HAZARDOUS TO YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA HEALTH

50 Previously Condoned Behaviors We No Longer Recommend

by DAVID SPARK

SPARK MEDIA
SOLUTIONS

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The Internet is flooded with advice on what you should and shouldn't do in social media. I think I've read and heard most of it, and let me sum it up for you: "You're doing it wrong. You're not doing enough of the thing you're doing wrong. Buy my book."

You should have less on your plate after you read this ebook

Every "how to" article and business book about communications provides yet another long list of even more things you should be doing but aren't. I feel I'm at a point in my career where I don't need advice from people I don't know telling me what *more* I should do. What I'd welcome is some advice on what I should stop doing.

That's why I chose to produce this ebook. I wanted less work to do (although writing and producing this ebook required a substantial amount of work).

To begin my research, I reached out via email to industry thought-leaders, many of whom are personal colleagues, and simply asked them, "What was once considered good advice regarding social media that you either did, advised, or agreed with, but now, given the rapidly changing social media landscape, you no longer recommend?"

This ebook is a compilation of advice from 56 experts offering "what to stop" recommendations, and I admittedly did many of these things myself… until very recently.

Read this ebook!

Don't just skim the section headlines and fool yourself and others into believing you read this ebook. I'm so serious about this request (read: demand) that I've updated this ebook to ePUB version 4.0 (it doesn't exist) and Adobe Acrobat 26.3 (also doesn't exist) and incorporated the industry's latest and most advanced imaginary facial recognition and eye-tracking technology.

WARNING: If you share this ebook without reading it cover to cover, *nothing* will happen. But you'll know you did it, and you'll know I tried to catch you doing it, but failed.

1 STOP BEGGING.
You look pathetic.

In a previous white paper of mine, "How to #Trend on Twitter," I recommended people blatantly ask for retweets (a.k.a. RTs) because your followers want to help you out and would support you in your endeavors… up to a point. All these pleas eventually start to have the reverse effect.

If you constantly barrage your friends with RT and "please share" requests, they're going to get irritated.

It's like having a friend whom you've helped move once before, yet asks you to do it again. *Dude, hire some friggin' movers.*

The sentiment is the same when you continuously beg for RTs. *Dude, hire a friggin' publicist.*

Begging for RTs is not a marketing strategy. It's a relationship-destroying strategy.

"Entitlement abounds on the social web with so many communications starting with 'give me,' 'do this for me,' or 'share this with your fans' without anyone ever thinking to create value first," complained Lee Odden (@LeeOdden), author of *Optimize* CEO at TopRank® Online Marketing, and Editor at MarketingBlog.com.

"Asking for retweets is simply unnecessary," noted illustrator Len Peralta (@lenperalta), "Either your content is compelling or it isn't."

"Earned attention comes from an investment in your community with real returns, not just superficial social shares. Creating value in meaningful and interesting ways before 'the ask' represents the kind of social media engagement that motivates action, and attracts even more fans," said Odden.

STOP TAGGING INFLUENCERS JUST TO GET THEIR ATTENTION

"While I may have a public profile, I do get annoyed when random 'friends' decide to include me in their pics [I don't appear in] because they are trying to get some general attention," complained Jeff Pulver (@jeffpulver), Co-Founder and Chairman of Zula.

You can't just @reply an influencer and expect a response. Context and relevancy are key. If you tag or @reply an influencer just as an attention-getting ploy, like tagging them in a photo they're not in, you'll get the influencer's attention. But thinking you're a jackass probably isn't the attention you'll want.

"It's annoying because I have to unsubscribe to the comment stream that I never asked to be part of," said Pulver. "This isn't how I would define engagement, and usually this type of action will trigger me to unfriend that person if we were never that close to begin with."

STOP TRYING TO PULL OFF SOCIAL MEDIA WITHOUT BEING SOCIAL

Many large companies are afraid of public interaction with their customers and critics because that could lead to negative publicity. Regardless, they see others garnering attention through social media, so they want to get involved, but not really. How can I get tons of recognition with seemingly very little effort and no engagement? Is there any way we can be involved in "social" media, but turn off comments, and not respond?

For a while, the answer was yes, most often because of regulatory requirements and lawyers eager to reduce corporate risk to zero. The recommendations often began with a "listening campaign."

This advice no longer flies. Ted Rubin (@tedrubin), Social Marketing Strategist and Acting CMO of Brand Innovators, lists the following anti-social media no-no's:

- It is not OK to use social channels to just broadcast.

- It is not OK to simply advertise and call it "social media."

- It is not OK to block employees from accessing social media sites while at work.

- It is not OK to discourage employees from building their own personal brands.

- It is not OK to allow PR agencies to be your social voice without regular input from company employees.

STOP LETTING BOTS CONTROL YOUR TWITTER ACCOUNT

4
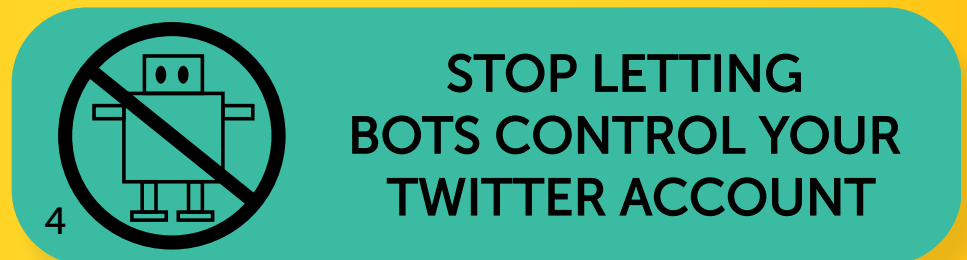
The act of following someone on Twitter or mentioning them via an @reply indicates an interest in that person or company. When you let a bot respond, you've just ended a conversation someone else started.

If *you're* not fooled by auto-generated responses, and if you find them incredibly irritating and insulting, what makes you think your audience will feel any differently?

Bots were not sold to us under the "Golden Rule" philosophy of "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Rather, they were pitched to us as a magical way to affordably "scale" social media communications. Artificial intelligence's consistent failure of the

Turing test proves that most humans can spot a bot very quickly. Bots don't scale communications. They are a form of response that scale customer annoyance and can accelerate public ridicule.

"Tools like TwitHawk were originally designed to automatically respond to customers [on Twitter] based on keyword. As a customer service tool they can severely damage a company's brand as Bank of America found out," said Jessica Miller-Merrell (@blogging4jobs), CEO of Xceptional HR.

BofA's vapid and robotic response of "We'd be happy to review your account with you to discuss your concerns" to every single tweet, even @OccupyLA that mentioned @BofA_Help, sparked a fury of anger and exacerbated the community's feeling that Bank of America wasn't truly paying attention to their concerns.

STOP POSTING TO YOUR PERSONAL BLOG

5

"Rethink having a personal blog as the centerpiece of your social media presence," said Charlene Li (@charleneli), Founding Partner of Altimeter Group, who recognizes this is heresy for old-time bloggers.

If your personal blog is not your business, it's probably just a glorified resume or a showcase of you talking in front of microphones.

Reserve personal blog posting to critical updates about your professional and possibly personal life, said Li.

"It's not necessarily the place where you may want to invest time and effort," said Li. "[For ongoing conversations] you may get more traffic and have more impact through your non-owned channels on other sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook. It's simply not feasible or desirable to post everything to a blog that may matter to you."

STOP GETTING YOUR FEET WET
6

"Too many brands today see the 'bright and shiny' object called social media and jump right in whenever a new network launches," noted Michael Brito ([@Britopian](#)), Group Director at [WCG](#) and author of *Your Brand, The Next Media Company*.

In the early days of social media, a social media consultant was so desperate to get a potential client up and running on social that they'd recommend the client just "get their feet wet." Set up an account on Facebook and Twitter. Post something, anything, and let's just see what happens.

