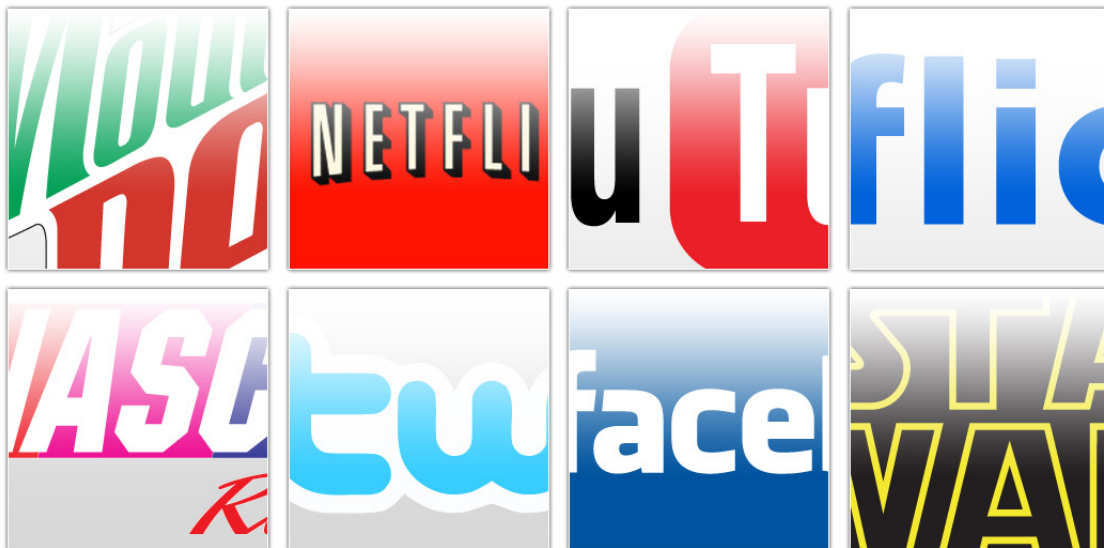


Ten (and a Half) Great Social Media Successes:

Vocus brings you a collection of social media success stories that rewrite the book on how organizations can engage their audiences online.

At Vocus, we embrace social media. All businesses should – even if they’re just using it to listen to their customers. Some organizations, however, are doing more than just listening and talking. They’re being creative; they’re using the power and reach of social media to engage their audiences in projects that go way beyond monitoring, reputation management and online coupons. You won’t find a formula for success here, or a prescribed process – but you might find inspiration in these snapshots of brands who dared to be a little bit different.



DEWmocracy Lives Up to its Name

Want to know what your customers want? Ask them — or better yet — have them make it for you. Pepsi, who caused a stir in forgoing superbowl advertising for social media,¹ has revived the 2007 DEWmocracy campaign that brought the world MountainDew Voltage. Welcome to DEWmocracy 2.² As its name suggests, DEWmocracy is by the people and for the people. In a bold and brilliant move, MountainDew gave 4,000 of its core fans (dubbed “DEW Labs”) and fans around the world the opportunity to create and choose new soda flavors. In addition, fans could create and vote on flavor names, packaging, advertising, and, according to Bevnet, even the choice of advertising channels.³



The 12-month campaign uses both traditional and social media as well as advertising. Channels include the web, Facebook, 12second.tv as well as mobile taste tests and online taste tests.⁴ DEWmocracy has been deemed the most aggressive social media campaign to date by Mashable this April;⁵ in another article, the site explains “How Pepsi Got it Right”.⁶

What we can learn:

Put your money where your mouth is — if you ask for opinions, be prepared to act. Social media campaigns should be genuine. Prepare for the long-haul as well. Social media is instantaneous, but requires a time commitment and a willingness to let ideas and communities grow.

NetFlix Gets a New Product

Right around when Facebook was getting big, NetFlix, the world’s largest movie subscription service, launched a contest that unequivocally showed the power of crowd and social media.⁷ The company challenged engineers across the world to improve their movie recommendation algorithm. Why? Because, in the words of NetFlix’s CEO: “We’re driving the Model T version of what is possible. We want to build a Ferrari.”

