SEARCH AND SOCIAL MEDIA:
Making your brand stand out!

HOW MANY DIGITAL SYMBOLS CAN YOU FIND?
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword by Dr. Qi Lu</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s really going to happen in 2010? by Danny Sullivan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jargon buster</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mood of the industry</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer landscape</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined effect: search and social media working together</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building brand by replacing the microsite</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informing strategy</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response and reputation</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search &amp; social media recruitment</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions: 10 things you need to do right now by Kieron Matthews</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Search has been called “The Database of Intentions.” Rightly so, but that is just the start. At Microsoft’s Online Services Division, our mission is to “Empower People with Knowledge” - this is a multi-decade quest to enable people everywhere to gain knowledge and creativity from the web by computationally understanding user intent and matching that with published content, advertising offerings, and software services. This is akin to building a virtual mind-reader, which automatically understands what people are trying to accomplish (intent: needs & interests) and distil knowledge (fundamental meanings, the insights and know-how from digital information).

There continues to be new surface areas to compete and differentiate across content types, entry points, devices, and use cases in Search, and we see this evolution continuing. Bing was a clear example of innovation in the richer user experience it provided, the integrated left-pane search refinement tool for a more relevant search experience, and the vertical searches, as an example.

However, user behaviour has also evolved significantly, and the market is undeniably moving towards open interoperability. Open and Social experiences are becoming the norm. Search can improve significantly by leveraging the open web and social networks like Facebook, Twitter and MySpace to provide real-time and social feeds. The power of Social Media is just that – social. Over 65% of users contribute, share or discuss content with friends and family. Decisions about what to read or view are often made based on popularity or “wisdom of the crowds.” And that is a good signal of intent.

Social networks like Facebook are an incredible targeting asset on multiple fronts: it provides an online people directory and audience with a rich dataset and profile for targeting; it allows for rich user generated content (UGC); it enables a digital community play for brand building and affinity; and it is an app platform for developers; amongst other dimensions of Social Network Services.

What does it mean for advertisers, however? The future of search depends on integrating such rich experiences into the SERP to provide better targeting and monetization opportunities through better relevancy (i.e., intent inference). This is a vast source of future value creation for us and the rest of the industry.
Just because you create a Facebook page or a Twitter feed, doesn’t mean that you have ‘social media’ covered. Acknowledging the voice of the consumer and incorporating it into your communications is a long-term commitment and valuable business proposition, but not one that can operate in a silo.

Traditionally search is one way in which the views and activities of the public have exposed the strengths – and weaknesses – of brands, but social media has provided a platform for these opinions to be heard louder and far faster than ever before. As such, the relationship between search and social media is becoming increasingly significant, and this report from the IAB and Microsoft Advertising highlights how user behaviour has driven the exponential growth of both.

Consumers are critics, creators and conversationalists, and Forrester’s Social Technographics study shows that they are becoming more ‘active’ online with every year that passes. So as social platforms and search engines merge, an understanding of the two has become necessary not just for PR and marketing departments, but for every single function of a business.

The industry is very much beginning to sit up and take notice of these two inextricably linked disciplines, and this report provides insight and guidance on the main three ways they can work together:

Through the use of research, case studies and practical insights, this overview of the current landscape will provide you with the tools to employ search and social media in tandem, to help your brand stand out from the crowd.

**Combined effect**
- Search and social media working together and replacing microsites

**Informing strategy**
- Using social media research to inform your search and overall business strategy

**Response & Reputation**
- Using search and social media as a response tool, to successfully manage your reputation online
Expect the synergies between search and social to accelerate even more as 2010 unfolds.

Already, Google has jumped into the social space with its just released Google Buzz service. All those Buzz pages in turn show up in real-time search results at Google, which drive traffic back to a web site.

Also expect real-time and social content to become more visible at Bing. Microsoft has promised that its search engine will be doing more in this space, and there's every reason to expect that to come soon.

Meanwhile, Facebook's visibility in search results continues to grow, as the company ensures more and more content planted within its walled garden can actually spill out into the fields of search.

Twitter continues onward as both a big driver of traffic and a source of links – which in turn helps fuel search rankings.

There's plenty of opportunity in these changes. People are tuning into social networks more than ever, as evidenced by the increasing amounts of traffic such services drive. On the downside, deciding which social networks to participate in can be overwhelming. Look for those that are backed by big players and reports of being large traffic drivers. But remember – social networks are not a replacement for maintaining control of your own destiny, running and developing your own web site. Do both.

In short, if having a web site was essential in the 2000s, having a web site plus a social presence in the major networks is essential in the 2010s.
Traditionally a brand’s web presence consisted of a website, campaign microsites and perhaps listings in online shops or catalogues. Now brands are wising up to the power of placing a web presence where users are, and a web presence includes any page or content directly owned and maintained by the brand. Therefore pages in social networks should also be considered part of your overall brand web presence.

SEM is all about matching your web presence to the words and phrases people type into search engines. To do this, you need to understand the words people use to find your content and these words are known as keywords. E.g. some of the Internet Advertising Bureau’s main keywords are ‘internet’ and ‘advertising’, but equally people search for us with phrases including ‘marketing’ and ‘digital’.

PPC is the model used by search engines that allow you to advertise ‘sponsored links’ on their results pages for a cost. All search engines use an auction model whereby the more you outbid competitors, the more prominent your advert. However, relevance and quality still play an important role, and good SEO can help reduce cost and improve your PPC advert positions.

SEM is the process of increasing the visibility of your brand’s web presence in search engine results pages (SERPS). There are two primary ways of doing this: search engine optimisation (SEO) and pay per click (PPC). In the world of the social web, your brand’s web presence includes not only your main website and microsites, but also any pages or content you own in social networks, e.g. MySpace, YouTube and Twitter pages.
SEO (Search Engine Optimisation)

SEO is the process of improving your content and web presence to make sure search engines naturally give it a better position in its relevant results pages. It can include improving the quality of your content and keywords, gaining links from relevant sites and improving the structure of your sites to make it easier for search engines to access it. Social media is now very much a part of the SEO process.

SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages)

SERPs are the pages showing lists of links after you’ve hit the ‘search’ button on search engines. SERPs now include video, image, review, maps and real time search as standard.

Social terms:

Buzz

‘Buzz’ is a term used to describe the amount of conversation that takes place about your brand, and there are tools available to help you measure this. Buzz can be either positive, or negative, depending on the sentiment of the discussions that take place. Again, there are a number of tools and monitoring services on the market to help brands make sense of the buzz around their products or services.

Social media

Social media, for the purpose of this report, refers to the social actions, behaviours and conversations that take place about your brand online, either on social networks such as MySpace or Facebook or microblogging sites like Twitter. This activity could also be taking place on blogs or forums, and also includes video or photographic content in the form of user-generated content on sites such as YouTube.

The way in which we use these conversations, either by analysing them for research purposes, engaging with consumers directly or targeting them through paid-for advertising in this space, is where ‘social media’ becomes a communications tools for brands.

Social networks

Social media isn’t just ‘social networks’. Rather, social networks provide the platforms, tools and technology to enable consumers to interact with each other, to express themselves and engage with brands. Examples of social networks include the most commonly referenced Facebook, MySpace and Bebo, but there are also numerous ‘niche’ social networks online such as LinkedIn and various games communities that enable you to reach more specific audiences.
The forward-looking nature of the digital industry is one of its key strengths. Having said this, it is also one of the reasons why it is plagued by prediction culture.

If we look to the blogosphere for an assessment of the auguries, alongside predictions of the end of the world, another ice age and a British Wimbledon winner, we also find the usual run down of key trends to expect in our industry in 2010. Mercifully there’s not too much chatter about 2010 being the year of mobile, but there’s certainly a lot of noise being made about how this will be the year that search and social media come together.

