

GUIDE

Real-Time Marketing

Going Beyond the Buzz



Real-Time Marketing

Going Beyond the Buzz

Remember when you were little and your parents took you out to dinner for your birthday? Mom or Dad told the waiter you were celebrating and then at the end of dinner, what happened? You got a free dessert and a song. The restaurant saw an opportunity to gain positive publicity and they acted on it right then and there.

That's Real-Time Marketing

Real-time marketing is not a new concept. It's about about recognizing an opportunity and responding to it, which marketers have been doing for quite some time. So why all the recent fuss? Social media has brought real-time marketing to the foreground simply by changing the rules of marketing.

Social media has removed the barricade between brands and consumers, letting them connect directly to one another. Marketing in social media is not about broadcasting a message or talking at your consumers. It's about talking with them. Real-time marketing takes it one step further by allowing brands to share an experience with their audience and be a genuine part of the conversation.

And while it might be tempting to jump on the buzzword bandwagon, first you have to decide if real-time marketing is even right for your business. We'll cover that and much more in this white paper. You'll learn about the different types of real-time marketing and how to utilize them within social media. You'll also come away with useful tips on how to set up your real-time marketing team, how to implement a monitoring strategy and most importantly, how to create successful content.



News Breaks in Seconds Not Hours

Information is moving faster than ever before. Major stories are breaking in social media in real time. Remember the “Miracle on the Hudson” plane crash? The story [hit on Twitter](#) a full fifteen minutes before mainstream news outlets. People want information now and they’re using social to get it. They want to discuss news as it happens, not days later. A story or an idea can go viral and become obsolete all in one day, which is why timing is now crucial for your social marketing messages.

You only have a small window within which to reach people—they come together to bond over a hot topic and then that bonded audience dissolves very quickly. If you engage with them at the perfect moment what will remain is your reputation as a brand that’s timely and relevant—a brand that “gets it.”

Real-time marketing efforts are about responsiveness and capitalizing on something while it is still relevant. It’s about delivering the right message to the right audience at the right time.

“A story can go viral and become obsolete all in one day...timing is crucial for your social marketing messages.”

You now have easier access to your target audience...but so does everybody else

According to a study done by GolinHarris, Americans spend one out of every four minutes online in social networks. Integration with social media and more traditional channels for advertising has also increased—40 percent of adults surf or participate in social networks while watching television. So what does all of this mean for you, the social marketer?

Your audience is turning to multiple channels for news and they're receiving a massive amount of information from each one. Anne-Marie Kline, the Senior Vice President of Account Management and Managing Director of BrandLIVE at integrated advertising agency, Digitas, says the key to breaking through the clutter is to create a true social business that goes far beyond just creating a strategy on Facebook or Twitter. "It's about deciding how you're going to operate in this era that we're in that's being fueled by technology. The way that we're all communicating and living together has changed. Marketing needs to evolve as well."

A critical part of that evolution has been real-time marketing, which is "a way to communicate with an audience by creating relevance and value on an everyday basis," says Kline. But it's about more than posting a funny image for a quick hit of attention. It's about long-term engagement. It's about "authentically participating in someone's life," says Kline. "It's about being culturally aware and taking cues from society." It's about participating in the conversation in a way that meets your audience's needs rather than your brand's.

"This doesn't mean you get rid of all your traditional advertising. It means you have to add a certain element of connecting with people and being part of what they care about and not just shouting messages at them," says Kline. According to the GolinHarris study, real-time marketing also allows your other marketing efforts to be more effective. When real-time marketing is added to the mix, there is a "significant lift in likelihood to seek out, pay attention to, and participate in brand communications delivered in common channels." By earning credibility with real-time content you're opening the door to long-term trust.

"By earning credibility with real-time content you're opening the door to long-term trust."



Money and Time. What can you Afford to Spend?

