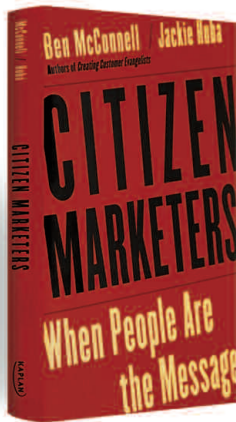




# Executive Book Summaries®



by Ben McConnell  
and Jackie Huba

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## When People Are the Message

# CITIZEN MARKETERS

## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

All it takes is a broadband connection, a laptop and maybe a cell phone to create the “next big thing” that spreads like wildfire, because today’s Web-based publishing platform of social media has become a dominant force in shaping culture and ideas.

Social media describes the participative, “democratized” nature of the Internet, where information flows not just from sites to users but from users to sites and to other users. Social media has circumvented traditional media, changed social dynamics and pop culture and hijacked companies’ abilities to manage their reputations.

But only a handful of users — citizen marketers — use social media to exert significant cultural influence. Who are these people? They are often young and computer savvy, and they use social media to demonstrate their allegiance to a brand, idea or product. They are not confined by traditional reporting methods and thus can collaboratively spread information. And they are not laborers, they’re hobbyists.

Citizen marketers have credibility and influence because people respond to their authenticity. They are crucial to successful Web sites or grassroots campaigns because they lead others to action, and the transparent nature of their collaboration enhances what companies crave: loyalty.

The democratized content citizen marketers create forms a demand-driven culture and business models that rely on what customers actually want. This reduces business risk and gives customers a stake in the outcome.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- What social media is and how it accelerates the spread of ideas.
- The four types of citizen marketers and what they have in common.
- Who 1 Percenters are and why they are important to marketing.
- How two of the most popular Web sites have democratized the tools of self-expression.
- The three C’s of working with citizen marketers.

# THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: CITIZEN MARKETERS

by Ben McConnell and Jackie Huba

## Social Media Is Born

In November 2004, a California man by the name of George Masters uploaded a file to his personal Web site that would change his life and the worldview of many people about the convergence of technology, marketing and pop culture. The file was “Tiny Machine,” a 60-second animation Masters had spent five months creating that featured as its star an acrobatic iPod, the portable music player from Apple Computer. Within a month, “Tiny Machine” had been viewed online more than 500,000 times.

“Tiny Machine” arrived at a point when millions of people in cubicles, schools and coffee shops around the world were writing essays, taking photos, creating animations, shooting videos and covering news as amateurs. They were using an emerging Web-based publishing platform called social media — defined as the sum total of people who create content online, as well as the people who interact with it or one another — that enabled people to talk, discuss, share and find new communities of like-minded people. As social media spread and subverted traditional media, it posed fundamental new challenges for companies and brands accustomed to closely stage-managing their reputations.

Masters’ story illustrates a fundamental characteristic about social media: It exponentially multiplies the power of one. A lone person today has a significantly better chance of influencing other people than before the arrival of social media. ■

## Filters, Fanatics, Facilitators and Firecrackers

Fiona Apple recorded a collection of new songs in 2003 and called it *Extraordinary Machine*. She was not happy with the album and wanted to re-record the songs with a new producer. Sony didn’t want to pay for re-recording an album it had already paid once to record and didn’t like. Discussions went back and forth, but broke down. Then Freefiona.com popped up. The Web site was the work of a 21-year-old musician and music teacher from Missouri, Dave Muscato. He assembled 10 assistants from an existing fan forum, and within a few

months they’d convinced 36,000 people to sign a petition and organized a demonstration outside Sony’s offices in New York City. The plan worked: Freefiona.com caught the attention of *Rolling Stone* and *The New York Times*. Not long after, Sony agreed to pay to re-record the album. In January 2006, *Extraordinary Machine* was certified gold, meaning it had sold at least 500,000 copies.

Citizen marketers create what could be considered marketing and advertising content on behalf of people, brands, products or organizations. Among the world of citizen marketers, Muscato is a Fanatic. His work falls comfortably into the middle of the four F’s: Filters, Fanatics, Facilitators and Firecrackers.

