



Platform

Get Noticed in a Noisy World

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

When there were three TV channels and two kinds of toothpaste, quality alone could sell itself. But, in a global economy crowded with millions of competitors, quality is just the beginning.

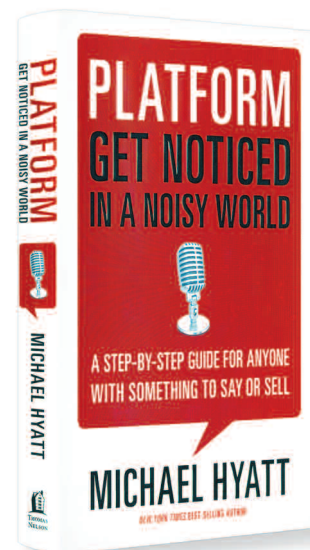
The real challenge is getting the attention of those who might buy your product or service. Two little words have combined to make this easier, less expensive and more possible than ever: social media. Websites, blogs, apps and social networks — used in concert and with savvy — can connect you with your global audience. No gatekeepers. No massive fees.

Michael Hyatt knows this from experience. An author, agent and publisher for more than 30 years, he has spent the past eight years creating an online following that numbers in the hundreds of thousands — all while leading the largest inspirational publisher in the world.

But a flashy website is not a platform. A Facebook page joins millions just like it. Creating an effective platform is the key to success, but it is not simple. In *Platform*, Hyatt condenses his expert knowledge into step-by-step plans for building your now virtual stage.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to create a compelling product and package it with the wow effect and a great name.
- How to create an elevator pitch for your product, service or cause.
- The elements of providing a wow experience.
- What common blogging mistakes you need to avoid.
- How to deal with the issues of not enough comments or too many.
- How to protect your intellectual property without shutting out your readers.



by Michael Hyatt

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: PLATFORM

by Michael Hyatt

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Part One: Start with Wow

More than four centuries ago, William Shakespeare wrote, “All the world’s a stage.” If you have something to sell — whether one-on-one, before a huge crowd or on the Internet — you are also on stage.

But the stage has never been more crowded — and simply being on it doesn’t matter much if the lights are not shining on you, or if there is no one in the audience. There is something you need. It’s called a platform.

Very simply, a platform is the thing you have to stand on to get heard. It’s your stage. But, unlike a stage in the theater, today’s platform is not built of wood or concrete or perched on a grassy hill. Today’s platform is built of people. Contacts. Connections. Followers.

There are two critical parts of the success equation: a compelling product and a significant platform. There is no sense in wasting your time and resources trying to build buzz about a ho-hum product. As marketing guru David Ogilvy once wrote, “Great marketing only makes a bad product fail faster.”

The purpose of marketing is to prime the pump. But if people don’t want to use your product and — more importantly — if they won’t recommend it to their friends, you’re hosed.

To be compelling in this crowded marketplace, you need to do three key things:

1. Create products you would personally use.

Your enthusiasm for your product must be real and believable. You’re not just trying to sell something; you’re sharing an experience.

2. Create products that solve problems in unexpected ways.

Don’t just create something with additional features. Rethink the solution.

3. Create products that exceed your customers’ expectations.

Never rush something to market with a sigh and a collective, “Well, I guess that will have to do. It’s not great, but it’s good enough.” Instead, aim high and execute even higher.

If you create outstanding products, everything else becomes much easier.

Give Your Product a Memorable Name

You have to give your wow product or service a name that will help it connect with the prospect. What you call it is more than just a title; it’s your No. 1 marketing tool.

This is arduous, time-consuming work. Yet nothing in the marketing mix is more important than a strong title. It’s like a headline: If prospective readers are intrigued, they keep reading. If they aren’t, they move on to the next thing that catches their attention.

Great titles are PINC (pronounced “pink”). They do at least one of the following:

- **P: Make a promise.** Example: *POWER 90: Tony Horton’s Total Body Transformation 90 Day Boot Camp Workout* (DVDs).
- **I: Create intrigue.** Example: *Steve Jobs: One Last Thing* (movie).
- **N: Identify a need.** Example: *Mommy I’m Here Child Locator* (wireless GPS bracelet for kids).
- **C: Simply state the content.** Example: *College Hunks Hauling Junk* (service).

