Conference Report

Congregation Digital Media and Technology Festival

Share, Discuss, Connect #cong15
www.congregation.ie
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How Slack became the backbone of our distributed company #24</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media from across the water, the joys and perils of remote working. #25</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ashley Madison® hack: The psychology behind vulnerability to cybercrime. #26</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How To Win Followers And Influence Them #27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Communities #28</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Media – It’s pointless putting lipstick on a pig #29</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If PowerPoint is the answer, it must have been a stupid question. #30</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right 2 Write. #31</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Twitter to build your Digital Personal Learning Network (PLN) #32</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pricing and Revenue Generation in the Digital Age #33</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media for Social Good. #34</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratisation of Data Science #35</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status: Providing insights into the essence of who we are for artificial intelligence. #36</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Growing Pains of Social Media. #37</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 10 Tips for Building a Tribe. #38</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your world is not my world. Why? #39</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Technology Killing Creativity? #40</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning and Narrative. #41</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its 2015, Why has the Essence of the Event Remained the Same? #42</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Need to Talk about Robots. #43</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Make The Movies #44</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media: Why so antisocial. #45</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulysses VR: A personal creative collision. #46</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Measurement is the Elephant in the Room. #47</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the Past a Place - Augmenting Reality. #48</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your website visit is(n’t) very important to us – please continue to hold. #49</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video killed the radio star and nothing interesting has happened since. #50</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Human Link - Competing within an Online World. #51</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Digital Age Gap? #52</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Social Media has allowed me to build a sucessful business living in the wilds of Erris. #53</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using Hashtags and Social Media to Make an Income. #54
Outbox Incubator - Supporting the Next Generation of Women in STEM. #55
The Dream Machine. #56
Technology and Human Performance. #57
Are you distracted yet? #58
3 Simple To Use Apps For Better Life Management #59
How our reality is already being augmented. #60
Post-Consumerist Society: Life in the New Digital Age #61
Banks don't get IT! #62
How I Learned To Stop Worrying About My Blog & Love My Stats #63
The Truth, you can't handle the truth (unless you can dig deep) #64
Work Local. Deliver Global. #65
The Power of the Dark Side: What is Dark Social Media & Why Does it Matter? #66
Factory 4.0 #67
How do I know anymore? Online comments sections and a paralysis of opinion. #68
“All is changing, changing utterly…” #69
Wifi an entire village? #70
DiscardEd - How do we fix an education system that is rapidly losing touch with reality? #71
Everyone has impairments. #72
Emoji, hashtags, textual deformation: flesh on the bones of online language. #73
Learning from 12 Months of Conscious Social Media #74
Judge the fish by its ability to climb a tree. #75
Food for now. #76
New Views - internal external realities and where to next. #77
Behavioural Debt #78
Who's Laying Down Your Life Story. #79
AR and Education, and some Implications for Digital Marketers #80
Social Media – What's your Strategy? #81
The Voice Inside My Head #82
Smart Cities Will Be Driven By Open Data. #83
Communications Needs a Culture to Match #84
Summary

Congregation in 2015 or #cong15 expanded to a three day digital media and technology festival that ran from November 27th to 29th with a very diverse range of activities. The Saturday Un-conference was the centre piece event with a Friday evening of presentations on disruption, virtual and augmented reality and finishing up with social events on the Sunday. Childcare and special workshops for the children of attendees were also introduced this year.

Themed around ‘How Digital Media and Technology is impacting Work and Personal Lives’ over 110 outline topics were submitted, resulting in over 83 full submissions with 80 people discussing and sharing the wide variety of topics over the weekend. Topics ranged from drones, cash, education, content, creativity, cyber hacking, dark social media, remote working, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, innovation and entrepreneurship to the future of music.

Who attended?

The background of the 80 attendees was diverse from
• consultants,
• entrepreneurs,
• archaeologists,
• politicians,
• teachers/lecturers,
• researchers,
• writers,
• authors,
• journalists
• filmmakers
• accounts
• public servants
• specialist technologists and digital media experts.

A world of discussion

From its first year, with a focus on Social Media Congregation has evolved into wider discussion around technology and society with thought provoking, considered and discussion-able topics. The level of time, effort and care in their composition reflected a willingness to take time out to ponder the world we live in, where technology has a central role.

After analysing the input of over 80 attendees from 6 countries and 17 counties, trends start to slowly emerge.

Although very diverse, reflecting how daily lives are now intimately touched by technology, they can largely be grouped in to imperfect but largely thematic areas of interest covering:

• Education and Concern for Future Generations.
• People centric and impact of IT
• Content – rise, demise, storytelling and new formats/approaches
• Disruption – trying to frame and shape the brave new world
• Technical – predictive data to privacy to drones
• Tips – from Slack to apps to Twitter community building

One mega trend that spawned an entire evening was ‘Augmented and Virtual Reality’ with live demonstrations showing how archaeologists are using AR to make the past a place through to using VR to recreate the world of James Joyce’s Ulysses. Both areas also featured in lots of case studies.
Education and Younger Generations

Education popped up with one **ex government minister’s post** and insights from a primary school teacher teaching coding to 5 year olds, but it was a central theme that surfaced in many of the following sessions. We all struggle with the impact of technology on our working world but equally, and possibly more so, we fear the ability of the education system to deliver the skills that our children need for the 21st century. Most reported school children learning a lot of IT in primary schools, which was not mirrored in the secondary level and that outside school initiatives like **Coder Dojo** and **Mathletes** are supplementing and advancing their learning. Another speaker spoke about what we can **learn from children** and how our maturing into adults can sometimes stop us from dreaming the impossible. Nurturing the talent of younger generations and the insights from the organiser of an **incubator resident programme** show the amazing things that passion and youthfulness can bring, when guided and not impeded. Another related and heavily debated topic was on the growing divide between older and younger generations and their **use of IT**.

People Centric Theme

Technology impacts on all of us personally but sometimes in the rush to focus on bright shiny tools or platforms we fail to really appreciate what is happening to society. A talk from a CEO on the **struggle with purpose** unexpectedly touched a lot of people. The tail wagging the dog came to mind on posts about being **distracted by IT**. Nothing like some dark topic to disturb people as we are grappling with some major future changes of man versus machine, **what makes us unique and our role**. On the other side there is much fear mongering and another speaker brought a balanced debate to the rise of **robotics**. Man versus platform is also a serious consideration and one debate rationalised its probably best to collaborate even if its likely to completely **change your industry**. For all the things that technology brings it can really mangle creativity especially as people/companies try to productively skim rather than focus on **break through thinking**. Contrary views are always appreciated. Blind acceptance that social and other channels are right were severely tested in **another forum**. Another contrarian view was delivered about the blind acceptance of digital allowing people to **ignore business rules**. People can get lost in any technology related trend or topic so it was good to be brought back to user centric design and good old **customer service**. Still focusing on the people theme another speaker gave some great archetypes of social media people and how some people need to **saved from themselves**. Thinking community before channel again under scored the **people first perspective**. A periscope session in a café delivered some great perspectives on what a community means – **many things to many different people**. Artificial intelligence was bound to pop up but the debate was **pragmatic**. Its easy to get carried away on the euphoria of agency fees and how business can benefit from social so a meander back to the societal good that **social media can do was welcome**. Still under the people
theme I was personally really interested to hear about cyberhacking and the professional insights into the Ashley Madison hack. One discussion around friction was fascinating as technology generally aims to remove it but it has some merits. The last couple of months have seen lots of chatter about trust and the Edelman Trust Barometer so an Italian perspective on the extinction of trust and the anatomy of trust was useful. Remember your first social media or online post. This author narrated the unsettling feelings that perhaps no future generation will experience.

There were quite a few insights into impairments, disability and IT (universal design), the deeply personal impact of changes to algorithms and shyness and the value for the technology industry in recognising the value of those with Aspergers Syndrome and Autism. I could relate personally to the new world of work and efforts to enable new forms of remote working by creating locally focused innovation hubs. Others spoke about how technology allows them to live in most remote part of Ireland and build vibrant communities. One technology journalist narrated his year long experience of living on an island off the coast of Ireland.

The dangerous and crisis side popped up with some great thinking around the popular book ‘You’ve been publically shamed’. I really enjoyed the retrospection by some people on how comments on articles influence our behavior, thinking and perspective. Communities are clusters of people and not just data but these need to be nurtured and there is lots of examples of how to do it right. Finally a personal perspective outlining how sometimes it can just be good to take your time.

Content
In previous years content loomed large but this year saw a reduced number of posts on the topic. One questioned if we are at the end of content marketing?

Rather than a how to discussion, another focused on the history of content, explaining the logical move/transition to storytelling.

Given the developments over the last few years it would have been unforgiveable for mobile to not pop up but this year it emerged under the guise of having content geared for mobile.

Although not strictly content and more brand purpose there was a lot of interest in how brands can really articulate their being by creating some incredible content and initiatives. The importance of Emoji in language and how it is used was fascinating, especially as some suggesting it’s a new form of Esperanto. Related and equally interesting was a debate around students and use of standard English and a question about how right are we in our criticism of the emerging txt speak?

Forget about the obsession on stats and start really thinking about your content can really help content management and relight passion.

Disruption
Disruption was an obvious theme that arose and built nicely on the presentations the evening before. We are in a brave new world but some great insights showed that is the cumulative effect of lots of little changes that really matter. This disruption also works backwards into the manufacturing sector with a post on factory 4.0.

