

# WISDOM REPORT

## Marketing Wisdom for 2011

Real-Life Stories of Success and Lessons  
Learned from the MarketingSherpa  
Community



marketing**sherpa**

powered by MECLABS

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MarketingSherpa Community

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## Marketing Wisdom for 2011

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the ninth annual edition of the MarketingSherpa Wisdom Report, a collection of your real-life stories, test results and lessons learned from the previous year.

Much like the year that preceded it, 2010 was a trying time for marketers. Despite the rumblings of "recovery" and "improved economy" that filled the airwaves each and every day, this nation's financial troubles continued to present obstacles for marketers. From what we gathered from these submissions, marketers continued the streamlined approaches they began in 2009, and dug deep to stay afloat – and even *prosper* – despite limited budgets, reduced staff and an increasingly skeptical customer population.

In past Wisdom Reports, we've used this space to highlight notable trends that emerged from your entries. This year, despite your myriad ways of expressing it, the most prominent trend culled from hundreds of submissions was simple:

*Communicate.*

If 2009 was a time to focus on marketing fundamentals, 2010 was the year in which you sowed the seeds of these "back-to-basics" efforts and built forward-thinking campaigns around them. From stories of elaborate, innovative social media outreach, to the most basic expressions of thanks, it was clear that communication – both internal and external – was a foundation of your 2010 marketing efforts.

To that end, we also have revised our categorization for this year's edition. Just as your efforts were streamlined this past year, so were your stories. Social media has become a predominant tactic for both B2B and consumer marketers, warranting its own category. And with significant developments in mobile marketing, online marketing continues to grow and adopt new tactics, as well.

Email marketing – despite many rumors of its demise in the wake of social media's explosive growth – proved to be another well-documented category, and as such, receives its own section in this year's report.

Finally, our yearly section on office politics has now been broadened to include all forms of general marketing wisdom, applicable to both vaunted best practices and the basic cornerstones of what we do, for experienced and entry-level marketers alike.

And with that, it's our turn to communicate our appreciation to you – the marketers who shared their stories for this year's Wisdom Report and those who will benefit from them. Thank you for your time, your efforts and your wisdom. These entries will inspire thousands of fellow marketers, all of them sharing the same hopes that 2011 produces stronger results, new opportunities and more wisdom to come.

Best,

Brad Bortone  
Associate Editor, MarketingSherpa (a MECLABS company)

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## CHAPTER 1 EMAIL MARKETING

The much-prophesied demise of email marketing (at the hands of social media) was at the forefront of discussion just a year ago. Yet, as we saw in 2010, email is not only alive, but currently thriving, thanks to a wealth of efforts that boosted customer reach, engaged (and re-engaged) subscribers, integrated with social media platforms and created seamless user experiences that connected with well-optimized landing pages.

As a result, email marketing remained a key element both on its own, and as part of integrated, multi-tiered campaigns.

To stay on top of the latest in email marketing, be sure to subscribe to MarketingSherpa's free [Email Marketing newsletter](#).

## LESS IS MORE

Since digital marketing is cheap (and often free), we tend to over-do it. More links, more content, more email newsletters, more pages...

Seth Godin once said, "Once you overload the user, you train them not to pay attention. More clutter isn't free and is a permanent shift, desensitization to ALL the information, not just the last bit. More is not always better. In fact, more is almost never better."

Put simply, try reducing your company's newsletter to above the fold or limit it to just one link.

- Nathan Potter, IDES, [www.ides.com](http://www.ides.com)

## MIND YOUR METRICS

Look at all your metrics when testing. In email tests results from different campaigns this year, I have seen:

- 1) A subject line test with unique click rate up 45%, only to find total click rate unchanged
- 2) No change in click rate in a creative redesign but the pattern of what was clicked changed
- 3) A "from name" test giving a 33% increase in open rate, by using a person not a brand, but a 150% increase in unsubscribes.

These results were all statistically valid and significant for the test cell size. While it's necessary in testing to have key evaluation metric that closely reflects your campaign objective, do also look deeper at all campaign metrics. You may find unexpected side effects or an apparent no result actually having a result, such as the creative test that had the same clicks but what was clicked changed.

- Tim Watson, smartFOCUS, [www.smartfocus.com](http://www.smartfocus.com)

## CREATE INTERACTIVITY IN EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

We have just launched a year-end email campaign for Christmas for clients and prospects. Using a simple clickthrough tool on some landing pages we have offered our recipients a way to be part of a small game where they can click on packages in the email to see what kind of prize they have won.

One challenge we have found is to get people to engage, and to provide us with indications they are doing so. This campaign is still running but we are seeing a much higher incidence of people interacting with the material. The lesson for us is that appealing to email readers' generosity – when it will not cost them any actual dollars – alongside their desire to win something of value is a good tactic to help them to engage with your message.

- Lee Kirkby, Leppert Business Systems Inc., <http://blog.leppert.com>

## GUERRILLA MARKETING TRIUMPHS IN BAD ECONOMY

In this down economy the pursuit of new students becomes challenging. Our marketing / communications department worked to strengthen our email marketing campaigns with great results. We added student testimonials to our campaign and prospective students responded to our present students.

We also began to ask our present students to refer their colleagues and friends to us with an email campaign that succeeded beyond our estimation. One can prosper in a down economy by looking at guerrilla marketing tactics to reach prospective customers.

- Dr. Raymond Guilette, The National Graduate School, [www.ngs.edu](http://www.ngs.edu)

## YOU SOMETIMES GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR...

We've been encouraging our clients to go back to the basics of email marketing – building a list, sending targeted campaigns, and setting up event triggers to automate the email marketing process. We also are reviewing the results of the campaigns with our clients over the phone and showing them hidden areas of potential revenue they might be missing.

One client is a large university that sends frequent messages to current students and alumni. In April of this year, they shopped around and found a better "deal" with an entry level email marketing providing. They had been averaging a 30% open rate, and using the same lists, same campaigns, and same offers, saw their open rates tumble to nearly 10% with the other provider.

In August they came back to Knowledge Marketing and immediately returned to a 30% average open rate. For us, this year has been about demonstrating value for the investment and doing the little, unexpected things for our clients to help them succeed.

- Tim Martinson, Knowledge Marketing, [www.knowledgemarketing.com](http://www.knowledgemarketing.com)

## (REALLY) KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

[Our client] wanted to increase renewal rates among members completing their first year of membership. After auditing their current communications efforts we concluded that members didn't clearly understand all of the benefits available.

Since we knew very little about these members, we decided to ask seven survey questions (a known threshold for research participation) and segment members into four key life stages based on answers of participants (households with no kids, households with kids under the age of 13, households with kids aged 14-18, and non-participants) and create benefit messaging by life stage segment.

After pouring over MarketingSherpa's *Best Practices in Email Marketing Handbook*, we recommended a "postcard"-type email format to deliver single-focused messaging.