In recognition of this growing trend, the IAB in association with Microsoft Advertising hosted a Search & Social Media Roundtable Discussion towards the close of 2009. During this process, a selection of key players from the worlds of search, social media, advertising and PR discussed how and why search and social media should work more in tandem.

Around the table there was an acceptance that the two worlds are growing ever closer. “Search and social are coming together,” argued Mindshare’s Ciaran Norris while bigmouthmedia’s Andrew Girdwood suggested that “search as a platform can be used as a social network”.

But it was not always thus. For many years search was the hottest topic in online marketing. It’s a mark of the youthfulness of the digital industry that it is now one of the grand old gentlemen of the medium – a fact reflected in the commanding position it assumes in most digital marketing budgets.

Despite its dominance however, search has never fully shed its geeky label. The situation is very different for social media, the youthful, trendy pretender to the throne, yapping at the heels of the search giants. While a search specialist would most likely be categorized as an egghead, a social media expert would more likely be portrayed as a trendy young digital guru. While search engine optimisation has been lumbered with a reputation for being something of a shadowy practice, social media is brazen and mouthy, shouting its virtues from the rooftops.
So there are key differences between search and social media. But what links the two? Looking to the future, can these apparently uneasy bedfellows set up a happy home together to create a digital marketing utopia?

In a nutshell social media is all about content creation while search is concerned with how to find this content. Increasingly however this easy distinction is becoming more blurred.

Just look at social media’s increasing strength as a news aggregator for example. Hitwise released figures earlier this year showing that Facebook is now the fourth largest distributor of news content on the web. Remarkably, the social networking site now sits behind search engines Google, Yahoo! and Microsoft’s Bing as the place where people get their news online.

A key driver of this trend is the speed at which social media operates. Traditional search methods can be too slow. As Microsoft Advertising’s Cedric Chambaz noted at the IAB’s roundtable, this is something that brands can learn from. “How do you promote your site and get it into the ranking fast?” asked Chambaz. “SEO takes too much time to get there.”

Similar trends have also been translated into the retail arena. Think of the way that Amazon or TripAdvisor for example have embraced the social side of the web to become key online resources allowing consumers to find out about goods and services they are interested in. Elsewhere, similar things are happening. Peer to peer recommendations are now a major feature of Facebook and the core of social shopping site, Ciao, for example.

In spaces like these then we are already beginning to see search and social media merge. The logical end result of this activity is that we will no longer search for products and services via a search engine, rather they will find us via social media. After all, consumers care more what their friends and peers link to than about what a search algorithm serves them. Don’t they? As Brad Little, Head of BuzzMetrics, EMEA for Nielsen noted at the IAB’s roundtable discussion, “social media makes search more personable”.

As a reflection of this trend, at the end of January Google unveiled details of its Social Search experiment. Available to all users in beta format on its main search engine, the initiative enables searchers to find content posted by their friends and acquaintances on the web. Two new links, My Social Circle and My Social Content, enable searchers to look at the connections and information that lie behind their search results. The launch followed the decision by Google and Bing to add real-time results from Twitter to their search listings.

In a blog post, Maureen Heymans and Terran Melconian of Google explained that the initiative is an acknowledgement of search and social media’s complementary strengths. “We think there’s tremendous potential for social information to improve search and we’re just beginning to scratch the surface,” they wrote.

So what does this mean for traditional search agencies? At the end of January, New Media Age’s Will Cooper argued that the rise of Twitter and real-time search has posed many questions for brands, but one that appears to be very common is where the management responsibility lies.
In the article entitled “Agencies need to up their social media game”, Cooper argued that search is usually managed by specialist agencies and networks, or dedicated in-house marketing teams while social media tends to be mainly managed by in-house or external PR or comms teams. However new initiatives, like those being explored by Google, have linked the two more closely. The challenge for the search agency of the future then will be in proving their ability to demonstrate an understanding of social media.

We began this section by looking at some of the key differences between search and social media. Perhaps the most important traditional distinction is the fact that search is – by it’s very nature – measurable, while social media is much more difficult to evaluate. As Nielsen’s Brad Little noted at the IAB’s roundtable discussion, “The annoying part about social media and a key problem, is how to measure it”. Looking to the future, the increasingly complementary relationship between search and social media may provide a solution to this problem. This can only be a good thing.
Can you remember your first online ‘search’? Can you recall how you felt when you realised that one simple engine could provide you with access to all the internet had to offer, simply by typing in a couple of keywords? Is it as significant a day as when your first child was born? Probably not... Do you ever count the number of searches you make in one afternoon? Do you even remember what the last thing you queried online was? Again, it's really quite doubtful.

That's because search is now so engrained within our lives that for consumers, it's just not that big a deal. In fact, with Comscore rating the UK population as the 4th most prolific ‘searchers’ in the world, with over 6.2 billion searches taking place in December 2009 (behind the US, China and Japan), it would probably be quite easy for each individual online query to slip our minds... It’s such an expected, necessary part of our daily routine that our activity within this space is often habitual, predictable and fast-paced. Whilst our industry can understandably get bogged down in technical jargon, definitions and the complex sociological theory that determines consumer behaviour, it’s important to remember that in the mind of the internet user, the average session looks a little something like this:

The average session is busy. Task-based, yet also entertainment seeking; fleeting, but at the same time immersive. People communicate, gather information, create and share, and first impressions are of the upmost importance. Minds are up made in an instant, which is why brands now have a need to consider every online touchpoint and how they can influence purchase decisions beyond the virtual front door of their corporate website.
Whilst history tells us that from one year to the next, the websites and online tools that crowd the computer desktop will change, the essence of the consumer’s need remains the same, and it is critical that advertisers appreciate these needs. Ciaran Norris, head of social media at Mindshare, stated at the round table that: “Last year it was Facebook, this year it’s Twitter - we have got to stop talking about the current popular websites and start talking about technologies and behaviours. It is about democratising cultures: people share, create and discuss stuff and this is the core characteristic of the online consumer. Technology changes, people don’t. We still want the same things we wanted 10 years ago, but can now share them faster.”

The growing demands of the online population

The internet has changed dramatically over the past 10 years to facilitate a richer, more dynamic and social experience that is driven by the modern consumer’s need for immediacy and choice. Some 92% of the online population now have a broadband speed over 2MB and 56% of home broadband users have wireless broadband, figures that continue to grow at a steady pace (BMRB Internet Monitor May 2009). From January to June 2009, around 73% of us used the internet, with 49% logging on every day (BMRB 2009). Whilst general email (by far the oldest yet most critical form of communication online) remains the most popular pastime, it’s evident that the medium is now being increasingly used for entertainment purposes, as illustrated in the chart below.

Top 10 Activities used Internet for in past six months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of Users ('000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using Email</td>
<td>32,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info on a particular activity</td>
<td>26,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site of a particular product or brand</td>
<td>24,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare prices</td>
<td>21,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at listings</td>
<td>19,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel plans</td>
<td>18,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To listen to music</td>
<td>17,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job opportunities</td>
<td>14,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play games</td>
<td>14,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow sports/results</td>
<td>13,919</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BMRB’s Internet Monitor, wave 49, August 2009  
Base: All GB Internet Users Aged 15+

Alongside the age-old uses of the web is the desire to learn about brands, products and services. We like to collect as much information as possible, using whichever method provides us with the most relevant results. Brands have infiltrated the digital space not necessarily seamlessly, but effectively. Whilst online presents many opportunities to ‘push’ a message upon the internet user via online display and affiliate marketing, there exists a further significant opportunity for marketers to capitalise on the proactive nature of consumers wanting to know more about a brand.
Consumers are taking brands into social media

Consumers have a wealth of means to access information about brands online, and it’s not just search that holds all the responsibility. Research from Penn State University in September 2009 found that microblogging is a vast new area that can facilitate consumers’ research. They found that some 20% of tweets are now related to brands, products and services. These aren’t just simple statements, such as:

In fact the Twitter population is asking questions, seeking advice, and making not only positive, but highly negative comments, too. Jim Jansen, associate professor of information science and technology in the College of Information Sciences and Technology (IST) at Penn State said of the findings: “People are using tweets to express their reaction, both positive and negative, as they engage with these products and services. Tweets are about as close as one can get to the customer point of purchase for products and services.”

