

A young woman with dark hair and bangs, wearing black-rimmed glasses and a white lace top, is smiling and looking down at her smartphone. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting with other people.

# 6 Smart Social Strategies to Fuel Your Brand's Marketing Success



## Consumers are talking in more places than ever — and not just in person.

Consumers are having conversations on social sites about the companies they do business with; contributing product reviews on manufacturer, retailer, and opinion sites; and driving other consumers' attitudes about brands across the web. **In many ways, this is a marketer's dream – shoppers everywhere, advocating on their company's behalf.**

But it has created an intimidating challenge: Marketers must figure out how to leverage social to create effective campaigns and get better-than-ever results with an audience that is dispersed all over the web.

**Marketers' biggest problem has always been how to deliver a return on their efforts.** In addition, many of them view social as yet another channel the organization wants them to manage. It turns out that social isn't another problem. It's actually the answer.

Social has tremendous power to affect the perception of a brand—in ways both favorable and negative. But social can do even more: **When employed effectively, trusted user-generated content has the power to dramatically improve all types of marketing campaigns—from digital to traditional—and deliver real, measurable results.**

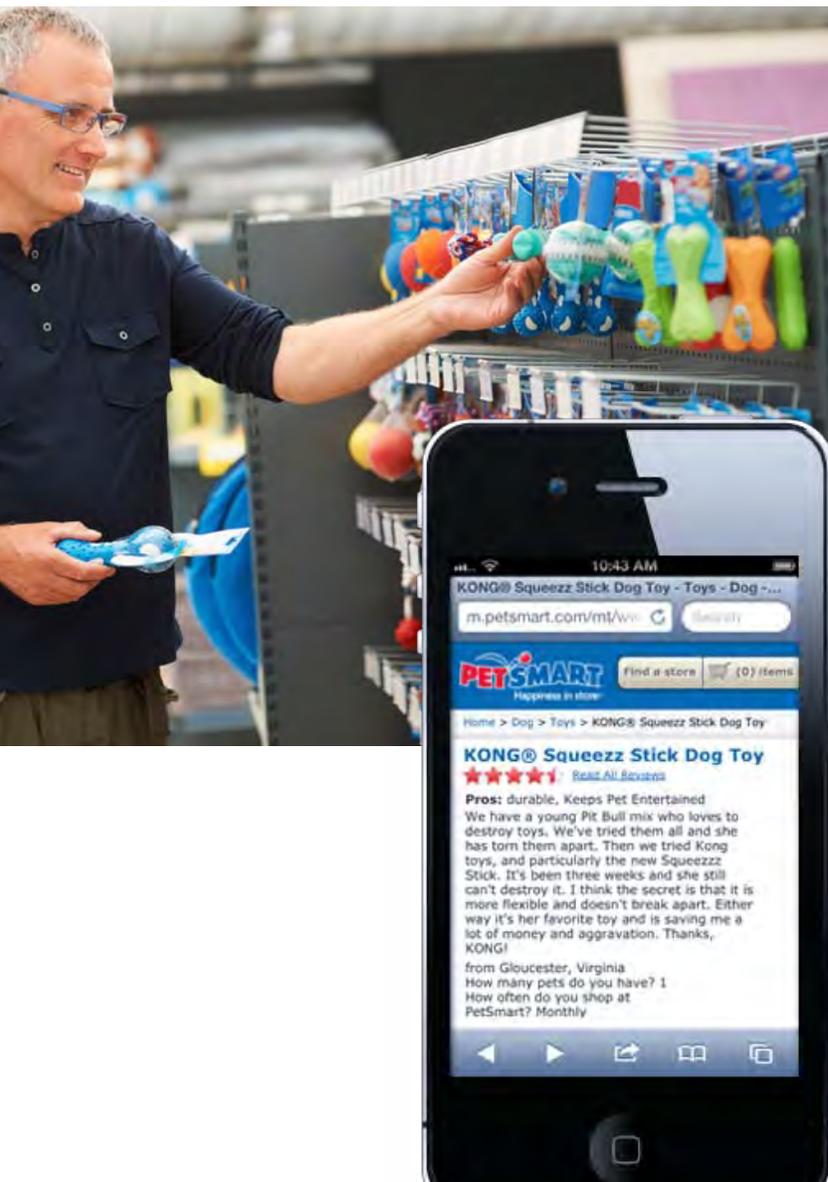
Because brands that sell through retail have fewer direct conversations with consumers, building relationships can be a challenge. But it's more critical than ever. When brands use social to cultivate loyal consumers who trust their products, they turn those shoppers into trustworthy advocates who offer a message that others are more likely to believe. In fact, 92% of consumers around the world say they trust earned media above all other forms of advertising.<sup>1</sup>

