

14 Successful Techniques for Building Your Industry Voice with Social Media

by David Spark, Founder of Spark Media Solutions

Brought to you by



entertainment
media inc.

and





The world is changing. Technology is changing, and Intertainment Media is at the forefront of this paradigm shift.

For the past 2 years Intertainment Media has been actively engaged in the process of creating a new revenue generating social media application, and we're educating and marketing to key brands worldwide.

Meet itiBiti.

Like all innovative endeavors, itiBiti has taken time to resonate with its constituents. With many early social media programs, the revenue model was not only elusive, but non-existent. Companies have been banking their efforts on the field of dreams, hoping that if they build it, not only would consumers show up, but by some stroke of luck or ingenuity, so would revenue.

itiBiti is a game changing platform. A truly different approach to the social media environment. Rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, we embrace its motion. itiBiti focuses on "clusters", creating social media applications for branded affinity groups. Major brands are by far the most pervasive marketers in the world. They attract consumers through emotion and value and in many instances their followers number in the millions. By leveraging the power of the "brand", itiBiti has instant reach and credibility with consumers. Revenue partners, who are already engaged to the brand partner are excited to look at new opportunities increasing the value chain for all parties.

Going one step further, itiBiti brings the social media experience to the computer desktop, providing instant access to information, content, promotion and other value propositions as soon as a registered user turns on their computer.

Through a comprehensive marketing and education program, Intertainment Media Inc. has introduced itiBiti to some of the world's most notable brand clients, and as full market rollout commences, many of these brands are signing on to deploy our private label application.

The pace of acceptance for itiBiti has quickened, and earlier this year, Intertainment Media Inc. was recognized by Microsoft Corp. and invited to become a Global Agency Partner. This prestigious program has provided us direct access to leading development channel programs, education and access to Microsoft's Live programs, a recent addition to the itiBiti platform.

Microsoft has called itiBiti "the next generation of integrated social media applications," and we are very thankful for all the support that our stakeholders have given us.

We are proud to present David Spark and the "Be the Voicessm" Leadership series, providing participants with insight into the social media arena, and the way organizations are embracing the dynamic change where the user leads the conversation.

The goal of our sponsorship is to provide you with the tools to expand your vision, and evolve your business, investment strategy and client programs in this exciting new direction.

David Lucatch,

CEO – Intertainment Media Inc. & President – Itibiti Systems Inc.

14 Successful Techniques for Building Your Industry Voice with Social Media

By David Spark, Founder of Spark Media Solutions, LLC.
July 12th, 2009

In this article:

Introduction: The latest trend in social media is figuring out how to do it

Get inspired to capitalize on social media for your business with these successful tales of building industry voice.

1. Ride current hot news and cultural memes

Mobile gaming company capitalizes on the Bernie Madoff scandal by launching a "create your own Ponzi scheme" game.

2. Build your own memes

An unexpected Internet entrepreneur starts a new celebrity tracking trend.

3. Connect an existing brand or talent to your brand

From complete nobodies to big product brands, more and more companies are using celebrities and entertainment to connect audiences to their brands.

4. Focus on content, not social media

An unbridled focus on content and not gaming social media technologies is what made Alec Saunders a thought leader in Voice 2.0 communications.

5. Use your own product to tell your story

Alec Saunders demonstrated Calliflower, his company's free conference calling application, by hosting a daily roundtable podcast in which anyone could participate.

6. Manage your industry's community

An SEO entrepreneur launches his city's professional networking community. With no revenue model, the connections and recognition have built invaluable goodwill with potential and existing customers.

7. The community is the best help desk

Intuit is helping customers find answers quickly by building social networking capabilities right into its applications.

8. Take care of your best resource, super users

Like Tom Sawyer did with painting the white picket fence, Boxee turned the arduous task into manning a booth at CES into something customers competed to do.

9. Convert potential buyers into a word-of-mouth advertising network

Unknown book author becomes a New York Times best-selling author by podcasting his book for free.

10. Feed everybody's needs all along the sales cycle

In order to sell a new product, Microsoft engages with decision makers, and tries not to fall short of satisfying everyone.

11. Own a word

With laser-like intensity and determination, The RFP Database focuses its energies on owning one word and succeeds.

12. Customer's perception of what they get must be greater than what they give

General Mills' Yoplait Kids asks customers if they're willing to trade personal information for a coupon.

13. Own more real estate

NBC extends its reach to every screen, but also uses itiBiti to get prime placement on the user's desktop.

14. Do the opposite of what everyone else is doing

If everyone follows the same advice, social media becomes very crowded. Sometimes, as Harry McCracken of Technologizer discovered, it's best to do the opposite.

Conclusion: What's wrong with your current solution or why haven't you chosen one yet?

Most companies haven't made the leap into social media because they're either still trying to uncover social media's ROI or they lack the necessary structural change in company communications.

The latest trend in social media is figuring out how to do it

The Internet is filled with an endless supply of "how to" articles covering every single aspect of social media. Dig around and you'll find loads of advice on how to use social media tools for your business.

