

8-2009

## Digital/social media as an audience marketing tool to promote corporate events

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Digital/Social Media as an Audience Marketing Tool to Promote Corporate Events

by  
Corie Rand

Bachelor of Science  
Boston University  
2005

A professional paper in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

Master of Hospitality Administration  
William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
August 7, 2009

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ABSTRACT

Digital/Social Media as an Audience Marketing Tool to Promote Corporate Events

by

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The purpose of this professional paper, a case study, is to determine the benefits of using digital/social media as an additional audience-marketing tool in promoting and increasing registration for business-to-business (B2B) corporate in-person events. This case study researches the state of the B2B publishing/media industry, and the media company, Reed Business Information (RBI) is the focus of this study. This paper will address RBI's business need to invest in additional revenue streams, and the potential of applying researched marketing tools that could help to promote and drive registration for events.

The impact of applying digital/social media, as a marketing tool, on an October, 2009 RBI event is analyzed over a 4-week period, prior to the event, to determine whether the integration of these marketing tools will increase awareness and registration. The findings from this case study will show that the use of digital/social media can increase registration, but will also reveal that these marketing tools are not being used to their full capacity. A proposal will be executed for future integration and use of digital/social media for events.

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## PART ONE

### Introduction

Social media networks like Twitter and Facebook are no longer just “social” sites that post what was recently eaten for lunch. These days event marketing managers may send a “Tweet” letting followers know there is an early bird reduced conference rate or a keynote speaker has been added to a conference agenda. The popularity of digital/social media outlets like Twitter, a micro-blogging site, is growing, and is being added to the traditional marketing and event marketing mix. It is becoming a beneficial tool with both Business-to-Consumer (B2C), (early adopters), and the Business-to-Business (B2B), (laggards), audiences.

As a publisher/media company, Reed Business Information (RBI) is an example of a B2B company trying to integrate digital/social media into its marketing mix, including to market events. RBI has had four vertical market events. RBI has broken even on three of the events and recognized a profit on the fourth. One difference that the fourth event had was the use of online vehicles. Prior to the fourth event, blogs and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter were seldom utilized for events. Registration trends were not closely followed so a true analysis, explaining how attendance increased, cannot be realized.

To better understand registration trends for RBI’s vertical market events, a case study will be developed to determine the benefits of using digital/social media for an event taking place in October, 2009. For the purpose of the case study, the event will be monitored for a 4-week period, May 28 to June 28, 2009. A proposal will also be executed to establish a best-practices scenario to increase registration for events.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to determine the benefits of using digital/social media as an audience-marketing tool, in promoting and increasing registrations for (B2B) corporate events.

This case study will research and describe digital/social media outlets that can be utilized for corporate B2B events, and will track and report on the effectiveness of using these outlets to increase registrations for a scheduled October, 2009 corporate B2B event, that is currently underperforming in registrations.

### *Statement of objectives*

It is the case study's objective to analyze, during a 4-week period, the impact of digital/social media on the fifth RBI event taking place in October, 2009. The case study will track event marketing for this event during a 4-week period. A proposal will also be executed for future integration and use of digital/social media technologies such as Twitter, Facebook and blogs for events. By applying these technologies, RBI may be able to increase reach to potential attendees and, in turn, try to enhance registration numbers.

RBI, like other media companies, is battling the demands of in-print/online revenue spend and now must also deal with the economic downturn, (i.e. budget cuts in marketing/ad dollars, etc.). In 2007, the typical advertising revenue for the top ten (B2B) Publishers was approximately \$59.0 million. In 2008, revenue fell to \$52.3 million, an 11.4% decline. Collectively, \$67 million in revenue from print advertising vanished from the top 10 B2B publications (Callahan, 2009). For these reasons, RBI is investing in in-person vertical market events as an additional and/or new revenue generating stream to increase profit.

To build events as a revenue generating stream, it is necessary to clearly understand how to market them by choosing the correct marketing vehicles to promote and drive registration. A synthesis of traditional event marketing, as well as, harnessing the power of digital/social media marketing may be the answer.

### *Justification*

Because publishing/media companies have consistently lost revenue over the last few years, new profit centers need to be studied. This case study will focus on in-person events, and determine the benefits of using digital/social media as an audience-marketing tool to increase registrations and apply some of these digital/social media networks to an actual event. A recent study analyzing B2B marketer' advertising budget trends indicates that although budgets have been reduced in early 2009 because of the economy, outlooks are positive for the second half of 2009, and 2010. The survey revealed that 65.7% will increase online spending in the second half of 2009 in the following areas: (a) 31.6% will increase direct mail, and (b) 26.0% will increase events. Online marketing will increase spending 63.8% in the following manner: (a) 61.6% on e-mail marketing, (b) 49.5% on search, and (c) 46.2% on social media (Maddox, 2009).

If this study is an accurate indicator of future trends, RBI needs to harness the power of these marketing outlets. Although the B2B marketplace may be laggards when implementing some of these vehicles, indications suggest that the use of digital/social media will play a strong role in the future of marketing in the B2B world.



### *Constraints*

This case study will have both self imposed and externally imposed constraints. The following are self imposed constraints: (a) proposed solution with only partial results. There is only a 4-week window available to grasp the effectiveness of these marketing outlets, and (b) proposed solutions only being applied to one organization and one event.

There are numerous externally imposed constraints. One of the most prevalent is the buy-in from the business unit. B2B audiences are still undecided about the use of digital/social media as a marketing tool. Currently, “Business to Consumer” (B2C) audiences appear to be much more accepting. RBI business units are part of the laggard audience. There are a few if any best practices to follow. Since the use of social networking in the B2B arena is still in the experimental stages, with few established best practices. The approach taken in this case study may need adaptation in the real world. There are challenges for deployment of ideas for the social networks. The business manager for the October event has been very receptive and co-operative to ideas, but at times, is slow to apply and upload items to the social network sites because of workload. Internal IT protocol for websites may be a constraint. There are certain RBI, IT rules that may prohibit tools/information to be added to the websites. Lastly, the state of the economy may cause inaccurate conclusions to be drawn in determining the effectiveness of using digital/social media as an audience-marketing tool, in promoting and increasing registrations for (B2B) corporate.

*Glossary*

The following is a glossary of terms that will be used through out the case study.

Term	Definition
B2B	(Business to Business) A transaction that occurs between a company and another company, as opposed to a transaction involving a consumer (investorwords.com, 2009).
B2C	(Business to Consumer) A transaction that occurs between a company and a consumer (investorwords.com, 2009).
Blogs	A blog is web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer (merriam-webster.com, 2009).
Facebook	Facebook is a social networking website. Users can create and customize their own profiles with photos, videos, and information about themselves. “Friends”, invited visitors, can browse the profiles of other friends and write/post messages on their pages as also referred to as posting to the “wall” (techterms.com, 2009).
LinkedIn	LinkedIn is a social networking website geared towards companies and industry professionals looking to make new business contacts or keep in touch with previous co-workers, affiliates, and clients (hudsonhorizons.com, 2009).
Microblogging	Microblogging is a web service that allows the subscriber to broadcast short messages to other subscribers of the service. Twitter

Term	Definition
Podcast	is an example of a microblog site (techtarget.com, 2009). A podcast is the distribution of audio and video "shows" across the Internet, such as a video blog or an internet radio show. Similar to blogs, they can range in subject matter from personal to business and serious to entertaining (Nations, 2009).
RSS	RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is an XML-based vocabulary for distributing Web content in opt-in feeds. Feeds allow the user to have new content delivered to a computer or mobile device as soon as it is published (techtarget.com, 2009).
SMS	SMS (Short Message Service) is also often referred to as texting, sending text messages or text messaging. The service allows for short text messages to be sent from one cell phone to another cell phone or from the Web to another cell phone (Fendelman, 2009).
Social media marketing	Social media marketing is the process of marketing through social media sites like <u>Twitter</u> , <u>Facebook</u> and <u>YouTube</u> (Nations, 2009).
Tags	A <b>HTML</b> tag defines an anchor and may be used to establish a link to other document, or a bookmark on a page (htmlquick.com, 2009).
Tweets	A tweet is a post or status update on Twitter, a microblogging service. Twitter only allows messages of 140 characters or less (Nations, 2009).
Twitter	A free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its

Term	Definition
	users to send and read each others' updates, known as “tweets” (twittermarketingagency.com).
Viral marketing	Viral marketing or internet viral marketing, is the act of promoting information or products that other customers are compelled to give to other friends, colleagues and family. Viral marketing encourages people to pass along a marketing message and/or advertising (Duermyer, 2009).
Web 2.0	“Web 2.0 is the move toward a more social, collaborative, interactive and responsive web. It is a change in the philosophy of web companies and web developers, but more than that, Web 2.0 is a change in the philosophy of society as a whole. Is used to describe advanced Internet technology and applications such as including blogs, wikis, and RSS” (Nations, 2009).
Webcast	A broadcast that takes place over the web and uses both audio and visual effects (Nations, 2009).
Widget	The term describes a software components portable piece of code that can be installed and executed within any separate HTML-based web page by an end user (pcmag.com, 2009).
wiki	A wiki is a website designed for multiple people to collaborate by adding and editing content. Wikipedia is a wiki (Nations, 2009).

## PART TWO

### Introduction

Because media companies are facing challenges in lost revenue, due to the decline in print publications, specifically for this review, B2B publishers are looking for new revenue generating streams, and are investigating the advantages of adding in-person vertical market events to their marketing mix. What also is being contemplated is the integration of digital/social media as a means to increase registration for events. In order to evaluate these strategies, the literature review will include: (a) in-person events in the B2B market place – a summary of the potential need and effectiveness (b) changes in event marketing: integration of social media for events (c) technology in event marketing, and (d) methodology: metrics and measurements used to track digital/social media. In the final section, an analysis of the literature review will provide a better understanding of how the B2B event marketing field has changed, and how digital/social media is not yet being fully being applied as a marketing tool.

