

The Internet & Marketing Report

News and insights on how executives use the Internet and other channels to drive business objectives

March 26, 2010

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Would you run ads from rivals on your site? Some are.

Click emr.blogspot.com for great ideas between issues.

The Purpose of The Internet & Marketing Report

The Internet & Marketing Report is the fast-read source of ideas to help marketers support customers, increase revenues and cut costs.

Twice monthly, The Internet & Marketing Report lets you know what's working for high-level marketers in a wide range of industries.

In addition, it reviews the best ideas and latest technology available. Instead of hype, we provide information you can use – every day.

Get more visitors to click and convert in 15 words or fewer

■ Replace reader fatigue with reader intrigue

Many sites are losing valuable prospects and leads to reader fatigue, says a top Web copywriter.

The problem?

Visitors “desperately want to read what you’re saying but a bit of tiredness creeps in and then they give up,” says Sean D’Souza of *Psychotactics.com*.

And what happens to these valuable prospects? Off they bounce to the next Web page that isn’t so tiring.

According to the latest research, you have just two seconds to grab prospects’ attention before they click away. Yet many sites continue to push

away visitors with long slabs of hard-to-read copy.

You can stop reader fatigue with three quick fixes, says D’Souza.

1. One thought at a time

Try not to exceed 15 to 25 words in any one sentence.

That’s around the length of one thought. Longer sentences tend to contain more than one idea, and when strung together, these ideas get confusing and make your prospect’s head ache.

D’Souza’s tip: If your sentence is

(Please see 15 words ... on p. 2)

Lift conversions 40% with new online form

■ Another way to stop leads from slipping away

You could increase conversions 25% to 40% on lead-generation forms and e-mail sign ups with a simple change.

Make lead-gen forms palatable

Instead of asking prospects to complete a standard form, turn it into a narrative.

For example: “I would like to sign up. I want my username to be ... By the way, my real name is ... and my e-mail address is ...”

Prospects using this style of form,

called the “Mad Lib,” were 25% to 40% more likely to convert.

Where can you see examples of this narrative-style form in action?

- Automotive sites like *Vast.com* and *KBB.com* are using forms like these when visitors sign up to get info.
Click: <http://ow.ly/1eJ1Y>
- Audio-sharing site *Huffduffer.com* pioneered the Mad Lib form on its sign-up page for its newsletter.

Click: [LukeW.com](http://ow.ly/1eJad) <http://ow.ly/1eJad>

SITE USABILITY

15 words ...

(continued from p. 1)

streaming across the width of the page, you've probably written about 15 words. So try to stop there, or soon, and start a new sentence.

Our tip: Mix it up. Very short sentences add interest and give readers a chance to breathe.

If your business sells technical products, making the content easy-to-read frees your prospects to concentrate on your products instead of thinking about what you are trying to say. Check out the way that B2B company *Javelin-tech.com* uses short sentences and punchy headlines.

Don't know which pages to fix first? Concentrate on your most important pages with the highest bounce rate.

2. Don't get an 'F' for wide columns

Just because a Web page can accommodate about 30 words on one long horizontal line, that's no reason to do it.

Visitors tend to read a page in the shape of a big F, finds eyetracking studies. They read across the line at first, but as they move down the page,

they read fewer and fewer words in each sentence.

To see how you lose prospects, click *Useit.com/EyeTracking*.

To get prospects reading more copy, try splitting your Web page into columns. Keep your main text column to about 15 words across at the maximum, suggests D'Souza.

For example, *ReadWriteWeb.com*, averages eight to 10 words a line.

REMINDER

"This isn't about grammar. It's about conversion," says D'Souza.

3. Put paragraphs on a diet

Chunky, fat, impenetrable paragraphs are a hangover from magazines, where space was often tight. In contrast, Web sites can take up as much space as they like.

For example, *AARP Bulletin* at <http://ow.ly/1g3XH> is full of lengthy paragraphs that make a complicated subject matter look even more intimidating.

D'Souza suggests limiting paragraphs to about four to six lines.

For more impact, vary the sentence length. A one-line sentence for your most important message can pack a big punch.

Source: "Three Methods to Fix Reader Fatigue on Web Pages," D'Souza, Psychotactics at <http://ow.ly/1g54l>

The
**Internet & Marketing
Report**

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The Internet & Marketing Report (ISSN 1099-0143), issue date March 26, 2010, Vol. 12 No. 275, is published semi-monthly, except once in December (23 times a year) by Progressive Business Publications, 370 Technology Drive, Malvern, PA 19355; PHONE: 800-220-5000. FAX: 610-647-8089. Subscription rate \$299 per year. Periodicals postage paid at Malvern, PA 19355. Postmaster: Send address changes to *The Internet & Marketing Report*, 370 Technology Drive, Malvern, PA 19355.

