rtcrm

Perspectives

A monthly look at what's happening in
the ever-changing digital world.

Interactive Strategy Group
RTC Relationship Marketing

From the Editor

First of all, thank you to those who have read, distributed and commented on the first two issues of *Perspectives*. We are thrilled by your response and proudly bring you our third installment. If this is your first time, welcome!

In this issue, our Interactive Strategy team again brings you relevant insights and recommendations on some fascinating and controversial digital trends. *Is MTV's GYT Campaign TMI?* offers a cautionary tale about making your STD test public knowledge via social media. Paper advertising meets enhanced digital experience in *Dipping Your Toes into QR Code Waters*. Read an analysis of Twitter's recent facelift in *Implications of New Twitter Design Are More Than Cosmetic*. Is there a new hope for independent music distribution from Ping? Peruse some great analysis in *Ping: Great Potential, Great Hurdles*. Finally, two of this month's entries are introductions to larger works. Michelle Fares kicks off her study of Microsoft's Bing Rewards Program and Sara Weiner summarizes some hind-quarter-kicking social media practices from the ASPCA in *Getting It Right: ASPCA's Approach to Digital*. To follow these developing articles visit the Interactive Strategy team's renegade blog *Treffpunkt* at http://rtctreffpunkt.blogspot.com.

We encourage you to continue giving us your feedback. Either drop me a line at the email address listed below or join the online conversation, where versions of *Perspectives* are available for comment on our website's Sparkblog, SlideShare profile and of course the *Treffpunkt* blog. If you are interested in a custom briefing on any topic in this edition, the Interactive Strategy team is here for you—just contact your Project Manager or Account Manager. If you aren't a current RTCRM client and would like a custom briefing, contact me and we'll work something out.

Thanks and enjoy!

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The RTCRM Interactive Strategy Team members introduce themselves in 140 characters or fewer…

Carlen Lea Lesser: *VP/Director.* Connector of people, ideas and info. Marketer, geek, blogger, baker, tea drinker and artist. Go Canes!

Sara Weiner: *Associate Director.* Yrs of planning, prodding & implementing digital stuff. Philadelphia born 'n' raised. Geeky, athletic and green. Go Big Red!

Kara Reinsel: *Senior Strategist.* Digital marketer and online business strategist. DMV local. Art, food and fashion enthusiast.

Rebecca Johnson: *Interactive Strategist.* Tradigital marketer. Social media junkie. DC Localvore with the heart of a New Yorker. Soccer enthusiast. Pop culture expert.

Michelle Fares: *Associate Interactive Strategist.* Floridian Hoya. Enhancing communication between companies and people; social media, online communities and cupcakes. Lots of cupcakes.

Greg Bulmash: *Coordinator/Interactive Strategist.* Learning the digital ropes, taking names along the way. Marketing implications, I'll find them. Maryland Terp, Montgomery County native. Hail to the 'Skins.

Is MTV's GYT Campaign TMI?
Kara Reinsel, Sr. Interactive Strategist

Summary: MTV, in partnership with the Kaiser Family Foundation, recently launched Get Yourself Tested (GYT), a campaign designed to encourage young adults to get tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The campaign leverages Foursquare, a location-based service (LBS), to offer virtual badges to people who check in to the service at a health clinic and get tested for STDs. MTV's intention to help destigmatize STD testing by encouraging young people to take control of their sexual health is commendable; however, the ramifications of publically broadcasting personal information via Foursquare must be considered. In addition, any company considering the use of Foursquare or another LBS should evaluate their target audience's attitude about privacy.

Key Information

At first glance, using Foursquare for the GYT campaign makes sense because their core audiences overlap significantly. Approximately 70% of Foursquare users are between the ages of 18 and 35.[1] More than 66% of all new STDs occur in people 25 years old and younger.[2]

It's often assumed that young adults will share everything and anything online. Yet, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 71% of social networking users age 18-29 have changed their privacy settings to limit what they share online—more than any other age group.[3] Furthermore, young people are more likely to later regret information they posted to a social networking site than all other age groups.[4] It's important to keep in mind that people's attitudes about privacy and what they're willing to share varies by age and should be taken into account.

Although young people may be more actively controlling their privacy settings, they often lack the maturity to decide what is and isn't appropriate to share online. In addition, MTV offered a free trip to New York City and backstage passes to an MTV show to further entice Foursquare users to display the GYT badge. Should a public health campaign encourage young people to publically share that they're being tested for any medical condition when they may not be able to think through the long-term consequences of posting private information?