The bottom line: The right title for your product, service, website or blog can make or break you. It’s worth spending the time to get it right. ●



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Part Two: Prepare to Launch

Are you prepared to take full personal responsibility for building your own platform or are you thinking of hiring a “babysitter” — someone else to do it for you? If the answer is a wobbly “I guess I’ll do it,” then ask yourself why.

Are you afraid because you don’t know what you’re doing? You’re not alone. It can seem a daunting and complex task. But there are four reasons you must take responsibility yourself:

1. No one knows your product better.
2. No one is more passionate about your product.
3. No one has more skin in the game.
4. No one is likely to do it if you don’t.

Take a long look in the mirror. The person you are looking at is your new chief marketing officer. Take responsibility for your own success and invite others to join you in the endeavor.

Create an Elevator Pitch

Part of launching successfully is being prepared to present your idea — your product, service or cause — succinctly. To do that, you need an elevator pitch: a short summary (30 seconds to two minutes — the length of a short elevator ride) of your product offering, including your target market and your value proposition.

People with successful platforms have often spent hours honing and practicing their elevator pitches. The stakes are huge. If they’re successful and connect with a potential customer, they win the opportunity to take the next step — a potential product sale or time to present their message.

An elevator pitch for an information product should consist of four components:

1. Product name and category.
2. Problem you’re attempting to solve.
3. Proposed solution.
4. Key benefit of your solution.

Here’s an example of the pitch for this book:

I’m writing a new [Component 1] business book called Platform. [Component 2] It’s designed for anyone trying to get attention for his or her product, service or cause. [Component 3] I teach readers how to build a tribe of loyal followers using social media and other new technologies. [Component 4] I explain that it’s never been easier, less expensive or more possible than now.

Pitches can vary widely, depending on your offering. Regardless, you want to create an elevator pitch that is clear and compelling. This is a prerequisite to attracting

Ten Elements of the Wow Experience

1. **Surprise.** It exceeds expectations and creates delight, amazement, wonder or awe.
2. **Anticipation.** As you begin to think about it, you begin to live the experience in advance.
3. **Resonance.** It touches the heart.
4. **Transcendence.** It connects you to something transcendent: a purpose, meaning or more.
5. **Clarity.** It creates a moment in which you see things with more clarity than before. You suddenly “get it” in a new way.
6. **Presence.** It creates timelessness — it puts you fully in the present.
7. **Universality.** Almost everyone will experience it in a similar way.
8. **Evangelism.** It has to be shared; you can’t contain it.
9. **Longevity.** The shine never wears off this experience.
10. **Privilege.** It makes you proud to be associated with the experience.

the partners and prospects you need to succeed.

Once you get your elevator pitch fine-tuned, don’t deliver it like a mechanical parrot. Instead, do what Michael Port suggests in chapter 4 of his excellent book, *Book Yourself Solid*: use it as the foundation of a meaningful conversation.

Secure Raving Endorsements

Easy access to social media, review sites and product comments means we depend more on what other people say about a product or service before we make a purchase. Relying on endorsements has become commonplace in almost every area of life. Why? Because with so many options, few of us have time to do the evaluation ourselves. Instead, we rely on the opinions of people we trust.

This is why — if you’re going to build a successful platform — you can’t afford to ignore endorsements. Endorsements fall into one of two types:

1. **Celebrity endorsements.** These don’t have to be movie or TV personalities; they may simply be the well-known experts in a narrow field.
2. **User reviews.** While a celebrity endorser may have all kinds of motives for endorsing a product or service, individuals are more likely to be candid.

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Once you create a great product, follow these steps to get endorsements for it:

1. Create a great product. This advice is worth repeating. People who matter are not going to endorse a mediocre product. They can't afford to.

2. Make a prospect list. Don't be too quick to rule someone out because you don't think you have access. You may not know the prospective endorser, but you may know someone else who does.

3. Leverage one endorsement for more. Sometimes prospective endorsers need to see an endorsement from someone else in order to get comfortable with your product. Obtain an endorsement from someone who'd be willing to, based on your relationship, and include it with your other requests.