Kline doesn't believe there is any brand that real-time marketing wouldn't be applicable to. "I think the hurdle that some brands are going to have is the willingness to reorganize around this and to change structures to take full advantage," says Kline. To decide if real-time marketing is right for your brand you have to decide what you're willing or able to commit to spending—time or money. There are two types of real-time marketing. One requires money, both require time.

The first type of real-time marketing is the most recognizable. The kind that has everyone buzzing (and writing white papers) is content based.

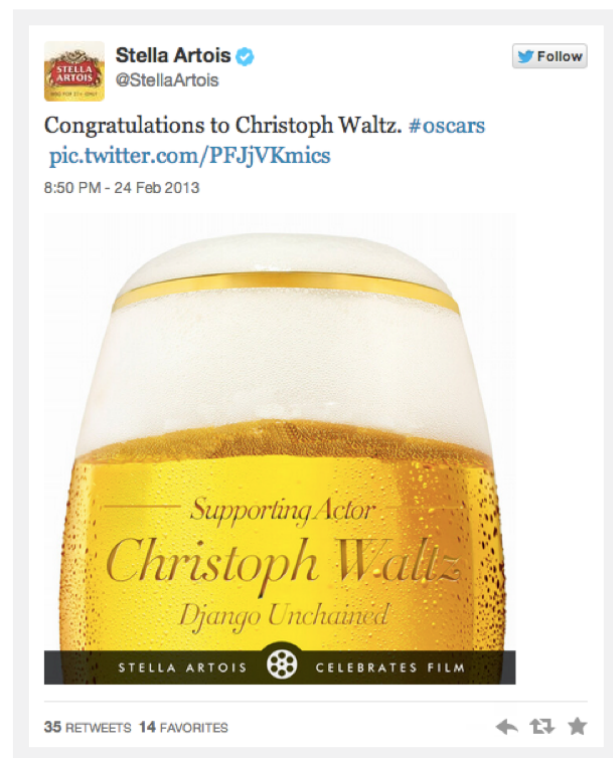
Content-based real-time marketing involves creating content—video, images, etc.—to interject into the conversation. This does not mean posting pre-planned

content around an event or holiday—it's about creating content that reacts to the conversation around it. You will know the airdate of the Academy Awards in advance, but you won't know if a Best Actress nominee will storm the stage in anger and steal the microphone from the winner. Creating content around that fiasco is real-time marketing.

During the 2013 Academy Awards the producers played the theme song from Jaws to cut off long acceptance speeches. The song choice surprised many and the social web was soon buzzing about it. Special K jumped on the opportunity to make a joke, quickly posting a shark-themed image with a clever take on the famous quote from the movie, “We’re going to need a bigger boat.”



A brand that missed the mark during the same Oscar broadcast was Stella Artois, who posted a beer image to congratulate the Best Supporting Actor winner. Clearly the content was planned in advance and then the brand quickly added the actor's name before posting. This didn't do much to add to the conversation as people who were watching the show already knew who won.

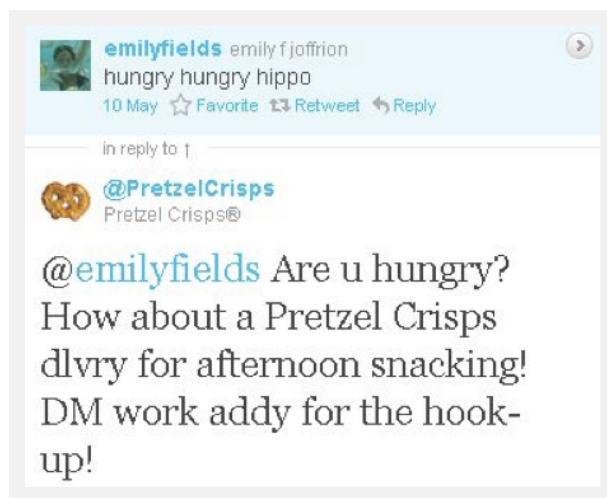


The lesson here is that it's not enough to create content around a big event or hot topic. You have to add something to the conversation. People were buzzing about the strange music and Special K joined that conversation by participating in it. Stale, pre-planned content like the Stella Artois example will not stand out or speak to an audience.

