

# Rebooting Your Ecommerce Marketing in the Social Media Age



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## Introduction

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As the 1990s gave way to the 2000s, demand for goods and services remained steady, but the means by which consumers were made aware of, shopped for, and bought those goods and services shifted, from bricks-and-mortar to the Internet.

Commerce became e-commerce as consumers moved their attention—and their dollars—online. Savvy marketers followed the money. Those who didn't... died (Borders Books, and countless others, R.I.P.).



As the first decade of the new millennium came to a close, consumers have once again moved the goal posts—indeed, the entire playing field—from merely the Web to social media and mobile applications. Everybody's on Facebook, for hours on-end every day, there are more than 200 million Tweets every day, and by the end of 2011, smartphones will be in the majority of consumers' hands. By the end of 2012, smartphones will outsell PCs, some 500 million units in 2012 alone.

If your e-commerce marketing efforts haven't kept up with the shift to social media, it's not too late to get on board. But, the train, full of your customers, is leaving the station—with you or without you. Use the tips and tools in this ebook to optimize each of the most important traffic channels in the latest iteration of e-commerce to grow your email lists, nurture and convert more leads, and of course, most important of all—grow sales.

## The 750 Million-Pound (and Counting!) Gorilla: Facebook

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Face it. Facebook's stats are unbeatable.

More than 750 million users worldwide (about 30% of those in the U.S.), half of whom log in everyday, spend more than 700 billion minutes per month (about 15.5 hours per person) with their face in Facebook.

As the market shifted from online media to social media, everyone from candy makers to car manufacturers sought—and soon found—ways to leverage Facebook to connect with their own customers, extend their reach, socialize their brand, and now, to tell their story and sell their goods and service. F-commerce has arrived.

If you're responsible for promoting your brand, it pays to pay attention and learn how to make the transition from e-commerce to f-commerce using strategies those at the vanguard, including three of the largest and most well-known brands—Coca-Cola, Disney, and Procter and Gamble—have already developed.



## Open a Shop on F-Street

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More than 1.5 million people “Like” Tide detergent on Procter and Gamble’s [Tide Facebook store](#). That’s right, a million and a half people are expressing their delight about laundry soap.

The company initiates the conversation with a Facebook post on everything from whether or not consumers buy Tide online (apparently more than 500 people have an opinion worth sharing about this) to the weather: “How hot is it where you are?”, about which nearly 1,000 people commented.

The opportunity to connect customers in the social space to each other and their brand—to build a community while selling everything from soap to soup inside the Facebook platform—is a marketer’s dream come true.



## Get Your Group-On

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Merchants like Sears, W Hotels and Belgian car maker, Skoda, are using their Facebook pages to aggregate customers much the same as Groupon and other social buying sites have done.

Skoda, for example, took €1 off the price of a car for every “Like” one of their cars accumulated on Facebook. At any point in time, consumers could opt to buy the car, as one smart shopper did, when the deal tipped the sale price below what he felt he could get it for at a dealer.

W Hotels, uses the group-buy approach to promote a special price on room nights whenever a certain number of buyers agree to the deal. At the same time, they are promoting upcoming and previous events they’ve hosted using online videos and polling their fans to see which fashion designers have them swooning to learn more about their guests buying habits and taste in fashion, décor, and lifestyles so they can tailor their marketing to meet their needs while building buzz for their own brand.

## A Special Deal Just for You—and Our Other 95,000 Closest Friends

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Companies including Pantene hair products, shoe and handbag merchant, Nine West, and ketchup maker, Heinz, use their Facebook stores and pages to offer their fans exclusive offers, creating loyalty, making customers feel special, and leveraging their fans’ online connections to spread the word about new products or limited edition offerings.

Heinz has roughly 800,000 “Likes” for its ketchup Facebook page. They use the page to tell customers about special offers, promote their new, eco-friendly packaging, and ask them what’s on their “to-do” lists.

Remember, we’re talking ketchup here, folks. That’s 800,000 people gushing about something that five years ago, you couldn’t get people to give a second thought about two seconds after they squirted it on their hamburger. Now, using Facebook, it’s a gateway to consumer habits, customer preferences, and a brand-building opportunity, a dozen times a day.



