

# **The Social Media Marketing Blueprint**

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## INTRODUCTION — WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA AND WHY DOES IT MATTER TO YOU?

Part of the job of being an online marketer is staying up to date with the trends. It's a tricky business. New trends pop up so often that it's impossible to throw your marketing efforts into all of them.

Nor would it be very smart.

As quickly as some fantastic new website idea appears another disappears, taking with it all the time and effort that marketers have invested in it. Where today are all the link exchanges, traffic swaps and exit schemes that we all enjoyed and benefited from just a few years ago?

While it can be a good idea to jump onto a marketing bandwagon nice and early when it rolls through the Internet, it is important to make sure that that bandwagon isn't going to roll into a dead end. That might involve waiting a bit and watching. If the main sites grow, if smaller sites pop up that don't just copy the originals but target niches... and if many of them are still around several months after the computer world has got bored talking about them, then it's a pretty good sign that the trend isn't just something to play with but something to make a standard part of your marketing efforts.

That has now happened to social media sites.

When sites like MySpace and Facebook first rolled out, no one was quite sure what to make of them. They were popular, which was definitely a good sign, and investors were prepared throw giant bags of money at them — and even *for* them — which was another good sign. But this had happened in the nineties too with the result that plenty of good money followed bad... and plenty of good companies went the way of bad ones too.

Now though, the jury seems to have made its decision. Social media works.

People are using it to keep in touch, publish their own news and find the information they're looking for. Many have been around for a while and some are making decent money, which means that marketers can feel confident about giving them their time.

Most importantly, they're bringing benefits to other online entrepreneurs too.

The time has come for Internet marketers to make social media skills a part of their marketing toolkit.

In this report, I'm going to explain how to identify which social media sites to use and what to do with them when you get there.

I'll begin with an overview of the most important sites currently available. There are now hundreds of different social media sites, some of general interest and others on topics as specialized as cat-loving and literature reading. I'll provide a quick introduction to a dozen that you should definitely know about — even if you choose not to use all of them.

I'll then talk about narrowing down the list. Obviously, you won't have the time to be active on every social media site, so I'll explain how to decide what kind of traffic you want, how to assess the different kinds of traffic available on each site and how to calculate the real price you'll pay for those users.

Although each site is different, there are some general rules that apply to all of social media. I'll talk about the importance of networking, community activity and the role played by each site's top influence-holders.

Like any marketing strategy though, social media does involve testing and tweaking. I'll discuss the sort of changes you're likely to make when marketing through social media and how to know when to make them.

Social media can be a very powerful form of marketing. It isn't complex and it can be a lot of fun. But it does require attention, understanding and effort.

Let's start by meeting the sites...

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## **1. EXPLORING THE SOCIAL MEDIA MAP — WHERE TO GO AND WHAT YOU CAN FIND WHEN YOU GET THERE**

Once social media users had a pretty simple choice: it was either MySpace or Facebook, and the differences between them were pretty clear.

If you were a 14-year-old girl who loves pop music, then you created a page at MySpace filled with pictures and your favorite music. If you were a student and a member of the college rock-climbing society, you joined Facebook and used the site to let people know which rocks you'd be climbing next week.

Now the choice of sites runs into the hundreds. One blogger has listed over 380 sites dedicated just to social bookmarking, the habit of users recommending websites to each other.

I'm not going to list all of the social media sites available online. There are far too many of them and they change too often. In this chapter, I'm simply going to describe the twelve most important sites, and in the future chapters, explain how to judge any other niche site you might want to use.

## 1.1 MySpace



MySpace was created in 2006 and quickly became the most popular social networking site in the United States. Today, that position has been taken by Facebook, but it can still reach over 117 million users a month and bring in 230,000 new users each day.

In July 2005, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation paid \$580 million for the site. MySpace is free to users, making money only from advertising.

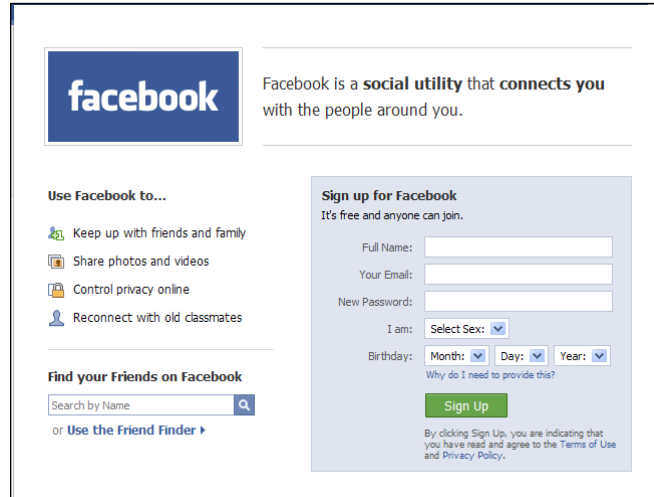
### 1.1.1 What Makes MySpace Unique

MySpace's audience tends to be young, attracted by two of the site's characteristics: the ability to personalize pages with HTML and emoticons; and the emphasis on music. MySpace offers special profile pages for musicians, allowing them to upload up to six MP3s to their pages.

That makes it a useful site for publishers offering content aimed at young people or which concerns entertainment. [Follow me on MySpace.](#)

## 1.2 Facebook

Facebook feels like an older version of MySpace. The site started at Harvard University, where it managed to sign up half the university's students within the space of a month. Gradually the site expanded to other colleges, schools and eventually anyone with an email address. Today, it is said to be able to attract over 130 million visitors a month, possibly making it the most popular social media site on the Web.



The image shows a screenshot of the Facebook sign-up page. At the top left is the Facebook logo. To its right, a tagline reads: "Facebook is a social utility that connects you with the people around you." Below the logo, there are four bullet points under the heading "Use Facebook to...": "Keep up with friends and family", "Share photos and videos", "Control privacy online", and "Reconnect with old classmates". To the right of these is a "Sign up for Facebook" form. The form includes fields for "Full Name", "Your Email", and "New Password". Below these are dropdown menus for "I am:" (with "Select Sex" as a placeholder), "Birthday:" (with "Month", "Day", and "Year" dropdowns), and a "Sign Up" button. A small note at the bottom of the form states: "By clicking Sign Up, you are indicating that you have read and agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy."

Like MySpace, Facebook is free and depends on advertising but it does have a number of site-specific advertising programs... as well as plenty of opportunities for Internet marketers looking for low cost ways of raising their profiles.

