

MARKETING TO THE SOCIAL WEB

*NOW
COVERS
MEASURING
SOCIAL
MEDIA*



SECOND EDITION

**HOW DIGITAL CUSTOMER
COMMUNITIES BUILD
YOUR BUSINESS**

LARRY WEBER

Foreword by JIMMY WALES, Founder of Wikipedia

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Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Foreword](#)

[PREFACE](#)

[PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[PART I - Pandemonium: The Landscape of the Social Web](#)

[CHAPTER 1 - The Web Is Not a Channel](#)

[Pandemonium in Media and Markets](#)

[From Broadcasters to Aggregators](#)

[The Web Is Not a Channel](#)

[Four Generations of the Web](#)

[CHAPTER 2 - Community and Content: The Marketer's New Job](#)

[Who's Really in Control Here?](#)

[Marketing's Role Has Changed](#)

[Opportunities to Achieve Community](#)

[New Rules of Engagement](#)

[CHAPTER 3 - Making the Transition to the Social Web](#)

[The New Marketing Mindset](#)
[Segment by What People Do, Feel, Think](#)
[Communicate Interactively](#)
[Content Created by Customers](#)
[Viva Virality](#)
[Five Stars for Reviews](#)
[Advertiser and Publisher Roles: No Paper Needed](#)
[Strategy from the Bottom Up](#)
[Hierarchy: Let Users Decide](#)
[Test Driving the Social Web](#)
[Beyond Bold Moves for Ford](#)

[CHAPTER 4 - How to Let Customers Say What they Really Think](#)

[Learning to Let Go](#)
[Learning to Listen](#)
[Comments as Early Warning Signs](#)
[Complaints, Complaints](#)
[What about Legal Issues?](#)

[PART II - Seven Steps to Build Your Own Customer Community](#)

[CHAPTER 5 - Step One: Observe and Create a Customer Map](#)

[Steps to Marketing on the Social Web](#)
[Look Who's Talking](#)
[You Need a Business Goal](#)
[Define the Target Audience and Speak Their Language](#)
[Look for Best Practice Examples](#)
[Select Key Words and Begin to Search](#)
[Create a Customer Map](#)

CHAPTER 6 - Step Two: Recruit Community Members

Recruit as if Your Business Depends on It
Bring a New Toolkit to the Job
Send Out Your Invitations
Create That Community Feeling
Build on Existing Sites and Communities
Feel the Momentum

CHAPTER 7 - Step Three: Evaluate Online Conduit Strategies

This Way to the Conduit
Searching, Searching
More about Blogs
Welcome to the E-Community
Tap into Social Networks

CHAPTER 8 - Step Four: Engage Communities in Conversation

Bubbly Conversation
A Brand Is a Dialogue
Making Customers Part of the Brand
Too Much of a Good Thing
Ten Rules for Private Communities
How Do You Pay for It All?

CHAPTER 9 - Step Five: Measure Involvement with New Tools, Techniques

On the Path to Payoff
The One-Two Punch
It's All about the Data
Listen, Engage, Measure

[Evidence of and Quality of Community](#)
[It's Not All Milk and Cookies](#)

[CHAPTER 10 - Step Six: Promote Your Community to the World](#)

[What If: Aéropostale](#)
[Now for a Real Example](#)
[The Little Web Site and How It Grew](#)
[One Size Doesn't Fit All](#)
[Outside Expertise](#)
[Multimedia Outreach](#)

[CHAPTER 11 - Step Seven: Improve the Community's Benefits](#)

[What about Friendster?](#)
[Job One: Quality](#)
[A Case in Point](#)
[Gather Ideas](#)
[The Improvement Imperative](#)
[Reality Check](#)

[PART III - Making Use of the Four Online Conduit Strategies](#)

[CHAPTER 12 - The Reputation Aggregator Strategy](#)

[Everybody Loves Search](#)
[What Am I Bid for "Laptop"?](#)
[Ready for Landing](#)
[Don't Ask Jeeves, Just Ask](#)
[Beyond Plain Vanilla Search](#)
[More Flavors of Search](#)