## Connecting the Dots... and the Trends, Opinions, and Recommendations

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One of the best things about Facebook, maybe *the* best thing, is of course, it's connectivity—the way the king of social media socializes. Now, companies, like Amazon, TripAdvisor and [Levi's](#) jeans, are taking advantage of those connections to show customers and prospects what their friends like, are recommending, and where they've been.



It's one thing to use the Web to show users what some people who seemingly share the same interests are doing or buying, it's something an order of magnitude better to show people what their known friends and family—the key people in their social networks—prefer, buy, use, and do. Facebook's Open Graph protocol, lets application developers do just that, connecting the dots, thoughts, and trends among friends and the brands they favor.

## On Sale Now! Yours for a Tweet

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In days gone by, people would figuratively explain how inexpensive something was by saying it could be bought “for a song.”

Today's social media mavens take that a step further by allowing customers and prospects in their Facebook universe to buy and pay for things with, of all things, a Tweet. [Pay With A Tweet](#) makes an application companies can use to spread their marketing messages by letting people buy products, for example a white paper, an ebook, a single song audio track, or even a beer by tweeting about the product.

Other companies, such as [Finz.it](#) and [Flaunt It](#), offer applications that reward people for recommending their products to friends in their social network. The incentives might be free shipping or discounts. Another plugin, [Swipely](#), connects credit card purchases to your social network to give your friends a kind of shopping feed of the things you consider worthy of your hard-earned money.

## Why Don't You Check In and See Me Sometime?

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Facebook Check-In Deals boost sales by offering customers, fans, and prospects special offers just for checking in with the brand's Facebook page when their smartphone indicates they are in the vicinity of a participating merchant. The Gap, for instance, used a Facebook check-in deal to offer a free pair of jeans to the first 10,000 customers and a discount to everyone else who checked-in, physically and virtually to one of their stores nationwide.



## Do the Opposite

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In a famous episode of Seinfeld, Jerry's friend, George, concludes that since everything he's done in life is wrong, that, logically, doing the opposite of whatever his instincts told him to do, must be right. The result is dream job with the New York Yankees and women who love him for the loser he is.

Some merchants instead of trying to drive traffic from their Facebook pages to their stores, real or virtual, are doing the opposite, driving traffic from their stores to their Facebook pages. Coca-Cola, for example, created a "Like Machine" for a summer camp it runs in Israel. Wearing specially designed wristbands and checking at "Like Points" stationed throughout the camp, allows campers to post their "Likes" and a digital photo directly from the camp onto their Facebook page.



## Sell It Like Starbucks

If anyone knows how to create fanatic loyalty (besides Apple, that is), certainly Starbucks does. To keep people craving their pricey products, Starbucks employs a comprehensive approach to social media marketing.

They begin by creating a distinctive experience for their customers, motivating and incenting them to do more with the brand, do more for themselves, do more for their community. They reinforce that experience with marketing creating specifically to drive traffic to Facebook, to engage consumers there with the brand, and get them to “Like” Starbucks.

Once the customers are hooked—to the caffeine and the Facebook experience, the company pursues an aggressive editorial strategy that consistently rewards customers while engaging them further with brand.



## The Big “O”

So, what does this paradigm that connects your content to your customers to your brand and the data those three elements generate mean? In a word: Opportunity.

Opportunity is knocking at your virtual storefront door in ways never before possible. The average Facebook user maintains a network of 130 friends. Applying the old “What if you told two friends and they told two friends” logic to Facebook social networks makes word-of-mouth marketing—the best advertising there is—positively geometric in its potential.

Does it work? You betcha. A [study of 1,500 consumers by iModerate Research Technologies and Chadwick Martin Bailey](#) demonstrated that 51 percent of Facebook users and 67 percent of Twitter followers are more likely to make a purchase after becoming a fan or follower. Those consumers are 60 percent (Facebook) and 79 percent (Twitter) more likely to recommend the brand when they become fans/followers.

More than a quarter—27 percent—of those consumers want to be “the first to know” about the companies they’re following new products and services.

A study by Booz & Co. predicts that [social commerce transactions will reach \\$30 billion by 2015](#).

That’s some powerful marketing magic.

