

# Is sharing part of your content strategy?

I can't believe that in mid-2016 I am still complaining about this, but it happened to me again just this morning. I came across an interesting blog post about—get this—content strategy, and it had NO SHARING BUTTONS. None. Zilch. There was no easy way to share this content out short of me cutting and pasting the URL or using an extension such as Buffer (as Jonathan Rick helpfully pointed out on Twitter).

## Think about the user

Here's the thing, content strategy is supposed to keep the "user experience" (or UX) in mind. That means, that you, the content strategist or website/blog owner, need to think about your site's visitors: How do they use your site? What do they need to do on your site? What do they want to learn about you? How can you make the process easy and intuitive *for them*?

## It's about being social

Sharing buttons have been around for years. There are dozens of plugins that allow this functionality in WordPress, and I am sure in any other blogging platform. Not having sharing buttons means you do not want your content to be shared. Which means you do not understand the purpose of content or the social aspect of social media (blogs are social media).

It's not difficult: **Your content strategy needs to include an easy way to share content.** And by the way, sharing content also includes being able to email it or print it (don't get me started on how many recipe sites don't have this functionality).

## Make sure it works

But it's not enough to stick a sharing plugin on your blog or website and call it a day. You have to check that it actually works. And that it is providing the right information. And that it is easy to find and use. (Just yesterday, I came across another blog post that I wanted to share, and it did have a sharing button, microscopic, but there, and guess what, it didn't work.)

**You will find sharing (and printing) buttons at the bottom of this post. Please consider sharing this so that we can get all the non-sharers on board.**

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## **The weekly communications #fail**

Every day I see something in the communications world that either irks me, peeves me or just plain amazes me, and not in a good way. There's so much that I am making it a weekly rant on the blog.

This week's communication fail has to do with sharing... social sharing that is...and how hard it can be to do.

**The communications failure for February 17th: Sharing done wrong.**

Here's what I have encountered this week:

- **No sharing buttons whatsoever on a blog or major news site.** (In fact, I found no sharing buttons on a post about how to communicate effectively, I am not kidding.) This needs to stop. If you have a blog, you have to

include the ability to share.

- **Sharing buttons that share the name of the blog but not the name of the post.** Why would I share something called say, Deb's blog and a URL and expect people to read it? If it said something like "Why sharing buttons are crucial" on Deb's blog, then yes.
- **Sharing buttons that share the name of the post but not of the author.** It's about giving credit where credit is due. There are so many sharing buttons out there, it's hard to find the right one.

**If you are a blogger, do yourself a favor: check your sharing buttons right now.**

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## **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!

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## 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.*