Technical
Predictive data and how accessible it is now kick started discussion long after people had time to digest it. Privacy continues to be a major central concern for people independent of technology, sector or platform and emerged as the need to have privacy built in rather than an add on after thought. Nothing like the clear perspective of the online world by an
accountant but the right pricing model is the life blood of online. Fancy a new form of money, then Money 2.0 is for you. Drones have really taken off but the measured debate was more around the legal and privacy aspects than documenting its capabilities, pointing to a maturing in the sector. Another post on Dark Social (not dark web) pointed out its importance in relation to measurement. The metric junkies and those just confused by measurement vented frustration at the lack of credible standard measurement or even the presence of a strong debate on it. Great reminders on how to produce a quality presentation which was ironic given the day. The implication of focusing on medium over message was given some pragmatic perspective with lipstick on a pig. Crowd Funding would previously have taken up lots of space but this year the debate was around how crowded it has become. Ireland is coming out of an economic crisis with the banks getting their fair share of the blame so an insider take on how they do not get IT was fascinating.

Tools/Tips
Using messaging and collaboration tool Slack allowed one attendee to build a virtual company. Another had great tips on improving Twitter.

Growth hacking has had a big two years in Ireland, but slightly off the boil this year, but still good enough for a how to guide post.

Ever want a one month marketing plans wrapped up nice and neatly into a set of instructions?

How many times have we moaned when asked to justify why a company should go online. One submission did it all for us?

Looking for some apps to help you through daily life?

Entertainment
One lively session that resulted in more questions than answers was around music and how little it has changed despite a perception of an industry that has endured huge upheaval.

Anyone curious about movie promotion got a sneak inside view from a publicity specialist about what it actually involves.

One notable exception was a well informed discussion around the migration towards messaging apps like Snapchat which I believe reflects the discomfort many older analysts feel with these platforms rather than the important seismic trend that appears to be spreading from the US through Irish millennials.

Looking forward
My personal crystal ball on 2016 says virtual reality will undoubtedly become more mainstream and normal, augmented reality will show its muscle in B2B, content overload will force us to rely on algorithms more and everyone will get more comfortable with data.

Methodology
Entry tickets to Congregation still hinge on the production of a submission, which once uploaded to www.congregation.ie is available for public viewing. Audio and video submissions were accepted this year increasing the diversity of media with tools like Periscope being innovatively deployed and recorded under #cong15.

The methodology behind producing and sharing the content before and after the event is to keep the volume of raw knowledge transfer at a sustainable level on the day so as to enable connections and meetings of minds during the discussions. Knowing that
the full versions are available online and published through the eBook allows
the participants to be ‘mentally present’ and open to creative thought and
dialogue. It also helps to uncover true personalities types while the small
‘huddle’ structure facilitates the active incorporation of quieter voices.
This year considerable effort was made to enhance and smooth out logistics
as the group of 80 was split between huddles of 10 people in 7 different
venues that alternated after 1 hour, 4 times during the day. At each of the four
sessions the group composition was sequenced to maximise the number of
people each person would meet. This was done with a spreadsheet on the
attendee lanyard which also featured a map of the venues and timetable.
Each venue also has a chairperson, who guided proceedings.

Friday in Ashford Castle
#cong15 kicked off on Friday 27th in the private cinema in Ashford Castle. A small
group of 36 people were treated to an intimate series of inspiring talks in the opulence
of ‘pullmanesque’ chairs. Themed under ‘A Night of Virtual and Augmented Reality’
the evening kicked off with a far reaching presentation by Damian Costello of Decode
Innovation narrating, analysing, explaining and putting into context the wave of
disruption we are experiencing. Set against the backdrop of past analysis, Damian
harnessed the insights of deep thinkers to weave together a narrative from Evert Rogers
S curve to describe innovation, 1950 R. Buckminster Fuller on making old models
obsolete, Clayton Richardson on stepping backwards to go forward dynamic and the rule
of three by Jeremy Rifkin on the explosion of value creation and third revolution. Damian gave a deep overview of the imminent
new economic paradigm based on decentralised and consumption of the communications/energy matrix. Central to the current
wave of disruption is the rapidly evolving arena of the Internet of Things and Damian closed with a poignant quote about where
we should position ourselves in the digital revolution ‘Winners gather oranges, while others are fighting over apples’.
Damian’s presentation provided an overlying framework and provided a context for the subsequent presentations.
Utilising the full cinematic impact of the room Nicky Gogan presented some curated video on the new views of the world that
drones offer and a special screening of a dystopian view of virtual world Second Life called Utopia 1.0. The first screening was
called Loitering Theatre and was a short drone view of Dublin from the eye
of drone. With no audio narration it documented views of prisons, banks,
guardians of data privacy Facebook and Googles offices, the home of the president and the aerial view of a rural site in the Dublin Docklands that
resisted the charge of development. The second screening proved to be a
talking point for the rest of the weekend with an intelligent but haunting
narration of how humanity has treated the blank canvas of a virtual world
that is Second Life, called Utopia.
Next up was John Tierney, an archaeologist, innovator and story teller. John
gave a compelling presentation that began with some rich local story telling
and fascinating archaeology discoveries from skulls in old church remains
to rich oral family narratives.
John’s presentation weaved the stories behind images, old buildings and ancient artifacts highlighting the fragile nature and potential loss of heritage especially orally communicated ones. Through his work on historic graves John has fostered an approach of original and locally crowd sourced images and data to build a repository of datasets about names, families etc. Through the simple examples of differences in second name pronunciations John explained some of the potential losses and richness of data that can be captured locally using a DIY kit of voice recorders and GPS enabled cameras.

John then moved on to describe how the older 2D drawings of archeological digs have now been transformed with reality computing that captures layers and multiple angles to bring a complex site excavation to life for future analysis. He also demonstrated how he uses 360 photography using smart apps such as the Bubbl app. John gave a snap shot of the power of augmented reality to deliver on his presentation’s title of ‘making the past a place’. By partnering with Bernie Goldbach from Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) and tapping into his students expertise, John is geolocating datasets for presentation through augmented reality platforms which visitors can access on a mobile phone. This could have a major impact on not only enhancing the experience of history with an almost limitless richness of media options but also in actually driving people to visit historic sites.

Building on the Augmented Reality theme, Alessandro Prest from LogoGrab looked back to the haphazard nature of web 1.0 websites and discussed how social media and web 2.0 scaled through standardisation. As mobile growth has mushroomed so too has the expansion of Augmented Reality on smart handsets. With very big differences in bandwidth and problems getting apps accepted, the challenge for Augmented Reality is how to scale with all this variation. Alessandro demonstrated their approach through a case study, which saw the activation of a global campaign with Heineken and the James Bond Spectre Movie through 85 countries. The campaign centres around the ability to simply take a photo of a Heineken bottle through the web browser on the phone, which then brings the user to unique images, clips and background location information from the Spectre movie. By driving the Augmented Reality experience through the browser it overcomes the problems of variable bandwidths and the need for special software. Much as the web changed fundamentally with Web 2.0, Augmented Reality experiences will also need to go through similar standardisations in order to scale and reach a truly global audience.

Finishing up the Friday evening, Eoghan Kidney gave a run through of the different variants of Virtual Reality headsets, current technology approaches to recording 360° video and seated versus standing experiences. He also detailed his negative early experiences with Virtual Reality headsets and the mental contamination it caused. Eoghan then demonstrated a prototype virtual reality project he created based on the James Joyce Ulysses. In his project he created 360 scenes from the book with a running narrative accompanied with floating words that could be further investigated for context. Eoghan shared the many learnings from the experience of creating virtual world content and how it differs from normal linear film content. He also gave insights into the challenge of having to research ancient maps of the world in which Ulysses was written as the modern day physical environment has changed so much. Eoghan’s closing warning of ‘Don’t Poison the Well’ reflects the fragility of the virtual reality promise with the impending pioneering dash to the platform. As an immersive platform it connects very deeply and bad experiences will be remembered for a long time.

Proceedings on Friday evening then moved to Danagher’s Bar in Cong Village where everyone made their own Virtual Reality Headset from old cardboard, toy binocular lenses, lollypop sticks and safety glasses – all stuck together with tape and guided by Eoghan Kidney. Although not aesthetically the most pleasing, the motley crew of headsets worked perfectly and transported
people from the bar into their own virtual worlds.

**Saturday Unconference**

On a quiet and damp Saturday over 80 people gathered in Ryan’s Hotel in Cong to register for the un-conference element of Congregation.ie. Discussion kicked off immediately and live streaming Periscope interviews where held without any ceremony.

Congregation is a very different type event as organiser Eoin Kennedy explained at registration “Everyone has earned their place here with their blog submission. Today is about sharing those insights and allowing serendipitous connections to form between you”. The principle behind Congregation or #cong15 is the inversion of normal conferences, where everyone is a presenter and each person decides when, where and how they wish to present. There are 7 venues used with four one hour huddles held throughout the day, each one containing over 10 people so that the 80+ presentations could be delivered.

This complicated structure was simplified with an almost treasure hunt like approach where each person was given a lanyard around their necks which detailed where they would be, at what time along with a map of the town. To ensure everything went smoothly each venue had a chair-person who guided proceedings and ensured that two/three people presented in each huddle and facilitated the all important discussions.

The mechanics of Congregation, although complicated, are easy to describe but the magic that happens when a motivated group meet in a social venue to share and discuss insights they have spent time composing, needs to be experienced to be fully understood. The close physical proximity in huddles combined with the friendly nature of Cong village unraveled barriers between people resulting in very engaged honest discussions and insightful connections between attendees.

Outside of the continuous mental stimulation of constantly changing topics, the relaxed nature meant that people’s true personality came out.

Interestingly during the course of the day the chairs revealed that education and the fear of social media popped up numerous times in unplanned discussions.

