



Market Data / Supplier Selection / Event  
Presentations / User Experience  
Benchmarking / Best Practice / Template  
Files / Trends and Innovation



# Online PR and Social Media Trends Briefing

June 2009

# Online PR and Social Media Trends Briefing

June 2009



**Published June 2009**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Copyright © Econsultancy.com Ltd 2009

**Econsultancy New York**

41 East 11th St., 11th Floor  
New York, NY 10003  
United States

Telephone:  
+1 212 699 3626

<http://econsultancy.com>  
[help@econsultancy.com](mailto:help@econsultancy.com)

**Econsultancy London**

4th Floor, The Corner  
91-93 Farringdon Road  
London EC1M 3LN

Telephone:  
+44 (0)20 7269 1450

# Contents

- 1. Introduction ..... 1
- 2. About Econsultancy ..... 2
  - 2.1. Contact ..... 2
  - 2.2. Training ..... 2
- 3. Market Trends ..... 3
  - 3.1. Overview ..... 3
  - 3.2. Social media news and marketplace developments ..... 4
  - 3.3. Social media objectives ..... 4
  - 3.4. Social media strategy and best practice ..... 4
  - 3.5. Resourcing ..... 5
  - 3.6. Metrics and Measurement ..... 6
  - 3.7. Essential PR tools and technologies ..... 7
- 4. Statistics ..... 8
- 5. Resources and blog posts ..... 10



# 1. Introduction

This is a free briefing containing the latest market trends, best practice and statistics relating to online PR and social media. This document contains an overview of market trends, tips for best practice, new statistics and useful resources.

The information within this briefing is collated from a range of sources including:

- Econsultancy conferences, supplier showcases and roundtables
- Third party events
- Research carried out by Econsultancy and other organizations

The purpose of Econsultancy's trend briefings (which are free to download) is to provide information relating to the latest trends, best practice, challenges and opportunities across a wide range of digital marketing and ecommerce topics.

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/briefings>

## Other Econsultancy reports and content:

### Reports:

Econsultancy /Lynchpin Online Measurement and Strategy Report

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/online-measurement-and-strategy-report>

Econsultancy / Guava UK Search Engine Benchmark Report

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/uk-search-engine-marketing-benchmark-report>

Online PR Industry Benchmark Report

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/online-pr-industry-benchmarking-report>

Online Reputation and Buzz Monitoring Buyer's Guide 2008

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/online-reputation-and-buzz-monitoring-buyer-s-guide-2008>

Online Customer Engagement Report 2009

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/online-customer-engagement-report-2009>

Innovation Report

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/innovation-report>



## 2. About Econsultancy

Econsultancy is the leading source of independent advice and insight on digital marketing and ecommerce.

Our reports, events, online resources and training programmes help a community of over 80,000 registered marketers make better decisions, build business cases, find the best suppliers, look smart in meetings and accelerate their careers.

Econsultancy is an [award-winning online publisher of reports](#) covering best practice, user experience benchmarking, market data and supplier selection aimed at internet professionals that want practical advice on all aspects of ebusiness.

Econsultancy also operates a highly popular [training](#) division, used by some of the world's most prominent brands for staff education, both in-house and via public courses. We provide training across all areas of digital marketing and at all levels from one day courses to diplomas to Masters in Digital Marketing.

In addition, we host more than 100 events a year, such as The Online Marketing Masterclass, regular Supplier Showcases and Roundtables, an annual Future of Digital Marketing event, Digital Cream and a range of social events.

The [Econsultancy](#) site now attracts 175,000 unique users per month where they access research, read the blog and take part in discussions in the forums. And as a portal to the digital marketing community, Econsultancy members can also link up with other members and digital suppliers through our directories, as well as find a new job or new digital talent using the job listings.

Some of Econsultancy's client-side members include: Google, Yahoo, MSN, MySpace, BBC, BT, Shell, Vodafone, Yell.com, Dell, Oxfam, Virgin Atlantic, TUI, Barclays, Carphone Warehouse, IPC Media, Deloitte and Touche, T-Mobile and Estée Lauder.

[Join Econsultancy](#) today to learn what's happening in digital marketing – and what works.

Call us to find out more on +1 212 699 3626 or [contact us online](#).

