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February 27, 2009

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These Lessons I'm Learning

An index of the things I'm learning in the field of Public Relations

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The Art of War and PR

The Art of War is a timeless tome that teaches resounding lessons on strategy. It reminds us to take things slow and start out with the basics. We can apply this to PR just as much as we can war. Let's say we have a great idea for a campaign and we are really excited about it. Sure you may have a great idea and it could be the next great thing but we have to start with the basics. Since someone has said it better than I could, I'm just going to use their wisdom.

“If you know the enemy, and know yourself you need not fear the result of a hundred battles” -Sun Tzu, the Art of War

The only way to know ourselves and the “enemy” is through research. While we don't have an enemy, we do have an audience. There are tons of resources to figure out what your audience enjoys. Figure out what they like to share and frequently talk about. There is always a community surrounding your client / idea / product, find them and know them. After we know the “enemy”, we won't be afraid of how they will respond because we know what they like.

“Having collected an army and concentrated his forces, he must blend and harmonize his efforts before pitching his camp” - Sun Tzu, the Art of War

While I don't believe Sun Tzu was talking about pitching journalists or a community, his point here is valid. After exhaustive research we are ready to settle our camp. We have a “battle plan” and know our “terrain”. This is the time to make sure that we are working towards the goal and all of our efforts are headed in the same direction. As a united force implementing good research, we are now ready for “battle”.

“In order to carry out an attack, we must have means available“- Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Make sure you are ready and set to carry out your campaign. Do you have all your ducks in a row ? Have you properly planned for anything to happen ? Do you have the staff and support to carry out your “attack” ? If your plans are set, your

forces ready, then launch. Be forward and progressive, follow your plan, but remember to be adaptive. There are many possibilities that your “forces” could be met with resistance.

“Hence it is only the enlightened ruler and the wise general who will use the highest intelligence of the army and thereby achieve great results” - Sun Tzu, The Art of War

If you have done your research, mobilized your “forces”, implemented your plan and achieved success remember the principles that you applied.

Go read [The Art of War](#). It can give you great insight into any strategy / tactic you have planned. Feel free to tell me what you think of The Art of War or if you have any suggestions for me or this site.

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By [Adam](#)

February 13, 2009

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Better Ways To Do More With Less

Pat LaPointe, Feb 24, 2009 02:45 PM

Crawling around inside a few dozen large marketing and finance organizations these past months, I've seen some evidence of five patterns of "do more with less" that seem to work best.

First, the "best" clearly define what "doing more with less" really means. The most common metric appears to be "marketing contribution efficiency" -- an increase in the ratio of net marketing contribution per marketing dollar spent. That seems appropriate when budgets are falling (recognizing the need to monitor it over time, as it can be manipulated in the near term).

Second, when the best companies cut, they do it strategically. Face it, most of us didn't take Budget Cutting 101 in B-school. After eliminating travel, consultants and other easy stuff, bad decisions creep in under mounting political pressure. More about this in [my last post](#).

Third, they watch the risk factors. CFOs want to cut marketing spend to increase the likelihood of (aka decrease risks against) making short-term profit goals. Yet when marketers try to do more with less, risk exposure rises in ways never imagined -- especially if it wasn't clear which elements of the marketing mix were working before the cuts. It's the "risk paradox." If you want to make sure your "less" really has a chance of doing "more," [manage the new risks](#) that have silently crept into the plans.

Fourth, they avoid the ostrich effect. Just because there's enormous pressure on businesses today, the best don't ignore the fact that tomorrow is right around the corner in the form of a 2010 plan. And when looking ahead, the only thing certain is that historical norms are no longer a reasonable guide. So the best are [anticipating the key questions for the 2010 plan](#), and working on getting some answers now. They're committed to leading the process, not getting dragged behind it.


Finally, the best push their marketing business case competency further, faster. The marketing skeptics and cynics have more political clout now. Untested assumptions, like ostriches, will not fly. Better business case discipline is the new currency of credibility.

We all have basically the same tools at our disposal to do more with less. The "best" seem to be able to apply their imagination most effectively in the use of those tools. I'm the world's biggest proponent of the importance of creative inspiration and instinct, but the lesson here, I think, is to start the conversation these days with "What do we mean by 'effective'?"




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PAUL WILLIAMS [BIO](#)

**Get Your Daily Fix
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"Yes, If..." Words of the Enabler

02.27.09

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As marketers and business owners - during this time when it feels things are looking down, rather than up - it's time for a boost.

