

[A Life Dedicated to Nurturing](#)

This is Jim Cecil's Blog

[September 13, 2011](#)

[Infographic: 7 Ways Social Media Is Changing the Nature of Nurture Marketing](#)

It is a rare event in my life to meet, much less collaborate on the major shifts that are occurring in our lives and businesses with someone who not only *'gets'* Nurturing Customer Relationships but has shared a vision of ways of truly integrating and leveraging your nurture marketing efforts with the emerging influence of business social media. As you will read, Doug Tangwall has created a new manifesto and a clear explanation of his vision in the attached article. Thank you Doug for sharing and *nurturing* so well.

Good Nurturing,

Jim

Infographic: 7 Ways Social Media Is Changing the Nature of Nurture Marketing

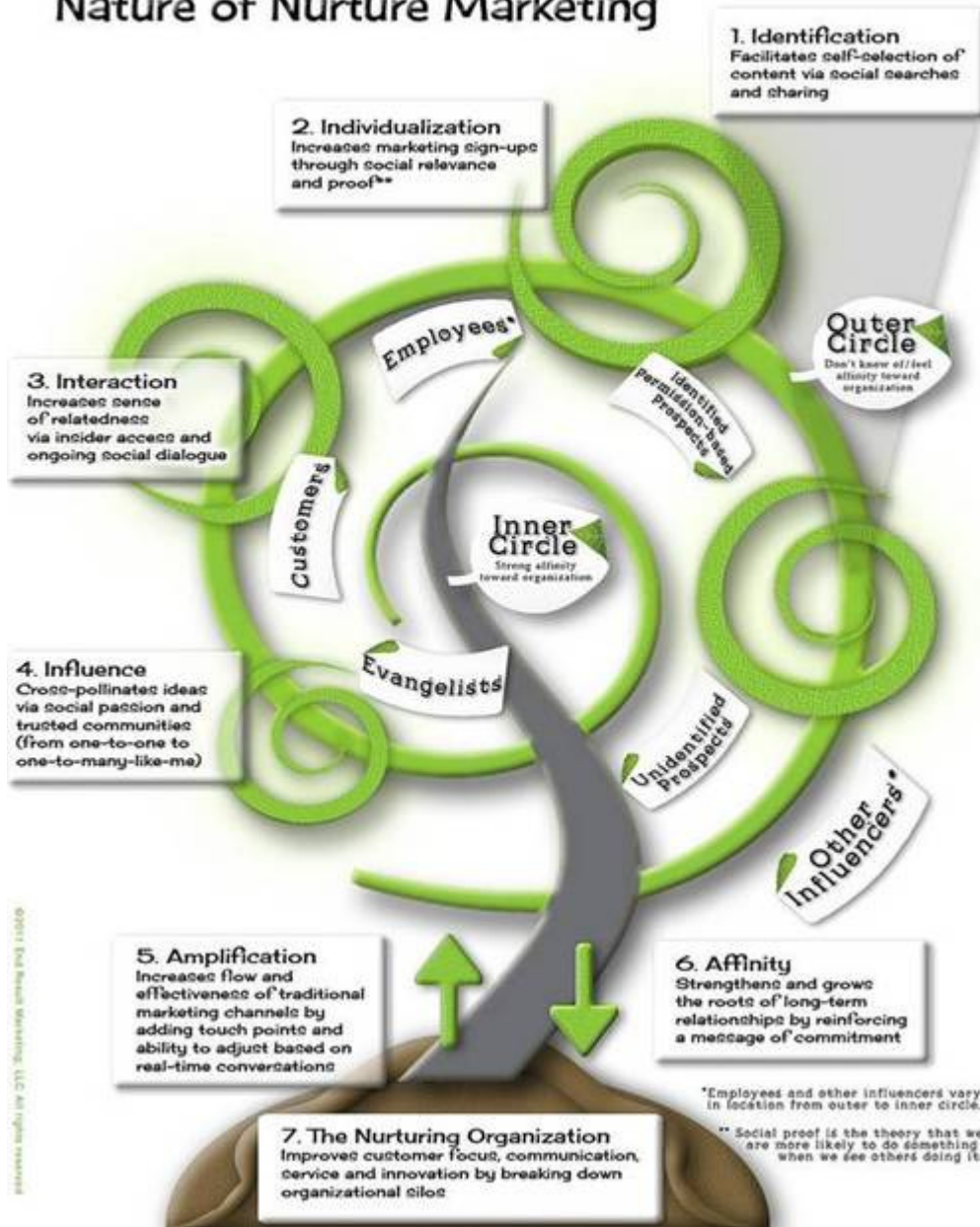
by Doug Tangwall



It's been an honor to collaborate on this piece with marketing great [Jim Cecil](#) and social media strategist [Wendy Soucie](#). Soucie is a certified social media strategist and dean of the [Social Media Academy](#). She runs a consulting practice where she helps businesses to gain a competitive advantage by using social media throughout the organization. Cecil is considered the father of [nurture marketing](#), and his numerous accomplishments include groundbreaking research, in conjunction with Microsoft and the University of Washington, co-founding a successful marketing business, [Nurture Marketing, LLC](#), and co-authoring the books, [Nurturing Customer Relationships](#) and [101 Business Love Letters](#).

The following infographic, analysis and advice integrates the viewpoints expressed in our discussions.

How Social Media Is Changing the Nature of Nurture Marketing



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Nature Versus Nurture Marketing: The Effects of Social Media on Cecil's Four "I's"

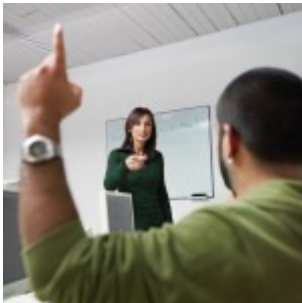
Cecil is a delightful individual who communicates through alliteration, farming metaphors and a vast personal library of case studies and success stories. In keeping with his farming metaphors, I built the infographic around the End Result Marketing logo, which is symbolic of a fruit tree.

Cecil uses four "I's" to describe his philosophy for engaging prospects, drawing them into the sales funnel and converting them into customers:

1. *Identify*—Select prospects for your product or service.