### 2.1. Contact

If you would like to know more about corporate membership and our roundtables then please contact us on +1 212 699 3626 or [mark.dingle@econsultancy.com](mailto:mark.dingle@econsultancy.com)

If you have any comments or queries about this briefing then please contact [aliya.zaidi@econsultancy.com](mailto:aliya.zaidi@econsultancy.com).

### 2.2. Training

Econsultancy operates a training division used by some of the world's most prominent brands for staff education, both in-house and via public courses. We provide training across all areas of digital marketing and at all levels from one day courses to diplomas to Masters in Digital Marketing.

Information about our training courses and qualifications is available here: <http://econsultancy.com/training>

[training@econsultancy.com](mailto:training@econsultancy.com), +1 212 699 3626



# 3. Market Trends

## 3.1. Overview

- The **popularity of social media** marches on, as social sites like **Twitter** become increasingly ubiquitous. Celebrities such as Britney Spears, Ashton Kutcher, and Oprah Winfrey have made Twitter mainstream.
- As more businesses integrate social networking sites into their digital marketing media mix, companies are increasingly focusing on **measurement techniques** to better understand the return on investment from social media.
  - The ongoing financial crisis is contributing to a focus on greater accountability; **metrics** are needed in order to enable marketers to measure success.
  - **Influence** as a key measurement variable is becoming increasingly significant. It is no longer enough to merely have a Twitter account with a large number of followers; rather **authority** is rapidly becoming a yardstick for success.
  - **Measurement Camp**, set up one year ago, continues to provide a set of open source resources to help organizations measure their social media activities
- The popularity of free and paid-for **buzz monitoring tools** continues to grow. Free tools such as Google Alerts, Twitter Search, and Addictomatic are now an essential part of the digital marketing toolkit.
  - **Enterprise level tools** such as Radian6, Attentio, and Brandwatch are useful for larger brands that need to measure a high volume of conversations about their brand and products.
- As the speed of **news buzz and message distribution** rapidly accelerates, **crisis management** and understanding how to deal effectively with negative news and comments become even more paramount.
  - This was recently highlighted by the Dominos PR disaster after rogue employees posted a video of their rather unsanitary food preparation skills on YouTube.
- **Twitter is becoming an important channel for relationship building between PRs and journalists**
  - Charles Arthur, Editor of Guardian Technology, recently changed his Gorkana media database profile to accept PR pitches by Twitter only.
  - The 140 character public or direct message pitch to journalists is proving an interesting challenge.
  - For every carefully crafted Twitter PR/Journalist relationship and pitch there is a disgruntled journalist tweet, *“PR just sent a press release as a word document attachment– FAIL”* – targeting, relevancy and empathy are important skills for successful Twitter journalist networking.
- There is expected to be huge growth in the use of **mobile social networks**.
  - The iPhone has led to greater distribution of mobile applications and **closer integration** between the **Web and mobile**, so it is no surprise that social networks are increasing their mobile presence.
  - MySpace recently announced plans to increase its presence on **mobile**, with a prediction that half the traffic on MySpace will come from mobile devices within the next two years.
- The **iPhone** has also made it easier to implement **location-based social networks**, and social sites that integrate geo-targeting are expected to continue to proliferate within the next two years.

## 3.2. Social media news and marketplace developments

- Major updates to **Twitter Search** mean that the site will start to crawl links that people tweet and begin to index the content of Twitter pages. This has the potential to transform Twitter into a powerful, real-time search engine.
  - Twitter's **business model** may finally emerge later this year, as there is speculation that the microblogging site may adopt a paid search or an AdSense model similar to Google.
- **CNN** recently became the first high profile company to buy a Twitter account, acquiring the CNNbrk account, with nearly 1 million followers.
- **Digg** recently entered the URL shortening market by releasing the **DiggBar**, allowing users to experience Digg on any web page.
- Rumours persist around a possible **buy-out** for Twitter later in the year, with **Apple** being the latest contender for an acquisition deal.

## 3.3. Social media objectives

- Marketers need to set **clear goals and objectives** for social media and online PR campaigns.
- Obtaining **management buy-in** at a senior level is essential; in the current climate, value for money and the “free” factor is seen as a significant driver of greater experimentation within social media channels.
- Using social media as part of a branding exercise is a valid goal for social media, but this must also be translated into a specific call to action, whether this is transactional or otherwise.
  - Currently, many marketers are adopting a “**trial and see approach**” to social media rather than setting objectives at the start of a campaign.
- Social media has established itself as an essential component of the digital marketing toolkit. As the damaging effects of negative buzz receive high profile news reporting, it is insufficient to engage online without a coherent strategy in place.
- It is important to consider that as with any media or consumer outreach programme, initial objectives may evolve through the lifetime of the campaign and should be continually reassessed and updated.

