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May 3, 2009

## McGuire on Media

« [Newspaper critics need to count to 100 and take a sedative](#)

### About me

Tim McGuire, 60, is the Frank Russell Chair for the business of journalism at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. As the Russell Chair, McGuire focuses on providing courses on ethics and on the business components of journalism including operations, emerging media, corporate responsibility and the future of media.

McGuire retired in June of 2002 as editor and Senior Vice President of the Star Tribune in Minneapolis. He served in that position since 1992. Prior to that, he was managing editor of the Star Tribune. He joined the company in 1979 as managing editor of the Star. He was managing editor of the newspaper when it won a Pulitzer Prize in 1990. He has been a Pulitzer jurist six times, most recently in 2003. McGuire is a past president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (2001-2002).

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« [Home](#)

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- [Business journalism](#)
- [Business of journalism](#)
- [Future of journalism](#)
- [Investigative Journalism](#)
- [Journalism education](#)
- [Leadership and Management](#)
- [Media Criticism](#)
- [Media ethics](#)
- [News decisions](#)
- [Newspapers](#)
- [Online journalism](#)
- [Speeches](#)
- [Sports journalism](#)

### Archives

- [May 2009](#)
- [April 2009](#)
- [March 2009](#)
- [February 2009](#)
- [January 2009](#)
- [December 2008](#)

## Civil conversation and media criticism should co-exist

**The tools of production have been democratized** and the power to create news has clearly shifted to the masses. All the hip authors tell us amateurs are on the brink of overpowering professionals. Legacy media is under siege because the **mass advertising model does not work anymore**. Despite **all the dire predictions** mainstream media seems to continue to set the agenda and media criticism is increasing rather than decreasing.

There's **a new entry into this field** from some folks at the Cronkite School's entrepreneurial lab. They asked me to write an entry about the need for media criticism. As is often the case, the request ran smack dab into a recent pet peeve of mine causing me to go in a very different direction.

I have found it mighty maddening lately that everybody who talks about newspapers, media and the future of said media is so damned certain about just about everything. I have certainly made as many flat-out declarations as the next guy in my life, but it strikes me that in **this intriguing liminal moment** we live in there is a demand for more humility, more sense of journey and more open inquiry. Thursday I listened to **Merrill Brown** here at a Cronkite School lunch. Brown is a media veteran of many platforms who is helping **Steven Brill with his new Journalism Online** venture. Brown was delightfully open and questioning. He does not pretend he knows all the answers and is engaged by the mystery that lies ahead.

If media criticism is going to be taken seriously I think the vitriol needs to be toned down and humility introduced. I think these five rules would make media criticism more civil, smarter and more effective. They would probably make life go a little easier too!

1. Understand that your views are not Divine Truth. **ESPN radio show host Colin Cowherd** doesn't always ring my chimes, but he did a great riff Thursday about what is obvious to him may not be at all obvious to you. I advise my students to try to reword an opinion this way to see if it still flies. "With all of my prejudices and baggage accumulated over 60 years I believe...." For most people that will inject a little humility into the observation.
2. Keep the focus of your criticism narrow and manageable. Words like "always" and "never" cheapen most arguments. Those words tend to make you seem silly and painfully uninformed. Allow wiggle room.
3. There needs to be common starting point. A good one for journalism is the four pillars of truth-telling, minimizing harm, independence and accountability. Those four elements are essential for discourse to be considered journalism. Good criticism should challenge journalists on the exercise of one or more of those elements.
4. Much criticism contends bias. Bias is a legitimate area of inquiry, but too often critics, offended by what they perceive as bias, simply attempt to impose their own bias. **Independence of faction** as proposed by **Kovach and Rosenstiel** requires that we have an **independence of mind and spirit** and that should be reflected in our language.
5. Finally, I bristle when attacks are not followed by wise advice. I advise my ethics students to ask "what would I have them do." If I believe a media practitioner made an error, showed bias or had an ethical lapse I need "to walk in their shoes." Your criticism will be more insightful if you attempt to understand how the scene may look from the ground and consider what better options the practitioner should have pursued. That process often introduces gray areas which should be appreciated.