### Literature Review

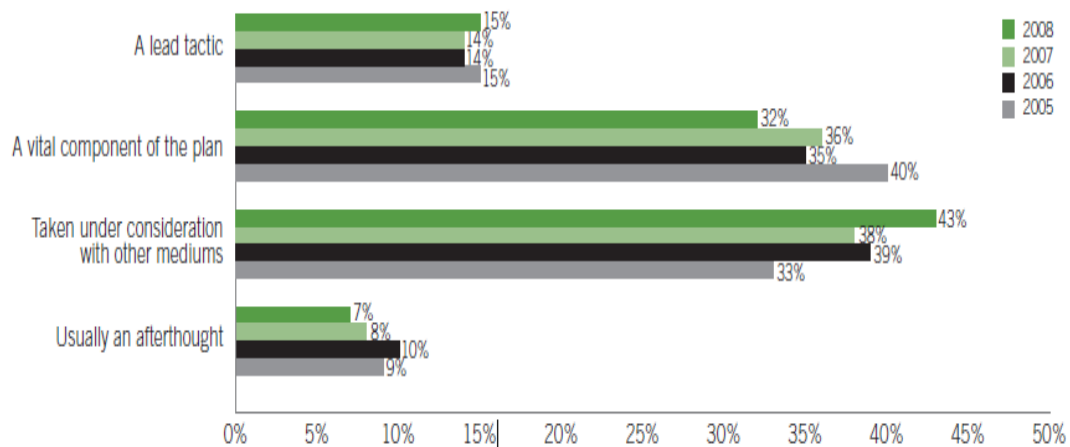
#### *Events: A summary of potential need and effectiveness*

“B-to-B print advertising pages plunged 29.70% in the first quarter, compared with the year-earlier period, according to the latest Business Information Network figures released by American Business Media” (Callahan, 2009, ¶1). This decrease is estimated to be an 11.4% and/or \$52.3 million decline in revenue from 2007 to 2008 (Callahan, 2009).

There are numerous reasons for the decline in B2B revenue such as the recession, and migration of in-print advertising dollars to online advertising outlets. In efforts to

capture new revenue streams, B2B publishers are following what is becoming a common corporate trend by investing in events and adding them to the marketing mix.

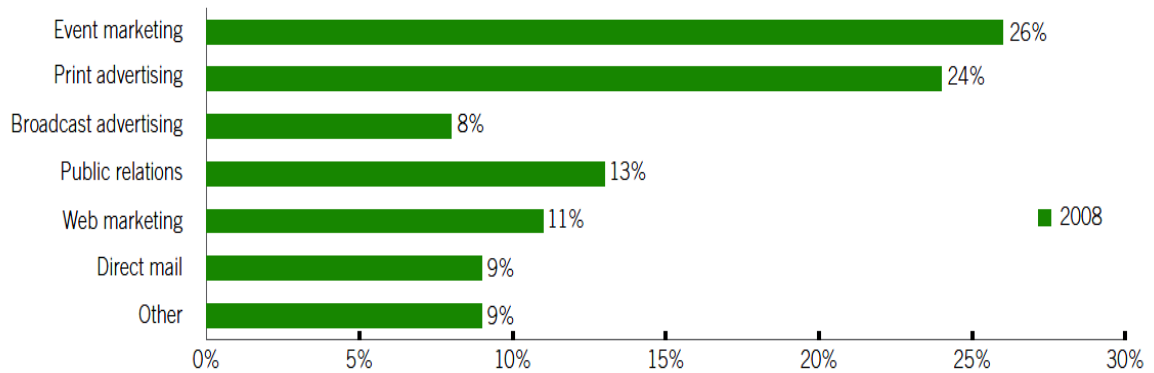
As indicated in the study, Event View 2009, based on the results of a survey administered to 942 senior executives in sales and marketing management positions in North America, Western Europe and Asia Pacific, events are playing a larger role in the marketing mix to increase revenue. Forty-three percent of the respondents from the Event View 2009 study indicate that event marketing is now being included more often with other marketing mediums as seen in Figure 1. This is a 5% increase from 2007. Thirty-two percent of the respondents indicated that events are a vital component of their marketing plan (Event View, 2009, p5).



*Figure 1.* Event marketing is now being included more often with other marketing.

From: The Events promise unique sales advantage in economic downturn, Event View 2009 study, Meeting Professional International, p.5, retrieved June 11, 2009, from <http://www.mpiweb.org/Archive/235/0.aspx>.

The study also reveals that by discipline, the proportion of the marketing budget dedicated to event marketing is the largest allocated, 26%, indicating the importance given to this medium (See Figure 2) (Event View, 2009, p6).



*Figure 2.* The proportion of the marketing budget dedicated to event marketing.

From: The Events promise unique sales advantage in economic downturn, by Event View 2009 North America, p.6, retrieved June 11, 2009, from <http://www.mpiweb.org/Archive/235/0.aspx>.

What also needs to be taken into consideration when contemplating adding industry-specific events to the marketing mix is whether business decision makers (BDMs) consider events a viable marketing/business tool. The findings from an independent research study, *The Power of Industry Specific-Events*, commissioned by American Business Media (ABM) and conducted by Forrester Research, indicate that 44% of the responding BDMs do find industry-specific events an effective tool to help in the decision making process. This is reflected in Figure 3.

### When making purchase decisions, BDMs rely on industry-specific trade shows and conferences for information and validation

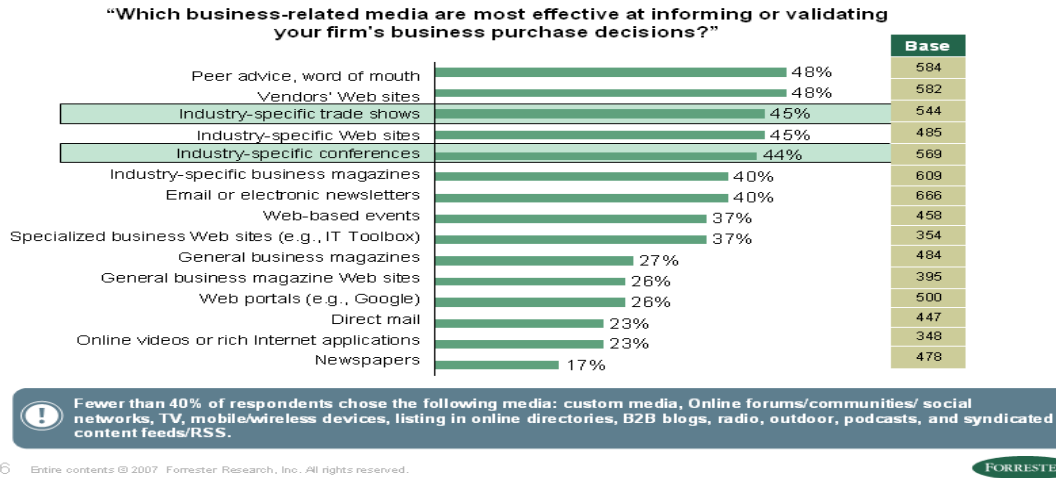


Figure 3. BDMs do find industry-specific events an effective tool.

From: Confirming the power of industry-specific events, by American Business Media, 2007, retrieved July 3, 2009, from <http://www.abmcustommedia.com/articles/the-digital-transformation>.

On the marketers’ side of the study, research found that 80% of B2B marketers build brand awareness, generate leads, and reach decision makers, using industry specific events. The percentage of respondents, who agree that in-person events are effective at brand imaging and lead generation, has grown almost 20% from 2005 to 2007(American Business Media, 2007).

Marketers were also polled on which B2B media marketing tactics they had used in the last twelve months. Sixty-three percent of the respondents stated they use industry specific conferences (American Business Media, 2007).

As indicated from this research, adding and investing in events as an additional marketing outlet option, may be an important step in developing a potential new revenue stream.



*Changes in event marketing: Integration of social media for events*

Traditionally, when promoting events, the marketing mix consists of print and direct mail advertising, public relations, personal selling, promotional marketing pieces and, more recently, websites. The information sent to potential attendees, using these traditional marketing outlets is, in most respects, a one-way communication. The market place is shifting, and one-way communication is becoming obsolete. Event marketers are better understanding that their audiences want information at their fingertips, 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week.

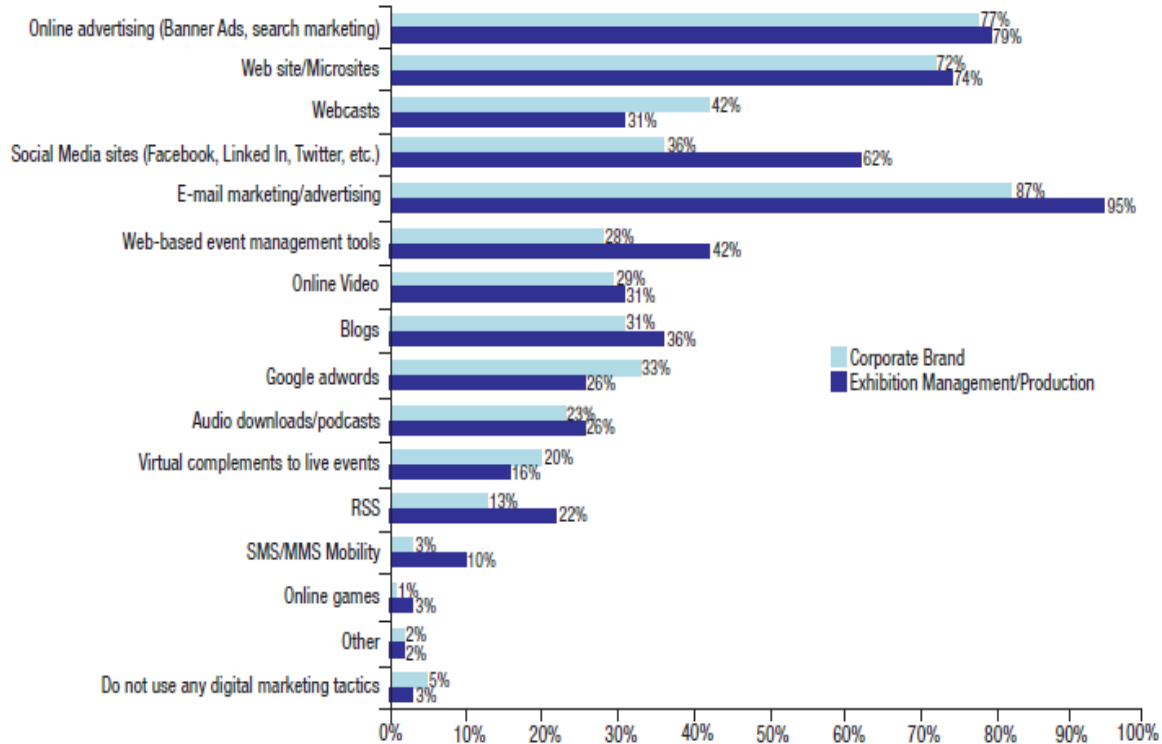
Social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook and blogs, are no longer just considered “fun” social sites. They can now be viewed as additional media outlets that have the potential, if used properly, to enhance customer reach. Using these digital/social media outlets as marketing tools has created two-way communication between B2B audiences. Because of this, the event industry is integrating these digital/social technologies, and incorporating them into their traditional marketing mix. By doing so, they are realizing that they are able to increase reach, which in turn, should produce more return on investment (ROI).