When Walt Disney was dreaming-up and planning Disneyland, (a pretty impossible feat at the time) those working with him knew "no" and "it can't be done" were never words what Walt wanted to hear.





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[Harrison \(Buzz\) Price](#), who did the original site and economic feasibility studies for Disneyland, put it this way: "Yes, if..." is the language of the enabler. You never wanted to tell Walt "No, because..." [1]

"Yes, if..." instead of "No, because." That's so simple; yet so powerful. Funny, how a small shift in wording doesn't change the current situation, it can completely changes the outlook.

Both approaches admit that something isn't currently possible. You're still stuck on the deserted island. But instead of "No, because... we don't have a boat." Your perspective changes to, "Yes, if... we could find a way to float off this place." (Or at least until the [Harlem Globetrotters](#) visit).

"No, because..."

- creates defeat,
- creates a wall, and
- stops the conversation.

"Yes, if..."

- opens possibilities,

- creates a launching platform, and
- pushes the conversation forward.

Instead of saying, "No, because..." ...we have no money, or because ...of the economy, or because ...they don't hire 'people like me,' rephrase these as "Yes, because..." statements.

"Yes, if..." will make you a better problem solver, a better employee, a better spouse, a better parent... Heck, I'm not sure what it *won't* fix. Rarely have so few words of simple advice carried so much weight.

Try it at work. With your clients. At home. With your kids. Let me know how it goes. You'll find it very powerful.

[1] Quoted in [Walt Disney's Imagineering Legends and the Genesis of the Disney Theme Park](#) by Jeff Kurtti

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Social Media Success: A Matter of Framing

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Posted by [cweisgerber](#) in February 25th 2009

For the past few years, I have been teaching an undergraduate level [course on social media for public relations](#) at St. Edward's University. When I first developed the course, I was a little worried about sharing insights about social media with a generation who lives on Facebook and rarely leaves the house without a cell phone, laptop or MP3 player. After all, aren't these students the "digital natives" — the experts on everything social media? What I discovered while teaching this class is a lesson I believe is worth sharing because of its implications beyond the academic world.

I've noticed that our first impression of a social media technology often gets in the way of us being able to perceive its full potential. We tend to view these technologies with a rather narrow lens, and choose to see them as either a tool or a place for community, but rarely as both. Students, for instance, often define social networks such as MySpace or Facebook exclusively as places to hang out and stay in touch with friends. This initial perception makes it difficult for them to think of social networks as strategic communication tools. Twitter, I think, is facing a similar problem. It tends to get framed primarily as a tool for getting a message across and much less as a vibrant community of networked people sharing stories and links. Becoming a successful social media player in the public relations field requires a more comprehensive approach — one that encompasses both views. I'm hoping [The Digital Impact Conference: Learn How to Profit From New Media](#) will give all of us an opportunity to explore the multifaceted and transactional nature of social media.



By [Corinne Weisgerber, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor, communication, St. Edward's University (Austin, Texas) teaches a variety of public relations classes and serves as the PRSA chapter advisor. Corinne has been studying computer-mediated communication and how people form relationships online since the beginning of her doctoral studies at the Pennsylvania State University. Her current research interests include new media, pedagogy, and health communication. Corinne also developed one of the first social media for public relations classes – a course in which students explore emerging social media technologies and study their application in contemporary PR practice.

Join Weisgerber for "Tweet Your Way to Success: How to Use Twitter to Connect With Your Audiences" at [PRSA's 2009 Digital Impact Conference: Learn to Profit From New Media](#), on April 30-May 1 in New York, NY.



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2 Comments Received



Astrid Sheil, PhD
 February 25th, 2009 @ 1:32 pm

Corinne,

I think you make some terrific observations about social media. To add to your point, I have found with my own students, they are all practitioners of social media techniques in varying degrees, but when pressed to define or explain the persuasive power and implications of such technology they are completely baffled. They have not connected the dots at all. Wish I could attend the meeting in New York—I'm sure it will be illuminating.

Regards,

Astrid Sheil, PhD
 Cal State University San Bernardino

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MediaPost **NEWS**

ONLINE MEDIA DAILY

Story

Tweeters Use Twitter For Business

Erik Sass, Feb 26, 2009 07:36 AM



As a business-to-business marketing platform, Twitter has legs. About 56% of Twitter users say they use the online social communication site for business purposes, according to Rodney Rumford, a social media guru and one of the keynote speakers at the inaugural Gravity Summit on Social Media in Los Angeles Wednesday.

The statistic, based on a survey of 700 Twitter users, suggests the service's value as a business-to-business marketing platform, alongside its emerging utility for consumer marketing.

