

Social Identity:

7 Best Practices for Driving Registrations



Enabling people to register using an existing identity from Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo, or other provider is one of the most powerful registration tools to emerge in the last few years. Registering people through an established online identity not only streamlines the registration process but also gives your business a head start on building deeper relationships with them.

As with any optimization effort, the devil is in the details. An effective system requires as much attention to user experience as to technology. The most successful implementations follow these seven best practices:

1. **Put social network brands to work**
2. **Provide identity options**
3. **Communicate the value**
4. **Apply available data**
5. **Link accounts**
6. **Create visual cues**
7. **Analyze to optimize**

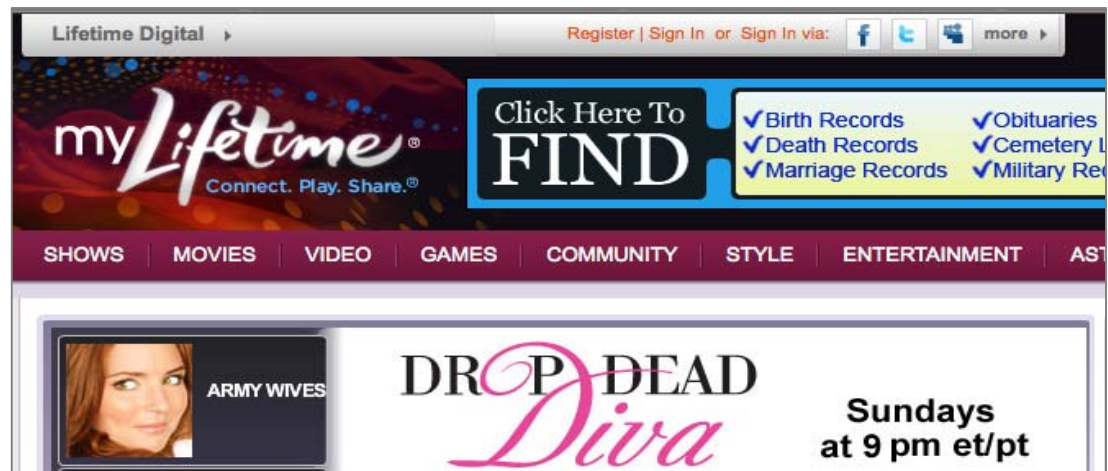
Best practice #1: Put social network brands to work on your home page

Facebook, Twitter, Google, Yahoo and the other providers are powerful brands that can help increase registration rates simply through brand recognition and affinity.

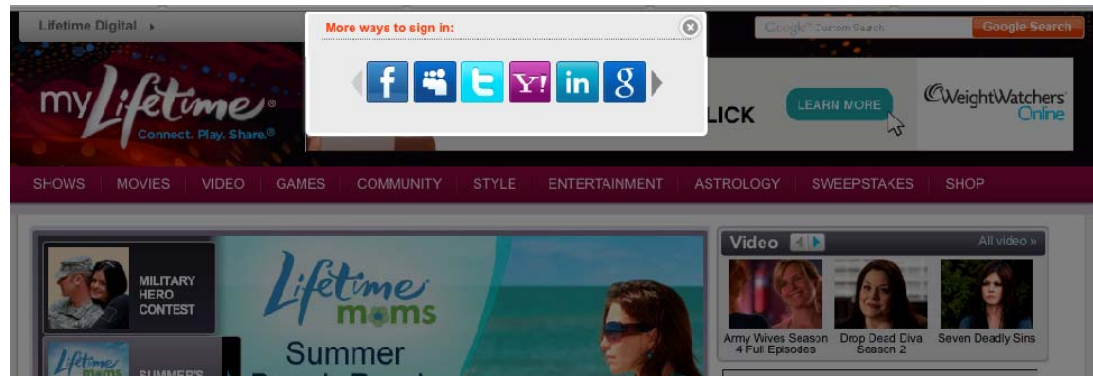
Best practice is to display a minimum of three social network icons on the home page, and above the fold, to indicate that visitors can sign in using a social network

