

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Technology Section Members,

Here we are again at the start of a new year. It seems like “change” is the mantra for 2009. We’ve already managed to change politics in a big way and I have a feeling that this year will be a roller coaster ride across most segments of business and industry.

There’s no telling how the economy will impact the public relations business, yet. I’ve heard lots of conversations that end with “well, we’ll wait and see.”

So, what are you doing to help your clients make the most out of an uncertain economic situation? Taking advantage of lower cost communications channels? Cutting expenses? Recommending fewer trade shows? Moving resources online?

We’d love to hear your thoughts and ideas. Join us for conversation at the PRSA Technology Section Ning site at <http://prsatech.ning.com/>.

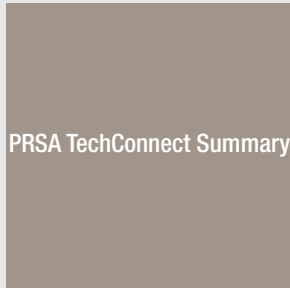
Here’s to a great 2009!

Sincerely,
Amy Fisher, APR
Editor
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PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS

Ten Reasons Why Your Company Needs to ‘Tweet’



Sandra Fathi, Sandra@affectstrategies.com

As Twitter becomes a more powerful business tool, organizations need to understand how to use it professionally in order to maximize its benefits. Businesses can now use Twitter for marketing, market research and analysis and communications with customers and business partners.

A micro-blogging service, Twitter allows users to send updates or “tweets” to their followers while following other individuals as well. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length (about two sentences long). Updates on Twitter are displayed on the user’s profile page and delivered to followers who have signed up to receive them. Users can also receive and send tweets on Twitter itself, a cell phone or PDA, and a host of other Web sites. Twitter has become an essential tool for public relations, and has relevance for almost every type of business. More and more companies are using it to communicate and create closer

relationships with reporters, customers and prospective clients. Companies that aren't at least monitoring Twitter, if not actively participating, could be missing critical opportunities.

Here are 10 ways that companies can use Twitter for business purposes:

- 1. Generate Awareness** — Many companies, employees and consumers use Twitter to spread awareness. Whether a tweet connects followers to the company blog, or a CEO's views on industry trends, tweets generate awareness through an online dialogue that reaches a large and active audience that is seeking information about you or your company.
- 2. Seek and Create Media Opportunities** — Many reporters are now using Twitter to find sources. Reporters will tweet about upcoming projects in order to help find spokespeople. By monitoring reporters' interests and news stories, public relations practitioners can strategically position their clients or organization to become a part of the conversation. Twitter is also a great way to generate news about a new product or service.
- 3. Foster Customer Loyalty** — Companies can search tweets from their customers to see what questions and critiques they may have. After compiling that data, companies can decipher what are the most frequently asked questions and concerns and address them by tweeting back or providing individual answers and superior customer services. In this way, customers can use Twitter to get instant resolutions to their questions and strengthen their relationship with the company.
- 4. Launch Viral Marketing Campaigns** — Twitter is a useful tool for launching and maintaining viral campaigns due to its near-instantaneous updating capabilities. Brands can encourage users to follow them on Twitter in order to receive exclusive updates and news directly through device notifications (e.g. instant messages).
- 5. Manage Reputations** — Organizations that routinely update their Twitter account are actively sending messages out to the public. Companies that respond to individual customers that are tweeting about them will have an impact on their public perception. Corporate Twitter accounts can also address widespread customer service issues faster and easier to help build and maintain a strong public reputation.
- 6. Promote Products and Services** — Twitter is an easy and free tool to share an idea or gather opinions from a large audience. Companies can promote products and services to their audience by simply writing a few sentences on Twitter without investing a great deal of time or money.
- 7. Network with Customers** — Companies that tweet on a consistent basis tend to generate a larger audience on Twitter. These businesses are able to insert themselves into conversations about their industry that are already taking place, in order to promote themselves and their company's brand.
- 8. Enhance Your Company's Impact at Events** — Companies can offer exclusive content and insights via tweets from the conference floor of an industry trade show or event. Instead of waiting until after the event concludes, conference attendees can engage in conversation with other attendees and presenters through group tweets.
- 9. Hear About Trends, Breaking News and Monitor Your Industry** — Twitter is already known for breaking news stories such as wildfires and earthquakes in California. However, Twitter is breaking news stories every day for vertical markets and industries. It's a great place to listen to chatter in the market and follow key influencers to learn what they are discovering on a daily basis.
- 10. Recruit New Employees** — Whether your company is recruiting prospective employees or clients, Twitter can be used to get the word out on all upcoming opportunities. Companies can tweet about job openings in order to attract potential new hires.