In comparison, older adults (ages 50+) were less likely to change their privacy settings (52%) but they were far less likely to later regret sharing information on a social networking site (4%).[5] Despite their lower use of privacy controls, older adults typically have more conservative beliefs about privacy, and these were more effective at mitigating the risk of publically sharing overly personal information.

Implications

Any organization or company that is considering using Foursquare or any other LBS that broadcasts a user's location should consider not only whether the target audience is made up of active users of that technology but also think about their attitudes toward privacy. Furthermore, just because an audience may be more inclined to use an LBS doesn't mean they always will or should.

In addition, the long-term consequences of sharing private information in a public setting must be evaluated. While these examples are extreme, they raise important questions about the impact of broadcasting personal data such as STD testing.

- Many Foursquare updates are posted to a user's Facebook page and/or Twitter feed. Anyone who is friends with or follows that person—friends, family, coworkers—will be able to see that the user is getting an STD test. While this creates an awkward situation at best, it could potentially jeopardize a person's employment, or even their relationships in a worst-case scenario.
- Background checks could uncover Foursquare-related posts, which could negatively impact job searches, insurance applications, etc.

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[1] "Forrester: Why Most Marketers Should Forgo Foursquare." Advertising Age. July 26, 2010
[2] STD Statistics, http://tiny.cc/STDS
[3] "Reputation Management and Social Media – Part 2." Pew Internet & American Life Project. May 26, 2010
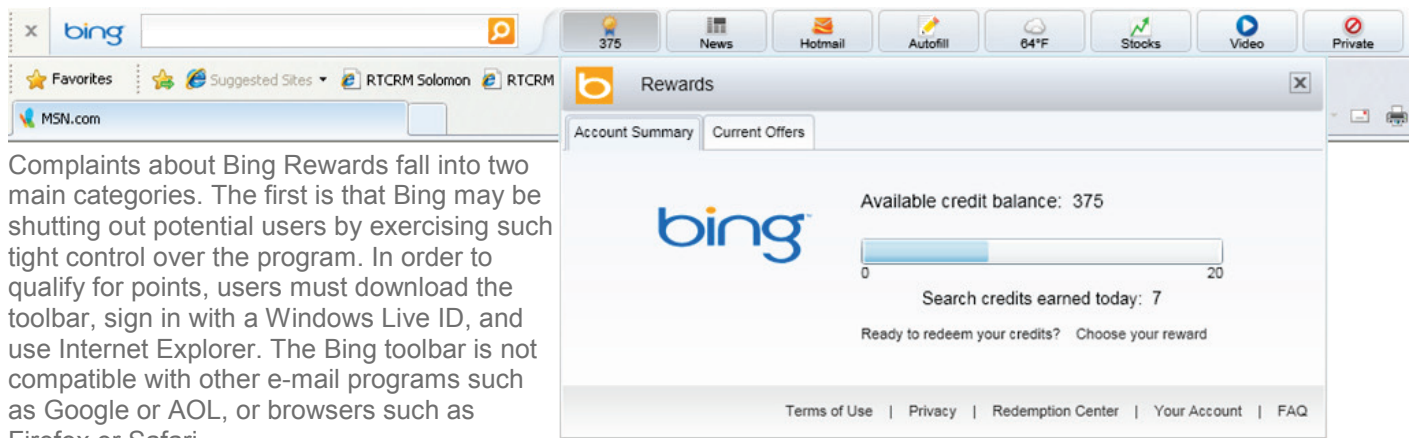[4] Ibid
[5] Ibid

Bing Rewards Program

Michelle Fares, Associate

Summary: Microsoft's new Bing Rewards loyalty program is designed to encourage users to engage with Bing and eventually make it their preferred search engine. However, critics claim that the program actually discourages users by enforcing unnecessary restrictions, and the program offers mediocre prizes that are overly difficult to earn. The Bing Rewards Program illustrates the fact that companies must consider customer value and motivations when creating a loyalty program that requires a significant behavior change.