“The social network brands are powerful forces for driving people to register on your site”

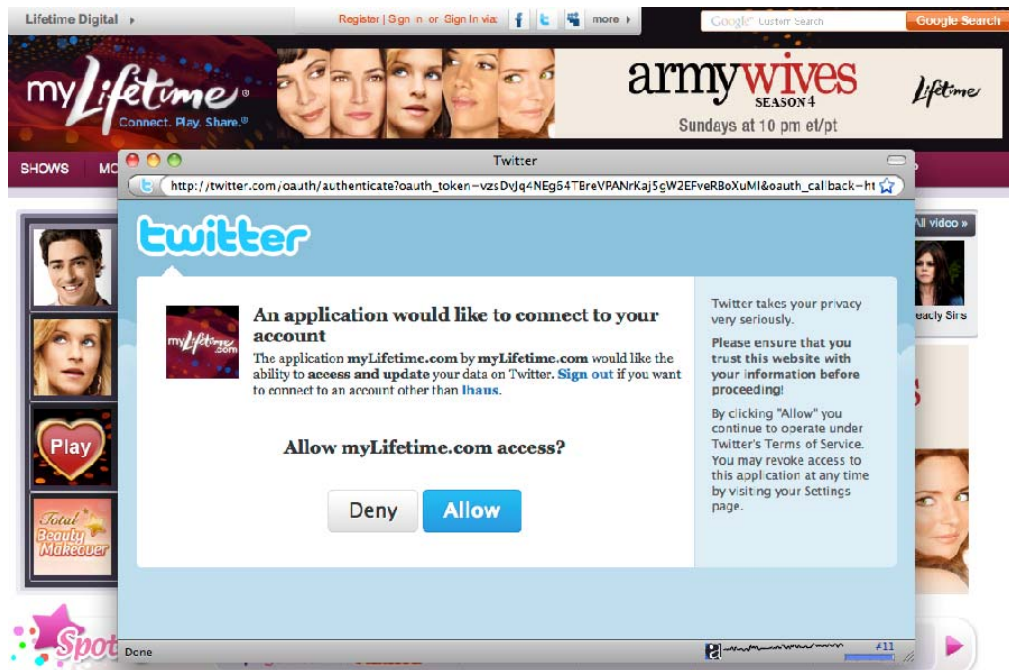
identity. It is important to clearly label or call-out the social network icons as registration options, so people do not confuse them with icons used for sharing.



To enable access to more than three options, you can include a “more” button or arrow, which when clicked launches a full menu of choices, as in the mylifetime.com example below:



One caveat to putting these powerful brands to work is ensuring the entire process still feels like it is part of your site. Be sure that the authentication window for each provider is compact, centered, and made to feel part of the site to make the process appear seamless. Note how the Twitter authentication window below appears as a natural part of the process:



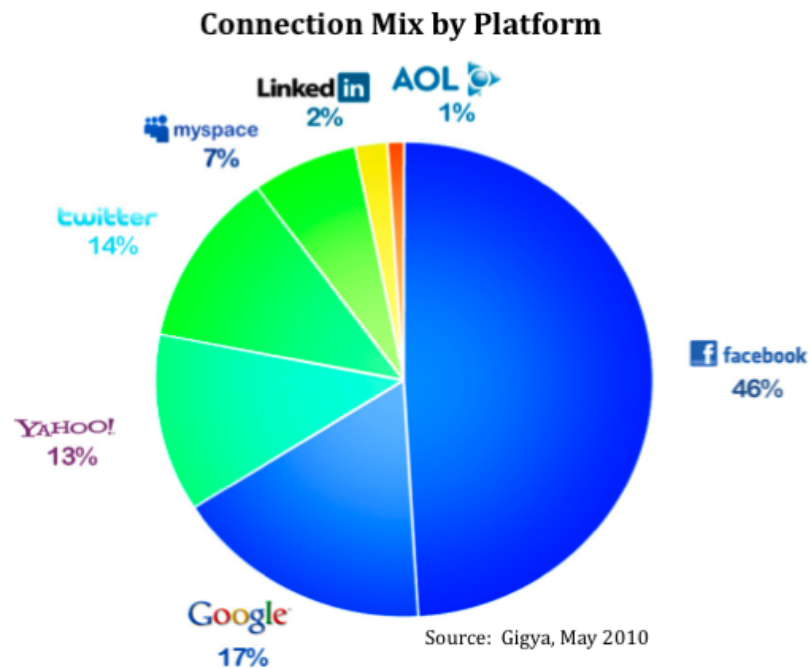
Insider tip: Users are drawn to the social network icons, so you can maximize participation by making the social network icons as prominent, if not more prominent, than the link to traditional registration options.