Content-based real-time marketing can involve a lot of time and money because your marketing team must be on call in order to create content on-the-fly. Some brands have even set up “war rooms” or “marketing newsrooms” where their entire creative team will gather during live events (or even be manned around the clock) so they can crank out quality content at a moment's notice! This approach can be quite expensive and definitely wouldn't be feasible for a small brand. It is possible for a small brand to create content on the cheap but doing so in real time does involve a huge time commitment. So it goes back to the original question— are you willing to spend money, time or both? If you're only able to commit time, consider conversation-based real-time marketing.

Conversation-based real-time marketing does not involve content but rather pure participation in the conversation. This is essentially real-time engagement—listening and reacting to current conversations.

A brand that has had great success with this type of real-time marketing is Pretzel Crisps, with its “Social Sampling” program. Pretzel Crisps has been monitoring Twitter conversations to find people who are in need of a snack. Pretzel Crisps finds someone who has tweeted about throwing a party or even just being hungry and reaches out, offering to deliver a free sample of the product. The brand then follows up and encourages the recipients to share feedback on the brand.



Since the program's launch in July of 2010, Pretzel Crisps has delivered over 3,600 free samples and earned over 4.2 million earned media impressions. The program even had a direct impact on revenue, [increasing sales by 87%](#).

While it may seem like only large brands like Pretzel Crisps—due to their larger audiences and bigger budgets—are capable of this type of real-time marketing, don't discount the practice for your brand. Maybe you won't be able to provide loads of free product, but you can connect and engage with your customers in real time. Conversation-based real-time marketing can also involve pre-planned engagement, which involves being online and ready to interact during certain events—whether it be a public event like the Grammy Awards or a live chat session you've set up in advance.

Hosting a chat around a live event where you can guide and participate in the conversation allows you to share an experience with your audience and be an authentic part of the conversation. Just make sure it's an event that is relevant for your brand (more on that later).

You could also host chat sessions that focus on your brand where your fans could ask you direct questions. President Obama (who you could argue is a brand) hosted a live Q&A on Reddit during his 2012 presidential campaign. This effort contained critical elements of conversation-based real-time marketing. It provided wanted content (actual engagement with the President!), it hit the right audience and most importantly it happened during the right time, which for Obama was right in the middle of the Republican National Convention. Talk about stealing the show.



Are you a Real-Time Marketer?

Now that you know what real-time marketing requires, are you and others on your marketing team ready to take it on? Not every personality is suited for this kind of fast-paced effort. Kline has been forming real-time marketing teams for almost two years and three qualities have stood out to her as ideal for the real-time game.

1. Curious

Curious people can never know enough. “Nothing will satisfy them,” says Kline. “It’s like my three year old who asks me ‘why?’ after every single explanation. He always asks why and he really needs to know.”

Curious people will always try to find the next best thing. Research is a top priority. They want to know everything about everything. “They get a charge out of being the know-it-all in the room,” says Kline. “Sometimes that’s an annoying quality, right? But in this frame of reference it’s not so annoying, it’s really helpful.”

2. Connected

To thrive in real-time marketing one should be connected to what’s happening in social media, technology, advertising, brand development and everything in between. “They are really, really into what it takes to be a connected world and how to make those connections for the brands to the audiences,” says Kline.

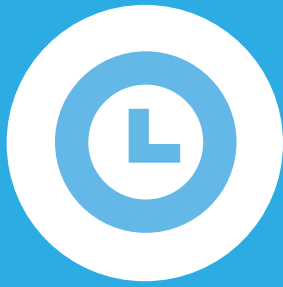
3. Inventive

While not a totally new concept, real-time marketing is still evolving. The idea of brands being part of the conversation is a different take on marketing—one that might be difficult for some marketers to understand let alone embrace.