After almost three years and submissions from more than 40,000 teams, NetFlix awarded BellKor’s Pragmatic Chaos \$1 million dollars for improving their software by 10%.⁸ For NetFlix, the result was publicity, engagement, and press in outlets like Fortune, Business Week, Slate and the New York Times — as well as a product enhancement that may have cost them 10 times the amount of the prize if they had done it themselves.

That same year, the company launched a second contest to discover more about “the predictability of movie watcher behaviors”; however, NetFlix’s second contest ran into legal issues over privacy and was stopped.⁹ Not necessarily a cautionary tale — just a note that even in the ideas-driven world of social media, a good idea can go too far.



$$\hat{r}_{ui} = b_{ui} + |\mathbf{N}(u)|^{-\frac{1}{2}} \sum_{j \in \mathbf{N}(u)} e^{-\beta_u |i_u - i_j|} c_{ij} + |\mathbf{R}(u)|^{-\frac{1}{2}} \sum_{j \in \mathbf{R}(u)} e^{-\beta_u |i_u - i_j|} ((r_{uj} - \bar{b}_{uj}) w_{ij}) + \sum_{j \in \mathbf{R}(u)} e^{-\gamma_u |i_u - i_j|} ((r_{uj} - \bar{b}_{uj}) d_{ij}).$$

This equation, from Yehuda Koren’s prize-winning documentation, shows the winning team adding a third set of movie-movie weights, and emphasis on adjacent ratings made by a user. (Source: Wired)¹⁰

What we can learn:

Your audience can provide the answers to the questions you’re struggling with. Show the courage and creativity to ask them to help.

A Symphony of Talent

Businesses are increasingly finding their talent online. A recent article states that Accenture will look for most of its candidates for more than 50,000 open jobs on LinkedIn this year.¹¹ LinkedIn claims that 40% of the Fortune 100 use its site to find talent.

But there are other ways to uncover talent. In December 2007, the band Journey hired singer Arnel Pineda after a member of the band saw him on YouTube. Twitter has dozens of job feeds and sites. A single, quick search of the terms “hiring” and “internships” brings up hundreds and hundreds of tweets — that’s a lot to work with.

On a much grander scale, the YouTube Symphony Orchestra¹² shows how easy it is to access and bring together talent online. In 2008, YouTube and the London Symphony Orchestra created the first online orchestra. Hopefuls posted their auditions on YouTube, and the orchestra created from the winners got to play at Carnegie Hall. To date, this single YouTube channel has had more than 13 million views.




What we can learn:

Create an interactive stage for people to showcase their own talent to their peers. They’ll create your content, and your story.

Britain’s Finest Hour: Minute by Minute

June 1, 1940: Red 5 (F/Sgt. UNWIN) climbed underneath one of the enemy aircraft and gave a burst of five secs. at an opening range of 150 yards. It blew up over his head. Red 2 (Sergt. POTTER) after firing at several enemy aircraft without visible effect and after seeing his tracer enter the fuselage of one enemy aircraft he ran out of ammunition. Turning for home in a 12-boost dive, he was hit on the port side by a cannon shell which destroyed his oil cooler...¹³

It’s not every day you can read the words of a British pilot detailing an attack he just made on enemy planes over Dunkirk in 1940. Well, actually it is. Between April and October, Britain’s Imperial War Museum is commemorating the Battle of Britain’s 70th anniversary by re-living it in real-time,¹⁴ in the words of those who participated, through Twitter (RAFDuxford 1940) feeds, RSS feeds, blogs and Flickr uploads. To date, the RAF pilots have around 2,200 followers and fans, including Brit celebrity Eddie Izzard, who tweeted about the launch of the campaign. The Museum makes great use of its “website/operations center” — a hi-tech site with a WWII look and feel that combines information about the museum with links to further reading.




Brian Lane, the Battle of Britain pilot whose 1940 career can be traced through the Operation Record Books that will be tweeted this year
Picture: SUBMITTED to the Wisbeck Standard

What we can learn:

Good, clever uses of communications channels can breathe new life into anything — even events that happened 70 years ago.

A Uniquely Successful Viral Campaign

Do a quick search for Uniqlo's Lucky Switch,¹⁵ the clothing chain's 2009 end-of-year online campaign, and you'll get more than 200,000 results for this community-focused ad campaign that went viral through social media.

