

On becoming dependent and thoughts on crying

The social media news of the moment is that Yahoo! is shutting down Delicious, the social bookmarking site. I have used Delicious intermittently over the past couple of years, and I am sure there are several interesting articles stored over there. I am told that it is fairly easy to transfer them to another site, but the issue remains, what happens when we become dependent on any website?

Many of us depend on Facebook to share pictures and news with friends and family. Others depend on LinkedIn to keep track of our professional network. We use readers to keep our RSS feeds all in one place. We are using cyberspace to keep our cyber activities organized. And yet, websites can be shut down at any moment and all our carefully curated information could be lost in an instant.

How do we become independent from the websites we depend on? First, figure out what information you must positively have access to and keep it in a hard (printed) format. I am talking about addresses, website URLs, email addresses and anything else you need to contact your clients, friends, network in general. Perhaps it is a good idea to keep a hard copy list of the blogs you read too.

On a totally unrelated topic, I have been reading a lot about John Boehner (incoming Republican Speaker of the House) and his crying. The man opens up the waterworks at the mere mention of his humble origins. This fabulous piece from Timothy Egan in the New York Times Opinionator blog says its mere hypocrisy as Boehner's policies do more harm than good to people of humble origins in this country. The marketer in me thinks there is more to the crying than meets the eye. I think it is a very calculated move on Boehner's part to seem

sensitive. Either that, or he has no emotional control.

What are your thoughts? Are you dependent on your social media? And is Boehner just a big cry-baby?

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]

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!

An easy marketing tip

Do you want to easily market yourself? I have a great tip: make your content (blog, website, social media stuff) shareable. I don't mean that you should simply create stuff people want to share—which is a given—but make it easy to share. By this I mean have a social media sharing button/widget on your blog or website (such as the one at the end of this post). If you don't know how to get one, here are a few to try:

- Add to any (which is what I have here)
- "Tweet this" button from Twitter
- Add this

You can find other individual service sharing buttons at this Wiki:

- <http://www.sharingbuttons.org/Buttons>

WordPress.com recently started its own sharing widget.

Find one that works with your blog/website and deploy it. **By allowing your content to be easily shared, you will increase your reach.** The word to note is EASILY. There are ways I can

share your content without your help...but if you make it easy for me, then I will most likely do it. And that is why you create great content, right?

Important clarification for WordPress users : If you have a WordPress.org blog (self-hosted), you may be able to find these buttons as plug-ins. WordPress.com users CANNOT use plug-ins, but can add these manually to each post or find the WordPress.com sharing button.



You must know tech

Amy Webb, principal of Webbmedia Group, spoke yesterday to a Washington Women in Public Relations (WWPR) Executive communicators brown bag lunch. She is very knowledgeable and highly enthusiastic about technology and has made a business consulting on the various trends and applications of the new tech stuff.

Some of us are a bit recalcitrant about tech stuff. There are so many changes that it is hard to keep up. Most of all, tech is changing the way things are done and change is hard.

However, we must learn about tech and how it is affecting the marketing/communications space. Just this week, long time Washington Post writer Howard Kurtz announced he is leaving the Post to go to the online-only Daily Beast. Print is giving way to online more and more.

Amy Webb talked about being in the space where the consumers are—even if you aren't on there—places like Facebook, Foursquare, Tivo and mobile apps. She sees the world of media

(traditional media, the web, mobile, e-readers, tablet pcs) as all connected by social media. Social media is part and parcel of all forms of media, not a separate entity.

Webb divides the social media world into:

- Geo social (Foursquare)
- Corporate social (Yelp)
- Social commerce (Groupon)
- Social content (YouTube)
- Mobile social (Loopt)
- Pure play (Facebook)
- Social curation (Digg, Delicious)

Other key take-aways from Webb:

- Keep your taglines and messaging simple for sharing
- Curation is huge right now simply because there is too much information out there to make sense of.
- Personalization is becoming more important. Journalists don't want mass press releases or multimedia releases but rather personalized content.
- Whatever you have done on line can be found by anyone with a bit of research knowledge
- Before launching a brand—make sure the name you want is not being used on social media.
- Tablet PCs are really big, witness the huge sales for the iPad, and there are many more on the horizon

My conclusion is that you must know tech. As Amy Webb suggested, read Mashable and/or Techcrunch every day to keep up with technology.

How is tech affecting your marketing life?



It's not what you say you do

It is what you do.

- Do you live up to your commitments?
- Do you deliver the goods?
- Are you reliable? Responsive? Responsible?
- Do you reply to people or just to tweets?

There are a lot of folks out there in the social media stratosphere developing massive followings, writing blogs, sending newsletters, even writing e-books, but **all they are doing is saying what they do. They don't actually do what they say they do. They seem to think talking makes up for acting.**

For instance, if you are in public relations, you need to create a strategy for your client. Tweeting all day is not a strategy—it is a tactic, and if it is not part of a larger, thought-out plan, it is good for nothing.

Although social networks are valuable, the people you know in real life may be more valuable because get this, you actually know them and they know you. If you are blowing off your in-the-flesh connections so that you can develop lots of virtual friends, you will be left with lots of virtual reality and little real reality.

Use social media, but use it to do stuff, not to say you do stuff.

The above is a commentary by the author of this blog. It represents her views in every possible way.

