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**EXPANDING THE
IMPACT OF
COMMUNICATIONS
THROUGH
DIGITAL INFLUENCE**

Ogilvy North America

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*Expanding the Impact of Communications
through Digital Influence*

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Improving Sales Force Performance

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INTRODUCTION

“It is not the strong, nor the intelligent, who survive, but those who are quickest to adapt.”

Charles Darwin

This recession will drive meaningful, lasting innovation for marketing and communications. You would expect marketers to retrench into the tried and true. Not this time. Digital communications, Internet-anywhere and the shattering of mass media into a highly segmented universe are all a bell that cannot be un-rung.

How can we find more effective and efficient ways to reach customers at a time when the Internet continues to change our lives and traditional media—paid or earned—isn't enough to change opinions? We need to engage and mobilize advocates—regular people who are willing to speak up about the issues, ideas and brands they care about. We need a new form of “earned media” driven by the guy sitting right next to you—your friend, colleague, family member or simply a peer who knows what kind of TV or car to buy, or why you should care about your carbon footprint.

Social media amplifies and accelerates this word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) and creates a new force—digital influence—that has the power to build brand preference, develop a groundswell around an issue and elect presidents. We need to change as marketers to use it well. We need to adopt new skills and new methods to impact our businesses.

Anyone can get started in social media. That's the easy part. But where do you go next, and how do you apply this new discipline at a time when we cannot afford to do anything but drive business effectively? Read on. The point of this paper is to serve as a guide to innovating right now—both to succeed in the recession and build your brand and business for the long haul.

- Doing More with Less: A Point of View on Marketing in a Recession
- Optimizing Production Expenditure and Creative Assets
- Digital in a Downturn: Smart Strategies for Tough Times
- Turning Shoppers into Buyers
- Improving Sales Force Performance

These booklets are available on www.ogilvyonrecession.com

BIG CHANGES

Social media-driven word of mouth (WOM) is a more efficient form of marketing, producing both sales and advocacy with long-term brand and reputation gains. Digital platforms have empowered the average consumer to both share and find opinions. They have also turbocharged the phenomenon of influencer marketing. Social media makes new influencers every day, and it amplifies and carries their voices farther than ever before.

This recession will reveal the selling and brand-building strength of social media-driven WOM marketing programs. It will also positively transform marketing for the foreseeable future. The power and efficiency comes from three big truths:

- Influencer and network marketing target more effectively than any type of mass marketing
- WOM scales outward to reach more people with more relevance over time, especially when fueled by engaging advertising
- The deeper engagement of most WOM programs builds brand affinity at the same time it drives action

A Useful Guide

One way to be “engaging” is to provide something people can use in their lives. This guide not only delivers a point of view on communications and marketing in a recession, but also suggests concrete steps you can take today.

How can brands use social media-based WOM marketing effectively? What are the 12 things that every marketer can do today to start applying this innovation to their business? How can performance be measured?

Social Media and Recession Drive Change

What has changed? And how will the collision of the worldwide recession and social media drive a new form of marketing and communications?

“When economic hard times loom, we tend to retreat to our village,” says renowned Harvard Business School Professor of Marketing John A. Quelch. But look how much our village has changed since the last recession.

Online social networks such as Facebook first sprouted as the media villages of the young. Now they house hundreds of millions, and on Facebook and MySpace—each boasting 120 million members—half are over 35. While the popularity of a given social media village varies by geography (for example, Bebo is king in the UK, Friendster is the most popular in the Philippines, and Facebook, LinkedIn and MySpace are leaders in the US), there is no doubt the online urbanization push continues, from the wilderness of stand-alone websites to the cities of social networks.

Tribes of Mind

These online “tribes of mind” will offer comfort in an economic storm. Public relations now means listening to these tribes, then entering into a conversation with them if they will allow you. These social media villagers can serve as an avant-garde, a forward army that loves and surrounds your brand, or they can chase you from the village as a monster, digital flames in hand.

Social networks are but one manifestation of social media—a cultural umbrella that includes blogging, microblogging through Twitter, video creation and sharing through YouTube and Blip.tv, and tagging and bookmarking in del.icio.us. There are communities formed around photography in Flickr, mobile applications for the new iPhone and Google’s Android, widgets from Gigya and Clearspring, and product reviews from Yelp and SuggestionBox.com. The common thread linking these platforms is that they allow us all to be content publishers, recommenders and potential influencers.