*Meeting & Conventions* magazine conducted a study in April, 2009, and collected data from 141 meeting planners. The information gathered from the survey indicates how rapidly social media is changing, and the way events are being marketed. Seventy-three percent of the respondents from the survey indicated that they were using social networking tools, (or plan to this year), to market their events. In contrast, when the same

question was asked in a survey conducted in 2007, 94% said they did not use social networking tools for events (Sharpiro, 2009).

Further research on this subject was conducted by the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) in April and May, 2009. The Digital + Exhibiting Market Insights 2009 North American report summarizes the study, which was conducted to better understand how corporate marketers and exhibition management are incorporating live and digital media into the marketing mix, in order to increase event performance. The study involved 287 respondents (a 50/50 split of corporate brand and exhibition management), from U.S. based companies (CEIR, 2009).

As seen in Figure 4, digital media, including social media, is being integrated and used as a viable event marketing tool. What is interesting in these findings is that corporate brands tend to be laggards in the application of using digital/social media as part of their marketing mix.

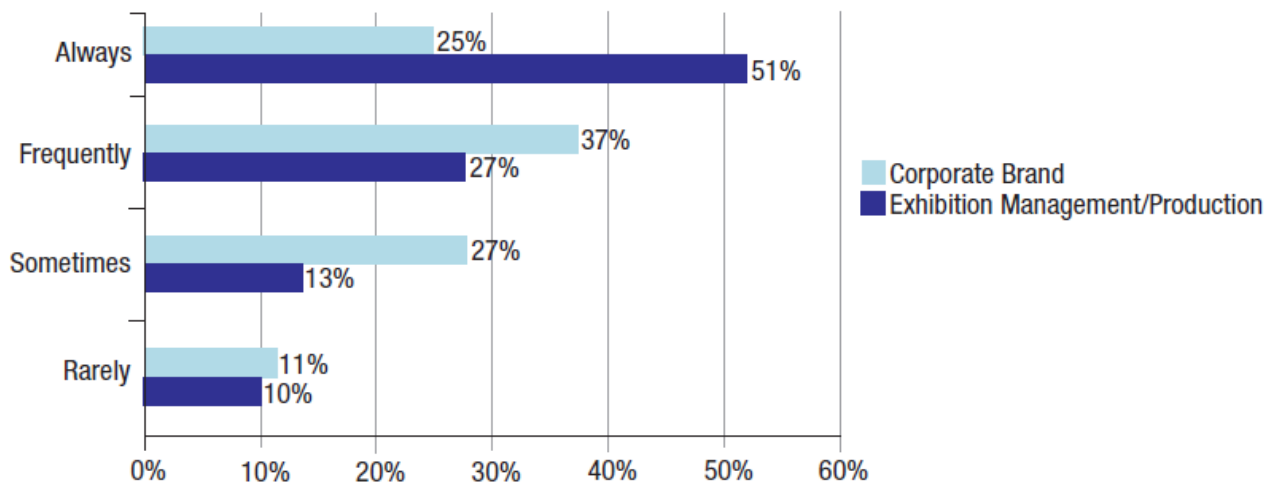


*Figure 4.* Digital/social media is being integrated and used as a viable event marketing tool. From: The Digital + Exhibiting Market Insights 2009 North American report, by the Center for Exhibit Industry Research, p. 5, June 2009, retrieved June 10, 2009, from <http://www.ceir.org/>

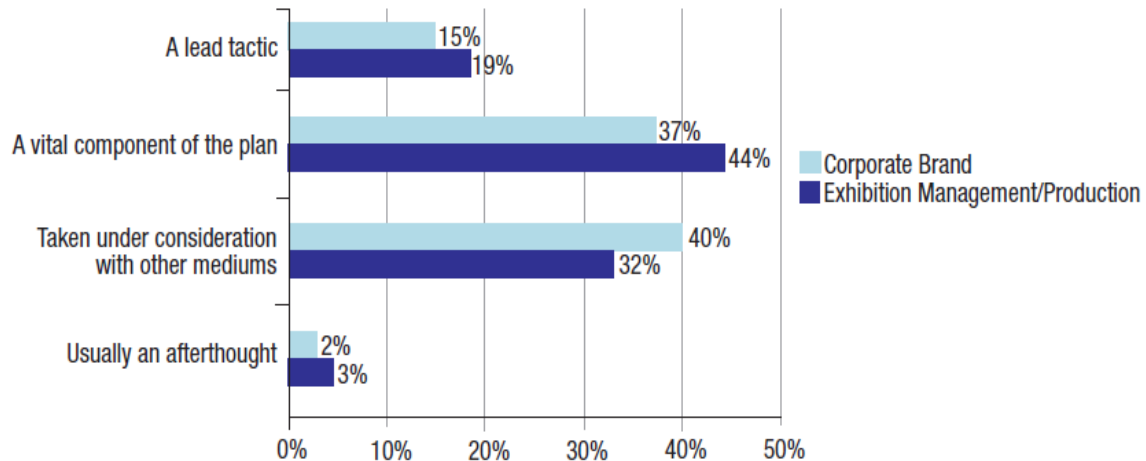
Although corporate brands are a slight percentage behind exhibition management in their use of digital media, they truly are using online mediums to try to extend and gain greater reach to their audiences. When asked what motivated them to use digital mediums, the highest percentage response was, “to extend the reach of their marketing efforts”, followed by, “to best engage their target audiences” (CEIR, 2009. p.8).

The authors of the report wanted to better understand the integration of digital media and the role it plays in promotion and marketing of events. One of the questions in the report was, “How often do you integrate digital marketing tactics in the promotion of your events” (CEIR, 2009, p6). As shown in Figure 5, the integration of digital media is

playing a significant role in the marketing mix, as indicated by 51% of exhibition management always incorporating it in their promotional efforts. Figure 6 establishes that the role of digital marketing is a vital component of event marketing plans, as indicated by the 44% of exhibition management and 37% of corporate brands response rates (CEIR, 2009, p6).



*Figure 5.* The integration of digital media is playing a significant role in the marketing mix. From: The Digital + Exhibiting Market Insights 2009 North American report, by the Center for Exhibit Industry Research, p. 8, June 2009, retrieved June 10, 2009, from <http://www.ceir.org/>.



*Figure 6.* The role of digital marketing is a vital component of event marketing plans.

From: The Digital + Exhibiting Market Insights 2009 North American report, by the Center for Exhibit Industry Research, p. 6, June 2009, retrieved June 10, 2009, from <http://www.ceir.org/>.

These figures are indicators that digital/social mediums are playing, and look to continue to play, a strong role in the promotion and marketing of events. What needs to be taken into consideration regarding digital/social mediums is that these marketing outlets are relatively “new” marketing mediums. Capturing their power, and as well as developing metrics for these mediums, are extremely important next steps for them to be considered a viable addition to the traditional marketing mix.

#### *Technology in event marketing*

As seen from research in this paper to this point, digital/social media appears not to be just a passing trend for event marketers, and actually is a medium that needs to be taken seriously as an additional marketing tool. Over 50% of respondents, from the Digital + Exhibit Marketing Insights report, indicated that they would strongly increase digital marketing for promoting future events (CEIR, 2009).

Early adopters of digital/social mediums, mainly peer-to-peer, used social outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs, as personal tools for connecting with friends and family, to communicate what was taking place in their lives. Although these digital/social outlets continue to be used heavily by the peer-to-peer audience, B2B marketers are using them as well, to reach their targeted audiences. This research will focus on the following digital/social technologies: (a) Twitter (b) Facebook, and (c) blogs. The research will attempt to better understand how to use these digital/social networks and how they can enhance marketing efforts for events.

### *Twitter*

Twitter, a microblogging, social networking site, has over 32 million unique users (McIntyre, 2009). To understand how fast Twitter is growing, it is interesting to note that last year at this time, it had 2 million users. Twitter operates by allowing users to send short, 140 or less character (microblog) text updates to “Followers”. The premise of Twitter is to follow people or be followed by people. The “Tweets”, (what messages are called), can be received via personal computer or mobile device. Messages can be made public or private. Members can request the ability to “follow” other members’ private updates. The ability to receive Tweets, via mobile device and as Instant Message allows real-time information to be sent as well as rapid feedback to be received. Twitter and Facebook are free services.

B2B marketers, although considered still to be somewhat on the sidelines, compared to their B2C counterparts, are using Twitter to listen to their target customers, talk directly to customers, support customers through this interactive channel, and gain immediate feedback on products, according to Forrester Research (Owyang, 2009).

As seen in Figure 7, *Purchasing* magazine is an example of a B2B media company that uses Twitter. They use this social networking site to try to keep their niche audience engaged and up-to-date with breaking industry news and events taking place in the purchasing world. *Purchasing* is using the site as a platform to announce updates about a new conference they are launching in October, 2009.

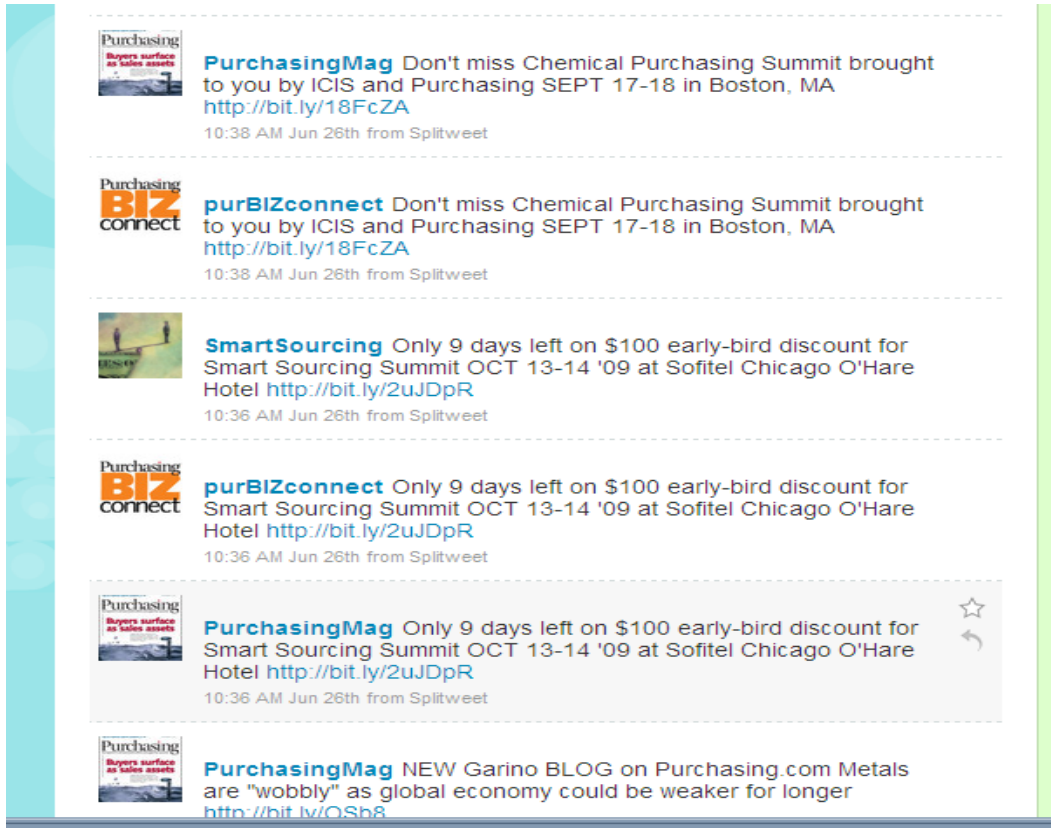


Figure 7. *Purchasing* magazine's Twitter site used to update Followers.

