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EXTREME DIGITAL MARKETING!

The Social Media Bible

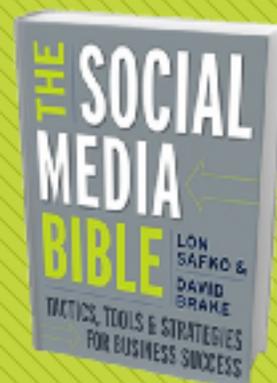
Tactics, Tools, & Strategies... For Business Success
(A Sample)

By Lon Safko



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About The Author

LON SAFKO

Lon Safko is a remarkably creative person. He is the creator of the “*First Computer To Save A Human Life*”. That computer, along with 18 inventions and more than 30,000 of Lon’s papers, are in the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. He has created numerous hardware and software solutions for the physically challenged, developed the first CAD software for civil engineers, designed the archetypes for the Apple Newton & Microsoft’s Bob Operating Systems. He is also responsible for those handy little Tool-Tips help-balloon pop-ups!

Lon has been recognized for his creativity with such prestigious awards as; The Westinghouse’s *Entrepreneur of the Year*, Arizona Innovation Network’s *Innovator of the Year*, The Arizona Software Association’s *Entrepreneur of the Year*, twice nominated for the Ernst & Young / Inc. Magazine *Entrepreneur of the Year*, and The Public Relations Society of America’s, *Edward Bernays, Mark of Excellence Award*, and nomination as a Fellow of the nation’s Computer History Museum. Lon has also been featured in Entrepreneur Magazine, PC Novice, and Popular Science Magazines just to name a few. Lon was recently selected by the Smithsonian to represent “*The American Inventor*” at their annual conference.

He is the founder of nine successful companies, including Paper Models, Inc., which uses downloadable three-dimensional models in business advertising, promotions, and education, which is being considered as an acquisition.

Lon is an author of remarkable breadth, writing five innovative books. His books have shown corporations how to train managers to think creatively, detailed the secrets of launching a successful on-line business, offered advice to new home owners on reducing building costs, and related amazing stories about the serendipity of life. His latest book with John Wiley & Sons “*The Social Media Bible*,” unlocks the mysteries of the hottest new Internet wave, Social Media, such as Facebook and YouTube. This book is transforming corporate and non-profit marketing strategies and how they use these new media to reach their desired audiences with power messages and efficiency.

Lon is a professional speaker, wowing audiences in a hundred cities nationwide with his insights into innovation, creativity, and how to be a successful entrepreneur / intrapreneur in this global digital age. Said one executive of First American Title Insurance, “This is the best seminar I’ve been to in 25 years.” Teledyne said Lon’s seminars are “Informative and entertaining, packed with useful information.” And the U.S. Postal Service called Lon’s seminar “inspiring and motivational.”

Lon also privately coaches Fortune 500 companies on harnessing Innovative Thinking to create higher productivity and profits. These on-site visits and personalized presentations help corporate, government, and non-profit executives improve their operations and performance by capturing the innovative potential now wasted or overlooked. As Lon says, “When you start to see your world in a different perspective, you see new ways to do everything!” Lon Safko sees the world in a new way every day.

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BRAKE

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INTRODUCTION

This book is a comprehensive guide to an important topic that is impacting your business, your customers, your coworkers, and everyone connected to them. That topic is *social media*, also referred to as *Web 2.0* at times. We hope you can use this book to accomplish three of the most important goals in business:

1. Increase your revenues.
2. Improve your profitability.
3. Ensure that you remain relevant, competitive, and alive in your industry.

If you own, manage, work for, or invest in a business of any kind—this book is for you. If you collaborate with coworkers to solve problems or create systems, services, or products that make your organization more competitive or more valuable to shareholders—this book is for you. If getting more customers or selling more to current customers is important to your business—this book is for you.

Using the systematic approach presented in this book you can learn how to:

- Increase your company and brand value by engaging people in new forms of communication, collaboration, education, and entertainment.
- Determine which social media tactics you should be using with your customers and employees.
- Evaluate and categorize the tools and applications that constitute the rapidly evolving *Social Media Ecosystem*.
- Make social media tools like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter, blogging, podcasting, and hundreds of others a part of your business strategy.
- Do a social media SWOT analysis inside your company to improve internal operations and outside your company to create and monetize relationships with customers and prospects.



- Implement social media micro and macro strategies to give your business the competitive edge it needs to survive and thrive.

Experts and Authorities

Anyone claiming to be an authority on everything in the *Social Media Ecosystem* should be placed under a doctor's care. We can't imagine how anyone could be an absolute authority on "everything social media" given how fast new players and applications are appearing. However, we have assembled a group of people with special expertise and insights on particular aspects of social media. (A list of our experts, along with their brief bios, appears in the Biographies of Our Experts section in the back of this book.) In several chapters in this book you'll find Expert Insights in which our experts offer their perspective on the topic at hand. These selections have been edited and abridged from more extensive interviews that you can listen to in their entirety on this book's web site.

As authors, we think we're good at identifying what kinds of things you need to know about social media in order to make it work for you. In essence, we're facilitators who have a lot in common with our readers. Like you, we have people to manage, products to launch, payrolls to meet, and customers to wow.

When we began assembling this book, we asked ourselves what would make this book truly indispensable? The answer seemed clear. We needed to ensure that every chapter began with a compelling story or the best "What's In It for Me?" (WIIFM) we could summon. We decided we wouldn't include the chapter if we couldn't begin with a strong story or a compelling WIIFM. You're busy. Your time is valuable. You shouldn't have to wonder "What's in it for me?"

We are always looking for experts and authorities to contribute to the next revision of *The Social Media Bible*, new projects, and the web site, www.theSocialMediaBible.com. We invite you to go on the web site and apply to become a contributor.

The Audience for This Book

The audience for this book is fairly broad. You may be in sales, marketing, operations management, or human resources. You may be an entrepreneur or small business owner. Perhaps you're a senior executive at a major company (the C Suite). You could be an educator or in educational administration. (Social media, by the way, is changing the way we deliver and consume education, and this book can help you develop meaningful strategies for your institution.) You may be an investor or someone who researches particular companies or industries. It's entirely possible that you fall into



more than one of these categories. We call these categories *audience personas*, and we've tried hard to make sure that the book keeps these personas in mind as we focus on those three crucial business goals.

Increasing Your Revenues via Social Media

The primary goal of any business is to make money. This generally means selling more goods or services to a growing customer base. Selling, advertising, and promoting what your business does is crucial to your success, and you'll find hundreds of helpful hints, tactical tidbits, and expert advice in these areas. Making money also depends on creating innovative products or offering compelling services that solve new problems or old problems in a new way. Developing, positioning, and perfecting products and services requires something different from sales and advertising; it requires good *marketing*. Too often people confuse marketing with advertising and sales. There's more to it than that.

Your Customer as a Collaborator—A New Way of Thinking

One of our heroes is Dr. Robert Lusch at the University of Arizona. Since the late 1990s, Dr. Lusch has advocated a new way of thinking in which you view your customers as “co-producers” of your products and services. Actually, Lusch doesn't say products and services as much as he says “offering.” Your *offering* is the combination of product and service that constitutes the *complete customer experience*. By converting your customers (and potential customers) into collaborators, you are creating the optimal environment to increase your profits. Social media enables this new way of thinking.

