How YOU can unleash a Traffic Stampede using the Power of Web 2.0!

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What You'll Get From This Book

In the next couple of hours, you're going to learn some jealously-guarded secrets of how to attain (almost) overnight wealth.

And here's the best news of all: **I've spelled out everything you need to know in an easy-to-follow way.** If you're serious about wanting to retire rich in the next couple of years, you can; all the steps and explan-ations you need are right here.

Right now, these secrets are known only to a few elite web gurus, who will go into a frenzy when they know I've spilled the beans. Because doling out snippets to their mass of followers is how they keep getting richer!

But look — I started out just a little guy, and now I've quietly made my pile. I just don't see why the guys at the top should have the lion's share : I want to see everyone with a spirit of enterprise, and the desire for better things, cut in on this too.

What we're going to cover

First up, I'll explain what Web 2.0 is, and why it's so superior to the older ways of doing business on the Internet. You'll learn:

1. How web pages can be now designed to interact with visitors
2. How Web 2.0 sites can bring people together in ways never before thought possible, in the blink of an eye
3. How sites can get details of your products and services out to millions of people, without depending on search engines
4. Ways to set up *your* site to attract a virtual avalanche of visitors with money to spend
5. How to turn your visitors into loyal fans

We'll also look at how millions of people worldwide are communicating daily, through hundreds of Web 2.0 sites set up specifically to help them do this. You'll discover:

1. Ways to form friendships with people of influence, and become their trusted provider of products and services

2. How you can tap into *their* contacts, and *theirs,* so that people are sending their friends to your website, from the four corners of the world!

3. Which sites and networks to join, for maximum results

4. How to advertise without spending money

5. Ways to get your message across, for maximum impact at minimum cost

…and much more!

What you'll learn

You'll not only learn how to put a Web 2.0 Internet marketing package together, you'll be amazed to discover how few of your competitors have even heard the term "Web 2.0" — much less realize its true potential for creating new Internet millionaires.

Study and apply what you learn in this book, and you're weeks if not days away from creating an Internet…

—and it'll be heading in your direction!

Make sure your shelves are stocked, and your cash register is ready for action. You've got hordes of company coming!!

So read, think, make some notes, join some Web 2.0 networking groups… Do whatever you need to do, but *whatever you do — DON'T MISS THIS ONE!*

PS: I won't go into products or services in any great detail here, though obviously quality products are essential. In this book, I'll be focusing on ways of building traffic, platforms, techniques, specific Web 2.0 success methodologies and the like.

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CHAPTER 1

A Quick Look at Web 2.0

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the main features of Web 2.0. It covers:

- **What IS Web 2.0?**
- **What's different about it?**
- **What are social bookmarking and social networking?**
- **How is the online marketplace different?**
- **The Four Ps**

The term "Web 2.0" suggests that there was something at an earlier time called "Web 1.0." In fact, there wasn't. There was simply the Internet, or the "World Wide Web," which started modestly, and grew like Topsy.

"Web 2.0" is a name coined several years ago by a gentleman called Tim O'Reilly. He used it to label the raft of changes that were occurring in the design of websites, and the many new platforms, technologies and social interactions that were springing up on the web in quick succession.

HOT TIP

The first ingredient in your wealth formula is Web 2.0 itself! To generate a high traffic flow, you'll need to *use* various Web 2.0 sites, and *set up your own* Web 2.0 site.

Here are just a few examples:

1. Suddenly websites weren't showing only text and still images — but also more complex media.

2. Web pages were originally packed to the gunnels with text, ads and such, and were mostly left-aligned. With Web 2.0, it became popular to center them in the browser, use larger fonts and leave more space on the page, for much more user friendliness.

3. Websites became interactive with the visitor in a variety of ways.

4. Pages were no longer organized only with links to other pages and sites, but also according to elements like tags.

5. The users of web pages didn't just read and run — they stayed and gave feedback.

6. Some web sites allowed users to edit them (a concept known as a *wiki*).

7. Blogs began to grow dramatically in numbers, to where they now attract more visitors than full websites.

Whether this adds up to a "second coming" of the web is really a matter of opinion. But whichever side you're on, "Web 2.0" is the term used nowadays to describe all these radical changes that are happening on the world wide web — and the next generation of sites which adopt them.

We won't go into the technicalities too deeply here — but you will need to know about a few. Remember, our main purpose is to look at Web 2.0 from the viewpoint of **the big sales and marketing advantages it gives us**. Especially while the fuddy-duddies are still soldiering on with… what the heck, let's call it Web 1.0!

The web as a platform

Web 2.0 doesn't use websites just as places for printless copy. Instead, it sees the web as a computing platform in itself. A platform that allows complex applications to be developed, to the point where they can end up replacing the old-style desktop programs. Some of these applications have already been developed.
A Web 2.0 site is no longer a simple page, like those of a book. Instead, **it's a gateway to a special kind of fast-response world** — regardless of whether that world is your company's website, a community site, a product you sell, or a service you provide. Here are some typical Web 2.0 innovations. For example, would you like to:

1. Start your business website with a 30 second video of yourself? *Piece of cake!*

2. Have a blog as your main website? *Done deal!*

3. Get rapid responses to your ideas, have your stories and articles voted on? *Easy-peezey!*
4. Conjure up a stampede of visitors? *No problem!!*

Here's a good example of a "community comment" type of Web 2.0 website:

Figure 1: A modern interactive community website

Social bookmarking

In Web 2.0, users interact in a very personal way. They exchange ideas and impressions — and even in many cases make friends, and develop a special kind of community.

These users access their favorite sites on a regular basis, and play an active role in the way the website and the community evolve. They're "sticky" visitors. And they hunt in packs, often hundreds at a time.

Meaning that if one or two of them find (and love) your site, likely as not you'll have 300 visitors by nightfall!

Which could quickly turn into thousands, if your site is bright, attractive and innovative, has some intelligent things to say, and cross-links to some other great material.

HOT TIP

Social bookmarking means sharing favorite sites, and discovering much more good stuff by working together as a community, instead on your own.

It taps into what Internet Explorer calls "favorites," and most other browsers call "bookmarks."

It lets members categorize sites and blog posts by "tagging" them, and reveals their popularity by showing the number of visitors.

This kind of thing, where people bookmark good sites, then share, talk about and rate each other's finds through a central community site, is called "social bookmarking."

As with Web 2.0 generally, social bookmarking is also here to stay.

How can I be so sure? Simply because humans are social animals. Social bookmarking sites (plus their close relatives social networking sites, together with the less famous but still huge business and special

interest networking sites,) are the biggest revolution EVER in bringing people worldwide into written and visual contact on a daily basis.
So while one site may flourish and another decline, there's no way we'll ever give up the concept. No more than we'd abandon our mobile phones. We'll talk a bit later about the leading sites, and show you how to join and use them.

Social networking

Allied to social bookmarking is social networking. There are many similarities in what these community sites provide, but the specifically social networking sites tend to (a) have more bells and whistles, and (b) aim at a particular market segment — though usually a pretty big one, it must be said.

LinkedIn, for example, focuses on business networking, freelancers, jobseekers and the like. *Flickr* lets you post your favorite photos, and now has something like a billion pictures in its database. *del.icio.us* — though it'll probably be renamed *"delicious"* by the time you read this — I would describe as the upwardly mobile bloggers' site. (I just read a long blog post on iPhone versus SmartPhone from English actor Stephen Fry, for example.)

HOT TIP

Social networking is a big part of the people-powered communications revolution that will make your traffic stampede possible. More on the "hows" later.

As Wikipedia notes,

> Social networks connect people at low cost; this can be beneficial for entrepreneurs and small businesses looking to expand their contact base. These networks often act as a customer relationship management tool for companies selling products and services. Companies can also use social networks for advertising in the form of banners and text ads. Since businesses operate globally, social networks can make it easier to keep in touch with contacts around the world. In many ways business networking on social networks has eclipsed the amount of networking that takes place on dedicated business networking websites.

Search engines are essential, and we'd be lost without them. However, a personal recommendation from someone you know to look at a website, blog post, podcast or news item is a great thing to have. Especially if such recommendation is posted on a community site with millions of visitors daily.

A wide audience

Another thing that's really got Web 2.0 on the boil is the huge growth in Internet connections over the past few years. This has brought in not just a larger amount of users, but a huge diversity — in age, culture, educa-tion, interests and even geographical location.

Which proves my point even more: this is an amazing time to be seizing the Web 2.0 opportunity, and combining broader knowledge of Web 2.0 generally with a better understanding of the business and social net-working platforms that are growing like wildfire in front of your eyes.

The customers have changed

The Web 2.0 customer is not equivalent to the kind of customer who reads magazines. Traditionally, what worked in printed press worked on the web — but this is no longer true. The clients flocking to Web 2.0 sites have different expectations.

First of all, the chances that your Web 2.0 visitor is a geek are much smaller than they used to be. The *audience* has broadened — which also means that the technical skills of your visitor may or may not be very advanced. This means that your Web 2.0 site needs to be *easy to use* and *intuitive*.

Web 2.0 visitors are also **much more eager to buy** online. A couple of years ago, ordering something online was both annoying and risky, since security features were only just emerging. This is no longer happening with sites that are adopting Web 2.0 technology — ***and the number of people who buy products online has increased exponentially.***

Remember, Internet purchasers are generally picky. They will buy items online — as long as the process is not too complicated, their credit card number is safe and the entire process is transparent.

The relationship between buyers and sellers has also changed noticeably. Clients no longer want you to be the person who's selling, and nothing more — they expect you to have a closer relationship with them, they expect the decisions you make to be transparent, and they expect their concerns and demands to be taken seriously.

The market has changed

There have been radical changes in the online marketplace across the board. This has happened for a variety of reasons:

1. As we saw earlier, the audience has broadened to the point where people from every imaginable category are surfing the web.
2. At the same time, people are becoming increasingly accustomed to buying a product they see online and want, without even looking at the country or the currency.
3. Most non-Americans are now used to buying and selling online in US dollars, then converting to their local currency.
4. Delivery services have improved out of sight, both domestic and international.
5. Companies like PayPal and ClickBank provide solid, trusted alternatives to the credit card companies, and often act quicker than banks in processing the financial side of transactions.
6. Vendors are becoming more and more used to selling to overseas buyers, aided by today's experienced, reliable and speedy financial and transport intermediaries.

In a nutshell, the market for consumer goods and electronic purchases has become very diverse. Or, as Chris Anderson of *Wired Magazine* said — it has developed a Long Tail.

What is this long tail? Here's what is meant by "the long tail" market. Firstly, the "head" of the market is dominated by a small number of very popular products. However, there is also another part of the market — the "tail" — made up of a very large number of products that are not as popular as those in the head, but continue to sell over a long period.

This long tail section is perfectly suited for Web 2.0 marketing. The basic idea is: create the infrastructure for producing and delivering products exactly when the need for them emerges, instead of stocking them up, holding the stock at great expense, and waiting for customers.

Then ride the wave of demand, much as a surfer rides a wave: in the moment, adjusting quickly as necessary.

If you can do that, you get more business, keep your costs down, and get
great wraps from the bloggers and other Web 2.0 community members. And of course, you'll have your own blog, to keep the good news circulat-ing! You certainly will if you keep reading, and take my advice!

Figure 2: The Long Tail concept

The advertising has changed

Web 2.0 has brought a huge number of new ways for you to promote and advertise your product or service. Due to features like blogs and similar informational services, promoting your product is no longer limited to banner ads.

Featuring your product on a blog or a podcast with large audience, getting a lot of bookmarks to your website—all these make for a new wave of advertising. We'll be talking a lot more about this in its own chapter.

This also means that it's **even easier to get more traffic to your web-site** — but remember: if you don't channel this traffic correctly, through a well-designed page with well-organized information, it won't help. You may get thousands of visitors daily, but no orders! **After all, we don't JUST want the traffic stampede, do we? *$$$ ka-ching!* (sound of cash register in background).**

Web 2.0 is stronger

Web 2.0 design, because of its

1. client participation, and
2. interconnectedness to layer upon layer of other sites,

is a stronger **"sales magnet"** than many traditional-style websites, where people are more likely to take a quick look (or even a longer one), then move on without purchasing, A proper Web 2.0 site contains gateways to every imaginable market in the world. Its strong points are:

1. A close relationship to the client.

2. A huge number of ways to distribute your product or service. Not only can you sell it — but your clients can share it, you can offer test drives, you can personalize it and so on.

3. An incredibly large audience which can be obtained very quickly, along with a very large amount of sales.

4. The ability to distribute a humungous variety of products.

5. The ability to expose your products or services to every imaginable market.

Talking about the strength of Web 2.0, here's a story I can't resist telling. It's typical of what can happen when a Web 2.0 site attracts a truckload of traffic — and it doesn't even have to be making a profit yet.

The founder of *del.icio.us*, Joshua Schachter, who developed the site from the ground up, bowed out about two years later with a check from Yahoo for somewhere between $15 million and $30 million. Not a bad takeout when you consider that he was holding down a day job for most of that period!

Hmm. Could that be you or me, two or three years from now? Who knows?

The Four Ps of Web 2.0

To gain maximum benefit from these new web and marketplace features, there are four concepts which form a perfect base for your Web 2.0 plan.

These concepts are known as the "Four Ps." Don't confuse them with the famous four Ps of marketing (Product, Pricing, Promotion, Placement).

The Four Ps of Web 2.0 are:

1. **Personalization:** allows your clients to customize your product or service using Web 2.0 technology.

2. **Participation:** allows your clients to influence the future direction of your product or service – in other words, your clients can express their opinions, and have them listened to.

3. **Peer-to-peer:** in the Web 2.0 world, your clients are no longer isolated. They interact, they talk to each other, they exchange impressions and they form a collective impression about your product or service – one which you can influence.

4. **Predictive modeling:** since we know how ideas, impressions and trends work in the Web 2.0-enabled world, it is perfectly possible to predict how the Web 2.0 market will evolve.

By the end of this book, you'll be able to understand and apply each of these four Ps.

Tell you what, all this book learning is fine, but…

Let's Build Some Traffic!

Stirring the pot

A good way to drive traffic to your site is to post something that grabs people's attention on one of the networking sites.

(Of course, why stop at one? "Working the Web 2.0 sites" will become one of your mainstays in building traffic to *your* website. But that's for later. Start with one, or two at most, till you get the hang of it.)

In case you're curious about how many of these sites there are to choose from, and what their names are, click on http://go2web20.net for a look. By the way, it's easier to read if you first click on the "sort by name" button at the top right hand side of the display.

I defy you not to be gob-smacked! To scroll through the list, click on the purple down arrow on the bottom of your screen.

Let's start with that bookmarking site that brought its owner a fortune, http://del.icio.us.

STEP 1. Sign up for an account, if you haven't already got one.

STEP 2. Del.icio.us is hot right now (which is what Yahoo paid for, of course), and it opens up with its own hotlist, plus a list of "tags to watch."

- Start off by looking down these lists to see (a) which titles (URLs) have been saved by the biggest numbers of people, and (b) if there's a topic there that relates to your website (and from hereon I'm going to include your blog in that definition, if it *is* your main or only website).

- Note that each item on the hotlist has a number of sub-categories which you can also take a look at for popularity and relevance.

STEP 3. Write something, helpful, funny or inspiring on your topic of choice. Try to grab the reader's attention with your subject and your

headline. But don't, whatever you do, play the fool. Quality, remember?