From: Smartsourcing, by Twitter.com, 2009, retrieved July 25, 2009, from <http://twitter.com/SmartSourcing>.

Another feature of Twitter is that it can be searched for like-minded people and/or groups. An example of how this feature can be a benefit in the B2B marketplace is how *Purchasing* magazine is using the site to find groups for the October conference, being held in Chicago. Their demographic for this event is purchasing managers, in the

Chicago-land area. As seen in Figure 8, a search was executed for “purchasing managers in Chicago” and numerous people with this criterion were found. After qualifying the results, *Purchasing* can become a “Follower” of these people/groups, and start to promote the conference.

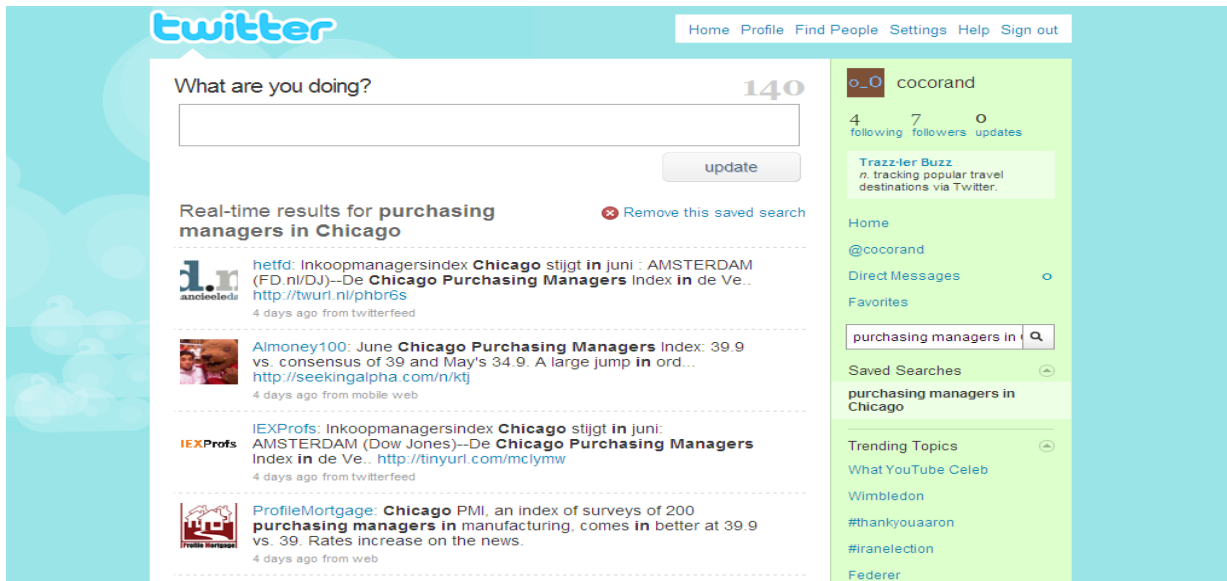


Figure 8. *Purchasing* magazine’s search results for “purchasing managers in Chicago”.

From: Purchasing managers in Chicago, by Twitter.com, 2009, retrieved July 3, 2009, from <http://twitter.com/purchasingmanagersinchicago>.

### Facebook

Facebook began as an online site that connected fellow university students with one another. Its popularity grew and spread to become an online venue to connect and share information with friends. It now has approximately 200 million active users globally, and is used for personal as well as business communication (Adegoke, 2009).

Facebook has some similarities to Twitter, such as a microblogging feature and the ability to find like-minded people/groups. But unlike Twitter, Facebook has customizable tabs and pages that are designed to house such items as business



information, discussions, events, groups, photos and videos, using a lot more than 140 characters. These pages and content are created and designed by each Facebook user/account holder, or by third party widgets. Facebook in some respects is a gated community. Followers on Facebook for personal use have profiles and are called “Friends”. Followers that follow businesses such as the NY Times use what are called “pages” to display information. The followers of business pages are called “Fans”. Friends either ask or are asked by other members to join each others Facebook accounts, and need to be allowed in to view pages. Pages are an open community and anyone can become a Fan. There are numerous ways to use Facebook, such as: (a) personal profiles, which have “Friends” – gated, (b) groups who have “members” that are both gated and open, and (c) business pages that have “Fans” – and are not gated.

The B2B communities are discovering that Facebook, with extensive reach, is a viable marketing tool and is “free” to use. They are finding Facebook helps build relationships, raises visibility, and builds brands - all to a significant niche audience. Studies indicate that consumers more readily want information brought to them through digital/social media outlets such as Facebook. Forrester Research conducted such a study, The Social Tools Consumers Want from their Favorite Brands. What they discovered, was that 42% of online adults are interested in at least one type of social application from brands they like (Bernoff, 2009). The same study also indicates that almost half of the consumers in the study want to interact online with their favorite brands.

Event marketers can leverage the use of Facebook, by creating Fan pages, to connect with their target audience for pre-show promotion, to drive registration, to gain insight for topics, and to create polls and surveys regarding content and post-show, to

repurpose/distribute event content. The two-way conversation is ideal to better understand what the customer wants, and to talk with them on a platform that most may be checking on at least daily, if not in real-time. Marketers can feel as though they are part of a community, and the community has the opportunity to shape the industry to fit their needs. What needs to be remembered is that people become Fans to gather information and have conversations, and they are not looking for a hard sell. Marketers need to learn to engage in conversations, and monitor the quality and effectiveness of these conversations, to build the trust of their Fan base.

Another plus for the marketer is that when customers sign up to be a Fan they automatically opt-in to receive updates from the Fan page. Any new update to the Fan page is sent to the list. In some ways, it is like sending out an email blast to a very niche audience.

### *Blogs*

Blogs, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary are, “web sites that contain an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer” (Merriam-Webster.com, 2009). In the B2B market place, and more specifically in B2B publishing, blogs are now used as a feature on the magazine’s website to communicate with their targeted online community. Blogs allow readers to add a comment, which in turn, allows dialogs to take place with customers and prospects. If done correctly, blogs can build communities, create a loyal following, and the blogger can become an industry expert to follow.

A study prepared by Forrester Research, How to Derive Value from B2B Blogging, surveyed 189 B2B marketing professionals in firms with annual revenues

ranging from less than \$20 million to more than \$5 billion. The study also reviewed blogs from 90 Fortune 500 and high technology companies. The study revealed that B2B marketers may need to rethink their approach to blogging (Ramos, 2008). The study talks about B2B marketers having issues attracting readers to their blogs and getting them to engage in conversations. Forrester found that B2B marketers were using blogs as just another selling tool, or as a white paper forum area. Ramos stated in the study, “more than 70% of the corporate blogs we reviewed stick strictly to business or technical topics and don’t share much personal insight or experience” (Ramos, 2008, p. 3). This approach to blogging does not generate two-way conversations and audience appeal is diminished. A better approach may be to create blogs that show self expression, build communities, give advice, and disseminate information about a company and/or product.

In the B2B publishing arena, editors write and participate in blogs as industry experts, and at the same time, try to show a personal side, which is reflected in the way their content/blog is written. This creates a two-way conversation, which in turn, helps them to do their jobs more effectively, by giving them a better understanding of their audience and their needs.

Forrester Research has numerous recommendations to strengthen the power of B2B blogs such as: to entertain as well as teach, to be a part of the community, and to participate in two-way conversations (Ramos, 2008). The research also reported on how blogging can enhance events such as trade shows, seminars and conferences. What is recommended for companies to promote events is have their event industry blogger build pre-event interest, encourage at event blogging, provide real-time posts and post-event coverage for those industry individuals that may not have been able to attend.

From the information gathered, blogging, if done correctly, appears to have the potential to be an additional event marketing tool that has the ability to reach targeted audiences.

*Methodology: Metrics and measurements used to track digital/social media*

“Despite the increasing use of virtual media, less than half of respondents can quantify how it is benefiting their organizations” (CEIR, 2009, p.13). This statement reflects the challenges event marketers are facing trying to track and measure qualitative data to better understand the ROI for digital/social media.

There are measurable ROI metrics for the traditional B2B publishing world, such as advertising pages sold for print, and click through, page views per visitor, and time spent on a site, for website based online vehicles. Digital/social media outlets challenge these traditional metrics because their metrics/measurement consists of elements such as, engagement and conversations. Trying to assign a dollar value to human interaction, relationships and conversations is at times difficult, and although hard to quantify it would not be impossible to do so. For the purpose of this paper, metrics for Twitter, Facebook and blogs that can be used for event marketing will be investigated.

Metrics/measurements for engagement can be monitored and measured by the marketer and/or by hiring paid services such as Nielsen or SEM Director. Items that fall into this category are online action oriented such as, whether the site left a lasting impression, changed an attitude, educated, or created intrigue to come back for more (For the purpose of this paper, monitoring by marketer options will be the only type of metric used). Services such as, Goggle Alerts, can be used to send results of specific

queries/topic to the user. A name of an event can be a Goggle Alert, and when it is mentioned on the web an alert will be sent to the user.

### *Twitter*

Followers of Twitter can create “Tweetdecks”. Tweetdecks allow followers to create a real-time information chart (decks) that contain columns of the user’s preferred and targeted preferences. The Followers can monitor what their specific groups are talking about, target what specific audiences are saying, and follow what people are saying about keywords, such as the name of an event. Most recently, Facebook has been integrated into Tweetdecks and a Friend status column can be created. Twitter also has another metric feature, TweetReach. This helps the user grasp the exposure they are getting from their Tweets. An example, Figure 9, shows the results of a TweetReach for an event, the Smart Sourcing Summit. This feature follows Tweets for this event and reports them in a very intuitive way. It reveals Tweet types, as well as, the exposure the event has received on Twitter.

