THE BLURRED LINES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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I AM BIGGER THAN SOCIAL MEDIA

BY JASMINE CHUAH
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“YES, I really, really, honestly, seriously think you should try it. I think you should try putting down your phone, not checking every single WhatsApp message that comes in through those group chats, not scrolling through Twitter, Instagram, Facebook or Tumblr.

“I think you should stop doing all that till you can make a conscious effort to prioritise whether the person in front of you is more important. By the way, that person should win.”

This was what I told myself six months ago when I made the decision to stop allowing social media to control me. These are my reasons.

1. THE CULTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA HAS ERODED THE WAY WE BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

I struggle with maintaining friendships because of my introversion; along with the reassurance that while people may be temporarily in my life, they are always accessible.

Because I feel that people are always accessible, I don’t put as much effort into building relationships.

I am wrong. I won’t truly know my friends unless I spend time with them, learning about them through engaging conversations and activities. A moment is not meaningful unless it has meaning. It will not have meaning unless I invest in it through making a point to spend time.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA TAKES ME AWAY FROM MY FAMILY

My greatest fear is one day seeing my family sitting around a dinner table, completely silent and absorbed in their own personal devices. I see it happening to so many other people: fathers push their children away because of Candy Crush, mothers let their children run helter-skelter because they are busy scrolling Facebook, grandparents eat surrounded by relatives but feel alone. I do not want that for my family. I do not want to do it to them either.

3. I WANT TO BE BIGGER THAN SOCIAL MEDIA

I want to be more than the value I place on the number of likes I get on a post or the gleeful delight I get from the number of comments on a picture. I want to be called up on my birthday. I want not to feel like I have to share every special moment with the world. I want people to converse with me because I didn’t say it all. I want to be that person that you just need to meet because she is so much more than the sum of her posts. In the end, I don’t want to be controlled by social media. I want to be real and live outside of the screen, not that what we were always meant to be?

The opinions expressed in this career guide are those of the writers or the people they quoted and not necessarily those of Leaderonomics.
By YUSMAR YAHAYA

I N 2014, when AccorHotels, a leading operator with a chain of hotels in 92 countries, was facing pressure from customers as well as shareholders to increase its customer service satisfaction, the company turned to social media to execute an impact monitoring exercise by aggregating more than 5,000 publicly available monthly customer opinions that were posted at travel websites that track the online reputation of 12,000 hotels worldwide.

Based on the exercise, AccorHotels managed to narrow down the areas for improvement and within a short period of time, the Novotel brand within the AccorHotels group saw a 55% growth in positive feedback in online posts and a significant decrease in the number of negative comments.

The content delivery platform is by far the most potent tool for leaders to articulate leadership values and execute them as well as the source for information analytics.

In recent years, it has developed into what we now call the social media platform where content is disseminated automatically to spread and to be replicated like viruses, hence the often-used term “viral” in social media.

Since social media software exists ubiquitously through mobile smartphones, the social media platform empowers everyone to express his or her opinions and garner worldwide attention within a very short period of time.

Prior to social media, it would have been nearly impossible for this to be done, especially by ordinary individuals without any access to print media or audio-visual broadcast channels.

In business circles, while the social media platform is heavily used by consumer groups to express their points of view, it also empowers business entities to promote their products, maintain product branding and enhance client engagement in order to stay ahead of the competition.

More importantly, it is an effective and crucial public relations tool during crisis management for any organisation.

There are many examples of how social media platforms are used by leaders of nations, industries and academia as a proactive tool to disseminate knowledge and information, as well as to address public concerns over organisational policies, product promotions or to support communal causes.

However, it is often unclear to many leaders how to use these platforms effectively and what steps need to be taken to ensure proper functionality that caters to their business purposes.

**STRATEGISE**

For leaders to be effective in managing the flow of content on social media platforms that are related to their organisations, there has to be a clearly defined procedure. It could be from a simple hourly or daily habit of checking the aggregated news to implementing a dedicated team of personnel acting as the company’s online watchguards.

Information flows extremely fast in the social media realm with an hour or even minutes, news about the company’s product malfunction or calamity could spread across the world even before the unsuspecting chief executive officer could finish having a meal.

Therefore, it is crucial that the management team in an organisation is kept abreast of their presence on social media. In the example of AirAsia, the top management exercises the use of social media to keep client communication open, thereby further gaining the trust of the public and investors of its commitment to transparency.

This method proved to be effective in several events involving AirAsia’s operations, including the recent crisis in managing the airplane crash in Indonesian waters.

It also goes without saying that social media platforms could be used as the promotional engine for an organisation, whether for business product promotions or asserting the organisation’s public image. When executed well, its exponential propagation rate would mirror the leadership capability of the executives.

