

Finding B2B Marketing Success Integrating Social Media & Search

Benchmarking statistics and key insights from
Business.com and BtoB Online's co-sponsored study
of more than 450 B2B marketers

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Introduction

Social media: What was not so long ago considered a 'test effort' for marketers has quickly become a staple of online marketing programs for most business-to-business (B2B) marketers. In fact, research indicates 72% of marketers currently employ a social media strategy.¹ Not surprisingly, as companies continue to invest in social media, marketers are moving away from using social media as an isolated marketing tool and moving toward integrating it with other online marketing programs; specifically, search marketing. However, while some B2B marketers appear to have the social-search integration down to a science, others still struggle to comprehend how to best use social media for B2B marketing.

Business.com and BtoB Online's co-sponsored study of 464 B2B marketers, 'The Impact of Social Media on Search,' set out to discover just how marketers are integrating social media with search marketing and uncover the measurable impact B2B marketers are seeing from such integration. With nearly half of B2B marketers reporting social media has had a positive or very positive impact on the search performance of their Web site, we were able to identify significant trends in what 'The Best' marketers are doing differently from 'The Rest'.

Results Summary

Among the study's key findings:

- B2B marketers most often turn to social media for brand awareness (81%), increased Web site traffic (77%) lead generation (67%) and improved search results (57%)
- B2B marketers are measuring the impact of social media through search marketing-specific metrics and are seeing positive impact in the form of search-engine-optimization (SEO) benefits and pay-per-click (PPC) benefits
- Significant differences exist in the social-to-search usage between those who have seen a positive impact in their social media efforts on search (The Best) and those who have not or are not measuring, (The Rest).
- The Best use social media techniques to enhance their paid search marketing efforts 67% more often than The Rest
- 74% of marketers in The Best have seen an increase in Web site traffic since the inception of their social media program

The Current Social Media Landscape

Our study of more than 450 B2B marketers found the majority of respondents (97%) use at least one social media channel for business, with B2B marketers, on average, using 4.5 social media resources.² More than half of B2B marketers favor the use of LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, webinars and company blogs as social media channels. Although the majority of marketers currently devote 10% or less of their online marketing budget to social media, many are looking to increase overall social media efforts in the coming year through increased resources (56%), budget (29%) and staff (15%).

¹ Williamson, Debra Aho. 'Nearly Three-Quarters of Marketers Have Social Media Strategy'. eMarketer, August 27, 2010. <http://www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?R=1007894>

² Mean number of social media channels with 11 possible choices

The intended growth for social media programs echoes Forrester Research's US interactive marketing spend forecast which shows social media spend is expected to reach more than \$3 billion by 2014.³

Prior research also indicates a growing desire to hold departments accountable for social media investment through quantifiable metrics. For example, a 2009 survey indicated 81% of CMOs and senior marketers were hoping to measure social media investments using quantifiable data by 2010.⁴

According to our study, these expectations were ambitious. In fact, we found 57% of marketers are currently not using social media monitoring tools to measure their social media efforts, even though they're turning to social media for quantifiable goals like building brand awareness (81%), increasing site traffic (77%) generating leads (67%), engaging more deeply with customers and prospects (66%) and improving search results (57%).

With goals of increased traffic and improved search results, it's not surprising B2B marketers are turning to search marketing-related metrics to measure social media. To better understand this relationship, let's examine how marketers are integrating social and search.

The Integration of Search and Social

Our study found search marketing and social media are closely related organizationally; 80% of B2B companies house search and social efforts within the same marketing group.

We also found a positive relation between social media and search marketing spend – the most important predictor of spending on search was spending on social media and vice versa. However, overall online marketing budget allocation to search and social remains relatively low among B2B companies; about half of respondents spend 10% or less of their budget on search and 68% of respondents spend 10% or less on social media.

How Marketers are Using Search to Enhance Social Media

Marketers are turning to search to monitor and 'listen to' social media conversations; 54% of marketers turn to search to find conversations about their company, products or brand. Thirty-seven percent turn to search to find competitor-specific conversations.

They also rely on search to increase visibility and engagement within their social media communities and platforms: 42% use search-engine optimization (SEO) tactics on the most popular social media channels, and one in four marketers employ SEO on company blogs and social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

B2B marketers also report placing social media links in paid search ads as an effort to increase their social media presence. Constant Contact, a company that provides social media and E-mail marketing tools for small businesses, is an example of a B2B company currently integrating search marketing and social media efforts. According to their senior search marketing manager, they deliberately align their search marketing and public relations departments to optimize social media site profiles, blog content and other online content

³ US Interactive Marketing Forecast, 2009 To 2014, Forrester Research, Inc., July 2009.