CHAPTER 13 - The Blog Strategy

Blogs Go Big-Time
So Why Get Blogging?
Get Your People Blogging
You Do Want to Hear the Bad News
Rules for Employees Who Blog
Blog or Tweet?
Now Listen up! Podcasting Is Here (Vodcasting Too)

CHAPTER 14 - The E-Community Strategy

Inside the Parenting E-Communities
Electrons Beat Paper and Ink
What's in It for You?
Throw Your Own Party
E-Communities Expand the World
Add Your Voice

CHAPTER 15 - The Social Networks Strategy

Everything Old Is New Again
Click and Connect
Think Interests, Not Just Demographics
Focus on Focused Social Networks
A Slow Build, Not a Quick Transaction
Organizing for the Social Web

CHAPTER 16 - Does Facebook Matter?

Getting Started on Facebook
On Facebook: Victoria's Secret and the New York Times
Let's Talk Turkey and Tea
Doing Business on Facebook

[Don't Stifle the Dialogue](#)

[CHAPTER 17 - Living and Working in Web 4.0](#)

[Welcome to the Emotive Web](#)

[Where Is Television Going?](#)

[In-Home Goes Out-of-Home](#)

[Where Are Newspapers Going?](#)

[Where is the Social Web Going?](#)

[This Is Only the Beginning](#)

[NOTES](#)

[INDEX](#)

MARKETING TO THE SOCIAL WEB

How Digital Customer
Communities Build
Your Business

SECOND EDITION

LARRY WEBER



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For Hannah, Julia and Geoffrey
... may your lives always be a
'verb thing, not a noun thing'

FOREWORD

You may have heard Jimmy say his now famous phrase, “Imagine a world in which every person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge. That’s what we’re doing.” Had it not been for an important change in direction eight years ago, that phrase would never have been uttered.

The predecessor to Wikipedia was actually the free encyclopedia Nupedia, which was built upon the traditional peer-review model of academic research. In other words, a traditional approval and gate-keeping process was very much in place. And while Nupedia saw some growth during its two-year existence, it wasn’t until the idea of opening up the contribution of content to everyone, and using a wiki platform to do so, that Wikipedia was born. What has made Wikipedia a global phenomenon is the idea that anyone interested in participating certainly can, which has given rise to a previously unprecedented collaboration based on a sense of ownership and community among thousands of volunteer contributors around the world.

Was it sheer luck that Wikipedia achieved its global success? Certainly historical timing was a benefit. But what really happened is that Jimmy and his employee Larry Sanger realized the old model of top-down uni-directional communication wasn’t working anymore and that people were really looking for a sense of community and a voice.

When it comes right down to it, humans haven’t fundamentally changed since their evolutionary ancestors first walked the earth—they’ve thrived on interaction and connection, namely community. It’s this concept—the need for community—that Larry Weber drives home in *Marketing*

to the Social Web. Weber understands what the new marketing is all about, which is not selling, per se. The end goal might be a sale or something similar, but in reality it's community and engagement that get people interested.

In this book, Weber helps marketers, whose job ultimately it is to introduce products and services to people who are sincerely interested in them, learn how to do it the right way. In chapter after chapter, he drives home the point that you can't fake sincerity, you can't fake authenticity, and you can't fake caring because the consumers, users, or participants that marketers are hoping to attract will smell any poser-like behavior a mile away. He accurately points out that "a brand is actually a living, changing thing, [and] is based on the dialogue you have with your customers and prospects—the stronger the dialogue, the stronger the brand, the weaker the dialogue, the weaker the brand."

So, while this is a marketing book with many practical tips, its underlying principle is respect for customers and consumers. For example, Weber encourages marketers that "when you start or join a social web conversation about your company or your competitors, you should be up-front about who you are."

Without being preachy, he also emphasizes the rise of branding and moral purpose on the web: "[Moral purpose] means offering value and acting ethically and transparently. . . . The ethics around doing business include: environmental responsibility, diversity in employment, considering the larger effects of the company's actions. . . . you need to have moral purpose embedded in your values, along with great products at a great price."