### F-Commerce by the Numbers

Still need convincing? Here are some [F-commerce stats compiled by Social Commerce Today](#).

- **7-10%:** Increased Average Order Value for Facebook transactions (vs. web-store) for Kembrel
- **1.5x:** Facebook users spend 1.5x more online than other Internet users
- **80:** Average community pages, groups and events to which a Facebook user is connected
- **117%:** the additional amount a fan will spend on a brand compared to a non fan
- **17%:** proportion of Facebook users who say simply having the ability to ‘Like’ a brand makes them more likely to buy
- **\$5.30:** The amount of ticket sales generated on TicketMaster when a Ticketmaster user posts a specific event they are attending, or may want to attend, to Facebook
- **20%:** The amount of ticket sales per “share” post-purchase versus pre-purchase on Eventbrite.
- **50%:** The likelihood of repeat purchases every month by people who “Like” a brand compared to average shoppers.

## On the Move: M-Commerce

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Maybe it took longer than expected—40 years—for the science to catch up with the art. In 1971, The Who released their *Who's Next* album, which included the hit single, *Goin' Mobile*. By the end of 2011, more than half of all phones sold will be smartphones sporting mobile apps. Already, more than a third of smartphone users have used their mobiles to inform their purchases in-store.

M-commerce, the next iteration in online consumerism, promises to take shopping to a whole new level for shoppers and the sellers who want to capture their imaginations, data, and dollars.

Mobile phones, armed with GPS capabilities and state-of-the-art shopping apps will (already do) guide shoppers to stores, check product availability, and provide information and incentives (coupons and discounts) to shoppers on the go. Mobile engagements will become a funnel leading to longer-term relationships, such as downloading a proprietary app to alert customers of special offers, and of course, as the technology matures, actually close the sale via an m-payment, whether on-the-go or in-store.



## Mobile: The Untethered Connection

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Understanding the role of m-commerce in product consideration and purchasing is critical to your success in this channel. The smartphone is the most persistent connection between a consumer and your brand ever devised. It presents opportunities unlike anything else before it and is a critical component in a multichannel approach to consumer engagement.

In fact, because it is so mobile, so connected and disconnected from your other marketing channels all at once, it's essential that there be tight integration between your mobile marketing strategies and the rest of your marketing efforts. Customers expect a consistent experience when they interact with your brand whether they're doing so in-store, on the Web, or via their mobile device. And, they expect your customer service people to have an integrated view of them as customers of your goods and services.



## Overcoming Mobilephobia

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Many retailers are afraid to dip their toes in the m-commerce revenue stream because they are misinformed or uninformed about how easy it is to deploy and support a mobile strategy. In fact, lots of inexpensive, sometimes, even free, applications exist to support even the smallest of retail operations.

Mobile barcodes, especially QR codes ([see our e-book about QR codes](#)), are easy to generate and just as easy to use. A mobile barcode image can be snapped by the camera in smartphones equipped with the reading technology (already about one-third of all smartphones). That image can trigger links to landing pages where valuable consumer data can be captured in exchange for incentives, such as instant coupons and detailed product information, along with opportunities to cross-sell and upsell the customer while they're still in your store.



By registering your information with Google and other mobile service providers, your customers and prospects can make use of location-based services to offer instant incentives and guide them to your store.

By arming customers with information about your products—even educating them about competitors prices—on their smartphones, while they're in your store, you actually give them the ability and the incentive to negotiate a price with you rather than have them leave to buy the product elsewhere costing you the entire sale rather than just a portion of the profit margin.

As m-commerce matures, the mobile channel will likely be your first point of contact with customers. This gives you an advantage in using that initial engagement to drive them to the other channels in your marketing campaigns, such as extending your brand into their Facebook communities or Twitter feeds.