⁴ CMO Club and Bazaarvoice, "CMOs Plan for Higher Social Media Measurability in 2010," December 2009.

using search keywords and phrases. As a result, they've seen measurable gains in their long-tail search rankings and positive engagement metrics.

How Marketers are Using Social to Enhance Search

Just as marketers turn to search-related tactics to enhance their social media efforts, they also turn to social media to enhance PPC and SEO efforts. In fact, one in four respondents monitor social media conversations to influence PPC keyword purchases, and one in five monitor social media conversations to influence paid search in general. On the SEO front, 40% of marketers monitor conversations to influence SEO and 45% expand profiles on social media accounts.

Measuring the Impact of Social Media on Search Marketing

Past research supports the positive effect of social media on search marketing. A 2009 study revealed a 50% click-through-rate (CTR) increase in paid search ads when users were exposed to both a brand's social media efforts and paid search ads. And, users were 2.8 times more likely to search for that brand's product when exposed to both social and paid search compared to users exposed to paid search alone.⁵

Companies like Office Depot have already seen positive impacts on leveraging their social media efforts for search marketing. By taking keywords and phrases directly from product reviews on their Web site and incorporating them into their paid search program, they were able to increase CTR by almost 80%, conversions by 23.8% and revenue by almost 200%.⁶

Many B2B marketers surveyed are currently feeling the impact on search marketing as a result of their social media efforts: 44% of respondents have seen an overall positive impact on the search performance of their company's Web site since the inception of their social media efforts. In fact, 43% of respondents report an increase in Web site traffic coming from search engines since the start of their social media efforts.

Marketers also reported seeing improvements in search engine ranking, increases in CTR for paid search, increases in search referrals and increases in conversion rates among all Web site visitors.

Although marketers are employing integrated social-to-search tactics, about a quarter of respondents are not currently measuring the performance of their social media efforts, and a similar percentage of marketers remain unsure of the overall level of impact of their social-to-search efforts.

To fully understand the relationship and influence of social media on search marketing, we decided to segment respondents based on the level of impact evidenced from their social-to-search efforts. To allow for segmentation, we separated 'The Best,' those who reported seeing a positive impact on search marketing from their social media efforts, from 'The Rest,' those who are either not measuring the impact or not seeing a positive impact.⁷

5 'The Influenced: Social Media, Search and the Interplay of Consideration and Consumption,' a comScore, GroupM Search & M80 study. October, 2009. <http://www.searchfuel.com/2009/10/search-marketing-social-media-interplay/>

6 Bazaarvoice. "Customer reviews drive 196% increase in paid search revenue for Office Depot," 2010. <http://www.bazaarvoice.com/resources/case-studies/customer-reviews-drive-196-increase-paid-search-revenue-office-depot>

7 Segmentation based on responses to Question 18, "What has been the overall impact of social media channels on the search performance of your business website(s)?" The Best (n=205) The Rest (n=259)