"Twitter is a goldmine," Rumford said, adding that a number of big consumer brands are already on the site--including Starbucks, which currently boasts about 6 million followers.

Rumford also noted that small businesses are using Twitter to advertise, citing the example of a gourmet Korean taco truck business in Los Angeles which since its launch in November has built a following through Twitter: "The driver tweets where the truck will be 20 minutes ahead of time, and literally hundreds of people show up," one conference attendee confirmed.

Marketers can use Twitter actively or passively, Rumford says--in the first case by reaching out with promotional messages, and in the second by setting up a "listening engine" that allows them to track consumer sentiment in public postings on the site. Any active marketing must be handled carefully to avoid alienating consumers with the appearance of dishonesty or inauthentic, impersonal messages: "It's not a campaign, it's a conversation," he said.

As with blogs, Rumford conceded that "people are going to be saying bad stuff about your brand, and that's okay" because it can be an opportunity for customer service interventions. "I love it when someone says something bad, because then it's a chance to show your true colors," he said.

Companies are still mishandling this kind of functionality, however: Rumford cited the example of Motrin, which reacted slowly to widespread criticism on Twitter of an ad about pregnant women that was perceived as misogynist. Rumford added that efforts to drive people to particular online destinations can be tracked and measured by Google Analytics; Google also crawls and indexes all the conversation streams on the site.

Justin Goldsborough, social media manager for Sprint, said the company uses Twitter to track consumer sentiment as well as for customer service. But Sprint also uses Twitter and a corporate blog to coordinate business-related activities, according to Goldsborough, who noted the site's growing penetration of all areas of U.S. business. "Retail employees are on Twitter," prompting some concern among management, but Goldsborough pointed out that it can connect these workers more closely to both their customers and their bosses. He also pointed to the example of BestBuy,

which has a communal blog and chat site used by thousands of employees. On the negative side, Microsoft's plan to get laid-off employees to give back some of their severance pay was rapidly derailed by criticism on Twitter.

Meanwhile, politicians are also on Twitter. According to conference organizer Beverly Macy, the Republican Party is using the site to hold discussions about re-branding the party.

Online social media can be a highly effective advertising medium, but there are some pitfalls that can seriously damage a brand, the speakers warned conference attendees. The central theme touched on by all the presenters was the importance of honesty and transparency in Web marketing that relies on word-of-mouth.

David Reis, the founder and CEO of DEI, an online word-of-mouth marketing company, recalled the condemnation heaped on Belkin, an electronics manufacturer, for paying users \$0.65 per post to write favorable reviews of its products on Amazon.com. "Basically, it's a simple problem: They lied," Reis said, emphasizing that marketers should always be forthright about their identities and mission.

February 25, 2009

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

We're Not 'Cowards,' We're Just Loud

By STEPHEN L. CARTER

New Haven

JUST weeks before taking the oath of office in 1861, Abraham Lincoln spoke to a crowd in Pittsburgh. The times were fraught. Since Lincoln's election, several slave-holding states had left the Union. More were threatening to go. But Lincoln told the worried assemblage, "There is really no crisis except an artificial one!"

Actually, Lincoln said much more than that — hundreds upon hundreds of words, calculated to soothe the public's fear of war. But had his speech been covered the way the news media cover political remarks today, it is likely that most people would have heard only that one line, and Lincoln, the nation's greatest president, would have been pilloried as an out-of-touch bumpkin.

Writing teachers everywhere tell their students that context is everything. But if the response to Attorney General Eric Holder's [remarks](#) last week to Justice Department employees is any guide, teachers everywhere are wrong. The speech was written for Black History Month. Now, a week later, what most people know about the talk is that the attorney general accused his fellow citizens of being, on the matter of race, "a nation of cowards."

The speech itself was more than 2,300 words. The already infamous phrase occurred about 150 words in. Thus we are left with well over 2,000 unanalyzed words — that is, the context for the phrase. For too many critics, the context of Mr. Holder's remarks (like the context of former Senator Phil Gramm's accusation during the election campaign that we are a "nation of whiners") is quite beside the point.

Perhaps, as some have suggested, Mr. Holder's language was infelicitous; but presidents and popes now and then regret their choice of words, so attorneys general can hardly hope for immunity from persecution. More important is what the response to the speech says about the current state of political dialogue.

Indeed, the truly intriguing aspect is not what the attorney general had to say about race, but rather what he had to say about the way in which we discuss it. Our national conversation on race, said Mr. Holder, "is too often simplistic and left to those on the extremes who are not hesitant to use these issues to advance nothing more than their own narrow self-interest."