For marketers still somewhat unfamiliar—and perhaps uncomfortable—with the new rules of effective online engagement, particularly when it comes to measuring success, he offers practical suggestions such as looking at a

blend of quantifiable and qualitative measures like share of voice, level of engagement, tone of discourse, evidence/quality of community, cost of market share and such things as how frequently and in what manner an organization is being discussed online, among other things.

Ultimately, *Marketing to the Social Web* is an excellent blend of theory, practical tips and how-tos, and fun and interesting case studies that will serve both marketers new to the Web and those more seasoned, making it a timely read for everyone interested in growing and thriving online.

—*Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia*
and *Andrea Weckerle, Communications*
Consultant & Entrepreneur, New York City

PREFACE

In late 1993, I received a phone call from Michael Dertouzos, the founder and head of MIT's Laboratory for Computer Science. He said he wanted to see me for two reasons; first, to help promote the extraordinary innovations coming out of the lab, and second, to discuss the marketing of the recent work of a young British researcher who was moving to the lab from a stint at CERN (the Organisation Européenne pour la Recherche Nucléaire) in Switzerland.

A few days later, the larger-than-life Michael and a quiet Tim Berners-Lee were sitting in my Cambridge office. Michael spoke of the many things the lab had accomplished and the work in progress. He showed me a videotape of his 1980 appearance on the *Today* show to discuss the impact of the first personal computers on society. The interviewer pushed Michael to agree that the advent of the PC was just a fad, but Michael politely disagreed and went on to describe a world in which a large digital community would soon be formed by connecting all personal commuters so that people could easily communicate, shop, learn—even get advice from physicians on another continent. The interviewer just shook his head and broke for a commercial.

Then it was Tim's turn. He discussed his recent work, the development of a language called html—hypertext markup language—that he planned to layer onto the Internet to create a World Wide Web. He asked if I thought the name was catchy, and I smiled, because I really had no idea what he was talking about.

Michael explained he was forming the World Wide Web Consortium and he wanted us to help promote and educate the world. Now, some 16 years later, we still have not seen

the full impact of this most important innovation of our lifetimes. Michael left us too early, and Bill Gates, to whom Michael often consulted on a variety of topics about the future, called his passing a major loss in one major newsweekly. Tim, now Sir Tim, continues to work on his next phase, the semantic web, and I heeded Michael's advice to study the marketing implications of the Web.

The Web has and will continue to change everything. A world of transparent content, mostly user-generated, broadband, rich media, and available on multiple devices, continues to evolve. Marketing at its best is the influencing of opinion through compelling content; doing so through the Web will get harder before it gets easier, but the change is gaining momentum. The Web has consumed almost all the traditional media: television, print, radio, and direct mail and will make marketing a set of dialogues. Companies will have to learn to contribute to these dialogues and share with their customers and potential customers. I've written this book to suggest how you can do just that.

—Larry Weber, Buenos Aires

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In the 18 months since the first edition of this book was published, more and more companies have learned to stimulate and maintain dialogues with their customers and prospects on the social web. I would like to think that the first edition of this book has helped a good number of executives to think about ways to do so. But since the social web is evolving so rapidly with new tools, techniques, and opportunities, the book demanded a new edition to stay current.

This second edition has an additional chapter on the Facebook phenomenon and how marketers can use it. I've completely rewritten the chapters on blogs and measurements, and updated examples and illustrations in every chapter. To obtain the most current thinking about marketing to the social web, I've interviewed several more executives and quoted the most current research available.

Fortunately, the principles of marketing have not changed, so any marketing executive can read and apply the ideas in this edition. Those who do so will, I believe, have stronger brands, products, services, and customer relationships than those who dismiss the social web as just one more fad of the times.

*—Larry Weber,
Waltham, MA*

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First and foremost I must thank my phenomenal co-writer Wally Wood, who truly understood my goals, thinking, and organization around this important book, as well as our earlier book, *The Provocateur*. These books would not have happened without his skillful hand. Thanks to Marijean Lauzier for always supporting my visionary discretions. Jackie Lustig, Jan Baxter, Brian Cavoli, Kevin Green and all at W2 Group who gave freely of their time and talents to bring this book to fruition while making my “second” career such a joy.

