

Got clout?

I am not sure if it is just another way to establish your influence or another popularity measure on Twitter, but now there are several tools to measure your rank and influence on Twitter.

This post from CIO presents five options to measure your Twitter clout.:

- Buzzom
- Topsy
- Twinfluence
- Twitter Grader
- Twitter Score

Two other tools not mentioned in the article are:

- Klout
- Twitteranalyzer

I tested my score on a couple of these. I liked both Twitter Grader and Klout, although they do not coincide. According to Twitter Grader I have a 95 out of 100 whereas on Klout it is 25. Hmm...

I did not like Twitter Score. Twinfluence tells you who has the most followers and does not really help you with your own effectiveness.

In my opinion, the most important measure for your communications effectiveness is how often you are being re-tweeted. If you share good material, people will share it.

Did you try any of the above? What is your take?

Is Twitter a High School for Adults?

There are followers and lists and getting many of each seems to be the focus for many people on Twitter. Some people make pleas for more followers and then there is "Follow Friday" in which people recommend to their followers other people to follow.

If this sounds a bit like a high school popularity contest, it is, for some people. Many people use Twitter to give and get information and ideas, but there is a subset of people who use Twitter to prove their hotness/coolness/hipness/in-the-knowness. These people go so far as to form cliques on Twitter, endlessly referencing their clique friends in every Tweet. They converse in public with each other and rarely engage with non-clique/inner circle people. Several of these people are "social media experts," which is ironic since they are not being very social (I must credit Daria Steigman of Steigman Communications with this idea).

I have theories as to why Twitter becomes like a high school for these people but I won't share them here. It is important to remember what social networks are for, and that is to make it easy to create connection. If all you are doing on Twitter is sending shout-outs to your five closest buddies or endlessly promoting yourself, you are not using Twitter to its full potential. I can't say that you are not using Twitter for what it is intended because I have no idea what its founder was thinking when he created the microblogging site.

Twitter is a great learning tool and it is a great sharing tool. It democratizes access and can really serve to mobilize people around causes. Eugene Robinson makes excellent observation in today's Washington Post, saying:

Twitter and other networking sites are unfiltered by editors or other gatekeepers. They rely on the wisdom of the crowd to sort out what is accurate and what is not. To someone (like me) who has spent his career as a gatekeeper, this was tremendously unsettling – at first. During the Iran protests, I saw how quickly Twitter users identified misinformation that was being posted by government propagandists. The self-policing capability of the medium is impressive.

The other big difference is that social networking offers not just information, but also the opportunity to take action. Twitter users were able to work together to mask the identities of the Iranian demonstrators who were using the site to tell the world what was happening. Last night, along with the news from Haiti came suggestions for how the Twitter community could most effectively help the relief effort.

Is this “news” the way we used to think of it? No. But it’s news people can use.

Read complete article [here](#).

To those popularity hounds on Twitter I say put high school behind you. If you have something worthwhile to say people will follow you no matter who your friends are or aren't.

Social media has changed PR

This is not or should not be a newsflash, but social media has changed public relations. Yet many people are resisting.

Yesterday, I was fortunate to have attended a presentation on social media strategy given by Sally Falkow, and hosted by the PRSA-NCC, here in Washington DC. Ms. Falkow presented a case

for social media (newspapers in decline, people looking for new sources of information) and gave some advice on how to use social media to achieve public relations/marketing goals. You can access this valuable presentation here:

[slideshare id=2655269&doc=prsadcsocialmedia-091205063755-phpapp02]

Although her presentation gave me lots of new perspectives and ideas, what fascinated me the most was the audience reaction. Specifically three or four people, who are decidedly old school, immediately started questioning Ms. Falkow. One person in particular, who claimed she had been a White House reporter, was quite acid about new media, saying "no one has time to watch video news releases" and "blogs are not credible." Obviously, this woman is not keen on social media, and thinks it just is not up to snuff, certainly not comparable to old media.

These questioners actually were quite disruptive, but mostly, they were a sad reminder that some people will fight change. This is why so many organizations are having a difficult time communicating these days. Sure, I know that getting a clip in a major newspaper or coverage from a major broadcaster felt good and was the result of good media relations. But that is not where the majority of the audience is these days. Newspapers are dying, major news broadcasts are losing ground, and more importantly, legions of people have embraced social media. Although you could ignore this situation, you would be doing it at your own peril.

If you practice PR, or advertising, or marketing, you **MUST** consider social media. It is not optional any more. It is not just a way to get young people or techies. It is where a large majority of people are getting their news and information. Railing against it, questioning its legitimacy and refusing to change your ways will only result in your public relations efforts going to waste. You will be left out in the cold.

Your minimum social media presence

If you are in marketing communications – advertising, public relations, direct marketing, design or anything else involving promotion, you should be conversant in social media. You should know what it is and you should be using some social media tools yourself. How will you be able to recommend “new media” to clients if you are not on any social networks yourself?