New Influencers

In a world of 150 million blogs, thousands of social networks, and an explosion of consumer-driven reviews, your and my potential influence has grown exponentially. We have developed new ways to gauge that influence and know which of the new “strangers with expertise” can be helpful to our brands if embraced in the right way. What has created the room for these new influencers?

A Trend in Trust

Ask anyone worldwide how much they trust their bank or car company, and you will quickly see the impact of the recession on a trend that has been growing for years. According to the *McKinsey Quarterly*, “European and US consumers, when asked how much they trust certain institutions to act in the best interest of society, place large global corporations at the bottom of the list—beneath nongovernmental organizations, small regional companies, the United Nations, labor unions, the media, and government.” And that was in July 2007, before the recession.

Trust in both marketing and editorial sources continues to decline. A Sacred Heart University poll reported early last year, simply: “In 2003, 27.4% of the poll’s respondents said that they trusted all or most of what the MSM (mainstream media) reports. In 2007 that number plummeted to just 19.6%.”

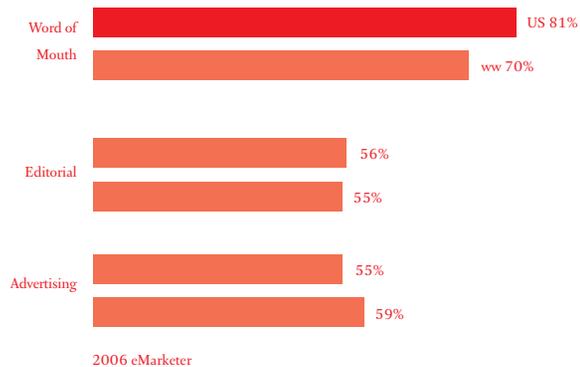
And according to Yankelovich, “75% of people don’t believe that companies tell the truth in advertisements.” What does that leave? WOM. Peer-to-peer recommendations continue to rise as the most trusted source for many types of information, from travel choices to health and wellness issues to purchase decisions. While the majority of WOM happens offline (80%), it is that online sharing and recommendation within social media that can scale and reach beyond even the Dunbar Number of 150 people. (Robin Dunbar was a British anthropologist who theorized that the maximum number of people with whom one human being could have a social relationship was about 150.)

Trust builds brand loyalty. That drives repeat purchase and advocacy. Brands can take positive advantage of this trust in two powerful ways:

- Engage with customers and influencers in a way that will activate them to share authentic WOM—passing something of interest to a friend, recommending a product, contributing content and opinion they care about.
- Train the brand organization to operate in a more open and transparent way so that customer dialogue becomes the norm. A brand gets “trust points” just for listening to its customers. Those points grow when the brand actually engages in a two-way dialogue and takes actions based upon customer input.

While other brands try to outspend their way to trust, the smart recessionary marketer will add WOM to the mix to make all of their marketing more trustworthy and impactful.

What's the most trustworthy source for purchase ideas?



Authenticity Matters

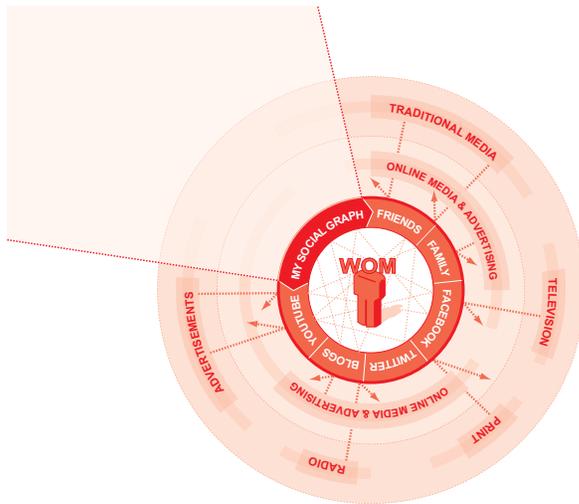
You cannot “game” WOM. In fact, the dangers of trying to do so are legendary. Marketers pretending to be grassroots Wal-Mart customers were quickly “outed” in the Wal-Marting Across America episode. In 2008, comment spammers working on behalf of a major electronics manufacturer made the mistake of inundating popular tech blogs with overly effusive product comments, earning the ire of the world’s most influential blogs. These clumsy, and possibly unethical, attempts to influence consumers reflect a culture of marketing that must change to succeed. We need to connect authentically with people, not rely on multiple impressions by “any means possible.”