These suggestions are hard to follow when a piece of reporting or opinion make you mad as hell. I am well aware they are easier to suggest than to act upon. I simply

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- [October 2008](#)
- [September 2008](#)
- [August 2008](#)
- [July 2008](#)
- [June 2008](#)
- [May 2008](#)
- [April 2008](#)
- [March 2008](#)
- [February 2008](#)
- [January 2008](#)
- [December 2007](#)
- [November 2007](#)
- [October 2007](#)
- [September 2007](#)
- [August 2007](#)
- [July 2007](#)
- [March 2007](#)

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offer the possibility that civil criticism and constructive ideas will make improving the media a more pleasant and a more satisfying intellectual undertaking.

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*This entry was written by [Tim McGuire](#) and posted on May 1, 2009 at 12:07 pm and filed under [Journalism education](#), [Media Criticism](#), [Media ethics](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#). Follow any comments here with the [RSS feed for this post](#). [Post a comment](#) or leave a [trackback](#): [Trackback URL](#).*

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#### 1. Alex Dering

*Posted May 1, 2009 at 1:41 pm | [Permalink](#)*

You momentarily touch on a crucial point with item three:

"There needs to be common starting point. A good one for journalism is the four pillars of truth-telling, minimizing harm, independence and accountability."

Yes, those form a good starting point. But you leave out the biggest gap to appear in journalism lately: intelligent, informed material from intelligent, informed reporters and editors.

I'm not saying every person in a newsroom has to be a genius, but I am seeing, more and more frequently, simply staggering errors, great and small. I'm seeing frippery squeezing out news. I'm seeing headlines, captions, and sentences that look like they were composed by escapes from a mental institution.

The local news has become physically painful to watch as the newsreaders editorialize about stories they have just read. The major network newsprograms have become the ultimate instruction for journalism students: "This, which was just done on a national broadcast, is what you DO NOT do, class. We'll discuss why after I collect your assignments."

If the criticism isn't high-brow enough, perhaps it's because the material being presented for evaluation — simply put — sucks.

#### 2. [Bradley J. Fikes](#)

*Posted May 1, 2009 at 2:03 pm | [Permalink](#)*

Was that a joke? A meta-spoof of a hostile, defensive journalist, to show what not to do?

How about evaluating the criticisms on their merits, growing a thicker skin, and taking that sedative yourself?

Look at your advice. If you want "more humility, more sense of journey and more open inquiry," set an example instead of fuming.

Ponder the contradiction between this:

# HOW BRANDS BALANCE THEIR DIET WITH SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPLEMENTS

Posted on May 3rd, 2009

Developing a social strategy is a lot like having a balanced diet. While the employees can learn from each other, additional external supplements must be introduced into the diet for a balanced meal.

Unlike other tried and true mediums that are used to connect with customers, social strategies come with implications and risk. While brands will ultimately drive and implement their own social strategy entrée they'll still need supplements to ensure they're getting a balanced and healthy diet for this marathon. The below is a list of methods that brands are getting their daily dose of supplements for their social programs.

**[Developing a social strategy is a lot like having a balanced diet. While employees can learn from each other, additional external supplements must be introduced into the diet for a balanced meal]**

## How Brands Balance Their Diet With Social Media Supplements

Brands ultimately drive their own strategy, but must have additional resources outside of their firewall to understand the rapidly changing social space. For each supplement, I'll define what it is, give an example, then suggest how to best use, these supplements include:

### Workshops and Webinars:

- What it is: Brands often bring in third party experts that have formalized workshop agendas, content, and workshop content to help them succeed.
- Examples: I know many of the community platform vendors like [LiveWorld](#) have such an offering, as well as most social media conferences. Education hubs like [Marketing pros have ongoing webinar series](#), as does [Forrester's teleconferences](#).
- How to use: Use these once internal stakeholders have buyin, and there's momentum from groups that want to learn best practices. Don't apply too early -nor too late.

### Ongoing Training/Internal Labs:

- What it is: Brands are offering marketers ongoing training classes for social, that include a variety of external speakers, but coordinated by an internal resource or central team.
- Examples: Proctor and Gamble has the [P&G social media labs](#) which has provided a multitude of internal brands with resources, including a safe place to experiment. See their recent [“Tides of Hope”](#) experimental campaign, which was a success in learning. Secondly, PepsiCo, is leaning on Edelman Digital Strategy team ([Rubel](#)) for internal training, strategy, and recommendations.
- How to use: Large conglomerates or CPG brands will benefit first by having this ongoing educational program and curriculum. Great to deploy when multiple teams need education -and need to benefit from synching from each other.

