Social media amplifies everything

Social media takes a magnifying lens to everything. It makes everything appear bigger and closer (kind of like your side view mirrors).

Fun with magnifying glasses by matlock on Flickr

You've probably heard that social media serves to amplify your message. You tell your friends on Facebook, and they then share it with their friends, and so on. I have come to realize that social media amplifies more than your message. It amplifies mistakes, personality traits and business smarts (or lack thereof).

Mistakes

You used to be able to slip up and it would be forgotten. Not any more. Now, someone will catch your mistake, and put it on Twitter or YouTube. And then people will share that. And before you know it, everyone knows of your mistake. Perhaps forgiven, but not forgotten.

Personality traits

Are you an angry person? You will appear even angrier when trying to contain your ire to 140 characters. Your nastiness will be contained and then disseminated. Are you rude? Not only will the person appalled at your belching at the dinner table know about it, but everyone else will too. Self-centered? It will be evident in endless self-promotional posts. On the other hand, if you are a connector or naturally gregarious, it will be evident because you will have 1000s of followers.

Business know-how

Do you answer your customer queries? If you don't do it regularly and quickly, it will be even more apparent on social media channels. People will complain. And since you aren't used to replying quickly, the problem will grow.

Not sure what social media is for and ignoring it? You can be sure others will not be. You will either look like a fool or lose customers.

For example, today I was looking at service providers "website." All it was a poorly formed WordPress site. There was no contact information. None. No listing of services. No reason why I should hire. In short, it was a disaster. I found a Twitter handle, and tweeted. No response. Better to not be on the web at all!

Remember that social media gives people the ability to share the good and the bad about you. Small can become big. And that can be a good thing, or it can be a disaster. Your choice!

Don't miss out! Sign up for the next How to blog workshop, taking place on May 17. Details and registration here.

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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.

Just because its on the

computer doesn't mean you can't act human

Be warned: this is a rant.

Lately, I have been getting followed and unfollowed on Twitter by a guy who has a networking group here in DC. He happens to have many Twitter handles (and a surprising number of followers). He has used at least five different handles to follow me, and then, I take it because I haven't followed back, he unfollows me. Is this a good way to get me to follow him? NO!!!

Say this interaction was taking place on the phone instead of on Twitter. It would go like this: He would call from his cell phone, and hang up once I answered. Then he would call from his office line, and hang up again. And so forth. This would be very annoying, and bordering on perverted behavior (if there were any heavy breathing involved).

If he actually wanted to talk to me, he might call and say "Hello, I really think you have some great ideas to share, and I would like to talk to you some more." But apparently, he is either unaware of how to behave like a human, or is just interested in numbers.

There is no great mystery to getting Twitter followers: it is simply about behaving courteously and human. That is, showing interest, re-tweeting content to show support and giving credit, and INTERACTING.

Why do so many people forget they are dealing with other people on the Internet? You would not walk into a store and yell obscenities, for instance. And yet people do this on Twitter as a matter of course.

A computer is just a tool. It need humans to run it.

Getting more readers and getting unfollowed

Check out my guest blog post at the Downtown Women's Club blog: 5 ways to get more readers to your blog. Hint: it has to do with being consistent and getting the word out. Special thanks to Diane Danielson for giving me the opportunity!

On social media and blogs, we are all trying to get more readers and more followers. If we are in business or marketing, we are also trying to convert some followers/readers/likers into customers. Right?

Lately, I have been cleaning up Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Basically, I have been reducing the numbers of people that I follow or am connected to. Let me tell you why.

It's personal

On Facebook, which I consider a personal network, I have been "unfriending" anyone that I don't know very well, or only know through business encounters. I tend to share my personal views and activities and really, would rather have fewer "friends" on Facebook than thousands of people with insight into my personal life.

It's business

On LinkedIn, I have removed a few connections because I just don't know enough about them. LinkedIn is a business network,

and when you connect with someone, you have access to his/her connections. I want to be more careful with this network and not give away my hard-earned connections to people who are just trying to expand their own networks with little regard for what I do.

It's common sense

I have been unfollowing lots of people on Twitter lately. Why? Because there is only so much time in the day, and there are so many tweets that I want to make sure to follow folks who are offering stuff that is relevant and/or interesting. I am on Twitter to share and to learn, but I don't need to learn about what you did at the gym or whether your cat is at the vet. On Twitter, I definitely stopped following anybody who:

- Self promotes endlessly
- Uses crass expressions/language ALWAYS
- Doesn't ever share anything valuable (as defined by me)
- Seems to be in a quest to get the most tweets per day ever
- Who never ever interacts with me or re-tweets or even acknowledges my re-tweets (unless the person in question is a journalist/politician/world leader)

So yes, we are all trying to get more followers and to do that, you need to be aware of what gets you unfollowed.

