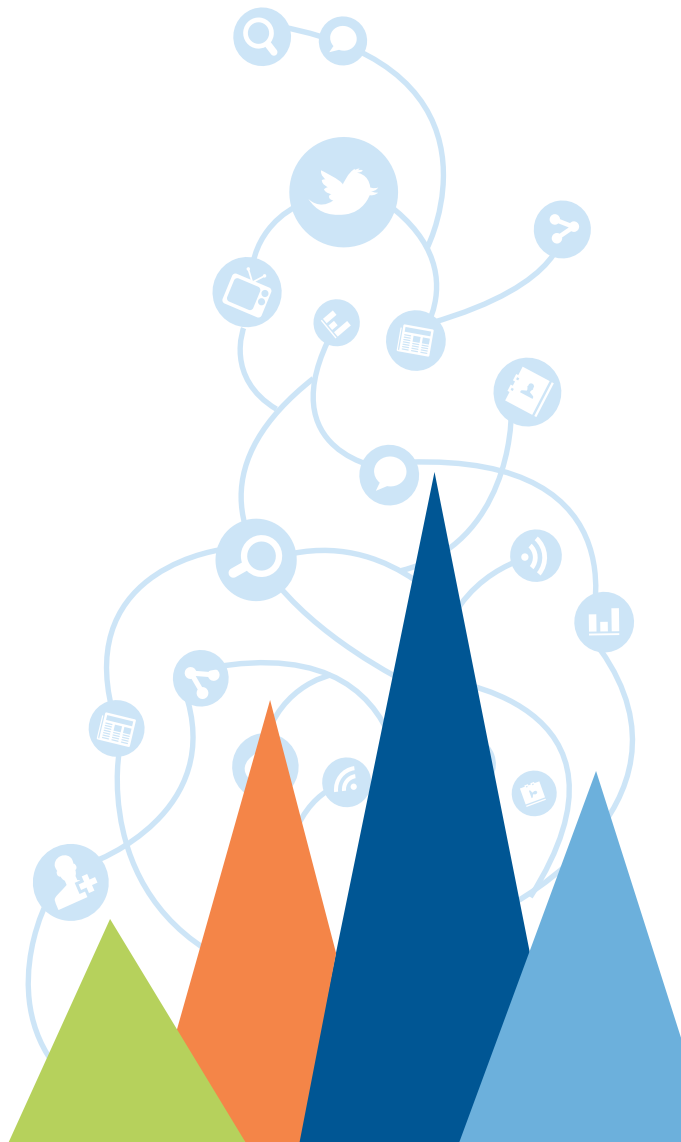


reddit – An introduction for communications professionals



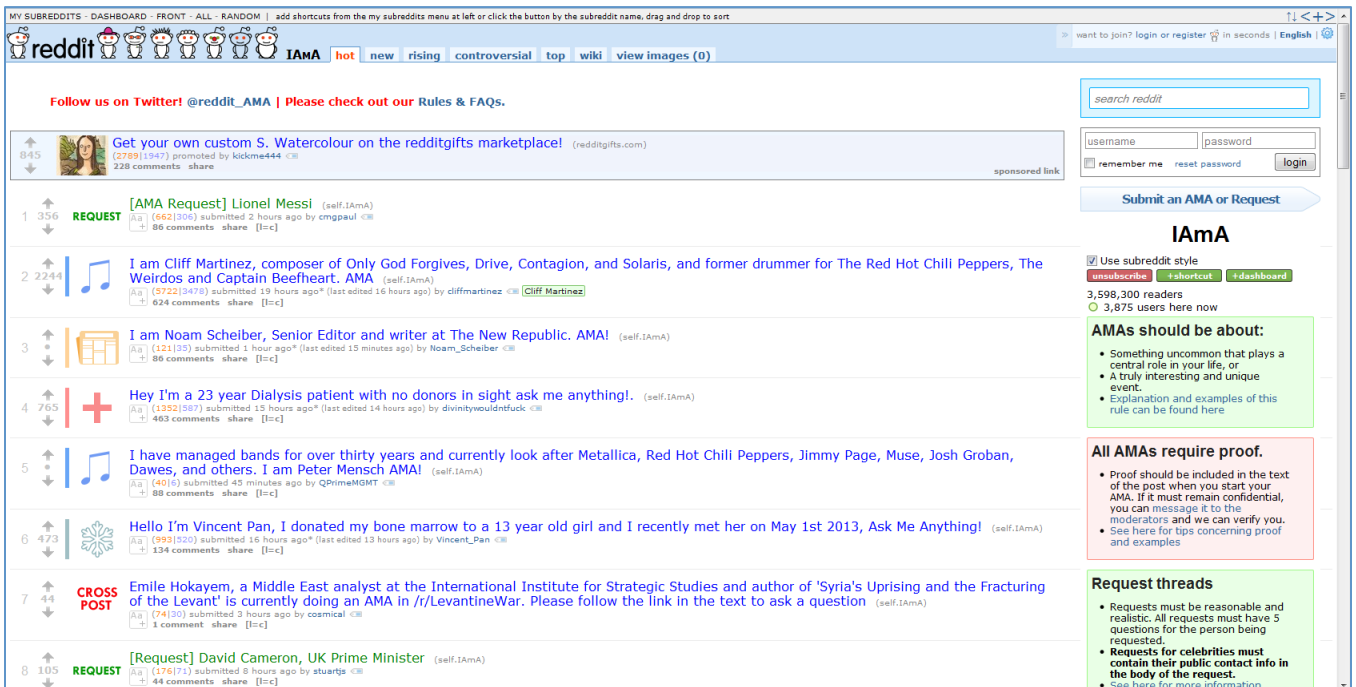
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As the social web has grown and matured, newer networks have emerged to challenge the mainstays for users' time and attention. For those of us in marketing and PR, this means continuously revising your social media strategy and reassessing where you spend your efforts and resources.

Networks such as LinkedIn, Pinterest and Tumblr are all surging in popularity, and making a push to be considered in marketing and PR programs alongside social giants such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

Of these newer entrants, however, none can claim the same mix of hype and controversy as does reddit.

While the so-called "front page of the internet" was founded in 2005, its size and exposure have increased dramatically in the past few years. As of 2013, reddit has approximately 70 million monthly active users and a Pew Internet survey in July 2013 found that six per cent of online adults are reddit users.



Follow us on Twitter! @reddit_AMA | Please check out our Rules & FAQs.

Get your own custom S. Watercolour on the redditgifts marketplace! (redditgifts.com) (2789|1947) promoted by kickme444 228 comments share

1 356 REQUEST [AMA Request] Lionel Messi (self.IAMA) (662|206) submitted 2 hours ago by cmgpaul 86 comments share [F=c]

2 2244 I am Cliff Martinez, composer of Only God Forgives, Drive, Contagion, and Solaris, and former drummer for The Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Weirdos and Captain Beefheart. AMA (self.IAMA) (5722|3113) submitted 19 hours ago* (last edited 16 hours ago) by cliffmartinez Cliff Martinez 624 comments share [F=c]

