

# RECRUITING with SOCIAL MEDIA



Social Media's Impact  
on Recruitment and HR

Raj Anand

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# Preface

We are entering an era where digital technology has become the norm to interact with customers and peers. As consumers, we are constantly adopting technology and incorporating it into our lives. For instance, we've replaced our habit of reading a newspaper with reading content from multiple websites in one location via Really Simple Syndication (RSS) readers. Smartphones are transforming into mini handheld computers, helping us plan our trips, office work, lifestyle, and just about anything. We are becoming aware of the environment and our carbon footprint, increasingly thinking of ways we can save on carbon dioxide emissions. Emails have replaced letters, and webinars have minimized traveling to participate in seminars, making business eco-friendly and cost efficient.

Increased connectivity, inexpensive handheld devices, and penetration of broadband have acted as catalysts in changing things around us. With the rise of gadgets and the openness of digital developments in the form of open source technologies, organizations can innovate and bring new products to market much more quickly. Some of the technologies that were initially available exclusively to the military and laboratories are now available at homes and offices. Examples include Google Maps, Skype, and other digital communication platforms. Best of all, the social tools are cheaper and generally greener than conventional forms of communication.

The recruitment and staffing industry is embracing social media in a big way, too. Many recruiters are using LinkedIn to find candidates and post new jobs. Twitter is another increasingly popular tool among staffing professionals, used mainly to update candidates on new opportunities. It should be noted, however, that merely developing a profile on sites like LinkedIn, Twitter, and other social media platforms is not enough. To maximize these sites' use, organizations should engage with their customers and candidates there. It's about developing a voice and initiating conversations with potential and existing customers.

This social media revolution marks a shift in our thinking. These tools are allowing individuals and organizations to become more efficient and competitive in communicating with their audiences. There are several ways of defining social media. For now, think of this media as a simple way to have a dialogue with your audience over the Internet. Social media are penetrating into existing businesses and already being embraced by veterans such as Ebay, PlayUSA.com, and other online retailers. For instance, have you recently bought a book on Amazon or Ebay? Maybe you bought a book on Amazon and used social media without realizing it. Typically before we buy a book, we read what other readers think of the book in the form of comments or user ratings. This is an example of user-generated content (UGC) in social media. Amazon enables you to connect with other buyers via the Internet, helping you make an informed decision before buying a book, audio, video, or other multimedia content.

Social media assist users in many walks of life. Perhaps you are a graduate job seeker looking for an opportunity in banking. Having just finished college, you probably don't understand the ins and outs of the industry. What would you do? If I were you, my first step would be to do a search on my favorite search engine. I would probably get in excess of 40 million results all talking about how should I apply for a job, polish my resume, make the best presentation, and answer interview questions. Looking at the results, I would probably realize that these sites give useful tips, although the communication is one way. The major online publications tend to provide users with a website where they might have the option to leave comments, but they cannot engage with the author or other users.

Today's candidate prefers to interact via rich media using videos on YouTube, forums on LinkedIn, groups on Facebook, and other social media channels. This is partly why after Google, Facebook and YouTube are the biggest search engines on the web. On rich media sites, users are hunting for jobs, finding life partners, learning about forthcoming drugs in the pharmaceutical industry, keeping track of shares of public sector businesses, and a multitude of research and development tasks.

I work as a social media strategist to help companies plan their social media journey. In this book, I share with you some of my knowledge and experience of running successful campaigns. To make your journey easier, I will touch on other digital media concepts that will help you get an overall perspective on things. I also have a secret mission to keep this book simple enough that my parents can understand it. You'll find this book easy to understand, even if you are just embarking on your social media journey.

# CHAPTER 1

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## Setting the Scene

This chapter looks at the evolution of recruitment and social media and the changes people are experiencing in daily business activities. It reviews customers' expectations from a brand or organization and their challenges. It examines the evolution of social media and various online communities and what they mean to a recruitment and human resources department.

Further, this chapter looks at the opportunities that digital has to offer in marketing and promoting a company and its product or service. It also explores the role of social media in digital and the role played in videos, photography, blogs, and other emerging tools. Lastly, this chapter examines how social media campaigns can increase awareness and efficiency and decrease costs.

