

# Social Media Geek-to-Geek

Practical Insights for  
Technology Marketers



by Rick Jamison &  
Kathy Schmidt Jamison

Cartoons by Rick Jamison  
Foreword by Brian Solis



# **“Social Media Geek-to-Geek” Book Excerpt**

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Marketers

**By Rick Jamison and  
Kathy Schmidt Jamison**

Executive Editor Rich Goldman  
Cartoons by Rick Jamison  
Foreword by Brian Solis



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## Foreword by Brian Solis

### Go Your Own Way

When I'm tasked with researching and presenting success stories and best practices in social media, I often ask my clients a bit more about what it is they're specifically seeking. After a bit of interaction, it usually comes down to two words: creative inspiration.

At the moment, social media represents something new, something we understand personally but have yet to comprehend professionally. The unknown is just that, it's undefined. And as such, the paths for exploring new media are uncharted. Rather than find our own way, we seek direction from those who have ventured forth on the roads most travelled. Eventually these expeditions require cartographers to map them, creating a series of charts to what is versus what could be.

Social Media represents change. Change evokes fear, and fear paralyzes us. Yet, all we need is a better understanding of how we got here in order to plan for where we need to go.

I'm sorry to be the one to break it to you, but there is no social media playbook. The only set of instructions that matters are those you write yourself based on the reality of your business and the state of the market. To that end, this book will help you chart your own path.

Everyday people, not businesses, originally embraced social networks. Champions and innovators introduced social media into the organization, from the outside in, because they believed in its ability to reach customers. Through experimentation in day-to-day listening and engagement, social media gained momentum from the bottom-up until it reached a boiling point.

The reality is that there is no IT department for social media. Most of the time, there isn't a Chief Social Officer residing in executive row to help execute against your vision, and the leadership of the organization isn't touting a vision for a more people-focused mission.

Social media is either a playground for the young and restless or it's a cost center. Either way, it's up to us to intimately understand how social media impacts the bottom line and how we can steer experiences, conversations, and action in our direction.

Without engagement, we cannot compete for relevance. Without relevance, we cannot compete.

This is your time to find the answers to your questions. This is your time to become the expert you once sought. Lead the way.

Brian Solis, author of *Engage*  
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## Introduction

In the world of geeks, brutal honesty is a cultural imperative. So we begin this book by exposing an unresolved logical tension pair critical to understanding the topic described in the title.

"Social media marketing" is both the topic of this book and a concept that, at best, is highly suspect to geeks and represents everything they distrust about both marketing *and* social media.

There. We've said it. And here's why:

"Social media" is just that: an ever-expanding set of Internet-based platforms, applications, and tools that allow people to create and exchange user-generated content and connect with one another via communities in which they share some basis of common interest. With social media, everyone is a publisher, transparency is king, and the community decides which conversations are of value and which are horse pucky. Given an Internet connection and an electronic device with which to connect, the channels of communication are virtually free of charge and the opportunities to "reach out and touch someone"<sup>1</sup> are endless.

"Marketing," on the other hand, has traditionally lived in the hands of an elite few, mostly paid for by corporations with something to sell. Within corporations, marketing messages are anything but transparent and spontaneous: Just try to get a press release approved without it going 'round and 'round in the business units and back and forth with marketing and other stakeholders, and

that's *before* it goes to legal. What is said and who gets to say it is carefully controlled, meticulously vetted, expertly polished, and often quite expensive.

Think about a social media community as a marketplace, and let's say you are a cheese merchant. There are several aspects of that enterprise that *are* under your control: the quality and amount of cheese you make available to your customers, where you set up your cheese stand, how much you charge, and what you say to your customers when they're at your stall. What you cannot control are the number and tone of conversations that take place about your cheese, who participates, when they start and stop, and what's said. In fact, as sad as it is, most of time, the people at the market aren't talking about your cheese at all: They're talking about themselves. So at the outset, a primary goal of corporate participation in social media is to find, create, and all cases, positively influence the conversation.

So when corporations, accustomed to calling the communication shots and controlling every attribute of their brand, decide to join in the wild new create-and-respond freedoms being discovered by their *individual* customers in a virtual marketplace—with the goal to "get their message out"—you have yourself quite a little conundrum called "social media marketing."

So, there's that.

Now, factor in the *geek* element. We'll spend more time in this introduction as well as in future chapters getting our heads around what, exactly, constitutes a geek. Specific to the scope of this book, we'll examine the particular attributes of this demographic that corporations need to understand if they're to stand a chance at having relevant dialogue with their geek communities.

But for now, let's take it at face value that geeks-as-customers share a highly refined sense of smell and can catch the whiff of snake oil and marketing piffle from a million miles of fiber optic cable away. And they don't care for the odor. In addition, geeks value accuracy and logic in their areas of expertise above almost anything else. Layer that into a world described by Andrew Keen in his book, *The Cult of the Amateur*, as being governed by "...the law of digital Darwinism, the survival of the loudest and most opinionated." It's a classic case of oil and water.

Finally, if you work in a company that sells stuff to geeks so those geeks can make other geeky products, chances are pretty good that the people who create your products (i.e., your R & D colleagues) are not just geeks themselves, they're übergeeks. So everything we say here goes double for them. Plus, given that the geeky products they create are highly valuable and vulnerable to piracy, even the non-geeks in your organization (e.g., Legal, Finance, Marketing, PR, HR) are wary of the beast called social media.

Since your geeks create products, tools, and services that are purchased by geek customers who care intensely about safeguarding their own proprietary designs and products, free-flowing dialog in the public domain focused on solving any real-world problems is highly unlikely (or explicitly forbidden by confidentiality policies). Moreover, whatever high-value dialog there is between the smart guys inside your company and the smart guys on the outside who want answers usually has a revenue stream attached to it: It's called technical support, and companies are predictably averse to compromising revenue streams.

