



April 27, 2009

# The Future Of The Social Web

by Jeremiah Owyang  
for Interactive Marketing Professionals



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## The Future Of The Social Web

Portable IDs Catalyze A Power Shift To Consumers

by **Jeremiah Owyang**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today's social experience is disjointed because consumers have separate identities in each social network they visit. A simple set of technologies that enable a portable identity will soon empower consumers to bring their identities with them — transforming marketing, eCommerce, CRM, and advertising. IDs are just the beginning of this transformation, in which the Web will evolve step by step from separate social sites into a shared social experience. Consumers will rely on their peers as they make online decisions, whether or not brands choose to participate. Socially connected consumers will strengthen communities and shift power away from brands and CRM systems; eventually this will result in empowered communities defining the next generation of products.

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Forrester interviewed 24 vendors and user companies, including Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, MySpace, OpenID Foundation, and Twitter.

#### **Related Research Documents**

["Ubiquitous Marketing"](#)

July 17, 2008

["The CRM 2.0 Imperative"](#)

March 10, 2008

["The Connected Agency"](#)

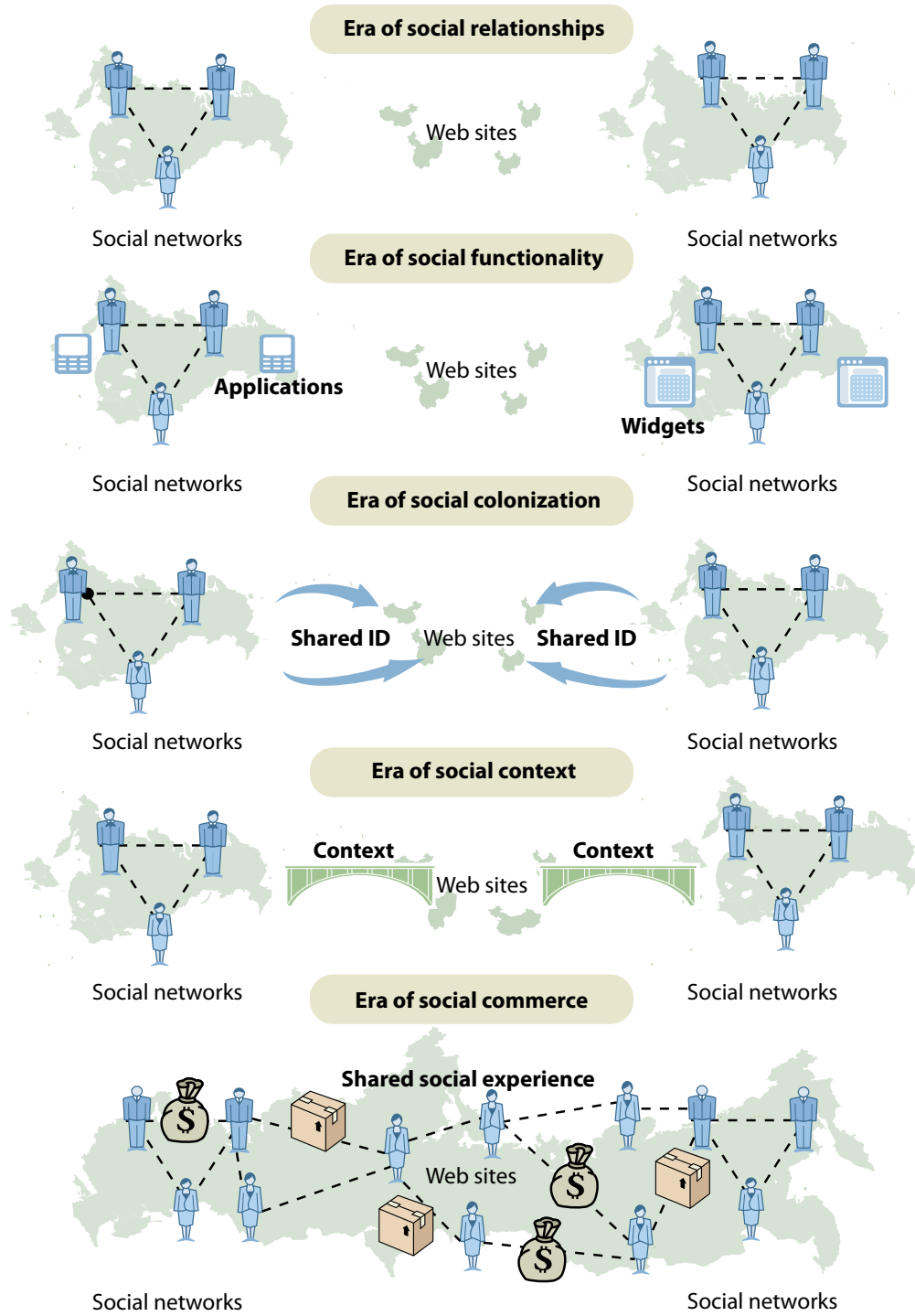
February 8, 2008

## SOCIAL NETWORKS PROLIFERATE, YET COMMUNITIES ARE LOCKED IN DISPARATE ISLANDS

Social networks represent the digital reflection of what humans do: We connect and share. While brands naturally want to get in on this furor of activity, there's a big problem — the social information about people, their profiles, and their friends is locked up in separate networks, frustrating both the consumers who use them and the brands who want to connect with them. But the Social Web is about to evolve into something much broader than a few social network sites: a consistent backdrop for every online activity. Portable social IDs and the changes they enable will transform how consumers, brands, and social networks interact. This online social experience will evolve through five eras (see Figure 1 and see Figure 2):

