

TRAINING CAMP

3rd^o SOCIAL MEDIA EDUCATION

When you're looking for social media advice that's relevant for your region, it's important to keep in mind the pattern of tech adoption. Most advice and news you'll hear comes from people in a relatively small and wired segment of the population that may not be representative of your audience.



Let's say this represents the entirety of the world's media-active population. The bare minimum of those being those who watch TV, listen to the radio, read books or otherwise encounter mass media on a daily basis. Let's divide them in half.



One half being more active than the other half, perhaps they've done a contest or filled out a survey. Now, let's further sub-divide this latter group under the same criteria.



Maybe these two text their friends, blog, or are active members of an organized community. And now let's even further halve that so this last person is the peak of media activity, a community leader and vocal advocate for her particular passions.



She is only one out of eight people in this row. Her opinions are coloured by what surrounds her: a vast, dense network of communication tools that the vast majority of the population does not encounter.

Unfortunately, a lot of the advice we get comes from people who live in that very small segment of the population. Those people aren't wrong about social media in general, it's just that their expertise needs to be reconsidered in the context of smaller clients whose communities are more likely to fall in the other end of the media-saturation spectrum.

Let's run through some drills to make social media more relevant for local and regional communities.

ROLL CALL

WHO'S PRESENT?

You may already be surveying your brand's presence online, but you should also take that opportunity to survey your people to see who is already using social media.

If the people in your company are vocal and prominent in their communities, then you already have an existing channel to spread a conversation through a local audience. Here are some action items that can help increase online presence.

BE AWARE. Good presence is in finding and promoting positive stories. Google Alerts keep track of your overall presence, but can be overwhelming if you have a common name. Technorati and Board Tracker each serve their niches, too. But if you want a thorough method of brand monitoring, try MonitorThis. It aggregates data from 22 different sources gives you an OPML file you can import into your feedreader.

RESPOND QUICKLY AND ANSWER

QUESTIONS. When you see that there is an ongoing conversation about your brand or a subject for which you are an expert, jump right on in and get talking. Be sure to use your name, but do it subtly.

BE VISIBLE. There are a handful of high-authority social media sites that frequently appear in web searches. Use each to emphasize your key phrases. If you can interlink these social media profiles with your blog posts with easy-to-recall anchor text, you can help push up other pages in the search results. Just be careful not to spam or "google bomb," that's counterproductive.

How to be Visible

- **Flickr and Youtube:** Use your name in your title and description. Add links in the comments or description. Tag, tag, tag.
- **Wikipedia:** You're not allowed to edit your own page or your company's page, you can contribute to Wikipedia and use the Talk: page to engage in a discussion. It may be better to just push your own sites and then make that existent community aware of new and correct information.
- **Facebook:** In order to display your profile in the Google results, you will need to change your privacy settings. Use relevant key words in the text.
- **Twitter:** Claim your username on Twitter (before someone else does) and fill out the short bio. This is still a very small community, but if you're on it, be active. Don't be Luke Wilson.

These are just ways to be visible. To really engage in social media, you have to be *present*.

Relevant Tools

Google Alerts
MonitorThis
Technorati
Search Twitter
Twilerts
Addictomatic:
Inhale the Web
Board Tracker
BackType

Reference

"Manage Your Online Reputation"
<http://bit.ly/lh-managerep>
"TV celebs worth following on Twitter"
<http://bit.ly/1Ocelebs>
"Luke Wilson: Just another board twitter user"
<http://bit.ly/BoredLuke>

CORPORATE POLICY

FACING SOCIAL MEDIA AND USING IT WISELY

For some clients, opening the floodgates of social media might be a scary prospect. What private information could be leaked? Are there legal liabilities? What if our employees spend all day on *Oh No They Didn't?*

This is the standard policy in that environment: Only a few employees are allowed to speak to the public. Often, all statements must be approved by the executives.

Others are jumping into the fray with a very mature and insightful approach to the realities of social marketing. Clearly aware that their employees are already blogging, twittering, and texting, they're writing relevant corporate policies. Instead of squelching that by banning any mention of their company, they're using those existing conversations and applying far less draconian measures to ensure a safe and productive dialogue. Intel is one of the best examples of social media corporate policy. ("SoMeCoPo?" Nah.)

There, any employee can speak to the public and is encouraged to do so, especially if they have an interesting perspective. There are still measures to make sure they respect Intel's privacy policies, but they use common sense limitations. They're not just allowing people to use social media for their work, they want their employees to be themselves.

Reference

"Why Intel's social media policy is a really big deal. Really." (thesocialpath.com)

"IBM Social Computing Guidelines" (ibm.com)

- **Perception:** "In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as an Intel employee, you are creating perceptions about Intel by our shareholders, customers, and the general public—and perceptions about you by your colleagues and managers. Do us all proud. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with Intel's values and professional standards."
- **Starting conversations:** "Don't be afraid to bring in your own personality and say what's on your mind. Consider content that's open-ended and invites response. Encourage comments."
- **Negative comments from the public:** "If the content is positive or negative and in context to the conversation then we approve the content, regardless if the content is favorable or unfavorable to Intel. However if the content is ugly, offensive, denigrating and completely out of context then we reject the content."

So what's the takeaway?

ADMIT IT'S HAPPENING. Your employees are on social networks and they're actively engaging in online conversations.

EMPOWER. Your media active employees may be on social networks, but that doesn't mean they want their personal online presence mingled with their professional life. Respect that boundary. Let your employees know you're okay with them being on social networks and talking about the company on those networks.

BE CLEAR ABOUT THE RULES. While you tell your employees that they're allowed to talk about their company online, also let them know what's not okay. Don't be Draconian about it, just make sure you're linking your social media policies to existent corporate privacy policies and to common sense.

REP MANAGEMENT

CHECK YOURSELF

Say you already know your presence in a local community and have engaged in a social media campaign with Third Degree, how do you maintain a consistent balance in that conversation?

A balance between the callous to-down marketing that some companies have tried to do and the guerilla operations that are sometimes so subversive that you don't even know how the campaign and the company are related.

BE REAL. Share your real personality. Participating in relevant, search engine friendly online communities under your own name is this is the best way increase trust. Try adding specificity to that trust by pairing relevant key terms in your conversations, like "Third Degree Advertising" vs. just "Third Degree."

LISTEN, THEN TALK. Hear other opinions. Put your social media site membership to good use and participate in the communities in your field of interest. If you love talking about antique cars, subscribe to a car blog, read the posts, then and ask to write a guest post. Most bloggers won't mind you giving them a break on their writing duties if you've shown a sincere enthusiasm and proven expertise.

BE A GOOD HOST. Even if you're getting negative comments, thank your community for being active. Make any newcomer feel welcome to jump in at any time. Before responding to a comment, ask yourself "Is it true, is it necessary, is it kind?"

BE PERSONAL. Generate positive stories with your personal perspective. You may create a lot of social media profiles to push down any negative results about your company, but it's far worse for search results to find a page full of generic boilerplate.

Reference

"Reputation Management Tips from Around the Web"

<http://bit.ly/cKyP>

"Twitter Sentiments"

<http://search.twitter.com/sentiment>

"Social Manifesto: Social Media Etiquette"

<http://bit.ly/16hpc>