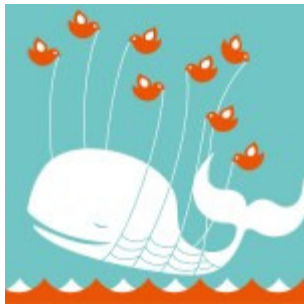




Social Media Mishaps

Posted on August 5th, 2009 by Emily Luiz



The most essential piece to incorporating social media into your company is to have a business strategy, training material and company guidelines behind social media efforts. Unfortunately, when companies don't do this they may garner negative press. Recently, real estate management company Horizon Group Management reacted to the following tweet by one of their tenants Amanda Bonnen, 'Who said sleeping in a moldy apartment was bad for you? Horizon really thinks it's okay.'

The tweet went out to Bonnen's relatively small following of 17 people, however many argue Horizon's reaction to the tweet did far more damage. Horizon has filed a lawsuit against Bonnen claiming reputational damages of up to \$50,000.00. According to former practicing attorney Kara Nickels, if Bonnen actually does have mold in her apartment she is in the clear. This is relatively new ground for social media and it will be interesting to see where the case goes.

In another instance, frozen yogurt company Red Mango tweeted a negative review about their competitor Cold Stone who was featured in Men'sHealth as, 'The New Worst Drink in America!' In a poll I posted on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook stating: Poll: Calling attention to negative review of competitor product via Twitter: Cool or not cool? <http://tinyurl.com/nks7nx>. The overwhelming response was not cool. As a PR professional would you feature a mention of a competitor in your media room? No, and one can argue including it in a tweet is fairly similar as media rooms are adapting to facilitate social media. Responses I received to my poll were it makes the company look unprofessional and childish. One person even went on to say it gave the competitor free publicity. On the other front there are lots of advertisements calling out competitors, my personal favorite [Mac vs PC](#), and appropriately an advertising professional who responded to my poll said it was perfectly fine. What do you think?

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Mom Bloggers are out of Control

Posted on July 24th, 2009 by Emily Luiz



Ok not really, but that was the comment from a friend who sent me a link to a mom blogger who is soliciting donations so that she can buy a Mac Book Pro. In return, she will advertise the companies who donated by engraving their logos on the lid of the laptop that she'll bring with her to conferences and events attended by bloggers and social media enthusiasts alike. Throughout the sponsorship, she plans on tweeting, submitting videos to YouTube and blogging about the sponsors.

To be fair, it's not just mom bloggers who are accepting sponsorships or getting paid to blog about products or services. It has become quite a common, yet controversial, practice in the blogosphere as a whole. Many bloggers claim this practice doesn't influence their opinion on a product or service and are completely transparent with their readers about how they came into to contact with it.

If someone is offering you free products and there is the possibility of receiving more, would that influence your opinion? A recent [New York Times](#) article highlights the fact that some bloggers won't write a negative review on a product, which might be considered bias by readers. Additionally, while journalists aren't required to return products but do so as common practice, bloggers don't do the same. The FTC believes these practices do influence their posts and have drafted a [new set of FTC rules](#) to regulate them.

Bloggers have struggled to be [considered professionals](#) compared to serious journalists in the past and have gained some traction. However, I can't help but wonder if sponsorships and paid-for posts will take away from the legitimacy of blogs. If bloggers don't get regulated, will they soon be regarded as equally marketing laden as advertisements? Inevitably the marketers (and yes, I'm one of them) are going to go where the consumers go, and it will be interesting to see how the interplay evolves.

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Is it Public Relations or Public Engagement?

Posted on July 20th, 2009 by Emily Luiz



This past week I tuned in to PR Newswire's webinar entitled, "The Convergence of Marketing and Public Relations." It's obvious that the PR world is in the process of a major transition. The combination of advancing technologies and economic woes have shaken the PR and Advertising fields to their core. I have heard many versions of what's

happens next... [The Death of PR](#), [The Death of Twitter](#) and [The Decline of Advertising](#) now that consumers are aptly aware of blatant marketing attempts. Instead of seeing an ad or reading a carefully crafted quote from a CEO, they are turning to personal references and industry influencers for product information.