**Childcare – a first**

As the attendees were exercising their minds in Cong Village, the brand new Crossroads community centre outside the village was hosting over 20 of their children. The organisers were determined that the children should have an even better day than their parents and they were treated to a Puppet Workshop by Carmel Balf of Little Gem Puppet of Kilkelly, followed by Clay Modelling workshop by Amanda Hickey of Clayroots. The Hungry Monk delivered lunch for the lunchtime movie and they even had the opportunity to test out the latest virtual reality headset called Oculus Rift.

Saturday’s proceedings wound up at 4.30pm with the traditional photo and wrap up at Cong cross. Over 50 of the group stayed on to continue the discussions over dinner in Pat Cohans and Ryans Hotel before continuing late in to the night in Lydons and Danaghers Hotels.
**Sunday Social**

Due to storm damage in the woods the planned guided bike tours did not go ahead but instead there was a drone demonstration and guided singing historical walking tours by the Quiet Cailin.

**Venues**

The choice of venue is a key ingredient in Congregation, as they help set the mood and calibrate people for active engagement. This year 7 venues were utilised from cafes to craft venues and the personality and physical setting of each drove a very different type of engagement, presentation techniques and discussion. No one venue was similar and most were open to the public on the day, which ensured that the interactions were as close to normal conversations as possible.

**2016 Theme**

After enjoying the Christmas market in Cong on the Sunday and leisurely breakfasts in Puddleducks the last of the attendees departed with the seeds of next year's Congregation theme – Technology Meets The Future and the Past. #cong16 will run from November 25-27th and balance the attendee perspectives of the future with the deep heritage of the past through guided tours of Cairns, Ringforts, Follies and ancient battle grounds.

**Sponsors Enabling Congregation**

Checking social media under #cong15 it’s clear the event was a real success and impacted greatly on people but one of the really impressive parts is that the event is entirely free. This is only possible due to the support by the sponsors Mayo.ie, Blacknight.ie and MKC Communications. The three sponsors have not just invested financial resources but also invested time by participating on the day and in the run up to the event.

**Economic Impact**

Outside of putting Cong on the map for another area outside of tourism and a expressed desire for many to return to Cong,
a quick economic impact showed that over €13,000 was spent by attendees with local businesses over the three days. One of the aims of Congregation was to test the concept to see if the season could be extended with an event that would normally be in a city location by co-ordinating local business venues.

**Congregation in the News**
Congregation mainly relies on word of mouth and content marketing but media coverage and blog posts really helps. Some of the highlights this year are below.

- Irish Times
- Silicon Republic
- Look West
- Technology.ie
- Tech Central Podcast
- The Persuaders
- Social Savvy
- Mayo.ie
- Connacht Tribune
- Mayo News – full report
- Digital Marketing Success
- Irish Technology News
- Conferencing. 3 page interview about Congregation.
- Congregation also featured in a book on events that will be published in 2016.

**Syndication**
A partnership with Irish Tech News syndicated many of the articles and expanded them with additional interviews with contributors. Inc60 also reformatted many of the posts into a podcast series.

**Life hack and comments.**
The ice breaker for each huddle was a life tip, which frequently spawned its own discussion. A selection of some of the is below:
Cronan McNamara
“what gets measured gets improved ... use your data”

Olivia Forde
“If you want to have mushrooms like they used to taste when you cooked them on the range - put them on a plate with a little salt in them and microwave for 1 minute - delicious.”

Padraig McKeon
“In everything that we do think of the power of the word ‘Why’ - If we know ‘why’ we do everything that we do, we will get on fine.”

Mary Carty
“Use IFTTT to automatically post happy birthday and congratulations messages on LinkedIn. That way you never leave out a colleague or friend.”

Joy Redmond
“Business: Hire someone with Autism/Asperger or any special needs some day if you’re in a position to make a huge difference to a small life.”
“Life: Instead of tut-tutting at a parent struggling in public with an unruly child (autistic or not), offer them some help! It means so much.”

Darragh Rea
“My one was the importance of exercise in your daily routine particularly in and out of work – I walk to work most days and it really helps to set me up for the day and unwind post. I also had a second one which was that in order to give advice to others, you needed to live a life away from your desk.”

Liam Horan
“Voice recognition is now a game changer”

Caroline Lawless
“Sometimes it’s okay to leave your phone at a home. Give yourself a break!”

Declan Clancy
“Be more mindful. Appreciate what is going on in the moment and don’t let life pass you by looking at your phone every 2 minutes!”

Alan O’Rourke
“I suffer from shiny object syndrome, where every idea is great and must be done now... so nothing gets finished. To combat this I have learned to be stubborn and write everything else down to look at later so I can stick with the current project until it is done.”

John Tierney
“Always carry a 4 ink pen - old fashioned but makes the review stage of notetaking far easier - no longer faced with monochrome wall of notes.”

Grainne Kirwan
“My life hack was very untechnical. As it is often (bizarrely) cheaper to buy a net of lemons rather than individual ones, to avoid wasting them, slice all leftover lemons and then freeze the slices in a small tupperware container. These slices can then be used as a slice & ice combo when serving drinks (especially over the coming festive season)”

Pauline Sargent
Congregation in Numbers

- 3 days of events
- 80 attendees
- 20 kids 3 workshops
- 7 sessions
- 6 countries represented
- 17 counties
- 110 outline topics
- 84 full submissions
- 4 video submissions
- 60% Male/ 40% Female
- €13,000 local economic impact
- 1 drone
Most Read Articles

01 One month - A micro marketing plan by Alan O’Rourke.

02 The 10 Different Types of Facebook Like by Sean Earley.

03 How To Win Followers And Influence Them by Marie Ennis-O’Connor

04 How Slack became the backbone of our distributed company by Jochen Lillich

05 Money 2.0 The Swiss WIR Way by Chris Armstrong.

06 Questioning Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome by Joy Redmond.g.

07 DisconnectEd - How do we fix an education system that is rapidly losing touch with reality? by Ciaran Cannon.

08 Bringing the World of Twitter to a Local Level by Ben Miles.
www.congregation.ie activity for #cong15

- 16,000 visitors
- 70,000 page views (AWStats)
- Over 700 #cong15 tweets
- Flares from Congregation.ie
  - 59 Comments
- Facebook
  - 261 Facebook likes
- Google+
  - 114 Google+ likes
- Linkedin
  - 700 Linkedin
Top Flares Per Post

- LinkedIn: 77 views for "If PowerPoint is the answer, it must have been a stupid question" by Rowan Manahan
- Google+: 27 views for "Is Technology Killing Creativity?" by Joan Mulvihill
- Facebook: 26 views for "How our reality is already being augmented" by Jimmy Healy
- Instagram/Flickr/Pinterest: 140 photos
- Twitter: 10 videos, 8 scopes, 200 photos
Tweet Quotes

Paul O'Mahony (Cork)  
@Ormsblog

The story of what happened at Cong last weekend. Superb Un-conference Congregation 2015 - #cong15

8:32 AM - 1 Dec 2015

Fiona Ashe

Huge appreciation @eoink for a fantastic weekend at @congregation13 #cong15

2:53 PM - 26 Nov 2015

Dermot Casey

Mr @eoink has created something very special with #cong15 Thank you and to @blacknight @MayoDotIE @MKComm for sponsoring!

2:05 PM - 29 Nov 2015

Outstanding weekend in Cong! Thanks to @eoink @congregation13 & sponsors @blacknight @MayoDotIE @MKComm #cong15

12:54 PM - 29 Nov 2015

Brenn O'Rourke

Fascinating conversations, interesting company, and a relaxed, stimulating format at #cong15. Thanks, @eoink, chairs, and everyone

1:43 AM - 30 Nov 2015

Alan O'Rourke

Thank you @eoink and team. That's the creative energy charged for the next 6 months. #cong15

11:00 AM - 29 Nov 2015

Paul O'Mahony (Cork)

@Ormsblog

@eoink I can't thank you enough for #cong15 - but I will try to spread the message that you are the best unconference designer of all

8:00 AM - 28 Nov 2015

Eoin Kennedy

I do appreciate the kind words Paul. Never got a chance to have a decent chat with you.

@eoink  - 29 Nov 2015
John Leonard
@jleonard

Home after a day of chairing huddles yesterday at #cong15. A tiring but most enjoyable and interesting experience.

Declan Clancy
@ Declan Clancy

Great weekend, great people and great discussions. That’s #cong15 in a nutshell! Did I mention it was great?

John Tierney
@ JohnTierney

A carpet of stone @ Cong Abbey - thanks to @eoink for developing the powerful #cong15 unconf model.