### Social Media Advisory Boards:

- What it is: Brands have a dedicated relationship with external thought leaders and practitioners, build relationships with them and seek their perspective.
- Examples: Intel has a social media advisory board, dubbed the [“Insiders”](#) that has a broad collection of industry practitioners and commenters -I’ve noticed some of them get Intel sponsorships. In some regards, [Wal-Mart’s 11 moms](#) program, which is non-paid sponsored conversations will result in similar benefits.
- How to use: Brands that want to develop long term relationships for programs, campaigns, should set these programs up, these are great stepping stones for influencer relations, esp in markets that take heavy criticism.

### Councils and Clubs

- What it is: Brands join ongoing clubs and councils created by third parties. Some have member fees, and some are free, depending on sophistication. In some cases, memberships are wide open for the public, and others have private membership
- Examples: There’s a great number of councils and clubs from the: [Social Media Club](#), [Social Media Breakfast](#), [BlogCouncil](#), [Internet Strategy Forum](#), [Forum One](#), [Womma](#), [EConsultancy](#) among others. [IBM hosted a Tweetup in their NYC office](#) to meet and greet the social media community, although a one-off, a tweetup is an ongoing meeting across the world of passionate social users. At Forrester, we offer premiere clients the opportunity to join the [Forrester Leadership Board](#) for Interactive Marketers.
- How to use: Encourage practitioners to attend these clubs to learn from peers on an ongoing basis. Host or sponsor these meetings at your own company to learn from folks.

### Research Firms:

- What it is: Research firms provide brands with data, best practices, and recommendations that help them to make successful decisions.
- Examples: [eMarketer](#), [Comscore](#), [Nielsen Online](#), [Pew Research](#), and [Compete](#) offer strong analytics. Brands seeking strategy and advice could approach [Society of New Communciations Research](#), or [Forrester](#), my employer. Leave a comment below if

I've missed someone.

- How to use: Research is needed before crafting a strategy, as brands must find out who their customers are, how they use technology, and use for vendor and service vetting.

### Ongoing Social News

- What it is: News about the social media space is well, noisy. Finding the right areas to find signal are key for every brand, as spending time scouring blogs can easily consume one's day -and night.
- Examples: You'll find consistent summaries and digests from [SmartBrief's Social Media daily wrapups](#), [RWW's weekly wrapups](#), or, [my weekly digest of the social space](#).
- How to use: Be selective in your choices, you don't have a lot of time during the day, once you find your credible news sources, be sure to encourage your colleagues to subscribe.

### Other Forms

Of course, this dietary supplement is an ongoing process, and not just limited to social, brands, leaders, and everyone need to constantly learn to stay fresh. Additionally, brands should have internal training areas that employees can share their best practices and learn from their wins and losses. Take for example Vignette's [Dirk Shaw](#), a recently appointed social media strategist who has an internal blog dedicated to helping their marketing and product teams and beyond learn social. I purposely [left out conferences, as others have created this large list](#).

### Upcoming Research on this Topic

I'm working on a Forrester report to uncover "How companies organize for social media" and if you're a large brand that wants to talk to me, I'd love to interview you for this Q2 report, contact me at [jowyang@forrester.com](mailto:jowyang@forrester.com).

I hope this list helps you maintain a balanced and regular social diet, leave a comment with additional suggestions, I'll add them in as appropriate and credit you.

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### What Kind of Networker Are You? A Journey to Self-Evaluation.

Online networking for business or a career, can be very intimidating when you don't have prior experience. For some people, it comes naturally, but for others, they would rather have all their wisdom teeth extracted, instead of networking with people they don't know. If this is how you feel, you are not alone. Here are some points to help you on your networking journey.

When I first started professional networking, I had a lot of misconceptions as to what networking really was. Initially, I only thought about what I needed. However, I quickly learned that networking was about building meaningful relationships, and giving more than taking.

Many people, who join professional or social networks for the first time, make a lot of mistakes along the way (just as I did). But don't despair, this is perfectly normal; and there is hope for you. What can help you to cultivate your networking skills? Making a self-evaluation, to see what kind of networker you are, then look for ways to make continuous improvement.

Here are some questions, in the form of a poem, which may help you with your journey to self-evaluation, when networking online, or face-to-face:

What kind of networker am I? A question, I often ask myself.  
Do I think more of others, or do I think more of self?