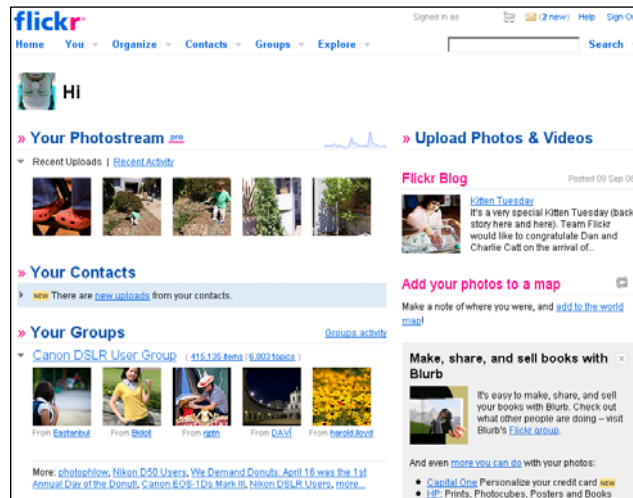
### 1.2.1 What Makes Facebook Unique

Facebook's advertising system is said to bring in around \$300 million, helped by the fact that the company has such detailed information on all its members. But it's unclear whether paying for advertising on the site would be more effective than building a following and using viral marketing. One of the ways to do that is by making use of groups — a strong point on Facebook — and by using and perhaps even creating apps. While that might require some work, it's really those small programs that keep networks together and help Facebook to stand out.

That and the huge numbers of interconnected people on the site. [Follow me on Facebook.](#)

## 1.3 Flickr

Both Facebook and MySpace are general interest sites. They're used by everyone and anyone, and contain groups on every subject you can imagine. Their goal is to keep people in touch by providing them with a public space to share whatever information they want.



Flickr is a specialized photo-sharing site. All members are photography enthusiasts but their enthusiasm might range from occasional family snapper to professional photographer. Like Facebook and MySpace though, the site revolves around networking and groups.

And like those sites, Flickr too is being used by smart marketers to promote their sites and their businesses.

### 1.3.1 What Makes Flickr Unique

Flickr is a photography website so the most important content on a Flickr page (or stream) is images. The better the images, the easier it will be to gain views and comments. Images also need at least two "faves" to be eligible for inclusion on the site's Explore page, an achievement that can have a massive effect on views.

Basic membership of Flickr is free but pro membership, which provides stats — including details on the origins of users — costs just \$24.95 per year. [Follow me on Flickr.](#)

## 1.4 Twitter

All of the sites I've mentioned so far rely on using large amounts of content to build interest. Twitter relies on using very small amounts of content — just 140 characters! — to describe what they're doing right now.

It's sounds like a strange idea — what on earth can you say in 140 characters that would be worth reading? — but in fact, I've found it to be an extremely useful way to cement relationships and attract valuable traffic.



### 1.4.1 What Makes Twitter Unique

Twitter's uniqueness is of course, the length of the messages — or tweets — that members can send. They can be sent from anywhere, including from mobile phones, and they allow network members to feel that they're taking part in a constant conversation rather than simply dropping by occasionally to read new content.

A number of major companies and leading personalities have already discovered the surprising commercial benefits that Twitter can bring. [Follow me on Twitter.](#)

### 1.5 12Seconds.tv

Twitter's big thing is microblogging. Instead of writing long posts that require thought and effort, Tweeters can simply shoot out a few words on the spur of the moment. Following those messages too is simple and can even be done by mobile phone.



But Tweeting still requires typing while the Internet seems to be slipping faster and faster towards multimedia content. 12Seconds.tv is a video version of Twitter. Users record a twelve second video clip which they upload to the site and make available for anyone to see in the same way.

### 1.5.1 What Makes 12Seconds.tv Unique

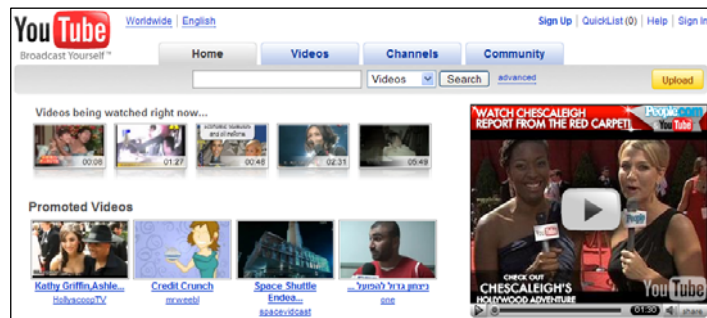
Like Twitter, 12Seconds.tv is marked out by the short duration of its content, but also by the fact that that content is video-based. Those

clips can be sent in from anywhere — mobile phones work here too — but you might struggle to build the sort of following on 12Seconds.tv that you can easily build on Twitter. In part, that's because the site is less famous and has fewer users, but it might also be because watching videos, even short ones, requires sound and commitment — which might make it hard to do at work. [Check out my 12Seconds.tv channel.](#)

## 1.6 YouTube

Another reason that 12Seconds.tv could struggle though is that it has to compete with the granddaddy of video content, YouTube.

Although clips on this site can be relatively long, they can also be embedded into websites, borrowed freely and attract massive audiences. Viewers might not form the sort of tight communities you can create on Twitter or even Facebook and MySpace — they're viewers, not friends — but they can be loyal and if they like the content will come back time and time again, and tell their friends. [Check out my YouTube channel.](#)

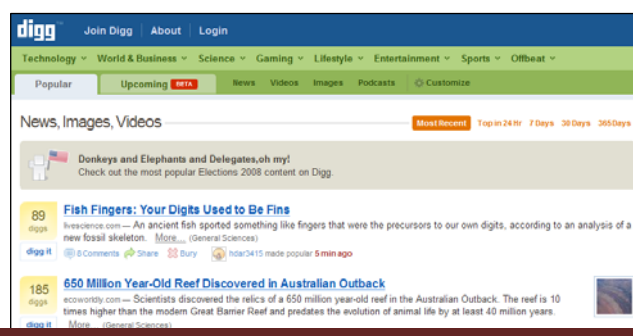


### 1.6.1 What Makes YouTube Unique

These days what marks YouTube out most is its size and reach. Adding videos to websites is now pretty easy but nothing gathers traffic to a video as quickly as putting it on YouTube. But while the potential is huge, making it work isn't easy. There's a lot of competition on YouTube so the site often best used as a way of bringing in extra, new users rather than as the center of your traffic hub.