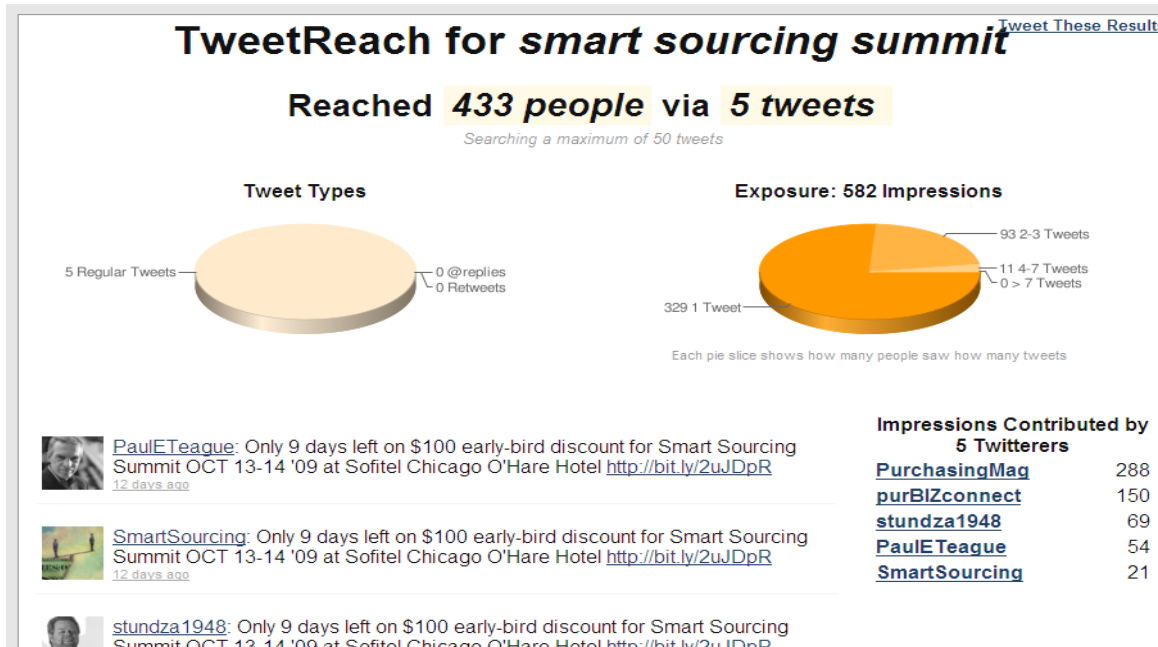


Figure 9. Result Tweets for the Smart Sourcing Summit.

From: How far did your tweet travel?, Smart Sourcing Summit, by TweetReach, 2009, retrieved July 8, 2009, from <http://tweetreach.com/>.

### Facebook

Facebook has analytical features that help monitor the metrics of engagement for business pages. Two of their free metric tools are Facebook Insights and Facebook Grader. Facebook Insights enables the page administrator to track metrics such as page views, wall posts, discussion threads, and photo views ([HubSpot.com](http://HubSpot.com), 2009). Facebook Grader measures reach and authority of the Facebook page. A query was run for Dr. Dobb's Events using Facebook Grader (Facebookgrader.com, 2009). As seen in Figure 10, this page was rated 22 out of 100. This metric is a percentile score. The 22 represents, that Dr. Dobb's Events scored 22% higher than the 47,828 other users of the service. The numbers are generated by items such as, number of Friends/Fans and the completeness of the profile. This tool is likened to Twitters' TweetReach tool.

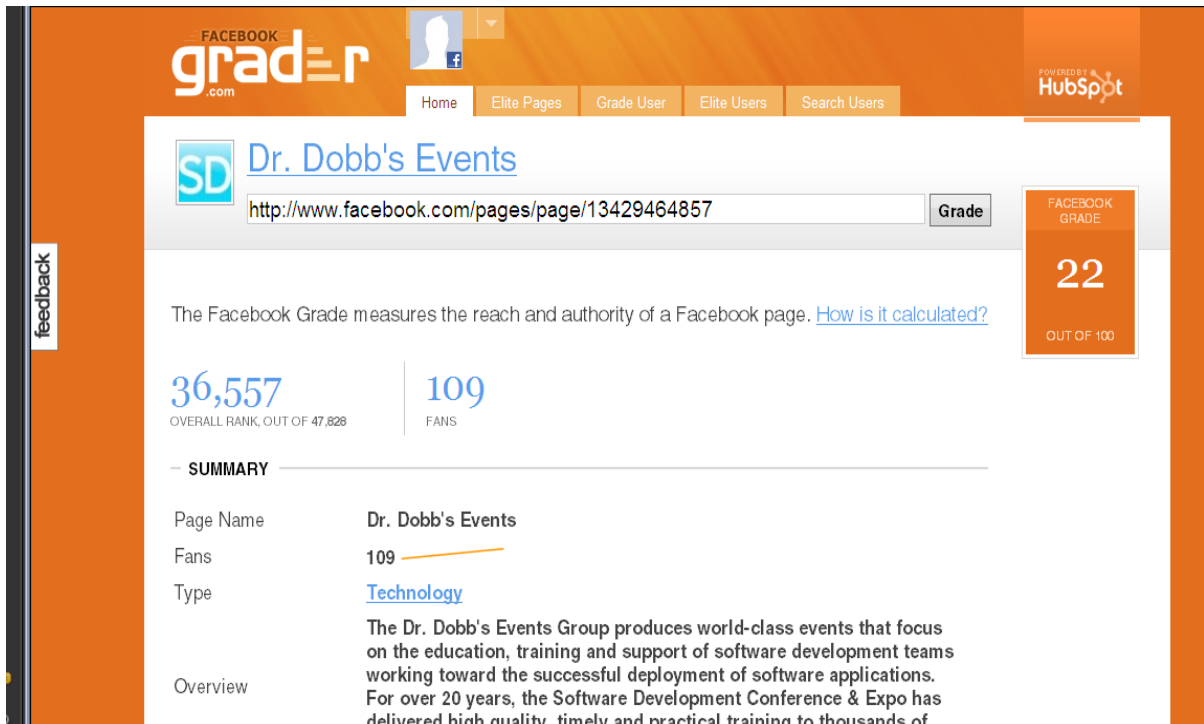


Figure 10. Query results Dr. Dobbs Events for Facebook Grader.

From: Dr. Dobbs Events, by Facebook Grader, 2009, retrieved July 3, 2009, from [http://apps.facebook.com/facebookgrader/?\\_fb\\_fromhash=b69f0728955c26cdf8c3ae825cbcb827](http://apps.facebook.com/facebookgrader/?_fb_fromhash=b69f0728955c26cdf8c3ae825cbcb827).

Unlike Twitter, Facebook has a paid advertising model. The analytics for the paid model reports on ad performance in regards to impressions, clicks and click through rates. Multiple ads can be run concurrently and the analytics can determine which are pulling better results.

### Blogs

Blogs may be one of the hardest digital/social media outlets to measure. Metrics that marketers tend to use for blogs are capturing the number of unique visitors, how much participation is seen, and page views. Blogs seem to be the wild card in the B2B digital/social marketing mix but their potential is being seen and they are playing a

significant role as a marketing application. As seen in Figure 11, in the Forrester Research Study, Metrics for Social Applications in a Downturn, Forrester Research interviewed 10 companies, including Carnival Cruises, Constant Contact, Dell, Emerson Process Management, HP, Intuit, Lego, and Sony. Fifty-six percent of these respondents indicated that they are currently using blogs as a social application (Bernoff, 2008). In the same study the respondents were asked, “How would you rate the value of the social applications you currently use?” (Bernoff, 2008, p. 6). Fifty-five percent responded that they found blogs valuable but can’t measure profit. Also indicated in the study was that results were hard to measure.

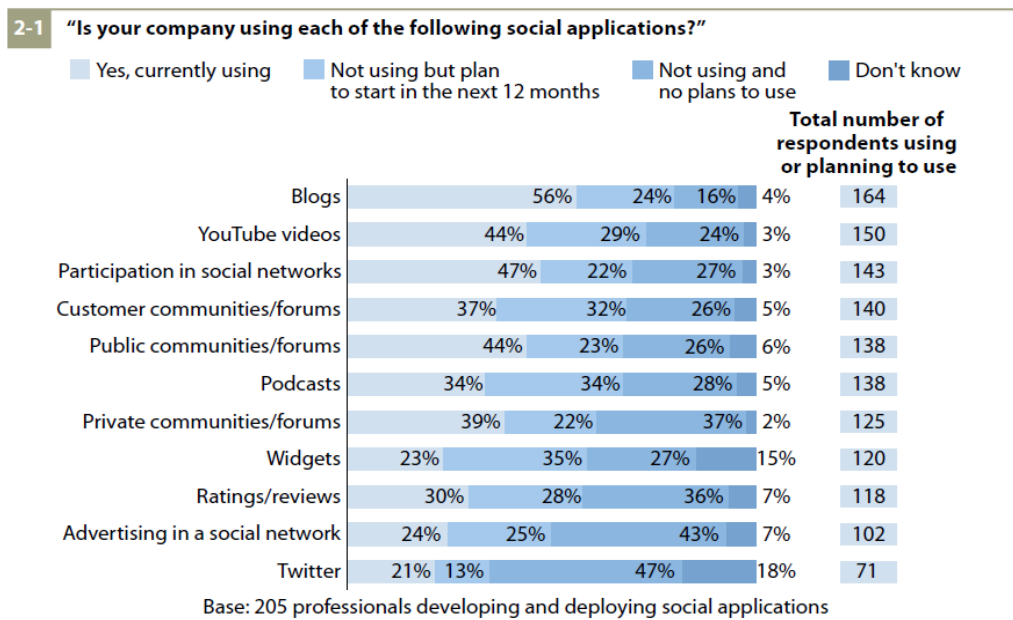


Figure 11. How marketers’ participate and spend on social technology applications.

From: Metrics for social applications in a downturn for interactive marketing, by J.

Bernoff, October 17, 2008, Forrester Research, retrieved July 8, 2009, from

<http://www.forrester.com/Research/Document/Excerpt/0,7211,47292,00.html?src=EMAI>  
[LCOLL](#).