1. **The era of social relationships.** This was the first stage of the Social Web, starting in the mid-1990s with communities like AOL and maturing a few years ago. In this era, people connected to each other using simple profiles and friending features to share information, discussions, and media.<sup>1</sup> While this era is the foundation of the changes to come, in this document we'll be concentrating on the next four eras — the future of the Social Web.
2. **The era of social functionality.** Today's social networks have evolved beyond "friending" into platforms that support social interactive applications and provide new meaning and utility to communities. Even so, social relationships are still locked up within sites.
3. **The era of social colonization.** In the next stage of social evolution, starting later in 2009, technologies like OpenID and Facebook Connect will let individuals traverse the Internet with their social connections along for the ride. The boundaries of social networks and traditional sites will blur, making every Web site into a social experience.
4. **The era of social context.** Next year, as sites begin to recognize people's personal identities and their social relationships, they will customize visitors' experiences based on their preferences, their behaviors, and who their friends are. In addition to enabling more intense social applications, in this stage social networks will absorb features of email and become a base of operations for everyone's online experiences.
5. **The era of social commerce.** Starting about two years from now, as social networks become the repository for identities and relationships, they will become more powerful than corporate Web sites and CRM systems. Communities will become the driving force for innovation. As a result, brands will cater to communities, resulting in a power shift toward the connected customer.

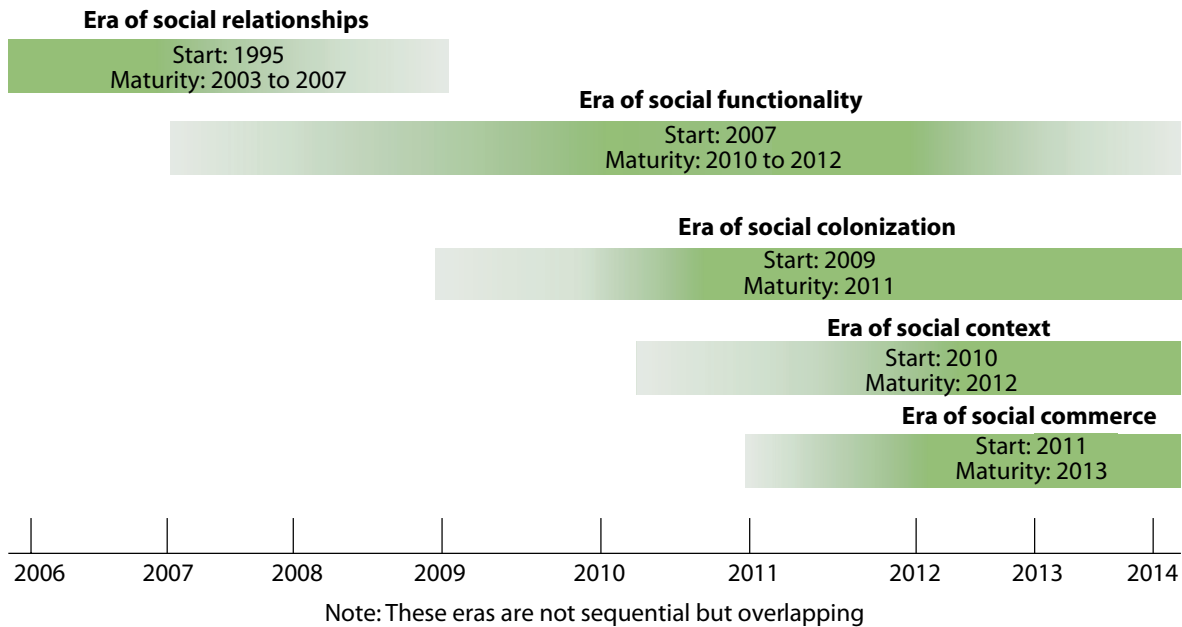
**Figure 1** The Five Eras Of The Social Web