4. Ask for the endorsement. Get to the point and try to ask them when they'd be the most receptive.

5. Provide guidance, samples and a deadline. Include a brief description and perhaps a sample. Then offer to send them the entire product. Tell them the kind of endorsement you're looking for; the more specific, the better. ●

Part Three: Build Your Home Base

The planks to your platform include everything from Twitter, Facebook, your blog, your website, even traditional media. And learning how to weave all of these things seamlessly is an art unto itself. A good social media strategy has three components:

1. A Home Base. This is a digital property you own and control, where loyal fans gather. It can be as simple as a blog or website, or as complex as a self-hosted community. It's where you direct all Internet traffic.

2. Embassies. Places you don't own, but where you have a registered profile. You engage in conversations with those who congregate there. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or other blogs you follow.

3. Outposts. These are places you don't own nor do you have a regular presence. Instead, you listen to conversations about you, your brand, your company or topics that interest you. Examples include Google Alerts and HootSuite.

Start a Blog (or Restart One)

For many of us, the heart of our home base is our blog, and starting one is easier than you may think. First, determine a theme: What will your content be focused on? Before you begin, ask yourself two questions:

1. Can you generate high-quality content on a regular — at least three times a week — basis?

2. Will your content attract a loyal and growing audience?

Don't invest a bunch of time and money until you can answer these questions with a resounding yes. The truth is, most people who start a blog quit within a few months.

If you can answer yes to both of the above questions, then move on to selecting a service, like WordPress.org, TypePad.com or Blogger.com, to host your blog. There are numerous free options, as well as highly customizable self-hosted ones. Next, set up your blog and select your design theme. Then it's time to write your first post! If you don't know where to start, a simple welcome post can break the ice and get you started.

As you continue to work on your blog and post content, you may want to look into an offline blogging client, which enables you to write when you're not online, then upload your post when you connect to the Internet. This isn't a necessity, but it will make blogging much easier.

Finally, be sure that you're writing regularly to ensure you build readership. If people like what you write, they'll come back.

Protect Your Intellectual Property

It's inevitable. If you're a successful blogger, people are going to steal your content — your intellectual property. So what do you do? There are eight ways to protect your intellectual property online:

1. Understand copyright law. Your post is protected from the moment you create it. You don't have to register it. It's your intellectual property and no one can legally reproduce it. However, the law only protects the expression of your idea, not the idea itself.

2. Publish an official copyright notice. This is not required to protect your work, nor does it grant you any additional rights. However, it reminds the world that this is your intellectual property. Consider using a copyright notice in your blog's footer so that it appears at the bottom of every page.

3. Create an explicit permissions policy. Create a separate page spelling out exactly what people may do with your content with permission and without permission. Be explicit. This will keep people from contacting you about every use of content, but it also will give you a published standard to refer to when someone violates it.

4. Give the benefit of the doubt. Not everyone who reposts your content does so maliciously.

5. Request that your post be removed. You can

do this via email or in a comment. Still, be gracious and assume the unauthorized user's motives are good. Point the user toward your permissions policy and suggest he or she post an excerpt instead.

6. Demand that the unauthorized user take down your content. If the offender does not respond to your previous request, escalate things by sending a “demand letter” or email insisting that the content be taken down.

7. Notify the infringer's hosting service. If there is still no cooperation, you need to do some research. Find his or her “WhoIs Record,” using a tool like DomainTools. This will show his domain registration information, including who hosts the site. Send an email to the hosting service, requesting a “take-down” of the website and explain why. Legitimate services will investigate and, if they agree, send their own demand to the offender. If he or she doesn't comply, they will take down the site.

8. Hire an attorney to take action. If the service provider is shady, incompetent or offshore, you may need to hire an attorney. Remember, you have to weigh the cost of litigation against the damage you believe is being done.

Don't deprive your legitimate audience of your content because you have an occasional person who violates your copyright. It's just not worth it. In the end, the more people who reproduce your content — hopefully giving you credit and link-backs — the more people will be exposed to it. Ultimately this will benefit you.

Avoid Common Blogging Mistakes

Assuming you want to increase your blog traffic, there are certain mistakes you must avoid to be successful. If you commit these errors, your traffic will never gain momentum. These are the top 10 traffic killers:

- 1. You don't post often enough.** You cannot build solid traffic without frequent posts.
- 2. You post too often.** Yes, this is possible, too. You'd do better to focus on writing one really great post a day rather than several mediocre ones. The trick is to find your frequency sweet spot.
- 3. Your post is too long.** Seth Godin is the master of the short, pithy post. His are usually in the 200–400 word range. You can even get away with longer posts — upward of 600–700 words — if they are scannable, using subheads, lists and other devices to keep people moving through your content. If a post is getting too long, consider breaking it up into multiple posts.