Here's the premise: as well as a daily sale on their website, Uniqlo also offered a clickable "lucky ticket", with winners receiving a free totebag. Instead of advertising the promotion through simple banner ads, Uniqlo let bloggers put a widget into their own sites that transformed every ad on the site into a Uniqlo lucky ticket. If blog readers won, they got a tote; if they lost, the ticket turned into a banner ad directing them to the Uniqlo sale. Nearly 5,000 bloggers were impressed enough to put the bookmarklet widget on their sites. Uniqlo received an unheard-of 2.5-plus million ad clicks and enjoyed a 120% increase in sales.

Uniqlo is no stranger to viral publicity. The brand also runs UTweet¹⁶ – an on-site app that lets users enter their Twitter handle to see a stylish animation of their tweets and Twitter icons.



What we can learn:

The technology is there to make it happen – but you need a good idea for others to spread the word.

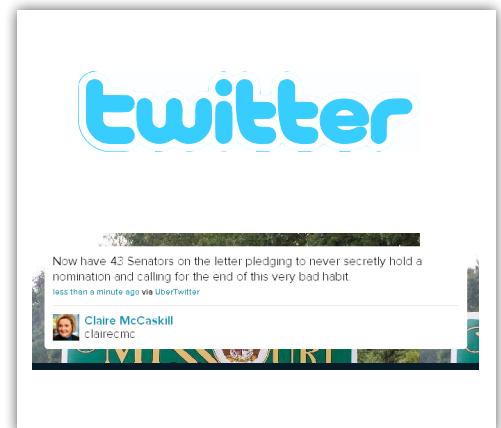
One Congresswoman Changes the Rules of Engagement

One member of Congress won't follow you back on Twitter. Don't take it personally though, especially if you live in Missouri, because there's a good reason to Sen. Claire McCaskill's technique. While the concept defies conventional wisdom of social media engagement, engagement is exactly why she's a non-follower.

"Most members of Congress who tweet have staff help on their tweeting," she wrote on her blog. "I took a different route. I decided I would do this myself."¹⁷

Sen. McCaskill explains that she reads — and replies — to nearly every Tweet addressed to her; however, if she followed everyone back, she'd have to sift through too many Tweets to find the ones that truly require her attention. It comes down to time management, she explains: rather than allocate all that time to engaging on Twitter, she'd rather spend it engaging on her work for Missouri.

The junior Senator's Twitter handle (@clairecmc) currently counts more than 38,000 followers and she's posted more than 1,500 times. Mashable credits her with creating the #MO hash tag as a means for residents of Missouri to get her attention.¹⁸



What we can learn:

If you've got lots of fans or followers, you can't always engage them all at once — but that doesn't mean you can't be open about it. Explain why you can't — you'll earn people's respect for your transparency.

Social Media and Small Business

“Welcome to AJ Bombers, where everyone knows your name — or at least your Twitter handle,” wrote The Business Journal of Milwaukee.¹⁹ The Milwaukee burger joint has used Twitter (@AJBomber) and other social media networks to build a community — and it’s proving to be a standout case study in how small business can spread the word online.

The burger joint has taken engagement on Twitter to a whole new level. It hosts Tweetups, like the “Bloody (Mary) Brunch” and has even introduced a popular new menu item — “Burger of the Moment” — created by one of the restaurant’s Twitter followers (@KateBerrie), according to Forrester’s Augie Ray.²⁰ AJ Bombers also “used Facebook to create initial awareness of their brand via a Facebook profile picture promotion, where their customers were assigned the task of taking the most creative photo in their logoed, signature, extra large beach chairs and post that photo as their profile picture, also leaving that photo up for the entire month of July.”²¹ The restaurant also offers free food to fans who hold its “mayor” badge on Foursquare — and they’ve also tapped the SXSW crowd to leverage the coveted “Swarm” badge and generate more business. To qualify for a swarm badge, 50 people or more must check in to the same place at the same time. When AJ Bombers made the offer online, they brought in 161 patrons. “Astounding for a burger place, let alone the fact there are only a few hundred Foursquare users total in Milwaukee,” wrote blogger Stephan Antonas.²² The buzz continues to spread. The same Biz Journal article says social media has landed AJ Bombers articles in the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, CNN and even a special on the Travel Channel, called “Food Wars.”