“We’re inventing it as we go,” says Kline. “Some people are not comfortable with that. They’re not comfortable living in that innovation stage of gray. People who do black and white won’t do well in this construct.”

Find Your Team

Your real-time marketing team needs to have the right personalities, but it also needs to be able to successfully execute real-time efforts. Your team needs to consist of people with the right skill sets. Take a look at your existing marketing team to see who’s up to the task.



Here's Your Real-Time Skills Breakdown

Creative Champion

- Original and imaginative
- Can think on the spot

Day Job: Creative Director, Art Director

Executioner

- Photoshop and copywriting pro
- Produces artwork and copy fast

Day Job: Copywriter, Graphic Designer, Producer

Decision Maker

- Has the authority to approve all content
- Always available to the team

Day Job: Marketing Manager, Marketing Director

Engagement Specialist

- Experienced in community management
- Calm, collected and has tact
- Expert on all things social

Day Job: Community Manager, Social Media Manager, Social Media Specialist



Understanding What Works Well Where

If you've decided that real-time marketing is right for your brand and you have the right people on board, it doesn't mean you should begin participating in every trending topic on every social platform. For your efforts to be successful they have to be reaching the right people. You need to determine the best way of reaching your target audience.

The first step is to identify where conversations relevant to your brand are taking place. Does most of your audience use Twitter? Are they image-obsessed Pinterest or Instagram junkies? Do they like to dive into longer topics on Digg or Reddit? Research where they go online, why they go there, what they like to talk about and who they talk to.

Once you pick your platforms, research what has worked best for your brand on those platforms. If you have a basic understanding of what works well where, and you know your audience inside and out, you'll be better prepared to give them exactly what they want when it comes time to create real-time content or conversations.

Pick The Party Your Audience Is Attending

Think of real-time marketing like navigating the nightlife scene. If you want a quiet space to talk with your friends then you shouldn't head to a club. If you want to dance and sing loudly to the music, you won't be welcomed at a small, intimate wine bar. (Trust us. We've been kicked out of enough classy joints to know).

Real-time marketing has the same basic principles as other forms of marketing. You want to be reaching the right audience for *your* brand. Pick the right situations where there is a potential for your target audience to be present and participating. If you know your audience is unlikely to be raving at a club, then why are you there screaming over the music?

It's tempting to participate in large-scale events like presidential debates or the World Series because they are sure to generate a huge amount of social conversations. Surely you can capitalize on that. But guess what? Every other brand has the exact same idea. That's why when Digitas is looking for real-time marketing windows for clients, they're "looking for the best opportunities. We're not looking for all of the opportunities," says Kline.

Choose opportunities that are relevant to your brand and your audience. If your target consumers are unlikely to be following the breaking story or conversation then it's not worth the effort of blasting a branded message to an audience who won't welcome it.

If You're Late to the Party, Don't Try to Resurrect it

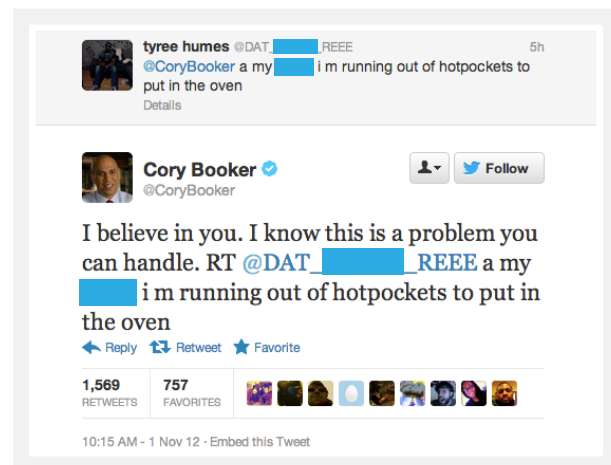
This shouldn't come as news at this point, but all real-time marketing efforts need to be well timed. Is the story or conversation you're considering jumping on driving interest right now?