Improving Profitability via Social Media

Compared to making money, saving money may not seem like fun. Saving money, however, is what successful businesses do when they employ strategies to maximize their profitability. If your business can implement ways to reduce your operating costs, you'll be able to keep more of every dollar that comes in the door.

Can social media help you save money? Absolutely yes! At one of our companies, we instituted a company *wiki* to help geographically dispersed teams share insights and best practices. The wiki has become a training tool for new employees and contractors, but it also has functioned as a virtual water cooler where people meet and share ideas. Has it saved the company money? You bet! We were able to take on more clients with fewer human resources; our initial training time has decreased by 50 percent; and our



employees feel a collaborative spirit that has positively impacted moral. It's great to see talented people collaborate to identify and solve problems that, when left unsolved, cost time and money. Social media is impacting all of these *functional groups* and more within an organization.

Remaining Relevant, Competitive, and Alive

Social media is a relatively new phrase in our business vocabulary. It's probably at the same point in its evolution from jargon term to everyday word as the term *e-commerce* was in the mid-1990s.

Many of the world's best business schools changed their curriculum and even their school names to reflect the impact they thought e-commerce was having on the world of business. There was a scramble to understand how to harness the power of e-commerce. You could hear the heartbeats of entrepreneurs as they ran toward this new frontier. There was discernable fear among the established brick-and-mortar folks. There were sages and cynics. It was an exciting time to be sure. What did all of these people have in common? They wanted to make sure that their organizations remained relevant and competitive in a world where the rules were changing.

So here we are with social media, and the same thing is happening. There's a scramble to understand. But social media encompasses a much broader range of players, activities, and rules than e-commerce ever did. Arguably, e-commerce is a component of social media. In a 2008 survey conducted by Content Connections, 67 percent of the 664 people surveyed did not feel as though they could offer an exact and meaningful definition of social media. Yet, 99 percent of them felt that social media was going to impact their lives and the way we all do business.

It doesn't require an MBA or years of business experience to conclude that when people can't define something, but overwhelmingly believe it will impact their lives and the business environment around them, perspective becomes crucial to success.

So how do we aim to offer you perspective? By organizing this book and its companion web site in a way that will help you digest the basic facts, terminology, history, and applications of social media and then help you develop and implement a social media strategy that is customized for your organization.

The Organization of This Book

We hope you'll read all of this book, but the way you read it will depend on what you're looking for and how quickly you need to find it. The book is part *reference work*, part *how-to manual*, and part *business strategy* book. You can



begin with any part of the book and then go to those chapters in other parts of the book that have a natural connection. If you're relatively new to social media, we suggest that you spend some time going through each part in order.

Part I introduces you to social media and gives you a helpful framework for understanding how various social media tools and applications are categorized. You'll also get some practical and tactical tips for using some of these tools. Part II introduces you to over 100 social media tools and applications in 15 different categories. You'll get a quick exposure to the features and functions of tools that can become part of your social media strategy. We include a handy *tool scorecard* for each group of tools to help you assess their value to your company. In Part III, you are provided with mini exercises and assessments to help you conduct a social media SWOT analysis on your company. You are then guided through a process of crafting and launching social media strategies that you have customized to the unique needs of your business.

The Web Site—An Interactive and Evolving Extension of the Book

This book and its web site, www.theSocialMediaBible.com, have been designed to work together to *organize* and *present* useful information that extends the material in the book. More importantly, the web site is an effective way to *experience* and *share* information among our community of readers. Here's what you'll find there:

- Examples of *best practices* from people and organizations who are already living in the social media ecosystem. What could be more valuable than first-hand reports highlighting successes and failures with different social media applications and strategies? Some of these take the form of case studies, and some are more casual, random even.
- *Links* to blogs, podcasts, and other resources that make it easier for you to capture and employ new strategies and tactics.
- *Interviews with people mentioned in the chapter*: We recorded many of our research interviews via digital audio or video. We edited them and posted them for relevant chapters. Some of these will have appeared already in a podcast, but we archived them for your use. We'll do the same with our user-generated content whenever possible. That is, we'll welcome, vet, and post interviews done by members of *The Social Media Bible* community.



- *Downloadable forms and templates:* If you're involving other people from your organization in any of the activities in this book, you'll find the downloadable exercises, forms, and templates from key chapters helpful.

Explore and Experiment

You need to explore and experiment with social media. We encourage you to proceed with a creative and collaborative spirit. Let us know what you think. Share your experiences with others. We encourage you to participate in the exploration of this new and evolving world.

Finally, we recognize that this book is not perfect. In writing a comprehensive guide to a topic that is as rapidly evolving as social media, we expect, unfortunately, that there will be errors and omissions. We may also offer a perspective in some chapters that is different from what others in this space might have already said. Heck, as authors we didn't always agree with each other. (Lon was the more passionate promoter of "everything social media" and David was the occasional skeptic, looking for the second and third order consequences of using a specific social media application or employing a particular tactic or strategy.) If our words should invite debate among readers and experts, we welcome the dialogue. Social media is about conversation. Social media also creates an atmosphere of self-correction. The wisdom of the many really is greater than the wisdom of the few. Although many people have reviewed and commented on the content in this book, we especially welcome your comments. We have set up a special online review for this book at www.theSocialMediaBible.com.

Thank you for joining us on this exciting journey into the new world of social media.

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www.davidkbrake.com



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was the largest and most passionate undertaking of my career and using social media to create a book on social media was by far the most enlightening.

When I first created the plan to write a book on social media, I thought it was going to be another typical business book; 250 pages, 20 plus chapters 50,000 words, the typical business book formula.

Then I realized that it was not only in my best interest to use social media, but also in a way I was required to use social media to create this book. I knew that if I asked the business community what they wanted in a book and wrote it that way, the book would be successful. What I didn't know at the time was the magnitude of the journey I was about to take.

We brought the initial concept of the book on social media to more than 1,000 people. They were mostly professionals with annual incomes over \$100,000; most had college degrees, from Associates up to PhDs.

Of more than 1,000 surveyed, 66.4 percent said that they could not define what social media was, while 99.1 percent said that they knew social media would have a significant effect on them and their businesses. Let me restate this, two-thirds of these professionals didn't know what it was, but nearly 100 percent knew it was going to affect them. This is whom this book is dedicated to.

By using user-generated content and feedback, I also learned that the business community didn't want just another vertical business book; they wanted something much more comprehensive. They asked for a book that first explains, What are all of these things we keep hearing about? What's a blog, a vlog, a podcast? What is a "trusted network" and "wisdom of the crowds"? What is LinkedIn, MySpace, Flickr, and YouTube? So this became the blueprint for Part I, which in itself is a business book on the tactics of social media.

They then asked for a guide. They asked, Who are the players? Where do I post a video, or a podcast? What's the most used photograph-sharing site? So this became the second business book, or guide to the social media players. This section is Part II, the Tools.



Finally, they wanted a book that could pull all of this together answering the questions: “How do I use social media in my business? How can I incorporate this in my business plan? How do I make money using social media? Where’s the ROI? How will this change the way I do business?” This became Part III of the book, Strategy.