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I thank my agent Jill Kneerim and my editor, Richard Narramore, whose subtle, but swift and clear touch has

made this book a very good read. Also to all the great people at John Wiley & Sons, Inc., including Tiffany Groglio and Lauren Freestone, who made the “process” of turning words into this book as painless as possible.

Finally, and as always, I want to thank my family, especially Dawn, for their support and love of a dreamer businessman who wants to help good businesses become great.

PART I

Pandemonium: The Landscape of the Social Web

CHAPTER 1

The Web Is Not a Channel

(And You're an Aggregator, not a Broadcaster)

Learning to market to the social web requires learning a new way to communicate with an audience in a digital environment. It's that simple.

It does not require executives to forget everything they know about marketing. It does mean that they have to open their minds to new possibilities, social change, and rethinking past practices. In the pages ahead, I look at what we can learn about these new possibilities and what the *social web* is all about.

Instead of continuing as broadcasters, marketers should—and will—become aggregators of customer communities. Rather than broadcasting marketing messages to an increasingly indifferent, even resentful, audience jaded by the 2,000-plus messages the average American is reportedly exposed to every day, marketers should participate in, organize, and encourage social networks to which people want to belong. Rather than talking *at* customers, marketers should talk *with* them. And the social web is the most effective way in the history of the world to do just that on a large scale.

The social web is the online place where people with a common interest can gather to share thoughts, comments, and opinions. It includes social networks such as MySpace,

Gather, Facebook, BlackPlanet, Eons, LinkedIn, and hundreds (actually, as we'll see, hundreds of thousands) more. It includes branded web destinations like Amazon, Netflix, and eBay. It includes enterprise sites such as IBM, Best Buy, Cisco, and Oracle. The social web is a new world of unpaid media created by individuals or enterprises on the web. These new strategies, which have the capacity to change public opinion every hour—if not every minute—include:

Reputation aggregators are search engines such as Google, Yahoo!, Ask, and Live. They aggregate sites with the best product or service to offer and usually put things in order of reputation. Mobile search is increasingly popular as people on the go check for a nearby restaurant, directions to a store, or the best price for a product.

Blogs are online journals where people can post ideas, images, and links to other web pages or sites. Some appear on personal or corporate sites, while others are hosted on Blogger, BlogHer (for women), Weblog, Tumblr, and other blogging sites. The microblog site Twitter, where users post “tweets” of 140 characters at a time, is another twist. Lenovo’s web-marketing vice president says, “I use Twitter to monitor tweets about our brand—looking for people having a tough time with our products. I also see a lot of opportunity to sell through Twitter, and I expect we’ll open a ‘deal’ channel there soon.”^{[1](#)}

Topic-specific e-communities are generally advertising supported although some are free. Business-oriented e-communities include dozens concerning IBM: for IBM interns, around different IBM products and services, etc.^{[2](#)} Hewlett Packard has communities on its web site: an HP blade community

and IT resource center forums.³ There are interesting healthcare communities: Sermo for physicians and Patientslikeme, which has communities around specific diseases. There are communities involving sports such as KayakMind for people who enjoy kayaking.⁴ Password-protected e-communities are growing especially quickly.

Social networks are places where people with a common interest or concern come together to meet people with similar interests, express themselves, and vent. In addition to the examples I've already cited, other social networks include iVillage, Xanga, and Stumbleupon. Dopplr is an interesting site for business travelers who share their experiences with foreign hotels, restaurants, and attractions; it will also tell you when, say, three people you know will be in Paris at the same time you are. Some sites are devoted specifically to image-sharing, open to the wide world or restricted to a select few through password protection. YouTube (now owned by Google) serves up 10 billion videos a month to U.S. viewers alone; photos and videos posted on Flickr (now owned by Yahoo!) attract more than 40 million visitors monthly.

In traditional publisher- or corporate-controlled media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, the communication is overwhelmingly one way. Professional journalists research and write stories that are edited and disseminated to the public.

Social media such as blogs, however, allow everyone to publish and to participate in multithreaded conversations online. Because bloggers, sometimes referred to as "citizen journalists" or even "citizen marketers," have no editorial constraints and have access to the entire Web, their posts

can make or break personal, product, or corporate reputations.