3 I am Noam Scheiber, Senior Editor and writer at The New Republic. AMA! (self.IAMA) (121|33) submitted 1 hour ago* (last edited 15 minutes ago) by Noam_Scheiber 86 comments share [F=c]

4 765 Hey I'm a 23 year Dialysis patient with no donors in sight ask me anything! (self.IAMA) (74|22) submitted 15 hours ago* (last edited 14 hours ago) by divinitywouldntfuck 463 comments share [F=c]

5 I have managed bands for over thirty years and currently look after Metallica, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Jimmy Page, Muse, Josh Groban, Daves, and others. I am Peter Mensch AMA! (self.IAMA) (74|20) submitted 3 hours ago by QPrimeMGMT 88 comments share [F=c]

6 473 Hello I'm Vincent Pan, I donated my bone marrow to a 13 year old girl and I recently met her on May 1st 2013, Ask Me Anything! (self.IAMA) (993|520) submitted 16 hours ago* (last edited 13 hours ago) by Vincent_Pan 134 comments share [F=c]

7 44 CROSS POST Emile Hokayem, a Middle East analyst at the International Institute for Strategic Studies and author of 'Syria's Uprising and the Fracturing of the Levant' is currently doing an AMA in /r/LevantineWar. Please follow the link in the text to ask a question (self.IAMA) (74|20) submitted 3 hours ago by cosmic 1 comment share [F=c]

8 105 REQUEST [Request] David Cameron, UK Prime Minister (self.IAMA) (176|71) submitted 8 hours ago by stuartjs 44 comments share [F=c]

Use subreddit style
3,598,300 readers
3,875 users here now

IAMA

AMAs should be about:

- Something uncommon that plays a central role in your life, or
- A truly interesting and unique event.
- Explanation and examples of this rule can be found here

All AMAs require proof.