Subscription service: 800-220-5000

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Sharpen your JUDGMENT

This feature provides a framework for decision making that helps keep you and your company out of trouble. It describes a recent legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

■ A cybersquatter clones thousands of Neptune.com

"More bad news?" asked Jack McCarthy, *Neptune.com*'s marketing manager, when Jenny Chang, the company's attorney walked in.

"Afraid so, Jack. A cybersquatter has registered thousands of domains with our trademarks. Look at these new sites: *Neptune-TusconAZ.com* and *Neptune-NewYorkNY.com* ..."

"I know. They've been popping up like fungus ... hitting every trademark and every market," Jack groaned.

"They're very convincing. I found it hard to tell if a site is fake or one of ours," said Jenny.

Diverting prospects

A few weeks later, Jack got through to the cybersquatter.

"Our sites are doing your company a service. We often recommend your products," said the squatter.

"No, you trick our prospects by making them think you sell our line. And then you recommend our rivals.

"I'm asking a tribunal to transfer these 1,500 domains back to us," said Jack.

"Nobody's going to rule for a group transfer. I can register them faster than you can fight 'em," said the cybersquatter.

Did Neptune win?

■ *Make your decision, then please turn to page 6 for the court's ruling.*

WEB SITE REVIEW: WHAT WORKED

What's the difference between a site and a blog these days? Little

■ Look professional and impressive even if your company is small

Is that a site or a blog? You probably wouldn't guess that *DeanPiccirillo.com*, a financial service's site, is powered by blogging software.

The line between a blog and a site is blurring, as companies turn to blogging content-management systems, especially WordPress (WP) because it's fast, free and flexible. Because WP is a popular open source platform, there are thousands of designs and plug-ins, which make optimization and design easy.

News and advice makes site look authoritative

DeanPiccirillo.com was developed entirely by the company's owner, using WordPress, reported *ContentMarketingToday* at

<http://ow.ly/1haBm>.

You wouldn't know it. The site makes the company look:

- **Professional.** It would be hard to tell this company is small. The site makes the company look bigger than it is.
- **Like experts.** News and updates on the home page of the site (traditional blog posts displayed like a magazine) make the company look like experts on the major issues facing investors.
- **Current.** Because this site uses blogging software, it's a snap for the owner, Piccirillo, to jump on the latest news.
- **Like a regular site.** Some prospects may equate a blog with hobbyists, but WP makes it easy to create static pages, too.

Web site review: In each issue, we review a site. It could be yours. E-mail jpower@pbp.com

ASK THE EXPERTS

Experts answer your real-life online marketing questions.

Big presentation? How to avoid death by PowerPoint

Q: I have a big PowerPoint presentation coming up. How can I engage listeners?

A: Death by PowerPoint is a well-documented syndrome that occurs when a well-meaning presenter fills copious numbers of slides with too many details. This nasty syndrome, which can strike down even the best prospects in an audience, is often made worse by presenters who read their slides verbatim.

For a killer presentation, in the best sense, try these tips:

1. **Practice the presentation** without slides. If technology failed, would the show go on?
2. **Use the slides to illustrate** a point, highlight an amazing fact or show a trend, rather than using them as your notes. **Click:** *LifeHacker.com*
3. **Show your passion.** Start by talking about the one thing that makes you mad, sad or excited.
4. **Don't go bullet-mad.** Limit the number of bullets to three. After that, people lose interest.
5. **Mix it up.** If you feel your presentations are routine, your audience will too. Use a slide search engine to find new slides and inspiration. **Click:** *Slidefinder.net*
Microsoft's also released 150 new designs and backgrounds you can download for free. **Click:** <http://sniprul.com/u91d0>
Info: *Julie Power is editor in chief of The Internet and Marketing Report.*

WEB SITE REVIEW: WHAT NEEDS WORK

■ I love your site but how can I contact you?

DeanPiccirillo.com is doing all the right things to bring prospects back to his site with fresh content, well-written advice and news.

Then what? After building a great foundation, this site stops short of turning these prospects into leads.

The only calls to action are the low-key suggestions to connect on Facebook and Twitter, and sign up to receive e-mail updates.

Phone numbers? E-mail addresses?

DeanPiccirillo.com is likely missing opportunities to convert prospects who need to talk to someone now.