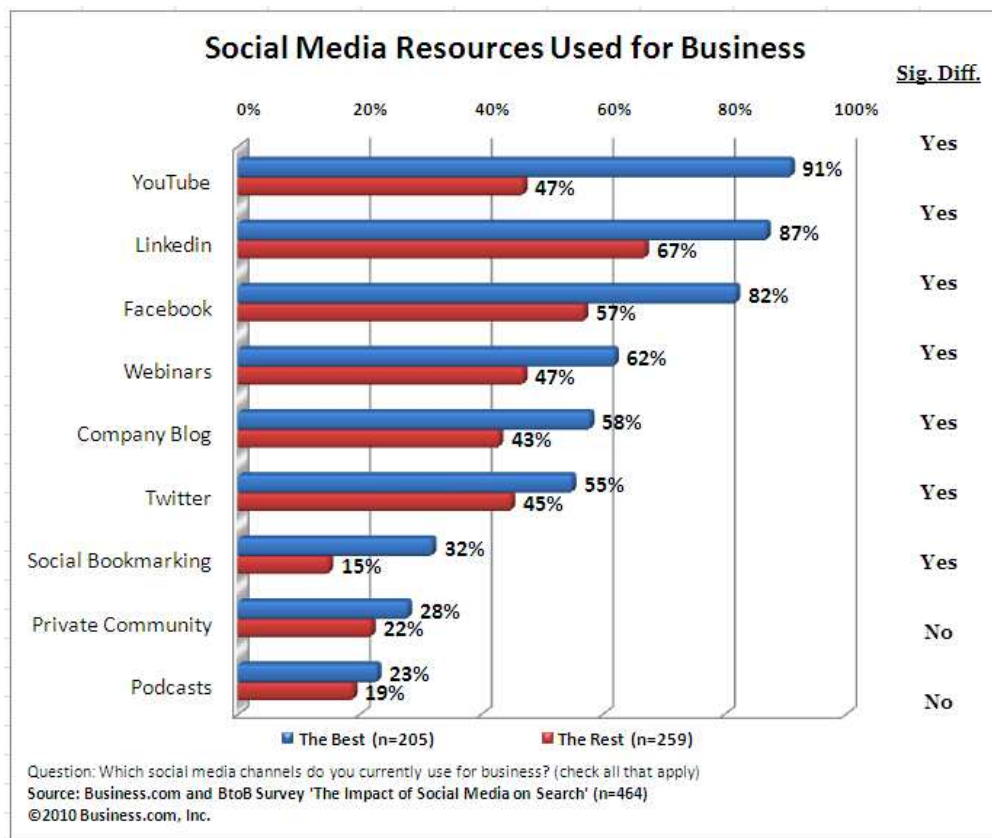
Such segmentation yielded significant differences between The Best and The Rest when it came to the general use of social media, the tactical usage of social media to enhance search marketing and the resulting impact of integration.

The Best Versus The Rest

Social Media Usage Differences

The Best were significantly more likely to use the three major social networking sites Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn; they were also significantly more likely to use webinars, company blogs, and social bookmarking sites. Of particular interest is the almost ubiquitous use of YouTube among The Best (91%) compared to only 47% among The Rest.

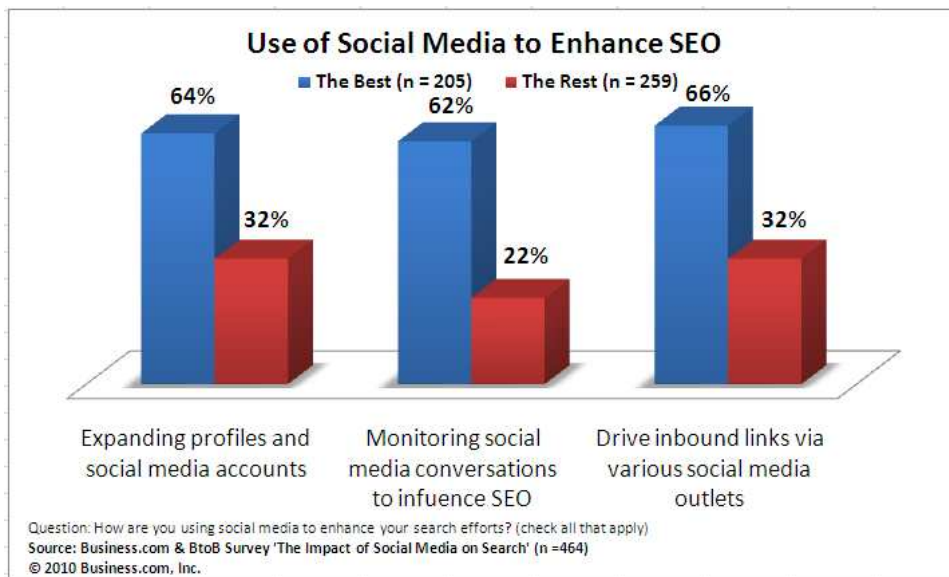
Figure 1: Use of Specific Social Media Resources



Our segmentation also found a significant difference in the average number of social media resources used by The Best (5.3) versus The Rest (3.7). Also significant was the difference in average number of social-to-search techniques (e.g., monitoring social media conversations to influence SEO, PPC, etc.) employed by each group; one for The Rest versus more than 2 for The Best.

Upon closer inspection of the specific social-to-search techniques utilized by The Best and The Rest, The Best most often rely on social media to enhance SEO-specific efforts, specifically through driving inbound links via various social media resources, expanding content on profiles and social media accounts and monitoring social media conversations to influence keyword selection and usage for SEO.