But the power of user-generated content doesn't manifest itself automatically. It takes a clear understanding of how and where consumers are talking, what they're saying, and how you can leverage that information in your campaigns to get results. By enabling user-generated content at all the right points in the buying cycle, brands can boost the power of their marketing campaigns and drive more traffic to the sites where their products and services are being sold.

In this white paper, we outline six strategies for leveraging user-generated content to boost your marketing campaign results ▶

# 1 Increase brand awareness and extend your reach

Consumers have many ways to research products and services, and they're taking advantage of them all. That means the journey to a purchase is longer than it has been in the past, and it's filled with a chorus of competing opinions. Those voices are loud, and they can be confusing: As of October 2012, Facebook had one billion active monthly users,<sup>2</sup> and Twitter had more than 500 million users.<sup>3</sup> **Brands must join the social landscape to ensure that as many voices as possible are speaking for them by amplifying user-generated content in a unified way across brand, retailer, and social sites. Here's how.**



Leveraging word-of-mouth content ensures consumers have authentic information that influences their decisions.

## Encourage word-of-mouth content.

Consumers trust opinions that come from other shoppers. The more word-of-mouth content you generate—and tie into planned marketing initiatives—the more your brand will dominate the conversation and reach more potential buyers. Post-interaction emails, social channel callouts, and contests encourage shoppers to contribute reviews. Authenticity is a must across all engagements.

## Share your content.

Shoppers leave reviews and tell their stories in various places—on your site, on retailer sites, and across social sites. By syndicating word-of-mouth content, you ensure that it is not confined to any one channel and can reach more consumers along their decision journey.

## Amplify it among your brand advocates.

When you leverage word-of-mouth content throughout your own social channels and loyalty programs, you're ensuring that consumers have authentic information that influences their decisions.

## Increase share of voice in-store.

Word-of-mouth content isn't just for the web; consumers are seeking it out in physical stores, too. By integrating user-generated content into retailer aisle collateral (for example, customer star ratings on shelf product tags) and ensuring that retailers give consumers a free, strong Wi-Fi signal in-store, you set your brand apart because you let shoppers access the opinions of trusted consumers.



## 2 Get consumers engaged with your brand

The demand for word-of-mouth content means consumers will create it no matter what, and this demand presents an opportunity for brands to actively guide and facilitate these conversations. **By making user-generated content a welcomed element on both your and your retailers' sites and an integral part of your marketing strategy, you can engage consumers in ways that weren't possible just a few years ago. Here's how.**

### Facilitate multiple types of content.

Consumer ratings and reviews focus directly on product opinions and help influence other consumers in the purchase path. Story campaigns hook shoppers with a brand experience. Question-and-answer content removes knowledge barriers by providing real-life answers to common questions.

### Use owned and earned channels.

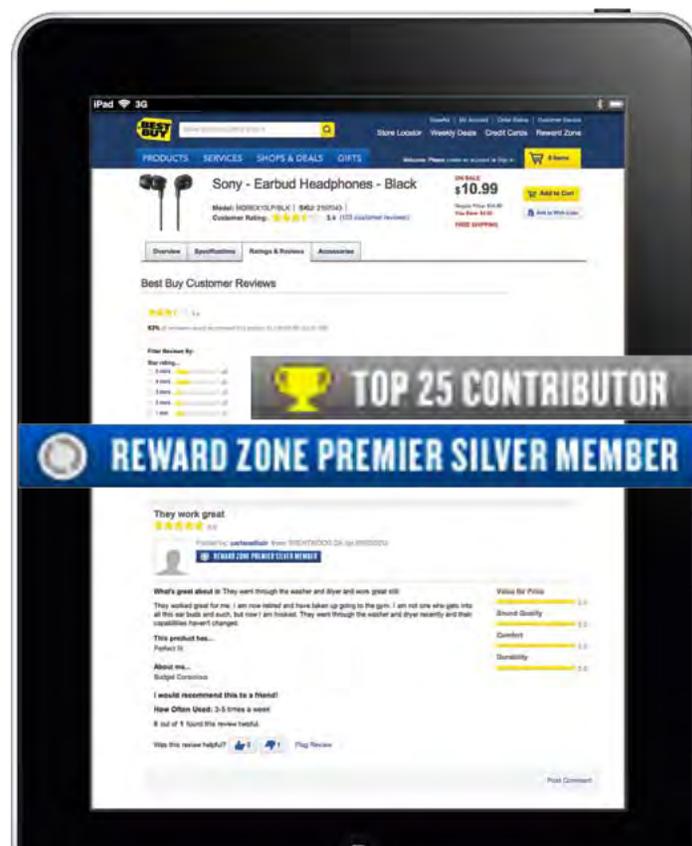
Incorporate word-of-mouth content into your website and in your social channels.