Consumers may not even want to talk to brands directly. Rather they are seeking to share their experiences with friends and colleagues, in order to seek guidance and solutions from ‘real’ people. Or sometimes they may just want to vent some frustration, like this:
Of course it would be incredibly time-consuming and probably quite unnecessary to hunt down and respond to every query, quibble or even compliment that occurs on a platform such as Twitter which has an audience in the tens of millions. However, the important lesson here is that the voice of the consumer is louder than ever, and it is highly likely that comments made in the social space could slowly work their way into a much more public arena like the search results pages.

Content produced and shared by consumers on social networking sites, in blogs, forums and so on, is also providing companies with a rich source of information concerning issues and questions that customers have regarding their products. How this information can impact upon your overall communications strategy will be discussed later on in this report, however it may be surprising for some brands to discover just how ‘social’ their audiences now are.

Our place on the ‘social’ ladder

Although based on US data, Forrester’s Social Technographics ‘ladder’ is one of the best ways to gain an initial understanding of the internet population, and the extent to which they have embraced social technologies and conversation online.

Forrester’s latest profile, published in Q4 2009, highlights the range of multiple behaviours consumers exhibit online, including 70% of people described as ‘spectators’ – those who actively read blogs, tweets, customer reviews and content in forums as part of their regular online activity. Some 24% of people are creating their own content online, whilst 33% are regularly engaging in conversation, and this conversation has the ability to live on indefinitely within the World Wide Web. An important consideration for the search marketer is how consumers find these hubs of conversation in the first place. With the ease at which comments can be shared and added to, even manipulated in some cases, this is a space that requires an increasing amount of commitment from brands.

At the round table, IAB marketing director Kieron Matthews challenged the notion that the public were really that important, simply because they have more tools to share their opinions “Why do we care about Social media?” he asked. “I used to make ads for Coca Cola and we knew for ourselves what the right creative was. We didn’t need to ask the man on the street. So why are we bothered about it now?” The overwhelming response from our round table attendees was that it is not each individual opinion that holds great significance for brands, rather, what holds greatest importance is the influence consumers now have on each other on a global scale, thanks to word of mouth activity.
The difference between ‘attention’ and ‘intention’

For some consumers, straightforward advertising won’t always cut it anymore. In a shoppers’ survey conducted by the Wall Street Journal in 2009, 78% of respondents said that TV ads no longer provide all the information they need in order to make a purchase decision. A key reason for this is the fact that the internet has made customers more savvy and demanding. As a result, they no longer need to rely on what brands tell them. Andrew Girdwood, head of strategy at bigmouthmedia, stated at the round table that: “Impact has shifted and has moved. 20 years ago people trusted their TV more than they do now. Trust has now become the biggest challenge for marketers, and one which many are eager to address.”

The proliferation of review sites, price comparison services and online communities means that advertising is very much the starting point of a far more complex customer journey, which often relies on the views of others almost as much as branded information itself. Search and social experiences punctuate this journey, but need to be approached in different ways to how a traditional marketing campaign would be devised. Research conducted by the IAB in 2010 on the ‘branded customer journey’ investigated the various branded touchpoints that consumers are exposed online to before they make a final purchase. In the travel market for example, the research found that internet users can see up to 8.6 display ads, 2 emails, can act on as many as 2.7 natural listings and up to 1.8 sponsored search results, before they make a purchase decision. These figures highlight just how complex and in-depth the online purchase path is, and that customer decisions aren’t always made in an instant.

Girdwood outlined what he believes are three key types of ‘media’, which sum up the ways in which brands can engage with consumers, both on and offline:

- **Attention Media** – advertising which sparks interest and is based on reach and frequency of consumers picking up the messages. It was acknowledged within the round table that broadcast media such as TV are still the best at getting people’s attention, however it may not be as reliable when it comes to making that final purchase.

- **Social Media** – this relates largely to the activities described within Forrester’s Social Technographics ladder: consumers creating content, reading the content of others, having conversations online and sharing knowledge.

- **Intention Media** – this refers to the user’s intentions, and is naturally driven by their own proactive behaviour, often facilitated by the internet as the medium that can serve these intentions.
Search lies very much within the ‘intention’ realm, as the use of a search engine requires a set intention or objective from the start. It is driven first by the consumer’s initial aims for their internet session, and then brands are able to respond with relevant offerings to meet these needs. However, search is steadily fusing itself with the social nature of online usage, most immediately from an aesthetic point of view, with social sites creeping up the results pages and the more formal decisions to allow content from social networking sites such as Twitter to appear dynamically within the natural listings. The following section highlights the ways in which from the consumer’s perspective, search and social media have become inextricably linked.

### Searching for social media and social media within search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Google UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Windows Live Mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>eBay UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Google</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>UK msn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>BBC Homepage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yahoo! UK &amp; Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>BBC News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Wikipedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yahoo! UK &amp; Ireland Mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Google UK images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>BBC Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>amazon.co.uk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sky Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Bing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>BBC iPlayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Google Maps UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>BT Yahoo!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A glimpse at the most visited sites in the UK at the beginning of 2010 (source: Hitwise UK January 2010) clearly illustrates our surfing priorities as a nation. Amongst the search engines, webmail and news sites live social platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Wikipedia. Even the regulars within our top 20, like eBay and amazon.co.uk have been founded upon a sense of community. But what is most interesting is these key sites no longer operate in a silo. Technology has developed to weave our online journey together to a far greater extent. The ability to transfer content from one website to another, and increased ‘sharing’ functions (i.e. post to Facebook, Digg, del.icio.us etc) have made the rapid dissemination of information across the Web a key characteristic of our current internet behaviour.

And of course consumers are searching for social media, too. Outlined below are the top ten overall search terms for January 2010, and the top ten fast moving search terms for the same period. The top social networking sites are being searched for the most, and every one of the top ten searches has clearly been conducted with a view to immediately visiting the site in question. Searching for a brand name still remains a more popular alternative to attempting to ‘guess’ the URL, with consumers believing the process to be far quicker. Furthermore a consumer survey conducted by Verdict in 2009, found that alongside using search as a means of visiting specific sites, 41% of people also use search to find new sites, outside of their regular portfolio of ‘favourites’.

“Search is steadily fusing itself with the social nature of online usage... And technology has developed to weave our online journey together to a far greater extent!”
The ‘top ten fast moving search terms’ in January 2010, as well as providing us with scary insights into the human psyche, also reveal the fact that searches are by their very nature highly topical and often driven by external communicators such as news, product launches or word of mouth. A search for every one of the terms above on each of the major engines reveals a similar pattern, and amongst the first ten results exist publisher sites and portals, as well as a selection of blogs, Twitter feeds and of course Wikipedia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Search Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Cheryl Cole lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Swan divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>John Terry affair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>iPad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Venus Williams flesh colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>‘Worker sacked by macdonalds’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>John Terry news of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Susan Boyle is a virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>“stunned” driver fined for blowing his nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Tina O’Brien smoking again</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hitwise UK - January 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Search Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Facebook login</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Youtube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>eBay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>eBay UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>BBC Weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Argos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Amazon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>BBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Bebo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In fact, a search for the Apple iPad in January 2010 reveals a blog post at the very top of the natural listings (factoryjoe.com/blog) and further blogs down the page. Apple products are some of the best examples of online conversation being just as - or even more - significant than the voice of the brand itself. This is largely due to the much-hyped launch events and slow dissemination of product information and rumours prior to the event, which in turn sparks mass interest and generates an exceptional amount of word of mouth activity online.