Instead of scrambling to be the first to recognize an opportunity and act on it, some brands are rushing to jump on the latest trends. Remember all of those Harlem Shake videos? Or worse, the Call Me Maybe videos? They hit a surge and then died a slow, painful death. Don't get caught in the downward spiral. Make sure the topic is still top-of-mind and appealing to your audience.

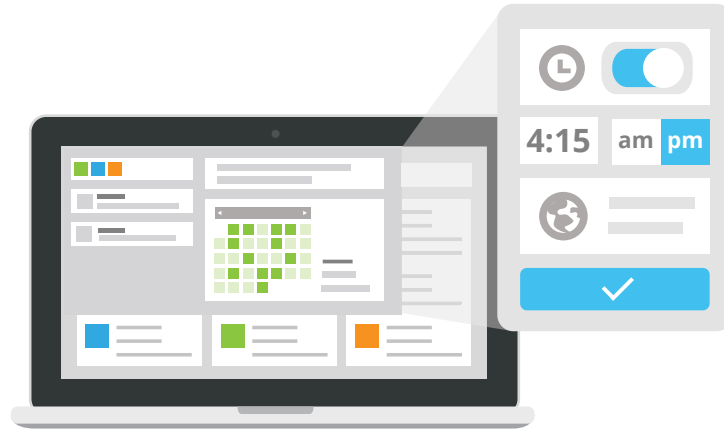
Not Every Breaking Story is an Opportunity for Real-Time Marketing—Especially Times of Tragedy

Be very careful when approaching breaking news. We've all seen cases of newsjacking gone wrong. So much so that it was even a focus of our last [e-book on social media fails](#). Repeat after us: NEVER use a tragic event as an opportunity to plug your brand without providing value to the conversation, no matter how harmless it may seem.

One brand that managed to handle this type of opportunity well was Hot Pockets. After Hurricane Sandy hit New Jersey—leaving many without power or supplies—a Newark resident tweeted to his social-savvy mayor Cory Booker (he has 1.4 million followers to date) telling him he had run out of Hot Pockets.



Mayor Booker's response soon went viral and Hot Pockets reacted quickly by sending the mayor hundreds of coupons for free Hot Pockets to distribute to the residents of Newark. Hot Pockets didn't get directly involved in the conversation, but Booker thanked the brand for its donation by tweeting a picture of the letter and coupons. By finding a way to help, Hot Pockets was able to seize a real-time marketing opportunity in a tactful way.



Plan for What you can Predict. React Quickly to What you Can't

Wait. You can plan ahead for real-time marketing? Yes and no. You can't plan content (not effective content anyways) beforehand but you can plan ahead for the types of events your brand should be ready to monitor and react to.

Create a calendar of events or holidays that may be pertinent to your brand and possible topics for conversation. These could be public events, brand events (such as a product launch or company anniversary), or breaking news. Don't forget the lessons from the Academy Award examples. The idea is not to create content about the actual event itself but rather the conversations that are happening around it.