It should consider adding a phone number to every page.

Some sites, like *Basement Systems.com*, discovered conversions increased even further when it displayed its phone number in several spots on the same page.

Tip: Consider adding your phone number at the top of your site, in the lead-generation form and in the footer, too.

The site's owner, Piccirillo, could add a personal touch like "Call me on my personal cell phone today."

Try Google Voice for a free way to consolidate and route all phone lines (cell, office, etc.) on one number.

MARKETERS' TOOLKIT

■ **Get images for free without copyright problems**

Add interest to your site by adding free photos, without breaching anyone's copyright.

Try *Flickr.com*'s Creative Commons to find images that can be used for free by attribution. Others can be displayed for non-commercial uses.

There are also several tools that search and drop in images related to the keywords in your Web content. To find free or inexpensive images that won't cause a copyright suit, visit:

- *Flickr.com*
- *Freefoto.com/index.jsp*
- *Sxc.hu*, and
- *Photodropper.com/WordPress-plugin*.

■ **Is your site in bad company?**

The old saying, "You are only as good as the company you keep," applies as much online as offline. If you exchange links with a site that's been penalized, it can hurt your results. Check the quality of links with *BadNeighborhood.com*'s link-exchange tool.

Click: <http://ow.ly/1emX0>

■ **A memorable favicon**

Build your brand with a free online logo generator, called a favicon. The best known is the G that pops up in the browser bar when you do a Google search.

- Create one.

Click: Topbits.com/favicon-generator.html

- Get inspiration. 50 remarkable favicons via *Smashing Magazine*.

Click: <http://ow.ly/1eldG>

Testimonials that jump off the page

A great testimonial tells a convincing story in one line.

Take this one used by *LongWindows.com* in its print and online advertising:

"Our energy use dropped so much that Dominion Virginia Power thought our meter was broken." Wow!

B2B site shows prices (world doesn't collapse)

Increasing numbers of B2B companies are posting their prices on their sites, preferring to control the message.

Many sales reps may cringe at the very idea, but *Eloqua.com*'s marketers decided to take the plunge to:

- **Control perceptions:** Buyers thought their prices were more expensive than they really were, and
- **Compete with Google:** Buyers were already able to gather info, form opinions and get pricing info using Google without *ever* talking to a rep, says Eloqua's CTO Steve Woods.

"The sales team is competing with Google as a source of info, and that is not an easy battle to win," he writes.

The move caused much debate internally, but the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, said Woods.

Read his fascinating account, and don't miss the comments from other B2B marketers.

Click: *Digital Body Language* at <http://ow.ly/1gzvq>

While you were sleeping

Even if a prospect opens an e-mail, then thinks she'll come back and read it later, she rarely does.

MarketingExperiments.com's experts lifted results by finding the sweet spot when execs not only opened an e-mail, but read and clicked through to its site. By testing different send times for their informational messages, they found:

STEAL THE IDEAS

In every issue, IMR presents quick ideas to inspire marketers can use the Internet to satisfy customers' resources they have.

- Senior managers and "indiepreneurs" on the West Coast read late at night
- East coast execs were early birds, responding and converting in the dawn hours before work, and
- Prospects in Asia and Europe responded better when work messages hit their work e-mails outside of business hours.

Click: <http://ow.ly/1emuA>

Spin this idea to prevent shipping sticker shock

Today's prospects are more sensitive than ever to shipping charges.

Not revealing shipping charges until the last-minute is a major cause of abandons for e-commerce sites.

That's why B2B tool company, *NorthernTools.com*, puts the weight of every item at the top of every product page next to a button to calculate shipping costs.

Click: <http://ow.ly/1g8R7>

When prospects say 'Send me an e-mail!'

Your reps probably hear these lines many times a day from prospects who are trying to get off the phone:

"Just send me an e-mail!"
or "Send me something first."

To keep prospects talking, suggest reps offer to e-mail a link or a PDF – and then wait until it arrives, so the

AL THESE DEAS ...

ick ideas to inspire creative thinking about how satisfy customers and work smarter with whatever

prospect can check that:

1. He can download or open the document, or
2. She can open the Web link.

Some sales trainers, like Adrian Miller, say these tactics are particularly effective for B2B companies that use catalogs and PDFs online and off.

Leads: Give something, get something

Remember the old days when direct mailers used to include a buck slip (a one dollar bill) to encourage prospects to read and respond to their mail?

Here's how one company is adapting this idea online: Music download site *Noisetrade.com* helps bands expand their fanbase.

