

GREEN-TECH TRAINING + BLUEPRINT MARYLAND + SOCIAL COUPONS

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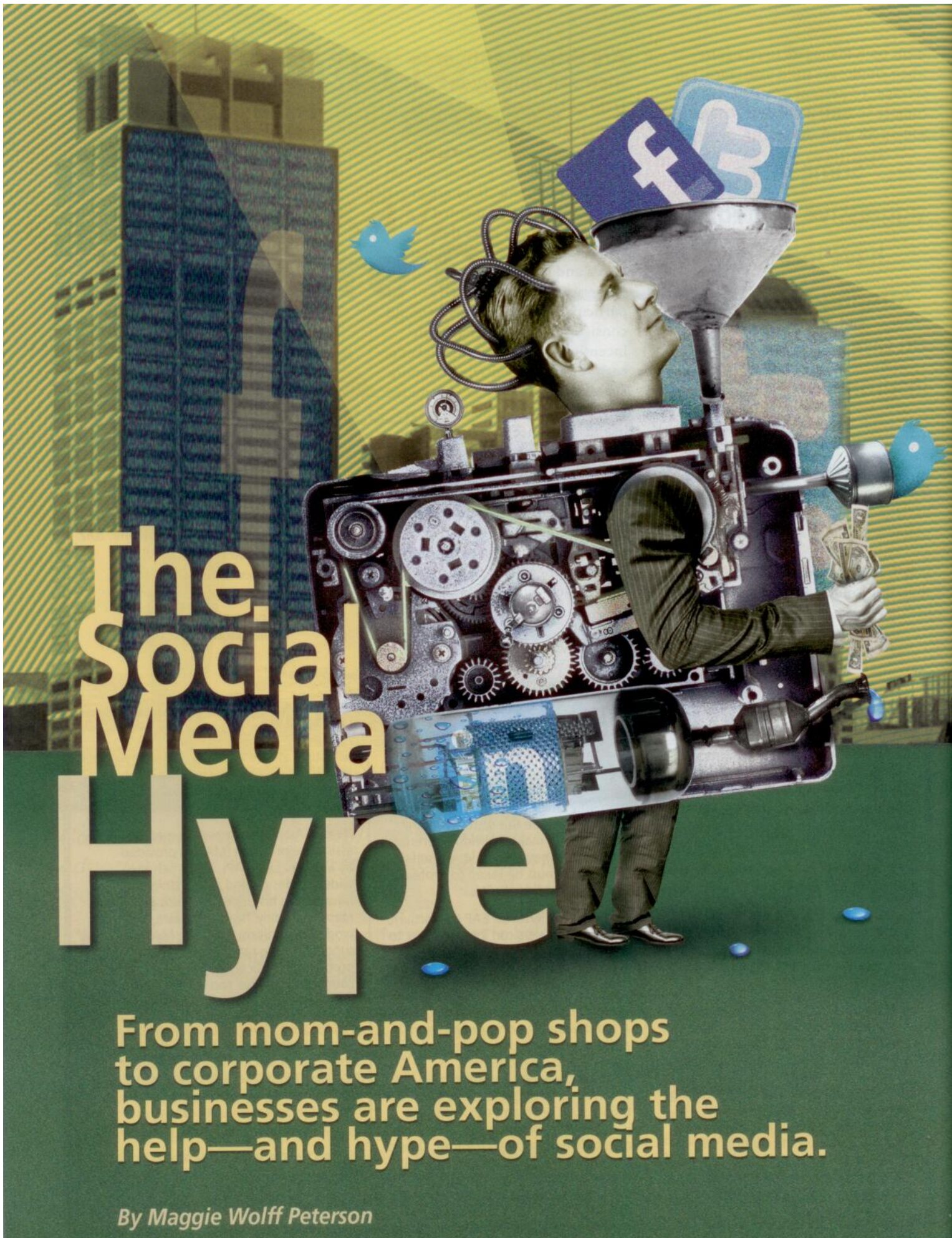
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The Social Media Hype

How Much Is It Helping?



The Social Media Hype

From mom-and-pop shops to corporate America, businesses are exploring the help—and hype—of social media.

By Maggie Wolff Peterson



Stacy Ramirez is hooked. Her salon, **Bella Bethesda**, tweets four times a day. It can be an update on a new hair product or maybe a few words about an upcoming style trend. All Ramirez knows is that in a single week, the salon gained 29 new followers and all it took was fewer than 140 digital characters at a time.

Business applications for social media are increasing. When businesses create interactive Facebook pages and use Twitter to reach clients, the barrier between social and commercial interaction online blurs thoroughly.

"Social media are so broad," says John Wolf, a public relations specialist at Marriott International in Bethesda. "The company is using these tools for many, many things," both externally and internally. Marriott maintains Facebook pages for its three main hotel brands, Renaissance, Courtyard and Ritz-Carlton, as well as a myriad of pages for individual properties. Further, it uses Twitter to interact with customers.