"Then they scratch their heads in confusion because their communities aren't growing and they have zero engagement," said Brito.

"It used to be true that it was enough to 'just participate,'" said Julien Smith ([@julien](#)), CEO of [Breather](#) and co-author of *The Impact Equation: Are You Making Things Happen or Just Making Noise?*

"That is still true, but it is only true when channels are new and unsaturated. When a channel is saturated, such as Twitter and Facebook, it is utterly pointless to just 'jump in.' It does not 'build audience,' nor does it 'increase engagement,'" complained Smith. "It only clutters the channel further."

Joe Pulizzi ([@JoePulizzi](#)), Founder of the [Content Marketing Institute](#), was an admitted dabbler as well.

"[Dabbling in social media] is almost like having a business phone number that you only answer once in a while, or a contact form on your website that only works part of the time," said Pulizzi.

"Stop doing social for the sake of doing social," admonished JD Lasica ([@jdlasica](#)), Founder of [Socialmedia.biz](#). "If you're pinning to Pinterest just because you're supposed to, but aren't getting any traction, stop it right now."

"We aren't in an experimentation phase any longer, so just playing around doesn't work anymore and can even harm you if you turn off your readers," said Robert Scoble (@Scobleizer), Startup Liaison Officer for Rackspace.

Some companies use the "social media" dabbling technique as a means to sink any possible investment in social media. Most "dabbling" efforts yield zero results, which is the necessary "proof" that the social media experiment failed and should receive no more funding.

"As a channel becomes more stuffed, it becomes increasingly difficult to be heard," said Smith. "You need to come into it with a clear sense of differentiation, of whom you will be targeting and why they care, and lots of other factors. Otherwise, you won't get noticed, or if you are, you'll be forgotten extremely easily."

7 STOP WAITING TO SEE IF A NEW PLATFORM GAINS MOMENTUM

"I used to advise waiting a bit to see if the tool gained momentum or attracted the right audience," admitted Shel Holtz (@shelholtz), Principal of Holtz Technology + Communication.

The tip of "just go in and participate" has a qualifier, said Breather's Smith. "If something is new and fresh, you can just go in and participate and it should be fine; there can be a reaction to that."

"These days, I advise my clients, readers, and listeners to jump in and experiment with interesting or exciting new channels and platforms. The sooner, the better," said Holtz. "Early adoption can help a brand stand out and even if it doesn't play out, you're still likely to learn something from the experience."

This "wait and see" attitude towards new platforms has been the bane of my professional new media existence. When I see the value in a

new platform, I push hard to get first-mover advantage. The problem is, however, that every company I've ever worked with played it too conservatively and wouldn't experiment on anything. Everything required "proof," and that's the last thing you'll get if you want to be perceived as unique and exceptional.

For example, I have been very bullish on podcasting from the earliest days on. Years ago, I pushed for my client Sprint to launch a podcast. We had meetings after meetings and they kept balking, wanting more statistics, and proof that this would work. I eventually won them over, but it took an entire year. In less time than it took to launch a Sprint business podcast, I watched a three-story building go up in my neighborhood.

What ultimately convinced Sprint to take the leap was an article in *The Wall Street Journal* about businesses getting into podcasting. I couldn't convince them, but the WSJ could. By then it was too late. They missed the first-mover opportunity. Had they jumped in a year previously, they would have been in that WSJ article. The podcast lasted for a handful of episodes and we ultimately pulled the plug.

#STOP #THE #EXCESSIVE #HASHTAGS

"In the past, hashtags were a *necessity* for social media search, but today if you add a string of hashtags to the end of your tweet, you look like you are desperate for attention," said Ben Parr (@benparr), Managing Partner at DominateFund.

Hashtags are best used to follow a discussion around a specific event, or strategically as a joke. After that, they're attention-hungry annoyances that visually break the flow of reading a sentence.

"While hashtags might mean something to those of us in the ecosystem, those who aren't part of the inner circle can't make sense

of what the tweet means and hashtags simply get in the way of a clear message," noted Renee Blodgett (@MagicSauceMedia), *CEO and Founder of* Magic Sauce Media and Editor of We Blog the World.

"I avoid using hashtags," said Tom Merritt (@acedtect), host of Daily Tech News Show. "They make your posts look less genuine. Being genuine has always been my top guiding principle on Twitter."

STOP GOADING YOUR AUDIENCE

One popular way to engage your audience is to simply find a controversial topic to rile up your followers and get a conversation going: "All religions are cults."

If that line of community engagement is not intrinsically tied to some development effort (editorial, customer, or product), it will probably be a brand-damaging effort.

"Using these platforms to be passive-aggressive with those who, in theory, should be your biggest fans is increasingly bad form. Moreover, we've learned that this approach tends to act as a troll magnet, and fill your follower list with unlikeables. While this can be seen as cheap fun for some, it leads to little value in the end," warned Scott Johnson (@scottjohnson), Founder of FrogPants Studios.

"I used to think of these services as a place to 'expand the conversation,'" said Johnson, "But I now believe it's terrible for that. It's near impossible to influence others in short bursts, without upsetting others in those same small bursts."

10 STOP POSTING NON-RELEVANT, ENGAGEMENT-BAITING QUESTIONS

At the first of the month, try handing over a few Facebook "Likes" to your landlord in lieu of a rent check. Or maybe you'd like to show the bank your Klout score to negotiate a lower interest rate.

If those recommendations sound insane to you, then stop wasting your time and your followers' time by posting images with pithy statements, pointless "discussion" questions (e.g., "What's your favorite salsa?"), and photos of adorable pets. These business-irrelevant questions are a transparent and blatantly orchestrated ploy to get some type of engagement. While cheap "Likes" and comments will increase your Klout and Kred scores, they do nothing to build your brand or business.

"There's too much noise already in the space," warned Brad Friedman (@bradfriedman), President, The Friedman Group, LLC, who used to recommend "what's going on this weekend"-type posts. "I now advise clients to only publish content that is in the context of their brand and adds value to their customers."

"Those strategies are fine in small doses, but your best customers see through those kinds of tactics and you'll lose the real chances to have conversations with those customers that will drive toward real sales," said Rackspace's Scoble.

11 STOP USING SOCIAL MEDIA DASHBOARDS TO CROSS-POST

From the onset, the ability to use automation tools and social media dashboards such as Hootsuite to cross-post content across multiple social media accounts looked like a great way to save time and scale social media.

That was true until everyone saw the results.

"People are growing tired of seeing hashtags in discussion posts on LinkedIn and truncated Facebook messages with '@' signs. Social networks themselves are beginning to penalize this kind of behavior, and users see it as just plain lazy," said Paul Gillin (@pgillin), author of _Attack of the Customers_.

Rarely do followers rally or even respond to such blatant laziness.

"Customize your message to the audience if you want a response," advised Gillin.

12 STOP FOCUSING ON YOUR NONEXISTENT "COMMUNITY"

"For a long time there was this constant nonsense that can be summed up with that annoying phrase, 'It's not about you, it's about the community,'" said B.J. Mendelson (@bjmendelson), Author of _Social Media is Bullshit_. "The community as it's often portrayed doesn't actually exist. Sure, you have an audience, and a group of

people who are interested in your content (not you, your content), but they're not at all a community," continued Mendelson.

You can find your community at your church, synagogue, or Little League team. The people who follow the Oreo page on Facebook are Oreo fans. They are not a community.

"I don't recommend people focus on the 'community,'" said Mendelson. "The only thing that matters, and arguably ever mattered, was generating good material and then using the media to get it in front of the right people. At that point, it'll either fly or die on its own merits."

13 STOP ENDORSING PEOPLE ON LINKEDIN

"Endorsements on LinkedIn are worth nothing. Don't waste your time endorsing someone. Don't get a swelled head when someone endorses you," advised Dan Janal (@prleads), Author of *Internet Marketing Confidential*.

