

**Abstract**

Search engine optimizers base business around the old system of trying to compete with search engines by studying analytics that are tested over and over. Social media is built around these search engines, forcing companies to ask the question, how do we engage the user? Today, this method is slowly becoming a thing of the past, as users demand a more personal experience such as blogging, which engages and establishes a level of trust. This whitepaper identifies this shift in web communities, outlines the core fundamental rules in implementing social media and highlights the best practices needed to become successful.

**The Changing Face of Web Communities**

The Internet has long been viewed as an informational hub with endless amounts of information, leaving the user lost and unconnected. Often times, search engines such as Google and Yahoo are misused and users are left with negative experiences due to lack of engagement. Blogs are one form of social media that alleviate this disconnect as people are becoming more selective with the quality and amount of information needed.

Social media is an ever-growing movement where individual users, marketers and client facing teams exist and form communities

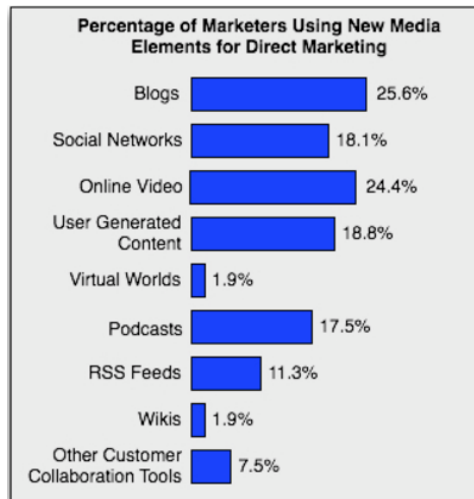
Today, many sites require a login and personalized functionality allowing the user to tailor their experience and network. Social media practices of today address these issues and create a sense of trust by **engaging** the user.

Through functionality and the ability to tailor each user experience, **trust** is attained through the ease of navigation providing direct, pertinent information. Once trust is established, a sense of **community** is formed with an organization. Having a community built around a social media network is a pivotal advantage in providing customers with the right tools. Such a network promotes users to **contribute** to the ecosystem and allow for a **self-regulating** environment that enables users to create their own flow of information.

**Establishing Clear Objectives**

When stepping into the world of social media, there is a large outlet of untapped possibility that can contribute to added organizational success. However, this marketing tool, used to reach users can also prove one of the largest pit falls if the objectives and intentions behind it are not clearly defined. Social media is built upon the interaction of people and spans across a broad spectrum of communication, breadth and depth. When determining the avenue of social media, there are four key purposes that companies must choose from: driving traffic, developing a brand, promoting customer service and creating a community. Success is dependant on how an organization directs and promotes these efforts. If left unclear, the ultimate goal is often lost.

**Use of Social Media in Direct Marketing**



Source: <http://www.socialmedia.biz/>



### The Headline or Title-

The most important factor in gaining initial attention is captured in the headline or title. This should advertise the value that is provided to the reader. Let's use the example: "The Influence of Blogging". This leaves users to believe that the blog post speaks to why blogging is important- but this wouldn't (at a glance) seem very useful. It is a general title. However if the title of the post is: "Experience the Influence of Blogging" the second title does a much better job of providing a "what's in it for me" action. The title advertises the fact that the content will provide some value to the reader, and when matched up with a valuable post, it provides a great link to catch a user's attention.

### The Topic-

When choosing to write a post, consider buzz-worthy topics. Use a topic that relates to a larger topic being talked about in the community, offering a chance for a higher success rate. People like to read content that talks about the latest trends or news. Current issues in circulation can offer an opportunity to 'piggyback' content and link to what the topic being addressed.

### Small is BIG-

The problem with most blog entries is the amount of fluff or non-information that is usually skimmed over by readers. It is important to stay focused, and to pack as much value as you can into the content. Proofread before posting, and take out any unnecessary content that would take away from the value. Some blogs tend to get a little carried away with opinionated content, and those opinions are fine, however, remember to stay short and to the point. A key rule of thumb, less is more.

### Learn from Example-

Take the time to visit sites like Digg, del.icio.us, or Reddit. Learn from those who have experience and direction in different social media outlets. The top users on these sites know what they are doing when it comes to creating viral content. Apply the structure of these articles to principle ideas and experiment. Also, look to network among peers to gain insight into what works and what may have not worked for others.

### Links-

Outbound links, used to help navigate, help the user find the proper information and support the organizations expertise in a particular field. Links offer a resourceful repository that allows for a one-stop experience that helps create an ease of use. In addition, the viral effect is often spawned by impressions that links leave on other blogs or sites.

### Visual Cues-

Visual cues are very subtle hints hidden in blog posts to help the reader assess *interest*. Use bold text, hyperlinks, and pictures to get your point across. Imagine that one reader subscribes to 700 blogs and needs to scan over all the information quickly and effectively. Visual cues provide a stimulus that grabs the reader's initial attention, drawing them into the blog or writing itself.

### Tags-

Tags are important to use because they serve as a means for users to find posts when searching. When used correctly, tags can also function as a system of hierarchal organization on a blog. Consider adding tags to posts on one particular topic, and reusing the tags when the topic comes up again.

### Word of Mouth-

The last factor (or perhaps the first) in helping to create viral content is accomplished by spreading the word. Creativity with print advertising, profiles on social media sites to cultivate

friends or generate conversation amongst friends and family- anything to get the word out helps. With any social media strategy, the focus of the first few months should be a word of mouth approach, gathering an audience by spreading the word.

### **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that a new school of thought has begun to take shape in the world of social media. As the shift of search engine optimizers moves toward a new breed of online community optimizers, user experience and engagement are essential. As social media continues to enable engagement to the next level, continue to hold these fundamental elements close as these communities continue to adapt and change.

### **About Indigio**

Indigio is an interactive solutions agency that specializes in search, design and web development. As a company that strives to bring simplicity and functionality to its clients, Indigio offers balance and Web site optimization that empowers clients to succeed online. As a company with a strong culture of driven, experienced and energetic people, Indigio looks to provide clients with the tools necessary to rise above the rest.