### Filters

The Filters are human wire services. They collect traditional media stories, bloggers’ rants and raves, podcasts or fan creations about a specific company or brand and then package this information into a daily or near-daily stream of links, story summaries and observations. Most Filters maintain a steady objectivity like traditional news wire services, but some cross over into analysis.

### Fanatics

The Fanatics are true believers and evangelists. Their roles may include filtering work, but they love to analyze the daily or weekly progress of a brand, product, organization or person and describe courses of action. Food is a popular subject for Fanatics, but entertainment

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**The authors:** Ben McConnell and Jackie Huba are speakers and business advisors who have researched the nature and effects of customer loyalty for nearly a decade. They are the authors of *Creating Customer Evangelists* and the Church of the Customer blog.

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## Summary: CITIZEN MARKETERS

### Filters, Fanatics, Facilitators and Firecrackers

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is probably more popular. It's not uncommon for Fanatics to assume an activist role, as Muscato did on behalf of Fiona Apple.

#### Facilitators

Facilitators are community creators. Their primary citizen marketer tool is a Web-based bulletin board or community software. Some communities are de facto support groups where customers act as call center technicians. Some Facilitators create communities simply for fans to connect with other fans. Some communities do both. Most Facilitators are independent of the company or product, but a few have sought the company's blessing or approval.

#### Firecrackers

Firecrackers typically attract considerable attention because they have created a song, animation, video or novelty that generates a lot of interest but tends to die out quickly as the creators go on with their other work. But the Firecrackers illustrate three principles of amateur content in the social media universe: (1) memes — an idea or custom (such as a catch-phrase, interactive online quiz, or fashion trend) that penetrates a culture via word of mouth or imitation — can live indefinitely on the Web; (2) social media networks accelerate the spread of memes; and (3) people love to mimic what entertains them.

Firecrackers also illustrate two fundamental principles about social media, especially within amateur cultures: Social media simplifies word of mouth and facilitates collaboration.

#### What They Have in Common

Whether a Filter, Fanatic, Facilitator or Firecracker, the work of citizen marketers is typically defined by three commonalities: personal expression, amateur status and freely given content.

A distinct advantage citizen marketers hold over many traditional media is *dynamic authority* — the authority fueled by continuous, productive activity. With citizen-created content, people are the message because their role as publishers or broadcasters hoists them above the boundaries that one-way media communicators have erected around themselves. ■

### The 1 Percenters

As a patch, it's pretty simple: a diamond shape surrounded by a blue border, with "1%" embroidered in the middle.

It's worn over the heart by members of motorcycle clubs that celebrate their outlaw status from mainstream motorcycle society. They call themselves the "1 Percenters." The 1 Percenters is an apt analogy to describe citizen marketers. They too are outlaws of culture.

#### How the 1% Rule Works

Research into the work of citizen marketers has produced the "1% Rule." According to the rule, about 1 percent of the total number of visitors to a democratized forum will create content for it or contribute content to it. Furthermore, it has been found that about 10 percent of the total number of visitors will interact with the contributed content.

For content creation in the age of social media and amateur culture, the 1% Rule may subvert the 80/20 rule, a guiding rule of thumb for millions of managers around the world. The 80/20 rule posits that 20 percent of something is typically responsible for 80 percent of the results. This means that building a solid core of early-adopting volunteers or contributors is critical to creating a successful community-driven Web site, to launching a new product or to designing a grassroots campaign. The 1 Percenters help lead others to action.

#### Who the 1 Percenters Are

Although people who contribute to Wikipedia and other sites relying on amateur content are not considered citizen marketers (they're more apt to be called 1 Percenters), they share many commonalities. *Boston Globe* reporter David Mehegan found the contributors are generally in their 20s and computer savvy. "They are highly educated, intellectually curious, sociable, interested in many things and in finding new interests," according to Mehegan. More are men than women.

Not all of the content creators will have sizeable audiences, influence or a lot of natural talent, but many of them will work hard at developing all three.