*But...* what if it turns out that the *social* aspect of social media actually *is* important for geeks and how they make buying decisions, and yours is the one company that misses that very important boat by being late to the party? Plus, what if your competitors are actually saving money by introducing ways for customers to support each other rather than relying on expensive but non-differentiating support from you?

See the problem?

There's a terrific need to pin down the combatants in the ring long enough to get a decent look at them. More importantly, given the "Practical Insights" promise in the title, we'll focus on where to start sorting out the possible from the pitfalls, one step at a time.

Before we launch into details here, let's get back to the brutal honesty program mentioned earlier: We don't have all the answers neatly sewn up for you. This isn't because we haven't been paying attention, but rather because all the questions aren't yet known. We do, however, promise to share our experience, what we know to be true (so far), and what we know for sure you shouldn't even *think* about doing in your own social media program designed for your geek customers. So there's that.



## So, Who's a Geek, Really?

Before we begin discussions about the "what" of a corporate social media program in a geek world, it makes sense to talk first about who is involved.

At the outset, let's agree that every study of human behavior by default demands a certain degree of simplification in order to be helpful. The risk is that simplifying categories of people, known in marketing circles as demographics, can easily prompt the accusation of stereotyping. Since the goal of this book is to understand social media as it relates to a specific type of person—those who purchase (or license) and use highly complex technical products and services—we want to say at the outset that the attributes we ascribe to geeks are not meant to be judgmental or hurtful in any way, nor are they intended to box individuals into rigid or overly-simplified definitions of the human experience. Having said that, if you are currently wearing a fanny pack and white socks with black shoes, have more than two electronic devices strapped to your body, or feel the compulsion to question exactly what we mean by "strapped to your body," chances are high you'll resonate with at least some of what follows.

And you'll be in good company. As of the publication of this book, a Google search for the keyword "*geek*" returns over 29 million results. Refine the search to "*geek definition*" and you still get more than 1.8 million results. Inquiring minds apparently want to know exactly what constitutes a geek. Let's start with a little (disturbing) history.

The term *geek* originally referred to carnival workers who earned their living by performing bizarre acts such as biting the heads off of chickens and snakes and eating glass.<sup>2</sup> Over time, it has come to be generally applied to anyone who earns their living in technical industries that the mainstream perceives as odd and/or incomprehensible. Currently, the Urban Dictionary defines geeks as, among other attributes, "The people you picked on in high school and wind up working for as an adult."<sup>3</sup>

According to the Internet-based consensus known as "Wikipedia,"<sup>4</sup> a geek is an enthusiast who is interested in technology and who "chooses concentration rather than conformity; one who passionately pursues skill (especially technical skill) and imagination, not

mainstream social acceptance." Geeks manifest "a devotion to something in a way that places him or her outside the mainstream...due to the intensity, depth, or subject of their interest." In most circles, the term "geek" has transcended the pejorative color commonly associated with nerds, dweebs and dorks. Indeed, within fields such as engineering, physics, and mathematics, it is nothing less than a badge of honor to be regarded as a geek.

Specific to social media, there are numerous characteristics and attributes of the geek demographic that differentiate geek-to-geek (G2G) from business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) communities. These distinctions are significant for anyone launching or managing a social media program that targets geeks, because a healthy slice of the conventional wisdom espoused by B2C and B2B marketers may be irrelevant or unhelpful in geek environments.

So who are these geeks anyway, and what makes us think we know them?

The company we work for was founded by übergeeks. This is because we make much of the software that the semiconductor industry uses to design and manufacture integrated circuits (computer chips) and electronic devices of all kinds. As you might imagine, this can be an extremely complex process involving ridiculously complicated and systemically interdependent technologies and methodologies. In the words of Synopsys' co-founder, Chairman and CEO Aart de Geus, electronic design automation (EDA) is "the heart of the heart of the heart" of technology. As such, we employ and revere geeks—the geekier the better. Think, "The Humpty Dumpties of All the Eggheads on the Planet." They create the products and services we market and sell to other geeks (our customers). So in the spirit of full disclosure, the observations that follow are based on our own interactions over twenty-five combined years of hanging out with these folks, a smattering of research into the burgeoning and fascinating field of "geek studies," and insights shared with us by fellow observers in the geek world.



Geeks are by nature and training-analytical, logical, and precise. This results in conversation styles that resemble a serious commitment to truthfulness. According to Google CEO Eric Schmidt, in an article by Russ Mitchell of *U.S. News and World Report*:

"One of the main characteristics of geeks is that they're very truthful," says Schmidt (who, in fact, uses the term "geek" only occasionally). "They're taught to think logically. If you ask engineers a precise question, they will give you a precisely truthful answer. That also tends to mean that they'll only answer the question that you asked them. If you don't ask them exactly the right question, sometimes they'll evade you—not because they're lying, but because they're being so scrupulously truthful."

A natural derivative of this orientation is that geeks tend to value being right over being liked. As you can imagine, this has important implications which we'll discuss later for those who intend to connect with them via social media and the plethora of "Like" buttons in social platforms and applications. There's an openness and lack of guile in most geeks that in some cases borders on painful to observe by those more skilled at the social games played by many. As a result, geeks tend to be pretty WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get), direct, and on occasion, tact-challenged.

In fairness, there is currently much debate in geek studies over whether or not social skill is a valid measure of "geekness." One camp claims that geeks can demonstrate perfectly "normal" social skills, and that it is more accurate to describe socially-challenged techno-fiends as "dorks," while the other side insists that by virtue of their intense interest in the correctness of things, geeks by default are doomed to be at least a little socially awkward. Regardless of where you land on this discussion, it's important to note that even if generally speaking geeks do care less than others about their own social acceptance based on typical measures of popularity, they still have egos and a desire for status. It's just that for geeks, their approval knobs tend to slide up and down on a scale of technical competence in problem solving. They have a passion for reason, and for them, the most important question is, "How does it work?" This is a critical aspect to keep in mind when developing a robust social media offering for your geeks that will garner high levels of engagement.