Implied reciprocity is not the backbone of trustworthy recommendations. A social network's lifeblood is continued back-and-forth engagement. Regardless of what a recommendation should be, LinkedIn pries you to return the favor when you receive a testimonial. Believing that anyone who gives you a good recommendation deserves one in return encourages people to just endorse and post testimonials of everyone so they'll receive testimonials in return, thereby reducing the value of endorsements and testimonials to a game of call and response.

LinkedIn has so severely lowered the bar for giving an endorsement (just click a button) or a testimonial, that they've completely devalued something that was once highly valued.

Here are Janal's three telltale signs you're looking at a crappy testimonial:

1. Testimonial was written in a way so the person being quoted gets publicity, (e.g., "As the author of six books on publicity, I can clearly say that Joe knows his stuff.")

2. Some testimonials are written by the subject because he or she knows the client doesn't have time or knowledge to write a testimonial, but will gladly endorse their work.

3. Testimonials that don't have the person's real name are useless and probably fictional (e.g., "Tom from New Jersey").

14 STOP TELLING YOUR STORIES

Storytelling is used to improve message retention and more often to increase your likeability. It's often unnecessary and designed to pump up a wilted ego rather than drive the bottom line. Most customers don't want to be your friend. Be happy they want your product or service.

"Don't assume all your customers want to be tied into your every action or that they care about you. Some just want your news, or your offers, or, more likely, your discounts to your products," said Lisa Barone (@lisabarone), Vice President of Strategy at Overit. "It's okay for you to give them that and cut out the chitchat."

STOP PITCHING BLOGGERS YOU DON'T KNOW

15

"Stop pitching people who blog or tweet but whom you've never had any interaction with before," said Marshall Kirkpatrick ([@marshallk](#)), CEO of [Little Bird](#).

Every day my inbox is filled with emails from people I don't know. With each one there's a subject and an opening line "crafted" to attract my attention. I bet you read somewhere that if you use "you" in the subject it will dramatically improve your open rate. I bet you also know that most influencers you're trying to attract are not morons and don't fall for simple attention-getting tricks like the inclusion of the word "you" in an email header.

There are articles and experts galore offering tips and tricks to craft the perfect email-based "pitch" to people you don't know. Stop wasting your time trying to try to write the perfect subject header and opening line to "catch an influencer's attention." *They all fail*.

Instead, start building relationships one-by-one. Like most people, bloggers, journalists, and influencers walk, talk, eat, and breathe just like other normal human beings. And just like you they respond really well to simple introductions and basic human communications.

"Discover people now," said Kirkpatrick, "Get to know them over time, eat huge plates of awesome winning that comes with paying attention to the best, and then pitch them later once you're a known and respected entity."

As someone who has been on the giving and receiving end of that kind of relationship-building-to-pitching technique, I can tell you it works. Mass emails from people I don't know never work. You've known this for years, but yet you can't stop. Save yourself the pointless effort and stop now.

16 STOP BUILDING FACEBOOK APPLICATIONS

Prior to 2012, a company's ability to get visitors to engage on Facebook required a Facebook app or well-designed Facebook page for which you could control the look and interactivity the moment someone landed on your page.

"Facebook announced during fMC (Facebook Marketing Conference) in February 2012 that it has limited the reach of business pages to a maximum of 16 percent (which actually stands more at 10 to 12 percent these days)," said Ayelet Noff (@ayeletnoff), CEO of Blonde 2.0. "Brands that want to grow their Facebook communities are no longer recommended to spend their budgets on coming up with cool creative ideas and visually stimulating apps, but rather on advertising."

Facebook is shaking down small businesses for advertising dollars by artificially throttling their traffic. Are you thinking of a word that starts with "e" and ends in "xtortion?"

Even before the traffic throttling, the Facebook app/page strategy was broken and a waste of your time and money. Companies mistakenly believed that if you built something fancy looking, people would click on it. We now know that the way to reach people is through the News Feed.

"Most fans never revisit a Facebook fan page once they become a fan (indeed many never visit the page in the first place when they click Facebook 'Like' boxes)," said Michael A. Stelzner (@mike_stelzner), CEO and Founder of Social Media Examiner. "So now what matters is what you place into the News Feed, not how nice looking your page is."

STOP TALKING ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

17

"All I hear all the time is fear and skepticism," said Brian Solis (@briansolis), Principal Analyst of the Altimeter Group and author of *What's the Future of Business*, of his conversations with business executives.

"By even saying the words 'social media' I was starting the conversation negatively," said Solis. "Executives don't care about social media. It's essentially the new email."

What you're looking to uncover is the story social media is trying to tell. For example, can conversations on Twitter predict future sales? If so, then explain to your executives that they *need* to listen to Twitter because it's going to alert them to potential opportunities or losses.

"The power of social media is that it resets corporate philosophy and gives everyone that 'Undercover Boss' moment," said Solis. "That instance when empathy becomes part of the business mix."
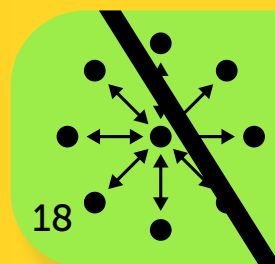
STOP FOLLOWING EVERYONE WHO FOLLOWS YOU

18

Twitter used to have this feature that automatically follows someone who chooses to follow you. At the onset, it seemed like the mannerly thing to do, and many people did it, including David Meerman Scott (@dmscott), author of *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*.

Once you friend someone on Twitter, you've opened the gate to let them send you direct messages.

"Unfortunately, way too many people abused direct messages (DMs), sending me unwanted solicitation," said Scott who has now turned off the auto-follow and only follows people he's interested in or knows personally. "Because of the widespread inappropriate use of direct messages, people need to be careful about who they follow, treating their Twitter account like a telephone 'do not call list.'"

Most social networks have wised up and don't have an auto-follow feature. Yet even without it, we still feel a pang of guilt and obligation to follow those who show interest in following us.

Joy Powers (@JoyPowers), Partner with Spark Media Solutions, no longer feels the pressure of friending someone online if she was never friends with the person in real life: "I received a number of Facebook requests from old classmates who wouldn't give me the time of day when we were in high school. Why should I pay attention to them now?"

STOP HIRING INTERNS TO MANAGE
YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

19

"Isn't there a college student we can get to manage our social media?"

Somehow it got into the lexicon that anyone under 20 is the only one capable of pressing the appropriate combination of buttons necessary to cause a social communications message to be delivered into the Internet ether.

Since high school and college students are potentially the cheapest employees who have successfully figured out how to use modern day push-button phones, we should hire them to manage our front-facing corporate communications, right?

"Having a child fresh from college as your main customer interface has been deemed not to live up to consumers' expectations," said Murray Newlands (@murraynewlands), Founder of TheMail. "You would not put a teenager in the reception of your global headquarters to welcome billion dollar partners, so why do it online?"

20 STOP CHECKING IN

No matter how much I initially love a particular game, I eventually become bored (sorry "Angry Birds") and don't want to play anymore. This is also how I feel about the gamifying of "check-ins" with Foursquare, Facebook Places, and all the other "check-in" apps. It was fun at the beginning, but now it's become a tiresome manual chore.

Every location-based app could easily eliminate the "gamify" aspect and simply automate our "check-in" process, but that would throw the entire Internet into a privacy-fearing "Jerry Springer Show" tizzy.

"Unless you're a retailer that requires foot traffic for your business to be successful, you don't need to do 'check-ins' on location-based services," advised Chris Heuer (@chrisheuer), CEO for Alynd.

"There's very little value inherent for the one checking in," noted Ann Handley (@MarketingProfs), Chief Content Officer for MarketingProfs and co-author of *Content Rules*. "[It would be different] if brands were able to use such platforms to reward their best customers or offer something other than the bragging rights of mayorships or useless badges."