This raises two questions: (1) Since the 1 Percenters are voluntarily producing work on behalf of a commercial operation, and that work increases the value of the operation, should they receive fair compensation like laborers? (2) Who owns this collaborative content — the 1 Percenters, the host organization or both of them?

For the compensation question, one answer is that they're not laborers. They're *hobbyists*. The 1 Percenters contribute because *it's fun*. And to answer the second question, no one would own the content outright — both parties would — therefore, it is free for others to create content on top of it, or below it. ■

For information on whether the 1% Rule applies to your Web site, go to: <http://my.summary.com>

### **The Democratization of Everything**

As the forces of democratization gain strength, they continually compel companies to become more transparent, sometimes against their will. Three separate stories on July 23, 2004, illustrate this concept.

1. Not long into the 2004 baseball season, parts of Chicago's historic Wrigley Field began to crumble. The Cubs made repairs to the storied stadium without telling anyone. As concrete crumbled, word spread quickly and loudly among Web sites, blogs and competing media. Waiting weeks to acknowledge what was being said online and off-line, the Cubs simply fueled the questions and speculation. Their hesitancy to acknowledge the obvious was a classic case of poor information control and, by extension, image control.

2. Control issues startled a small but influential software company whose mission is to democratize personal expression and the spread of information. Six Apart had been in business nearly three years by the summer of 2004. One of its products was Moveable Type, software that allows people to create blogs and then communicate easily. In July 2004, Six Apart upset hundreds, if not thousands, of those supporters by announcing a dramatic change in its pricing and licensing policy.

Obviously, Six Apart is in charge of its pricing model, but supporters complained that the voice they'd normally had in the company's decision-making process had been ignored. Many customers are willing to volunteer their time and attention, but they will fight for their status and power.

3. The bipartisan federal commission investigating the 9/11 attacks on the United States released its final report, faulting U.S. intelligence agencies for their systems of secrecy. The commission said excessive secrecy led to "compartmentalization" of records, making it virtually impossible to connect the dots of a deadly plot.

The Chicago Cubs discovered that word of mouth is being accelerated by Web-based media. Six Apart learned that being open with customers is a virtue for growth, but, if taken away, the repercussions can be painful and time-consuming. And the 9/11 Commission said the lives of citizens are literally dependent upon a democracy that remains true to transparency.

#### **Web 1.0 Versus Web 2.0**

If "Web 1.0" was primarily one-way communication between Web-site owner and visitor, then Web 2.0 is multiple-way communication among Web-site owner and visitor, and visitors with other visitors. All of this

leads to a tangible, citizen-marketer byproduct of Web 2.0 imaginations: mashups.

"Mashup" is a Web buzzword to describe a hybrid combination of two or more data sources that, when combined, create a new product or improve an existing one. Two of the most prevalent types are data mashups and entertainment mashups.

Data mashups are typically created by software developers who often combine the mapping technologies of Yahoo, Google or MSN (all of which have opened their mapping systems to programmers) with their own data or data that's freely available. Entertainment mashups often come from free yet capable programs that allow everyday people to play and "remix" videos or songs with other videos and songs.

The rise of citizen marketers is being fueled by two distinct technological realities: speedy broadband connections and affordable digital tools. The prices for software, audio equipment and digital or video cameras have dropped dramatically, enabling millions of people to become more proficient online-content creators, publishers and broadcasters. ■

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### **Everyone Is a Publisher; Everyone Is a Broadcaster**

As Gutenberg's printing press revolutionized the world of the 15th century and thereafter, so too did radio and television dramatically alter the landscape of 20th-century culture. Today, social media are forcing traditional media to reconsider their dominant, one-way publishing and broadcasting models as they struggle to bridge the gap between control and participation.

#### **Blogs**

In the beginning, blogs were online journals — the equivalent of a diary entry. Millions of blogs have since been created, and they're on the radars of big companies, if not drawn up in the playbooks; senior executives from General Motors, Hewlett-Packard and Amazon.com blog regularly and engage in discussions with everyday people.

