

Wiki promotion and self-promotion

Promotion is one of the four “Ps” of marketing (the others being price, product, place). You can’t market effectively without promotion, and in fact, marketing communications is all about promotion. MarComm people don’t deal with price, product or place, other than to give input.

So, to sell a product, a service or an idea, you will promote. Promotion could go many ways, from traditional advertising, to blogging, to a public relations campaign. That’s all fine and good. However, with the rise of social media as a prime promotion vehicle, we run into some problems. In social media, we rely on user-generated content, whether through blog entries or sharing thoughts and ideas via social networks. We now have the term “citizen journalist.”

Enter Wikipedia. Wikipedia is an online, USER-GENERATED encyclopedia. Anyone can contribute to Wikipedia. There is very little if any editorial control over content. Products, people, historical events, music and any number of other topics are covered over at Wikipedia. Wikipedia entries tend to come up pretty high in Google searches too. It seems obvious that someone looking to promote something or someone would add a Wikipedia entry. Right?

From a marketing perspective alone, of course you would add Wikipedia as a target for your social media/SEO/SEM efforts. It makes complete sense. However, as a consumer you have to be wary. If anyone can post anything on Wikipedia, then how accurate is that information? Can you rely on it? Should you rely on it? Are people questioning what they find on Wikipedia and if so, how is that affecting Wikipedia entries?

I don’t have the answers to this.

You have all heard of personal branding right? And personal branding has everything to do with promotion, and more specifically, self-promotion. You see people on Twitter promoting links to their blogs, to their parties, to their businesses. This is OK (although I have a problem with people who endlessly self-promote but that is another blog post). And to link it back to Wikipedia, individuals are now creating Wikipedia entries about themselves. Again, it makes sense on a macro-scale.

Still, perhaps I am being “old school” but a self-provided entry on Wikipedia is meaningless. A third party endorsement, like an article in a newspaper, has much more weight. Presumably, the third party (perhaps a journalist) did some fact-checking. If I can put down whatever I want in Wikipedia, what is stopping me from inflating reality or straight-out making stuff up? And worse, people think of Wikipedia as a real source for information, not unlike an Encyclopedia Britannica.

The bottom line is this: maybe using Wikipedia to promote yourself or your product is a good strategic, social-media-savvy move, but is it ethical?

What do you think?



Advice you shouldn't ignore!

Last week was Digital Capital Week here in Washington, DC. The event consisted of workshops, meet-ups, parties and other events. It was well attended and well tweeted. As is now the custom, event attendees tweet out the little nuggets of

shareable information followed by a hashtag, thus sharing with their following and publicizing the event.

Here are some that I saw:

“Be authentic.”

“Search your name on YouTube to see if there is any videos of you that you’ve forgotten.”

“Engage with your followers.”

“Blogging is hard work.”

My reaction to these on my Twitter stream: Really? Is that so? I have never heard that before.

On my Google Reader this morning, I came across this piece from HubSpot: “Responding to a Social Media Crisis: #Intuit Outage Takeaways.” Here are its four rules for dealing with such a crisis:

***1. Practice what you preach.** If you tout the importance of transparency, then make sure that you can be transparent during a crisis, too. For example, at HubSpot, we use trust.hubspot.com to show our portals and report on downtimes.*

***2. Respond fast, respond often.** You’re only hurting yourself if you wait too long before releasing information, and when you finally do speak up there isn’t a lot of substance to what you’re saying. Give frequent updates, even if the update is just “no new information”.*

***3. Apologize for the right thing.** Make sure you aren’t alienating your customers further with your apology. They may be more upset if they feel like you are not addressing how the error impacted their livelihood.*

***4) Make amends.** Try to find a way you can make it up to*

your customers. They are the backbone of your business, so it's in your best interest to keep them happy.