- Proof should be included in the text of the post when you start your AMA. If it must remain confidential, you can message it to the moderators and we can verify you.
- See here for tips concerning proof and examples

Request threads

- Requests must be reasonable and realistic. All requests must have 5 questions for the person being requested.
- Requests for celebrities must contain their public contact info in the body of the request.
- See here for more information

One of reddit's most popular subcommunities, IAMA.

Three characteristics make reddit especially important for marketing and PR -- both as a potential opportunity and a potential pain point.

- 1. reddit's users come to the site looking for content and links.** Unlike many networks, reddit's central purpose is content discovery and its users are much more willing and likely to click on outbound links. Available data shows that reddit often refers as much or even more traffic than much bigger social networks.
- 2. reddit provides an interactive and dynamic environment.** The reddit platform allows for discussions and interactions no other social network can match. Users can easily converse with experts, celebrities or other knowledgeable individuals. The site's structure makes it a powerful tool for crowdsourcing knowledge and experience, especially concerning brands and products.
- 3. The reddit community is active and influential.** reddit's user base has proven to be more impactful than its size would suggest. reddit users spend a great deal of time on the site and are the source of many of the internet's biggest memes, discussions and events. The reddit community is also known for taking direct action on issues or causes, many times with real-world impact.

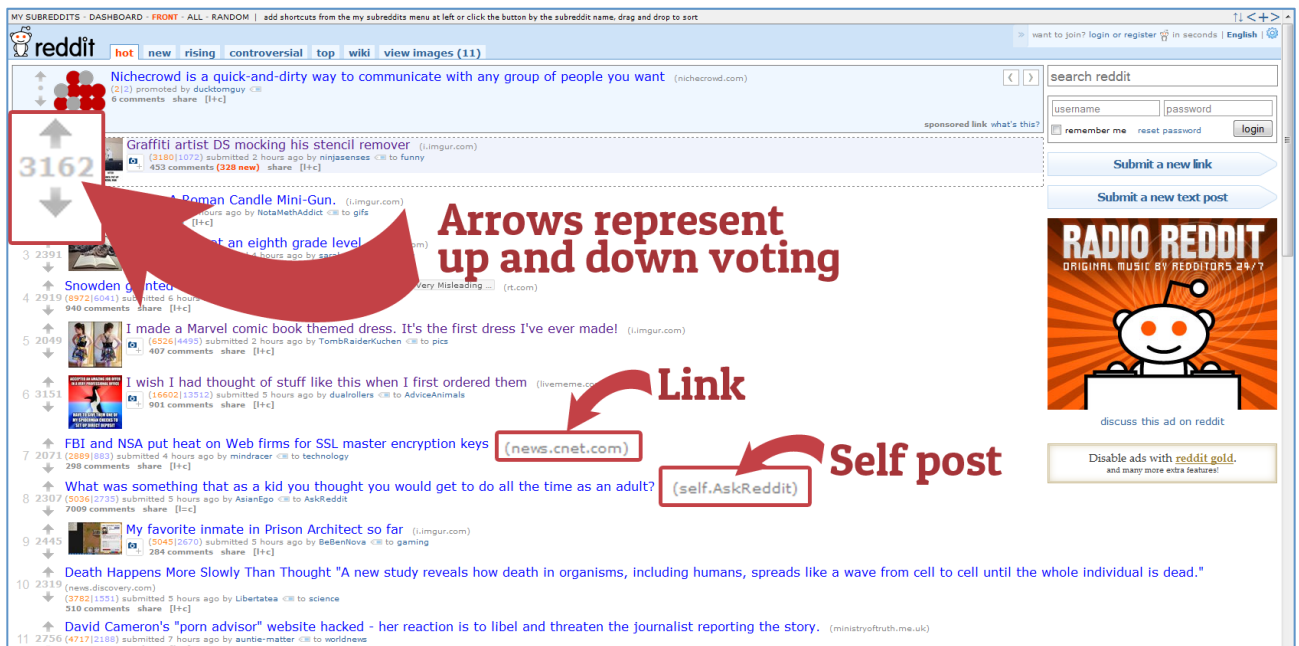
Based on these three aspects, we at MediaMiser feel communications and PR professionals would be wise to consider reddit when determining a social strategy. To back this up, we have added the ability to monitor reddit to our MediaMiser SNAP product alongside Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

