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Emerging Technologies and Tactics in Public Relations



Learning Objective Questions

- How prevalent are social media in today's technological environment?
- How are traditional and social media similar and how are they different?
- How are social media influencing and changing the practice of public relations?
- What are the current legal issues regarding using social media?
- What's on the horizon for public relations, marketing, and advertising?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

In Their Own Words

The Big Picture

PR: Moving Forward

- A Brief History of Social Media: From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 and Beyond
- Social Media Defined
- Differences between Social Media and Traditional Media

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- Social Media and Public Relations: Natural Partners
- The Power of Social Capital

Online Public Relations

- Step 1: Listen to the Online Conversations
- Step 2: Determine Your Share of Voice
- Step 3: Set Goals and Benchmarks
- Step 4: Find Bloggers and Relevant Communities
- Step 5: Identify Online Influencers
- Step 6: Develop a Content Strategy
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- Step 8: Create and Deliver Content to Spark Conversations
- Step 9: Participate in the Conversations and Engage Your Audience
- Step 10: Facilitate Conversations

Social Media and the Law

The Future of Social Media



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

NAME: SALLY FALKOW

CURRENT JOB: SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIST WITH MERITUS MEDIA; ADJUNCT PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S ANNENBERG SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION AND A SENIOR FELLOW AT THE SOCIETY FOR NEW COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH; WAS ALSO NAMED PR TRAINER OF THE YEAR 2009 BY *PR NEWS* FOR HER SOCIAL MEDIA BOOTCAMP CLASSES

DEGREE: BACHELOR OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

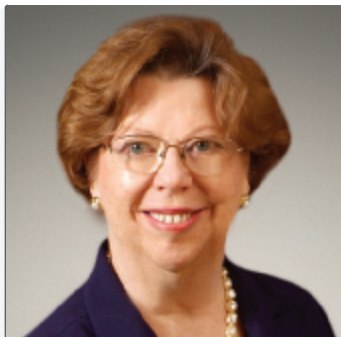


FIGURE 5.1 Sally Falkow.

Authors' Note: Sally Falkow is the guest contributor to this chapter. We thank her for her expertise and input.

I've been in public relations for 30 years and I am an APR—that means I have been Accredited in PR by the Public Relations Society of America.

In 1995 I was fortunate to be given a glimpse of the future—I was associated with an experimental distance education program for several UK Universities funded by the European Union. This degree program was delivered entirely online to students all over the world. Their study materials included rich media, video, and instant chat functions.

It opened my eyes to the possibilities of digital communication, and after dabbling in the field for four years, in 1999, I decided to move to the United States and learn to use the Internet for PR. I made it my mission.

I've been an evangelist for online PR for over 10 years now—and the natural progression into social media for the past five years. My blog, Proactive Report, was launched in the summer of 2003 as a vehicle to share what I was learning with others. It was one of the first 20 PR blogs.

The blog has grown to be a large part of my life, and I regard it as my first priority—I try to blog every day. My aim is to bring PR practitioners the news and information they need to understand the rapidly changing media landscape and how it's affecting our lives. I teach a social media bootcamp and have trained over 300 PR professionals from Fortune 100 companies, small businesses, individual entrepreneurs, large international PR agencies, and boutique shops. You can connect with me on Twitter (www.twitter.com/) or follow my blog at The Leading Edge (falkow.blogspot.com).



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In Their Own Words Online

To learn more about careers in public relations from recent graduates and other professionals in the field, visit the text website.



THE BIG PICTURE

This was the most challenging chapter of this book to write because new media are changing and expanding the array of public relations strategies and tactics so fast that by the time we finished the first draft, some of the information was already out of date. (Don't worry; we continue to update this chapter regularly!) If you're a "digital native" (someone who has grown up with and is totally at ease with technology), you may think that this chapter has nothing to teach you. But this chapter isn't about the personal aspects of social media—it's about the *business* of social media—and in this chapter, our aim is to expose you to a different perspective about how organizations can use social media to engage clients and other constituents. According to PR agency experts, all new jobs in public relations require a fundamental facility and understanding of how to use social media effectively. This chapter provides the background you need to employ social media and other emerging technologies effectively in the real world of PR practice.

PR: MOVING FORWARD

The press release is dead.

—Arianna Huffington,
editor-in-chief,
The Huffington Post

At the opening plenary of the annual PRSA Conference in San Diego in November 2009, Arianna Huffington (who went on to sell her online news and lifestyles website The Huffington Post to AOL for a reported \$315 million in 2011) told the assembled crowd of 3,000 public relations professionals and students that the world of journalism, PR, and marketing is experiencing radical changes. The shift from the passive consumer to the content-producing, community-inspired, cause-driven consumer dramatically alters how information is produced and consumed. "Traditional media was [sic] something that people consumed while sitting on the couch. The new media is [sic] like galloping on a horse," she noted (Huffington, 2009). Welcome to the brave new world of social networking and social media.

Unless you've been without electricity, a computer, or a smart phone for the past 10 years, you've most likely engaged in social networking and with social media. **Web 2.0** technology has led to an explosion in platforms that are universally accessible and scalable, including (but not limited to) crowd sourcing (music), search (Google, Bing, Yahoo!, MSN, Ask), social networking (Facebook, Google+), microblogging (Twitter), virtual social worlds (Second Life), collaborative projects (Wikipedia), content communities (YouTube, flickr), aggregation (mashups, RSS feeds, StumbleUpon), and much, much more. Social media have burrowed deep into our cultural DNA, infiltrating every aspect of communication and information from newsgathering and dissemination, to consumer marketing, corporate social responsibility, and crisis communication. Results from a survey of 341 journalists conducted by the Society for New Communications Research (2010) show the impact of social media tools in the newsroom:



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PR Example Link

To see Arianna Huffington speak, go to YouTube and search for "Arianna Huffington on Citizen Journalism."

- Nearly 70 percent are using social networking sites, a 28 percent increase since the 2008 Survey of Media in the Wired World.
- 48 percent are using Twitter or other microblogging sites and tools, a 25 percent increase since 2008.
- 66 percent are reading blogs.
- 48 percent are viewing videos online.
- 25 percent are listening to podcasts.
- Nearly 80 percent believe that bloggers have become important opinion shapers in recent years.
- 91 percent agree new media and communication tools and technologies are enhancing journalism to some extent.

In addition to journalists, business makers and consumers are also seeing the connection between social media and news. What started as individuals filming news as it happened and transmitting it to news stations for editing and airing has turned into individuals creating and posting the news online before it ever hits a media outlet. Scott Monty, the global digital and multimedia communications manager at Ford Motor Company, noted in an editorial piece, “Incendiary YouTube videos or provocative tweets can’t be fluffed off as being something separate from news. Mainstream media will pick up on a firestorm and make it even bigger news” (2010, p. 28).

It’s difficult to overestimate the impact that social media are having on public relations, corporate strategy, marketing, journalism, advertising, politics, crisis communication, and international relations. Organizations that were once able to control and manage their reputations with highly structured communication messages and through one-way channels are now vulnerable to commentary and complaints from anyone with access to a keyboard and the Internet. Social media have opened the information floodgates blurring the “boundaries and distinctions between audience and producer” and making this “the age of *consumer-generated content*” (Phillips & Young, 2009, p. 7). Technology now makes it possible for people who don’t even know each other to have their comments and postings interlinked by search engines that *aggregate*—or connect—conversations and topics posted on webpages or anywhere online. As of April 2011, the number of indexed webpages had surpassed 15 billion (deKunder, 2011).

Amazon uses participation by consumers to create shared data and show customers what other people have bought as well as consumer product reviews. Flickr feeds showcase-uploaded photos. Pick a song or a style of music on Pandora, and the site will cue up music to match that genre to create your own personal “radio” station. Social media/PR researchers Brian Solis and Deirdre Breakenridge state this clearly: “A true transformation is taking place that completely redefines our role [in public relations]. And it fuses the best of multiple disciplines that span everything from Web marketing to customer service to market analysis.