Problem is people don't need more "how to" social media articles, they need inspiration. Social media is far from formulaic. What we all end up doing is taking bits and pieces of advice from others and determine what works best for us. I believe the best way to be inspired by social media is to hear real world stories of how others have succeeded.

This article and the companion presentation offer up fourteen different techniques with examples of how social media can deliver a different value proposition for your organization. That value could be enhancing communications with your customer base, attracting new customers, deploying a word-of-mouth marketing force, or increasing revenue.

I hope you get excited about some of the possibilities. Not every technique is right for everybody. Your job is to determine which ones are right for you and your business. It could be one of the techniques described here, a combination, or one that's yet to be mentioned.

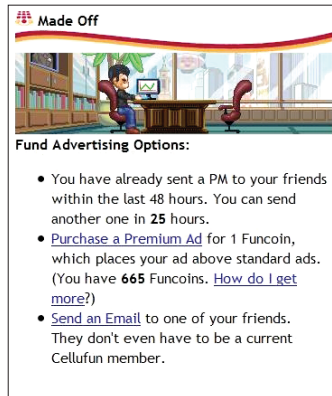
Links to all the examples, company sites, the PDF of this article, and the full presentation can be found here: <http://bit.ly/socialm>

Ride current hot news and cultural memes

The problem with traditional advertising is you're asking your audience to break away from whatever they're currently thinking and pay attention to you the moment they see and hear your advertisement.

Instead of trying to force a shift of thinking, why not ride the wave of current thinking by attaching your business to a big story in the news or some hot cultural meme?

In the wake of the Bernie Madoff scandal, mobile game developer Cellufun created a cell phone game called "Made Off" where aspiring Madoffs recruit their friends to invest Cellufun's virtual currency in each other's Ponzi schemes. The comical bent on the financially tragic story obviously humored many people as "Made Off" became Cellufun's most popular game bringing in record advertising revenue. Tens of thousands of players joined the game of which 40% spent real money to purchase Funcoins which give players additional capabilities such as attracting new investors, explained Keith Katz, Cellufun's VP of marketing.



Expect more culturally hip games from Cellufun in the future, said Katz, "Because our production team is so nimble, we can quickly seize upon events that have struck a cultural nerve and build a game or application around it that our users will respond to. We'll continue to do this moving forward."

By shifting your company's messaging and storytelling to the current news and trends, you're feeding off of existing editorial work that has already proven to attract attention.

Ask yourself

To successfully take advantage of huge news stories and hot memes for your business, ask yourself three questions:

1. What is the public talking about?
2. What's your relevant take on the issue?
3. Can that viewpoint somehow be connected to your business?

Riding the hot meme wave doesn't have to be so global. It can also be connected to news specific to your industry. Is there something huge happening in your industry right now? What's your take on it?

Build your own memes

A harder road than riding an existing meme, but often more successful, is to find an untapped market and build your own meme. This requires looking for the stories people aren't talking about, yet still would be of interest to your audience. Nik Richie, founder of "The Dirty," did just that. Even though he was an admitted Internet neophyte who only knew how to check his email, Richie's simple \$40 investment to buy a domain and hosting services from GoDaddy turned into a fortune when he uncovered an untapped market for celebrity news sites.



While competitive sites such as PerezHilton.com and TMZ.com race all over Los Angeles to be the first to get the latest dirt on Britney Spears or Lindsay Lohan, Nik

Richie's users, a.k.a. "The Dirty Army," avoid Hollywood's glitzy red carpet and instead find celebrities in lesser known places. Armed with digital cameras, "The Dirty Army" can be found at night clubs and bars in second-tier cities such as Baltimore, Houston, and Newport, Rhode Island. They're looking for and photographing their town's outrageous characters and bikini clad women.



Admittedly a place to waste time, Richie has turned "The Dirty's" brand of making fun of regular people into a revenue generating powerhouse in just one year. Today, "The Dirty" has a fifteen person content publishing staff that draws an average of 700,000 to 1,000,000 page views every month.

Ask yourself

Are you chasing the same thing everyone else is chasing, or is there a market that's being ignored that you should investigate?

Connect an existing brand or talent to your brand

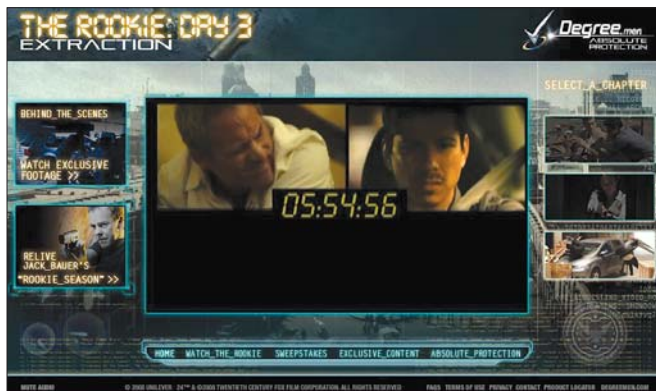
Rappers and TV action heroes have very little to do with the jewelry industry. Still, Pinny Gniwisch, Founder and EVP marketing for the jewelry site Ice.com, found a way. For a measly \$1,295, Gniwisch launched a silly YouTube campaign where he interviewed B-level celebrities such as "Three 6 Mafia" and Kevin Sorbo about Mother's Day and whether they got guilt for not getting a gift as good or better than what they gave the previous year. At the end of the video a woman delivers a call to action, asking viewers to sign up at Ice.com for a chance to win a \$10,000 shopping spree.