When I post a question, and others reply,  
do I say thanks, or just say goodbye?

When I see a profile, of someone I'd like to meet,  
do I send a personalized message, or just a default greet.

When I receive a message, from connections I know,  
do I read and reply, or do I just go?

When someone wants to know, what is a ditch?  
Do I answer to help, or just give a pitch?

When someone asks about apples and pears,  
do I reply to the question, or talk about bears?

When I see a great article, that someone has post,  
do I thank them for sharing, or make an opportunity to boast.

When I network with people, am I always gracious, and kind;  
or do those traits, often get left behind?

I ask this question again, What kind of networker am I?  
This is a great question to ask ourselves.

Please give some thought, before putting this poem on a shelf.

If we make an honest self-evaluation of our reason for networking, and the manner in which we do so, we will be able to find out what kind of networker we are; and reach our destination to effective networking!

Follow me at Twitter: <http://twitter.com/Wkapfer>  
Follow me on Facebook: William Kapfer

Posted 10 hours ago | [Reply Privately](#)

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## Who will pay for the news? The Internet has walloped newspapers Print Page

The recent closing of the Rocky Mountain News came as no surprise to those of us who have been tracking the news business, but it does seem to finally be sparking a national conversation about how we will pay for quality reporting in the future.

Denver was lucky to be one of the last remaining big cities with two major competing dailies. The Rocky Mountain News probably had its life lengthened because of its joint operating agreement, under which it shared use of presses and ad sales staff with The Denver Post. (The Birmingham Post-Herald enjoyed a similar arrangement with The Birmingham News, keeping it viable long after it would have ceased publication otherwise.)

### Tip of the iceberg

Sadly, Denver is just the tip of the iceberg. Everywhere one looks in the industry, there is trouble. Earlier in the same week, The Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Other newspapers in bankruptcy court include The Tribune Co. (owner of the Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Hartford Courant, Orlando Sentinel, South Florida Sun-Sentinel and about 16 other dailies) and the Journal Register Co. (owner of 27 dailies). The Detroit newspapers have cut home delivery to three days a week. The New York Times borrowed \$250 million from a Mexican financier at 14 percent interest. Hearst says it may have to close the San Francisco Chronicle and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer if it can't find buyers for the newspapers.

Despite the loss of the Post-Herald, Alabama has been fortunate due to the stability provided by Newhouse, which owns The Birmingham News, The Huntsville Times and the Mobile Press-Register. But there is no such thing as a bottomless pocket, and in time, no city can be immune to the larger troubles affecting our news media.

Traditionally, newspapers have received revenue from three sources - subscriptions, advertising and newsstand sales. The Internet has hurt all three of those sources. Many people have dropped their subscriptions in favor of reading online. And Webbased alternatives have siphoned off much of the classified revenue for real estate, jobs and merchandise.

Meanwhile, for a decade, news junkies like me have gorged on virtually unlimited news from all over the globe, without paying the news organizations a cent for any of it. In doing so, we've given hardly a thought to who was paying for all that good coverage.

In theory, online advertising was supposed to make free media Web sites profitable, but it hasn't worked out that way.

Revenues from online advertising haven't come close to offsetting losses in subscription and print advertising income. To make matters worse, the emergence of news aggregators (primarily Google and, to a lesser extent, Yahoo!), has caused readers to break their dependence on local media sites and move instead to those that bring together stories from media throughout the world. Advertisers have naturally followed the readers - away from the news organizations and toward the aggregators. As a result, the money hasn't made its way back to the people who produce the product.

Now, we've finally started looking for ways to reconnect the revenues to the people who do the work. We've remembered that gathering and reporting news are an expensive business. And our system of government simply doesn't function well without good reporting.

To stay alive, news media are going to have to find a new business model that enables them to operate at a profit. The least popular model - and the one that appears the most viable - is to end the news free-for-all and move to a new system in which readers pay for their online news.

Make no mistake: The local media must survive. Without our newspapers, who will spend the hours covering meetings, investigating corruption and asking hard questions of our leaders in Birmingham and Montgomery? If we lose them, who will take their place? It won't be bloggers in pajamas or cell-phone photo-graphers, because they piggyback on the real work done by real reporters. No, to get our reporting done, we'll have to figure a way to pay for it.