Don't go knocking traditional media

Last week I wrote that social media is not all that. Even if I do believe in the importance of social media, I don't think everyone HAS to be on it. And now, Pew Research has found that 1 out of 5 Americans do NOT use the Internet. This means if you are still aiming for high coverage you cannot rely on Internet ads/social media marketing alone. Traditional media (I know, it sounds old-fashioned) is still viable when attempting to reach those Americans who won't or can't access the Web.



Is social media all that?

There's a lot of hand wringing about whether the "C-suite" (fancy jargon term for the higher ups in a corporation) is on social media. Does it matter? Does the CEO have to be on social media for it to be worthwhile? The answer is no. For social media to matter it has to be the conduit to your audience or your supporters.

Say for instance you are the CEO of a kid's cereal manufacturer. You advertise your highly sweetened concoction on children's shows on Saturday morning. Do you also have to watch those shows, or even those TV channels? No! Of course not. Presumably, your marketing department did some research

and found that a certain percentage of your target audience watches shows and therefore if you advertise your cereal there, those kids will be begging their parental units to buy it for them.

Social media is not for everyone. But that does not mean it is not effective in reaching some people. It is more effective for certain applications and among certain demographics. This is why social media is part of the arsenal in your marketing mix.

Let me emphasize again: social media is part of the marketing mix. There is more to marketing communications than social media, and if your chief executive is not tweeting or blogging or Facebooking, that is OK.



What does your Twitter stream communicate

Lots of communications people –journalists, PR folks, ad people—are on Twitter. I am too, and I follow many communications types. You can get a lot of good information, and interesting facts from your Twitter stream. But you can also learn a lot about the people you follow.

What you tweet about: Obviously, what you tweet about shows what you are interested in, and what you are more knowledgeable about. If you are in health care, you may tweet about the latest health research. If you are constantly tweeting about personal stuff, you are communicating that your business is not as important to you as your personal life. If

you never tweet about personal stuff, you are saying that you view Twitter as only business.

When you tweet: Do you tweet during the day? Chances are that you incorporate Twitter into your work life. Do you only tweet on the weekend? Timing shows how much you understand how Twitter works. Although we have the ability to look at people's stream history, Twitter tends to be about immediacy. If you are tweeting in the middle of the night, you are saying you don't care whether people see your tweets, you just want to share.

How much you re-tweet: If you re-tweet stuff, it shows you are really reading what the people you follow share, and also, that you find it useful. You also are saying you are willing to share credit. If you never re-tweet, well, maybe you haven't found anything worth sharing.

Your Twitter stream really communicates a lot to those who follow you. Twitter is about building your network, and it is about sharing. I would argue that Twitter is also about branding. If you haven't locked your tweets, anyone can see what you are putting out there, and can form an opinion about who you are and what you do.

What does your Twitter stream say about you?



Some non-connected thoughts

This is not a post about marketing communications per se, but it does have to do with communications. This is also not in any particular order.

Heads in the sand

I wrote a few days ago about my stay in a Rochester hotel that did not live up to its advertising. Like I said then, there was nothing WRONG with the hotel, but it wasn't particularly right. Since I made my reservation online, I got the following email from the hotel:

Thank you for staying with us at the XXX. We sincerely hope you enjoyed your visit with us and that we were able to exceed your expectations. We look forward to serving you again when your travel plans bring you back to the XXX area.

They "hope" they exceeded my expectations. Well, they barely met my expectations but are they interested in knowing what my expectations and experiences were? No. I responded to them that if they cared about my expectations they would ask for feedback, and guess what, I have gotten no reply to that.

If you want to stick your head in the sand about your product or service, you are doing so at your own peril. If you are wondering why sales are down or employee morale is low, perhaps you need to FIND OUT instead.

How you present yourself (or, there are other people in the room)

I was at a couple professional development events yesterday. In both cases, there was at least one audience member who, during the Q&A, seemed to forget that there were other people in the audience. In the first case, the questioner went on and on about her business and finally got in a question (if asking a question that applies only to you is asking a question). In the second case, the questioner shared a very personal, and in my opinion, inappropriate, story as a set up to her comment (no real question). Both these people clearly see the world as subordinate to their own personal needs and desires.

This last thought leads me to:

Self promotion, arrogance and the cult of celebrity

Although the rise of social media and citizen journalism is, in general, a good thing, there has also been a rise in the amount of people who think they are superior to all the rest of us, and now, because they can harness great followings and share their every thought with the masses, have become ubiquitous and often, quite obnoxious. I wrote recently about people who actually create Wikipedia entries for themselves (talk about arrogant), and yesterday, my friend and colleague, Daria Steigman told me about the hoopla surrounding a “famous” PR person and a comment on a blog. Read the whole thing here and draw your own conclusions.

However, let me add my conclusion, I think Kami Huyse is generally right that people have become arrogant, but what she doesn't realize is that she herself is being arrogant by claiming “I don't have time to Google you.” Why is her time more important? Now let me be clear—people who think that “Google me” is a response to other people who ask how to contact you or more about you are clearly arrogant. BUT, if I truly want to know more, chances are I WILL Google you.

In the end, it is up to each of us to give attention to the people we respect. If we don't respect someone or we think they are arrogant, then let's NOT follow them or read their blogs or buy their books or attend their parties or whatever. Self-promoting and arrogant people will eventually lose their followings IF enough people realize that just because other people think someone is great does not mean that he or she really is great (after all, lots of people liked Stalin ...).