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### **What Is the Shift, and How Is It Affecting Recruitment?**

Recruitment is an established industry worth more than \$42 billion at the end of 2008 in the UK alone (Source: OnRec). The Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) reports that the UK employs more than 95,865 recruiters. A resource for the staffing industry, Recruiting Life, sponsored by the National Association of Personnel Services, mentions that the United States has in excess of 30,000 staffing, personnel services, and employment companies, with annual revenues of nearly \$75 billion.

Recruitment is not a new industry; the first signs of the industry are visible as early as 55 B.C., when Julius Caesar signed a decree, promising a reward of 300 *sesterii* to any soldier who brought another to join the Roman army. Finding a Roman citizen who could march 20 miles per day in line while wearing all his armor and carrying his food and tents meant that recruiters traveled the length and breadth of the empire to find suitable candidates. Many principles valued today, such as equal opportunities, employment branding, compensation, and temporary staffing, were practiced first by the Romans.

Some recruitment practices have been carried on for generations, although over the years, there has been a shift in thinking about how we hire, retain, and increase the productivity of our staff. Over the years, one thing that has changed is the channels used to

communicate, discover, and implement recruitment. The past few years have brought forth another change in companies using an emerging form of communication. This marks the beginning of the social media era, where things we do are open and engaging; organizations are rewarded for being engaging. End users are able to connect with the people working behind the scenes and get real-time information, when and how they want it.

I have just introduced the concept of social media without telling you what the term actually means! The concept of social media means using the Internet and web-based technologies to change broadcasts (one-to-many) into conversations (many-to-many). Think of it from a company's perspective: Social media allow you to connect with several people and discuss as a group, extending the concept of communicating with your customers a step further (see Figure 1.1). The concept is not rocket science; social media simply take the conversations we used to have in the pub or coffee shop into an easy-to-consume format, when we want it and how we want it. Users can utilize social media on their computers via the Internet, through a website on their office PCs, or even on their handheld devices.

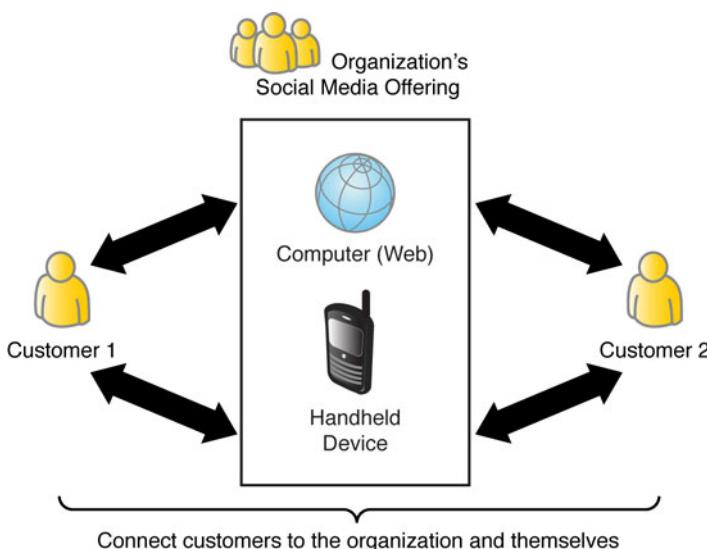
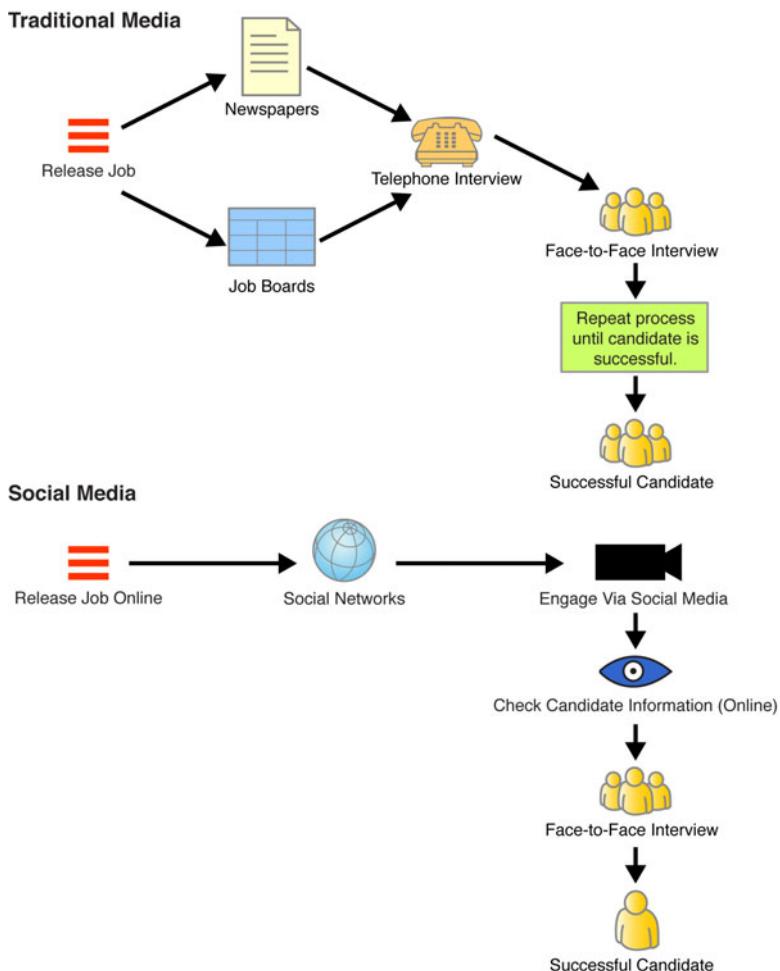