This notion produces shrieks from those who feel everything on the Internet should be free, but we'll just have to get past that. Currently, The Wall Street Journal charges \$103 per year for online access. As a Birmingham News carrier in the 1960s, I collected \$3.25 a month from subscribers for home delivery. That's \$39 per year, in 1968 dollars. Today, that would come to well more than \$200.

In truth, I suspect that if we adopted a subscription model, the cost would be surprisingly low. We could get several national and local publications for less than we paid in 1968 for The News alone.

Some would argue that if we moved to an online subscription model, people would get less news. But in truth, it would ensure the viability of a vigorous, independent press, resulting in more and better coverage both nationally and locally. Regardless of how things take shape, consumers of news will have to get over the idea we're entitled to free, unlimited news.

The real issue is just how long it will take before we reach a crisis point where we begin to face the reality that we're losing our reporters. I'm not sure our democracy can function particularly well without them.

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## What Obama's first 100 days can teach communicators

By: Sarah McAdams

*The 44th president offers 16 lessons in framing a message*

Barack Obama's inauguration signified more than just a dramatic change in politics: It also launched an equally significant shift in how White House communication is handled.

"Nearly 30 years ago, Ronald Reagan was hailed as the great communicator in the manner in which he shaped his words utilizing his training as an actor, but also in the way he was able to relate those words directly to the American public through a medium he was intimately familiar with: television," says Dick Grove, CEO of [INK Inc.](#), a Kansas City-based PR firm.

On Jan. 20, "we cheered another great communicator who knows not only how to shape his words as an obviously talented orator, but also knows how to use media to transmit those words for the greatest impact," he continues.

Of course, we're only a little more than three months into Obama's presidency: whether his communication strategy has any impact on the success of the administration remains to be seen.

"But there is no question that he has 'touched' the public in a way unlike any president before him," says John Baird, director of corporate communications at [Blue Nile](#) in Seattle.

Here are 16 lessons that his first 100 days hold for corporate communicators:

**1. Ask for help from those who went before you.** Just before he took office, President-elect Obama met with President Bush and all the living former presidents. "He realized that he needed to be able to build relationships with these men so that he could pick up the phone," says Rick Maurer, principal of change management firm [Maurer & Associates](#). "So instead of pretending he had all the experience in the world, he had the good sense to ask the counsel of those who have done the job before [for help]. Seems like good advice for anyone moving into a leadership position—both as an act of leadership and humility."

**2. You catch more flies with ... oatmeal raisin cookies.** In his first couple of weeks as president, Obama held in-person meetings with all his departments—but he also reached out to many of his internal critics. Among the various receptions he held for bipartisan groups of legislators was a Super Bowl party at the White House—where Obama passed around a plate of hot, homemade oatmeal raisin cookies. Representative Trent Franks, R-Ariz., was one of the guests. As he told *The New York Times*, he is "probably as philosophically opposed to this president as any member of Congress"—but when he left that night he had a new respect for Obama. "First of all, when you have a meeting like this, it humanizes and personalizes opponents, where you recognize them as human beings," Franks told the *Times*. "I think that does a lot toward helping people put aside politics and really try to do what is best for the country."

**3. Meet with the "enemy."** Is someone talking smack about your organization? At least it's not Hugo Chavez. But just say it were Hugo Chavez—or, you know, a disgruntled employee or customer—consider the Barack Obama method of handling conflict, and meet it head on. From giving his first official presidential interview to Arabic TV channel al-Arabiya (during which he said he wanted Muslims to know that "Americans are not your enemy"), to calling for a new openness with Cuba, to shaking hands with Chavez, Obama has been taking pains to improve relations with countries whose relationship with the U.S. is strained.



He responded to the many critics of these actions at a press conference following the Summit of the Americas: "It's hard to believe we are endangering the strategic interests of the United States" with a handshake. Rather, he argued, the thawing of tensions between previously hostile countries could lead to "an opportunity for frank dialogue on a range of issues, including critical issues of democracy

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and human rights throughout the hemisphere.”

strategy. 

There seem to be positive signs already. On April 16, Cuban President Raul Castro released a momentous statement, asserting: “We are willing to discuss everything—human rights, freedom of press, political prisoners, everything, everything, everything they want to talk about. We could be wrong, we admit it. We’re human.”

Chavez, meanwhile, also said he’s interested in restoring diplomatic relations between his Venezuela and the United States.