I gave up on Foursquare and Facebook Places a while ago, although I do engage when I'm at large, highly distributed events, such as CES and SXSW, for which knowing where people are or discovering major industry players is extremely valuable.

STOP "HUMANIZING" YOUR BRAND

21

"It's time to dial back on the 'humanize the brand' trend," suggested Joe Chernov (@jchernov), VP of Marketing for Kinvey. "Marketers have taken the advice too far."

"Humans bicker, brands shouldn't; humans behave frivolously, brands shouldn't," said Chernov. "The Venn diagram of 'human' and 'puerile' tend to contain too large an area of intersection. 'Humanize the brand' was sound advice initially — when too many brands were too 'corporate' on social media — but today I see brands sharing absurdist memes or making politically charged statements, and I realize it's time to reintroduce a measure of sobriety into our corporate feeds."

STOP THROWING EVERY VIDEO YOU MAKE INTO ONE YOUTUBE CHANNEL

22

While corporations spend fortunes to review and protect their brand equity in all corporate communications, they seem to treat their YouTube channel as a dumping ground for any video anyone at the company produces.

"Stop shoving lots of disparate and discrete shows and programming into that one catch-all channel," said Jim Louderback (@jlouderb), CEO of Revision3. "YouTube recommended this for a while, but we've found that it just doesn't work."

Heck, most of the videos on your site don't work either, yet you still keep dumping video after video into the same channel. Instead, open up multiple channels and create true audience-specific programming on each one.

"Viewers now aggregate for themselves at the sub-feed level, and don't need your channel putting lots of unrelated content into a single feed point," said Louderback.

23 STOP SPREADING YOURSELF TOO THIN

The pressure to be on every single social network is overwhelming. Every time a new social tool comes out, a journalist or social media "expert" will tout statistics showing that someone got 20 bazillion views once they started producing six-second videos on Vine. The essence of the story is you're missing out on a huge opportunity and you need to start producing Vine videos right *now*. You saw the one example of the person who became successful. Why couldn't that person be you?

It's probably not going to be you because you already lost first-mover advantage. Remember, every time you read a story about a new social network and one person does unbelievably well, that's because *something* and *someone* has to go on the front page.

Don't start running towards every social network like you're the second wave of settlers trying to strike it rich on the Gold Rush. Nothing will be left.

"Before the rise of social media my philosophy was be everywhere, be seen, be read, and build a following. I would create a profile on every shiny-new social media site and reserve my name," said Wayne Sutton (@waynesutton), Founder of PitchTo.

"I recommend that people no longer try to be active on every platform. My advice is to figure out your objective and really use one or two sites well — rather than to spread yourself and your message/content too thinly," said Porter Gale (@portergale), former VP of Marketing at Virgin America and author of _Your Network Is Your Net Worth_.

"Stop thinking your message needs to be everywhere — you can't engage everywhere so invest in spaces where your clients/customers are, instead of spraying and praying," said AdHocnium's Heuer. "That has always been the case, of course, but being smart about where you invest your limited resources is still something not enough professionals are doing well."

"[Similarly,] stop posting on every social channel and calling it 'customer service,'" argued Peter Shankman (@petershankman), Principal for Shankman|Honig. "Customer service starts in the real world. Provide amazing customer service so that your customers post how awesome you are _for you_."

24 STOP COLLECTING FRIENDS

"Once upon a time, amassing 'friends' or 'followers' seemed like a great way to build a community that would be interested in your future thoughts, projects, blog posts, videos, and so on," said Sarah Lane (@sarahlane), co-host of Tech News Today on TWiT.tv and a recovering "friend" collector.

"If you spend too much time (like I have) just building a network outward rather than focusing on developing key relationships with people, you have the network equivalent of a chocolate Easter bunny: big and tasty looking, but hollow on the inside and ultimately unsatisfying," said Michael Wolf (@MichaelWolf), Founder and Analyst for NextMarket Insights.

"It's no longer smart to collect fans and followers for sheer number's sake," said Jason Falls (@jasonfalls), Vice-President for Digital Strategy at CafePress.

It's a misguided notion to think that collecting friends is the equivalent of creating a broadcast channel. We spend the overwhelming majority of our time ignoring others.

"Facebook friend requests from strangers are worthless to me, as are LinkedIn requests from people I've never worked with. Those numbers build nothing, contribute to nothing," said Lane. "This behavior doesn't mimic or re-create real connections."

"You're still yelling at most of your audience," said Falls of most social communications. "Why not talk to them and perhaps persuade them to want to become customers?"

This giant land grab of users was actually valuable when we weren't so overwhelmed by social messaging. Now the influx is so overwhelming that we're reliant on filters to manage the noise.

"What matters more is developing substantial relationships with people. People you meet face-to-face, whom you've had long written or phone conversations with, they're much more likely to have a significant impact on your career," advised Wolf.

STOP LAUNCHING SOCIAL MEDIA "CAMPAIGNS" AND "CONTESTS"

"Businesses are still so uptight about increasing social media numbers that they're constantly doing everything to gain additional fans by launching contests and campaigns such as 'One "Like" = $0.10 to charity,'" explained Aaron Lee (@AskAaronLee), Chief Geek at Ask Aaron Lee.

This is just a vicious cycle that keeps repeating itself. Businesses keep focusing on running social media campaigns and contests that will acquire lots of followers to advertise to later. It's all done in an effort to grow their fan base, without adding any value. Measuring counts of followers and "Likes" are just vanity metrics.

"Businesses will now have to think beyond social media," said Lee. "Think beyond campaigns, contests, and apps that create a 'wow' factor because there simply is not enough 'wow' to go around anymore."

"Focusing on the 'Likes' won't matter anymore as social noise is increasing," said Lee. "Focus on the current fans."

26 STOP READING YOUR RAW TWITTER FEED

When Twitter first started, participants shared every single random thought that crossed their mind. The "I'm eating a tuna sandwich" tweet became the common joke to point out Twitter's combined uselessness and noise even when most of us realized the tool's value. As more users started using the service, the "tuna sandwich" tweets began to increase. Twitter's raw value began to implode, making its core service, your Twitter feed, rather valueless.

"I don't even look at Twitter anymore because there's so much crap in the timeline," said Leo Laporte (@leolaporte), Chief Twit at TWiT.tv. "The only way I use Twitter is I look at the @replies and then I use these other aggregators such as Flipboard, Prismatic, Nuzzle, and Bottlenose. I feed them my Twitter, so I still pay attention to whom I follow, but I never look at the timeline. That's a better way for me to use Twitter."

STOP BLOGGING ABOUT EVERYTHING

27

I pretty much want to punch anyone who tells me to "create great content." Similarly, I avoid personal damage by not telling brokers at Fidelity to "buy low and sell high."

Even though we all know the obvious, this kind of trite advice continues to be published as "new thinking." The reality is we've got no shortage of content. What's your hit/miss ratio not just in what you post, but in the number of words you post?

"I no longer recommend writing full-length articles that could be explained in 140 characters or less," said Chris Pirillo (@ChrisPirillo), CEO of LockerGnome.

If all you want to do is make a single point, there's no reason to publish an entire blog post about it. Given that we all have more than enough to read, then brevity will be your friend and your readers' friend as well.

"What's the point in spending hours working on something if spending minutes will get you the same amount of traction?" asked Pirillo.

STOP ENGAGING IN "CONVERSATION"

28

To steer people away from using social media as a broadcast tool, we were constantly reminded by "experts" that the real value of social media was the conversation. Unless you're a prostitute, you usually can't charge for "conversation."

"We need to be focusing on things that are more about action than conversation," said Giovanni Rodriguez (@giorodriguez), CEO of SocialxDesign. "Social technology has evolved in a way that enables people to do more, not just talk more."