I am not covering any new ground here, I know. However, I am continually shocked when I meet people who are in the marketing biz and who are completely out of the loop in terms of social media. Or, what I think is worse, is people in marketing who have dipped their tippy toes into social media only to have Twitter accounts they never use, or incomplete LinkedIn profiles with 10 connections or a blog that was last updated in 2007. Do you know these people? Are you one of these people? Don't be!

OK. If you buy in to the paragraphs above let's proceed.

LinkedIn–your professional social networking site

- Set up your profile, and include a photograph of yourself. You can most likely use the same photograph on other networks as well. Make sure you have a robust description of what you do now, and an informative headline. If you have older profiles, get rid of them. Make it easy for people who know you to find you.
- If you own your company, set up a profile for your company. Include your company logo and website.
- Link your blog to your profile.

- Grow your network! When you meet people you'd like to do business with, see if you can add them to your network.
- Answer questions. LinkedIn has an "answers" section...see if you can contribute to it.

Blog already!

- If you have a website, that is fine. But keep in mind that websites are static and don't invite interaction. If you can add a blog to your website you will keep it fresher.

Twitter

- Set up a twitter account. If it is personal, use your name. If it is business, use your business name. Getting long and complex doesn't pay off. Remember, your name is part of any re-tweeting, so don't take away precious characters from the 140 you are given.
- Your Twitter profile should have either a photograph of you or your company logo. Do not use the Twitter bird. Be sure to write up a bio and include your website or blog URL.
- Follow people. Make lists (the newest Twitter feature)
- Tweet! Have something to say.

Facebook

- In my book, Facebook is personal. However, you can and should set up a fan page for your business. It is a no-cost way of promoting your business.

To succeed in social media, you must invest some time, be consistent and be persistent.

To recap, get on one or more social networks already!!!!

Resisting change

Does change frighten you?

If so, you are not alone. Many people are so frightened of change that they cling to outmoded things. For some people, it is that shoulder-padded 1980s look that keeps them grounded. In business, especially the marketing business, resistance to change may not look as jarring as a 1980s ensemble, but it still causes plenty of pain.

The only constant is change

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your perspective, change is constant. Technology is especially fond of change and this kind of change is not only hard to deal with but expensive. Upgrade to Vista anyone? A few years ago, we would have never dreamed that we would be communicating with each other in warp speed via text messages or Twitter, but yet here we are.

I have noticed that many people in the marketing industry resist change. Some PR practitioners may still insist on sending out press releases via fax or regular mail. Some may keep their website static, never updating. Many scoff at Twitter or blogs or Facebook, thinking that they are flavor of the moment and quickly gone.

Whether Twitter will be here a year from now is debatable, but what is not debatable is that it changes the way people communicate and connect. If anything has derived from the new social media world, is how close connections can be to anyone anywhere. One can be in contact with an Australian designer or a French writer. And the other reality is that there is more information out there than ever before. It IS hard to keep up.

But ignoring it because you don't like it will not make it go away. I have heard many people say they "don't have time for blogs or for Twitter." Do you also not have time for the news and for email? My point is that the way people are communicating and learning is changing, and by resisting that change, especially if you are a marketing person, you are staying behind the times.

This reminds me of a friend who refuses to be on Facebook. She and I were catching up and she relayed information about a mutual friend, whom I haven't spoken to in a while. I told her I already knew. She wondered how I knew. I told her I saw it on Facebook. The point is people communicate with each other via social media, and it is necessary for marketing people to understand where people find out things.

Let me know what things you are resisting, and why. I really want to know!

The question of the day: Is Twitter Worth It?

It's on the minds of people everywhere: should I Tweet on Twitter? Some people think it is silly. Some people think it is stupid. Some people think it is a waste of time. I even saw a letter to the editor in the Washington Post where some guy was saying that he was above hearing all about how people enjoyed breakfast or whatever (he must be down to brass tacks guys, because God knows, in real life everybody talks about extremely important stuff all the time). Well folks, in order to answer this question, I have decided to let you see what other people out in the blogosphere think about it:

Janet Fouts from Social Media Enabler, says it is worth it. (I found this post through Social Media Today, worth a look through if you are interested in this topic)

Neil Patel from QuickSprout sees pros and cons.

Copyblogger says you can grow your business with Twitter and that you can improve your writing with it.

Work it Mom is in favor of Twitter

And finally, Chris Winfield uses Twitter to find out if it is a time waster or not.

And me? I think you can't beat the ROI. Twitter is free, and if I learn something it is totally worth it, and if I am wasting my time, it is also worth it.

Thoughts from the peanut gallery?



Time to sharpen your online skills

The bad news for print continues to pour in. New research from Pew indicates that many Americans do not consider having a local newspaper important. It is as if management knows this. McClatchy, the owner of the *Miami Herald* and other newspapers, just announced personnel cuts this week. The bottom line is that newspapers are hurting and many people don't care. Why? Because many people get their news online or from TV.

