

Are you stuck?

At my gym, I see several folks doing the same thing, day after day. Some of these people even use the exact same machine at the same time, every day. Are they getting more fit? Probably not, because to get more fit you have to challenge yourself, you have to change things up.

Those gym rats always doing the same thing are stuck. Stuck in a routine (perhaps best to call it a fitness rut).

Are you stuck in your marketing routine?

- How long has it been since you updated your website?
- How long have you been using the same brochure?
- When did you develop your tagline?
- How long have you had your logo? (Yes, logos need to be refreshed...typography changes!)
- Have you experimented with social media marketing?
- Have you experimented with *anything*?

If you are stuck—that is, you are doing the same things over and over, not changing things up, even a little bit, it's OK.

It's OK if you want to remain where you are and not move forward.

If, on the other hand, you want to move forward, now is the perfect time to get unstuck. Historically, December is more about partying than productivity, so you will have plenty of time to review and revise. What needs to be changed? What will bring you more value?

If you need some advice to get started, here is a good article from the Business Insider.

What will you do to get unstuck? Please share in the comments.

What sways you?

Today, on Thanksgiving Day, many people are sitting around plotting how to tackle “black Friday.” What stores should they visit? Whose gifts should they get? How early should they get there? And so forth.

Many of these folks are swayed by the promise of getting AMAZING! deals. Low low prices! Doorbusters! But are the deals worth the hassle? Hard to say.

The truth is that we can be swayed by many things. For instance, the reports about the TSA’s new invasive procedures. It was widely reported on TV, yet it seems that few if any people participated in Opt-Out day. At least that is what is being reported today. The Washington Post has yet another editorial supporting the TSA, and a front page article saying that very few people protested the TSA. Does that sway you?

A new movie opened yesterday starring Jake Gyllenhaal and Anne Hathaway called Love & Other Drugs. The Washington Post gave it one and a half stars. Roger Ebert gave it three. Which review sways you? When you are deciding whether to spend \$10 plus, which reviewer will make you go to a movie or not?

My point is that we are swayed by opinions, news reporting, public relations and advertising but we are not always aware of what is making us feel one way or another. These forces are powerful—they surround us and provide us information.

Oh and the force that seems to sway the most people is what their peers are doing. If everybody is going around using Foursquare, then we are too. And on this week of Thanksgiving there has been the often disingenuous need to express gratitude publicly. On Twitter, there’s a hashtag for that.

I am not against gratitude or expressing thanks. But if I do it, it is not because I am swayed because 400 people in my Twitter stream are expressing all the blather they are thankful for.

What sways you this Thanksgiving and holiday season? Why do you do what you do?

Happy Thanksgiving to all, and thank you for reading.

Inform your customers first

Perhaps you heard yesterday that Netflix is adding a streaming-only option and increasing its rates. It was reported on various different blogs, websites and of course, Twitter. Here's a sampling (and notice the date/time):

L.A. Times

ABC News

Consumerist

I am a Netflix customer, and guess what, **I heard about it from Netflix directly last night, through a company email that arrived at 6:38 p.m.** Of course, by then I already knew that I was going to be paying more.

Companies should tell their own customers about changes to ANYTHING (pricing, service, hours, etc.) before they release the information publicly. Customers should not find out that their service provider or bank or whatever will be changing its ways from third parties. It does not make good business

sense. It alienates customers.

When communicating news, you must have a hierarchy:

First, communicate changes to your internal organization.

Second, communicate to your users/customers.

Third, communicate to the public at large using media relations, advertising or other mass channels.

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Sometimes, it isn't about marketing

By now, you have probably heard about George W. Bush's new book/memoir *Decision Points*. Bush went on a media blitz to promote the book and appeared on the Today Show and Oprah, among other venues. Many have said *Decision Points* is about trying to recast how the Bush II presidency is viewed. It certainly is a chance for Bush to explain why he did what he did. But the question is—will the book change the public's perception of Bush?