From what this research is indicating, digital/social media is becoming a more viable marketing tool. Metrics and best practices are not in place, but need to be established to create cohesive industry standards. The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) released in May, 2009, their guidelines for standard definitions, common metrics and industry best practices for the use of social media in the advertising industry (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2009). The guidelines were developed to help provide common metrics for marketers who are trying to capture the strength of these mediums, and put a value on reach, relationships and the relevance. In the introduction to the guidelines the IBA states the following:

The most profound difference is that Social Media has added a participatory element where an individual not only receives information but has the ability to take part in the creation and distribution of content. Furthermore, social media tools have enabled a dialogue and discovery around this content. It is the combination of these unique and appealing aspects that defines the true value of social media. Value is derived not only from the primary distribution of branded content but also the additional interactions that result as users share, participate with, and propagate advertising content. In the end, social media adds another layer of value through its ability to engage users and create additional reach. (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2009, p.3).

The quoted passage captures, not only the importance of using digital/social media as an event marketing tool, but makes the reader aware that what is being measured is quite different than with traditional media. It also brings to light, as discussed earlier in this paper, that these “new” mediums are no longer considered a one-way conversation. Value

is being recognized by having interactions, engaged conversations, and participation from both buyer, and seller and metrics are being constructed to make them a viable marketing tool.

### *Conclusion*

From the Literature Review it can be inferred that the B2B print publishing industry is facing challenges and new revenue streams need to be created that can support growth and increase revenue.

In-person events, as revealed in this Literature Review, qualify as a viable marketing tool to add to the B2B marketing mix as an additional revenue stream. This was shown in the Event View 2009 study where 43% of the respondents polled indicated that event marketing is now being included more often with other marketing mediums (Event View, 2009, p. 5). Forty-four percent of BDMs concur, in The Power of Industry Specific-Events study, that they do find industry-specific events an effective tool to help in the decision making process (American Business Media, 2007).

The Literature Review showed that marketing methods are changing. New technologies in the digital/social media arenas are being added to the traditional marketing mix. These new technologies are becoming useful and viable advertising tools to enhance in-person events. As was seen in Figure 6, over 50% of exhibition managers find social media a vital component of their marketing plans (CEIR, 2009. p. 6).

Social networking sites, that are used to market events, like Twitter and Facebook, are continually building tools for the business world to use as a platform to reach and engage their target audiences. This includes ROI metric and measurement tools

such as, Tweetdecks, and Facebook Grader. The IAB is following suit and has created the first social media standards guidelines for the advertising industry.

Consideration of this research is justification for the proposal to execute a case study applying the use of digital/social media outlets, for a 4-week period, May 28 to June 28, 2009, to an in-person event taking place in October, 2009. The case study will enlist the use of Twitter, Facebook, and blogs to promote the October event, and will track and report on their effectiveness in increasing registration. A proposal will also be executed to recommend a best-practices scenario using digital/social media to increase registration for events.

## PART THREE

### Introduction

Based on a review of empirical and trade literature, it is evident that the B2B publishing industry is facing revenue challenges and new profit centers need to be generated. In 2008, collectively, \$67 million in revenue from print advertising vanished from the top 10 B2B publications (Callahan, 2009). For these reasons, Reed Business Information (RBI) is following a common corporate trend by investing in events and adding them to their marketing mix. For example, as indicated in the study Event View 2009, events are playing a larger role in the marketing mix to increase revenue. Forty-three percent of the respondents from the Event View 2009 study indicate that event marketing is now being included more often with other marketing mediums. This is a 5% increase from 2007. Thirty-two percent of the respondents indicated that events are a vital component of their marketing plan (Event View, 2009). From research collected, in-person vertical market events are a relevant profit center addition. What also was clearly suggested by the available information gathered was that marketing methods specific to event marketing is changing. Digital/social media marketing tools are part of this change and their addition to the marketing mix is making them a viable promotion tool. This was seen in the study conducted by Meeting & Conventions magazine where 73% of the respondents indicated that they are or will be using social networking tools for events.

For all of the above reasons, a case study to analyze the impact of digital/social media on the fifth RBI event taking place in October, 2009 will be developed. For the purpose of this case study, the event was monitored for a 4-week period, May 28 to June

28, 2009. The case study tracked registration trends when applying digital/social media tools as an addition to the traditional marketing mix. A proposal, as well, will be executed for future integration and use of digital/social media technologies such as Twitter, Facebook and blogs for events. By applying these technologies, RBI may be able to increase reach to potential attendees and, in turn, try to enhance registration numbers. The event that will be tracked is the Smart Sourcing Summit, sponsored by one of RBI's business unit's *Purchasing* magazine. When the study began, only four attendees had registered for the summit.

The study focused on the following: (a) how digital/social media was being used, (b) the application of additional digital/social media tools, through vehicles such as Twitter, Facebook and blogs, and (c) metrics and measurement tools.

### Results

The case study was executed by first reviewing current marketing tools being used for the Smart Sourcing Summit, and then ideas were suggested to *Purchasing* magazine to encourage them to take additional steps to add digital/social media to their marketing mix. Some of the results of this case study were not a surprise because the research gathered indicated that B2B companies may be laggards when employing digital/social media to their marketing mix.

The following were the main marketing tools being used by the magazine: (a) a micro-site was developed for the event, (b) ads for the event were being run on the magazine's website ([www.purchasing.com](http://www.purchasing.com)), (c) some forms of digital/social media were being used pre-case study, and (d) email promotional blasts were being sent out to *Purchasing's* 60,000 name circulation list.

*Micro-site: Smart Sourcing Summit*

The micro-site specific to the Smart Sourcing Summit was launched in early May, 2009. The micro-site can be linked to from the Purchasing.com's website (Purchasing.com, 2009). The micro-site has a professional design, is easy to navigate, is intuitive, and contains pertinent event information regarding the agenda, registration, housing, etc. A video of the Chief Editor was placed on the homepage talking about the event's strengths, who should attend and what would be gained by attending the event. As seen in Figure 12 the site is fairly robust, so suggestions about design and functionality were not deemed necessary. Although the micro-site functions and looks great but with registration of only four attendees as of May 20, 2009, it was questionable if it was reaching the niche audience it was created for. This led to the critiquing of the ad placement on the purchasing.com website.

The Smart Sourcing Summit: **Managing Risk in Uncertain Times**

OCTOBER 13-14, 2009 • Sofitel Chicago O'Hare Hotel, Rosemont, IL **Purchasing**

**Welcome**

**Agenda**

**Accommodations**

**Sponsorships**

**Sponsors**

**Media Partners**

**Terms & Conditions**

**Contact Us**

**Registration**

**Purchasing.com**

## Managing Risk in Uncertain Times

The global economy in 2009 is fraught with risk. The best way for purchasing professionals to do their jobs is to stay informed about critical economic and marketplace developments in an era of mergers, acquisitions and strategic corporate developments in a supply base struggling to survive.

The **Smart Sourcing Summit**, brought to you by Purchasing magazine, will deliver must-have information about global, national, and regional economies, commodity pricing and supply conditions, and critical strategies among top-performing supply management organizations.

**Key agenda topics include:**

- Where prices and supply are headed for key raw materials
- The past, present and future of energy cost management
- Recovery outlook for U.S. financial and credit environments
- The North American manufacturing forecast and prospects for economic rebound
- Supply chain management in an uncertain world
- How purchasing will manage risk in the post-recession economy
- How procurement professionals can emerge from the recession as buying champions

Play Video

Figure 12. The Smart Sourcing Summit's micro-site.

From: Smart Sourcing Summit, by Purchasing.com, 2009, retrieved July 17, 2009, from [http://www.purchasing.com/article/279151-Managing\\_Risk\\_in\\_Uncertain\\_Times.php](http://www.purchasing.com/article/279151-Managing_Risk_in_Uncertain_Times.php).

*Purchasing magazine's website: purchasing.com*

Purchasing.com, as seen in Figures 13 and 14, ran ads for the Smart Sourcing Summit on its homepage in two areas: one small ad on the top of the homepage and one roughly three quarters of the page down on the right hand side of the homepage. The ads are technically on the page but are poorly displayed and hard to find.

The screenshot shows the top portion of the Purchasing.com website. At the top right, there are links for 'PURCHASING MOBILE', 'LOG IN', 'REGISTER', and 'FREE NEWSLETTERS! SIGN UP NOW!'. The main header features the 'Purchasing.com' logo and a Sprint advertisement with the text 'One number. One voicemail. Wonderful.' Below this is a navigation menu with links for 'HOME', 'MAGAZINE', 'NEWS TO YOU', 'MARKETS', 'CASE STUDIES', 'SMART SOURCING SUMMIT' (highlighted with a red box), 'L INVITE', 'FIND SUPPLIERS', 'RESOURCES', 'JOBS', and 'BOOKSTORE'. A search bar is located below the navigation menu. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'TOP STORIES' featuring a line graph titled 'Caustic soda prices plunge off peak' showing price trends from July 2008 to June 2009; a 'Midday BUSINESS REPORT' video player with the text 'Now Playing: Stainless steel prices continue down'; and a 'Chemical Purchasing Summit' advertisement for September 17-18, 2009, at the Seaport World Trade Center in Boston, USA. Other visible elements include 'ANALYST WHITEPAPER' and 'NEWS FROM THE WEB' buttons.

Figure 13. Top of page ad placement for the Smart Sourcing Summit on *Purchasing* magazine's website.

From: Purchasing.com homepage, by Purchasing.com, 2009, retrieved July 4, 2009, from <http://www.purchasing.com/>.



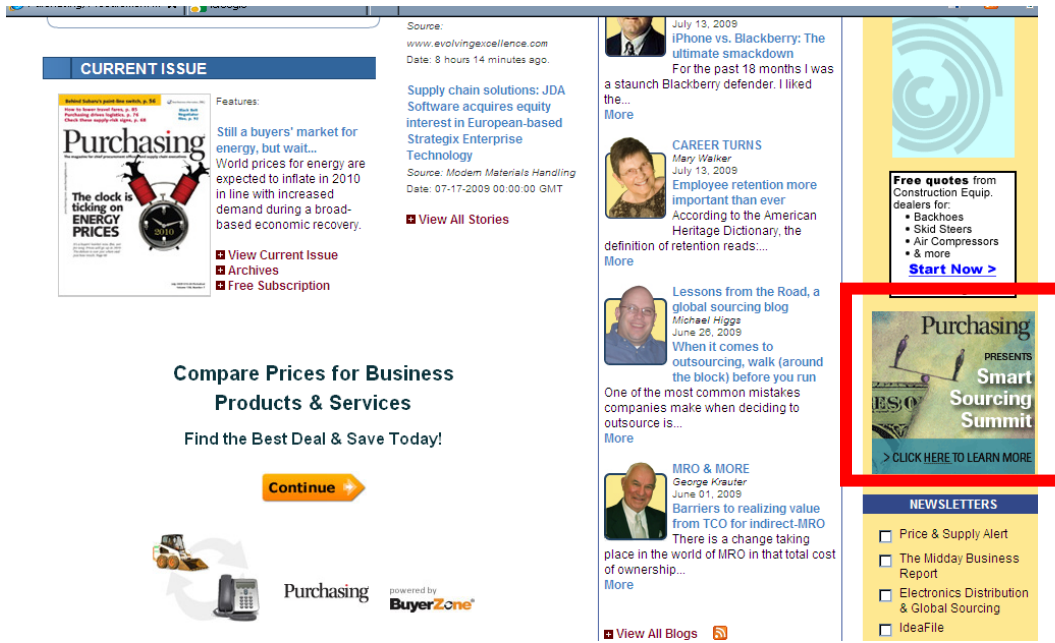


Figure 14. Side of page ad placement for the Smart Sourcing Summit on *Purchasing* magazine's website.