Social media is about ordinary people taking control of the world around them and finding creative new ways to bring their collective voices together to get what they want. Whether you like it or not, it is the world to which institutions must adapt. And we have only the barest inkling of what will happen when a new generation of digitally empowered kids joins the workforce.

—Paul Gillin,
Secrets of Social Media Marketing

The shift from passive, top-down, and reactive PR to proactive, hands-on, participatory engagement absolutely requires us to embody everything we represent” (2009, p. 276). This is the new reality—and if you want to be competitive in the public relations job market, you’ll need to know and master the various elements of social media strategy.

FIGURE 5.2 The Possibilities Are Impressive and Still Growing.

The number of social media options available to PR practitioners continues to grow.



A word of warning here: Even industry gurus don’t know where all this technology is leading us. The explosion of new platforms and apps keeps everyone scrambling to assimilate the techniques quickly—even before we understand their purpose and value for public relations (Figure 5.2).

A Brief History of Social Media: From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 and Beyond

Back in the 1960s, a mild-mannered Canadian educator and professor of English literature turned communication scholar uttered one of the most provocative statements of the 20th century: “The medium is the message” (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). Marshall McLuhan, hailed as a genius by some and maligned by others who called his work “McLuhanacy” (Gordon, 1982), began developing his controversial theory long before the iPad, X-box, smart phones, and social media were even ideas on the drawing board. McLuhan believed that all changes in society and culture are *determined* by and through communication and changes in communication technology (hence, the name of his theory, **technological determinism**). Essentially, he was saying that the channel through which a message travels determines the meaning.

For example, how is the meaning of telling someone you’re going to be late for a date different if you text message it as opposed to calling on the phone or looking the person in the eye? The words are likely very similar, but the connotative meaning attached to the message about the kind of relationship you have is changed by the channel. If you look me in the eye and tell me you could not

get off of work as early as planned, that says “I care about you” in a way that a text cannot convey. As communication theory scholar Em Griffin notes, “Whereas Karl Marx’s economic determinism argued that changes in modes of *production* determine the course of history, McLuhan concluded that it’s specifically changes in modes of *communication* that shape human history” (Griffin, 2000, p. 315).



THINK AS YOU READ

- How are the ways you learn and study different from the ways your parents and grandparents learned and studied?
- What role do the physical library and the books in the stacks play in your learning? When was the last time you went to the library building?
- To what extent are you using the online, interactive components of this text to enhance your learning experience?
- How often do you participate in discussion boards regarding your course topics online? Why?

Although it may seem that the Internet has been around forever, it wasn’t until 1994 that an online revolution in self-expression became possible. Individuals began creating and uploading basic, information-only websites. This was the genesis of Web 1.0. These websites were static, something akin to an electronic version of a press release or brochure. There was no ability or opportunity for someone to interact on any website. They were simply a place where you could go to view posted information.

In 1995, Classmates.com appeared on the Web, providing a way for schoolmates to locate each other. This was the start of something totally different. Group-led chat rooms and discussion boards quickly followed as technology evolved. The new technology, dubbed Web 2.0 because it’s the second generation of web-based technology, made interactive communication a reality because of its ease of use (you don’t have to be a programmer to use it!). Web 2.0 technology created immediacy and expanded our abilities to reach others through the concept of “friends” (Gillin, 2009). Web 2.0 launched the social media revolution. Suddenly, a person didn’t need a computer programming degree to interact with people via technology; ease-of-use changed the game plan.

Almost 50 years after he uttered them, McLuhan’s prophetic words seem hauntingly accurate. It’s not too much of a stretch to say that social media are changing everything about the what, why, and how of communication. As such, social media are changing our culture—and *that was McLuhan’s point*. For example, less than 10 years ago, texting a message was a slow and expensive proposition and few people did it. Today, texting is ubiquitous—almost everyone under the age of 40 sends text messages, often instead of calling. The advent of texting has changed the

YouTube now gets two billion pageviews/day, nearly double the prime-time audience of all three major U.S. television networks combined.

—Seth Weintraub, *Google 24/7 Blogger on Fortune.com*.
May 17, 2010


way we communicate and has significantly impacted our culture. An estimated 75 percent of the U.S. adult population is now online, and more than 1 billion people post information online through social media channels, such as blogs, Twitter, Tumblr, social networks (Facebook, Google+), social media referral sites (StumbleUpon), or photo/video sharing services (flickr, YouTube) (Phillips & Young, 2009).

Social Media Defined

Simply stated, **social media** encompass all technology platforms online that make it easy to publish and share ideas and opinions. Social media serve as the umbrella concept that covers a wide range of technologies and strategies based on *conversation*—everything from social networking to Web 2.0 platforms, to viral marketing, and to online public relations strategy. Social media provide the catalyst that has altered how we conceive, retrieve, and consume information. Lawrence Lessig, the director of the Edmond J. Safra Foundation Center for Ethics at Harvard University and the founder of the Center for Internet and Society at Stanford University, defines social media as the **writable Web**, a concept he borrowed from the inventor of the Internet, Tim Berners-Lee (Lessig, 2008). Business writers Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein see social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0” (2010, p. 61). They also note that the new platforms make it possible for anyone to create and distribute user-generated content.

Differences between Social Media and Traditional Media

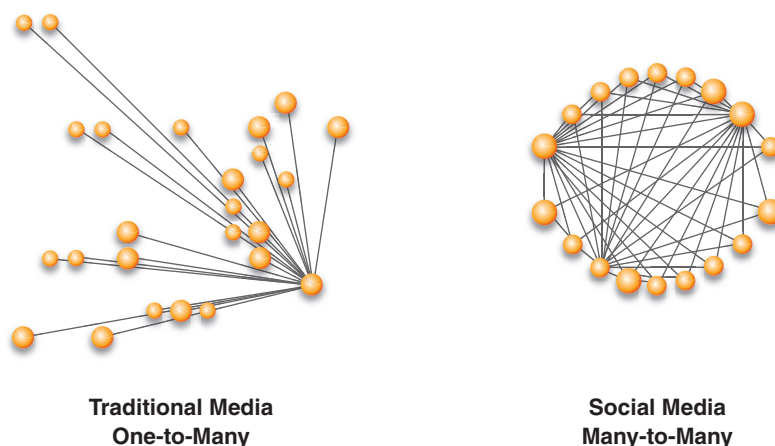
Traditional media have limited channels of distribution. Television, radio, magazines, newspapers, brochures, advertisements—and even basic websites—are the typical channels we most often associate with traditional media. Unlike traditional media, which can be categorized as a monologue (one-to-many), social media (Figure 5.3) are co-created (many-to-many). For the first time in history, organizations and public relations departments have an opportunity to listen to

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Visual Online Learning

To view an interactive version of Figure 5.3, visit to the text website.

FIGURE 5.3 One-to-Many vs. Many-to-Many.

In the many-to-many figure, more people find out about an organization or client faster than in the one-to-many figure.



their publics without having to worry about sorting through comment cards or wondering how many people had an idea without expressing it because it was too much work to do so. The two-way format of social media allows organizations to listen, think, and respond more quickly and effectively than they have been able to in the past.