The goal of the YouTube campaign was to build up the Ice.com database, and then over the holidays convert those subscribers to buyers. While not tons of traffic, the call to action worked and Gniwisch got over 6,000 people to sign up for the sweepstakes. And those signups have already converted into more than \$20,000 in sales.

Capitalizing on social media is not just for small brands. Bigger brands are spending big money to put content online. One of the leaders in the space, Unilever, Advertising Age's Digital Marketer of 2008, has already committed millions of dollars to its online video programming.

Suave and Sprint teamed up to produce "In the Motherhood" starring Chelsea Handler, Jenny McCarthy, and Leah Remini. Another show, "The Rookie," sponsored by Degree deodorant was an offshoot of the television show "24."

Each of these programs lasted two online seasons, with each show costing per season between \$4.5 to \$5.0 million. Like the promotion for any production, the programming was part of a larger advertising campaign. To insure the success of their investment, many of the ads pointed back to the programming.



"The Rookie" achieved more than 5.5 million views during its first season. That viewership combined with Degree's entire advertising campaign boosted the deodorant's sales more than twenty percent.

By the second season, the show began distribution to alternative screens, appearing on mobile devices and on video on demand (VOD) via cable and satellite.

To engage the audience from the onset, "In the Motherhood" introduced a contest where viewers would send in stories, and the winners would get their ideas written into the scripts. In the first year the show received 3,000 submissions, 5.5 million video views, and 60,000 votes, according to a Suave senior brand manager. At the end of two seasons all the episodes garnered more than 30 million views and last year ABC purchased the series for the network's 2009 season.

Similar to Unilever's efforts, Breyers® ice cream just launched a new show, "Smooth & Dreamy™", which stars NBC's "30 Rock" star Jane Krakowski set into



classic movie scenes from films such as "King Kong" and "Gone with the Wind."

Now that media audiences are highly fragmented, big general brands have to go online to reach their audience. Audiences are looking at a lot more screens than just television, and those screens require more content than force fed advertising. The entertainment programming is the conduit that connects brands to audiences. In the case of Suave and Breyers, the programming was designed to reach stay-at-home moms.

The one formula that's stayed consistent with all these programs is that the product brand associates itself with an existing entertainment brand or a known actor, even a B-level actor. It's a level of insurance, because even if the content itself doesn't go viral, the existence of the entertainment brand or the celebrity gives people a reason to talk about the content. The PR is what delivers the biggest benefit for these brands. For example, Jane Krakowski was recently on "The Ellen Degeneres Show" talking about her role on "Smooth & Dreamy."

Ask yourself

Is there a well known brand or celebrity you'd love to have your product associated with?
What's your take on it?

Focus on content, not social media

Alec Saunders is a VoIP industry thought leader and founder of the free conference calling Web application, Calliflower. Saunders didn't become a thought leader overnight. It took lots and lots of blogging.

A mutual friend of ours, Andy Abramson, also a VoIP blogger and owner of the public relations and marketing firm Comunicano, advised Saunders that if he wanted to raise the profile of his business, he was going to have to blog three times every day. Saunders was shocked at the advice, but he did it, even on weekends, for an entire year. The result is his blog's traffic went from 300 people a day, to 1000 pretty quickly. By the time the year was over he had 200,000 visitors a month. That traffic translated over to his business site as well. As his blog traffic went up, so did his business site's traffic.



Blogging was all Saunders did. He didn't do any advertising or take advantage of any of mailing lists or social media broadcast tools. "A lot of people invest in everything in social media. I decided to focus on one thing really really closely, and that was content," said Saunders, "You don't get the comments traffic until you get the content for people to comment on. You don't get people returning over and over again or commenting on what you wrote on other blogs until you've got the content."

Ask yourself

Are you currently blogging? How often do you do it?

Saunders said that when he first started blogging, he only did it when he felt he had something to say. The "do it when I feel like it" technique didn't bring him an audience. It was only when he committed to blogging with some level of frequency that he garnered an audience.

Can you commit to producing some kind of content on a regular basis?

Use your own product to tell your story

Saunders not only become an industry voice through blogging, he was also able to do it through podcasting using his own free conference calling product, Calliflower. Having the ability to record calls, Calliflower became a great platform for hosting a roundtable podcast. Every day, Saunders gave everyone a chance to call in and participate in his daily tech talk show, "The Squawk Box".