### Reward contributions.

When shoppers feel that you're listening and that you value their opinions, they're more likely to stay engaged. By spotlighting strong reviews and creating a merit badge system, brands can reward contributors for being a part of the community.

### Build trust and enhance the shopper experience.

User-generated content should be integrated across your entire site, but you can maximize its power by giving it a special home where shoppers can easily find top-rated products. Analysis of Petco's site revealed that the "top-rated products" category consistently outperformed other categories, with higher conversion rates (49%) and higher average order values (63%).



Best Buy rewards frequent reviewers with badges.

70% of shoppers research online before purchasing in a store.

– Google ZMOT, 2011

# 3 Boost campaign conversion ratios

Because consumers trust one another more than they trust brands, word-of-mouth content can help you convert browsers into buyers. Marketers need to ensure that they expose shoppers to this content at the right points in the buying cycle to nudge shoppers toward conversion. **Studies have shown that promoting word-of-mouth content on brand sites can increase “buy now” action by up to 76% and increase time spent on the site by up to 79%. Here’s how to boost conversion with word-of-mouth content.**

## Display your content.

Consumers want to make knowledgeable decisions, so make their peers’ opinions a prominent part of the shopping experience. On Epson.com, for example, visitors who read reviews were 67% more likely to convert to a purchase than those who did not.<sup>4</sup>

## Put content to work.

Incorporate user-generated content into all of your marketing activities. Create email campaigns that invite your audience to contribute content or reach out to participants via social sites. Leverage the stories consumers are telling and feature customer comments in your outbound communications. Rubbermaid found that adding reviews to its newspaper inserts increased conversion by 10%.<sup>5</sup>

## Leverage consumer relationships.

Your most engaged shoppers, including loyalty program members, will get even more engaged when you recognize their social contributions to your site. They’ll purchase more and, by generating content, they’ll encourage others to purchase.

Epson incorporates ratings and reviews from consumers in their marketing materials.



Prints beautiful documents.  
Everything seems to work flawlessly

- Samson, Epson Store Customer

## Highlight your insights.

When customers tell you they love a product or service, feature that content on your homepage and category pages. Fifty-five percent of consumers are more likely to purchase products with a high rating,<sup>6</sup> so promote the highest-rated products and related user-generated content all along the purchase path.

## Funnel offline interactions.

Nearly half of consumers have used their mobile devices to access customer reviews while in-store.<sup>7</sup> Use mobile campaigns to integrate the physical shopping experience with digital, enabling those shoppers to convert to a purchase right in the store.

Promoting word-of-mouth content on brand sites has shown +76% “buy now” action and +79% time on site.

– Bazaarvoice



# 4 Generate buzz around new products

User-generated content can help set the stage for successful product launches before they happen.

**By encouraging shoppers to create word-of-mouth content before a product even launches, you can establish the product's credibility and set the stage for a successful launch.**

When launching a new line of hair products aimed at repairing split ends, Nexxus reached out to brand advocates who had mentioned split ends in their reviews and seemed willing to recommend Nexxus products. Nexxus invited those consumers to an exclusive pre-launch trial of the new product line and asked for feedback. Reviews were overwhelmingly positive, and Nexxus launched the line with earned media already in place—which it could then use in display and print ads, on the brand's Facebook page, and on major retailer sites.<sup>8</sup>

## Identify your advocates.

Comb the comments on your site and retailer sites to discover customers who are the strongest advocates for your brand. These users can help build momentum that will carry through your product launch.