Rodriguez points to examples of mobile apps that enable urban dwellers to rapidly organize and collaborate on municipal projects. Other examples include massively open online courses (MOOCs) that provide access to the best teachers and learning communities no matter where you are.

"Focus less on empowering your voice," said Rodriguez. "Focus more on empowering your entire identity — as a consumer, citizen, and co-creator."

STOP CREATING SO MANY DAMN TWITTER ACCOUNTS

29

"For a long time on Twitter, companies created bunches and bunches of accounts — one for the whole organization, ones for specific product lines, one with job listings, one for support, and on and on and on," explained Harry McCracken (@harrymccracken), Editor at Large at TIME.

What happens is that some of the accounts take off while others languish. People may see an inactive one and wonder why the company is no longer active, unaware that there may be another active profile.

If you're creating a series of different Twitter profiles, most people won't know you created a series of different accounts to handle different issues. For example, you might have one account for support questions and one for information about specific products. Twitter users are simply going to respond to the first one they find that's active.

"Twitter is closer to a broadcasting medium than a narrowcasting one, and it's tough enough to build one great, popular Twitter presence, let alone a dozen of them," said McCracken. "So unless you've got unlimited resources, infinite patience, and endless interesting information to share, my recommendation is stay as focused as possible."

STOP LIFECASTING

30

If you're considering lifecasting, stop for a moment to consider what a horrible decision that would be. Anyone you meet will view you as an egotistical ass and want to slap the Google Glass right off your face.

"There was a time in social media, especially on Twitter, where 'quantity' ruled. More posts, more mass pursuit of high follower counts, more retweets, more likes — more everything. It was a land rush to stake claims and get attention. And for a while, that worked," admitted Leadership Consultant Terry "Starbucker" St. Marie (@starbucker).

Frequent posting led to the "adding to the noise" concept of lifecasting where one can post *all the time* without having to do anything except turn on the record function of their hat-mounted camera, or now Google Glass.

"Noise for noise's sake is no longer a strategy worth going after, for most of us," said St. Marie.

STOP DOING **SINGLE** SOCIAL MEDIA TESTS

31
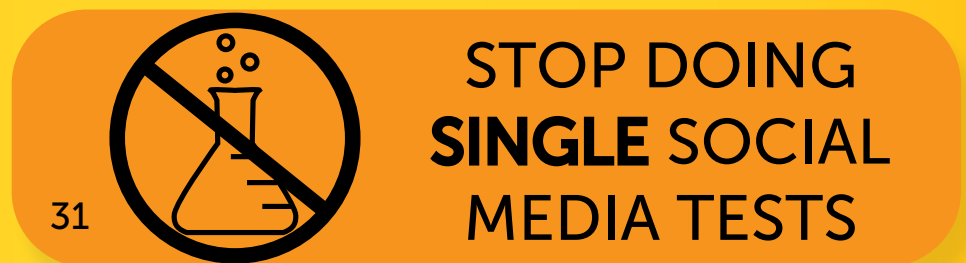
It's perfectly fine to experiment in social media, but you don't do yourself any good with a single social media experiment.

"If you only try one channel, you'll have no idea how you're doing unless you are lucky enough to knock it out of the park and bring in business," said John J. Wall (@johnjwall), author of *B2B Marketing Confessions* and host of the podcast "Marketing Over Coffee." "With two you can at least tell which is better than the other. With three you will have some data on what the difference is between the channels vs. the overall effectiveness of social media."

Ultimately what you should stop doing in social media is what's no longer successful for you, explained Wall. And you won't know that unless you start comparing your social media efforts.

Recommending that people stop doing what's not working shouldn't be advice — it should be common sense. The problem is that without social media analytics, you're not able to form any common sense as to what's working and what's not working.

STOP RESPONDING TO EVERYONE

32

"We used to think that you had to respond to anybody and everybody," said Mitch Joel (@MitchJoel), President of Twist Image and author of *Six Pixels of Separation* and *CTRL ALT Delete*.

That would be true if everyone deserved a response.

"There are instances of people crying wolf or being unreasonable. This is driven (mostly) by the self-correcting power of the community," Joel continued. "It's not hard to see when someone has a real issue that needs to be resolved in contrast to individuals who are complaining for the sake of free stuff or attention."

Back in the day, responding to everyone was actually a wise tactic as many influencers, such as entrepreneur Gary Vaynerchuk and comedian Dane Cook built their following in just this manner.

Responding to people who truly care and show passion is critical, but the days of automatically responding to everyone who @replies you are long over. Those people are trying to game the system, hoping you'll respond. Don't fall for the bait. Ignore them.

33 STOP IGNORING PEOPLE WHO DON'T AGREE WITH YOU

In some cases there are people you may be ignoring that you shouldn't. If someone passionately doesn't agree with you or points out something you did wrong and they're able to do it with correct spelling and no profanity, then you should respond.

"If we have the opportunity to engage in dialogue with one of our users, we will usually have a fan for life," said Ethan Austin (@EthanAustin), Co-Founder of GiveForward.

Austin admitted that most of his site's super users introduced themselves as complainers who were frustrated because something wasn't working properly on their site.

"We treat every email, complaint, or inquiry about the site as an opportunity to inject humanity into the conversation and win over a customer," said Austin.

Sadly, most people are so taken aback by negative criticism that they don't respond. By not responding, you're letting the person who has already formed a negative opinion about you not only keep that negative opinion but allow it to grow into a beautiful turd flower. If you recognize their complaint and respond, you'll be happily surprised by the results.

In my personal experience I'm almost always ignored when I catch a PR rep making an egregious mistake and I call them out on it.

Since I didn't respond in the exact manner they desired, then I'm the equivalent of someone who ignored them, and therefore a lost cause. In truth, it's the opposite. I took the time to respond, so one should see that as an opportunity to have a personal engagement. If they don't respond, I'm only left with my own thoughts to form an opinion of the individual and the company. If they had only responded, they could have easily changed that opinion.

In reality, the lost cause is when you miss a personal engagement moment when it's handed to you on a silver platter. Sometimes it's hard to see because that silver platter may arrive with a big dump on it. Don't worry; big dumps are usually easy to clean off.

STOP SHARING WITHOUT CONSUMPTION

34

You see a really cool headline for an article. You click the link, see how long the article is, and then think twice about actually reading it. Maybe you'll just share the article with your friends via Facebook, Twitter, and/or LinkedIn.

We've all done this and it's just adding to the noise. Some online users have built their online brand on the "sharing without consumption" model. I'm talking to you, Guy Kawasaki (@GuyKawasaki), who tweets out tons of articles from his content aggregation service, Alltop, without @replying the Twitter handles of the authors of the articles. I have seen him do this technique live at a conference and advise others to do the same. He is unabashed about his "sharing without consumption" technique, which has effectively raised his Klout score to 89 while giving zero credit to the original publishers of the content.

I spoke to a designer who similarly shared dozens of links to articles about design and web development. He referred to it as "curating"

yet admitted he didn't read any of the links he shared. Like Kawasaki, the designer was gaming Twitter to build his personal brand. It's effective as they can appropriate someone else's content as their own, especially when they don't give the person credit. This type of credit-free sharing is a once-removed form of plagiarism. You're not stealing the content, but you're effectively gaming the system to benefit from the content (higher Klout and Kred scores) without letting the originator of the content benefit from their own work first.

In addition, stop using any service, such as paper.li, that scans links your Twitter followers share, and then automatically tweets that auto-generated online paper to all your followers. You didn't spend the time to create it, so why should I read it? You're simply just adding to the noise.

True curating would involve adding your own editorial spin. When you just parrot out a series of links from your brand, you're just a distribution channel. When others respond, it merely increases your online influence as determined by online influence measuring services such as Klout and Kred. Unless you want everyone to think you're a weasel, stop it.