Some examples of what many-to-many communication looks like in comparison to one-to-many communication follow:

- **Traditional media.** Company CDE manufactures recreational bicycles. To market these bicycles, it hires a PR and advertising firm to create television, radio, and print advertisements, design brochures, and host grand openings and other activities involving CDE bikes in the community. Ads run in the local newspapers and during the local news at 6 and 11; radio commercials run during drive time. The company's logo appears on handouts for a local "Bike for Life" event it sponsors. All of these are examples of the company (one) distributing information to the public (the many).
- **Social media.** Julie in Idaho buys a recreational bicycle from Company CDE and takes the bike on a camping trip. She blogs about her adventure and how well the bike handles in the woods. Cesar in Detroit also has a bike from Company CDE and posts pictures on his Facebook page where 200 of his closest friends and relatives read about the new bike that Cesar loves. Sister Margaret Mary, a missionary, has arranged for Company CDE to donate 100 bikes to the people of Haiti. She posts a video of the bikes being delivered to families on YouTube. Within a week, the video has been viewed or downloaded by more than 50,000 viewers, and Sister Margaret Mary is now inundated with inquiries from people wanting to know how they can donate a bicycle. None of these individuals knows each other, but they are talking about the same thing—bicycles from Company CDE. Julie, Cesar, and Sister Margaret Mary are part of the "many" who talk to the many (the public, their friends, etc.). As discussion of Company CDE's bicycles spreads, the conversation moves to a social networking site on Google+ where hundreds of people now talk about their bicycles, ask each other how to fix the bikes, and share good and bad stories about the bicycles. Company CDE follows the discussions online and has a few of its employees talk and respond to questions and comments. The company doesn't try to "sell" the bicycles, but it listens, participates, and allows the conversation to spread organically. Nothing is forced. Relationships begin and grow.

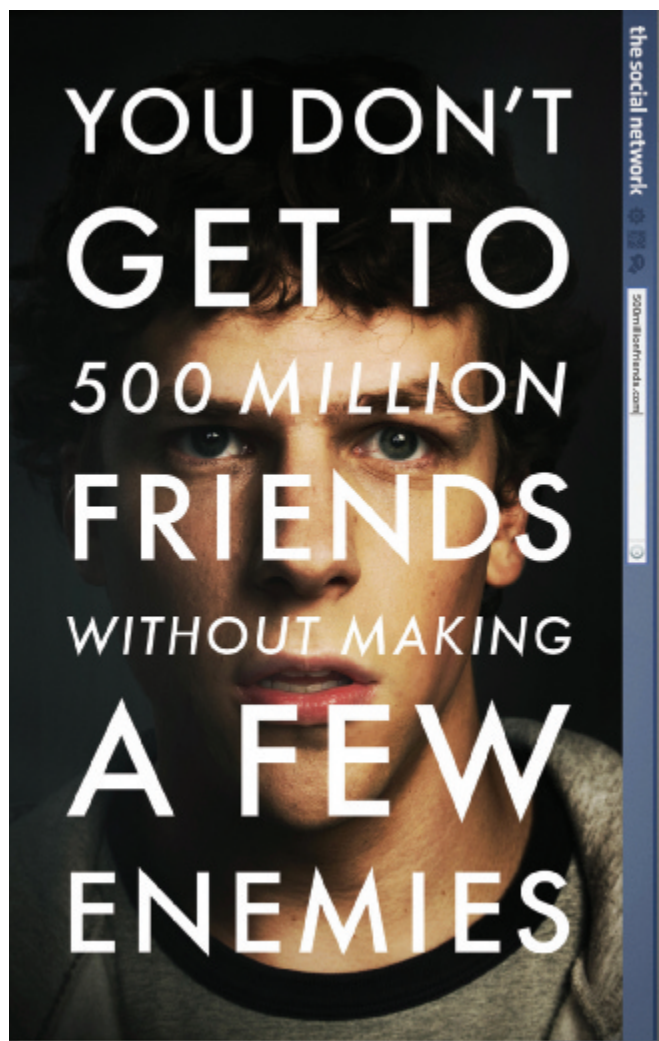
Social media create a whole new ballgame. As we noted earlier in the chapter, Web 2.0, this second generation of web-based technology, is fundamentally different from Web 1.0. Web 2.0 does more than expand and enable existing technologies (Pavlik, 2007). Web 2.0 technology fosters conversation and interactivity among many. Those "many" are individuals, organizations, clubs, fans, media outlets, government agencies, emergency personnel, Fortune 500 companies, and anybody else who wants to join the conversation. Social media elevate feedback to the same level of (or more) importance as the message and the channel. Feedback is now king of the communication model, requiring organizational spokespeople to be authentic and transparent in their communication online if

they want to be believed and respected. With that freedom of transparency comes a heightened level of responsibility because organizations and PR professionals no longer have complete control over how, when, and by whom a message is seen.

At the heart of social media are **social networking sites (SNS)**, which are online communities where members “(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). The connections work through the “invite-a-friend” system (Gillin, 2009). Facebook and Renren, the Chinese answer to Facebook (see nearby feature), are two of the top social networking sites in the world (Figure 5.4). In its initial public offering (IPO) on the New York Stock Exchange in May 2011, Renren raised \$740 million. With 100 million users (double the number of Facebook users) whose number is growing by thousands each day, investors worldwide jumped on the opportunity to invest.

FIGURE 5.4 Creation of Facebook.

In 2010, *The Social Network* captivated movie audiences with its portrayal of the rise of Facebook.



Chinese Equivalencies

While Facebook, Google, and Twitter are available almost everywhere in the world, China has taken a different approach with its new technologies. The Google of China is called Baidu; the Facebook is known as Renren; and the Twitter of China is called Sina Weibo. Launched in August 2009, Sina Weibo has nearly 100 million users, according to Forbes.com. And according to iResearch, Baidu exceeded 64 billion inquiries in the fourth quarter of 2010.



PR Example Link

Check out weibo.com to learn more about these Chinese equivalencies. Be sure to click translate if you want to see the information in English.

By altering the balance of power in message formation and distribution, social media have leveled the playing field between consumers and companies, constituents and governments, and citizens and journalists. With hundreds (if not thousands) of communication outlets online, traditional media are no longer exclusively in charge of disseminating information and news. Social media make it possible for anyone to publish information and opinions. People use blogs and micro-blogs (Twitter, Tumblr), social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest), social news and book-marking sites (digg, StumbleUpon), syndication sites (RSS), review sites (TripAdvisor, Yelp), shopping sites (Amazon), and forums (Ning, Mommybloggers) to post their musings, videos, complaints, questions, and photographs.

FROM GATEKEEPERS TO CONTENT PRODUCERS: SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGE EVERYTHING

In 2001, a seminal book, *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, presciently posited the notion that “markets are conversations.” The authors stated, “Even at its worst, our newfound conversation is more interesting than most trade shows, more entertaining than any TV sitcom, and certainly more true-to-life than the corporate websites we’ve been seeing” (Levine, Locke, Searls, & Weinberger, 2001, p. xiii). The *Manifesto* provocatively suggested that people (and that means all of us) want to talk to each other, and we want to talk to companies. This was a hugely radical idea when it was first conceived, and it highlights the differences between micro- and macrocommunication.



THINK AS YOU READ

- When you communicate online, what sites do you visit first? What does that say about who you are and what’s important to you?
- If you use Facebook or Twitter, do you see staying in touch with close friends, influencing others, or having the most friends or followers as being more important?
- What do you think about an organization if you find that it doesn’t have a social media presence?

Microcommunication is the symmetrical exchange of information. Imagine a conversation you might have with a friend or friends: “Hey, do you want to go out to dinner?” “Sure, where should we go?” This idea of an informal and conversational

two-way exchange is the basis of all social networking. Web 2.0 technology allows us to develop intricate connections among individuals online—be they friends, strangers with similar interests, organized groups, customers, or stakeholders. The powerful group mommybloggers.com began with individual mothers looking for other

mothers online with whom they could share advice and support. Community members started out simply writing about themselves and sharing their empathy and wisdom with each other online. Unadvertised, unsubsidized, and unorganized, the group grew organically over time. Today, mommybloggers.com is feared and respected by consumer product giants such as Johnson & Johnson and Procter & Gamble. This is the power of the writable Web. Conversations online are now interlinked and aggregated by search engines such as Google and Bing, making it easy for people at opposite ends of the world with common interests to find each other. Various sources collect, tag, and are influenced by information and then repackage, revitalize, and disseminate it over and over,

allowing the conversation to build, morph, develop, and eventually run its course. Web 2.0, where we are all content producers, shifts the balance of power from the established organization to the people.