The Personal Message Shield

Subject to as many as 5,000 commercial messages a day, each of us has erected our own personal message shield. We block out messages flung at us from traditional media, which rarely has our full attention anymore as we jump from activity to activity. That might be flipping channels. It might be carrying on a Twitter “multilogue” while watching a game on TV. (Twitter allows us all to broadcast our 140-character thoughts to hundreds of followers, elevating this platform to a notch above simple dialogue, to a multilogue.)

“...the interruption-disruption model is dying out, thanks to shifting consumer trends...”

Geoff Ramsey, eMarketer



We surround ourselves with our own “social graph” —our network of family, friends, Facebook groups, and blog and Twitter followers. They become our filter for relevance. Brands that provide engagement value and connect via our social graph earn our attention. This is not as simple as delivering advertising within social networks to reach us. In fact, marketers are quickly learning that pumping traditional online advertising, by itself, into Facebook and MySpace is a losing proposition. Advertising must now develop engaging experiences for users in these environments to earn their attention.

“Online social network users were three times more likely to trust their peers’ opinions over advertising when making purchase decisions.”

“Social Networking Sites: Defining Advertising Opportunities in a Competitive Landscape,”
JupiterResearch, March 2007

Three Steps to Take Today: Keeping Up with the Changes

What can any marketer do today—especially in recessionary times—to better understand the difference between message-driven marketing and conversation-based marketing? How about anticipating the next changes in social media that will affect their brand?

1. *Create a personal social media dashboard.* RSS readers have gotten a lot more sophisticated. Now you can pull hundreds of feeds from blogs and other sources into a manageable “dashboard.” We have built one with Netvibes technology specifically designed for marketers. Set up your account now at www.thedailyinfluence.com.
2. *Set up a listening post for your brand.* If you want to know what people are saying already and prime your team to engage authentically, there is no other way to start. That means listening to what people are saying not just about your brand but the topics that your brand intersects with across blogs, forums, Twitter, review sites and more. Ogilvy provides our Listening Post powered by Radian6. And you can set up your own “listening post-lite” by using tools like The Daily Influence.
3. *Audit your multimedia profile.* Search for your brand, category and topics in YouTube, Truveo and Flickr. What videos have you published? How about your competitors (or even detractors)? Have people published pictures, or is there an image-based social network that is relevant to your brand?

INFLUENCER MARKETING

Mass marketing reaches a large number of people, but with less predictable results than in pre-Internet days. Some people become aware, fewer remember, fewer still may take an action given another brand experience. We cast a wide net and hope to drive a few down the customer journey funnel.

Influencer marketing relies on finding relevant influencers and offering them a brand experience they want to talk about with their network of connections. This is a highly efficient and cost-effective strategy ideal for today’s marketplace. *Network marketing* activates affinity groups in which the potential impact of the group can be tremendous, even though there may be no one person who could be considered influential. Mom bloggers are a great example of a broad, highly influential network that is not dominated by rock-star influencers.

Who’s a relevant influencer or relevant group? Someone who has an interest in a brand-related idea or topic and whom people listen to and connect with. In influencer and network marketing, we look for people who have an affinity for and interest in the product or an idea related to the product. If we are trying to introduce charge cards (not credit, not debit), we might reach people who blog or contribute to forums on family budgeting during a recession or around life-moments—those times when we all must spend money on such things as vacation, buying a car, or sending a child to college. If we want to sell orange juice, we will look for those brunch and home-entertaining enthusiasts online. Of course, we will also look for any existing brand fans whom we’ll find through their words and actions that demonstrate their interests—their blog posts, the pictures and videos they create and/or post, the Facebook groups they belong to, and the content they tag.

Influencer Audits and Conversation Maps

Relatively inexpensive listening programs help you find relevant influencers and the conversations to pay attention to or dive into. Our 360° Digital Influence team has developed a methodology for finding and engaging with influencers to activate WOM. Using online information, from inbound links to unique monthly visits to frequency of posting and more, we can plot new influencers along a matrix of relevance and influence for any particular brand.

Using the same technology and methods we apply to our Live Listening Posts, we can “map” the conversations happening throughout consumer-generated media, from blogs to message boards to Twitter and more. Technologies like Radian6 and Visible Technologies help collect and sort all that is being said about brands and the topics related to them. The 360° Digital Influence team can then analyze and find the opportunities for brands. Can an airline jump into the conversation about family reunions? Can a software company contribute to a conversation about Internet safety? The answer is often yes—if the brand has something of authentic value to offer participants.

Three Steps to Take Today: Know Your Influencers

How can you know who might be influential for you? In the chaos of 150 million blogs, which 50 can help your brand? Here are three more tips to help you get started with more efficient marketing now.