Whether there will be actual policy change remains to be seen, but at least the dialogue is open.

**4. Take social media seriously.** Obama’s team excels at using technology to get information to and from the public—from the social network and organizing tool [My.BarackObama.com](http://My.BarackObama.com), to weekly videos on YouTube, to a Facebook group, to a constantly updated blog on [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov).



The administration has done more than just slap up the tools; Obama has been consistent in the frequency and type of access he has granted the public and staffers. “This is an important lesson for corporate communicators in the new media era, because the new channels offer a bewildering range of levels of corporate engagement,” says Peter Hirsch, a former Porter Novelli partner who is teaching a course on new media and corporate communication at Baruch College in New York.

“Consistency in that engagement is crucial,” he says, “regardless of the stakeholder audience. In other words, don’t start a CEO blog if its frequency is highly volatile.”

**5. Do your homework.** These days, nothing stays hidden forever—even, say, embarrassing photos you assumed would never see this side of 1987 (thanks, Facebook). That goes for the big stuff, too, as several appointees to Obama’s cabinet could tell you. Make every effort to research and unearth secrets that could harm your organization—before someone else does. Likewise, always fact-checking the messages you communicate on a daily basis will boost your credibility. As Obama notably said, when asked why it took him and his team several days after learning about the AIG bonuses to publicly address them, “Because I like to know what I’m talking about before I speak.”

**6. Admit it when you screw up.** Obama has not been afraid to “own it” after a misstep. Both when he joked about Special Olympics bowling on “*The Tonight Show*” and when some of his key appointments were revealed to have tax evasion and other flaws in their backgrounds, he immediately stepped up and took the blame.



In a press conference after a couple of key appointees withdrew their nominations, Obama said: “I’m here on television saying I screwed up, and that’s part of the era of responsibility. It’s not never making mistakes; it’s owning up to them and trying to make sure you never repeat them, and that’s what we intend to do.”

The president also invited five broadcast and cable television anchors to the Oval Office on Tuesday to apologize for and take responsibility for nominating aides with tax troubles.

“Hearing leaders admit mistakes is rare,” Maurer says. “At best, we might hear mistakes were made, but that leaves us to wonder just who made those mistakes.”

Another common reaction to a screwup is to obfuscate with spin so that no one understands what is going on. And a final favorite is to parse the error so minutely that it appears that everything worked out just fine. But to hear someone say, ‘I screwed up,’ is as shocking as it is refreshing.”

**7. Control the flow, or the flow will control you.** “Bush was continually beset by bad news and was always seen reacting to it. Obama daily communicates an active agenda of what’s going on today and tomorrow,” says Bill Pemberton, senior vice president at [Forte Public Relations](http://Forte Public Relations) in Dallas. “Whether you agree with his policies or not—I don’t for the most part—you have to admit he projects a guy who is involved in finding solutions. The media have to react to Obama, he is far too active to allow himself to have to react to them.”

Obama went so far as to become the official salesman for his stimulus plan before it was accepted: He wrote an Op-Ed for the *The Washington Post* in which he defended it against “misguided criticisms,” held a prime-time news conference, and gave interviews from the Oval Office on the topic.

**8. Don't make promises you can't keep.** Sometimes Obama's actions do not match his words, says Dianna Booher, CEO of [Booher Consultants](#) in Grapevine, Texas. For instance, "during the stimulus package discussion, he promised [Treasury Secretary Timothy] Geithner would unveil a big 'detailed plan' in his speech to the nation," she says. "Geithner unveiled no such details. The stock market reacted with a huge drop the following day."

U.S. stocks fell more than 4 percent the next day; Standard & Poor's 500 Index took its biggest plunge since Obama's inauguration.

Another example: "He promised that North Korea would face tough consequences if they tested a nuclear bomb," Booher points out. "Only more talk followed."

**9. Tone is everything; content can be basic.** Obama is rarely rattled, mad, frayed, off-guard, negative, or confrontational. "So in a world that has to make judgments on sound bites, Obama comes across as very, very cool and in control," Pemberton says. "He offers our enemies no harsh words to build a countercampaign against. He won't give them a straw man to beat."

Business leaders would do well to keep similarly cool under pressure. (Consider the volatile Ted Turner did not remain cool and found himself marginalized in his merger with Time Warner as a result.) They should calmly solicit the opinions of others and keep an open mind until final decisions are made.