℞ JUST READ THE DAMN CONTENT AND SHARE IT

Being on social media and being inundated with so much tantalizing advice, I am constantly questioning whether I should consume and/or share a piece of content:

Hmm, that's an interesting headline. I think I'll click on… wait, it's from BuzzFeed.

Am I going to read the description?

Am I going to click the link to open the article?

I'll probably just first scroll down to see how long this article is.

Wait, only two people shared this article? It can't be any good.

Maybe I'll just click the "save to read later" button (a.k.a. the "save to read never" button).

The article does have a really good headline, but I'm really busy today. Maybe I can convince my friends that I spent a half hour reading this *New Yorker* article by clicking the Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter buttons and adding the comment, "This is a *must* read."

An hour has passed, let me check to see if anyone retweeted, "Liked" my post, or left a comment.

Let me see if my Klout score increased.

No, I'll read it, but I don't know if I'll make it past the first paragraph.

I've only read the first paragraph; I'm not that committed yet.

I honestly don't know whether I want to finish this. At this point let me just scan to the end.

I've read half of it. I get the idea.

I'm thinking about leaving a comment.

Uggh, if I leave a comment I'm going to have to read all of it. I don't want to look stupid leaving a comment that was addressed in the article I didn't really read.

Now that I've actually read it, or sort of read it, I *have* to share it.

I could just click one of those share buttons and hit *send*, but I need to add some context if I want my followers to know I really read it.

Will I share it via multiple social channels, or just one?

When I do share the link via Twitter, will I credit the author by including their Twitter handle?

Uggh, an hour of my life just went by. I should have just picked up the newspaper.

STOP SHARING POSTS ON FACEBOOK

35

While it's OK to post things on Facebook, it's not fruitful to hit the *share* button on a specific post to essentially retweet and repost the very same content.

"The Facebook algorithm (also known as EdgeRank) has changed in such a way to really penalize sharing on Facebook pages from other pages," said Andrea Vahl (@andreavahl), co-author of *Facebook Marketing All-in-One for Dummies* and alter ego to Grandma Mary – Social Media Edutainer.

When Vahl shared content from other Facebook pages, she noticed a dramatic drop in reach to practically 1/10th of what she used to get. Others have noticed similar drops. Instead of sharing between Facebook pages, Vahl advises users to post the link directly and tag the Facebook page with the @ symbol. For even better success, post a picture along with a status update that includes the link and the tag.

"Facebook's algorithm is constantly keeping us on our toes with what is working best in our marketing efforts," said Vahl.

It's possible Facebook will revise the algorithm again and all of this advice will change after this ebook publishes.

36 STOP RELYING ON OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS TO BUILD YOUR BRAND

I loved LinkedIn Answers, the Q&A conversation space that was similar to Quora, but far more responsive. With LinkedIn Answers I could, in one day, get at least a dozen responses to *any* question I posted. Quora wasn't nearly as useful. I often had Quora pleas ("Help me make sense of this dirty limerick") languishing for weeks without a single response.

The two services ranked expertise by the number of questions you answer along with the number of other members who voted up your answers. Many used LinkedIn Answers to build up their public expertise. It was an awesome service and I used it a lot. Then one day LinkedIn pulled the plug on LinkedIn Answers. The content, and everyone's built-up reputation within the site, vanished.

Getting kicked off the cheerleading squad can really put a damper on your popularity in high school. If you're not involved in any other extracurricular activities, you're now a social outcast. And that's exactly what happened to all the experts on LinkedIn Answers.

High-profile social media shutdowns, such as the ill-fated MySpace and Friendster, happen all the time. They're recurring warnings that it's *way too risky* to build your brand solely on someone else's social network. Yet Internet users have short memories and don't want to listen to these chronic warnings. It's often only a matter of time before they get burned. Social networks can and often do change their rules, and you have no choice but to concede.

"Brands should now focus their efforts and resources on driving traffic to owned digital platforms, like self-hosted communities and opt-in email lists," said Steve Farnsworth (@Steveology), Demand and Lead Generation Strategist for Jolt Digital Marketing. "The strategy must be to draw engaged customers and prospects from those third-party outposts back to owned digital assets."

STOP TRYING TO MAKE A "VIRAL" VIDEO

37

Asking a video producer to "create a viral video" is the equivalent of asking a film producer to "make an Oscar®-winning movie."

The reason everyone wants viral content is they want heavy distribution without having to pay for it. Who wouldn't want that? But planning for viral often leads you down a completely inappropriate path where you look for ways to "game the system" and not necessarily create videos that are appropriate for your business.

We all like to get something for nothing. That's the promise of a "viral" video. It would be great if you could just hire a video producer who could produce one for you. And just like an overweight unicorn with a tummy tuck, it's not realistic.

"'Viral' content is a pipe dream that encourages too much risk taking," said David Burk (@burkburk), CEO of The Electron Shop. "They were once a risk, now they're a liability."

"Brands started trying to engineer what would make a video go viral. A lot of money was spent before people realized that it's not the platform or the medium, it's the creativity of the campaign that ultimately gets results," said Burk. "Good content is a safe bet."

STOP POSTING BORING BUSINESSLIKE HEADSHOTS ON LINKEDIN

38

Most of us have spent many hours crafting our LinkedIn page, as it's become the new de facto online resume. With all that time spent writing and rewriting our job descriptions (which are rarely read), we spend close to zero time thinking about what profile photo to post. Along with your name, your photo is one of the top two items noticed in your profile.

Even though most of us don't use LinkedIn for online dating, it doesn't mean you can't find an attractive and interesting picture of yourself that doesn't look like it was shot in a Sears photo studio.

"The businesslike headshot is out," said Mike O'Neil (@Mikeoneilrocks), President of Integrated Alliances. "You must spring from the page. A great picture with a great smile and something special is what is needed to get selected from the search lists you show up in."

O'Neil uses a red square around his profile image. He recommends anything that will pop such as interesting backgrounds, blurred backgrounds, and clothing that stands out without looking out of place.

STOP SENDING OUT SOCIAL INVITES TO **EVERYONE** IN YOUR CONTACT DATABASE

39

In a wise effort to get users on their platform as quickly as possible, almost all the social sites offer an option to import your entire online address book (e.g., Outlook, Google, AOL), so as to invite all your friends at once to join you on your new social network.

This is now officially a bad idea.

"You might have your ex-girlfriend in there," warned Integrated Alliances' O'Neil. "LinkedIn offers no 'Are you sure?' feature. The invites go out and you cannot even add a custom message."

For better uptake and engagement, O'Neil suggests hiring a low-cost assistant to send out personalized invitations to a select list of people you want to connect with.

STOP THE SOCIAL MEDIA PHILOSOPHIZING

40

"There's a time and place for philosophy when it comes to marketing, but the world of social media has been focused on this for way too long," said Jason Miller (@JasonMillerCA), Senior Manager, Content Marketing and Social at LinkedIn. "Buzzwords and clichés such as 'transparency,' 'authenticity,' and 'there's no ROI to measure from social' are beginning to outlive their usefulness."

"Philosophy cannot compete with the science of marketing," said Miller. "It's now time to enter the age of enlightened metrics and results. The ROI of social is no longer shrouded in mystery. Social can play a major role in driving revenue and accelerating the buying cycle."

"It's all about tracking how social affects the entire buying cycle. Not only top of funnel, but also throughout the entire buying journey and even afterwards through cross-selling and upselling. If you are not measuring this, then you have some catching up to do," warned Miller.

41 STOP USING RSS READERS

When introduced, the RSS reader was this unbelievably efficient tool to scan headlines from multiple websites all on one screen. For all these efficiencies RSS readers offered, it was to the detriment of experiencing serendipity and the website user experience.

"I dislike reading posts that have been rendered inside an RSS tool. They suck posts from their native context, so there is little opportunity to happen upon other content at a website," complained Stowe Boyd (@stoweboyd), Lead Researcher at GigaOM Research. "They flatten everything in the name of efficiency."