Just as Gutenberg's printing press did 600 years ago, blogs are democratizing the control of information and knowledge by diffusing it to a wider swath of people. Today, knowledge is being replicated at rates beyond the scope and capability of print. If every blogger is a publisher, then every blog is also a platform — a stage in the middle of the virtual piazza. The challenge now is to get people to pay attention.

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## Summary: CITIZEN MARKETERS

### Everyone Is a Publisher; Everyone Is a Broadcaster

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#### Podcasts

Podcasting makes possible what has eluded radio listeners since the dawn of broadcasting: It's an easy way to subscribe to a show and then pause, rewind or fast-forward without relying on cassette tapes. The FCC is excluded from regulating its content — with a computer and iTunes, anyone can be a broadcaster and reach tens of thousands of listeners without the FCC's permission.

Niche markets are being served in ways meant to appeal to busy businesspeople who travel with iPods, the icon of podcasting. Video podcasts are cousins to audio podcasts. One of the most well-known amateur video podcasts is RocketBoom, a daily three-minute take on Internet news and culture. Produced by a staff of four, the show had 300,000 subscribers after its first two years. That's more viewers than almost any single local newscast in America.

#### RSS

RSS is short for Really Simple Syndication, but the emerging user-friendly term is *feed*. Blogs, podcasts, dis-

cussion forums, even parts of entire Web sites, like Amazon.com, are subscribable with RSS. For the creators of amateur content, feeds democratize the worlds of publishing and broadcasting in at least four distinct ways:

1. Feeds do not consume energy.
2. Feeds are free.
3. Feeds are almost instantaneous.
4. Feed subscribers are a tangible asset.

#### MySpace and YouTube

MySpace and YouTube command most of the attention about social media, social networks and why online communities form. The two Web sites have democratized the tools of self-expression. For teenagers, MySpace is the new mall. In July 2006, one research firm said MySpace had reached a new plateau: It was the most-visited U.S. Web site and accounted for 4.5 percent of all U.S. Internet visits. Google caught MySpace fever and signed a deal in the summer of 2006 to pay MySpace \$900 million to put Google's search and advertising services on the site.

When YouTube came out of nowhere in November 2005, launched by two twentysomething entrepreneurs above a pizza parlor in San Mateo, Calif., it became the predominant online video-sharing site in about six months. YouTube reflects the leading edge of social networks. ■

### Six Lessons From the YouTube Story

**1. YouTube was designed and built with community as its founding principle.** Features like visitor-created tags, voting and comments are the social media tools that democratize involvement.

**2. YouTube made sharing content easy.** This gave it credibility with early users and signaled it wasn't trying to control the experience or merely drive users back to its Web site.

**3. YouTube was loaded with statistics.** That serves two roles: It is evidence for professional and amateur analysts to discuss popularity, and it's a feedback tool for video creators on their creative or marketing abilities.

**4. YouTube encouraged its users to personalize their public profile pages.** Like MySpace users, YouTubers can decorate their profiles.

**5. YouTube's user interface was restrained and simple.** That design consideration created a universally pleasing aesthetic for professionals and amateurs, young and old.

**6. YouTube's search functionality, although not its strongest point, consistently bested Google Video's functionality.** YouTube lets visitors sort their research returns by title, date added, view count and rating.

### Hobbies and Altruism

The story of Surge began in 1997, when Coca-Cola launched the beverage with a razzle-dazzle Super Bowl commercial. It caught the attention of Eric Karkovack, who was then 19 years old. Two years later, Surge lost its marketing fizz.

By February 2002, most bottlers had stopped producing it. With the help of another fellow Surge enthusiast — Avery Lund — Karkovack launched SaveSurge.org on February 1, 2002. The site features a discussion forum, recipes, lists of where to find Surge and form letters to send to Coke on behalf of the cause.