**10. Communicate to your audience on their terms.** Find your audience (be they employees, customers, or shareholders) and go to them. Obama has done that geographically—with trips both domestic and international—and otherwise.

"In modern communications, audiences are so amazingly fractured and so loyal to their outlets that you have to go directly to them, meet them where they are on issues, and speak a language they understand," says Dan Cohen, principal of [Full Court Press Communications](#) in Oakland, Calif.

That's why in one week, the president appeared on three television programs. In addition to CBS' "60 Minutes," viewers could watch Obama on ESPN and on NBC's "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno."

"Many pundits have suggested this is not presidential or that Obama should be focusing on the nation's problems, not appearing on entertainment shows," says Tripp Frohlichstein, founder of media coaching firm [MediaMasters](#).

Radio station KTAR.com quoted Republican Sen. Jon Kyl of Arizona stating, "There is nothing funny about President Obama's appearance on 'The Tonight Show.'"

"Those critics have missed the point," Frohlichstein says. "This is a very smart media strategy designed to reach out to average Americans. It demonstrates for people that Obama is in touch with their needs and interests. It shows that he is in touch with popular culture, while his predecessor was not."

Apparently, it worked. During the AIG discussion on "The Tonight Show," the president said: "Listen, I'll take responsibility. I'm the president"—which led to cheers and applause.

**11. Make upward communication easy for your CEO.** Every organization would be well-served to have a communicator playing the Mike Kelleher role. Director of correspondence at the White House, Kelleher selects 10 letters, faxes, or e-mails (out of the tens of thousands the president receives daily) to show to Obama every day. He picks ones he believes best represent what Americans are thinking and feeling. As Kelleher told [The New York Times](#) recently: "We pick messages that are compelling, things people say that, when you read it, you get a chill. I send him letters that are uncomfortable messages." Often, Obama personally writes back to the author.

The president also uses the letters to keep his staff "real." As White House chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, said in the *Times* piece, Obama "believes it's easy in Washington to forget there are real people with real challenges being affected by the debate." In policy meetings, the president will say to advisers and say, "No, no, no. I want to read you a letter that I got. I want you to understand," Emanuel said.

**12. Keep it interesting but keep coming home.** Refresh your message—but keep going back to key elements. This administration has succeeded in keeping focused on the economy but not beating the drum to the point of tone-deafness. "They recognize that they can't talk about the same issue every day. They do economy on Monday, health care on Tuesday, NCAA brackets the next. And then return back to the economy," Cohen says.

**13. Meld formal and informal.** Obama's tone is "a fascinating—to fans—blend of warm and cool," says Hirsch, who's writing a book about corporate communications and Web 2.0. "This is another very tricky balancing act in the age of Web 2.0. The legacy formality of corporate communications sits uneasily alongside cheeky tweets. Finding the right blend is going to be a huge challenge for

most corporations.”

For the most part, Obama is a good example of providing the right tone for the time and audience. His light-hearted demeanor on Jay Leno’s show was a strong contrast to formal messages in front of Congress, at press conferences, or at town hall meetings.

He doesn’t always get it right, however. Press conferences, for instance, have been criticized as being too controlled. “His responses have been characterized as a series of mini-speeches rather than spontaneous answers,” says Booher, author of *The Voice of Authority: 10 Communication Strategies Every Leader Needs to Know*.

**14. Don’t be afraid to morph the message.** Obama’s initial discussions about the economy were alarmist (mostly to make sure that people understood he inherited the mess). But that had the accompanying effect of helping trash the stock market. “They moved their message to one of working together to restore and rebuild the economy and both the market and his personal popularity stabilized,” says Ed Coghlan, longtime senior corporate communications executive for medical companies and current communication consultant in North Hills, Calif. “Many organizations don’t have the immediate barometer of a stock market to test messages, but we all know and preach that if something isn’t working, you change it.”

**15. Prepare your speaker.** Whether it’s the CEO or another company spokesperson, he or she should be completely prepared, says Beth LaBreche, chief executive of Minneapolis-based brand communications firm [LaBreche](#). Obama’s team, she says, are experts at this. “Every time he is mentioned in traditional media it’s through either a sound bite or a direct quote—talk about nailing the key messages,” she says. “The time he and his team have spent developing policies, ideologies, and messages that support his initiatives is evident. This lesson of preparedness is something that every organizational communicator should know.”