Macrocommunication, in contrast to microcommunication, is the asymmetrical distribution of information. Macrocommunication is mass media—newspapers, magazines, television, and radio. It can also be emergency agencies, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the National Guard, and fire and police departments, during times of disaster. An example of macrocommunication is your local nightly television newscast at 11 p.m., which offers “newsworthy” stories that have been collected, pre-screened, edited, and produced by a gatekeeper (the editor at the television station). The media organization tightly controls the information. For all intents and purposes, the audience has little to no input. Viewers simply passively receive the information. Less than two decades ago, mass media disseminated most of the information we consumed. The mainstream news media were the official gatekeepers and determiners of news.

With the advent of social media, however, the gatekeepers no longer have sole dominion over the information we consume. At the 2010 PRSA conference, John Armato, senior vice president and senior partner of Fleishman-Hillard in Sacramento, California, stated, “There is simply less and less traditional media. . . . Traditional media is [sic] ‘trophy media’—in other words, it may not be more strategic to go on the *Today Show*, but people want it. They want a clip for their website.”

Corporations, government agencies, and emergency agencies are struggling to manage their messages, too. For example, when brush fires threatened neighborhoods in the hills above Los Angeles, California, in the summer of 2009, residents and concerned citizens typed tweets, posted on Facebook, and blogged about the spreading wildfires. The traditional media picked up the posts and reported the information via television and radio to the general public, often bypassing official fire department dispatches. This resulted in a lot of confusion, causing the fire command center to scramble to keep up with

The key development with Twitter is how we’ve jury-rigged the system to do things that its creators never dreamed of. In short, the most fascinating thing about Twitter is not what it’s doing to us. It’s what we’re doing to it.

—Steven Johnson (2009),
author of *Where Good Ideas
Come From: The Natural History
of Innovation*

How can you squander even one more day not taking advantage of the greatest shifts of our generation? How dare you settle for less when the world has made it so easy for you to be remarkable?

—Seth Godin,
Seth’s Blog, 2010

the breaking news posted by locals (Sheil, Slusarski, & Violanti, 2011). Afterward, U.S. Forest Service Incident Commander Mike Dietrich noted at a press conference, “We need to use social media and be the ones to provide the information.”

Social Media and Public Relations: Natural Partners

Social media offer a compelling way for public relations professionals to develop quality communities and dialogue with key constituents, customers, employees, stakeholders, investors, the traditional media, and others. The relationship between public relations and social media is a natural one because public relations has always been—and always will be—about *relationships*. With such an easy alignment, you might even say that social media *are* online PR.

As we move further into the age of two-way authentic dialogue, traditional advertisers and marketers are scrambling to reframe, recalibrate, and relearn how to interact with people rather than dousing them with unwanted messages. A marketing campaign has a beginning, middle, and end, but a social media program is a long-term commitment to engage consumers and stakeholders on their timeline. According to the *Cluetrain Manifesto*, traditional marketing and advertising are the *anti-conversations* (Levine et al., 2001). Today, the most trusted form of advertising is a recommendation from another person “just like me”—even if I don’t know that person personally.

Just because social media and public relations are natural partners doesn’t mean they always interact in a positive way. Take, for example, organizations that choose to continue using social media in the same way they previously used traditional media—as a one-to-many medium with no feedback. If you continue receiving electronic advertisements and marketing materials from an organization, you’ll find a way to block or “unlike” them. Similarly, organizations that design their social media presence with little or no opportunity for public feedback are likely to annoy the very people they are trying to reach. According to data collected by APCO Worldwide and The Huffington Post (Kraus, 2010), consumers rate 1. the ability to dialogue with an organization, 2. the quality of its customer service, and 3. integration/quality of content as the three most important aspects of a social media campaign. Consumers today want to be able to interact with organizations, not just passively digest information, and smart PR departments provide that opportunity through social media.

The Power of Social Capital

Social media have changed the way we communicate and the way we do business, which has led to the rise and importance of social capital. **Social capital** can be loosely defined as “connections and membership in a group” (Ihlen, 2005, p. 494). The more connections and influence one has in a group, the more social capital that person is said to have. Why is that important? In the realm of social networking, status is conferred on those individuals with the most number of “friends” and/or followers. Almost 40 percent of online Americans admit to using social media to influence others by posting their preferences, positive or negative, online (Harris Interactive, 2010). Those with more social capital are in a position to be more influential.

With more than 6.5 million followers as of April 2011 on Twitter alone, the actor Ashton Kutcher wields considerable influence because of his extensive network of followers and friends. Kutcher's social capital translates into big bucks for his firm, Katalyst, a social media studio that provides "content and monetization strategies to succeed on the Web . . ." Kutcher's production company aims to become: not just a home for his television and movie projects but also a go-to source for brands looking to deploy what's called 'influencer marketing,' a squishy hybrid of entertainment content, advertising, and online conversation that finds its audi-

ence via video, animation, Twitter, blogs, texts, and mobile" (McGirt, 2009, p. 1). By all measures, Kutcher has figured out how to extend and leverage his social capital through a blending of public relations, marketing, and advertising.

While traditional methods of public relations, marketing, and advertising are still viable, the top agencies are following online strategies similar to Kutcher's. "Social media is now part of the mix of everything we do," states John Armato of Fleishman-Hillard. "Cookie-cutter work isn't the way to go. We have so many tools to reach audiences—it's time to be smart and strategic about how we incorporate social media into serving our clients' needs successfully" (2010).

Commerce drives much of social media, but it's not the sole component. People go online to express themselves, share ideas, create awareness, find goods and services, swap junk, find apartments, look for jobs, meet the love of their life, laugh, review, complain, comment, interact, learn, and play. In other words, social networking is first and foremost about relationships—people connecting, interacting, listening, and responding to each other. The technology platforms make the interactions simple and easily accessible. Social networking sites "are primarily organized around people, not interests" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 219). This organizing concept of "people, not interests" is a fundamental tenet of public relations, and it's why public relations and social media are natural partners. Thus, the new value proposition of social media or online PR can be described as *sustained conversations that shape perceptions*.

The secret isn't growing a huge fan base. We have 100,000 Facebook fans, but those fans have all come to us organically. We believe the more organic the growth, the more loyal the fans, the more likely they will be repeat customers.

—Cam Balzer,
vice president of marketing,
Threadless



REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE

Old Spice

In Summer 2010, Procter and Gamble's ad agency Wieden+Kennedy set out to create a social media campaign for Old Spice. The initial series of YouTube videos was designed as an advertisement for Old Spice (Figure 5.5). The social media campaign, "Smell Like a Man, Man," amassed tens of thousands of followers on Twitter and millions of people watched the YouTube videos. People were asked to send in questions or comments and Isaiah Mustafa, the "Old Spice" man, recorded 150 video responses to these questions as part of a dialogue with the followers. The campaign garnered accolades because the videos never pushed Old Spice products down people's throats but presented real-life responses to the questions

(continued)



FIGURE 5.5 Isaiah Mustafa.

Procter and Gamble's Old Spice social media campaign included 150 video responses to questions and comments from followers.

 **Watch on**
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Go to www.youtube.com and search for "Old Spice: The Man Your Man Could Smell Like," "Old Spice Questions," and "Sesame Street: Grover Stars in 'Smell Like a Monster.'"

posed. "In his penultimate video, the Old Spice guy talks directly to his daughter, explaining that until recently, he was just a struggling actor no one has ever heard of. When was the last time a marketing campaign spoke directly to you in such a frank way, making you laugh and cry at the same time?" (Schroeder, 2010, par. 7). The emotional connection these videos created is what shows us the power of social media (Bruno, 2010). People have said that imitation is the strongest form of flattery and only successful things are imitated. The original commercial was so popular that *Sesame Street* did a parody of it with Grover in November 2010.



