Report on
Web 2.0 and Social Media Marketing

Are you having trouble keeping up with the ever changing world of social networking? Every time we turn around new buzz words crop up – the latest progressive platforms are web 2.0, social media optimization and social media marketing. But what does it all mean? Some people are tearing their hair out trying to work it all out and when they do, sometimes it no longer seems relevant.

How do you define Web 2.0? There seems to be no definitive answer and it really has become a collective term that loosely means the following:

- How the web has developed its technologies into mass media marketing interactive tools to provide services and products to each other worldwide. It is about collaboration, sharing and linking. Human interaction and selection instead of robot selection & monitoring.

- An addictive way of socializing that has developed into on line social communities and networks growing in size beyond what anyone could ever predict. This in itself is a massive marketing tool if you can get people to notice and talk about you.

We finally got our heads around search engine optimization (SEO). Working hard to get the search engines to notice us using good content and now it is not so singularly important. SEO is still important to get the search engines to see you but now it's wise to be integrated into social networking communities to achieve more traffic and to some degree, make the search engines recognize previously unnoticed or poorly (technically) optimized sites. It is a continual learning curve as more methods are discovered or reverse engineered, and are promoted in a media hype of social networking.

Time to take our heads out of the sand. Social networking and social media optimization has exploded across the Internet. Everywhere you look – Digg, MySpace, Flickr, Twitter – the list is infinite, almost, and growing every day. Competition – everyone is competing for that top listing and traffic. Rehashed ideas and concepts pop up overnight.

How do you decide where to start? Well they tell me I have to harness the power of social networking along with my SEO to enhance my visibility on line. Mmmm, let me see.

What makes a Top Web 2.0 Website?

So, what makes a web 2.0 website so special:

- The ability to share user applications and promote audience participation. Motivate your audience to comment on your content to improve your social networking.

- Web 2.0 websites are not static like the earlier personal websites. They are continually

upgraded to keep the visitor coming back. Encourage your users to share quality information, and allow comments and the ability to remix content to make your site interactive.

- Web 2.0 is a platform that is integrated with social marketing tools to send more traffic to your website.

- Web 2.0 encourages creating social networks on line by getting involved which helps you to build a reliable reputation.

Bookmarking

Bookmarking is hardly a new social phenomenon. Is it? Let's face it we've used to bookmarks for books and documents for centuries. Anyone would think the buzz about bookmarking was a new social discovery. Well it isn't. It's an old concept in document terms and even in Internet marketing terms. It has been around since the first Internet browsers. People bookmark their favorite websites so they can find their way back. In today's Internet world and in the web 2 context, it is a social bookmarking tool with a whole new meaning.

The most popular is the delicious bookmarking concept. Hah … now you can access your favorite websites from anywhere in the world. No longer are you limited to what you can store in your browser. Delicious is a management system you can access from anywhere. You tag your favorites and can even share them with your friends; collaborate with co-workers or just share a laugh.

Encourage your visitors to link to you. Add features to your content such as link to me and bookmark buttons to encourage your visitors to come back; talk about you. Make sure you tag your own pages with the most popular social bookmarking sites and don't just bookmark your home page. By the way, don't bookmark every page only those pages with incredibly good content you're proud of. If you bookmark all your pages, you may find yourself banned and web2 lonely.

No-follows tags
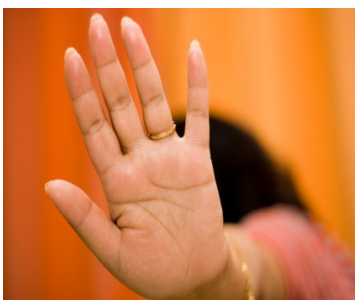
No-follow tags were created to prevent spammers leaving links of no relevancy to their comments on social networking sites. Gone are the days, well nearly, of simply making comments on interactive websites where the link in your signature will always bring traffic to your website.