Any time you can use your own product to tell your story, you have achieved what I consider the Holy Grail of "Be the Voice" communications. It's not always possible for someone to use their own product to build their own public voice. But when you can, you're giving people the opportunity to see your product in action. And when people see it, can participate in it, have fun with it, and see its value, then there's little need to do any marketing or make a formal sales pitch.

While not being produced currently, Saunders says that listeners and participants of his podcast did convert into users.

I loved "The Squawk Box" so much that I volunteered a few times as a substitute host for the show.



David Spark & Alec Saunders

Ask yourself

Are you fortunate enough to have a product where its use can actually tell your story?

Manage your industry's community

Ten years ago Kent Lewis created pdxMindShare, an Internet-based community network for top thinkers in Portland, Oregon to meet and collaborate. Lewis is the founder of a search engine marketing firm Anvil Media. While he definitely had a business model for Anvil Media, Lewis confesses he had no business model for pdxMindShare.

Ten years later, with membership growing 3,500 strong, Lewis still doesn't have a business plan for pdxMindShare, a fact he admitted to his social networking idol, Seth Godin.

Godin didn't believe Lewis' social network "lacked a business model." Godin wrote on his blog, "By building something that connects his community, by building a permission asset with the right people (and not asking anything in return), Kent builds his reputation. He makes it more likely that people will trust him, talk to him and hire his firm."

Godin was right. Lewis said that over the past ten years pdxMindShare has become an invaluable tool for solidifying relationships. He uses pdxMindShare to help clients and potential clients find employees, plus he promotes them on his newsletter, all for free. In addition, the network has created amazing goodwill for his business. The pdxMindShare website and newsletter is a top ten traffic driver for his business site. As a bonus, pdxMindShare's newsletter generates from \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year in advertising revenue.

Ask yourself

Has someone already created a network for your community?
If they already have, how can you volunteer and become an integral part of its growth?
If they haven't, why don't you start one?

The community is the best help desk

In an effort to help people who get confused and stressed by their products, Intuit is beginning to integrate social media directly into its products, such as QuickBooks. If you're working within the bookkeeping application and become frustrated, QuickBooks will help you search the social media sphere to find people who have answers.

Ask yourself

Think about where people physically are when they encounter a problem with your product. How can you help them best resolve it by giving them the best experience possible?

Take care of your best resource, super users

Boxee is an open source social media center for viewing online video content. A real grass roots startup, Boxee's staff was so small that they didn't have enough people or money to staff the booths they had to man at CES (Consumer Electronics Show) in Las Vegas.

While Boxee has a very small staff, they do have tons of passionate users. Reaching out to those super users, Boxee offered them a chance to come to Las Vegas and staff their booths. Turning the request into a contest, Boxee asked their users to send in a video of themselves demoing the product. The Boxee staff chose the presentations they liked the most and declared those people the winners, flying them out to Las Vegas and paying for all expenses.

The relationship was far from a one-time affair, said Dave Mathews, an advisor at Boxee. The four winners ended up partying with the Boxee crew at CES and they've gone on to become Boxee evangelists and close friends.



Boxee Vegas trip winner, Patrick Lawson

Ask yourself

Does your business have super users?
If not, why not? Or maybe you do and you don't even know it.
What have you done special for you super users to show that you really appreciate their support?

Convert potential buyers into a word-of-mouth advertising network

For nearly six years, unknown novelist Scott Sigler was slugging it out with publishers trying to get a print deal for his first novel, *Earthcore*. He got one offer from Time Warner that fell apart when the market crashed in 1999, and it took Sigler another two and a half years to get the rights back for his book.

Eight years passed and Sigler started all over again sending *Earthcore* out to publishers, because that's the way you're supposed to do it if you want to get your book published. Unfortunately, the rejection letters continued stacking up. Going the traditional route of pitching publishers just wasn't working.



Scott Sigler

At around the same time, the mid-2000s, podcasting had just come into vogue. Sigler liked the serial nature of podcasts. The style reminded him of the weekly serial films of the 30s and 40s that could draw and keep an audience by building anticipation. Sigler couldn't find any other writer who was reading their book for free via the podcast format. Audio books and Audible.com were available


at the time, but they operated under a paid model and they were not serial. You had to buy the audio book all at once. Working in marketing at the time, Sigler saw an opportunity to set his mark in the fiction world as being one of the first authors to publish his book for free via podcasting. The news hook would get him exposure and hopefully a link back to his site and podcast where people could download and listen to the book. He hoped those trial listeners would like the podcast and the book's popularity would take off via word of mouth.


Sigler's literary agent hated the podcast idea. He implored him to stop doing it. Giving away the audio book for free was going to compromise the audio rights, said Sigler's agent. Sigler ignored the advice and eventually dumped his agent.

Within just a few weeks of podcasting, Sigler attracted 7,000 people to listen to his *Earthcore* podcast. When he built up that audience to 10,000, he showed it to a small publisher, Dragon Moon Press, who bought the rights and published the book.