The outcome was a series of email blasts, by life stage segment, that were blasted every two weeks, PLUS a series of "special" emails that universal appeal, which were blasted based on calendar date or triggered event. Open rates of the first "Welcome" email were 2.5x higher than the previous benchmark and clickthrough rates nearly 300% higher. Open rates of the first segment-specific email were nearly 350% higher than the benchmark and clickthroughs, depending on the subject matter in the email, were well above benchmark metrics.

After 16 weeks of blasting, segments were still at 30% open rates and 15% clickthrough. Event-triggered emails enjoy open rates of 50-80% with clickthrough rates between 70 and 95%. While retention rates are just starting to be measured, we know we increased engagement with the brand, so we're hopeful that we see that reflected in renewal rates.

- Carolyn Goodman, Goodman Marketing Partners, [www.goodmanmarketing.com](http://www.goodmanmarketing.com)

## DELIVER TARGETED CONTENT TO SEGMENTED LISTS

Over the past ten years I have worked with a myriad of health care providers as well as individual family doctors helping them with their email marketing. Like most email marketing we always suggest strongly to segment and offer content based on the individual recipients wants and needs. When these rules are followed along with personalization, the increase in opens and clickthroughs, as well as interaction with doctors about content in their newsletter were amazing. We took a sampling of family doctors who opted for help segmenting their lists and providing dynamic content based on patient's medical needs and history as well as current prescriptions.

This sample was taken over a 12-month period with 12 doctors who segment/personalize their newsletters and ten doctors who did not. Doctors, who segmented, created and delivered targeted content and used personalized subject lines had an average open rate of 41% versus an average of 22% for those who didn't. Almost a 100% increase. Some doctors had open-rates of 50%. Clickthrough rates also increased by an average of more than 50%, with many of the doctors getting close to a 20% clickthrough rate.

Sharing of newsletter content by "Forward-to-a-Friend" and social media increased by an average of 25%. While those doctors without targeted content showed only a 3% increase of sharing.

We reviewed a list of the top 14 reoccurring patient medical conditions which covered almost 78% of all patients. We then built a content library of multiple articles on each malady for targeted placement in the newsletter. We continued to add new articles as the projects progressed.

Many of the articles we used were available for free from either medical associations or through pharmaceutical companies. We then went on the hunt for discount programs and free trials of top 30 most prescribed medicines so we could include those to recipients using those medications. We also included notices when named brand medicines were available as generics, saving the patient money. We created a separate database to manage the patient's information based on a blind key set of criteria so when the patient list was uploaded there was no discernable information unless you had the key to the blind criteria set.

We were now able to send targeted newsletters with dynamic content to almost 80% of the doctor's patients. We also tested and found that unlike some personalized subject lines, when using the Dr.'s name and the patient's first name in the subject line (Example: For Chris from Dr. Smith) the open rate increased significantly in all cases. This personalization also helped reactivate subscribers who previously were disengaged. We also created a preference center so subscribers can choose additional content subjects that interest them. It seems people have a very personal connection to their family doctors.

Although that wasn't a complete surprise it was an eye-opening experience. Did all this take some increase in time and budget to complete? Of course, but the results paid for itself quickly with more interaction with patients, higher patient satisfaction and patients directly commenting on articles and savings they received when visiting with their doctor.

Taking the time to create, manage and deliver customized content can make a significant difference with the engagement of your recipients and build on the valued and trusted relationship between doctor and patient.

Takeaway: Delivering targeted content will help any business with their email marketing campaigns. Just take the time to review your list and what you know about them and start segmenting and delivering the content they want and need.

- Chris Donald, Inbox Group Email Marketing, [www.inboxgroup.com](http://www.inboxgroup.com)

## LIST MANAGEMENT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

Grant Wrangler is our free grants listing service for teachers and schools. We operate it as a community service and a "sandbox" for testing technologies, content, and services.

In November 2009, we made major updates to our site design and content. After the redesign, we expected traffic, ad revenue, and newsletter signups to increase. Instead, we saw very modest increases in traffic, some loss in ad revenue and no increase in our newsletter list.

After several months of testing newsletter subject lines, promotions, buying ad words, revamping our SEO – all the strategies that are supposed to matter – I stumbled upon the answer. We were cleaning up our mailing lists and I discovered two opt-in lists with nearly identical names. One was growing; the other had no new addresses since November 2009.

During our redesign, we had posted the wrong opt-in to on our subscribe page. People were signing up on one list and we were mailing to another one!

A couple of lessons:

1. Assume nothing and test everything.
  2. A sandbox site that does good for the community is a great way to learn how to do your best for your clients.
- Karen Henke, Nimble Press, [www.nimble-press.com](http://www.nimble-press.com)

## DEEP DISCOUNTS RESONATE WITH BUYERS

Our online retail company does twice to three times the normal monthly sales in November in December. To make sure our Christmas sales are big, we tried a new marketing ploy in November and it was a big success.

We send out monthly emails to our customers offering usually 15% off their next purchase. In November we made an offer for a one day sale with 33% off. We have never given that deep of a discount before, and initially we were skeptical but chose to take the plunge.

We sent out an email to all our customers that the sale was going to happen the day before. The day of the sale we sent another email that a few hours were left. Our customers responded! We had three times the orders we usually have from our promotions

- Haralee, [www.haralee.com](http://www.haralee.com)

## CHAPTER 2 ONLINE MARKETING

Based on your responses, 2010 brought about an interesting amalgam of old and new marketing tactics. For every story highlighting new tools to improve SEO, we learned of a marketer who applied tried-and-true practices to this new technology. Video chat promoted personalized, one-to-one interaction. Mobile platforms increased the likelihood of interaction, and testing and research were paramount to success.

Above all, 2010 was the year that content returned to the forefront of online marketing. While crafty SEO and better keywords brought people to your websites, unique, valuable content is what kept them there ... and more importantly, brought them back.

If you're interested in keeping up with the ever changing world of online marketing ,be sure to subscribe to MarketingSherpa's [Best-of-Weekly newsletter](#).

## B2B CAN BE FUN (NO...REALLY!)

The words "automation" and "fun" are seldom seen in the same sentence. For that matter, the words "B2B" and "fun" don't mingle at the same parties, either. For whatever reason, the marketing automation industry has traditionally been seen as the serious member of the sober B2B family.

Eloqua decided to buck the trend. There wasn't a massive amount of data to support our decision. We didn't distribute questionnaires asking prospects if they ached for more humor from vendors. We didn't draw a Venn diagram highlighting the intersection of purchase interest and consumption of quirky content. We just intuited it - and trusting intuition doesn't always come naturally to a "measure everything" company like Eloqua. So we decided to, well, have a little fun with our marketing, and hope the spirit would catch on.

First of all, we took the concept of a "whitepaper," long held as the prize hammer in the B2B marketer's tool belt, and we turned it green (literally) and coffee stained. That is, we redesigned the traditional whitepaper, stylized it, and branded it "The Eloqua Grande Guide series."

We also made each paper very short. Like, short enough for marketers whose attention span has been reduced to milliseconds thanks to today's 140-character communications economy. And we made a promise to the reader: We'd equip you with subject matter expertise (each paper focuses on a single topic) in about the time it takes you to drink your "grande" cup of coffee.