4. You don't invite engagement. Engagement is a combination of page views, reader comments and social media mentions.

5. You don't participate in the conversation. People want to have a conversation — with you.

6. You don't make your content accessible. Readers have shorter attention spans. They are scanning content, looking for items that interest them. You must remember this.

7. You don't create catchy headlines. Your headlines are the most important things you write. According to Brian Clark, who runs the popular site CopyBlogger, “on average, eight out of 10 people will read headline copy, but only two out of 10 will read the rest.”

8. Your first paragraph is weak. This is critical. You must use this paragraph to pull readers into the rest of your blog post. The idea is to grab their attention and hang on to it. Many bloggers spend too much time trying to set up the post or provide content. Just get to the point.

9. Your post is off-brand. If you're trying to build a platform, you need to find an editorial focus and stick to it. A tighter focus leads to higher traffic.

10. Your post is all about you. Unless you are a megacelebrity, readers don't care about you. They care about themselves. They want to know what's in it for them. Your personal stories can be a doorway to that but, in the end, the best posts are about your readers' needs.

Develop Your Landing Pages

A website landing page highlights one specific product offering. The goal is to convert interest into action. In a sense, it's a salesperson who works for you nonstop. For example, the Speaking page on an author's blog would be designed to convince meeting planners to book the author to speak at events.

The problem is landing pages can be confusing. Visitors don't know what action to take once they get there. To combat this, here are seven characteristics of landing pages that get results:

- 1. Headline.** You need a strong, compelling headline. Nothing else on your page is more important than this.
- 2. Sales copy.** You need to write compelling sales copy that starts with your customer's problems and concerns, explains why your product is the solution, and makes a compelling offer.
- 3. Product photos.** Software like BoxShot 3D gives you the tools to make your product the hero.

4. Testimonials. Nothing convinces people to buy like testimonials.

5. Guarantee. Make it easy for customers to trust you and take the risk out of the transaction. Promise to refund money promptly if they are not satisfied. If your product is good, it is not a risk.

6. An offer. You have to establish a price and make an offer. Remember that people often impute value based on price. If you charge more (within reason), they assume the product is worth more.

7. Call to action. You must ask for the sale. It must be clear, unequivocal and positioned in a prominent place.

If you're launching a new product, service or cause, you need a landing page that delivers results. This is essential if you're going to convert readers to customers, and, from there, to tribe members. ●

Part Four: Expand Your Reach

It takes marketing to build a powerful platform, right? Well, traditional marketing, while not dead, has morphed dramatically in the world of social media. Tribe-building is the new marketing. Marketing is no longer about shouting into a crowded marketplace; it's about participating in a dialogue with fellow travelers. It's no longer about generating transactions; it's about building relationships.

Building Up Your Blog

You're posting frequently, writing focused content and being engaged with commenters. What else can you do to improve your blog traffic?

- **Get your own domain name.** Make it easy for readers to pass along your blog. What do you think is easier: yourname.wordpress.com or yourname.com? This is the foundation of branding and it makes your blog memorable.

- **Include your blog address everywhere.** In your email signature, on business cards and on stationery. It should appear virtually everywhere your name appears, particularly in your social media profiles.

- **Make it easy to subscribe to your blog.** You don't want to depend on your readers to remember to come back to your blog. Instead, you want them to subscribe, so they get every post you write, either by RSS or email. Provide both options and position the buttons prominently.

- **Optimize your posts for Search Engine Optimization (SEO).** You want people to find you

when they search one of your keywords or your name. There are tools such as All-in-One SEO Pack and Scribe that can help you do this.

- **Comment on other blogs.** As you read other blogs, leave comments — not spam invites to read your blog, but instead engage in the conversations that interest you and build credibility. Register with their commenting system so there's a link back to your blog.

- **Write posts for other bloggers.** Guest posting is great for search engines, introduces you to new communities (and them to you) and allows your ideas to spread more freely. Consider who you'd like to guest post for, read their guidelines and make sure what you have to write will be of interest to that audience. Contact that blogger and, if he or she agrees, write a post for his or her blog. Once it's published, promote it via email, social networks and such. Post an excerpt on your own blog and link to the whole article. And, of course, interact in the comments.