1. *Find five bloggers who are relevant to your brand.*
Using a blog search engine like Technorati, Google Blogs or Icerocket, search for your brand or category. Check out how many inbound links a blogger has. That’s one indication of how influential they may be.
2. *Search Facebook groups for...groups.* Chances are that employees or brand fans have already established Facebook groups for you or your competition. Take note of who started each group. You might be surprised.
3. *Search for your brand on Tweetscan.* Twitter has grown some 700% this year, and while comparatively it may still serve a niche user base, it is a vocal and potentially highly influential group of people.

DEEPENING ENGAGEMENT

Reaching 50 influencers or a few hundred people who share an affinity for potluck dinners (think Tupperware or Rubbermaid) is far from the endgame. The point of reaching influencers is to activate them to share WOM. We need to activate and amplify their voices to make the message scale. Walter Carl from Northeastern University established rates for generational pass-along known as the G2X model. Given a certain context, initial influencers (G0) will have a product experience and be asked to engage others. They may have conversations with 12 people in G1. Each of those 12 people may have conversations with 4.14 people (G2). Suddenly, each initial influencer has catalyzed over 60 conversations.

We need to do two things to activate and add fuel to the influencer fire:

1. Offer influencers some type of engagement value so they will care enough to share with their network
2. Extend the reach of this engagement through strategic advertising

Engagement Value Is the New Big Idea

Jan Leth, Vice-Chairman, Global Digital Creative at Ogilvy, suggests adding a section to every creative brief forcing us all to consider what he calls the *engagement value*—what value we can offer people so they will spend their time with us and share information about us with their social graph.

We can offer value in the following ways:

- *By being of use.* The American Express Mobile Concierge from Singapore is of use to members and provides value over and above the core services from American Express.
- *By offering people social capital they can spend with their network.* We did that with Lipton when we gave bloggers something significant they could give away to their readers (bicycles). Product previews work well here, too.
- *By offering people a spotlight.* When we feature bloggers in an aggregation around a brand or brand topic, we shine the spotlight on them and send them additional traffic. Pulling together 100 Olympic athletes to blog and vlog from Beijing raised awareness and drove traffic to their individual blogs in a way they could not have achieved on their own.
- *By delivering on a social good.* TOMS Shoes does that every day with its One for One campaign (see www.TOMSshoes.com).

Strategic Advertising Fuels WOM

Yes, regular people talk about advertising. Many ad campaigns, such as Axe's, are designed to be provocative and drive talk. But that's not the type of advertising we're talking about. If you want to get more people involved ("engaged") in social network-based discussion about travel-hacking tips for a tight economy on behalf of Virgin America, one way is to take crowd-sourced tips and deliver them through an ad buy across influencer blogs and relevant communities. Not display advertising, but content. This extends the engagement out through the ad network window and draws more people in.

Effective WOM must be authentic and rooted in true interest for the consumer who is doing the sharing or talking. We can raise awareness through content-based advertising, but if the experience we are driving folks toward does not engage them in some authentic way, we will not convert—and worse, we will earn their anger for being just another “interruptive” advertiser.

Three Steps to Take Today: Shareability

How can you make it easy for influencers to pass something along to friends? If you want to instigate WOM and get yourself and your organization ready to try more, here are some ideas you can implement right away.

1. *Evaluate your site’s social media optimization (SMO).* Making it easy for people to share something of yours—your website, product microsite or news—is key to improving shareability. Count the social objects on your site—RSS feeds, send-this-to-a-friend feature, bookmarking icons, embeddable video. Check out Joshua Porter’s *Designing for the Social Web* for more.
2. *Find out where to start.* Every business is different. If you are not sure where to start in social media, visit www.yoursocialmediascore.com. You’ll see how your organization ranks in “readiness” and get practical suggestions for next steps.
3. *Check out widgets for engagement value.* Browse through Widgetbox, Netvibes or the iPhone App Store to see how people are creating engagement value in a format that can be delivered via advertising networks (or that is a new form of advertising). If it isn’t engaging, the widgets don’t fly off the shelves.

Deeper Engagement Builds Brand Affinity at the Same Time It Drives Action

This recession will not be like others. Marketers cannot retrench around older, proven models, because the effectiveness of those models is irrevocably eroding while, paradoxically, using those models is becoming more expensive. McKinsey offers this insight:

“New communications vehicles such as the Internet, social networking, and mobile devices are gaining scale and delivering effective results. Meanwhile, classic media such as television have become, at a minimum, much more costly. Most marketing plans therefore try to meet their objectives cost-effectively by using a mix of traditional and new vehicles, with the latter typically accounting for 10 to 15 percent of spending.”