**IDENTIFY THE RIGHT TOOL**

Many leaders of an organisation do not realise that they are already surrounded by many existing tools – freely available – to ensure that their messages get through effectively.

Some tools are meant to push the deliverables and others to trigger notifications based on keywords. Tools such as hashtags and Google Alerts are very efficient for information dissemination and instant online notifications.

By effectively using group communication software (apps) to aggregate online news into a collection of information sorted according to their preferences, leaders can create a snapshot of the organisation’s social media presence and its most recent status before proceeding with further actions publicly.

This would assist leaders to make well-informed decisions and in turn deliver them by leveraging on the social media platforms for further dissemination of crucial information within a short time.

**DEDICATED TEAM**

The management of social media is no longer an afterthought in an organisation’s structure and requires a dedicated team that focuses on its deliverables and impact.

The public often regards leaders that are capable of responding immediately on issues pertaining to their organisation as trustworthy and relevant.

As such, leaders require a good team in the organisation that ensures accurate information is provided within a short turnaround time.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Embracing the use of social media platforms in the organisational structure will enhance the effective flow of communications and information from within the organisation. All employees will stay connected with each other and the management at all times.

Any new updates, information or crisis, will be communicated quickly and effectively.

Solutions for problems can be found quickly too with full engagement from all levels within an organisation.

An organisation that practices this will definitely get acknowledged by the public and will be sought after by individuals who are looking for an employer of choice.

Leaders will be able to convey their leadership values and traits more effectively, covering a wider audience, both locally and internationally.

Corporate executives of an organisation, especially in business circles will be able to harness the power of social media platforms to improve their services more effectively, elevate their competitiveness and propel the business into catalysing growth.

An effective leader is one that is capable of identifying innovative ways to manage valuable information and is constantly well informed of on-going affairs.

Tools such as social media platforms are powerful in all businesses but their effectiveness can only be measured by the way they are being utilised.
Companies can gain or lose out to a mobile audience

1. **Expand Client Base**
   - With a global connection to nearly every person on the planet, companies are no longer restricted to a certain area. You can connect to a global market and expand your boundaries to cover areas and demographics that may otherwise be out of your range. Use tags to enable search engines to list your site so that it can be found and with every click, the page would be higher up in the search results, which in turn, results in more hits.

2. **Engage Clients**
   - Clearly with any organisation, your clientele is your most important user base; the purchasers, purveyors and retailers of your products. Engaging well with your stakeholders is imperative to foster good relationships that will be long-lasting. These are key people who keep the company afloat, for no man is an island and to extend the metaphor, communities are not lone islands but are a collection of small and large ones that are networked together.

3. **Personalise Assistance**
   - Direct access to your clients can be personalised; each interaction between the individual client and the company can be one-on-one, which gives rise to a more meaningful and centred relationship where your problems are answered in the way a good friend would. When a face is given to a company, people are more likely to respond to that as compared with an identity that is seen as omniscient.

4. **Interactive Advertising**
   - Social media, whilst virtual, allows for a wide variety of interaction between not only the company and the individual but also the individual and the platform itself. With flash games, contests and interactive clicking and typing games, clients are able to better understand the company’s core values and/or products and most importantly, they have fun while doing it. Remember: fun = better information retention!

5. **Corporate Responsibility**
   - Corporate responsibility is an initiative that is common in many companies and with the advent of social media, one would be able to not only extend one’s reach to a larger community but also have the option to encourage your customer base to contribute to the cause. Clients would not only be able to view the corporate responsibilities carried out by organisations, but will also have the option to get involved in some of these activities.

**DO’S & DON’TS**

1. **Reveal Client Information**
   - Trust between the client and the company is of utmost importance as it is the foundation that builds all good relationships. Trust is difficult to earn and extremely easy to break. Upholding the privacy of client information is a definite must in any organisation. Be careful with what you post and ensure that information does not get into the wrong hands as this could cause a crisis. Check and ensure that all sensitive information is removed from any posting(s) before it goes on the Internet.

2. **Engage in Destructive Commenting**
   - On the Internet, news can go viral in an instant and tend to attract pugilists who are more intent solely to irritate others. If you receive such comments on your page, do refrain from engaging with him/her because you will only be adding fuel to the fire. Use caution and discretion to tell the difference between legitimate criticism and a comment made solely to incite a negative reaction.