## 1.7 Digg

So far, the main point of all of the sites I've talked about has been to share content and build a community around that content. Digg is different. Its goal is to recommend



content to a community centered on the site.

That's a big change but for an Internet publisher it can be a very valuable tool — and it's one that's been copied by plenty of other sites.

Users vote — or Digg — for Web pages they like, recommending content to each other. They can also vote down content they don't like and add their thoughts about what they've read.

### 1.7.1 What Makes Digg Unique

Digg isn't the only social bookmarking site but it does have a particularly tight-knit community which supports each other as much as the sites they like.

Certain kinds of content — such as long list posts — tend to do particularly well on Digg but sites that deliberately produce such “Digg-bait” in the hope of receiving the viewer spike that results from reaching the Digg home page can find themselves added to a secret blacklist. [Follow me on Digg.](#)

## 1.8 StumbleUpon

You could say that StumbleUpon is to Digg what Facebook is to MySpace. While Digg feels very cliquy — especially to anyone who doesn't think



Ron Paul is the greatest American since George Washington — StumbleUpon is much more open. It also works slightly differently. Instead of submitting and voting on content at the networking site itself, users download a toolbar which they then use to submit and recommend content that they “stumble upon” while surfing the Net.

### 1.8.1 What Makes StumbleUpon Unique

The use of a toolbar makes the community at StumbleUpon much weaker than that at Digg. Members don't need to return to StumbleUpon to submit an article that they've enjoyed — only to see other people's recommendations and comment on them.

The community also appears to be a little older, less critical and — judging by the articles they like — more scientific. A post about Apple will always get Dugg on Digg.com; a post about the Hadron Collider is likely to do equally well on StumbleUpon.

Like Digg though, receiving additional votes does depend on good connections with other members who value your opinion. [Follow me on StumbleUpon.](#)

## 1.9 Reddit

Reddit is another social bookmarking site, like Digg and StumbleUpon. Users can submit links to Web pages they like, vote others up or down and find interesting content to read. The site is owned by publishers Condé Nast.



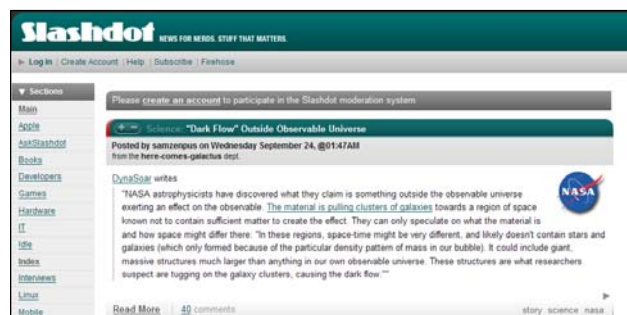
### 1.9.1 What Makes Reddit Unique

At first sight, the differences between Reddit and Digg look pretty minor. The subject tabs at the top of the page are divided into "hot," "new," "controversial" and "top" instead of subjects, and the stories highlighted more political (and liberal).

But a more important difference is that users can set up their own "subreddits" on topics they find interesting. That lets them build a targeted community around other people's content — something that any online entrepreneur would find very useful.

## 1.10 Slashdot

Although Slashdot is another site that allows users to recommend content that they've found interesting, it looks different to Digg, Reddit and StumbleUpon, and operates in a very different way. Most notably, users don't just submit links, but write summaries of articles they like. The comments are also moderated



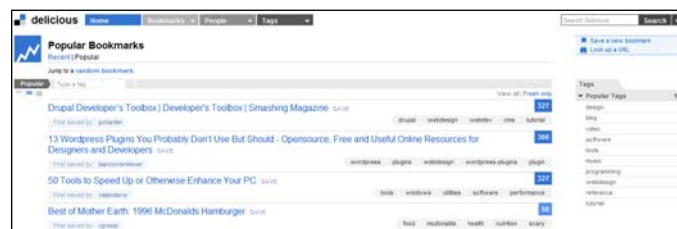
and scored, making the actions and opinions of contributors particularly important.

### 1.10.1 What Makes Slashdot Unique

Like Digg, the popularity of top stories on Slashdot has been known to overwhelm servers and bring down sites. But the site functions in a very different way, with a greater emphasis on the opinions of the site's users. Most importantly, Slashdot makes clear who it considers its market. The site's slogan is: "News for nerds. Stuff that matters." Article categories tend to be technology and science-based and the readers educated and savvy. (Although, judging by the ads, they also like role-playing games). It's a niche market, not a general one.

### 1.11 Del.icio.us

Like Digg and Reddit, Delicious is another social bookmarking site, but like Flickr, it also has the backing of Yahoo! It's one of the Web's most popular



social bookmarking sites, with over 5 million users and more than 150 million bookmarked URLs.

Get your Web pages bookmarked here, and you have the potential to place it in front of a lot of users.

#### 1.11.1 What Makes Del.icio.us Unique

A number of factors mark out Delicious from other social bookmarking sites. First, it's been around for a while — it was founded in 2003.

Second, it's owned by Yahoo! so it has plenty of backing.

And third, it doesn't just recommend sites; it also categorizes them by allowing users to add their own tags.

You can think of Delicious as a kind of online version of your own bookmark list — but one that everyone can see.

## 1.12 Furl

And finally, although it's certainly not the last one available, FURL stands for File Uniform Resource Locators — which is just a fancy way of saying "social bookmarking."

Like Delicious, users submit Web pages they like. They're aren't voted on like on Digg or StumbleUpon but they can be tagged, commented and rated, and the site even has groups that allow members to swap recommendations.



### 1.12.1 What Makes Furl Unique

Furl is very similar to Delicious but it's most important difference is that each member receives up to 5 gigabytes of storage space to hold the HTML of each page submitted. So if you delete one of your pages, it will still be accessible through Furl and more importantly, it means that full text searching is allowed.

## 2. SO WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO? — CHOOSING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA DESTINATION

So you can see that when it comes to social media sites, you're spoiled for choice. And the list I gave in the previous section is just the tip of the iceberg. Spend just a little time surfing around the blogs on social media sites and you'll be pointed to plenty of other smaller, more specialized sites.

The most important decision you'll need to make when using social media sites to promote your online business is which site — or sites — to use.

That begins with an understanding of traffic.