By the time he had podcasted his second book, *Ancestor*, his audience had grown to 25,000. In April 2007, with no marketing budget and with Sigler still a complete unknown, Dragon Moon Press published *Ancestor* as well and it was a huge success. It hit #2 in fiction right after *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* and became the seventh most successful book on Amazon. Sigler had made a name for himself in fiction through podcasting. *Ancestor* and *Earthcore* held the number one and two spots in horror fiction.

The most popular items on Amazon.com. Updated hourly.

- 

Ancestor
by Scott Sigler (Author)
Average Customer Review: ★★★★★
In stock soon. Order now to get in line. First come, first served.
List Price: \$19.95
Price: \$11.97
You Save: \$7.98 (40%)
- 

Earthcore
by Scott Sigler (Author)
Average Customer Review: ★★★★★
In Stock
List Price: \$19.95
Price: \$13.57
You Save: \$6.38 (32%)
17 used & new from \$13.06

Many of those publishers that rejected Sigler's first novels started a bidding war for his third novel, *Infected*. Crown Publishing, a division of Random House, won the bid with the understanding that the book would be podcasted for free before the print edition came out. *Infected* was released in April 2008 and hit the New York Times Bestseller list. Sigler looks back at his success and is amazed. For ten years, absolutely nothing happened. And then thanks to giving his book away for free via podcasting, he built an audience, and then sold two successful hard covers in one year.

Back when he was shopping around his first book, *Earthcore*, and showed that he amassed a listening audience of 10,000, publishers simply responded that the audience only represented 10,000 lost sales. In reality, those 10,000 listeners became Sigler's 10,000 person strong word-of-mouth marketing force.

Sigler has since left his marketing job and is a full-time novelist.

Ask yourself

Sigler and Saunders both agree that consistency is what led to both of their successes.

What can you commit to creating on a consistent basis that will interest your audience and build your profile?

Feed everybody's needs all along the sales cycle

More than two years ago I was working on a project for Microsoft. They had purchased FrontBridge Technologies, providers of a hosted messaging solution, and rebranded the hosted mail solution as Microsoft Exchange Hosted Services or MEHS. Microsoft had been very successful with its Exchange Server, but that's a self-hosted messaging solution. With MEHS, Microsoft now offered a hosted messaging option. There were pros and cons for both the build-it-yourself and the hosted solution.



Working with an ad agency, Microsoft purchased a research report analyzing the issue and we posted the report online as a wiki. We invited people to edit the document or blog about it. I acted as the editor and reached out to network administrators and managers that dealt with messaging. I engaged them in conversation about managing mail in-house or outsourcing it. Some edited the wiki, but more chose to simply write a blog post about it and pointed to the wiki.

To help drive traffic, Microsoft purchased advertising on sites such as eWEEK and Information Week. In about a period of a month and a half, we had 25,000 page views with each visitor looking at an average of eight pages and spending seven minutes on the site.

This effort was a simultaneous success and failure. While we were successful in getting network managers, administrators, and technical people engaged in a discussion, we weren't focusing on the prize, which was moving people towards a trial and ultimately a sale. Actually purchasing the product, getting a trial, or contacting a sales rep was difficult if not impossible to find within the wiki. Plus, we didn't offer a summary of the information for which one network manager complained about in an email to me. He said, "All this information is great, and I agree with the hosted solution, but it's not presented in a way in which I can show it to my CIO."

He was right. We weren't satisfying all the decision makers' needs along the sales cycle. We thought we were succeeding because we were speaking to one group of decision makers. But to make a sale you need to satisfy all decision makers and that requires different information at different times during the sales cycle. Plus, if you've already convinced one decision maker, you need to arm them with the necessary information to make their case to the next decision maker.

Luckily, just one week after receiving that critical email, a Microsoft partner had written up a return on investment analysis of MEHS for a mid-sized company of 200 people. It was the perfect one-sheet breakdown a CIO would need to see. I forwarded the ROI analysis to the network manager who had emailed me and sent it to everyone else as well.

Ask yourself

- Are you feeding the appropriate information to all the necessary people in your sales cycle?
- Are you giving them the opportunity at any moment to skip steps in the sales cycle and simply jump to purchase?

Customer's perception of what they get must be greater than what they give

You'll be amazed what personal information people will give up for what is perceived to be a good value exchange.



General Mills asked a simple question of their audience of moms: "If you liked our product Yoplait Kids so much, would you give us your name and address if we mailed you a free coupon?" Many of

them said yes. General Mills collected the addresses, and the moms got the coupons.

Later in the campaign General Mills gave away Yoplait Kids coupons online and lowered the value on them. Ultimately with both online and offline coupons, General Mills served up more than 285,000 free to high value coupons to moms and the redemption was exceptional. In return for the couponing, Yoplait Kids got tons of online conversation in traditional and new media. A total of 5,800 placements with 800+ on blogs. All those mentions delivered nearly 100 million impressions about Yoplait Kids, said David Witt, General Mills Manager, Public Relations.

