Do this one thing!

You have to do PR if you want to get new clients!

You have to have an optimized website if you want to get new customers!

number 1 by Jon Jordan on Flickr

You have to do content marketing if you want to get new leads!

And most recently,

You have to try Periscope to get some exposure!

In the new world of marketing communications, there is a growing array of standard and innovative possibilities for getting the word out about your business.

From the pre-Internet era we have good old advertising/public relations/marketing, including the use of print materials, broadcast, outdoor, direct mail, etc.

From the Internet-era, we have websites and email marketing.

From the social media-era, we have content marketing, and a seemingly endless stream of networks (Twitter, Pinterest,

Instagram, and so forth) and video in short format (Vine) and in long format (Periscope). And I am sure as I write this, something else is bubbling up to capture our short-attention span.

Here's the thing: all of these work. They work differently, with different audiences and with different levels of "engagement." But the uncomfortable truth is that no one thing will get you leads/customers.

Back in the old days, we had a concept called "integrated marketing communications." It posited that in order to be successful, you had to use a variety of marcomm tools and make sure they were playing nice with each other. For example, if you were using sponsorship and public relations, the PR folks would know what you were sponsoring and the sponsorship folks might in turn get a bit of PR for the sponsorship. You know, everybody working together toward a common goal.

Now it seems that people want a shortcut. They want to try the one thing that will "guarantee" results. Everybody seems to be lurching from one platform to the next, one tactic to another.

If you want to achieve results from your marketing communications efforts you are going to have **to stop being tactical and start being strategic.** Stop thinking in terms of doing one thing to get audiences interested today and start thinking in terms of objectives and actions you want from said audience.

You can't do just one thing.

If you need help figuring out what your communications efforts should be, contact me today! Let's talk.

Do you have a Twitter strategy?

I follow more than 1,300 accounts on Twitter. Some of them are purely news sources and some are people I know "in real life." Some are journalists and others "social media experts."

Sand sculpture by Rosaura Ochoa via Flckr

Since I spend a good amount of my day on Twitter, I see a lot of tweets. Many of those tweets are interesting or funny or offer good advice. However, some tweets make me wonder if the person/account has ever considered why he/she is on Twitter. I see constant check-ins and bitter complaints about spouses. I see random quotes and people earning points for some action (usually checking in). I see people obviously brown-nosing ("Store X is the best, super customer service). And just today I saw a tweet about someone's menstrual cycle (I wish I were kidding).

Get strategic.

Big brands probably have a written and codified Twitter strategy that is part of their larger content strategy. But if

you are a freelancer, small business owner or just you, you may not have a "content strategy" much less a Twitter strategy? But should you?

If you want to get more out of Twitter, yes, you should develop a simple but effective strategy.

Here's how to develop a Twitter strategy:

1. **Decide what you want to achieve on Twitter.** This is also the answer to "why am I here?" Perhaps you want to make business contacts or you want to learn more about a subject or you want to promote your writing. Whatever it is, write it down.
2. **Now, figure out your audience.** What kinds of people or accounts are likely to have the type of information you are interested in? Who on Twitter would be interested in your stuff? Can you describe a group or groups of people that would be your audience? For example, if you are a knitter and sell stuff on Etsy, your audience would be other knitters, people interested in crafts and so forth.
3. **What defines success for you on Twitter?** Do you want to have a large following? Do you want to be an influencer? Do you want to meet like-minded folks in person?

By thinking about these issues, you will start being more focused or purposeful in your tweeting.

Now, get tactical

Tactics are what puts your strategy in motion.

1. **Engage.** See someone asking a question? Respond! Find somebody's tweet useful/inspiring/interesting? Retweet!
2. **Become a content curator.** Find sources (Twitter accounts, blogs, websites) and follow them. Collect and share the most relevant information for your audience (see above).

3. **Join/follow selected Twitter chats.** There are so many on a variety of topics, and folks that participate in those are folks that are interested in the same stuff as you are.
4. **Use lists**. Twitter gives you the ability to put accounts into lists, and then, when you use a Twitter client such as Hootsuite, you can put those lists into their own column. This way if you have a list of "Fiendish knitters" you can make sure to see what those crafters are up to.

What am I trying to accomplish?

Of course you will have the occasional "not on message" tweet. You are a person with a life and you want to share your interests or things that happen to you. But if this is all you tweet, you have a problem, and you are probably not seeing any results from Twitter.