What most often happens in a downturn is that brands walk away from brand building in favor of just selling. This is a trap. “Just selling” quickly devolves into a price or promotion war. It assumes that consumers care for nothing but the lowest price, when in fact they might be searching for the best value for their dollar. “Value” is often delivered through the promise and reality of the brand.

Effective use of social media is the best way to build a strong brand bond and drive people to action. Consumers want brands that listen to them. Through Listening Posts, we can hear what consumers are saying publicly across social media, from brand “gushes” to brand complaints. Those brands that listen and respond—as have Zappos, Comcast, Ford and Lenovo—will earn brand loyalty and advocacy.

The deeper the level of engagement with customers, the more likely brands are to earn that loyalty. Think of your own experience as a customer. When you spend more time with a brand, you become more invested in that brand, provided the experience is a good one. If you actually put the effort into a conversation with peers about why the Rainbow vacuum cleaner really does clean better (I am a Rainbow fan), you become more invested still. This deepening level of investment leads to deeper loyalty and advocacy. This is critical in a recession.

In this time of uncertainty, we will increasingly look to our peers not just for recommendations but also to corroborate our decisions. Building a core of brand evangelists can establish that hub of authentic conversation that makes all marketing more trustworthy and effective.

The simplest form of engagement is brand entertainment in the form of a video or game experience involving the brand. The deepest form is true co-creation, wherein brands invite customers to help make a product or service better. Dell and Starbucks are using similar platforms to solicit co-creation ideas from their customers, and they will earn brand loyalty and advocacy for their efforts. (Most WOM is based upon the primary assumption that the product or service is a good one, something which is true of both Dell and Starbucks.)

Engagement Is the New “Creative”

In this recession, it will not be enough to create an entertaining advertising campaign. We should change the term “creative brief” to “engagement brief.” The innovation and creativity made possible by inviting people to take part are limitless. What can you do today to engage with your customers?



Three Steps to Take Today: Engaging in Social Media

After you have listened, what are some easy steps to engaging via social media? How can you stay smart and stretch your thinking?

1. *Check out the competition.* Brands are experimenting right and left in social media. You can check out this wiki for an ever-growing list of examples (and add yours): <http://wiki.beingpeterkim.com>.
2. *Get ideas at WOMMA.* The Word of Mouth Marketing Association is the leader in the discipline (we are members, and therefore biased). You can visit the website for case studies in social media-based WOMM: www.womma.org.
3. *Add “engagement value” as a field in your creative briefs.* When writing up that strategic brief or creative brief for your team or your agency, add a field that asks: “What is the value we can provide so that people will actually care enough to spend time and energy with us?”

PRACTICAL MEASUREMENT

Social media-driven WOM has become a measured discipline. Ogilvy is a governing member of the Word of Mouth Marketing Association, and innovations in measurement are reviewed every year at the association’s Research and Measurement Symposium. Social media-based WOM campaigns are inherently measurable. The evidence shows up in blogs, social networks and review sites every day.

Several best-practice models for understanding the impact of WOM were presented at this year’s symposium. They include:

- *Customer Value Matrix*—the bottom-line benefits of new-customer acquisition and the reduction of acquisition costs
- *Net Promoter Economics*—the value that increasing one’s Net Promoter score has for the growth and revenue performance of the company
- *Social Value of Opinion Leaders*—the value “influencers” bring to sales and conversion
- *Conversation Value Model*—how positive WOM drives new customers via the G2X model

A Marketer-Friendly Approach to Measurement: Conversation Impact™

To be able to guide brand marketers and communications professionals, we have developed a new, innovative yet down-to-earth measurement model called Conversation Impact. To understand performance measurement while programs are in the field and to evaluate overall effectiveness, Conversation Impact inventories and values all the WOM activity generated by a particular campaign.

What if a particular strategy could increase—within a relevant audience—brand preference and intent to purchase? What if WOMM could increase the effectiveness of your advertising and other marketing and communications programs? What if it could extend “relevant reach” and drive customers to action?

Conversation Impact demonstrates how the best social media-based programs can deliver. Adopting a performance measurement model is critical to making WOMM programs work within traditional marketing organizations. We must reach a common definition of success if we are to push our use of the discipline forward.