Although Twitter is the most widely used micro-blogging site, there are several other options for businesses that are interested in micro-blogging. Other sites that are similar to Twitter include Pownce, Jaiku and Plurk.

As with any social media campaign, it is important to understand the medium, the culture and the unwritten "rules" of the network. All you need to do is sign up, start following friends, colleagues and other businesses. Within a few days, you'll start to understand the landscape and uncover immediate uses for your own business or personal use.

Sandra Fathi, founder and president of Affect Strategies, leverages Twitter to inform followers about new blog posts on her company blog, www.techaffected.com, as well as share her opinions and insights on public relations and marketing. She can be found on Twitter as @sandrafathi.

■ Turning the Tables On: Esther Schindler



Erica Fenik,
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Esther Schindler, most recently the senior online editor at CIO Magazine, recently sat down with Erica Fenik, to discuss building relationships with public relations professionals. Read on to find out how to make your relationships “stick” with any publication.

Erica Fenik: Prior to working with CIO Magazine, what was your background in journalism?

Esther Schindler: I came to journalism as an enthusiastic tech professional (I was a programmer, then later a computer consultant and computer store owner) and community participant (initially in the CompuServe Computer Consultant’s forum, which turned into a career with lots of online community moderation). I was also a computer user group activist; my first articles were for the user group newsletter. When Computer Shopper needed someone to write an article about “using user groups for tech support,” my online friend recommended that I write it. Similarly, when a book about WordPress 6 was being developed, the editor saw my comments in an online forum and asked if I wanted to contribute. The rest was history.

EF: Moving up through the ranks, what was your relationship like with public relations people?

ES: I spent years as “someone who didn’t matter,” and I saw how much and how often public relations people could blow off an enthusiastic writer because their publication wasn’t big or important enough. There were always exceptions, of course: public relations folks who responded more to my interest and technical expertise than to my “reach.” I think it’s an important lesson for public relations people to be kind to the little people. They grow up.

EF: And today?

ES: Vendors yearn for reporters to dribble a positive word about their products, because a CIO who says, “CIO.com recommends this” translates into “ka-CHING!” Today I still make a point of always answering and responding to the public relations people who took the time for me when I “didn’t matter.” That doesn’t mean that their pitch is always relevant, nor does it shape my writing. But it means they always get my attention.

EF: So what makes a public relations person great in your book?

ES: They see their roles as communication enablers, not gatekeepers. The best public relations folks (and I’ve been lucky enough to

work with several great ones) make sure that they know what I want (gosh, they ask!); they find the people who can best answer my needs; and they do whatever is necessary to put me together with them in a timely fashion.

Esther Schindler is also the author of a famous piece titled “The Care and Feeding of the Press,” which was written several years ago on behalf of the Internet Press Guild (of which Esther is now president). The principles still apply today, and cover everything from initial outreach to product reviews to press-friendly Web presence. You can find at <http://netpress.org/careandfeeding.html>.

■ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Today’s PR 2.0 Interactive Newsroom (with excerpts from “PR 2.0”)



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As public relations professionals, we experience a vast array of online newsrooms in search of information about a company, its executives, products and services. In the Web 2.0 world, an online or interactive newsroom is an extremely valuable tool because it enables a business to present its vision and facts, and provides a means to communicate with customers, investors and general knowledge seekers.

Today, Web 2.0 functions such as social-networking platforms, blogs, podcasts, RSS feeds and wikis can offer new interactive ways to reach and engage key audiences. In my book, “PR 2.0: New Media, New Tools, New Audience,” I address how companies, marketers and public relations professionals can utilize these tools to optimize online newsrooms.

The popular lottery motto “You have to be in it to win it,” rings true in regard to online newsrooms as well. The more compelling the Web 2.0 features included in a newsroom are (coupled with useful, informative and easily accessible content about your company), the greater the probability that the audience will remain immersed in the site. They will be more likely to react to a call to action, whether it is signing up for a company newsletter, contacting the company, or purchasing a product or service.

Building in the Basics

First and foremost, an effective interactive newsroom should start

with a usability assessment and a simple navigation system. Work with Web developers for guidance on information architecture and page mapping techniques to fully optimize the newsroom.

Your target audience expects to find elements that are typical “best practice” functionalities of newsrooms, such as information about a company’s brands, policies, mission statement, career opportunities, archived news releases and financial information. Always-on-dead-line journalists cannot report on information they cannot find, which can result in lost opportunities.

Another feature characteristic of online newsrooms is the company’s public relations or editorial contacts. Keep in mind, a journalist does not have the luxury to search for this information in their mad dash to collect data and meet deadlines. Several different, yet effective, methods of displaying public relations contact information have been established, allowing flexibility in regard to the technique that best suits a company or brand. For example, some newsrooms position contact information within the navigation bar, while others place it on every page within the newsroom. It might seem redundant or excessive but you do not want to risk missing an opportunity over a small technicality.