PRACTICAL THEORIES, CONCEPTS, AND MODELS

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Traditional approaches to public relations have focused on mass communication theories. In mass communication, everything's about the channel through which you choose to transmit your message (think of Marshall McLuhan and his famous statement that "the medium is the message" introduced earlier in this chapter). Social media have shifted our attention back to the importance of building relationships. Accompanying that change is an increased need to draw on traditional interpersonal theories and tweak them to address how mediated (online) interactions and face-to-face interactions differ and how they are similar. If you really stop and think about it, we do essentially the same thing in both types of relationships—we just do it differently. The bottom line is that all relationships are about getting to know one

(continued)

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Case Study

To learn more about uncertainty reduction theory, visit the online case study for this chapter.



PRACTICAL THEORIES, CONCEPTS, AND MODELS (*continued*)

another better and building trust. Uncertainty reduction theory is one of the oldest and most-researched interpersonal communication theories. If you take it to heart, you'll have an easier time determining when and how to adjust to this changing public relations environment.

Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese introduced **uncertainty reduction theory** in the 1970s to predict relational development between people. They asserted the best way to build a relationship is to reduce the amount of uncertainty the relationship involves. Berger and Calabrese (1975) provided eight axioms that explain how the reduction of uncertainty plays out and how people go from being strangers to determining whether they are going to have a long-term relationship. A few of them are listed here.

- As verbal communication increases, uncertainty decreases, and as uncertainty decreases, verbal communication increases.
- As information-seeking behaviors increase, uncertainty decreases.
- As the number of similarities between people increases, uncertainty decreases.
- As uncertainty decreases, liking increases.
- As the number of shared communication networks increases, uncertainty decreases.

Clearly, not all of these axioms are equally important in the world of social media. Which of these is likely to be most useful to you as a public relations practitioner attempting to build online relationships?

ONLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS

Recognizing that traditional marketing and advertising communication is passive/one-way and losing its effectiveness, companies are learning how to tap into conversations on sites where their constituents and customers hang out. Sally Falkow has recommended 10 steps to align marketing and advertising with social media/online PR (reprinted with permission from *Social Media Strategy*, available online at falkowinc.com).

Step 1: Listen to the Online Conversations

For the past 100 years or more, companies have had the luxury of deciding what they will produce and sell, what the brand message will be, and how they will deliver it to their audience. The Internet changed that. Now more than ever, corporations need real



THINK AS YOU READ

- Based on your experiences, how do you suggest an organization become part of online conversations?
- Given the continuously growing number of social media available, where do you turn first to look for online conversations?
- What connections do you see among advertising, marketing, and public relations in a social media environment?

strategies, not gimmicks, to engage with their audiences. Organizations must focus on their objectives and goals and not be distracted by the “slew of new social media tools or lured into spending resources just because ‘everyone is on Twitter’” (Falkow, personal communication, May 2010). Above all, organizations must listen as well as speak.

The most important outcome of listening is that it provides the company important data, such as:

- Who’s talking about the organization?
- Which social sites have the most conversations related to the organization?
- Who are the influencers (bloggers with many followers and significant credibility) in these online communities?
- How can the organization talk to these influencers?



SKILLS PRACTICE

RSS Feeds

Part 1. View

You’ll need to view two videos to get started on this Skills Practice exercise. Sally Falkow demonstrates in an online training video how to set up an RSS feed so that you can track who is talking about your product, service, or organization ([screencast.com/t/OTY4MzQwZWM](https://www.screencast.com/t/OTY4MzQwZWM)). Once you establish the feed, Sally demonstrates how to do in-depth searches that can provide you daily business intelligence on the important data ([screencast.com/t/Y2M5NjY2OGYt.C](https://www.screencast.com/t/Y2M5NjY2OGYt.C)).

Part 2. Practice

Once you’ve viewed the videos, choose an organization with which you’re familiar. Conduct an in-depth search for today’s daily business intelligence for this organization. What did you find out? What surprised you about what you found out? What did you find that you expected? If you were the PR professional for this organization, what are the highlights you would provide to your manager to show you’re listening?



Study and Review
on mycomplab.com

Activity Link

Visit the text website to find the links you need to complete this Skills Practice.

Step 2: Determine Your Share of Voice

Millions of conversations occur online every day. When you tap into the ones about your industry, what share of voice does your organization have? **Share of voice** is the percentage of mentions about a brand/company/organization. Positive share of voice leads to increased market share. To put it another way, you need to find out what kind of buzz there is about your organization online. Share of voice is an important indicator of whether a product or service is going to do well. Ideally, you want the greatest percentage of total postings about your industry that specifically

mention your organization in a positive way. It's important to know whether the comments are negative or positive, specific or general. For example, if your company produces makeup for women, are the majority of conversations about cosmetics in general or specifically about your company's brand of cosmetics?

Step 3: Set Goals and Benchmarks

Online listening and tracking provide information and insights into what people are interested in right now. Once you have trending information, you can effectively set goals and benchmarks based on that information. The question is how you convince your management that a social media program is worth the investment of time, human capital, and company resources.

In business, senior management is always focused on the bottom line. How much is a social media program going to cost and what is the ROI—return on investment? Paula Drum, author/blogger, says that in the age of social media, ROI stands for **risk of ignoring**. “The millennial generation is the first digital native generation with very different expectations of companies and marketing . . . not understanding this segment will be detrimental for future marketers” (2009, par. 14).

The following are some examples of how some well-known companies reformulated their business goals through social media research:

Brand Reputation. The “Dell hell” conversation caused a flood of negative comments about Dell’s customer service and even a poem! Based on the heavy negative traffic on the Internet, Dell set a goal to reverse the problem. The ratio of positive to negative comments has become a key performance indicator for Dell. More recently, Dell has been receiving better comments online, like this one:

Tuesday, May 6th, 2008

Dell has started another blog with execs and employees talking about personal technology. It's called *Your Blog* but I'm not sure why; it seems to be their blog or, from their perspective, our blog even if they invite people to send them messages atop the front page. And that's fine; I'm merely puzzled about the name. What's good about this is that it's Dell people talking as people more than as a company, even if it's around technology, not their cats. This follows Chris Locke's precept in *Gonzo Marketing* that companies should want their employees to show their public that they share the same interests. (Jarvis, n.d.).

 **Explore on mycomplab.com**

PR Example Link

To learn more about this example, visit the Dell-Hell blog at dellhellrevisited.blogspot.com.

 **Watch on mycomplab.com**

PR Example Link

To learn more about the Skin MD example and link to relevant URLs, visit the text website.

Increased Brand Awareness. Skin MD Natural launched its lotion in social media and created interest in the phrase “shielding lotion” as a search term. The company used this initially unfamiliar term to describe its intensive moisturizing cream (www.skinmdnatural.com/how-it-works.html). More than 400 mommy bloggers have written about the product, and the content has spread through social media sites with a predominantly female demographic, such as StumbleUpon, Kirtsy and delicious.com (see www.guessingalltheway.com and search for “Skin MD natural shedding lotion”). There are now search queries for the brand and the generic phrase *shielding lotion* in every country in the world.

Increased Share of Voice. Reed's Inc., a manufacturer of a natural ginger soda, discovered that there is a vigorous conversation online about ginger beer,

ginger ale, ginger brew, and the health benefits of ginger. According to a Google search of Reed's Ginger Ale, there are more than 37,500 posts about the product, including a YouTube video from CNBC. A planned social media program could increase that share of voice. It could immediately start ideas flowing about how to participate in this conversation, initiating a study on the health benefits of ginger, soliciting recipes, and producing/posting articles and videos.