FIGURE 1.1  
Customers connect with an organization and other customers using social media.

A major reason for the popularity of social media is that people are moving away from being spoken *at* by suppliers, brands, and organizations serving them. Instead, they want to engage with them and discuss their offering. This is true for most industries, including recruitment.

For instance, in the past when a company was hiring, they typically advertised on a major job board or, if they were a bit traditional, in a newspaper or magazine (see the

top portion of Figure 1.2). They would then receive resumes and cover letters, the number varying based on the popularity of the job, salary, location, and other such factors. They then would sort through as many as thousands of applications and choose a few candidates. Candidates would come in for an interview and, based on their criteria and the demands of the job, all but one would be turned away, making recruitment lengthy and labor intensive. Today, however, social media allow organizations to clearly state their requirements and start interaction before candidates step into the office (see the bottom portion of Figure 1.2). Typically, organizations place advertisements or mention job opportunities on social media sites. Organizations can conduct research on candidates' pasts and see referrals up front. This helps recruiters ask more insightful questions up front and come to a deeper understanding of them.



**FIGURE 1.2**

The process of traditional recruitment with social media recruitment, the new way of doing things.

From now on, I refer to *social media* as the *new way of doing things* and to traditional media and earlier practices as *the old way of doing things*. I will occasionally mention how other industries are using the new way of doing things in their day-to-day work and how the recruitment industry can learn from it. This book looks at the new approach and how it can affect various parts of your business, so it's relevant to everyone from the CEO of the company to individual recruiting staff. However big or small the company is, this book has tips and tricks for everyone.

## Evolution of Social Media

It's important to realize that the new way of doing things has actually evolved (and is evolving) from the old way of doing things. This section briefly mentions how social media came about, so you can learn a fair bit from its history and evolution.

Social media didn't begin on the Internet. It actually began on the phone in the 1950s, long before there was Skype or companies offering deals on broadband and landlines. Like all good innovations, it was a labor of love for technologists who wanted to connect with their audience in a new way. Telephone hackers then used the earlier versions of the hacked phones to find company test lines and conference circuits so they could host virtual seminars and discussions. This was an example of the first form of *podcast* (a series of audios or videos released episodically and downloaded) or *blog* (a type of website with regular entries of commentary, thoughts or multimedia). Next to be discovered was a bulletin board service (BBS). The first BBSs were small servers powered by personal computers attached to a telephone modem, where one person at a time could dial in and get access. Think how frustrating it would have been if today's bulletin boards were limited to one person at a time?

Although bulletin boards existed, those in the underground scene were its primary users. The majority of BBSs catered to adult entertainment seekers and software pirates, whereas the general public used television and newspapers to communicate with the world. BBSs came to the public through CompuServe, which wanted to make this a large-scale operation. The costs could make anyone cry: \$5 per hour for using a service like CompuServe, and \$30 per hour for a long-distance telephone call. I am not sure how many home users would be interested in spending \$35 per hour these days. One of the main contributions of CompuServe was releasing the first online chat software CB simulator, which later became famous because of the movie *You've Got Mail!*, AOL had one of the best product placements and maximized its market share. Since then, many chatting systems and file sharing sites have surfaced, including ICQ, MIRC, and Napster. This led to the start of social networking sites as we know them now.