We also created a fictitious character - Juan Eloqua, a nobleman known for growing coffee and revenue - and we produced cheeky videos of Mr. Eloqua introducing each Grande Guide. We hosted all of these assets on a single microsite (in addition to distributing them broadly across the social Web).

To capture leads, we pushed the campaign out through our own email system (requiring recipients to complete a form); to generate awareness we concurrently offered the resources for free on social channels.

It worked. In fact, it's still working. From a lead gen perspective, the campaign generated more than 500 marketing qualified leads in one quarter alone. It reengaged thousands of dormant prospects in Eloqua's database. And, most importantly, it lead to real closed deals. From an awareness perspective, the results were just as powerful.

Dozens of blogs, hundreds of tweets, several awards, and a handful of "best of" lists all cheering the Grande Guide campaign as proof positive the trial separation between "B2B" and "fun" is over.

- Joe Chernov, Eloqua, [www.eloqua.com](http://www.eloqua.com)

## PERSONALIZATION IS APPRECIATED

Customers like some customization. I was performing user testing on some of our new online products with some members of ours, and had a little time to kill before the demo. I was able to get into the wireframe and customize some of the names and fields to represent the member's company name, industry, potential interests, etc. – right down to the names of the members on the actual call. They appreciated the extra effort to learn about how they could utilize the tool better.

- Michael Kinstlinger

## LET YOUR WEB PRESENCE MATCH YOUR REAL-LIFE OFFERINGS

At the University of St. Thomas, online lead generation is very important to increase interest in our non-degree and degree programs in business. Unfortunately, our frontline Web experiences weren't living up to the standards of the programs themselves.

We adopted a post-click marketing tool to help us improve our Web presence. Whereas before it would take us months to test just one aspect of our online campaigns, in the same amount of time we've now tested video testimonials, long-tail messaging, incentives, second-level segmentation and three levels of narrowing by visitor's intent. This has lead to a 3X conversion rate improvement, higher quality of leads and a Web experience that now reflects our programs.

This year we also integrated the tool with our marketing automation platform, allowing for seamless passing of lead data. In 2011, we will be focusing on bringing an exceptional user experience to the mobile market by creating, testing and optimizing mobile landing pages within the platform.

- Mykola Sarazhynskyy, University of St. Thomas, [www.stthomas.edu](http://www.stthomas.edu)

## REWARD CUSTOMER TRUST WITH VALUE

It's no secret that the growth of the mobile channel will continue to increase over the coming years. With that in mind, marketers need to use the mobile experience to deepen the relationship between the brand and consumer and to connect other multichannel experiences.

If marketers concentrate all their mobile efforts on a branded push, the mobile opportunity is missed. Deliver usefulness and value to your customers by helping them figure out ways to enhance their lives, solve a problem or deliver instant personal engagement that's relevant to why they know about you in the first place.

Connecting with your customers via mobile is a deep and personal relationship. If you get permission to communicate with them over the mobile channel, you must be ready and able to deliver value.

- Dave Lawson, Knotice, [www.knotice.com](http://www.knotice.com)

## FACE-TO-FACE IS NEW TECHNOLOGY PROVIDING OLD-FASHIONED RESULTS

Live video chat has enjoyed tremendous adoption among online marketers thanks to the 20% conversion rates providers consistently report. And it makes sense; online marketers took a page from their brick and mortar operations and began providing live sales support to their website visitors. Unfortunately, the user experience and conversion rates have changed little since website text support was first introduced more than ten years ago.

This year, we tested the next generation of live support - live video chat - in a pilot with one of the for-profit colleges in California, and came up with some pretty astounding results. The contact rate for completed inquiry forms was 89%, speed-to-contact averaged just 8 seconds, and conversion rates among those who engaged in video chat were 44%!

In fact, across the almost 400 video chats conducted in our pilot, the average duration was nearly 11 minutes. This gave the agents the opportunity to spend enough time to make the students comfortable and demonstrate a genuine interest in helping them pursue their career dreams.

Going into this we expected our results to improve over text alone. We weren't disappointed. As video chat evolves from a consumer curiosity into an online business tool, the early adopters will enjoy the greatest benefits that this innovation can bring to their bottom lines.

- Joe Bigley, Live ADViZOR, [www.liveadvizor.com](http://www.liveadvizor.com)

## PPC IS CHEAPER, MORE EFFECTIVE THAN ESTABLISHED MEDIA

We wanted to test an entirely new medium (television) for comparison against our existing Google PPC campaigns, to see if we would pull in visitors whose behaviors would justify any assumed added cost.

In less than an hour (and for less than \$200) we were able to produce a broadcast-quality television commercial and had it slotted on top channels (CNN, The History Channel, Golf Channel, etc.) using Google TV Ads. We added a new domain and custom toll-free number to track this new channel, so results were easily measurable.

It took two weekends for us to learn that – at least for our audience – TV's cost per visitor was exactly 10x more expensive than PPC; and for us, these users had no discernible difference in propensity to engage and/or buy. So for us, it was back to PPC.

- Robert Kelen, ItalyByWeb.com

## KEYWORD RESEARCH IS PARAMOUNT

Getting better results with organic search was a major part of my copywriting business this year. Following Google's suggestions on relevance and narrowing the focus of my clients' landing pages really helped boost their rankings. I did my own keyword research, rather than rely on client assumptions or previous work done by others. Knowing what terms prospects were actually searching on in real time really helped target my audience. It also helped keep the copy tight, relevant and focused.

Making sure page titles, descriptions, keywords, video scripts, video titles and metadata, and image titles and alt text were optimized for specific search terms helped boost position, as well as the inclusion of XML sitemaps for pages and video. While narrowing the focus of product pages may mean you need to add pages to a client's website, it's well worth the extra effort as it helped maximize free clicks and improved PPC ad performance as well.

- Michael Fiala, The Write Copy, [www.thewritecopy.com](http://www.thewritecopy.com)

## MOBILE MEDIA PROMOTES INTERACTION

Everyone seems to acknowledge that the importance of mobile marketing is on the rise very quickly. More and more businesses are looking at using SMS/Text messaging, QR Codes or geo-location services to reach their mobile audience. Of course, we may only invest a little bit of money and effort into this channel, because we may think that portion of our audience is small.

However, we may be surprised to find out that the number of people that will interact with our company on their mobile phones is greater than we may have expected. In a print ad, we offered people a free whitepaper that contained "10 Secrets for Marketing Success."

We provided two ways for people to access it: a short URL on the ad, and a QR Code. This turned into one of our most successful print advertisements of the year. We had a few hundred people download the document.

However, we were surprised by which response channel led the majority of the people to the landing page. More than 70% of the respondents hit our landing page by scanning the QR Code versus typing the URL into their Web browser. Sure, not everyone in our target audience has a smartphone yet. But the number of people that do continues to rise, especially among those in the worlds of marketing, communications, print, etc.