Read

more:

<http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/6101/Responding-to-a-Social-Media-Crisis-Intuit-Outage-Takeaways.aspx#ixzz0raltVJsj>

All these pieces of advice are fine. They aren't saying anything new, but we are supposed to think that social media somehow needs these rules. Being authentic and credible? Yes, you should be IN ALL ASPECTS of life. Engage with your audiences? Yes, of course you should. And the Hubspot advice to deal with a "social media" crisis? That is just plain crisis communication 101.

Social media may be new media, but the communications "rules" and advice that apply to older media apply here too. Perhaps because so many people are coming into media/communications because of social media, that so-called experts can recycle this advice and call it social media expertise.

My conclusion is that people are very eager to learn, but they are being snookered by the "social media experts" who seem to recycle advice and bring very little value to the conversation. So my advice, and this you should definitely not ignore, is to question any advice social media experts give.

P.S. If you need someone to tell you that being authentic and credible is important, then I really don't want to do business with you.

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Missing opportunities

Are you truly making the best use of the many marketing opportunities out there? Probably not. This is understandable since there are so many things we can do and only a finite amount of time and staff to do it in. However, there are some

opportunities that you SHOULD NOT be missing out on. These are:

- Responding to your emails
- Tracking your mentions on the Web and social media
- Responding to social media mentions
- Following up when necessary

Let me provide you with one example of a really big missed opportunity. A couple of weeks ago, I wanted to visit a coworking space in Baltimore. I sent an email to see if I could just drop by. It took someone there more than 24 hours to respond (the answer was yes, just come on by). With that in mind, I did just that. I was welcomed and given a spot to sit. I tweeted about it. No one responded, even a week later. No one asked me for my card or information. In fact, no one said much of anything. There was absolutely no follow up. Even though I believe the coworking space offers a great convenience and is a wonderful concept, I think this particular one won't survive. They are missing opportunities to engage with potential customers, and they are doing nothing to market themselves.

If we've learned anything about social media and the Internet, it is that people expect a response (most expect an immediate response). My website host is on Twitter, and if I tweet them, they certainly respond. Why? Because they realize that it is giving them an opportunity to engage with a customer and try to fix any problem that is happening.

When you don't respond to what is being asked of you or being said about you, you are truly missing an opportunity. Social media makes it easy to find out when people are talking about you. Perhaps you can't monitor it all day, but do it once a day and make sure to engage.

If you want to make the most of easy opportunities, track and respond, and do so sooner rather than later. What are you

doing to make sure you are responsive?



Tech vs. communication

Recently, I have been noticing jobs that require someone with technology skills (html, programming) to handle web development and social media. It is interesting that in some organizations social media efforts are housed under the IT umbrella. But should they be? I don't think so. That is like asking the kitchen installer to cook a meal. Just because you know the appliances and how to work them does not mean that you can use them to their best potential.

Last week, I attended a social media workshop (not worth my while, but that is a topic for another post). One of the presenters was a tech guy, and he came out and said that he didn't know marketing. He understood the power and importance of social media tools, but not how to use them for marketing purposes.

Then there is the whole web developer versus web designer issue. A web designer is concerned with the aesthetics of the website, and the web developer makes the site work. Some people claim to provide both services, but in my experience, a web developer's websites never look pretty. And a web designer who does his/her own development probably can't do complex back-end stuff.

It boils down to what technology can and cannot do. Technology is a tool, a very specialized tool. And in the "internet age," keeping up with evolving technology is crucial. But technology alone cannot communicate, it cannot market. A superior tech

website with no communications strategy or well written content will not do the job. Technology is not communication. Tech people are notorious for being hard to understand. They speak a specialized language and have skills that your average communications person just doesn't have.

The bottom line is that to have your IT department handle social media does not make good marketing sense. Social media is completely about communication. It is not about the technology that allows said communication. I don't have to understand how Twitter works to use it for marketing promotion. I need to understand how people communicate, what information they are seeking. This is not to say you shouldn't involve your IT department—they can probably help facilitate what you are trying to do. Just leave the communicating to the communicators.



Thoughts on the new Facebook

Mark Zuckerberg has done it again. He has made some serious threats to your privacy, if you are a Facebook user. Zuckerberg does not believe in privacy, he has said so in those very words, so it is not too surprising that he further damaged your privacy to enhance his bottom line.