To see the video go to www.youtube.com and search for "Reed's Ginger Beer Made Him A Millionaire."

Thought Leadership. Former CEO Jonathan Schwartz of Sun Microsystems was the first leader of a major corporation to start his own blog. He credits blogging and social media with the revitalization of the brand (even though social media couldn't help him save his job!) (www.huffingtonpost.com and search for "Sun CEO Jonathan Schwartz Tweets Resignation In Haiku").

Increasing Sales. StormHoek Wines increased its sales by more than 400 percent after sending wine to bloggers, inviting them to blog about the wine (good, bad, or indifferent). StormHoek had more than 1,000 "members" on Facebook as of summer 2011 (www.facebook.com and search for "StorkHoek Wines"). Does this sound radical, or is it becoming a familiar story? It may sound common now, but not too long ago—in an age of traditional media—the organization would have simply invited the local food and wine critic in to taste the wine and write a column about it in the local newspaper.

Reduce R&D Spending. Dell's Idea Storm, My Starbuck's Idea, and Crayola's Kid's Comments have all tapped into the wisdom of their customers. Common industry wisdom is that a high percentage of consumers indicate, "I'd definitely buy a product I helped to evolve."

Step 4: Find Bloggers and Relevant Communities

According to Researcher eMarketer, more than 1 billion people are now posting information online (Gillin, 2009). Conversations are taking place in literally thousands of places online. As a public relations professional, how will you effectively divide your time and resources so that you participate in conversations that make sense for your organization? Part of your research—listening to what's being said online—must include finding out who is talking about you and where the conversations are taking place.

Listening to online conversations requires that you conduct daily research (also known as *intelligence gathering* or *business intel*) for your organization. For example, Skin MD Natural discovered pockets of conversation about dry skin in gardening forums! They also found out that moms, crafters, and medical professionals all talk about dry skin care—a lot. These folks have their own **niche social networks**, small groups of people with one characteristic in common that is not necessarily the one that interests the organization. In this case, crafters are connected by their craft interest, and dry skin care is just a secondary interest; this likely prevents the groups from being connected to medical professional social networking groups. Much chatter about skin care occurs on Twitter (who knew?). Once you know where the majority of the conversations take place, you can



FIGURE 5.6 What Is a Bot?

Electronic robots, known as *bots*, can help you monitor online activity about your organization or client.

 **Explore on mycomplab.com**

PR Example Link

To learn more about these examples and link to relevant URLs, visit the text website.

sensibly allocate your time and energy to following and participating in online conversations that visibly impact your organization's reputation and, ultimately, its bottom line. The number of online influencers is growing as more and more people look to the Internet for just about everything under the sun.

Here's a basic business intel to-do list:

1. Find the bloggers who talk about your company or product.
2. Find bloggers who talk about your industry but have not mentioned your company.
3. Monitor these bloggers even if you do it manually in Google Blog Search. This will show you who is writing on a certain key topic.
4. Track mentions of your brand and generic keywords that describe what you do in social news sites such as Digg, Newsvine, Kirtsy, and StumbleUpon (Figure 5.6).
5. Track content about you and your industry on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter as well as smaller, niche networks that are relevant to your brand or organization. Many small social networks are built around a group passionate about a subject. Find the ones that are relevant to your company or organization.

The following are examples of niche social communities:

- **Closet Couture.** A site for women who want advice on how to be stylish (www.closetcouture.com).
 - **A Small World.** A private international community of influential people (www.asmallworld.net).
 - **Sober Circle.** Recovering addicts (sobercircle.com).
 - **English Companion.** A network for English teachers (englishcompanion.com).
 - **QuiltingFriends.** Quilters (quiltingfriends.com).
6. Do the same with social news sites; track mentions on sites such as StumbleUpon, Twitter, and Digg. Find members who talk about you and about your industry or competitors. Once you have the full list, rank them according to influence.

Step 5: Identify Online Influencers

Today influence is about accuracy, authenticity, and trust. You want to reach the bloggers and social networkers who have influence: those who can cause others to take action or change their perception and/or their behavior. An *influencer* is someone people trust and listen to. They aren't necessarily A-list bloggers or power users in a network, but they can be. The people you're interested in are the ones who send a flood of traffic to your blog or your website and because of the strength of their recommendations, their followers take action. For example, as we mentioned earlier in the chapter, Ashton Kutcher, whose Twitter handle is @aplusk, had more than 3.9 million Twitter followers at the time of his nets save lives campaign to prevent children in Africa from dying of malaria. But the number of followers isn't what makes him so influential; rather, it's how he can move people to do things. Partnering with a small nonprofit organization called Malaria No

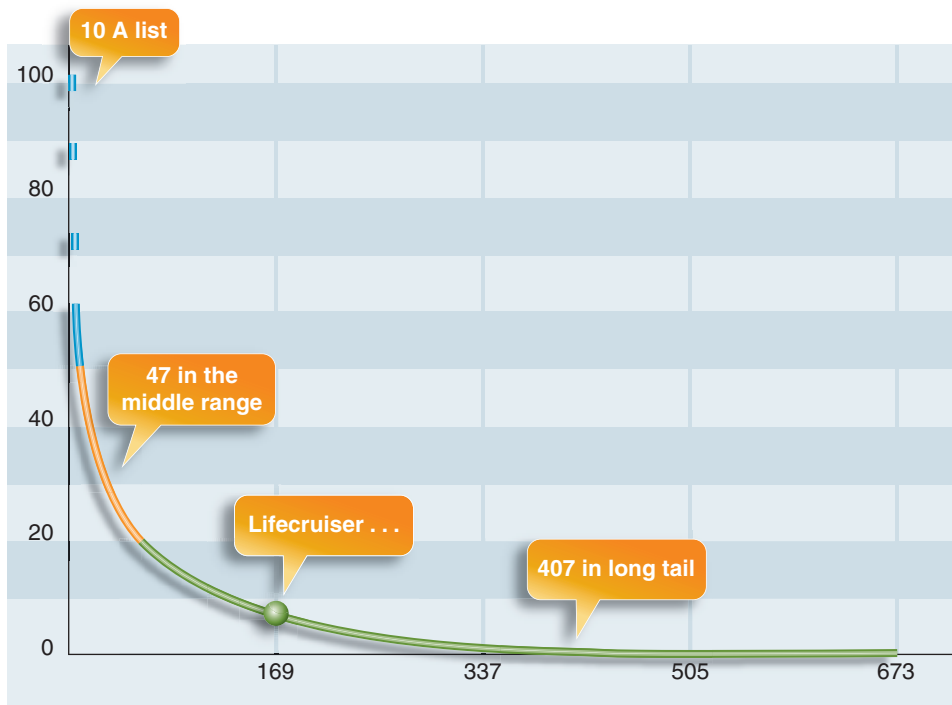


FIGURE 5.7 Travel Blogger Ranking.

This graphic indicates only 10 in the A-list category, 47 in the middle section, and 407 in the long tail. You might find that you have better results working with the middle and long-tail bloggers.

Source: eCairn.

More, Kutcher tweeted, “Every 30 seconds, a kid dies of malaria. Nets save lives.” His call to action was “\$10 buys a net.” Kutcher’s production company Katalyst and Malaria No More blitzed the Internet with messages, appeals, and videos. The campaign helped to raise enough money to buy nearly 90,000 nets (McGirt, 2009, p. 3).

How do you measure influence? Although this is not yet an exact science, here are some of the parameters public relations counselors use to determine which bloggers and networkers are important for their client.