We approached John Wiley & Sons, Inc. with a concept of three full-sized business books (two business books sandwiching a guide). They trusted the “wisdom of the crowds” and the result is *The Social Media Bible*.

The Social Media Bible is an aggregation of blogs, vlogs, podcasts, wikis, e-mails, and conversations. *The Social Media Bible* is a collection of other books and resources. It’s a collection because I could never profess that I am an expert in all of the 15 social media categories identified including all of their nuances. I can’t even profess that I am an expert in any one category. What I have done is pulled together information that many people have contributed.

Thank you to Jimmy Wales for creating Wikipedia and the Wikimedia Foundation and to all of the people from around the world who have contributed to Wikipedia providing such a valuable resource of cumulative human knowledge.

I want to personally thank all of the nearly 50 corporate partners who shared their expert insights both in the book and their executive conversations at www.theSocialMediaBible.com.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to my company partners and closest friends Geoff Clough and Linh Tang who picked up the slack at the company, allowing me to write and often to vent. Thank you also goes to Evo Terra for his *Podcasting For Dummies* book, bloggers like David Risley for his top 50 blog tips, and to my friends and colleagues: Steven Groves for all of his ideas; Francine Hardaway, Dan Nienhauser, Steve Zylstra, Joan Koerber-Walker, and Doug Bruhnke for their introductions; Amanda Vega for her help with PR and insights; Dan Willis for persevering through Microsoft red tape; Sean Tierney for inspiring me to do podcasts; Glenn Batuyong for helping with the web site and his technical edits; Cindy and Steve Bauer for their cabin hideaway in the mountains of Pinetop, Arizona, which prevented my writer’s block from setting in; Joanne Zimakas for her incredible transcription skills and attention to detail of the more than 24 continuous hours of executive interviews; and to Nancy and Bill Lauterbach at Five Star Speakers who were willing to book me to speak about social media even when no one knew what I was talking about.

My personal gratitude also goes out to the staff of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. for all of the “wisdom” of that crowd, and especially to Peter Booth Wiley for his support and contributions, without which this book would have never been published. Also, thank you to Matt Holt for believing in



and fighting for this unusual book; Kim Dayman for her marketing and design insights, which really put the polish on the design; Shannon Vargo for her incredible author wrangling skills, which allowed the book to be published; to Christine Moore for her insightful and meticulous editing talent, which made this book intelligible; Beth Zipko for pulling it all together to make the book complete; and Lauren Freestone for making this book look good!

And I want to mostly thank my wife Sherrie for working so hard both at work and around the house, for without her painting the deck, trimming the bushes, and taking care of business, I never would have been free from distraction and able to write. Forever and for always . . .

I hear the orchestra beginning to play, signaling that my time is up. So . . . THANK YOU!

—Lon Safko

On a warm Saturday morning in July of 2007 Lon Safko and I met at a bagel shop in Phoenix, Arizona, where we both live. We had never met before, but a mutual friend, Joan Koerber-Walker, had suggested that we get together. Lon wanted to write a book on social media; he could see the wave approaching and wanted “to be on the front end of it,” as he told me. Joan knew that my company, Content Connections, specialized in helping publishers and authors use social media to develop, hone, and promote their content. From Joan’s perspective it seemed like a perfect match.

What began as a favor for a friend turned into a pro-bono research project and then a co-authoring opportunity that has been one of the more interesting experiences of my life. (I will never look at a bagel quite the same way.)

This book is the result of a lot of hard work by a lot of people, and Lon has already thanked many of them. As for me, let me first thank Lon for his passion about social media. As an experienced book publisher it was a rewarding challenge for me to harness that passion. As a coauthor it was an educational though sometimes bemusing experience to get two different world views and working styles to mesh. As Kurt Vonnegut refrained in his masterpiece, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, “so it goes.”

I’d like to thank several people without whom this book would not have been possible. First, there are several people at Content Connections who worked behind the scenes to get this book completed. On a daily basis Content Connections helps publishers create and engage a community around content. The folks at “CC” certainly helped me on a daily basis, and I appreciate their efforts. They include Holly McAllister, who runs the AuthorBound program. (AuthorBound is a division of Content Connections



and specializes in working with individual authors to help them realize their dream of successfully publishing a book. The AuthorBound program has helped several authors secure publishing contracts with major publishing houses as well as navigate their way through a social media ecosystem that is changing the publishing world. You can learn more about how the AuthorBound program works by visiting them at www.authorbound.com. Holly is always ready to do whatever needs to be done to make a project successful. I would like to thank the senior management team at CC, Craig Beytien and Roland Elgey, professional colleagues yes, but experienced publishers and good friends who took on extra assignments (that would have gone to me) so I could have the time to work on this book. Holly, Craig, and Roland also gave me a lot of input and numerous timely articles and tidbits from the media on the topic of social media.

Scott Lunt and Margaret Thompson provided insight, support, and contributions to the book for which I am grateful. A small team of researchers and writers helped me compile the profiles in Part II of the book. They include Miachelle DePiano, Dawn Davis, Sarah Wray, Brandon Billings, Katie McAllister, Haley McAllister-Birkeland. Many thanks guys.

Finally, I'd like to thank my family for their ongoing support. Thank you Kristy, Aisling, Sydney, Adam, and Matthew. A lot happened in their lives as I worked on this book, yet their love and encouragement was always there. Writing a book is a process with a beginning and an end, but families are forever. Indeed.

—David K. Brake



BACKGROUND BASICS AND TACTICS



What Is Social Media?

Social media is one of those phrases that many people think they should know because it combines two familiar words. You know what *social* means. After all, people are social beings, relying upon one's abilities to interact with and influence others in order to survive. As a kid, your mother may have told you to "go outside and be social." To be social is a desirable thing. The word connotes something good.

Now take the word *media*. In a traditional sense, media includes things such as newspapers, magazines, and television. You might think of the *New York Times*, *BusinessWeek*, or CNN, three media giants with a tremendous amount of influence in society. While the word *media* does conjure up images of news organizations, it also brings up impressions of how the news is delivered: via print, audio, video, and photographs. Each is an important medium used to engage an audience by telling a compelling story or sharing important news.

Since the focus of this book is business and not journalism, stop the train here for a moment, just long enough to point out that there has always been a powerful relationship between the traditional media and business. The media has always been particularly good at gathering people to read, watch, or listen to something of interest. Whether it is sports, finance, fashion, or international politics, traditional media has something to offer you. Enter the people who advertise their products and services via commercials and print ads that accompany your favorite source of news. These advertisers use print, audio, video, and photographs in an attempt to influence our behavior. They rely upon the traditional media to help them get closer to you and your money. It's a symbiotic relationship that is generally accepted without question. You expect to get a sales pitch on every page and half a dozen commercial breaks during a broadcast.

Words, pictures, video, and audio can inform and inspire, just as they can influence and incite. Humans like to know about the good, the bad, and



the ugly side of people, places, and situations, as well as to share this information with others, often as quickly as possible.

In the past, neighbors would meet on the corner and coworkers would meet at the water cooler to talk about and share what they read in the morning paper, heard on the evening news, or learned from a friend of a friend at a party. Sometimes the conversation assumed life-and-death proportions, and sometimes it was simply about a sale at a local store. But whatever it was, people listened and often responded.

