

# Are you perpetrating antisocial media?



By Ryan George

I still shake my head when I hear people touting social media as a shiny, new concept or as a marketing giant to slay all other media.

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and

YouTube may all be younger than Justin Bieber (and that's saying something), but they are just online venues to do what you've been doing offline for decades. Many of the same rules that apply to offline networking and personal conversations apply to online interactions — just tweaked a bit for privacy or the lack thereof.

As businesses and entrepreneurs flock to these sites, some are chucking social graces and common sense in search of some marketing El Dorado or advertising Fountain of Youth. Unfortunately, some are being antisocial in their use of online networking in these ways:

## Parking on the shoulder

If you haven't tweeted in months or updated your Facebook page in weeks, you might be doing more harm than good. In our culture, we understand people who have intentionally chosen not to add social media to their plates. But when a business professional or company sets up an account then doesn't contribute to the community or update their followers, they demonstrate either a lack of desire to interact or an incompetence to manage the simple technology. It's like parking on the

shoulder. Technically, you're on the road, but everybody passing you knows you're not going anywhere. So, if you're going to do this online social gig, purposefully comment on status updates, share links, retweet and hit that "like" button on pictures.

## Invading personal space

You'd think that, with the openness of online social sites, there isn't a lot of personal space on them. But that's why Facebook has such a robust range of security settings and why even Twitter has levels of interaction. If you're a firm posting company news, post it as a status update, an event, or a note on Facebook and as a tweet on Twitter. Do not send them via personal messages. You will get recipients' hopes up — especially mobile users — that there's a personal message for them. If you have a personal (not mass-broadcasted) message, then proceed in the more personal message space. Otherwise, you'll be the entrepreneur that cried "friend!"

## Unloading your camera

Whether it stems from a lack of technical skills or a lack of discernment, people dump scores of images into our streams. And we're tired of it. No captions, no tagging, no selective choice — no self control. Nobody wants to see 15 shots of the same tee ball at-bat or birthday candle puff or surprise snow around your house. If it's not worth your time to label and weed your pictures, why would you

assume it would be worth our time to sort through them — let alone leave a pithy or complimentary comment? Look at your content as shares of stock or printed money — the more you create (at one time or from one event), the less each picture is worth. It's supply and demand. Make more indelible impressions by making fewer, more intentional ones.

## Singing like a wall-mounted bass

It grabbed our attention the first time: that battery-powered frog that croaked by the sidewalk or the singing fish on the wall. But then it got annoying. Friends and family found your first and maybe second status updates about what you're selling to be interesting — to let them in on your career scene. But then, when most or all of your (rare) status updates were "If you're looking to buy a 3BR, 2BA house, check out our auction tonight!" or something similar, they checked out and now just speed scroll past such announcements. Some even find the habit to be annoying. Even for your company's Facebook fan page or separate company Twitter feed, if all you do is cry auction or assets for sale, you turn the communication from a conversation to a broadcast. This is a social setting, not a sales environment! It's OK to post such things from time to time on your personal areas, but make it the exception that brings attention to it. On your company's social pages, mix in helpful tips/articles, entertaining anecdotes, sales results, conversation starters and links to engaging content. Pretend you're at a social gathering — because you are.

### Megaphoning on the corner

Do not use ALL CAPS in your posts. It's the typing equivalent of shouting (and studies have shown that humans, unlike computer scanners, have a harder time reading ALL CAPS than sentence or title case). So, just as you wouldn't walk into a chamber of commerce mixer shouting, make sure you type with your inside voice.

### Not getting the clue

I have people send me multiple invitations to join the same group I've declined (now multiple times). It reminds me of the MadTV clip that's caught viral wildfire to almost 5 million views on YouTube. "Can I have your number? Can I have it? Can I have it?" In my case, I may not have past transactions with a company or know much about a particular entity. Maybe your invitee is trying to cut down on the number of updates in their stream. Whatever the reason they haven't become a follower, if you have to inundate them with invitations to get them to relent, what do you think your brand image will be when they see your updates pop up in their news feed? Don't make me get Oprah. He's just not that into you.

### Raining on the parade

We all know someone who, when they show up in a social setting, makes everybody else cringe inside. It's going to be a long story, a tale that seems complicated to the teller, a sad spew that ends in a sigh, a collection of too much information. These people find their way into our news streams. And with an insecure desire to bait people into engaging, they'll post ambiguous or uncomfortable status updates, like: "doesn't need to answer to anyone," or "will get through this," or "has been really struggling lately."

We all have Murphy's Law days, and social media can help us find the humor and irony in commiseration. But if your posts regularly trend negative, take a nap or a vacation. Find a hobby, a life coach or a certified counselor. Your personal attitude reflects on your professional personae and your company's brand.

### Stealing from the boss

Whether you work for a supervisor or the client is your boss, both want to know you're bringing your "A" game during business hours. When your Mafia Wars acquisitions, Farmville accomplishments or Bejeweled scores hit the stream, everybody knows you're not working on their project — at least not to an optimal extent. So, if you're going to grab some personal distraction on company time, you might want to go back to Minesweeper and Solitaire. Otherwise, it might be a good idea to do what your business card says you do.

If you want to succeed at online social media, play by the same rules that help you win offline. Listen to people, engage with them and add value to relationships.

*George, of Biplane Productions Inc., Lynchburg, Va., provides more marketing tips at [www.AdverRyting.com](http://www.AdverRyting.com). □*

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