

# Invigorate your organization's blog

Is your organization's blog feeling tired? Perhaps it's time to try a few new things like soliciting guest blog posts, or live blogging a conference. Read the five tips to re-invigorate your blog that I share as a guest blogger at Bates Creative Group's *Align* blog.

My thanks to Director of Business Development Heather Shelton and Marketing Specialist Amanda Jennison of Bates Creative Group for including me in their blog!

---

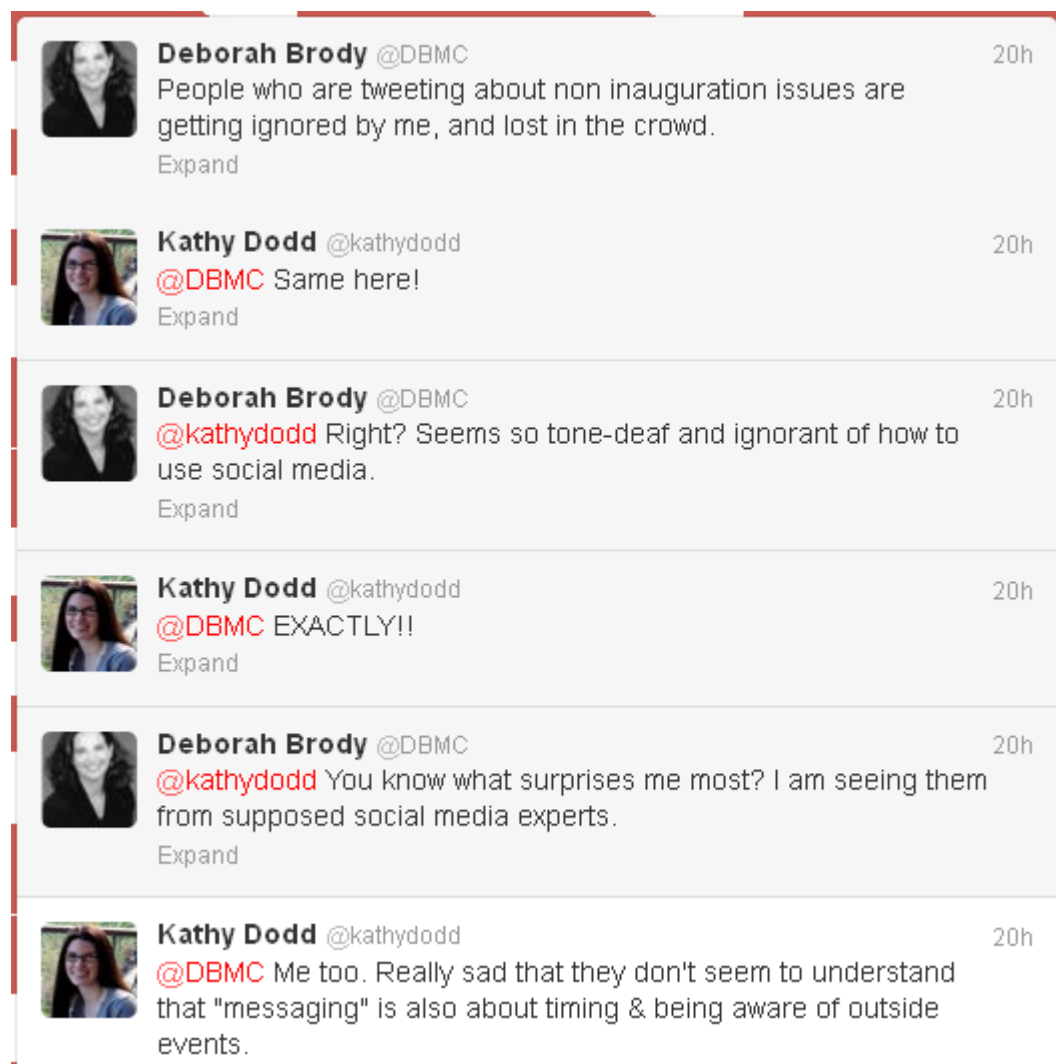
## How to tweet like a marketer

Yesterday, about 1.1 million tweets were posted regarding President Barack Obama's Inauguration ceremony. That's a lot of tweets! People commented on everything from Michelle Obama's coat to Richard Blanco's poem to Beyonce's rendition of the National Anthem.