Do you think those moms would have said yes to "Would you give us your address for a \$3 check?" Probably not. The initial question had a higher perceived value. Getting something for free sounds better than receiving a \$3 check. Connect that with moms trusting the General Mills/Yoplait Kids brand, and they had no problem offering up their mailing address for the coupon in return.

Many Web 2.0 services, especially messaging platforms such as Google Mail, Yahoo! Mail, and Hotmail, operate under this exchange of perceived values. People give up the privacy of their email, plus having it tagged with advertisements, for the benefit of getting free email.

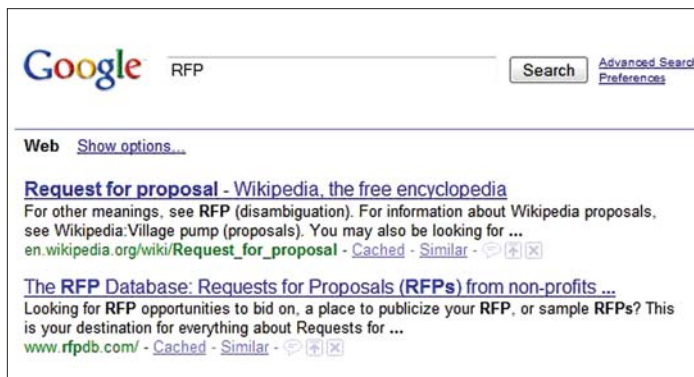
Ask yourself

Besides obviously money, what is it you want from your customers? What information could they give you that would be a great asset to you?

Does it have a very high perceived value? What service or product can you give your customers that they would willingly part with that information in order to get it?

Own a word

Wouldn't it be great if everyone thought of your business when they thought of just one word in the English language? It's the advertiser's ultimate goal. Kleenex did it with tissues. Xerox did it with photocopying. David Kutcher is trying to do the same for his site, the RFP Database, with the term "RFP," which is the abbreviation for "request for proposal."



While Kutcher has a LinkedIn group, he's been working hard to develop a following on Twitter (@RFPdatabase) by using the hashtag #rpf to announce million dollar projects up for bid. All this work is starting to pay off. His site is in the top three search results on Google for "RFP" and "request for proposal." "And by making the link to our site ubiquitous to the phrase, we're creating that bond between the item and our service," Kutcher said. Every day, he sees at least 100 people coming to his site just via Twitter. It helps that he sends out tweets that encourage people to retweet, such as "If you see an #rpf that might interest your followers please RT it. They might land a \$million project from your RT."

Ask yourself

What word sums up your business that you would like to own? Do a search on Google and see who owns it currently. What would you have to do to steal that word away from them? How would your business and publishing need to change to be the number one destination for that word?

Own more real estate

If your audience spent all its time on the Web, or all of its time in front of the TV, you'd know where to market to them. Problem is people like to move around and do different things. That's why you have to establish a presence wherever your audience goes.

Broadcast network NBC puts its content wherever its viewers can see a screen that plays video. They're on TV, on mobile devices, on the Web via NBC.com and Hulu, and now they're on the desktop via itiBiti, an entertainment, communications, and social networking platform.

Separate from the Web, itiBiti is desktop Internet application that can be ever present, constantly delivering content and providing free text, audio, and video communications. While itiBiti powers the technology, NBC controls the brand by customizing the application's look and feel. Similar to the perceived value exchange that the advertising-supported Web mail programs offer, Itibiti tracks user behavior within the application and delivers targeted content and advertising. In return, the consumer can use itiBiti to make free outbound phone calls to landlines and mobile phones anywhere. Plus, since the tool combines content and communications, users can chat as they're viewing video content.

Reaching viewers through the Web only works when people choose to go to the NBC sites. It's a

destination choice by the viewer. itiBiti's placement on the desktop delivers a new real estate opportunity that NBC didn't previously have. Traditional real estate is all about location, location, location. Now that NBC is using itiBiti, they've got prime placement, the desktop, which is the first thing a user sees when they turn on their computer.

The benefit of free communications especially free phone calls, entices users to want to keep itiBiti on the desktop. Other desktop communications applications, such as Skype, have no content. NBC and itiBiti believe the enhanced combination of the two will make users want to constantly come back.



In early trials with the itiBiti desktop application, NBC discovered that beta users spent on average 30 minutes with the tool, watched multiple videos, and spent the majority of their time using voice communications.

NBC isn't the only brand taking advantage of itiBiti. More brands, such as itravel2000.com and Astral Media, have customized itiBiti for their audiences. And there are dozens more companies looking at itiBiti with hopes of landing some new digital real estate.

Ask yourself

List all of the locations where your customers are. How many of them do you have a presence?
Are you happy with that presence?
Are you providing a value added experience, giving them a reason to come back or go to one of your other destinations?
Is your presence consistent across all those media outlets?

