

social media to the power of 7²



PRNews

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principles for successful influencer outreach

First up, let's look at 7 guiding principles for influencer outreach. These aren't "my" rules – plenty of marketing bloggers have published their own thoughts about how marketers should engage with bloggers and when you read enough of these posts you find that there are a number of common threads. Here are 7 reflect the collective wisdom of the blogosphere - which leads us directly into the first principle.

I. look, listen and learn



Before you do anything, you need to listen to the blogosphere. You need to understand who is talking about your clients's brands, what they're saying and what the impacts of those conversations are. But this principle runs deeper than that.

You need to think beyond your clients and simply get to know bloggers – especially those bloggers that you ultimately hope to approach on behalf of your clients. There are lots of benchmarks – Todd Defren of Shift Communications, a PR agency in Boston, for example advises marketers to read at least 20 posts by a blogger before assessing whether they are a good target. He also advises that you read deep into the comment threads. Great advise. Similarly, at crayon we apply a 1-hour rule: never target a blogger unless you've spent at least an hour on their blog. You really need to understand who the blogger is, what their hot buttons are, what topics they're passionate about, how they feel about various brands and if in fact they ever right about brands at all.

This level of effort will help insure that your outreach is relevant, personal and appropriate.

As an added bonus – remember that I said that lots of bloggers have published their version of outreach best practices? If you spend serious time with the bloggers you are most interested in, you're bound to learn exactly how they want to be approached.

2. right matters more than might



For the most part, marketers think in terms of the “big hit” – for advertisers that might mean prime time TV spots, for PR agencies it might be a piece in the Wall Street Journal or Time Magazine. It’s only natural that this mindset filters through to the blogosphere – you probably focus a lot of your energy on earning the attention of a small set of A-listers.

This approach, while not out-and-out wrong, is only one piece of the puzzle. While A-listers mean large audiences and larger influence, they typically have the lowest tolerance for BS, are notoriously difficult to persuade and, at the end of the day, increasingly unlikely to pay attention to unsolicited pitches from strangers.

Make sure you focus the bulk of your effort on finding the “right” bloggers for your pitch – principle #1 helps you do this, but you need to follow through with a new kind of thinking and look beyond the biggest of the big. You just might find gold in the b, c or even z-list if you can get the most appropriate bloggers talking about something that they can truly be passionate about.

3. join my community



Your pitch shouldn't be the first time I hear from you. If a blogger is an important target for one of your clients, make sure you establish a line of communication long before you need them for something. Here are a few simple things you can do:

Chime in now and then with comments.

Join MyBlogLog – for bloggers that use the service, it lets them see who is visiting their sites. Showing your smiling face every now and then says a lot about your level of commitment to the social mediasphere – more on commitment in a bit...

Contact the blogger directly – most bloggers publish their email address. Use it – just to say hi, to open a dialogue about a topic that matters to the blogger and even to ask permission to pitch before you actually do so.

Join twitter and follow bloggers – again, they'll see you out there, get to know you and recognize your name.

The same goes for Facebook – lots of bloggers, especially marketing and business bloggers, use it to maintain their networks. Join their networks and you stand a better chance of breaking through the clutter.

4. my mailbox isn't your newswire



I don't know too many PR professionals who would – unsolicited - email a generic press release to a mainstream media reporter. Typically, you approach key reporters with well-crafted, highly personalized pitches. For safe measure – and broader coverage beyond your target list – you put the release on the wire. Yet, I can't tell you how many times PR people have sent me generic form emails with their release attached in PDF format.

By now, you have probably figured out that I don't think this is a good approach and, if you follow principles 1-3 you will be less inclined to take this approach. Never, never, never blind-email hundreds of bloggers with the same pitch – sure, that means a lot more work but it also means that you will have a significantly higher success rate. The more personal you can make each pitch, the better chance you'll have of getting positive responses.

5. bloggers are not journalists



This one is a bit of a conundrum. The most obvious interpretation is that you shouldn't expect the same professional standards that you do from reporters – I'm not saying that bloggers are inclined to be unethical (the good ones are anything but) but you do need to bear in mind that bloggers are not obligated to be unbiased, they might not fact-check, etc.