Case studies and white papers are an effective way to communicate a company’s expertise and demonstrate customer successes. They allow a company to showcase its innovative capabilities, services, talent and technologies, all of which may be interesting to potential customers, investors and journalists.

Additionally, case studies and white papers can be a profitable lead generation tool — if readers are asked to fill out an online form, which triggers an email directly to the sales and marketing team. An online form should include first name, last name, company, job title, e-mail address and phone number, which will provide the staff responsible for generating revenue with all of the information they need to follow up.

Over the last few years, the Internet has become the most prevalent resource for breaking news. I was compulsively reading the barrage of information regarding the recent presidential election and bailout strategy for America’s fallen banks.

Using an online newsroom to communicate and maintain control of a brand can be beneficial, especially in times of crisis or uncertainty. The flexibility and speed of the Internet allows content managers to easily and quickly update information. Moreover, the ability to add to or remove information has changed. Whereas IT professionals

were once tasked with updating content, now, as technology evolves, communications professionals can modify and manage a newsroom quickly and effortlessly.

Going Beyond the Basics

For a more cutting-edge newsroom that extends beyond the standard tools we’ve just discussed, here are some examples.

Elements such as a searchable archived news release database allow visitors to seek out information by typing keywords into a search bar. The matching content can then be filtered to the page. Having tools that produce specific and relevant results can assist in narrowing the chances of visitors abandoning your site. This is important, as studies show surfers look for the quickest, fastest and most informative results and when they do not find it, they go elsewhere.

Links to corporate blogs are a great way to engage in a conversation with clients, employees, industry experts or any visitor with an opinion on your topics. Corporate blogs are beneficial for posting information related to events that are happening at the company, with clients or in the industry in general. A typical blog may include commentary or news on subjects relevant to your business, links to other blogs, Web sites, or other media related to the topic of each particular blog post.

Are you constantly looking for updates from your favorite Web sites? I am. I probably subscribe to at least one new e-mail newsletter each week in search of information on promotions, industry events or new product launches. Adding a company e-newsletter opt-in is great way to build a network and stay connected to an audience. Providing news on client wins, industry awards or executive opinions on what is happening in the industry can be a good way to get the message out.

Related to newsletters, blogs and press releases is the ability to provide an RSS feed of content from a newsroom. RSS feeds are used to notify subscribers of frequently updated content, including news headlines, blogs, podcasts or other forms of media. A feed can be Web-based or desktop-based and once the user downloads an RSS reader, it will check the feeds subscribed to and regularly download updates.

The growth and evolution taking place on the Internet has had a profound effect on the way we share, send and receive information. In today’s marketplace, professionals are embracing and optimizing the value that Web 2.0 can provide companies, clients and their respective brands, products and services. Interactive newsrooms have become an integral tool for companies and communications profes-

signals to connect with and deliver targeted information to intended audiences. Staying connected is a key component to maintaining a successful brand.

Deirdre Breakenridge is president and director of communications at PFS Marketwyse, a marketing and public relations company whose clients include AmerisourceBergen, JVC, Kraft, Michael C. Fina and RCN Metro. An adjunct professor at Fairleigh Dickinson University, she is the author of four books including "Cyberbranding," "The New PR Toolkit," "PR 2.0" and "Putting the Public Back in Public Relations." She has 20 years of experience as a public relations practitioner. For more information about Deirdre Breakenridge, go to www.deirdrebreakenridge.com or www.pfsmarketwyse.com. For more information or to purchase Deirdre's books visit Amazon or Barnes and Noble.

MEMBER PROFILE

Kevin Lightfoot, vice president, Corporate Communications, Affiliated Computer Services



Andrea Hazard,
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It took a few career and location twists before Kevin Lightfoot's career goal of ringing the New York Stock Exchange closing bell came true.

While he didn't personally ring the closing bell, he stood alongside as his company's CEO Lynn Blodgett rang it. "I was right there, right beside him," says the vice president of corporate communications for Affiliated Computer Services (ACS), based in Dallas. "It was really a culmination."

That culmination came after a more than 20 year career as a media relations strategist, crisis communications specialist and corporate spokesperson. Kevin began his professional life as a reporter in Manitoba, Canada before going into politics, working as a press secretary for provincial and national politicians. From there, he decided to get a taste of the corporate communications world.

"I always thought I'd get out of school and be a reporter for the rest of my life," Kevin says. "I never realized there was life beyond reporting. But it was a natural progression. As a corporate communicator, I'm still telling a story, I'm just telling it to a different audience in a different way."

Moving from the cold of Winnipeg to the heat of Dallas six years ago to take a director of corporate communications position with Electronic Data Systems (EDS), also felt natural to the father of two sons, ages 8 and 11.