Recently, I read how a PR guy was lamenting the downfall of trade publications. I read this on his BLOG. He, like many PR

folk, schooled in the “old” days, learned that to do media relations you reached out to print journalists. A nice, print piece in a trade magazine was truly a prize for the client. I also learned to do PR this way. And nothing was more exciting than seeing your client’s name in the newspaper, especially on the front page. But the reality has shifted. More and more, the news is being reported on and broken online. Many people do not read the newspaper, and during the day, certainly do not watch TV. What these people do however, is access the Internet. Many offices allow unlimited Internet access, and certain folk, do their work ON the Internet. In any case, it is time for PR people, and advertising people, and in fact, all communications people, to accept this reality.

Instead of lamenting that blogs now are main sources of information, and that no one is reading trade publications, you must ADAPT to the new realities. Of course, newspapers are not quite dead yet, but teach yourself how to use the online world. Here are a few suggestions:

1) Are there **influential blogs** in your area of expertise? Find out and follow. Not every blog is created equal. The PR guy I mentioned before made the blanket statement that blogs are unreliable. How wrong he is. Very few people would call The Huffington Post or Politico or the Daily Beast unreliable. Yes, they contain opinion, but it is LEADING opinion.

2) **Learn where your potential clients/customers/target audience goes to get their news AND entertainment.** After all, the Web is not just about information. Lots of people play games on the Internet, listen to music and find out about their hobbies.

3) Enhance your **web writing skills**. Writing for the web is not the same as writing for print. You have to be more concise. You have to be more choppy. People read differently online than in print.

4) **Explore multimedia.** People are more visual on the web. And the web allows for video/audio in addition to text.

In sum, stay ahead of the game. Nothing is to be gained from wringing our hands and lamenting the end of print. Instead, find new opportunities. I am sure in the late 1940s, PR people everywhere were concerned about the box in everyone's livingroom. By now, most PR agencies are experts at B-roll and media training. Right?



The dawn of a new (communications) era

One of the first things that signaled the start of the new Obama administration was the changeover of the Whitehouse.gov website. The new website, which shares many elements with the Obama campaign website, was up and running at 12 noon, even before the flubbed swearing-in took place. In a sense, the new website is the product of people who haven't been in the White House very long. It still has the campaign feel, talking about the Agenda, and showing the Whistle Stop tour Obama and Biden took the weekend before the Inaugural. What is more updated about the website is that you can now sign up for email updates and like many other organizational websites in America today, it has a blog. And, as the website claims:

“WhiteHouse.gov will be a central part of President Obama's pledge to make his the most transparent and accountable administration in American history.”

The website has been getting a lot of attention. Here's an article from Politico via Yahoo on the presidential bios on the website.

Obama will certainly be a more "electronic" president. Much has been made about his BlackBerry "addiction." He was able to garner much of his support among the GenY/media/social media savvy people because of his campaign know-how regarding Web 2.0. Let's see how this plays out.

Update: Interesting takefrom the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on the PR skills of the new administration, helping create a positive perception, and apparently an area where Bush was not as media-savvy.

Web 2.0 Squared

If you have ever doubted that blogs are important then take a look at Pete Snyder. Snyder, at 35, is a multi-millionaire today because he understands the importance of blogs and created New Media Strategies, a firm devoted to checking up on what blogs are saying about its clients. "Trolling" if you will. I have written about this phenomenon before, but had no idea a single person made so much money checking up on online mentions and reputations. Read the entire Washington Post story here.

More and more, we will hear about Web 2.0. In fact, I am not sure that traditional public relations moves such as sending press releases will continue to work at all. Many people no longer read newspapers, unless they are online. Newspapers are consolidating and there are fewer reporters to target. Small community newspapers may still pay attention to press releases, but overall, people are using the Internet more

often to obtain and disseminate news.

Recently, I attended a meeting with other writers. Some of them were woefully uneducated about the powers of social media. Indeed, if there is a Networking 2.0 it is social media. I know people who have hundreds of connections on LinkedIn and/or Facebook. These networks are the new Rolodexes. People who refuse to join will simply be tapped out of the new currency. It's like people who refused to have cell phones. It also always surprises me to find businesses without a website. What is that about? It seems today that aside from Mom and Pop neighborhood shops (drycleaners, card stores) everyone has to have a website. How else to find out more about someone?

All in all, the Web is the place. How many people have flocked to the iPhone because they want access to the Web wherever they are?

Online reputations

A few months back I wrote about companies that check on what is being said about them online. I had written a post about Comcast and their lack of customer service and I myself got a comment from Comcast. I theorized that this was a new outreach program for them, and today's New York Times has a story confirming this. They compare it to a sort of outbound customer service department, trying to fix things before they get out of hand. I will give kudos to Comcast simply for acknowledging how important blogs, social media and other online forums have become and how they can affect reputations.

Reputations are perceptions and thus changeable. We've all heard of sterling reputations, and we should all aim for that.

Bad reputations can be damaging in a very real, economic way. This blog will always deal with companies and never with individual reputations. However, this new online world order can damage individual reputations as well. I saw a story on TV not long ago (I can't remember which TV news show or I would link to it) where an individual had the same name as a famous rock star. Clearly, his online reputation would be somewhat buried because 99% of mentions referred to the rock star. He went to create an online reputation agency that charges lots of money to clean up companies' (and individuals) images. In any case, this is an ongoing issue and one that more companies will be expending effort to deal with.