But here's the other side – they are often “passionate experts” that write about what they want, when they want, how they want. They don't have deadlines, have no obligation to report the most “important” news stories, etc. This gives you more flexibility on the one hand, but also takes away some of your leverage – most bloggers won't write about something that doesn't jive with their personal agenda, period.

Which brings us to the next point.

6. what's in it for me?



You need think about WHY the blogger should care – because your client’s new product is revolutionary? Don’t care. While you never, ever, ever should offer bloggers direct compensation in return for writing about your news, you do need to think about what levers you can pull to make bloggers care.

The simplest is “link love” – the blogosphere runs on linking so if your story is likely to drive other blogs to link to the bloggers that cover your news first, make that part of your pitch (but only if it’s true.) Even better, have your clients put a blogroll on their own sites and link directly to any blogger that writes about their brands.

Another approach: treat bloggers like journalists. They may not BE journalists but they sure like to feel legitimized. At crayon we’ve had tremendous success with inviting bloggers to invite-only press events and giving bloggers access to our clients’s executives for exclusive interviews. It works...

Think about providing your bloggers with something – products, invites, etc – that they can share with their communities. Trust me, if a blogger has a stack of your clients’s products to give away to readers, they will let their readers know.

7. commitment, not campaigns



I said we'd get to commitment – in fact, I'd argue that following steps 1-6 requires you to make a commitment to the social mediasphere. But here I'm talking specifically about what happens after the outreach. I can't tell you how often I get a pitch and then, even if I write about it, nothing.

Any blogger can tell you that the post is just the beginning of a conversation that can and will continue (sometimes for months) through the comments thread. As a PR professional, you need to make sure that you (or your client) stays part of that conversation. Be prepared to comment, address points head on and engage in constructive professional debate with both the bloggers and their readers.

Even more so when the tide turns against you. Unlike mainstream media, blogs offer a public forum for you or your clients to argue their case and sway opinion. At crayon, by being persistent and professional in dealing with detractors, we have been able to make allies and supporters out of vocal critics of two clients – Coca-Cola and Firebrand. Remember that blogosphere firestorms (like Dell Hell) can come from anyone, anywhere – the best thing you can do to prevent something from getting out of control is to stay involved all the way to the end.



tools for integrated social media marketing

Now we'll look at 7 tools that, in combination, form the basis of an integrated social media PR program. I am not advocating a "give me one of everything" approach. You don't need to do all seven – pick and choose the ones that are right for your brand. But when used in combination, they provide your client with more bang for their buck.

The screenshot shows a Cisco social media press release page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Solutions, Products & Services, Ordering, Support, Training & Events, and Partners. Below this is a search bar and a 'Share' button. The main content area features the title 'Social Media Release: Cisco Connected Life Contest' and a sub-headline 'Cisco Contest Invites the Human Network to Help Shape the Future of the Connected Life'. The text is organized into sections: 'Highlights / Key Facts', a paragraph about the contest's purpose and prize, a paragraph about the selection process, a paragraph about participation rules, a paragraph about registration and rules, and a final paragraph about the contest's sponsorship and eligibility.

If there is one mandatory, it is the social media press release. These are becoming more and more common – here’s a Cisco example but I could have easily shown you a dozen others. At first glance, a SMPR isn’t so different from a traditional wire release but if you look closely you’ll notice that they tend to be presented in bullet point form, with most if not all marketing hype stripped out. They are no nonsense web pages that provide facts and language that any blogger can (and often do) pick up verbatim. This helps you to disseminate a consistent message and makes it easier for bloggers to write about your release.

But the text is only the beginning...

social media press release, cont'd

SHIFT
COMMUNICATIONS

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESS RELEASE
TEMPLATE, VERSION 1.0

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Client contact	Spokesperson	Agency contact
Phone #/skype	Phone #/skype	Phone #/skype
Email	Email	Email
IM address	IM address	IM address
Web site	Blog/relevant post	Web site

NEWS RELEASE HEADLINE
Subtext

CORE NEWS FACTS
+ Bullet-points preferred

LINK & RSS FEED TO PURPOSE-BUILT DELICIOUS PAGE
The purpose-built delicious page offers hyperlinks (and PR annotation in reader feeds) to relevant historical, brand, market, product & competitive content sources, providing context as-needed, and, on-going updates.

