THE TOP 10 MISTAKES
I MADE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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For Kerry and Finn.

"Engagement is not a metric, it's an excuse." - Avinash Kaushik

PAINFUL MISTAKES AHEAD. STEER CLEAR.

Let's face it: Social media can be hard. In other words, there are ample opportunities to suck. (How's that for an attention-grabber?)

I've been on Twitter longer than 86% of current users. I've been using the service since January 24th, 2007. My first tweet was, "Trying to figure this Twitter thing out." Profound, I know.

I stayed up until 12:01a the night Facebook rolled out vanity URLs. As fast as I was, someone was faster. I wanted http://facebook.com/justin, but ended up with http://facebook.com/justinwise. Such is life, I guess.

This, unfortunately, is true. I woke my wife up when I didn't get the name I wanted. She was less than pleased with me.

I've been blogging in some fashion since 2007. My estimate puts my blogging post count somewhere around 1500 posts. Not Steven King-prolific, but it's a healthy average nonetheless.

Why do I share these stats with you? To show you that, regardless of my social media longevity, I've made big, glaring, obvious, and painful mistakes. The majority of the time I've been using social media has been one giant experiment. I want you to learn from my blunders.

But, as Thomas Edison once famously stated, "I haven't failed, I've just found 10,000 ways that didn't work." And that's why I wrote this ebook: To show you what doesn't work. To cast a big spotlight on the mistakes I made in the hopes that you won't make the same ones.

Simply put, I want you to go farther, *faster*.

So sit back, grab a cup of coffee, and take the next 15 minutes to read through this short ebook. Take the time and invest in yourself. You'll be that much more dangerous on the other side!

Now, the top ten mistakes I made in social media.

1. Connecting Twitter to Facebook.

This is a rookie mistake, and I made it well into my social media career. There's something frustrating about going to a person's Facebook page and seeing hashtags. I don't know why, but that's how it goes.

I realize that some folks do this to "save time," but it ends up clogging the news feeds of your online community (and there's some research that suggests Facebook penalizes users who update their timeline with a third-party app).

Facebook is different from Twitter. Twitter is different from Facebook. They each have a unique audience, sharing some functional similarities. Those commonalities are few and far between. Treat them as unique conversation stations, much like you would a water cooler and your living room. Don't make the same mistake I did. Disconnect Twitter from Facebook today.

I actually timed myself reading this.

Third party app: Hootsuite, Tweetdeck, Seesmic, etc.

2. Following everyone back on Twitter.

I've made this mistake. Twice. And I've paid for it each time.

Here's a little secret that non-famous people with high follower counts don't want you to know: It's usually automated. Yeah. That's right. Mechanical turk-style automated.

When you see someone with stats like "50,000 followers/49,500 following" what you're really seeing is someone with an auto-follower switched on. It works something like this:

@JohnnyPopular wants to jack up his follower count. He finds a service that allows auto-follows based on keywords or other Twitter triggers. @JohnnyPopular "flips the switch," and before long, that follower count is higher than it's ever been. @JohnnyPopular is feeling, well, popular!

Sounds great, right?

Well, it's not. Trust me.

I've done this–as I already stated–twice. The results are disastrous. You end up getting a following bloated with spam accounts and other auto-follower Twitter users. (As the philosopher Ice-T once said, "game knows game." Auto-following software can sniff out other auto-followers. It's like a social media cycle of doom!) You may have a lot of followers, but the large majority of them are junk and do nothing for you but artificially inflate your ego. *Blech*.

Thankfully, Twitter is cracking down on their API and allowing less of this mindless type of following. My advice to you: Don't even try it! Not worth the effort.

Trying to make sense out of thousands of followers is like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall. In other words, very, very difficult. The people you want to see get lost in the din of snake oil salesmen and Twitter porn bots.

Twitter is a unique beast in that it's ultra-personal. If you follow someone, I firmly believe you should be the one going to their profile and hitting the "follow" button. Not an automated script or program that someone wrote in their basement. You.

Skip the auto-follow and opt for the slow-growth instead.

3. Not utilizing Facebook lists.

Your approach to Facebook may be different from mine, but anyone can use the power of Facebook lists to their advantage.

