

# SELLING GOES SOCIAL

## Partners tapping 'stars' to up sales

By Laura Baverman

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When dunnhumbyUSA partnered with Kroger in 2003 to analyze shopper data and build a large base of loyal customers, the work was considered leading edge.

Today, Kroger is experiencing record sales and grabbing market share in most of the cities in which it operates. Another dunnhumby client, Macy's Inc., also has outperformed its department store peers in sales post-recession.

Downtown-based dunnhumby could easily keep doing what it's always done, tracking customer purchases and personalizing promotions and coupons in-store or through direct mail to individuals.

But the fast-growing company wants to stay ahead. In May, it purchased BzzAgent, a 10-year-old Boston firm that uses active social-media users to collect and disseminate information about brands. Its CEO Dave Balter recently was named one of Boston's "Hottest Technology CEOs" by Harvard Business School.

Today, Balter is a keynote speaker as the two-day Digital Non-Conference begins downtown. It's expected to attract 300 regional digital-advertising, design and marketing professionals.

BzzAgent relies on 800,000 volunteer "agents" to help brands test new products and create buzz once those products land in stores. The company sends samples to agents who are likely to enjoy a product (based on information they've shared about themselves) and who have a large following on social media or blogs.

"We give them experiences



Provided

**BzzAgent CEO Dave Balter** uses social media to create buzz.



**Jacobs**



**Gallop**



**Keylock**

## Digital Non-Conference going on downtown

Dave Balter will be joined by other digital visionaries at the Digital Non-Conference hosted by AdClub Cincinnati and Ad2 Cincinnati, today and Wednesday, downtown.

The fourth annual conference brings together marketing experts from Cincinnati, the region and the country for conversation and meetings about digital marketing. Headquarters for the conference is the Hilton Netherland Plaza. It's called a non-conference because many of the presentations will be at bars, restaurants and other non-traditional venues.

Among the presentations today:

■ Balter, CEO of one of the region's newest digital marketing players, BzzAgent, speaks on "Advocacy in a Social World" at 4 p.m. in the Hilton's Hall of Mirrors.

■ Cindy Gallop, a New York-based brand consultant and founder of two websites, IfWeRanTheWorld and MakeLoveNotPorn, will share her transition from advertising executive to digital entrepreneur. She'll weigh in on where digital marketing is headed in "The Future of Advertising," also in the Hall of Mirrors, today at 11 a.m.

■ Valerie Jacobs, vice president and group director of LPK Trends, an office of downtown-based brand agency LPK, speaks on "Building a Place to Connect: The Brand-Consumer Relationship and the Future Role of Marketers." It's at 2 p.m. at The Penguin, 441 Vine St., downtown.

■ Matt Keylock, senior vice president of new business development and partnerships at dunnhumby USA, has been working with Balter and BzzAgent. He'll present "Realizing the Promise of Digital" at 3 p.m. today at Lunar Lounge, 435 Elm St., downtown.

More information is available, and registration is still open at [www.digital-cincinnati.org](http://www.digital-cincinnati.org).

— David Holthaus