## Rise of Social Networking

The new way of doing things in many ways mimics real life. As in real-life friend circles, professional groups, and societies, social networks have personalities and themes. For instance, Orkut.com is recommended for reaching users in Brazil and India,

**Lesson #1.1** Social Media is a combination of strategy and technology. A good social media campaign requires both key areas to talk to each other.

whereas Kaixin.com is great for finding students and people for white-collar jobs in China. Knowing your community means you can use your time on social media more effectively, saving you valuable resources.

For recruitment purposes, individuals need to know which social network to connect with to yield maximum utility. As recruitment spreads across various niche markets, it's advisable to identify sectors you would serve. Some recruiters have a broad client base, varying from finding personal assistants to nuclear scientists. Given the global economy, more and more recruiters are asked to hire staff in foreign countries, speaking different languages and possessing various skill sets. To maximize the use of social networking, it is vital for recruiters to approach an online community with the right demographic. Also, it's worth realizing that social media are part of an industry that has evolved just recently; we are still in the infancy stage. This also implies that social media are rapidly changing. Maximizing the benefit does require recruiters to keep a tab on emerging social media sites. The following sections cover some sites that are an important part of the history of social media.

## **Friendster and MySpace**

Social networking sites as we know them now began with the launch of Friendster in 2002, which in many ways started a revolution. Adults, 16 and up, could join and connect with friends, family, classmates, groups, activities, and interests. The site was launched in Sydney, Australia, and grew rapidly among younger audience. By the end of 2009, Friendster had approximately 115 million registered members with 61 million unique visitors per month. Now, the site caters mainly to the far east. In early 2003, MySpace grew out of a side project of the Internet marketing company eUniverse (now called Intermix Media). The main reason for the falling number of active users on Friendster was the lack of customization and scaling up of the technology to meet the demands of the growing users.

Many social media commentators described MySpace as the open evolution of Friendster. The latter was restrictive; it limited user self-expression in the form of types of multimedia functionality it supported and the design of user profiles. Members of the site reacted by moving to MySpace, creating detailed profiles, complete with large amounts of multimedia. Users *hacked* their profiles using Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) to make them more expressive. MySpace welcomed this form of exploration of its platform. As a result, the cultural enthusiasm was nurtured, and it grew rapidly.

**Lesson #1.2** Social media are built on openness. Users like their data to be imported and exported into their web communities.

## **Facebook**

Facebook is the world's largest social network, with more than 350 million users. Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook in February 2004, initially as an exclusive network for Harvard university students. It was a huge hit, and within 2 weeks, half the schools in the Boston area began demanding a Facebook network. Facebook's first major growth

as a social network has been attributed to the introduction of Facebook applications. It grew 32% from May to August 2007, with more than a third of the growth coming from its new applications. Applications had a big buy-in from users and application developers alike. During the middle of 2007, the number of published apps continued to grow steadily to more than 32,000. Applications meant users could port data from their other profiles on social networks throughout the web. Further, Facebook applications were becoming a one-stop shop for anything social on the web.

Facebook also has an impressive record of making things simpler and user friendly. Subsequent chapters in this book address the way Facebook has made the concept of user identification easier through *Facebook Connect*. Similarly, Facebook applications have made it simpler for nontechnical users to add widgets to a profile. It's worth remembering that the new way of doing things is a set of straightforward tools that make having a dialogue on the Internet more manageable. Facebook makes tasks trivial for users, and that is one of the main reasons for its rapid growth.

## **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is a fantastic example of a niche social network that was designed and grown to help business professionals organize and display their resumes online. At the end of 2009, this network had more than 50 million users on the site, which at first site might look little when compared to gigantic Facebook, but it's worth remembering that LinkedIn is a niche network. LinkedIn has carved out its role as a business-only network and has been eagerly adopted by the recruitment industry. In terms of revenue, allegedly, it made \$17 million in 2008, and its ad revenue has been growing by 50% year-on-year, but this number is on the rise because LinkedIn constantly updates its interface.

LinkedIn enables companies and recruiters to put jobs on the site and display them to job seekers. The site also enables its members to connect and send messages to other members. If the user is not linked to a member directly, it charges the members to use this feature. LinkedIn also has group functionality. Groups are great when you want people in a community to contribute. Groups also help to incubate ideas and stimulate communication among peers. On LinkedIn, group users can create an invitation only or a public area. Invitation-only groups can be used for internal office communication, a niche network addressing a particular issue, or sector-based communication. Public networks are appropriate when addressing an issue faced by a large audience, where members can discuss a theme throughout. Groups enable users to answer questions in a systematic way. Groups can also be used as a blog to send news bulletins, announcements, or information about a particular topic. This enables other members to comment and interact.

