

# Nine rules for creating successful widgets

By [Jon Bishop](#)

3 Mar 2008

[Widgets](#) have only recently caught the attention of forward-thinking marketers. Here is a list of best practices for widget campaigns for helping outline a successful campaign. These rules might also be useful to know when engaging an agency, helping you to not feel completely useless!



## 1. Content must be free (duh!) engaging and relevant

Content must be free; no need to add to that. It must also be relevant and engaging, which means if you're selling a toasters, having a widget with a hot new chick pic everyday is not going to work. Now if you are *FHM* or Pirelli, then that widget might very well work.

## 2. Content must be dynamic

Remember that when running widget campaigns, you are playing in the social media space and in this minefield, you play according to the rules of the consumer (read one of my other [posts](#) for more on this). Consumers are not going to blink an eyelid at your widget if the content is boring; in this space you have to give a lot more to get attention.

So make sure your content offering is dynamic, encouraging the user to engage with it, or at least have it update often. Check out *National Geographic's* [Pic of the Day widget](#) as an example.

## 3. Make sure the design is attractive and modern

If you want the [new influencers](#) to embed your widget on their blogs/websites, it better look good. People work hard getting their blogs to look slick and stand out from the crowds, so your widget better not look like a fifth grader's artwork pinned on a fridge.

## 4. Distribute!

Like selling a book or a CD, distribution is everything. There are great websites that help you get your widget all over the web. Check out [Clearsprings](#), [Gigya](#) and [Spring Widgets](#) which are all purpose-built distribution sites. Also have a look at [download.com](#) which is a major site for software downloads but also hosts a whack of widgets.

## 5. Make it easy to share.

Why make it difficult? Easy one to work out really. For an example of making a widget easy to share, go to my blog [www.jonin60seconds.com](#) and check out my TV advert widget on the top right hand corner and click the share button. I must note, however in contradiction to my own rule, that not all the sharing works on that button as the system I am using is still in beta but you get the idea.

## 6. Put it on Facebook

Widgets don't work on Facebook and Facebook apps don't work anywhere else (for now) but fundamentally they are the same thing. So if you're going to all the effort to make a widget and design a campaign around it, you may as well convert it to a Facebook application and make it available to another 60 million people. Remember, you can also do targeted advertising on Facebook to better attract your niche to your widget or application.

## 7. Give it a home

It amazes me how many great branded widgets out there are so hard to find when you are deliberately looking for them, I usually end up finding them at download.com. So why not start a microsite for the widget: [www.nikerunadaywidget.com](http://www.nikerunadaywidget.com) or [www.nationalgeographicwidget.com](http://www.nationalgeographicwidget.com) or something like that, where you can have a central landing page for downloading, embedding and sharing of your branded widget? It is my belief that this practice would automatically elevate your quality widget above that of all the other half-baked attempts out there.

## 8. Include your widget in your advertising campaigns.

Like it or not, widgets are the latest accepted advertising and branding platform, so add it to your product / brand's marketing campaign right up alongside your banner, mag and TV adverts, posters, and web presence. I can almost guarantee you that you can measure a much more solid ROI on your widget than you can on your traditional media.

## 9. Why not run an advertising campaign about your widget?

Want to show that your company is forward-thinking or at the edge of the latest technologies? Or maybe you have a widget that can drive sales or will really increase brand interaction? Why not run a campaign in traditional and online media about this widget?

Having the landing page mentioned above will definitely help you with this campaign as a referral point or a call to action. If you position your widget as the central point of your campaign, you will definitely get big hits but more importantly, you'll be able to track the ROI of all your efforts via the widget's tracking.

• Adapted from [original blog post](#) published 19 February 2008

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