## Activate your community.

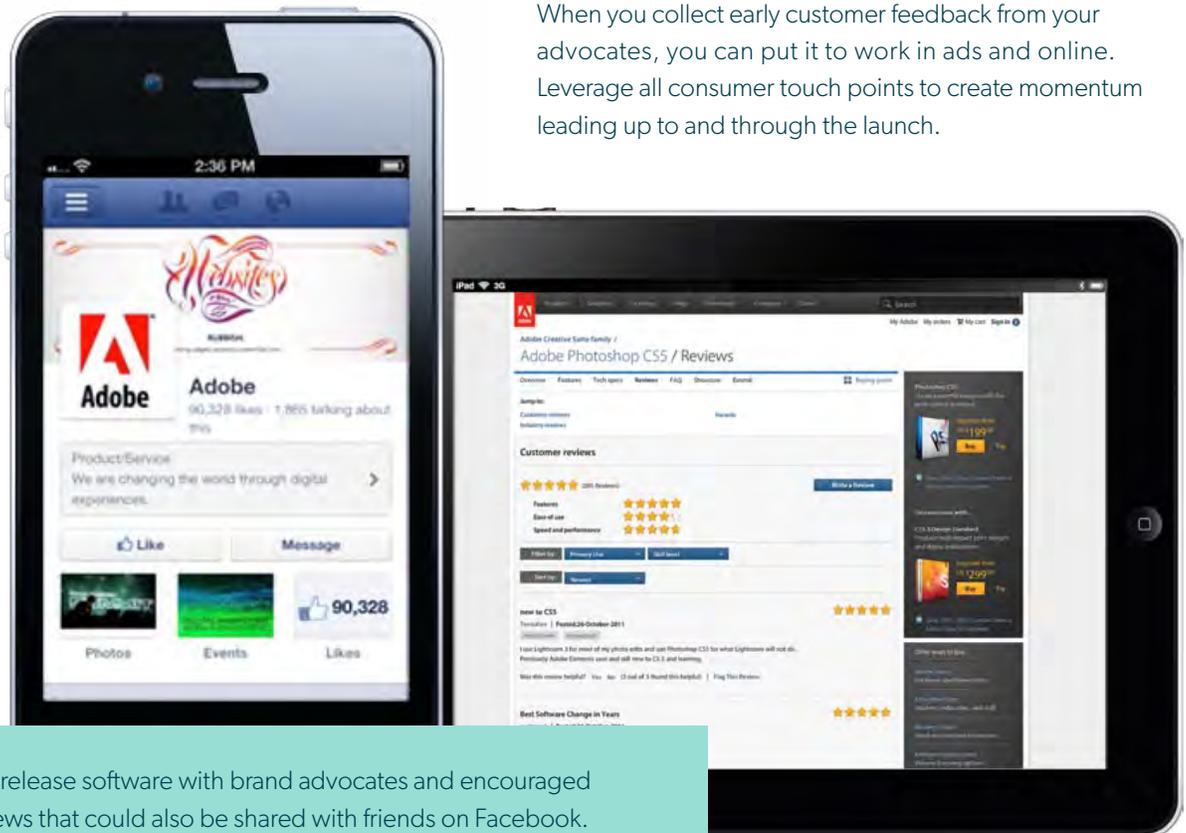
Offer advocates early access to your product. Ask them to test and provide feedback on your product before it launches. Make advocates feel that they're part of an exciting new venture and show that you value their opinions.

## Listen and learn.

Early feedback on your products not only establishes a product's credibility before it enters the market, but it also gives you a chance to refine the product's messaging and features.

## Distribute.

When you collect early customer feedback from your advocates, you can put it to work in ads and online. Leverage all consumer touch points to create momentum leading up to and through the launch.



Adobe shared prerelease software with brand advocates and encouraged them to write reviews that could also be shared with friends on Facebook.

# 5 Target your marketing more precisely

Brands that sell across many channels might find that different types of customers shop in different settings. Shopper A may be motivated by price while Shopper B is motivated by features. **With user-generated content, you can better understand the differences among consumer groups and the terms they use to talk about your products**, and then target them with the messages that will resonate best—both online and offline.