- **Traffic.** Who is visiting clients’ sites? How many RSS subscribers do they have? How long do visitors stay on the site? How many pages do they view?
- **Inbound links.** How many contextual links from well-ranked sites and blogs do they have? According to Google, *inbound links* “are links from pages on external sites linking back to your site. Inbound links can bring new users to your site, and when the links are merit-based and freely volunteered as an editorial choice, they’re also one of the positive signals to Google about your site’s importance” Ohye, 2008, par. 1).
- **Reader engagement.** How much time do people spend on clients’ sites, and how many comments do they post?
- **Recommendations.** How much retweeting, bookmarking, tagging, and sharing of content is in evidence?
- **Connections.** How many followers/mutual connections does the blogger have across multiple social networking sites?
- **Track record.** What is the age of the domain? How many blog posts have occurred? What is the average length of engagement?
- **Traffic referred to the site or blog.** Analytics tell which referring sites send the most traffic. Once you have a list of the bloggers, tweeters, and social network users, it becomes easier to rank them according to influence. See Figure 5.7 for an example of ranking travel bloggers.

Step 6: Develop a Content Strategy

In 2001, Forrester Research asked people why they returned to a website; the overwhelming answer was “content.” That still holds true today. Success in social media depends on the quality of its content. Success is about engaging people, and the key to engagement is good content. In social media, people are creating, reading, saving, tagging, and sharing content. If you don’t produce the kind of content your audience values, it won’t be republished or shared. How do you know what kind of content to create? Listen and observe.

- **Example 1.** A mortgage company discovers that young mothers in their first home are very concerned about the housing market and the subprime mortgage fiasco. They are looking for information in language they can understand. The mortgage company realizes an opportunity to connect with these moms via informative articles and video interviews with its experts.
- **Example 2.** A nonprofit organization involved in drug rehabilitation finds that women turn to blogs for information, advice, or recommendations (Wright & Page, 2009). Because women (the wife, mother, or sister of an addict) are the ones who most often call the rehab centers, the organization creates content around the stories of women who have saved their families with this program and sees that it goes to women bloggers.

Telling your story online in the right place to the right people gets results. But you need a well-thought-out content strategy based on solid research to get those results.

Step 7: Pick Social Media Tools

This task can be confusing because a wide array of social media tools is available. But if you have all of your data analyzed and your content strategy in place, it’s easier to pick the right tools. Your research will tell you where to start. If the majority of the conversation about your product or organization is on Twitter, you’ll need a well-designed custom Twitter page, a strategy for whom you intend to follow, and the content to include in your 140-character messages. If you find you have brand evangelists making videos about your company, set up a branded YouTube channel right away.

Effective social media tools include:

- “Share this” buttons, tagging, and bookmarking
- Blogs
- Microblogging (Twitter)
- Podcasts
- Images
- Video
- Social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Social media news sites (Kirtsy, Newsvine, StumbleUpon, Digg)
- Widgets and applications for your blog, website, Facebook, or smart phones.
- Social media news release format with multimedia and social bookmarks.
- Searches for optimized articles
- News feeds (RSS) to syndicate all your content articles

- Optimized search for press releases (This is an informational piece with live links written specifically for dissemination through the Internet. Because millions of people are using search engines to find news online, it becomes strategically important to use key words that optimize a search engine's ability to find your content. An optimized press release can land your information in the top 10 results on news websites such as Yahoo! News, Google News, and Mashable.)

Twitter Mania

Twitter turned five on March 21, 2011. The following key statistics related to it were revealed on that day:

- **3 years, 2 months, and 1 day.** The time it took from the first Tweet to the billionth Tweet.
- **1 week.** The time it now takes for users to send 1 billion Tweets.
- **50 million.** The average number of Tweets people sent per day one year ago.
- **140 million.** The average number of Tweets people sent per day in the last month.
- **177 million.** Tweets sent on March 11, 2011.
- **456.** Tweets per second (TPS) when Michael Jackson died on June 25, 2009 (a record at that time).
- **6,939.** Current TPS record set 4 seconds after midnight in Japan on New Year's Day 2011.
- **572,000.** Number of new accounts created on March 12, 2011.
- **460,000.** Average number of new accounts per day in March 2011.
- **182 percent.** Increase in number of mobile users in 2011.
- **8, 29, 130, 350, 400.** Number of Twitter employees in January 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 and March 21, 2011, respectively.*

Sysomos, a Toronto-based social media analytics company compiled a study on 11.5 million Twitter accounts in June 2009. The following is a partial list of results:

- 85.3 percent of all Twitter users post less than one update per day.
- 21 percent of users have never posted a Tweet.
- 5 percent of Twitter users account for 75 percent of all activity.
- New York has the most Twitter users followed by Los Angeles, Toronto, San Francisco, and Boston.
- More women (53 percent) than men (47 percent) are on Twitter.†

*Retrieved from blog.twitter.com/2011/03/numbers.html

†Retrieved from: sysomos.com/insidetwitter/

Signpost

Chapter 9, Research and Evaluation, discusses why the statement that there are more tweets in New York and Los Angeles than in other areas of the country is one way to deceive people with statistics. There are more people in those two cities than any other, so we would expect them to have more tweets than anywhere else. A more ethical statistic to report would be how many tweets per capita. That will accurately represent states as small as Delaware and Rhode Island.

Step 8: Create and Deliver Content to Spark Conversations

Content strategy based on solid research is key to creating online interest. If your responsibility as a public relations professional is to drive traffic to the organization's website, you must produce excellent content. For example, if you're the public relations manager for a hotel or resort, you should be writing about the destination—give people ideas of where to go and what to do. Use great images and videos. Nothing is more enticing than photos of majestic mountains with hiking trails or sandy white beaches with aquamarine waters. Interesting articles, images, and videos can be very powerful tools that help bloggers and online reporters find your site and write about your organization.

Step 9: Participate in the Conversations and Engage Your Audience

It's not enough just to push out content. Social media aren't simply other channels you can use to reach your target audience. The biggest mistake companies and brands make is to use social media as a way to sell a product. *Content should be created with a view to starting conversations and building relationships.* Social media are about a two-way flow of conversation. People are no longer willing to be passive bystanders; they want to take an active part in the conversation. And they fully expect you to be there and participate, too. The Research Report *Social Media Playtime Is Over* (Owyang, 2009) clearly shows that dabbling or experimenting isn't enough; you have to deliver genuinely interesting and valuable content that meets the needs of your audience and actively engages them.

Step 10: Facilitate Conversations

Word of mouth (WOM) has long been the holy grail of marketing. Peer reviews, opinions, and comments are now the number one influencer prior to making a decision to purchase online. You want not only potential customers to be engaged with you but also to talk positively about you to each other. Facilitating these conversations is the ultimate goal of a successful social media strategy.

Make it easy for anyone who wants to begin a conversation with your organization: Provide excellent content that online visitors will want to share and discuss. Then provide the tools to make it easy to do this; when you provide content, give viewers an easy way to (1) send to a friend via email, (2) share via social networking sites, (3) bookmark, (4) subscribe, (5) discuss, and (6) comment.

In the past few years, searching online for travel destinations and travel deals has become the primary way that individuals prepare for trips. According to research by the Travel Industry Association of America (2005), 65 percent of travelers use online search engines to plan travel. In addition to planning, many social media websites provide ways for returning travelers to post their photos, comments, and opinions (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). CruiseTube.com connects cruisers so they can stay in touch with fellow passengers, meet other cruise enthusiasts worldwide, and share memories and travel information online. Because consumer-generated reviews and comments are regarded as the most trusted forms of information today, getting people to share their positive cruise experiences on CruiseTube.com and other social media sites is critically important for the cruise industry. Unsolicited compliments (or criticisms) can start a chain reaction through the Web.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE LAW

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) was chartered in 1914 to ensure that markets compete fairly with minimal restrictions. Most of the regulations and guidelines that pertain to advertising, marketing, and public relations fall under its

purview. So, it's not surprising that in December 2009, the commission, which oversees issues related to consumer protection, issued new guidelines for bloggers, tweeters, and online commentators. These new guidelines require any person who posts a comment about a product to disclose whether he or she is receiving "anything of value" from the producer of that product (16 CFR 255). In issuing these guidelines, the FTC's intention is to protect consumers from seemingly neutral bloggers who actually might be paid to say nice things about a product or service. Payment equals endorsement, and it must be disclosed (Smedley, 2010).