## **2.1 Your Kind Of Traffic**

Or rather, it begins with an understanding of the sort of traffic you want your site to receive.

That's crucial because while social media sites can massively increase your page views, they don't always translate into ad clicks and sales. Digg, for example, is famous for crashing servers but it's also well-known for the low clickthrough rate of its members.

The problem with writing content that's interesting to lots of people is that your ads might only be interesting to a very small number of them. The result can in fact be much higher server costs while your revenues only increase slightly.

Before you can choose a social media site then, it's vital to understand what sort of users are most likely to click through on your ads.

You're only going to find that information by reviewing your stats and your server logs. Those logs should tell who clicked on an ad and which site they came from before they reached yours. You'll probably find that there's a dozen — or even fewer — sites that are responsible for a large portion of your ad clicks, and a handful of keywords that lead people to your site in search results and from there to your advertisers' sites.

This is analysis that you should be doing anyway — and not just because it helps with your marketing. When you can turn your audience into a single individual, whether that's a soccer mom, a barbeque dad, an online games player or even another home-based Internet entrepreneur, it's so much easier to write for them and produce better content.

When you can do it while you're targeting social media sites though, it will also help you to identify which sites you should be aiming at.

## **2.2 Your Kind Of Social Media Site — Checking Your Users**

The challenge is that almost all of the main social media sites like to pretend that they're aimed at everyone. MySpace's slogan isn't "The best site for teenagers." It portrays itself a general interest site that can cater to anyone who wants to keep in touch with their friends and have fun.

Of course, just like any other popular venue, that's not how things work in practice. While you might find all sorts of people on both Facebook and MySpace, and everyone and their ancient uncle uploading videos to YouTube, certain types of people will always be more active on those sites than others.

Users know instinctively who they can expect to meet on their favorite social media sites. Internet marketers looking for a site to focus on for traffic will have to spend a little time browsing the sites and getting a feel for the community.

There are usually two places to look to understand the sort of traffic you can expect to pick up on a social media site.

The first is the profiles. This is always going to be more revealing on some sites than others, although just about all sites have them. On social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, they're the core of the site and even the questions that members are invited to answer can be revealing. The fact that MySpace asks plenty of questions about music, for example, and leaves room for members to add their own music player says a great deal about who the site is aiming its services at. That Facebook has plenty of university-based groups and lots of members with degrees tells you something else.

But the profiles on sites like YouTube and Digg tell you a great deal less. They're not very detailed and often, some questions will be left unanswered. More important on sites like these are the comments.

These can be at least as revealing as profiles because they give you an insight into the thoughts of the site's most active members. Top social media sites might have millions of members but not all of them are active — many people join, say "hullo" to a few friends they haven't seen since high school, then never visit the site again. The people who leave comments though are those who visit the site frequently, value it enough to contribute to it and often define the nature of the discussions on the site.

And the quality of the comments can vary tremendously. On Digg and YouTube they can be pretty fierce, with plenty of flaming; on Flickr and StumbleUpon, they tend to be more encouraging and positive.

The question for an Internet entrepreneur is which type of user is going to bring the best results for their site?

## 2.3 Testing Traffic Quality

Understanding the different types of users on the different social media sites isn't very difficult. The identification is subtle — you get a feeling rather than a definite picture — but spend any amount of time on each of those sites and you'll certainly pick it up.

Much harder to calculate is what exactly those users would be worth to you.

This is not information that you can find by browsing the social media sites — and it's not even information that you can find by browsing the blogs about social media sites. Even though plenty of marketers complain about the quality of the traffic they receive from Digg and its low clickthrough rates, that could have at least as much to do with their own sites as the social media service they're using.

The only way to know for sure how much the members of a social media site are worth to you is by testing the site and tracking the results.

Write a long list post and submit it to Digg, for example. Do all of the things that I'm going to suggest in the next two sections of this report to improve the chances that it will be seen, and calculate how much extra revenues those views gave you.

If you find that the effort only produced a small amount of extra revenue — while also raising your server costs and alienating your regular readers — then move on to the next site. You could either submit the same content or create a new page targeted to that community.

This might be a little harder to do on some social media sites though. Social bookmarking sites deliver instant results. If a page is picked up, views will spike and you'll notice the difference. Creating a network on Facebook or MySpace takes time and the results only come in slowly — in terms of a gradual rise in page views, a growth in the number of comments, and hopefully an increase in the amount of your earnings too.

On sites like these, you'll also have to consider another factor though: the branding power of the site.

Becoming a popular member on Flickr, for example, won't bring instant results. It will take you time to build up contacts and only a small number of those contacts will click through to your website.

But during that period, being active on the site makes your name known and your content blogged about elsewhere.

It's the difference between handing out coupons and seeing how many people use them, and putting your name on billboards and counting how many people recognize it.

The best strategy for sites like these is to choose them carefully, pick sites that you want to be a part of anyway and look for long-term results.

## **2.4 Measuring Your Costs**

The best thing about social media sites is that for the most part, they're free. It costs nothing to use Facebook or MySpace. Digg and StumbleUpon let you share your opinions for nothing, and while Flickr charges for better organization and for stats — both worth paying for — the \$24.95 per year charge is low enough to write off.

A bigger expense though is time, and this is where things can get difficult. I've already pointed out that for some social media sites, the results will only come through gradually, but when they do come through they tend to be very powerful and long-lasting. The friends you meet on Flickr and Twitter can be pretty loyal.

But even for sites that bring quick results, like Digg, StumbleUpon and YouTube, it's important to consider how long it will take you to produce content that fits their communities, deduct the amount of time you would have spent creating content anyway, and look at what you receive in return for that content.

You'll also have to factor in the amount of time you actually spend on the site doing the sort of networking that's necessary to bring in results.

That's what I'm going to discuss in the next section.

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## **3. STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS ON SOCIAL MEDIA SITES**

"Build it and they will come" only works if you're Kevin Costner. For the rest of us trying to bring users into our online businesses, a

better approach would be “build it and market like mad to make them come.”

That much is already well-known by anyone who has been online and trying to make money for a while.

Less well-known is that exactly the same is true of becoming a success on social media sites. It’s never going to be enough create a profile or even just to recommend content. If you want people to see your profile or pay attention to your recommendations, you have to take action.

The exact attention you’ll need to take will vary from site to site. On Flickr and Facebook, group activity is key; on Twitter and YouTube, messaging is more important, but there are some general strategies that are useful for whichever site you’re using.