The site is particular about who it lets connect on the social network, and in conjunction with restrictions on the number of messages that can be sent, that helps ensure the platform is hard to spam and misuse. LinkedIn, like other social networks, is slowly opening its platform so members can bring their other profile information inside it. For instance, members can now integrate sites like Twitter, SlideShare, and WordPress into their LinkedIn profile.

At the end of 2009, LinkedIn announced that it was opening the platform, so organizations and individuals can develop applications using LinkedIn data inside their companies. Chapter 2, “Understanding Social Media and Technology,” examines how LinkedIn’s recent changes have unleashed new sets of opportunities for the recruitment industry, especially for companies that were skeptical about its function. It looks at how recruitment companies using LinkedIn’s latest launch can keep their business relationships in the company even if recruitment consultants change jobs.

### **XING (Formerly Known as OpenBC)**

While LinkedIn was growing in the United States, Europe had its own version, known as XING. With headquarters in Berlin, Germany, it is another fantastic example of a thriving business online community. XING is in 16 languages and has paid members in more than 200 countries. The major difference between XING and LinkedIn is that the former is a paid-for network. Users get a basic profile on the community for free but must pay to upgrade and use additional features. XING was the first social networking-only business to go public (IPO) in December 2007.

Recently, XING has been gearing up to directly compete with LinkedIn, with plans to launch in the United States soon. It has been rapidly innovating, acquiring social networking businesses and opening local versions of the site. Of late, XING has been acquiring databases in the form of buying sites in Turkey and Spain and has plans to grow further in Europe. As the industry matures, it will be interesting to see who wins the spot for the top business network: LinkedIn or XING.

### **Twitter**

Twitter's story is one of radical innovation that has taken the concept of developing social media applications to a new level. In March 2009, Nielson Online indicated that Twitter grew 1,382% year-over-year in February, registering a total of just more than 7 million unique visitors in the United States for the month. In addition, in January 2009, Twitter.com saw 4.5 million unique visitors in the United States, which implies that the website grew 50% month on month, making it the fastest-growing social network, outperforming Facebook. In October 2009, the speed of growth considerably declined, although the reach of Twitter grew outside North America. According to HubSpot, 40% of the top 20 Twitter locations are outside North America.

Twitter is a free social networking platform often referred to as a microblogging service, which allows its users to send and read updates from friends. The updates are often referred to as status updates or *tweets*. All tweets are restricted to 140 characters, although users creatively include links to other forms of media like photos, video, and websites to maximize utility. Users can tweet using Twitter.com, text messages, mobile phone applications, and various desktop and web applications built by others.

## Recapping Social Media Tools

To recap, MySpace allowed users to amend their profiles via HTML to showcase their personalities. Facebook made it easier by making standard applications that all users could bring into the Facebook ecosystem. Twitter developed on the concept, making third-party application development core to its business. When Twitter launched as a social network, it had limited resources. To make it successful, it had to get other people to innovate on its behalf. Twitter encouraged developers to build applications on top of its infrastructure. This implied that individuals and organizations could access most of Twitter's features without actually going on to Twitter.com. It's like controlling a remote controlled toy car. You can provide all the instructions to the car through a device without physically touching the car.

Until recently, only 20% of the users interacted with Twitter through its .com site. The others used innovative applications, like TweetDeck, TwitPic, and TwitterCounter, to update their profile, add friends, and perform other functions (see Figure 1.3). Twitter has opened the eyes of many to a new way of working.

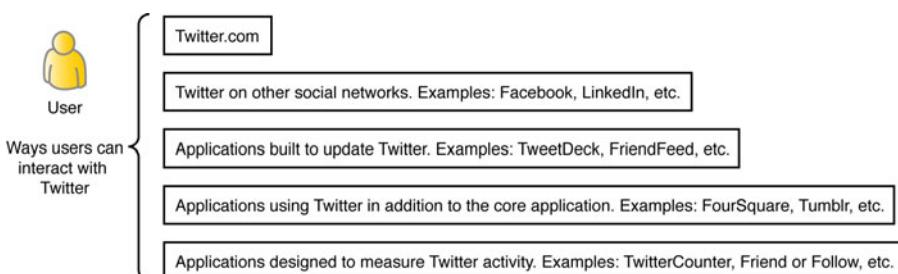


FIGURE 1.3  
Users can interact with Twitter's data in various ways.