These guidelines also state that employees who blog or tweet about their company must disclose the fact that they have a paid relationship to the company. This means that employers are now responsible for any posts or comments their own employees make on behalf of the company. What happens if a rogue employee posts something on a social media site that puts the organization at risk of liability for unlawful conduct? No one yet knows how this will affect public relations professionals who might be assigned to blog on behalf of their company. It does suggest that any and all companies should have a written policy regarding social media.

Domino's Pizza and the "Stomach-Turning Video" on YouTube

In April 2009, Domino's Pizza employees Michael Setzer and Kristy Hammonds made a video of themselves doing highly unsanitary things to the food they were preparing for customers and posted it on YouTube. News reporters called it a "disgusting and disturbing video." Within hours, the video made national news and had caught the attention of the world. It didn't take long for Domino's to find the rogue employees and fire them. Both employees were arrested and faced felony charges for tampering with food. But the damage had been done. The visuals were disturbing: Hammonds shot a video of Setzer spitting on food and sticking cheese up his nose and then placing it on a slice of garlic bread. The video severely affected this franchisee's business; all Domino's locations felt the financial repercussions of this stupid practical joke that nearly destroyed the brand's reputation.

The incident was the closest thing to corporate sabotage that had ever been caught on tape, and it demonstrated the power and speed of social media to spread like wildfire. Patrick Doyle, the president of Domino's, went on YouTube almost immediately. He issued an apology and promised to change hiring practices so that a similar incident would never happen again.

Source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYomw1cLA2U.

THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

As we mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, not even the experts know where social media are going to take us, but we're nowhere near finished inventing and innovating. Here are some points to consider:

- The job you'll have when you're 40 may not even have been created yet, so stay flexible when it comes to technology. You'll be learning for the rest of your life.
- Social media are tools. Treat them as such. Always use the correct tool for the job.

- Social media are neither good nor bad. They are whatever you make them.
- The next big thing on the horizon is **advertainment**, a combination of advertising and entertainment sometimes seen in video games or children's educational programming. **Branded content** is also known as product placement where a product is shown on a television show or during a movie. *E.T.* and the extra-terrestrial's Reese's Pieces may be the best-remembered early example of branded content. More recently, the advent of reality television and DVRs/commercial-free viewing made branded content and advertainment even more prominent in our lives as television shows seek to give advertisers more for their money. On *The Biggest Loser*, look for National Fitness training the contestants; on *The Office*, look for Hewlett-Packard printers.
- Social media are the hottest trend in business today. Learn the techniques and the technologies, and you'll be highly sought after by many companies.
- Social media have overtaken pornography as the number one use of the Internet (Tancer, 2008).
- Social media have the power to dislodge governments (e.g., Jordan in 2011), make the world a "global village" (McLuhan, 1968), and bring more humanity back to commerce. Social media fueled the Arab Spring that began in Tunisia in 2011 and quickly spread to Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria.
- Social media have annihilated the recording industry, just as they did to newspapers, magazines, and other forms of traditional media. Social media are also going to change education: how we teach, how we learn, and what we learn.
- Social media are moving us into a **culture of sharing**. The expectation is that all information and news should be free and available to everyone. Traditional media companies must find a new business model or perish.



CAREER PLANNING

How Social Media Can Derail Your Career

Social media and social networking sites have been woven into the fabric of many people's lives. Used appropriately, they're great communication tools; used inappropriately, they can be the kiss of death. Your career in public relations actually begins before you obtain that first job. As you continue to interact through social media, stop and think twice before you do the following:

- **Post a message that could be viewed as too opinionated.** Online tirades about politics, religion, race, and your current employment are public once they are posted and can always be found by a potential employer who looks hard enough.
- **Have photos posted or tagged that make a less than favorable impression.** If you know pictures exist of you that you would not want seen by a potential employer, make sure they are in password-protected online albums or better yet, kept in the privacy of your own home.
- **Use foul or inappropriate language.** The language we use around our friends at a social gathering isn't likely to be the language you want a potential employer reading online.

The bottom line is to be aware of what appears online by and about you so that you aren't making excuses for that 10-second lapse in judgment!

FLASHCARD SUMMARY

- Web 2.0 is the technology of social media platforms that has radically altered the way we produce and consume information and news.
- Estimates are that 75 percent of the U.S. adult population is now online and more than 1 billion people post information online through blogs, microblogs, and social networking sites.
- *Technological determinism* is the normative theory conceived by Marshall McLuhan that postulates all changes in society and culture are *determined* by and through communication and changes in communication technology.
- Social media elevate feedback to the top of the communication ladder above the message and the channel.
- By altering the balance of power in message formation and distribution, social media have leveled the playing field between consumers and companies, constituents and governments, and citizens and journalists.
- Social networks are online communities where members post their profiles and exchange information, share interests, and discuss common topics.
- A marketing campaign has a beginning, middle, and end, but a social media program is a long-term commitment to engage consumers and stakeholders on their own time and schedule.
- Social media *strategy* is a 10-step process that logically and systematically provides companies ways to listen, understand, and participate in online communities.
- The Federal Trade Commission has issued new guidelines that require any person who posts a comment about a product to disclose whether he or she is receiving “anything of value” from the producer of that product (16 CFR 255).
- Social media, one of today’s hottest trends, are tools and should be used carefully to promote conversation through a culture of sharing rather than attempting to sell products and services.

ACTIVITIES

1. **Discussion Board Activity.** Go to: chronicle.com and read the article “East Stroudsburg U. Professor Returns after Suspension for Facebook Posts” by Mary Helen Miller. After reading the article, decide whether the punishment for Gloria Gadsden was too lenient or too hard. Post a blog entry to the website and defend your position.

✓• [Study and Review on mycomplab.com
Online Discussion Board Activity

To use the online discussion board, visit the text website.

2. **Self-Evaluation Activity.** Go to the textbook website and complete the “How Social Media Savvy Are You?” survey to determine how well you can converse in the social media milieu.

✓• [Study and Review on mycomplab.com
Activity Link

Visit the text website to find links to this site.

3. **Professional Development Activity.** Using the RSS feed you set up as the Skills Practice in this chapter, track the postings and conversations online for a week, and then assess what you’ve read and write an executive summary. Who is talking about your topic or company? Tally the postings

into positive and negative comments. Are there certain sites that are highly reactive to your topic or company? What would you do if you discovered that the majority of conversations about your organization were totally negative? How would you correct the problem or misperceptions?

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Activity Link

Go the online discussion board and post your reply to this activity.

4. **Research Activity.** Go to: lessig.org/content/columns and choose one of the many articles that Lawrence Lessig has written about the Internet. Write a one-page summary of it.

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Activity Link

Visit the text website to find links to this site.

5. **Smart Student Activity.** Take the online chapter exam and video quiz.

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To access the online chapter exam and video quiz, go to the text website.

BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE Pick up one of these great books and articles and read it!

- *Putting the Public Back in Public Relations: How Social Media Is Reinventing the Aging Business of PR* by Brian Solis and Deirdre Breakenridge (2009). Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press.
- *The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools, and Strategies for Business Success* by Lon Safko (2010). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

KEY TERMS

advertainment 128
branded content 128
culture of sharing 128
macrocommunication 114
microcommunication 113
niche social networks 121
risk of ignoring (ROI) 120
share of voice 119

social capital 115
social media 110
social networking sites 112
technological determinism 108
uncertainty reduction theory 118
Web 2.0 106
writable Web 110

✓ **Study and Review**
on **mycomplab.com**

Activity Link

Online flashcards for the key terms can be found on the text website.