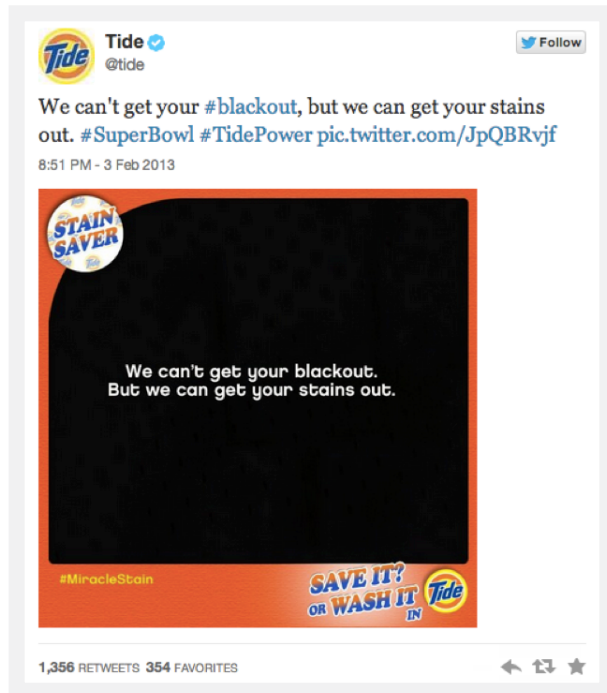
If you're planning to create content, have a large collection of visual elements—brand images, logos, etc.—ready for you to use. That way when an opportunity presents itself you're prepared with the initial groundwork so creating content will be that much faster.

Many brands were watching the Super Bowl in 2013, waiting for real-time marketing opportunities. Their chance came when one very big moment went viral. During the second half of the game, the lights in one

half of the stadium went out, delaying the game for 35 minutes. With no football to watch people took to the social web and soon the story was trending on Twitter. A brand that successfully capitalized on this was the ONE Campaign, which used the conversation around the power outage to promote its advocacy programs in Africa.



Tide also successfully seized the opportunity, choosing to piggyback on the #blackout hashtag that began trending.



Your events calendar is just a guideline for when to be on high alert. You also need to be prepared for the unpredictable. You should always be monitoring social media in general for any breaking news. But on top of that you should be paying attention to the conversations and the trends that are happening around your industry.

"Listening to everything is a pretty big ask," says Kline. "You can't boil the ocean." Instead, she suggests focusing on areas that are applicable to your brand. Are you a fitness brand? Find out what's happening in the lifestyle and fitness industry. Are you a mascara brand? You should be listening to conversations around the beauty industry as a whole, but also focus on specific topics—like makeup rather than skincare. "What are the pillars of the industry?" asks Kline. "Underneath every pillar, there are about five subcategories that you could be listening to. You have to be broad enough, but also narrow the categories so you can find something that will resonate with your consumer."

In addition to listening to the chatter in your industry you should also be on the lookout for organic conversations around your brand and any customer service opportunities. The best way to make sure you don't miss anything is to set up a monitoring plan. A monitoring plan will allow you to have a constant eye on mentions of your brand and your competitors so you know when your brand has an impromptu window to act. Clearly Hot Pockets was monitoring mentions of its brand and it enabled them to capitalize on an opportunity.

This is where a social media-monitoring tool like [uberVU](#) via [Hootsuite](#) comes in handy. You can set up search streams for any term you want to monitor and our exclusive Signals feature will show you any real-time spike in mentions, sentiment or activity. These Signals will ensure you never miss a real-time marketing opportunity.

Monitoring is also extremely important in recognizing a potential crisis and reacting to it. When used correctly, real-time marketing can be a successful component in crisis management as proven by Fathead, a company that produces wall graphics. In June of 2013 a Reddit user posted an image of a Tim Tebow Fathead poster he had purchased. The problem? He had actually ordered a Tom Brady poster and was shipped the Tebow one by accident. The post quickly gained traction and Fathead used it as an opportunity for some real-time marketing. Fathead sent the customer a corrected order (plus some extra freebies) and then ran an ad on Reddit that poked fun at its mishap with the copy, "25% off NFL Fatheads with code NFLOOPS today only. Buy now, and there's a good chance we'll ship you the right one!" The apology and self-deprecating jab was well received by Reddit users and Fathead even stuck around to take part in the conversations. By recognizing the opportunity quickly, Fathead was able to utilize real-time marketing as a remedy to its crisis.



The Topic is Relevant, but is Your Content?

Once you choose what topic or conversation you're going to tap, make sure your content is quality. Choosing the right opportunities and the right content will ensure that your real-time marketing efforts have long-term benefits instead of just being a quick hit of attention.