3. **Bad Customer Service/ Unclear Directions**
   - A more personalised engagement may not only flow positively but can also go the other way. On the social media platform, you can see the person you are engaging with. Hence, it is very easy for a poorly-written sentence to be accidentally misconstrued when it is typed instead of said, which can result in people thinking that you do not care about them or their needs. Organisations in the customer care front need to take note on this. Do ensure that the language used while communicating is as clear and concise as possible to minimise these misunderstandings.

4. **Spread False Information**
   - Spreading false information, especially information that is personally destructive, will result in a lot of problems. Do research before posting and go over drafts to ensure that you do not miss anything. Update yourself with the latest details in case the information you use is outdated so that you can present information that is as accurate as possible and as close as possible to the publication of that post.

5. **Ineffective Crisis Management**
   - As with all forms of media, information that spreads fast can have consequences that range from mild to severe. When dealing with severe cases, use social media as a rallying point to show that the company is taking serious steps to address the problem or it could also be where clients can get assistance in times of disaster. Assign a team to address the situation at the grassroots level; this can be an indication that the company really cares. Delegate tasks to the team so that they can handle the situation in a cohesive manner.
YOU may be a CEO (chief executive officer), student, fresh graduate or businessman, but the one common thing you share with each other would be the use of social media on a regular basis. Everyone is hooked on social media in one way or another. Information is being shared every minute. As of late last year, there were 2.46 million shares on Facebook alone every minute. Each one of us contributes to that number in some way. Just pause for a moment and think about how much information that actually is. I am sure the number is much higher now.

So what happens to all the information that is shared? Everything stays online in some way. That can be good or bad depending on what we’ve been busy posting in the past. Whilst we are quick to share stories and post updates on social networks, the one thing we don’t often think about is the impact of our posts, the actual audience and lastly our very own digital reputation.

In this day and age, digital reputation counts for something. That is why you find top CEOs and politicians paying lots of money to public relations (PR) agencies and digital specialists to help manage their digital reputation. But what about the rest of us who don’t have that kind of money to spend on hiring a PR agent?

Firstly, let’s understand how our digital reputation can affect us.

**IT MAY COST YOU A DREAM JOB**

If you are a jobseeker, a common practice for the human resources department or the person hiring you is to do small “research” about yourself online to better understand you. If the information that appears is not the best, it can definitely impact your chances of securing a job.

**IT MAY COST YOU A RELATIONSHIP OR A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY**

You may have posted something nasty, or shared something inappropriate many years ago and have forgotten about it. All it takes is for someone to find that information, if it is public, and then share it online again.

The information can suddenly become viral or be used against you. Even websites or blogs which have been deleted for years can still be looked up online using the Internet Wayback Machine, so nothing ever truly disappears.

**YOU MAY JUST GET FIRED FROM YOUR CURRENT JOB**

I know what you’re thinking. Yeah right? Time magazine published an article middle of last year titled “10 Social Media Blunders that Cost a Millennial a Job — or Worse.” I actually remember an employee in my previous company who lost his job.

Through some research online, it was discovered that he had falsified some of his professional certifications. So now that we’ve established the importance of having a good digital reputation, what can we do?

Here are some tips I’d like to suggest when it comes to managing our digital reputation.

**THINK BEFORE YOU POST OR REACT ONLINE**

We have to remember that we are ultimately responsible for everything that we post online. No one else is accountable for our actions. What we think may be a great post, may actually be offensive to some. If we are sharing information publicly, such as posting public updates on Facebook or tweeting openly, we have to accept that not all comments or criticism will be fair or positive and not everyone will agree with us.

If we do get some negative feedback, how we handle it also reflects on our personality and professionalism.

**USE THE T.H.I.N.K. METHOD WHEN POSTING ONLINE**

I’ve seen this being used in various types of situations and I think it works well when it comes to posting on social networks.

*Is what I am saying, texting or typing, True, Helpful, Important, Necessary and Kind?*

Following this guideline helps us pause and think for a moment before posting something online that could damage our digital reputation.

**ADJUSTING THE SOCIAL NETWORK PRIVACY SETTINGS**

This is not just about our digital reputation but also protecting ourselves online. If we feel that the information shared online is personal and private, it may be wise to adjust the privacy settings to match that.

If you are tweeting personal information and photos, then having an unprotected Twitter account may not be the best option for you. I’ve met up with some people who often would like to be labelled as “Thought Leaders” and are often posting intriguing as well as controversial information on their social networks.

And when someone comments on it or challenges them, they get all worked up, deleting the comments and over-reacting. If you feel you are one of those people, then having a private profile would be a better option as opposed to one that is public.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

To conclude, our digital reputation is something that we should take seriously as it can have a huge impact on our daily lives. Being responsible online (as well as offline) goes a long way in helping us establish a good and healthy digital reputation.