I heard a pundit (I can't remember who or on what show) say that if you liked Bush before, you will like him now, but if you didn't like Bush then, you will certainly not like him more after reading the book. Perhaps only if you had no opinion or were undecided would you change your perception of

Bush after reading this book.

Why? Because sometimes it isn't about marketing. Products or services are good or not good, useful or not useful, and no amount of marketing changes that. If you are a Bush hater, no matter how many positive books are written about him and how many accolades he receives, you are not going to change your mind.

Same thing happens with housing. I know a Realtor who is trying to sell a house. The house itself is very roomy, with a great layout and other nice features—except it is very close to a major highway. The Realtor is marketing the house in all the usual ways—open houses, brochures, well worded descriptions, etc. But unless you don't mind having a view of traffic, you are not going to buy the house. It is not about the marketing. It is about the product.

Addicted?

Lots of people describe themselves as addicted to Twitter or Facebook, or to social media in general.

Are you addicted?

With alcohol, there is **social use** (drinking in social situations), **habitual use** (drinking consistently, part of your usual routine) and **alcoholism** (where you *need* to drink, can't function without alcohol and which is a medical condition requiring treatment).

With social media, I think most people are not addicts, they are habitual users. Just like we have become habitual users of

email, but we are not addicted to it. We use social media in our everyday life, it is part and parcel of our work life. But do we NEED social media to do what we do? No. We can use other tools to communicate (although lots of people can't seem to use the phone to have actual conversations) Can we live without it? Yes (if Twitter went down you would still know how to get in touch with people, right?).

Are we ruining our health by using it? Only if you never leave your computer or smart phone and limit your physical activity to keying in.

The key is to realize that social media is a tool and not a substitute for interaction, strategy, etc. You may use social media habitually, even heavily, but you probably are not addicted to it. You could shut down the computer or power off your smart phone and still talk to people. Right?

[polldaddy poll=4060801]

Go check-in somewhere else

If you are on Twitter or Facebook, you will have seen many of your "friends" tell you that they are at Starbucks or at the airport. Some of them are "mayors" and some have "badges." It's all about the Foursquare check-in. Many nonprofit marketing consultants, and more for-profit marketing consultants, are advising that organizations/companies should get on Foursquare (or other location-based services). The idea is to have people in the vicinity know you are there—offer those people special deals or more information just for checking-in.

But. There is a problem: only four percent of adults online

“check-in” or use geo-location services, according to research from Pew.

To me, the rush to embrace check-ins and geo-location has more to do with the fact that marketers have lots of friends using Foursquare, and less to do with reality. To suggest to nonprofits that they must be on location-based services is based on what exactly? It is based on the desire to be cutting-edge, to suggest something “ahead of the curve.” What it is not is practical. Nonprofits have many many other communications and marketing challenges to fix, other than having people check-in.

In my opinion, the check-in is really great for retail and restaurants/bars, especially if you are promoting a special or a sale or trying to build interest. But, just realize that there is an element of unfairness to those patrons who don’t have smart phones, or don’t do check-ins (apparently 96% of the population).

Perhaps people are not so eager to share their locations. It does seem big-brother to me. And this is what the article Tag-Along Marketing in the New York Times talks about.

Will check-ins take off in the future? It’s questionable. And you should not base marketing advice on something that is still in the works.

And President Obama agrees

In an interview to 60 Minutes (which is excerpted in this CBS News piece and which will air on Sunday, November 7), President Obama says:

"I think that's a fair argument. I think that, over the course of two years we were so busy and so focused on getting a bunch of stuff done that, we stopped paying attention to the fact that leadership isn't just legislation. That it's a matter of persuading people. And giving them confidence and bringing them together. And setting a tone,"

Leadership is about inspiring people to follow you. Inspiration requires that you have an ability to communicate.