2. *Individualize*—Prepare relevant content targeted to your prospect's needs.
3. *Interact*—Stay in communication with prospects and customers.
4. *Influence*—Alter attitudes and behaviors.

In each of these areas, social media is changing the nature of nurture marketing initiatives:

Identification



Change #1

Social media enables self-identification of prospects as they discover and interact with your nurture marketing content.

Most of us educate ourselves about products now. And because nurture marketing content focuses on the needs of customers, it is inherently shareable. By enabling new prospects to find and self-select content, social media enables the start of a business relationship without ever having known, or even targeted, your prospect.

Cecil, who has spent much of his life marketing to C-level executives in the B2B space, says, “Your ‘A’ prospects are not likely to give your proposals serious attention until they have business needs.” Social searches and sharing often come into play at the exact moment when there is a need for information. And, in the process of discovering valuable content, the individual identifies himself as a new prospect for your product or service.

Nature vs. nurture tip: In social spaces, self-selection involves super-fast decisions. Titles, tags and keywords are crucial to the success of your search engine results—and, by extension, to your nurture marketing success.

Inside out: Looking at social media’s impact from within your business, marketing and sales leaders seeking to identify new prospects can employ social introductions to improve targeting and social monitoring to gain insights into desired nurture marketing content.

Individualization



Change #2

Social media increases marketing sign-ups by providing a relevant context and a forum to follow the examples set by others.

The closer nurture marketing content matches the needs of an individual, the more likely she will be to sign up for future communications. Cecil advises, “These touches should be deposits, not withdrawals.”

The structure of social media groups, circles and filtering places your nurture marketing content within a specific context; when executed properly, this relevance increases permission-based marketing opportunities. The impact of social media can also be felt through *social proof*, the theory that we are more likely to do something when we see others doing it.