- Bullet-point lists are popular, along the lines of *"50 ways to lose your lover."* Just don't start your list with "Slip out the back, Jack," or you'll have Paul Simon's attorneys breathing down your neck!

- The other style of post you'll notice a lot of is the "How to" post. An oldie but still a goodie, in terms of popular appeal.

You'll notice that people often post just the opening sentence or two of their article, and you have to click through to their website to read the whole thing. Definitely a smart technique, if your post has an attention-grabbing title and a strong opening paragraph.

CHAPTER 2

How to Write a Good Blog Or Website Article

Chapter 2 covers:

- **Looks — how important are they?**
- **What is the first priority?**
- **The starting question**
- **Giving quality and value**
- **Saying it well**

A pretty (or handsome) face will attract admiring glances, but it takes a pleasing personality, and a good helping of character, to sustain a poten-tial partner's interest beyond the first date.

In a similar fashion, a website can be in the fortunate position of getting lots of exploratory clicks, because its owner has taken effective steps to promote it. He or she may even be in the enviable position of having a truly beautiful site, oozing taste, and with widgets galore.

HOT TIP

If you want to attract a stampede of traffic to your site, you've got to get your priorities right. Many things are important, but this one is the number one item by far. Can you guess what

Oh, it'll get the "admiring glances" all right. But will it attract the sustained interest that's crucial to building the word-of-mouth buzz, which will attract many others and before long turn into a stampede of traffic?

If those first few people who visit don't find much of substance, why would they rate your site highly? Why would they bother to tag it? Why would they blog your site as a sight to be seen? (Sorry about that, just couldn't resist it!)

Why would they email, IM, sms (etc) their friends about it? See, if they DON'T do these things, then instead of seeing a stampede of traffic,

and sales galore of whatever product or service you're marketing, you're going to be like the rocket that blew up on the launch pad. Looked the goods, went nowhere.

The three most important things

As I'm sure you know, there's a saying in real estate that the three most important things about a property when it comes time to sell are (in order) location, location and location.

If we transpose that to websites which we want create a stampede of traffic towards, the three most important things are without doubt

1. *content,*
2. *content* and
3. *content*.

Now I'm not suggesting that this is the ONLY thing of any importance; that would be stupid. But it is the substance without which little else will matter.

Take a look at ANY of the high-traffic sites on the web (go and check on *alexa.com* if you need some help with that), and you'll find that without exception, they all deliver a product or a service which a large number of people deem to be important. They provide something which makes life (work, gambling, sex or whatever else is a high priority for lots of people) easier, better or more enjoyable in some way. They all deliver value, *in the eyes of the marketplace.*

Some of these sites are attractive-looking, some of them are just okay; others are downright ugly. But few regard their esthetics as being of the utmost importance. It's what's *on there* that matters.

Here's what people are asking: Does this content answer my questions, wants or needs; does it reward my time and attention? Is my time well spent by going there?

Could I safely recommend it to my friends, especially my online community friends, who trust my judgment — at least somewhat?

So what do you need to do to deliver this vital ingredient, namely high quality content?

A threshold issue

A quick but important starting off question:

☹ Do you gather and write up the information yourself?

😐 Do you do some research, write it out in your best grammer and speling, then hand it to a pro to edit or rewrite?

☺ Or do you contact a bunch of pros from the beginning, provide them with a brief on what you want, get some quotes, and have one of them do the job for you from scratch?

And when you're ready, do you do the html/css and then ftp (upload) the material yourself to the site you've bought hosting for, and a template of, OR — have you got a webmaster to do all that for you? Anyway, back to our threshold issue… what's the best way to create your content? Of course there is no "best way." Whatever works best for you is fine. Just remember — there's absolutely nothing wrong with getting some help in ANY of this. The only thing that matters is coming up with the idea, then seeing that it gets done. (Because, believe me, no one will pay you for an idea and nothing else!)

Just make sure what needs to be done gets done, check the results, make your adjustments, and keep repeating the pattern.

The first step to quality content

When it comes to writing quality content, in my opinion, there's one place to start, and one place only. You've got to go on from there, mind you, got to go on a *l-o-n-g* way. But for a starting point I don't think there's a better one than this:

Have something to say.

Before you attempt to produce valuable content, or brief someone else to do it, there's got to be something on your mind. Something that you want to share with other people; something that will be of value to at least *some* of them.

Okay, maybe you're not particularly gifted in relation to expressing your thoughts. That's where getting help comes in.

But if you *don't have anything* valuable or moving or funny to tell the rest of us, something to lighten our load, or make our day better, and **you say it anyway** — if you cynically slap something together simply because you want to make money, the more the merrier, the faster the better, let the buyer beware — then there's going to be a price to pay.

Not a **reward** to reap, not a fast buck; but a **penalty** for short-changing your fellow man and woman; for watering down the Coca Cola.

And do you know what? It's so unnecessary. Everyone reading this page HAS something of value to offer. For a start, **you had something in your mind when you bought this book.**

If it was

1. a great idea to help lots of people,

well that's a perfect place to begin. If it was

2. so you and your family could stop having to live in genteel poverty

(that's being hard up, when it doesn't *look like* you're hard up — believe me, it's a curse), that's a fine place to start. That's a noble motive.

Just come clean, tell us your story, tell us how you decided to kick that curse! Inspire us with your grit. That's valuable!

Or even if it was

3. just so YOU could get rich,

that's a wonderful thing to have in your mind. If you get rich, you create a little thing called economic activity. You employ people, like a maid or a gardener. You buy stuff, and thereby bless the salesperson, the manager and the production worker. Even the shareholders! (Don't laugh at that. When YOU get rich, you're going to become a shareholder.) You can give to charity. (Can't do that without being at least tolerably well off.)

Now you may be thinking, didn't he say that people who just wanted to get rich had to pay some kind of *penalty*?

No, my friend, I did NOT say that. What I said was that people who short-changed others, people who did a shoddy or slipshod job — *they* were going to have to pay a penalty. There's a big difference!

So here's the deal: think

4. **"something to say" and**
5. **"give value."**

Giving value

Let's agree that having valuable content is THE starting requirement for building a Web 2.0 site that is going to attract a stampede of traffic.

Well, you may be wondering, what qualifies as valuable content? (Tell you what, I just finished off a container of Connoisseur strawberry ice cream, and did *that* have some valuable content! Del.icio.us!)

Talking websites, before you begin to write, why not give some thought to the **hundreds, thousands and possibly even millions of people who will eventually visit your site? If you could get them all together, what would you like to say to them?**

If can only come up with a vacuous answer (like my comment about ice cream), now is probably not the best time to address this question! But think about it for a minute or two.

1. Maybe you'd like to say something that sounds like this:

"Someone dear to me was struck down by a speeding car. I'd like to create a community of folks who've experienced a similar tragedy.

"I'd like us to give other people support in their time of loss. Maybe even go to the courts and offer to speak to young people who were arrested for speeding — whether they harmed anyone or not. I'd just like to tell them calmly, without any recriminations, what it feels like to have a loved one killed or maimed by a speeding driver. Does anyone want to join me?"

(See, you might not want your avalanche of traffic to make you person-ally rich. You may want money for a charitable purpose, or you may not want money at all — just people to join you and volunteer their services for some good cause. But you still need the traffic.)

2. Or perhaps you'd say something like this:

"I'm a single parent with a special needs child. I really need to get into some kind of business I can work from home. Why don't I set up a website to share what I've learned with anyone who's interested?"

Or…

3. "I'm a personal trainer. Life is so much better when you're fit and toned. I'd like to give people advice on how they can get much fitter at home, with a minimal outlay on a few cheap weights. Some of them might like to buy my video and my AbShaper too, but it would be worth their while just to use my free guidelines."

Truly, the only limitation is your imagination. Just dig deep, and think about your own beliefs and values, your likes and dislikes, your hopes and dreams. Think about what you'd say to all those people, given the chance. It doesn't have to be deadly serious; maybe your advice would be "lighten up and enjoy life more." As long as it's authentically you.

Whether you start with a full website, or a blog, it hardly matters. **Once you've got something of value to say, and you know what it is, then you can start to say it.** In turn, people will recommend your

site to others, often on *their* blogs. You'll find growing numbers of links to your blog, and perhaps even to your website (if they're two different things).

So number one, make sure you've got something of value to say.

This also helps when you're staring at a blank screen, wondering "What will I write about?"

And the next requirement for valuable content?

Say it well

You don't have to be a Shakespeare, a Dickens or a Hemingway to say it well. You don't even need to be one of today's top novelists or jounalists, or anything like it.

Okay, not everyone has the skills to put their thoughts in writing. And not everyone who wants to appeal to the English-speaking market has English as their first language. For some people, having a pro either edit and polish their stuff, or write it from scratch the way they want it, makes a great deal of sense.

The same goes for those who are genuinely too busy, and if they wait till they've got time, it just isn't going to get done. A pro is a good answer in a case like that.

But, hey, we're talking about blogs and website articles here: not the Pulitzer prize!

So if you are doing it yourself, there are a couple of "tricks of the trade" that will make your words more appealing. But before we go there, remember this: some of the most successful people are not highly educated. (Look at Bill Gates!) Some of them don't spell very well. (Thanks for the spellchecker, Mr G!)

HOT TIP

Here are a few tips on improving the writing quality of your articles and posts.

When you're writing your blogs and articles, draw from books you've read, magazine articles that appealed to you, interesting

conversations you may have had. (Keep a file for future use.) Draw from your own life: often that's the most instructive of all. And on top of that, there's an enormous amount of material around, freely available for anyone who cares to do a little research.

Now, those tricks of the trade? Here's a big one.

1. Keep most of your sentences short. It makes them easier to read, and easier to get the sense of.

2. Then stick a longer one in ocasionally, but rarely longer than three lines.

By the way, **there are heaps of ways to make your sentences SEEM shorter, even if they aren't**.

3. Like break them up with a colon: the reader pauses when he or she sees it, and reads it like two shorter sentences. (Didn't you?)

4. Dashes are good, too — especially if you use the longer ones — as another way of making a long sentence easier to read. (See what I mean?)

Here's are some more tricks of the writer's trade:

5. Write conversationally. Don't try to write like a textbook.

6. Especially don't get all hung up on correct English grammar. Finish a sentence with "of," like I did in point 1, if it sounds like a real person speaking.

And just a final word on good writing.

7. PLEASE use correct punctuation.

This is one area where if it's bad, it looks *really* bad. If you're not too sure where to put the punctuation, or which kind to use, get someone who knows about this sort of thing to check your post or article out for you.

Don’t feel embarrassed — we all get it wrong sometimes. Just don’t “go to press” with punctuation mistakes, if you can possibly help it.

Okay, put your books away, it’s time to get out there and be sociable…

Let's Network!

As you've probably gathered, Web 2.0 gives us a previously unimag-ined opportunity to create traffic rushes akin to the gold rushes of 150 years ago.

There are many possibilities, but let's start with *digg.com*. I like digg because it challenges you to always have well-written articles and useful advice on your own site.

STEP 1. If you're not yet a member, just go to the site and sign up. It's free, of course.

Done that? Okay, here's what you do next.

STEP 2. Find a news item, story, video or podcast that you'd like to share with others. Look for items of special interest within the categories that Digg has, articles with good information, how to advice etc. Make sure the topic is current for best results.

STEP 3. Be aware that you don't upload to digg, it just bookmarks the story for interested people to visit and rate. If you can post the story on your own website, so much the better. Then people will have to go there to read it.

STEP 4. Give your story an imaginative or catchy title and description, to attract more readers.

STEP 5. Press "Submit New" at Digg, check you comply with the guidelines and fill in the story's source URL. The story gets an "Upcoming Stories" mention, so people can check it out if they want. People who like your item *digg it*, and people who don't, *bury it.*

Those who like your item can check out your profile, and from there visit your site to see what else you may have that's of interest. Everyone who does is another visitor you get, so go for quality stories and make sure there's quality content on your site, too!

Depending on how popular your submission becomes, it can make it to the “Top Ten” in its category, which puts it onto the home page for that topic. Which in turn means more visitors to your profile, and your site.

There is a **STEP 6**, for the “advanced soul.” This is simply to make intelligent comments on other people’s posts, in a way that will intrigue people to come and have a look at your site — but make sure it’s relevant to their interests. Don’t abuse the opening to comment by virtually spamming the unsuspecting!

They may bury YOU!

CHAPTER 3

Creating a Web 2.0 Blog

The previous chapter was about creating quality written material for all aspects of your web presence. Without this essential ingredient, you

Chapter 3 covers:

- **The need for a blog as part of your traffic-building strategy**
- **How to design and write a great blog**
- **How to get results from your blog**

won't keep your visitors long, you're unlikely to see them again, and they sure won't be recommending your site to others.

Your traffic stampede will be over before it's even begun! So let's take creating and adding quality content to your site as a given. What I want to do now is look specifically at your blog. A blog can be your only site, but even if you have a separate "real" website, you must still have a blog as part of the strategy for massive traffic-building that this book is about.

HOT TIP

You need a high quality blog to attract fans to your website, and high quality website articles to create a traffic

A blog to build traffic

But not just any old blog will do. Because right now, the Internet is full of blogs that get traffic only from the author's friends. Obviously, this isn't going to help you much if your purpose in reading a book on Web 2.0 is to create an exciting income flow!

To have a blog that hundreds of strangers will visit, come back to and recommend to *their* friends, and to ultimately turn this traffic into sales, there are a number of **things you need to do and features you need to include, like**

1. **Quality posts:** Providing quality posts is an absolute must, and it's the main point of Chapter 2. Have something worthwhile to say, say it well, and above all give value to your readers. Without this foundation, your blog's already in deep dudu. More on what makes a good post shortly.

2. **Good looks:** Today's successful, Web 2.0-style blogs have an attractive, polished appearance — and preferably, a theme that matches their subject matter. Are you writing about sports? Then a sporty look will be great. Single parenting? Look for something that shows an adult interacting with children. If your subject matter is travel, or great vacation spots, look for something scenic or recreational.

   Just be a bit restrained; don't match a dark, Gothic look and feel with a blog on fun-filled retirement for healthy seniors! And if you're not sure, it's best to err on the side of conservatism and professionalism. You can still show style and flair.

   Note that the better blog providers give you a wide choice of templates, which are often customizable.

   Good looks also extend to having a layout which is easy to read and pleasant to visit. So make sure your elements don't overlap, use a normal font face and size, skip the up-tempo music, and do away with the scrolling marquee!

3. **Being well organized:** Web 2.0 and blogs were made for each other. Things like tags, categories and archives integrate perfectly in both environments. Indeed, people expect these things nowadays, and mark you down if you don't feature them.

4. **Quick loading:** At a time when people tap their foot in front of the microwave, muttering "C'mon, c'mon!" don't expect them to wait for a slow loading blog. However, this normally won't be a problem if you host with a major provider.

Here are a couple of examples of a good and a not-so-good blog layout.

Figure 3: A good Web 2.0 corporate design

The design above is attractive, clean and easy to read. Each article's opening sentence has a neat headline and graphic, and a click-through button to read more. Just off to the right are links to similar blogs. If the articles are as good as the look and feel, a visitor would certainly give this blog a positive recommendation.

On the other side of the coin, below is a bland, small print, ad-laden blog of the old style. Unless the articles had sensational material, it's unlikely to win too many fans.