### 3.1 Building The Network



Just some of my 2716 YouTube channel subscribers.

Most important on all social media sites is the network. This is the list of people who you’ve met on the site. It shouldn’t just consist of people you knew before you joined the site — although they can be good places to start — but all the people you’ve signed up as friends or contacts.

You can think of them as your users. The difference is that they will always be far fewer than the number of users on a website (I recently passed 3,500 followers on Twitter and I feel very chuffed) but also that you'll know all of their names.

That's a huge difference. Social media marketing isn't only about enlarging your audience; it's about adding audience members who you know and who know you. It adds extra quality not just extra depth to your list of potential customers.

So what can you do to build that network?

The most important thing you can do, regardless of which site you're on, is to play an active role in the community.

That might sound obvious, but in fact it's something that few people do. Although lots of people join social media sites, only a small minority actually spend time taking part in all of the activities that the site offers — and was designed for.

It's a bit like attending a party. Most people chat to a few people they know, meet one or two strangers and taste the canapés but only a tiny minority make up the party's life and soul. They work the room, glad-hand everyone and are the first on the dance floor when the DJ starts spinning the discs.

Being a success on a social media site means being the life and soul of your network's party.

Usually, that means doing at least one of three things.

It could mean creating content. That's true of sites like YouTube and 12Seconds.tv, where you really need to be uploading videos; of Twitter, where you need to be creating smart one-liners; and of Flickr, where you need to be uploading images.

Get the content right and you could well find yourself at the center of a whole new network, something that can have very valuable results. (On Flickr, for example, Icelandic art student Rebekka Guðleifsdóttir has over 1,200 contacts and can generate over 500 comments on one of her images. That fame led to her being hired by Toyota to shoot a billboard campaign for the Prius.)

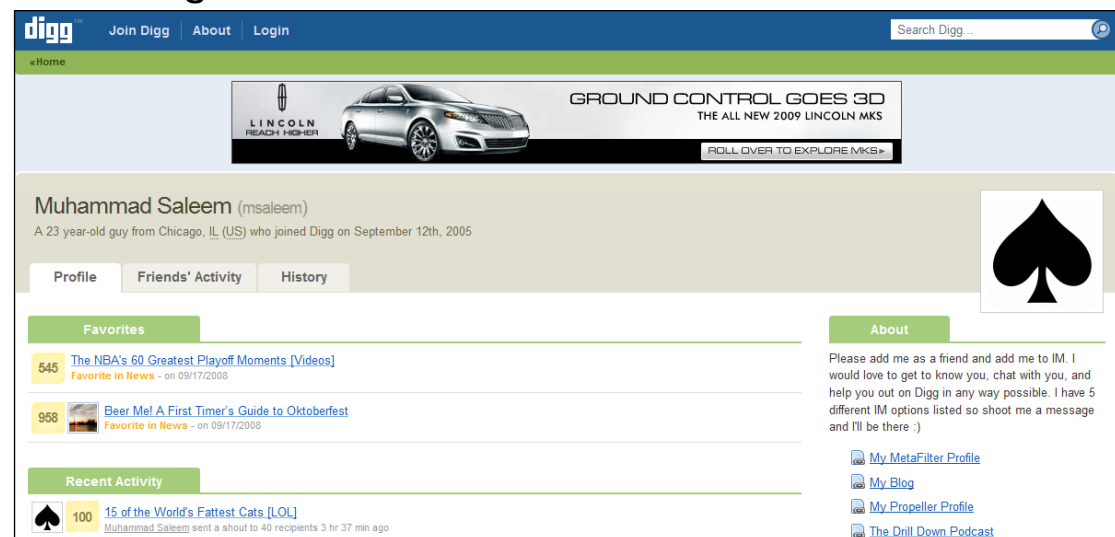
In addition to creating content though, being an active community member can also mean contributing comments on other people's content. That's not just a generous act. It's also good marketing. Provide constructive criticism — or even the sort of "nice capture"

compliments that are so often found at the bottom of Flickr images — and the recipient will click through to find out who's handing out the kind words. It's a very effective way of increasing the size of your network.

And finally, many (although not all) social media sites have groups. In the cases of Facebook and Flickr, they're really where most of the action happens and it's around the groups that new networks are formed.

That means that social media marketers who want to create networks, build their brand and increase exposure for their online business should be active participants in groups — and they should be creating their own too.

### 3.2 Aiming For The Leaders



The screenshot shows the Digg website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Join Digg', 'About', and 'Login' links, and a search box. Below that is a banner for a Lincoln MKS car. The main content area features the profile of Muhammad Saleem (msaleem), a 23-year-old from Chicago, IL, who joined Digg on September 12th, 2005. His profile includes tabs for 'Profile', 'Friends' Activity', and 'History'. Under 'Favorites', there are two items: 'The NBA's 60 Greatest Playoff Moments [Videos]' (545 favorites) and 'Beer Me! A First Timer's Guide to Oktoberfest' (958 favorites). Under 'Recent Activity', there is a shout to 40 recipients for '15 of the World's Fattest Cats [LOL]'. To the right of the profile is an 'About' section with a spade icon and a bio: 'Please add me as a friend and add me to IM. I would love to get to know you, chat with you, and help you out on Digg in any way possible. I have 5 different IM options listed so shoot me a message and I'll be there :)'. Below the bio are links to 'My MetaFilter Profile', 'My Blog', 'My Propeller Profile', and 'The Drill Down Podcast'.

Muhammad Saleem is one of the top Diggers. He can also help sites reach the home page.

I've already pointed out that most people on social media sites are occasional visitors while a few do most of the party-rousing.

Those few are important. They can massively increase the power of your own content and comments.

Muhammad Saleem, for example, is one of the leaders on Digg. Whenever he submits a story, he can be sure that his many friends will support his recommendations — whether they like (or have even read the article) or not. They'll support him because there's a good chance that he'll then support them in return and an endorsement from someone as well connected and respected as Muhammad Saleem is likely to generate many more votes.

The same is true of a comment from someone like Rebekka Guðleifsdóttir on Flickr. That's a powerful endorsement which can bring in plenty of extra views and comments.

Spotting the leaders on your social media site will take a little time. The sites don't advertise who they are. But look to see who's leaving the most comments, has the longest contact list or runs the most groups. Stick close to them, and you might well be joining them.