**16. Don’t overextend the CEO.** “The words of the president have an enormous weight,” Calvin Coolidge wrote in his autobiography, “and ought not to be used indiscriminately.” “Silent Cal” Coolidge refrained from speaking so much that he gained a reputation for always being worth listening to. “By necessity, business leaders speak a lot,” says San Diego speech coach and consultant Chris Witt, “but when they speak too often, they risk sounding repetitious. Then they lose their employees’ and customers’ interest and respect, and they cheapen their message.”

Witt, the author of *Real Leaders Don’t Do PowerPoint*, believes that “the frequency of Obama’s speeches may diminish his power.” Instead, he argues, the president should delegate to others to speak about important, but less urgent issues. “Why, for example, did he need to comment on Cheney’s criticisms? Why not have his VP do that? The same for owners or CEOs delegating to their VPs or department heads. Less is more.”

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## SEC all atwitter

BY BOB HOLT

Posted on Thursday, April 30, 2009

URL: <http://www.wholehogsports.com/adg/258468/>

FAYETTEVILLE - Tennessee Coach Lane Kiffin doesn't know if Twittering is a recruiting advantage, but he's not taking any chances.

Kiffin opened a Twitter account recently after learning Georgia Coach Mark Richt had one.

"To me, it's more one of those things that you don't want anyone doing anything that you're not," Kiffin said. "Reading that Coach Richt had started that and had one, we just wanted to make sure that there wasn't anything that could possibly be a benefit that we weren't doing.

"I don't know that it really helps you that much in recruiting. But if it does, we're trying."

Arkansas Coach Bobby Petrino said he has a Twitter account set up by Kevin Trainor, the UA's associate athletic director for communications and media relations.

"Kevin set it up to make sure nobody else did," Petrino said. "But he didn't tell me the password and, what else? There's something else you have to know. I don't know the codes."

Petrino added he's not familiar with the technology.

"What is Twittering?" he said. "What exactly do you do?"

Twitter, Inc., founded in 2006 and headquartered in San Francisco, is a free social networking and micro-blogging service. Users are allowed to send and read other users' updates, known as "tweets," in text-message posts of up to 140 characters.

NCAA rules prohibit coaches from text-messaging recruits directly or posting messages aimed at a specific recruit, but anyone can sign up for a Twitter account and receive updates from a coach regarding the team in general or other topics.

Many coaches who Twitter - and the growing list includes Southern California's Pete Carroll and Michigan's Rich Rodriguez - have an administrative assistant who handles it.

"I have somebody that runs that for me, that communicates with me on a daily basis," Kiffin said. "It's just another method of getting out there and letting our fan base or recruits know what we're doing and what's going on with our program."

Some of Kiffin's tweets, according to the Knoxville News-Sentinel, included messages promoting the Volunteers' spring game, noting that assistant Ed Orgeron had a six-hour recruiting meeting and comments on the weather.

LSU Coach Les Miles laughed long and hard when asked about Twittering on the SEC coaches' spring teleconference and called it "hilarious," but then said he needs to start doing it.

"To be very honest, I have not Twittered yet," Miles said. "I think 'old school' would be something that people call me. But I think they also would say I need and have the want-to to be on the fast edge when it comes to communicating with our prospects, our supporters and our fan base.

"So, yeah, I'm going to try to tweet. What a great name, huh?"

Richt said his assistant director of football operations sends his tweets after the two discuss topics.

"It's just a way to give information to people about what's going on at Georgia, and not just football," Richt said. "We talk a lot about our other sports and congratulate those teams and wish them luck when they play."

Richt said fans attending Georgia's spring game brought more than 12,000 pounds of items to be donated to a local food bank after being encouraged to do so in one of his tweets.

"I don't know if Twitter is really that big of a deal," Richt said. "I think it's more for your Georgia fan that enjoys trying to keep up with what's going on in my life and in our football program."

Kentucky Coach Rich Brooks, the SEC's oldest coach at 67, said he has no plans to Twitter. He said it's tough to do much communicating in 140 or fewer characters.

"I don't think it's much better than e-mails or phone calls," Brooks said. "Certainly it's the latest craze and hottest item on the horizon at this point.

"Probably six months to a year from now, we'll be talking about something else replacing Twitter."

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