PHOTO
e.g. product photos, expo headshot, etc.

MP3 FILE OR PODCAST LINK
e.g. sound bytes by various stakeholders

GRAPHIC
e.g. product schematic, market size graphic, logos

VIDEO
e.g. short product demo by in-house expert

MORE MULTIMEDIA AVAILABLE BY REQUEST
e.g., "download white paper"

PRE-APPROVED QUOTES FROM CORPORATE EXECUTIVES, ANALYSTS, CUSTOMERS AND/OR PARTNERS
Recommendation: No more than 2 quotes per contact. The PR agency should have additional quotes on-the-ready, upon request, for journalists who desire exclusive content. This provides opportunity for Agency to add further value to interested media.

LINKS TO RELEVANT COVERAGE TO-DATE (OPTIONAL)
The emphasis is on links to "take a different angle", etc.
These links would also be cross-posted to the custom delicious site.

BOILERPLATE STATEMENTS

RSS FEED TO CLIENT'S NEWS RELEASES

"ADD TO DELICIOUS"
Allows readers to use the release as a standalone portal to this news

TECHNORATI TAGS/DIGG THIS*

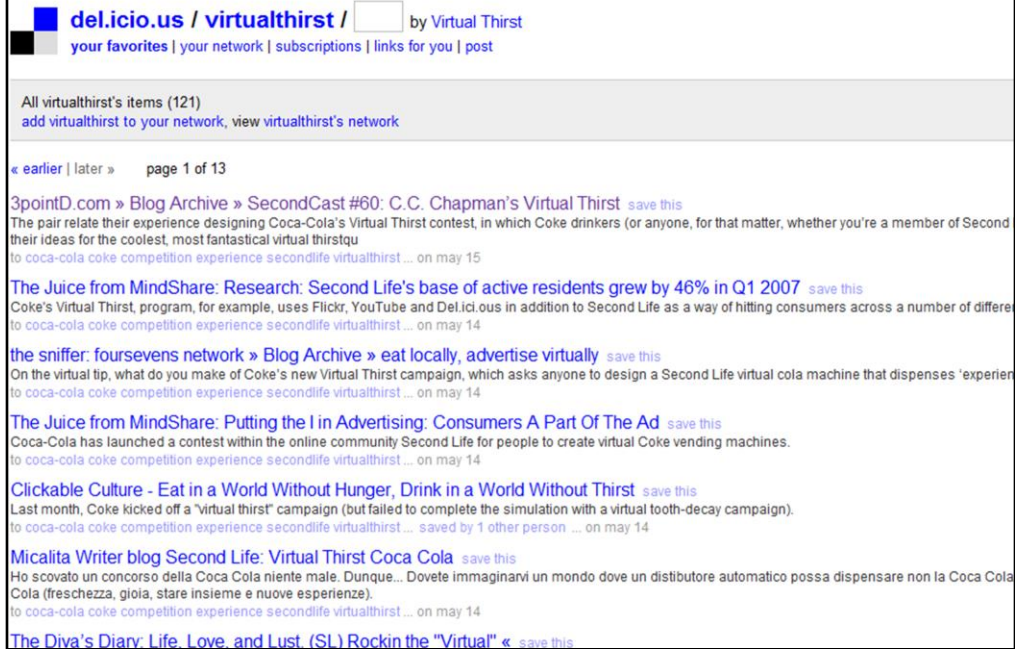
<http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/smprtemplate.pdf>

Todd Defren's SHIFT communications released a template that has essentially become a standard for SMPRs – you can download it in PDF form. You'll note that the template includes links to rich media assets like photos, videos and graphics that the bloggers can access and use to dress up their posts. It also includes links to other social media hubs, as relevant – this is a great way to let bloggers know what their colleagues are saying and more. If you provide a robust SMPR you'll find that many bloggers will literally piece together their posts using assets you've given them.

I should point out that the SMPR isn't a static object, but is created as a living web page. If you can tap into your client's web development resources, great. If not, think about building your own SMPRs using a common blogging platform like Typepad or Wordpress, or a third party SMPR builder like PRX Builder.