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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

**Figure 2** Timing Of The Five Overlapping Eras



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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

### In The Era Of Social Functionality, The Focus Remains On Activity *Within* Social Networks

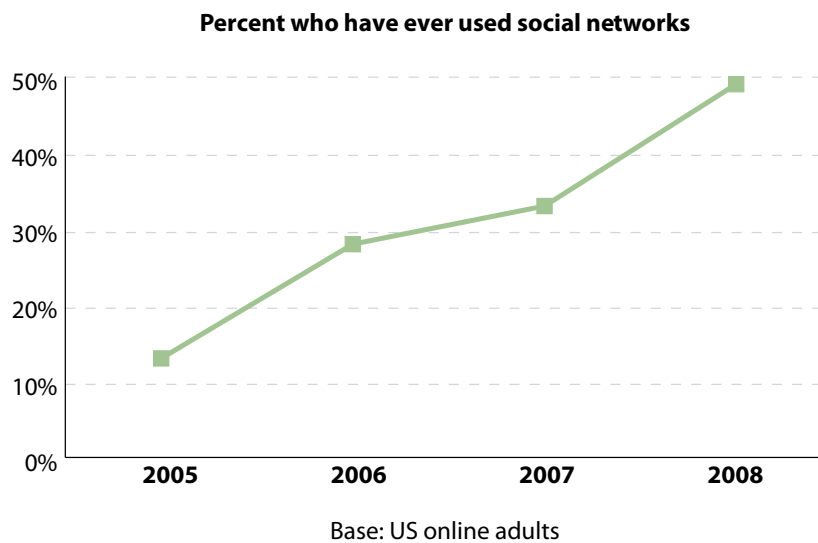
The past five years of social network evolution have been about growth of adoption (see Figure 3).<sup>2</sup> Now, as the era of social relationships gives way to the era of social functionality, the inhabitants of the islands that are today's separate social networks will adopt a more useful social experience — but they'll still be stuck on those islands (see Figure 4). For example, Facebook's platform allows sophisticated social experiences like the iLike application for sharing music preferences among friends, but these experiences don't extend beyond the boundaries of Facebook and iLike.com. In this era:

- **Consumers share their experiences but can't connect them across networks.** Consumers have rapidly ramped up their social network activity, with 35% joining up in the US, 18% in Europe, 51% in Korea, and 30% in Japan.<sup>3</sup> But multiple IDs are a problem. Among the US online consumers who visit Facebook, LinkedIn, or MySpace at least monthly, 42% must juggle at least two social network IDs.<sup>4</sup> And 63% of those in social networks are also logging in to discussion forums — again with a separate ID.<sup>5</sup> Just as early AOL users were not able to email those outside of AOL, none of these IDs work outside the social networks they belong to. This creates friction for consumers who must now manage multiplying personal information and username/password combinations. It's hard to keep track of connections when your friends and contacts

may be in Cyworld, Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Ning, Twitter, Xing, or any of a hundred other places.

- **Social networks have evolved into operating systems, but their reach is limited.** Even as people are frustrated by the boundaries between sites, the social network sites are chafing at the limits of their reach. Currently, only a few sites have enabled Facebook Connect, the system for recognizing Facebook IDs on the broader Web; as a result, Facebook's influence stops when you browse elsewhere. Social network sites have to remind people to come back by generating "BACN" — email notifications of activity happening back in the social networks.
- **Brands connect with profiles and applications but can't reach the whole audience.** While 42% of consumers would be willing to interact with their favorite brands socially, they're split on which type of interaction they'd prefer.<sup>6</sup> So Victoria's Secret needs a separate presence on Facebook and MySpace. Dell connects with some customers on Facebook but maintains multiple communities on its own site. Whether brands attract consumers to their own social community or chase them in the sites they frequent, they still seem to be connecting with "identities," not actual people.

**Figure 3** The Steady Rise Of Social Network Adoption



Source: Consumer Technographics® Q3 2005 North American Media & Marketing Online Survey; Forrester's NACTAS Q3 2006 Media & Marketing Online Survey; North American Social Technographics Online Survey, Q2 2007; and North American Technographics Media And Marketing Online Survey, Q2 2008

