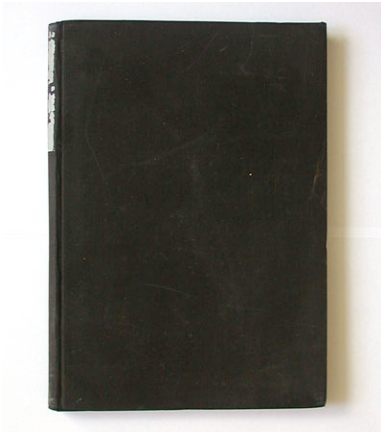


# PR 2.0

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## The Future of Communications – A Manifesto for Integrating Social Media into Marketing



While I was preparing my presentation for the “Starting the Conversation,” a social media [workshop](#) hosted by [SocialMediaClub](#), I wound up drafting version one of the manifesto for helping marketers adapt to the rapidly evolving realm of social media.

In the past, I’ve spoken at PR, tech, and communications events about Social Media and how companies can engage in the conversations taking place with or without them. As much as I wanted to look into the future, I was rooted in the present as a means to connect it to the past. There are just too many new things to introduce to people and even more reasons why they should care.

The discussion usually centered on the tools enabling social media instead of analyzing the shift in how information is distributed. From there, the natural progression was to understand who would be responsible for these new strategies and how they would sell it to management.

There has been a fundamental shift in our culture and it has created a new landscape of influencers and an entirely new ecosystem for supporting the socialization of information – thus facilitating new conversations that can start locally, but have a global impact.

Monologue has given way to dialog.

Social media has created a new layer of influencers. It is the understanding of the role people play in the process of not only reading and disseminating information, but also how they in turn, share and also create content for others to participate. This, and only this, allows us to truly grasp the future of communications.

The socialization of information and the tools that enable it are the undercurrent of social media and ultimately the social economy.

Content is the new democracy and we the people, are ensuring that our voices are heard.

What we're talking about here is how companies will best manage an integrated communications strategy in the not too distant future. It about putting the "public" back in Public Relations and realizing that focusing on important markets and influencers will have a far greater impact than trying to reach the masses with any one message or tool.

The key point here is that Social Media has yet to reveal its true impact. While many are defining its future, the majority of people around the world have yet to embrace it and participate. This means that it's only going to become more pervasive and as such, become a critical factor in the success or failure of any business.

The evolution of social media is also forcing an incredible transformation in PR and corporate communications – its most dramatic to date; even more significant than the introduction of radio, television and motion pictures.

With the injection of social tools into the mix, people now have the ability to impact and influence the decisions of their peers and also other newsmakers. Social media is not a game played from the sidelines. Those who participate will succeed – everyone else will either have to catch up or miss the game altogether.

Engage or die.

### **What does the future of communications look like?**

First it's an understanding that social media is about sociology and less about technology. It's a mashup of new and traditional media that spans across advertising, PR, customer service, marcom, sales, and community relations.

In order to succeed now and in the future, is to bridge the gap between early adopters and everyone else.

Now, however, it's about conversations, and the best communicators start as the best listeners.

This is where the future of communications takes shape.

It all starts with respect.

Listening is marketing.

Participation is marketing.

Media is marketing.

Conversations are marketing.

Comments are marketing.

These are pretty powerful statements and they are the essence of the future of marketing. They combine traditional marketing, conversational marketing, participatory marketing, and more importantly, the ability to be successful in dynamic relationships with multiple markets.

Let's start with figuring out who's in charge of the conversation? Is it advertising, PR, marketing communications, customer service? It's all of the above.

How do you integrate this into the marketing fold without either getting laughed at, or worse, fired? Perhaps CEOs, directors and investors will read this and force the change to stem from the top, down. But in most cases, change will be driven from bottom, up and from the middle.

The best companies will let go of their message and control of gatekeeping in social realms and trust it with their employees to carry forward. Don't get me wrong, traditional marketing can still run as it has, it just now needs a more complementary role with all new media activities. There also needs to be a more cognizant process for understanding the people who comprise the markets you're trying to reach.

**We need leaders. We need champions.**

What the CMO, chief marketing officer, was to Web 1.0, such is the new role of community managers in the new world of Web 2.0 and social media. This is the role that keeps the company ear to the ground in order to determine where the conversations are taking place and where they should participate. They are on the front lines of listening and engaging in conversations across the Web.

The next step is to realize that messages are not conversations. This is where most companies fall down in traditional marketing. People just don't speak or hear things that way.

