The Edge: Keeping Up With the Social World

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I spend a fair amount of time teaching clients and other business owners about the latest developments in the social media world.

At 41, I’m not the youngest person trying to keep up to speed with the ever-changing world of social media, but I likely spend more time than the average Joe chasing knowledge on the topic. Why? My clients, first and foremost. They hire us to communicate to their clients, customers, members and stakeholders, and social media is undoubtedly the single-fastest, most-targeted way to do that.

Gaining exposure through earned coverage in print media is part of the “traditional public relations” toolbox — and hasn’t changed too much over the years — you still develop a compelling pitch, hope to get interest by a targeted reporter or editor, and share published or aired successes with your clients. There’s more to it, but essentially we were all taught to use one-way “push” methods of communication to reach targets — press releases, newsletters, broadcast interviews, fact sheets, case studies, ads, etc. With all of these elements, you speak, others listen (you hope). There is no interaction, no conversation, no making your brand truly vulnerable, accessible and human. Social media has changed all that.

The thing is, to stay relevant in the social media world (from a business perspective), you must be a perpetual student. There is no formal (or informal) training that prepares you 100 percent to dive into
how to best leverage Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, etc. These platforms change daily and can be overwhelming. The key is to determine which platforms make the most sense for you (hint: it’s not ALL of them!!). And once you think you have the right mix of platforms selected, several new ones show up on the scene!

As an example, just this year Periscope (purchased and now marketed through Twitter) is slowly changing the concept of live video streaming, enabling any of us to create one of the most impactful methods of communication — video — straight from our mobile devices.

For the doubters, yes, there are plenty of people using it to broadcast what they’re making for breakfast, BUT, there are also reporters and editors giving behind the scenes looks at their newsrooms.

Imagine how you could incorporate video into your own marketing mix on a platform like this! And it’s just the tip of the iceberg.

For all of you business owners, corporate executives and budding entrepreneurs … my best tip for you is to never stop learning … especially when it comes to the world of social media. Staying relevant to your targets means speaking their language on platforms they go to most for information.

One other tip. Don’t make the same mistake many other businesses have made — thinking the younger the employee (or intern), the better their fit to handle your company’s social presence. Would you give your public relations or marketing responsibilities to that person? Your accounting or HR functions? No. So please don’t delegate one of the most powerful communications tools your business has to someone that doesn’t fully understand your target audiences, core key messages and corporate goals.

Don’t know where to start? Follow some of these great informational resources: Mashable, PR Daily, Social Media Today, Social Fresh and Entrepreneur Magazine (just to name a few).

Good Luck!

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