As I watched the Inauguration ceremonies and followed my Twitter stream (using the second screen), I noticed a social media "expert" tweeting out content management tips. Then I noticed another marketing/social media person promoting a blog post, which had absolutely nothing to do with politics, Martin Luther King or inauguration. It struck me as dissonant.

I tweeted out that I was ignoring anything not Inaugural-related, and I thought anything regarding other topics would

most likely get lost. This led to an exchange with Kathy Dodd, a Washington, DC-based marketer. It went like this:



So it wasn't just me. What was happening was that those tweets were not following a main tenet of marketing communications: molding your message to the audience's needs. As Kathy said, **the people putting out these messages were not being aware of outside events or of the timing involved.**

In those tweets, there was nothing wrong with the message, but the message failed to have an impact. They came off as extraneous and irrelevant.

Twitter has often been described as one big cocktail party. Can you imagine if you were at a party where everyone was talking about the how much fun they were having at this event, and somebody crashed the party and announced that bananas were

on sale across town. Everyone would shake their heads and continue talking about the party, *no matter how much they liked bananas* because it was a message that wasn't suited to the occasion.

Perhaps the non-Inaugural tweets from yesterday were previously scheduled, we can't really know. But what we do know is that they failed to achieve their goal (selling bananas if they were the party-crashers above) for one simple reason: the people tweeting were not thinking like marketers. **Marketers want to make sure their messages get to the right people at the right time.**

Here are some tips to tweet like a marketer:

- Be aware of major events (some are scheduled and some are not) that will hold a majority of your target audience's attention.
- Time your tweets for when they are most likely to be well received. For example, if you are promoting your lunch specials, don't do it at dinner time.
- Be human, not an automaton. Remember it is *social* media.
- Don't talk at people; have a conversation with them.

What are your thoughts? Agree or disagree?

---

## Dealing with the haters (on social media)

Perhaps it's a sign that our social fabric is stretched too thin. Perhaps people don't know how to behave when they have the cover of social media. What is happening more and more is that people are expressing hate and hateful things to

strangers on social media channels.

On Twitter, haters will search for ideas that they disagree with and then attack whoever tweeted those thoughts. On blogs, people will leave nasty comments. On news sites, people will disparage others they disagree with. Social media seems rife with haters and trolls.

How do you deal with all these haters?

First, do NOT take these comments personally.

Second, ignore the hater/troll. Most of these people are attention-seekers or enjoy getting an angry reaction from others. On Twitter, go to the hater's profile and block him or her. On your blog, discard the comment (you are under no obligation to provide a platform for others' ideas, especially if they are contrary to your own and expressed in a disrespectful manner). If feasible, delete the comments on Facebook.

I am not saying to get rid of all comments that show a different viewpoint or even that question you, just get rid of comments that are obviously motivated by hate or the desire to incite argument.

Third, move on. Social media is a constantly changing landscape, and what was interesting and hot five minutes ago may not be now.

How do you deal with haters or trolls? Would you add anything?

---

# As easy as 1, 2, 3 (or not)

Last week, I read a guest post on a popular PR blog that counseled people to spend 10 minutes a year on their LinkedIn profile and to schedule one or two tweets a day “to maintain a presence on Twitter.”

Can you do social media in a few minutes a year? Sure you *can*. But, the question is not whether you can, it is whether you *should*. And if you think you can achieve good outcomes by doing it the easy way, you are in for a big surprise.