Nature vs. nurture tip: Permission can be gained more readily when social media is used to build a sense of increased status, such as exclusive access or membership.

Inside out: For business leaders wishing to connect one on one, Cecil comments, “Technology has given marketing great power.” He recommends paying close attention to preferences for frequency of contact and using social CRM systems to enable what he terms “ultra-hyper-segmentation.” For example, if your prospect’s hobby is golf, even if your business has nothing to do with golf, you can automate social alerts and share an article about the most difficult golf holes to gain a quick and less-intrusive touch.

Interaction



Change #3

Social media increases a sense of [relatedness](#) by providing insider access and nurturing an ongoing dialogue between customer and business.

Cecil’s third “I,” *interaction*, is a natural strength of social media. The immediacy that social media delivers coupled with a sense of insider access pulls customers deeper into the inner circle of your business. What better way to strengthen relationships than to keep customers aware of what you’re doing and encourage feedback on how to better meet their needs? Social media provides a timely and interactive format to accomplish this.

Nature vs. nurture tip: Feature employees and customers in your efforts to nurture customer relationships, and take advantage of multimedia to give a “human face” to your organization.

Inside out: Cecil is fond of a quote by the late advertising executive David Ogilvy, “The only antidote for defection is affection.” Customers who feel ignored are more likely to go elsewhere. Social media messages from top executives and other employees within your organization give a sense of insider access that deepens relationships and reminds customers that you care about them.

Influence



Change #4

Social media cross-pollinates the ideas contained in nurture marketing content via the passion of individuals and the trust inherent within homogeneous communities.

Just as bees cross-pollinating flowers can increase the quality and quantity of a harvest, influencers share nurture marketing content across their social ecosystems. Perhaps the greatest change social media is delivering is in the role of *influence*; however, its effects are more varied and complex.

The reasons why evangelists have an affinity for your business vary. And Soucie points out that, “Motivations to share nurture marketing content in social spaces arise from numerous perspectives, including passion for the products, service or values of a business; mutual interest; personal relevance; a desire to increase social status, participate in conversations, build relationships or connect with others; generosity; altruism; reciprocity; entertainment and humor.”

Whatever their motivations, the passion and trust evangelists bring within their related communities means people pay more attention to your nurture marketing content and find it more believable. Soucie adds, “Within their circles of closely related connections, a powerful exponential transfer of nurturing content can take place: I call this a shift from one-to-one to one-to-many-like-me.”

Nature vs. nurture tip: Although this post doesn’t directly address social negativism, by nurturing evangelists, your business has a source of built-in, believable, counter-arguments to negative comments that may appear on social platforms.

Inside out: Be conscious of your motives: “Nurture marketing is not about changing people,” Cecil says. “It is about influence and how you gain it by touching hearts and minds.”

A few words about influence : At this stage, I'll introduce two additional groups of influencers: *Employees* and *Other Influencers*. Employees have access to content and are often in a position to nurture prospects. Other influencers may never purchase from your business but interact with and share your nurture marketing content. Like evangelists, other influencers have different motivations for sharing; but in the age of social media, they play a larger role in the success of your nurture marketing efforts.

“Employees and other influencers vary in their evangelism for your organization, and this affects both their message and its tone,” says Soucie. “Social media enables us to help others by investing just a few seconds of our time. Business and marketing leaders need to recognize this significant shift in mindset and think differently about how they educate, engage and participate in shared experiences.”

How Social Media Is Changing the Two “A’s” of Nurture Marketing

Clearly, social media is bringing significant changes to the nature of nurture marketing in the context of Cecil’s four “I’s.” Next, I’ll explore two more areas of change. I label these with the letter “A”: *Amplification* and *Affinity*.

Amplification



Change #5

Social media increases the flow and effectiveness of traditional marketing channels by adding touch points and enabling adjustment based on real-time feedback.

Just as a tree with plenty of water and soil rich in nutrients grows faster and stronger, social media increases the flow rate and provides a better growing environment for your nurture marketing efforts. Cecil says, “The nurturing seed produces the abundant harvest.”