### **I Can't Get Past "Geek"**

I have spent my professional life working with and around some of the greatest engineers and engineering cultures in the world; first at Thomas Edison's General Electric Company, then Jack Kilby's Texas Instruments, and Anton and Gerard Philips', NV Philips. I spend considerable time and effort understanding these remarkable individuals.

I'll admit engineers are logical, analytical, quantitative, and fact-based. They epitomize the rational being through analysis and logical dissection of everything. They're critical and realistic, love numbers, and know how things work. So to the rest of us, they're different, even a bit scary. You do have to communicate with them differently than you would a mere mortal. But in working with engineers, I came to the realization that engineers and scientists make things; the rest of us are parasites that live off what they make!

Our world has advanced and grown due to scientific discovery and advances in technology. The wheel, printing press, light, electricity, internal combustion engine, transistor, medicines, materials, rocketry, integrated circuit, computers, software, the Internet to name a few. And who made these advances possible???? GEEKS!!! Geeks? No, engineers did. Without engineers, we'd still be hunting wild animals with spears and living in caves.

Engineers built this country on innovation and technology. So why are we still dependent on oil? What other things are broken? Environment. Economy. Infrastructure. Education.

Today, the United States is graduating less than 10 percent of the world's engineers. And there is a greater than 50 percent mortality rate for engineering majors in our colleges and universities. My grandchildren's friends tell me they don't like math and science. "It isn't fun," they say. No math and science, no engineers, no new technology, no world leadership. Our overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated school teachers cannot be expected to make math and science fun and exciting. But, what if we get the Baby Boomer engineers to spend their retirement bringing the old character, "Mr. Wizard," back into the classroom?

Engineers may be geeky, but they should never be referred to as "geeks." There is nothing in our lives that has not been made possible by engineers and scientists. The book you are holding explains how to best communicate with these very special people. Use that knowledge to help them do their jobs more efficiently. And let's bring math, science, engineering, and innovation back, and begin solving world problems before it's too late.

**H. Buford Barr**  
***High-Tech electronics and B2B practitioner,***  
***now Lecturer in Marketing, Santa Clara University***

One characteristic of geeks that's frequently overlooked is that most place a high value on creativity, and specifically, their own creativity in problem-solving. If you want to ask the question, "What motivates a geek?" (and you definitely should be asking that question if you're trying to harness social media to create meaningful conversations with them!), then consider asking the question, "What motivates geeks to be creative?" In general, the answer never rests in externally motivating incentives, but rather in a passion for the work itself and the ability to push personal limits of exploration and creation.

Geeks also love a good thinking model. In geeks' eyes, everything is part of a system of other things, and in order to fully understand anything (and we know how important that is), they need to understand *what* and *how* it fits into the bigger picture. Efforts to educate or influence geek thinking outside a schema or process or thinking model will inevitably flounder. Challenging a geek to deconstruct a problem rationally is like putting peanut butter in front of a chipmunk—they almost can't help themselves. Find a way to weave that kind of hook into your geek social media program, and you'll have a winner for sure.

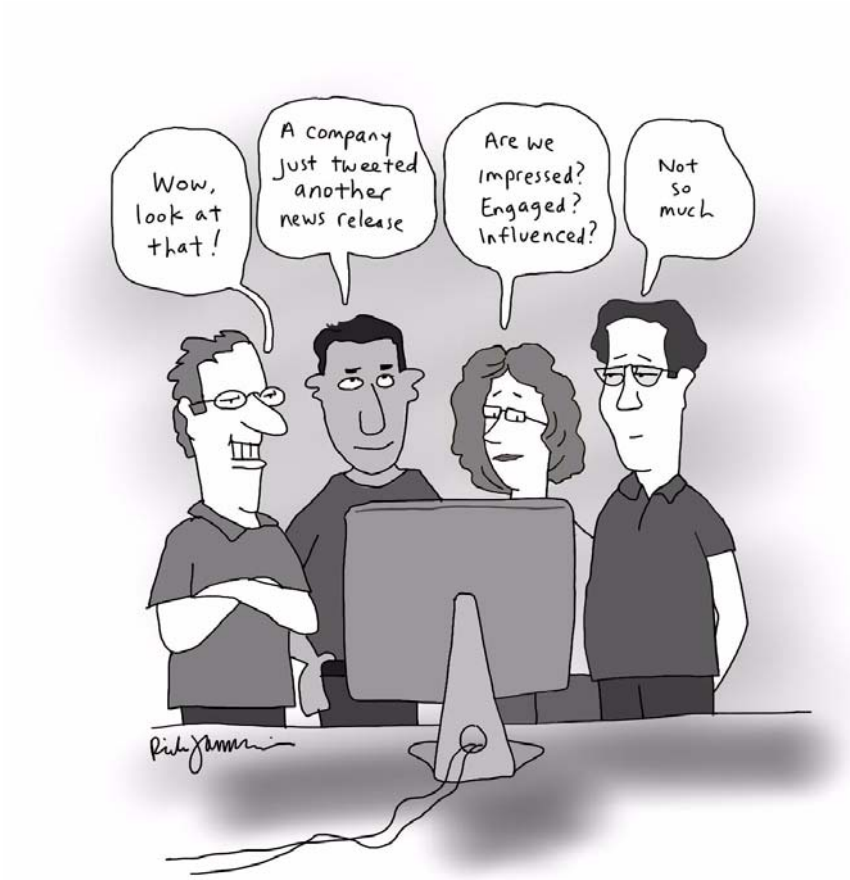
Another important characteristic, especially within the younger geek community, is that while money is important (and they get plenty of it, almost twice as much on average, in fact, as their counterparts in non-tech roles), believing that they're making a positive impact on the world is of equal, if not greater, importance. They believe in the value of their ideas, and they're competitive insofar as wanting to see their ideas "win."