As Doc Searls once said, "There is no market for messages."

This is a hub between the company and its customers. It's the new customer service, fusing marcom, PR and customer relations, all in one department.

Everything we're integrating into the marketing mix is aimed at sparking and cultivating not only conversations, but relationships. It's humanizing companies and their products and services so that they matter to people.

### **Focus.**

Jay Rosen wrote a great [essay](#) entitled, "We are the People Formally Known as the Audience," that introduced an entirely new concept of reaching people – ultimately influencing marketing.

In order to reach people, we have to figure out who they are and where they go for information. In the process, you'll quickly discover that there is no magic bullet for reaching everyone.

The best communications programs will reach out to traditional media, a-list bloggers, people, and communities equally. But it requires a new mindset.

Social media is about speaking with, not "to" or "at" people.

This is about doing PR in a way that both works in a conversational medium and doesn't demean and insult the intelligence of everyone involved. This is a sea filled with sharks – most of which would love nothing more than to have PR pros for every meal of the day. To succeed here though, is the future of integrated communications. This concept introduces the [Long](#) Tail of media and the new regime of influentials in the micromedia.



### **Integrated Marketing – The Tools**

The future of marketing integrates traditional and social media elements. The new mix will include what you know along with the tools to succeed in social media and customer relations.

They can include blogs, social networks, wikis, lifestreams ala Twitter and Jaiku, video, livecasts such as Veodia and ustream.tv, news aggregators such as Digg and Reddit, social media releases, videos, and podcasts. There are also opportunities for companies to participate in virtual worlds, such as Second Life.

Remember, the future of communications introduces sociology into the marketing strategy. The technology is just that, technology. The tools will change. The networks will evolve. Mediums for distributing content will grow.

As you participate in each of these new discussions, the key ingredient to ensuring transparency is realize that whatever you do, is less about the company, per se, and more about how your customers can succeed in their business or how people can simply improve their personal lives. They learn. You learn. It's about building a community around them – literally. The rest are just tools to facilitate the conversation.

With everything you do in social media, you have to participate in order to build bridges that connect people and the company.

**Blogs** - I'm pretty sure that by this point, we're all pretty familiar with blogs. What we should all know however, is that they are not effective when used as a corporate platform for marketing messages. And also, they're not a channel for featuring ghostwritten posts for company executives. The best corporate blogs are genuine and designed to help people. Make sure to pay attention to the comments as well. Some of the best conversations take place in the comments section as people react to what you wrote as well as the feedback from their peers.

Trackbacks can not go unmentioned here. As you blog, make sure to send trackbacks to any outside blog post that may have inspired your post. This builds tunnels between the blogs allowing new readers to discover your content.

**Social Media [Release](#)** – Originally introduced by Todd [Defren](#), the SMR is a new way of facilitating conversations, while also packaging content in a more concise format, rich with media and other social tools (it also recently [celebrated](#) its first anniversary).

The social media release aka new media release is not a miracle pill to cure the ills of poorly written press releases. It is merely a tool that is most effective when combined with a strategic arsenal of relevant company blog posts, traditional releases, relationships, and an emerging category of press releases that tell a story (written by people for people using SEO to reach them).

Social media releases are designed to get the conversation going, providing readers with the ability to disseminate information and multimedia, bookmark and share the content, and in turn, spark threads. They also serve a purpose of

providing new media influencers with the information they need, in one package, in order to write a full story, their way – without having to carve out the BS of a traditional release or pitch.

News releases can tell the same story in different ways – appealing to specific markets and the users that define them.

Here are a few examples for your reference:

[HP](#)

[Geocommons](#)

[Virtual Thirst](#)

**VNR 2.0** - Video is the new frontier, again. I recently introduced the idea of reinventing the VNR (video news release), which is designed to help viewers humanize companies and also explain the value of their products or services in a way that speaks to them directly.

'Un' produced videos that tell stories are incredibly viral when placed in online communities and also on the corporate Web site. The more produced they feel, the lower the interaction and sharing ratio. The more real they are, the greater the dynamic and propensity for sharing.

These videos can be short demos, screencasts (a demonstration or walkthrough on screen), entertaining snippets or collages, mini episodes, etc.

Create a channel on Youtube, tag each video with the key words you think people are searching, and watch the views skyrocket. I recently uploaded a simple screencast, which generated 55,000 views in one week.