Modern technology hasn't obviated the need to meet on the corner or at the water cooler, but it has greatly increased the amount of information available to share. Most importantly, technology has allowed everyone to participate in creating and delivering information to family, friends, and colleagues. Everyone has the ability to function as citizen journalists or market mavens. That is, you can capture a robbery at a local auto dealer on your camera-phone and send it to your local TV station within seconds. Or you can snap a few shots of the sporty new hybrid on the showroom floor and send it to your brother who's trying to reduce his carbon footprint.

Thus, from a business perspective, *social media* is about enabling conversation. It is also about the ways that this conversation can be prompted, promoted, and monetized. Definitions of *social media* and its cousin *Web 2.0* appear later in this chapter, but first the chapter takes a look at the darker and brighter sides of social media.

The Two Sides of Social Media

Did you hear the story about the extremely paranoid guy who can no longer go to football games because he can't stand the thought of the players talking about *him* in the huddle? In the new world of social media, this kind of paranoia may not be as extreme as this old joke would have you believe. That's because people are talking about you. They're talking about your business, your brands, and your products, too. What's more, you can't stop them. In fact, there are thousands of social media tools—and more on the way—that enable conversation among the masses of humanity with Internet access who may want to talk about you.

So be careful of what you do, and of what you say, and whom you say it to. Learn to live with the idea that it's nearly impossible to hide from friends, employees, customers, and others who are motivated to talk about you. People are going to talk and gossip and complain. This behavior is human nature, and in the new world of social media, you have virtually no control.

Now let's consider the bright side of social media. If you've got a great product or service in search of more customers, you want people talking about you. There's nothing like word-of-mouth to take your business to the next level. If your company has won an industry award or enjoys a reputation as a great place to work, you want people talking about you. In other words, conversation about you, your business, or your brand is not inherently a bad thing.

You may not have control over these conversations, but if you have a social media strategy and can get comfortable with some basic tools and tactics, you can use social media to your advantage. Really. You won't have total control, but you can have considerable influence, and influence is the foundation of successful relationships with customers, employees, vendors, family, and friends.

You've just learned the first three rules of social media for business:

1. Social media is all about enabling conversations.
2. You cannot control conversations, but you can influence them.
3. Influence is the bedrock upon which all economically viable relationships are built.

To this list, you could perhaps add a fourth rule: paranoia has a purpose.

Lessons Learned at Starbucks

Few would consider Starbucks, the Seattle-based company that has forever changed the way people look at a cup of coffee, to be paranoid. But they are, thanks to their employees and a blog-based web site that enables conversations among employees and customers. A quick visit to www.starbuckgossip.typepad.com reveals brief missives, musings, and rants about company policies, practices, customer behavior, and just about anything else having to do with the unique brand of coffee culture that Starbucks made famous. You won't mistake this for a company newsletter.

You can read about the Starbucks barista from Minnesota who was fired for trying to unionize employees. Not to worry, though: he got his job back. Starbucks officials were quoted on the site as saying that the termination and reinstatement had nothing to do with the effort to unionize. It may, however, have had something to do with the coverage the event received on the Starbucks gossip blog.

This story demonstrates what employees and customers can do when they decide to huddle together for a little conversation about your company.



What did Starbucks learn from this experience? They received a fast lesson on the first three rules of social media for business.

Is this unique to Starbucks, or is it happening other places, too? It's happening everywhere. A quick click to Glassdoor.com or JobSchmob.com and you'll see restless, wild, or world-weary employees ranting about their bosses and the working conditions at their companies. What you say inside your company is never too far away from becoming a feature on someone's blog.

Social Media and Web 2.0 Defined

You're not alone if you're not able to define *social media* and *Web 2.0* quickly and with confidence. In a survey the authors conducted while writing this book, nearly 70 percent of 600-plus respondents were not especially familiar with the term *social media*. Again, many people think they should know what the term means, but most are not sure. About the same percentage were not completely confident in defining the term *Web 2.0*. To be sure, the terms are closely related but not exactly synonymous. The reluctance to offer quick and confident definitions of these terms reflects the cautious and often confused discourse that many businesspeople exhibit today when the topic of social media enters the conversation.

It seems as though people are living in a strange new ecosystem of innovative and highly disruptive applications. People tend to fear what they don't understand. There is a lot to learn about this complex and rapidly evolving ecosystem—the social media ecosystem.

So Exactly What Is Social Media?

Social media refers to activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media. Conversational media are Web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios.

Most likely you belong to several communities, and if you've ever used your computer or cell phone to read a blog, watch a YouTube video, listen to a podcast, or send a text message to other members of your group or community, you've already ventured into the social media ecosystem.

What about Web 2.0?

Web 2.0 is somewhat of a misnomer. It does not refer to a new and improved version of the World Wide Web, the information superhighway



that's become ubiquitous over the last decade or so. There really is no new physical version of the Internet. In other words, it's not as though the highway has been widened by four lanes. But, to continue the analogy, there are a lot more interesting vehicles traveling on the highway, and some incredible places to stop along that highway, thanks to Web 2.0 technologies and the inventive people behind them.

Social media and Web 2.0 come together whenever one of these new technologies has as its primary goal to enable communities to form and interact with one another—to converse. This book does not distinguish further between Web 2.0 and social media, because the terms are closely related and *social media* is the more important of the two terms. In fact, you'll probably hear talk of Web 3.0 and Web 4.0 in the not-too-distant future. As such, it's probably easier to think in terms of social media tools and applications.

It's All about Engagement

Before you start a conversation, and certainly to continue one, you have to engage your audience. If you're in business, the litmus test for a social media tool or application is simple: does it allow you to engage with customers, prospects, employees, and other stakeholders by facilitating one or more of the following:

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Education
- Entertainment

A Closer Look at Engagement Strategies

Let's take a quick look at these four categories of engagement and a sampling of some of the social media tools associated with each.

Communication: If you've sent an e-mail recently, you've communicated. If you've used a service like Constant Contact or Survey Monkey to invite a group of people (via e-mail) to view your newsletter or take a quick survey, you've taken your communication to the next level using a social media application. If you've used Twitter to blast a quick text message to a group of friends or colleagues, you've used a specific social medium to communicate. If you've used Jott to convert a voicemail message into an e-mail, welcome to the world of social media. If you haven't done anything beyond e-mail, that's

okay, too. This book is designed to make you comfortable with taking your business to the next level, from a social media perspective.

Collaboration: One of the earliest uses of the Internet was as a collaboration tool. If you've participated in a Listserv, a chat room, or a discussion board, you've already experienced collaboration to some degree. There are, however, several social media tools designed to foster collaboration among work teams, buyers and sellers, companies and customers, even authors and readers. Wikipedia, eBay, and Gather.com are all examples of applications and companies that offer a means of collaboration.

Education: Educating your customers and training your employees can be important to the success of your business. Several social media tools make the educational process easier and more dynamic. If you've downloaded music from Apple's iTunes, did you know that you can also download college-level lectures on a wide range of topics? Some businesses are using podcasts and YouTube videos as a means of educating others. There are virtual seminars and classes being held in Second Life. Some savvy real estate brokers are using blogs to educate potential buyers about schools, churches, and restaurants in their community.