There are tons of articles about the new issues with privacy that came out of the f8 conference. This one on GigaOm is a good one (and thank you to Downtown Women's Club for posting it on Facebook...the irony). Sadly, most Facebook users will never know about these changes, which directly affect them.

I have been a steady Facebook user for more than two years. I

had rarely logged out and usually checked in several times a day to see what everyone is up to. I also recently launched a Facebook Fan Page, which is now called a like page. But today, I logged out. I will log out every single time I visit Facebook and furthermore, I will limit my visits to Facebook. I am just not comfortable with what they are doing over there. And more pernicious, is that other sites I visit, like CNN and Washington Post now have my information and friends. Unless I logout of Facebook, CNN knows who my friends are and what they are doing online. Talk about Big Brother!

I also hate the new “like” feature on Facebook. A Fan page is not a “like” page. They are inherently different. Like Kim Woodbridge from Anti Social Development said to me about the change: “I like peas, but I am not a fan of peas.”

I am not sure that Facebook cares what people think. It is feeling high because it has 400 million users worldwide, and that gives the company a lot of power, not to mention marketing might. For now, if you care about your privacy, protect yourself. Do not let Facebook use you for its gain. So logout, opt out, or do what you have to do.

Feel free to share your thoughts in the comments. Are you a fan of the Facebook?



The dark side of social media

Editorial

Social media has definitely changed the Internet, marketing, news gathering. Many people feel more in touch with long lost

friends because of social networks. In short, there is lots to praise and like about social media. But, because it is social, and mostly free, social media has increased the reach of hate groups, racists and other people who previously relied on getting their message out only to a small circle of similar miscreants.

Take for example a group on Facebook that is dedicated to “praying” for President Obama’s death. I won’t link to it here but this hateful group has already amassed almost one million followers (or likers in the new Facebook parlance). As you know, social media works as an amplifier. So if someone sees one of their friends likes organic yogurt, then he or she can also like said product. Same thing happens with these hate groups. And then it becomes a numbers game. Sadly, many people join these groups because they think its “funny” or as a joke. But what they are doing is lending weight, via numbers, to a hateful cause.

Remember the Holocaust Museum shooter? Well he had several rantings on the Web. And the guy who killed a bunch of women at a gym in Pittsburgh, and then killed himself? He had an entire blog devoted to his hatred of women. Social media is easy to access and has little or no cost. Anyone can set up a blog or a website, a Facebook page or a Twitter stream.

There is a lot of hate and plenty of malcontents out there. It’s unfortunate that social media, which generally serves to build community and share interesting ideas, can also be used to share the hate and spread the ignorance. I am not sure what, if anything, we can do about this.



Hello there social butterfly!

Are you a social (media) butterfly?

Social media and social networks are not new anymore. In fact, there is talk of a Web 3.0. Social media is mainstream. After all, you have the White House and most television anchors tweeting and lots of businesses have Facebook pages. I bet your grandmother is on Facebook and your grandpa is blogging. Social media has served to connect lots of people, across demographics and geography.

With the rise of social media, and its usefulness in “friend” raising, being social is becoming a bigger asset. How social are you?

Take the following quiz to gauge your sociability:

1. Do you read blogs regularly?
2. Do you use a reader? (extra points if you can define RSS)
3. Do you ever comment on other people’s blogs?
4. Do you have a blog? If so, do you blog regularly, or was your last post last summer?
5. Do you have a Twitter account? Do you actually tweet?
6. Do you know what Foursquare is?
7. Do you use a service to post your blog content to your Twitter stream? If so, have you customized the settings?
8. Do you respond to @ tweets and DMs?
9. Have you met anyone from your social media world in real life?
10. Have you ever been to a Tweet-up?

If you answered yes to all 10 questions, you are a certified social media butterfly.

If you answered yes to at least five questions, you are earning your social media wings.

If you answered yes to less than three questions, you are a social media wallflower.

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-knownness. 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.