Photo by idlphoto from Flickr

Marketing in general, and social media marketing in particular, are not easy tasks. In fact, to achieve results, you have to spend lots of time and effort (and sometimes money too). Anybody who tells you you can do it a couple of minutes a day is lying to you (or maybe just misleading you). **Just having or maintaining a presence is simply not enough.**

Your goal may be to just have a presence. But why would that be your goal? If you are marketing (yourself, a product, a cause, an idea), you probably have goal that involves movement

(more followers, more buyers, more supporters). Just being is not going to move your goal very far forward.

Take Twitter. If you schedule your tweets and then do nothing else, what exactly are you achieving? Not engagement, that's for sure. Twitter is a responsive platform. People comment and respond in real time. If you don't participate in real time, and respond quickly, I am not sure you should be on Twitter at all. Beside the fact that one or two tweets a day will likely get missed, especially if there is something else going on (and breaking news breaks on Twitter).

Take LinkedIn. If you refresh your profile one time per year, and then don't do anything else, you aren't going to appear on the timeline. People will forget about you.

Perhaps what the guess blogger I referenced above was trying to say is that you have to have a minimum presence if you are going to participate in social media channels. However, you can't and shouldn't be satisfied with the minimum. You need to MAXIMIZE your presence if you are trying to achieve goals. And perhaps you don't need to be on every social media channel. Perhaps you choose one or two where you can make an effort.

Social media marketing may be easy to understand, but it is not easy to achieve. It takes a lot of time, and a lot of effort. That's a fact.

What are your thoughts? Do you think social media marketing can be accomplished easily? Do you think a minimum works? I would love your thoughts in the comments.

---

# Can you sell on social media?

All sort of companies sell (sponsored Tweets, for example) on social media, so a better question is should you? In my opinion, the answer is no.

## **Wedding crashers**

Think of it this way: you are at a wedding reception. You are busy chatting with relatives you haven't seen in ages while enjoying one or two glasses of champagne. Then, someone (think of this person as a wedding crasher) pops up, out of nowhere, and starts discussing health insurance options with you. First, you know this person is not invited to the wedding. Second, this person is a buzz kill. Right?

## **Time and place**

Same thing happens when you are on Facebook or Twitter and someone you don't know is talking to you about something you don't want to discuss right then. And the truth is you may be interested in the product or service being offered, but the time and place are all wrong. It is wrong because you are on social networks to be social. You are not there to shop.

## **Are you pushing?**

This is not to say you can't market or communicate with target audiences on social networks. If your emphasis is brand awareness or image building, I think social networks can be hugely helpful. But selling is a "push." And people don't like to be pushed when they are relaxed.

Perhaps this is a personal bias of mine, but I don't like being sold in general. The other day I was doing a bit of shopping at Tysons Corner (and I was in the buying mode), and I got hawked walking from store to store from the various vendors who sell their wares from carts. I found it hugely annoying

(one of them even asked me if was lazy because I didn't have a manicure and she was selling a manicure kit).

Do you think selling on social networks is effective? Have you bought something that was advertised to you on a social network?

---

## **3 Rs: Who to avoid on social media**

My Google reader has more than 100 subscriptions. On Twitter, I follow more than 1000 folks. I also have connections on LinkedIn and pages I have liked on Facebook. All in all that is a lot of content to which I am exposed each day.

I have come to realize there are three types of content providers that I just don't have time for. They are the raconteurs, the recyclers and the reprobates. They seem to be everywhere and I just want to avoid them!

### **Raconteurs**

Raconteurs like to make a fuss. They are there to criticize anything and anybody just to get a rise out of their readers. There is one writer in particular who is such an extreme example of this that I recognize him from his blog titles alone (things like "Are we really better off today?" or "The Gender Gap is a Myth") which are designed to perk your interest because they AIM to be controversial. The sad thing is many raconteurs are seeking controversy not to enlighten but to rile up.

### **Recyclers**



These are not your environmentally-friendly folks, looking to reduce, reuse and recycle cans, bottles and paper. Instead, these are idea recyclers. They are so devoid of original thought that they recycle ideas posted by other folks and pass them off as their own. A couple of weeks ago, the big rage on Twitter was an article from Fast Company on how to be more productive. Now, there is nothing wrong with re-posting or retweeting that information (heck, we all want to get more out of days it seems). What is bad is taking the content but changing the title, taking only the main points, or whatever and passing it off as your own post. There's a blogger, often featured on a blog I read regularly, who is a mistress of this format. If it was all over Twitter yesterday, she is posting about it today.