- Jason Pinto, InterlinkONE, [www.interlinkone.com](http://www.interlinkone.com)



## THERE IS NO "ONE SIZE FITS ALL" IN ONLINE MARKETING

As an online marketer who manages an audience base of 4 million and growing, I knew I needed a way to segment my audience and provide specific and targeted online messaging to each unit. A "one size fits all" landing page approach just wasn't working, but I didn't have the time or resources to create multiple pages.

To help me, I adopted a landing page management tool, and using its template driven, no-code interface, I was able to quickly create multiple landing pages for each of my business units.

Whereas before I found it tough keeping up with one page, I'm now managing over 500 landing pages! This not only increased my Google quality score but I'm now consistently seeing a 15-17% conversion rate! That's something I couldn't have achieved with one landing page for all 4 million customers.

The bottom line is that there's no such thing as 'one size fits all' in effective online marketing. It's all about hyper-personalization!

- Nicole Bukacek, Infogroup, [www.infogroup.com](http://www.infogroup.com)

## TEMPLATES OFFER EFFICIENCY

For a long time the word "template" stood for inflexible and uninspired. This meant many non-technical marketers had little choice but to go to outside creative agencies for a finished Web page. One page could take weeks or months to develop, at a very high cost.

We created brand-specific templates that give us a high-level of flexibility while ensuring brand consistency. It's important for us to reach new customers as well as engage our current base, and online campaigns are essential to our strategy for doing so.

Being able to work with flexible, branded Web templates allows us to not only ensure consistency between the 100+ countries we have campaigns running in, but also allows us to get new campaigns up and running quickly. We're very pleased that we went almost immediately from a very low conversion rate to as much as 9%, which has really made a difference in our ROI.

I would highly encourage fellow marketers to use templates for faster speed to market. Thanks to our predefined templates we are able to be very agile and set up campaigns in a matter of minutes or hours.

- Rolf Inge Holden, DHL Express, [www.dhl.no](http://www.dhl.no)

## GET CUSTOMERS TO YOUR SITE (AND KEEP THEM THERE)

In 2010 our SEO software company focused marketing efforts on improving the user experience, rebranding, and enhancing core technology based on customer feedback. The software is accessed via a Web-based search engine interface, so the website's effectiveness is key.

The goal for 2010 was to ensure that money spent on advertising driving traffic to the website would provide as many conversions and as much of a return on investment as possible. Why pay for online advertising if nobody stays on the website when they arrive? Since our website is effectively our business, it is vital to ensure that visitors understand the marketing message immediately upon arrival – you don't want them to get bored or confused, and leave.

We started with a complete overhaul of the website's look and feel, including the company name, branding, and marketing message. We focused the homepage on four different advantages that our software provides, like saving time and money, a proven SEO system, the ability to outrank your competition, and the ability to decipher any search engine codes.

Additionally, the new website devoted separate Web pages, content, and resources for each of our three primary types of customers so they could quickly and easily see why our products give them an advantage. Consolidating and clarifying site navigation to keep visitors from getting lost was also a focus.

In overhauling the site, we implemented a content management system which was a lot of work upfront, but would make it easier to add and remove content, test out different styles of branding, and make site-wide changes in the future. The great thing about these systems is that there are many companies who provide free or paid ready-made website templates. They are inexpensive and can save thousands of dollars in website design fees if you have the resources to devote to the project internally. We also found that stock photos are also a great resource to save valuable time and money on graphic design.

Advertising on social networks, search engines and other online outlets is only as effective as your website's ability to keep visitors on the site. It is important to take an objective look at your website, listen to customer feedback, and utilize tracking software to see how effective your website really is for your online business.

- Scott Stouffer, The SEO Engine, [www.seoengine.com](http://www.seoengine.com)

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE GROWING POPULATION OF MOBILE USERS

According to research out of e-Dialog's Centre for Digital Marketing Excellence, a study of 2,083 adults out of the US and UK, showed that mobile email usage continues to grow with 33% of consumers accessing email on their mobile devices. So, to take advantage of this growing audience we worked to create a targeted campaign focused on Apple iPhone customers.

An analysis of Avis' database and a special database query allowed us to identify significant growth in emails opened by mobile users, particularly Apple iPhone customers. A unique email design for the iPhone was created to ensure a more streamlined experience. The iPhone email, sent to a segmented list of iPhone users, continues to outperform traditional campaigns exceeding the client's expectations.

Due to the ongoing success of the program, Avis has now rolled out an optimized mobile campaign across other mobile devices.

- Andrea Orvis, e-Dialog, [www.e-dialog.com](http://www.e-dialog.com)

## TESTING LEADS TO ROI

Cycle of innovation and iteration leads to big wins. No matter how high your campaigns are converting, or how optimized you think they are, a continuous cycle of innovation and iteration can help to push the envelope even further. This year I increased SEM leads 200% over last year, thanks to ongoing landing page testing and optimization.

Most recently, an iteration wave resulted in over a 90% increase in Web conversions in our top performing market. Learning in pilot markets is then leveraged across markets to improve overall lead conversions and maintain brand consistency across twelve states. Having a nonstop cycle of content testing is the biggest piece of wisdom I can share with my fellow marketers looking to continually increase ROI.

- Arden Buchanan, Wellpoint, Inc., [www.wellpoint.com](http://www.wellpoint.com)

## CHAPTER 3 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

As we've said numerous times on our website and in the pages of our Benchmark Reports and special reports, social media is no longer an optional tactic. Once a novel way to expand your brand messaging, 2010 saw social media become a cohesive part of nearly everything we do online. Today, social sharing icons are as vital to the Web experience as hyperlinks and "back" buttons.

Social media's reach is now embedded in every part of our lives, and technology has matured to the point that social media innovation will no longer be limited by platform restrictions. Our computers, phones and even portable music devices now seamlessly integrate social tools into larger frameworks, allowing content sharing and online conversation to happen virtually in real-time.

But, as we've already established in this report, new technologies must be leveraged with time-honored marketing practices. Audience engagement, strategic campaign planning and well-targeted, valuable content will still be necessary for any marketer looking to leverage this rapidly evolving tactic.

Read on for a small sampling of how social media benefited your peers in 2010. And be sure to subscribe to MarketingSherpa's all-new [Inbound Marketing newsletter](#).

## ENGAGE THE AUDIENCE TO ACHIEVE OPTIMAL RESULTS

One of my biggest lessons this year has been that social media engagement and success is much more about the conversations you begin and not the messages you push out. When we first implemented social and blogging last fall, we saw it as a way to replicate content in a number of areas, and I think we believed the rest would follow. What I learned ... The rest doesn't follow until you engage in a conversation and provide true value. Not just message blasting to your audience.

As we learned more, we began continuing the conversations started out there with social and have seen tremendous results. Here are just a few examples:

- Clout and mentions have increased steadily as we have seen engagement spike.
- More customers are actively engaged than before.
- We are able to diffuse any negative comments or service issues with quick response.
- Sales and inbound leads have nearly doubled during this same time period.

Results speak volumes, but the conversations we have had over the past year resonate so much more.

