Social media intelligence is an essential skill

You have probably heard of Emotional Intelligence (EI), which is defined as the ability to perceive, evaluate and control emotions. EI is the ability to figure out how to respond appropriately to a situation. There are people that rank low on the EI scale—they lack empathy or social skills. They may laugh inappropriately or not seem saddened by a tragic moment. And there are those who have high EI and are very adept at navigating human interactions.

Yesterday's attack on the Boston Marathon got me thinking about a variation of EI—what I am terming **social media intelligence**. The news was just awful, and coming out in dribs and drabs. On Twitter, there was a ton of (mis)information. There was one bomb, then there were three. Was it domestic terrorism or did this have the hallmarks of Al Qaeda? Wild speculation abounded.

The people who have social media intelligence were the ones had reasonable responses and tweets. Some asked people to check their sources before tweeting and some asked others to refrain from posting exceedingly graphic images.

Those with **low social media intelligence are the people that appear unaware how their communications affect their followers** and who were busy re-tweeting thoughtlessly, spreading rumors and even engaging in fear-mongering.

Another variation of low social media intelligence was being unaware that a big news event was happening and tweeting/posting about mundane, unrelated stuff. Unfortunately some of these are communications folks who have automated posts to send out press releases and other announcements. There is little that is as jarring as reading about an

upcoming event (join us for a spectacular fun-filled evening!) when simultaneously finding out that the nation's oldest marathon has been targeted by terror. Some people (those with higher social media intelligence) called out this behavior.

Whether EI is learned or you are born with it is an open question. Social media intelligence on the other hand, can most certainly be learned. In fact, in today's social media fueled information age, having this type of intelligence is an essential skill. Here are a few guidelines:

- Be aware of what is going on and act accordingly. Don't post without checking your feeds.
- Don't assume that everything you see on social media is true and deserving of re-posting. Double-check facts and sources.
- Every social media network is different—post accordingly. Perhaps your personal trials and tribulations are best left to Facebook and taken off LinkedIn.
- Remember that people can see your posts both in real-time and in the future.
- Discussions on social media are not all about you. Remember the social in social media.

What would you add? What makes someone have social media intelligence? What are examples of lacking or having social media intelligence?