While the immediate impact of this on their professional social media levels of engagement is not completely obvious, it's certainly an aspect of the demographic that could prove to be important down the road. Embedded in that statement is another interesting characteristic of the demographic: While you won't find many geeks chatting on Facebook about the complex and proprietary problems they're working on, that doesn't mean they don't use social media in their private lives, or that they won't share non "company confidential" solutions to problems in support forums. Where they do participate, they're proud of the techno-whiz reputations they develop online.

Social media provides virtual opportunities to like-minded individuals to build community, and geeks are no different than anyone else in that regard. Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name; but for geeks, the value of current social media opportunities for *professional* community building is less clear. A research project conducted by a team of students at Santa Clara University in mid-2010, for example, found that engineering geeks continue to overwhelmingly prefer email over all other communication channels. The research, which focused on 165 DesignCon 2010 conference attendees and 74 Synopsys Users Group (SNUG) participants, indicates that a substantial majority of these electrical engineers do not follow blogs, most reserve Facebook for personal (not professional) use, and most have scant interest (if any) in social media platforms such as Twitter.

Given such research-based insights, a G2G social media program that places all of its emphasis on blasting marketing messages through blogs or Facebook advertising or a strong Twitter presence is likely to miss the mark today, not to mention that geeks hate marketing spew. A different approach to engaging geeks via social media is needed, and frankly, it's one that's still not entirely clear in focus. But, we are getting close to knowing which questions to ask, and perhaps it's our own inner geek that leads us to this thinking, but knowing which questions to ask is a huge part of solving any problem.

So this brings us to the second "who" involved in this picture: you. Since the purpose of this book is to provide a solid foundation and some great questions to answer around G2G social media, who is it that might be looking for help with that?





## **Incoming Marketers**

Nobody needs to give recent college graduates a tutorial on how to use Facebook or retweet a Twitter message. Generation Y has come of age in a technology-pervasive, interconnected world. For them, social media is already second nature and part of the "background of obviousness" with regard to how people communicate. What may not be immediately obvious when entering the professional workforce for the first time, however, is how much has changed in recent years for those who have been around awhile. Senior managers at geek companies have built their success in paradigms that have not included social media—originally because it didn't exist and lately because it may not be completely clear why it matters to the specific business they're managing. If you're in the Gen Y category, you can skim past the details about stuff you already know about social media and focus more on the context and historical perspective in the pages that follow.

## **Experienced Communicators**

You've been in the workforce since the time when neither "friend" nor "unfollow" were considered verbs. You've built a successful career in marcom, PR, or other communications-related role, and one day your boss asks you to take the lead in running the social media program for your company or add a social media dimension to the marketing program you currently manage. In either case, this book is definitely for you. Although you're already Internet-savvy and social media-aware, what will you do to quickly get a handle on all the moving parts in a full-blown G2G social media program? What are the high-level considerations that compose the architecture of a coherent G2G initiative? Where is the terrain likely to present challenges? When venturing into uncharted territory for the first time as the one who's supposed to know, a bit of experienced guidance can smooth out some bumps from the learning curve ahead.

## **Traditional Marketers**

Social media isn't your thing, and maybe it never will be. But maybe you still have some professional curiosity about what all the social media hoopla is all about. Surely there must be something more to it than reading blogs or experimenting with Twitter. By providing a detailed overview of what it takes to conceive and manage an end-to-end social media program that helps to effectively engage geeks, this book will help provide a contextual framework to help you understand what your non-traditional social media colleagues down the hall are up to—and why it potentially matters.

## **Corporate Managers**

Your job is to run the business of whatever business you're in. You're aware of social media and may have even heard an anecdotal success story or two, but you're inclined to trust your marketing staff to sort through whatever implications social media may have for your business. If this is you—and you're holding this book—odds are that someone on your staff wants you to have a working familiarity with the framework and issues involved as social media takes root with the geek customers and markets your company serves.

As a matter of full disclosure, we do not claim status as a pure-play geek ourselves. We do, however, manifest many geeky characteristics we're rather proud of (like choosing concentration over conformity and passionately pursuing skill and imagination over mainstream social acceptance). Luckily for us, we possess just enough geekyness in mind and spirit to see the forest and the trees, as well as the human beings who are the substance of the pages that follow.

### **Oh, To Be A Geek**

"My three (now grown) kids were sitting around the dinner table with me and my wife. They were parked right in the middle of their teen years, when poking fun at Mom and Dad had special appeal. Part of that process, of course, was correcting your parents' misuse of vernacular and other anthropological errors.

So, in my feeble attempt to be self-effacing, I referred to myself as a "nerd." This precipitated rolling eyes of disbelief and hysterical laughter that, frankly, caught me off guard. I thought to myself, "How else should I describe myself to appear regular and culturally aware of my kids' perception of me?" The surprised look was picked up by my eldest and she offered, "Dad, you're not a nerd. Mom is a nerd. You're a dork."

"A dork?" I said. "Yes, Mom's a nerd because of how much she loves school (she's an MD). You're a dork because you think you're cool, but you're not." I queried, "Can't I at least be a geek?" To which she replied, "No. A geek is a person that loves gadgets and tech stuff more than hanging' with people. They're way better than dorks; but, you're too into people and not that into gadgets. So, you're stuck with being a dork 'cause you're not cool."

If only I could be a geek.

**Jack Harding**  
**Chairman, President and CEO**  
**eSilicon**





# 1 Stop

## First Things First

As we discussed in the introduction, geek demographics are not the same as general business or broad-based consumer demographics, and this distinction has all kinds of implications for anyone tasked with starting and/or managing a geek-to-geek social media program. The engineering geeks who literally invented the Internet are typically not early adopters of the interactive/interpersonal potential the Internet makes possible. But, just because their adoption rate isn't high (yet) for most social media technologies, that doesn't mean that no geeks are using them.