What you'll notice is that a proper social media press release is much more than a flat retelling of the facts. In fact, a good SMPR outright requires you to leverage other social media channels as distribution points for right media content, as hubs for aggregating and sharing consumer generated content (at a minimum, blogger generated content) and more. For the rest of this presentation we'll look at each of these components, the role it plays in integrated social media marketing and the basics of how you get it done.

2. del.icio.us linkroll



The screenshot shows a del.icio.us profile page for 'virtualthirst'. At the top, it says 'del.icio.us / virtualthirst / [] by Virtual Thirst' with navigation links for 'your favorites', 'your network', 'subscriptions', 'links for you', and 'post'. Below this, it indicates 'All virtualthirst's items (121)' and provides a link to 'add virtualthirst to your network, view virtualthirst's network'. The main content area shows a list of links with navigation options like 'earlier' and 'later', and 'page 1 of 13'. The links include:

- 3pointD.com » Blog Archive » SecondCast #60: C.C. Chapman's Virtual Thirst [save this](#)
The pair relate their experience designing Coca-Cola's Virtual Thirst contest, in which Coke drinkers (or anyone, for that matter, whether you're a member of Second Life) share their ideas for the coolest, most fantastical virtual thirstqu...
to coca-cola coke competition experience secondlife virtualthirst... on may 15
- The Juice from MindShare: Research: Second Life's base of active residents grew by 46% in Q1 2007 [save this](#)
Coke's Virtual Thirst, program, for example, uses Flickr, YouTube and Del.icio.us in addition to Second Life as a way of hitting consumers across a number of different...
to coca-cola coke competition experience secondlife virtualthirst... on may 14
- the sniffer: foursevens network » Blog Archive » eat locally, advertise virtually [save this](#)
On the virtual tip, what do you make of Coke's new Virtual Thirst campaign, which asks anyone to design a Second Life virtual cola machine that dispenses 'experien...
to coca-cola coke competition experience secondlife virtualthirst... on may 14
- The Juice from MindShare: Putting the I in Advertising: Consumers A Part Of The Ad [save this](#)
Coke's Virtual Thirst, program, for example, uses Flickr, YouTube and Del.icio.us in addition to Second Life for people to create virtual Coke vending machines.
to coca-cola coke competition experience secondlife virtualthirst... on may 14
- Clickable Culture - Eat in a World Without Hunger, Drink in a World Without Thirst [save this](#)
Last month, Coke kicked off a "virtual thirst" campaign (but failed to complete the simulation with a virtual tooth-decay campaign).
to coca-cola coke competition experience secondlife virtualthirst... saved by 1 other person ... on may 14
- Micalita Writer blog Second Life: Virtual Thirst Coca Cola [save this](#)
Ho scovato un concorso della Coca Cola niente male. Dunque... Dovete immaginarvi un mondo dove un distributore automatico possa dispensare non la Coca Cola (freschezza, gioia, stare insieme e nuove esperienze).
to coca-cola coke competition experience secondlife virtualthirst... on may 14
- The Diva's Diary: Life, Love, and Lust (SI) Rockin the "Virtual" [save this](#)

So bloggers will blog and you'll be keeping an eye out for their posts. One simple tool – for you and your client, but also for the bloggers – is a purpose-built del.icio.us account. Here's an example from our Coca-Cola Virtual Thirst campaign. Every time we find a post about the program, we tag it and add it to our linkroll. This costs nothing and takes almost no time – it's literally a no brainer. It shows bloggers you're listening and acknowledging their contributions, but also looks pretty impressive when del.icio.us users search for your brand and find hundreds of related posts.

Set up a del.icio.us account for each one of your clients and then, within each client account, set up a distinct linkroll for each program you run.

One last point – you should linkroll EVERYTHING. Even the negative posts. This isn't just about patting yourselves on the back – it's about aggregating ALL conversation about your brand and program in a way that provides a complete picture of what people are actually saying.