Ginger Aarons
@ GingerTT

#cong15 If you missed this great event organised by @congregation13 you missed out! Looking forward to #cong16

Dermot Casey
@ DermotSweeven

@Freedom_Sweeven I’d take 1 #Cong15 over 100 Websummits

Pauline Sargent
@ PaulineSargent

Five words about #Cong15 from all. Thanks @Eoink it was magic

Paul Killoran
@ PaulKilloran

Thanks to all the #cong15 sponsors! @blacknight @MKCCComm @MayoDotIE Well done for believing in such a great event.
In attendance at #cong15

Ginger Aarons
Fiona Ashe
Clodagh Barry
Sharon Boyle
Robbie Canavan
Ciaran Cannon
Mary Carty
Dermot Casey
Gianni Catalfamo
Declan Clancy
Simon Cocking
Chris Collins
Jacqueline Connolly
Damian Costello
Helen Cousins
Julian Ellison
Olivia Forde
Robert Gaggl
Mark Gavin
Alex Gibson
Nicky Gogan
Bernie Goldbach
Kieran Hanranan
Max Hastings
Lucia Hastings
Reggie Hastings
Jimmy Healy
Barbara Heneghan
Liam Horan
Wayne Hunt
Ailish Irvine
Lisa Jackson

Calvin Jones
Ruairi Kavanagh
Eoin Kennedy
Barry Kennedy
Paul Killoran
Tim Kinsella
Grainne Kirwan
Caroline Lang
Karl Lawless
Jane Leonard
John Leonard
Mark Leydon
Jochen Lillich
Andrew Lynch
Maryrose Lyons
Pauline Madigan
John Magee
Alastair McDermot
Sean McGrath
Myles McHugh
Padraig McKeon
Cronan McNamara
Ben Miles
Joan Mulvihill
Barry Murphy
Eamonn O'Brien
Emmet O'Donnell
Paul O'Mahony
Auveen O'Neill
Alan O'Rourke
Breffni O'Rourke
Sue Patterson
Alessandro Prest
Carmel Rafter
Darragh Rea
Joy Redmond
Pauline Sargent
Roseanne Smyth
Nichola Spokes
Averil Staunton
Gerard Tannan
Alec Taylor
John Tierney
Alan Tyrrell
Mariann Unterluggauer
Beatrice Whelan
John Wright

Chairs
Alec Taylor
Averil Staunton
Auveen O’Neill
Emmet O’Donnell
John Leonard
Barry Kennedy
Robbie Canavan

Acknowledgements

Congregation could not have taken place without the generous financial backing of Mayo.ie, MKC Communications (www.mkc.ie) and Blacknight Solutions (www.blacknight.com). I would also like to thank The Public Relations Institute of Ireland (www.prii.ie) and the Irish Internet Association (www.iia.ie) for their continued support of this initiative. The real heart of Congregation were the amazing posts and energetic attendees on the day who travelled from as far as Italy and Austria. I also owe gratitude to the chairs who expertly guided and moderated the sessions with professional ease and Sue Power of Power Design for her help in designing the posters. A special thank you to all the venues in Cong who pulled out all stops with infectious enthusiasm and ensured day long supplies of tea/coffee and lunches for all attendees. Finally my gratitude to Ashford Castle for the support and use of the private cinema. I really hope you enjoy reading the submissions from #cong14 and put November, 25-27th 2016 in your diary for cong#16.

Eoin Kennedy
The 10 Different Types of Facebook Like. #1

By Sean Earley

It may seem like a simple click but since 2004, Zuckerberg’s Facebook “like” has gone from social interface to cultural icon. The much loved “thumbs up” has spawned t-shirts, stationery, store window decals, and even knock off emojis outside of Facebook.

However, I believe there are not only many types of Facebook “like”, but several layers of psychology that go into hitting that little button on your newsfeed.

Consider for a moment that all of an individual’s “likes” are for public consumption and so in one way or another, one’s “Facebook likes” build up a very comprehensive portrait of a person’s inner thoughts, opinions, desires, interests and influences. Unless of course, you like things entirely at random with no attention paid to the content or the publisher - at which point I’d probably just label you as a wee bit of a nutter. Yep, my kind of people.

Synopsis:

In the age of clickbait and mindless social media checking (up to 17 times a day - yeah, me too) how many of us actually consider the wider digital portrait we’re painting of ourselves with our interactions with others our seemingly un-motivated Facebook “likes” that conceal a multitude of ideology, opinions and thought processes that delve so much deeper than just aimlessly tapping our smart phone screens. Seán Earley, Head of Creative in New/Slang (PSG Communications) takes a light-hearted look at the psychology behind a “like”, the cultural convention and the microcosm of social politics that go into that one little tap.

4 Takeaways:

1. Your “likes” are public and define you. Don’t forget it.
2. When you “friend” someone – you’re inviting them into your life. Warts and all!
3. “Likes” have taken on a whole new definition and no longer simply mean a positive feeling towards something.
4. With the rise of Facebook our social interactions as a species will never be the same again.
About Sean Earley:

Sean is a Digital Marketeer working in New/Slang (PSG), executing exciting, innovating and award winning for clients such as HB Ice Cream, Lyons Tea, Life Style Sports, LIDL, Bayer, Activis, Repak, Keogh’s, Bord Gáis Energy and Boehringer Ingelheim.

He develops and implements digital strategies for top international brands on social and helps them build connections with consumers online.

Contacting Sean:

You can see connect with Sean on Facebook, follow him on Twitter or Instagram.

The genuine like

The kind of thumbs up to a nice photo of your mate devouring a cornetto at the sea front on the only sunny day we had this summer. Or maybe it’s a like for a photo of a creamy Friday evening pint with accompanying check in. There’s little psychology in this one it’s pretty much the purest form of a like.

The creeping like

Slightly more sinister - the line between reminding someone you exist and being a full on stalker can quite easily be crossed. No need to like a random holiday snap from 2009 but also no need to like EVERY SINGLE POST recently. Calm down.
The buddies like
Less romance more “hey, let’s hang out”x10. This kind of like occurs on photos from nights you have out with other mates in a “looks like a great night, please please please invite me next time” sort of way. Again - ease off on these, needy folk.

The passive aggressive likes
The saying something without saying something execution.

Example 1: Rupert borrows €300 from Humphrey to pay the rent. Rupert then checks into Lillie’s on Friday and Saturday night with messy status updates such as; “LANGERED LADS!” and “uh oh; round two!” Obviously Humphrey has not loaned Rupert rent money but drink money. Instead of just calling Rupert out on this, Humphrey passive-aggressively likes every one of Rupert’s check ins. He nearly breaks his index finger as he slams it down on that like button through gritted teeth. He also eats Rupert’s snickers from the fridge. Oh dear, Humphrey. Next time, use your words buddy!

Example 2: Cuthbert and Ethel have a fight. They don’t take it onto social media as they’re “way” too mature for that lark. Instead, Ethel likes a bunch of memes around the subject “men are so clueless” and some friend’s posts about “strong independent women”. Smooth Ethel’s of the world. Smoooooth.

Example 3: An argument erupts in the comments on a post - probably a thinly veiled remark calling someone out on something stupid. Each party continues to “like” the other’s response in a; “you’re full of shit and I hate you, but I’m showing that I’m the bigger person”, kind of way. I always imagine these likes are done as the likee holds two fingers up to the screen. Yep, that’s me.
The end of a conversation like
Someone's commenting. You have nothing further to say. They won't stop. You just like their posts instead of replying. It's the Facebook equivalent of putting your earphones back in after the person on the bus sitting next to makes an attempt at small talk. Eyes forward.

The supportive like
The “hey, I see you’re having a spot of bother with someone in a heated online debate but I’m not getting involved. Instead, I’ll quietly cheer your name from the side-lines by subtly liking your replies and comments” kind of like. Seriously? Chime in and give us your two cents for the love of Zuckerberg.
The sad like

My dog was my best friend and she died today. *like* She was like a sister to me. I’m devastated. *like,like* She got cancer and died in my arms this morning *like,like,like,like,like*. This is a weird one because obviously you don’t enjoy hearing that a dear old pet has doggy cancer. But a thumbs up is the limpest gesture of a soft pat on the back. “Hey buddy, have some social media interactions to mop up those tears”. Better? Good.
The Amen like
We all share experiences that define the human condition. Sharing these collectively make us feel similarly less stupid for; stepping on an upturned plug, sneezing when eating rice Crispies or calling your teacher “mam”. The Amen like is the “been there, have the t-Shirt” social nod of silent acknowledgement. I'm cringing with you.

The pity like
Ah sure they tried. They spent a shed load of money on the outfit, the hairdo, the seemingly endless supply of orangina branded slop they applied liberally to their torso in the name of “tan”. Sure what will a pity like cost? Nothing. Except enabling carry on like this to continue! Careful now.
The brand like
Freeeee stuff. Who doesn’t like free stuff? The stats tell us that 60% of people in Ireland like a brand page for the chance to win prizes or get free stuff. That’s not to say that it’s all exclusively competition based, liking a luxury handbag or suit might be a vain attempt to drop hints to the other half!

The intellectual like
And finally the one that bugs me the most. If I really thought you were interested in the dwelling habits of Mesolithic cave shrews I’d assume you’d be too busy to be Facebooking about it. Sharing novels of content is coupled with liking posts from the Dalai Lama and Richard Dawkins and commenting; “so true”. Come down off that high ground, you’ll get a nosebleed! "
The Good Wife, the Lobbyists and Technology. #2
By Myles McHugh

Synopsis:

Lobbying has had a bad name. Lobbyists have been seen as part of a hidden underworld of private meetings, lunches, golf outings and entertainment. In fact lobbying is a legitimate activity. The new Lobbying Register is being facilitated by technology and will shine a light on this area.

4 Takeaways:

1. Lobbying has a rather murky reputation, sometimes unfairly.
2. Regulation of Lobbying is now a fact and the Register is in place.
3. Ireland will be at the forefront of regulation of Lobbying.
4. Technology is playing an important role in shining a light on this area.

About Myles McHugh:

Myles is a Galwegian, living in Oranmore. He provides training and advice to companies in the areas of Media Relations, Customer Service, Management and Strategy. He lectures in Marketing and Communications at Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT). He is an

Listen to Myles or read below.

I was recently watching an episode of “The Good Wife”. In it, the main character, Alicia Florrick has just been elected as State’s Attorney. During the election campaign she received financial support from a number of dubious quarters. In this particular episode she is celebrating her victory when each of the benefactors arrive on the day with a reminder of how many dollars they contributed and their list of demands from the new attorney. It set me to thinking about how we lobby our politicians and officials in this country and how all of that will change with the Lobbying Act 2015.