"I really like content floating in the social stream, like in Flipboard's Twitter integration, where I can click through on something that seems interesting and be reading that content in context," said Boyd.

Google also saw the limitations of its RSS reader, Google Reader, and they shut it down, despite the dismay of many geeks.

STOP PLAYING OUT SO MANY DAMN "WHAT IF" SCENARIOS

42

I'm always amazed when a company that has little to zero online presence is scared of going online because of the potential flood of responses they will get when they finally decide to grace the Internet with their online presence.

This egotistical nonsense almost never plays itself out, even for the largest brands. Regardless, I've been forced to spend weeks if not months planning endless "what if" disaster scenarios. Even when well planned, the client still usually opts for publishing the lowest- or zero-risk content for which nobody wants to consume.

Having a disaster preparedness plan is a good idea, but developing "the corporate response" should be a sliver of the time you spend building your editorial calendar, producing content, and forming relationships. Sadly, I've seen all three take a back seat to endless "what if" scenarios.

STOP RESPONDING TO EVERY SINGLE SOCIAL MEDIA ALERT

43

According to the Android app Locket, the average person unlocks their phone 110 times every day. Many of those unlockings are the result of us reacting to alerts from our phone. Every time I hear a beep, an endorphin release causes me to check an incoming email or a Facebook response. Whatever I'm doing I simply stop, and look. Ninety-nine percent of the time it's garbage or it's something that could have waited at least 15 minutes.

The net result of this reflex behavior is a reduction in productivity. We think we're being more productive because we're "multitasking," but in actuality the constant switching from task to task causes both a physical and mental shift that takes time to exit and reassess. That time is wasted effort and energy that could be better spent by, say, napping.

Turn off all your unnecessary social media alerts:

- Turn off that alert on your phone that chimes whenever a new email comes in.

- Turn off that other magical noise that tells you when someone has played you in Words with Friends.

- Turn off the alert that lets you know someone commented on your Facebook status.

- Turn off the alert that indicates someone @replied one of your tweets.

All of these alerts were turned *on* by default by your app developer. They're fighting for your attention just to make their apps popular. They don't care if your productivity drops to zero.

While you're at it, go into your computer and update the alert settings for email, Facebook, and Twitter.

44
STOP STARING AT YOUR PHONE

We do this in the guise of being productive with the few minutes of our free time, but staring at your phone screams, "I don't want to talk with you, and I'm scared to talk with anyone." It's a nervous habit that we do when we're uncomfortable in a crowd.

We don't want to feel alone or be perceived as alone, so we stare at our phone to combat that feeling of loneliness; yet, it sends off the message that we're busy and don't want to be bothered, thereby continuing that cycle of loneliness, especially in a crowd.

Stop doing it. Every time you do it, you're blowing an amazing opportunity to make a true connection with someone who just happens to be right in front of you.
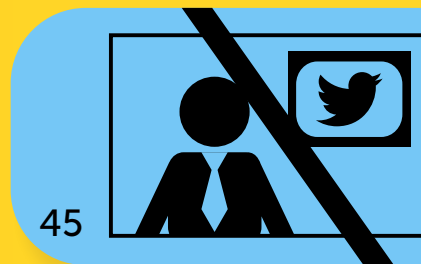
STOP RELYING ON TWITTER AS A LEGITIMATE NEWS SOURCE
45

"On one hand, Twitter and its crowdsourcing capabilities are getting 'news' out faster than ever before. On the other hand, it's enabling lazy journalism. People often forget that Twitter is just a digital rumor mill. Something can make its way around the Internet faster than you can type 'RETWEET THIS,'" noted Elinor Mills (@ElinorMills), Director of Content and Media Strategy for Bateman Group.

"There are particularly nasty consequences when it's a journalist or media outlet that spreads the 'news' because the tweet is then

assumed to be fact. Whether it's the AP spreading a false report of an attack on the White House because its Twitter account was hacked, or a CBS affiliate reporting the premature 'death' of Steve Jobs, due to just plain human error with a tweet, the problem gets amplified as the network effect of Twitter kicks in. People get fired. Stock markets plunge. It's ugly and it tarnishes reputations," said Mills.

STOP USING GUEST POSTING AS A MEANS TO GAME SEARCH-ENGINE ALGORITHMS

46

There's a non-monetary value exchange that happens when one chooses to guest blog on a popular blog or news site. The popular site gets free content, and the author gets exposure to a larger audience. Some sites do it casually and others such as *Huffington Post* have built a significant portion of its empire on the backs of free blogging labor.

While both parties accept this value exchange, what's frowned upon is trying to take advantage of the site's high PageRank to link back to your site with irrelevant keywords all in an effort to manipulate search engine algorithms, explained Tamar Weinberg (@tamar), social media enthusiast and blogger at Techipedia.

An example, said Weinberg, would be "XYZ represents ABC Agency, who also works to promote blue widgets and orange tricycles." In this example, the links are a non-organic means to connect back to the companies' websites.

Gaming search-engine algorithms, a.k.a. "black hat" SEO, was an acceptable practice that was often beatable. In February 2011, the Google Panda update eliminated common search engine gamifying techniques.

"If the readers can spot those fake links from a mile away, so can the search engine spiders," said Weinberg.

STOP FOLLOWING "THE RULES" OF SOCIAL MEDIA ALL THE TIME

47

"Sometimes, to get your message across, you do have the break the rules," said Richard Nash (@R_Nash), VP of Content and Community at Small Demons. "If you always follow the rules, you will have a very good social media account. Perhaps a very, very good social media account. But you will not have a *great* social media account."

Breaking rules is not an every communication occurrence and it's also not a license to be an idiot, noted Nash. It's about throwing something out provocative that isn't the norm that causes your followers to both question and be intrigued by your behavior.

For example, you could push out a sequence of 20 tweets over a course of an hour that tells a story. While most followers wouldn't get it, the few that do will "RT you for the rest of your social existence," said Nash.

STOP LOOKING AT YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA FEED

48

Your social media feed is an unfiltered time suck. Even if you are incredibly persistent about whom you follow, you're still staring at a lot of information that's of no use to you. Your work and most of your email is far more important. Try going entire days where you never look at social media and you'll see how much more productive you are.

After a day of cold turkey, you can pull back a little. Try looking at it once a day, then after a little time maybe twice a day. Get to a point where you have just a few intervals where you look at your social feeds, and the rest of the time you're concentrating at your task at hand.

STOP OBSESSING ABOUT PERFECTION

49

So much of online content thrives on imperfections. It's the way content evolves and people get to touch it and engage with it. This is not the same as producing cheap content.

Blogger Chris Brogan and CEO of Human Business Works has a litany of posts that get hundreds of comments, while some of his other posts get only a few comments. In an interview I did with Brogan in my "Be the Voice" podcast series, I asked him why there was such a great discrepancy.

"I usually write my blog posts so that they're not entirely finished. I leave a lot of open space for you to add your opinion. And the reason I do that is because I want you to feel like there's some contribution [from you] and some give and take to the experience. I'm not writing theses and essays and editorials. I'm writing things where I have something in my mind, and I want to share it and get your ideas too," said Brogan.

Brogan does it because people love to give their opinion. If you want some engagement with your content, it might be a good idea to not make it exhaustive. Also, you may have limited information and won't have the time to make it comprehensive. In some situations, it might be best to just post what you know and let the piece be a living story that you and others will update over time. But this is always dependent on what's most appropriate for your brand. If you're a

medical outfit and you put information out there that hasn't been thoroughly vetted, then that could not only damage your brand but also bring about a lawsuit.

STOP TELLING PEOPLE WHAT TO DO IN SOCIAL MEDIA

50

Here's a truth I think we can all rally behind: Most people don't like to be criticized. Even when a company hires you as a consultant and pays you to tell them what they're doing wrong, rarely does anybody want to hear it. I have been asked for, and have written, many social media plans for companies. In almost all cases, the company greatly appreciates the feedback, pays me very well for my time, and then completely ignores the advice thereby implementing nothing.