**Social Media Newsroom** - Todd Defren who introduced the original template for a social media release also introduced the concept of a social media [newsroom](#).

This allows press, analysts, bloggers, conference organizers, and also customers to discover, subscribe, and share corporate news, bios, images, video, RSS feeds, del.icio.us links, blogs, tags, IM accounts, etc.

**Social Networks** - Building a dedicated social network, which could be considered a more sophisticated and easier to use discussion board, is imperative to service and relationships. Take a look at services such as [Ning](#) in order to quickly build and launch a network if you need to take matters into your own hands.

But just because you build it, doesn't mean they will come. You have to start by recruiting. Go find your customers and bring them to you. Also make sure to maintain a presence in other social networks – where relevant – so your customers can also find you.

Also take a look at Dell's [Ideastorm](#) for mashingup a digg-like community around customer ideas.

For more on the subject, take a look at Jeremy Toeman's smart and useful [post](#) on DIY Viral Marketing Activities.

**Podcasts and Video Blogs** – Podcasts and video blogs are easy to produce and can provide a world of value to customers. They can focus on company milestones, executive interviews, customer success stories, how to's, and anything else that may be worthy. Not only can they be hosted on the company's web site, they can be placed in a variety of content distribution networks such as itunes, to reach people using the tools of their choice.

**Wikis** – Wikis are important to facilitate collaboration in a more friendly, socially-focused content management system. It's not just about teams and document

management. It can now provide a forum for inviting content and suggestions from customers.

**Microblogs and Flow Applications** – [Twitter](#), [Jaiku](#), and [tumblr](#) aren't just for geeks. They represent a new channel for listening to customers and also sharing new information with them. Often referred to as microblogs, these new tools are designed to share short updates, whether you're publishing new information, content, or media. People "add" people and companies as friends when they want to learn or stay up to date with their activities.

Again, these are just a few examples where conversations are taking place. Not one represents a collective community for your customer-base. You have to understand where they are, what they're looking for, and why – in order to reaching them.

**Livecasting and video casting** – There was a time when only the elite or Fortune 500 companies had access to video production and the ability to mass broadcast. Now companies are building networks and the tools that enable you to broadcast video live or as episodes, which can facilitate 24/7 or episodic livecasts on the Web and through mobile appliances. Video segments allow companies and customers to engage in a whole new way. All it takes is a notebook, a fixed broadband connection (or even EVDO for mobile casts), and either a Web cam or a camcorder.

Companies such as Veodia and Ustream enable [livecasting](#) anywhere, anytime. While kyte, Mogulus, and BlogTV facilitate episodic broadcasting.

For business, these tools are ideal for (whether live or not) for webcasting training sessions, HR and executive announcements, product reviews, marketing events, lectures, conferences, speeches, panels, etc.

**Media** – Artwork, and all media in general should be placed in social communities for customers to find and use. Some of the more successful companies are sharing less-polished, more customer-focused exclusive content in communities such as flickr, zoomr, Izimi, Photobucket or all of the above.

Also collage tools, such as SplashCast, allow you to integrate all forms of media into one portable, rich, and captivating video. SplashCast enables anyone to create streaming media 'channels' that combine video, music, photos, narration, text and RSS feeds. These casts can be placed on blogs and in social networks.

If you want to read a killer case study that gives us a glimpse of the future of integrated marketing, take a look at what Marshall [Kirkpatrick](#) and Alex Williams did for the Splashcast launch.

Here are the highlights:

- Goals: Drive traffic, demonstrate the potential of our publishing tool, encourage people to enlist as SplashCast publishers
- Daily blogging, not only about company news but interesting industry news as well
- Sending trackbacks to other blogs, where posts that are related to theirs are linked for their readers to discover
- Link, link, link
- Leaving thoughtful, value-ad-focused comments in response to posts on other blogs, where our names are linked to the SplashCast site added in the URL field of the comment form
- Placed relevant bloggers at the center of their PR strateg
- Lead to more than 250 blog mentions within 48 hours of their launch
- Attended events and building relationships with other social media producers, who will remember SplashCast when writing about related subject matter
- Used Twitter to stay abreast of what other people are doing and keep friends up to date on SplashCast
- Engagement with and inclusion in relevant topical aggregators.
- For example, a Google search of Techmeme.com for SplashCastMedia brings back 1,400 results - made 15 appearances on the front page of Digg
- Enjoyed more than 1,000 publishers register for an account at launch, we doubled that in our first month to 2,000 & doubled it again in our second month to more than 4,000. SplashCast player loads are now approaching 5.5 million

**Crowdsourced News aka News Aggregators** – Tools such as Reddit, digg, Fark, etc. represent the ability to spike visibility and traffic. Making the front page or earning the highest amount of votes for these sites is an art – and a lot of missionary marketing. It's important to first develop a trustworthy reputation by submitting, promoting, and voting stories not related to your company.