Figure 2: Use of Social Media to Enhance Search Marketing

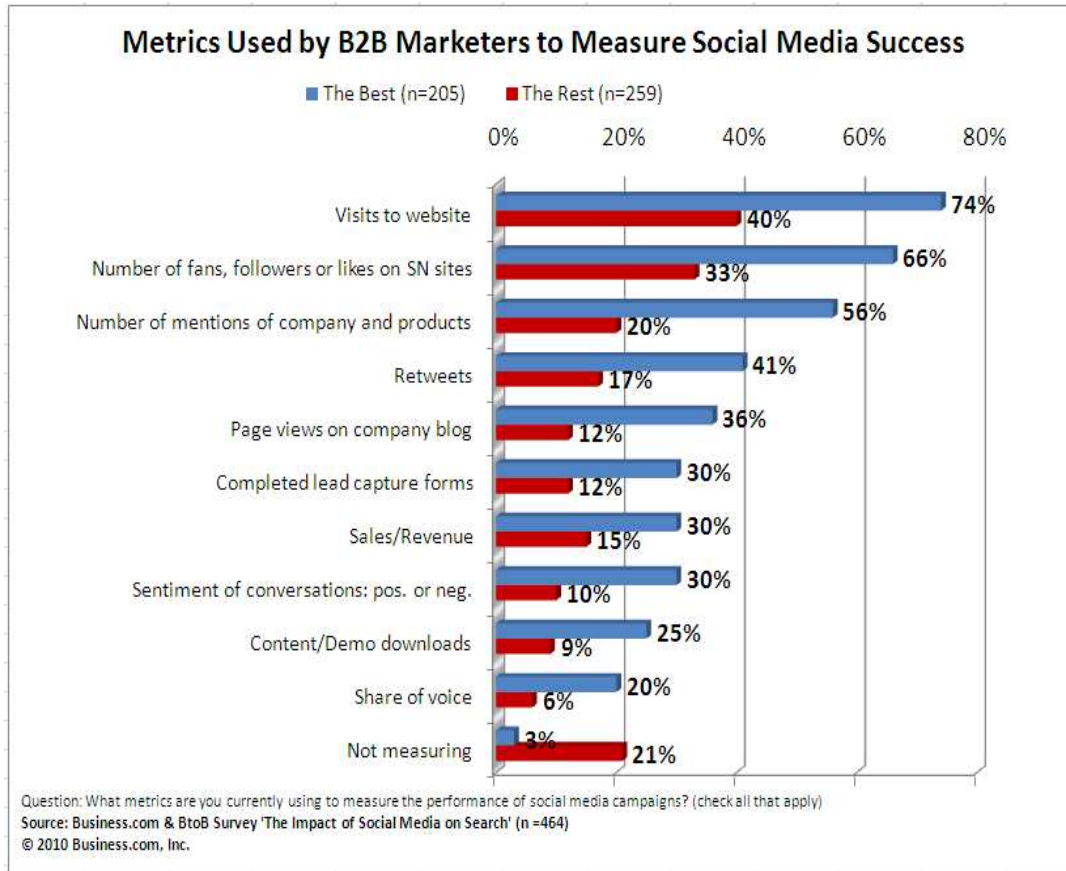


In the use of social media to enhance paid search, The Best were significantly more likely to monitor social media conversations to improve paid search and influence keyword purchases. An explanation for why The Best rely on social to enhance paid search an average of 60% more than The Rest may lie in the measurement and monitoring differences between the two, which we will explore in further detail.