It’s never too late to start but don’t forget that a good digital reputation is not all. You still have your offline reputation to manage.
THE BOT SYNDROME

5 SIGNS YOUR EMPLOYEE FEELS LIKE A BOT

By KARIN HURT

It’s not just social media reps who feel that way. It happens across industries at all levels. I’ve met vice-presidents whose fear of failure is a constant anxiety. Teens belong to no less than a dozen networks. But I know few business leaders who want to dismiss their employees or even to view loyalty programs that show the employee will stay for years without the slightest thought of leaving much more.

Sometimes your employees will tell you, “I know what you mean, but ‘earn, learn, retain’ is a far cry from what I experience.” For them, the truth is that they are not just one of your employees but also one of your customers.

How Are Your “Bot” Symptoms? An employee’s employer may be feeling:

1. But, they don’t make any noise without asking lots of questions. They don’t ask lots of questions. They don’t ask lots of questions. Their confidence is low, they don’t talk a lot, and they seem to think you want them to be silent.

2. They come to social media because they want some upbeat and friendly scripts and all the rules. It’s hard to get them started or to get them to talk.

3. They “follow the rules” even when they don’t want to. For example, you’ve asked them to Tweet.. TweeT.. TweeT..

4. Meetings are lifeless. You feel like a cheerleader in an empty stadium.

5. Efforts are invisible. How do you know if you succeed? Is there a way to do this?

Concluding thoughts

The goal is not to weed them out. Because for the bot, I guess it avoids doing anything, it doesn’t see the way to do anything except as a possibility. It may just not be the best way to do it. You will need to help them first before you can help them. You need to give them a chance to prove themselves. You do not want to lose your best employees. You do not want to lose your best employees. You do not want to lose your best employees.

Alternatively, if you’re considering a change in your career path, you might find it helpful to think about your current career and see if there are any opportunities that would fit your skills and interests. If you’re not sure what you want to do next, consider exploring different options or talking to a career counselor to get some guidance.

For example, digital natives prefer seeing photos and videos to text. If you have a post, post it with an image and you’ll have a dramatic difference. Don’t post a novel in your posts, keep it short and sweet – something that can finish itself in a sentence or two.

The BoT Syndrome

By KARIN HURT

THE MISTAKEN CONCEPT OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

Relying on a strategy of “customer service as a service” is like relying on a marketing campaign that says “we offer services to our customers.” It’s a strategy that doesn’t work for many businesses and can lead to a decline in customer satisfaction and sales. Instead, businesses need to focus on providing a superior customer experience by making sure that every employee understands the importance of delivering exceptional service to every customer. In this article, we explain why this approach is necessary and how to implement it successfully.

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SOMETIMES YOUR EMPLOYEES WILL TELL YOU, “I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, BUT ‘EARN, LEARN, RETAIN’ IS A FAR CRY FROM WHAT I EXPERIENCE.” FOR THEM, THE TRUTH IS THAT THEY ARE NOT JUST ONE OF YOUR EMPLOYEES BUT ALSO ONE OF YOUR CUSTOMERS.

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2. THEY COME TO SOCIAL MEDIA BECAUSE THEY WANT SOME UPTAKE AND FRIENDLY SCRIPTS AND ALL THE RULES. IT’S HARD TO GET THEM STARTED OR TO GET THEM TO TALK.

3. THEY “FOLLOW THE RULES” EVEN WHEN THEY DON’T WANT TO. FOR EXAMPLE, YOU’VE ASKED THEM TO TWEET.. TWEET.. TWEET..

4. MEETINGS ARE LIFELESS. YOU FEEL LIKE A CHEERLEADER IN AN EMPTY STADIUM.

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CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

THE GOAL IS NOT TO WEED THEM OUT. BECAUSE FOR THE BOT, I GUESS IT AVOIDS DOING ANYTHING, IT DOESN’T SEE THE WAY TO DO ANYTHING EXCEPT AS A POSSIBILITY. IT MAY JUST NOT BE THE BEST WAY TO DO IT. YOU WILL NEED TO HELP THEM FIRST BEFORE YOU CAN HELP THEM. YOU NEED TO GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO PROVE THEMSELVES. YOU DO NOT WANT TO loose your best employees. YOU DO NOT WANT TO loose your best employees. YOU DO NOT WANT TO loose your best employees.

AN ENTREPRENEUR’S GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

The most buzzed about trend in the corporate world these days is entrepreneurship. With so many success stories of the young and old, we haven’t stopped hearing about the time when everything seems possible (and can be monetized), which allows you to break the mindset, or to invite the person who doesn’t think that way. A new world is opening up today. The way it’s opening up is different.