Do the opposite of what everyone else is doing

Lists of "best of," "do's and don'ts," and "best practices" are some of the most popular articles on the Internet. We are drawn to them because they shout out, "Here are the answers you were looking for!" Problem is these rules cause people to follow them in mass. And while they may provide great advice, if everybody's following them, how can you stand out?

Don't get hung up on the "rules" of success on the Web. It's possible to break every single rule on the Web and still do well. Conversely, you can follow every rule and be an abject failure, said Harry McCracken, former editor of PC World magazine and now editor of the consumer technology site, Technologizer. For McCracken, the rule of blog publishing says you should post your best posts on Monday and Tuesday and only post in the morning. McCracken has actually had some of his greatest success on a Sunday and he'll often post in the afternoon because that's when people are usually not posting. "Often if everyone is following a rule doing the opposite will do at least as well," said McCracken.

Gabe Rivera, who founded Techmeme, a site that crawls for the most popular technology stories being talked about on the Internet, confirms McCracken's belief about weekend publishing. Compared to weekday publishing and traffic, Rivera estimates that weekend technology stories are published at a rate of 10%, yet viewing traffic during that time is 60%.

Ask yourself

Do you always fall into the trends of what you should do?
What is the norm in your industry?
Have you ever tried breaking from the norm?
What do you think would happen if you did?

What's wrong with your current solution or why haven't you chosen one yet?

In my experience, there are two main reasons organizations haven't made the commitment to develop their industry voice in social media.

First is they're waiting for someone to prove to them the ROI of social media. I've dealt with this issue for years. I'd give a presentation on social media which would go over very well and then I'd have to face that final question: "David, this is all fantastic, but how much is it going to cost us to reach our audience?"

It's an unanswerable question because audience is based on content and relations, not traditional media which allows you to buy attention. Marketers have to ask this question because they develop budgets based on CPMs (cost per thousands). If you can't answer a question in terms of CPMs, then the media option, in this case social media, can't fit into a media planner's spreadsheet.

David Meerman Scott, author of *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*, has dealt with similar frustrations. Whenever he gets "The ROI question" he fires back with, "What's the ROI of your receptionist? What's the ROI of your parking? What's the ROI of the paint on the walls? What's the ROI of the landscapers?"

"The idea that everything has to come back to a measurable ROI is ludicrous," Scott said. Marketers need to shift their ideology from measuring impressions to growing connections. With increased relations, the cost of each additional impression drops dramatically.

The second issue that prevents organizations from making the leap into full blown social media conversation is the need for overall organizational change in communications. This is why you see much smaller organizations making their mark in social media before enterprises. Organizational change for a business with less than five people is easy. Not so easy for a business with thousands of employees.

Unfortunately for most large organizations, they often don't make the change until social media slaps them up silly. Such was the case for Dell, who was tarnished online and did a complete reversal hiring employees whose sole job is to track and respond to conversations online. We may soon see the same happen for United Airlines who just recently had their poor customer service exposed with the funny and catchy song, "United Breaks Guitars," by the band "Sons of Maxwell."

As Dell, United Airlines, and many other organizations have learned about social media is if you're hiding any problems right now, it's only a matter of time before they will all blow up in your face. Take proactive action now to feed the market what it wants at the time they need it.

Don't assume if you build something people will come. You need to start the conversation, prod people, and invite people in. Sometimes that will require building in some traditional advertising into the mix.

Links to all the examples, company sites, the PDF of this article, and the full presentation can be found here: <http://bit.ly/socialm>

About David Spark:



David Spark is the founder of Spark Media Solutions, LLC. (<http://sparkmediasolutions.com/>), specialists in building industry voice through storytelling and social media. For more than fourteen years, Spark has worked as a journalist reporting on the tech industry in print, radio, TV, and online. His articles and advice have appeared in more than 25 publications and media outlets including eWEEK, Wired News, PC Computing, PC World, TechTV, and Smart Computing. In addition, Spark spent ten years in advertising and corporate entertainment as a new media director and marketing creative. While not covering the tech beat or managing ad campaigns, Spark squandered more than a dozen years working as a standup comedian and comedy writer for The Second City in Chicago. Currently, Spark is a regular contributor for John C. Dvorak's Cranky Geeks, KQED's "This Week in Northern California," Mashable, Socialmedia.biz, ABC Radio, and hosts his own podcast "Be the Voice." He blogs regularly at "Spark Minute" (<http://sparkminute.com>). David Spark lives in San Francisco, a city he loves so much he's become a local historian offering walking tours to locals and tourists.



About Spark Media Solutions:

Spark Media Solutions, LLC. (<http://sparkmediasolutions.com>) offers services in the creation and management of editorial, production, distribution, and social media to build industry voice. Spark Media Solutions works in conjunction with public relations, marketing, and branding efforts to turn any business into a media network with its own editorial and industry conversational voice. Our plan of attack includes assessment of your audience, editorial development, efficient production, and expanding distribution channels. Spark Media Solutions is based in San Francisco.