In his book “Yes, Taoiseach: Irish Politics from Behind Closed Doors” written in 2004, Frank Dunlop recalls the setting up of TACA a fundraising group for Fianna Fáil in the 1960’s. “TACA was the forerunner of many subsequent inventive schemes that allowed business people to buy their way into the decision-making process, to gain access and to put their case forcefully in circumstances where others, who had not contributed, were denied an audience.” he wrote.

The situation in the US is even more extreme. In his book “Capitol Punishment”, the disgraced Jack Abramoff describes how he would “buy off” public officials. His exposé of the corruption in the corridors of power in Washington. He is now an advocate for
experienced management professional with over 38 years of management experience and was a senior manager in Iarnród Éireann. He has held senior positions in strategic management, customer relations, media communications and marketing strategy. He is also a qualified coach.

Contacting Myles:

You can contact Myles by eMail, follow him on Twitter, Facebook or phone on +353 87 2588763

reform of how lobbying is carried out.

The Lobbying Act 2015 and the commencement of the Lobbying Register have placed us at the forefront of how lobbying is regulated.

For me this perception that all lobbying was corrupt has dogged what is in effect a very legitimate activity in a democracy. Politicians and public officials do not have the monopoly on wisdom. Indeed they can very often be removed from the reality of how their decisions affect citizens. There remains however in the public eye the “whiff of sulphur” about the lobbying process. There is also the perception of “golden circles”.

The Role of Technology

It has taken over 50 years for legislation to be brought in to regulate lobbying. In a strange way this delay may lead to a much more robust and transparent system. The one sure thing is that the new Register will finally allow for a new level of transparency.
The reason for this is that Standards in Public Office (SIPO) officials are using technology to report all instances of lobbying. Lobbyists will be required to complete the database online and the citizen will be able to read the reports without the need for any manual intervention by the regulator.

Lobbying.ie is a very user friendly website which has quickly become both a repository of information and the workhorse to capture the reports of lobbying activity. Citizens will now be able to just log on to the site and to search for specific activity or just browse the database. Journalists will have great fun with this.

SIPO have also been very active on Twitter in treating awareness for the new legislation.

We are on a steep learning curve with regard to the reporting of lobbying and it will be interesting to monitor how the new system will bed in. The one sure thing is that the lobbying landscape has changed forever. The technology will likely evolve as well and I have no doubt that the Lobbying Register will also evolve.

Interesting times ahead.
Drones: Game Changing from a Distance. #3
By John Wright

Five years ago on Christmas morning, I was handed a book on drone and robotic technology. After the first chapter, I was well and truly seduced.

© www.mydrone.ie

To most back then (and even now) it seemed unimaginable that small flying robots might film our landscapes, serve us food or even deliver packages to our door. Until recently, drones were dismissed as an amateur niche. But the technology has evolved rapidly and as drones get smaller and smarter, they continue to show us that there are few limits to their capabilities.

Drones are changing the game for many sectors. Industrial inspections and surveys are faster, cheaper and more accurate, using drones. But the most prevalent use so far has been in aerial film and photography to create eye-catching content!

But just like other new technologies – drones bring their own set of questions and challenges. Some of the more common subjects are:

(i) What are drones used for?
(ii) Aren’t there laws on drones?
(iii) How can they be legally used in business?

To many, using drones to create digital content is a no brainer. After all, drones certainly capture the imagination. But moving beyond the hype: are drones just a catchy marketing stunt or part of a serious digital marketing strategy?
About John Wright:

John Wright BL is a practicing barrister, qualified drone pilot and founder of MYDRONE, a drone startup that caters to a range of sectors, including Film & broadcast, planning & construction, engineering and agriculture. He is also co-founder of Flightpath Consulting - set up to meet the growing need for key regulatory and commercial assistance on the use of drones for a variety of civil and commercial applications. John is a regular speaker at drone events, including Digital rights Europe, Skytech UK and UKdroneshow.

Contacting John Wright:

You can follow John on Twitter, email him or learn more about his business at www.MYDRONE.ie

There is undoubtedly value in simply associating your brand with something so innovative and unexpected. Creativity is currency in social media and drone content gets hits. When Twitter published “Drone Selfies” of the stars at Cannes in 2014, for example, their @dronie account gained several thousand followers within a few hours of its creation. “Superman with a Gopro”, filmed using a drone, has almost 18 million Youtube views. It’s been shown many times that aerial content can be a powerful PR instrument in a digital marketers toolbox.

But drones are no once off marketing gimmick. They provide new perspectives in a way that ground footage never can. Nine times out of ten, aerial videos look better than what a photographer can capture on the ground and they have even become known as the biggest advance in film since the tripod. The unique angles that drones capture are becoming an essential part of productions, large and small and directors are rewiring their imaginations. Viewers, initially surprised at the angles that drones capture, will soon begin expecting it. The smartest media outlets are catching on to this phenomenon: CNN, for example, were recently granted a licence to use drones in their broadcasts. Others broadcasters, recognising the value of aerial footage, are following suit.

And drones are not limited to film and photography. With powerful on board sensors, they can collect an array of data, making them invaluable tools for aerial inspections.
By Roseanne Smith

and surveys – faster and cheaper than traditional ground based methods. In the hands of a professional, drones add real value to a range of sectors such as media, construction & engineering, architecture, sustainable energy and farming. The list is endless.

But while anybody can buy a drone, not everybody can be a pilot. In the hands of an unlicensed or reckless pilot they can be a serious hazard. Even a small drone, for instance, is the equivalent of a steam iron being thrown at 30mph. Safety must be paramount.

The Irish Aviation Authority (IAA), responsible for air safety, already carefully regulates commercial drone operations. All professional operators must be trained, licensed and insured, and have sufficient knowledge of air law; for instance, flights over urban or residential areas must be specifically authorized by the IAA and strong safety precautions are required.

Privacy too, is a widespread concern. Drones cross boundaries with ease and can access places where we previously took our privacy for granted, such as gardens. The long gaze of drones means that pilots can capture personal information accidentally, or worse, deliberately.

As the numbers of drones in our skies increase, regulations will be more important than ever and from a liability and reputation perspective, both the pilot and the customer should be aware of the need to play by the rules. New laws are in development and expected next year.

Each day brings something new: Lighter cameras, longer flight times, smarter drones and even new laws. The pace of change is speeding up. But it is we humans that are in the driving seat, and drones of today and tomorrow will be restricted only by our own imaginations.
Money 2.0 The Swiss WIR Way #4
By Chris Armstrong

Synopsis:

As a physicist I've been taught to accept change but only when its backed up with scientific facts. However when it comes to the world of finance and banking this all breaks down. The Crisis in Greece, Ireland and the Euro spurred me to educate myself- a crash course in economics. This has resulted in an incredible discovery which I'm calling Money 2.0. The fact is banking has not changed in 300 years and nothing survives if it doesn't evolve. I discovered that Switzerland has 2 currencies. Yes it has the Swiss Franc which we all know but since 1934 it has the WIR Franc. The most successful economy in the western world has a complimentary currency model that is today used by over 60K+ Swiss businesses and it's one of the reasons the Swiss have managed to get through all the financial turmoil unscathed. My Blog is how we should follow the Swiss and re-invent our currency Money 2.0 The WIR Punt as complimentary to the Euro. I know this will sound like heresy to bankers and those vested interest but it's works for the Swiss so why not Ireland.

4 Takeaways:

1. The Old traditional Banking-Money model is broken.
2. The Swiss have 2 currencies: Swiss Franc & WIR Franc.
3. Digital Money should not follow the old banking model.
4. Competition for Money 2.0 will create a new economic paradigm.

In 1922 the Henry Ford said "It is well enough that people of the nation do not understand our banking and monetary system, for if they did, I believe there would be a revolution before tomorrow morning." What Ford knew was how banks create and lend money. I believed that my car loan was a collection of monies from the banks own savers who were paid interest but shockingly this is not how banks work.

A bank is a private company with a license that bestows incredible power away from the state to a group of private shareholders to print money and charge interest. If you are assessed for a loan €500K the bank will literally enter your name in a computer ledger and create €500K of money from thin air and charge interest. Incredibly they don’t print the money needed to pay the interest! So when you take out loans money is created:- debt creates money. Note if we all paid back our loans there would be no money!

Banks are given the special privilege by the state backed by our laws to print money from nothing and charge interest on it. What a great business model for the very few- the 1%. I want to purpose a new model for money: Money 2.0. For many this will seem like heresy similarly to when Copernicus formulated a model of the universe that placed the Sun rather than the Earth at the center of the universe triggering a backlash from the Pope. Later Galileo's invention of the telescope meant that he was tried by the Inquisition, found "vehemently suspect of heresy”

In 1929 the Wall Street crash meant that banks failed and they stopped lending and with no new loans then no new money circulated causing the Great Depression but banks still demanded repayment of their loans and the interest. However in Switzerland
when their banks drew back on lending a group of visionary business men came together and formed their own bank and money. In 1934 they formed the WIR Bank a not-for-profit bank (WIR in German means we). They issued money called WIR Francs with a few simple rules a. 1 Swiss Franc = 1 Swiss Wir Franc b. WIR loans would charge no interest just a small admin fee c. The WIR could not be used outside Switzerland d. The business would accept a mixture of Swiss Fr and WIR Fr e.g. 80:20 and finally all taxes paid to government in Swiss Fr. Now I imagine very few of you knew that the most successful democratic country in the world Switzerland had 2 currencies!!! True. Now in Switzerland you have real competition for credit and the traditional bank have to compete alongside the WIR Bank. 89 years later the WIR bank is still going strong with cheque books, credit/debit cards and ATM’s. When times are tough businesses transact more in WIR’s meaning they can pay their employees in WIR who have more cash to spend. This supports the local economy which needs consumers to spend with them. In 1934 they had no computers yet the WIR system has survived with 62,000 businesses using it today.