If you think Karkovack and his carbonated band of soda activists don't fit mainstream expectations of how people spend their free time, you're right. Some people might call them lunatic fringe. The grassroots nature of Karkovack's work may not equal a marketing campaign in 920,000 convenience stores, but that's not the purpose of citizen marketers. Their focus is often an attempt to transcend brand awareness into action by creating amateur networks of affiliation. ■

For information about what happened to SaveSurge.org, go to: <http://my.summary.com>

### The Power of One

Casey Neistat purchased a first-generation iPod in early 2002. After 18 months of daily use and after the warranty expired, the rechargeable lithium-ion battery wouldn't charge anymore. Apple could fix the iPod, but it would cost \$255 plus a mail-in fee, almost equal to the cost of a new machine.

Neistat's older brother, Van, also a longtime Apple fan, "thought this was really un-Apple." So they created a stencil that read, "iPod's Unreplaceable Battery Only Lasts 18 Months." They spray-painted the stencil over dozens of iPod posters in New York City as Van filmed Casey doing it. They posted the video — called "iPod's Dirty Secret" — to their Web site and notified 30 friends, who sent it to their friends. Within six weeks, the video had been downloaded over a million times.

Then Apple called. Apple had a new battery-replacement program. For out-of-warranty iPods, it would replace the battery for a \$99 fee. (Apple later reduced it to \$59.) The guerilla work of the Neistat brothers paved the way for future customer protests by employing easy-to-use multi-media tools and the inherent word of mouth of social media.

### Spreading Memes

Why do things spread? One explanation is the meme, an idea or custom that penetrates a culture via word of mouth or imitation. What makes the work of citizen marketers important is that broadband and social media tools expedite the spread of memes.

One reason why citizen-created memes spread is that they often follow the four stages of successful meme replication:

- 1. Assimilation.** The meme is noticed, understood and accepted by someone, who becomes the host of the meme.
- 2. Retention.** It's embedded in the memory.
- 3. Expression.** The idea can take some form, such as language, text, pictures or even in unconscious behavior, such as the way someone walks.
- 4. Transmission.** The host passes the meme on to one or more people.

With the foundations of a meme in place, what are the mechanics of its spread among social media?

- Bloggers spread a story that has a surprising development.
- The story is filled with numerous and concrete details.
- The story documents a tangible form of injustice.
- The story reaches a plateau of recognition among a number of well-known blogs.
- The story reaches a worldwide plateau.

When anyone can be a content creator, publisher,

### Finkelstein Versus Comcast

In the summer of 2006, Brian Finkelstein's Comcast Internet connection kept dying. A technician arrived to replace the broadband modem. When the technician dialed the company's support line to activate the replacement modem, he was put on hold for 90 minutes. While the technician was on hold, he fell asleep on Finkelstein's couch. Finkelstein filmed the technician, posted it to YouTube and mentioned it on his blog. A month later, the video had been viewed 750,000 times.

The day after Finkelstein posted his video, a regional vice president at Comcast called. He was going to come by with a team of technicians to fix the problem himself. But it was too late. Google had captured the story, the outrage and the reaction, and cataloged it indefinitely.

broadcaster or citizen marketer, there's bound to be more stuff to know, more stuff to entertain us. In the bigger picture, how do we separate the interesting stuff from the merely imitative? It is up to the community to determine what's interesting. ■

### How to Democratize Your Business

Jake Nickell and Jacob DeHart have created a model of democratized participation that has propelled their T-shirt manufacturing business to become a \$20 million company in five years. Customer-citizens create the T-shirt designs, then discuss the designs and vote for their favorites on the company's Web site, Threadless.com. T-shirts that make the cut are then manufactured a few weeks later. The community does this on a Web site that is part voting booth, coffeehouse, art gallery and dorm.

Applied to other industries and their business models, the Threadless model of a collaborative citizenry could make it possible for a company to create a more reliable forecasting system for choosy customers. It could help identify a lemon before it becomes an expensive lemon. The key is to build a community with a stake in outcomes.