Entertainment: Historically, some of the best commercials on television have been very entertaining and quite effective at selling products and services. They've also been expensive to produce and broadcast. Not so in the new world of social media. A quick search on YouTube using the phrase "Blendtec iphone" will let you see how a CEO of a company that makes blenders (yes, the kitchen appliance) was able to dramatically increase sales by shooting a series of videos showing him feeding different objects into his powerful blender, objects that included an Apple iPhone.

Now let's take a look at how one nationally recognized company is using a combination of these engagement strategies to drive business.

How H&R Block Engages Prospective Customers

What can be more practical than filing your income taxes? For decades now, H&R Block has helped wary and harried people prepare their tax returns at thousands of storefront offices throughout the country. Business grew through word of mouth. If you liked what they did for you, chances are you would tell a friend or relative. This fairly traditional business model helped H&R Block become the largest tax preparation service in the United States, a position it has worked hard to maintain.



Concerned that new technologies enabling new forms of person-to-person communication could impact their business model, H&R Block decided to experiment with social media by trying new ways of reaching their valuable client demographic. Using applications such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, and Second Life (where they opened a virtual tax preparation store), H&R Block tried several tactics that included text messages (Twitter “tweets”) to customers, and the introduction of Truman Greene, an affable, singing character who serenaded YouTube viewers with the brand’s key consumer benefits. The Truman character also appeared on H&R Block’s MySpace and Facebook pages in an effort to integrate his brand-enhanced persona into as many lives as possible. H&R Block’s strategic goals were to communicate with, educate, and entertain their prospective customers.

Were they successful? According to *Advertising Age* and research firm RocSearch, H&R Block saw a 171 percent increase in online ad awareness and an overall increase in brand awareness of 52 percent. The experiment cost the company about 5 percent of its allocated marketing budget, so it wasn’t free. But it’s hard not to like those metrics. Without a doubt, H&R Block bought themselves a lot of new customers with this strategy.

Madison Avenue Meets Social Media

In the summer of 2008, just prior to launching the second season of *Mad Men*, the A&E network’s highly acclaimed cable television drama about life in the fast lane of a 1960s Madison Avenue advertising agency, the network sponsored a contest in which *Mad Men* fans were asked to submit self-produced videos re-creating their favorite moments from the first season. The top prize included a trip to the show’s set and a cameo appearance on one of the episodes. In essence, A&E was asking loyal viewers to shoot, star in, and produce what would certainly be—given the premise of the show—racy, raucous content that could be shared with friends and other fans of the show via YouTube, MySpace, and other social media applications. The hope was to facilitate fan-generated content and comments that would help A&E expand its audience.

Were the show’s producers concerned that some really bad acting and horrific videography might damage the Emmy Award-winning brand? Probably not, providing that the content was memorable. Indeed, other fans would not expect Hollywood production values to be the basis for winning the contest. More than likely, fans themselves would look forward to entries that invoked hooting, hollering, and bawdy laughter upon watching other fans’ attempts to re-create scenes with the show’s trademark heavy

drinking, prolific smoking, and insatiable secretary-chasing, behaviors of a bygone era and the very glue that made the first season stick. If the goal was to generate buzz among this lucrative fan base and to extend that fan base via word-of-mouth promotion of *Mad Men's* equivalent of amateur night, then it was a brilliant strategy.

So what were the results of this social media strategy to collaborate with and entertain the show's fan base for *Mad Men*? According to the show's producers, it worked nicely. There were 17 winning entries that can be viewed on the A&E web site, where you can also see how many fan votes each entry received. You can also read comments posted about each video. The net result for A&E was that second-season ratings for *Mad Men* increased by 89 percent. Not a bad use of twenty-first-century media to advertise a television program about the good old days in the advertising business.

When Engagement Strategies Backfire

In an attempt to engage customers, the makers of Heinz Ketchup and Pepto-Bismol both sponsored video contests that allowed amateurs to produce brief commercials for their flagship products. According to representatives from both companies, there were some "very good" amateur commercials produced, but there were also a number of entries that put these household brands in a position of being parodied and ridiculed. One of the more memorable Heinz entries showed an adolescent boy dealing foil packages of Heinz to an addicted customer desperate for his next ketchup fix. Heinz executives did not honor the entry with any recognition whatsoever, let alone an award. You won't find the entry on the Heinz site, but it has led an active life on YouTube. Pepto-Bismol had a similar experience when several participants, in an attempt to sing about diarrhea, turned the contest into a joke. Heinz and Pepto-Bismol may not have made social media work for them in these instances, but they do deserve credit for being brave enough to experiment.

But what happens when you become the victim of social media without attempting a strategy that backfires? Look no further than the Kryptonite U-Lock, a bicycle lock based upon a trusted 50-year-old design. In 2004, an industrious cyclist figured out how to pick the lock using a ballpoint pen and posted the information on a bicycling blog. The word spread quickly. A YouTube video followed. The design flaw invoked a recall that has cost Kryptonite's parent company, Ingersoll Rand, over \$5 million.

Chances are that some companies in your industry encourage the use of blogs and wikis among employees and customers. These can be great collaboration tools for coworkers to share general knowledge, special expertise, and even best practices. Blogs and wikis are also effective means of



educating your customers, or of letting customers sing the praises of your product or service to each other. It's nice to get special insights from the blog of a design engineer who helped create one of your favorite products, whether it's a sports car or a software application. As a customer, you feel closer to the product. As more organizations discover the power of employee- and customer-generated content via blogs, wikis, and other applications, you can imagine how productivity, performance, satisfaction indices, and sales might rise. You could even argue that the Kryptonite bicycle lock debacle was an excellent example of how social media ultimately improved the quality and reliability of a product.

The next point to consider is what happens when an employee posts something damaging to your brand or reputation on a company-sponsored blog or wiki? Worse still, what happens when current employees, former employees, and customers create an independent blog or wiki assailing your company's products or practices? You quickly learn the difference between control and influence. Inside your company, you can control what employees share, say, and do with social media by instituting regulations and enforcing behavioral standards, but these can only apply to what they do on company time using company-provided equipment. Remember, in the vast social media ecosystem that lies outside your company, beyond your reach, there are no set rules of behavior. You can be assailed, spoofed, and blasphemed, and you have no control. It's as simple as that. However, you do have the ability to influence the conversation if you understand how the social media ecosystem works.

But, again, even that can end up balancing itself out a little bit and try to get those genies back in the bottle through the ongoing conversation. But they require people to really be citizens; they require people to really participate within their communities of interest.

Social Media Is Disruptive

Social media is a disruptive factor for many organizations. It will remain a mystery to many until it becomes commonplace, in the same way a toaster and microwave are common to your kitchen. The fact that many people will find it hard to understand what it is and how it works creates an opportunity for those who move first. People felt the same way about railroads, the telephone, automobiles, and airplanes. They were disruptive technologies too. Most people tend to avoid and even fear what they don't understand. They're willing to let other folks go first, the ultimate risk mitigation strategy. Don't make this mistake. Social media is already redefining the way people live and do business. You don't have to be a technical wiz to take advantage of



the business opportunities that social media creates. History has already shown us that.