Online communities started in the early days of the Internet and software companies encouraged “user groups” to test and experiment with new programs. The Well in California, CompuServe, and America Online built on that idea and began to attract people to the Internet who didn’t have a community or who felt somewhat on the fringe of the new social order, where the groups were a way to meet and bond with new people. As Reid Hoffman, the founder of LinkedIn. com, says, “It was almost like the frontier. Who were the people who originally went West? They felt they didn’t really fit with this society; were somewhat alienated; and wanted to take a big risk. So they got in their wagons and headed West to make something happen. That’s the reason why there was this fascination with things like chat rooms and message boards. Wow, you are with these people you don’t know. Anonymity was a big part of this because it was like this Wild West kind of community.”

Today, there are online tools to manage and present your identity, to communicate with people, to bring yourself online and make yourself heard. Today, individuals and organizations are founding Web-based communities at a mind-boggling pace. People are using the Web to find others with similar interests, to shop more efficiently, to learn about products and services, to vent about shoddy products and poor service, and to stay in touch with distant relatives and friends on the other side of the world.

As Microsoft CEO Steven A. Ballmer told the *New York Times*, “I think one pervasive change is the increasing importance of community. That will come in different forms, with different age groups of people, and it will change as the technology evolves. But the notion of multiple people interacting on things—that will forever continue. That’s

Podcasting
Prairie Web Internet Marketing
Proctor & Gamble
Purina
Putnam, Robert

Rabjohns, David
Radian6
Reichheld, Fred
Reputation aggregators
 example of
 landing pages
 overview
 paid search
 search engines *See also* Social web; Marketing on the
social web
Rexrode, Christina
Ringleader
Roll, Patti
Rollyo
Romanoff, Andrew

S&K Menswear
Santeler, Brad. *See also* Kimberly-Clark
Schultz, Howard. *See also* Starbucks
Schwartz, Jonathan
Scoble, Robert
Scribner, Josh. *See also* IBM
Search engine optimization
Search engines. *See also* Reputation aggregators
Segway
SendTec
Sermo.com

Siegelman, Russell L.

Sifry, David

SiteTuners.com

Six Degrees

Slate. *See also* Microsoft

The Slate Group. *See* Slate

SocialNet

Social networks

- focused

- history of

- by interest

- vs. nonvirtual social networks

- overview

- starting *See also* Marketing on Facebook; Online communities; Social web

Social web

- blogs (*see* Blogs) and conduits (*see* Marketing on the social web, platforms) defined

- e-communities (*see* E-communities) effect on society

- employee communications (*see also* Customer-generated content)

- future of

- and interactivity

- lead generation

- and moral purpose

- online communities (*see* Customer-generated content)

- partnerships

- research and development

- and role of marketing

- targeted brand building

- transitioning to (*see also* Marketing on the social web)

- and transparency

- types of

user-generated content (*see also* Customer-generated content)

See also Internet and marketing; Social networks

Special K. *See* Kellogg

Sproul, Tim

Starbucks

Stationary brands

Stealth marketing

Stone, Lisa

Stoneyfield Farm

Strauss, Judy

Stross, Randall

Sun Microsystems

SuperPoke

Swerling, Jerry

Swicki

Taylor, Jeff. *See also* Eons.com

TechCrunch

Technorati

The Telegraph

Thomas Cook Group. *See* MyTravel

Tickle

Timbuk2 Designs

The Times

TMZ

TNS. *See* Cymfony; Media Intelligence

Topic-specific e-communities . *See also* E-communities;

Social web

3M

360i

TripAdvisor.com

TurboTax. *See also* Intuit

Twitter. *See also* Blogs

Under Armour

UNICEF

U.S. Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation
Committee

USA Today

Valdes-Perez, Raul

Victoria's Secret

Viral marketing

Visa

Vittal, Suresh

Vivísimo

Vodcasting

Voki.com

Walczak, Bob

Washington Post

Web Marketing Today Free Weekly

Webinars

Webisodes

Weblog. *See* Blogs

Whitaker, Forest

Whole Foods

Wikipedia

Wilkins, David

Windber Medical Center

Wink

Wizmark

Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association