Apple aside, ‘fast moving search terms’ and the wealth of social media results now present within engine listings are an area that marketers are yet to fully capitalise on. Identifying the current feeling of the UK population, examining popular search terms and understanding your target audience through social media research can be a great way of tapping into the zeitgeist and raising brand awareness where people are already searching. Monitoring ‘buzz’ on fast moving social networks can allow advertisers to exploit interest through search where people will be looking for more, or alternative information.
Consumers acting as marketing ‘pied pipers’

Surprisingly, such quick responses to consumer interests and search behaviours are currently few and far between. This is an area with real potential for further penetration from brands who can enter the space with relevance simply by being quick to adapt their marketing messages and creating content based on consumer demand. The marketing community has traditionally been quite slow to follow consumers into and around the digital world, but perhaps rather than an inability to ‘keep their finger on the pulse’, there have been some very logical hurdles in their way:

• In order for advertisers to embrace digital fully they have needed a reassessment of internal structures and relevant skillsets required within marketing teams to adapt to new consumer behaviours. This is something that will be discussed later in this report.

• The internet has been subject to both very significant developments and also to marketing ‘fads’, which go in and out of favour depending very much on the levels of media press coverage they receive. Second Life (the 3D online world where users can create avatars and socialise with one another) is one example where many brands entered the space due to the hype that surrounded the virtual world, however they soon retreated once it was realised that the effect on consumers was minimal. This means that marketers may now treat some trends with caution.

• When employing a new form of marketing activity, measurement remains a real challenge for brands continually looking to prove ROI. Particularly where social media is involved, it can be hard to establish like-for-like benchmarks, especially when getting involved for the first time.

The very crude mock-up below for a fake make-up brand is just one example of how this could work.
Social media influence

Industry research is one way that marketers can learn what works within digital, and provides concrete evidence for brands deciding where to allocate their budgets. Research into the relationship between search and social media is now beginning to rise higher up the agenda, and a study from comScore, GroupM Search & M80 in 2009 has found a clear, profitable link between the two.

The research, which examined the behaviours of respondents exposed to paid-search, social media (i.e. blogs, forums, video sharing sites etc relevant to a specific brand category) and influenced social (i.e. part of a brand’s social media programme) showed that consumers exposed to social media are far more likely to search for brand and product related terms. Key findings included:

• Consumers exposed to a brand’s influenced social media are 2.8 times more likely to search for that brand’s products than people only exposed to paid search.

• There was a 50% click-through rate increase in paid search when consumers were exposed to influenced social media and paid search, which means that consumers exposed to social media activity are more likely to click on a brand’s paid search ad, compared with those exposed to the brands’ search alone.

• Consumers using social media are 1.7 times more likely to search with the intention of making a list of brands or products to consider purchasing compared to the average internet user.

• In addition, respondents who had been exposed to a brand’s social marketing campaign were 2.4 times more likely to click on organic links leading to an advertiser’s site than the average user seeing the paid search ad in isolation.

In the words of the researchers: “The study showed searchers who use social media are more engaged consumers and more likely to be looking for places to buy and brands to consider.” Therefore in the eyes of the active internet user, whilst the clear links between search and social media may not be a conscious part of their purchase decisions, the way the two interrelate has clear effects on their behaviours.

The complex customer journey described earlier in this chapter has inevitably given consumers more control over what they know about brands, products and services. For advertisers, the control is slightly more difficult to retain, given the growing influence of online word of mouth, and the intensity of conversation taking place every second on various social networks and sites such as Twitter. But by understanding how search and social media can work together, and the different ways in which you can maximise their combined effects, brands can take the first step in managing their online presence to a greater extent.
Social media, at the most basic level, is content. Search engines make sense of content to help people find what they’re looking for. It was therefore inevitable that both search and social media would quickly bond in a loving embrace to form a romance that’s getting stronger every day.

In this chapter we’ve highlighted some of the important ways you can use search and social media together to positively improve your campaign.

**Set objectives**

What is the objective of your campaign? To drive sales and customer acquisition? Lead generation? Build brand? Raise awareness of information? Build an online community? Increase traffic to sell more advertising or subscriptions?

Search and social media work together to do almost everything and anything. Before embarking on your campaign work out 1 – 3 primary objectives, decide how search and social media can help you achieve these and how you are going to measure them (see the end of this chapter for more on this).

**1. Search directly improving social media**

- **PPC**: underused by brands at the moment, paid search is one of the most obvious and best ways of directly improving your social media presence. As more brands like Lynx start to use social network pages as replacements for campaign microsites, it becomes more important to direct your customers to these pages. Nothing is as instant and accountable at doing this as PPC.
• **Search intents:** if search is a database of ‘intent’, as John Battelle, author of ‘The Search’ once said, looking at the search patterns for your brand and industry can help you identify unmet information needs from your customers. Providing this missing piece of information is critical, and if it exists you should provide pointers to it. In both cases social media can be a quick way to seed the information.

• **Social network pages:** because these tend to perform strongly in natural search results, once they’re listed search will supply your network pages with more people. If you get the wording and proposition right, you can use search to drive more traffic, which will lead to more sign-ups and potentially more content to extend your web presence.

2. **Social media directly improving search**

• **Extend brand reach:** brand pages on the likes of Facebook, YouTube, MySpace and Twitter all have ‘no follow’ rules (HTML coding) that stop links from them boosting your own web presence. However, by the nature of their popularity, social network pages all tend to rank highly on SERPs. Make the most of this and think of these network pages as part of your brand’s web presence. By doing so, you can increase the number of web pages under your control in related searches giving you a ‘wider net’ to reach consumers while simultaneously knocking negative coverage down a peg or two.

• **Blog network:** links to your website, particularly from related websites and blogs, is the best way of improving your natural and paid search position in SERPs. Bloggers are most likely to quickly write articles and link off to other sites. Build genuine long-term relationships with relevant blogs and offer them useful, entertaining or financially rewarding content to encourage more links to your web presence. This relationship is time consuming and must be carefully managed to give bloggers something valuable in return. Don’t just send them your press releases! Do so by thinking beyond your marketing and PR departments. Social media should be embraced across the whole company. Your Research & Development department might have some valuable assets to share with the online community for instance.

• **Own community:** building a community on your own web presence will increase the amount of content on your site, helping you widen your net even further to reach the search long-tail (the thousands of key terms people search for). For instance, setting up support forums, user reviews and wikis empower your consumers to add content to your site; often far more content than you could create yourself. This is a similar tactic to setting up a page in a social network, with the same objective of increasing your web presence in SERPs, so you’ll need to decide which is right for your brand.
3. Social media indirectly improving search

- **Buzz:** as mentioned above, social networks like Twitter, MySpace and Facebook don’t directly boost your own website’s natural search position, but they are a perfect conduit for news and gossip. This sharing of information about your brand will indirectly increase brand awareness and searches related to your brand.

- **Aggregators:** the main search engines are starting to integrate ‘social search’ functionality which does exactly what it says on the tin; it lets you search for something only in social media content like blogs and forums. Social networks also offer their own search functionality like Twitter and Facebook. This is all new technology so there’s a lot to learn and there are many grey areas, but it presents opportunities for the early adopting marketers among us to make their brand stand out.

4. Social search

- **Social search:** the main search engines are starting to integrate ‘social search’ functionality which does exactly what it says on the tin; it lets you search for something only in social media content like blogs and forums. Social networks also offer their own search functionality like Twitter and Facebook. This is all new technology so there’s a lot to learn and there are many grey areas, but it presents opportunities for the early adopting marketers among us to make their brand stand out.