Selling is not just easy – advertising is not just easy – and sometimes that’s an important and cheaper tool. Many food and clothing stores, which were previously in need to brick and mortar buildings are now online using thanks to e-commerce. Selling is not only easy – advertising is not only easy – and sometimes that’s an important and cheaper tool.

The way it’s opening up is different. The way it’s opening up is different. The way it’s opening up is different.

Are you ready to break the mindset, or to invite the person who doesn’t think that way? A new world is opening up today. The way it’s opening up is different.

If you’re a travel agency, you might want to think about starting a blog that focuses on travel tips or advice. Or perhaps you could consider offering free trials or discounts to new customers. This would give them a chance to experience your product and service first-hand.


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Someti...
By MICHAEL POH
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W
ITH all the publicity on employees getting fired over wall posts on Facebook, the last thing you'd expect to hear from the popular social networking site is that it can help boost your career. True enough, posting about work on Facebook can bring about negative and serious consequences to office politics. We should always be tactful when it comes to voicing out our opinions and grievances in a public domain. Nevertheless, the opposite can also happen.

Social networking sites like Facebook can give you an edge in your career if you use it to connect with co-workers and clients the proper way. Of course, it very much depends on your office culture and other factors.

Here are some suggestions on how you can potentially make good use of social media to impress your colleagues, bosses and clients to possibly land you in a better position at work.

"FRIEND" PEOPLE FROM WORK

Many of us avoid adding our bosses, colleagues or clients into our social network for fear that they would have access to our personal posts and details. We do that because we want to have some level of privacy to be able to post with greater ease, especially when it comes to our gripes about work.

Well, you can see that Facebook is a double-edged sword. You'll need to grant access to people from your work before you can use it to post that'll impress them.

If you play the game well, then your career might get that boost it is lacking from your other efforts at work. If you post things that might inadvertently offend people from work, your chances are greatly reduced.

MORAL OF THE STORY: BE MINDFUL OF WHAT YOU POST

Forming the connections with your bosses, colleagues and clients is just the first step. If you’re worried about them having access to your personal photo albums and status updates, don’t worry. Facebook now has more personalised and in-depth privacy settings that enable users to decide who can see what posts.

CONNECT WITH WORK-LIFE BALANCE

As much as you want people from work to think that you are a workaholic who is passionate about what you do, it is not advisable to post everything about work.

Or worse, to post everything positive about it, and about how much you really love your work. It would come across as trying too hard.

In any case, you will definitely need to connect with them on a personal level. Show them what you really are as a person on social media. Show them that you do have a life outside of work.

Some of us believe that work and personal life are separate entities, and that the way we relate to people at work may be vastly different from our relationships with our friends and family. However, I would think that our personality in these two aspects should be quite aligned so that people would not see you as someone with a split, or inconsistent personality. This I believe, is an important ingredient for trust to occur.

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY

As with all other social networking platforms, Facebook gives you the perfect opportunity to expand your network. Co-workers from other departments may not know you on a personal level in the office, but this relationship can deepen when you add them onto your social network. You can then attempt to chat, play games, share interesting posts and explore hobbies via mutual “likes”.

What do all these translate to?

Firstly, you would improve your social life in the office. Having more friends around would probably keep you going when times get tough.

After all, these friends are also colleagues who work in the same organisation, so there’s no one else better who would understand what you may be facing.

Secondly, networking gets you to places. It is particularly important to build strong networks within the organisation if you’re climbing the ladder. Why?

One of the most crucial reasons is that it will get you noticed. If you can establish friendships with at least one person from each department of your company, these friends may recommend you to their bosses should they need a replacement.

Another significant reason is that knowing someone from every department would likely make your work easier if inter-departmental collaboration is needed.

GETTING UPDATES

You need to keep in contact to maintain any relationship. The advantage that Facebook has over offline networking is that you get updates from friends, be it in the form of status updates or photo uploads.

This makes it easier to keep yourself informed on what’s going on in their lives before you interact with them. Essentially, getting updates from your bosses, colleagues and clients keeps you in the know on what they’re up to before they actually tell you in person.

Sometimes, they may not even want to tell you directly. You can then seize the opportunity to respond to what they have just posted and make a lasting impression.

At other times, this simply provides you with the information to initiate a conversation and maintain the relationship with them on a regular basis.

For instance, if your client posted something regarding his/her need to engage some services, you can step in and offer help by either offering your expertise or just recommending some people you know.

That way, you cultivate the trust and can even expect your client to consult you in the near future. You can even add in potential clients to your network so that you can actually “recruit” them when their posts give out signs that they might require your services.