"The skin graft moving from Canada to Texas took immediately," Kevin says, with a chuckle, before taking a more serious tone. "I miss aspects of Canada — of course you're going to miss your home. But I've developed some really, really deep friendships and relationships here, so it's feeling a lot like home down here. You ingrain yourself to the professional community and into your personal community. People have been quite welcoming since I arrived."

He laughs that his sons have become "true blue Texans," who share romantic visions of snow-filled landscapes, but don't understand the firsthand reality of winter. "Running from your car to your office building when it's minus 35 Celsius, there's no glamour to that," says Kevin, who is a member of the Dallas PRSA Chapter. "In fact, I had to explain to my 8-year-old how icicles are made."

Outside of weather, Kevin says his main adjustment in moving to Texas came in dealing with the business media. Namely, he says while Canadian media can be more aggressive, American business media tends to be more sophisticated.

"It spans from Wall Street to Chicago to Silicon Valley, and there is a very, very educated and savvy business press corps, especially in the tech area," Kevin says. "It makes it easier to tell the story. American business reporters understand the key points of what companies are trying to do for their clients, they understand the economic drivers a lot better, and there's a lot more of them."

Kevin foresees telling corporate stories for many years to come. "Within a corporate environment, you can touch so much of an organization, from the very human side through the financial issues as well," he says. "I like supporting the leaders and I feel that's my best use."



Kevin Lightfoot,
<http://www.acs-inc.com>

Jocelyn Johnson, CEO, Gravitas Communications



Susan Garcia,
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Jocelyn Johnson, CEO of Gravitas Communications, has a bold attitude about the world of public relations. "Every day in public relations is an adventure, you never know what you will be facing," she says. Jocelyn has worked in public relations for many years, starting with her first position at Shandwick International on the Microsoft account. Years later, Jocelyn is proud to be CEO of Gravitas Communications, a firm that is starting its fourth year of business, with offices in New York City and St. Louis.

Gravitas is a boutique-style communications firm focusing on high tech and digital media companies. Gravitas consults with a wide range of companies, from household names to small startups, on their needs for public relations and marketing communications services. Jocelyn says that she particularly enjoys the work her firm is doing with emerging business models for ad-supported online media, which she touts as "innovative" and "shaping the way we will consume media."

Jocelyn recently became a new member of the PRSA New York Chapter where she plans to get more involved with the technology and entertainment groups.

Previously, Jocelyn worked for six years on the management team of Elliot Sloane, who was a friend and mentor during her early years in public relations. She described Sloane as an "incredibly smart business man" and admired his drive and passion for the business on a daily basis.

With 15 years of experience in communications, Jocelyn remains excited about the future of media and where technology can take us. She is looking forward to participating with the PRSA Technology Group to help shape best practices in our field.



Jocelyn Johnson,
<http://www.gravitas-pr.com>

PRSA AND TECH SECTION NEWS AND BUSINESS

T3 Plan / Dates

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) announces the T3 PR conference, which will be held in New York on Tuesday, June 9, 2009. The conference, hosted by the PRSA Technology Section in cooperation with the PRSA New York Chapter, offers speakers and sponsors a chance to reach the best of technology communications professionals from around the country. Panel discussions, educational seminars and presentations will be devoted to issues facing today's practitioners who specialize in public relations for organizations in technology industries. The conference will also feature the annual Awards for Excellence in Technology Journalism.

For more details, or an early registration form, go to <http://prsat-ech.ning.com/events/t3pr-2009-conference>.

T3 Call for Papers

Want a chance to speak at the conference? We are looking for speakers to address some of the hottest topics in the industry including social media tools, traditional media and blogger relations, and measuring the ROI of your campaigns. Do you have great story to share? Submit it by clicking here: <http://www.prsa.org/networking/sections/technology/2009conferencepres.html>.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following PRSA members joined the PRSA Technology Section, September through November 2008. We are glad to have you on board!

<i>NAME</i>	<i>COMPANY</i>
Kevin Lightfoot	ACS, Inc.
Mike Ward	Ancestry.com
Melissa Lynn Dodge	Blackbaud
Gayle M. Tuttle	BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina
Lorelie Vi Johnson, APR	Bright House Networks Orlando
Clara Potes-Fellow	California State University
Lila Leonard	Cerami & Associates
Jennifer Hoffmann	Dow Jones & Company
Michelle Honald	E.W. Scripps School of Journalism
Traci King	Fujitsu
Isa Loundon	IntraLinks, Inc.
Loren Wallace Hurst	Loren Hurst & Associates
Lawrence A. Thomas	Medialink Worldwide
Nicole Angerone	Metia
Sheryl Andrea Lee	Metia
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