## 3.4. Social media strategy and best practice

- Although on the surface there is no tangible **cost** associated with social media (in terms of paying for the channel), it may take up significant resource or ‘human capital’ to manage.
  - Many organizations are working with social media as part of their in-house marketing effort, with employees managing the channel in addition to their normal workload and day-to-day routine.
  - Therefore, marketers must demonstrate tangible benefits in order to be able to justify investing resource into social media compared to other elements of the digital marketing mix.
- **American Airlines** is an example of an organization using Twitter particularly effectively as an additional customer service or CRM channel.
  - The airline has linked their Twitter channels to physical customer service representatives who individually respond to disgruntled customers.
  - Identifying the influencers and tapping into the goodwill of key customers has enabled American Airlines to generate positive PR.

- Companies can remedy the impact of **detractors** by resolving their issues and converting them into advocates.
- A successful social media campaign must orientate around **passion points** or conversational themes which an organization can add genuine value to. Organizations should understand where their audiences are and where the conversation happens, rather than being platform-orientated.
  - The platform or combination of platforms used should be the one of the decisions made within a social media strategy.
  - Successful engagement entails understanding what the conversation is about and how to relate to the key influentials within the network.
    - Social media enables marketers to reach customers at all steps of the buying cycle.
  - “**Empower your influencers**” - companies must understand their core issues and who to involve as part of their engagement strategy, in order to transform the influencers into vocal advocates.
  - The specific rules of engagement associated with the relevant platform must be the final consideration for marketers: *“It’s not about understanding ‘how do I use Twitter or Facebook’, but rather how to create conversations with key stakeholders in the first place.”*
  - In some cases it is not about organizations initiating conversations. It is equally important to create relevant information and assets to enable conversations to develop and advocacy and support evolve.
  - As with any channel, organizations who get involved must be open and honest about:
    - Who they are
    - The company that they are representing
- Rapid responses are needed to deal with **PR crises**; companies need to neutralize detractors and resolve their issues, but also consider the consequences of negative PR on the wider community.
  - There can be sustained and long-term reputational damage if negative sentiment appears in search rankings which is one of the contributing factors to Search Marketing specialists creating and providing SEO PR and ‘reputation management’ search led solutions for clients.

## 3.5. Resourcing

- Successful online PR and social media strategies require having the right human and intellectual capital in place and obtaining a “*social media mandate*” from senior/board level managers. Dell is an example of an organization where department heads were challenged by senior management to integrate social media into their planning, people and activity.
- There is ongoing debate about who owns social media and where the responsibility for managing the channels lies within the organization. Currently this is largely driven by the marketing department.
- This debate is mirrored by the lack of ‘ownership’ of the online PR and social media strategy and its implementation by traditional marketing agencies. There are many PR v SEO, who owns the online PR and social media strategy debates, illustrated by a [recent post about Volvo Cars and subsequent comments on the Econsultancy blog](#)
  - This debate comes back to understanding the business objectives of social media and what organizations hope to achieve from the channel.

- Organizations need to find the “**social media champions**” within the company and understand who can drive the long term strategy and short term campaigns.
- Employees responsible for managing social media should not only have a coherent understanding of the channels but also must have significant experience of managing relationships with stakeholders.
- Marketers need to be highly responsive to the needs of their customers and understand how and when to engage appropriately.
- In many organizations, junior level employees take charge of the social media implementation and management, which can result in social media messaging completely at odds with a corporate and brand messaging strategy.
- For some organizations, senior management heading up social media initiatives can be far more effective. Engaging with senior level executives allows organizations to establish credibility and build trust and relationships with their customers.
- The lack of **social media succession planning** is a major stumbling block for many organizations.
- As a specific employee may be the ‘*face of the company*’ and customers may build up relationships with the individual rather than the brand.
  - This creates a potential weakness in company strategy if employees choose to leave the organization.
  - An effective way to mitigate risk is to use both branded and personal social media tools.
    - For example, Econsultancy use both a branded company Twitter account, as well as personal accounts of individuals within the company.
    - Branded accounts allow companies to send out marketing messages, which may be less effective for personal Twitter accounts. Personal accounts are useful for providing a “*human face*” for the company.
- Providing sufficient resource for crisis management is also an ongoing issue for many companies, as in-house PR teams may be managing this in addition to their normal workload.
- A coordinated, multi-faceted approach is needed, as social media increasingly sits across many disciplines and departments of the company including customer service, research and development, corporate communications, public and investor relations, ecommerce, marketing and IT.
  - It is insufficient for social media strategies to be merely the responsibility of the IT, online marketing or PR function, as input is needed from all divisions and levels within the company.