## Segment retailers by consumer sentiment.

Are consumers who shop at one retailer providing different feedback than consumers who shop at another retailer? Understanding priorities and preferences by retailer can help you tailor your messages to be more effective with all groups.

## Target by preference.

You may think that the weight of a laptop is the most important feature to highlight in your promotional copy. However, through insight from user-generated content, you may discover that battery life is what most shoppers care about. Listen closely to be sure that your messaging addresses the right issues. Also, keep listening and be willing to adapt if you see consumer sentiment changing over time.

## Optimize search.

User-generated content provides insight into the terms consumers are using to talk about your products. Using those words and phrases in your marketing campaigns can help increase traffic to your website and your retailers' sites. UK-based Evans Cycles saw a 23% increase in visits from search engines after incorporating user-generated content into its product pages.<sup>9</sup>



# 6 Cocreate with shoppers

Companies on the cutting edge aren't just using consumer opinions to sell more existing products; they are working with their customers to cocreate products. For example, customers might have a great idea for a new product, or they may identify a way to modify an existing product. **By inviting those consumers to cocreate, you're turning them into partners who will then act as advocates for other shoppers because they now have a stake in your brand. Here's how.**

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## Listen.

Enable conversations on both your site and retailer sites, and keep your finger on the pulse of consumer opinions wherever they appear.

## Reach out.

Identify the consumers who understand your brand and message, and engage them in the cocreation process.

## Collect the best ideas.

Help your advocates refine their ideas. Take the most viable ideas to your internal R&D team for further exploration.

## Pilot.

Continue to engage your advocates by including them in a pilot launch of the product they helped create.





## Don't let conversations happen without you

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Social is a boon for marketers who can leverage it effectively. User-generated content enables you to engage directly with consumers in ways that were never before possible. These conversations can build virtual communities of consumers who are driven by a true appreciation of a brand and an altruistic desire to inform other consumers. In fact, a study of the reasons why consumers write reviews found that 90% do so simply to help others make better buying decisions.<sup>10</sup>

But social also presents marketers with a challenge: how to drive measurable results from all consumer touch points from the valuable user-generated content that appears across so many channels. Social can help brands create authentic conversations with and among consumers, which is helpful in boosting loyalty and conversions. Social can also turn shoppers into advocates, and brands can facilitate those advocates in reaching more consumers across top retailer and social sites. And by analyzing user-generated content, brands can uncover valuable insights into the motivations behind purchases, then put that insight into action in targeted marketing campaigns.

Marketers have always been under pressure to deliver a return on their marketing initiatives, but that pressure is increasing. Now they're also under pressure to address social. Rather than view these as competing pressures, marketers can address them simultaneously. **By leveraging the power of the content that consumers are already contributing, marketers can create campaigns that truly deliver by converting more shoppers into buyers and ensuring that the good content keeps coming—all of which delivers value to the business.**

92% of consumers around the world say they trust earned media above all other forms of advertising.

—NielsenWire, April 2012

# b: About Bazaarvoice

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Bazaarvoice, a leading social software company, helps clients bring the voice of the customer to the center of business strategy. With nearly 2,000 clients globally, including over half of the Internet Retailer 500 list of the world's largest retailers, over 20 percent of the Fortune 500, and over one-third of the Fortune 100 brands, Bazaarvoice helps clients like Best Buy, Costco, Dell, Macy's, P&G, Panasonic, QVC, Travelocity, and USAA to create social outlets on their brand websites and Facebook pages where customers can engage in conversations. These conversations can be syndicated across Bazaarvoice's global network of client websites and mobile devices, making the user-generated content that digital consumers trust accessible at multiple points of purchase.

Through Bazaarvoice, brands can also connect directly with consumers on retail sites to answer questions and respond to reviews written about their products. The Bazaarvoice technology platform allows clients to leverage social data derived from online word-of-mouth to increase sales, acquire new customers, improve marketing effectiveness, enhance consumer engagement across channels, increase success of new product launches, improve existing products and services, effectively scale customer support, and decrease product returns. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, Bazaarvoice has offices in Amsterdam, London, Munich, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Stockholm, and Sydney. For more information, visit [www.bazaarvoice.com](http://www.bazaarvoice.com), read the blog at [www.bazaarvoice.com/blog](http://www.bazaarvoice.com/blog), and follow on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/bazaarvoice](http://www.twitter.com/bazaarvoice).



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