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

**Figure 4** The Evolution Of The Social Web Affects Consumers, Brands, And Social Networks

	<b>Era of social relationships</b>	<b>Era of social functionality</b>	<b>Era of social colonization</b>	<b>Era of social context</b>	<b>Era of social commerce</b>
Start; maturity	1995; 2003 to 2007	2007; 2010 to 2012	2009; 2011	2010; 2012	2011; 2013
Descriptions	Individuals assemble and connect with each other in online groups.	Social networks become operating systems.	Every Web site is now social, even if it doesn't choose to be.	Web sites deliver personalized content to visitors.	Online groups supplant brands.
Consumers	Use simple profile and discussion features to share with each other	Embed Web applications and widgets on their profiles to make experience more fun and useful	Lean on their peers' opinions to make decisions about products	Opt in to share their identity in return for a more relevant Web experience	Work with peers to define the next generation of products; also purchase in groups
Brands	Join online groups using conversational marketing or sponsorship, or create their own community	Advertise, then sponsor, then create applications to provide utility to consumers	Focus on influencers and including social recommendations	Provide specialized content for visitors; get rid of registration pages	Lean on groups to define products
Social networks	Struggle with monetization	Share as developers to monetize applications	Aggregate all implicit and explicit data, creating a new type of social inbox	Become the identity system of the Web	Offer features to help with product design and vendor management
Other media	The world is more connected.	Office apps become social; even solitaire games have social leaderboards.	Mobile devices trigger in-store displays to show custom content.	TV offers personalized interactive channels for viewers.	A new PR agency emerges that represents online groups — not brands.

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

**In The Era Of Social Colonization, Communities Will Traverse The Internet**

Many of the frustrations of current social networking stem from the limits of traversing the Web without your social identity. This is why players in this space including Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo! are working together on a shared identity system called OpenID.<sup>7</sup> For example, in a bid to extend the reach of its new browser, Chrome, we expect Google to build OpenID and its associated friend connections into the browser; look for Firefox and eventually Internet Explorer to copy this feature. Facebook and MySpace will also likely build a way for users to surf the Web within the Facebook experience, retaining the social functionality. These connections won't be perfect, but

they'll allow social networks to colonize communities and other parts of the Web, extending their experience out to other sites through the shared ID. As a result, in two years, portable identities will become a ubiquitous part of the online experience as they reach maturity.

- **For consumers, surfing the Web will no longer be a lonely experience.** The new browsers and identity technologies will let consumers choose to surf the Web and see what sites their friends have visited — and what they thought of the information there. Because they trust their friends more than they trust companies, they'll lean on their network to make decisions about what they're reading, considering, and buying.<sup>8</sup>
- **To add value, social networks will aggregate members' activities and those of their network.** To help people make sense of their social activities across the Web, social networks like Facebook and LinkedIn will collect and prioritize their members' activities on their profile pages within social networks. They'll merge these into their messaging systems and newsfeeds, allowing users not only to control their communications with other sites but also to see where and what their friends are doing on the open Web. People will start to rely on this inbox/newsfeed as an equally important communications channel to their traditional email.
- **Brands will shift focus from traditional marketing to social recommendations.** Peers' recommendations will become more visible, so marketers will boost their efforts to influence communities by encouraging word of mouth from consumer brand advocates. As communities become more powerful, expect brands to use both PR and sponsored conversations to reach out to micro-celebrities and micro-experts in each niche — mommy bloggers and political pundits, for example.<sup>9</sup>

### In The Era Of Social Context, The Internet Delivers Personalized Experiences

Starting in 2010, the portable identity will make the Web more relevant because it will include not only information about friends but also about people's preferences, demographics, and history. Consumers will opt in to share this information with online communities and other Web sites in exchange for a more relevant Web experience, much as they now allow sites to use browser cookies. This personalized experience will build bridges between social networks, sites, and any other medium that can connect with these identification tools.

- **Consumers will expose parts of their IDs to sites.** Portable IDs mean you'll be able to flip a switch to tell Nike you're a woman who runs 12 miles a week and immediately see the shoes that are best for you — along with input from experiences of your running buddies. The levels of experience will vary based on how much context people are willing to share (see Figure 5). We also expect consumers to gather together virtually with their friends for shared experiences, watching online video or visiting wedding registries as they fire off instant messages about what they're seeing. Digital breadcrumbs from friends will help consumers to navigate what matters to them.