### Responding to Citizen Marketers

What inspires citizen marketers to create content on behalf of companies, brands, products or people? Inspiration, like lightning, is hard to predict. Creating a sufficient brew of personal relevance that inspires citizen marketers or 1 Percenters is the job of leaders who have an intimate knowledge about their customers' motivations, desires and habits. With citizen marketers and 1 Percenters crashing the gates to create content

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# Summary: CITIZEN MARKETERS

## How to Democratize Your Business

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about companies, brands, products or people with or without official approval, this leaves companies with a variety of options to respond to citizen marketing attempts:

1. Say nothing privately or publicly to the people involved.
2. Make behind-the-scenes overtures but say nothing publicly.
3. Provide terse recognition.
4. Encourage company employees to participate.
5. Threaten or take legal action.
6. Build programs or communities specifically for them.
7. Incorporate their ideas or work them into your production system.

Items 6 and 7 prompt a question: What if a company discovers it has citizen marketers or wants to build a community of them? How to begin? Besides Threadless, several companies have been leading the way on democratizing engagement. The programs typically fall into the “3 C’s” of working with citizen marketers: contests, co-creation and communities.

### Contests

The more successful contests that generate citizen-created media involve brands or products with well-known histories and active fan communities. Here are several examples of company-sponsored contests designed to turn everyday people into citizen marketers.

**1. Converse Gallery.** The athletic shoemaker invited its customers to submit 24-second films inspired by the decades-old Chuck Taylor brand. Almost three months later, filmmakers had submitted 1,800 short films from 15 countries. Within a month of the gallery’s launch, traffic to the Converse Web site surged 66 percent. Shoe sales on the Converse Web site doubled, and overall company sales increased 12 percent in the quarter compared to the previous quarter.

**2. Ban This!** While talking with a group of teens one day in 2005, the makers of Ban deodorant learned that their marketing wasn’t very interesting. A “Ban \_\_\_\_\_” contest invited Web site visitors to select a photograph, or upload their own, and fill in the blank. Three months later, it had 4,000 submissions. When the “ads” of the nine semifinalists were featured on the Ban Web site, traffic shot up 150 percent. After a three-year decline, sales of Ban rose 13.6 percent.

**3. Spread Firefox.** The Mozilla Foundation launched a campaign in December 2005 to promote the Firefox browser’s latest version. It encouraged fans with webcams

to record a brief testimonial for the browser or to create a more elaborate 30-second ad for the browser. Mozilla received 600 webcam testimonials from 41 different countries, and for the ad contest it received 280 submissions. Downloads of the Web browser went from 100 million in October 2005 to 200 million by July 2006.

### Co-Creation

When a company co-creates, it involves customers in a partnership to produce a product or service. Here are a few examples of companies that have co-created products with citizen marketers.

**1. “Hips Don’t Lie.”** In 2006, Epic Records asked YouTube fans to submit music videos of themselves lip-syncing to Shakira’s song “Hips Don’t Lie.” After culling submissions, the record company created a mashup video that zoomed to the No. 1 spot on Yahoo Music. “Hips Don’t Lie” eventually became the most-played pop song in American radio history.

**2. “Awesome!”** When The Beastie Boys wanted to commemorate their October 2004 sold-out concert at Madison Square Garden, the band gave 50 fans video cameras and instructed them to shoot whatever they wanted, as long as they did it with passion. It took editors a full year to comb through 100 hours of material, and the resulting film debuted at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival to mostly positive reviews.

**3. The Vespa Way.** Piaggio Group is the Italian manufacturer of Vespa scooters. From its research, it knew that 65 percent of prospective motor scooter buyers visit the Vespa USA Web site. But they also found that 56 percent of their prospects visited other sites to see what people were saying about the scooters. Piaggio asked two of its customer evangelists to blog about their experiences as Vespa owners. Piaggio sees the Vespaway blog as an extension of traditional scooter clubs.

### Community

Companies that create their own communities are democratizing their call centers. If a company is lucky, the community will hack it enthusiastically and build it into a very vertical Wikipedia of knowledge. If that happens, then the company has created two real tangible assets: an expanded knowledge base and an identifiable database of citizen-owners.

Sociologists say there are three core components to understanding the dynamics of community:

1. Consciousness of kind
2. Shared rituals and traditions
3. A sense of moral responsibility to the community.

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# Summary: CITIZEN MARKETERS

## How to Democratize Your Business

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Here's how other companies have democratized their communities, what spurred the development and the early results they've been able to achieve.

