

Actuan

## **Rebranding and Emerging Media:**

### **A Must-Read Primer on the Technologies Marketers Can Integrate Today**

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## Rebranding and Emerging Media: A Must-Read Primer on the Technologies Marketers Can Integrate Today

- New logo.
- New stationery.
- New website.
- New podcasts. Huh?

Rebranding is as much about changing corporate iconography as it is about changing the way you communicate with your customers. This is especially true today due to the media and advertising consumption changes that have occurred with the advent of the Internet and other new media technologies, like podcasts. These changes are impossible to ignore. However, it is equally impossible to react to them if you don't understand the technologies and what they do. This paper offers a primer on these emerging new media technologies, often dubbed Web 2.0, with some ideas on how to use them. All won't be applicable for every marketer or brand strategist, but they warrant some consideration. A few of them will become mandatory, if they aren't already.

### AJAX

AJAX, short for Asynchronous JavaScript and XML, uses technologies that are embedded in web browsers to create interactive applications. While most applications on the web require clicking on links to exchange information between your browser and the application's server, AJAX applications don't. They behave as naturally as your word processor or your spreadsheet. In fact, Google has created an AJAX based spreadsheet that you can use at [spreadsheets.google.com](http://spreadsheets.google.com).

While not great for every site, AJAX based applications can provide users with a more seamless and cohesive user experience than typically available on the web. If your site has an ecommerce component or requires a high number of page views to complete a task, AJAX may be worth checking out.

### Behavioral Targeting

We've all come to accept that advertising is a part of the Internet experience. Unfortunately for both advertisers and consumers, the advertising that has typically appeared on websites is rarely of interest to us. Consumers are annoyed and marketers experience low ROI. Behavioral targeting seeks to change that by using complex analyses of the sites that users visit to anticipate the products that are of interest to them.

Regardless of the business you're in, behavioral targeting may be valuable to you. Instead of simply displaying your web advertising to anyone who visits the site, your ads are targeted to those whose surfing history indicates that they are most likely to value your product. In fact, companies that specialize in behavioral targeting report an average of 166% increase in click-thru-rates (CTRs) over standard web advertising.

### Blogs

Many people were introduced to blogs, diary like websites usually written by individuals, during the 2004 presidential election season. Blogs have since been equally praised and

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derided. For marketers, however, blogs can be an excellent vehicle to promote a brand and interact with consumers.

A blog for a brand can personalize the brand and make it more accessible to customers. It also provides a forum for updating customers about the brand while gauging responses to new products. Blogs are not without risks, though. They should be monitored by detail oriented editors who are instructed to allow honest criticism while minimizing those that are clearly offensive or overly detrimental to the brand. The benefits of blogs typically outweigh the risks, and they can prove to be excellent tools in the rebranding arsenal.

### **Games / Advergaming**

Video games are generally considered to be the domain of young men, 14-34. Consequently, advertisers have typically ignored this channel as a way to reach women. However, research from the Consumer Electronics Association (as reported by the New York Times) indicates that 65% of women 25-34 play video games compared to 35% of men in the same age bracket. Games, it seems, are a great way to reach young people of both genders.

Games can be used as a marketing vehicle in a few ways. Some companies use games as the draw to their product's site. Game players visit the site to play the game and, in doing so, learn more about the product. An alternative is advergaming.

Advergames are video games that include product placement within the games themselves. The product placement can take the form of embedded ads such as an Adidas logo on a football field. Alternatively, games can be developed that make the brand a key part of the game's strategy. For example, the Bottle Search game at absolut.com offers a different take on "Where's Waldo" by having you find hidden bottles of Absolut Vodka. An advergame could be a great way to engage a new audience or to build product awareness. Another opportunity for marketers may prove to be Massive Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs).

All games, whether it be Pac-Man or Half-Life, offer its players some ability to escape their real lives. MMOGs like Second Life ([www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com)) take "escapism" to a new level by allowing users to contribute to a fantasy world where they can create new personas, own land, build, sell and buy homes, and interact with other members of these "communities" – just as you would in the real world. Additionally, your customers are using their real-world (and hard earned) money to purchase virtual currency that is used in these games. A virtual outpost for your brand in a targeted MMOG may offer increased brand equity that pays off on your very real bottomline.

### **Mobile / Wireless**

Mobile devices are frequently called "the third screen" – after the television and the computer screen. Considering that mobile phone penetration rates in the United States exceed those of cable TV and PCs in the home, "the third screen" may be an apt description. The number of existing mobile phones should not be lost on marketers.