SHOWCASING YOUR EXPERTISE

Whatever industry you are in, you can use social media as a platform to demonstrate your passion, vision and opinions you might have about your work.

Given that you’ve added a range of work contacts, it is now more convenient and appropriate to give your two cents’ worth and project yourself as a competent leader, team player or a reliable consultant, whichever you think would bring you closer to your career goals.

Take note though, that there’s a fine line between showcasing and being a show-off. The key is to not let others perceive you as trying too hard.

Post something about what you think or feel about your work every now and then, but don’t let all your posts revolve around it.

Remember to stay humble and not post things that make you sound like you are right and others are wrong.

Just let your posts be as neutral as possible and keep an open mind about whatever comments that may come in. All the best!
HOW TO ROCK YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

By ARIELLE YEN
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In April 2015, there were 1.44 billion active Facebook users and over 288 million active Twitter users monthly. Millions of posts and pages were dedicated to various brands, companies, personalities and more.

Social media gives us the freedom to post whatever we want. With all the constant updates clustering newsfeeds and timelines, it’s not hard to feel like a small fish in a vast ocean of social media presence.

If you want to rise above the clutter and give your social media profile a boost, here are some tips that might help:

- **A SINGLE VOICE MAKES A DEAFENING NOISE**

  For a project at university, my group and I were tasked to create a platform for middle-aged mothers to discover and share their passions, activities, and experiences. With all the various brands, companies, personalities and more, it’s not hard to feel like a small fish in a vast ocean of social media presence.

  The appeal of social media platforms is their wide potential of reach we weren't grabbing. However, there was still a need for a more personal touch. And that’s what none of us knew many middle-aged mothers with an interest in wine. Without anyone to invite to “like” our page, our Facebook page was sadly neglected.

  What we didn’t realise was that the concept of “word of mouth” has transformed, with the help of social media, into World of Mouth®, a concept coined by Erik Qualman, an author, keynote speaker and marketer.

  Word of mouth works like this: you tell one person. That person tells another, and the cycle continues as such. With World of Mouth®, a simple click of the “Post”, “Share” or “Invite” button means that the information you post gets spread to your entire reach of friends or followers within a single action.

  With another single click, your friends can pass that information to a few more people. Out of all those people, you’re bound to find a few interested consumers.

  None of our Facebook friends fit the target market for our wine discussion platform, but there was a likelihood that a mum, aunt, grandmother, or neighbour might have (please refer to the graphic).

  So, don’t be shy — spread the message wherever you can, and you’re bound to eventually be heard.

- **CREATE A BRAND PERSONA FOR YOURSELF**

  It’s important to give yourself a voice on social media. A “voice” doesn’t just mean typing a few half-hearted words, or sharing a blurry iPhone photo, and hoping for the best. In order to be seen on social media, you need to stand out from the rest. “How?” — you may ask.

  Swift was lauded, with major publications releasing articles such as Time’s “How Taylor Swift Saved Apple Music.”

  The fact that Apple, one of the largest corporations in the world, caved to Swift, a 25-year-old, surely demonstrates the sheer capacity of her influence. Even more commendable? This all happened through the Internet!

  **SYNERGISE YOUR PLATFORMS**

  Most people enjoy cohesive, organised material. However, it can be tiring to constantly update all your profiles one by one.

  To synergise your social platforms, use tools such as Hootsuite to create a singular dashboard. It would be advisable to modify the content for each site, though, so your material won’t be seen as generic and it won’t look like you haven’t made an effort.

  Shorter links can go with retweeted content on Twitter, whereas longer posts and more carefully curated images can go on blogging sites such as Tumblr.

  Since the demographics of users for each social media site differs, make sure that the content posted on each profile you own is relevant to viewers on those platforms.

- **IN CONCLUSION**

  Why is it so important to have a social media presence? Firstly, businesses are having to keep up with their fast-moving customers. The modern world is quickly changing, and if brands aren’t constantly updating their profiles, they may be left in the dust.

  Social media platforms are not just for businesses or commercial transactions. They can be used as an awareness tool, as well as for forging and maintaining relationships.

  With social media, you don’t have to have the loudest voice to make a difference or make yourself heard.

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Taylor Swift is arguably one of the world’s biggest pop stars at the moment, and the favourite artist of many fans, myself included. She’s known for her platinum-selling albums, several number one hits on the radio, and sold-out stadium tours all around the world.

