

# The New Next

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It's no longer enough for a brand to use the digital channel to deliver a message. Smart brands come up with "advertools" — free applications with no strings attached.

## Fill Up Your Adverttool Kit

**E**NGAGEMENT'S THE THING WHEREIN I'LL CATCH THE ATTENTION OF THE CONSUMER! So goes the current thinking. Forget all that push stuff — we can't break through. There's too much clutter, too many channels, too many brands, and 30-second spots don't work anymore anyway. Everyone either gets up for snacks during commercials or screens them out with TiVo. I'll use the Web instead, and then consumers will seek me out and bathe in my brand to their hearts' content.

Well, maybe.

But with more than 80 million Web sites out there and a new blog created every second, the Web has become more cluttered and fragmented than any other medium.

It's no longer enough for a brand to use digital communications merely as a platform to deliver a message or create an experience. Now smart brands take it a giant step further: They strive to make their communication channels provide a *service* value, too.

To do this, they build what we call "advertools." An adverttool is a communication channel, created by a brand, which offers in itself a functional utility to consumers — free, and with no strings attached.

Adverttools don't just make your brand easier to sell. They make it easier to buy.

Of course, Google dominates this space, because it

built its business model around providing valuable digital services in exchange for the right to deliver messaging. But other brands are beginning to develop creative adverttools, too. Here are our six favorites:

» **Google Desktop:** This one allows you to search your computer as though it were the Web. It's an awesome application, and it's far faster and more powerful than Windows Explorer. It delivers great value while keeping you hooked on Google. [desktop.google.com](http://desktop.google.com)


» **eBay Watcher:** You'll never miss an auction when you have eBay Watcher, another gem among the many recently released Google Gadgets. It sits on your desktop and allows you to view items from your eBay Watch List. And it tracks the current price and time remaining on each auction. [desktop.google.com/plugins/i/ebay.html](http://desktop.google.com/plugins/i/ebay.html)

» **Honda Mobile:** Honda understands that life on the road isn't quite as glamorous as it sounds. So the company created Honda Mobile, a free tool for your cell phone that helps with some of driving's daily hassles, like keeping track of all your travel expenses. [honda.co.uk/hondamobile](http://honda.co.uk/hondamobile) (scheduled to launch in September)

» **Yutaka Loves London:** Here's an entertaining and useful guide to London, all from the point of view of

Yutaka, an obsessive Japanese fan of the city. And should you want to go, Virgin Atlantic, which provides this tool, will be glad to fly you there. [yutakaloveslondon.com](http://yutakaloveslondon.com)

» **Verizon Beatbox Mixer:** This free mixing tool allows budding musicians to craft their own homemade beatbox masterpieces. The mixer is the latest expression of Verizon's "Richer, Deeper, Broader" broadband push. [beatboxmixer.com](http://beatboxmixer.com)

» **Google Spreadsheet:** Google's free version of Microsoft's Excel is an adverttool so powerful that — together with Writely, Google's word processor, and Google Gmail and Calendar — it could seriously damage Microsoft's Office business. [spreadsheets.google.com](http://spreadsheets.google.com). 

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