So, perhaps before you tweet anything, you should ask yourself : What am I trying to accomplish by sharing this?

Let me know: do you have a Twitter strategy? Can you share it?

What makes a successful LinkedIn long-form post

Last year, LinkedIn opened up its publishing platform to all. Since then, we've seen an explosion in these long-form posts. Everyone is trying it, and why not, after all, LinkedIn is the professional social network and we want to expand and influence our business network in order to get more business or land our next job.

The idea, according to the LinkedIn help blog, is to share your expertise. It says:

> *Your long-form posts should share your professional expertise. Write about challenges you've faced, opportunities you've seized, or important trends in your industry.*

And yet, many times people are pushing their products/services/ebooks/webinars on us. Instead of providing information or resources, these people are merely trying to sell us something.

Tell, don't sell

I don't know about you, but I don't like being sold to. If I am shopping for something, I want a salesperson to help me figure out what I should be looking for. I don't want a salesperson to push something.

It's about trust

On LinkedIn, your network is probably composed of people you have worked with or gone to school with, or perhaps met volunteering or through a networking event. Your network is not a bunch of random strangers (or at least, it shouldn't be). You've earned your network's trust. This is why when somebody spams us on LinkedIn we get pretty upset. And this is why we should get upset when somebody writes a LinkedIn long-form post that is designed solely to sell something.

To stop breaking your network's trust and get their attention instead, write LinkedIn posts that are worthwhile.

What makes a top-performing post?

A read of the top performing posts on LinkedIn shows they share the following characteristics:

- They answer questions (for example a current top post is

titled "What makes a leader")
- They give tips
- They have fun headlines
- The have a strong point of view, sometimes controversial
- Having notoriety or celebrity helps (The top post when I looked yesterday was by author Daniel Goleman)

Make your posts work for you

Based on this, here are six tips to make your LinkedIn posts stand out and work for you:

1. Write about a subject you know well. If you are an expert on UX, then write about that instead of the five life lessons you learned from the seminar you attended last week.
2. Share your knowledge/expertise. Don't charge for it by making people pay for your webinar or your ebook.
3. It's not academic writing—make it conversational.
4. Don't rant. There are plenty of other places you can vent—perhaps at your local pub to your friends.
5. Write clearly. Avoid spelling and grammar mistakes by asking someone to edit/proof it.
6. Spend time working on your headline. Think of it as your book cover. If it is appealing, people will read through (and maybe even buy it).

What is your experience with LinkedIn long-form posts? Have you written one? If yes, how did it perform? If no, what has stopped you?

Can you rehab your image by deleting offensive posts?

Here's the story:

Yesterday, Grammarly (a site that promises to be your best grammar check resource), posted an article titled "5 authors who died old maids" to Facebook (unfortunately, I was not quick-thinking enough to take a screen shot). The post was about great female writers such as Emily Bronte and Emily Dickinson.

I did a double take when I saw that on my timeline. Old maids? What year is this? Who calls unmarried women "old maids?" I commented on the Facebook post that it was sexist and ageist to use the term, and that Grammarly should rename the post. Many others had similar comments and sentiments. Some (minority) thought using the term was perfectly OK and that the rest of use were too easily offended.

Then, I went to Twitter where I posted this:

I remind you that Grammarly is a site that claims it offers a "better way to write."

No response from Grammarly on Twitter or on Facebook. <u>No comment whatsoever.</u> But this morning, the post is gone from Facebook and from the Grammarly blog without any type of acknowledgement.

It seems that Grammarly understood that using the term was offensive enough to some, or at least, controversial enough, to remove the post. They have erased it from Grammarly post history. But Grammarly has not admitted anything explicitly. It ignored tweets and Facebook comments.

Is ignoring comments a wise move?

And just this past weekend, in the *Washington Post Magazine,* humor columnist Gene Weingarten had this to say about Grammarly:

> *In short, as a sleuth, Grammarly is top-notch. As an editor, however, it is of the prissy, arbitrary, rule-besotted sort whom good writers want to kill. Under the circumstances, I would do it slow and ugly, like what Dave the astronaut did to HAL.*

Perhaps not super humorous, but definitely worth it to read the whole piece.

Grammarly can't erase Weingarten's piece as easily as it can erase it's own mistakes.