Twitter made an important discovery along the way: the value of interaction online goes beyond the website; developing ways to interact with peers and customers indirectly is equally powerful, if not more. This concept isn't new; for instance, how often do you go to your favorite soft drink's factory to buy a can? Probably never; countless stores near your house resell the can, and you choose to buy from them instead. You learn about

**Lesson #1.3** The value of online interaction goes beyond your website. Indirect forms of communication are as powerful as direct communication

**Lesson #1.4** The target audience can help you innovate rapidly, if given control of the development of a technology platform

soft drinks on the television, radio, and other media, but you purchase mainly from

resellers. Third-party developers building applications for Twitter are like resellers, packaging the product in an easy-to-consume format. Chapter 2 discusses this in detail.

The tools mentioned in this section are the movers and shakers of the social media industry. They are important for recruitment and HR because they can help you re-innovate your business by using them internally. All the above come under the new way of doing things, enabling you to interact with platforms by accessing their data on your website or building applications inside these networks for your audience.

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## What Is Digital?

Social media are part of a company's digital strategy. Digital comes from the Latin word *digitus*, meaning fingers, because fingers were used for discrete counting. We often use the term digital when talking about computers or electronics. Digital is also widely used as a buzzword without understanding the true meaning of it. For some, digital would mean publishing books in the form of PDF files or eBooks, whereas for others launching videos on YouTube or launching a website is going digital. So what is digital?

*Digital* is a data technology that uses discrete (discontinuous) values. In contrast, non-digital (or analog) systems use a continuous range of values to represent information. In other words, all the digital data you have can be represented by 1s and 0s. So all the digital videos, electronic files, websites, mobile phone signals, and other digital phenomena are *digitized*, decoded, and encoded for you to be able to see or hear the content in a recognizable format. Digital has moved from the days of Morse code, where all the data was transmitted in the format of dashes and gaps and sent via electricity or light. A prime example is the electric telegraph. Now we have the Internet, digital television, and mobile communication, which send and receive all our messages digitally.

The main advantage of using digital technology is that it is fast, effective, and inexpensive. For instance, compare a newspaper to a blog. (A *blog* is a contraction of the word *web log*. It enables individuals and organizations to broadcast opinions in the form of text, images, and videos.) Although a newspaper is a great way to transmit news, it is limited when it comes to obtaining feedback from customers. The interactive nature of the web makes it possible to easily connect with the brand and increases the value of your offering. On the other hand, blogs enable businesses to transmit news and post comments. This enables an organization to post news about its company or an incident and get responses from its customers. The customers can contribute to the news and discuss their views or enrich an article by adding their own experience. Powerful, right?

Digital communication is powerful because, unlike the more traditional forms of communication, it can help customers in more than one area of selling, which is the lifeline of any business. Just so that we can test our supposition, let's take an example. Say you are a new ice cream producer in your town. Apart from producing the product, you are responsible for marketing and selling it. You have just launched your new ice cream called *Jo's Ice Cream*. You need to make people aware of it, so you start advertising on television, in local magazines, and online, all of it for *awareness*. People are now aware

of your brand, but they don't know how your ice cream tastes. Therefore, you start to give free ice cream samples on a hot summery day, which is a fantastic way to *trial* your ice cream. Lots of people now know about your ice cream and have tasted it. Suddenly, you realize that people like your product and have started to recommend it to their friends. For people who haven't had the opportunity to taste your product, you offer testimonials of people who liked it. This helps increase the *credibility* of your offering. Now that you have awareness, testimonials, and credibility, the next thing on your list is to develop channels to sell more. So you decide to invest in salespeople who can sign up shops to *sell* more. Once you manage to sign up stores who sell your product, you need customers who come back time and again to consume more.

Channels of sales/marketing are important to anyone involved in the process. Typically, you'd use *mass media channels*—whether it's radio, television, or the Internet—to get the word out. This is often referred to as *above-the-line advertising*. You can also use *below-the-line* advertising, which is targeted advertising utilizing more direct, less "mass" media, such as brochures, banners, competitions, and direct mail. Companies often use press releases to help get reviews or mentions on television and in newspapers. Increasingly, point of sales systems are popular; in them, customers are offered deals such as two-for-one and discount vouchers. This helps sell more items not only in the shop, but at other businesses. Another way to communicate with customers is to send regular newsletters or magazines. These are often managed by customer relationship management (CRM) tools. CRM involves using technology to maintain, record, automate, and manage business processes like sales, marketing, customer service, and technical support. According to Forrester Research, spending on CRM is expected to exceed \$11 billion per year by the end of 2010.