- **Real time search:** Twitter’s ‘real time’ search functionality, which is largely linked to news and events, is already something you should consider. It’s largely linked to news and events. As a story breaks, almost instantly people start talking about it online instantly – this allows you to monitor but also become part of the conversation. It’s interesting watching this happen to big stories like the launch of the Apple iPad and Michael Jackson’s death, but you’ll be even more interested when people are talking about your own brand.

- **Universal search:** Universal Search is the name given to the search options that allow you to refine results by images, videos, news etc. Included within this are new options like ‘Blog search’, ‘Review search’ and as mentioned ‘Video search’. Ensure your web presence is included within these to capture this specific traffic and importantly, to increase brand visibility on normal SERPs as more of this content is included in the main results.

**Example:**

A quick search in Bing for “McDonald’s Nutrition” finds a flood of official McDonald’s pages including MakeUpYourOwnMind.co.uk, the brand’s interactive FAQ site.
5. Customer relationships

- Customer service: Over the years, social media has opened up the conversation between customers and brands. Pioneer brands have been operating support and chat forums for over a decade now, and social networks make this two-way conversation online far easier. Social search helps you locate recent discussions about your brand. For example, if you search for your brand on Twitter and find a recent negative tweet, you can instantly respond and try to rectify the problem thus – hopefully – solving the problem and strengthening your brand perception. You can do this within the social networks themselves but also outside these social spheres. For instance, why not proactively update your call centre scripts or website homepage to address an emergency situation?

---

**Search & Social Media Measurement**

1. Online sales, engagement and interactions: Web analytics can be one of the best foundations for judging success of search improving social media and vice-versa. Most social network pages like Facebook and MySpace offer their own web traffic data or can integrate your own packages like Google Analytics, Site Intelligence and WebTrends. Obviously you can use these on your own blogs, forums and website too. These allow you to measure new and return visitors, page views, interactions, conversions, online sales and more. Tip: use bit.ly for shortening URLs in Twitter, if you register on bit.ly you can measure the number of clicks on specific links.

2. Buzz and conversation: Search is one of the strongest tools for measuring online conversations and buzz. Microsoft Advertising Intelligence Tool (MAIT) is a free add-in to Excel that lets you analyse search trends in a similar way to Google Insights, with additional demographic and budgeting data*. As social media content in search increases in importance, monitoring search trends is actually a way of monitoring social media trends too. The demographic data offered by MAIT is fairly unique and incredibly useful if coupled with specific conversation and ‘buzz’ measurement tools. A plethora of tools exists to measure conversation trends including Nielsen’s BuzzMetrics, Market Sentinel, Nielsen BlogPulse, Trendistic, How Sociable and many more. You should also conduct qualitative research by monitoring news and blog search in Google and Bing for new articles about your brand, as well as spotting conversations on Twitter and forums. This is discussed later in chapter six.

3. Brand tracking: To measure brand uplift created by social media and search you have to ask customers what they think of your brand through your own surveys or using the likes of Dynamic Logic. Brand metrics can include awareness, favourability, consideration, message association and much more. Of course, you should also use search tools like MAIT, Google Insights and keyword referrals to your sites and social network pages to monitor an increase in positive searches for and articles about your brand. For instance, if there’s an increase in message association within searches for your brand, you know the social media property has had an effect.

* MAIT and user guides are free to download at www.LetSearchMakeYouSmarter.com
Search and social media build brand in lots of different ways – that’s really what they are all about – but one important trend at the moment is brands ditching their campaign microsites, and instead using social network pages. This is a key trend the IAB expects to continue happening in 2010 and one that will have significant implications on search.

In a January 2010 New Media Age magazine article, Cheryl Calverley, Unilever UK’s senior global manager for Axe Skin said “You’ll see fewer brands creating a site for one campaign and then throwing it away. Certainly we won’t be doing that at Unilever any more. It’s natural online to go to the place where people are already consuming media. It’s less effort to ask people to leave an environment they’re already in.”

Benefits of using a social network page as a brand campaign site

1. **Reach**: places your brand in a site with high usage instead of forcing people to your own site.

2. **Natural search**: social network pages have good SEO and tend to perform well in natural search. E.g. content like video is often easier to index from a social network.

3. **Simple registration**: people will usually be an existing member of a social network; they simply click ‘join’ and don’t have to remember a separate login.

4. **Audience retention**: you can increase registrations using PPC and other media (TV, radio, outdoor, print) then users remain as members until they choose to leave.

5. **Familiarity**: people know how Facebook, MySpace etc work. Familiarity with the environment will increase interaction and engagement.
6. **Repeat messaging:** if someone becomes a fan, follower or member they are interested in your brand and you can deliver messages within their feeds.

7. **Measurable:** you can easily track what’s going on using search and social network analytics.

8. **Customisable:** you can change the design of a social network page and reuse it for future campaigns.

**How does this build brand?**

Relationship marketing. One basic marketing rule is that it costs five times more to gain a new customer than to retain one. Building a community in a social network creates a cycle of interaction with your brand that, if done correctly, builds your brand relationship.

**What does this mean for creative agencies?**

More business of course! They may start building fewer microsites but we can guarantee there will be more demand for professionally designed social network pages with new functionality, widgets, games and video. The social network page is a virtual playground for the creative imagination.
Social media is well known for its highly innovative nature, and the ways in which you can establish relationships with consumers with far more depth than traditional broadcast ‘push’ advertising allows. However what is often less discussed at an industry level is the power of social media as one of the most authoritative, unaided forms of research for organisations.

How can you measure buzz and sentiment about your brand?

There are a range of tools and services available to gauge public sentiment and the volume of buzz about your brand. Some are widely available such as Technorati and other blog search tools, whilst many agencies offer their own bespoke monitoring package, combined with insights into how these learnings should be applied.

There are a wealth of products on the market - some free, some paid-for - that can help you build up a profile of what people are saying about you online. As a starting point, below is a list of the most commonly used tools:

- Nielsen Buzzmetrics, Market Sentinel
- BlogPulse (a free Nielsen tool)
- Trendistic
- How Sociable
- Say What? By iCrossing (free iPhone app)
- Brandwatch
- Onalytica
- Twitter Trends
- Google Insights, GoogleNews etc
- Microsoft Advertising Intelligence Tool (MAIT)
Depending on the extent to which you intend to incorporate audience insights into future marketing strategies, each of the products listed above will have varying degrees of relevance, and some research is required to work out the best one for your business. However some of the more basic tools such as Twitter trends and Google Insights will only be able to provide you with top line details about the levels of conversation about your brand.

**Applying new knowledge to your campaigns**

Brad Little, Head of BuzzMetrics, EMEA for Nielsen stated at the IAB/Microsoft Advertising round table that this is an area largely misunderstood by marketers: “A lot of brands are measuring buzz, just to see whether what’s being said about them is good or not, but after that they don’t really know what to do with it. If I’m Honda, and the online buzz about me is big or growing then surely it’s useless unless I do something with it? It’s the strategy and insights that comes afterwards that makes social media research much more impactful and actionable.”

Ciaran Norris, head of social media at Mindshare, echoed this point, highlighting the current lack of links between social media research and ‘listening’ campaigns, with the final executions deployed by brands. “How do you listen, learn and leverage? Marketers need to listen to what people are saying about their brand and their competitors – who is saying it? What does that mean for your product? And then the most important thing is to leverage it – create a website, or content, that you optimise for search & social and create a digital visibility team who can manage SEO, who can run paid search campaigns and ensure it gets out to the right communities.”