Figure 4: A non-Web 2.0, old-style blog

As well as having good posts and looking attractive, a smart blog will connect its readers with other useful information. If the author has a main website where relevant products can be bought, or an email newsletter, there must certainly be a link to it in his or her blog.

The blog itself should promote products subtly, and not come across as a heavy-handed sales site. You're looking to build a friendly, informative relationship with your visitors, not be seen as a hard-sell merchant. Therefore if you want to talk products or services on a blog, keep it low-key, informative and matter of fact.

Guidelines for writing good posts

If you follow these commonsense principles, and keep in mind what's already been said, you won't go too far wrong. A good post will be:

1. **As short as possible, but no shorter.** You should aim to put as much information into as few words as you can. Some posts are as short as 100 words; 300 – 400 is more common. By the time you get to 700 – 800 words, you're getting into a large-ish post. Make sure you're not waffling.

If several important points need to be made, you might go as far as 1000 – 1100 words. Any more than that, and unless you're a very skilled writer, the sound you hear won't be one hand clapping, it will be one reader after another snoring!

2. **Informal and conversational, but no swearing!** And while you're at it, leave the jokes to the professional humorists. It's not easy to be funny, especially in print. Just stick to a good professional style, without sounding too formal.

3. **On topic.** Focus your post on a particular topic and stick to it. Don't ramble far and wide, or try to cover too much. Save it for another post tomorrow or the next day!

4. **Informative and accurate.** If you're setting yourself up as an expert, be sure to check your facts and assertions. On the other hand if you're stating your personal opinion, be sure to make that clear.

5. **Easily understood.** For a lot of readers, English isn't their first language, so keep it simple and clear.

6. **Designed for humans, not search engines.** In other words, don't go overboard with keyword optimization and h1 headline fonts at the expense of content, substance and ease of reading. Remember, SEs are a lot more sophisticated these days. If humans appreciate your posts, and visit often, SEs will too.

7. **Updated regularly.** Don't let your hard-won audience drift away for lack of fresh material. Incidentally, updating your content with regular posts, and archiving your previous material, will help to increase your visibility and search engine ranking.

8. **Checked for grammar and spelling.** I should also say check your punctuation, as so many people get it wrong. And vary your words, instead of repeating the same ones over and over. Use a thesaurus to find a synonym.

Also, use a higher-impact word occasionally. For example, instead of saying "very," repeatedly, see how "hugely," "enormously" or "tremendously" look in its place.

And be especially careful about "its" versus "it's." The one with the apostrophe is a contraction of "it is" or "it has." If you mean "belonging to" use "its." **So "it's a fact" is correct, but "see how 'tremendously' looks in it's place" is incorrect**.

9. **Made available through RSS feed.** Including your blog's content in an RSS feed will increase its readership ("its," note!) and help drive more traffic to your site.

How to get more comments on your blog

Although this is the dilemma of beginner bloggers, the solutions are in fact simpler than you may imagine, and are common to **blogs, vlogs, podcasts and talkcasts**. Here they are:

1. **Tackle open, current issues.** If you are writing about an issue that is no longer current, why would anyone be interested in it? And if everything that was to say about it has been said, why would anyone add anything to it?

2. **End your posts with questions, not conclusions.** One of the elements of communication is, as I said, the exchange of ideas. By asking a question at the end of your post, you are indicating that you have had your say on the issue, and want to hear what other people think. Remember: you're a blogger, not an editorialist!

3. **Invite users to comment.** There are times when ending your post with a question is silly, or repetitive. For example, if you are announcing the launch of a new product, ending a post with "What do you think?" is useless. What could a user think about that after all? In such cases, ending a blog with "I'm looking

forward to hearing your ideas and seeing you there" works much better.

4. **Follow up.** If one of your earlier blog posts had a lot of comments, you can sometimes bring up the issue again to share new ideas and shed new lights on it. This may be especially beneficial for your community. The exercise of digging the collective memory helps strengthen the community's bonds.

5. **Answer comments.** This is something too many people forget to do. Communication is not done in two steps — you talk, they talk and that's it. If users ask you something, try to answer. If they ask something very interesting, it may even be worth a blog post. If they present an opposite point of view, debate it.

6. **Comment on other blogs.** There's nothing wrong with commenting on another blog, while linking to an earlier post from your blog — as long as you actually have something to say. If one of your blog posts illustrates your view well and in greater detail, it's okay for you to summarize it in the comment, then include the link at the end in case anyone wants to explore your ideas further.

What to do with comments

User's comments on your blog can provide interesting insights about your community. Once you have them, you should use them wisely.

The first thing you should do with any comment, as I said earlier, is to ***answer it* if it anticipates an answer**. Any comment that includes a question, an alternate point of view, or even another argument for your point of view, should be answered. If you come to think of it, a blog is not entirely dissimilar to a forum. Posts take the place of topics, and discussions are carried on based on the first post.

HOT TIP

Responding to users' comments is a great way to popularize your blog.

You should **continuously monitor** the comments you get. Some of them may not need answers, but they can still provide important information about your readers.

There are a couple of posts which should always remain unanswered. These are known as **"flame baits".** Flame baits are easy to recognize: they criticize the person, not the ideas, and are written in an angry or overly sarcastic tone. They contain no helpful information whatsoever, but are bound to hurt your ego if you let them do that. Just ignore such posts; they are not helpful, neither for you, nor for the community.

As I mentioned above, there are some comments which will **really stand out.** These are comments that show an entirely different and interesting point of view, or some extremely helpful information. Such a comment should be "featured" in a fully-fledged post.

Quote it, link to it, and comment on it. This will not only feel very flattering to the person who posted it, but it will also make your readers feel that you actually care about their opinions.

Well, it's that time again…

Blogging Time is Here

Your own Web 2.0 blog

Now you may have already done this exercise, but if you haven't, now's the time!

Anyone claiming to be serious about creating a stampede of

free traffic to their site, who doesn't have and regularly update their own blog, is kidding themselves. It's that fundamental.

In fact, many people use their blog *as* their website.

Blog sites can be quite sophis-ticated, yet are quick to set up. They are spidered regularly by the search engines for their frequently updated content, and often indexed much more quickly than the traditional website, which is starting to drag into weeks of waiting.

> **HOT TIP**
>
> **Of course Web 2.0 didn't invent the blog. But it took something that was little more than a curiosity and made it mainstream. NB: blogs now get more clicks than regular websites**

Lots of bloggers use RSS syndication, both incoming (importing other relevant blog updates) and outgoing (allowing readers to take the feed and be kept abreast of your blog's new posts). This helps to create more traffic circulation, which can be linked to your website, if you have a separate one.

So what we're going to do is set you up with a professional-looking blog — for free! We'll do this at **WordPress.com**, but there are numerous other providers you can choose — just type "blog providers" into your search engine to check out the options.
WordPress is a solid, powerful blogging system ideal for publishers who are on a budget but who don't want to give up any functionality.
The steps to set up your free WordPress blog are on the next page.

Steps to set up a WordPress blog

STEP 1. Go to www.wordpress.com and click on “get a free blog on WordPress.com,” then “sign up now” for a free account.

STEP 2. Choose a blog name, relevant to your business or other interests. For example, let’s say you sell teddy bear kits. Your URL might read http://teddybearkits.wordpress.com.

Ensure you check “I would like my blog to appear in search engines”.

STEP 3. Click on Gimme a blog!, then next, then signup. You’re active!

STEP 4. Click on “change your template,” and select a theme.

STEP 5. Upload a photo or avatar, and fill in your “About” page (optional).

STEP 6. Set up your sidebar, by clicking “Presentation” then “Widgets,” then dragging and dropping your selected items into the sidebar box.

STEP 7. Write, edit and post your first article.

Be sure to pack it with news or information that’s useful or interesting to (in this example) teddy bear fans, and links to your main site. You want people to click through to your sight, but also to bookmark it in del.icio.us, digg it in Digg, link to both your blog and your site, and circulate your details to their friends.

STEP 8. Keep your posts coming!

> Keep them fresh and helpful, and you’ll soon build up a growing nucleus of fans who spread the news to others. Your traffic will soon start to grow.
>
> Later on, you can add all sorts of widgets to your blog site, set up categories for your posts, respond to comments, click

through to other teddy bear blogs, personalize the look and feel, and watch your traffic grow even more.

So get started on your traffic stampede campaign blog today!

And remember: we've still got many more aces up our sleeve!

CHAPTER 4

Syndication

Chapter 4 covers:

- Beyond blogging — syndication
- Vlogs
- Podcasts

Syndicatio er

What we've talked about so far is just one side of the blogging story. But **there is a good bit more to blogging than posting text.**

HOT TIP

The next step after simple blogging is to use some methods of syndicating your comments, i.e. using different media to make sure your message gets broadcast even more widely.

1. Despite being more personal than a web page, some people feel that blogs are still too impersonal. There are no gestures, no eyes to look into, no tone — it's not like hearing a real person speak.

2. Text can at times be difficult to follow. Many people feel it's easier to understand someone's point if they see him or her talking, or if they at least listen.

3. Reading is something that requires voluntary effort and quite some attention. You can't read while you drive to work, and besides, you need to be in front of a computer to read a blog. Therefore, several new ideas began to bloom — spin-offs of the blog idea. We will cover three such spin-offs, one of which has a much wider field of application: ***vlogs, podcasts and RSS feeds.***

Vlogs, podcasts and RSS feeds have one thing in common: they are all forms of content syndication. You may be familiar with the term from television programs.

Syndication is a way for you to share some information with another person. In more computer-centered terms, it is **a way for a website or a service to share content with another web-site or service.**

Podcasting is the quickest example:

1. A user records something.

2. He or she uploads it on a public website (like a podcast directory).

3. The website "shares" it with any client who wants to obtain it.

The principle is simple — and the results you get are often amazing.

There is one thing we should mention from the very beginning: although syndication allows you to inform your clients, remember that the content is often viewed by those who are still not your clients. Therefore, **every form of syndication can contain some advertising.** How much?

The answer is "Just enough to attract new clients, while not irritating those who already are."

Vlogs

Vlogs (video blogs) can prove to be more expressive than text blogs — but they do have some limitations. First of all, **the content can't be indexed by web search engines.** Secondly, **you can only see a small part of it at once**. It's perfectly possible to skim a blog post — but it's impossible to do the same with a vlog.

Furthermore, **vlogs are more exposed to problems such as accent, stage fright and so on.** People usually feel neutral towards a piece of text, but are quick to judge others by their physical appearance or voice tone. Advice many people give is to use a vlog only where you absolutely need visual and vocal expression. If you are an artist selling your own records, for instance, a vlog may be more valuable than a blog. However, in most cases, a text-only blog works better for marketing purposes.

Podcasting power: how to publish your own podcast

Podcasting is one of the newer aspects developed in the Web 2.0 world — and unique in its own way, because it is strongly linked with hardware development. In fact, **the early days of podcasting involved Apple's iPod so extensively that the technique got its name from it.**

A podcast is essentially a *collection of audio files*, available for download and aggregation — usually automatically — **somewhat similar to radio shows.** They are indeed broadcast, but the only difference is that they are not “live” and “interactive”. (Though some live podcasts have appeared, and we will cover them shortly.)

Podcasts act essentially like “sound blogs.” A podcaster records his own thoughts, polishes the recording and, when everything is ready, makes a podcast episode available for download. Downloading is usually handled by media players like iTunes, and many users have these episodes automatically uploaded to their MP3 players.

In terms of expressivity, podcasts are somewhere between text blogs and vlogs. They don't provide the same personal feeling a vlog does, but humans have a reasonable ability of associating persons with voices. Thus, although hardly the perfect choice for artists (especially in the case of those for whom physical aspects, like gesture or setting are important — actors for example), **podcasts are the perfect supplement for a blog.**

In fact, one strategy that has often been applied is podcasting actual blog posts. **This is a way of overcoming one of the inherent limitations of blogs — the necessity of being in front of a computer to read them.** By podcasting blog posts, bloggers ensure that people can listen to their ideas when they are not in front of the computer, but not doing anything requiring a lot of attention either.

> **HOT TIP**
>
> **For those in a hurry to whip up their traffic stampede as fast as possible, add podcasts to your Web 2.0 toolbox.**

Another important advantage podcasting has is the fact that it's very cheap. Creating a good vlog is not an easy job — you need a decent camera, some care with the lights, a closely rehearsed text (unless you want people to see that you are reading) — in other words, some effort.

Podcasting is that much easier, because users have no way of seeing what you do.

Figure 5: Apple iTunes browsing a list of available podcasts

If you think you have what it takes to publish a podcast, here is how to do it.

STEP 1: Get the gear

Although podcasts are cheaper than vlogs, you still need some equipment in order to record yourself. You will obviously need a computer with a soundcard. In addition to this, you will need:

1. A microphone. Many laptops come with one incorporated, but the sound quality is very poor. The best choices are headsets with microphones and USB microphones. A decent microphone can be bought for about $25.
2. Sound recording software. Most podcasters use Audacity (http://audacity.sourceforge.net/), a free, Open Source program available for many platforms. Some Mac fans use GarageBand, but it's not free.
3. An encoder, if your recording software doesn't provide one. You need it in order to convert your recording to a compressed format like MP3. The LAME MP3 Encoder (http://www-users.york.ac.uk/~raa110/audacity/lame.html) is the most widely used, but many programs, like iTunes, can automatically convert your sounds to MP3.

STEP 2: Write what you need to write

No matter how spontaneous you are, try to understand that a podcast is still not a live radio show. **Any podcast with ah's, umm's and ugh's will sound unprofessional.** However, bear in mind that you are not at school. Try to read with a natural tone.

The script should not be very formal and it should sound just lik**e natural speech,** so it isn't very obvious that you are actually reading. If you need help with it, you may want to ask a writer to help you.

STEP 3: Postprocessing

Postprocessing is a must of every successful recording. Fortunately, most recording software allows you to perform postprocessing tasks easily through automated wizards.

Common postprocessing tasks include removing background sounds and adding slight reverb effects when the sound feels too “dry.” One thing to remember though: you are recording a podcast, trying to inform your clients and promote your product. **You are not playing psychedelic rock.**
If, after adding an effect, you need to listen twice to understand what you are saying, the effect is bad. If you have trouble understanding your own voice, imagine what your listeners must be going through.

STEP 4: Publish it

This is probably the trickier part. A podcast is actually made out of two distinct parts: the audio content itself, and a special file called an RSS file. The RSS file contains information about what your audio file is, where it can be downloaded from, how it should be played and so on.

What you need to do in this step is to upload the podcast you record to a publicly accessible location. This can be your own web server. You must then create the RSS file — something which may be a little bit tricky if you are not technically inclined.

The good news is, RSS feeds can be generated automatically, using tools like Escapepodder (http://www.ghofulpo.com/), MyRSS Creator (http://www.myrsscreator.com/) or ePodcast Creator (http://www.industrialaudiosoftware.com/products/ipodcastcreator.html)

The files generated by these programs are usually enough, but if you encounter problems, you may want to ask someone who knows his way around RSS for help.

Once the RSS file has been created, you can simply start distributing it. Your website is a good place to start — but there are several podcasting directories where you should submit your podcast. iTunes allows you to automatically submit your podcast to Apple Shop, but you shouldn't stop there. Yahoo! Podcasts (http://podcasts.yahoo.com/) and Podcast.net (http://www.podcast.net/) make good starting points.