- Carissa Newton, Delivra, [www.delivra.com](http://www.delivra.com)

## SOCIAL MEDIA REQUIRES THOROUGH PLANNING

This year, I found many clients enamored with the idea of jumping into social media. Should I blog? Maybe I should have a Facebook page? Maybe my company should be on Twitter?

When asked why they wanted to include social media into their marketing mix, the universal answer was because everyone else is doing it. But jumping into a new marketing tactic is never the best way to develop a strategic plan. Start by identifying your business and marketing goals.

- What are you trying to accomplish and who are you trying to reach?
- Is social media the best way to engage with your customers and prospects? If so, do you have a content strategy in place?
- How will it advance your business goals and grow your brand or business?
- Do you have the resources to keep the conversation going with a meaningful conversation?

Beginning a social media program without a strategy and resources in place is like inviting friends over for a party and then leaving. You have initiated a relationship and conversation, but aren't willing to participate. My wisdom for 2011: Know your audience and the best way to engage them to reach your goals. Have a plan in place to have a meaningful conversation, and provide value that differentiates your brand from the competition. If you want to dip your toe into social media waters, do it with your eyes wide open and with a solid plan in place.

- Barbara Reed, Terra3 Communications, [www.terra3communications.com](http://www.terra3communications.com)

## STRATEGY FIRST

When it comes to digital marketing communications, companies are seeing a lot of activity on Facebook and Twitter, and feel they need to be there. They hear about SEO and feel they need to improve their ranking. They read articles about online video and want to start filming.

It's easy to get caught up in the "everyone else is doing it" excitement, but that's precisely the time to step back and take a deep breath. Because anyone who stands in front of a room full of business owners and says, "You all absolutely need to be on Facebook and Twitter" is flat-out wrong.

What is the marketing communications goal of the business? Once this is properly articulated, then Facebook and Twitter may or may not be appropriate tactics for meeting that goal. SEO and video may or may not be tactically relevant.

There are countless tactics that any business can take when it comes to digital marketing communications ... but if there's no strategic thinking underlying those tactics, if time hasn't been taken to understand the dynamics of the business relative to customers and potential customers, then you're vastly minimizing your chances of success.

- Craig Peters, CKPCreative, [www.lohad.com](http://www.lohad.com)

## TARGETED FACEBOOK PROMOTION HELPS EVENT GROW OVERNIGHT

The Festival of Books is a statewide, three-day festival featuring over 50 authors who share their knowledge and experience as writers. As the premiere event for the nonprofit South Dakota Humanities Council, it is important to attract a large audience to ensure future funding for the nonprofit and to maximize exposure for the organization.

Our company was hired only two weeks before the 2010 festival when just 400 tickets had been reserved online. The Humanities Council was looking for a quick boost in ticket sales and advertising.

To get quick results, we used a combination of social media marketing, email marketing and Facebook ads. First, we used the Humanities Council's email list of 2,400 to attract new connections on Facebook. We created clear calls to action in both the invitation emails and on the Facebook page to drive ticket sales.

Additionally, we targeted the largest regional Facebook pages and posted messages on their pages and to key influencers on their page about the festival. While growing the page organically, we created a series of Facebook ads targeted at friends of members of the Facebook page. We ran two groups of ads targeted at 20,000 people. One group asked them to "Like" the page which had a link to ticket sales. The second group of ads went directly to the online ticket reservation page.

The campaign had great success, increasing ticket reservations from 400 to 1,200 in two weeks. This works out to half of their email list converting via social media and email. The Facebook page

also grew substantially from 900 likes to 1,540 in two weeks. Not only did the community grow, but the interaction did as well, increasing weekly visits to the Facebook page from 392 to 1,308 the first week and then to 1,554 the week of the festival along with active users increasing from 399 to 870 in the first week of the campaign and finally to 1,623 the week of the festival.

Most importantly, the Humanities Council put on a great festival and was pleased with record attendance and measurable marketing that has created a new, renewable channel for them to promote their organization.

- Scott D. Meyer, 9Clouds, [www.9cloudsinc.com](http://www.9cloudsinc.com)

## NEW EFFORTS HELP BRING YEAR-END RESULTS

Coming into 2010, we had set forth the goal of 50 percent growth for the company. While this number would be lofty any year, it seems especially so in this economy. We planned to hit this goal through a number of strategies, including the extension of our alliance program, a well-defined and executed integrated marketing plan and the diversification of our client base.

This year, we have experienced amazing growth in the number of visitors to our Website and the amount of leads we receive. These positives can be attributed to the marketing efforts, both conventional and through social media. Involvement in Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook have greatly increased our reach in the technology channel industry, and we will continue to extend those efforts in the new year.

We didn't hit our goal of 50 percent however, settling instead for a 40 percent increase in revenue. This number signifies our largest yearly growth to date. Our 2010 success is credited to a dedicated, strategically focused team and the incorporation of new programs and solutions reflecting our customer's needs. The addition of new marketing approaches to our proven best practices will continue to allow us to better serve our clients. We intend to carry this momentum into 2011 by launching several new efforts in January.

- Tina Lauzon, Channel Services Group, [www.csgchannels.com](http://www.csgchannels.com)

## THERE ARE NEW RULES OF GRAMMAR

Grammar is meaningless, unless it's wrong. But word choice is priceless even if it's meaningless. I'm directing the launch of a new daily deal site. I have a long history in marketing and especially email marketing. Social network marketing, however, was a new animal to me. I usually approach these types of challenges like a newly found backyard pool – grab your nose and jump right in! Social network marketing was no exception.

My first revelation was punctuation and proper spelling can be sacrificed for the magic 140. Unless you just out-and-out misspell your target word / phrase. Then you will be abused incessantly and risk losing followers. This I had experienced in my own personal networking

efforts so the shock was more how prevalent it was. The 'big boys' are hiring the right people to do their dirty work, but everybody else falls in one of two categories:

1. Perfectionists
2. Naive

The first end up being perfect spellers and punctuators, but drag their posts over multiple posts (which really is annoying). The second think the 140 limit gives them license to spell and write however they feel.

There is such a thing as social speak and certain limits must be followed. Search your keywords and see what others are doing in order to stay within 140. The second and much larger revelation involved those very 'keywords'. I was using Twuffer to schedule tweets, using Hootsuite to manage multiple social network accounts and replies to DMs. But even I had never thought about 'tacking' on a virtually irrelevant keyword to my posts until I noticed a trend in our responses.

We were going to be appearing at a function at Dodger Stadium and I started including posts referencing the stadium and used the keyword "Dodgers." That day our impressions more than tripled and we gained double our usual conversions.

The next day I hadn't "put it together yet" and failed to mention Dodger Stadium or the Dodgers at all. Over the course of the next two weeks, I noticed the trend and started inserting the "Dodgers" keyword to other posts and referencing Dodger Stadium in our deal descriptors somehow. We significantly increased our impressions by merely mentioning a regionally relevant topic.

So, check your keywords and remember, tomorrow is spelled "2morrow," not "2morow"...