For example, it wasn't necessary to understand how the engine of a steam-powered locomotive worked to see that railroads would change the way people live and do business. As a result, the people and institutions that built the railroads made a lot of money, but so did the companies that manufactured locomotive engines and those that built boxcars—as did the entrepreneurs and business owners who bought property and set up shop in the towns whose fortunes were forever changed when the railroad came through.

You didn't have to understand the physics of flight to see that airplanes were fundamentally going to change the world. Companies that manufactured airplanes made a lot of money, but so did those that made luggage, as did those that started travel agencies or wrote travel guides about exotic locations. And don't forget rental car companies like Hertz and overnight airfreight carriers like FedEx. These are examples of companies that took the time to understand the business implications and applications of a new technology and then either found, filled, or created a profitable niche associated with that technology.

Find and Exploit Your Niche

If you make it your goal to understand social media in the context of your current business, to experiment a little, to harness its awesome power, to make it work for you, your chances of achieving success will dramatically increase. You might, however, see an opportunity to use social media to create a new kind of business. The microwave oven was invented when scientists and technicians using microwave technology in a lab setting discovered that it would rapidly heat and cook things. It didn't take long for someone to notice that a changing social pattern among busy families and two-income households might create a market for the time-saving properties of a microwave oven. As use of microwaves became widespread, someone conjured up the concept of microwave popcorn. You get the idea. Chances are there's a niche for you somewhere in the social media ecosystem.

The Formula for Success: Experiment and Explore

Can anyone guarantee your success with social media? Of course not, but here's your alternative: take a wait-and-see approach and do nothing. Perhaps it's all just a fad, something as short-lived as the telegraph or the citizens band radio craze of the 1970s.



Every era in the history of business has provided great opportunity for the first wave of explorers, experimenters, and investors. Those in the second wave, having made strategic and tactical alterations based upon the experiences of the first-wavers, have often enjoyed great success as well. Sometimes those in the third wave are able to make additional adaptations or find small, untapped niches. But those in the fourth wave? They generally get left behind and wind up wondering what happened.

Self-Assessment: Social Media Inside Your Organization

If you are part of an organization that has more than two or three people who make the business run, take a minute and answer the following questions:

- Would people in your organization be more effective if they could communicate more quickly and precisely with one another?
- Would people in your organization be more productive if they were able to work in a more collaborative environment?
- Does entertainment play a role in the way your company operates? In other words, could the environment be improved by increasing the fun quotient?
- Could employee training and development be improved?
- Do people in your organization feel as though they are stakeholders? In other words, are they fully engaged in the business's mission?

Self-Assessment: Social Media Directed Outside of Your Organization

If your organization has customers, investors, or vendors, and most do, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you have a strong relationship with them?
- Do you know their names, their preferences, and their needs as they relate to your company's product or service?
- Do you know their accepted beliefs about your company's product or service?
- Have you ever asked them to help you create or improve your company's product or service?
- Would they welcome an opportunity to help you improve your company's product or service?



- Does your product or service create an opportunity for them to be entertained or amused?
- Do you currently do anything to educate them about the use or value of your product or service?
- Would they react positively to an opportunity to be educated concerning the use of your product or service?
- If asked, would they strongly recommend your product or service to a friend?
- Do many of them already strongly recommend your product or service?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you need to learn more about and experiment with social media tools. For your organization to be effective, you need to consider methods to communicate, collaborate, educate, and entertain within your organization. To maximize your impact with customers and prospects, you need to understand how to employ specific social media strategies in an effort to influence the conversation about your company.

Expert Insight

Peter Booth Wiley, chairman of the board, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Publishing, www.wiley.com



Peter Booth Wiley

... I started out independently as an author and publisher. I am a member of the sixth generation of Wileys involved in the publishing business; we are 201 years old. There is a seventh generation: two of my sons, both of whom are aggressively working in social media. I've been the chairman at John Wiley & Sons, Inc. since 2002. Prior to joining our board of directors in 1984, I was a magazine publisher and a newspaper reporter, a writer of articles for magazines, and the author of five books. . . .

... Years ago, social media was writing a letter, which was then handed to somebody who got on a horse (or handed it to somebody who was getting on a stagecoach) in the good seasons when it was dry. It would take a while to get from, say, Virginia to New York; and in the bad season when it was muddy it probably went by ship. Now we've got information and creative ideas flying through the air at the speed of the electrons. . . .

... Going back when we talked earlier, I talked about how we began experimenting with introducing computers into the business in the 1950s. But we tried to understand and experiment with computers and networks really



aggressively 25 years ago, and our ideas about what we should be doing as a business came from our authors. We listened very carefully to them about what they thought was going to happen.

So that's part of it, and the other is creating a culture internally to Wiley that can implement not only gathering information while listening to authors and experts, but also developing within the company (or with partners, as the case may be) the necessary social experiences (I'm not supposed to use "platforms" anymore) that are helpful to us and to our authors and to our customers. . . .

. . . I think one of the things that's interesting about what we do is that we use social networks (now we use them electronically, before we used them in an interpersonal way) to understand who you are and what you are capable of doing. So in our initial conversation when you told me of your history in the world of technology, I was very impressed. And so Step 1 is, "Okay, I recognize that this guy is somebody who has been right on the cutting edge himself." Step 2 is to use our social network to evaluate your capabilities and your proficiency in whether you are going to be able to deliver to us a manuscript that we'll be able to sell.

And so it's very interesting the way in which the whole author/publisher relationship is evolving using social media. . . .

. . . Yes, it is interesting because we have a bookstore in *Second Life*. And we've actually published a number of titles in that area, and it has led me to think more about marketing and how you market. Because what we know is that in the traditional method when we talk about authors we use the term "platform" . . . what's Lon's platform? By which we mean, "Does he speak regularly at conferences, how big are they, is he going to get on *Oprah*, is he going to get on *Good Morning America*, will his books be reviewed?"

And in some of the traditional print forms for marketing, and specifically book reviews, they are having a very difficult time right now because print newspapers are failing. Book reviews are being either downsized or completely eliminated. Television works to a degree. I think it's very effective at times. We've had experiences with authors going on very high-profile television programs and selling a lot of books (like *Oprah*).

We've had experiences with other authors going on high-profile television programs and not selling a lot of books. And now we are looking more at the social media networks that authors have, and trying to understand the way in which you created your own community, digitally, and how we can get to that community to explain to people what your book's all about.

But the interesting thing is the way that you're actually "authoring" the book is creating the platform. . . .

. . . Of course, as a commercial publisher we are interested in metrics. So we are interested in seeing the evolution of the effectiveness of marketing and the effectiveness of networks. And we are at an early stage with that, but I really look to the libraries and their interaction with publishers. They are able to

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measure usage. So say that they license 100 journals from us; they can look at which of those journals are being used. They look at two things. Impact factor, which is the impact of the content on the audience that it is trying to reach—journals are rated according to their impact factor. The other is usage. So the librarians are saying, “Okay, I’ve got these 100 journals but only 98 of them are really being used. Let’s look at these two that we might eliminate or replace with other journals, and maybe they should remain in the collection even though there is a low usage.”

So there are metrics being developed and I assume over time (right now we go to Google and we look up Lon Safko, and we can get a rough metric there) we will be able to measure more accurately the impact of your work and of your particular social network. . . .