Slightly more than podcasting: live podcasting

Before moving on, there is an interesting service provided by *TalkShoe.com* that we should discuss: live podcasts, or *talkcasts* as TalkShoe calls them.

Talkcasts are essentially online radio shows which allow listeners to participate. After registering, every user has the option of scheduling a show he will hold, under a certain category. Everyone is free to choose their own theme and content, with a few exceptions (pornographic material for example).

Once a show is scheduled, those who want to participate (i.e. be "on air") must "phone in" until up to 15 minutes before the show begins. If they only want to listen though, no such registration is required.

The talkcast experience has two components. On one hand, TalkShoe uses a client called TalkShoe Live!, which enables a host to start or stop recording their podcast, to mute or unmute the text and/or voice chat ability of callers, and allows callers to listen in to streaming audio even if they have not "phoned in."

Unlike traditional chat programs, TalkShoe uses horizontally-scrolling text for chatting. The text is displayed in colored text bubbles, with every answer to a message having the same color as the original message.

Figure 6: A TalkShoe session in progress

The other component is the Voice. Users are allowed to listen to a show using their telephone or using Voice-over-IP software. They can also talk, if the host allows it, just like over a radio.

Using a talkcast is much like using a podcast or a vlog. You can use it to promote your own product in a talkcast about its field (e.g. if you are selling garden plants, you may hold a weekly show about gardening). **Talkcasts have the advantage over podcasts of interactivity.** People are involved through the chat board, and you can get instant feedback without interrupting a broadcast.

Everyone can still listen to your talkcast, because it gets uploaded immediately after it is finished, and can be repeated – while retaining the advantages of podcasts (the format is the same and people can still listen to your talkcast on their MP3 player).
Therefore, it is much easier to develop a loyal audience — and since many new accounts are created every day, there is a constant flow of new people you can direct to your website. Still, the fact that you can get new people to your community is only a side effect — **the important thing is that you can improve your relationship with**

your fans, with those who listen to your talkcast every time. Their insights can prove extremely valuable.

RSS: syndication at its best

Just a few lines above, I said that a podcast has two parts: the audio file and the RSS file. It should be obvious what the audio file is — but I assume you were slightly left in the fog about the RSS file.

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a standard format, used to publish frequently updated content. That is, **people use RSS feeds (or files) to share their headlines or summaries of their latest blog posts through syndication.** It should be noted that RSS is not the only standard (in fact, there are several RSS standards — the latest one being RSS 2.0).

However, many professionals consider that the newer ones, like Atom, are just one extra hassle which confuses users even further. **We will only cover RSS here because it's very common and easy to use** — but you may want to check on the other standards to see if any of them fits your needs better.

Figure 7: The RSS icon. This icon has been adopted by convention. Clicking on it on any website will take you to the RSS feed of that website.

An RSS file uses a markup language called XML to describe the data it contains. Generally, RSS feeds contain small pieces of data and links to larger pages. For instance, **a local newspaper may use RSS to distrib-ute lists of the latest headlines. A click on the headline in the RSS file will lead to the full article.**

Figure 8: RSS reader displaying feeds

So, how are these RSS feeds used for marketing?

The most popular solution is using a feed along with a blog. Every time you write a new post, the blog is updated. With this at the user's disposal, there's an important chance all your readers will come back once they are subscribed. They no longer need to

remember your blog's address and check it every once in a while to see if you have written anything new.

Another popular usage of blogs is **re-aggregation.** Remember what we said about the consistency of the RSS format and how it can be used? Re-aggregation refers exactly to that: **combining several feeds to form one which is distributed.**
For example, you can re-aggregate news from the field of your product. If you are selling computer software, for instance, you can use five or six RSS feeds from large websites (*freshmeat.net, softpedia.com* etc.). You can take only the text of the news, and add these news items to your RSS feed, which already includes a few words about your product.

This way, your clients will be thankful — *not only are you providing them with news from a field they are interested in, but they can also keep in touch with your product.*

One other useful thing you can do is allow others to place banner ads in your feed. Small, unobtrusive banners placed at the bottom of every feed can generate some income for you, without disturbing your client. The procedure works the other way around as well: you can place your banner in the feeds others distribute — as long as everyone agrees.

All in all, RSS feeds can prove to be very useful. The only basic disadvan-tage they have is the fact that they are not a form of active communica-tion — only one of the parties is actively involved (i.e. you are sending the message, but others can only read it). However, even if it doesn't make your relationships with your customers more personal, RSS is still very useful for informing them.

Let's Plug in to Another OSN Site

HOT TIP

Here's a tip I *gathered* from one of my colleagues, and **it's so good I'm going to shamelessly borrow it for your next exercise.** But I will give credit where credit's due, and give him a plug at the same time.

It comes from Mike Worthington's very practical manual, *The Web 2.0 Traffic System.* Thanks, Mike!

Visit http://www.web2trafficsystem.com

Use *Gather.com* to increase your Web 2.0 spoils

Some fascinating facts about Gather:

1. Three quarters of its subscribers have a college education, and are between 30 and 60 years of age.

2. Even more (around 80 percent) have a household income in excess of $50,000 per year.

3. Gather members have "a great propensity to spend," according to the site itself.

So these are extremely solid citizens! In fact, Gather describes itself as *"a place where informed, engaged people share perspectives on everything."* **NB: While Gather isn't nearly as well-known as some of the other OSN sites, it more than makes up for this in the *quality* of targeted traffic that it offers to the serious Web 2.0'er on a traffic-building spree!**

As always, **STEP 1** is to visit the site and register. So begin by going to http://www.gather.com, then click on Join Today – It's FREE!

STEP 2. Complete the sign-up formalities, then go to "My Gather," then "Create your member profile."

STEP 3. Choose an option — or do them all! Publish an article or comment, read other people's articles, share some images, connect through a group, invite other people to join.

STEP 4. Your ultimate objective is generate website traffic. To do this, you'll need to enhance your profile with other members. This means contributing quality material, while making it easy to find through catchy headlines and appropriate tags.

You can add links to your articles, include images, and give them an attractive layout to gain positive attention, and click-throughs to your website.

STEP 5. Do your own self-promotion. Network with members in your target market; invite your friends to join Gather and rate your posts highly. Ask people to recommend your material to others, to digg it and bookmark it on del.icio.us.

Put "tasteful" plugs for your site, any freebies it offers, at the bottom of your articles. **This will guarantee you some heavy traffic!**

STEP 6. Comment on OPs articles, especially the popular ones, that come within your market niche. A sure-fire way to build traffic!

STEP 7. Gather provides some of the **best-targeted traffic you ever saw** when it comes to paid ads and PPCs.

CHAPTER 5

Niche Markets and The Buzz Factor

Chapter 5 covers:

- **Selling one-to-one vs. one-to-many and many-to-many**
- **Social selling**
- **The not-so-big players**
- **Public launches and events**
- **Presence streams**

Traditional marketing mostly employs a one-to-one relationship. Even TV commercials work this way: the ad is directed from the voice and image on the screen to the individual sitting at home. The same thing happens in shops, car showrooms, telemarketing and so on.

Web 2.0 has brought us a new, interesting approach. It hasn't replaced the older ones, which are still around and work reasonably well, but has topped them with two new approaches: one-to-many and many-to-many.

These approaches arise from two new factors that have emerged with Web 2.0: the niche market and the buzz factor.

Until recently, targeting a niche market was difficult and often unreward-ing, because it was difficult to obtain a decent exposure. This is no longer the case.

As for the buzz factor, it's always been known, but not always effectively employed. The buzz factor refers to the notoriety, the "hype" a product gets, which, when exposed to a willing, dynamic market, produces almost instant selling almost without any form of personal intervention.

The best example here is the iPod. From the very beginning the iPod was targeted a young audience, and promoted as a trend, causing most young people to want to own one. Once this was done, the iPod almost sold itself. This very smart marketing has made it outsell all its competitors — even those which were better and cheaper.

This is the effect of social networking, and it's something we'll discuss in this chapter.

E-Friends

Web 2.0 marketing over social networks mirrors the way people develop their relations in cyberspace.

Social networking is not just a nice buzzword: it actually describes a reality, an everyday kind of social interaction. People have developed group relationships from the very dawn of humanity. We depend on social interaction to live, and we go crazy without it. Human beings are social animals. And the essence of this social interaction is the exchange of information.

The only thing that's changed is the *means of communication* via the Internet. Ease of communication is the foundation of the new marketing. People are eager to communicate, and they have better and faster means available than ever before.

However, as the speed of communication has increased, the amount of time people invest in knowing each other better has actually decreased. Trusting someone is no longer an issue on the Internet. As a consequen-ce, people make friends much faster and the social networks develop at a higher rate.

The commonest kind of social network is the family, both nuclear and extended. However, everyone is part of other social networks as well. Our circle of friends, work mates, sporting groups, fellow church attendees and club members make up some of the social networks we belong to.

One problem with traditional social networks is that communication is generally done locally. And due to the slow speed of communication, with few exceptions information is usually exchanged only between two or three members of the same network.

This is the major difference when compared to online social networks, where communication is almost instant, can be done easily and can be exchanged between hundreds of people in only a matter of minutes.

Furthermore, the trust factor is not so decisive. Under normal circumstances, a person would only take buying advice from a very close associate, or for someone known to be an expert in that field. In an online community, this is hardly a problem, since trust seems to develop naturally between the network's members, based on mostly subjective criteria.

Sell It Socially

Using online social networks (OSNs) for marketing is closely related to blogging. However, OSNs are not only about blogging, or only about making friends. They are somewhere in between.

The main idea is for OSN websites to link people with similar interests, concerns or affiliations. Therefore, it provides a set of users for whom whatever you are trying to sell is relevant. The key is to have a way to sell them your product or service.

As Tim O'Reilly has noticed, marketing is shifting from people respecting or enjoying brands to people being *fans and friends* of brands.

Once a network of friends is developed, communication is done so easily between them, that a lot of the points we made in the other chapters are achieved — the clients are more informed, your relationship with them becomes more personal and they get a word to say in the way your services and your products evolve.

One disadvantage OSNs have is the fact that they tend to focus on individuals. That is, it doesn't really make sense for a *company* to have a social networking account. However, there's nothing to stop you from being an intermediary between the community and your company.

So, how would you go about selling something via an OSN website? The solution depends on your brand's level of establishment.

If you are just starting up

STEP 1: Register with the OSN site

1. Choose a nickname that's familiar enough to your users, easy to remember, non-offensive and representative of the product or service line you want to promote — without being tacky, of course.

2. Ask some of your offline friends to register as well, if they haven't yet done so.

STEP 2: Form a social network.

This is the trickiest part of them all.

DON'T make the mistake of rushing straight into trying to sell something to everyone in the group you join, or on your "friends list." Not only doesn't it work, but it's most uncool. It may be easier and faster to gain people's trust in an OSN, but this doesn't mean that people will immediately want to do business with you.

In fact, it's really an abuse of your new "friendship." If you get people crossing you off their list, you'll know why!

Instead, concentrate on building an initial network of new friends and acquaintances. It won't be hard, but give people a reason to add you to their friends list and exchange comments. It may be a good idea to go only for those people who would be relevant as an audience for you.

STEP 3: Talk about your product or service.

But give yourself some time to establish a rapport first!!

Make it friendly and casual, and don't hit them with an ad. If possible, get them to ask you about your job or business. How? Ask them about *their* line of business first! They'll eventually ask you about yours, which gives you the perfect opening.

Or just list it on your profile.

STEP 4: Listen to your feedback, iron out any problem areas, and repeat from step 1.

You can keep on developing your network in exactly the same way, while continuing to build your friendships. And by responding to posts in a thoughtful, intelligent way.

Remember: you don't network with a sledgehammer. Okay, you can be quite direct with some forms of online advertising, but true networking takes a little more finesse.

It's more than worth it though, because while "Discount Dave" may make a quick one-off sale, "Friendly Frances" will eventually tap into layer upon layer of interwoven relationships which will have her cash register ringing non-stop.

If you're an established business

If your brand is well-established, the strategy is much more straight-forward. Although the steps are mostly identical to the one above, developing your social network is very much quicker, because you already have an initial user base. Usually, announcing that you have registered an account is enough to give you several hundred entries in your friends list.

1. The key in this case is to make it seem you aren't really selling, just notifying people of a new address.

2. The whole point of social networking is to get *closer* to your clients, to *interact* with the community. Once this happens, the product almost walks out of your store.

3. That's exactly what you should announce on your website: not that you've registered at this or that network so that people can buy from a network friend, but so that you can have more involvement in the community, understand your clients better and work with them more easily and productively.

Sell it indirectly

Social networks are not independent entities, living by themselves. Since
everyone can be a member of more than one social network, the members of social networks also interact.

1. Ponder this fact: OSNs have on average about ten times the membership of offline social networks, and a far higher rate of information pass-along. Furthermore, they go generations deeper than offline groups.

2. The end result is a vastly greater dissemination of news and views via the online networks. Remember, too, that they're not restricted to a single website.

3. The net result is that through OSNs, tens of thousands of people could well hear about your product or service within a short period of time. This in turn opens up the possibilities for many-to-many selling in an unprecedented way.

If you can gain a client base of very devoted people, half of the job is already done. The strategy is usually a four-step one:

STEP 1. Build the initial base.

To build such an initial base, the product you're selling must have a couple of special features. It must be very innovative, to gain attention, and it must be extremely appealing to its audience, for interest in it to be long-lasting.

The product needn't be a technical masterpiece (think about the iPod example), but it must have at least one unique appeal.

If you have such a product, you can build your initial base using several strategies:

1. **Hype.** Advertise your product before it appears, pointing out its most original features. For hype to work, the product *must* have original features — otherwise, it will be just a copycat solution to a familiar problem.

2. **Leaking.** If your product is remarkable through a certain feature which can be leaked without much suspicion, this strategy may prove very useful. If it has a very original look (maybe it's a very thin, or banana-shaped mobile phone, for instance), you can leak pictures of it. If it has a new way of doing something, you can leak a few details about how it works. This is almost guaranteed to draw attention.

3. **Rumors.** Used wisely, rumors can be extremely helpful. Just be careful how often you spread them and what kind of light they shed on your product. If you spread the rumor that a feature will be included, but, in the end, it's not, users may be disappointed. Furthermore, if you spread too many of them, you'll lose credibility.

4. **Unusual price.** If your product is extremely cheap for its market segment, it will be a hit. Think about the OLPC project. It's what gave Palm the idea of Foleo — and look at the fame Foleo has.

5. **Special offers**. You can use these to stimulate the initial sales.

6. **A public launch.** Done right, it can do more than all the other five solutions combined, as we will see soon.

Making the information public is essential in this step, and this is where social networks come in handy. You can use them to spread any kind of information, any sort of rumor, leaked photos or simply to hype about your product.

STEP 2. Evangelize the product aggressively.

When it comes to your target audience, stand by your principles with your life. Stand out firmly for any opinion you may have. Once again, Apple is the perfect example in this case: by systematically refusing to include any technically cumbersome solution (to the point that their computers don't even have screws!), Apple is not only a stubborn company, but one with a very devoted fan base.