Best practice #2: Offer multiple identity options

A key goal of every site should be to maximize the number of people who are able to register using an existing identity. The best way to do this is to offer people their choice of identities to use on your site, and at least three choices at a minimum. Identity providers include social networks, webmail platforms and other OpenID issuers such as Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo, Microsoft, Google, and LinkedIn.

“If you don’t offer your visitors multiple identity options, you may be leaving more than half of them out”

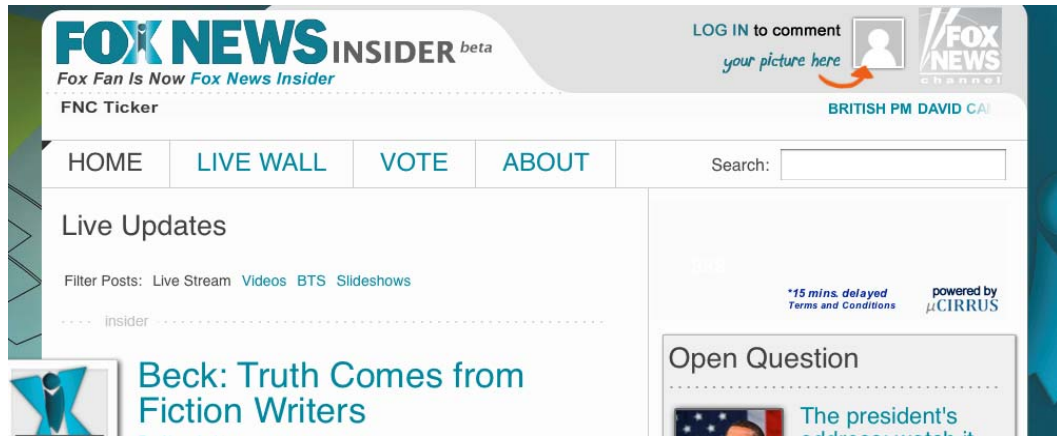
The chart below illustrates the average mix of connections by provider in the month of May 2010. Across millions of connections on client sites, we find that Facebook is the identity of choice for approximately 46% of visitors. That means if you don’t offer your visitors other options, you may be leaving more than half of them out and losing the opportunity to strengthen the relationship.



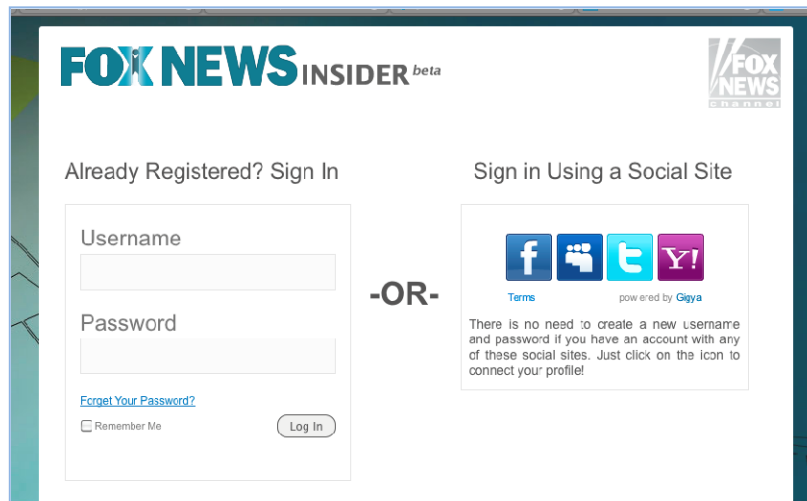
Insider Tip: Consider using a vendor that aggregates all of the social network connections to make it easier to implement and manage multiple identity options