Now, is Grammarly in crisis, even of the fleeting social media kind? No, of course not. But in my book at least, it has a damaged image. Between Weingarten's criticism and Grammarly's uncaring attitude, not to mention the fact that a sexist term got through the supposed strict usage checker folks, I am not keen to promote or use the service. And no amount of erasing posts (would this also be called white-washing? I am not sure) and ignoring comments is going to fix that.

What would you recommend that Grammarly do, if anything? Oh,

and had you even heard of Grammarly before or am I doing it a public relations favor by mentioning it?

The real problem with social media marketing

If you do a Google search on problems in social media marketing, you will find several articles that discuss the following:

- Personnel (capacity of and/or lack of)
- Strategy (generally lack of, or not fitting in with overall comms strategy)
- No ability to measure ROI (or, can't justify expenditure)
- Budget (not enough)
- Content (not adequate)
- Consistency (generally, lack of)

[Go ahead. Google "the problem with social media marketing" and you will see for yourself.]

Although all these problems definitely affect the ability to do social media marketing, the biggest problem is this: **all it takes is one click to unfollow/unlike.**

In other words, it's easy to lose support, and once you lose support, it's very hard to gain it back.

It occurred to me this morning that although I recently unfollowed a couple big names in social media that I had not missed them in the very least. In fact, I was relieved to not

see them in my timeline. In the personal realm, I have hidden several people on Facebook. Again, I don't miss them and have almost forgotten them.

It's easy to hit hide or mute or unfollow. And once you are out of sight, well, you are out of mind.

Still, because there's a low barrier to entry, there's also a low barrier to exit. Something can go viral one week and practically disappear the next week. People lurch from one topic to another. Some social media accounts get stale. Some social media accounts become offensive. <u>Whatever the reason, we lose interest and we move on. And once we move on, it becomes difficult if not impossible to get us back.</u>

There's a small hitch to my theory and it's social sharing. Say you unfollow "JoeBigMediaExpert" but your trusted colleague "Ilovesocialmedia" hasn't. If "Ilovesocialmedia" constantly shares "JoeBigMediaExpert's" posts, you'll see them.

Still, the ease of ignoring (unfollowing/unliking) on social media plus the clutter issue (too much stuff!) is what any social marketer has to deal with. The guiding questions may be these:

- What keeps followers interested?
- What offends followers?
- What's the best way to bring value to followers?

What do you think? What makes you keep following a brand or personality? What turns you off?

Are you lacking social media manners or best practices?

When I first started using Twitter in 2008, I had no idea what an "RT" was or how to check "@" messages. I didn't know Tweetdeck from Hootsuite. So I asked a couple millennial friends of mine, and over lunch, they explained how Twitter worked and how to use it.

Since then, I believe I have become fairly adept at using Twitter and use it quite heavily as a place to learn, share and interact with people. I've also used Twitter to promote my blog posts and workshops, and by extension, my business.

One of the most gratifying aspects of Twitter is how many personal relationships I have developed. Some people whom I met through Twitter have become friends IRL ("in real life") and some have become trusted online colleagues.

Developing best practices for social media use

In order to make life on Twitter more manageable, I follow certain "best practices." Up to now, they've been in my head, but here's a more formal list:

- Use a client such as Hootsuite to make managing @ replies, streams easier
- Group people in lists to include as a stream to follow (this way, I know what my friends/colleagues are up to)
- Respond to @ replies ASAP
- Thank people for sharing tweets, posts, etc.
- Avoid obscenities/expletives and unfollow those who favor this type of communication
- Follow selectively (and don't follow back automatically)

- Don't engage with trolls, and block whenever possible
- Block followers who are obviously spammers or bots or who are only following to get me to follow back
- Be conscious of what I am sharing
- Take personal conversations offline or DM if appropriate
- Avoid unproductive complaining
- Don't tweet everything on my mind or share mundane stuff
- Be personal without providing too much personal information
- Don't use tools that do your tweeting for you

To me, it's about common sense and having manners

They say good manners exist so that your behavior make others comfortable. That's why it is not good manners to use expletives (because some people may be offended and thus uncomfortable). That's why we say please and thank you (because we want to acknowledge that we are not owed anything, and that we appreciate kind gestures). That's why we don't chew with our mouth open (no comment needed right?).