Measurement & Monitoring Differences

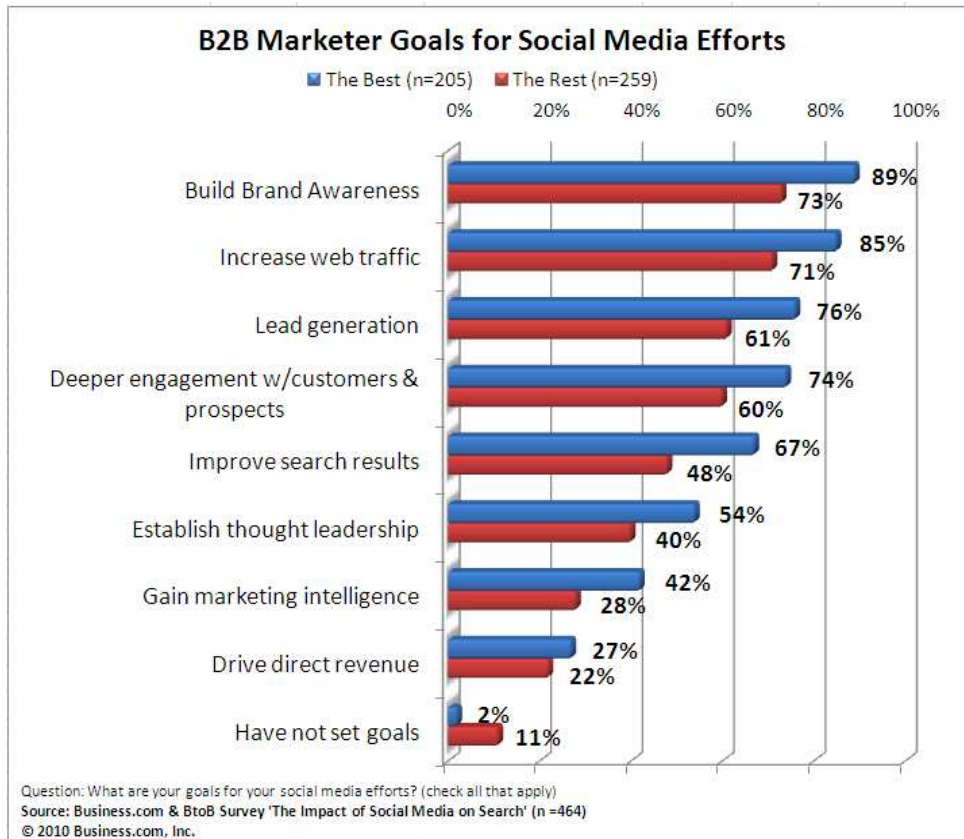
The Best rely on social media metrics that are not overly complicated and are easy to measure, like number of Web site visits (74%), number of fans (66%), number of mentions (56%) and retweets (41%). The Best rely on these social media metrics on average 50% more than The Rest.

Figure 3: Measurement Metrics for Social Media Success



Among The Best, the most commonly reported social media goals were building brand awareness (89%), increasing Web traffic (85%), improving lead generation (76%) and more deeply engaging with customers and prospects (74%). As evidenced below, these were also common goals for The Rest, albeit at lower percentages.

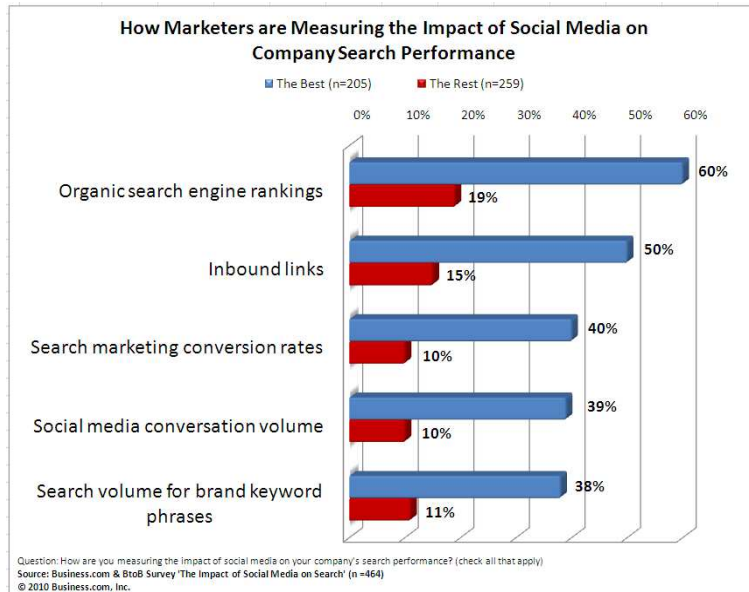
Figure 4: Goals for Social Media Efforts



The largest percent difference in response for reported social media goals for The Best and The Rest existed for the goals of gaining market intelligence (33% difference), improving search results (28%) and establishing thought leadership (26%). Clearly, The Best value social media beyond its use to enhance search marketing; they value it as a strategic public relations tool for direct engagement and dissemination of thought leadership.

