Thoughts on reaching out, stumbling blocks and helplessness

Perhaps in honor of the name of this blog (Caffeinated ideas and views on marketing), I have lots of things percolating in my head this morning.

Reaching out

With social media fast becoming a substitute for print and electronic media, and with the idea that "inbound" marketing is best, we are seeing a drop-off in reaching out. For instance, there is a conference today in Washington that I only just found out about because someone in my Twitter stream is attending. This conference is intended for nonprofits. I am not sure what type of marketing was done for the conference, but I can assure you it was not a traditional advertising in many channels approach. I will place bets that the nonprofit I work with never heard about it…

I feel that what is happening here is that circles are getting smaller and tighter. If you depend on social media for your outreach, you will be reaching a self-reinforcing group of folks. More and more, if I attend an event promoted on social media, I see the same folks I saw at the last event.

I am not shunning social media, but I do think that if marketers want to spread the word, they have to use many different channels to do so.

Stumbling blocks

Last week, I attended a talk by Guy Kawasaki, author of Enchantment. He mentioned that when you put stumbling blocks between you and your customer or supporter, you are not being

enchanting. And yet, I have visited dozens of blogs this week, with interesting posts that I would like to share on my social networks, and guess what, they make it hard to do. For instance “Sexy Sharing” (I think that is what is called) adds a second step when you click on one the sharing buttons (It asks whether you want to allow a third party to connect to your account…and I don’t). That is not sexy, and it is a stumbling block. Similarly, some blogs do not have sharing or their sharing buttons don’t work, making me do the work (use my own Hootsuite sharing button or use a URL shortener to cut and paste). Or how many times are you asked to give information, create passwords, etc. just to get costs/estimates/speak to someone. Stumbling blocks turn people away, and hurt you in the end.

Helplessness

I belong to a listserv, the name and purpose of which I won’t share here. What irks me about this listserv is that many times people ask questions to the listserv that could be found out by doing some research (AKA typing a term into Google). To me, this is being helpless and dependent on others, and makes those people look bad (stupid). Perhaps these people are trying to reach out and start a conversation, but sometimes you just have to wonder if they understand the power of the Internet.

I admit, the above are some random thoughts. Your take on them is appreciated…that is why we have comments!