## 3.6. Metrics and Measurement

- There is an understanding that social media can be measured using many of the metrics applied to **traditional channels** such as television and radio.
  - Brand metrics can be used to measure social media investment.
- Many senior executives have greater expectations of social media metrics, given that other digital marketing disciplines are inherently measurable.
- It is important not to merely measure the impact of social media in terms of traffic to the site, as reputation, authority and engagement may be more effective benchmarks.
- **Clickthrough rate** is limited as a metric, since it cannot always link clicks to sales.

- **Platform-specific metrics** (such as the number of Twitter followers or Facebook friends) should be used in combination with other digital marketing benchmarks, such as SEO rankings, conversation sentiment and behavioural outcomes
- Metrics should then be compared to assess the cost of **acquisition** or cost savings made versus other channels in the marketing mix.
- There is an ongoing debate about the benefits of **free** versus **paid-for** reputation monitoring tools.
- There are very few buzz monitoring tools that effectively measure **sentiment**, so additional resource and human interpretation is needed to analyze the data and gain actionable insights.
  - This means effective reputation monitoring can be expensive since companies need to invest in technology and pay additional costs for analysis and reporting.
  - Different tools use different measures of influence, and it can be difficult to benchmark success as many companies and agencies use more than one monitoring tool.
- There are **currently no industry standards for validating the outcomes from monitoring tools and reporting**
  - More research is needed to establish a tangible link between how many people are talking positively about brands versus the expected uplift in sales.
- Measurement parameters must be set out as the start of the social media campaign, though these metrics should be continually reassessed and re-evaluated.
- Links should be assigned values in terms of how much **influence** they carry and their **SEO benefit**.

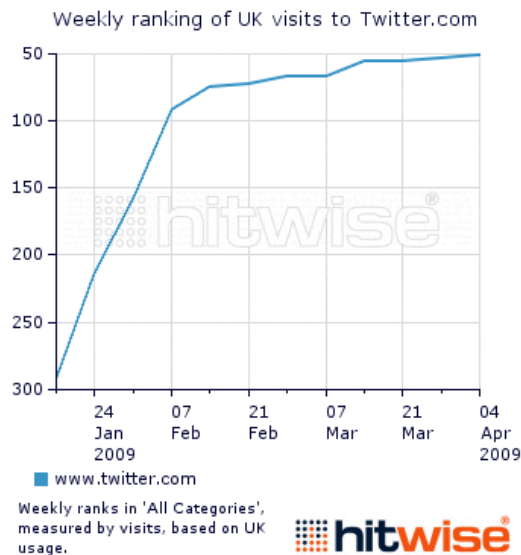
## 3.7. Essential PR tools and technologies

There are a vast number of tools available for online PR; although there are far too many to list them all, some of the most important are highlighted below.

- **Twitter and Google Alerts** are essential tools for monitoring conversations and building networks and outreach targets.
- **Social bookmarking** tools such as **delicious** are also deemed to be indispensable for building and sharing links through a trusted network: “*delicious is my memory.*”
- **Google Keyword Search** is highly useful for optimising copy in paid search campaigns, but is also effective from a PR perspective for understanding the most relevant and popular search terms.
- **Silobreaker** is an online search service with contextual and graphical search results that includes:
  - Trend analyses
  - Trend maps
  - Geo-mapping of news events
  - Quotations from key PR people
- **Addictomatic** and **Yahoo! Pipes** are one of a number of tools useful for providing snapshots of trends for organizations, brands and keywords across multiple online channels.
- **Google Webmaster Tools** allows site owners to see how their site is performing in search results and rectify potential problems.