The tone of your content should be appropriate for the situation and the audience. Make sure you've spent enough time monitoring the conversation to ensure you know the overall sentiment. Does the conversation surround a serious topic? That joke you have ready might not go over well.

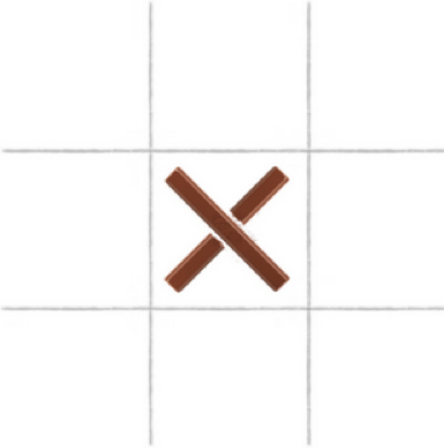
Real-time marketing is most effective when it's consistent and authentic to your brand. Real-time content should not be any different than your existing content, but rather be a natural extension of other marketing efforts. All content and conversations should

align with your established brand position and voice. "It has to support the business and the brand equity," says Kline. "Everything should be tied to the current visuals and messaging."

Content must be on brand and also be branded. This means that the audience must be able to recognize the content as yours. Include your logo or anything that's identifiable so the content is easily associated with your brand when people read and share it. What's the point of creating great content if you don't get credit for it?

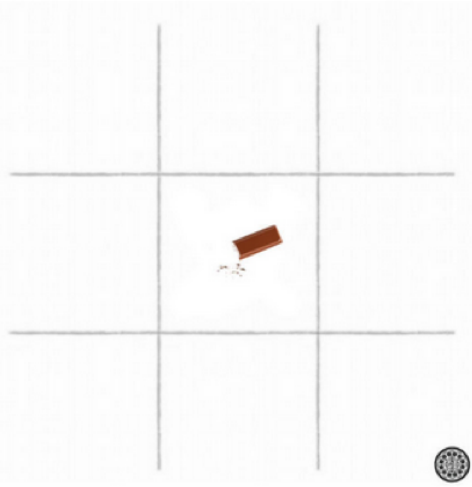
LauraEllen @Laura_ellenxx Follow
 Can tell I like chocolate abit too much when I'm following @KITKAT and @Oreo hahahahahah
 5:36 PM - 11 Mar 2013
 87 RETWEETS 39 FAVORITES

KITKAT @KITKAT Follow
 The fight for @Laura_ellenxx's affections is on. @oreo your move #haveabreak twitpic.com/cb1g84
 11:41 AM - 13 Mar 2013



TwitPic @TwitPic
 298 RETWEETS 219 FAVORITES

Oreo Cookie @Oreo Follow
 Sorry, @kitkat we couldn't resist ... #GiveOreoABreak pic.twitter.com/iMXjChetOa
 6:42 PM - 13 Mar 2013



377 RETWEETS 323 FAVORITES

LauraEllen @Laura_ellenxx Follow
 @KITKAT @oreo OMG AM I IN HEAVEN
 11:41 AM - 13 Mar 2013
 30 RETWEETS 24 FAVORITES

Oreo and Kit Kat scored major social media points for some on brand (and well branded) conversation-based real-time marketing in March of 2013. After a Twitter user professed her love for both of the snack foods, the brands playfully battled over her affections.

This creative exchange is a great example of how brands can participate in social conversations to gain some attention rather than just pushing out standard marketing messages. Plus, when done right you can still incorporate a plug of your brand—notice the clever use of actual Kit Kats in the tic-tac-toe image and the Oreo logo in the reply.

The ultimate goal of real-time marketing is to generate attention for your brand—both among your current audience and beyond. The best way to reach people outside your current community is to create content that your current followers will want to share with their community. That's why Digitas makes sure to research sharing behaviors as part of its audience research. "Find out what people are sharing with others. What the consumer reads and what they share are sometimes different. It's important to understand what they consider worth sharing," says Kline.