A fan can download a rare or new song for free if they provide the e-mail addresses of five friends or colleagues who'd also like to hear the song.

These bands have expanded small lists into hundreds.

Even better, these prospects are more likely to act on the recommendation because it comes from someone they know and trust.

New social media sites worth checking out

There are so many social media sites popping up that it's impossible to keep up, but a few show promise for building communities and collaboration:

- *Foursquare.com*, which encourages users to visit restaurants or cafes to become mayor of their neck of the woods. Businesses are now offering promotions, too.
- *Wave.Google.com*, which lets anyone collaborate online in real-time. *Click:* "5 Ways to Use Google Wave for Business," at <http://ow.ly/1gb2G>
- *Buzz.Google.com*, which has had a controversial beginning because of privacy fears, could threaten Twitter and Facebook's dominance, some say. *Click:* *Mashable.com*

Help reps close more sales during presentations

If reps turn to your Web site for support during meetings with prospects, video could increase their chances of conversion.

Sales reps lifted close rates 20% when they played a video at the beginning of a virtual sales demo, says Patrick Moran, chief strategy officer of *Fuze.com*.

Other online services report similar results. *Jivox*, an online video ad platform, used a video demo to increase registrations by 25%. It embedded a sign-up form right on the demo page to collect registrations.

A service like *Wistia.com* can let you share a video with prospects – and track how they interact with the video.

Click: <http://ow.ly/18MTU>

Game, (Google) set and match: Fun research tool

Break out of a rut by trying Google Sets.

It's a free research tool that you can use as a "thesaurus, a creativity booster and enhancer, and just plain fun!" said one user. Just type in a few words and the tool expands your idea for you.

Web marketing expert, Bill Slawki of *SEObytheSea.com*, says Google Sets is often overlooked, yet it allows you to "automatically create sets of items from a few examples."

Click: Labs.Google.com/sets

WHAT NOT TO DO

■ Alert: PDF ahead

The industrial Web site *KaydonBearings.com* seems better than the average site.

It has keyworded links on every page, like "turntable bearings."

Only trouble, many of these links surprise prospects by opening up the company's catalogue or other PDFs.

Tip: Alert prospects that they are about to open a PDF. And consider turning this content into Web pages.

These downloads are slow. And most PDFs can't be accessed by search engines. Unless you do some fancy optimization, they don't help search results one bit.

WHERE TO GET HELP

■ Look like even more of an expert with this cheat sheet

"How do I know which social media sites to use? What will YouTube do for us? Can we get leads from LinkedIn?" These are common questions facing marketers today that you can answer with a cheat sheet by Drew McLellan.

He walks you through these aspects of the major social media sites:

- **Brand exposure.** For example, LinkedIn profiles are great for giving an exec the top result for his name.
- **Traffic to your site.** YouTube is great for building links.
- **SEO.** Twitter is bad for SEO but Flickr is fantastic for building links, especially for image search.

Click: DrewMcLellan.typepad.com at <http://ow.ly/1ga9v> (PDF)

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS THAT WORK

4 great conversion techniques worth stealing from Honest Abe ...

■ Bring lost prospects back to your site by answering their questions

Instead of losing customers who came to its site and didn't find the info they needed, *AbesofMaine.com* found a smart way to get prospects to come back and buy.

It let anybody ask and answer a question about any product on its site.

The electronics retailer created an online Q & A (in addition to a thriving customer ratings section) that let visitors post a question for the online community. It then e-mails the customer when there's a new answer.

4 ways to steal this idea

These e-mails were so effective at drawing prospects back to the site that Abe's site converted 114% more prospects than its e-mail newsletters.

During the first three months, this feature was so popular that customers asked 5,200 questions. Of these, 72% returned to get an answer and 7.5% converted to a sale, reported *MarketingSherpa.com*

How could you do something

similar? Borrow these ideas from Abe:

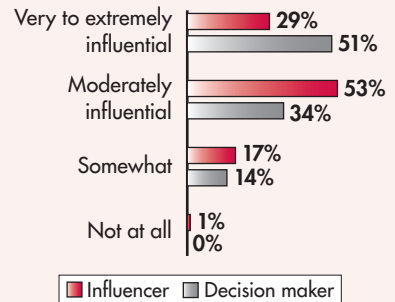
- 1. Capture the lead.** Abe's is smart. It doesn't ask prospects to register before asking a question. But a "Notify Me" screen pops up after the question has been lodged asking a visitor if she'd like to be alerted via e-mail of any responses.
- 2. Copy every question to service professionals.** Many questions also get answered by Abe's reps. That gives the company some control, and lets reps add value, address inaccuracies and show expertise.
- 3. Send a notification e-mail.** Every time a response comes in, Abe's e-mails the buyer.
- 4. Head off prospects' questions.** Abe's Q & A feature also shows prospects' questions that have already been asked before they submit theirs.