The goal of this white paper is to help you decide if reddit should be part of your social media strategy, and provide some guidance in integrating reddit into your day-to-day workflow.

What is reddit?

reddit was [founded in 2005](#) as a social news website and was acquired by publisher Conde Nast in 2006. In 2011, it was split into an [independent division of Advance Publications](#), the parent company of Conde Nast.

The current iteration of the site allows users to submit [either third-party links or native "self posts."](#) Users can [vote the post "up" or "down"](#) and may also [comment on the post](#). Comments can also be voted up and down. Users gain or lose "karma" based on the performance of the links they submit, and "comment karma" based on the performance of their comments.



The reddit front page shows the current top 25 links.

Using a combination of chronology, vote ratios and vote totals, an algorithm determines [the order in which posts and comments are displayed](#). This rewards interesting or high quality content by pushing it to the top of the site, and punishes uninteresting or poor quality content by pushing it out of view.

reddit is divided into topic-based subsections [known as subreddits](#). Subreddits are created and maintained entirely by users and each has its own rules, styling, functionality, culture and community. By default, the front page of reddit shows posts from the 22 predetermined subreddits. A user may unsubscribe from any of these defaults and subscribe to any number of other subreddits.

Traffic and demographics

Alexa.com rates reddit as the [122nd most-visited](#) website on the internet. During 2012, according to [reddit's own statistics](#) the site had approximately 37 billion page views, 400 million unique visitors, 30 million posts and 260 million comments. As of 2013, reddit averages 5 billion page views a month. Users spend an [average of 16 minutes](#) on reddit per visit.

Alexa data shows that reddit traffic comes primarily from North America. Alexa and the Pew Internet survey found that reddit's user base is heavily male and under 30.

The list of [most popular subreddits](#) gives a good indication of the key topics of interest for reddit users -- these include science, video games, politics, movies and music. That being said, subreddits with large subscriber counts can be found for a very wide range of topics.

Using reddit

Users do not need an account to view reddit content. A user without an account will see content from the 20 default subreddits but can also navigate to any of the other subreddits.

To post, comment or change your subreddit subscriptions requires making an account. Accounts are free and [don't require an email address](#). Once an account has been created, other users may see a history of all your [posts and comments](#).

reddit's built in subreddit search isn't optimal for identifying all of the subreddits for a given topic or issue. The un-affiliated website [Metareddit](#) keeps a better list of indexed subreddits.

The front page of reddit shows the 25 highest rated posts from up to 50 of a user's subscribed subreddits. A bar at the top of page allows users to navigate between subscriptions. reddit also recently announced better tools for [creating multi-reddits](#) which let a user keep track of multiple related subreddits on a single page.

To see all of the posts from a single domain, you can navigate to [http://reddit.com/domain/\[domain\]](http://reddit.com/domain/[domain]) (e.g. <http://reddit.com/domain/mediamiser.com>). To see whether a given link has been submitted to reddit, go to [http://reddit.com/\[link\]](http://reddit.com/[link]) (e.g. <http://reddit.com/www.mediamiser.com/2013/06/04/twitter-reacts-to-most-heart-wrenching-game-of-thrones-yet/>).

The free browser extension [reddit Enhancement Suite](#) provides a series of navigation tools that vastly improve the reddit experience. A premium [gold account](#) can also be purchased which, among other things, alerts users when their username is mentioned.

The public reddit API provides the ability to [track posts by keyword](#) across all subreddits. Various social media monitoring services use this to allow users to monitor reddit.

While the official API only allows for keyword monitoring of post titles, and not user comments, some services use scraping technology to track comments for keywords.

Other reddit specifics can be found in the [site's wiki](#).

Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are mainstays within communications and PR strategies because they have large user bases and high visibility.

reddit does not have the massive user base of its larger counterparts, and is only just gaining in visibility. What reddit does have, however, is an active community, an interactive environment and a focus on content discovery.

reddit has shown that it can be both a boon and a thorn in the side of brands and organizations. At the very least, it should be considered as part of a social media strategy – as with anything, reddit will provide more value for some organizations than others.

Exposure and content discovery

The term [“reddit effect”](#) has been coined to describe the deluge of traffic reddit can send to a highly ranked link, especially when a link ends up on the front page of the default reddit view.

reddit is about discovery and its users come to the site looking for new and interesting content. Available data shows that reddit can drive traffic at a rate equal to or higher than social networks with much larger user bases.

Journalists and content creators have especially found reddit to be an invaluable tool. In 2011, Alexis Madrigal, senior editor at *The Atlantic*, said that a [“single big reddit hit can drive six-figure traffic to a story.”](#) reddit’s user base has grown by leaps and bounds since then.

While reddit does not encourage content creators, brands or organizations to try to submit their own content, there are ways to make it much more likely that your content is seen through such offerings as Sponsored Headlines (see section 4 for further discussion about getting the most out of reddit traffic referral).

reddit has never released information about its referrals. However, a few organizations have published data about reddit's effect on traffic to their websites:

Penny Arcade: The webcomic Penny Arcade [released data](#) about a post on its blog that reached the front page of the default reddit view. The post received 157,401 referral visits from reddit over a 48-hour period, which was over 18 per cent of all referral traffic to the post -- more than either Facebook or Twitter. The data showed that the site's concurrent users increased steadily as the post's reddit rank rose until it reached the front page, after which it plateaued. The data published by Penny Arcade also indicated that, on a normal day, reddit referred more traffic to the site than Facebook or Twitter.

University of reddit: [The University of reddit](#) is a standalone website -- not affiliated with reddit -- as well as [a subreddit community](#). On August 20, 2012, the reddit blog [mentioned the community](#) and the post made the front page of the default reddit view. In [a blog post](#), one of the individuals who runs the community said universityofreddit.com had over 92,000 pageviews that day, an increase of approximately 12,000 per cent from average daily traffic. The number of subscribers to the University of reddit subreddit doubled within 24 hours after the post hit the front page.

MediaMiser: On June 4th, our [twitter analysis of HBO's Game of Thrones](#) "Red Wedding" episode attained a relatively high rank on the Game of Thrones subreddit. The result was a 423 per cent increase from average daily traffic, 66 per cent of which came from reddit. The post remains the most popular ever on the MediaMiser blog. So far in 2013, reddit is the number one traffic source for the MediaMiser blog, referring more traffic than Twitter and Facebook combined.

Interaction and community

reddit is structured very differently than other social networks, especially those that are based on a reverse chronological feed. There are many interactions and communities that occur on reddit that couldn't happen elsewhere.

Some of the most popular subreddits are not for aggregating content but, instead, focus on crowdsourcing information, or asking open questions of the community. This provides a unique opportunity for community interaction and developing reputation. Native reddit content is also a lot more permanent than that of other networks, making negative discussions especially damaging.

- **AMAs:** One of the most popular subreddits is [IAmA](#), in which anyone can hold a town hall-style question-and-answer session known as an “Ask Me Anything” or AMA. Recently, AMAs have become a popular platform for celebrities or other well-known individuals. The most popular post ever on reddit is an AMA done by US [President Barack Obama](#) during his 2012 reelection campaign. The post was [viewed over 5 million times](#) in approximately 24 hours. Other subreddits will also hold AMAs for individuals related to their specific topic. The AMA is the most editorial opportunity available on reddit today. As the site does not have a board of writers or editors, this can be the most effective way to get people aware of the content you are creating or promoting without breaking any site rules.
- **“Ask” subreddits and posts:** reddit’s commenting platform makes it ideal for asking the community open questions or crowdsourcing information. “Ask” threads and subreddits are an opportunity to provide value to the community and/or present oneself as an expert. The most popular, [Askreddit](#), is largely a platform for soliciting personal stories or experiences. Others, such as [AskScience](#) or [AskHistorians](#) and [ExplainLikeImFive](#) are platforms for users to seek information from experts or the general community. Other subreddits aren’t exclusively for asking questions, but still allow users to crowdsource information, especially about products, services and brands.