I purpose Ireland creates the WIR Punt-Euro but using modern smartphones to drive adoption and regulation. This complimentary currency has a proven model and what’s good for the Swiss can be good for Ireland. All this will be heresy to the ECB and in Banking circles but if we don’t introduce competition for money then we will go on making the same mistakes with boom busts fueled by reckless old fashioned banks.
The Young Bull versus the Old Bull. #5
By Liam Horan

Synopsis:
Liam Horan suffers from Fastitis. It sounds worryingly bovine, but it’s not: it simply means that he has a tendency to plough into things without first doing due diligence. Like Randy Travis in the country classic (well, just to say ‘song’ would be a bit underwhelming), sometimes he reaches for the honey without smoking the hive. In this piece of public self-talk, Liam makes a paradoxically quick argument for slowing down, particularly when it comes to pursuing business ideas. Maybe a wham-bam event like Congregation needs to hear what he has to say.

4 Takeaways:
1. Sometimes it’s good to take your time.
2. Too much haste can lead to a solution that solves a problem that doesn’t exist.
3. Find the problem that does exist.
4. Our world is tending towards more and more speed - a bit of slowness could be a counter-balance.

About Liam Horan:
Liam Horan is Managing Director of Sli Nua Careers Ltd, one of Ireland’s leading career training agencies with nine offices nationwide. He is currently developing a spin-out idea on the Enterprise Ireland New Frontiers programme. He is a native of Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, where he lives and works. In a previous life, he was a sports journalist and broadcaster.

When you’ve got a start-up idea, the one that’s going to make you those millions, Rodney, the temptation can be to charge down the hill like the proverbial young bull.

Today, though, I want to make a case for the old bull’s approach.

The old bull takes their time whereas the young bull doesn’t.

I have recently started on the New Frontier programme with Enterprise Ireland which has taught me a great deal about the value of not rushing into things.

My tendency has always been to charge into new projects. The cycle usually runs like this: idea, quick brainstorm, bout of intense activity: and thus the idea becomes a reality.

Sometimes it works. Sometimes it does not. Of course, nature of the beast and all of that, I am quick to forget those that don’t work out and that allows me to convince myself that each and every idea I come up with is golden. Just as a liar needs a bad memory, so does someone with start-up tendencies.

The New Frontiers approach forces you to stay at the starting point of identifying the exact problem you plan to solve or the exact vitamin (i.e. benefit) you are going to provide to your customer.

Key questions that emerge during this process include: How many people will buy? How will they hear about your product? How much will they pay? Beyond Ireland, how many are there? Is the whole idea big enough to attract investment?

And these are not just abstract questions. You are forced to give real figures and best available approximations of market size. Initially you do this because this is what is asked of you - but, in time, a young bull learning old ways, you realise that this is what you actually need to do to give your project the best chance of succeeding.
In an era where social media and other technological advances have promoted the primacy of quick response and action times, it’s important to take your time too. Slow down. Think it through. Rather than ploughing on headlong, tarry a while and see if there is a better way, a cleverer idea or a simpler model.

Some ideas should be teased out a great deal more. By interrupting the speed involved of the ‘thought to profitable product or service’ process, you can make the product or service stronger.

In the New Frontiers programme over the years, there have been many examples of people who were pursuing something that they thought to be a profitable endeavour – but the fact was that, right beside them, or close by, there was an even more fruitful market.

And that’s where they went - when they took time to stop and look around.

My advice, for what it’s worth, is that if you have young bull tendencies, you should begin to strip search your idea a little bit more. Yes, we all love our own ideas; however, if we are honest, we can all admit to having had some chronically bad ideas in the past.

In order to avoid repeating the same error again, taking time to tease it all through could be the best bit of slow action you ever did. Go, bulls.
The SnapChat Imperative. #6

By Mark Power.

Synopsis:

This post focuses on the how SaaS/Cloud business applications mimic consumer applications to drive adoption of their products.

4 Takeaways:

1. SaaS business apps will have to continue to measure their relevancy in terms of what consumer apps look and feel like.
2. Enterprise software will have to credibly absorb more consumer app features to create more ‘stickiness’ (adoption).
3. SaaS products have to be sold and marketed like a consumer products in order for the SaaS vendor to scale.
4. The very culture that SaaS products enable ie ‘bring your own app’ to work etc, create the biggest threat to the most successful SaaS vendors.

About Mark Power:

Mark is a lecturer in Cloud Computing in the Dublin Business School (DBS)

Contacting Mark Power:

You can contact Mark on LinkedIn.

Once upon a time, apps were built by IT people for IT people. The more complex an application was, the wider the grin of the IT implementation and support team.

Apps weren’t ‘beautiful’ and function trumped user experience every time. In fact, most software became the paisley curtains business owners wished they never bought. Think blue screens at airport check-in desks.

Setting our mental Deloreans to 88mph, software in 2015 is now delivered as a service over the internet to billions of users at a time. Apps are the digital fungi that connect us and it’s precisely this unimaginable scale that is so craved by SaaS business vendors.

Marc Benioff, a.k.a. The SaaS Father and CEO of Salesforce.com previously said, in his widely read guest blog post, The Facebook Imperative, ‘In 1996 I had an epiphany…why is it that all enterprise software can’t be like Amazon.com? (2010)…But it’s no longer Amazon that frames the questions or gives us the answers. In this decade, I’ve become obsessed with a new simple question: “Why isn’t all enterprise software like Facebook?” And this is not just the lone voice of a visionary, Larry Ellison, former CEO of Oracle, underscores Benioff’s thinking by adding, ‘For the first time, the consumer end of IT is bigger than the enterprise side.’

At the core of these statements sits an idea that has turned SaaS business apps on their head. The idea is also a tacit admittal that consumer apps have become the engines of innovation business apps often seek to mimic.

In reality Facebook’s stratospheric user growth created a curious juxtaposition for SaaS business vendors. By showing what was possible in terms of growth it simultaneously undermined the user experience of their apps. In other words, Benioff’s question was not only correct but also a realisation that the user adoption of Salesforce.com’s CRM app could be threatened if it didn’t enable existing and potential new users to have a Facebook like experience.

Interestingly, whether by accident or design, the blending of a consumer type experience within a business app, is also a common attribute of the SaaS business model.

Some obvious similarities include, try before you buy or in the parlance of the SaaS, freemium. Ever tried ringing the support line for a mass consumer product? Same goes for SaaS vendors who have left the runway and scaled. Even the sales models are merging with old methods of selling software practically dead and the internet enabling a zero touch sales process akin to the handheld supermarket scanner. Equally,
the video marketing of SaaS business applications is typically driven by clever animated shorts or even more radically half-time super bowl ad-slots. See the Black Eyed Peas celebratory endorsement of the Chatter collaboration platform during super bowl for a full frontal consumer experience. And if that wasn’t enough to create the software equivalent of sugary water syrup, then SaaS companies might as well face it they’re also addicted to the use of the word ‘love’. Consumer marketers will use this word for anything that shines and it seems SaaS marketers in their quest for a billion users will as well. Now where’s that ‘I love Excel’ t-shirt.

If we follow this yellow brick road to its next juncture then SaaS vendors will have to continue to measure their relevancy in terms of what consumer apps look and feel like. The embedded social network feed in business apps is alive and well, but will business apps transform again to be punctuated with the video streaming capabilities of Meerkat, Periscope or SnapChat. Imagine receiving on the job shadowing through the business versions of Meerkat and Twitch via the highest paid salesperson in the building. Who said sales couldn’t be a spectator sport?

As Snapchat positions itself and its 200 million users as an alternative to Facebook, perhaps the next question will be, not so much as to why isn’t all enterprise software like Facebook, but how enterprise software can credibly absorb more consumer app features to create more ‘stickiness’.

During the transition cycle from desktop to mobile, app user growth increased 10 fold. This had a copper fastening effect on the DIY culture of bringing your app into the workplace. Nothing strikes fear into major SaaS vendors more, than their user base going off script. The challenge has now become how business apps can foster a Snapchat-esque culture of bring your own grin!
Are We Experiencing The End Of Content Marketing? #7

By Beatrice Whelan

Synopsis:

As the age of content marketing is now in the maturity phase, the age of content experience is gaining momentum.

4 Takeaways:

1. As more brands create more content are we saturating our audience, have we reached peak content? Is golden age of content marketing coming to an end?
2. Achieving stand out with content is considerably more difficult.
3. Unlike with traditional content, you don’t have to ask people to share great experiences, they want to share them even if you never asked them. It is human nature. It is social by nature.
4. Consider any content you’re planning to just be another piece of content pollution and you really start to challenge yourself.

The irony of the fact that I’m writing a piece of content about the end of content as we know it is not lost on me. I don’t write as many blog posts as I used to. When I first joined Sage almost four years ago, a strong advocate of content marketing having seen what brands like Hubspot and American Express were achieving, I created a lot of content and that content did achieve results. My ‘weapon of choice’ was often a blog post or an Ebook.

This worked well for a lot of brands for a long time. The formula was easy. Create ‘great’ content (with lots of posts being written about what makes great content) and as a result reap the rewards of high search engine rankings, thought leadership association with specific topics and an added bonus of having lots of content to share on social media.

The problem with this approach was that it was fine in the early days when there were big gaps in the content market. We all know the story of Marcus Sheridan. He was able to completely own the space of swimming pools online because none of his competitors were creating content about that topic. It was the same for many brands. Those that seized the content opportunity first or applied the biggest investment (if not money then time) were able to ‘own’ their chosen space, reach and convince their audience. But is this golden age of content marketing coming to an end?