**1. Discovery Education.** Hundreds of thousands of U.S. teachers can download digital video clips directly from companies like Discovery Education in minutes and drag them into PowerPoint files. The Discovery Educator Network (DEN) united educators who believe in digital media as a teaching tool. A year after the DEN launched, product usage increased 114 percent. Renewals jumped from 82 percent to 99 percent.

**2. QuickBooks Community.** With the help of a contractor, Scott K. Wilder launched QuickBooks Community in 2005 as a low-profile project. It was a forum for the 3.4 million users of QuickBooks — from the novice to the expert accountant — to share and exchange ideas, ask questions and provide peer support. After a year, the QuickBooks community had 70,000 registered users and was hosting 100,000 visitors per month.

**3. Channel 9.** In 2004, Microsoft launched Channel 9 at channel9.msdn.com. Access includes hundreds of video interviews that the Channel 9 team members have conducted with Microsoft developers, product managers and executives about the company and its products. Channel 9 attracts a lot of spectators: By July 2006, it was hosting 4.5 million visitors per month.

What Threadless established from its first day as a company, and what Microsoft, Intuit and Discovery are working toward, is establishing *community as a core competency*.

### *Snakes on a Plane*

Samuel L. Jackson, a reliably bankable actor, agreed to star in a movie called *Snakes on a Plane*. Filming for the August 18, 2006, release wrapped in the summer of 2005. But by the end of the year, buzz about *Snakes on a Plane* started to spread. Movie fans became citizen marketers.

What set *Snakes on a Plane* apart from other films was the early feedback from self-selected, highly interested film fans. Fans were expecting violence, graphic snakebites and plenty of profanity from Jackson. One problem was that the film had already finished principal photography. So in early 2006, the filmmakers reshot parts of the movie to incorporate the fans' ideas.

In a column for *Esquire* magazine, the pop-culture and music writer Chuck Klosterman said collaborating with fans makes *Snakes on a Plane* “the Wikipedia version of

a movie.” He also argued that artistic decisions by consensus don't work any better than giving one person complete autonomy. So why do it? To reduce risk. As John Heffernan, the film's screenwriter, put it, “You'd be a fool not to give the audience what they want.”

*Snakes on a Plane* earned \$33 million after four weeks; however, it's rumored to have cost \$30 million to produce. If anyone in Hollywood was expecting all the word of mouth to be a magic bullet for marketing and set records for its opening weekend, expectations were set too high.

The willingness of everyday people to get involved and participate will not replace traditional marketing, nor will it solve all existing marketing problems. It is a supplement. It may spell the difference between profit and loss, recognition and obscurity. ■



If you liked *Citizen Marketers*, you'll also like:

- 1. *Made to Stick* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath.** The Heath brothers provide a practical guide to effective communication and explain how great ideas tend to stick around.
- 2. *Wikinomics* by Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams.** The authors address how the Internet's social network offers new, decentralized ways to produce content, goods, services and profit in the emerging world of massive peer collaboration.
- 3. *Small Is the New Big* by Seth Godin.** Godin has compiled entries from his blog, discussing current marketing and the source of new ideas.

## The Future of Marketing

Social media makes it possible for one person to launch a domino effect of word of mouth that quickly sets off triggers of interest or alarm. The most successful work in this new world of media comes from a place of passion and authenticity, not calculated deception or stealth marketing.

Those who think and plan in terms of campaigns are often unconcerned with what matters most toward true, unadulterated growth: loyalty. The citizen marketers are demonstrating their loyalty by devoting their time and resources toward their hobby work.

The hobbyist work of citizen marketers is based on keeping it real. They demonstrate a conscious or unconscious belief in social altruism, driven by a belief system that says the more a citizen marketer contributes to the greater good, the more valuable their contribution becomes.

Participation is the future of marketing. Votes equate demand, and citizens determine the future. Their governance is real, not just hype. Their involvement is their loyalty. Like a meme with all the built-in instructions, it turns out that loyalty is contagious. ■