Her social media strategy and relatable persona increases her popularity even more. She utilises sites like Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook to connect with her fans, recognising them as her friends, commenting on her fan-made content and even reaching out to her fans on social media to personally invite them to listen to new song material at her own home or to send them gifts of appreciation.
GUIDE CHILDREN WHO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

By ELAINE YONG
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N today's reality, having internet access is as essential as having water and electricity. A global mobile sample and research provider called On Device Research (2014) reported that in Malaysia, the internet penetration is 66% against a population of 30 million people, with 70% living in urban areas. The mobile social media penetration in Malaysia (as of October 2014) stood at 50%, when compared with neighbouring countries Singapore (80%), Thailand (46%) and APAC average (22%).

The top three most popular websites visited by Malaysians are: Google.com, Facebook and YouTube. For Facebook, children and young people (aged 3-24) make up nearly half of the users in Malaysia.

With these statistics, one can be certain that a typical 13-year-old Malaysian dwelling in a big city is likely to own a mobile phone with internet access and is an active Facebooker. This is the reality of the day.

As a parent, how do we fit into this scenario? Do we need to take our parenting online too? Is there a line to be drawn for our children when it comes to social media use?

Before we proceed further, let’s have a clear understanding of the concept “social media”. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary explained it as forms of electronic communication (as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create, share, and/or exchange information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).

It is a means of interaction among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. On the other hand, Whatis.com, (a search site for knowledge exploration and self-education tool about information technology), defines social media as “the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration”.

BRIDGING THE PARENTAL DIVIDE

Popular social media platforms include blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Wikipedia, Reddit, Pinterest, YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, Instagram and LinkedIn. These definitions have one thing in common, they all explain social media as being community-based, and which involves the exchange of information using an online platform.

So, what do parents in other parts of the world do to manage their children’s social media use? How do they react?

A quick browse through the literature yields mixed views. For instance, a survey conducted by Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics involving 728 American parents found that 83% of parents think the benefits of their children’s social media use outweigh or at least balance any perceived risks.

This view seems to be at odds with 40% of parents within this group who worry that their children’s online activity could breed social isolation and behavioural problems; and another 40% of parents who are concerned about their children’s virtual lives getting in the way of their real-life social skills and friendships.

In the UK, parents reveal their discomfort with social media. Approximately 63% of 1,006 parents of children aged eight to 16 surveyed online by Opinion, reported following their child’s Internet activity at least once a week. While 21% of these parents were not confident they could install parental controls, 46% admitted not being confident or aware of the school Internet policy.

An interview with 16 American parents with teenage children in Atlanta, Georgia gave detailed insights into their fears of wanting to balance parental authority with their children’s privacy and independence.

Parents of pre-teens were stricter than parents of older teens in enforcing rules about frequency, time and place of technology use. However, despite having such rules none of the 16 parents used GPS to track their child’s location. Equal numbers of parents (18%) required their teenagers to befriended them on Facebook and share passwords. The researchers also found that parents acknowledged their awkwardness with technology and some did not understand their children’s fascination with chats.

All parents were aware that they could not monitor or control everything their children were doing online.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Despite the negativity, is social media all that bad? There must be something good about it otherwise children will not gravitate towards it.

Many children have more positive than negative perceptions towards social media. Some benefits noted are:

- another outlet to express themselves
- builds confidence
- reaffirms their introverted personality trait
- strengthened friendships
- opportunities to collaborate with others
- encourages self-censorship
- sources of information
- encourages multitasking

In essence, if you have a child or teenager today we as parents, have to jump on board the ship; otherwise the ship will sail without us. Just like the times when our parents used to nag us about television watching, many saying it’s a waste of time, we certainly never thought so.

PARENTING SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS:

1. Adopt an authoritative parenting style
   - Set rules and limits for acceptable technology use and behaviour
   - Allow children to talk and negotiate on these rules
   - Outline clear consequences for rule-breaking

2. Get educated about technology
   - Keep up with technology trends

3. Educate children on how to keep their online footprints clean
   - Not to leave identifiable details such as phone number, address, and identity card number

4. Remind children it’s a World Wide Web
   - Information is permanent and public
   - Be prepared for differences in opinions and instigations for arguments

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LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM KINGDOM HEARTS

By TARA THIAGARAJAN
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I love for video games blossomed when I was at the impressionable age of 5. To me, video games provide something more than just the thrill of leveling up after winning each “boss fight”. They also introduce colourful, complex, and lovable characters that stay with you long after you complete the game.

One such video game that first set the bar for me was Kingdom Hearts, which tells the story of a young boy named Sora, who has the weight of the world thrown on his shoulders when a powerful, celestial weapon known as the “KeyBlade” chooses him as its wielder.

Although Sora was the only one wielding the Keyblade, his growth as a warrior, his companions providing support along the way. Sora knew that his friend could still be saved, as he believed that everyone has light in their hearts that can lead them to the right path.

