

## Internet research

Search for the keywords *klout score*. How useful are measures of influence for individuals or brands? How can you increase your score?

## Glossary PAGE 154

dodgy  
double-edged sword  
endorse  
gripe  
lobby  
stack up  
sucks  
thrive

# Social marketing doesn't have to suck

Many people regret the way some marketers offer cash or other rewards in return for lying to one's friends, while other dodgy companies sell bundles of 10,000 Twitter followers to help a particular brand look well loved. However, the ongoing collision of marketing and social networks doesn't have to involve trickery or deception.

Picture this: you're sitting by the pool at a Vegas resort, when you decide to tweet a picture of where you are to your friends at their fluorescent-lit offices. A few minutes later, a waiter shows up with an ice-cold beverage on the house, explaining, 'Thanks for the tweet.' Guess what your next tweet will be about? Staying at the BEST HOTEL EVER!!

That's the scenario proposed by Marc Heyneker, co-founder of Revinate, one of a new generation of Web-based tools that help companies monitor what people are saying about them. Similar tools are commonplace,

typically picking up on keywords on Twitter, Facebook, Yelp and so on, but Revinate is different in that it specializes in a single vertical market: the hotel industry. Individual hotels and chains can see how they stack up to the competition and respond to isolated or repeated gripes and praise.

Heyneker says the hotel industry has been 'sitting on the sidelines': Their business has been disrupted by the double-edged sword of online travel agents and review sites like TripAdvisor®, but hotels are often 'clueless' as to how to deal with the new landscape. Revinate typically pays for itself if it results in one extra booking per month. In its first seven months, the service has signed up 491 hotels, including smaller individual hotels, Vegas resorts and popular hotel chains; Heyneker plans to take on the restaurant business next.

Medimix's ScanBuzz™ applies a similar approach to help the

medical industry listen in on what people are saying about hundreds of pharmaceutical products and brands. A company looking to market a drug to fight a particular disease can monitor the social web to research how many misdiagnoses are made and try to educate the relevant doctors and hospitals about the disease's symptoms. Meanwhile, Radian6 tackles the same job for consumer packaged goods, technology and other verticals, taking a more general approach than Revinate's hotel or Medimix's medical industry dashboards.

Nowhere in these marketing schemes are people paid to lie to their friends; businesses use information in a purely reactive way. All the data they access is on the open web, so any privacy concerns should be minimal. In the end, all that this socially-reactive marketing does is make businesses more responsive to what their customers are saying about them, and it's hard to see how that could be a bad thing. By reacting quickly and appropriately to conversations on the public web, businesses have a better chance of thriving in the unforgiving and increasingly powerful court of public opinion.

