

What The Hell Does Social Media Marketing Think It Is?

by [Lyndon Antcliff](#), 8 July 2009



Social media marketing (SMM) on sites like Facebook, Twitter, Stumbleupon and Digg has exploded in the past year. But what exactly is it? And what's in it for you? And what's in it for you? Let social media marketing expert and the man behind [Magnetic Web Content](#), [Lyndon Antcliff](#), gently introduce you to the subject and perhaps change your marketing life.

Earlier this year [police closed Liverpool St Station](#) in the UK after 13,000 people 'flash mobbed' the station, mimicking a [TV advert for a phone company](#) by all dancing to music playing on their MP3s. The idea for the flash mob was spread on [facebook](#).

It doesn't matter if the flash mob idea was planned by professional marketers or happened 'organically'. The original advert inspired it, people loved it enough to travel across the country to take part, and Facebook allowed it to go viral. Oh, and T-Mobile got a lot of cheap marketing. Everybody was happy (even the policemen were smiling).

How social media works

When a user of a social media website discovers your story and likes it, they have the option to share it with their friends. This can cause the story to 'go viral' and be shared with even more people. This can deliver hundreds of thousands of visitors, launch a website or new product and bring significant [inbound links]. Those inbound links will directly bring your site visits and indirectly help your [SEO](#).

When using social media marketing the quality of your content is crucial, the better it is the more likely it will be passed around. We'll be talking about how to create such 'sticky' content in a future article.

Stunning content will still need a push to get going, the bigger your network on these social media sites the better. Your network can help you give it that initial push, increasing the chance of the story going viral.

Direct marketing will reduce the chances of a piece of web content going viral. People do not want to be sold to, the initial social media marketing push should be more about the conversation than the sale. A more aggressive sales angle can be added later, once the social media push has ended.

Keywords and SEO in social media

Your social media marketing can support your [search engine optimization \(SEO\)](#) by including target keywords in headlines. Then when your story goes viral and other sites use your headline to link back to your site – Bingo! - you get [keyword-rich inbound text links](#).

Smart SEOs love social media.

[Keyword research](#) can also be a great way to find ideas for stories that people want to read. One of the points of keyword research is that it shows you what people are searching for. Many is the social media marketer who goes to Wordtracker's [Keyword Question Tool](#) to look for inspiration.

Smart social media marketers love keyword research.

Bigger than TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and books

18-34 year olds now spend 4.3 times more time on social media than with TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and books combined. This is happening because social media allows users to talk to each other (which they prefer to being talked to) and choose for themselves what they see and read. Social media is a many-to-many conversation and not a one-to-many communication.

This conversational aspect of social media is crucial to understanding social media marketing because you can't fake a conversation and you can't automate it.

We'll now have a quick look at four gorillas of the social media jungle – [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [StumbleUpon](#) and [Digg](#).

Facebook is growing faster than Google ever did



[Facebook](#) is the biggest social site with over 250 million users. It took Google ten years to reach 50 million users – something Facebook achieved in just 19 months.

Facebook is the world's online scrapbook and meeting place in one. Friends, customers, stars, fans, and anyone who crashes the party use Facebook to stay in touch, swap photos, pay homage and talk to each other.

At a recent meeting, a client told me 'I don't use email anymore, I only use Facebook'. Everyone she communicates with (including for work) is on Facebook, so why leave?

Facebook is viral by default. For example, if I post and comment on a photo, my 'friends' will all see it on their Facebook pages. Then if any of them comment on my photo, then their comment, my photo and my comment will all be seen by their friends. With one post, I can start a conversation with my friends and all my friends' friends. That's powerful.

If you have a large network on Facebook and talk about something interesting enough or present a Facebook application (like a game or a quiz) that users like, then it can spread across the internet. This is what happened with the Liverpool St Station flash mob.

You can share your thoughts, ask questions and chat with Wordtrackers on the [Wordtracker facebook group](#).

Twitter might be the ultimate networking site



[Twitter](#) is a microblogging site on which each post is no more than 140 characters long. Friends, colleagues, admirers and the interested all 'follow' each other and can read each others' posts.

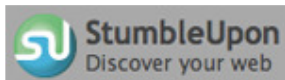
The result is a collection of thousands of different conversations and mini monologues. This can seem like a mad mess but that chaos is like the hum of chatter at a lively party - narrow your focus and you find that people are amusing each other, helping each other, sharing ideas, making connections and doing business.

[Dell makes money on Twitter](#) and offers its followers [exclusive Twitter deals](#).

A local coffee shop [@coffeegroundz](#) in Houston, Texas, used [Twitter to double its customers](#).

If you have something interesting to say then networking on Twitter can help your business. Try Wordtracker's [How to Twitter](#) to get started and follow [Wordtracker on Twitter](#).