**Social Bookmarking** – Social [bookmarking](#) sites, such as [del.icio.us](#), ma.gnolia, diigo, and stumble upon, also offer a unique way of creating a resource center for reporters, bloggers, and customers by saving key sites, reports, user experiences, or any relevant information on the web to help place your company and its value proposition in clearer perspective when compared to competitors.

Relevant tags allow other people to discover information, bookmark it on their own and also read through your bookmarks.

**Social Calendars** – Nothing beats participation and relationship building like doing it in real life! Social networks aren't only limited to content, they also allow people to find and share events related to their interests. Upcoming and eventful are great ways to reach potential customers by introducing relevant events, by location, to people who may or may not have discovered it on their own.

Companies use these tools to invite people to demos, open houses, webcasts, tradeshows, etc. Tags also play an important role in attracting visibility.

**Virtual Worlds** – This is an interesting category unto itself. Many companies are extending their presence into virtual worlds, with Second Life ranking as the most popular of the bunch – but certainly not the only world to participate. This truly requires participation prior to any form of marketing, as these worlds have a unique culture that requires experience – the kind of experience only possible through residence and participation.

To succeed in social media, we can't be gatekeepers or handlers.

Like with all forms of social media, companies sometimes make the mistake of attacking it with the same rules as they do with traditional media. In the recent case of Intel's launch of its island through a virtual press conference in Second Life, we learned what not to do.

Many attending media complained that the news of Intel's launch was already released prior to the conference and that nothing new was reported in the event. Even worse, reporters, analysts, and bloggers felt that there was an "us versus them" mentality typical of traditional press releases. According to Metaversed, "The overriding feel I got from attending was one of 'we will talk, you will listen.' Indeed, one of Intel's inept handlers actually told the audience to shush, and show some respect, for daring to converse."

### **Defining the Future of Integrated Communications – Getting to Work**

Below are your action items for placing your company on course for the Future of Integrating Marketing and embracing the world of social media to enhance relationships with press, bloggers, customers and all other unforeseen influencers:

- Experiment with social media as a person before jumping in as a company spokesperson
- Talk to the corporate marketing team, discuss the options, and divide and conquer
- Listen – find the tools that work for you (technorati, GoogleBlogSearch, BlogPulse, etc.)
- Determine where your customers participate, listen, read, and speak with them on their terms
- Assign a community manager or multiple managers and start commenting, reading, writing, sharing, and participating
- Participate as a contributor and not a marketer
- Create company profiles and share relevant content on every important social networks – don't forget to manage your presence in each one
- Create videos, screencasts, and demos and upload to YouTube

- Broadcast and receive relevant updates through Twitter, Plazes, or Jaiku
- Webcast relevant videos
- Podcast and/or host a video blog
- Set up del.icio.us profiles for corporate bookmarks, industry trends, competition, and press/blogger coverage
- Create special Linked in profiles for company executives
- Establish contacts in all major IMs for specific company contacts
- Expand the company blog to support multiple spokespersons
- Add a blogroll that links to other relevant sites and ensure that each post trackbacks to other resources and references to increase visibility
- Participate in comments
- Create blog profiles in Mybloglog and Bloglines to reach dedicated users
- Build company and campaign-specific profiles (where appropriate) on Facebook, Myspace, etc.
- Develop your own social networks specific to the company and current activities a la Ning and Ideastorm
- Host a regular talk show on blogtalkradio or blogtv
- Create an account and Digg relevant stories – not just related to you
- Write more than one release – experiment with social and SEO releases and create new distribution methods to get them in front of customers – the wire services are no longer the only game in town
- Analyze Web statistics to measure traffic and referring sources

What does the future of integrated marketing and communications look like? It's a mashup of new media and traditional media – all with the common goal of engaging people and influencers on their terms. The difference is that by listening, reading, and participating, corporate marketing will be smarter and more approachable than ever before. This is how we humanize brands, create loyalty, and earn customer's business.

Let businesses be measured by their actions and not their intentions. In the world of social media, companies will earn the community of customers they deserve.



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