- **Social networks will shift their business models.** During this era, social networks will experience pain as weakness in their advertising-supported business model blocks revenue growth. Instead, they'll explore a number of different models, including more interactive advertisements, helping companies to deliver better-branded social and community experiences, and aggregating knowledge from consumer data. In the end, since they won't be able to charge consumers much, their money has to come from marketers. Look for social sites, especially Facebook and Twitter, to concentrate in this era on marketing services based on identification of key influencers, tracking what they're saying, and then serving that valuable information up to brands at a fee.
- **Brands will personalize their Web site experiences to drive results.** Brands will develop their competencies to best provide personalized information to attract and retain customers. Should people with more friends in the local area get an automatic discount? Do older consumers with less developed social graphs need their hands held as they browse? Web experience and analytics will become tightly coupled as brands in search of higher yields dynamically adjust how their sites and social network profiles react to visitors. One likely offshoot will be a decrease in the number of advertisements produced, even as they become more personalized with higher click-through rates and CPMs. We expect new metrics to arise as brands recognize that developing a fan generates more business than making an individual sale.<sup>10</sup>
- **Search results serve content based on social relevance.** Consumers want faster and more relevant information in their lives, especially in search. Search engines like Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo! will access consumers' preferences and social friends to help match and deliver more related content. Expect search engine results to serve up information based on both what friends have clicked on and on the choices of people who share similar traits to the searcher.
- **Mobile devices will allow anyone to have an entourage in their pocket.** Because people rely on mobile devices for near constant communication, they'll naturally tap into their communities on the go.<sup>11</sup> We're already seeing mobile social networks like Facebook Connect, Loopt, and Whrrl. In the era of social context, these trends will expand as consumers broadcast their personalized signal in real-world stores and share specialized services, deals, or products. Electronic displays or registers will evolve to reflect what these communities are saying. Marketers will also be able to provide contextual advertising — with a social twist — in outdoor digital displays.
- **TV providers will marry the social graph with traditional TV — birthing social TV.** In order to compete with eyeballs shifting to the Web, Comcast will extend social content to TV using data from the cable operator's 2008 acquisition of social network Plaxo. Tools like boxee will evolve beyond organizing media on your laptop to extending your social network to all the screens you own. As a result, communities will be able to recommend shows to their friends and share opinions about the plot, characters, and advertisements in real time or asynchronously.

Actors and producers will talk back to communities using the same social tools, bridging the experience between actor and audience. Eventually, operators like Time Warner Cable and Verizon will create customized TV channels based on friend recommendations, much as Pandora currently does for music. As a result, channel surfing to find “the least objectionable program” will become far less common.

**Figure 5** Levels Of Social Context That Consumers Can Share

! The rules of an online social contract state that consumers will provide access to personal information in exchange for more personalized content. The portable identity brings new ways for consumers to obtain a personalized relevant experience. For brands, this provides opportunities to increase advertising relevancy and to engage in a more meaningful relationship with consumers.



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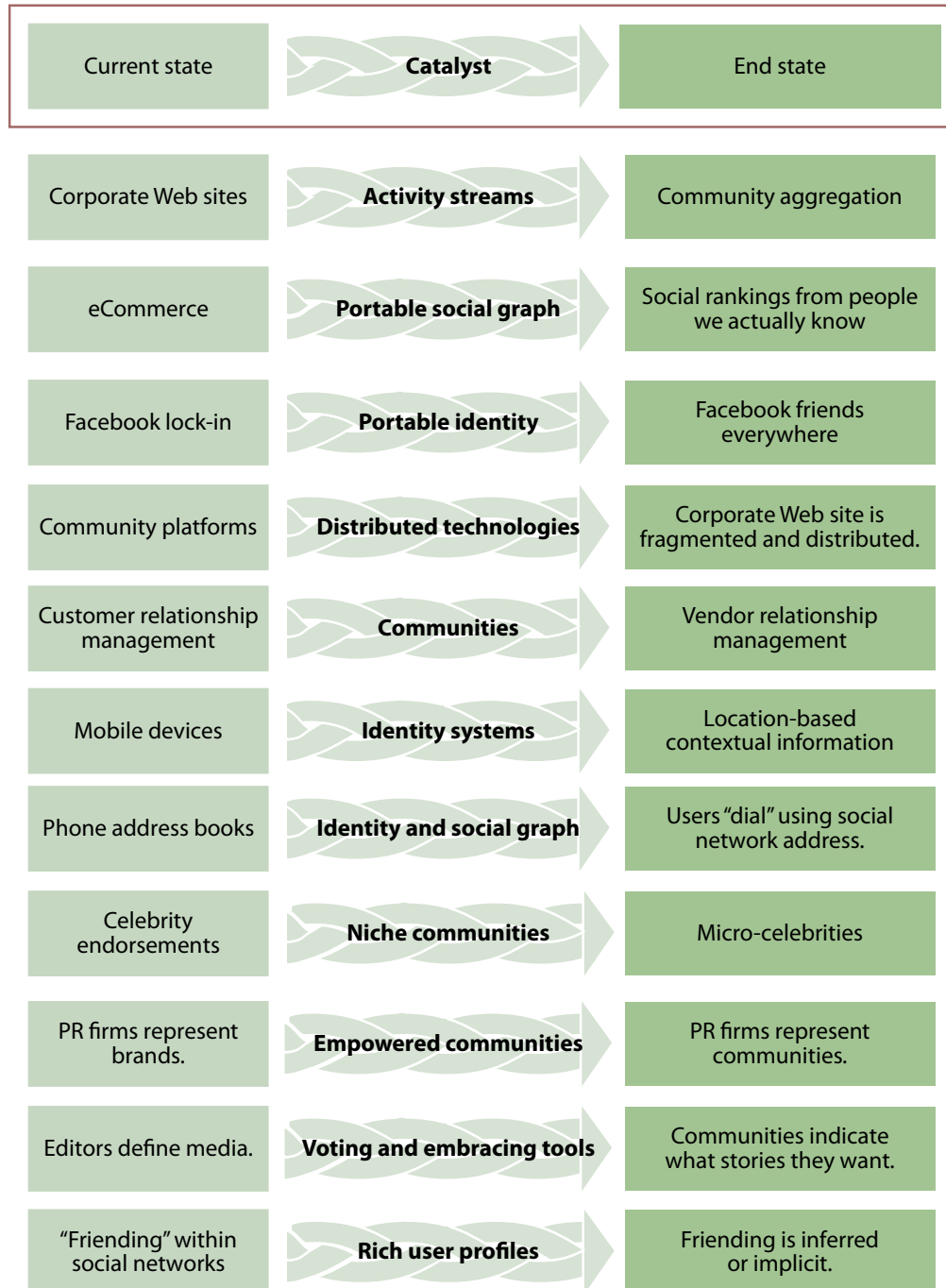
Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