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The Mobile device is the only currently existing “screen” that is self-powered and reliant upon an almost ubiquitous data availability. Consequently, it offers marketers exciting new opportunities for marketing that they have not had previously. Cellular carriers have deployed high speed networks that have made it possible for phone users to stream audio and video to their phones at speeds that rival those of low-end DSL. Newer mobile phones offer global positioning satellite (GPS) information that can be used to identify users’ precise locations.

Marketers can start with the mobile audience by adding a small mobile text-messaging (SMS) component to another campaign whose target audience is likely to use mobile messaging. After becoming familiar with the medium, many opportunities abound including screen-savers (for branding), delivery of convenient content such as shopping lists or recipes or even sites especially for mobile devices.

### **Podcasting**

Apple’s iPod introduced the masses to the idea of listening to music saved in digital format. The concept of the podcast – a combination of parts of the words “iPod” and “broadcast” – came about when it was realized that it was possible to create a series of themed audio files, similar to television episodes, to which people could subscribe. The idea of the podcast is that the podcast creator, the podcaster, creates audio content that is made available to people who subscribe to the content via RSS (discussed next). Each podcast is downloaded by its subscribers and can be listened to the subscriber’s leisure on his/her MP3 player or computer.

Podcasts can present marketers with a novel way to build relationships with their customers. For example, a cosmetics company could provide weekly podcasts of interviews with celebrities and beauty tips from noted cosmetologists. A financial management firm could provide its customers with comments on the market’s most recent week and what to expect in the upcoming week. When done well, podcasts provide an amazing opportunity that gets customers to opt-in to receiving relevant information that keeps them engaged with the brand.

### **RSS**

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is a web technology that allows people to subscribe to content on the web. Many sites that publish content frequently (e.g. news sites, blogs, etc.) make that content available in RSS “feeds.” RSS feeds contain an index of the content that has been published by a site. By subscribing to these feeds, consumers are able to keep track of the latest news from their favorite sources without having to visit the source itself. If they are intrigued by a particular headline from the RSS feed, they can visit a link specified in the RSS feed to learn more.

Marketers should be aware of RSS because there is some opportunity for advertising and branding within the feeds themselves. People who subscribe to a particular feed are typically very interested in the content of the feed – which is why they subscribed in the first

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place. For example, someone who subscribes to the RSS feed for a digital camera web site is most likely a digital photography enthusiast. An ad for the latest camera, in the form of a headline, could be placed in the RSS feed subscribed to by that media buyer. The full content of the ad or a web page would be seen by the enthusiast if she clicked on the ad.

### **Search Engine Optimization**

Search engine optimization is the science of customizing websites to rank highly in search engine queries. As reported by SearchEngineWatch, data from comScore, a market research firm, indicates that 6.4 billion searches were done across all search engines in March 2006. Regardless of the product you sell or the business that you are in, more than a few people were searching for information about your product or service.

The goal of search engine optimization is to improve the quality and quantity of visitors to your web site. This is accomplished through the use of both technical and marketing methods. The technical methods may include emphasizing the use of specific words throughout the site, ensuring that directory names indicate content that is available and the values of alt tags on images. Additionally, search engines like Google use the number of sites that link to your site as a way of indicating how high your listing should appear.

The marketing methods should be of utmost importance to marketers. The major search engines all support the purchase of text advertising that appears within search listings. Marketers can purchase cost-per-click (CPC) or cost-per-impression (CPM) ads that are shown when search engine users type keywords that the marketer has specified. The rank at which an ad appears amongst other ads is based on an electronic auction format that assigns higher ranks to ads whose marketers are willing to bid higher for each specific keyword.

The click-thru-rate (CTR) is the metric usually used to gauge the percentage of people who click on an ad. However, proper SEO focuses on some conversion metric that must be determined by the marketer. Conversion rates are generally calculated by dividing the number of people who visit a pre-determined page by the number who perform some pre-defined task (e.g. purchase a product, download a document, make a telephone call, etc.). Unless the goal is simply to raise brand awareness, conversion rates are critical and are a very strong indicator of the quality of the SEO.

### **SMS**

Short Message Service (SMS) is the technology used by cellular telephone carriers to allow mobile phone users to exchange short messages (also known as text messages, SMS messages or SMSes) with each other. The majority of marketing campaigns that include mobile devices use SMS messages as the key methodology for exchanging information between the company and consumers. In addition to using SMS to exchange short messages with customers, content such as ringtones, wallpapers and games are also delivered to mobile devices via SMS.