Your thoughts?

Check your links

I know you need to add one more thing to your to-do list like you need to wake up Friday at 4 a.m. to watch the royal wedding, but do consider doing this with every blog post, website page, tweet, etc that you put out there:

CHECK THE LINKS!

Does your website have any broken links (or pages that don't appear correctly)? Does the sharing software on your blog work? All of it? When you post a link to a story on Twitter, are you sure the link is working?

Many of us do not check these very often.

Case in point: a blogger I follow has faulty sharing buttons on her blog. I read a good post by her, which I wanted to share on Twitter. I clicked on the link and all I got was a blank Twitter page—no title and no link. No good. I created a Bit.Ly short link and posted it anyway but she would have no way of knowing that the item had been shared unless her blog records ping-backs. I reported this to her, and I hope she is able to correct it.

Prevent this from happening by occasionally checking these links. Just sayin'.

Web and social media

irritants

There are things that I see happening on social media and on the web that are irritating. They happen way too often. Here are my top peeves (and least of this week).

One of my top ten peeves of all time, and which I have discussed before, is the i**mpersonal invitation to connect on LinkedIn.** In the past few weeks, I have received at least four or five invitations from people I don't know and who haven't made the slightest attempt to personalize the LinkedIn generated note "I'd like to add you to my professional network." I got one this morning, and I fired back a note telling the person in question that we hadn't ever met, and that a tip for her would be too personalize the note. She wrote back this really clueless note:

> *Please accept my sincere apologies. I must have mistaken you*
> *for someone else. I thought I had met you at a XXXX function.*
> *I never send blind invitations.*
> *I am currently writing for a couple of online magazines and*
> *am building local pr connections.*
> *So sorry to be an annoyance.*

Why is this clueless? Because, a) she did send a blind invitation. She could have written something like, "We met at a XXX event last week, and I would like to connect with you here." And b) she is telling me she is using LinkedIn to build connections, which I interpret as using this forum to send out countless queries and newsletters , etc. So, she is not seeking to build a connection with ME, she is seeking to build her network to profit her work.

Other irritants are:

Blog posts that are not shareable on social media. And ironically, this post, from the All things WOM, from the Word

of Mouth Association, IS NOT SHAREABLE. Has no share buttons. Really. How stupid is this.

Web redesigns that are not useful to the reader. The Washington Post redesigned their website and recently re-launched it. As far as I can tell, readers were not consulted. In a note to readers, sent THREE days after the re-launch the Post says:

> *The Washington Post is now even more essential and more in tune with the way you interact with news.*
>
> - *Follow stories as they develop and share your ideas as they evolve*
> - *Watch events unfold with new video programs*
> - *Know what's getting the most buzz and what's really happening in D.C.*
> - *Get straight to your favorite coverage with destination hubs for Politics, Local, Sports and Opinions*

I guess what they mean by "more essential" is less stuff to read. Now I have to dig through the site to get to local news. And where are the blogs? Oh, and by screwing around with the site, lots of the Post's blog RSS feeds were messed up. Nice going.

Using swear words on Twitter. I have written about this before, and I will again in light of this article in the New York Times. I swear all the time, just not on Twitter. Because Twitter is a broadcast medium that is also archived. What you say here is on the record for ALL to see. It shows a lack of thought to use your words carelessly.

Promoting yourself endlessly or worse, showing off on Twitter. There is one particular person, whom I just unfollowed today, who felt it necessary to be a braggart at every turn. It was things like this: "aren't you jealous of my fabulous view?" with an attached picture. Why do I want to read this? Why do I

care? Again, Twitter is a broadcast medium. What you say can be seen by 1000s of people.

Sending too many (or useless) email marketing messages. The AMA-DC was sending me four emails A WEEK. I told them it was too much. They unsubscribed me for criticizing them. And here is Entrepreneur's take on why people stop following you. Read it and see that too many emails or too many posts irritate people. (And get this, I keep getting Comcast's marketing missives, even though they CANCELLED my account.)

Any of these get your goat too?

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?

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!

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 multitmedia 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?

Share / Save ...

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 enewsletters, 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.

Share / Save