Facebook lists were the only thing that kept me sane when people I didn't know friended me. Super helpful!

Facebook gives you the ability to divvy up your friends based on predetermined and self-defined categories. Win.

Let's say you're not completely comfortable sharing pics of your family with all of your friends on Facebook. You can use lists and designate what grouping gets to see your photos. For instance, when I was on staff at a church, I wasn't comfortable having everyone see newborn pics of my son. I made four lists:

"Friends," "Family," "Acquaintances," and "Limited Profile."

Friends and Family lists got to see the pics. Acquaintances and Limited Profile did not. It took me about two hours to go through my entire friends list and categorize each person. But the results were worth it.

Before using lists, I was at the mercy of Facebook's default security settings. I couldn't use Facebook in the way that I wanted to. Lists are there to give you control over your Facebook profile. Use them!

Google Plus: A necessary evil. If you're not there, get there.

4. Not optimizing my Google+ profile.

I've written on this before, but Google+ is a player in the social media game for one reason: Google Search.

There are sections on your Google+ profile that Google looks at for keywords. Want to tell Google that you're a passionate social media advocate? A kick-ass baker? A Peruvian model? Make sure your introduction (and these other sections) are filled to the brim with relevant keywords.

I wasted months of could-be keyword discovery by not having my introduction filled out. Don't make the same mistake!

This one's my favorite.

5. Responding to every comment on my blog.

Comments on blog posts are important. More for the reader than the author, I think. The comments section is a chance for the reader to respond to what they've just read. A chance to be heard.

The mistake comes in believing that you need to respond to every person who writes a comment. I've made this mistake before and it is, quite simply, exhausting. You can keep this strategy up, but not for long.

There are well-meaning people who will advise you to, "respond to every comment" and "every person who comments is a potential return-reader!" "Don't upset your audience," they say. "If you don't respond, they may not come back!"

The advice is well-and-good but the reality is this: If people like your content, they'll come back to your blog. If they don't, they won't. If someone doesn't come back to your blog just because you didn't respond to their comment, they're codependent and no amount of responding is going to help.

If a comment catches your eye, respond to it. If it doesn't, don't worry. You'll save yourself time and the headache of feeling like you need to coddle your readers. You don't. They're big boys and girls. Take the pressure off yourself and focus on crafting great content instead.

6. Not paying attention to my Klout score.

This one was costly. Oh, was it costly!

Here's the thing about Klout: They're trying. "Trying what?" you might ask. Klout is a web app that seeks to measure people's online influence. They do this through an algorithm that measures various factors on networks like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

People complain about Klout and say things like, "No one can really measure influence online," or, "I don't even pay attention to my Klout score!" I can say with confidence that, 1.) yes, you can and 2.) people who say they don't pay attention to their Klout absolutely pay attention to their Klout score. They're just upset they don't have a higher score.

Is Klout perfect? No. Neither is Ben & Jerry's, but you don't see too many people complaining there. I wish I would have paid more attention to my Klout score when the service was just starting. If you're not tracking yours, get to it. Right now!

> *Ben & Jerry's is pretty darn close. I mean, have you had Phish Food? Karmel Sutra? COOKIE DOUGH.*

7. Not utilizing Twitter lists.

Similar to Facebook lists, Twitter provides each user with the ability to make and curate lists. For any power-user of Twitter, lists are a must.

Currently I follow just over 400 people. It's manageable, but there are still times where I find myself missing some of the content I want to see. Enter, lists.

I have the following lists set up:

- **GTK**: People that I want to "get to know" on Twitter. These are folks whose content I enjoy or people I'd like to work with someday. The list is small so I can ensure regular interaction with each user.

- **Must See**: As the name implies, these are users who I simply must see. It's mostly made

up of friends, family, and content generators I don't want to miss.

- **<u>Retweetable</u>**: I like sending out quotes on Twitter. Quotes are magnets for retweets and it keeps my feed from being a never-ending stream of links. If I find a user who consistently generates good quotes, they go in this list.

Throw each list into its own column in <u>Hootsuite</u> and you've got a powerful, curated stream of Twitter content.