- **Knowledge stores:** reddit's structure means that native content -- either self posts or comments -- has a long shelf life. This makes reddit a robust platform for in-depth content such as reviews, lists, tips or lengthy explanations. Certain subreddits have become powerful stores of information on a given topic and moderators will often create collections of previous threads that are important or useful. This is especially used to collect information about brands and products. Dedicated subreddits exist for product reviews, such as [BuyItForLife](#) and [GoodValue](#), but many other subreddits will maintain lists of recommended and not recommended products.

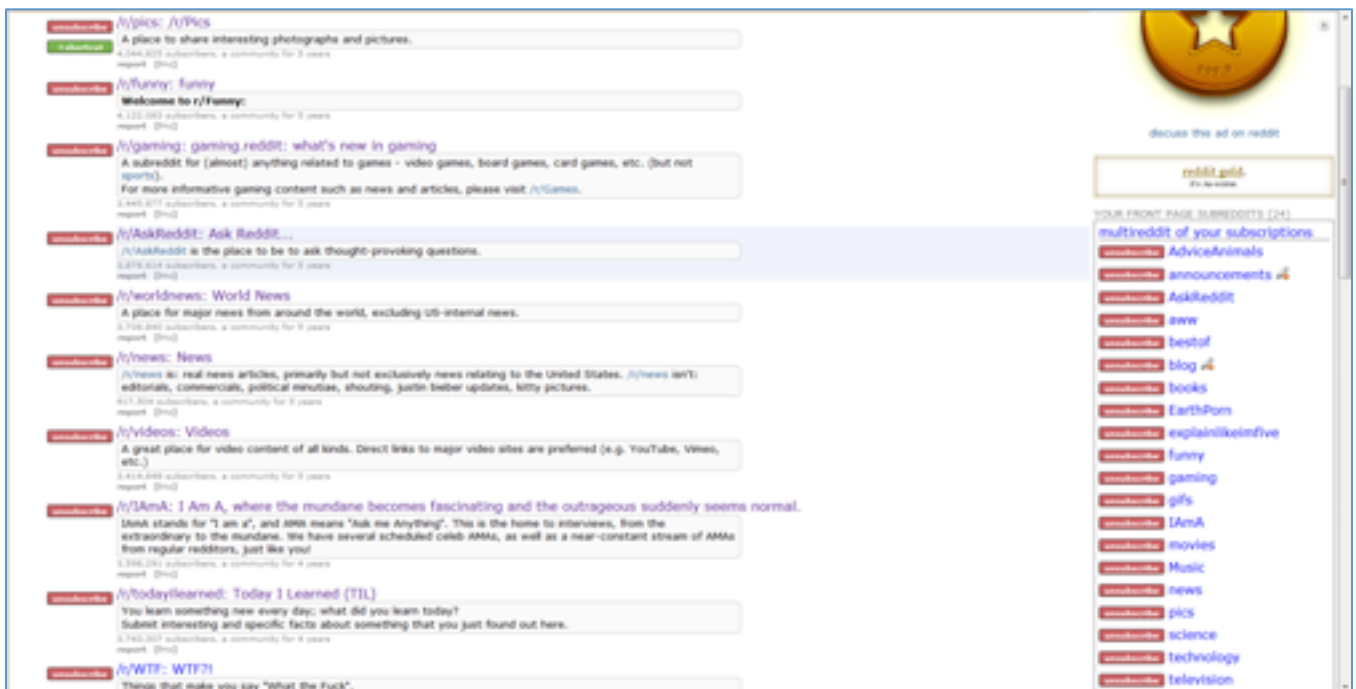
Influence and activism

reddit is easily one of the most influential communities on the internet. While the site is known as the origin of many of the most well-known internet memes, it has also been the starting point for some of the web's biggest stories, discussions and events. Images, videos or content can quickly move their way up through the reddit community and then out to other social networks, the blogosphere and the mainstream media.

The reddit community has also never shied away from taking on causes or becoming active on an issue or event. There are numerous cases where the reddit community has come together to affect real-world events.