Watch These Metrics

When people try to get a feel for how meaningful your platform is, most look at specific social media stats as a proxy, including those specifically related to blogging, Twitter and Facebook.

To get accurate blog stats, you should sign up for a free Google Analytics account. This is the gold standard when it comes to reporting Web stats. Here are six stats that most people fluent in social media deem relevant:

- 1. Unique visitors per month.** The key word here is "unique." One individual may visit your blog three times in one week, but this would only count as one unique visitor. Note: RSS and email subscribers do not count toward your total.

- 2. Page views per month.** If you divide this number by your total unique visitors, you'll get the average number of pages viewed by each visitor. This number is important to prospective advertisers on your blog. Why? Because they're basically buying the specific number of impressions their ad will get on your site.

- 3. Percent change in the last 12 months.** This is the rate of growth in the last 12 months. Here's the formula: unique visitors in the last 30 days, minus your unique visitors for the same period 12 months ago, divided by your unique visitors for the same period 12 months ago, multiplied by 100.

- 4. Average number of comments per post.** This demonstrates how engaged your audience is with your content. Not all commenting systems keep track of this stat, but there are systems available, such as Disqus.

5. Total number of blog subscribers. The people who subscribe via email and RSS represent your most loyal readers or superfans. They've made the effort to sign up to receive your content. More importantly, they've given you permission to push content to them.

6. Total number of Twitter followers or Facebook fans. These are the two primary vehicles you'll use to get the word out about your new blog posts. While the total number of followers can be important, it's more important to show how engaged they are.

Embrace Twitter

One of the most important tools to expand the reach of your platform is Twitter, a real-time network that connects you to the latest information about what you find interesting, in 140 characters or less. Tweeting requires very little time, and can be done from a Web browser or mobile device.

Twitter offers an unparalleled opportunity for brand building, social networking and customer engagement. The service is free, but you must be able to devote the time. If you aim to tweet regularly throughout the day — sharing insights, informing followers of new blog posts, responding to replies and direct messages, etc. — you might spend 20-30 minutes once you add it all up. That's not a big investment of time, especially for the benefits you'll receive. The key is to be intentional and not allow it to become a huge time suck.

Get More Twitter Followers

Some argue that the number isn't important and that having quality followers — those who aren't spam bots and are real, engaged people — is better. So let's look at how you can build your follower base and make it a quality list:

- **Show your face.** The absence of a photo often tells others that the Twitter account is a spammer or newbie. You can use a headshot, company logo or some other image.
- **Create an interesting bio.** Don't leave this blank; it's one of the first things potential followers review.
- **Make your Twitter presence visible.** Make it easy for people to follow you — and for others to promote you. Display links to your Twitter account in your email signature, blog or website, business cards, etc.
- **Share valuable content.** Point people to helpful resources. Create content that others look forward to getting and want to pass on via retweets.
- **Post frequently, but don't flood your followers.** No one wants you hijacking their Twitter feed.

Employ Consistent Branding

Whether you design your own pages for your blog, Twitter, Facebook and more, or have them designed for you, here are four elements you want to include on a consistent basis across all platforms:

- 1. Your name.** Use it in exactly the same form in every instance.
- 2. Your logo.** It also could be a type of font that is associated with your name.
- 3. An avatar.** Have your headshot done by a professional photographer and use the same one in every application.
- 4. A branding statement.** This could be a slogan, a sell-line or even the name of the product or service for which you are known — or would like to be known.

A consistent brand is vital for a strong platform and it should be one of your top priorities.

You can use a service like Buffer to spread your tweets out throughout the day.

- **Reply to others publicly.** This shows you're listening and sociable (of course, send a direct message — DM — when appropriate).
- **Be generous in linking and retweeting others.** Twitter fosters a culture of sharing. The more you link and retweet others, the more people will reciprocate.
- **Avoid too much promotion.** You can promote blog posts, products, events and more on Twitter, but do not cross the line into looking like a spammer.
- **Don't use an auto-responder.** This is just more clutter and isn't personal. ●

Part Five: Engage Your Tribe

One important word about building your brand via your platform: This isn't an opportunity to blast your message out to thousands of followers for free and sell them stuff. Social networks — Twitter, Facebook, Google+, etc. — are relational tools, not transactional ones. No one wants to be spammed. If you want to build a social media platform — one where people listen to you — then you have to be a giver, not a taker.

