

Mass comms

Back when I was in grad school, I studied mass communications. The theory was that advertising, public relations and journalism all reached mass audiences. Back then, there was no Twitter, no one blogged or even had a website. Cable existed but lots of people still watched the broadcast channels. People still read the newspaper. Magazines were everywhere. Mass media was alive and well.

Today, mass media are dying. Witness the declining numbers for the broadcast channels. An article in Fortune Magazine about Oprah said that one of the reasons she is going to her own cable channel is because her audience on regular TV is declining. We have all seen magazines disappear and newspapers shrink (and become more irrelevant).

The question is how do we communicate messages to the masses when the masses are getting more and more segmented? People are demanding personalization. No one seems to listen to the radio anymore, they listen to their own playlists on their MP3 player. In social media, we follow those we want to follow.

There are messages that must get to the masses. For instance, last year we had the H1N1 "pandemic." Health information had to be sent out to the largest number of people.

What got me thinking about this is that we have had an increasing number of pedestrians being struck and killed by cars here in the DC area. Clearly, more people are driving either drunk or distractedly, and are speeding on top of it. In the past week alone, we have seen more than half a dozen people KILLED not to mention others who are injured. How do we combat this? How can we get the word out if there is no mass medium that is effective?

In the age of Twitter, where would a PSA make real impact?

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