When it came to measuring the impact of social media on search marketing, The Best were more likely to monitor and measure the results of their social-to-search efforts, an expected finding based on segmentation parameters.

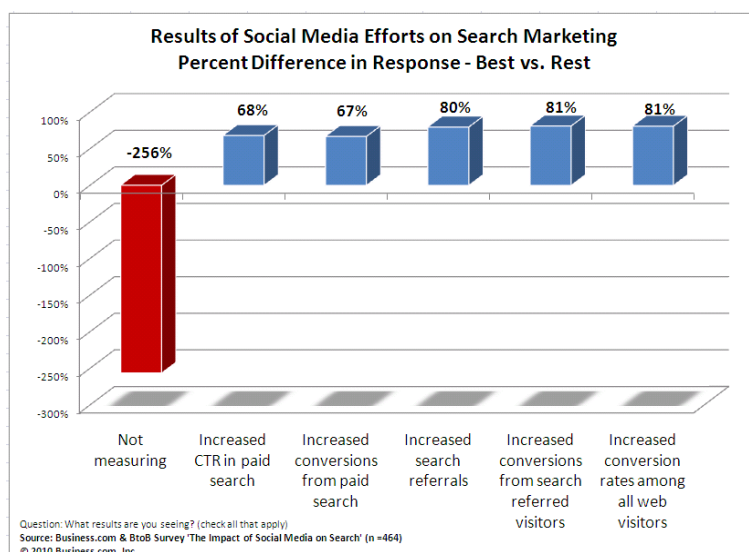
Figure 5: Measurement of Social Media Performance on Search Marketing



Impact and Results

As a resulting impact of social media efforts on search marketing, The Best were most likely to see an increase in search referrals, conversion rates among all Web site visitors and CTR in paid search, and they reported such results 80%, 81% and 68% more often than The Rest. The Rest were not likely to monitor these efforts.

Figure 6: Impact of Social Media Efforts on Search Marketing



And, since the inception of social media marketing program, 74% of marketers in The Best reported an increase in Web site traffic, compared to only 19% of The Rest.

Additional analysis indicated the best predictors of an increase in search engine traffic after launching social media efforts are the spend level in search and social (as a percent of online marketing budget) and the percent of company Web site traffic currently originating from search engines. Indeed, the larger the percent of online marketing budget allocated to search and social, the larger the increase in Web site traffic. It seems spending can enhance the effect of social on search, especially when companies already maintain a strong search engine presence.

For example, National Instruments has a global community of 140,000 engineers who share information, source code and answer one another's questions. This active user community answers technical questions for other users, which saves the company time and money. A key result, the company found, is increased Web traffic. The company estimates that 40% of the site's traffic comes from users searching the site for specific terms and for user-generated content⁸.

Constant Contact's senior search marketing manager said they've also seen an increase in their overall site traffic as a result of their social media efforts on major social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. By measuring the impact of their social media programs on their search marketing efforts through the use of Web analytics tools and social media monitoring tools like Radian6, they've been able to quantify the impact of their efforts and have witnessed a significant year-over-year increase in traffic referrals from social networking sites. In fact, they estimate their social media efforts have heavily contributed to the overall increase in search presence since last year.

By consciously aligning their search marketing and public relations departments to better entwine their social and search efforts, Constant Contact has been able to successfully integrate their social and search marketing programs and clearly measure the impact, setting a positive example as a group of B2B marketers clearly among The Best.

Practical Applications for B2B Marketers

Overall, the study highlights the strong interplay between search and social media, especially among The Best – marketers who are able to integrate social and search and successfully measure the positive impact of their combined usage. B2B marketers can learn from the evidenced practices and tactics of The Best and can move toward a stronger integration of social media and search marketing by employing a few best practices.

If You're Among The Rest

Clearly Define Social Media Goals To Determine Social Media Strategy – Taking the we-need-to-be-on-Twitter-and-Facebook-because-that's-where-our-competitors-are approach is a common mistake. Marketers need to consciously push beyond this defensive reflex and take a moment to clearly articulate **their** goals for social media. Looking to establish thought leadership? Consider blogs, webinars and question-and-answer (Q&A) sites. Interested in lead generation? Begin engaging potential clients through social networking sites like

⁸ "MarketingProfs B2B: Proven Success Stories Integrating Social Media into Overall Strategy." Conversations and Connections Blog, Tuesday, May 4, 2010. <http://blogs.sas.com/socialmedia/index.php/?archives/95-MarketingProfs-B2B-Proven-Success-Stories-Integrating-Social-Media-into-Overall-Strategy.html>

Facebook and Twitter; utilize webinars. Want to increase Web traffic or search engine rankings? Flesh out user profiles on social networking sites and share user-generated content that links back to your site on YouTube, Facebook and more.