### 3.3 Don't Spam!



The screenshot shows a Facebook post from a user named 'Free Twitter Report' with the source 'www.joelcomm.com'. The post text promotes a '30-page report for FREE' about Twitter. To the right is a small image of a spiral-bound book titled 'twitter secrets'. Below the post is a 'Discussion Board' section with three topics. The first topic, 'Free auction site - ahhge.com', is highlighted with a red box and includes the text '1 post by 1 person. Updated on Sep 23, 2008 at 12:21 AM.' The other two topics are 'Have you ever wondered what happened to Steve Fossett?' and 'Hey there everyone-'. The page also shows 'Displaying 3 of 20 discussion topics' and links for 'Start New Topic' and 'See All'.

Somebody spams my Facebook group... grrrr.

It should really go without saying, shouldn't it? And yet, spend any time on a social media site — especially Facebook and MySpace — and you'll soon find yourself tripping over links to get-rich-quick schemes, pharmaceutical ads and all of the other things that land in your spam folder every day.

They turn up in the comments, they're sent through the messaging systems and they clog up groups.

Users hate them and they hate the people who send them too.

Sending spam through a social media site is like turning up drunk and naked at a party. No one will want to know you. You'll struggle to network — the most important activity on any social media site.

And it doesn't work.

That might not be entirely true. Maybe it works a little bit. Perhaps the odd person gets curious and clicks a link stuffed into a Facebook group but when you consider what you lose by being identified as a spammer on a social media site, the cost is enormous.

You give up all of the branding benefits that a social media site can generate, all of the clicks it can bring, the community and the referrals in favor of the occasional user who's unlikely to buy.

The problem is that spamming can mean different things on different sites. Clearly, putting a link to your own website into a group discussion on a totally different subject would fit the bill. That would apply anywhere. But on Flickr, submitting your image to unconnected groups is also considered spamming, while social bookmarking sites may consider content created specifically to reach their home page as a form of spamming too.

The best way to judge whether you're likely to be accused of spamming is to ask yourself whether what you're posting is in the spirit of the site. If it gets in the way of what people are trying to do on the site — even if you think it benefits them anyway — it will probably be considered spamming and you'd be better off not doing it at all.

### **3.4 Promoting A Web Page With Social Media Marketing**

All sorts of benefits can come from social media marketing, from just improving your branding to landing new clients for a business. But for most online entrepreneurs, the immediate goal is usually going to be to get people to a website. That's why spamming can look so tempting.

It's an easy way to put a URL in front of lots of people — even though very few of them will actually click it.

There are better methods but, of course, they will vary from site to site. Once you've built up a good network on a social bookmarking site, for example, you should find that just submitting the URL is enough to get your friends voting it up and people stopping by. And

once they've seen the page you're promoting, you should find that they continue clicking through your other pages.

On a networking site like Facebook or MySpace though, you'll have to work a little harder. People might click to your home page if you include the link on your profile but to get them to click on specific pages within your site, you'll need to mention those pages in your group discussions or in apps like FunWalls. On Twitter, it's enough to simply send out the link as a TinyURL for some people to click through.

All of these methods though, will need a large network and plenty of contacts — the immediate goal of all social media marketing activity.


**Digg** **Top Ten Signs You are Twittering Too Much**  
Posted on September 24, 2008 12:56 PM by Joel Comm

[submit](#) I wasn't feeling great today, but the show must go on!

Dan Nickerson and I took questions from viewers, showed some videos, discussed [social media](#) and presented a new top ten list.

Did you miss the show?

[Check out the replay now!](#)



[It's Del.icio.us!](#) [Furl It!](#)

I link to these three sites on my blog...

An alternative approach is to attach social media buttons to every post. Each of my blog posts, for example, has a big Digg button

right at the beginning. They also have Del.icio.us and Furl buttons at the bottom.

Paul Hartunian, a publicity expert who's often on the speaker circuit, adds icons to ten different social media sites at the end of his blog posts on PaulsPublicityBlog.com.



So which sites should you link to and how many buttons should you add?

... Paul Hartunian links to all of these.

That depends on your users, your content, and most importantly, the results of your testing.

There are lots of different strategies that you'll need to use to be a success on a social media site, and they're all site-specific. In general, the best advice is to spend time on the site. Get to know it. Enjoy it.

And test the results.

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## 4. TWEAKING YOUR STRATEGY

The secret of any good marketing campaign isn't the idea. It isn't the copy and it isn't the places you put the ads.

It's what you do with the figures when they come in.

That's true of every kind of kind of marketing. I give out all sort of advice on all sorts of different ways of promoting websites and turning them into cash, but the best advice I can always give anyone is...

... test it.

Every website is different and while there are always general strategies that have general effects, how exactly those strategies should be applied will always vary from site to site.

The only way to know for sure what works best on your site is to record the numbers, take a different tack and compare the results.

That's especially true on social media sites when you're so spoiled for choice and there are so many different ways to benefit from them.

#### **4.1 So What Do You Want Your Users To Do For You?**

Before you can begin testing, you first have to know what you're aiming for. On many social media sites, the measure of success is pretty clear: the more contacts you have, the better you're doing. Other sites have different measures. On Flickr, what counts is the number of views and faves your images receive, while on social bookmarking sites like Digg, it might be the ease with which you can push a story you've submitted onto the front page.

But when you're using social media sites for profit as well as for fun, there's a whole other measure you need to consider: the amount of money your activity generates.

That's always going to come down to just a few methods. You might be monetizing your traffic by persuading your users to click on ads; you could be generating cash by clocking up page views with Cost-Per-Mille banner ads; and you could be winning commissions by recommending affiliate products — or even items of your own (a strategy often used on Flickr by professional and semi-professional photographers.)

And ideally, you'll be using a mixture of all of them.

You'll need a baseline figure that includes the number of page views you usually generate, your clickthrough rate and your revenues, and you'll need to compare that figure with the information you generate after you begin pushing a page on a social media site.

That's information you can pick up by following your stats.