- Kevin Krejca, Krejca Creative Group

## SOCIAL MEDIA, IN SHORT...

Successful social media marketing is about identifying the most influential members of your audience and leveraging them to achieve your key business goals.

- Jo, FreshNetworks, [www.freshnetworks.com](http://www.freshnetworks.com)

## STARTING A BLOG IS EASY. MAINTAINING IT IS TOUGHER

Starting a blog is easy - updating it with fresh content each and every week from multiple contributors is the hard part. It's tough – really tough – to get contributing writers. Even with our nearly 100 employees, it's like pulling teeth to get people involved. We even gave the blog a fancy name, and made it easy for people to submit articles.

What's most interesting is that when contributors do write, they average 40-60 page views and 5-10 reTweets for each of their blog posts - this is fantastic. I think part of the reason for high page



views and reTweets is the content. Blog content must be unique, fresh and pertain to the blog theme. The content doesn't have to be great just good enough and people will view and reTweet. In our case, the content is about B2B lead generation, marketing automation and CRM.

We launched the blog on Tuesday, April 6 and now have 33 subscribers – a decent start. Recently we got syndicated, which helped boost our average page views by 15-20%. To my surprise, the Facebook version of our blog/magazine has been a complete flop - we only have 16 fans. Twitter on the other hand has been a lot more successful with 414 followers.

The biggest benefit we received from our blog is improvements to our search engine optimization. We now have 22 keywords in the top 10 of Google. Though we still have not received any leads directly from the blog, many more people are finding us on Google. This has ultimately translated into a higher volume of inbound leads.

- Marty Knight, OnPath Business Solutions, [www.onpath.com](http://www.onpath.com)

## ENCOURAGE INTERACTION, DON'T REQUIRE IT

This year I ran a one day sale in November. I offered my biggest discount ever, 33% off including sale and clearance items, and the results far exceeded our expectations. We sent out an email to all our customers the day before and then a second email the day of the sale. Those who bought, bought lots! This was a great success.

I tried another email campaign that was not successful. I gave a code of 15% off and told my customers if they wanted another 10% off (for a total of 25%) they had to find the promotion code on my blog and on my Facebook Wall. They hated it and told me not to do a scavenger hunt again and just give them the promotion code!

I tried to be creative and sometimes you try but do not succeed. I will not be doing a scavenger hunt promotion code email marketing campaign again!

- Anonymous, Haralee.com Sleepwear, [www.haralee.com](http://www.haralee.com)

## FEELING SOCIAL?

If you really want people to "Like" and "Follow" your brand, it's important to give them valuable content that they'll "Digg." They may "StumbleUpon" your post, but if you can continuously engage them in conversation, together, you're creating valuable content to share.

- Chery Halim, Olsen Europe, [www.olseneurope.com](http://www.olseneurope.com)

## INTEGRATE AND COLLABORATE

Our company manufactures gear and apparel for the martial arts industry. With the burgeoning popularity of MMA (mixed martial arts) and expanse of user engagement on social networks, we are gaining brand exposure and growth like never before in the 14 years we've been in business.

We learned we have some control when launching initiatives to achieve desired results and meet our goals.

1. SEO and beyond! Analyzing most searched key words in our industry and creating opportunities to maximize the theme. For example, we discovered 'cheap mma gear', 'cheap fight gear' and words of that sort that ranked high in SEO driving traffic to our site. With that in mind, we created a clearance category on our site and optimized words like cheap gear and other variations. Taking the concept one step further, we then created a second category called MMA Action Gear, featuring economy-priced products and promoted as everyday low prices.
2. Tell us how you really feel. Posing the question on our Facebook page, 'Kids MMA- too aggressive or a great way to raise self-esteem?' generated user engagement within 30 minutes of posting. That showed us this is a controversial and active topic that everyone from mothers to dojo owners to fans have plenty to say about. Taking the concept one step further, we reached out to our affiliates inviting them to add commentary and guest blog about the topic on our blog in an effort to expose our brand to their customer base. Applying the same formula, we started reaching out to groups in other areas related to our industry such as collegiate grappling and wrestling. With that, our strategy to market outside our network will include posts on Facebook, Twitter and blogs encouraging user engagement.
3. Collaborate! Devise/work/launch your social network initiatives as a team. We review analytics as a team. We encourage each team member to contribute ideas. As a team, we discuss the options and agree on a strategy with calls to action for each team member to facilitate. As a team, we track progress which often gives us new ideas and leads us to the next initiative.

If I were to use a metaphor for marketing via social networks, it would be that of a tree. It has a trunk at its core with roots and limbs that branch out in all directions. The leaves and fruits bloom and then die, dropping seedlings for new growth.

- Shelley Goldstein, Revgear Sports, [www.revgear.com](http://www.revgear.com)

## IF THERE'S NO "SOCIAL," THERE'S NO SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Last year, we hired a social media firm to set up, create and manage all of our social media profiles. We paid \$15,000 for the initial setup and an additional \$7,500 per month for maintenance -- only buying 40 hours of actual work per month. Sadly, the ROI on this was next to nothing, and we had to cancel our account.

Recently, we expanded our PR division to take over ALL social media efforts. Within the first few weeks of our new strategy, we began to see results. We designed a welcome tab for our Facebook page which brought in 100 new visitors within 3 hours of launching and our fans went from 516 to 685.

This past Halloween, we had a staff costume contest. Several days before, we started posting about the contest on our Facebook page and that we needed all our fans to help vote for the winning team. The contest voting ran from Noon-3:00pm on Oct. 29th.

At 12:30 we were at 858 fans. By 1:00, we were at 944. By 3:00, we hit over 1,000.

We ended up getting about 212 votes, comments and "likes" all within this period. Since then, our average daily new fans have increased from 0-1 to about 2-3. We've seen similar growth on Twitter and LinkedIn, as well.

The lesson learned here is that if there's no "social" in your social media content, your fans, friends, followers don't feel a connection. We always get more "action" when we post more conversational updates and Tweets – and we can see it in our sales figures. Our social media presence has turned some of our prospects into customers, customers have purchased more, increased new leads, etc.

It's definitely still a work in progress, but in the past few months we've seen a big change since we changed our content strategy. We just had to find our social media voice.

- Ferris Stith, PostcardMania, [www.postcardmania.com](http://www.postcardmania.com)

## DON'T INVEST IN FOOLS' GOLD

Every year there's a new technology or service that garners too much attention from the media, causing marketers feel the need to jump on board. Groupon has taken center stage this year and while they do offer a great product and service, it's not right for all clients. We evaluated it for one client and the financials just didn't work for them.

You need to stay focused on the business impact, not just how shiny the new metal object is.

- Peter Plats, Catalyst, [www.catalystinc.com](http://www.catalystinc.com)

## FIND VALUE IN ALL AREAS OF YOUR COMPANY

My team recently identified that we had the need for an expert in the area of fashion blogging. Many of us had prior experiences with blogging but no one had experience in fashion blogging. We all examined our vertically upward and horizontal internal network to find the answer to our problem.