- **Philanthropy:** On several occasions the reddit community has convened for large fundraising efforts, including raising over \$700,000 for a [bullied bus monitor](#), over \$200,000 for [Doctors Without Borders](#) and almost \$600,000 for [Stephen Colbert's March to Keep Fear Alive](#). reddit has several subreddits dedicated to philanthropic efforts and holds the [world's largest Secret Santa exchange](#).

- **Political Activism:** reddit has on occasion taken up political causes, even affecting legislation. The reddit community played a large role in the activism that pushed many companies and legislators to change their stance on the [Stop Online Piracy Act](#) -- a bill that was ultimately defeated. Users helped push a [blackout by reddit](#) and dozens of other websites as a protest against SOPA. reddit users also coordinated a [boycott of domain registrar GoDaddy](#), who supported the legislation. reddit has also a major role in protests against [alleged spying by the NSA](#).
- **Negative PR:** reddit has also been the driver behind several negative PR events, pushing them viral across other networks and into the mainstream media. The videos showing unhealthy conditions at a Golden Corral restaurant [were first posted to reddit](#) before it went viral. The reddit community was a major driver of the [controversy around](#) Scottsdale, Arizona restaurant [Amy's Baking Company](#) and has created significant negative PR for companies such as [Electronic Arts](#) and [Microsoft](#).



The list of the top subreddits. Users can unsubscribe from the defaults and subscribe to any number of others.

As with any social network, if reddit is going to be part of your social media strategy, it's important that you stick to best practices to avoid wasting time and effort as well as preventing backlash. Many best practices we propose here are standard for any social media. However, reddit has its own unique characteristics that need to be taken into account.

A. Follow the rules.

This may seem obvious, but reddit has certain rules that users must follow. Circumventing these rules can result in a user being banned, and especially egregious violations can result in the blockage of an entire domain.

- **Spamming:** Submitting links to your own website is allowed but is considered spam if you're only linking to your site and [not otherwise participating](#). This can be grounds for banning a user or even an entire domain. There are several examples of reddit blocking domains for several weeks for violating this rule, with *The Atlantic* magazine being the best known example of this. The magazine's social media editor was caught spamming links in early 2012 and his account was deleted. In June of 2012, links from *The Atlantic* and a host of other well known sites were [banned for several weeks](#) for the same practice.
- **Vote manipulation:** While it may be tempting to try to use reddit's voting system to your advantage, the site has strict rules against this. It's not an easy thing to prove, but the community has been able to identify violators before. The most well known example is the website Quickmeme, which was [banned from reddit](#) for manipulating voting using automated software.
- **Reddiquette:** reddit also has a set of informal rules known as [reddiquette](#). These are not enforced formally, but violating them can mean a harsh punishment from the community. Each subreddit has its own distinct rules and disobeying can mean being banned by moderators.

B. Know your audience.

As noted before, reddit's user base is demographically different than most social networks. The reddit community tends to have strong preconceptions about certain brands, products and organizations. However, the vast array of sub-communities can be as culturally diverse as the topics they represent.

- **Community preconceptions:** It is important to approach reddit with a good understanding of how you will be perceived. Before you dive in, use Google and reddit's built-in search function to get a sense of the reputation you, your competitors or your industry have on reddit. "Remember that reddit is unpredictable. Don't think that you can predict or control the conversation. That's what makes it exciting. It's also what can make it a challenging place to interact as a brand," says reddit Director of Communications, Victoria Taylor. A good example of not following this advice is an AMA [conducted by developers of Electronic Arts' SimCity](#). reddit users had previously heavily criticized the game, and the AMA served as a platform for the community to vent its frustrations.
- **Community focus:** The default subreddits are very large and contain a lot of noise -- smaller communities may still have a significant user base, but are often more topic-focused. This means your content and discussion is much more likely to have an impact. It's also important to keep any posts or comments to subreddits where they are relevant. Use sites like [Metareddit](#) to search for more specific subreddits (many subreddits also keep a list of similar communities in their sidebar).

C. Provide value.

It's always a best practice when working with any social network to give value back to the community, and reddit is no exception. Part of this is simply producing valuable content. Another option is providing promotions or discounts to the community to help convert members into loyal customers.