Strive for Organizational Alignment Among Social Media and Search Teams – The majority of B2B marketers reported their search and social marketing programs were housed within the same group, and the level of involvement with both search and social media marketing programs indicates the majority of marketers are directly involved in both. B2B marketers looking to continue toward the proper integration of social may benefit from working more closely with their counterparts to align their search and social goals and efforts.

We would be remiss not to mention this philosophy should apply both to the integration of search and social and to the continued integration of social across all online marketing programs. As evidenced in the wide variety of reported uses for social media, marketers can also benefit from integrating social media efforts with other online marketing efforts like incorporating social media share buttons into E-newsletters or company blogs and even testing display programs on favored social networking sites like Facebook or LinkedIn for an even bigger brand impact.

Invest in a Social Media Monitoring Tool – To be able to measure campaign influence and impact and to optimize accordingly, measurement is imperative. Tools don't have to be complicated or rely on advanced metrics for quantifiable results; The Best in the study keep it simple, and so can you. There are a variety of free social media monitoring tools available to track and monitor conversations and general social network statistics like [SocialMention](#), [TweetBurner](#) or [Google Alerts](#). If you're all about Twitter, [Hootsuite](#) will help you to both track and manage Twitter conversations and accounts. For companies looking to accomplish everything from competitive intelligence to reputation management, more advanced tools like [Radian6](#), [Sysomos](#) or [Alterian's SM2](#) can provide even more robust capabilities.

Branch Out from Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook – As evidenced in the study, there are many more social media resources for B2B marketers to explore and add to their existing social media marketing program. Ninety-one percent of The Best are currently using YouTube; additional areas, and The Best are also exploring webinars and company blogs.

Marketers using social media to monitor conversations about their products or brand can easily join potential clients and buyers in their conversations on business Q&A sites like [Business.com Answers](#), where business professionals turn to seek information and insight about potential products or solutions for their business. The majority of Q&A sites are free to join and can make a big impact in establishing your brand as a thought leader and community member, and participation in Q&A often leads to an increase in Web site traffic.

If You're Among The Best

Don't Forget About Paid Search Enhancement –The Best are more likely to use social to improve paid search. While the majority of marketers in both groups value social media's use for enhancing SEO, they should continue to enhance their paid search tactics as well. Some social media monitoring tools offer Word Cloud dashboards and reports that make it easy for marketers to identify missing paid search terms. Whether you look to social as a means to build keyword lists, identify salient ad copy or track offers from competitor brands, social media can and should be a valuable paid search marketing enhancement tool.

Identify, Test and Implement Social-to-Search Techniques – Even though The Best were significantly more likely to employ more social-to-search techniques, they still only used, on average, 2.5 techniques. There is more potential for growth even among The Best B2B social media marketers. If you're already using social to drive inbound links or to influence SEO, consider using it to influence PPC keyword purchases, commit to expanding and optimizing profiles on social media accounts, and always tag social media content with favored keywords or search terms whenever possible.

Continue to Identify 'What's Next' – The Best are clearly marketers who identified early on social media's importance for B2B marketing and were able to master and integrate social quickly with their other online marketing efforts. The Best should move forward, identifying and testing the newest social media resources and continuing to redefine the use of existing channels to see what's next. Whether it's looking at social as an online public relations tool or finding a new channel to integrate into search marketing efforts, the work of The Best is never done.

About the Study

Business.com and BtoB Online's co-sponsored study, 'The Impact of Social Media on Search' was conducted online from July 1 – 16, 2010 and netted 464 completed survey respondents⁹. Respondents were primarily B2B decision-makers in an executive or managerial role that were overseeing or managing directly both search and social media marketing. No significant difference existed for responses on key variables between B2B and B2C respondents, so data was pooled for analysis. Most companies had fewer than 250 employees (59%) and were from a variety of industries, including high/tech, advertising and media. For more information on the study, please reference the [BtoB Online feature article](#).

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Contact

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khand@business.com

⁹ As an incentive to complete this survey, BtoB held a drawing for an Apple iPad among eligible respondents.