However, the person most capable of helping us happened to work in a customer service position. I was able to identify the value this person could bring to our project and enlisted help through the proper channels. The person's contribution to our project helped us secure a new client and provided the employee with valuable academic experience.

This is just one example of how vertical social mobility, both downward and upward movement, has helped our company achieve success on a variety of projects. Having a broad social network can allow you to problem solve a number of project solutions. Spend some time around the proverbially "water cooler" and find out who you work with.

- Carlos Dy Barbour, *The Spokesman-Review*, [www.spokesman.com](http://www.spokesman.com)

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## CHAPTER 4 GENERAL MARKETING WISDOM

For all this talk of advancing technology and online expansion, 2010's fragile economic climate forced many marketers to revisit the fundamentals and apply these basics to newer practices. But, regardless of whether your marketing is done via seven social networks or seven-minute phone conversations, the fact remains that no matter the medium, this business still centers on communication and customer engagement.

Your submissions only served to reinforce this point, as many of this year's most memorable entries focused on the importance of building relationships, balancing old and new tactics, and even expressing appreciation for customers and coworkers alike.

Though not as cutting-edge as technology-based tales of success, these entries nonetheless show that in marketing, some things never go out of style.

Be sure to keep up on all-new marketing job postings and career-focused articles by subscribing to the weekly [Marketing Careers newsletter](#).

## CLIENT/AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS MUST BE SYMBIOTIC

In my past both as a client and as a consultant, the most effective campaigns have come from both sides working together as partners. When client and agency work with and learn from each other, both the expertise of the agency and exclusive knowledge of the client come together to build a truly effective market presence. When the two aren't in sync, things fall through the cracks.

Misunderstandings about who does what causes time delays and schedule scrambling. Treading on eggshells, afraid to speak the truth for fear of hurting feelings by pointing out an issue, only causes further distrust and deepens the problem. Neglecting to share unique behavior of the market audience precludes the possibility of building a tailored program to shape that behavior.

This is why it is absolutely critical that both clients and agencies strive to find a partnership they are comfortable with. As a client, you owe it to yourself to make sure that you are getting the most out of the money you're spending. As an agency, it's your responsibility to ensure the success of your clients, and hence the success of your own business.

Both sides need each other, and need to work together as partners. If they can't, any programs they come up with will likely be anemic.

- Matt Burghdoff, Grizzard Communications, [www.grizzard.com](http://www.grizzard.com)

## BALANCE MARKETING DISCIPLINES

It's a simple lesson, actually. *Easy does it.*

This year, I took on the challenge of rebuilding the marketing department within our flagship product division. Up to 2010, our marketing fell into two buckets: outbound marketing and search engine marketing. The results were, as you might have guessed, disappointing.

Many otherwise qualified leads fell through the cracks of a poor system. The company lost mindshare within target industries. Confidence and enthusiasm among employees started to wane.

Seeing both the challenges and potential of the product and company, I pitched a new vision: Accelerate demand generation through an inbound, content-focused marketing strategy. Along with this plan, we would also reignite our brand proposition with a more cohesive message that would accentuate our company's unique identity.

But here's where the lesson kicks in: rather than swing for the home run shot by attempting to accomplish all of this in three months (which is where I've seen so many of these plans strike out), I encouraged patience and focus for small wins. We couldn't just dump our outbound marketing tactics and replace them with a new plan overnight. It took a balancing act where we would incrementally add content to our plan.

We quickly built a microsite to not only show proof of concept, but to demonstrate success. In just three months, we tripled our number of qualified leads which signaled to both employees and management that this new strategy of inbound, content-focused marketing works.

- Chris Bailey, Jounryx, [www.journyx.com](http://www.journyx.com)

## FULLY UTILIZE RELATIONSHIPS

Earlier in the year I decided the best way to maximize my company's Marketing, Advertising and PR efforts was to more fully utilize relationships. While many people are still investing in networking, I chose to move beyond the "meet and greet" to the seizing the rewards that only serious relationships can deliver.

The first step was to inventory my relationships. I wanted to categorize my database by who was on the move, who had services I could personally use to grow my business and who had offerings I could highly recommend. Those people who appeared in all three categories were the ones I contacted first. The offers I made were different depending on the entrepreneurs to whom I was speaking.

One strategy was for our businesses to co-market our services. Another was based on affiliate programs that paid for referrals. A third was based on trading services.

The result has been fantastic. I've dramatically increased my revenue, my sales have rocketed due to referrals and my business has a higher profile and more polished look due to the trades I was able to secure. Sure I've paid out thousands in affiliate fees but it would have cost me much more to develop that business myself or hire a sales representative. Not only that, but my payments are fueling my client's growth, which reflects well on me in the long run.

The best part of the systems I have in place is that they continue to produce Win-Win-Wins all around. Now that I have the strategies perfected, I am able to help my clients implement these programs to increase their revenue as well. The great news is that we're finally reaping the rewards of all those networking events. The systems I've outlined here have fully developed and maximized our relationships in a way that doesn't cost us a dime.

In today's business climate, working together is the smartest, most cost effective way, not just stay in business, but excel.

- Lauri Flaquer, Saltar Solutions Inc., [www.successwithsaltar.com](http://www.successwithsaltar.com)

## REFERRALS CREATE WARM LEADS

In order to increase sales, a practice the sales staff and management of our company stands by is to ask for referrals! We prefer referrals because they are not entirely cold leads; you have the name of the referrer as an entrée which puts the prospect somewhat at ease – in some cases the referrer may have even greased the way by telling the person they've referred to expect a call, thus ensuring they will speak to the salesperson when they call.

We've had a referral program in place for years to compensate ESPs and agencies for referring business to us but we weren't aggressively hunting for referrals. In the second half of 2010 we started a new program encouraging our entire sales staff to ask for a referral on every client or prospective client sales call. Even when we lose a job, our sales staff asks for a referral. We put a permanent paragraph in our monthly newsletter promoting our referral program as well, and our referral business has jumped tremendously as a result of these combined efforts.

- Sandy Pochapin, FreshAddress Inc., [www.freshaddress.com](http://www.freshaddress.com)

## DIRECT MAIL IS ALIVE AND WELL

We re-confirmed that direct mail is not dead! It can be a very effective weapon in your lead gen arsenal, especially when using a dimensional mailer as part of a comprehensive and integrated campaign to reach a senior-level audience. We executed several very targeted and personalized dimensional campaigns this past year and found them highly effective when done as part of an integrated campaign that also includes email and call follow-up.