Best Practice #3: Provide a reason to register – and use an existing identity

Fox news does a terrific job of explaining to new visitors why they should register: it’s required to comment. They even demonstrate how they will personalize the experience for visitors who sign in.



Fox takes it a step further, explaining why it's easier to use an existing identity – no need to create a new username and password. See in the example below how the large, brand icons draw the eye:



Insider tip: Consolidate the sign in and registration screens. Because the path for registering or signing in a user differs only after they authenticate using their existing identity, it is simpler and less intimidating to ask them only to sign in. Once a user authenticates with your site, you can take them through the desired flow.

Best practice #4. Apply available data to streamline the registration process

One of the benefits of registering people via existing identities, from social networks

“Use the data your users make available to your site to minimize or entirely remove forms”

to webmail platforms, is the ability to collect and apply publicly available information to streamline the registration process.

This is an enormous win for marketers, solving the age-old tradeoff between collecting the information needed to personalize the site experience and communicate with the user while keeping the registration process short and simple to reduce abandonment rates.

Apply available data to minimize or eliminate registration forms

Facebook recently¹ changed its terms of use to match that of the other social and webmail platforms. They now enable websites to not only access but also indefinitely store available user information when a user signs in using a Facebook Identity.

Data from any provider can be directly stored by the site as part of that user's account, making it possible to register people in a single step.

Information that each provider makes available is summarized in the table below:

Profile Data:

Profile data is available to websites after a user authenticates directly using an existing identity. Data varies widely by provider and depends on user permissions. Online businesses are typically applying available information to provide a more relevant, personalized user experience.

	Name	Email	Nickname	Photo	Profile URL	Birthday	Gender	Location	Social Graph	Add'l Profile Info
facebook	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
twitter	X		X	X	X			X	X	
YAHOO!	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Google	X	X	X	X	X				X	X
myspace®	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
LinkedIn	X			X	X	X		X	X	X
Aol.	X	X	X				X	X	X	

gigya Social Optimization for Online Business

DATA FROM MONTH ENDING MAY 2010

SOURCE: GIGYA.COM

¹ F8 conference April 2010

Pre-populate forms

If you do choose to create a form to ask for additional information, use available data to pre-populate as many fields as possible, such as first name, last name, and email address, to show the user that much of the work has already been done for them. In the example below, WilliamHill.com not only pre-populates the form, but also clearly indicates to the user (via checkmarks) which fields have been filled automatically:

The screenshot shows a 'Sign Up' form for William Hill. The form is divided into two main sections. The left section is for creating a new user, and the right section is for linking an existing account. The new user section is pre-populated with the following information:

Field	Value	Status
First Name *	Liza	✓
Last Name *	Hausman	✓
Date of Birth *	1 January 1940	✓
Email *	lhaus@yahoo.com	✓
Country *	United States	✓
City *	Palo Alto, CA	✓
Zip/Postal code *	94301	✓
Address *		
Phone *		
Language	English	