## M-Strategies

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As you plan your m-commerce strategy, keep these considerations in mind:

- Make sure your content management system (CMS) is fully integrated across your mobile and web platforms. A single interface should be able to generate content across your platforms, be tightly integrated to your promotional platforms, and be capable of quickly and easily generating SEO-friendly content which is easily searched and navigated to within the CMS.
- Use Web services standards-based APIs. Proprietary apps are so 2001. You want your m-commerce platform to support all the latest technologies and connect to all the best back-end systems, not be tied into one standalone platform while the rest of the m-world moves ahead without you or without you having to pony up more money to keep up.
- Make use of mobile barcodes. They're great for driving impulse sales, cross-selling, upselling, and capturing valuable customer data to be used across all your marketing channel.
- Make sure your content is optimized for the mobile Web. Customers frustrated by your mobile experience will abandon your mobile site faster than you can say, "iPhone."
- Optimize your website for mobile search. On a mobile device, search engines like Google, strip out all the extraneous images and doo-dads and deliver a stripped down version of your homepage. Make sure that nearly naked page still satisfies whatever drove the user to seek you out in the first place or you will lose valuable conversion and sales opportunities.
- It all starts with awareness, so make sure your first mobile touchpoint is a positive experience for m-consumers.
- Make sure your customers' experience with your mobile app provides tangible benefits and valuable assistance during the product consideration phase of the sale.



During this phase, customers are kicking the tires and checking things out. Make it easy for them access to their social graphs, friends and family, during this phase.

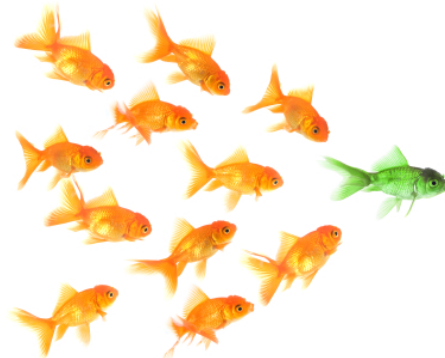
- Timing is everything, especially in m-commerce. When a potential customer is in your store or just mobile window-shopping, now is the time to offer incentives, limited time offers, loyalty rewards, and the like. Strike while the iron is hot.
- Never make registration compulsory. Some shoppers find it a turnoff. When they're satisfied with your brand, they'll be happy to fork over their personal details later on.
- Go the whole 9 yards. Don't pare back your offerings just because it's mobile shopping. Consumers expect the same inventory and choices no matter how they're shopping with you.
- Take the time to fully understand the mobile buying experience so you can create a comprehensive, integrated m-commerce strategy that addresses consumers needs and wants.



## Building a Loyal Following – Literally

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M-commerce is the epitome of having a loyal following, your customers literally follow your brand with them wherever they go. Here are some tips from the experts to increase customer loyalty in the mobile environment as told to eMarketer:



**Listen to your customers** - Tim McCauley, director of mobile commerce for Walgreens explains that customers wanted to see Walgreens' weekly circulars on their iPhones, so that's what the company gave them. In return, Walgreens got higher customer ratings and more downloads.

**Show them how loyal they've been** - Jeff Haddon, mobile team lead for OfficeMax explains that the office supply retailer integrated their MaxPerks loyalty program into their first mobile app in 2010. Members can see their reward levels and redeem their rewards while they're shopping in our stores.

**Incent them to go mobile with you** - Shoe retailer Steve Madden Ltd. asks customers to opt-in to their mobile database while they're checking out in-store, according to Andrew Koven, president of e-commerce and customer experience for the retailer. Customers are promised exclusive offer and a chance to win a \$100 gift card. The mobile database is growing 2 percent weekly according to Koven, with more than 100,000 members.



## Social Studies, 21<sup>st</sup> Century-Style

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Who knew, even five years ago, that we all yearned to be so connected to each other? Birds flock, fish school, buffalo herd, and apparently, people facebook, tweet, and link in. It's a phenomenon even the anthropologists severely underestimated. To leverage social media for your ecommerce initiatives, keep these points in mind:

**Go With the Flow** - People, customers, spend so much time on social media because they are looking to connect in ways that provide answers to their questions and reinforce their instincts or assuage their doubts and fears. Pay attention, learn. Then, give the people what they want. Create awareness for your brand, build relationships with your community and use those relationships to turn leads into customers.

**Stake Your Claim** - Set up your accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Optimize your profile in each of these communities. Study the competition; get a feel for the lay of the land and the culture in your niche. Then, share unique content which builds your brand and draws users to your site. Understand that this is not your domain; it belongs to the community, so act accordingly.

