

Engagement is just the beginning

Johna Burke, of BurellesLuce addressed WWPR last week (recap by Joan Coyle here). She talked about social media measurement and provided lots of useful information about web tools and marketing strategies.

One thing, more than anything else Johna said, struck me as crucial: she talked about engagement and marriage. Engagement, Johna said, is just the beginning. It's when everything is all promise and excitement (isn't that ring all shiny?) Marriage (which most times follows the engagement) takes a lot of hard work and commitment.

In social media, people talk about engagement all the time. You have to "engage" with your followers. What does this really mean? Why are you engaging? The answer is simple—to build a lasting relationship (the "marriage"). If you are engaging just to engage and not to follow through, then you are just breaking promises. If you get caught up in getting Twitter followers but don't provide any substance or reason to "stay together" then you are looking at social media (and any marketing) as being all about the excitement of it rather than the substance (which should be your marketing goals and strategy).

Engagement is just the beginning. It is your starting point to a marketing/communications strategy that seeks to accomplish a goal (e.g. establish thought leadership, increase sales, etc.).

Are you getting engaged all the time or are you working on your marriage?

What makes stories work?

Last week, I attended a Washington Women In PR (WWPR) panel on “The Art of Storytelling.” WWPR’s Past President Debbie Friez has a great recap on the BurellesLuce blog.

While I agree with the concept that creating a story will help your organization to connect with its target audience, one thing was not answered. What makes the story work?

Danny Harris of People’s District said that stories help “show the texture,” which I take to mean give life and detail to otherwise dry and boring concepts. For instance, if I tell you I saw a homeless person on a street corner, that means nothing. But if I tell you that I stopped to talk to the homeless person, and he was able to tell me that because of a health issue he lost his job, and then his house, now you understand the situation. The story fills in the details.

Stories should be memorable, ideally. But then again, not every story, and certainly not corporate stories, is memorable. Stories should aim to create recognition and let you find commonality with them through the details they impart. Yet what details will resonate with your audience?

One thing not one person on the panel said and which I think is absolutely critical for storytelling is this: authenticity.

Although it is a much-vaunted word (especially on social media), authenticity is a concept that is often lacking in marketing communications. When something doesn’t ring true it is because it is not authentic. Case in point: my criticism of Pepco’s ads about customers being first. Those ads were simply not authentic. Why? Because anyone who has had to deal with Pepco knows that customers are NOT first. Same goes for

Comcast (Here is a total aside, I went to Comcast to return equipment and saw a sign that said “Customers are our first priority.” Of course, the customer service office was a small cramped affair where a dozen people were waiting in line for one or two surly customer service reps. Yes, I am sure Comcast puts customers first.)

If you are going to use stories to relay your marketing message you have to be sure they are authentic. People see through the BS. And people who see through it will now have a really bad impression about your organization.

What do you think makes stories work?



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 multimedia 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?