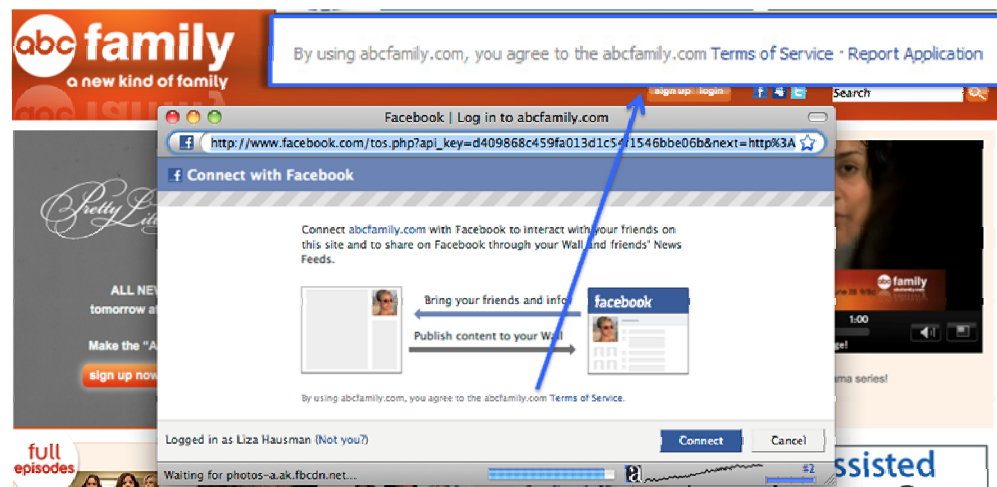
The right section is for existing account holders and includes fields for Username and Password, and a 'LINK ACCOUNTS' button. The word 'OR' is placed between the two sections.

Keep additional fields minimal

If additional fields are necessary within the form, use as few as possible. Remember, you can always ask for more information later. If you still want more data from registered users, you can use *progressive profiling*, asking for additional information in subsequent visits in a way that doesn't slow progress toward an objective on your site. ABC.com asks for additional registration information before accepting a comment. Other ideas include asking for information before the site plays a second or third video, or displays a second or third article.

One of the most common additional fields asked on forms is the agreement to a site's Terms and Conditions. Facebook's authentication process now enables websites to

incorporate this step by including agreement as part of the authentication process in a single step, as in the ABC Family example below:



“Link existing account data to social network accounts to avoid duplicate records”

Special Note: Retailer Best Practice

While allowing people to authenticate with an existing identity, retailers should also require customers to create a site-specific password. This password is for additional security and is requested only at the time of checkout.

Insider tip: Email addresses are pre-validated by the identity provider, so you don’t need to confirm them. This capability enables sites to focus initial email communications on welcoming visitors and highlighting key features, rather than the email confirmation process.

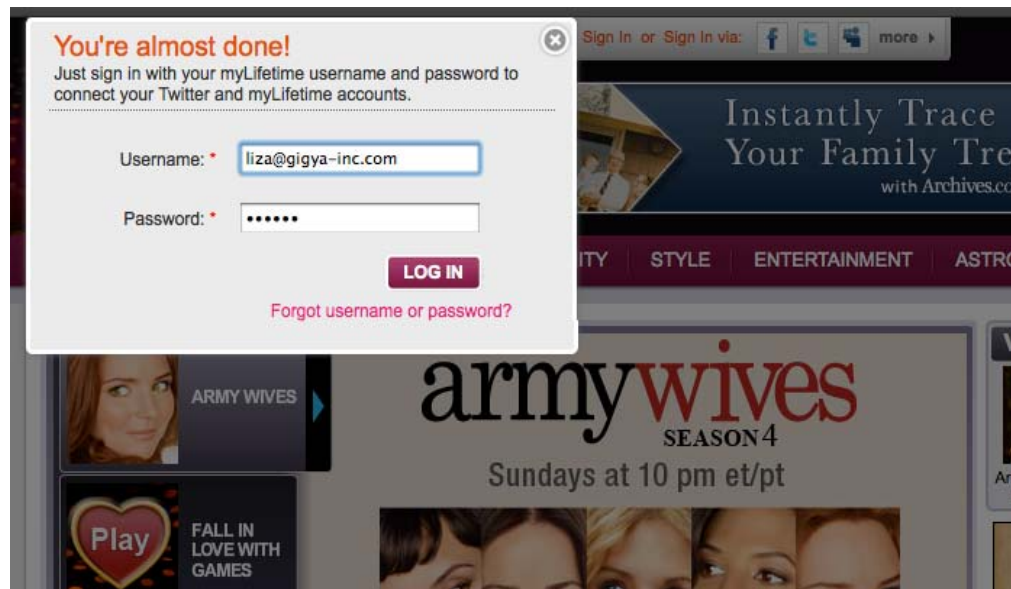
Best practice #5. Link existing accounts with social network accounts