Key Information

In September 2010, Microsoft launched a loyalty rewards program for its Bing search engine. With Bing Rewards, users can earn points for using the Bing search engine, testing new products, and performing actions such as setting their homepage to Bing. To participate, users must download the toolbar for Internet Explorer and log in with a Windows Live account. Users can then exchange points for prizes such as gift cards, technology items or charitable donations. Microsoft has stated several goals for the program: to encourage casual users to engage more with Bing, and also to keep track of what its most loyal users search for in order to refine the search engine. [6]

Complaints about Bing Rewards fall into two main categories. The first is that Bing may be shutting out potential users by exercising such tight control over the program. In order to qualify for points, users must download the toolbar, sign in with a Windows Live ID, and use Internet Explorer. The Bing toolbar is not compatible with other e-mail programs such as Google or AOL, or browsers such as Firefox or Safari.

Another issue with Bing is the difficulty of earning a valuable reward—at the time of this writing, two searches equal 1 point, and users are limited to earning 20 points a day for searches and around 30 points for completing special offers. A standard DVD on Bing Rewards costs 3,197 points to purchase. At this rate, it takes 58.94 days, or approximately 2 months, of making 40 searches a day to win a DVD on Bing Rewards.

Bing Rewards comes as the successor to Bing Cashback, which ran for two years and offered users special deals for searching for and purchasing items on Bing. The product never gained traction, partially because users complained that it offered a crowded toolbar and unnecessary services. Bing Cashback was discontinued in July 2010.

Implications and Action Items

Although loyalty programs such as Bing Rewards can initially motivate users to sign up for a service, customers will only return if the product or service can add value to their lives without requiring a huge change in behavior. Companies considering loyalty programs can take the following lessons from the Bing Rewards program:

- **Don't** make users jump through too many hoops to participate in your loyalty program.
- **Overcome** users' reluctance to participate by offering prizes that are valuable or compelling.
- **Encourage** users to stay loyal to your program by making it relatively easy to win prizes; "surprise and delight" them with big-ticket prizes and sweepstakes.

As a follow-up to this article, I plan to use the Bing Rewards program for one month. At the end of that time, I will evaluate the program, the prizes I have earned, and the overall effect on my opinion of Bing. Check out my kick-off blog post here: http://tiny.cc/mhnn1 and stay tuned to for more updates.

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[6] http://tiny.cc/1c33h

Dipping Your Toes into QR Code Waters
Rebecca Johnson, Interactive Strategist

Summary: QR codes are a quick and easy method for mobile- and technology-savvy users to access additional relevant and meaningful information. The technology also offers marketers the opportunity to have a truly cross-medium platform in which they can continue the dialogue with their customers. However, brands and marketers must be strategic in their implementation and usage of this emerging technology, because if QR codes are misused in infancy they are at risk for becoming irrelevant.

Key Information

A Quick Response or QR code is a two-dimensional barcode that allows for quick and easy access of data, a URL, video content, coupons, text messages, etc. Smart phones and cell phones equipped with cameras and a QR code reader can either scan or take a picture of the code and then quickly connect the user to additional information and actions on their mobile device.

Originally developed by Denso Wave,[7] the technology was intended to help keep track of the thousands of parts used to manufacture automobiles. However, QR codes' potential applications within the marketing world were immediately obvious: They're compatible with mobile phones, require small amounts of print real estate and provide an immediate response engagement. So, the codes have evolved into an innovative marketing tactic that allows brands to move consumer dialogues from the offline to the online world.

While extremely popular in Asia, particularly Japan, QR codes have only just begun surfacing within the U.S. marketplace. Paper-based media have been early adopters of this technology, as the codes allow editors and advertisers alike to continue engaging with readers through QR code–accessed webpages, microsites and additional content even after they have put the magazine down. Shops and restaurants are also using QR codes to provide users with location-based information. A good example of this is Google's Favorite Places[8] window decal, which utilizes the barcode to connect users to reviews, menus, coupons and further information about the restaurant, shop or site.

With smart phones set to become the predominant type of mobile device in the U.S. by the end of 2011,[9] QR codes will likely become a common method for companies to communicate and share additional information with their customers. In the near future, look for QR codes to expand beyond magazines and newspapers into the consumer packaged goods market, public transportation, doctors' offices, museums and the apparel industry.

Implications and Action Items

- **Understand Your Audience's Mobile Profile:** While your targets, or segments of your target, may have the technology capable of reading QR codes, the greater question is, Will/can they actually use it to scan QR codes?
- **Create a Valuable and Relevant Interaction:** If a consumer's actions aren't rewarded, either monetarily or experientially, the user may begin to view QR codes as a waste of time.
- **Surprise and Delight:** Because the response is hidden within the pixels and data, users are intrigued and curious about what their actions will reveal, and as they scan the code and wait, the anticipation of the response builds and builds.
- **Test and Track:** Tracking should go beyond response rates and report on the other elements of engagement and interaction that QR codes can elicit.