Beginning at square one on the yellow brick road to G2G social media success, it's helpful to know as much as you can about the people who actually compose the community you wish to join. As an important aside, notice we didn't say "the target market you want to sell stuff to" or even "the audience you plan to talk to." Social media is all about engaging and conversing in multi-directional online conversations. For anyone in the marketing profession, we're hoping that's not a news flash.

From the beginning, some have looked at social media as a slick new channel to "get their message out," perhaps in the same way pupa-phase spammers took the measure of email when that channel was brand new. But that's not the way to go. If social media is a conversation (which it is), then spam is an interruption—so why do that? Better to join the party as a welcome participant than show up as a gate crasher. Even better, host a great party yourself and invite in all the geeks you can find, get the beer flowing, and then sit back and listen. We all have a lot to learn about these folks.

Whom do they trust? How do they communicate? What types of information do they value? Where do they congregate? What lights their fire, or turns them off? The more you know about who "they" are and how they prefer to interact, the potentially smoother your entree into an environment that you didn't define and certainly don't control.

## Who Goes There?

Like shapes in the fog, a clear and definitive snapshot of how geeks engage with social media is challenging to discern. One reason is that anecdotal perspectives tend to skew the view in one direction or another (and are typically more accurate in describing corner cases than the core of the overall bell curve).

Listen to a social media enthusiast, for example, and one gets the impression that late adopters are missing a very important ticket to making their relationships deeper, networks stronger, and lives profoundly better (who knows, maybe they're right). Of course, that's the fundamental nature of enthusiasm: great excitement for a subject or cause. As such, looking at the world through the rose-colored glasses of enthusiasm is not the same as applying an objective business lens to form an unbiased snapshot.

Opposite the enthusiast end of the spectrum live traditionalists who generally aren't all that open to change or new ways of doing things. Quick to dismiss social media with an "I don't care what size latte you're ordering right now" wave of the hand, traditionalists look at the world through spectacles (even blinders) of their own.

So, who's right? The answer is, both...and neither. Both perspectives are able to accurately describe the points on the continuum they most understand and/or relate to, but neither speaks for the whole.

So here you are at step one—simply trying to understand the traits and communication preferences of the geek community you want to engage—and already it's complicated. Isn't there some objective, third-party research out there that can sort all this out?

## Paint Me a Picture

Beyond opinions and anecdotes, the other reason it's challenging to form a clear picture of how geeks engage with social media is that primary research targeting various slices of the B2B and G2G markets often yields remarkably different results and conclusions, often leading to more questions than clarity.

Consider, for example, a report authored by Laura Ramos titled "Rethinking the B2B Tech Marketing Mix in the Digital Age"<sup>5</sup> (Forrester Research, March 2010). Based on a research sample of 249 B2B marketers at companies with fifty or more employees, she wrote:

"Social media became the hot new marketing tool. Penetrating even the most conservative marketing organizations, social networking, microblogging, and blog publishing shifted the B2B marketing mix significantly toward digital channels in 2009. For the first time, this survey looked at the role that applications like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter play in the mix, and we found B2B marketers flocking to set up shop in these communities to converse with potential buyers. Two-thirds of B2B marketers (68%) have established group pages on social networking sites, exceeding inside sales use by 3%. Barely a blip on our 2008 radar screen, more than half of respondents (55%) said they now use Twitter for marketing purposes. Almost half (49%) employ corporate blogging, a number much higher than the 32% who embraced this digital medium in 2008."

Sounds like social media went mainstream for tech marketers in 2009. But wait, the tech marketing subset of B2B is not a homogeneous demographic: A PC manufacturer that sells laptops to a corporate



procurement department is certainly a B2B tech marketer, but quite different from a G2G tech marketer that sells low-power optimization software solutions to chip design engineers. So while research focused on B2B tech marketing may be more relevant to the geek world than generic B2C research, G2G companies are advised to consider both as potentially informative, but neither as conclusive.

## Dive Deeper

Step by step, the shapes in the fog become progressively more discernible. Sifting further into the survey data gathered by the student researchers at Santa Clara University referenced in the introduction, the following insights emerge from those surveyed:

- Of those who responded, only 10 percent of DesignCon attendees and **zero** SNUG participants use Twitter
- Although 57 percent have Facebook accounts, most reserve Facebook for personal (not professional) use
- LinkedIn has achieved the highest adoption rate among engineers: 63 percent
- 59 percent of DesignCon and 53 percent of the surveyed SNUG attendees stated that the proprietary nature of their jobs inhibits their participation in online forums

In addition to surveying engineering geeks in the current workforce, the researchers also interviewed a group of twenty-eight electrical engineering majors at the School of Engineering at Santa Clara University. The researchers note, "While the current generation of engineers had to adopt the use of online sites and resources mid-career, the next generation of engineers has already adopted the Internet and everything it has to offer." Even so, although 100 percent of the EE majors surveyed have Facebook accounts, none interact with blogs, none have Twitter accounts and only 11 percent use LinkedIn.

Synopsys conducted a research study in March 2010 among current users of EDA software. Based on 1,867 completed surveys, the research underscores a consideration noted in the last bullet point above (a factor that's virtually non-existent in the B2C world and of

peripheral concern in B2B communities): Corporate policies sometimes restrict participation in online technical communities—even those directly germane to an employee's professional role.

Corroborating another part of the Santa Clara University findings, *EE Times* found that Twitter usage among engineering geeks is decisively low. The geek-focused publisher conducted a survey in May 2010 that asked "What's your gut reaction to Twitter?"