### In The Era Of Social Commerce, Social Networks Will Gain Power Over Brands

Within two years, we will start to see versatile IDs that will allow social sites and the Web to merge into a single common experience — the islands will have combined to form a single nation. Users in this era will have mastery over their identities and what they choose to expose to brands. As a result, they will band together to use collaboration tools to define how they want brands to serve them. A suite of community tools to manage companies — or as Harvard’s Doc Searls has called it, “vendor relationship management” — will become a reality.<sup>12</sup> To keep up, companies will need to cater to the needs of communities (see Figure 6). Although it will take four years to mature, the power will shift to communities within social networks, and brands that don’t respond will lose market share.

- **Consumers will let communities take the driver's seat when it comes to buying.** Having recognized their collective power by banding together, consumers in communities will at first work together to do group buys. Then they'll evolve to use tools like Ideastorm to define what future products will look like. When it's possible to meet those needs economically, companies will respond. In the end, communities will define the features of a desired product and brands will bid for their business.
- **Social networks will become next-generation CRM systems.** At first, we'll continue to see vendors like Apprio pass small bits of user data to CRM systems like salesforce.com, but users will be reluctant to give full access to their data to brands they don't trust. Eventually, social networks including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter will include more sophisticated controls on which data customers wish to share with brands, earning consumer trust. As a result, these social networks will evolve into the holding ground of customer information. Social networks will derive power from a new role: a customer-relationship intermediary between brands and consumers.
- **Registration pages will go away, and Web site content will fragment.** Because Web sites will know who's visiting, the annoying ritual of filling out registration pages will disappear — sites will get the required information from social network IDs, when consumers permit it. But the sites themselves will eventually become less and less relevant. As content on sites becomes more targeted and based around visitors and community, corporate Web sites will begin to distribute content to people as they need it instead of forcing them to sift through complex site experiences. As a result, users will need to rely less on search and surfing to get information and will lean more on sharing their needs in exchange for receiving information that fits their behaviors, preferences, and community.

**Figure 6** The Technologies Of The Social Web Catalyze Internet Metamorphosis



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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

## ISSUES LIKE PRIVACY MEAN THE PATH TO THIS FUTURE WILL BE BUMPY

Because of the compelling desire of consumers to streamline their experience and of brands to reach out to those consumers using social tools, the socially aware Web is inevitable. But it won't be simple to get there. Among the challenges that need resolving are privacy and social network fatigue.

- **Privacy will continue to scare users as they connect with brands.** The tradeoff seems simple: Users provide some personal information in order to receive a more relevant experience. But any information sharing will raise privacy risks, especially as brands present the occasional ill-considered message like “Welcome back, Michael. Did you know we've got Viagra now in stock?” Expect continued user paranoia over mistrust of brands and social networks. Also look for people to continue to maintain multiple IDs for different aspects of their experience, much as they may now have several email addresses. But as the millennials begins to lead in both consuming and adopting new Web experiences, their experience with public sharing will lead the way for less trusting generations.
- **Overexposure will cause people to withdraw from social networks from time to time.** As in real life, social connections online can be energizing yet emotionally draining. Expect users to dial up and down their social experience based on their day-to-day comfort level — especially as their work and personal lives intersect. Even wallflowers will have friends who draw them into social connections online, but expect their participation to remain far more passive, carried along with the more active and open members of the community.
- **Social networks will need to seriously beef up their data processing abilities.** CRM and related revenue systems have evolved over decades to deliver the customer insights brands need. The data and technology infrastructure within a site like Facebook are designed to deliver experiences to consumers, not to integrate with marketers' operational systems. If the future we've described is to come to pass, then social networks must devote major resources to technology foundations within the next few years to deliver a real-time, reliable, and secure environment for customer and brand information that integrates with marketer systems.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### FOCUS ON ADVOCATES AND PREPARE FOR COMMUNITIES