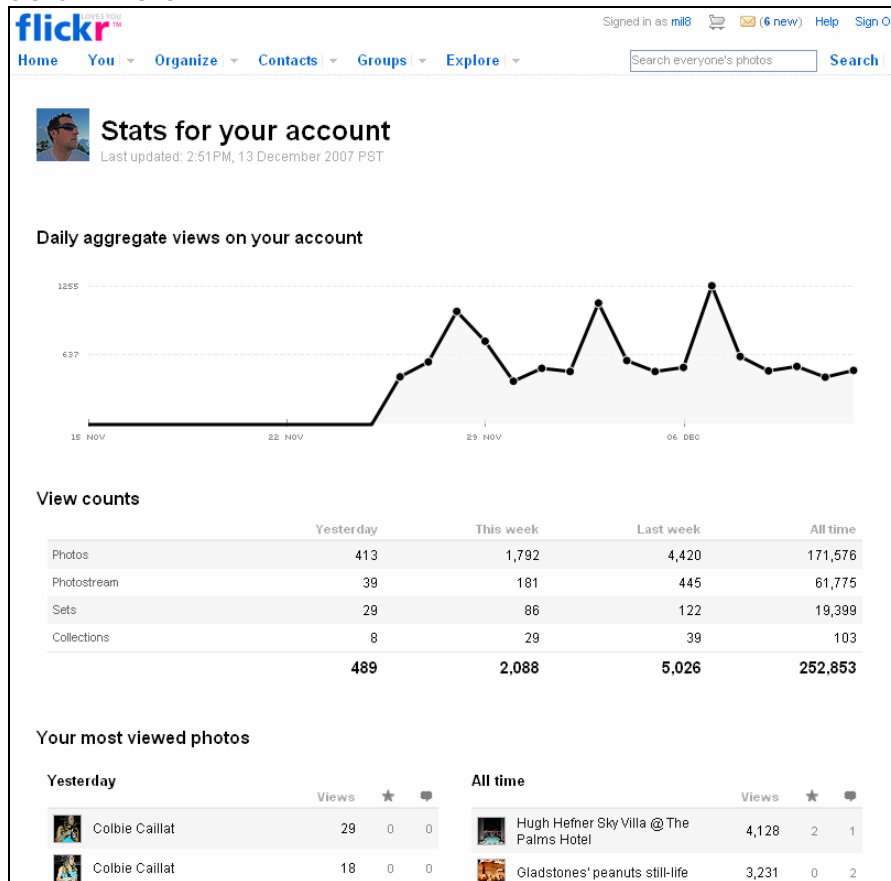
#### **4.2 Following Your Social Stats**

Usually, you'll be picking up the information you need by looking at your server logs. They'll tell you how much your traffic has increased and where it's coming from. You'll be able to see pretty clearly how many users you're receiving each month that comes directly from your social media marketing.

A few sites though provide stats of their own. Flickr, for example, supplies all sorts of valuable information to its Pro members,

including their origins and which keywords they used on search engines to reach an image.

That can make search engine targeting very easy and means that you can expand your reach beyond the site's community to the Web as a whole.



Flickr's stats, like these of [Mil8's](#) photostream, can be extremely useful when it comes to targeting your efforts.

You can also see which images generate the most views so that you can supply more of them and make sure that the descriptions on those images contain links back to your website.

YouTube too lets you see how many people have viewed your videos, allowing you to calculate which are the most popular and whether that popularity translates into revenue.

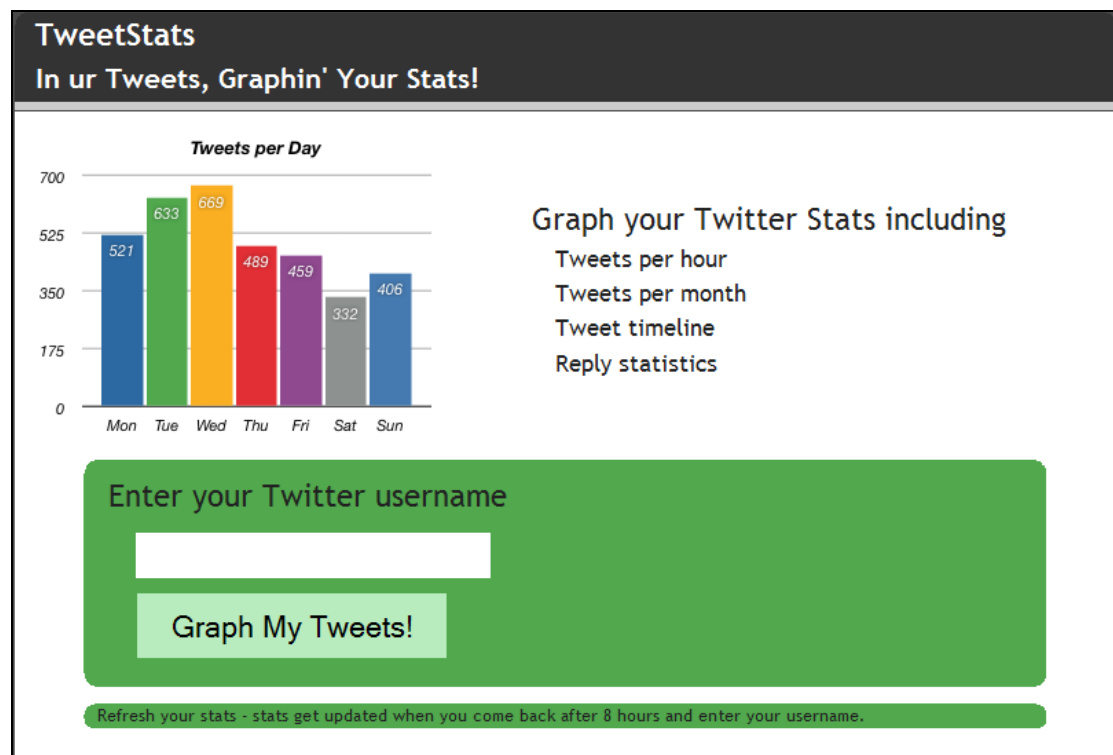
But you can also keep your own stats, and that can be very valuable too — even if it does require a fair amount of work. Damon Cortesi (<http://twitter.com/dacort>), for example, keeps a score of the frequency with which he tweets on Twitter and who replies to him. Damon says on his Twitter page that he has “a passion for breaking things and generating statistics” but it's a passion that anyone can share because he's created an online program that lets anyone create their own graphs.

Enter your username at [TwitterStats.com](http://TwitterStats.com) and you can have a graph that's both helpful and pretty.

What you're most likely to find when you're following your stats though is that shortly after putting up a link, you see a rise in your page views. That could be a very sharp rise (if you hit the Digg or Reddit home page) or a gradual rise (if you add your URL to an image description on Flickr).

But it's also likely that you won't see the sort of clickthroughs that you're accustomed to.

No one is really sure why that is, and it really depends on the site too. Part of the reason is likely to be that people on social media sites tend to be pretty savvy. They know how to use the Web... and how to avoid the ads.