Source: "Product Q&A E-mails Get 7.5% Conversion Rate," <http://snipurl.com/twsxk>

WHAT MARKETERS SAID

B2B prospects love white papers

How influential are white papers in your purchasing decision?



Source: EccoloMedia.com survey of high-tech buyers

White papers continue to be the most effective B2B prospecting tool, says this study.

The most effective time to use them is during the research phase.

Each issue of IMR contains a survey to give marketing executives insight into what their peers nationwide are thinking and doing.

Sharpen your judgment... THE DECISION

(see case on page 2)

Yes, 1,500 domain names were transferred to Neptune from the cybersquatter by the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) domain name arbitration service.

Neither the rules nor the policy provided for the consolidation of multiple complaints. But they didn't expressly preclude multiple cases either, said the arbitrator.

The domains were so similar in structure that it was easy to make a mass ruling.

In every case, the cybersquatter was using the domain names in bad faith, misleading buyers and advertising services that competed with Neptune.

Implications: It pays to register variations on your brand and trademark before cybersquatters do it for you.

Be proactive, register domains

"Cybersquatters do untold damage to your brand," says attorney Paul Gershlick of Matthew Arnold & Baldwin LLP.

They may ask for significant sums of money for what should really be your brand. To keep the pressure on you and to increase the price you may be willing to pay, they may link from competitors' sites or to porn sites. Gershlick says it is far better to have a brand protection strategy and register in advance all common spellings and mis-spellings of a brand across top-level domains such as '.com', '.eu', '.biz' and '.uk'.

Cite: Inter-Continental Hotels Corporation et al v. Daniel Kirchof, *WIPO Domain Name Decision: D2009-1661* <http://ow.ly/1dQtH>. **Info:** Gershlick: <http://ow.ly/1dQJj>

Dramatized for effect.

WHAT WORKED FOR OTHER MARKETERS

Our subscribers come from a broad range of companies, both large and small. In this regular feature, three of them share an Internet marketing success story, often for the first time in print.

1 Was around-the-clock advertising worth it?

I wasn't sure if one of my clients was getting enough bang for its AdWords' bucks.

The ads, costing thousands of dollars every month, targeted more than 2,000 keywords and ran 24/7.

But were they getting enough clicks and leads at the right time?

To find out, I reviewed the campaign, analyzing many variables including a timeline of when clicks occurred on a daily basis.

When I analyzed clicks on an hourly basis, I got a nasty surprise.

They weren't getting any leads or clicks after 6 p.m., when their most valuable prospects were online.

The right time got prospects clicking

What was going wrong?

They were exhausting their daily budget every day by 6 p.m. That meant they had no ads running in the most valuable period, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.

So I changed the hours

of the ads so they ran from 12 noon to 12 midnight.

This change resulted in a stream of steady clicks throughout the afternoon and evening, which peaked in the early evening, the very time we'd been missing before.

(Bryan Hayward, president, BostonWebMarketing.net, Northborough, MA, based on his work with a client. You can also read Bryan's story in Marketing Wisdom 2010 at <http://ow.ly/1ghay>)

**REAL
PROBLEMS,
REAL
SOLUTIONS**

2 Too many messages confusing prospects

Our message needed to be more integrated and consistent.

Whether our people were in the office, out in the field or at a conference, they needed to be sending the same message.

But they weren't.

My challenge was to get everyone to understand that saying the same thing could make a big difference.

Years ago, I did an exercise where we put all our brochures on a wall

to show how different they were.

Keeping it simple

So we took a similar approach. We showed everyone that saying the same thing would have more impact.

Then, we boiled our message down to something simple and easy to say in any context.

In our case, it was: "Stop diabetes."

And now it's at the center of everything we do online and off.

Every message we send includes

these words: "Stop diabetes by lobbying ..." or "Stop diabetes by donating ..."

If you visit our Web site, you'll see this elevator pitch has become part of our brand.

It's working very well for us because it keeps everyone focused and consistent.

(Larry Hausner, CEO, Diabetes.org, Alexandria, VA, spoke at the DMA Nonprofit Federation Conference, in Washington, DC)

3 How to land a lot of referrals

We've always believed in the power of referrals to boost our sales and business, but we wanted to do something that would help us while helping others.