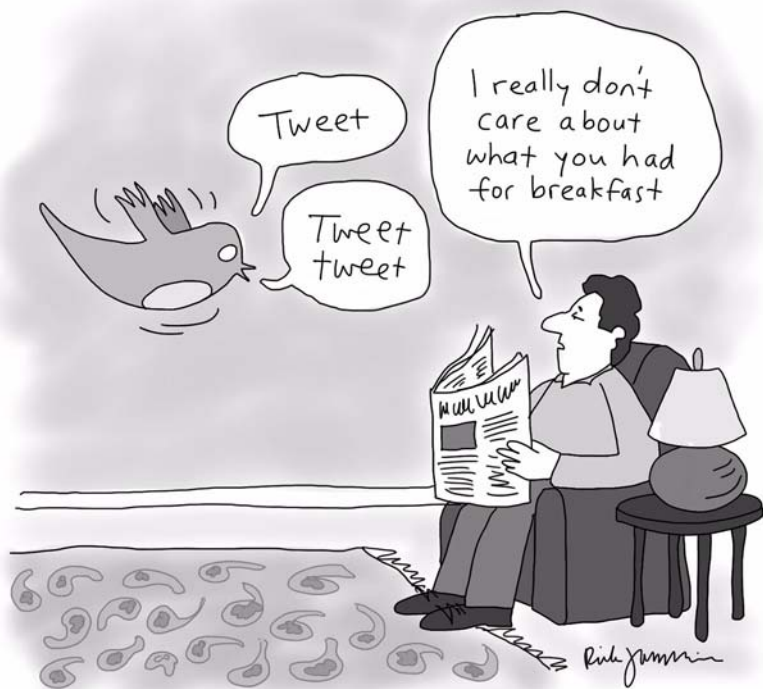
In her blog post that analyzes the results, Karen Field writes:<sup>6</sup>

The results from 285 survey respondents revealed that 85 percent don't use Twitter. More than half indicated that the statement "I don't really care what you had for breakfast," best sums up their feelings about it; others characterized it as "a ridiculous waste of time and electrons" or expressed the strong desire for it to simply "go away."

Field quotes Jeffrey Tuttle, a hardware design engineer, as saying, "The amount of information in a tweet is not worth the time spent looking at it... To be productive when doing design, you need long periods of uninterrupted thought. Twitter by its nature is intrusive and interruptive. Consequently it seems to be for those people who don't have enough to do."

Jeffrey's stated opinion is an interesting confirmation of the assessment that geeks care more about the value of information and productivity at work than they do about the experience of connecting with other people. And he's not alone in holding this opinion.

A significant number of engineers evidently see little value to their professional standing to checking in, hanging out, or building online ties with potential peer groups. Ironically, even among geeks who *are* actively engaged in social media, some hold "generic" social media in disregard if not downright disdain.



For example, in his blog post of August 29, 2010, technology blogger and self-proclaimed geek Daniel Nenni wrote:<sup>7</sup>

"Why will everybody in the entire world have a smartphone and/or tablet PC in the not too distant future? One word, NARCISSISM! What else drives the masses to Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WordPress, FailBlog, Blah, Blah, Blahblahblah... All key enablers of the mobile Internet explosion."

Currently then, it appears that the best that *certain* social media technologies can hope to do in the G2G space is to help create a positive predisposition so that when other things happen downstream, there's a favorable mindset of receptivity. That mindset is developed not only from social media, but from every other touch-point in the ecosystem. Did they hear your CEO speak recently, and how did that go? Do they like, trust, and respect their sales rep? Did they feel paid attention to when they had a problem, and was the problem resolved to their satisfaction? As we'll see in future chapters, it's very difficult to map direct causes and effects in the social media space, particularly in the G2G domain.

We believe all of this to be true, but does that mean we simply shouldn't bother with a social media program at all? No! We definitely should bother, and give it our very best shot while we're at it, and here's why:

First, one of the key values of Twitter is that it gives us the ability to "listen to the buzz." For example, several of our product marketing teams listen to the downstream buzz about what's working/not in their domains (and even what's coming with the standards under development). There's a *lot* of Twitter traffic in these areas, and listening in provides excellent and necessary reconnaissance to a marketer and product manager (and the R&D team as well).

Second, while applications such as Facebook and Twitter seem to hold little appeal (although certainly more than zero) to the majority of the geek world as it relates to their professional care-about, other media such as blogs, technical forums, and even YouTube hold significant promise in the G2G world. Think about those geek attributes we discussed earlier: Anything that has the potential to assist geeks in being more creative in their technical problem-solving, or build a more

robust perspective of the big picture in which they're trying to solve those problems, or even find a more interesting place or team or set of problems to work with can be of immense value.

And maybe that's why even Facebook and Twitter shouldn't be underestimated regardless of evidence to the contrary. One of the interesting aspects of the *EE Times* survey described above is the favorable and outspoken passion expressed by the 15 percent of engineers who participated in the survey who do use Twitter. In response to the previously mention blog post by *EE Times*' Karen Field titled "Why Engineers Hate Twitter," Synopsys' Karen Bartleson commented, "I'm an engineer and I absolutely love Twitter. I use it every day. It's a powerful communication channel that helps me constantly with my work and outside activities. I know quite a few other engineers who love it, too. We're capitalizing on technology that we engineers invented, after all."

While the bulk of other engineers may not (yet) agree with Bartleson on the value of Twitter, she has apparently found (and one might argue, built) a community of like-minded geek communicants who find their perception of their work world informed, enhanced, and enriched by their engagement online.

## **Zoom Back Out**

With each wave of data, the shapes become clearer, even if they're but a snapshot of a moving target. As helpful as research data may be, however, there's only so much enlightenment one is likely to find down in the weeds. At some point, the most helpful view only snaps into focus from the 10,000-foot level, where the entire forest becomes visible.

More than any other specific research finding about geek communication preferences, the Twitter vignette just described may be the most significant marker of all for what geek companies should understand about geek communities and social media: Some love it, some hate it... and most are focused on other interests.