A no-follow tag in an HTML link is a message to a search engine to not follow that link or rank that page. This is an interesting concept as it penalizes genuine posters along with the spammers. Blog owners and software sellers are encouraging the use of the no-follow tag in signature links and blog comments to try and stop this practice and the popular conception of page rank trickle depletion.

The point of the links in signatures and blog comments was to give the reader access to more relevant material; to promote a perception of community. Whether no-follow links do or do not stop

spammers is debatable. What it does do is make it more difficult for us to get link popularity. We now have to work harder to find other ways of getting those links.

New ways to get good quality links include syndicating content rich articles and using a quality web2 submitter to get the best out of your social media marketing strategy. There are a few around today, but don't rush in. The free web 2.0 submitters are known to crash in a short space of time. The best and most flawless way to increase link popularity is to just write excellent content for your website that makes people naturally want to link to it.

Article Marketing

Content or article writing is imperative – and if you don't do your own writing then you'll be keeping writers in lots of work. Article writing is hard work if you are going to get it right and attract the audience you want to your website.

What does this have to do with Web 2?...Everything? People can comment on your supply of knowledge, tips, contributions etc. They can also contribute to it. They can also...wait for it, recommend it!

Submit your articles to article directories, e-zine publishers and other sites, that allow the submission of free content. This gives you the chance to build-up credibility with your customers and visitors. Always making sure you can have a resource box which allows you to leave links and anchor text pointing to your chosen content or site. Cool article sites that actually produce traffic include ezinearticles.com, GoArticles.com, Articledashboard.com, Selfgrowth.com, and Buzzle.com just to mention a few. You get your best traffic if the article is original not a duplicate. Don't be drawn to software that shoots out duplicate articles all over the joint. *I will create another report soon highlighting a list of worthwhile sites in this category which produce traffic. Keep an eye out.*

When writing articles keep the following in mind:

- Make your article short and succinct. It is a bait to lure readers to read more on your website. You want them to click your link; not scare them away or bore them to death.

- The most effective articles are 'How to' ones that offer solutions to problems your target audience may have.

- Keep it simple stupid (KISS) – this theory is based on writing in a manner that is familiar to your target audience. Avoid using terms that only you, or a few, understand.

- Write from your own experience. There is nothing more interesting than reading how you achieved it.

- Do edit your work – or get someone else to do it for you. Spelling and grammar mistakes will damage your integrity.

- Your articles should be genuine and offer good content; avoid using sales pitches.

- If you want people to take you seriously, do not add affiliate links to the descriptive text.

- Always add your name, company name, a tag line and a link to your website at the bottom of your article. If people like what they read, they will follow your link. If they don't they won't. It really is that simple.

Best Known Web 2.0 Websites

If you don't know where to start here is a list of some of the more popular web 2 websites, in no particular order:

1. Digg (http://digg.com/) Digg is a community that contributes all content to digg; then shares and promotes information that is important to them.

2. Stumbleupon This one has grown to be one of the most popular. It allows its members to stumble on sites and vote sites up or down in rating as do most of these sites mentioned. It's true that if your headline is eye catching and description is carefully written, you can receive quite a bit of initial traffic from Stumble.

3. Technorati (http://www.technorati.com/) Technorati helps you to keep an eye on your visibility on line It shows who links to your blog posts and has a database of popular blog posts and videos. Use Technorati alongside other social marketing tools.

4. Netscape (http://netscape.aol.com/) Submitting a story to Netscape can increase your visibility. The Netscape community is interested in current affairs rather than in just stories, and this site is more controlled by facilitators than others.

5. Newsvine (http://www.newsvine.com/) Newsvine is a site predominantly for current affairs and news. It gets its content from the wire (e.g. Associated Press) and from the most popular articles on sites such as reddit and digg. If you are going to get noticed on Newsvine, your contribution needs to be in line with current affairs stories.

6. Squidoo (http://www.squidoo.com/) Squidoo helps you to become an expert in your own field on line At Squidoo, you create lenses that allow external links to increase your visibility on line

7. del.icio.us (http://del.icio.us/) Bookmark and tag your favorite websites with delicious bookmarking. This is the ultimate way to find and share your favorite websites on line

8. Wikipedia (http://www.wikipedia.org/) This is the on line community's answer to a free encyclopedia. Wikipedia is the biggest of its type on line and its community contributes all its content.