And yet, some people just don't get that in order to be on social media, and get along with others, you need to mind your manners and your behavior. Perhaps they don't really understand how Twitter works and that whatever you post on Twitter is visible to the public. Perhaps they think you won't notice if they ignore your messages. Perhaps they feel entitled. Or perhaps they are always rude in person too.

Perhaps the best practice is to not take it personally

Who knows why people behave the way they do. Truth is you just don't know. It could be they are going through a hard time or just got busy with other things. Some people like to offend and want to argue (trolls are everywhere on social media). Context and tone are hard to convey on social media, and on Twitter, you only have 140 characters to express yourself.

Do you have best practices for Twitter? Do you behave differently on different social networks?

Some weekend reading

I share so many articles every day on Twitter, and of those I save my favorites to Pocket (my favorite tool for saving articles). Starting today, I will do a weekly or biweekly round-up of great articles for weekend reading.

Here are three articles on writing and editing:

7 Self-Editing Tips for Reporters Without Copy Editors

Study Shows the Value of Copy Editing

11 easy ways to write more clearly

Here's a couple about websites and social media:

5 Things You Can Learn From a Poorly Designed Website

Is Social Media Actually Helping Your Company's Bottom Line?

Happy reading and have a great weekend!

No pain, no gain (or, are you relying too much on assists)?

Every time I go to the gym I see at least one person hanging on for dear life on the Step Mill. In case you don't have them at your gym, they are a "workout escalator." Essentially, the workout consists of climbing moving stairs. Lots of people lean on the bars (yesterday I saw a woman whose upper body was horizontal, putting all her upper body weight on her arms) when the "correct" or more efficient way is to use the bars simply for balance and let your lower body do the work of climbing the stairs and keeping you upright.

When you lean on the bars you are effectively **getting an assist.** You are trying to minimize the pain. But, as they say: no pain, no gain. Though it may look like you are working hard, you really aren't. You aren't getting the cardio you think you are and you aren't burning the amount of calories the machine tells you.

The same thing happens on social media when you rely on programs to post for you. You are getting an assist that makes you look like you are working hard when in fact you are not. Plus, you are not getting all the benefits of social media either.

There are many social media apps and programs designed to give you an assist. We may need that automation in order to keep up with the pace of social media, which is 24-7. The problem is when we rely on these assists for all of our social media presence and we forget to inject some of our own effort.

There's an account I have been following on Twitter for a couple of years. I say account and not person because almost all the tweets from the account are links to blog posts (old blog posts at that). And I have seen the same five or six blog

post links tweeted out over and over and over and over. There is no personality there. There is no discussion. There is no interaction.

I am sure the person who manages this account set up a program that will tweet the top blog posts every certain amount of time. This person pretty much set it and forgot it. This person rarely if ever has any exchange with anybody, never re-tweets, and only responds to direct tweets days later (if at all). *This account is entirely reliant on social media assists. So although there is a social media presence, there is no social media benefit.*

Social media requires effort and attention. Get assists if you must, but don't forget that over-relying on assistance means that you aren't making as many gains.

What are your thoughts? How do you handle your social media accounts? Do you follow accounts that are completely automated?

Angry and posting? What you should do instead.

In this age of social media, we always have an outlet for our thoughts, whether they be insightful and informative, or

whether to express our frustrations and complaints.

If we want to share golden nugget from a conference, there's Twitter and a hashtag. If we want to lash out at our boss, there's Facebook (where we aren't friends with our boss). If we want to rant (or rave) about anything, we can post about it at length on our blog.

Most of the time, there's no harm done. Except if you post when you are angry.

When you are angry, you are caught up in the (negative) emotion of the moment. You are looking either to vent your frustration or to exact some sort of revenge. When you vent in anger in person (and not on social media), there are often (immediate) consequences. You may insult or offend someone and ruin your relationship with that person. You may escalate a situation (and in some cases, this can even lead to violence). Or you may blow off steam, and calm down.

But when you are angry and you post on social media, the consequences can be greater and more long-lasting. Social media is the great amplifier. Your angry thoughts can go viral. And even more so, they became permanent. They can't be easily retracted. They are searchable and they can definitely be attributed to you.

We've seen case upon case of people tweeting in anger (whether justified or not), and then facing consequences. There have been a few cases of passengers getting booted off a flight. Or people being fired for tweeting something.