Telling people what to do in social media is asking people to change their behavior, which is rarely within a social media consultant's capabilities.

Rather, it's advisable when formulating a social media recommendation to first ask those affected what they're doing now and what they're willing and eager to do later. Use those limitations to form your social media recommendation, which will result in a lot less of you telling people what to do, and a lot more success for the company.

< ARE YOU READY TO DO LESS?

I hope this ebook inspired you to turn off some of your present social media behavior. The key to success in social media, personal branding and heck, all business, is to simply focus. Whenever a new social media service comes about, they turn on a lot of bright lights and attractive whistles all in an effort to get you to engage on a regular basis. They're not concerned with your productivity. They're concerned with their own survival. Don't be distracted. Focus.

Have something to add to the discussion? Please add a comment in the original post for this ebook.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Spark (@dspark) is a veteran tech journalist and founder of Spark Media Solutions, a brand journalism firm that helps its clients be seen as leading voices in their fields through brand-quality media production. The company has worked with clients such as IBM, Oracle, Microsoft, Dice, Yammer, IGT, Sprint, Alcatel-Lucent, Tripwire, Riverbed, Zoho, and IndyCar Racing.

Since 1996, Spark and his articles have appeared in more than 40 media outlets including eWEEK, Wired News, PCWorld, ABC Radio, John C. Dvorak's "Cranky Geeks," KQED's "This Week in Northern California," and TechTV (formerly ZDTV).

In addition to traditional media, Spark spent ten years working in advertising and marketing at various agencies, the last being Publicis Dialog, where as New Media Director he launched the company's New Media division. Spark also squandered more than a dozen years working as a touring standup comedian, a San Francisco tour guide, and comedy writer for The Second City in Chicago.

Today, Spark co-hosts the weekly Tear Down Show roundtable podcast on the PodcastOne network. He blogs regularly on the Spark Minute and has been a regular contributor for Mashable, Socialmedia.biz, and Technologizer. Spark is a happily married father of two boys living in the San Francisco Bay Area.

ABOUT

SPARK MEDIA
SOLUTIONS

Spark Media Solutions is a brand journalism and media consulting firm, founded in 2007. The San Francisco Bay Area company produces branded videos, articles, photos, and podcasts about their clients and their industries, which are commonly then published on the clients' blogs and oftentimes shared with other interested media sites. The content marketing firm refers to the technique as a PR 180°, or creating media about others. The simple philosophy of paying attention to others through media production increases search visibility and social sharing, as well as grows industry relations. Similar to how any media outlet can grow its brand and industry recognition through the creation of content, so can any business. Spark Media Solutions' "content is the currency of social media and search" and "influencer relations through content" models have proven to be repeatedly successful since the company's inception.

Work with Spark Media Solutions

We can help you be seen as a hot shot through content we create about your industry and its influencers. This kind of recognition will increase your brand value dramatically and quickly, and you'll be able to raise your prices, sell more products, and easily introduce new products to the market. Sound like something you'd like to try? If so, please contact us and we'll let you know how we can do it for you.

" QUOTED EXPERTS

Ethan Austin
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Magic Sauce Media

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Twist Image

Scott Johnson
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Tech News Today
on TWiT.tv
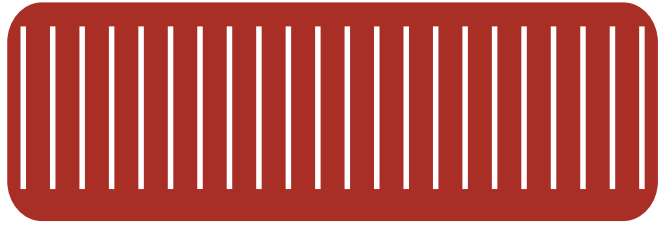
Leo Laporte
TWiT.tv

JD Lasica
Socialmedia.biz

Aaron Lee
Ask Aaron Lee

Charlene Li
Altimeter Group

Jim Louderback
Revision3

Harry McCracken
TIME

B.J. Mendelson
"Social Media
is Bullshit"

Tom Merritt
Daily Tech News Show

Jason Miller
LinkedIn

Jessica Miller-Merrell
Xceptional HR

Elinor Mills
Bateman Group

Richard Nash
Small Demons
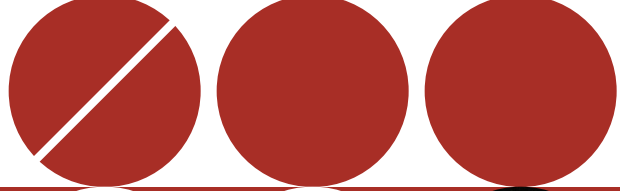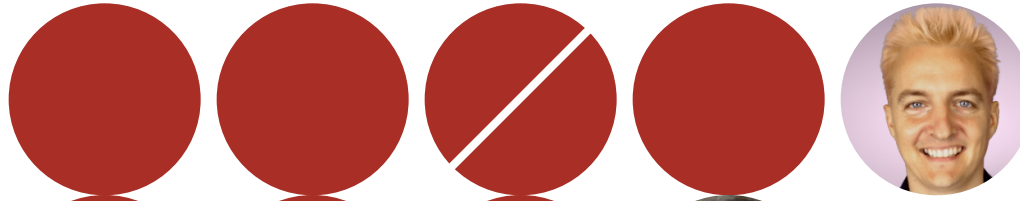
Murray Newlands
TheMail

Ayelet Noff
Blonde 2.0
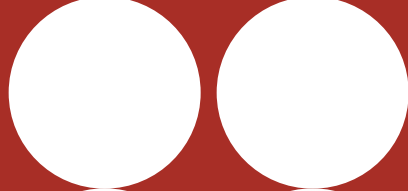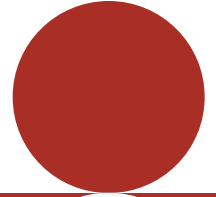
Lee Odden
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Ben Parr
DominateFund

Len Peralta
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Chris Pirillo
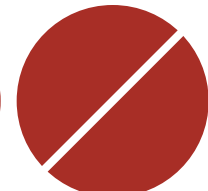LockerGnome

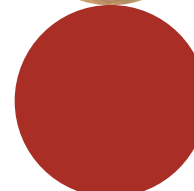**Joy Powers**
Spark Media Solutions

Joe Pulizzi
Content Marketing
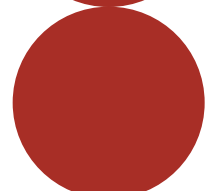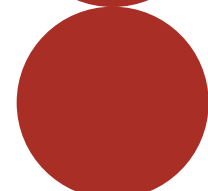Institute

Jeff Pulver
Zula
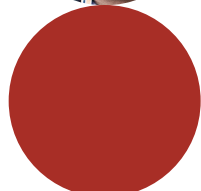
Giovanni Rodriguez
SocialxDesign
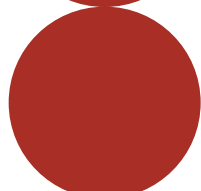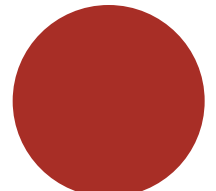
Ted Rubin
Brand Innovators

Terry "Starbucker" St. Marie

Robert Scoble
Rackspace

David Meerman Scott
"The New Rules of Marketing and PR"

Peter Shankman
Shankman|Honig

Julien Smith
Breather

Brian Solis
Altimeter Group

Michael A. Stelzner
Social Media Examiner

Wayne Sutton
PitchTo

Andrea Vahl
"Facebook Marketing All-in-One for Dummies"

John J. Wall
Marketing Over Coffee

Tamar Weinberg
Techipedia