About Itibiti Systems Inc:



Itibiti Systems' platform, itiBiti, is a revolutionary, instant revenue driven, Rich Internet Application (RIA) providing entertainment, communications and social networking initiatives displayed directly onto a user's computer desktop - providing major global brands with the unprecedented ability to power their social media and marketing efforts within a unique, private label loyalty and revenue platform. itiBiti offers users a rich suite of services in combination with brand client initiatives, and the Microsoft Windows Live platform. Users have the ability to access itiBiti using their Windows Live ID, giving them direct access to a number of Microsoft services. Itibiti Systems is currently in the planning stage for a mobile version of its product offerings.

About Intertainment Media:



Intertainment Media Inc. (<http://intertainmentmedia.com>) is a Rich Media Applications leader, focused on delivering leading edge technology and marketing solutions enabling clients to power enhanced branding, loyalty initiatives and consumer engagement. Selected as a Microsoft Global Agency Initiative partner, Intertainment has joined an elite group of interactive agencies worldwide that Microsoft recommends to its Partners and Customers.

Additionally, Intertainment owns, operates and invests in high value content, traffic management, advertising and social networking solutions including, Eye Rock Digital (<http://eyerockdigital.com>), No Good TV (<http://ngtv.com>), View2gether Inc. (<http://view2gether.com>), Itibiti Systems Inc. (<http://itibitisystems.com>) and Magnum Fine Commercial Printing Limited (<http://magnumprinting.com>).

Headquartered in Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada, Intertainment Media Inc. is listed on the Toronto Venture Exchange under the symbol "INT".

Meet itiBiti



A revolutionary voice-powered, all-in-one computer desktop entertainment, social networking and communications suite, with the power of Microsoft's Live Services platform built in.

Brand Supported, Revenue Driven: With itiBiti, global brands are able to offer consumers a no-cost, fully integrated private label platform – sent right to their computer desktop - designed to power marketing programs, enhance online ROI performance, and increase consumer engagement, while generating revenue.

Instant Consumer Connection: Now, users can instantly interact with their favourite brands as soon as they turn on their computer. itiBiti delivers the power to customize a new, daily experience via a full suite of tools, content and services, including full FREE telephony / voice chat systems, multi-channel media players, premium access to 3rd party services, custom feeds, loyalty programs and more.

A New Conversation: The debut of itiBiti signals a landscape-changing innovation, targeting the virtually untapped opportunity of the computer desktop. For marketing professionals, and the industry at large, the customizable itiBiti private label brand platform breaks a new, refined vision for what revenue-driven, loyalty, viral and mind-share initiatives can represent.

The Team: This technology development is led by Itibiti Systems Inc., ("ISI"), a wholly owned subsidiary of Entertainment Media Inc. Recently invited to join the prestigious Microsoft Global Agency Initiative Partner program, Entertainment Media Inc. is publicly listed on the TSX Venture Exchange under the symbol "INT" and is headquartered in Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada.

Competitive Position: The range of "widgets" currently in the market has nothing in common with itiBiti's proprietary technology or marketing platform. ItiBiti's technological and marketing differentiation, coupled with Microsoft's Live services platform, allows itiBiti's data driven and permission-based programming to offer brands and advertisers the ability to "drill down" to user preferences and initiate match offerings, providing the highest potential value for consumers and online ROI for brands.

Launch: Together with Microsoft, itiBiti exclusively debuted at South by Southwest, one of the world's leading interactive festivals, in March, 2009. In addition, itiBiti also showcased at MIX09 - Microsoft's premier conference for web commerce, education and communications.

BUSINESS:

Increased and Accretive Revenues: As itiBiti lives on the computer desktop, it is creating value in a new environment, proving both increased revenues to existing programs and accretive revenue platforms. Programs with major agencies allow itiBiti to create robust and effective broadcast, segmented and one to one permission based revenue programs. Additionally, itiBiti offers state of the art advertising insertion services, allowing all popular formats of online advertising and exclusive domination and custom skinning programs.

Major Brands, Ad and Marketing Partners: itiBiti has over 200 major brand presentations underway prior to its fully commercial launch and media awareness programs, in addition to established relationships with some of the world's largest consumer-driven organizations, advertising agencies and technology groups.

Comprehensive Network Architecture: itiBiti has developed a comprehensive network architecture providing over 20 Points of Presence (POPs) in major regions in the US, Canada and Europe. itiBiti is working with large scale managed hosting, colocation and cloud computing providers to create an integrated global network.



a division of



30 West Beaver Creek Road
Units 12 & 13
Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 3K1
Canada
Phone: 905-763-3510
Fax: 905-763-6175
Toll Free: 1-800-395-9943
www.itibitissystems.com
www.intertainmentmedia.com

*Headquartered in Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada, Intertainment Media Inc.
is listed on the Toronto Venture Exchange under the symbol "INT".*

TSXV: INT