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Two hearts in three-quarter time: How to waltz the social media/viral marketing dance

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Abstract

The concept of viral marketing has been discussed in the literature for over 15 years, since Jeffrey Rayport first introduced the term in 1996. However, the more widespread use of social media has recently pushed this idea to a whole new level. We provide insight into the relationship between social media and viral marketing, and illustrate the six steps executives should take in order to dance the social media/viral marketing waltz. We define viral marketing as electronic word-of-mouth whereby some form of marketing message related to a company, brand, or product is transmitted in an exponentially growing way—often through the use of social media applications. We consider the three conditions that need to be fulfilled to create a viral marketing epidemic (i.e., giving the right message to the right messengers in the right environment) and present four different groups of social media viral marketing campaigns (nightmares, strokes-of-luck, homemade issues, and triumphs). We conclude

with five points of caution that managers should heed when trying to launch their own viral marketing campaign.



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Keywords

Web 2.0; User-generated content; Social media; Viral marketing; Word-of-mouth

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