I speak with many marketers, and a fair number of them have not heard of [nurture marketing](#). But Cecil coined another term which may sound more familiar in the lexicon of today’s marketing: *drip irrigation marketing*. He also refers to drip marketing as *touch campaigns*. Social media provides additional pathways to discover content and real-time insights into elements that will resonate in traditional marketing efforts.

Nature vs. nurture tip: Some companies, like [Ford](#) begin with loosely structured ideas and use communities of socially vibrant individuals to generate and fine-tune content, develop more formal campaigns, and leverage social media marketing integration so various communication channels can “play off of each other.”

Inside out: Tracking social input aids sales. In [Understanding the Difference Between Drip Irrigation and Drip Irritation](#), Cecil says “[Many marketers] don’t understand the customer very well. The difference...is the sensitivity factor. Since most leads are slow adopters, marketing now makes it possible for sales to have critical information at their fingertips at exactly the right time.”

Affinity



Change #6

Social media strengthens and grows the roots of long-term relationships by reinforcing a message of commitment in your nurture marketing efforts.

A tree draws water and nutrients upward, but it also produces sugars that sustain its roots underground. With an expanded root system, the tree is firmly positioned, receives more nourishment and grows rapidly. Likewise, nurture marketing is a virtuous circle where, over time, an investment in the success of your customers is rewarded with top-of-mind presence and loyalty. Social media reinforces this cycle.

Nature vs. nurture tip: Think of ways to combine social media and nurture marketing to show thought leadership, while focusing on the top questions and concerns of your prospects. *Hint:* It doesn’t always have to be about your business.

Inside out: Have patience with your investments in social nurturing: Cecil says, “All living things respond to nurturing. Clients, like crops, must be fed, nourished, protected, cultivated, pruned and pampered to ensure maximum results.”

The Nurturing Organization



Social media changes the nature of nurture marketing, but its impact may extend further to effect change within an organization.

Change #7:

The combination of social media and nurture marketing improves customer focus, communication, service and innovation by breaking down organizational silos.

Last year in his [Nurture Marketing Blog](#), Cecil described a question he received while speaking to an audience of CEOs, “How *does* one go about becoming a nurturing company?”

Cecil challenged his readers to come up with a list of ten or more steps one must take to realize this goal. This question is an important one and has stayed with me. The answer to the question is certainly multifaceted, and I don’t have the complete answer—(yet!), but I believe the combination of nurture marketing and social media provides fertile soil for a business to develop into a more integrated, customer-focused, and purposeful organization.

Nature vs. nurture tip: Focus on the success of your customers. Work across functional areas by sharing social feedback, forming strategies and developing nurture marketing content together.

Inside out: Find a higher purpose. Cecil says, “Nurture marketing has as much to do with caring for our internal staff as it does with caring for our clients. It is about motivating every person in the organization so that they, in turn, will nurture customers and show them that your company is one that will be there for them.”

Make Marketing Meaningful

The landscape of marketing has been reshaped by many factors—splintered channels, scattered attention and increased transparency to name just a few. Yet Cecil's theories remain as relevant today, perhaps even more relevant, as when he began to conceive of them nearly 20 years ago.

While nurture may be timeless, another of human nature's most basic elements—social conversation—is adding a few twists to the efforts of marketers seeking to educate and engage prospects. *The result:* the balance of power has shifted from push to pull and from marketers to consumers.

For many companies, nurture marketing represents a substantial opportunity to gain attention, change attitudes, and increase sales and loyalty. And the impact of social media on nurture marketing initiatives is significant. Externally, it can be used to improve reach and effectiveness, and internally—within a business—it holds potential to improve the overall quality of a company.

Bottom line: This transformation is about more than marketing; it's a shift in worldview that will redefine the future of business. Successful organizations will work in concert with customers, prospects, employees and other influencers—amplifying interaction and sharing to better understand and meet their needs. Social context will become increasingly important. And smart marketers will employ nurture strategically...by considering the seven ways that social media is changing its nature.

So, what impact is social media having on your nurture marketing efforts?

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