New Public Relations for the Recession

The recession forces efficiency upon us from every direction. While we cannot go backward to rely on old marketing models, we need to explore and adopt only those innovations that have a clear model for evaluation. As David Ogilvy put it, “We sell, or else.” Social media and WOMM programs sell, and they build brand. That combination defines “value marketing,” with which all of our brands get the most out of their marketing efforts today without undermining their future value.

New public relations is defined by WOMM and social media-driven programs. While there is a lot of wisdom in the notion that brands that continue to market during a recession come out the other side stronger, there’s even more wisdom to switching strategies from a purely paid model to a new form of earned media—one that authentically engages people and uses paid media to drive more engagement. We not only need to strengthen brands; we need our brands and businesses to survive. To do that, we must sell, or else.

Influencer and network marketing drive sales and conversion today while building that brand equity through the strengths of engagement and conversation. That’s a deeper brand connection, one which will survive even this recession.

ADDENDUM:
OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is not a marketing discipline. It is a loose collection of platforms, technologies and behaviors. Social media marketing is, at best, a misnomer.

Ogilvy's 360° Digital Influence team consists of specialists in social media. We quickly defined a strategic approach to using Web 2.0, social media, and digital marketing platforms. When social media is used strategically, it is called WOMM.

Brands that want to use social media effectively in the current recession will reap more measurable benefit from adopting a strategic approach.



We create comprehensive digital strategy for clients who want to engage customers or constituents in direct conversation. It starts with listening to customers, identifying the most influential voices and then creating compelling engagement programs in social media that get people talking and sharing.



Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide

Listen, Plan, Engage and Measure

All of our programs start by listening to what people are saying about a brand, an issue, or a set of brand-related topics in blogs, message boards, social networks and review sites online. This intelligence is key to deploying any program online and can provide invaluable insight into how consumers think and talk about brands and issues.

We have three basic listening programs:

1. Conversation Map
2. Live Listening Post
3. Crisis Monitoring

Planning

Like the traditions of strategic planning in communications firms and connections planning in advertising agencies, we have a process for planning influencer and WOM programs. Based on listening to conversations online, we plan an engagement strategy—how we can authentically involve people online so they will “care to share” with their peers and spread WOM. Engagement plans focus on providing value to users and inviting them to participate with a brand or organization in some way. Engagement plans are highly creative, yet firmly based in strategy.

The biggest step in the planning process is our *Influencer Audits and Network Maps*. Influencer Audits identify the people with the most potential influence for our engagement program. These can be high-profile bloggers, individual mom bloggers somewhere in the world, or “pro-am” (part professional, part amateur) experts in a B2B market. Anyone can be an influencer given a certain context. We look well beyond the obvious. Network Maps do the same thing at the social network and community level, indicating which affinity groups we

can connect with. Both the Influencers and the Networks are mapped to specific engagement plans. We not only identify who is important but map out how we will reach and involve them online.

Search has changed the way everyone finds information online. Every 360° Digital Influence strategy includes a *Visibility Plan* that combines search engine optimization with an overall content plan that covers multimedia (audio, video, images) distribution. The goal is to make our content and supportive third-party content as visible as possible via search engines.

Engagement

All engagement programs involve users in different ways, from very simple and superficial participation to the deepest levels of engagement in cocreation and community. “Engagement” describes our ability to hold a conversation with people, to invite them to participate with a brand or issue, or to motivate them to cocreate a product, service or experience. It’s what sparks sustained WOM.

Some engagement programs solicit and make use of consumer-generated media (CGM). Many require the development of a Web 2.0 Web experience specifically designed to be shareable and to encourage participation (vs. simply deliver content).

The best engagement programs are based on our overall digital influence strategy in order to meet a stated communication goal or business objective.

Examples of engagement programs:

- *Quaker Oatmeal Living Proof Weekend*: A brand summit experience with 16 highly influential health and fitness bloggers alongside the Quaker brand team at Quaker Oats Company HQ.
- *Kaplan University Blog and Aggregator*: A blog and conversation aggregator for Kaplan University’s unique POV about “adaptive education.”
- *Lenovo’s “Voices of the Olympics”*: 100 Olympic athletes blogging and video blogging their Olympic experience, all brought together in a social media aggregation site.
- *Intel’s Modder’s Challenge*: A crowd-sourced competition for the computer modification community to build the best computer “mod.”
- *Lipton Tea’s Find Your Youthfulness Collaboration*: A cocreated contest experience with 30 influential health and wellness bloggers to create custom micro-contests on their individual blogs.