As more brands create more content are we saturating our audience, have we reached peak content? Achieving stand out is considerably more difficult. We are bombarded with content every time we go to any social channel and as a result brands and publishers have resorted to ever more fantastic techniques to stand out. As a result, we are now in the age of malignant information density as Mark Schaefer states in The Content Code: “There is just too much content and too precious little time for people to consume it.” However as Mark also points out information density is an engine for innovation.

About Beatrice Whelan:

Beatrice Whelan is multi award winning digital marketing manager with over ten years’ experience in digital and social media. Beatrice holds an and B.A and an M.S.c from Trinity College Dublin, and a Diploma in PR from the PRII. She currently works for business technology company Sage as Global Digital Content Manager. Previous roles at Google, Kildare.ie and Sage included online sales, search marketing, and social media and community development. She was co-organiser of Blog Awards Ireland in 2012 and 2013 and previously ran her own digital marketing business. She
The answer could be playing out as we speak. As the age of content marketing is now in the maturity phase, the age of content experience is gaining momentum. Unlike with traditional content, you don’t have to ask people to share great experiences, they want to share them even if you never asked them. It is human nature. It is social by nature. We saw it in action this week at Dreamforce. How can blog posts compete with a cruise ship!

Scott Abel says it best: “In the Experience Age, consumers expect much more from brands than they have in the past. Once they’ve enjoyed an exceptional customer experience, they become intolerant of confusing, irrelevant, and inconsistent content."

Content is not dead but I’ve started to apply the TED test to any content I think about creating. If it really isn’t an idea worth sharing well then I just don’t write it. You’d have to have something very special to say before you would take to the stage at a TED conference but are you applying the same consideration to all of the content you create? Consider any content you’re planning to just be another piece of content pollution and you really start to challenge yourself.

So when I was asked to submit a piece of content to blog my way into the CongRegation Gathering I applied the same question. Should I just create another piece of content or should I wait until I have something worth sharing. That is where this post has come from. It’s a question worth sharing, I hope you’ll agree.
Hide and Seek with Social Media. #8

By Olivia Forde

Synopsis:

Social Media can be a wonderful thing for people of all ages and lifestyles, but and there is always a but, it can also be a terrible thing. Like everything it is “What you make it” or maybe what you let it become. We all lead busy lives and are probably all very well intentioned, especially in the areas of health, nutrition and work-life balance but sometimes we are drowning in information. Unfortunately we aren’t always that honest with ourselves and are only “window shopping”. We are doing all the research and then playing the ultimate game of hide and seek with the real world.

4 Takeaways:

1. Social Media can be a wonderful addition to a person’s life.
2. We need to manage our lives - social media will not do that for us.
3. Kids and social media is going to happen.
4. You can get fit on Pinterest

About Olivia Forde:

IT Professional and parent with an huge interest in sport and technology from Galway.

Contacting Olivia Forde:

You can follow Olivia on Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest or LinkedIn.

Does this sound familiar to anyone here ? It’s 11.15 am on a wet and wild Sunday morning in the West of Ireland and so far I have read the following, Instagram - Self Help Motivational Quote, Cheat Clean - Healthy Mac and Cheese recipe, Pinterest - The Standing Workout for flat abs, Your Gym Cheat Sheet, Burn Fat Build Muscle - Plyo Workout, Paleo Pumpkin Sweet Potato Custard, Twitter - When you need something healthy on the run, these fast food breakfasts are actually healthy, Try and take a buddy with you on your first run, Facebook - Green Earth Organics video, GMail - Level 1 Kettlebells Certification and a receipt for Galway Night Run registration - finally some real activity.

I am a working mother with three young activity mad children but I think I have been struck with this Social Media disease called “Good Intentions”. As you can see from the opening paragraph there are numerous Social Media outlets fuelling this affliction, ok maybe this is an exaggerated representation of my morning but you get my drift.

Social Media is wonderful, or at least it can be, but it can also be damaging and allows people to play “Hide and Seek” with the world - we are seeking out how to lead a healthier life through exercise, nutrition and mental health awareness but how many of us are taking action?

It’s a bit like the chicken and egg - Social Media gives us the ideas, the inspiration and the know how, YouTube videos can lead us through a perfect HIT 15 minute workout that we can do in our own home before we whip up a green veg smoothie recipe garnered from Pinterest and then post the pics on Instagram, or as many do we can read up on all of these from the comfort of our couch with a packet of crisps and a latte. While this isn’t criminal, what about those who are suffering from mental health issues and continue in this vain and never reach out to get help, but on the other hand there are many who for them seeing that motivational quote on Instagram or that inspiring video on Facebook has been the catalyst to recovery, has been the trigger that allows this person to say to themselves “I am not alone in this and I can survive”. So, without the start on social media we might never, run that triathlon, start that Art course or reach out to/for a friend - but on the flip side we might also get so immersed in the sheer volume of information out there that we never take any action; buy the gear but never do the workout; fork out for the Nutribullet and leave it in the
box - chicken and egg.

So three young activity mad children and Social Media lethargy how does that mix you may wonder? Well thankfully my Social Media time is limited to after bedtime or while waiting in the car outside activities such as gymnastics, so while I bemoan the fact that we are playing Hide and Seek with the real world, thankfully I have not allowed it to take over my life, but am I one of the lucky ones - or am I slowly heading down that slippery slope? Thankfully one of the items in my email was the receipt for registration for the Galway Night Run in aid of Croi so I am still somewhat in control. Are you?

Don’t get me wrong social media is wonderful and I embrace it fully in my life and the lives of my family. I encourage the kids to watch videos on YouTube - they watch everything from how to bake a cake to how to do a handstand. The have even made their own instructional videos on baking without any prompting from me (as I am a rubbish baker) this is perfectly normal in their new world - long may the learning continue but “be careful out there”.
Shyness and the World of Blab #9

By Barry Murphy

Synopsis:

Studies have shown that shyness is not a barrier to online interaction. ‘Chat rooms,’ based on the written word and augmented with emojis, allow the shy business owner to get communicating, without giving too much away about their personality. However, while social media in its written formats, like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, have given the shy business owner a new marketing outlet, the new drive for video and live streaming might be a step too far.

4 Takeaways:

1. Shy people may have gained a sense of connectedness through social media ‘chat room’ platforms.
2. Just how social was social media when based solely on words and smileys?
3. Reach decline reduces the effectiveness of these platforms.
4. Webinars and live streaming video platforms may be less attractive to the shy business owner.

About Barry Murphy:

Barry Murphy is a sales and marketing mentor and trainer based in Mayo. In summer, he also leads guided group walking holidays of Mayo and Connemara.

Contacting Barry Murphy:

You can contact Barry on 086-8318748, on Twitter, LinkedIn, or visit Murphy Marketing.

The Smiths once pontificated that “shyness is nice and shyness can stop you from doing all the things in life you’d like to”.

I often wonder if social media has been good or not for “shy” people running their own small business.

One feature about social media, at least in its written forms, is its lack of expression and tone. Emojis have tried to fill this gap, with questionable success. A shy person can seek benefit from social media by sticking to relatively safe posts and replies, without their tone necessarily being grasped by others. You’ll hardly be spotted as shy because of a harmless “Thanks for your RT”. And yet, is this true? Can others get a sense of one’s personality by the spontaneity, length, frequency and content of posts and responses?

Does a shy person reflect longer before hitting the publish or enter button, for fear of revealing too much of their real-life social inhibitions? Do they tend to keep their contributions short and somewhat lacking in personality? Do they avoid emojis? Do they fear appearing more ebullient on social media than they perhaps are in real life?

Indeed, by their very nature, do shy business owners tend to be less “successful” than others on social media, where success is often superficially measured in numbers of followers and likes. Perhaps. On the other hand, do they tend to become more “successful” on social media than in real life? Again, perhaps.

Various studies (if you truly want them, I can provide details) have concluded that shyness is not a barrier to online interaction and may indeed facilitate engagement. Given that anonymity has historically been afforded to individuals in the online world, it is not surprising that shy individuals might be more willing to engage in online than offline interactions, as a result of their discomfort in social situations. It has been argued that, because of the perceived control and privacy features, shy people often turn to the internet to meet their social needs. Might this also be true of shy business owners?

But there’s a problem. Lack of engagement, due at least in part to the decline in organic
reach on Facebook and the preponderance of automation and scheduled posts, is perhaps taking the ‘social’ out of social media.

So what about webinars, podcasts and the new raft of live streaming platforms? It’s one thing to be able to think long and hard over a Facebook post and subsequent replies to comments. Indeed, it’s easy to tweet and thank for retweets, or publish on LinkedIn. It’s quite another to stand in front of a camera and/or speak over live video footage. Using video as a marketing tool (all the rage nowadays) can be daunting for the shy. Maybe that’s why animated promotional videos, with a third-party voiceover, have come of age.

Live streaming is bringing the ‘social’ back. People are interacting with one another again “live” (sorry, Bill) and engaging in useful and (somewhat) meaningful conversations. Through video, people are actually getting to know each other. We can see each other’s mannerisms, movement and get a much better ‘vibe’. Streaming social media is about the closest thing to face-to-face interactions online. The way that people jump in and out of livestream video conversations, like on Blab, makes it even more real.