9. Reddit (http://www.reddit.com/) Reddit is a social bookmarking site that lets you comment

on and save articles contributed by the reddit community. You can even contribute your own content.

10. LinkedIn (http://www.linkedin.com/) LinkedIn is a social networking site that boasts more than 7 million professional members. This is a good place to promote your company and professional services; or to find professionals.

11. Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/) Facebook has grown into an obsession for around 9 million people. It works by having friends or profiles associated with you and your groups. Facebook can be a useful tool for good, targeted marketing if you are clever.

12. Flickr (http://www.flickr.com/) Flickr is one of the best free on line communities for sharing photos. You can even add external links to your website and tag your photos.

13. YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/) The phenomenal rise of video sharing on YouTube has proven the popularity of videos for fun and for marketing.

Because there are so many I haven't mentioned here doesn't mean they aren't just as good. I'm realizing though, I could be going on forever.

Remember, your content must be good...no, really good, and helpful. Don't use cut and paste tactics here. If you do, you will be blasted out of the water in no time.

Using Social Marketing with SEO

The advantage of developing good SEO along with social marketing for your website will help you understand your customers better; avoid spending those precious dollars and you can even learn how to do it yourself.

- Have your main keyword phrase as part of your URL. For example, your website may be about dog training. A good URL could be dogtrainingexpert.com rather than expertdogtraining.com. And don't make your URL too long. Always research, don't guess.

- Keep your website design simple and clean and use interactive tools (e.g. encourage your visitors to sign up for a newsletter) so your users can participate.

- Use the keywords your customers are using. How? Spend the time and do some research.

- Write good interactive content.

- Submit your pages to social bookmarking websites.

- Submit good, content rich articles to sites like reddit and digg. And continue submitting new articles frequently.

- Create interesting headlines and sub headings.

- Build external links to your website.

- Place a 'Share it' button on your pages

- Learn a little about increasing website traffic

Are You Time Poor?

Does all of this make you sigh and wonder where you are ever going to find the time? While there are some excellent marketing tools available to promote our websites, how much time do you really have to spend? It seems endless checking out all these sites and tools, and then it takes even more time working out how they work and if they will benefit you. Which sites are best? You try one, then another, then another. Spend that time checking them all out; comparing them all; working out what it is all about and how to apply it to your website is terribly confusing – which site; joining, ad infinitum … and before you know it, it is way past your bedtime, again.

Then there is the time it takes writing, preparing and submitting your articles and pages over and over again, as they are updated. The more often they are updated the more visible you will become. The more traffic that comes with that! Once you are visible, you still need to compete to stay there.

There is a lot of information out there. It pays to make sure your marketing strategies are amongst them, no matter how time consuming the whole process is. Fortunately, there are tools out there that can cut down your time. Even halve the time you spend submitting to article and bookmarking sites in some cases. A few in fact can automate most of the process. You still need quality original content but the laborious tasks can be eradicated or should I say automated. That said, when you do decide to swim in social waters and submit your *quality* (notice I keep using that word) articles, make sure you use quality tools - always!

Whatever you learn today, it will all progress to another level eventually. One thing is for sure - now that humans are involved in deciding the value of content, do you think it will go back to being decided by spiders or robots alone anytime soon - I don't think so (*as the song goes*)! It will be a long time before robots can tell an extremely well written piece and rate it higher than an average piece...and guess what, the search engines know that too. Hey, maybe the new buzz word may even be *web human 3.0*. I wonder what that will bring.

If you're interested, I use an advanced Web2 submitter to lighten my load. It's updated regularly unlike most of the others. That's why I prefer it. Perhaps it will suit your needs too. If not, there are others you can research. I think I've tried most of them though and before you rush out, here's **a review on the web2 submitter software I use**.

Hope you found this helpful...all the best,

Ray Baker