Content that is humorous and lighthearted tends to be extremely sharable. But if humor isn't your strong suit—or completely wrong for your brand—focus on quality. Well-done content that resonates with people will be shared.

Smart Car nailed shareability with its witty reply to a joke about the size of its cars. The brand put together a genius infographic response. The beauty behind this success story is that the original tweeter did not tweet directly at Smart Car, which means the brand was monitoring for brand mentions and acted quickly when it saw an opportunity to be funny and reach new consumers. It worked—the post resulted in over 500 new followers for Smart Car.

Determine if Your Real-Time Marketing Needs Real-Time Promotion

There are certain situations in which backing your real-time marketing efforts with extra promotion can be really beneficial. Promoted tweets or sponsored stories on Facebook enable you to reach a larger targeted audience than your current followers or fans. If your content has strong creative or an important brand message, promoting it could give it that extra exposure you need.

During a 2012 presidential debate, Mitt Romney stated that he wanted to withdraw government funding from PBS, while insisting "I love Big Bird." The comment went viral and the social web rose to defend Sesame Street with photos, fake Big Bird Twitter accounts and even fundraising campaigns. PBS turned the hype into a marketing opportunity by running a promoted tweet on the phrase "big bird." Rather than use the phrase in a tweet—which might have felt forced—PBS chose to promote a serious message to those who were following the trending topic.



Are you Still Playing by the Old Rules?

Social media has changed the game of marketing. Attention spans are shorter. Hot topics get old faster. If you don't hit your audience with the content they want when they want it, your message is lost. Real-time marketing "has to be a priority, says Kline. "Relevance is only going to last so long. It does come with a deadline."

Real-time content goes above and beyond a banner ad here or a magazine ad there. Real-time engagement gives your brand a personality. These efforts can even directly increase sales and increase your social following—it worked for Pretzel Crisps and SmartCar.

Above all, the most important benefit of real-time marketing—one that is feasible for any company, regardless of size—is that it establishes your brand as relevant, interesting and worth listening to. Why? Because you're relating to your audience rather than forcing them to relate to you.

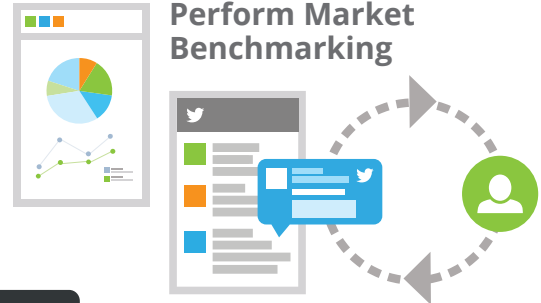
About uberVU via Hootsuite

Better business decisions through social data

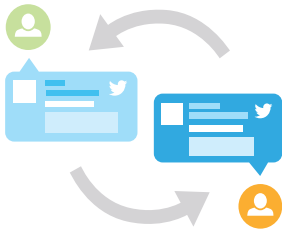
Experience Deep
Social Listening



Perform Market
Benchmarking



Discover Real-Time
Marketing Opportunities



Monitor Important
Discussions



Social data can empower everyone. With our intuitive, easy-to-use social analytics platform, you don't have to be a data scientist to see the value of social media analytics. uberVU via Hootsuite's exclusive technology synthesizes results from across the social web (not just your owned channels!) into a user-friendly dashboard offering the broadest possible overview of the social conversations that matter most, in real time.

Hootsuite and uberVU via Hootsuite were built for business. Featuring the most advanced tools and services available for security, collaboration, engagement, and social media analytics, we're the trusted solution for 744 of the Fortune 1000, and for more than 1300 enterprise clients worldwide.

Request a custom demo today by visiting ubervu.com/demo

Trusted by 744 of the Fortune 1000