Make your principles public from the very beginning, and show no sign of flexibility about them, unless there are very, very strong grounds for it. In time, some of your initial client base will disappear — mainly those clients which are not so enthusiastic about your principles — but those who are, are guaranteed to stay with you.

STEP 3. Encourage your client base.

Once this initial client base has been shaped up, take all necessary steps to encourage its development. If your clients want to meet somewhere, send someone to join them. If they write about your product on their blogs, post a comment. If they post about your product on their Social Networking Site page, post a comment there, and on your own page with a link there, and show the people you are proud they are promoting your product.

STEP 4. Let it grow and make partners.

Once you have taken the three steps above, the communication will start working inside the social networking framework. If you managed to put enough hype and trend in your product, it will work wonders.

If you see that some of your clients are especially active in this area — actively promoting your product, defending your point and making new, interesting ones, you should consider forming a kind of

partnership with them. It doesn't mean you get to pay them or offer them some special incentives. An honorary title (like Trusted Partner, or Friend of..., or MVP) is often enough.

The not-so-big players

There are several alternatives to the big players which are underused simply because they're more specialized. Many marketers wrongly fail to consider these, thinking they cannot get a relevant audience there, but in fact, it often proves to be the exact opposite.

Yedda (www.yedda.com) is an underused website which can give you a lot of traffic. It's based on the question-answer paradigm. Users can post questions, and other users answer them. Each answer can be rated, and questions can be sorted based on the subject.

All it takes to get a good rating is to competently answer questions in your field — and provide links to your website or product whenever you can see the chance.

LastFM (www.last.fm) is an OSN website centered around music. Social networks develop around the interest users take in music – based on the kind of music they listen, their favorite artist and so on.

Indeed, LastFM is essentially a niche market, making it hard to sell anything that is not somehow related to music. However, since users have absolutely no reluctance in sharing even advertisement, as long as it is related to music, the rate of dissemination is often amazing.

And finally, *Shout Central* (www.shoutcentral.com) is an interesting, albeit somewhat recent and underused website. It features real-time chat, photo galleries in a Flickr-like manner and blogs.

Due to the fact that it supports diverse media, it allows you to be very expressive in your advertising.

Public launches and other events

Public launches have become a trend in the Web 2.0 world. Indeed, they are the most appreciated form of promotion. A public launch shows that you want to make a public statement, that you believe in your product so much that you want to share it with everyone else — and, most importantly, that you have the resources to do it.

Actually organizing a public product launch is hard work, and you need to have as many people as possible to attend.

Social networks play a very important role in this case, because people are much more interested in attending a function if they come with a friend, or to represent a group. Furthermore, since information travels very quickly, announcing the launch a month before it takes place ensures that tens of thousands will find out very easily.

Besides announcing the launch of your product, there is one extra thing you can do. A new kind of Web 2.0 service has emerged recently, and has steadily increased in popularity during 2007: presence streams.

Introducing Presence Streams

Presence streams are based on blog–OSN hybrids, but the focus is rather different. Instead of users blogging about general issues, they write about what they are doing NOW!

The biggest names on the presence stream front are *Twitter* (www.twitter.com), *Jaiku* (www.jaiku.com) and *Dodgeball* (www.dodgeball.com). So far, Twitter seems to be the most successful.

Presence streams have the advantage of being very new, and thus easily adopted, as people want to use it simply because it's new. Besides, there is no problem with sending several messages a day — in fact, it's what you are supposed to do.

Figure 9: Reading a user's Twitter.com page.

Furthermore, since the overall idea itself is very personal, the personal tone is expected and the relationship with your readers is very personal. Since the content is easy to check, it's almost as if you were sitting in the same room, occasionally chatting from time to time.

As a consequence, you can strike a balance between advertising your product (which you can even do upright) and posting other types of interesting content. But there is one even more interesting thing that you can do.

GET ONTO TWITTER!

What is Twitter about? Why is it getting so much attention? Is it worth your attention?

I'd say YES.

And three of the main reasons are:

1. The time taken to manage Twitter is minimal,

2. You can really put your PERSONALITY into Twitter - and that is satisfying as well as financially rewarding!

3. You can automate many Twitter operations to maximize your time/reward ratio.

Let’s look at these three in a bit more detail.

1. TIME TAKEN TO MANAGE TWITTER

Twitter is restricted to 140 characters.

That is very different from a blog - which is more time-consuming to set up as well as to maintain.

Twitter's limit of 140 characters is quite a blessing - when you have something to say, you HAVE to make it short - so you can't spend that much time on it!

2. PUTTING YOUR PERSONALITY INTO TWITTER

You can have a bit of fun with Twitter, which is good. It is good because people are looking out for others who share their interests and who are fun to interact with.

Boring people - no thanks. People who ‘sell, sell, sell’ every other Tweet - again, no. But someone who is interesting and fun to read – YES! They have the edge.

3. AUTOMATION AND TWITTER

Twitter lends itself to automation.

You can use automation to post your tweets throughout the day. For example, enter them in the morning in one hit, and then schedule them to appear every hour or two until they have all been sent. That’s you for that day – the tweets are sent automatically.

Do you blog? If you do, you can get your blog posts’ headlines and url to be posted automatically into Twitter. That will surely get visitors to your blog.

SELLING ON TWITTER

Do you have a website selling something? You can occasionally tweet about the products you make money from – and you will get visitors. Maybe one sales email out of six or seven is about right.

Anyone who pushes sales hard: or anyone whose ‘welcome’ tweet (sent when I follow them) is pure sales, I ‘unfollow’ immediately.

If you follow this chapter through, I will tell you exactly how to see how many people clicked on your sales link.

CREATE YOUR TWITTER ACCOUNT

I assume you have your Twitter account, which you get by signing up at Twitter.com. If not – go grab one!

If you haven’t already, you do need to personalize it:

1. Put in a picture most people use a close up of their face. Settings/Picture
2. Go to Settings/Account and put in your Blog or Website address; your one line bio in 140 characters. Lots of people will read this – so spend some time on it.
3. Change your design from the standard one. Go to Settings/Design

WHICH TWITTER CLIENT

You will need to decide which Twitter client to use – the computer programme you use to read your tweets. Twitter leaves it to others to make good applications to view their tweets on. Twitter.com itself is very basic.

At the moment, the fight for ‘best client’ is between Tweetdeck and Seemic. Google those and download one of them for free.

At the time of writing Tweetdeck has an iPhone version and Seesmic’s is in development. .

HOW TO BUILD A FOLLOWING, AND SEND TWEETS ON AUTO

I will describe one strategy with Twitter which works very well. It aims to build your followers by nice steady 30-40 a day – that's over 1000 a month!

You are aiming to:

1. Post 3-6 tweets a day. These can be 'scheduled' to make it easy to manage.

2. Build a following of people in your niche who like you - who connect with you.

3. Spend minimal time managing Twitter - because you make use of tools to make you more efficient.

WHAT DO YOU TWEET ABOUT?

Well, folk, just DON'T be boring!

Twitter does say: "What are you doing". But in brackets, afterwards, should be "(but be interesting)".

Retweets: First of all, you can retweet two tweets a day from other people that you find interesting. There are two tweets a day already!

Tweet some urls: Then you can find two news articles which you think will interest your followers. Go to *Google* news and search there. Go to *Yahoo* news, *BBC*, or *CNN*.

If you use Firefox, I recommend you subscribe to the RSS feeds of these sites, and use the Firefox Addon 'RSS Ticker'. This displays the feeds from the sites you subscribe to in a 'ticker tape' along the bottom of the browser.

So, there are four tweets!

Put in some of yourself: Now you put in two tweets about you – the niche you are in is, hopefully, interesting to you. So…write down a couple of interesting thoughts, questions, or comments you have.

Now up to six tweets!

Advertising: Now you get the chance you put in a tweet advertising one of your products. By now you will have read tweets from others and will see you can recognize sales tweets from a mile off. So, don't make them too in-your-face.

You will have to guess what people are ok with. It may well be about as subtle as you yourself like to see.

There are your seven tweets a day!

NOW TO MAKE IT EASY – AUTOMATION

Google Tweetadder and download and install it. Create an account with your Twitter username and password.

Automated Tweets

Now, create your seven or more tweets.

Paste them on the 'Tweets' tab one at a time next to where it says 'Add'. Or, quicker, put each tweet on one line of a text editor such as notepad and save. Click 'Load from file' and select the file. All will be loaded at once.

Automated Followers

Go to the 'Search' tab in TweetAadder. Select 'Search by profile data'. Now type a word or phrase into the 'Keyword' field which you think will pick out users interested in your niche. Select any other options shown if you think appropriate. Click 'Search' and a window will appear with the resulting potential followers. Read the profile data of the first few. If they seem about right for your niche, I suggest you 'Check all', and 'Save all'. This will add them to your list to follow.

Repeat for as many relevant key words or key phrases you can think of.

Many of these will follow you back automatically – you will now get followers every day!

Other TweetAdder Settings

There are certain things Twitter doesn't like, such as following too many people in the same day, or following loads all at once.

Because of this, it is wise to be cautious in the number of followers you add. These are the settings I use:

Follow tab

Max follows to send per day: 200

Time delay Between Follow: 0 to 5 seconds

Stop adding follows when following to follower ratio reaches: 1.5 and tick the tick-box

Unfollow tab

Max #to UnFollow per day: 50

Time delay: 0 to 5 seconds

Tick: Only UnFollow users that were followed using TweetAdder

Tick: Wait x Days Before UnFollowing a user,and enter '5'

Tweets tab

Tick 'Only Post updates from: ' and put in the times you think your followers are likely to be awake.

'Post Tweets Every' – put in two numbers of minutes and TweetAdder will choos a random number in between them. I often use '60' and '120'.

Enter a maximum number of posts a day, if you have added a huge lists of tweets.

Automation tab

Once you have added tweets on the Tweets tab, you are able to tick ‘Automatically Post Updates up to the Daily Maximum.

Tick: Automatically UnFollow Users

Automatically Follow Back Users,and

Automatically Follow Users

AN IMPORTANT EXTRA

It is nice to send someone a ‘Welcome’ message when they become a follower. You can set this up to happen automatically. My advice is, read other people’s welcome tweets, and write yours in the style you like best. As I mentioned before, some people ‘sell, sell, sell’ in their welcome tweet. I just unfollow them there and then.

I suggest you tell folks a little about yourself and tell them what they can expect from you. Try to add a bit of personality.

Do all that in 140 characters and your well on the way to becoming an excellent Tweeter!

The way I set up my ‘Welcome messages’ is by using the free service at Socialoomph.com. No doubt other services offer the same thing; but that’s the one I use.

(You can also use Social Oomph (used to be called TweetLater) to schedule Tweets at specific times, long into the future. This might be useful for you.)

REFINEMENT – BIT.LY ACCOUNT

Every url you create – either referring people to an interesting page, or to one of your sales pages, obtain a bit.ly url for that page. To do this, go to bit.ly and create an account. Now drag the ‘bit.ly sidebar’ to your browser toolbar (the row just under the address bar – where you type in any urls). Now, when you are on any page and click the bit.ly button, it will open the bit.ly sidebar, and there will be a shortened url for you to use. Use this in your tweets.

Now, whenever you log in the bit.ly, you will see how many people clicked on each tweet. So now you will know which tweets are popular with your followers – and which ones you need to send more of.

ADVANCED – RSS A BLOG TO TWITTER

This is great if you have a blog.

Go to Twitterfeed.com and set up an account using your Twitter data. Tell Twitterfeed about any blogs you have.

Now, whenever you post a blog entry, Twitterfeed will post the entry headline and the url to your Twitterstream. How cool is that! If you are blogging anyway, you just leveraged your time and got something for nothing.

FOLLOWERS WILL COME

So now you know how to get over a thousand visitors a month. Good luck, and let me know how you get on.

Ad-Hoc Meetings

The most interesting type of event you can organize is an ad-hoc meeting, and you absolutely need a presence stream for that. Ad-hoc meetings can provide you with the most surprising insights of your clients, as well as with a very faithful audience. You can only call for an ad-hoc meeting if you already have a very loyal group of readers, but once you do, it can work wonders.

Calling an ad-hoc meeting is carried out on a very short period of notice, usually two or three days. A date and a place are chosen, the place being as familiar as possible so that everyone can easily reach it. Once this has been set, the announcement is made — on your public website, on your blog, on your present streams, through podcasting and so on.

During the two or three days that precede the event, you should constantly update your presence streams and your blog with details about how it will be organized and why people should attend. Free giveaways can work wonders in such cases, even if it's something as simple as a T-shirt.

When the day comes, you should make sure that all the organizational details are set. If you intend to have lunch with all those who attend — a very nice, informal way of meeting your clients — you should make bookings so that everyone has a place. However, try to pick the location according to your audience. If your clients are mostly teenagers, they won't like a fancy restaurant, and if most of those who come are lawyers and businessmen, going to McDonald's is a bad idea.

Take lots of pictures, make lots of movies, find out everything you need to find out. In the end, thank everyone, give T-shirts, business cards, stickers or whatever you want to give and let them leave when they like. Be sure to enthusiastically mention the event on your blog or in your next podcast, and upload pictures to Flickr.

Why should you organize these ad-hoc meetings? Three reasons:

1. They encourage your clients, making them feel that you actually care about their needs.

2. They develop the relationship between you and your clients, and allow them to have a word in the evolution of your brand. The insights you can find out from them are often amazing.

3. They make a huge buzz about your product. Seeing even as few as twenty people gathered in one place with promotional T-shirts will surely make an impression.

CHAPTER 6

Advertising and Promotion

Chapter 6 deals with:

- **The rules of Internet advertising**
- **How to use banner ads with Web 2.0**
- **Instant messaging**
- **Skypecasting**

Earlier we discussed some of the wonderful new possibilities that Web 2.0 opens for marketing, and looked at some of the changes going on in the online world. Inevitably some sites and their owners will fare better than others in adapting to the new conditions.

But it seems clear that most favored of all are those who understand Web 2.0, and have made efforts to bring it into their thinking and planning. To the victor, as they say, go the spoils. And there's not the slightest doubt that Web 2.0 is creaming the opposition!

Right now, we're going to pay special attention to an old favorite, the banner ad.

If you have some formal marketing training, you may know that there are two basic objectives advertising tries to attain. The first is *letting people know about your product* — and prompting them to look for more information. In the Web 2.0 world, this translates almost exclusively to **getting traffic to your website** — a complex problem that we address throughout this book.

HOT TIP

Don't overlook the good old banner ad!

The other objective of advertising is to *showcase the features of your product* — and we will talk about this as well.

One important thing to remember is that, with Web 2.0, *advertising is rarely done on its own*. In the Web 2.0 environment, very few advertising actions seek only to show "how good" a product is, like TV ads do. Most Web 2.0 advertising techniques are more complex. To understand them, we'll first look at the methods that are more familiar to you.

People hate ads: the five rules of Internet advertising

Let's forget for a second that we depend on marketing, and be frank with each other: **everyone hates ads.** Even though we realize that commerce in general wouldn't be possible without advertising, we all have a secret wish that ads would just go away. Those who buy would prefer to get the information directly, without buzzwords like "buy two, get one free" or "new and improved." And those who sell would rather sell based on sincere trust rather than expensive advertising.

Now, unlike the TV or the radio, when it comes to advertising on the web, when a window with an advertising message pops up, and we don't want to know about it, we'll simply close it.

This is an important contrast compared to television for instance. There, the only way of skipping ads is to change the channel.