But even if only a small fraction of the community is latching onto one aspect of social media or another, the smallest handful is still worth paying attention to. Let's say, for example, the furthest reaches of your

universe consists of just 100,000 current and potential customers. If only 10 percent of the total available market is tapped into Twitter, that's still 10,000 people—enough to fill more than twenty Boeing 747s.

While that's not everybody, it's still an impressive number. Plus, any cohesive subset of a larger group that's willing to buck the status quo of the majority is likely to hold sway beyond their numbers. What if these 10 percent are the influencers? Early adopters? Evangelists? The people who bridge communities? This is definitely a good group to connect with.

## **First-Hand Experience**

Beyond well-intended anecdotes and whatever research you might be able to find, the most valuable information source of all is usually first-hand experience. At Synopsys, we launched a social media program in 2007. Sometimes through trial and error, occasionally through inspiration, but mostly through the methods described in this book, the program has grown into a nexus for interaction with the übergeeks EDA community.

With experience comes knowledge, and web metrics help to inform some of what we know. Synopsys blogs, for example, are viewed by close to 5,000 unique visitors a month. Undaunted by research to the contrary, we know for sure that a significant number of engineering geeks do read blogs and, specifically, they're reading Synopsys blogs. Even in the absence of web analytics metrics, simply look around. Go to a technical conference or geek trade show, and you'll see Internet-connected/social media-enabled mobile devices everywhere. Go on-line to LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook, and you'll see impressive numbers of geeks self-associating with geek groups and geek brands at every turn.

Look backwards: Usenet (an Internet-based discussion system) has been around since 1980—more than a decade before the World Wide Web was hatched—and geeks have been a core constituency of that computer-based communications system from the get-go. Look ahead: Companies of every size are investing increasingly more and diverting a larger percentage of their shrinking marketing/PR spend on social and other electronic media on the bet that social media is here to

stay—whether that reflects a "build it and they will come" mentality or a forward-looking business acumen, critical mass and time are on their side either way.

As sure as the Internet genie will never be put back into the bottle, social media is not going away. It's got a solid foothold—yes, even among geeks—that's irreversible. With that, it's time to advance to Job #2: Observe the lay of the land before you pitch your tent.

### **Are you an engineer-geek?**

Do you remember the line from the movie "Forest Gump" where Forest's mom assured him that if God wanted all people to be special he would have created them all needing braces on their feet to walk straight? Or Captain Kirk of "Star Trek" fame passing the "Kobiashi Maroon" test by changing the rules (cheating)?

If you possess the combination of the illogical reasoning of the first with the brilliance of the second—and add a heavy dose of self-confidence and a belief of possessing a monopoly on flawless thinking...Then there is a good chance you are an engineer-geek!

If you simultaneously believe that disorder could result from perfect order (you call it random variability)—and that perfect order could come out of disorder (you call it clever engineering)...you are a good candidate for being an engineer-geek.

Let me give you an example: In optical wafer processing the wavelength of the light used couldn't keep up with ruthless continuous feature shrinking engineers are bent on pursuing, so the resulting printed shrunk shapes started getting heavily distorted. How did engineer-geeks solve the problem and "cheat" light? They distorted the original drawn shapes in a calculated way so that when light distorts the distorted shape you end up with a good shape. It reminds me of the kid's joke: How do you know when sour cream goes bad? It tastes sweet!

If you judge your kids' school tournaments as if you are grading a PhD thesis...you are a good engineer-geek candidate.

Finally, to qualify as an engineer-geek candidate you should see no need for marketing or sales, and think of both functions as totally unnecessary.

***Jamil Kawa***  
***Engineering Group Director, Implementation Group***  
***Synopsys***





STONE AGE SOCIAL MEDIA  
PLATFORM EVALUATION

## Notes

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(<http://dbesem.blogspot.com/2010/06/dbe-releases-results-of-social-media.html>)
- <sup>9</sup>In 2008, we attended a panel discussion where we thought we heard social media expert Sean O'Driscoll warn against becoming mesmerized and side-tracked by the latest "shiny dime." It turns out that term he actually used was "shiny

diamond," but we think "dime" is more apt in describing the imbalance that's possible when an infatuation with social media bells and whistles causes one to lose focus on business objectives.

- <sup>10</sup><http://bit.ly/cKMzdl>  
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## About the Authors



By day, Rick Jamison is disguised as a mild-mannered corporate communications contractor. But at sundown, he reveals his real superpowers as author and cartoonist. Part illustrator, part subject clarifier, and part Big Business underbelly tickler, his words and cartoons enlighten, enliven, enrich, entertain—and, from time to time, even educate.



Kathy Schmidt Jamison is a blogger, photographer, and humorist. She is Director of Strategic Communications at Synopsys where she's privileged to work directly for and with one of the finest übergeeks on the planet, Chairman and CEO, Dr. Aart de Geus.

## About Synopsys Press

Synopsys Press offers leading-edge educational publications written by industry experts for the business and technical communities associated with electronic product design. The Business Series offers concise, focused publications, such as *The Ten Commandments for Effective Standards* and *The Synopsys Journal*, a quarterly publication for management dedicated to covering the issues facing electronic system designers. The Technical Series publications provide immediately applicable information on technical topics for electronic system designers, with a special focus on proven industry-best practices to enable the mainstream design community to adopt leading-edge technology and methodology. The Technical Series includes the Verification Methodology Manual for Low Power (VMM-LP) and the FPGA-based Prototyping Methodology Manual (FPMM). A hallmark of both Series is the extensive peer review and input process, which leads to trusted, from-the-trenches information. Additional titles are nearing publication in both the Business and Technical series.