Comments: How to Deal With Not Enough or Too Many

There's hardly anything more discouraging than blogging about something you think is important and then waiting for comments ... just to hear crickets.

Summary: PLATFORM

Conversely, there are few things more rewarding than having people comment on your post and engaging directly with your readers. Here are seven strategies to get your readers more engaged:

- 1. End your posts with a question.** The more open-ended you make your posts, the better.
- 2. Use a threaded comment system.** This allows readers to comment in-line and reply to others.
- 3. Display your comment count prominently.**
- 4. Make it easy.** Yes, comment spam is a problem, but most modern blog systems catch this. Don't require registration and don't use annoying technology like CAPTCHA to prevent robot spam.
- 5. Participate in the conversation.** Your readers want to engage with you.
- 6. Reward your best commenters.** You can list your top commenters in your sidebar and recognize them publicly. Be creative.
- 7. Don't overact to criticism.** If people see you as sensitive, defensive or rude, they won't feel free to participate in the conversation.

Comments are also one major way in which blogging is different from all other forms of writing: You get near-instant feedback. This is gratifying, but it also can be a challenge to keep up with your readers.

Monitor Your Brand

It takes years to build a brand. Unfortunately, there aren't many shortcuts. You build a brand — like a reputation — one impression at a time.

Twenty years ago, if a customer had a bad experience with your company, it didn't quite matter as much. Sure he or she could tell friends and family and, eventually, it could catch up with you, but it wouldn't happen overnight.

But, today, digital communication has changed everything. Brands can be damaged in a few days. Whether you like it or not, people are talking about you, your brand or your organization online. Do you know what they're saying? Do you like what they're saying?

Here are four actions you can take to monitor your brand online:

- 1. Sign up for Google Alerts.** It's fast, easy and free. Once you sign up, you can enter the names of those you want to monitor, such as your personal name, company name, brands, products, etc.
- 2. Use Twitter search.** This is similar to Google Alerts and can be saved as a bookmark on your browser.
- 3. Engage in conversation.** Thank people for posi-

tive comments. Respond to negative comments so your brand is represented.

- 4. Solve the problem.** You'll get credit for listening and even more credit for responding. But your job isn't finished until you follow through and solve the person's problem. Granted, you can't satisfy everyone, but you should try.

If you are responsible for building or maintaining a brand, you need to know how to monitor your brand online, as well as defend it. Here are seven suggestions for defending your brand in the digital age:

- 1. Build an online presence.** The time to build an audience of followers and fans is before you need it.
- 2. Monitor the conversation.** You know precisely what is being said, by whom and how you can respond if you choose to do so.
- 3. Respond quickly to criticism.** If you don't respond quickly, you lose control of the conversation.
- 4. Admit your mistakes.** When you mess up the only acceptable response is to take full ownership.
- 5. Understand the lifetime value of the customer.** Customers are worth more than a single transaction, especially if they come back to you for more. Do you know what the lifetime value of your customers are?
- 6. Empower your employees — or yourself — to solve problems.** It's amazing how fast you can turn a bad customer experience into a good one when you empower a frontline employee to solve problems without delay. Nothing communicates to your customers that your company values them more than this.
- 7. Exceed your customers expectations.** Every customer problem is an opportunity to create a wow experience.

Setting out to develop a platform can be overwhelming and scary. You worry about making a mistake, looking foolish or, worse, failing. But here's a secret: Forget all that. The key is to start. Once you take the first step everything else will take care of itself. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Platform*, you'll also like:

- 1. *Real-Time Marketing and PR* by David Meerman Scott.** Find out how to act and react flexibly as events occur, and position your brand in the always-on world of the web.
- 2. *Trust Agents* by Chris Brogan and Julien Smith.** Trust agents are digitally savvy people who use the web to humanize businesses using transparency and genuine relationships. Learn the steps to become a trust agent.
- 3. *Enchantment* by Guy Kawasaki.** Enchantment transforms situations and relationships. This book explains all the tactics you need to prepare an enchantment campaign.