In the conclusion of the game, Sora briefly reunites with Kairi after being split up once again. True leaders are driven to achieve their goals although tough challenges may come their way. They give their all into whatever they do, especially if it’s for something they are truly passionate about.

CONCLUSION
Kingdom Hearts taught me about the many trials and tribulations we are faced with when taking on the seemingly daunting task of being a leader. Although it seems undoubtedly hard to be a leader, especially for a young person, this game showed me that leaders could come in any shape, size, and even age. As a young person myself, I believe we should not underestimate our strengths that give us the potential to become leaders.

Every great leader was once young, naïve, and scared at some point in his or her life, just like Sora was at the beginning of the game.
O ne of my favourite movies to watch is the 2007 computer-animated comedy film Ratatouille. Reasons being, for one, the close-up graphics of really delicious-looking food and two, the simple message of the movie which is “everyone can cook.”

The truth of that saying hit me in a cooking workshop one day, when I was taught how to make a meal out of spaghetti, salt and herbs. I was 12 years old and inspired, and I resolved to go home and make spaghetti for the whole family. They didn’t like it. Regardless, I fell in love with herbs like parsley and thyme and later on, got infatuated with rosemary. The relationship between the four of us has been solid ever since.

**BREWING LEADERSHIP**

I grew up into not only a consider-ably adequate cook but also a leader of sorts. Being a perfect in school took me to many places in my personal development as a leader.

I learnt how to control a crowd without causing a riot, how to get a point across without offending people and so on. Looking back, it was truly an adventure that brings back really great memories, but the most memo- rable lesson is that leading is just like cooking.

And just like Ratatouille: everyone can cook. In other words, everyone can lead. Why do I say so? The leader is like the cook, the current situation is like the kitchen that the leader is in, and everything else about people: their characters, personalities and skill sets, goals, backgrounds… are the ingredient.

The meal is the end goal that the leader is supposed to help everyone achieve.

**LEADERSHIP RECIPE TIPS**

In the real world, all of these vari-ables are different and they are always changing. So, the question is, how do you cook?

The easy answer here would be: there is no real recipe for success. But I understand how disappointing that sounds, so here are some pointers.

**KNOW YOUR COOKING STYLE**

Just as there are different kinds of chefs, there are different kinds of leaders. Just as each chef has his own cooking style, each leader has his own way of leading.

Some people are methodical chefs, so they will be organised leaders. Others like things simple, their leader-ship will be direct and uncomplicated. Some individuals like to play around with spices and experiment, they will have unconventional methods.

In the end, regardless of whichever kind of leader you find yourself becoming, the most important thing is to ensure that you play to your strengths and never become too extreme.

If you are unconventional, ensure that your risks are wellthought out. If you happen to be methodical, make sure to allow for flexibility in your plan. If you like things simple, remem-ber that sometimes a little bit of flair won’t hurt.

At the end of the day, play them to your best ability and be ready to throw off failure and keep trying.

**KNOW THE INGREDIENTS**

A smart chef always makes it a point to get to know the ingredients. Have you ever realised that the chefs on food shows always make it a point to introduce the ingredients to an audience? They usually drop tidbits of infor-mation about its history and its general usage. This is because you never know when knowledge about that food might help in choosing your ingredients.

Just like a chef, a leader too needs to get to know his ingredients: his people. A chef mixes and matches his ingredients to bring out the best qualities for the final product. A leader’s job is to mix and match his people to bring out the best in them.

To do that, a leader has to know who his people are, what they are inspired by, what their skill sets are and what backgrounds they come from.

The more you know about people, the easier it is to communicate with them. A good leader knows his people and is able to communicate the final aims and objectives to them. His peo-ple would know that he cares about them, about bringing the best out of them so that everyone gains in the end.

**KNOW YOUR KITCHEN**

The kitchen is the home of the chef. Everything that he needs can be found in the kitchen. Henceforth, a good chef knows his kitchen and the equip-ment available.

Likewise, a good leader is aware about his environment and how he can change it.

A good leader is capable of chang-ing his environment in such a way that it helps the team be more pro-ductive and efficient without decreas-ing the team’s passion – for example, having a meeting to realign the team towards their goals and objectives all the while cheering them on in their current efforts. Or having little discus-sions with team members on how they as a team can improve.

**IN CONCLUSION**

In the end, I guess what I truly want to get across is that anyone can be a leader if they are willing to step into the “kitchen” and “start cooking”. As long as you have a heart for people, no matter big or small, as long as you are willing to move to bring out the best in every-one, you are a leader. The world isn’t your oyster, it is your kitchen!