**Pay Attention, Then Act** - Your customers, fans, and followers will be sharing their thoughts and opinions with you freely in social media. Leverage this valuable insight by monitoring what happens on your Facebook pages, what people are saying in the Twitterverse. Then, create unique offers based on those thoughts and use the opportunity to address any negative comments by resolving the issues your customers are telling you they have.

**Socialize First, Then Proselytize** - Social media users are there to socialize first. This is no place for heavy-handed, over the top selling. Offer non-transactional ways to engage with your brand first, then incentivize the community with discounts and special offers that take them to landing pages where you can collect email addresses or other useful data.

**Spy on Your Competitors** - Okay, maybe spy is too harsh a word. Become a "friend" on your competitor's Facebook page, become a "follower" on Twitter, become a subscriber to their blog. You're not necessarily there to crib ideas, but it couldn't hurt to see what your competitors are up to online in case you can spot an opportunity to steal some of their business.



## A Twitter Tutorial

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Despite its 140-character limit, or maybe because of it, many ecommerce marketers are perplexed by how to best use Twitter. It's a unique marketing play, to be sure.

With only 140 characters and perhaps hundreds or thousands of items in your inventory, don't try to do it all with just one Twitter account. Parse your business into different segments, each with their own Twitter account, such as @MyStoreHousewares and @MyStoreGardenTools. More—followers—is not always better. Focus on creating a solid following honed in on your products instead of tens of thousands of followers, many of whom have no interest in what you sell.



Twitter users live in the moment. Make your tweets time-sensitive and compelling. Contests with short deadlines or discounts that expire in a few hours are excellent ways to get people to pay attention to your tweets. Not every tweet has to be a deal or offer a prize, but a healthy balance between promotional tweets and giveaways keeps them looking at what you share.

Take advantage of the Twitterverse. Use tools like Search.Twitter.com to find conversations which share common keywords you can use in your own tweets. See what concerns consumers have and tweet solutions to those problems.

Social media monitoring tools provide access to the vast majority of tweets. Pay attention to what people are saying about your company and seek out those who have expressed an interest in your products or services, then reach out to them via Twitter.

Showcase your, and your brand's personality on Twitter. Sure, Twitter is digital technology, but ultimately, people connect with people. Don't be afraid to showcase your character in your Tweets. Consider using a person's picture instead of your logo in your Twitter profile. It humanizes your brand.

Make the most of Twitter's ability to provide you quick, easy access to market research. Thinking of launching a new product or service? Ask your followers what they think. Use their feedback to shape your business and marketing decisions.

## Google vs. Google: Search vs. Shopping

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Searching and shopping are two different things. It's that simple.

Someone searching for lawn mowers in Google Search may want information about how lawn mowers work or the history of lawn mowers ("In the beginning, Ward told Wally and The Beaver to go forth and mow..."). Someone searching for lawn mowers in Google Shopping is clearly interested in price, features, and product reviews.



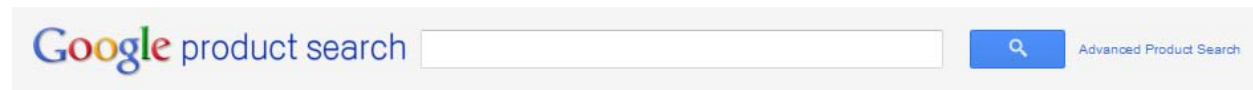
The factors that contribute to success in Google Search are substantially different than those leading to sales in Google Shopping.

Create a Google Merchant account and submit your data feed. Your data feed should include valid, clear, concise, factual information along with quality attributes. Provide a means for, and encourage seller ratings among your customers. More high seller and product ratings are the key to higher rankings in Google Shopping.

Google is not the only shopping comparison engine, but it's no surprise it's the dominant player. Still, it only takes minimal effort to ensure your data is available on the other shopping comparison engines as well. Submit your data feed to Bing Shopping, TheFind, Oodle, SortPrice, ShopMania, and GoShopping to take advantage of any traffic they drive your way too.