Cellular phone carriers have mandated that commercial SMS senders must use a special code called a Common Short Code. A Common Short Code, usually shortened to "short

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code” is a 5 or 6-digit number that companies must provision from the Common Short Code Administration (CSCA). The short codes are leased for a specified period of time – 3, 6 or 9 months – from the CSCA. During this period, the leaser has exclusive access to the assigned short code and can use it for various purposes including receiving messages from mobile phone subscribers.

The costs of leasing a short code can be expensive. Some service providers offer shared short codes that allow multiple companies to share a short code that is owned by the service provider. These arrangements can be financially beneficial to small companies that cannot afford the expense of owning a dedicated short code.

### **User Generated Content**

User generated content is not a technology. It is more of a Web 2.0 (defined later) concept for creating content.

Generally, website publishers have relied on a staff of people to create the content that appears on their sites. By doing so, they maintained tight control over who was able to influence the site’s content. As blogs and other technologies have made it easier for individuals to publish on the web, web publishers have begun to relax some of their controls and are beginning to rely on content that is provided by visitors to their sites. The content provider by those visitors is called user-generated content.

That content can take various forms including users’ comments on articles, forums where consumers discuss products or galleries where customers upload pictures of themselves using the brand’s products. It’s clear that by allowing customers to provide content that the brand managers have to be very adept at moderating the content that might appear to protect the brand. Nevertheless, by inviting consumers to participate, the brand potentially has a relatively inexpensive way to ensure brand loyalty.

### **VOD**

Video-On-Demand (VOD) is a term used to describe video that users can view at their leisure or – on demand. Of the new media technologies that are typically referenced, VOD is unique in that it can be applied to any channel with a screen. In other words, VOD is applicable to the television, the personal computer and mobile devices.

The availability of VOD across multiple channels allows marketers to take advantage of each channel to reach targeted audiences. Through their digital cable products, cable operators provide homes with the opportunity to access a library of VOD content. Cable providers also sell slots in those libraries to marketers who are interested in advertising using VOD. On the Internet, VOD advertising can occur by placing informative infomercial type video on your own site. However, you can also buy ads that display before, during or after other VOD content

that users may view. Additionally, there may be some opportunity for viral ads using online sites that host video or by developing a more involved campaign around VOD.

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For mobile devices, VOD ads, in the short-term, will be most effective when they are included as ads within other video content. Mobile consumers are currently unlikely to download long-form video ads for numerous reasons including the size of the screen and the relatively high cost of downloading video over cellular networks. An exception may be when targeting highly technical consumers who are likely to have subscribed to unlimited bandwidth service from their mobile carriers and are therefore unconcerned about the download expense. Another exception might be partnerships with a carrier where the marketer makes the video available on the carrier's "deck" (i.e. the content that the carrier provides to interest consumers in its data capabilities) and subsidizes the download so that it has no cost for users.

### **Web 2.0**

The term "Web 2.0" was popularized by the publisher and technology evangelist Tim O'Reilly. It seeks to convey the influence of new media technologies on the Internet. Some of the technologies and concepts usually inferred by the use of the term include blogs, RSS, AJAX, open source, podcasting, Wi-Fi, instant messaging (IM), collaboration, data syndication and web standards. The term also implies a sense of community and improved user experience that is manifesting itself in the web's current iteration.

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### **About Actuan**

Actuan is a new media technologies and interactive marketing consulting firm that works with marketers and advertising agencies. We use our expertise to develop insights that provide our clients with innovative strategies and solutions that help them gain competitive advantage.

### **About Talib Morgan**

Talib has over ten years of Internet technology and interactive marketing experience. Prior to founding Actuan, he served as VP, Digital Engineering and led the technology department for FCB Worldwide's Interactive Group, FCBi, in New York City. There, he worked with clients that included American Standard, AT&T, Eli Lilly, HP, MetLife and Qwest. He joined FCB from Digitas where he led teams for clients among whom were Federal Express, General Motors, Morgan Stanley, Seagrams America and Dell. Talib's experience with leading brands and top agencies has provided him with expertise at understanding new media technologies and developing strategies that use them effectively for his clients' customers.

Talib holds a MBA degree from Rutgers University and a BA degree in Applied Physics from Rutgers and the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT).

### **About ReBrand™**

ReBrand™ is the only source for case studies and programs on effective rebrands: the repositioning, revitalizing and redesign of existing brand assets to meet strategic goals. ReBrand recognizes the world's most effective rebrands in its ReBrand 100® Global Awards with annual deadlines in late September. To enter or to learn best practices from winning case studies, visit [www.rebrand.com](http://www.rebrand.com).