Similar to #2 above, trying to pay attention to what everyone is saying on Twitter is exhausting. And a waste of time. Get savvy and fire up your Twitter lists!

8. Not paying attention to LinkedIn.

This is a social network that simply cannot be ignored. For quite some time, I didn't take my LinkedIn profile seriously and it reflected poorly on me. Nothing says, "minor leagues" like a LinkedIn profile with goofy position titles, grammatical errors, and a painfully-cropped headshot.

People think you need to be a business exec or on the hunt for a job to be on LinkedIn. Not true. With the ability to post your CV, integrate your active social networks, list contacts and recommendations, and note relevant skills, LinkedIn is a living, breathing social resume.

Optimize your profile with all the suggestions LinkedIn gives you, connect your social networks, and upload a decent headshot of yourself. Give people a good first impression if

If you do a search for my name, you'll see that I have two profiles: One I update and one that I can no longer access. The inaccessible one is, of course, the embarrassing one. I used an email address that no longer exists and LinkedIn won't reset it. Have mercy on me!

they stumble across your profile. You'll thank me for it when you land that perfect gig!

9. Not curating content.

> *This is so vitally important. You need to give your online community a chance to breathe! Give them the best, and only the best.*

There's nothing worse than blasting out any and every link you find to your online community. Believe me, I've been there. Done that. Got the t-shirt.

When you don't intelligently sift the content you present to your online community, you essentially say to them, "none of this is important." Like they say, "If everything's important, nothing is important."

Keep your links to a rate of one-per-hour max. Use tools like BufferApp, Timely.is, and Hootsuite to space out the most important ones. Add small bits of commentary that clue your audience in to why you think the content is important.

Don't add to the noise. Intelligently add value to your community.

10. Ignoring the sharing power of Facebook.

I don't know how it's possible, but I came late to the game with Facebook. I signed up and had a profile just like everyone else, but I didn't realize the sheer volume of sharing that happens on Zuck's nook.

Get this: One in every five pages viewed on the Internet is on Facebook. That's a lot of eyeballs.

I toyed around with a content strategy for Facebook, but never took its ability to drive traffic seriously. Yeah. I'm shaking my head, too.

Now, my Facebook traffic is my highest referrer. It dwarfs my next-highest referrer (Twitter) by a ratio of 2-to-1. I think back to all the traction that I missed out on for failure to optimize for sharing on Facebook. Grab an app like Networked Blogs or just post the old-fashioned way on the platform itself. However you do it, make sure you capitalize on the power of Facebook.

11. BONUS: Valuing conversation over content.

I've saved the best for last. As I move forward in a career centered on the power and functionality of social media, I am more convinced than ever that social media are for sharing content, not conversation.

What does that mean?

It breaks down like this: People don't care about carrying on a conversation online. At least not with social media. There are well-meaning "experts" who say things like, "engage in the conversation," and "make sure to respond to people!" It sounds nice, but it's wrong. In the long run, these things do not matter.

Dan Zarrella calls this the "unicorns and rainbows" theory.

What does matter is creating content that adds value to people's lives. Content that people care enough about to share with their friends, family, colleagues, and online community. That's the "social" part of social media. The ability to share, not socialize.

I made the mistake of believing that if I responded to every tweet, every blog comment, every Facebook share or like, that I was being effective with my social media strategy. This is wrong thinking. And it may be the quickest way to annoy people online. Focus on creating good content, that people want to share, and you'll be just fine.

If you want to read more, I've written quite extensively on the subject. Admittedly, this is a short-sided summary of the topic and it may be the first time you're hearing this viewpoint.

Wrapping things up.

Whether you've yet to send out your first tweet or you've got millions of hits on YouTube, hopefully you can learn from my mistakes. I've made plenty of them, so your chances to learn are ample!

If you've enjoyed this free ebook, please consider one (or more) of the following:

- Tweet about this book.
- Subscribe to my free Social Media Starters Course.
- Join me on Twitter, Facebook, or Google Plus.

> Of course, you can always join me at JustinWise.net for continued conversation on social media, blogging, and personal productivity. I'd love to meet you. **We'll see you online!**

A sharing time is a happy time!