## The Secrets of Google Shopping Search Success

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Google Product Search, Google Shopping, Froogle - the product has had several monikers since Google launched it. Don't worry about what it's called, it's the top-producing shopping comparison engine on the Web driving traffic to your ecommerce store for free! Make sure you populate the data feed you submit to maximize the results.

Add keywords to your data feed. Use the keywords you already have Google Analytics. Add keywords to your product titles and descriptions. Find additional keywords by reading customer reviews on Amazon.com and other shopping sites. Those are the customers actually talking. Don't forget to include the brand name and part numbers in your data feed.

Include a UPC code in the data feed. Google Product Search requires at least two of the three identifiers, UPC, brand and part number. Combined, these increase traffic, order volume, conversion rates, and revenues.

Include seller reviews. If you're not confident in your customer service, you have other problems that need to be addressed first. Because Bizrate and reseller ratings break up the review process into five categories, it's unlikely that every, or most, reviews will be 100 percent negative.

Add rich snippets by adding product average and product review count columns into your data feed. Reviews gets you in the Google 1 box, the prime real estate. Add the rel="canonical" link element to each product page (Your Web developers will know what this means.).

Optimize your product/type columns. Use Google's suggested product types, e.g., audio, electronics. The more detailed you get, the better impact on traffic. This column is what Google uses to categorize your product.

## The Email-Ecommerce Connection

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Your email database is undeniably your most valuable asset as an ecommerce marketer. Nurture your email leads and your email database will grow. Grow your email database and your sales will grow. What are you waiting for? Use these tactics and watch your database blossom into an ecommerce selling machine.

Make your customers feel special by making them part of a group that receives an exclusive offer by email. Being part of a targeted group with an offer designed just for them typically produces a better click-through rate in emails. Experiment with different group structures to see which produces the best results.



Educate your customers with solid advice about the products or services they come to your website to buy. Create a “Guide to Buying...” that informs customers and prospects about everything they need to know during the decision-making process. Make the guide downloadable via a form you create to capture valuable information before they get access to the guide. A well-written guide positions you as a thought leader in your field.

Run a contest or a sweepstakes. Everybody likes to win free stuff, a sweepstakes email is certain to get read. Likewise, people are competitive, they like to demonstrate their skills. Run a contest that is challenging, but simple. The simpler you make it, the more email entries you’ll receive. Keep it fun and offer a prize that is worth contestants’ time to enter.

Lead nurturing emails are a slightly different breed than promotional emails. Here, you’re trying to move prospects through the funnel with an eye toward getting them to buy later on, albeit as soon as possible. According to Forrester Research, companies who succeed at lead nurturing generate 50 percent more sales-ready leads at 33 percent lower cost-per-lead than those who are inept at lead-nurturing.

Make sure you have something valuable to say in your lead nurturing emails. When you give readers something they can use once, they’re more likely to read the next email you send.

Keep your lead nurturing emails short, focused, and to the point. Lead nurturing emails should focus on one topic with a clear call to action at the end. A reader should be able to discern in five seconds or less what benefits they will gain from the email you sent them.

Lead nurturing should follow a natural progression. Educate and inform in the first email and offer an opportunity to convert. In subsequent emails, provide an offer, a free trial or a demo, along with a second offer to convert.

Be sure to measure your progress every step of the way in the lead nurturing process and learn from your successes and your mistakes.

## There's Still 22 Letters Left in the Alphabet

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First there was b-commerce (Our ancestors bought and sold at the bazaar). Then, there was e-commerce. Now, there's F-commerce and m-commerce.

It's only a matter of time until some techie develops a new way to connect people—and therefore customers and companies—necessitating another alphabetic iteration of the age-old business of buying and selling.



Maybe it will be V-commerce, virtual selling, or maybe that already happens in video games where players already trade in virtual currencies.

Maybe it will be S-commerce, connecting retailers and customers in outer space.

Regardless, the endgame is the same. Merchants have products and services to sell, people need and want those goods and services. The key is connecting the two in the best, most efficient, most effective way possible. But for now, happy e-selling, f-selling, and m-selling. May the forces, whatever they be, be with you.

## Next Steps

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If you are a company that is interested in growing your business and generating leads, [use HubSpot's free 30-day trial to learn how HubSpot's software can help you.](#)