In reality, none these practices will die, yet instead develop along with the savvy consumer. Richard Edelman's post '[6:00 A.M.: PR in a World of Expression](#)' is the best explanation of the future of PR I have read. The key, he says, is public engagement. He discusses PR's role beyond communication by using the consumer feedback from social networks to develop products and better customer experience. Despite successful marketing and PR tactics, at the end of the day, if the product or service doesn't meet consumer expectation, it's going to tank. By utilizing our strategic communication tactics to speak *with* the media, influencers, and consumers instead of *at* them, PR professionals can engage the community to create a truly desired product and successful launch.

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Using Your PR Skills to Stalk Your Way to a New Job

Posted on July 15th, 2009 by Emily Luiz



What have you tried to get your foot in the door? Job seekers are turning to obscure ways to grab hiring managers' attention, from dressing up as a [bunny to sending a gift-wrapped resume](#). As PR pros, we have a distinct advantage to job searching – experience creating a successful pitch and delivering it to your target audience. In my job search I follow a strategic approach to utilize every opportunity to get a company's attention.

Aside from the obvious updating your resume, the first step is branding your product and creating an online presence that ensures companies can find you. For a more detailed online branding approach I suggest taking some tips from personal branding expert [Dan Schawbel](#). Once you have fully branded yourself and created your job search campaign, apply your research skills to the companies you want to work for and hit them from every angle with your customized pitch.

1. Apply online through the company website - While this application may not see the light of day, if you skip it and land an interview it will show an inability to follow instruction.
2. Do a company search on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#) to look for a connection or begin following them.
3. Develop a list of employees you can try to reach out to - Research your desired company's website, visit the pressroom or look through the 'about us' section for names and contact information.

4. If you can find a name and e-mail address send them your pitch via e-mail and snail mail. No such luck? Utilize the same networks in your company search to find these people, join their network and engage them by demonstrating your industry knowledge through tweets, updates and blog posts.
5. Comment on the company blog to demonstrate your interest and ability to contribute to the company and always link back to your website.
6. Even if there isn't a job listed don't hesitate to make contact and ask for an informational interview.

I followed these steps to get into a company I applied to that [BeyondMadisonAvenue](#) Blogger Jeff Louis worked for. He checked out my website featured on my Twitter profile and e-mailed me about a blog post. I then had to respond letting him know I actively sought him out to get an in at his company without sounding like a stalker. Just as PR pros have learned to do with their clients, I decided to be honest and transparent. While engaged with an e-mail discussion on industry trends I closed with the following:

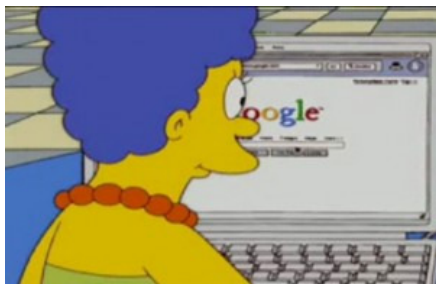
“Also, I have to be honest with you. I sought you out because I applied for an account coordinator position at XXX (which I believe is your current company). I am very interested in hearing more about the opportunity.”

While I didn't get the position, it lead me to this opportunity at Flackme.

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Social Media's Important Side Dish - SEO

Posted on July 10th, 2009 by Emily Luiz



Social Media is no doubt the hot topic in PR, but are we missing out on one important side dish? While the notion of applying SEO to a press release is nothing new, SEO also needs to be applied to these evolving social media strategies, as well.

Many savvy consumers first interact with a product online before making a purchase decision. Trusted sources such as posts from reputable blogs, Facebook statuses/endorsements or Twitter conversations have a heavy influence. If your product's benefits aren't being touted on these platforms, it can be a big blow to a brand. In many aspects, Google is the gateway to increasing brand awareness. Influentials, journalists, and bloggers are turning to online searches to find subject matter experts and sources in addition to topical research. If your brand or product isn't optimized, it will be harder to find and a lot less talked about.

[Vivid Ascent](#), a Chicago based interactive marketing agency, recognizes this and takes PR to the next level by providing clients with an integrated marketing platform that incorporates SEO every step of the way. During an informational interview, CEO [Dan O'Brien](#) threw a curve ball my way when addressing social media and said, "SEO is the next big thing." He went on to discuss the dialogue social media fosters and highlighted the importance of incorporating SEO so that this dialogue is widely seen. Utilizing both ultimately leads to increased awareness with a wider audience.

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