Marketers must be ready for yet more changes in how they reach customers over the next few years. Traditional marketing is becoming less effective, and to retool it, marketers must do more listening than talking. To thrive in this rapidly changing environment:

- **Brands must focus on their most vocal advocates.** New forms of advocacy will emerge as social applications systems enable rating friends' reputations for reliability. Because consumers will trust their peers, brands must learn to rely on their advocates more than ever.

As a result, marketers should develop relationships with key influencers within communities, win them over, and allow them to carry the message to the community. Brands should offer incentives like group discounts to advocates and their followers. Those with fewer real fans will choose authentic and transparent sponsored conversations instead.

- **Marketers must evolve direct email from broadcast to social.** Because consumers will control the messages they receive, they will be able to see or block information from brands. But trust is high among peers, so messages from friends will get through. Marketers should begin to develop a new form of email marketing that encourages consumers to forward offers to their friends, as an endorsement. People whose friends sign up will become trusted brand advocates. Look to innovation within developer platforms like Yahoo! Open Strategy, which allows third-party developers to interact with existing Yahoo! Tools. Microsoft's Windows Live is already moving in this direction. Expect these portals to compete on how well they help consumers keep up with social networks.
- **Marketers must focus on pull as "opt-in" metrics take the place of conversions.** Because the registration pages that marketers use to measure conversions are headed toward extinction, marketers must be ready instead to seek and measure "opt-ins," the events in which consumers indicate they want more information without exposing their identity. Brand marketers should develop a new form of a social contract that coaxes consumers to share information in exchange for premium content, discounts, or other special services.
- **Brands must prepare internal culture for these shifts — starting from the top down.** Here's how to prepare for the major shift in brand strategy that these social changes entail: Senior marketers should start by participating in the Social Web themselves and lean on staff marketers who understand the Social Web and encourage them to educate others. To develop instant trust, consider hiring or consulting with marketers from the community itself, as Ford did with mommy blogger Jessica Smith.

## WHAT IT MEANS

### AS POWER SHIFTS TO COMMUNITIES, MARKETING WILL TRANSFORM ITSELF

The power shift isn't just about social networks, since it triggers changes in all aspects of marketers' go-to-market plans. Marketers are entering a world in which empowered communities will not only define how they want to be marketed to but also define product design and development.

- **Advertisers will buy based on social capital — not just page views and clicks.** The value of ads will not be who sees them but the likelihood that those seeing will take action. Expect to see pricing based on influence. As an example, consider social ads like Facebook engagement ads, which allow consumers to share with their networks. The more influential the individual, the more likely her community will engage with the ad; ad prices will change to reflect this.<sup>13</sup>

- **Social networks will differentiate based on their members and competencies.** While social network business models will all evolve toward data management, we expect the networks themselves to angle for differentiated positions. For example, MySpace will further ally itself with media companies and is likely to lead on shared media experiences. Facebook will focus on distributing its content to all parts of the Web, while at the same time aggregating actions from across the broader Internet. LinkedIn will excel within the ecosystem of workers and recruiters and may become a key element in internal corporate social networks. And we expect Twitter to step up as a vendor of real-time brand analytics, to answer the question “What are people saying about my brand and products right now?”
- **CRM vendors partner with social networks.** Twitter has become a fast-growing social network and will turn into a thriving marketplace in which consumers talk and support each other about products and connect to each other and brands. As registrations and support processes shift to social networks like this, traditional CRM companies like Oracle and SAP will seek to partner with social networks in order to maintain access to customer interactions.
- **Communities influence media content.** Community innovation isn’t limited to products alone. We also expect online groups to dictate to media companies what type of content they prefer. Communities like Digg already indicate what one tech-focused audience prefers, and we expect similar deployments to cascade to other verticals. Simple tools like tipjoy, which allows readers to provide micropayments, could encourage writers or bloggers to cover topics that communities want. Hybrid models have already begun to appear, as Demand Media allows subject matter experts from the crowd to submit stories, which the company then buys and publishes.
- **Brands with community appeal will assert power over brands without it.** As brands with social cachet, like Axe, begin to resonate with their communities, those without, like Right Guard, will have to make a choice. Brands lacking sex appeal will be forced to consider acquisition of brands thriving within a community — or risk being acquired themselves.

## SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

### Companies Interviewed For This Document

Appirio	Google
Cisco Eos	Graphing Social Patterns
Dell	IBM
Facebook	Intel
Federated Media Publishing	KickApps
Flock	LinkedIn
Gigya	Meebo

Microsoft	Razorfish
MySpace	ReadWriteWeb
OpenID Foundation	salesforce.com
Plaxo	Six Apart
Pluck	Twitter

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> AOL was one of the first online communities to pioneer consumer relationships and connections, but in these early online communities, members were unable to email members of other ISPs. This is similar to today's social network identity dilemma. Social networks will standardize data transfer just as email systems did in the past. Expect the unifying technologies like Facebook Connect or Open Stack, which includes OpenID, to lead the way.
- <sup>2</sup> How we asked consumers if they used social networks evolved with their adoption over the past few years. In 2005, "ever used social networks" was defined as "I belong to at least one social networking site but use it/them less than once a week or more." In 2006, it was defined as "use social networking sites less than monthly or more." In 2007 and 2008, it was defined as "visit social networking sites less than monthly or more."
- <sup>3</sup> Social Technographics® compares the behaviors of consumers using different social technologies. From 2007 to 2008, there was an increase in Joiners (social network members) from 25% to 35% of the online US population. See the October 20, 2008, "[The Growth Of Social Technology Adoption](#)" report.
- <sup>4</sup> Source: North American Technographics Media And Marketing Online Survey, Q2 2008.
- <sup>5</sup> Source: North American Technographics Media And Marketing Online Survey, Q2 2008.
- <sup>6</sup> More than half of online tweens and teens and 42% of online adults want to interact with their favorite brands. For example, one in four US online adults want to see discussion forums from brands they like, while more than one-third of teens want profiles on social networks. See the April 16, 2009, "[The Social Tools Consumers Want From Their Favorite Brands](#)" report.
- <sup>7</sup> Several players in the social network space have indicated support for the Open ID Foundation, a cross-industry foundation that strives to provide standards for the Social Web. Source: "Microsoft and Google announce OpenID support," *OpenID*, October 30, 2008 (<http://openid.net/2008/10/30/microsoft-and-google-announce-openid-support/>).
- <sup>8</sup> Consumers trust each other; in fact, 77% said they trusted emails from friends they know and 60% said they trusted consumer product ratings and reviews. Therefore, marketers should prioritize energizing and word-of-mouth campaigns to get customers talking to each other. See the February 17, 2009, "[Peer Influence In An Unstable Economy](#)" report.



- <sup>9</sup> Dozens of brands, in order to reach online influencers have begun to engage in Sponsored Conversations, which Forrester defines as a marketing technique in which marketers provide financial or material compensation to bloggers in exchange for their posting blog content about a brand. Keep in mind that to be successful, marketers must mandate transparency and authenticity. See the March 2, 2009, "[Add Sponsored Conversations To Your Toolbox](#)" report.
- <sup>10</sup> The OpenID Foundation is focused on creating a single identity system that can be used across many Web sites, enabling users to register once across all Web sites. This identity system allows consumers to benefit from contextual information from Web sites that allow the identity to be shared. Chris Messina, a member of the board of the OpenID Foundation shares more in "Portable Profiles & Preferences on the Citizen-Centric Web" *Factory City*, April 8, 2009 (<http://factoryjoe.com/blog/2009/04/08/portable-profiles-preferences-on-the-citizen-centric-web/>).
- <sup>11</sup> Mobile Internet adoption in North America is still slow because while users find the content and services useful, they are not easy or enjoyable to use. Yet as these technologies and devices improve, expect an increase in adoption. See the July 9, 2008, "[Usability And Cost Slow Mobile Internet Adoption](#)" report.
- <sup>12</sup> VRM, or vendor relationship management, is being pioneered in concept at Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University and headed by Doc Searls. The project is designing a system where consumers will be empowered to own their own data, as well as dictate to brands and institutions like healthcare companies what products they want. Source: Project VRM ([http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/projectvrm/Main\\_Page](http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/projectvrm/Main_Page)).
- <sup>13</sup> Social ads allow community members to interact with these half-widget, half-advertisement units. As users interact with them, it triggers actions on their activity feed, encouraging other users to participate. Facebook was one of the first to offer its version of these ads, which it calls engagement ads, Pluck has partnered with Razorfish to offer a version called AdLife, and KickApps also has a version called labeled WidgeAds. See the August 25, 2008, "[Facebook's Engagement Ads Require A Social Approach](#)" report.

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