For some interesting and creative examples of QR codes in action, visit RTCRM's Interactive Strategy blog at http://tiny.cc/x5a75

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[7] http://tiny.cc/dwqr
[8] http://tiny.cc/idmf8
[9] http://tiny.cc/y1z6w

Ping: Great Potential, Great Hurdles
Greg Bulmash, Coordinator

Summary: Ping, a new social network devoted to music, was launched in September by Apple and integrated into iTunes 10. Ping allows friends to share music with one another and artists to interact with consumers at the point of sale. Although good in theory, Ping hasn't properly laid the foundation for effective social networking—limited functionality currently leaves Ping's future questionable, but opportunity for the entertainment industry is obvious.

Good in Theory, Bad in Practice

When it comes to music distribution, Apple is an obvious leader. With its record label partnerships and a network of 160 million registered customers, Apple has access to all the pieces needed to combine production with consumers.[1] What better way is there to do this than to create a place for consumers to share songs and interact with other music enthusiasts? What better place is there for popular and emerging artists to interact with their fans? Enter Ping…

Ping was designed to capitalize on two fundamental means of music distribution: artist production and consumer word of mouth. It combines user profiles with artist profiles, and song sharing with ticket sales. It is a one-stop shop, combining elements that are found on other social networks, but not all in the same place. While the idea is sound, the road to Apple's first successful social network is by no means smooth. A few problems are apparent:

> **What is Ping?**
> *Ping allows members of iTunes to create a profile. Members can become followers of other users and artists; artists can release new songs and members can purchase them. Purchases get broadcasted to the network, similar to news feeds on Facebook. Artists can also post concert listings and offer tickets on Ping through Ticketmaster.*
>
> Learn more about Ping at http://tiny.cc/b994y

1. Artist interaction is questionable: For Ping to become the go-to place for artists and consumers, it must offer features that no other music social network can boast. If you want to follow Lady Gaga on Ping, you can, but only alongside 1,000 other fans every 12 minutes.[2] While it is fun to "follow" superstar musicians, this seems no different than Twitter. How can we expect Lady Gaga to sacrifice her massive following on Twitter by converting her social netowrking efforts to Ping?

2. Talent has been ignored: You won't find up-and-coming artists on Ping because it only supports artists signed to a label under distribution rights with iTunes. This failure is where MySpace, Twitter, Facebook and Last.fm trump Ping in music distribution. Friends share music with one another to discover new sounds and new artists; Ping will not last long if it only provides users access to the newest mainstream song a few days before it hits the radio.

3. Finding friends is not user-friendly: Apple has been unable to reach an agreement to utilize a friend search function through Facebook. This makes it difficult to locate friends on Ping, which deters many users and fails in the networking aspect of the site. The stalemate is largely attributed to Facebook's concern about overwhelming its own capacity from too many potential Ping members flooding the licensed search function.[3] Ping should continue to seek Facebook integration, but it shouldn't ignore other options such as Gmail, Yahoo! and Hotmail contact lists.

4. A music network needs music: Ping does not offer the option to listen to a full song as other social networks do.[4] Users are only offered songbytes (30 second clips) when deciding to buy a song. If Ping allowed artists to stream a selection of their songs free of charge for a limited time, Ping could become a source of entertainment plus e-commerce, rather than just a sales vehicle.

Implications

Addressing these four issues are table stakes for success, but the largest opportunies lie in Ping's potential for being a more accessible, less expensive entertainment resource in the long term. For example, the social network could be a means of privatizing sales of concert tickets, to compete with Ticketmaster (Live Nation). This could introduce revenue stream expansion for Apple and provide welcome options for consumers. Ping also has the ability to expand its focus to movies and TV. This could open doors for consumers to interact with actors along with musicians, while leveraging this existing content on iTunes. Overall, the sky is the limit for Ping.