3. social network hub



As I mentioned earlier, bloggers have flocked to Facebook – for that matter, so have consumers. While MySpace is still the largest social network by a long shot, it is also the one in which it is hardest to make any impact – unless you’re willing to spend six or seven figures to do it right. We’ve used MySpace as a social network hub for some of our campaigns only to amass a dozen friends that in the end aren’t particularly engaged with the brand. Conversely, we’re finding some success with Facebook – primarily with groups but the new Fan Pages hold promise as well.

What can you do with a Facebook group? Among other things, you can invite bloggers and other influencers to join and, when they do, use the group as another communications touch point. This slide shows the group for crayon client Firebrand – the site just went into beta this week but for more than a month we’ve had over 600 members, mostly marketing bloggers and high level advertising executives (a key target audience for this client.) To make this happen, we literally tapped into our own personal networks – this ties back to the principle of joining your bloggers’ communities. If you already travel in the same circles, it is easy to make this happen. Now, we are using the group to notify the members of developments with the beta site and actively solicit feedback and participation.

4. flickr photostream

The screenshot shows a Flickr page for a user named 'twopointhome'. The page title is 'Jesserer Block Party'. The main content area features a large photo of a group of people standing in front of a building, and a grid of smaller photos showing various scenes from the block party, including people, decorations, and a 'HOME' sign. The page includes navigation links like 'Home', 'You', 'Organize', 'Contacts', 'Groups', and 'Explore'. A search bar is visible at the top right. The page also has a 'View as slideshow' link and a 'Comments' link.

flickr
Signed in as gregverdino Help Sign Out

Home You Organize Contacts Groups Explore Search twopointhome's photos

twopointhome Sets

Jesserer Block Party View as slideshow (8)

Thumbnail Detail Comments

These block parties just keep getting better and better. Despite being a bit nippy out, we had an amazing turnout – seems like almost everyone from the Jesserers' school was there, and everybody went nuts when they saw the big reveal on the Jumbotron.

36 photos | 21 views | [Add a comment?](#)

Photos are from 12 Nov 2007.

Next up Flickr. At a minimum you'll have logo graphics, executive photos, product shots. Beyond that, you might have pictures from press events, consumer events and more. This is a great example by Verizon – to promote FiOS they are producing a VOD makeover reality series starring real families and throwing block parties in local neighborhoods. Each event is a content creation opportunity – they capture lots of photos and share those photos in their branded Flickr account.

You can take this a step further by letting content creators and consumers know how to tag their photos and contribute them to a purpose-built Flickr group.

5. youtube channel

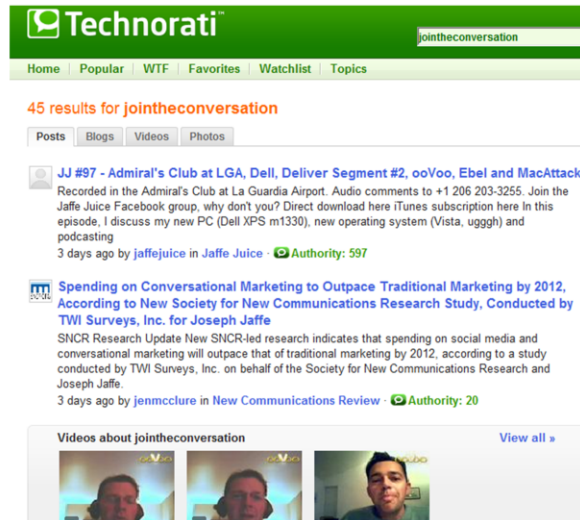
The screenshot shows a YouTube channel page for 'Virtual Thirst'. At the top, the YouTube logo is on the left, and navigation links for 'Hello, GVstreaming', 'My Account', 'History', 'Help', 'Log Out', and 'Site' are on the right. Below the logo is the tagline 'Broadcast Yourself™'. The main navigation bar includes 'Videos', 'Categories', 'Channels', and 'Community', with an 'Upload' button on the right. A search bar is located below the navigation bar. The video player shows a man speaking, with the title 'Michael Donnelly's Video Diary'. To the right of the video player, there is a channel information box for 'Virtual Thirst' (joined 7 months ago, 13 videos) with a 'Subscribe' button. Below this is an 'About This Video' section with a description, date (April 30, 2007), category ('People & Blogs'), and tags including 'virtual thirst', 'coca-cola', 'second life', 'coke', 'crayon', 'vending machine', 'myspace', 'virtualthirst', 'contest', 'EpyBird', and 'Wishcast'. There are also fields for 'URL' and 'Embed'. Below the video player are 'Share', 'Favorite', 'Add to Playlists', and 'Flag' buttons. At the bottom right, a 'Related Videos' section is visible, showing a video titled 'Re: Michael Donnelly's Video Diary'.