In doing these campaigns, it also reinforced the following factors as being critical to success:

- 100% Contacts Validated Prior to Campaign: taking the time to verify all contact info is current prior to the campaign has a huge impact
  - High Level of Campaign Personalization: tailoring the communications to the needs and pain points of the individual you are targeting plays a key role in converting them from a contact to a qualified lead
  - Immediate Follow-up Call after Dimensional Mailer is Sent: coordinating follow-up calls to happen within 24 hours of the mailer being received really helps to increase the response rate
  - Peer-to-peer Communications Approach: having sales call "from the office of the CEO" vs. saying they are the sales person creates a more peer like connection
  - 1:1 Emails Sent After Several Call Attempts: since we targeted busy execs who are frequently on the road, we got a great response rate when reaching out to them via email if we didn't catch them via phone
- Christa Kleinhans Tuttle, Launch Marketing, [www.launch-marketing.com](http://www.launch-marketing.com)

## DON'T JUST INTERVIEW...IMPRESS

If you want an amazing, high-paying job in 2011, and it involves the Internet or Web in some way (because that's where the opportunities are for years to come), I recommend you do the following ten things:

- 1) Have marketable expertise with demonstrated success (i.e. resume, experience, references, blog posts, etc.)
- 2) Know what your passion is and find an employer who shares the same passion
- 3) Use current and past employer websites, social media and networking to create your story and engage key executives at one company you would like to join and build a career



- 4) Craft an executive pitch (PPT) for your function and/or role and make it your own with branding and terminology that is both yours and from the industry; know this backward and forward
- 5) Communicate where your function is going within a year (or at most, two) and be able to demonstrate that you not only have a passion for where things are going but you know how to advance your future employer, starting now.
- 6) Persist and don't give up with engaging but be personable, consistent and confident
- 7) Be patient and check in with key contacts over the course of months, if necessary
- 8) Learn all that you can about the potential employer and boss. This is easily done by using Web and social channels
- 9) Once given the opportunity to pitch, ask for what you want to do (even if the position is not posted) and show how it's going to help the company achieve their goals
- 10) When you land the job, observe and celebrate (no more than four weeks), and then start knocking it out of the park. Work smart and let your passion inspire great work from you and others

Honestly, I think that any company that isn't open to the approach above isn't worth joining. But remember, always follow your passion.

- Erick Mott, Sitecore, [www.sitecore.net](http://www.sitecore.net)

## EXPRESS APPRECIATION TO VALUED CUSTOMERS

As a major healthcare information technology vendor, one message we needed to communicate to the customers who have been with us from the beginning is the value we place in their relationship with us. As some of our customers are moving to an EHR as part of reform and federal stimulus, many others want to stay with their current practice management solutions.

To speak directly to our customers, we created the customer appreciation program to honor the commitment our customers have demonstrated. More than a resource, this is a rewards-style program in which we provide benefits such as reduced financial burden to practices that wanted to upgrade their software from simply a practice management solution to a complete electronic health record solution.

The purpose of this program was several fold, including:

- Thanking customers for their years of loyalty
- Create awareness of new products that include a certified electronic health record
- Help customers achieve their practice goals
- Provide customers an opportunity to obtain our technology while honoring their current commitment and investment with the company

Because of this program, hundreds of customers who have faithfully used our solutions, but would have otherwise been unable to make the switch to an EHR because of financial constraints, are now doing so. In many cases, customers are seeing increased practice efficiency, seeing more patients, better able to manage and improve patient's healthcare outcomes and increase cash

flows simply by using the electronic health record. And for those customers, who would have otherwise remained on a paper-based system, the electronic version is helping improve lives.

The bottom line: It's better and more cost-efficient to keep the customers you have and prove to them that you have their best interest in mind than to lose them. For us, dramatically reducing investment costs for its physician partners is proving increasingly profitable.

- Tony Ryzinski, Sage Healthcare Division, [www.sagehealth.com](http://www.sagehealth.com)

## REACH OUT AND TOUCH SOMEONE

We saw a significant increase in our online programs in 2010 due to one very simple tool – the telephone. In 2010 we offered several online boot camps. To market these programs we did traditional online and email marketing to our in-house lists and also to affiliates. Several weeks before each boot camp we produced a complimentary webinar which we used to promote the program.

While we gained sales by these tactics, we added one more piece: We called every single person that had attended one of the complimentary webinars. Adding this piece, using webinars to generate qualified leads and then calling those leads, enabled us to increase enrollment by 40% over previous years.

In addition, by speaking with our customers and potential customers we were able to uncover more information about their needs which is helping us to better plan for 2011.

- Wendy Weiss, [www.wendyweiss.com](http://www.wendyweiss.com)

## MAINTAIN INTEGRITY IN A DOWN ECONOMY

When everyone's on edge — wondering where their next piece of business is coming from/whether they'll be able to hit their numbers/how to rationalize and deal with declining sales, etc.— there's a tendency to fudge... to play a little fast and loose with the facts ...to try to squeeze out a little more margin, by any means necessary.

That's why it's so important to know (or at least have a good sense of) the veracity of the people you're doing business with. The best of the bunch are always honest and above board. They might scale back or shift resources from one initiative to another in an effort to wring out efficiencies, but they won't renege on commitments or throw others under the bus to save themselves.

You can learn a lot from these folks about how to do business under pressure and still be able to hold your head high.

- Peter Leeds, Gabardine, [gabardine.com](http://gabardine.com)

## THE GOLDEN RULE...REDUX

*"Can you be there for me in the good and bad times?"*

This is a question we either get directly or indirectly as an Internet marketing firm that works primarily with small business clients with less than 10 employees. As important as past results are to them, small business owners want to know that their marketing company will treat them like "family."

Often, they have learned that they're another number/figure to larger firms. As a smaller firm, our strongest unique selling proposition has been "you can reach the people implementing your campaign via text, phone, email, Twitter, Facebook or any medium you prefer, and we will respond within the same day."

Although it can be difficult, this has led to 90% retention of all of our clients.

- Parham Nabatian, Infinite Communications, [www.infinitecomm.net](http://www.infinitecomm.net)

# About MarketingSherpa

MarketingSherpa is a research firm publishing Case Studies, benchmark data, and how-to information read by hundreds of thousands of advertising, marketing and PR professionals every week.

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- *Social Marketing Training Course*
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  - April 19, 2011 - Toronto, CA
- *NEW - Optimization Summit*
  - June 1-3, 2011 - Atlanta, GA
- *B2B Marketing Summits*
  - September 26-27, 2011 - Boston, MA
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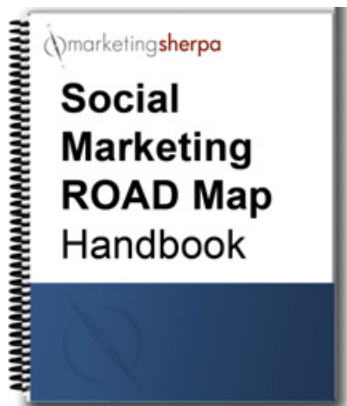
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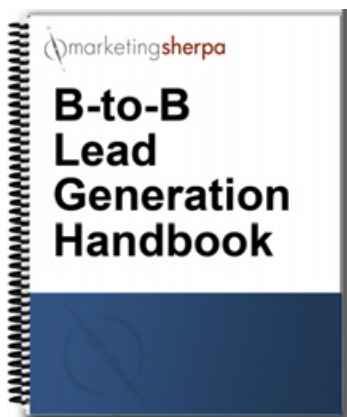
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