In addition to providing up-to-the-minute information for design professionals, Synopsys Press publications serve as textbooks for university courses, including those in the Synopsys University Program:

<http://www.synopsys.com/Community/UniversityProgram>

The Synopsys University program provides full undergraduate and graduate level curricula in electronic design. For more information about Synopsys Press, to contribute feedback on any of our publications, or to submit ideas, please navigate to:

[http://www.synopsys.com/synopsys\\_press](http://www.synopsys.com/synopsys_press)

## **A Note from the Publisher**

Thank you for your interest in this business series book from Synopsys Press. *Social Media Geek-to-Geek* was born out of our frustration with other social media marketing books and materials, which generally focus on business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing. Our executive editor, Rich Goldman, challenged his Synopsys marketing team to find new ways to engage technical customers using social media, coining the phrase "Marketing Geek-to-Geek." Authors Rick Jamison and Kathy Schmidt Jamison relate their experiences inventing and rolling out this social media strategy—both what worked and what didn't. In addition, Rick and Kathy have collaborated with other marketing practitioners and geeks (and people who are both) to include their perspectives in this emerging field. Brian Solis, globally recognized as one of the most prominent thought leaders and published authors in new media, contributed the Foreword.

We hope you enjoy the book and look forward to interacting with you through our social media geek-to-geek blog, The Listening Post, at <http://www.synopsys.com/blogs/listeningG2G>.

To learn more about this Synopsys Press book and the others in both the technical and business series, please visit [http://www.synopsys.com/synopsys\\_press](http://www.synopsys.com/synopsys_press). Additional copies are available online at <http://happyabout.com/synopsyspress> or at other online and physical bookstores.

Phil Dworsky  
Publisher, Synopsys Press  
May, 2011

## **A Note from the Executive Editor**

I am a Geek.

Back in the 1970s, I took one of the nation's first high school computer science courses. I instantly knew that computers would be a big part of my life, and this helped direct me to Syracuse University to study computer science, and to my first two jobs at IBM (as an intern) and Texas Instruments. At IBM, I worked on an IC simulator that is still in use today. Years later, when I went back to work with IBMers, I was surprised at the instant standing that my "Geek Cred" gave to me. It was much easier to connect immediately with the Geeks at IBM, and I was more effective for it. For me, this drove home the first principle of G2G: Geeks appreciate and respect other Geeks, and this is the peer group that they want to interact with.

At Texas Instruments, I led a team responsible for ASIC design libraries. This required close interaction with EDA vendors and led me to realize how much I enjoy working with people. I'm blessed in that my current job as vice president of corporate marketing allows me to combine my two passions of being a Geek and working with people.

When I moved into this job in 2009, the nascent field of social media was all the rage. I knew it would be important to incorporate social media into our marketing mix, so I immediately set off to learn about it. I found that in Silicon Valley, I could attend a seminar on the topic any week of the year, and anybody could attend a webinar on the topic any day of the week. But none of these sessions resonated with me—they didn't seem to apply well to our situation at Synopsys.

Eventually, I realized all these seminars were about B2C (Business-to-Consumer) or B2B (Business-to-Business), but our business is quite different from either of these. We're not selling shoes or soda or even electronic products to end consumers. We're not even selling supplies to businesses. Synopsys sells very sophisticated chip design software and solutions to very smart electrical engineers.

Our customers are geeks. And so are we at Synopsys. I realized that we need a different strategy to address our customers, one that would resonate with them, not turn them off. We need an approach that would connect our customers' geeks with our technical information and our own geeks.

Our challenge was to use social media marketing to reach people who don't want to be marketed to and aren't known to be particularly social. This led to coining the term G2G (Geek-to-Geek). I looked around and was surprised to find almost no companies practicing G2G marketing. It was then that I realized that we would have to put forth a pioneering effort.

You can hear more about the development of G2G marketing in my 2010 TEDx talk on the subject

(<http://www.ted.com/tedx/events/768>). Kathy, Rick and my entire staff have my eternal gratitude for sharing my G2G passion and for working to develop it into an excellent success for our customers and ourselves. We feel like we have just started down this path. There are miles and miles of roads ahead of us; but, when we look in the rearview mirror, it's gratifying to see all that we have achieved, and I hope that this book will help you get down that road faster while avoiding some of the many potholes along the way.

Rich Goldman, Executive Editor  
VP, corporate marketing & strategic alliances at Synopsys

"Geeks have a unique culture and live by different rules—so, if you want to reach them successfully through social media, you need this book. Rick and Kathy tapped their real-world tested experience to fill this book with advice that you can put to use immediately."

- **Charlene Li,**  
**Author, "Open Leadership" and Founder, Altimeter Group**

"Social Media Geek-to-Geek is a great resource for technologists who use social media to communicate and share real-time information. In our business environment, where transparency and relevancy rules, it's the perfect time to equip geeks alike to join the conversation and have fun!"

- **Michael Brito,**  
**VP, Social Media, Edelman Digital**

"We've certainly seen a level of mistrust among the hard-minded business pros—and geeks—who find it hard to believe the hype from all the self-professed social media gurus, ninjas and bandwagoners. That's why Social Media Geek-to-Geek is so timely. Talking G2G provides a practical roadmap for an audience who is well-equipped to move their interests forward through social marketing. And with this focused approach, the book also enables what we believe to be one of the most important factors in social media success: Make it your own."

- **Jeff Loomis,**  
**Chairman + CEO, Loomis Group**

**Rick Jamison**, principal at Schmidt Jamison Communications, is disguised by day as a mild-mannered corporate communications contractor. But at sundown, he reveals his real superpowers as author and cartoonist.

**Kathy Schmidt Jamison** is Director of Strategic Communications at Synopsys where she reports directly to the Chairman and CEO. Creator of boardroom thinking models and executive presentations, Kathy's background as a speechwriter, professional speaker, trainer, humorist, and blogger makes her a uniquely well-equipped communications collaborator in a highly technical world.



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