If you have (or can make) video assets – promos, demos, event videos, etc – you should think about creating a YouTube channel for the presentation of those videos. This also provides a forum in which you or your clients can directly address the consumer population during the course of a program -- and just as importantly, a forum for consumers to talk back. In this screenshot, you see one of our Coke clients describing some of the changes we made to the Virtual Thirst program as a result of consumer criticism of the prizes and terms of participation. I should also note that prominent video podcaster and podCamp organizer Christopher Penn, who you can see at the top of the related videos section, posted his own response to Coke’s video post. Beyond this video exchange, our channel hosts promotional videos about the program, video diaries from the crayon team that managed the project and other related video segments.

6. suggested tag taxonomy

Technorati Tags:

join the conversation | conversation | community dialogue partnership | community | dialogue | partnership | jaffe | joseph jaffe | josephjaffe | crayonllc | crayonville.com | jointheconversation.us | bumrush | bumrushthecharts | oovoo | videochat



The screenshot shows the Technorati search interface. At the top, the Technorati logo is visible. Below it, a search bar contains the text 'jointheconversation'. A navigation menu includes links for Home, Popular, WTF, Favorites, Watchlist, and Topics. The search results section displays '45 results for jointheconversation'. There are tabs for Posts, Blogs, Videos, and Photos. The first result is a post titled 'JJ #97 - Admiral's Club at LGA, Dell, Deliver Segment #2, ooVoo, Ebel and MacAttack!' with a description mentioning a recording at La Guardia Airport and a Facebook group. The second result is a blog post titled 'Spending on Conversational Marketing to Outpace Traditional Marketing by 2012, According to New Society for New Communications Research Study, Conducted by TWI Surveys, Inc. for Joseph Jaffe' with a description mentioning SNCR Research Update. Below the results, there is a section for 'Videos about jointheconversation' with a 'View all >' link and three video thumbnails.

Now to pull all of the shared content – whether photos, videos, links or the blog posts themselves -- come together, you need to establish a set of consistent tags (or key words) and make sure the content creators know what they are. Your SMPR should always include a list of suggested tags – often called Technorati tags, after the popular blog search engine, even though they are used for more than just Technorati. You should come up with a list of relevant – and ideally distinctive – words and terms that include your brand names, key phrases and key descriptive words for your product or category.

Content creators are inclined to use the tags that you suggest because they understand that it will help increase the visibility of their content in searches and help associate their contributions with other relevant contributions by other people. In return, consistent tagging makes it easier for you to monitor activity and stay on top of the online conversation as it unfolds across a wide variety of social media channels.

7. rss everywhere

2008 Ford Focus Social Media Release



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[View Feed XML](#)

Embed this content on your site

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Current Feed Content

Contact Info

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wdrake@ford.com

Collin Douma
416.500.6972

collin@socialmediagroup.ca

And finally, let's talk about RSS. More and more people are using RSS as a way to subscribe to content that interests them. This is most prevalent among bloggers and other social media creators, so serving your updates via RSS makes perfect sense – to be blunt, most bloggers won't check your site for updates, once they've been there the first time. Most – if not all – of the sharing sites that I've spoken about allow users to subscribe to topical RSS feeds. The one channel that you control – your social media press release, or more broadly your social media press room – should be RSS powered as well. Give influencers an easy-to-find link to subscribe to your news updates and you will establish a permission-based stream of communications with anyone that takes you up on the offer. Over time, this decreases the burden of proactive outreach while making it easier for influencers to write about the news that is relevant to them.

questions?



you can find more resources at:

gregverdino.typepad.com/greg_verdinos_blog/2007/11/smpr-to-the-pow.html

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