## **Reprobates**

Reprobates are people who just post nasty stuff—either because they think it is amusing or because they are seeking to shock. Mostly, they love to use obscenity in their tweets and their posts. The more f-bombs they can cram into a paragraph the better. Reprobates also make inappropriate remarks about serious or sensitive topics—like the CNN guy who called the Democratic National Convention “The Vagina Monologues.”

Do you have some of these in your content stream? Do you have types of bloggers/Tweeters that you avoid? Let me know in the comments.

---

# **Is social media making us**

# more passive-aggressive?

If you are on Twitter, chances are you've seen tweets like this:

*Hey smelly guy on the Metro, invest in some deodorant!*

*This girl at the gym is hogging the machines.*

People are tapping away their snide commentary on their smartphones, knowing full well that the person they are discussing will never see these commentaries or know he or she was being discussed at all.

People seem to be avoiding a confrontation. Or maybe they are avoiding an uncomfortable conversation. People seem to be expressing anger and distaste quite passively—by sharing it on Twitter—without actually solving the situation.

Perhaps this avoidant behavior is related to technology. Over the weekend, the Washington Post ran an article regarding entitled “It’s over. Didn’t You Get My Text?” (weirdly, the digital article is titled differently: “The Art of the Digital Breakup”). More and more, people are hiding behind their gadgets and avoiding talking to each other, especially about difficult things. In the article, Lisa Bonos writes:

*And it’s not unheard of for Facebook users to get news about their romances when the other person changes his or her status...*

Bonos says that digital rejections seem easier because there is no interruption or arguments. But, it could be painful for the “dumpee” since there was no chance to interact, to ask questions.

I see it all the time (and have been guilty of myself): using email or social media to say something that we couldn’t say to

someone face to face.

It's affecting conversations for sure. But more distressing to me is that it seems to be affecting empathy and connection with other people. We figure that if we "like" something on Facebook, then we've connected with someone. But have we? Not really. I have seen many people who say they would rather text than talk. Some people even prefer posting things on social media to communicate with lots of people at once instead of bothering to talk to friends individually.

In the end, social media may not be MAKING us more passive-aggressive or socially awkward, perhaps it only exacerbates what was already there. And for me, social media has been the springboard to more meaningful personal connection. Sadly though, there are far too many people hiding behind their gadgets, making snide comments rather than confronting or connecting with other people.

What do you think? Have you seen the rise in passive-aggressive behavior? Does it affect you?

---

## **But why are you doing it?**

Yesterday, none other than the Social Media Club DC (SMCDC) put out a tweet asking people to "show some love" to their Facebook page, because unlike their Twitter feed, it had "only" 3,000 supporters. I responded: "Twitter and FB are totally different platforms and thus have different audiences. Where are you giving/getting more value?" To which SMCDC responded: "It's hard to compare since they are so different, but just in case people want to be exposed to our content in a different form..."

First of all, social media is not JUST a numbers game. Having more followers/supporters/likers doesn't mean anything if you haven't decided what you want from those people. Are you trying to show increased interest in your product? Then the metrics may help with that.

You have to ask yourself WHY you are doing what you are doing. What are you trying to accomplish? Are you advocating for a cause? Trying to sell product? Raising your profile? In SMCDC's case, is the content on Facebook different than Twitter? Is it more appealing to a certain demographic to see it on Facebook? What are the advantages of having more Facebook followers?

Young people who understand the tools of social media and can adapt at warp speed to the newest and greatest (in other words, they get the what), generally do not have enough business experience to really understand the why.