To gain referrals from companies across the country, we introduced "Make a Referral Week."

The goal was to have over 1,000 executives from around the country recommend or refer other worthwhile businesses to colleagues.

We even created a Web site as a base for anyone who wanted to recommend a business to others.

Became known as the place to be

We were able to draw additional traffic by featuring daily blog posts and online chats hosted by well-known business leaders.

We promoted the idea via social networking sites (like Twitter and LinkedIn), message boards and print publications.

And we also created a widget that supporters could add to their sites to

help our idea go viral. By the end of the week:

- We'd exceeded 1,000 referrals
- We'd created a virtual network of business associates who were exchanging leads and ideas with one another on a regular basis, and
- We'd been mentioned and linked to over and over again.

It was so popular that we've decided to do it again next year, and shoot for even more referrals.

(John Jantsch, president, Duct Tape Marketing Coaching Network, MakeAReferralWeek.com)

NEWS AND RESEARCH YOU CAN USE

1 in 5 search results are personalized

Heads up! One in five Google searches are personalized to match your location, Web history and contacts.

That means you can't rely entirely on a search to prove to your CEO that your company ranks No. 1 (or 25th or 344th) on Google.

If you've been visiting your own site, Google will likely elevate the ranking, thinking that's where you want to go.

Click: The Register <http://ow.ly/1gz3i>

YouTube videos get very search friendly

If you load videos on YouTube, seize the opportunity to get videos automatically captioned.

It will transform videos into content that search engines can index, and make your videos accessible to the hearing impaired.

YouTube (the world's second largest search engine after its owner Google) has now rolled out the free captioning/subtitle service to anyone with a video in English.

Click: SearchEngineWatch.com at <http://bit.ly/dil5KA>

Sharing online? FTC threatens action on leaks

Watch out if you share documents with prospects, customers or partners via a peer-to-peer (P2P) network on Skype, Facebook (where apps mine your contacts) or Twitter.

The Federal Trade Commission is cracking down on companies that don't take "reasonable and appropriate security measures to protect sensitive personal information." It's warned 100 companies that they're not doing enough to protect customers' privacy.

Click: FTC.gov at <http://ow.ly/1gbG3>

Big sites start accepting ads from rivals

Desperate to make money from your Web traffic? Some of the biggest online retailers are doing something that was unheard of a year ago. Sites like Walmart and Target are accepting ads from competing retailers, a trend which Google's AdSense experts say is spreading.

Click: AdAge.com <http://ow.ly/1gc92>

INSPIRING QUOTES

"Brand yourself as the one who makes it happen."
— Anonymous

"Fast is fine, but accuracy is everything."
— Wyatt Earp

"The element of surprise is the most important aspect in contemporary marketing."
— Andy Nulman

"If you do it online, it's social media. Do it offline and it's a BBQ or cocktail party or movie night or just plain life in general."
— Jeff Weidner

LIGHTER SIDE

■ Lick the bugs

Sometimes companies go to extraordinary lengths to make prospects sit up.

AVIcode.com, a tech company, has joined the ranks of those who'll do nearly anything.

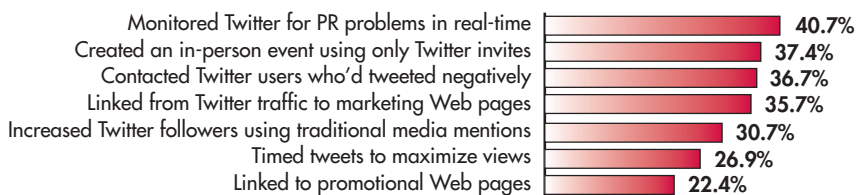
For example, as part of its new campaign, *LickTheBugs.com*, it sent lollipops to prospects with a special treat inside; scorpions, grasshoppers or crickets.

The company's encouraging its business prospects to literally lick the bug, and send photos or video of them doing it.

Source: FUDWatch.com, "Strange Press Kits: A Lollipop With A Scorpion Inside," <http://ow.ly/1gxWM>

HOW BUSINESS MARKETERS USE TWITTER

Twitter tactics that work for B2B marketing



Source: Marketing Profs Fall 2009 survey

The most common way to use Twitter is to protect, defend and nurture a brand, shows this study. More than 40% of B2B marketers say they monitor Twitter to head off negative news. To track mentions, try setting up an RSS feed of your product or name using *Search.Twitter.com* or get updates via *Google.com/Alerts*.