What we can learn:

Engaging hard across multiple social media channels can propel a small, unassuming brand to nationwide fame.

NASCAR Fans Tune Up the Rulebook

After a decade of tremendous growth, NASCAR found attendance and TV viewing slipping in 2008. What did it do? It steered its attention towards its diehard fans — an audience capable of creating a buzz louder than any engine. The brand teamed with interactive agency Vision Critical to engage its core supporters in the NASCAR Fan Council — a community of 12,000 fans who get to do more than just cheer.²³

NASCAR engages this community of members at least twice a month around issues relating to the sport — and their views have changed the shape of racing. Recently, a change was made to the restart rule (drivers now restart the race side-by-side instead of in single file) based on groundswell opinion within the Fan Council.²⁴ The result was immense goodwill from viewers nationwide.



What we can learn:

If you’re stuck for answers about what people want, ask them through social media and then demonstrate a willingness to do more than just listen.

Facebook Flashes Colors

Victor Hugo, the 18th century French poet and statesman might not have had breast cancer or Facebook in mind when he said, “All the forces in the world are not so powerful as an idea whose time has come” — but somehow his words seem fitting for the spontaneous sensation of “What Color is Your Bra?”

Women everywhere, in a risqué revelation for a good cause, began posting the color of their brassieres as their status updates in order to raise awareness of breast cancer. The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation has been the most notable advocate of the phenomenon — yet no organization or strategist has actually stepped forward as its originator, though some reports indicate it started with a blogger in Detroit.²⁵ Wherever it started, it didn’t stop with a blog post. Thousands of Facebook users (ostensibly women) began posting one-word status updates: “black,” “red,” or even “nothing”, according to Mashable.²⁶ The media pounced on the story: as well as Mashable, Washington Post, NPR, Associated Press, and CNET all covered the craze. A Google query, now several months later, still returns nearly 4.5 million search results.

The phenomenon was not without criticism. “At this point, there can’t be a person in the world who isn’t aware of breast cancer. What we need is not a context-free reminder of its existence, but a cure, as well as some scientific clarity about how best to prevent the disease. Does anyone think the Facebook meme contributes an iota to that?” wrote Newsweek.²⁷ Even so, it’s hard to deny that it got people talking. In addition, some media who covered the posts provided links to nonprofit organizations where readers could learn more or donate.



What we can learn:

A single blog post — if that’s what happened — can start a worldwide Internet sensation.

HARO Helps Others to Help Itself

In 2007, PR agency founder Peter Shankman started a Facebook group in response to the number of queries he was receiving from journalists looking for hard-to-find sources. The page allowed journalists to post their source requests directly to readers looking to place an organization, product—or simply themselves—in the media.

Within a year, the group had outgrown Facebook, so Shankman relaunched it as the Help A Reporter Out²⁸ email. The project now connects nearly 30,000 reporters and bloggers to 100,000 email recipients including PR professionals, businesses and members of the public, and turns over \$1 million a year by selling ad space at the top of each email. Shankman has yet to spend a penny on conventional marketing for the project, which grew instead through social media buzz and word of mouth. This June, he sold it to Vocus — that’s us — and joined the company as a social media leader.²⁹



What we can learn:

One: create content that genuinely helps people, and they’ll help your project grow by spreading the word.
Two: create a social media project this impressive, and Vocus might buy you.

And Finally... Star Wars

You can't talk about social media without mentioning Star Wars.

Very recently in a galaxy far, far away a LEGO Star Wars video racked up more than 1.5 million views.³⁰ The video was posted on May 4, 2010; the next day, Mashable covered it after 100K views.³¹ The pairing of Star Wars and LEGO and the overall success of the two put together is nothing new. The partnership has helped revive the LEGO company, which had been struggling to compete with video games and electronic toys. Meanwhile, the toys themselves continue to win awards.



What we can learn:

Very little really. We just love Star Wars and LEGO and wanted to mention them.

About Vocus

Vocus is the world's leading provider of on-demand software for public relations and marketing professionals. Vocus enables organizations of all sizes to increase their visibility, monitor and measure their reputation, and engage with journalists and consumers across traditional and social media. Vocus is based in Lanham, MD with offices in North America, Europe and Asia. Vocus software is used by more than 4,400 organizations worldwide and is available in seven languages. NASDAQ:VOCS

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