. . . But let’s go back to what we were talking about earlier and the way you are creating this book because this tells you a lot about where publishing is now and what its future could be like.

I wrote my last book in 2000; in that instance, an editor asked me to write the book. I sent the manuscript to the publisher. The publisher reviewed it and edited it and sent it to production. Production designed it and laid it out. It went to the printer and then to marketing and sales. And then it ended up in the customer’s lap.

It’s a very traditional model of print-on-paper. Right now we are seeing this continuous process, and we have a favorite graphic that we use at a lot of meetings. It’s out on Frommers.com. So we are one of the leading travel-publishers and we’ve created this circle called the Travel Cycle. And we have looked at what do we do in the Travel Cycle. So the first part of the cycle is to *dream* about what you are going to do.

And you would look at travel newspapers, magazines, online forums, blogs; so right now we are doing travel newsletters, online forums, and blogs about travel.

And then you *plan*; and we are doing guidebooks and travel web sites with text, photos, video, podcasts, recommendations, interactive maps, and custom PDF guides.

And then you *go*, and when you are going we continue to interact with you with audio walking tours, and now we are going to be launching (or just launched) maps that will go on your iPods with airport guides.

And then after you come *back*, we share with customers and with the traveler online trip journals and online photo albums, and reviews and ratings. So there is a continuous process of interaction here, rather than the linear process I described earlier. And when you add to that what you are doing, which is working with the community (your community) to develop content, and review and refine the content, you have a completely different publishing model. . . .

To listen to or read the entire Executive Conversation with Peter Booth Wiley, go to www.theSocialMediaBible.com.



Expert Insight

Chris Heuer, founder, the Social Media Club,
www.theSocialMediaClub.org



Chris Heuer

... I got started in interactive in 1994. I read a book by Howard Rheingold who I am now, thankfully, able to call a friend, and who has done some amazing work since. It was called *Virtual Community* and I read that pretty much every day after work at the Barnes & Noble at the time, because they really didn't have a lot of Internet distribution for people like me.

And after that I ended up starting a company with a bunch of friends in South Florida called Guru Communications. Somewhere around then, I started getting involved in Interact. So from the beginning for me, it has been about community elements and we used to talk about it. In fact, Howard Rheingold, in the book *Virtual Community*, talked about it as the idea of social computing.

And until a few years ago when Chris Shipley, and a couple of others around the same time, started calling it *social media*, it really started this mind shift across the way, and as a result of those activities I got back into it.

I taught Interactive Marketing at Miami Ad School; I did web design and multimedia classes there as well. I also got a chance to learn some things for some people, like topography, and other important Photoshop skills I get to use every now and then. And I've been involved in a lot of different things ... I was at the U.S. Mint for a little while. ...

... It's very exciting. And there's an interesting debate, as you know, that's raged on between some people like Andrew Keane, and others, who say this is a very terrible thing for us because it's just going to get a lot more noncreative people, not eloquent people, creating media and talking and video and audio ... about things that they don't know about, spreading more falsehoods and all these other problems.

But you know there is going to be a little bit of bad with the good. But in the end the great thing about the system is, as you know from blogging, that it's self-correcting. You know, if I write something and it turns out that I am incorrect, you can almost assuredly bet that somebody is going to go ahead and correct that information. That's one of Robert Scoble's famous strategies that he employed very early in terms of how he was able to be so prolific with his blogging activities and almost everything he was able to get done. It was about not being afraid of being wrong, knowing that it was going to get corrected.

Now I didn't always agree with that, because there are some times you are wrong and, you know, 50,000 people or 100,000 people might end up getting the wrong information before it gets corrected. So that's kind of a little

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unfortunate thing as you get to a certain size, in terms of responsibility you have as a citizen of this online community and this social world we live in.

But, again, even that can end up balancing itself out a little bit. . . . But it requires people to really be citizens; requires people to really participate within their communities of interest.

There is also a lot of work going on in geography. I've met a couple of blogging mayors in the past years. It was very, very interesting in doing things by connecting directly with their constituents. So it's really a fascinating time on all elements in terms of an entertainment side and the ability of self-expression, as well as getting into the civic-responsibility areas . . . and, of course, the emergence of citizen journalism and many of the other elements . . . it served a social side, as well as the social/entertaining side. . . .

. . . But it's more interesting, of late I've seen a little bit of quick-ish stuff forming. And of course this is one of the reasons why we created *Social Media Club*, to ensure that we can really have people collaborating better together. But we are an emerging industry; social media, as you know, still has not matured yet. So there's actually going to be differences of opinions and values and things that are we are seeing over time, as people get together in different groups.

We just really want to see more people collaborating across the different groups. There is a scale, really, that's inside of here, of course. But at the same time, there are some really great ways we can share tactics and other ways of actually connecting across our systems and across our different corners of the social media worlds in order to be able to accomplish our goals and to meet people who we need to connect with. . . .

. . . I am going to first quote my friend Ian Kennedy for Yahoo!, who had one of the best answers I've ever received for the question of what social media is, which was, "It's not something; it's what you do with it." . . .

. . . It's not a noun, it's an adjective! You know, social media . . . it's what we're doing; it's what we're doing with media. And the way I really look at it . . . I come back to the social computing stuff, a little more technical I guess. But really it's just those two words put together, modified, as you might imagine. You know, there's this social element to it, which is involving connecting with others. And that's really, to me, what it's all about. And, of course, media does reference to a medium, which is something we connect through, or with, or whatever verb you want to apply to it. But the idea being this is something we connect with other people through. And that is the sharing of common stories, going back to cave paintings, and that was back to the beginning!

Cave paintings were the original social media. . . . It was sort of a story, it was visual, and it had so many different elements to it. But when we get down to the bottom of it, it's how we interact with one another. Some people like video, some people like audio, some people like, let's just say, fooling people, giving



them a hard time. Some people are good people who like to help and it really just reflects our overall humanity.

And the interesting thing is the majority of the dialogue is about the positive dialogue, the aspirational elements of, "How can we do this better?" To your point earlier, about you not wanting that information out there; well that's interesting as an amateur because it means you're willing to admit you're wrong. And there are still a lot of people out there who think that admitting they're wrong is a weakness, as opposed to strength. So I think it is a very important attitudinal element that you're bringing to it, as you get that experience. That's what we were talking about before. . . .

. . . You can go into an Internet café with a dollar in your hand and put out a piece of citizen-advocacy by just logging onto the Internet computer there. You don't even need to have a video camera or specialty equipment. If you're looking to distribute it more widely, of course, you want to have some more professional stuff in that.

But the point is it's really the democratizing of the access of information and the ability to share that information and publishing, in essence. . . .

. . . They talk about the original opening of the doors of the Internet to a broader audience back in the early 1990s, I guess, as being the biggest step in retrospect. What's happening now is much more so because it's making it accessible to the average, everyday person. And in fact, there are arguments being made that the same thing happened with TV, the same thing happened with newspapers and print.