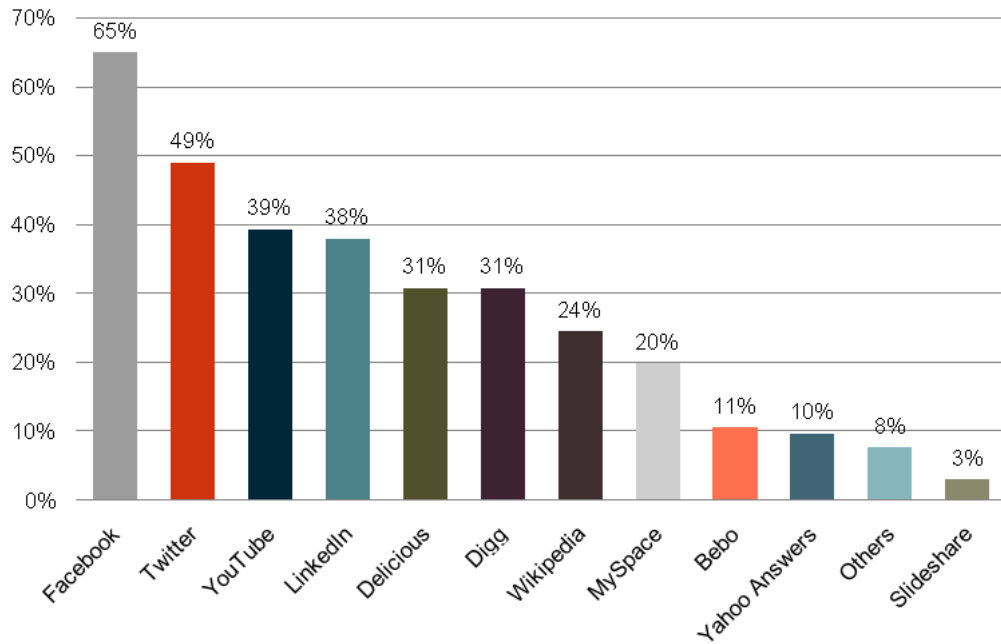
## 4. Statistics

- Econsultancy's Online Measurement and Strategy Report 2009 (with Lynchpin) found that the proportion of companies looking at reputation monitoring or social media metrics has doubled from 21% to 40%, highlighting the exponential growth of both social media and the reputation monitoring technology industry.
- **Hitwise** data shows that internet visits to Twitter have increased 6-fold since the start of the year and 32-fold over the last 12 months between March 2008 and March 2009.
- Twitter is now the fifth most popular social networking site in the UK.



- A new study by the Association of National Advertisers reports that 26% of marketers say that social media and word-of-mouth are the activities most likely to be increased in the current economic climate.
  - 23% say public relations are most important.
  - In addition, when the recession ends and recovery begins, 41% of markets report that they will increase social networking and word-of-mouth activities.
  - 42% of companies say PR is the activity most likely to be maintained through the recession.
- There has been a remarkable shift in the importance of different media channels for building brand equity.
  - Online is ranked as the most important channel by 61% of marketers surveyed, whilst guerrilla or word-of-mouth marketing is mentioned by 57%.
  - Social media is ranked as the next highest effective media channel at 40%.
  - Social media, however, ranks highest as the media channel that marketers would like to use but have not yet been able to implement.
- Research from Econsultancy's **UK Search Engine marketing Benchmark Report** in association with Guava indicates that 29% of company marketers see branding as the main objective of social media marketing compared to 26% who say that driving traffic is the primary objective.
  - A fifth of companies are not tracking ROI from social media marketing at all, whilst a further 49% do not know how successful their social media campaigns have been.
  - The research shows that Facebook continues to dominate the social media sector, with 65% of companies incorporating the social networking site into their marketing strategy.

- Twitter has shown phenomenal growth in the past year; 49% say they use Twitter as part of their marketing strategy, compared to only 3% responding similarly in last year’s survey.