**How could this work in practice?**

Analysing online conversation about your brand should be the very first point in working out your key messaging and identifying what will be of most use to consumers. For example, imagine you’re a dental brand, producing a range of toothbrushes. Recently you’ve been promoting the fact that your toothbrushes are excellent for ‘tongue-cleaning’, so have been heavily promoting the importance of brushing your tongue in order to maintain full oral hygiene. As such, you’ve been bidding on key terms such as ‘tongue hygiene’, ‘tongue brush’, ‘tongue brushing’ and so on, but with limited success.

Then, you explore the conversations surrounding dental hygiene and discover that brushing one’s tongue isn’t entirely necessary and not recommended by dentists. In fact, a number of people have been admitting that when they brush their tongue it makes them gag…

Having monitored conversations about your brand and those regarding your competitors, as well as wider discussions about all-things-dental, you discover that actually what people like about your toothbrushes are the psychedelic colours. There also is popular demand for bendy heads - proven to aid the healing of aching gums and teeth - which luckily your product development team incorporated into the last design. Such knowledge enables you to execute a smart search strategy, entering results pages where your competitors are nowhere to be seen.
A further opportunity is to build content around your site relevant to the issues that people are currently having with aching gums and teeth, and the ways in which your products can help alleviate those pains. This content should contribute significantly to your SEO, and further guidance on social networking sites such as Twitter or Facebook, alongside an online PR strategy to engage with consumers directly in relevant forums, will also boost your rankings.

Even for well established brands, a full programme of social media research can be used to refine your online content and adapt your search campaigns. Tom Morphy from Coca Cola Europe confirmed at the IAB/Microsoft Advertising round table that marketing for his portfolio of products is largely determined by consumer conversation. He stated: “We do a lot of social research to work out what people are actually interested in, and tie search up with our other social media properties. If we launch a YouTube channel for Fanta for example, we would make sure that the advertisement was optimised so we had the right keywords based on what our audience found entertaining. With social media it’s important that our consumers can locate our pages easily, so it’s a constant refining process based on our research findings.”
For entertainment value, everybody loves a crisis. The voyeuristic nature of the public and the media’s apparent glee when organisations, brands and of course celebrities make mistakes has become a key characteristic of modern society. Results pages can be a great way of gauging the current feeling towards any particular topic or brand, and marketers are becoming more aware of the importance of their ‘second’ online home within the natural or paid listings of search engines.

However, the internet refuses to stay still and an SEO strategy is required to evolve and adapt to external forces over which brands may have no control. Once again the voice of the consumer is highly influential here and where negative commentary about you may be creeping into the first page of Google, Bing or Yahoo!, brands on the whole have three main options:

• Proactively begin to generate positive content produced by your own teams on your corporate website and within social networks
• Engage further with consumers in social spaces in order to raise positive perception, thus enlisting advocates
• Change the way you do business, and become a more transparent organisation

Proactively putting yourself out there

There are relatively short-term measures that can be used to exercise some control over search results, which involve the proactive creation of content to improve your reputation. Henry Elliss, associate director, social media at Tamar, states that: “The most important thing is to try and dominate that front page with interesting, accurate information about your brand. This way if anyone is saying anything negative that holds little significance but could damage your reputation, then these results should be pushed further down the list.”
Elliss recommends that brands extend their presence into relevant social spaces in order to boost positive perception and ensure you gain more control over how your product or service appears within natural search. “Before social media came along, within natural search results would be a corporate website, perhaps a campaign microsite and the rest would be filled with what other people were saying about you.”

“Now brands have the opportunity to explore other areas of the web – establishing a great presence on a social networking site such as Facebook for example, an official, effective Twitter feed, maybe even a blog to let people know about new product information and giving them a chance to ask you questions. If you have invested time in making yourself known on 5 or 6 different social media properties, your PR department will thank you for it!”

**The rise of detractors online**

Many brands are turning to social platforms such as Twitter to appease their audiences and boost their reputations, attempting to join the conversations that can find themselves on the front page of a search engine. At a recent IAB Social Media Council event on ‘the Importance of Picking your Battles Online’, James Bromley, managing director of the Mail Online, argued that more and more people are using the internet to vent their frustrations but also to impress their friends. For Bromley, many consumers are using Twitter to attack brands, rather than seek decent customer service. “How can I serve you efficiently when you tweet me 140 characters so you can show to your friends that you’re giving me a hard time? A lot of social media activity at the moment is about a minority winning a disproportionate share of voice and attention, and it’s important that brands don’t give into criticism too easily.”

Justin Hayward, managing director of Make it Rain agrees, providing an example at the IAB/Microsoft Advertising round table: “I had a rant on Twitter about BT and they responded pretty much straight away. It’s because you are making a statement in front of everyone else – tens, hundreds, sometimes thousands of people who are following you and it’s then in the public domain. Brands’ reputations are now being built up and dashed directly in the eyes of the consumer, and this makes it hard to deal with in search, because positive PR is so tricky to keep a handle on nowadays.”

**Responding in a crisis: action vs. words**

Needless to say negative commentary about your brand will increase in the event of a specific crisis, and if your SEO strategy is not strong enough to deal with an influx of bad PR, your search positioning will suffer. Areas where this can be most significant are where a brand is not fully established, when a product is newly launched or where the negative word of mouth activity is related to a specific campaign, the corporate side of which may not be so entrenched within the listings. When considering search, the most appropriate reaction to a crisis is to take positive action which will affect your rankings, rather than responding one by one to your detractors, which has less chance of impacting upon search results.

Over the past 12 months, several brands have fallen foul of crises (either self-inflicted or outside of their control) that have set the social media world alight with debate and criticism. Habitat, Eurostar and the Daily Mail are just three brands that have been forced to both act in their defence and respond to widespread criticism, and each case has provided the industry audience with valuable lessons.
‘How to manage an online PR crisis’

Based on these case studies, and interviews with search and social media experts, a checklist is provided below to assist you in developing a ‘response strategy’ for when unforeseen PR disasters occur:

• Identify where discussion about your brand takes place online, to inform your strategy moving forward. Researching blogs, communities and forums to find out where conversation is most intense, and who the key influencers are, will help you in the event of a crisis.

• Decide upfront who your major spokespeople will be – normally the most senior person in an organisation, for example CEO or managing director, is most appropriate to make the public feel like their comments have been taken on board. However this will depend on what exactly the crisis involves. If it is a marketing issue for example, make sure someone on the communications side is equipped to make a statement.

• Have a policy on how long your organisation is prepared to wait before responding to intense negative word of mouth online – is it a few hours? 12 hours? 24 hours after the event?

• Once a crisis happens, give yourself time to gauge the public sentiment, and what people are saying about you. This can now be done in real-time either via search engines or on Twitter search. This will enable you to work out the key messages to incorporate in your response.

• When responding, ensure any statements are optimised for the keywords that are being used to describe the event, and produce content that can be easily shared or linked to online. In December 2009, social media agency We Are Social created a video featuring Nick Mercer, Eurostar’s commercial director, to answer FAQs about the Eurostar crisis, which was uploaded online two days after the first incident. However prior to this they engaged directly with consumers via Twitter and Facebook, releasing regular statements and assisting concerned travellers with their queries.
• Don’t apologise too many times within social platforms, as this is where many brands fail in their official response. One public apology online that everyone has access to should be enough, and a stream of apologetic tweets will not only make your public page look incredibly defensive, but will also appear within search engines.

• If you know people are going to be searching for news about your brand and the incident in question, consider investing in some short-term paid-search to assist consumers who are looking to the major search engines for the facts and an official response. This ensures your result will immediately appear at the top of the search results, and will be removed the moment you decide. BA for example, bought the term ‘BA Strike’ in December 2010 to provide searchers with an accurate, official response after 12,500 cabin crew threatened to go on strike for 12 days.
One sector which may fall victim to such issues is the film industry. Studios have a relatively short amount of time to ensure their brand (the film) is at the top of the search listings and that positive reviews and featuring at the top. The following case study highlights how proactive PR can quickly turn sour, and outline steps that were taken to address this and combat negative search listings.