From: Purchasing.com homepage, by Purchasing.com, 2009, retrieved July 4, 2009, from <http://www.purchasing.com/>.

To increase traffic to the micro-site from the *Purchasing* website, a peel-back ad was suggested and implemented on Purchasing.com (See Figure 15 for an example of a peel back ad). The ad was much more visible and eye catching.

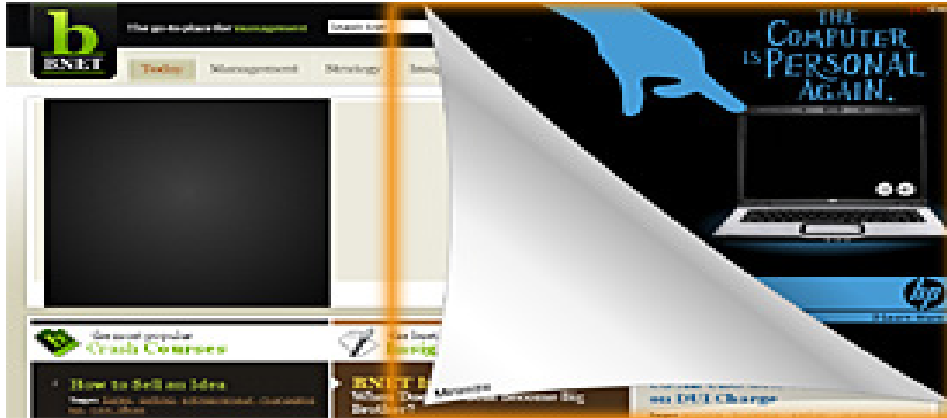


Figure 15. An example of an online peel-back advertisement similar to what *Purchasing* ran on their website for the Smart Sourcing Summit.

From: Peel Back Ad Specifications, by CNET Networks, 2009, retrieved July 19, 2009, from [http://www.cbsinteractive.com/advertise/gel\\_docs/peelback.doc](http://www.cbsinteractive.com/advertise/gel_docs/peelback.doc).

#### *Digital/social media outlets*

The next method to drive traffic and increase reach to the micro-site, purchasing.com website, and ultimately to increase registration for the Smart Sourcing Summit, was the use of other digital/social media outlets. As gathered research indicates, these digital/social outlets have the potential, if used correctly, to inform, engage and connect *Purchasing's* niche audiences. CEIR's, Digital + Exhibiting Market Insights 2009 North American report, is an example of this. The respondents were asked what motivated them to use digital mediums. Sixty percent of Exhibition Management, the highest percentage of respondents, said, "to extend the reach of their marketing efforts" (CEIR, 2009. p8). *Purchasing* had already established both Twitter and Facebook accounts.

*Twitter*

*Purchasing's* Twitter website posted Tweets about news in the industry and/or topics the magazine was writing about. They were receiving very few ReTweets (replies to Tweets) from these postings. It was suggested that new and different Tweets constantly be posted about the Smart Sourcing Summit highlighting topics, speakers, and the early bird discount specials. It was recommended that ReTweeting be a goal. To help achieve ReTweeting, it was suggested that items such as "please ReTweet" be included when Tweets are sent out, and that a link, also known as "#hashtags", to the Smart Sourcing Summit's micro-site be included in the Tweets as well. By adding these features, there is greater potential to reach larger audiences and spread the Tweet. Another ReTweet option that was encouraged was to ReTweet posts that were created by customers and/or industry colleagues who are related to the topics being presented at the Smart Sourcing Summit. This creates additional dialogue with the community, and can create more followers.

Twitter is also an ideal place to test the waters for the Smart Sourcing Summit. A Tweet can ask about items such as whether the content of the Smart Sourcing Summit is of interest, whether the location is good, or whether the date is acceptable. The feedback gained through ReTweets has enormous potential to help redirect the conference if need be. As seen in Figure 16, 69% of Tweets with links become ReTweets. The magazine was also encouraged to look for like-minded groups (i.e. in this case purchasing professionals), as well as associations in the chemical purchasing arenas.

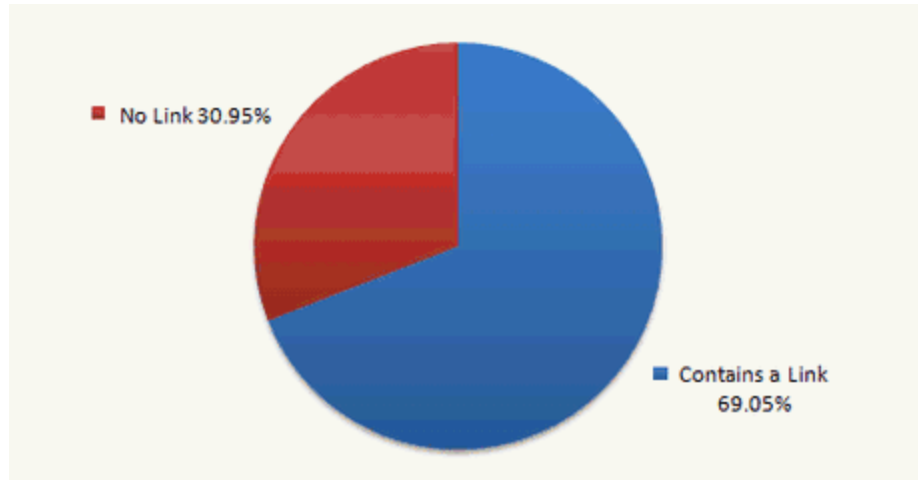


Figure 16. Percentage of ReTweet occurring by adding links to Tweets.

From: 5 Steps to going viral on Twitter, by D. Zarrilla, 2009, retrieved July 4, 2009, from <http://www.copyblogger.com/go-viral-on-twitter/>.

During the 4-week case study period, *Purchasing* posted information about the Smart Sourcing Summit three times on their Twitter account. The Tweets that were sent looked like ads and did not encourage two-way conversations, were not a strong call to action, and did not mention “please ReTweet”. Because of time constraints on the editorial staff, none of the other recommendations were applied.

### Facebook

*Purchasing* had a Facebook page, but it was in need of enhancing as well as in need of more Fans (See Figure 17). The magazine was enlightened when information from a Forrester Research study, The Social Tools Consumers want from their Favorite Brands, was presented to them. Bernoff (2009) reveals that almost half of the consumers in the study want to interact online with their favorite brands. Because of this *Purchasing* was encouraged to update its Facebook page, and to post information about the Smart Sourcing Summit. It was suggested that the video of the Chief Editor from the micro-site

be placed on the wall. To increase the Fan base, sponsors of the event should be solicited to become Fans, which in turn would link their Fan base to *Purchasing*'s. The editorial staff was encouraged to join purchasing groups/associations, such as Certified Purchasing Managers, to try to gain Fans, and to create and join in industry conversations. Also, it was thought that by joining these conversations, they could check the pulse of the industry to see if there was true interest in the Smart Sourcing Summit.

The screenshot shows the Facebook wall for Purchasing Magazine. At the top left is the magazine's cover with the text 'Suggest to Friends' and 'Subscribe via SMS'. Below this is the magazine's description: 'The magazine for chief procurement officers and supply chain executives'. The 'Information' section lists the location as 225 Wyman Street, Waltham, MA, 02451. The 'Fans' section shows 6 of 40 fans, with profile pictures of Russ Thibeault, Janet Welday, Tom Stundza, Tony Tam, Jack Brumvig Hansen, and Chris Parnaby. The main wall area has a search bar and three posts:

- Chemical Purchasing Summit:** Details - Registration. Given the critical role that procurement professionals must play in helping their companies weather this global economic storm, the 2nd Annual Chemical Purchasing Summit—brou... Host: Purchasing Magazine. Time: 7:45AM Thursday, September 17th. Location: Seaport World Trade Center. May 27 at 4:09pm.
- Professional Networking Site:** Check out our new professional networking site for procurement and supply chain professionals. <http://www.purchasingbizconnect.com> May 27 at 4:02pm.
- Smart Sourcing Summit:** Managing Risk in Uncertain Times. On October 13-14, 2009 at the Sofitel Chicago O'Hare Hotel in Rosemont, Ill., Purchasing magazine will convene its first ever Smart Sourcing Summit to provide industrial procu... Host: Purchasing Magazine. Time: 12:30PM Tuesday, October 13th.

Figure 17. Purchasing magazine's, Facebook wall page.

From: *Purchasing* magazine, by Facebook.com, 2009, retrieved July 20, 2009 from <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/pages/Waltham-MA/Purchasing-Magazine/76387806410?ref=ts>.

The magazine did place information about the Smart Sourcing Summit as well as another industry event on the wall of its Facebook page. Similar to what happened with Twitter, because of time constraints on the editorial staff, as of June 28, 2009, the

recommended steps to promote the Smart Sourcing Summit on Facebook were not executed.

### *Blogs*

Blogs were also one of the digital/social media outlets that the magazine was encouraged to use. B2B marketers, at times, have issues attracting readers to their blogs. Ramos (2008) attributes this to the practice of using blogs more as a selling tool or white paper. This held true for *Purchasing* magazine. The editors were encouraged to start conversations about the subject matter for the Smart Sourcing Summit in their blogs. They were prompted to write the blogs in a conversational manner, to talk about the “hot” topics being covered and the industry leaders that would be presenting at the Smart Sourcing Summit. The intent was to start back-and-forth conversations, to see if the topics being presented were of interest to their niche audience.

A blog was sent out regarding the Smart Sourcing Summit from two editors who are participating in the conference. Because of time constraints, a marketing manager wrote the blog for the editors. In most respects, it was written more as an advertisement for the Smart Sourcing Summit than as a tool to start conversations about the Smart Sourcing Summit. As of July 28, 2009 no further actions have been taken in regard to blogs.