When a previously registered user chooses to subsequently sign in to a website with an existing identity, don’t create a duplicate record. Best practice is to link existing account information, history and preferences with their social network account or accounts.

When people register with a social or other identity, they can sign in with that identity

each time they return to the site, and don't have to worry about remembering a site-specific username and password. Linking your existing registered user accounts to their social network or other external account enables any user to simply click on the icon of choice to immediately connect – no username or password needed

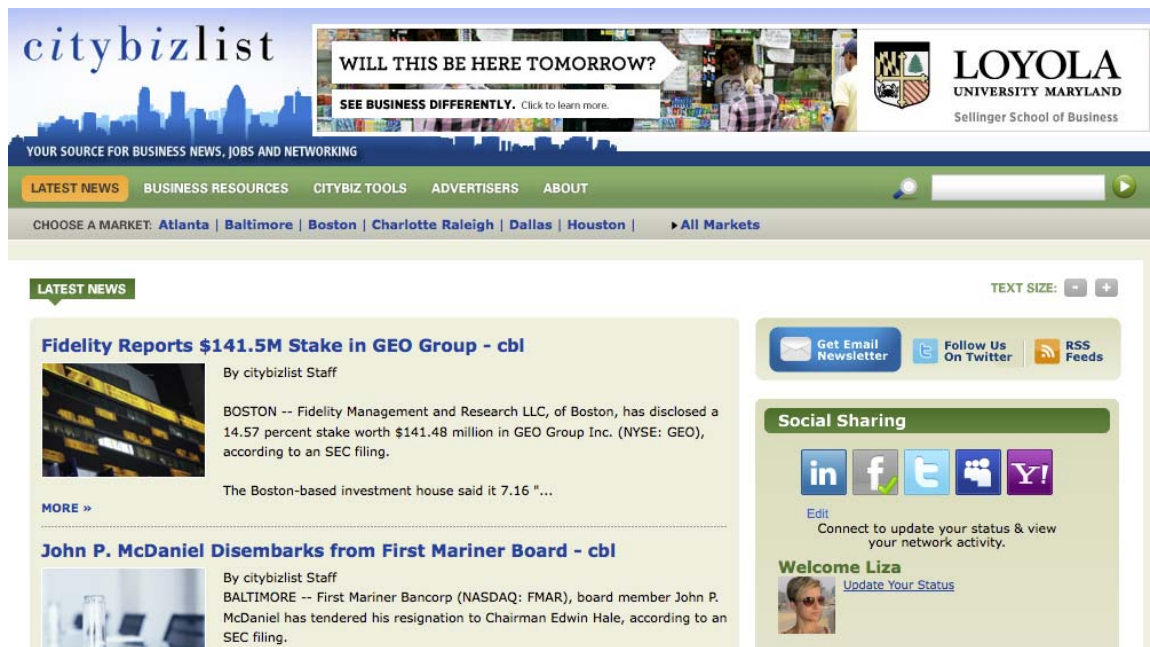
“Use strong visual cues to let users know the process is both complete and a success”