Snapshot case study – Pass it On Media for the film Three and Out

Three and Out was a film released in 2008, about a train driver who accidentally kills two people on the job, only to be told that if he kills a third, he can retire early!

Perhaps thinking that all PR is good PR, the ‘spin’ agency thought it would be a good idea to contact the Tube drivers’ unions. Big mistake…

Overnight, tube and rail drivers, and victim support groups started petitioning against the film, slating it in high ranking news and film forums, even picketing outside the star of the film Mackenzie Crook’s house.

Pass it On’s remit changed swiftly from creating overall awareness, to containing the negative word of mouth online, and steering it away from venues such as Channel 4 Films forums, where negative comments were coming up in organic search above the campaign website.

They swiftly made a forum page on the campaign site and invited the loudest detractors to take part in a Q&A with the producer and director, with a view to airing their frustrations with the makers themselves.

Not only did the loudest online detractors respond very well to having been acknowledged in the first place, they then went back to their forums and retracted or diluted their rage.

Within a few weeks, the campaign site was up at the top of the search engines again.
Should you change your entire business?
Challenging long term brand perceptions

As outlined at the very start of this chapter, digital isn’t just about ‘short, sharp fixes’ to help improve brand perception and drive sales. If the negative voices online are persistent, then a long-term social media research strategy should be employed to feed into your entire organisation, and make significant changes as a result.

The exceptional advantage of monitoring online conversations is that we are now able to identify those comments which refuse to go away. If a negative search listing remains dominant over weeks, months and years, this exposes your brand as lacking transparency and should therefore be addressed. This is where every one of your departments should come in, from product development to research, customer service to corporate communications, even HR because the online commentary about your brand should be used to make the business better. Such changes can’t be made overnight, but they can feed into your long-term business objectives.

A simple search for the brand ‘Starbucks’, for example, reveals a number of negative listings, some linking to articles or websites that have been created some years ago, yet still remain on the first pages of results. If brand ‘health’ is at the top of their priority list, then such visible feedback should be incorporated into an ongoing evaluation of how consumers perceive their brand. This job goes much wider than the marketing team, and extreme negative buzz should be considered even at CEO level, as well as feeding into communications campaigns.

Nestle has also been taking greater steps to manage their online reputation. According to an article by Arun Sudhaman, published in February 2010 in PR Week, the food giant decided to embark upon an ‘emergency online PR campaign’ in order to address the widespread criticism about it on the internet, and set about building up a better digital profile. According to the story: “In October 2009, a social media crisis erupted after Nestle invited 20 influential ‘mummy bloggers’ to its US HQ for an all expenses-paid meeting with its CEO.”

“Anti-Nestle activists including other parenting bloggers, responded by hijacking the relevant Twitter hashtag and launching a highly visible opposition campaign.”

Indeed, whilst the results pages for Nestle on search engines appear much cleaner and more controlled than they have in the past, the results for ‘Nestle mommy bloggers’ - a search term specific to the crisis in question - shows different results, and a wealth of negative comment surrounding the brand’s social media activity.
Once again, this example highlights the need for a more thorough understanding of consumer searching behaviour, and the views held by particular groups towards your brand at any one time. Both PPC and SEO can play a part in diffusing these online situations, and the best way to respond is by both buying keywords relevant to the complaint, and proactively and ethically engaging with the right social media audiences to ‘clean’ the search results page, thus paving the way for more recent and accurate results.

**Moving on...with sentiment**

Consumer opinion is set to become even more influential as the key disciplines and platforms merge. This will require every brand to reassess the way they deal with complaints and criticism online. As search becomes increasingly social, and sentiment begins to play a larger role in search results, even small crises will attract substantial coverage, despite your best basic efforts.

Tamar’s Henry Elliss argues that: “Sentiment will have massive significance with search’s future, and this is where brands need to up their game and work out what exactly their shortfalls are. Until now, whether people thought you were rubbish or not hasn’t had an effect on where you were listed, only the content of these results, but that will change. For example if you are a restaurant that has been receiving consistently bad reviews for the past three months, you will inevitably receive a lesser quality ranking, even though your SEO and online PR strategy is a proactive one.”

As highlighted in our ‘mood of the industry’ chapter earlier, 2010 has been cited as the year that search and social media together will be perceived as a highly significant force within digital communications and reputation management. With the lessons learnt from past PR failures and with investment in learning what people are saying about their brand now, advertisers and agencies should be looking to develop a combined strategy and equipping themselves for a range of negative eventualities.
Specific search marketing jobs have existed for many years now, becoming one of the most important positions in both agencies and brands themselves. Social media has been used by editorial and communication teams for years as part of existing jobs, but in 2009 marketers really began to take notice.

The marketing industry now views social media as a vital marketing tool, and during 2009 we began to see the first specific social media jobs appearing. A high profile example of this was when Sky appointed an official Twitter correspondent, Ruth Barnett, who works alongside ‘traditional’ journalists to monitor conversations and stories breaking on the social platform.

Due to the very close relationship between social media and search, both search and social media jobs tend to include an element of each. As a result we’re now starting to see hybrid search & social media jobs appearing too.

Where does search and social media sit within a company?

One of the biggest myths surrounding both search and social media is that one department can ‘own’ either. In a January 2010 IAB study, 73% of marketers felt social media belonged to the marketing department for instance, whilst the PR, customer service and research departments all got a look in, but there was a clear confusion about where it should sit.

Search and social media are tools brands can use to communicate with customers. As with other communication channels, different departments use them for different reasons. For example, sales use telephones as do customer services, both for very different purposes. Paola Lopez, at the Central Office of Information (COI) argues that “there is so much potential for social media, with moving call centres online, for instance. It’s not just for marketing departments, but for every single function of the business.”
Echoing this, Emma McNamara, managing director of recruitment agency Propel sees the merging of social media across all areas, not just into search: “Social media is creeping into every discipline of online marketing” she believes.

**Brand guidelines**

Of course, when using the telephone to communicate with customers there is usually an overall company policy for tone of voice, language and standards. The same should be true of search and social media. This needs to come from a group of people that agree this policy. However, the policy needs to be flexible enough for individual departments to meet their individual needs.

A policy group could sit within a department or be a mix of people from a number of departments that meet regularly. However, it is true that marketing, which would typically be responsible for brand guidelines, should be a part of this group.

**Search and social media across the company**

Social media and search are so important to online that knowledge of the two disciplines is essential across many jobs. McNamara says: “Most online marketing/client services roles are starting to incorporate search and social media. Even editorially focussed content producers specialise in communities.” This won’t change, so at a minimum, the IAB recommends all marketing and customer facing employees have a firm grasp of the two.

**Training**

The IAB strongly recommends that all marketing and customer facing employees have a good knowledge of both search and social media. We offer training courses about both throughout the year with a 15% discount for IAB members.

Book here: [www.iabuk.net/training](http://www.iabuk.net/training)
1. Search marketing (specific role)
Search marketing has rapidly grown in importance. 62.3% of online advertising spend is now spent on search (PwC / IAB AdSpend study H1 2009), because it’s so measurable and possible to track return on investment.

Brands have invested in the need for expertise to manage their presence in search, whether by employing in house experts or working with agencies. This makes sense because to do paid and natural search marketing incredibly well, the individual must have strong technical, numerical as well as editorial skills.

As discussed earlier, social media is, at a basic level, content. Therefore the majority of search marketing experts will have a good understanding of social media’s effects on search already.

2. Social media (specific role)
Jobs with “social media” in the title are new but few of the skills are new. In fact other roles including Web Editors, Copy Writers, Community Managers, Online PR Managers and even Search Managers all have skills and experience essential to managing social media.

