

# The Social Metropolis

Online is a teeming city -- and it's your job to navigate it

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-By Jimmy Maymann

It will come as no surprise that recent data from Jupiter Research indicates the Internet has passed print consumption in Europe. This clarifies even further the importance of online social media and the need to engage an increasingly fragmented audience -- an audience that is tweaking your content and taking it places you never would have thought of, whether you want it to or not. The act of campaigning, as we're all learning, is an ongoing process, one in which we're often not involved.

The million-dollar question, of course, is how can products and brands dig into this social metropolis? First, you need to understand it.

## Social glue

As we've heard and witnessed time and again, social media are comprised of relationships and interactions among people. The things that spark the relationships and inspire actions make up the social glue of our society. This glue includes family holidays, TV shows, music, the sending of birthday cards, great (and bad) advertising -- all the experiences and events we engage in, share and, importantly, talk about.

With social-media activity a trading game -- a user's currency in the metropolis is his or her attention span -- the content needs to be bang on to make it to the "water cooler" where the talking takes place.

Last year's most popular viral ad in the U.K. was the Cadbury "Gorilla" spot featuring a gorilla (a man in a gorilla suit, that is) playing the drum solo of Phil Collin's 1981 hit "In the Air Tonight." It was the talk of the town for months on blogs, in offices and certainly among ad land execs. It got viewed and spoofed and went straight to the hearts of the British population.

Some of the many comments centered around its great execution, its simplicity, the excellent choice of music -- even whether it could be Collins himself in the gorilla suit. Bottom line: in 2007 this ad became part of the social glue in Britain and beyond. And if you hadn't already seen it, you were bound to sooner or later.

## Digital brand activation

Bringing something to the table for users in order to receive their support requires, as we all know, a very different mind-set and set of tools than are used in traditional advertising. There is a major difference between getting people to promote a social cause and to get them to support the interests of your company. Social epidemics are rare, especially for companies to instigate on purpose. The solutions can be found in "big-seed marketing" and "always on."

## Big seed

A core element of a successful social-media campaign is the big-seed marketing approach that combines viral-marketing tools with old-fashioned mass marketing. It focuses on optimizing your content and distribution strategy to craft effective campaigns.

The idea behind seeding is to take advantage of the power inherent in the user's networks to launch branded-content campaigns in the right context. This makes the brand message as relevant as possible, which, in turn, creates engaged consumers.

The activation of the campaigns can be done with online PR, viral marketing, social tools, content placements, SEO and with behavioral targeting as an underlying technology to optimize the ROI.

## Always on

The great metropolis never sleeps -- and so it goes for ambitious brands. They must be available to entertain, inform and engage around the clock. There are no opening hours and you must be ready to take the user by the hand as soon as he or she shows an interest in your message.

The user's journey can take many directions and you want to make sure that you are present at all relevant points -- in blogs and reviews, on viral-entertainment sites. You want to always be ready to make an offer, give an experience.

As click-through rates prove that many of the existing online formats are failing to deliver the expected returns, "always on" is about meeting people where and when they gather, rather than trying to drive them to a campaign site.

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