I will be interested to see if the White House changes how it communicates. And to see what the Democratic leadership does—will Harry Reid still be Majority Leader in the Senate? Perhaps not such a great idea, since his failure to communicate nearly lost him his seat to an extreme candidate.

Why the Democrats lost

A Caffeinated editorial

The Democrats lost because they lost the message. President Obama, his administration and certainly the House leadership did a poor job of communicating what they accomplished and of refuting the sometimes crack-pot ideas the Republicans, and especially the Tea Party candidates were offering.

Communications matter in shaping perception. The Tea Party was especially successful in convincing the public that Obama was “socializing” the country. The perception of the Democrats as un-American was instilled. Did Obama prove otherwise? No. He didn’t seem to grasp that how he communicated what his administration achieved was just as important as what he actually did. He didn’t make the case that the changes he made

may have helped stem the recession. He also didn't make the case that jobs were his number one priority. What was? Health care reform.

Timing is crucial in communications and in politics. If Obama had put health care on the back burner (or at least seemed to) he may have been able to say he prioritized jobs.

This mid-term election is a tremendous failure for Democrats. The Republicans were led by someone who constantly put his foot in his mouth, Michael Steele, and yet managed to win control of the House. Sarah Palin, arguably the most superficial politicians of all time, is the voice of the Tea Party on a national stage. She talks in platitudes and unsupported statements, and yet the Democrats couldn't find a way to reduce her credibility.

Nancy Pelosi, who is a brilliant politician, failed to make the case. Obama failed to make the case. And the many incumbents who lost their seat, failed to make the case.

It all comes down to communications and having a message that is relate-able, repeatable, and that resonates with voters. Democrats did not have this in 2010.



You may be overlooking something

If you blog, for yourself or for your organization, do you know what your blog looks like to the outside world? How are your readers seeing you? Are they subscribing in a reader, via

email or just visiting your blog? Are those visitors sharing your blog? If so, how are they doing it?

(Caffeinated tip of a few days ago was to make sure your blog is shareable.)

Many bloggers out there, including those that blog for large organizations, are NOT checking to see how their blog looks. I can tell you because there are several I follow in my Google Reader. Here are several fixable mistakes these bloggers are making:

- Duplicating entries
- Having no title appear for the blog or having a generic title like "Most Recent Entries."
- No sharing button
- Sharing button that does not fill in information when you share so the post only has a link and no title.
- Only sharing the first line of the post
- Not allowing sharing from the reader
- Not having a visible RSS feed or email subscription tab on your blog

Happily, all these are fixable. Start by following your own blog via RSS feed in a reader and via email subscription. Use your sharing button to see how (and if) it works. You may be overlooking something that will turn off one of your readers. You should probably view the blog on someone else's computer too.

You may be overlooking something. Protect your brand and your blog!

Are you hitting the mark?

Are your efforts paying off? Is your marketing achieving results?

How do you know? Obviously, the first sign is that you are generating numbers: sales, impressions.

But how do you know what people think about you, your product, your service and your marketing efforts? This is a harder question to answer. If people don't attend your event, it could be for a myriad of reasons (don't have time, costs too much not interested). Same thing with your product or service. How do you know why people aren't buying?

It comes down to requesting feedback, and to listening to what your audience has to say.

First, you should ALWAYS request feedback from attendees to your event and people who buy your product. Make it easy for people to provide comments on your website. Have an email address specifically for feedback.

Second, listen to what exactly is being said about you in the comments you receive. Also, cast a wider net: check out SocialMention (or other social media monitoring tools) to see what is being said about you or your brand.

Last week, I tweeted to a local marketing networking group that they were sending me too many email messages. In fact, it got to a point that I would just delete rather than read. The organizational response to me via Twitter was to tell me they would be happy to remove me from the list. I told them to take my comment seriously. I was giving them FEEDBACK. They didn't want to listen.

You will not know if you are hitting the mark with your marketing efforts if you don't make an effort to gather

feedback. You may get some people to buy your product or attend your event, but you may be missing a host of others.