In many respects, with so many people using and required to understand social media, you could question whether you need a single ‘social media expert’ at all. Social media is so integral to the internet; everyone in a brand should understand it!

For agencies it is another matter because a single specialist makes sense to focus on the subject, anticipate upcoming trends, deal with multiple client needs and use sometimes expensive buzz monitoring tools. “Recently a lot of businesses have been asking their social media specialist to consider reputation management, either through buzz monitoring. Twitter searches or by using specific programmes that scan blogs and forums for comments on their products and service,” says McNamara.

3. Search & social media (hybrid role)
The search and social media hybrid role is an entirely new beast but the actual skills involved aren’t. According to the recruitment specialists we spoke to, the hybrid role seems to be specifically for agency-side roles and largely with a search focus, i.e. understanding how to improve search performance using social media. With that said, it makes sense for publishers – who have a strong content, consumer facing focus – to consider employing a search and social media specialist too.
Skills and salaries

As always, the IAB recommends that you look at similar jobs on the market and really think about the needs of your company. Search is fairly straight forward; you can look at an individual's training and experience. Social media on the other hand is still quite new and covers a lot of different activities; do you really need someone who is expert in everything? Think about your company objectives: is PR more important than community building for example?

“If it’s a hybrid role search is definitely the most important factor at the moment” felt Emma McNamara of Propel. “Social media is evolving all the time and in some ways still defining itself, with word-of-mouth and crowd sourcing agencies.”

As for salaries, McNamara says: “You basically get what you pay for. Strong search people command high salaries, so do social media specialists, but as long as the freelance market doesn’t take off their salaries won’t go over the top. The usual rules apply though, if they are good, don’t wait for someone better to come along - they won’t because there aren’t that many around!”

Search and social media across the company

Social media and search are so important to online that knowledge of the two disciplines is essential across many jobs. McNamara says: “Most online marketing/client services roles are starting to incorporate search and social media. Even editorially focussed content producers specialise in communities.” This won’t change, so at a minimum, the IAB recommends all marketing and customer facing employees have a firm grasp of the two.

Example: Jonathan Stewart, Head of Search & Social Media at the Review Centre

Consumer reviews website Review Centre, recruited its first Head of Search & Social Media, Jonathan Stewart, in 2009. The majority of the Review Centre’s content is based around a community of users who write product and service reviews and discuss topics on forums.

Jonathan explains the reasoning behind his appointment: “Primarily the Review Centre was looking for an SEO person, but given the way search has changed over the last 12 months, social media involvement was essential. For instance with the Google ‘Vince update’ [editor’s note: a tweak to the algorithm], inclusion of real time search and social search. If you recruit an SEO guy, it’s essential now that they have a strong grasp of how social media works and how it affects search.” Therefore the inclusion of social media in the title would likely attract the right people.

Much like the opinion of recruiters, Jonathan still sees search as the dominant part of the role estimating a 95% - 5% split between search and social media. However he does feel that social media’s share will grow over the next year. “Social media, if you do it right, can do a lot of the SEO legwork. But it takes a lot hard work to get to that point. It’s not as simple as saying, I’m going to run a Facebook or Twitter campaign. You need defined goals and strategy.”

One of the major benefits Jonathan - who has a background working with clients in a search agency - saw with a hybrid search and social media job was bringing departments together. “It’s quite common if you have separate departments that you work in silos. Even if you meet frequently to talk about goals people don’t generally work together to meet them. If you are responsible for both, you are much more clearly focussed on what you need to do and how to achieve it.”

So will we see more hybrid roles? Jonathan hasn’t yet noticed them: “There do seem to be more in-house SEO roles than in-house social roles. It’s probably like that because of the maturity of the disciplines; SEO is far more mature than social media,” says Jonathan. Given the increasing importance of social media in SEO jobs however, it does remain a distinct possibility that companies could recruit hybrid search and social media managers.
1. **Learn.** It may sound like basic advice but ‘search’ for yourself. See what the natural listings are and where social media is creeping in. Take a look at the Twitter commentary about you, and if there’s recurring questions or issues that require a response. The IAB and Microsoft’s conversations with brands have told us that too few marketers take these simple initial steps to find out more about their online profile.

And learn what people are searching for – this is easily done via properties such as Hitwise, Bing or Google - and based on these topics of conversation devise ways in which you can tap into this behaviour with refreshed online content and consumer interaction.

2. **Monitor.** All brands should have a long-term monitoring programme in place to investigate the right conversations online: not just about your brand, but about the sector you dwell in, and even those relating your direct competitors. Like our iPad example earlier in this report showed us, there will be peaks and dips in buzz and search traffic depending on many external factors, so it’s important to provide yourself with a holistic picture of how things change over time.

3. **Understand.** Volumes of buzz and search traffic are great stats to have, but you need to really listen to work out the sentiment towards your brand online – is there a lot of criticism? Are people raving about one particular element of your product? Or is the internet simply swarming with conversations about your brand which you haven’t yet stepped in to answer?

4. **Identify the audience.** Every brand knows their target audience, but do they understand, in a digital world, what kind of social behaviours they boast? Are they prolific searchers? Identify whether they create, critique or collect content online, and how they share it – a greater understanding of your audience will help you work out how to get their attention.

*by Kieron Matthews, marketing director, Internet Advertising Bureau*
5. **Evaluate.** Perform an evaluation of the current social media properties your brand has – do they all have clear objectives and do they appear in the first page of natural results, to ensure you have as much ‘official’ presence on this page as possible? If you have no friends, followers or fans on any one social media property, then either lose it or work out a way to get some more (and keep them!) Under-performing pages on social networking sites are unlikely to have much impact on natural search.

6. **Inform.** One of the key learnings from this report has been the range of ways in which you can use social media research to inform your search strategy. You know what people are saying about your brand, but so what? This analysis loses its meaning unless you do something with it, so take these learnings and let them dictate your PPC and SEC.

7. **Plan ahead.** Put a strategy in place, should an online PR crisis occur, to ensure you are equipped to deal with it swiftly, ethically and effectively. In the event of a disaster – however big or small – relating to your brand, who should respond, and how quickly? Ensure can use your social media to firefight the situation head on, and understand the importance of paid-search when this occurs, as shown in our BA example earlier on.

8. **Educate.** The importance of search and social media should be appreciated not just by those working on the frontline, but by your most senior colleagues. Even those at CEO level need to be educated about what people are saying about you online and how this impacts upon your overall online presence – particularly if there are recurring negative comments that crop up.

9. **Train.** As technology, behaviour, and communications tools develop, the digital workforce is constantly required to keep up with the trends. Working within search and social media requires very specific skillsets including editorial, marketing, corporate communications and even customer service. Work out whether this should be the responsibility of just one person within your organisation, or whether such activity requires a ‘team’ of individuals from a number of different departments for it to work effectively. And then make sure your staff receive sufficient training to help them make the most of this exciting space.

10. **Act.** If you don’t have a search and social media strategy, then now is the time to create one. You now have the knowledge and understanding, as well as insights into the tools and techniques to make this happen, so set up that first kick-off meeting this week! And if you still need support, then just get in touch with either the Internet Advertising Bureau or Microsoft Advertising to give you a helping hand.
The IAB and Microsoft Advertising would like to thank all participants that attended their roundtable on search and social media in November 2009, and all those industry experts quoted within this report.

Key contributors:

Cedric Chambaz  marketing manager, Microsoft Advertising
Amy Kean  senior PR and marketing manager, Internet Advertising Bureau
Jack Wallington  head of industry programmes, Internet Advertising Bureau
Stuart Aitken  editorial manager, Internet Advertising Bureau

For more information go to:
www.advertising.microsoft.com/uk
www.iabuk.net/search
www.iabuksocial.co.uk