### *Email blasts*

Promotional email blasts regarding the summit were sent out to the U.S. circulation list, which consists of 60,000 names. A sample of the promotion email is seen in Figure 18. The magazine was encouraged to add “Please follow us on Twitter and Facebook.” To gain greater reach, it was suggested that the magazine send an additional,

more geo-targeted promotion to a circulation list within a one hundred mile radius of the event location. The reasoning behind this was that during these economically challenged times, with travel budgets reduced a more locally targeted list might draw greater numbers. The week of August 3, 2009, an email blast, geo-targeted within a 100 mile radius of the event location, will be sent out to prospective attendees. The promotional piece will include “please follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

You are receiving this email as a subscriber or registrant to Purchasing Magazine, or a Purchasing eNewsletter.  
To stop receiving event or similar promotional emails, simply send an email to the unsubscribe address at the bottom of this email.

The Smart Sourcing Summit:
Managing Risk in Uncertain Times

**OCTOBER 13-14, 2009** • Sofitel Chicago O'Hare Hotel, Rosemont, IL
 
Purchasing

**AGENDA**

**LOCATION + VENUE**

**REGISTRATION**

On October 13-14, 2009 at the Sofitel Chicago O'Hare Hotel in Rosemont, Ill., Purchasing magazine will convene its first ever **Smart Sourcing Summit** to provide industrial procurement professionals with must-have information about global, national, and regional economies, commodity pricing and supply conditions, and critical strategies among top-performing supply management organizations.

Delegate seats are available at recession-busting rates, discounts are available for multiple delegates who register at the same time, and early-bird registrants (before July 5, 2009) will receive an additional \$100 discount off their total order. *For complete details, please visit [www.purchasing.com/smartsourcingsummit](http://www.purchasing.com/smartsourcingsummit)*

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FEATURED PRESENTATIONS

Figure 18. A sample promotional email blast sent out for the Smart Sourcing Summit.

From: PDF of an email blast from *Purchasing* magazine.

### *Metrics and measurement tools*

As the research indicated, event marketers are facing challenges in trying to track and measure data for digital/social media. The measurement tools for these marketing vehicles are relatively new and are based on concepts such as engagement and conversations. Although there are challenges, tracking of metrics is not impossible to do.

*Purchasing*, as earlier seen in Figure 10, can use TweetReach as a Twitter metrics tool. This metric tool reveals the number of Tweets the magazine has gotten in regard to

the Smart Sourcing Summit. It reached 433 people via 5 Tweets. It also revealed that there were 0 Replies, as well as, 0 ReTweets. The magazine was encouraged to use the “reached” numbers as a marketing metric in upcoming promotional pieces. As of June 28, 2009 this metric had not been used to promote the Smart Sourcing Summit. It was also suggested to the magazine to create a TweetDeck to monitor in real-time what followers of both Twitter and Facebook are talking about. The TweetDeck as of June 28, 2009 had not been created.

One item the magazine did create is a Splitweet account. This tool allows all of the magazine’s Twitter streams to be available in one window. It can be designed to send messages to one or more Twitter accounts. It also has a column that shows messages from people who have responded to Tweets. As seen in Figure 19 *Purchasing* has a Splitweet account. This Splitweet screen shot shows that the magazine is following Tweets from both the Smart Sourcing Summit and purbizconnect.com. The replies tab can be used as a metric tool to track replies back to certain posts.



The screenshot displays the Splitweet interface for the account 'anne.millenporter@reedbusiness.com'. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Help, Downloads, Blog, About, and Contact. Below this is a header for 'Splitweet beta' with the tagline 'Twitter multi account manager & brand monitor'. The main content area is titled 'What are you doing?' and includes a tweet composition box with a 'Tweet it!' button and a 'Tweet audience: ~364 followers' indicator. Below the composition area are navigation tabs: Dashboard, Replies, Direct messages, Favorites, and Brand mentions. The 'Showing' section lists several accounts: PaulETeague, purBIZconnect, PurchasingMag, smartsourci, and stundza1948. The 'Tweets you follow' section shows a list of tweets with their respective avatars and content. The 'Your brands' mentions' section shows a list of tweets mentioning 'Purchasing.com' or related terms, with their respective avatars and content.

Figure 19. Purchasing magazine's sample Splitweet account page.

From: Anne Millen Porter's Splitweet account, by Splitweet, 2009, retrieved July 24, 2009, from <http://splitweet.com/>.

Facebook, as reported in the research, has two free analytic tools, Facebook Grader and Facebook Insights. Facebook Grader can be executed by anyone who goes to the Facebook Grader site. This tool measures reach and authority of the Facebook page. Facebook Insights needs to be executed by the administrator of the site. This tool measures metrics such as page views, wall posts, and discussions threads. As of June 28, 2009, these tools were not being used by *Purchasing* to track metrics.

Blogs are one of the most difficult digital/social media outlets with regard to metric tracking. The metrics are based primarily on participation. For *Purchasing*, it was

almost impossible to track. Only one blog went out during the 4 week time period and participation was minimal.

As seen from the limited amount of metrics and measurements used by the magazine, they are trending similar to what was revealed in the Digital + Exhibiting Market Insights 2009 North American report. The study found, “Despite the increasing use of virtual media, less than half of respondents can qualify how it is benefiting their organization” (CEIR, 2009, p13).

### Conclusion

When the case study began on May 28, 2009 there were 4 registered attendees. As of June 28, 2009 there were 27. Although this is not a huge increase in registrants, it is a noteworthy increase. Can this be attributed to the use of digital/social media as an addition to the magazine’s marketing mix? The answer is, yes. A small number of the registrants can be attributed to the use of digital/social media. In mid-May, a question was added to the registration page asking how the registrant had learned about the Summit. Four registrants said they saw the Smart Sourcing Summit on *Purchasing’s* Facebook page and six saw it on Twitter.

Can this case study draw any concrete conclusion regarding the use of digital/social media as a viable marketing tool for a B2B media company to drive event registration? The results from this case study may make it appear to be a debatable marketing tool because of the numerous constraints involved.

Some of the constraints noted earlier make it difficult to definitively draw conclusions from the case study. Some of the noted constraints occurred or evolved during the case study. The timeframe of only a 4-week period merely gave a partial view

of the effects that adding digital/social media has had on *Purchasing's* marketing efforts. Although the magazine has Facebook and Twitter accounts, the marketing person responsible for administrating the pages was unable to devote significant time to this initiative. Her responsibilities have increased due to staff reductions related to the economic downturn, so she is expected to do more with less, and what may be a priority one day is set aside because of a more burning issue. Because of these time constraints, the use and choice of digital/social media outlets may not be as well thought out as they could be with a larger marketing staff. In the rush to meet deadlines, information may be placed on the sites, which may not always be engaging, nor does it tend to serve as a conversation starter, as seen in the lack of ReTweets. As noted, internal RBI IT rules prohibit putting information on the websites, such as, "Follow us on Twitter and/or Facebook". And lastly, the economy is still playing a large role in all-around budget cuts, including travel and expense budgets. The decrease in travel and expense budgets may affects attendance in spite of best marketing efforts

This being taken into consideration, *Purchasing* magazine, despite what may seem like baby steps in regard to the use and acceptance of digital/social media, is actually among the norm. The current situation in the B2B publishing market place is that a shift is occurring in customer marketing priorities, resulting in more advertising dollars moving online. In addition to brand advertising, companies are looking for integrated marketing programs that give them a measurable ROI on their investment. Specific industry related studies show that 91% of Business Decision Makers (BDMs) state that when they see the same message in multiple media vehicles such as trade magazines,

events and online products, they are more likely to be recognized (American Business Media, 2007).

There are opportunities for B2B publishers, to meet the new marketing needs, by creating new programs that combine traditional print and innovative new online technologies such as digital/social media. These outlets need to be integrated into the marketing mix in imaginative and non-traditional ways to sustain and create new revenue streams.

Update. On July 28, 2009 *Purchasing* agreed to try using Twitter again to drive registration for the Smart Sourcing Summit. They were open to recommendations on how to improve their Tweets with the intent of generating greater ReTweets and in turn, drive registrations for the event. The following are samples of what was Tweeted: (a) “Look who is speaking at Purchasing magazine’s Smart Sourcing Summit! Scott Singer, CPO, Rio Tinto. Please ReTweet! <http://bit.ly/1hUg0j>”, and (b) “Are you curious when the North American economy will rebound? Find out at the Smart Sourcing Summit. Please ReTweet! <http://bit.ly/1hUg0j>” (Twitter.com, 2009).

What was also implemented the week of August 3, 2009 was a geo-targeted email blast to potential attendees within a 100 mile radius of the event location. The email promotion included “please follow us on Twitter and Facebook”. No further actions have been taken regarding the magazine’s Facebook page or the other recommendations to enhance their blogs.

### Recommendations

To establish a best practices scenario for the future use of digital/social media for in-person events numerous steps should be taken. One of the first steps is that an

organization needs to be willing to make an investment in the integration of digital/social media into the traditional marketing mix. Part of the investment is having dedicated administrators for the digital/social media outlets. This is important to ensure that the proper outlets are being chosen to fit the needs of the organization and to ensure that engagement and conversations with target audiences are taking place. Once the audience is engaged and two-way conversations are underway, it is more likely that the digital/social media tools will start to work and attract niche communities.

Numerous recommendations were made in the results section of this case study regarding tools to use for outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, and blogs. The recommended adaptation of tools should be applied to help to create Fans, Followers, and loyal readers. These tools should be well understood, applied and metrics followed to report ROI and prove the value these tools bring to the marketer. Tracking metrics is essential to ensure that the company's inbound marketing strategies are working.

Digital/social media is still in a somewhat early adoption stage. Event marketers are trying to understand what they should be doing and which correct digital/social media tools will best suit them and their customers. What marketers are realizing is that these new mediums are becoming more widely used, and are not just a fad. These new mediums are changing some traditional marketing rules and ROI and Return on Objective (ROO) are no longer the only goals. Additional focus, when using digital/social media, is on building communities and engaging audiences. Because of this, they are becoming an important marketing tool for businesses. There are numerous tools to help marketers navigate their way through this new frontier. Websites such as emarketer.com were created to help marketing people understand digital/social media tools in the areas of

research, trends, analysis, and emerging technologies. Event associations such as the Interactive Advertising Bureau, Meeting Professionals International, the Event Marketing Institute and the Center for Exhibit Industry Research are educating their audiences on what tools are available, how to apply them and how to measure ROI.

No longer is the question "Will you be using digital/social media as an event marketing tool" but rather, "When will you be using digital/social media as an event marketing tool?" What will become as common as turning on a computer to start a work day will be checking a company's Facebook Page every morning and looking at how many ReTweets the last Tweet received.

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