Figure 1.4 summarizes this marketing and promotion strategy.

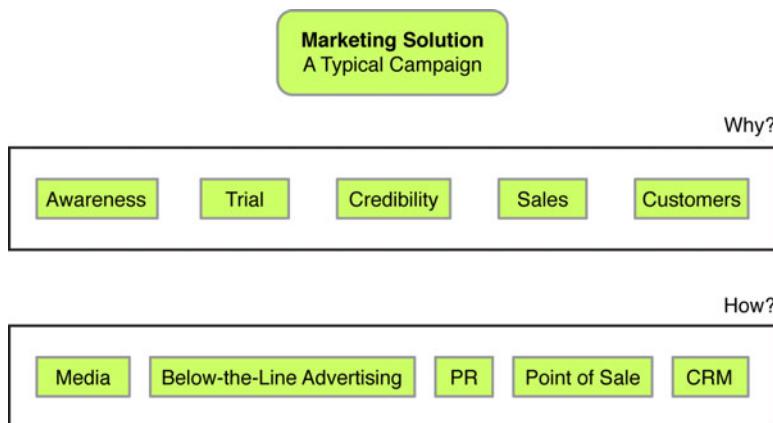


FIGURE 1.4

The value of a typical marketing solution and how companies promote products and services.  
Source: Jeremy Hill, HendersonKite.com

Organizations can digitally implement the new way of doing things. This enables them to integrate all forms of marketing into one manageable and *trackable* campaign. Media

are available in various formats, including video on demand, websites, and digital television. Below-the-line advertising is widely practiced on large online marketplaces like Amazon, offering users the opportunity to sign up and try products. I'm sure you have also seen banners on sites that replace the billboards and posters with the online version. Online banners and billboards enable publishers and advertisers to track the campaign—that is, number of visitors, user's behavior, and demographic, with real insight into the users and providing targeted advertising. For many companies, their website/blog is where they release news about the company. Many media sites pick up news from these sources and consider them as official press releases for the organization. Digital media are also used as point of sales systems, especially when purchasing products online. Sites like Amazon and Dell suggest other products that complement the products you are currently buying. Point of sales systems also work in the form of discount coupons (you can print) when you buy something from their store/e-store. Several CRM systems are available online to help you manage your customer base. Some of them integrate with your online sales platform; successfully using these channels provides an integrated offering. Having them all online means that you can now initiate, grow, and track your progress remotely.

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## How Does Social Media Fit in Digital?

Earlier, I mentioned that digital is versatile and can cover all aspects of advertising. Social media help take this even further because they provide users the tools to become publishers, often referred to as *self-publishing*. This ability enables the public to be publishers and advertisers. The new way of doing things enables organizations to outsource its content generation process to its customers, often referred to as *user-generated content* (UGC). A good example is YouTube.com. Users watch more than 12 billion videos on average each month. Most of these videos are produced by the public, using camcorders, mobile phones, and webcams. Social media platforms enable people to express themselves and generate useful content in the process. Increasingly, major social networking sites are providing revenue share deals for active members and users with major followings. So, content providers are remunerated for preparing engaging concepts. Social media are prime examples of power to the people. They are media generated *by* the people and *for* the people, although unfortunately not *of* the people; most of the content generated on social networking sites is available to share with others, although once the content is online it's generally fully owned by the social media site.

Social media are extensions of digital technology, where we the people control its direction. This section goes through some examples of social media and how they transform themselves into various forms of media, often referred to as *rich media*. It covers examples of media in the forms of video, photos, blogging, location-based applications, and real-time communication. As social media mature, some sites are establishing themselves as winners in their field. To best use social media, it's generally best to choose a leading platform, because these platforms generally are thought leaders in their space.

## **Video Social Media**

Video is a fantastic way to communicate with people because it's expressive, interactive, and appealing. This is why television advertising has been so successful. Television advertising in the past has been limited to major organizations with large budgets, but since 2006, there has been a change in the way video advertisements connect with their audience. Increasingly, advertisers are creating user-generated style advertisements, either developed by the target audience or creative teams within the organization.