But what we really go back to, historically, in terms of the greater significance of this era that we're living in now and the access to these technologies, is back to Renaissance, where we're looking at . . . it used to be only a few hand-transcribed Bibles that were going around. But as soon as they were able to make books that were vastly available and inexpensive—a good book was \$2.00 to \$3.00. When you have all these different people interacting and sharing their ideas and correcting their wrong ones . . . and being able to express themselves in new ways and collaborate and now we're actually able to build technologies to do this! Some people would say we are approaching a singularity. But it's actually much simpler than that. It really is a matter of us finally being able to balance the system, the ecosystem that we're in. It's for our mental competence—even for our ability to control our world to one degree and, and to another to interact with it.

One of the great things is that the majority of the people involved in this are aspirational toward how we can use it for positive ends . . . to everyone's benefit at the end of the day.

An interesting thing I do when I talk to people about this (because it sounds a little California-ish, hippie-ish, people might want to rally around this) but it really is about the market. It's actually understandable that

(continued)



(continued)

information efficiency in a market allows people to make the correct purchasing decision. It allows people to "not" make the wrong decision with regards to hiring people.

So when we get this accessing near-perfect information, it's actually better for the overall market, and it will actually accelerate our ability to innovate and create new things and solve old problems we never thought we solvable, and in incredibly interesting ways. . . .

To listen to or read the entire Executive Conversation with Chris Heuer, go to www.theSocialMediaBible.com.

Prepare to Explore the Social Media Ecosystem

The debate about social media's impact on society and business will continue. Social media, like many tools and appliances in our lives, can be used for perpetrating both good and evil. However you choose to use these tools, we advocate on behalf of good, ethical behavior, but you can already find plenty of examples of "the good, the bad, and the ugly" within the social media ecosystem.

In this book, you'll learn more about the functions of social media and be able to explore applications associated with them in more detail. You're about to begin a fabulous journey. We begin with a closer look at that social media ecosystem and its component categories.

Credits

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Chris Heuer, founder, the Social Media Club, www.theSocialMediaClub.org.



BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS 21 Book Excerpt

“Social media is about enabling conversation among your audience or market,” write coauthors Lon Safko and David Brake in *The Social Media Bible* (John Wiley & Sons). “What are you trying to get them to converse about? Things that will help you generate revenue or increase company profits, of course.” This excerpt from *The Social Media Bible* describes the four pillars necessary to support any social media strategy:

Think of your social media strategy as a platform supported by four pillars. You really need all four pillars in order to stabilize the platform and make the strategy work. Those four pillars are:

- 1 Communication
- 2 Collaboration
- 3 Education
- 4 Entertainment.

These four pillars are categories of audience engagement and before you can master them you have to stop and consider what you’re already doing and the results you’re either getting or missing.

What Are You Really Communicating?

One of the problems with many traditional means of communicating with your audience is that you cannot accurately measure the impact of your communication strategy.... With some social media tools, you can measure things that eventually translate into something on your company profit-and-loss statement. For example, let’s say you develop a monthly newsletter delivered via email. Your email might include a special discount offer with a link to your website where your customer can request more information or place an order. These requests or orders can be measured and a cause-and-effect relationship can be determined.

If email strikes you as too traditional a communication strategy, consider the value of measuring traffic on your own YouTube channel or your blog. Whatever content or message you post, the number of views, visits, or subscriptions can be measured. More importantly, you can get feedback on “what” you are communicating because your audience can comment on your communication. You can even measure the number of comments.

In Celebration of Collaboration

Many people think of collaboration in terms of a process to be managed rather than a set of tools to be engaged. Thus, you might say that brainstorming sessions, conference calls, and company strategy retreats are among your current methods of collaboration. You might even argue that the telephone and the office copy machine facilitate collaboration. Indeed, these may be effective methods for your company, and they may lead to desirable results, but what if the process of collaboration itself became a highly valued product?

Earlier in this book you were introduced to the Wiki, a social media tool that



allows you to collaboratively create and edit content. Assume for a moment that the content you want to create is a best practices manual for a process or procedure that is a core part of your business. For the sake of this discussion, it really doesn't matter what that process or procedure is; it could be a guide to diagnosing problems in turbine engines or a how-to manual for call center managers. By establishing a company Wiki, you can enable your employee community to collaborate in ways that have never been possible before; they can create and maintain a dynamic productivity tool that is regularly altered and improved. You can leverage their collective wisdom for the benefit of your organization. In effect, the Wiki becomes not only a method of collaboration but a product of collaboration as well.

Is it possible or even advisable to get your customers and prospective customers to engage in some form of collaboration that will benefit your company? The answer is yes, but the concept can be a bit counterintuitive. After all, imagine what kind of things your customers could say about you if you were to enable that conversation through one or more social media tools that allow them to interact with and influence one another. Talk about the good, the bad, and the ugly. Ask yourself this, however: Do you gain more by sponsoring or at least endorsing this kind of conversation than you do by running from it? Arnold Kim's MacRumors.com, attracts 4.4 million visitors a month, most of them eager to get the inside scoop on Apple products or exchange information, gossip, and user tips. If you were Apple Computer would you endorse this kind of community or would you look for an opportunity to participate in the conversation and perhaps influence this community?

Engagement through Education

Many of us have had the experience of standing helpless and hapless in front of a plumber as we try hard to understand what the problem is and what the solution will cost. At moments like these, you tend to appreciate an avuncular instructor. You feel better—though not always financially relieved—to get a quick plumbing lesson right there in your flooded basement. You realize that your plumber has expertise, and when that expertise is combined with an ability to effectively educate you about your home's plumbing, you have been engaged by the plumber's expertise.

One real-life plumber who has turned his expertise into content is Big Tony the Plumber. A licensed master plumber, Big Tony joined YouTube in November 2007, and now has his own YouTube channel with approximately 5,000 channel views and nearly 200 subscribers. One of his videos has had over 35,000 views. If you visit his site, you'll see that he has archived a series of videos that address your everyday questions about plumbing. You can even submit questions to Big Tony. In converting his expertise into content, he has also managed to get Google ads to frame his videos. He's even generating product placement revenue; in one of his videos he praises the benefits of the Kohler Power Flush toilet as he demonstrates its operation. Clearly, Big Tony has discovered the importance of converting his expertise into content.

Your ultimate social media strategy should leverage your expertise and/or the expertise of people within your company. You should consider leveraging the expertise of your customers as well.

Now That's Entertainment

If kitchen blenders can find a starring role on YouTube, there's reason for just about any business to be optimistic about the prospects of entertaining your audience by finding those attributes of your product or aspects of your company that others might consider entertaining. Be cautious, however, because entertaining doesn't necessarily mean funny. In fact, humor can be dangerous terrain to traverse. What some people find funny is patently offensive to others. Christian Lander's blog site, stuffwhitepeoplelike.com, is a fitting example of content that many people find hilarious and others inappropriate. Lander is building a brand around an audience who enjoys an opportunity to self-deprecate, but his brand of sarcasm and irreverence could prove disastrous to other product offerings.

Don't be afraid to experiment, but try to be interesting and compelling rather than running the risk of missing the mark with something that the majority of your audience will not find funny. This applies to internal audiences as much as it does external audiences. That said, don't avoid humor altogether, just respect it. It may be exactly what your strategy needs.

About the authors: Lon Safko, is a social media strategist and professional speaker, as well as the founder of eight successful companies. David Brake is CEO and founder of Content Connections.

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