[1] "Ping: Apple Launches Music Social Network on iTunes." Fast Company. September 2010. http://tiny.cc/ujz2f. [Accessed 9/21/2010]
[2] "Lady Gaga Gains 1,000 Followers on iTunes Ping in 12 Minutes!" ITProPortal. September 2010. http://tiny.cc/qm65i. [Accessed 9/28/2010]
[3] "Apple vs. Facebook: What's Behind the Ping Controversy?" NetworkWorld, September 2010. http://tiny.cc/je6t4. [Accessed 9/28/2010]
[4] "Is Ping the MySpace Music Slayer?" The Huffington Post. September 2010. http://tiny.cc/jlezi. [Accessed 9/21/2010]

Implications of New Twitter Design Are More Than Cosmetic
Carlen Lea Lesser, VP/Director

Summary: Twitter has redesigned its interface to provide a better user experience. While the user experience may be improved, the branding options for those who have customized their backgrounds have been limited. Backgrounds carefully crafted to create a brand presence, rich information and legally required information will no longer display optimally for most Twitter users. For some, the pharmaceutical industry in particular, the issue is more than cosmetic. The new Twitter design may cause pharma companies to have non-compliant materials in market and risk warning letters and fines from the FDA.

Key Information
Twitter is in the process of rolling out a completely redesigned interface to all users. Unlike many other services, it has given a great deal of warnings and even provided a "preview" view for several weeks. The new design is a fairly radical change, and largely for the best. The key issue for brands currently using Twitter is the effect this redesign has on the carefully crafted background images most companies have created.

Even though most people will only ever see a brand's Twitter presence one time, and then interact with the brand through their own Twitter home page—most brands have created branded imagery, which often provides much greater information than Twitter's native design options allow. Along with the new Twitter design providing less overall space for custom branding, the design is also fluid. This means that at some screen resolutions the customized elements may entirely disappear. In the old design, the left-hand column might have been truncated by smaller resolutions, but it was always visible.

The new Twitter design reduces the amount of space for branding, contact information, and legally required disclaimers.

Implications and Action Items
The implications for most brands are not dire. They will simply need to explore the new interface layouts and determine a new approach to branding their Twitter presences. There are very detailed and helpful guides available online, such as the excellent one by Mashable.com.[10]

For the pharmaceutical industry and other heavily regulated industries, however, the issue is more than just a cosmetic concern. The new Twitter interface does not provide space for the "fair balance" presentation of risk information required of the pharma industry. There are only a few pharma companies using Twitter for product-branded marketing, and those that are have hopefully already launched their updated designs. Any pharma company looking to use Twitter moving forward will have to truly consider if pharma regulations can be followed with the new design restriction.

Here are some important tips for all companies currently using Twitter:

- **Review** your current Twitter design presence in multiple screen resolutions and, if you are in the pharma industry, consider shuttering your existing presence until new designs can be approved by DDMAC.

- **Redesign** your Twitter background and profile to meet new design specifications.

- **Ensure** that key branding and legal elements are visible in resolutions used by your core audience and the majority of Web users.

- **Pre-clear** any new branded Twitter background with DDMAC or the appropriate regulatory body, and consider discontinuing branded use of Twitter until approval.

- **Contact** Twitter to discuss implications and potential accommodations for regulated industries.

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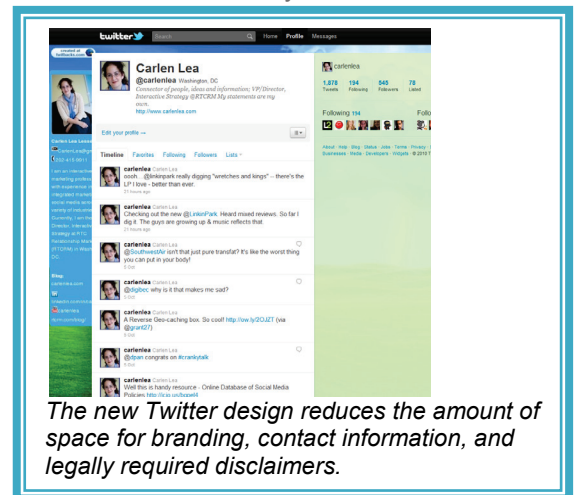
[10] HOW TO: Customize Your Background for the New Twitter http://tiny.cc/t85mr.

Getting It Right: ASPCA's Approach to Digital

Sara Weiner, Associate Director

Summary: Social media has become a go-to for brands trying to amass a public following. However, coordinating social media efforts with other digital efforts, not to mention brand objectives, can often prove complicated. One organization in particular, ASPCA, seems to have it figured out. Its comprehensive channel approach and dedication to the medium represent all the components that RTCRM considers necessary for a successful 360° digital presence.