The change was initiated by YouTube, a video-sharing site that Google acquired for \$1.2 billion in 2006. YouTube started a revolution; prior to its development, there was no easy way to share videos. Earlier, technical people uploaded videos to their website, whereas others sent them via email. Neither method was ideal. Uploading videos to a server and watching them required downloading software; emailing videos meant the file size was limited to what the email service would allow, and users needed to download software to view them.

Launching a video-sharing site wasn't easy. Taking the various technical formats of videos and showing them in a standard way is complicated. However, Adobe launched a new version of Flash (a form of software that enables users to view rich media) that made it possible to encode videos in a desirable format. Another major issue with developing a video site is that video often takes a lot of server space. In 2008, YouTube was paying \$1 million a day for video storage and streaming videos.

Video is a fantastic tool for explaining concepts/techniques in an easy-to-understand format. It is more engaging than text, music, and photos, and in many ways, it encapsulates all of them. Videos are good for direct marketing, creating awareness, and demonstration. In a professional scenario, videos can explain services and products. This is why you will find a huge number of *how-to* videos—videos from how to make an egg to how to fly a helicopter. Increasingly, organizations are using YouTube for branding. For instance, companies have videos to showcase their company; these videos include testimonials for employees, customers, and suppliers. It's part of branding a company. Chapter 5, "Social Media for Talent Acquisition and Retention," discusses retention and development.

YouTube by no means is the only video social network, but in volume and functionality, it is absolutely massive. There is a large gap between

**Lesson #1.5** Video is a fantastic way to showcase a company and give potential employees a peek into the company's culture

YouTube and its nearest competing video-sharing site. According to Hitwise, YouTube has in excess of 65% market share. Its nearest competitor is Google Video. Apart from being a video site, YouTube is being called a search engine by more and more experts. Some reports suggest that after Google and Facebook, YouTube is the third largest search engine. People are realizing that sites that appear on the front pages of search

engines like Google, Yahoo, and Bing (Microsoft) are highly optimized. These sites are generally large publishers who have spent a huge amount of money or produce content frequently to get their site to that position. For instance, if I was a graduate job seeker, requiring *unedited* advice on joining a company, would I prefer a corporate website that had to be careful about what it wrote or another graduate who had just talked about his experience of getting a job? YouTube tends to provide people's opinions and experiences. By the nature of social media, content that is accurate, engaging, relevant, or well delivered rises on social networks. This implies that good content gets more recognition and views by users sharing it with friends and family. We often refer to this as the *viral nature* of social media.

Giving advice via video is a fantastic way to connect with your audience. Using YouTube is also a nice avenue for broadcasting your message, because users can connect not only via YouTube.com but also on mobile platforms like Apple's iPhone, video game consoles like Nintendo Wii, other social networking sites such as Facebook, and your website. Users can embed YouTube videos by copy and pasting a short code snippet on their blog or website. Further, an organization's audience can promote the brand by embedding video on their personal profile on social networks, websites, and blogs. In principle, the audience helps the brand spread the word via videos, on their behalf.

Last but not least, you can use YouTube to host videos for social networking sites. And you can carry out the whole process without physically going to YouTube.com. This is possible because YouTube has built a system whereby users can upload videos remotely and rebrand them so they don't look like your typical YouTube video players.

## Picture Social Media

A picture is worth a thousand words, as the idiom goes; that's certainly true of social media. Just like videos, pictures help to visualize concepts. Pictures have added advantages, though: They are generally compact, require less server space, and can be emailed easily. Images also are quick to deliver and have standard formats, such as

**Lesson #1.6** Sites like Facebook and YouTube are increasingly being considered as search engines because of their volume and quality of content.

JPEG and PNG. Images are a quick way to communicate, especially when you're on the move. The rise in camera-enabled mobile phones has certainly helped promote the popularity of images.

One of the most popular image-sharing site is Flickr.com, bought by Yahoo for \$35 million in 2005. Flickr hosts in excess of 4 billion images and has a global audience and fan base. Flickr launched before YouTube and was a thought leader of its time, providing a clean and simple interface to upload and view images. One of the most innovative, yet simple, features of Flickr is tagging. *Tagging* is the simple process of relating a media item to keywords to make it easily searchable. Flickr tagging offers a common-sense way to find images. It has replaced other initiatives from several research labs based on finding media through clever image recognition algorithms.