Too many people don't get that the Internet is different when it comes to advertising. "TV/radio" methods and buzzwords tend to annoy Internet users so much that most potential buyers will block your ad through their computer software, or instantly develop an inner feeling of hate for your product or service.

Therefore, you need to take note of *five essential rules of Web advertising:*

1. **Don't spam.** This is the very first rule you should follow. Spam has now become *so* common, intrusive, and associated with viruses, that very powerful methods have been developed to filter out anything even suspected of being spam. And last but not least, it's illegal.

2. **Don't push it.** When someone surfs the web, they usually do so either as recreation, or to get specific information. If you intrude in an unwelcome way, you'll kill any chance of them buying whatever you're selling.

3. **Be honest.** The Web 2.0 community spreads word about a great product with honest advertising just as quickly as it spreads word about a bad product with dishonest advertising. It takes just one false word in your advertising campaign for everyone to see you as not being trustworthy, and the cost to you could quite easily be ruinous.

4. **Be smart.** People have seen so much poor quality advertising that they're thoroughly tired of it. On the other hand, if your ad is smart, funny, witty or simply interesting in some way, people will enjoy it, and be open to buying your product when they're ready. So be smart: go for quality.

5. **Be original.** A lot of Web 2.0 surfers and searchers are young. They applaud originality, and even quirkiness. Plenty of older people will appreciate an original campaign, too. If you can come up with something fresh and interesting, you'll immeasurably improve your chances of selling.

The good old ways

The traditional methods of doing advertising online are still available today. Animated banners and pay-per-click services still exist, and they are being used as widely as they were before.

There are several reasons for this.

First of all, these "old-style" methods are still sufficiently workable to be worth the effort, and they are also relatively cheap to implement. They mostly require next to no technical expertise, so those who are in business by themselves can afford to use them without being tech experts, and without spending too much money. Old-style as they are, techniques like the ones we're about to describe provide a cheap way

of advertising your brand — though maybe less effectively than other techniques described in this chapter.

Let's talk first about generating traffic through *banner ads*. Once the most important method of web advertising, their main purpose today is in capturing traffic and funneling it to your website.

How to use banner ads in the Web 2.0 world

Banner ads are a familiar sight even today. They are the famous animated little images which, when clicked, lead to the website of whatever they advertise. Various website owners will allow you to display your banner either for a sum of money, in exchange for you displaying their banner on your website, or, in some cases, even for free.
A special possibility is **PPC (Pay-Per-Click)** services, where the amount of money you pay for the banner being displayed varies according to how many people click on it.

Until a few years ago, most ads used the GIF format, which had numerous limitations. Nowadays, most banners use the Flash format. Flash is a technology which allows very rich content to be designed, including interesting image effects, true-color images, sounds and interactivity, while keeping the size of the banner ad small enough.

Another thing that has changed in the use of banner ads is their placement. Initially, banner ads belonged only in the header of the page, or sometimes in the sidebar —if there was any. This is no longer the case.

Now let's learn how to use these banners.

STEP 1: The mandatory planning

There are a number of decisions you need to take at this step, especially as to how the banner will be displayed, and what will happen when the user clicks it.

1. ***How will the banner be displayed?*** Banners placed in the header or the footer of the page have the advantage of being cheap and not very disturbing. They fit nicely into the page almost regard-less of how they look, and there is a good chance that they will be seen by visitors (while the page is loading or immediately after it has loaded).
2. ***What will happen when the user clicks it?*** If you are advertising your *brand,* or a *service* you provide*,* it should lead to your homepage. If you are advertising a product, it should lead to that product's description, especially if you sell a wide range of products.

If you are on a tight budget, you may consider a banner exchange program, like *neobanners.com*. If you can afford some spending, you may do a bit of research and find high-traffic websites willing to display your banner. Many online magazines, for instance, do so, and in fact so do many popular portals, like Yahoo! They have a number of strict guidelines, though.

If you don't want to do this research, and want a very reliable banner exchange service, you should consider Google AdWords. However, since Google AdWords is a “border” service, it does require certain special techniques to be used.

Who would want to show your banner for free? That’s pretty much a no-brainer: people who appreciate you, or what you’re doing, or your product or service. These are your **fans.**

A lot of people have a personal website, a blog, and a signature they use in many forums. If they dig your product enough, they may be willing to show your banner. In this case, the banner need not be complicated. In fact, a button-like image with your logo on it is enough. If you intend to let people do this, be sure to include these banners on your webpage for them to copy.

STEP 2: Design the banner

When it comes to ads, this is probably the trickiest step if your creative skills are not very good. Fortunately, there are ways to overcome this lack of inspiration.

One option is to use specialized computer software. Tools like *Swish* (http://www.swishzone.com) allow you to design Flash animations without much knowledge of Flash technology — and also include a fair amount of templates. You can find even more of these templates on Google, and you only need to change the text and images, something easy to do after ten minutes of reading the help file.

The other possibility is to pay a specialist. Since banner ads are a common requirement, a talented designer will not charge you a fortune. You can find someone to do this for you by randomly searching Google for artists' portfolios. Or you can compare quotes and qualifications from numerous professionals all once, at freelancer websites like *elance.com*, *rentacoder.com* and *guru.com*.

These freelance websites usually employ a rating and client review system, allowing you to check out the track record of those who bid on your project, and anyone you wish to *invite* to bid.

STEP 3: Publish your banner

This process is usually automatic. Link exchange services usually require you just to upload your banner through an online form and will provide detailed instructions. Large websites which offer advertising opportun-ities (like Yahoo!) often employ a similar method.

STEP 4: Promote your business

Gone are the days when you merely had to have some kind of Internet presence to "get the clicks," and if you were fortunate, a worthwhile number of sales.

The emphasis now amongst Internet marketers is very much on pro-activity. One form of advertising supports and promotes another, and

it's essential that you use several ways of drawing attention to your message if you want it heard, and acted on.

Thanks to the magic of rapid and wide communication through the OSN sites, blogs, bookmarking, clouds, article sites (outside of the OSNs) and so on, together with the straight business networking sites like *Ryze, Ecademy, LinkedIn* and so many more, there is no practical limit to the openings available for promoting your business.

The IM wonder

One of the interesting things Web 2.0 has brought to the marketing world is a certain level of technical knowledge for the clients. This is important because modern technology has removed many communication barriers.

The Internet is responsible for removing a lot of these barriers. What we will talk about in the next few paragraphs is instant messaging (or IM) – one of the most important offspring of the Internet.

Instant Messaging is not, technically speaking, related to Web 2.0 (or to the WWW in general). However, the use of IM in marketing has increased exponentially, simply because the clients of the Web 2.0 world are more technically knowledgeable. A few years ago, someone who could use *ICQ* was seen as a god. Nowadays, almost everyone can use an IM program.

What is IM good for in marketing? It goes to the extent of removing almost every communication barrier between you and your clients. It is the virtual equivalent of a very informal conference, where everyone can come dressed as they want and enjoy whatever drinks they want.

Using IM during the development of a product is not something new. Open Source enthusiasts have been using it for several years now. Larger companies have only recently begun adopting it though – not because IM is inefficient, but rather because large corporations are slow to adopt this kind of personal communications.

Although there are many IM solutions, two are the ones which we will look into in detail*: IRC and Skype*. Why these two?

IRC is simply the most accessible IM solution around. There is an IRC client for virtually every operating system, and none of them requires much computing power, so it is available even to those who use older computers or to those for whom battery life is essential (mobile phone, PDA or laptop users).

Skype, on the other hand, has an excellent Voice Conference mode. Although this allows only for a limited number of users in a conference, the voice quality is excellent, and is also available for several operating systems.

But how can these be useful? Some of you with a healthier intuition have probably thought about a few ways.

For instance, you can create an IRC channel for your forum community. This will quickly become a meeting place which you can exploit in “hot moments”, like the days before a product launch.

Or you can Use this IRC channel for Friday Night discussions which don't serve any “information gathering” process in particular, but develop a healthy relation between you and your clients.

Skypecasting spells

Another interesting solution we will talk about is known as *skypecasting*. We talked about various kinds of casting in the previous chapter, but this one is a bit different, because it is interactive.

In a few words, skypecasting relies on the Skype (www.skype.com) voice-based instant messaging program. In many ways, Skype is the equivalent of a virtual telephone, and uses many analogies with the telephone. T his is why it is very easy to use even for those who are not very technically savvy.

Skype has the wonderful feature of allowing up to 8 people to chat in the same room, just like in the case of a conference. Although 8 people may sound very few (compared to what IRC offers, for instance), don't be mislead! There is much you can do with only 8 people.

The problem with IRC is that it's very difficult to talk to several persons at once. The problem is synchronization: people type at different speeds and it's very difficult for two people not to talk at the same time — it's not because they're rude, it's simply because there is no way of knowing when someone else is also talking.

Skype discussions are much more fluent and less chaotic, making them perfect for the more serious issues you need to share with the community. But wait, you may say, how can you share something with the community when you can only have 8 discussion partners?

This is how skypecasting differs from IRC. On IRC, anyone can join, meaning that *everyone is invited*. This is not the same on Skype: you choose who to invite to your conference.

The point is, you should use skypecasting to talk to *leading community members* or *trusted business partners*. The latter is obvious and similar to videoconferencing (only without video), so we won't cover it here. We'll talk about the former.

Every community has a number of “leaders”, voices that can be heard louder than others. The position of a community leader is built upon several important blocks: professionalism, reputation, original ideas, vision and so on. Although a community is more than just its leaders, their views are very important because they can shape the evolution of their community.

These are the kind of people who may be leaders in your community. They need not be your employees, and often not even your fans. But who else? The list is long, so we will only cite a few examples:

1. Bloggers who regularly feature your product or service in their posts, making interesting points and lots of traffic. They may have a strong influence over the readers' opinions, but they can

also act as the voice of a large part of the community, simply because, having a successful blog, it's easier for them to make their ideas known to the world.

2. An expert in the field where your product or service is used who is actively involved in the community, and whose opinion on your product is known. This person need not be famous – his opinions should just be trustworthy inside the community.

3. A respected user with many posts on your forum.

Why is it important to develop a strong relationship with these people? The answer is easy: if your clients know what they are talking about, these people know even better.

Being not only respected by the community, but also having a great influence *and* having a clear picture of your evolution, their insights may be extremely important. They may help you deal with the community during delicate times, and they can also act as "emissaries" for your clients. Each of them finds out a number of things from their own contact with the community — from their blog, from forum posts — things which you may not be able to find out yourself.

The information you give out during skypecasts is the kind of information that has to reach only a few people at first. You can decide what information is best to be shared with only a few members of the community at first. A few examples could be:

1. Pre-production samples. Returning to the printed poster example we looked into just earlier, you could provide your skypecasting partners with a few low-res pictures of the posters you intend to print. They may have some valuable tips, and may also like the fact that you appreciated them to the point of sharing such information with them[1].

1 Do note that this is a two-sided idea. On one hand, they may give you their advice, but remember: they are not under NDA! If you absolutely depend on not leaking anything, don't share it with anyone you wouldn't trust with your life.

2. Pulse taking. Have you just released a product, or added several new features to the service you provide? These community leaders allow you to get valuable insights regarding how these were received.

These practices may seem completely out of this world for you, and the pre-production samples may seem almost overwhelmingly bad. Indeed, in college, we are taught this is bad practice. However, they don't even mention the Internet in college, let alone Web 2.0.

The Web 2.0 toolbox

Earlier we mentioned that Web 2.0 has brought a number of very important changes to how websites are designed. The appearance of new technologies which are easier to use and more powerful (like Ajax) has led to an increasing number of tools for just about everything.

Before moving on to the next chapter, we will be spending a bit of time looking over the tools that can help clients have a word to say about how you should continue with your product.

Shout it with shoutboxes

Figure 10: A typical shoutbox

One of the easiest scripts for this purpose is the so-called shoutbox. In just a few words, a shoutbox is a small box, usually placed on the left or right side of a web page, where *Shout It With Shoutboxes* users can enter short messages (20-30 words at most).

Placed wisely and logged continuously, these shoutboxes can provide very valuable insights. It's still amazing how many web designers don't realize how powerful they can be if the messages are interpreted correctly. Shoutboxes cannot provide you with fully-fledged suggestions, but they can show you what your websites' visitors really think, simply because the messages are so short that users rarely try to censor themselves before posting.

For instance, shoutboxes can be placed on the index page. This is the place where users will most likely report ugly color schemes or misbehaving design elements like badly placed pictures. Placed on the main page of a forum, a shoutbox is the place where users are likely to quickly shout for help if they cannot find a certain topic. If such "shouts" can be heard more and more often, it may be a sign that the forum's search engine is no longer helpful and you should find a plug-in that extends its functionality.

As a basic guideline, you can place a shoutbox wherever you think users would often have something quick to say that they are likely to share. Many blogs feature a shoutbox, for instance.

It's important for you to monitor whatever happens in the shoutboxes. You should ask the developer who designs and maintains your website to log every comment in a file, so that you can look over it later. You won't find technical papers in shoutboxes — but it's still amazing to see what you can find from time to time.

Advanced feedback forms and surveys

There are several improvements Web 2.0 has brought to the web, and many of them can be exploited in the most strange (though interesting) ways. You may already think the introduction is overblown —after all, a form is a form and nothing more— but some creative designers have found a way to go even past that.

For instance, let's assume you are selling photo frames. You already provide a pretty wide range of colors, but you plan on adding two or three more. How would you ask for opinions?

A survey would be interesting in this case — a simple, three-step survey which would test to see what colors users like most for various kinds of photographs. But the *presentation* may prove valuable.

Going for the traditional way of doing things, you may simply present a page with 10 squares of different colors and ask the user to click on the one he likes most for a portrait's frame, then for a landscape's frame, and finally, for a family photo frame. But this has a serious problem: for anyone whose strong point is not imagination, it will be difficult to imagine how the frame would look.

A Web 2.0 approach would be an elegant Flash clip of a moderate size (say, 512x384 pixels). In every case, the user would be presented with a real shot of the frame with a sample picture in it, or at least with a 3D computer model with a sample picture, sitting on a desk. Such a survey may provide sensibly better results: the client can see how the frame would look, and it will be easier for him or her to pick the best one.

As a rule of the thumb: wherever you can enrich feedback forms or surveys with content that would allow the person in front of the monitor to provide more accurate answers, do it.

There is a reason why Web 2.0 fans like to say that *content is the King!*

Figure 11: A sample poll box

Poll boxes

A poll box is also a small box, also placed in the sidebar of a website, but its purpose is (as its name says) to conduct a poll. Poll boxes have the advantage of allowing you to get a huge number of votes: placed in full sight, straight on the index page of your website, virtually every visitor will vote. There is a catch however: these poll boxes must have a limited number of choices (i.e. six at most), and users cannot comment regarding their choice.

As a consequence, you should only use poll boxes for quick, straight forward surveys, or for complementary studies. For instance, returning to the printed posters example, it's fine to ask everyone what artist would want to see featured, *after* you have asked the community. The reason is quite obvious: the community should have

a serious influence over what happens next —but those who are not already your clients should have a say as well.

Quick feedback forms

Quick feedback forms are exactly what their name says they are. Forms which are small and easy to fill, allowing your clients to quickly give you feedback.