Here's the thing: Anger does not allow you to think clearly. You may not see the consequences.

Angry and about to post? Take a pause. Put your thought into a draft. Wait.

A few weeks ago, I had an unfortunate meeting with someone and

I felt very angry and upset afterward. I came home and wrote a blog post, which would have upset that person had I published it. Instead, I wrote it and let it sit in the draft file. I still haven't published it. My anger is gone, and now I realize I don't necessarily want to have those thoughts, about a specific person and meeting to be "on the record." Perhaps what happened was not as bad as I perceived it. Perhaps this person meant no harm.

If you must vent, write it but don't tweet it. As a speaker at an event a couple of years ago said (I wish I could remember her name):

Never Twitter when you're bitter.

So, write it. But don't post it…yet. Come back to it when you are not as angry and frustrated.

Once you are calm, and revisiting your post ask yourself these questions:

- Do you really want to put it on the record?
- Is this important enough to ruffle feathers?
- What do you expect to gain from this?
- And, is it worth it?

Have you regretted posting something you wrote while you were angry? What were the consequences?

Is self-censorship the

answer?

Have you ever regretted saying something on social media? Or has something you posted on social media come back to haunt you "in real life?" Do you wish you could say what you really think but fear the consequences?

Social media seems to occupy a unique position of being virtual yet connecting real people in real relationships. We can broadcast our thoughts instantly, to thousands (or millions) of people around the world, while still having to be careful about the relationships we have in real life (IRL) with some of our connections.

Is everybody in your Facebook world your friend or family member? Chances are you have a fair number of other relationships on Facebook—co-workers, professional acquaintances, people you knew in high school/college, people you met on Twitter, and so on. Do you want to share everything with everybody or do you wish you could pick and choose? If you don't want to share something with a certain person in your Facebook, why are you "friends" with him or her?

Sometimes, you see people in real life (at professional events, etc.) and feel forced to maintain a "Facebook friendship." Unfriending on Facebook is a strange phenomenon, especially since most people use it to communicate that they no longer consider you to be in their social circle (although some people think of unfriending as simply reducing the number of people that they need to read feeds from).

Not a friend, just an acquaintance

But wait, Facebook has an answer! You can designate people as "acquaintances" and then when you post you can choose to share with "friends, except acquaintances." I just learned about this feature (and I am not sure how long it's been around).

Clearly, many people are trying to separate close friends from acquaintances while becoming "Facebook friends" with anybody that asks.

But what about friends/acquaintances who say annoying things?

Facebook has had a "hide" feature for years. Twitter recently created a way to maintain ties with people you don't want to hear from. It's the mute button. Now, you can simply mute people you don't really care for while still following them.

So can I say what I think?

And then there is what we say or don't say. Should we say what we really think or should we be more politic? There was a recent poll that found people are not expressing their opinions freely on social media any more. I can see why. We don't want to offend and more importantly, we don't want to be attacked. There are many "trolls," that is people in social media who make it their business to be on the attack. They actively seek confrontation and are often very nasty. Or there are those people who are always arguing with you on Facebook or Twitter. If you say white, they will say black. Does every opinion need a counter-opinion?

Is self-censorship the answer to all these social media conundrums?

I think that at times you should follow the adage that if you have nothing good to say, don't say it. For example, if someone posts a picture of his/her baby, and you don't think the child is terribly cute, do you share your thoughts? Probably very wise to keep that opinion to yourself.

Social media seems to have made it difficult for people to understand that their words have real consequences. That you can insult and offend virtually. People routinely express their negative opinions. They don't like the restaurant you recently went to (and raved about), so they share their

thoughts saying that it was disgusting, the food was gross, they got sick (you get the picture). They disagree with an article you shared, they tell you how stupid the author is, how ridiculous anybody is for having that opinion. And on and on.

There is no one correct way to do social media. Some people will always be offended and some people won't care. To some, social media is a place to cultivate relationships and to some, it is just a place to promote their product or business.

I think it is always best to think about what you are going to say before you say it: Is it necessary? Does it add value to the conversation? Is it something you care about deeply? Will it make a difference? Will it hurt the other person? Does it really matter?

Perhaps it is not self-censorship we need as much as a **pause and think moment.** Too bad there isn't a built-in feature for that on Twitter and Facebook.