This morning I came across this article on Inc. Magazine: 11 Reasons a 23-Year-Old Shouldn't Run Your Social Media by Hollis Thomases. Most of Thomases' reasons have to do with the knowledge that experience delivers. You become a better communicator with time, for example. She writes:

*Social media is not the be-all and end-all. It's a marketing tool—part of an ever-growing arsenal of ways to bring your company to your prospective customers' attention.*

I would also add that young hires/interns/recent college graduates don't understand STRATEGY. Tools are to be used tactically, as part of a larger strategy. If you just look at the tool (we need more followers on Twitter), without thinking about WHY, then you are just using the tool for no purpose at all.

Thoughts? Please share in the comments.

---

# How to use Twitter and not be obnoxious

It seems that there are lots of people out there who either don't know how to use Twitter or don't really care. Their behavior –from ignoring people to being excessively self-promotional– is just plain obnoxious. “In real life” if you engage in obnoxious behavior, people start avoiding you, right?

These are a few obnoxious behaviors that you should avoid:

**Behavior:** Not responding to @ mentions

**Why this is obnoxious:** Someone is trying to talk to you. In person, would you ignore someone who is speaking to you?

**Behavior:** Retweeting every comment that includes a mention of you

**Why this is obnoxious:** It is clear that you are trying to make sure your followers know that others have mentioned you. In person, what would you think of someone who is constantly saying, things like “Joe really likes me, and told me so.”

**Behavior:** Bragging or posting completely self-serving tweets

**Why this is obnoxious:** When you are going on (and on and on) about yourself, you are acting as if the world is your echo chamber. The only person that benefits from your behavior is you.

**Behavior:** Following people but never interacting with them

**Why this is obnoxious:** If you are interested in following someone, perhaps it is because you enjoy what they share or

have to say. When you don't COMMUNICATE with that person, you are giving absolutely no reason why that person should follow you or value your follow.

**Behavior:** Never interacting with anyone at all

**Why this is obnoxious:** Would you go to a party, stand up and start talking and ignore everyone else in the room? Would you show up to a networking event and not speak to anyone? Why are you there? Presumably, you are there because you want to speak with other people—not to or at them.

**Behavior:** Scheduling Tweets

**Why this obnoxious::** When you schedule Tweets you are using Twitter as a place to dump information rather than a place to interact with people. It takes the social out of social media.

**Behavior:** Automatically Tweeting your check-ins

**Why this is obnoxious:** Do you walk around announcing yourself everywhere you go? “Hi, I am at the corner of Main and Elm. Hi, now I am dropping my clothes at the dry cleaners. Hi, now I am stopping at the drugstore for my seizure medication. Hi, now I am picking lint off my jacket while standing on line at Starbucks.”

If you don't want to be obnoxious on Twitter, think whether you would do those things if you were to see your “Tweeps” in person. It really is that simple.

What obnoxious behavior have you encountered on Twitter?

---

# The medium and the message

You may remember the famous line by Marshall McLuhan:

*The medium is the message.*

What does that mean? According to Wikipedia:

*meaning that the form of a medium embeds itself in the message, creating a symbiotic relationship by which the medium influences how the message is perceived.*

All that is somewhat esoteric...and when McLuhan was writing his observations in 1964, the new frontier was television.

Television may or may not be on the decline, but we are definitely in a world where the Internet and social media are our mass communication media.

I came across an article by Jeremy Porter, on his blog Jounalistics, entitled "Are Blog Posts Better Than Press Releases?" Now, I am a huge fan of blogging and blogs, but I don't think blogs are "better" than any other form of communication. However, blogs may be *better suited* to some types of communication.

In my opinion, there is no hierarchy among the media (this one is better than that one) but rather there is a "right-er" medium for the message. For instance:

- If your message is short and ephemeral (an observation, a quick update, etc.) use **Twitter**.
- If your message is long and requires complicated explanations, use a **white paper**.
- If your message is newsworthy, and you want to get out to journalists, use a **press release**.

Choosing which media to use is your job as a communicator. If

you don't understand the differences between media, then you are going to have a hard time communicating your message to its target audience.

What are your thoughts? Is there a medium that can be used for all messages? Is there a better medium? Let me know in the comments.