Feedback has trad-itionally been ass-ociated with long surveys and long, boring sentences. Unfortunately, this is completely inap-propriate for Web 2.0. Quick forms were needed.

Figure 12: A quick feedback form on microsoft.com

Quick feedback forms are generally used to gather feedback about a service. For instance, in the case of an e-shop, it can be placed at the bottom of the checkout page.

Clients can use it to report any problems they encountered — like not being able to choose their favorite payment method or having difficulties sorting the contents of their shopping basket.

But even more, as a general rule, you should *always* include a quick feed-back form at the end of every FAQ or user support page. Documentation problems are very hard to report — users will simply use Google to find an answer they cannot find in your help pages, without reporting it to you. Several companies are already using this system, the most famous name probably being Microsoft.

However, you should remember that these quick feedback forms are not compulsory for anyone to fill. In other words, don't rely on them to

gather any information that is vital for you. Use polls, blog posts or loudly-announced surveys for that.

CHAPTER 7

The "Ideal" Web 2.0 Site

Chapter 8 takes a look back over what we've covered, and brings it together in an imaginary "ideal Web 2.0 site." We look at:

- **The big picture**
- **Giving thanks**
- **The Web 2.0 compliant site**
- **The end of the beginning**

Th

It's vital that you see and understand the "big picture," so you can have some idea of the magnitude of the opportunity in front of us right now. It's truly staggering.

You also need to be aware that there's no telling how long the "secret" will remain known to only a few. My advice to you is don't let the grass grow under your feet!

HOT TIP

It won't all happen at once, but picture the ideal Web 2.0-driven Internet marketing plan, and then put the elements in place one by one.

So let me summarize the situation.

By now you'll be well aware that in the world of Web 2.0, business is no longer done on a single website.

You (the seller of products or services) have your website and your blog. You do business by attracting people either directly to your site, or indirectly via your blog. When they get there, you want a percentage of them to buy, or at least come back later for another look and *then* buy. You'd also like them to recommend your site to others.

But first you need to have ways of attracting these direct and indirect visitors. And not only attracting them, but having them stay a while, look around, click through to your monetization pages, and buy, call,

make an appointment, visit your office or shop, or do whatever else it is that earns you money.

Now here's our "ace in the hole." Web 2.0-savvy marketers have at their fingertips sources of traffic in numbers never before imagined. These sources consist of other high-traffic websites, which foster the creation of virtual communities — communities which typically number anything from a handful to a few hundred people.

HOT TIP

We have so much to be thankful for!

Many of these people have their own blogs and websites. And their relationships and communications interlock and overlap to such an extent, that some of these extended groupings are larger than the populations of small countries!

Thus it is that literally hundreds of millions of unique visitors worldwide, making untold billions of page views, hit on Web 2.0 sites every month.

STOVE-HOT TIP!!

A relatively small percentage of Internet marketers have seen the gold mine inherent in the above situation. They've realized that by becoming part of this phenomenon, and feeding in useful content, THEY could be on the receiving end of many of those visits and page views *And YOU could easily join them!!*

Furthermore, *some of the biggest numbers of visits and views on the top American-based sites DON'T come from North America!* Instead, they come from Asian and South American countries. And these countries, too, have their own leading sites that most of us have never heard of, which by some measures are getting even more traffic than the US majors. (By page views, time on site etc.)

Let us give thanks

The possibilities for the home-based web entre-preneur "getting a slice of the action" far out-weigh anything ever seen before in the history of the Internet. And the "action" itself is almost beyond imagination.

Yet most people haven't the faintest idea what Web 2.0 really offers! *If they know anything at all about it*, most of the older ones who actually use the web for business or recreation have a vague notion that "this Web 2.0 thing" is about websites looking a certain way, and having "some sort of interaction capabilities," along-side of "some kind of dad-burned teenage-yuppy-post-your-own-video nonsense."

At the same time, to the younger participants it's about "Hey, dude, did you see the totally cool video we did on (name your preference of sites)!" Or "Gee, I have my picture on (such-and-such) and I'm getting so many hits from people all over!"

> **The few in the know should kneel and give thanks every day that while they're bookmarking and networking, and visiting OUR sites in droves, these millions of new Web 2.0 visitors buy humungous amounts of products every month.**

We should probably also add, "And please let all these nice people keep thinking that way for just a little bit longer."

In the old, pre-Web 2.0 days — and even now for the big majority who aren't using (or haven't even heard of) Web 2.0 — getting even a sliver of much smaller action was very laborious, and there was no guarantee of making a profit. I.e., either getting enough free traffic, or selling enough product to cover the cost of "bought traffic."

There are still no guarantees, of course, but one thing we can say for certain is this:

1. if you adopt Web 2.0 strategies, your chances of attracting a great deal of traffic to your site are multiplied many times over.
2. What's more, you can build that traffic far more quickly, and "a great deal" can mean vastly more than was even thinkable under the older methods.
3. So that's what it's really about — which is several orders of magnitude *bigger* than the limited vision that most people have.

Now let's look at how you can become "Web 2.0 compliant" in terms of your own website and blog.

The Web 2.0 compliant site

The first question to ask is "What makes a website work?"

If you ask a computer science student, he will probably mumble something about HTML, PHP and a MySQL backend. An SEO expert will say something about keywords, and a marketer will probably say it's traffic.

Wrong answers. The thing that makes a website work is *content*. Without content, there is no website. Content, as they say, is king.

Regardless of a website's eventual scope, every site carries out a number of typical functions.

To put it another way, whether a site provides email services, or acts as an online shop, it will clearly have to fulfill all the following functions:

1. **Display content in viewable form.** Most websites handle the typical types of content associated with web browsers – text, images and animation. When something can't be displayed by the browser itself, an external program is used (for instance, when the user downloads a WMV file, Media Player will be launched).

   However, the content is becoming more and more diverse, ranging from sound clips to spreadsheets.

2. **Sort the content,** allowing the user to discard that part of content which is not relevant.

3. **Navigate through the content.**

The Web 2.0 environment has added two more functions to these three.

4. **Allow the visitor to modify, create or upload content,**

5. **Create bridges** between a user, other users, and whoever the site is representing.

If you look at these five functions, you'll see that they fit perfectly in the image we've described earlier. Sorting and navigating are ways of correctly handling traffic.

Creating bridges makes the relationship with the customer more personal. Allowing the user to modify, create or upload content are ways of allowing the user to have a say in the site's and the product's evolution.

Should any of these functions not work correctly, the user's experience will not be as good as he expects it to be. The consequences themselves are quite difficult to evaluate.

Now, let's take each one in turn.

Displaying content the ideal way

This area is really the job of the web designer. The technical side of web design is beyond the scope of this book. However, if you're not in a position to engage a designer, there are plenty of good Web 2.0 template sites you can use.

HOT TIP

building experience, a good solution is to purchase an inexpensive Web 2.0 customizable template, and make some simple modifications.

Stock designs are usually customizable, and here are a few hints in that regard. But first and foremost, check out some live Web 2.0 sites, and find an overall style, or "look and feel," that appeals to you.

Pay particular attention to font face and size. Avoid exotic fonts — most browsers won't be able to render them, and your visitor won't see your intended effect anyway.

Best to stick to the well-known families, in your choice of serif (e.g. Times, Cambria) or sans-serif (e.g. Arial, Verdana, Calibri, Tahoma). The body text of this book is in Cambria 12.5. It's also got 1.15 line spacing, which you don't need for a regular website or blog.

If you want a slightly more exotic title font, create your title as a graphic, and insert it as a picture. Don't go overboard, though, as graphic-heavy sites take longer to load, which can thoroughly tee-off visitors on dial-up connections. As to size, my advice is to avoid those miniscule font sizes like the plague — though some designers

obviously find them attractive. I'd stick to 10, 11 or 12 point (plus the point-5s), depending on the face.

As to color, theme and look and feel, this is largely a matter of taste, and your own flair for design. In my opinion "less is more" is pretty good advice. In other words, avoid the extremes if you want your site to be a commercial success. Plain with a dash of color is always acceptable. You can't go wrong with a white or light background, and black font color — with other colors for occasional emphasis.

By all means experiment. You may find that in your particular market a more colorful approach works well. I would stay away from dark backgrounds and light font colors: they're harder to read, and may well cost you both traffic and sales.

Screen tips are usually quite helpful, as are "alt" tags for pictures. (I.e., display of captions on mouseover.) Remember, some people turn their graphics display off, and rely on these captions. Also, some SEs will mark you down if you don't include captions.

Ease of navigation

Extra data is good, as long as visitors can quickly and easily navigate through it to find what interests them personally. (Ease of navigation is thus way of bringing a measure of personalization to your site.)

The main navigation points (Home, About Us, Contact Us plus whatever primary categories are relevant to your site) are usually displayed in a navigation bar, horizontally across the top or vertically down the left hand side of your layout. There are all sorts of buttons, tabs and fancy graphics you can use here, but again simplicity generally annoys no one.
Of course, if you've got a dog-grooming site, paw-print navigation buttons could work quite well.

If you have pages with a lot of content, place some "go to" links in a menu near the top or on the left of your page, together with "back to top" links at the end of each section as you scroll down. You may also need to place links to other pages in the body of the current page; e.g.

your home page may show some product families, and an interested visitor should be able to click through from each one to a detailed display, catalogue and/or order page for that range.

Another form of navigation with large or complex sites is to use a site search engine. You can either use one of your own (scripts that do this are already available and can be easily integrated), but you can also use Google. The former can often provide better results and be faster, but it is more costly to adapt and implement. The latter is easy to use, but may not always provide the best results, because it relies on Google's spiders which may not be able to index certain pages (like those available only to registered users).

A personal experience

Personalization is one of the elements that define the Web 2.0 experience, and something you should always aim for as carefully as possible.

In a Web 2.0 site, there are two things you can personalize: shape and information. By *shape* I mean the way information is presented, and by *information* I mean the actual data that is presented to the user. In either case, your users should generally get an account, in order to ensure that their customization is consistent every time they visit your website.

In terms of shape, you can personalize almost every aspect of your website. The common one is the website's appearance, but you shouldn't remain limited to this. Your users will want to customize many other aspects, especially in terms of interaction. They may want to ensure they receive emails only from forum administrators, or they may want to have a graphical avatar for every comment they post. These are must-have features, which Web 2.0 templates and hosted blogs usually provide for.

In terms of information, there are a lot more ways in which you can personalize the website. However, the aim is always the same – better relevance for the user.

You can achieve this by allowing your users to narrow the data you provide according to as many preferences as possible. This is especially useful for syndicated data, where you have little or no control over the content that you syndicate.

If the data you provide is especially broad in range, and it cannot be objectively narrowed down into single categories, using tags is the best possibility. Tags allow the community to categorize the information, and makes it much easier to retrieve, with less effort from your team.

An important possibility is offered by *wikis*. Wikis are collaborative websites, where everyone can add and edit information. The advantage is that it ensures a steady growth of the available information, and of well-balanced information, since the community of visitors can edit the content according to their wishes. However, wikis do require a certain amount of attention, mainly because of the danger posed by vandalism.

The end of the beginning

In this chapter, I've discussed how you can work to achieve the best Web 2.0 site you can get. Of course, this isn't the end of the story: it's just the end of the beginning.

Over the next few months, you'll become increasingly familiar with the Web 2.0 environment, and more at ease operating within it. Your website and blog will develop and mature, and acquire all the attributes of a genuine Web 2.0 platform.

Don't be concerned if it seems a lot to learn and master right now. Think of all the other complex tasks and skills which were difficult to begin with, that you can now perform quite comfortably. Apply the old "how to eat an elephant" method, and take it one bite at a time.

Think of the stunning advantage you now have within your grasp, over most of the online world — simply because you understand what they don't; namely the *real* benefits of Web 2.0 when

combin-ed with the traffic frenzy it's stirring up more and more each day.

Picture your enhanced lifestyle, once you've got into the swing of things. Imagine a virtual stampede of traffic, thundering across the Prairie.

You can now see how by using a little bit of technology, and beginning to mix with the crowd at one or two of the new networking sites, you'll soon get the hang of it. You'll be ready to intercept some of that traffic and redirect it to your site.

Now take action and implement these Web 2.0 strategies for your own business and stand back and watch the stampede of traffic.

Appendix A

A Quicker Guide to Web 2.0

Throughout this book, we have talked about the many issues of Web 2.0. We often mentioned some important websites – like Flickr, Digg or StumbleUpon. However, it may be difficult for you to move all around the book to find them, so we have gathered it all in here.

In this appendix you will find a list of the most important Web 2.0 places, websites which address various Web 2.0-related issues, demonstrate important Web 2.0 technologies, provide tightly integrated social networks or are simply relevant to us in any way.

Digg (www.digg.com)	Digg is a user-driven website, employing social democracy in order to decide which of the submitted news make it on the front page. Digg also functions as an article directory.
Bebo (www.bebo.com)	Bebo is the little giant behind in Web 2.0. It offers several features not available on other websites. Even though it has grown somewhat slowly, it is steadily increasing in user base.
StumbleUpon (www.stumbleupon.com)	StumbleUpon is a social bookmarking service with a popular Firefox and IE set of extensions.
Del.icio.us (del.icio.us)	Del.icio.us is the most popular social bookmarking service. It has the largest user base and offer excellent tag-based browsing.
De.lirio.us (de.lirio.us)	De.lirio.us is an open-source clone of Del.icio.us. Although less popular than its rival, it has a steady user base.
Flickr (www.flickr.com)	Flickr is a very popular photo-sharing website. It employs a number of social networking features, but its first use remains media sharing. It is one of the most popular Web 2.0 sites, and, as such, offers very good advertising possibilities.
Fotki (www.fotki.com)	Fotki is a photo-sharing website with a few twists. It offers blogging service and holds regular photo contests. The premium service is excellent.
Last.fm (www.last.fm)	Last.fm is a music tag-based discovery and listening service. It also offers a wide range of social networking features.
Slashdot (www.slashdot.org)	Slashdot is an online news service. It has a huge user

	base, ensuring that, if your website is featured in a newsline, it can get tens of thousands of visitors. However, it concentrates mostly on technology-related issues.
Metacafe (www.metacafe.com)	Metacafe is Microsoft's answer to Google Video. Although not as popular and more restricted in terms of content, it has a steady user base that can prove useful.
WordPress (www.wordpress.com)	WordPress is a blogging service that offers both free and paid accounts. It is one of the largest blogging networks and offers a wide range of features. The WordPress CMS (which drives the WordPress blogging service) is also available in case you want to host the blog yourself.
Blogger (www.blogger.com)	Blogger is another free blogging service. It offers a large blogging community, like WordPress does. It's simpler to use compared to WordPress, but offers fewer features.
Technorati (www.technorati.com)	Technorati is a blog aggregation website. It indexes a large amount of blogs (more than 76 million blogs, as it claims) and offers a tag-based browsing system.
Bloglines (www.bloglines.com)	Bloglines is Technorati greatest rival. Although it indexes fewer blogs, it has a steadier user base and is less controversial.
Findory (www.findory.com)	Findory is a blog and podcast aggregation website.
Squidoo (www.squidoo.com)	Squidoo is a powerful social networking and content sharing website. It offers several excellent business opportunities, including the excellent SquidOffers.
Odeo (www.odeo.com)	Odeo is a website that offers recording, sharing and browsing facilities for podcasts.
PodShow (www.podshow.com)	PodShow is a podcast publishing and indexing service
TalkShoe (www.talkshoe.com)	TalkShoe is a live podcast (talkcast) service.
Skype (www.skype.com)	Skype is a powerful voice IM application which can be used for skypecasting.
Moo (www.moo.com)	Moo is an online printing service. Using Moo, you can create postcards and stickers from various content sources (like Flickr), which are printed and mailed to you.
AmazingMail (www.amazingmail.com)	AmazingMail is an online printing service, just like Moo.
Zlio (www.zlio.com)	Zlio is a French affiliate marketing website which allows you to set up an online storefront at almost no cost.
Scriptaculous (script.aculo.us)	Scriptaculous offers a wide range of Web 2.0-related scripts. It can serve as an inspiration for what else you can add to your website.
Hittail.com	Hittail is a service that reveals, in real time, the

	keywords and phrases that users search in order to get to your website.
Twitter (www.twitter.com)	Twitter is the leading presence streaming website.
Jaiku (www.jaiku.com)	Jaiku is a presence streaming website. It has more features than Twitter. The user base is currently smaller, but it is growing.
Dodgeball (www.dodgeball.com)	Dodgeball is a presence streaming website. Although currently lagging behind Twitter and Jaiku, it has a very steady and rapidly growing user base.
AdWords (adwords.google.com)	AdWords is Google's own advertising program. It allows you to employ several interesting strategies and is very reliable.
AdBrite (www.adbrite.com)	AdBrite is a banner advertising company, similar in many aspects to Google's AdWords.
Pligg (www.pligg.com)	Pligg is a very powerful PHP-based content management system.
Fleck (www.fleck.com)	Fleck is a powerful online annotation service.
Yedda (www.yedda.com)	Yedda is an ask-and-answer website with several social networking features.
Meetup (www.meetup.com)	Meetup offers various services for setting up ad-hoc meetings.