Key Information

In September's issue,[11] I wrote about proper management and maintenance of Facebook fan pages. In a related article, Michelle Fares covered content strategies for brands engaging with the social media space. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) provides a real-life representation of these two *Perspectives* topics, demonstrating an appropriate and successful approach to social media through its management, maintenance and content strategy coordination. It goes further than social media, though: ASPCA utilizes the digital space to ensure a coordinated online strategy that is technologically sophisticated and on-brand. From its website (www.aspca.com) to its emails to its YouTube channel, the efforts are heavily branded, mission specific and self-promoting. Throughout, they make donation easy and obvious. Yet, the cross-platform strategy isn't overkill—rather, it allows ASPCA to engage in a 360° conversation that is both heartfelt and technologically sound.

Implications and Action items

ASPCA is doing a number of things correctly that nonprofits and for-profits can both learn from. We take a deeper look at its efforts on our blog, Treffpunkt, but for starters here are at least five things ASPCA does well:

- **Coordinating** digital channels so that each platform mentions or feeds content on other platforms. ASPCA creates a 360° surround sound of consistent messaging and information so that followers and supporters are never left without updates and comprehensive content, regardless of the site they are on.
- **Utilizing** top-of-mind technology to encourage public support and ease of donation. ASPCA employs text-to-donate, PayPal, iPhone apps and e-newsletters so that it is constantly top-of-mind among its supporters and so that supporters are able to donate without going through a lengthy offline (or even online) process.
- **Developing** material that is inherent to, and expected in, social media and on the Web. ASPCA creates videos, podcasts, avatars (virtual pets) and creative executions that not only make sense for the digital medium, but suggest a progressive and innovative brand.
- **Discussing** topics related to the brand mission, but not *only* about the brand mission. For example, a recent post by ASPCA on Facebook discussed a wine producer whose proceeds benefit a number of charities, including ASPCA. By stepping outside the boundaries of only the ASPCA brand name, ASPCA can build credibility across markets. Expanding its content strategy also helps it maintain a consistent digital presence, since with more topics, ASPCA won't be at a loss for information to post, tweet, blog or email.
- **Engaging** in dialogue with fans and followers. ASPCA retweets on Twitter, responds on Facebook and comments on its blog; it encourages contact and feedback on its website. Its emails are even geotargeted so that you only get information relevant to your region. The conversational and personal approach stimulates interaction and allows ASPCA to use digital in the best possible manner.

To read more about ASPCA's digital strategies, please go to www.rtctreffpunkt.blogspot.com.

For more information on ASPCA please visit any of the following platforms: ASPCA Website (http://www.aspca.org/), ASPCA YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/aspca), ASPCA Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/aspca), ASPCA Twitter (http://twitter.com/aspca).

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[11] RTCRM *Perspectives* Vol. 1, Issue 2. September 2010 http://tiny.cc/5tt7d

About RTCRM

RTC Relationship Marketing (RTCRM) is a full-service direct marketing and relationship marketing agency based in Washington, D.C., in the heart of Georgetown, with an additional office in New York. RTCRM boasts more than 40 years' worth of innovative, targeted solutions that grow its clients' brands and help them forge lasting, valuable relationships with their customers. What distinguishes RTCRM is its unique ability to analyze data and research on both a rational and emotional level. RTCRM's clients include major brands in the telecom, technology, pharmaceutical and other business sectors, such as AARP, BlackRock, Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk.

To learn more about RTCRM, please visit www.rtcrm.com or follow the Twitter feed @rtcrm.

About the Interactive Strategy Team

The RTCRM Interactive Strategy team is tasked with keeping track and making sense of the ever-changing digital world. It's our job to understand the nuances of how and why different types of people use technology and what that tells us about them. More importantly, it's our job to help our clients apply this knowledge to better communicate with their customers. We help clients translate business goals into marketing campaigns that build relationships with customers. In the 21st century, understanding how and why someone uses technology is as important as understanding where they live, what gender they are, and how old they are. That's where we come in. From ensuring that technographics are considered in the research phase, to tactical plans that align digital, print and broadcast tactics, we work with clients and internal partners to make sure it all works.

It's not about what's cool. It's about what's smart.

Treffpunkt, Interactive Strategy Team Blog: http://rtctreffpunkt.blogspot.com/