There is, plainly, something to this. When we talk about race we do tend to talk in simplistic categories, spending more energy on labeling each other than on reasoning together. Consider the entirely predictable battle lines over The New York Post's infamous stimulus bill cartoon last week, which featured a chimpanzee. One side says the newspaper was insensitive, the other that the protesters have a double standard and are fanning the flames for the sake of attention. Plenty of sound bites, but nothing that moves us forward.

This difficulty, however, is not limited to race. There are few issues of any importance that are not reduced, in public dialogue, to sloganeering and applause lines. Whether we argue over war or the economy, marriage or religion, abortion or guns, we reduce our ideas to just the right size for the adolescent tantrum of the bumper sticker.

Consider, for example, the Obama administration's evolving tough line on terrorism. Many critics seem to think that reminding us that President Obama's policies are similar to President George W. Bush's is argument enough against them. But guilt by association with an unpopular past president does not tell us whether a particular tactic is right or wrong. Or consider the economic crisis, where one cable television network, on the very evening of the Lehman Brothers collapse last fall, had a program promising to analyze not what had gone wrong but who was at fault.

Democracy, at its best, rests on a foundation of mutual respect among co-equal citizens willing to take the time for serious debate. After all, even on the momentous issues that divide us, there is usually the possibility that the other side has a good argument. Yet if we paint our opponents as monsters, we owe them no obligation to pay attention to what they have to say.

Forty-five years ago, in his classic essay "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," Richard Hofstadter warned against this tendency, and worried that it would recur in every era. There is, he suggested, something in the Western psyche that too often makes us retreat to a vision of politics in which there is no complexity. "Since what is at stake," wrote Hofstadter, "is always a conflict between absolute good and absolute evil, what is necessary is not compromise but the will to fight things out to a finish."

Complexity is the enemy of such fundamentalism, and, as our public dialogue grows more fundamentalist, complexity fades. If you read Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451" — and everyone who loves democracy should read it, at least every two or three years — pay attention to the speech by the fire chief, Captain Beatty, explaining why they burned the books. The reason was not national security or political power. It was complexity. Books, says the fire chief, make ideas too difficult. The reader winds up lost, he says, "in a great welter of nouns and verbs and adjectives." The people demanded the books be burned because they wanted no complicated ideas.

We may not be burning books, exactly, but we are burning argument and ideas, replacing them with applause lines. If we Americans can make our way past the fanfare over the most controversial words in Mr. Holder's speech, perhaps we can learn from his reminder that democracy needs dialogue more than it needs bumper stickers.

Stephen L. Carter, a novelist and Yale law professor, is writing a book about what democracy needs now.

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• Success

Issue Date: Daily 'Dog - February 27, 2009

New Survey Shows Consumers Still Rely Heavily on Traditional Media: Respondents Cite Blog-Credibility Doubt Among Reasons

Despite the implosion of America's magazine and newspaper industry, the vast majority of adult consumers still consider the print editions of these publications indispensable sources of news and entertainment. In a new survey, public relations firm **The Rosen Group** (www.rosengrouppr.com), polled Americans about the current state of media, and what might be in store for the future. Nearly 80 percent of respondents still subscribe to magazines and the vast majority (83 percent) find that daily newspapers are still relevant.

Despite a pronounced move toward online news consumption, respondents still believe news is fit to print. When asked if newspapers and magazines will exist in 10 years, nearly half of those surveyed (45 percent) said yes, while 40 percent remained uncertain.

"People are looking online for news and lifestyle information, but they are not abandoning their print editions," said **Lori Rosen**, founder and president of The Rosen Group. "There is still a certain satisfaction and ease to holding printed text in your hands, and PDAs or PCs will not replace this just yet." Among the evidence: Even though the public can't ignore the burgeoning blogosphere, nearly 60 percent of those surveyed agree that the information found on blogs is not credible.

Other key findings:

- Thirty percent cite websites devoted to news as their top source for updates; 66 percent say that they are among their daily news sources.
- Only 18 percent say that a print newspaper is their first stop for news, but 55 percent of respondents still look at newspapers on any given day. Fifty-three percent still subscribe to the print version of a newspaper.
- When it comes to leisure time, print magazines and Web sites tied for first as a leading entertainment source (26 percent). Only seven percent seek out their favorite magazines online.
- Sixty-five percent of respondents find weekly news magazines relevant.

The Rosen Group polled 316 respondents ages 12-75, online, from February 18-23.