Respondents: 237

- According to Econsultancy’s **2009 Customer Engagement Report** with cScape, 23% of company respondents report tangible improvement in engagement through brand presence on social networks.
- Of 500 SMEs surveyed, 17% are actively using Twitter, with over a quarter of these respondents joining within the last week or two. [Source: O2 via Econsultancy Blog, March 2009]
  - 40% of SME respondents say that they are using Twitter more than LinkedIn or Facebook.
  - 42% of SMEs surveyed consider Twitter useful as a means of staying in contact with customers and suppliers.
- When it comes to social media, 51% find advertising “annoying and irrelevant” [Source: IDC via Econsultancy Blog, March 2009]
- In February the largest age group on Twitter was 35-49, with nearly 3 million unique visitors, comprising almost 42% of the site’s audience. [Source: Nielsen via Econsultancy Blog, March 2009]
- Facebook logged 275 million global visitors in February 2009 and has catapulted to the #6-ranked online property worldwide, a 75% increase over the same period last year. [Source: comScore World Metrix via Marketing Charts, April 2009]
- In January, 735,000 unique visitors accessed the Twitter website through their mobile devices. [Source: Nielsen via Econsultancy Blog, March 2009]

**For more statistics, charts, facts and figure, see our Internet Statistics Compendium:** <http://econsultancy.com/reports/internet-statistics-compendium>

## 5. Resources and blog posts

**Econsultancy / Guava UK Search Engine Benchmark Report**

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/uk-search-engine-marketing-benchmark-report>

**Online PR Industry Benchmark Report**

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/online-pr-industry-benchmarking-report>

**Online Reputation and Buzz Monitoring Buyer's Guide**

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/online-reputation-and-buzz-monitoring-buyer-s-guide-2008>

**Online Customer Engagement Report 2009**

<http://econsultancy.com/reports/online-customer-engagement-report-2009>

**Does Social Media activity really help SEO?**

<http://econsultancy.com/blog/3832-does-social-media-activity-really-help-seo>

**10 superb social media presentations**

<http://econsultancy.com/blog/3982-10-superb-social-media-presentations>

**The A-Z of social media for brands**

<http://econsultancy.com/blog/3965-the-a-z-of-social-media-for-brands>

**Social media and risk management**

<http://econsultancy.com/blog/3987-social-media-and-risk-management>

**Will media agencies sound the death knoll for pure play PRs?**

<http://econsultancy.com/blog/3795-how-can-a-pr-campaign-not-include-seo>

**Social media is about the steak, not the sizzle**

<http://econsultancy.com/blog/3797-social-media-is-about-the-steak-not-the-sizzle>

**A Social Media Smorgasbord: 40 common elements for community focused websites**

<http://econsultancy.com/blog/3747-a-social-media-smorgasbord-40-common-elements-for-community-focused-websites>

**Social Media Engagement: Are we making it up as we go along?**

<http://econsultancy.com/blog/3785-social-media-engagement-are-we-making-it-up-as-we-go-along-4>

**Experts demystify Twitter**

<http://econsultancy.com/blog/3753-twitter-demystified-panel-what-the-experts-said>

**Universal McCann Social Media Tracker 2008**

[http://www.universalmccann.com/Assets/wave\\_3\\_20080403093750.pdf](http://www.universalmccann.com/Assets/wave_3_20080403093750.pdf)

**The Guardian – Social Networking**

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/socialnetworking>

**Will McInnes' Blog**

<http://blog.willmcinnes.co.uk/>



**Ian Jindal's PPT at Econsultancy 2008 Future of Digital Marketing event.**

<http://www.ianjindal.com/speaking-at-the-future-of-digital-marketing-e-consultancy-june-2008-london/>

**Nixon McInnes Free E-Book: Essential Business Blogging**

<http://tinyurl.com/67l2s8>

**Nixon McInnes Free E-Book: Essential Buzz Monitoring**

<http://tinyurl.com/5e5zl9>

**Online Reputation Monitoring and Management Beginners Guide – Marketing Pilgrim**

<http://www.marketingpilgrim.com/2006/03/online-reputation-monitoring-beginners.html>

**Jakob Nielsen report: 'Designing websites to maximize press relations' (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)**

<http://www.nngroup.com/reports/pr/index.html>

### **Free reputation monitoring tools:**

**Twitalyzer – Find trends in Twitter**

<http://www.twitalyzer.com/twitalyzer/index.asp>

**Technorati – “What are people talking about right now?”**

<http://www.technorati.com/>

**Trendpedia – Compare Trends in Blogs**

<http://www.trendpedia.com/>

**Twitter Search**

<http://search.twitter.com/>

**Blogpulse – “Search the Blogosphere”**

<http://www.blogpulse.com/>

**Google Blog Search**

<http://www.search.blogger.com/>

**Google Alerts – “Email updates of the latest relevant Google results.”**

<http://www.google.com/alerts>

**Yahoo! Alerts – “Real-time updates”**

<http://www.alerts.yahoo.com>