- **Provide valuable content:** The simplest way to ensure exposure through reddit is to produce content that people want to share. "Make good content and people will submit it to reddit FOR you. Let others do the submitting," says Taylor. Take a look at the most popular content in your area of interest and adapt yours accordingly. Make sure you've added a "share to reddit" on your website and push your content to other social channels to increase the chance of it being shared on reddit.

- **Rewards and promotions:** Once your organization or product is being discussed on reddit, a powerful strategy can be to provide special offers or promotions just for the community -- especially in response to positive reviews, or otherwise positive sentiment. This mostly applies to subreddits that focus on product reviews but it can be used elsewhere. An example is when NameCheap and other major registrars [provided discount codes](#) in response to the reddit organized boycott of their competitor, GoDaddy.

D. Be interactive.

reddit is unlikely to provide value to you unless you and/or your organization actively participates. Part of providing value is using reddit as part of your day-to-day social strategy.

- **AMAs:** AMAs are the most powerful interaction tool within reddit and provide an unmatched platform for public interaction. While the main IAMA subreddit has the biggest audience, it is often swamped by top global influencers. But smaller subreddits will also hold AMAs if a person of a relevant topic is willing. Check out the communities relevant to your organization to see if they hold AMAs, or contact a moderator and ask about setting one up. If you do hold an AMA, make sure you lay out the ground rules beforehand -- if there are questions you can't answer, tag it as an AMAA (Ask Me Almost Anything) and let the users know what that means. Be positive and informative in your answers and do your best to interact with users. Check out the top ranked AMAs for examples of good strategies.
- **Responding to mentions:** If a user or users mention your organization -- negatively or positively -- a good strategy is to respond directly. This will help you either mitigate the negativity or build on the positivity. An example is when a user noted she had had a negative experience [with actor Wil Wheaton](#). Wheaton, a prominent redditor, responded and asked how he could fix the situation. The two spoke privately and, with permission, Wheaton posted the interaction on the discussion thread and [his blog](#). The thread was highlighted by the [BestOf subreddit](#) and reached the front page.

- **Participate in the community:** The stronger your community of interest is, the more value you'll gain from reddit. You can help improve the community by posting interesting content, answering questions or requests or providing information in the form of a self-post. You could offer to moderate or help with community organization.
- **Use Sponsored Headlines.** reddit's sponsored headlines are the easiest way to ensure guaranteed visibility of a link, headline or video on reddit. You can target sponsored headlines to any subreddit to ensure that the right people you want to see your content will be seeing it, and they start as affordable as \$30 a day. The best thing about sponsored headlines is that they are integrated directly into the site - just differentiated with blue highlighting. To learn more, visit <http://www.reddit.com/selfserviceoatmeal>

E. Be genuine.

reddit, as a community, is much more aware of and sensitive to promotional and corporate interests than networks such as Twitter and Facebook. An entire subreddit, HailCorporate, is dedicated to identifying (and singling out) organizations attempting to use reddit disingenuously for marketing and exposure. While few of these accusations are ever proven, it only goes to highlight the attitude much of the community has towards overt marketing on the site.

Part of the remedy of this is to provide value, but part of it is simply to be truthful and open about yourself and your goals.

- **Openness:** As long as you are clear that you represent an organization, reddit users will decide on their own whether to trust you or not. If you aren't open about your affiliations and you're found out, there's a very good chance the response will be negative. reddit doesn't provide a space for a personal biography or explanation, so it's usually a good idea to choose an identifying user name. It's also a good practice to quickly mention who you work with in comments or even in post titles.
- **Fake content:** The crowdsourcing nature of the community makes it very good at identifying anything that isn't entirely genuine. As with your identity, if you are found posting fake content, you're likely to lose any goodwill you've built up and then some. The most prominent example of this was an [AMA from actor Morgan Freeman](#), which turned out to be faked by a publicist. The community responded harshly and the post identifying it as a fake was widely circulated.

While social networks such as Twitter and Facebook will continue to be the most important for communications and marketing professionals, reddit is among those newer networks that must be taken into account in social media strategies.

reddit's fast growing user-base and robust platform make it a huge opportunity for those looking for exposure and community development. Its influential and activist community can also make it a major thorn in the side of those tasked with reputation management.

reddit is not a social network that every organization or brand needs to pay attention to. For many, however, it's absolutely necessary.