Creating a comprehensive list of all the Web 2.0-related websites you can have is almost impossible to do. There are literally thousands of them. A list of the best such websites can be found at www.seomoz.org/web2.0/.

Even when it doesn't come the best websites, there is one rule to remember when dealing with any Web 2.0-related issue: Google is your friend. Whatever you need to find, you can find it. The Internet is a huge pool of resources, so you shouldn't limit yourself to what is covered in this book.

SUPER HOT FREE RESOURCE

Full credit to Sorin at Social Marker for creating this wonderful resource. I quote from Sorin’s site: It can help you spread a link on 32 of the best social bookmarking sites in under 15 minutes!

- It helps you get a lot of backlinks.
- It helps you increase your traffic.
- Your link gets indexed by Google in a matter of minutes.
- Best of all, it's free!

Find out more from Sorin's FREE site at http://www.socialmarker.com/

Social bookmarking is a powerful tool in promoting a website. But going through all of those social bookmarking sites is very time-consuming and downloading all toolbars is madness! That's where SocialMarker.com comes in, the **free service** designed to reduce the time and effort needed to socially bookmark a website.

Here are the Web 2.0 sites you may want to submit to:

Propeller.com
Slashdot.org
Digg.com
Technorati.com
Del.icio.us
Stumbleupon.com
Twitter.com
Reddit.com
Fark.com
Newsvine.com
swik.net
De.lirio.us
Connotea.org
Blinklist.com
Bluedot.us
Spurl.net
Netvouz.com
Diigo.com
Backflip.com
Shadows.com
Rawsugar.com
Bibsonomy.org
Folkd.com
Linkagogo.com
Dotnetkicks.com
Indianpad.com
Plugim.com
Myjeeves.ask.com
Kick.ie
Google Bookmarks

Sk-rt.com
Wirefan.com

Appendix B

What to do when…

Sometimes, things just don't go as we would want them to go. Unfortunately, Web 2.0 is complex that, at times, it can be difficult to see what is working well and what isn't. Below, you will find a list with the top 5 most common issues Web 2.0 marketers encounter, and a quick checklist or the most common causes. If you can check everything on the list, chances are the problem is somewhere else.

I'm not getting enough traffic

- Are you sure you are not getting “enough” traffic? Depending on your target market, a traffic of 200 visitors per day may be very much, or very little. Re-analyze your predictions. If you are sure that you are not getting enough traffic, go on.

- Is your website well-promoted? Can people actually hear about your website from somewhere? If you are running ad campaigns, try to see which ones are efficient and which ones aren't.

- Is your website correctly optimized in terms of information? Try to see which keywords and phrases your visitors use in order to find your website on search engines. Maybe they are not relevant to your target market.

- Is your website's Page Rank score high enough? Maybe people are searching for your website, but it appears so low in the result list that nobody reaches it.

- Are other websites linking to yours? If they aren't, you can plan on designing some of your own – maybe running a blog, or posting articles to article directories.

People aren't interested in my product

- Is your website getting enough traffic? Maybe people are interested in your product, they just can't find relevant information about it.

- Is your product promoted correctly? Maybe people would be interested in your product if they actually knew about it.

- Are you targeting the correct market with your website? If you are getting enough traffic and the product seems like a bomb, maybe you are not attracting who you should be. Check the keywords and phrases used by surfers to reach your website.
- Is your website attractive? If people are interested in your product, a badly-designed website can drive them away.

- How is your relationship with your customers? Maybe people are interested in your product, but they don't trust you. My retention rate is very low, nobody buys my product!

- Is your website well-organized? Maybe people simply can't find their way around.
- Are you targeting the right market? See the previous issue on this. Maybe the people who reach your website simply aren't interested in whatever you are trying to sell.

- Do you offer enough information about your product? Simply placing a picture is often not enough. If your potential clients don't know much about what they are going to buy, how do you think they would buy it?

- Do you use popular, easy-to-use payment methods? If people cannot pay you easily, they won't buy anything either.

My advertising campaigns aren't working

- Are you targeting the right audience? Services like AdWords or AdBrite have a great chance of success, because they are advertising only on relevant websites.

- Are you advertising your product's strong points? If you are advertising a mobile phone, nobody cares about an ad headline which mentions that you can carry it around. Ads must be very punctual – include only the strong points.

- Are the websites which run your ad campaigns getting enough traffic? If they aren't, how would you expect the ads to be seen?
- Are the ads being displayed properly? For instance, pop-up windows are completely inefficient today – most users block them.

- Is your advertising fair? Make sure you do not advertise features your product doesn't have.

My clients don't seem to trust me

- Should they? People are very picky today. False advertising, spamming, anti-competitive practice, poor customer support – all these are banned today, sometimes very harshly. Take Microsoft's example – there is an entire anti-Microsoft cult out there, with very fanatic people simply because they didn't know how to play fair.

- Is your relationship with your customers close enough? What about the one with your affiliates? If not, running a blog or a podcast may prove helpful. Personalizing the content could be equally useful.

- Are your services satisfactory? If you are receiving complaints about delivery or about customer support, this may indicate that they are not.

- Are your customers involved in the way your product evolves? If you don't listen to their suggestions and don't try to solve their problems, they may not trust you are able to satisfy their needs.

THE MISSING CHAPTER

SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL NETWORKING

YouTube, MySpace and *Facebook*

This Spotlight looks at three of the biggest social networking websites, *YouTube, MySpace* and *Facebook*.

For abundant caution, I've made no reference to these leading sites in my recent book *Web 2.0 Traffic Stampede.* But whatever may be the correct usage, I believe you're entitled to some basic information about these three extremely successful websites.

YouTube

Set up in February 2005, YouTube has enjoyed phenomenal growth and popularity. Its main thrust has been to provide a platform for members to upload videos of themselves, movie and TV clips and music videos. YouTube also carries a lot of video blogs, and various other forms of original and amateur content. Its slogan is "broadcast yourself."

Even presidential candidates discuss their policies, and solicit both votes and funds on this widely-viewed social networking website! For the few who may not have heard, YouTube was purchased by Google in late 2006 for the staggering sum of $1.65 billion in Google stock. (That has to be some kind of record growth over one year and nine months!)

What was Google paying so much for? It certainly wasn't immediate profitability. **No, Google was buying that priceless commodity, web TRAFFIC — in massive amounts.**

Marketing

Whatever other purposes it serves, YouTube can be a real goldmine to any marketer. For a start, it has a huge following, and you don't even need an account to view clips and posts. Moreover, without transgressing any rules against advertising, you can put up a newsworthy item which may include someone using your product, or expressing an opinion on various things *including* your product.

> **HOT TIP**
>
> **Look for ways to *entertain* or *inform* rather than sell, to rate on the big, generic social networking sites.**

The fact is, a lot of people show clips of commercials on YouTube. The attention-grabbers are funny, gross, witty or interesting in some way. However, there are two things to be aware of. Firstly, when you upload a video you will need to add some tags describing it. You're looking here for an area of interest to attract attention, not just a pure description. For example, if you're promoting a sunscreen, you might show some of your friends playing beach volleyball and include a tag like "holiday fun."

Secondly, there's a rating system of from 1-star to 5-stars. If your video is boring or annoying, and gets a poor rating, it will sink without trace.

Because users are rating your video, not the product it showcases, then provided the video gets their attention, they'll tolerate the promotional bit. Just a couple of points here: firstly, if you are promoting something, then it's good manners to say so in one of your tags. And secondly, the name of the game is *subtlety*. You've probably heard the old expression "softly softly catchee monkey" — well, that's outstanding advice if you're thinking of YouTube and marketing in the same sentence.

Especially, make no overt attempt to sell: just include a reference to your website, so those interested can get more information.

Creating a clip for YouTube

Your clip needs to be in a format that YouTube supports — that is, WMV, AVI, MOV, MPEG or MP4. However, it doesn't need to be of broadcast quality. In fact, high quality means high bandwidth, resulting in frequent interruptions to playbacks for many viewers. So keep the file size small and the quality modest for best effect.

STEP 1. Plan and create the clip

To create an attractive clip, begin by drawing up an outline of what you plan to cover, then script your dialog or voice-over. (Point form will give you more natural-sounding results.) Then prepare a shooting script, and block out the scenes and shots you need.

Think of as many tags as possible while you're getting organized.

Shoot in natural light where possible, but keep it even and avoid high-contrast. If you're just using the camera microphone, keep it close to the subject for good sound volume and clarity. Edit in the camera — if you fluff something, cut it short and move on, or shoot it again if you can.

STEP 2. Register at YouTube

It's as easy as clicking on Sign Up, and filling in some basic information (which stays private).

STEP 3. Upload your video

Login and click on Upload. This will take you to a new screen, where you will need to choose a title for your video, a description, a set of tags and a category (among others). It's important to provide accurate information here. If the description says one thing, and the video is about another, you will get a bad rating.

Monitor your video for comments, especially if it is a demo of a product. People may want to ask you questions, and answering them is a good idea.

STEP 4. Promote your clip

If your topic is interesting and your tags are right, you'll no doubt attract quite a few visitors.

However, to really ramp up your traffic to the max, you'll need to do some *extra* promotion.

For example, you could post comments and forum messages in other places across the web which include a link to your clip. You may even be able to get people you know to include links on their websites. Don't neglect emails and offline connects, as well.

One thing you need to beware of while thinking of ways to promote your clip is DON'T SPAM. Make sure any comments or messages you post or give out are on-topic, or you'll lose both credibility AND traffic, instead of gaining it.

Vlogs.

I've mentioned these in the book. They consist of people commenting on
various matters, as they might in a blog, but doing so in a video clip instead. The big advantage of vlogs over written blogs is that you can show something in pictures.

Perhaps you could show clips of your product being made, or people happily using it. If it's a service, you could show yourself talking to a client or patient, while giving a voice-over commentary on the vlog.

Picture quality should be decent without being outstanding, but ensure that your sound quality is as good as possible. Remember the pluses and minuses of vlogs that I talked about in my book.

An image from renetto's vlog on YouTube

MySpace

One of the most in vogue websites of the moment is MySpace, the won-derful social networking site which has attracted so much controversy and so much bitter irony from anyone past his 20s. And yet MySpace is one of the **healthiest sources of income for Web 2.0 marketers.** How come?

Probably because, while it still has all the energy and verve of a teens website, MySpace appeals to a population demographic averaging in the 20s. Many of its members are in their 30s, even. Here we're talking about a lot of people making their way in their careers and relationships, filled with optimism and a sense that they're in control of their own destiny. (You remember that time, don't you?!) Young enough to do everything, yet old enough to think!

HOT TIP

Create an account on MySpace, enjoy the up-beat atmosphere, and find out what motivates 20 and 30-

Using online social networks for marketing is closely related to blogging. **MySpace,** for instance, offers straightforward blogging features.

The main idea is for online social networks (OSNs) to link people with similar interests, hobbies or affiliations. Therefore, it provides a set of users for whom whatever you are trying to sell is relevant. The key is to be able to sell them your thing.

The Big Players

At this moment, the biggest players on the OSN front are *MySpace* (www.myspace.com), *Facebook* (www.facebook.com) and *Hi5* (www.hi5.com). The first two are probably the most appealing to a majority of marketers, since they have a large and broad audience, as well as offering several tools for promoting a business.
Hi5 is less appreciated, mainly because it offers fewer tools (it's not a way to make a presence for yourself, but merely a way to "organize" your friends). In addition, its users are mostly teenagers. This can, however, be turned into an advantage, because most teenagers communicate much more easily than adults do.

You'll no doubt remember the concept of "presence streams" that I spoke of in *Web 2.0 Traffic Stampede*. These evolved from sites like MySpace.

A MySpace member's home page

Facebook

Facebook is MySpace's greatest rival. Although it has grown a fraction more slowly over the last few years, due to its closed-circuit user base, it has an increasing number of members and a very healthy traffic flow.

And lest you get the wrong idea, a recent news story I read had Microsoft looking at purchasing a little under 5 percent of Facebook for between $300 and $500 million. The higher figure would value Facebook at around *$10 billion*! A subsequent article even suggested that a figure of $15 billion would be a more realistic assessment of the company's worth.

Either way, that's a truly extraordinary achievement for a company not four years old!

Facebook's sign-up page

The key to marketing through sites like Facebook is to make it seem you aren't really selling. The whole point of social networking is to get *closer* to your clients, to *interact* with the community. Once this happens, the product almost sells itself.

That's exactly what you should announce on your website: not that you've registered at Facebook so that people can buy from a

Facebook friend, but that you have done so in order to have more involvement in the community, in order to understand your clients better and in order to work with them more easily and more productively.

Softly softly…

A moment ago I suggested that the way to market a product or service through the major social networks is to use a softly-softly approach. I'm convinced of that 100 percent. (To be fully accurate, I should say "the way to *draw traffic to your website*, which sells a product or service."). What I'm NOT convinced of is that we shouldn't even be looking at these networks as a means of building traffic for a commercial purpose.

- ☺ As long as this is done in a non-blatant, non-objectionable way,
- ☺ as long as we genuinely try to extend our personal network of people who know us,
- ☺ who come to know our values and what we're about,
- ☺ and as long as we participate in community debate
- ☺ and GIVE VALUE first,

I can't see what the problem is!

But one thing I know for sure: this is the best time EVER to be an Internet marketer, with excellent products or services to sell to people who really want and need them!!

So take my book, take this Spotlight, take the initiative (it's YOUR FUTURE — YOURS AND YOUR FAMILY'S) and go out there and build a Web 2.0 traffic stampede!!