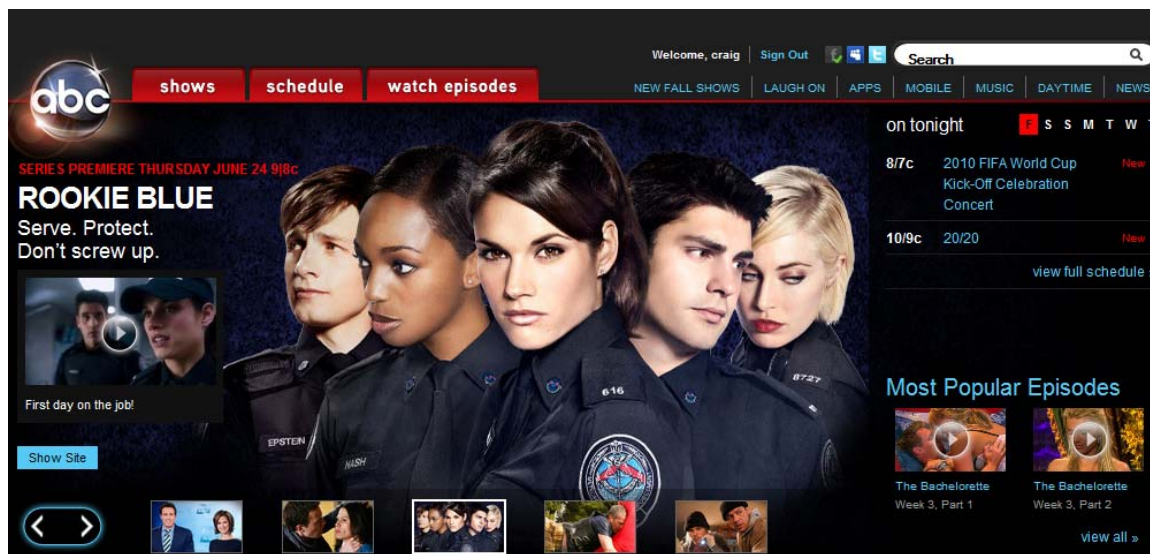
Insider tip: Ask people upfront to link their accounts to maintain account consistency and avoid duplicate accounts.

Best practice #6. Give visual cues that a user has successfully completed the sign in or registration process

When the registration or sign in process is complete, give the user clear confirmation. Put a checkmark on the platform icon or gray it out, display the user's existing profile picture, and most importantly greet them by name. Don't leave them wondering if their registration was successful, and don't waste the opportunity to begin building on the strong foundation you have established for the relationship. In the following examples, citybizlist.com displays the user's photo and a welcome message containing the user's name.



The social network identity chosen by the user is also clearly identified; ABC also displays a welcome message customized with user name, and identifies the identity chosen by the user.



Insider Tip: Place visual cues in a position where people would naturally look for confirmation, like the area where they clicked to sign in, or another intuitive location.

“Test not only the icons you display but also the order in which you display them”

Best Practice #7: Analyze to Optimize

Testing can help you determine which are the most important identity providers to display on your own site. User preferences can vary significantly. For example, while Facebook is the choice of approximately 50% of visitors across all sites, 45% of people choose Twitter as their preferred identity on news sites.

Insider tip: Run an A/B test on which icons to display as well as the order in which you display them.

Gigya: The Experts in Applying Social Identity

Gigya is the leading social optimization platform for online business, connecting websites seamlessly to the most popular and powerful social network platforms and OpenID providers including Facebook for Websites, Sign-in with Twitter, and LinkedIn. Gigya’s technology enables customers to provide registration, social sharing, and interactive features to drive traffic, increase conversion rates and grow time spent on their websites. In addition, Gigya provides plugins, analytics, best practices, consulting and customer support to ensure clients can optimize the social performance of their websites.

Gigya’s technology touches more than 250 million people each month, and is the clear choice for social optimization for a wide spectrum of online publishers and retailers, including A&E, Disney, ESPN, Reuters, and Turner. Online business the world over is turning to Gigya to make social connectivity and optimization a key competitive advantage.

To learn more about how Gigya’s Social Optimization solutions can help your site implement Facebook for Websites, Twitter, LinkedIn and other top network APIs to increase registrations and decrease shopping cart abandonment, contact a Gigya representative at 650.353.7230, or visit www.gigya.com. You can also reach us on Facebook or on Twitter @Gigya.