StumbleUpon can deliver a steady stream of specialist visitors



[Stumbleupon](#) can seem peculiar at first. As a 'viewer', you 'stumble' via a browser toolbar and are shown seemingly random website pages. But they are selected by an [algorithm](#) that considers your tastes and others' 'votes'.

For many sites, StumbleUpon is amongst those that bring the most traffic. Below is a report showing referring traffic for a [sports injury](#) site and StumbleUpon is the biggest referrer with almost 19,000 visitors:

	Dimension: Source ▾	Visits ↓
1.	stumbleupon.com	18,933
2.	pponline.co.uk	10,861
3.	en.wikipedia.org	6,079
4.	itbs.info	5,449

StumbleUpon works via a toolbar which is used to vote 'up' or 'down' and categorize web pages whilst browsing. This allows StumbleUpon to both know what you like and show other stumblers content they will probably like. Stumblers can 'friend' each other, view and comment on each other's 'favourites' on 'blog' pages.

Below is a screen grab of the Stumbleupon toolbar on my browser:



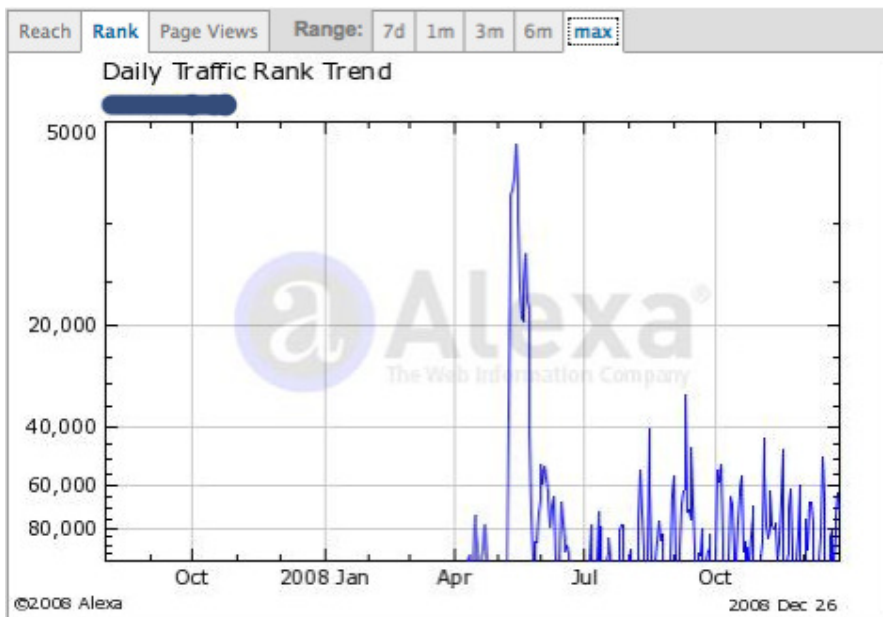
The result of this voting is a 'wisdom of crowds' that delivers wonderful web pages to stumblers. This can work for you because Stumblers befriend each other according to their tastes and interests. So whatever your website is about, if you have quality content and a network of friends on StumbleUpon then your site can go viral within a relevant specialist audience and bring thousands of visitors a day.

Digg can deliver millions of visitors



[Digg](#) is a user-generated news site. Users submit stories (as links to the page that hosts the story) and then others vote (digg) for stories they like. The stories with the most votes are listed on the front page and will receive anything from 10,000 to 50,000 visits, with many more reading just the headline and summary.

The graph below is taken from [Alexa](#) which measures and ranks traffic levels for all websites – the site ranked no.1 has the most traffic. It shows how a Digg front page was used to launch a website. The first spike is around 'front page day' and the rest is the momentum that followed:



A second Alexa traffic rank graph below shows how a national newspaper's website traffic rank increased from about 800th to almost 300th after they integrated Digg into their marketing:



You will have already worked out that a front page on Digg is much coveted. But watch out as you can get so much traffic that it brings your server down. And to get a Digg front page, forget all your traditional marketing and think like a journalist trying to create irresistible content.

How to win friends and influence people on social media sites

To get results from social media sites you need great content with great headlines that will grab readers' attention and make them want more.

To give your content a first 'push' you will also need a significant network of friends and contacts, or to be friendly with a 'connector' who has. Read my next article coming soon on Wordtracker to learn how to win friends and influence people on social media sites.



About Lyndon Antcliff

Lyndon Antcliff is a social media marketing specialist, who concentrates on creating viral content to build links. With a background in creative writing and over 11 years experience in web marketing, Antcliff offers website marketers training and consultancy in the art of seducing links out of websites. He lives with his wife and two teeny tiny children in Cornwall, runs [Magnetic Web Content](#), blogs at [Cornwall SEO](#) and [Tweets](#) a lot.