Damon Cortesi's [TwitterStats.com](http://TwitterStats.com) graphs Twitter usage automatically. Change your tweeting frequency and watch what happens to your results.

Part of it though, might be that social media sites are big but broad. You're going to be casting a pretty wide net and while that means you can land a lot of users, only a small number of them will be the sort of people you would usually target.

So what do you do when you find that your social media views are high but your CTRs are low?

The first thing you do is count your money.

That was money you didn't have before, so you're already ahead.

The next thing you do is calculate your AdSense earnings per click. Google uses a calculation called Smart Pricing to set the rate for each ad click. Sites that send users who tend to buy are paid more for their clicks than sites that send users who don't buy. If your social media users lower your Smart Pricing rate, you could find that you have another cost to factor into your strategy.

And the third thing you do is try another site.

That might not sound like great advice, especially if you've already invested a great deal of time and effort in building up your network. But with so many sites to choose from, you might well find that shifting your efforts elsewhere can give you much better results.

Nor do you have to abandon your first site completely. Although it is a good idea to keep the momentum going with some updates and new content, once you've created a network on a site like Flickr or Facebook, you keep it, even if you're not logging in every day or even every week.

There's nothing wrong with creating a name for yourself on one site, testing the results, shifting your attention to another site while still sending out the odd update or group challenge at your original venue and comparing the results.

### **4.3 What To Do If You Get Banned**

Having a reserve site on hand is particularly useful when you get banned.

That *can* happen although again, it depends on the site. Digg is known for operating a secret blacklist that blocks submissions of Web pages from sites that are known to be targeting it. The site denies the blacklist exists but users have tracked what happens following the submission of a URL and found that when a link from a banned site picks up a set number of Diggs — usually around 20 — it's automatically buried.

It's not entirely clear what can cause a site to be blacklisted. Creating deliberate Diggbait might have something to do with it but there are plenty of other sites that seem to do that without getting

blacklisted. Rather than look for consistency — or an appeals process — a better bet would be look to StumbleUpon or Reddit if you find that pages that would once have done well on Digg are now disappearing after 20 votes.

Bannings from sites like Facebook, MySpace and Flickr tend to be much clearer — and much rarer too. Usually, this is a result of blatant spamming, something which should be avoided anyway. It might also happen for breaching a site's rules on commercialism (Flickr's terms, for example, state that the site is not to be used for commercial purposes, even though many people do.)

I haven't heard of anyone being banned for that, but in theory at least, it could happen. Again, you can switch your attention to another site or there's no reason why you couldn't simply relaunch with a different email address and a new identity. You'd have to rebuild your network but if your old friends didn't mind your old habits, there's no reason why they shouldn't mind your new identity too.

Banning is pretty rare on social media sites — they're pretty inclusive places. The best thing to do if it happens though is to take it as a warning that you're on the wrong track.

The path to success with social media marketing is always to play the game. Become an active member of a community and deliver the sort of content and help that other members are looking for and you'll build a network, respect, your brand — and your website.

Do the sort of things that could get you banned and you'll struggle to get the results of your activity anyway.

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## CONCLUSION

Social media is an idea whose time has definitely come, and it's here to stay. It can also be a valuable tool for Internet marketers.

But it's a very big tool with lots of different features.

When you can choose to promote your online business through sites as different as Facebook and Furl, and Twitter and Flickr, you really have to do some thinking, choose carefully and plan your strategy.

In this report, I give a very brief introduction to twelve of the social media sites that I've found to be the most important. They aren't

the only ones I could have written about but they are some of the biggest, the most effective — and sites that I've used.

I then talked about choosing which sites *you* should use. I can't tell exactly which social media site would best suit your business, so I explained how to assess traffic types, traffic quality and measure the cost of that traffic.

To pick up that traffic though will require some effort, so I then discussed network-building, network leaders and Web page promotion.

And finally, I talked about how you can change your social media marketing campaign to make sure that you're getting the most out of it.

There are all sorts of good reasons to market your online business through social media sites but there's one reason that stands out above all the others...

... it's fun.

You'll meet some great people, a lot of old friends and plenty of new ones. You'll create content that makes you smile and see plenty you enjoy.

Pick a site, build your network and give it a try.

You'll be amazed at both how enjoyable it can be, and how profitable it can be too.

## **Follow me on these social networks!**

Twitter – <http://twitter.com/joelcomm>

YouTube – <http://www.youtube.com/user/joelcomm>

Facebook – search for my name

MySpace – <http://profile.myspace.com/joelcomm>

Flickr – <http://www.flickr.com/people/13272932@N00/>

12Seconds.tv - <http://12seconds.tv/channel/joelcomm>

Digg.com - <http://digg.com/users/jcomm>

StumbleUpon - <http://jcomm.stumbleupon.com/>

## About Joel Comm



Joel Comm is an Internet entrepreneur who has been building successful web sites since 1995. Dedicated to providing a family-friendly Internet experience, Joel's flagship site, [WorldVillage.com](http://WorldVillage.com), continues to be a popular family-safe portal. Joel is the co-creator of [Yahoo! Games](http://Yahoo! Games) and author of the New York Times Bestseller, [The AdSense Code](http://The AdSense Code). Joel makes frequent appearances at Internet marketing conferences and

seminar, conducting workshops and training others in the latest ways to make money on the Internet. He is the host of the world's first Internet marketing reality show, [The Next Internet Millionaire](http://The Next Internet Millionaire). His most recent best-seller is [Click Here to Order: Stories of the World's Most Successful Internet Marketing Entrepreneurs](http://Click Here to Order: Stories of the World's Most Successful Internet Marketing Entrepreneurs).

Joel's sites include:

[JoelComm.com](http://JoelComm.com) – Joel's Blog

[AdSenseChat.com](http://AdSenseChat.com) – Google AdSense Member Forums

[DealofDay.com](http://DealofDay.com) - a popular bargain-hunting community

[FamilyFirst.com](http://FamilyFirst.com) – Family-friendly sites reviews

## Click Here to Order: Stories of the World's Most Successful Internet Marketing Entrepreneurs

While the general public is familiar with the larger Internet companies such as Yahoo!, Google, eBay and Amazon, very few are aware that small business is thriving online like never before, especially in the realm of information products. Click Here creates an entertaining and instructive narrative that provides an in-depth look at the unintentionally underground movement known as Infoproduct marketing, and the people who have profited and succeeded in the industry.

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