As the demand for ever more video and improved live visual online communication becomes stronger, will the shy person feel the urge to retreat back away from social media? With significantly decreased organic reach on Facebook and, presumably, only a matter of time before Twitter goes down the same route, where will this leave the shy business owner in the next chapter of this Digital Age?
My customers don’t use the internet. #10

By Roseanne Smith

Synopsis:

I wrote this blog post because a chance encounter got me thinking about what the most compelling arguments are for getting your business online. It may seem old school to my colleagues at Congregation but I wanted to write those reasons down and have them at my fingertips. The next time I meet someone who dismisses the internet as a business tool (yes the WHOLE internet in ONE FELL SWOOP) I’ll have this ready for the fool. I hope my colleagues at Congregation find it useful when they are chasing leads and developing their business.

I was talking to an acquaintance recently who had just completed a half-day course on blogging. He felt it was a waste of time. He said to me, “My customers don’t really use the internet.” The fact that he included the word “really” made me realise that he wasn’t 100% sure about what he was saying. He doubted himself and added that qualifier. Had he said outright, “My customers don’t use the internet.” I would have been very concerned. A harder person would have written him off as a poor business person at best and a complete eejit at worse. But that “really” saved him in my eyes. There is hope for him. It also got me thinking about how I could help him be more certain, one way or the other about his customers’ use of the internet.

Let’s get one thing straight. Everyone in Ireland uses the Internet. The pedant in me must point out that the internet is a network that passes packets of information using specific protocols. It is NOT Facebook, it is NOT even JUST the web. It is also email and file transfer and on demand television and connects to the cloud and other magical places and it is all the devices and the Things (fridges, thermostats, cars) and maybe Ray Kurzweil can tell you what it will be tomorrow because he’s making sure he lives that long.

4 Takeaways:

1. Statistics show that Irish people are divils for the interwebs.
2. A company may never sell a single thing online but customers might be “webrooming” on their site. Or worse their competitor’s much better site.
3. A business’ expertise is their fortune: use it or lose their standing.
4. If a business is too busy for online, no need to worry, that will all change soon as they lose customers to their online-savvy competition.

About Roseanne Smith:

Roseanne Smith’s mission is to help your organisation to thrive online. She chose the name OnlineHub for her company because she believes that every business should have an online hub. If an organisation creates an online hub for their work, an online space where they manage the look and substance of that space, they can maintain it and manage it to respond
If you don’t believe me here are some boring stats which you may skip if you so wish. (Or bookmark this to whip out next time you are speaking to a luddite/boss/potential investor in your internet breaking app.)

- At the end of June 2015, there were 1.70 million active internet subscriptions in Ireland [Irish Communications Market: Key Data Report Q2 2015](http://www.comreg.ie). At 80% household penetration of broadband we are 2% above the EU average of 78%. (ibid.)
- There are nearly 5m mobile subscribers in Ireland according to ComReg’s report. (pp. 52, ibid.)
- This is a 105.2% penetration rate. (pp. 54, ibid.)

“In Q2 2015 there were 3,594,077 mobile voice and data subscribers using 3G/4G networks in Ireland. This figure can be taken as an indication of the number of smartphone users accessing advanced data services such as web/internet content, online multiplayer gaming content, Video on Demand (VoD) or other equivalent advanced data services (excluding SMS and MMS). This represents approximately 73.7% of all mobile subscriptions (excluding dedicated mobile broadband and M2M) in Q2 2015.” (pp 52, ibid.)

Ipsos MRBI publish a quarterly report on [Social Networking in Ireland](http://www.ipsosmrbi.com/) and produce the results in infographic form. This picture speaks a thousand words.

---

**Contacting Roseanne Smith:**

You can reach Roseanne by [email](mailto:), read about her work on her work in [Onlinehub](http://www.onlinelhub.com) or connect on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com) and [Twitter](http://twitter.com).

---

to any changes to computed algorithms or human fads. Roseanne has been creating content for the web since 1999 and is an expert content strategist with skills across social media, email marketing, podcasting and more.
If we are interested in age groups the Central Statistics Office can assist us. They have charts that tell us that in 2012 (their most recent dataset) 46% of Irish people had made a purchase online in the previous 12 months. This chart shows how that has trended upwards over the preceding years and how it breaks down by age.

![Chart showing online shopping by age]

Caption: Shopped online in the last 12 months by age.

I’m a sucker for those numbers but I understand if you are not. However let me put it like this: when these engaged, searching, researching, enquiring and buying customers go looking would you prefer to be there or not?

Even if your customers fall into one of the smaller groups of users by age in Ireland are you going to let a competitor be there waiting for them with open (virtual) arms when they Google “traditional Irish furniture”?

There is no doubt that face to face interaction or at least telephone interaction remains important especially for big purchases. However research online/ purchase offline has become such an everyday phenomenon that it even has its very own acronym, ROPO. You know you’ve made it etc. This phenomenon also has a “cool” verby noun “webrooming” which I hope to never write again. It’s the idea of using the web as a showroom. Before you panic about how on earth you will “showroom” your products and services online remember that most of the searches start with keywords and phrases. While certain apps by a certain global ecommerce player do have an object recognition function especially when it comes to, ahem, book covers, most research will begin with a Google search. If your site content is optimised to respond to those searches and fulfils the myriad parameters of the Google/ Bing algorithms then your clients should find you.

So how do you prepare your website content to respond to this? What content strategy should you put in place? Search Engine Optimisation remains highly important and while there are many keyword planners available online you should also trust in your expertise in your sector. Think about all those phone calls and in person conversations you have had with new and existing customers over the years. Use the questions
you commonly get asked to build that content for your site. For example one of my clients, Louise Slaney Architects, was regularly getting queries about the Home Renovation Incentive Scheme. Slaney wrote a blog post that answered the most frequent questions so that the next time someone asked about it, Slaney or her team could access the information easily themselves to answer questions there and then. They could also follow up with an email/text to the enquirer with a link. This creates a second touchpoint with a potential, new or existing client. As the content now exists on the web and is regularly being shared with people who are searching on this topic or around this topic its authority increases and moves inexorably up the search engine results page.

Similarly if a lot of the queries your company are receiving are about opening hours, location or whether you offer a particular service or supply a particular product you definitely need an improved web presence. Your job is being an expert professional at what you do not an information service. Yes, of course, you still need someone to answer the phone but the next time you are interviewing for a PA try and find someone who can help maintain your online presence.

Many small businesses have invested in online, maybe commissioning a brochure style site or even a more dynamic one. However, they feel that their “efforts” are a waste of time and money. I say efforts in inverted commas because apart from the initial investment in the site itself, and creating content for that, they never update their site, they have no content strategy, they don’t use social to maintain a presence on the platforms where their customers “hang out”. Even if for some misbegotten reason the business has decided not to update their site or participate in social in a planned, reasonable manner, this company don’t even check their website statistics on a regular basis. They don’t know how many of their customers access their site via mobile devices, what time of day they are accessing it, what the bounce rate is and which pages are keeping them engaged for longest. These are all questions that can be answered by a free Analytics package from Google that every web developer should include in every site no matter how basic.

So if for some reason your company has written off the internet as a waste of time and money I’d like to know how is your company being marketed? How is that working out? Has it brought any new customers? How is it being measured? How often do you review those metrics and tweak your strategy to respond to this?

Some companies will say “We get a lot a repeat business, our customers are loyal.” and this may be the case until the day they are fluting about on Facebook and one of their good friends recommends a competitor who have a gorgeous site where they offer a free trial or consultation or a discount for signing up to their newsletter. So even if your customer, being loyal, never activates that discount or makes that free trial/consultation appointment, your rival is sending them a regular newsletter chock full of useful ideas, interesting links, arresting images and calls to action with them. They are developing a relationship. Some day all your company will be is the company who sold them that old thing in the corner or who once fixed the boiler or who advised them, years ago, on a straightforward legal matter. They won’t know about your latest special offers but they will know about your competitors. They won’t know about the latest grants for boiler upgrades from you but your competitor will have informed them. They won’t be aware of the fact that your legal firm is expanding and able to offer advice on a greater range of issues but they will know exactly who your firm has recruited and the expertise that new hire brings to the table. How? Because these are exactly the kind of things that businesses are writing about on their site, sharing on the networks and
sending in regular newsletters.

No doubt you are so busy you are wondering why you have even spent this time reading my (uncharacteristically negative!) blog post this far.†This is another reason I have heard used by business people when they are trying to think how on earth they will fit this other job of maintaining an online presence into their already busy job. This is the one factor that I truly understand from personal and professional experience. We ARE all busy, too busy. The solution is that we need to get organised. Recently I wrote a blog post about creating a content calendar for your business which takes all of the guesswork out of when to write. As to what to write my whole philosophy is based around sharing your expertise from your own online hub from where you can be part of the search and social web by creating optimised, useful and engaging content on a regular basis. It is about forming a habit. In order for a habit to form the creation of an online hub must be a pleasurable and useful experience that you want to repeat. If it is a chore with no results, you will not do it. So get organised, create a strategy, form a habit and soon you will be working the web like a pro!

Remember change is life. And I don't mean the loose change that you'll be scrabbling around the office couch for if you remain shut off from the internet…
The Facebook Virgin. #11

By Jacqueline Connolly

Synopsis:

How one mature student, under orders from tutors, joined the Digital Age and learned that the medium is indeed the message but all faults and omissions belong solely to the author.

4 Takeaways:

1. Perceptions online and off are beyond your control.
2. It’s not the medium’s fault, own your own stuff.
3. Age is a state of mind.
4. The missing apostrophe is lost by the writer not the machine.

About Jacqueline Connolly:

I’m a designer, I’m a herbalist and I’m a seeker. Currently I’m in second year of a four year degree in Digital Media & Society at GMIT Castlebar. I see all my interests and passions eventually forming a cohesive whole.

Contacting Jacqueline Connolly:

You can connect with Jacqueline on Twitter or follow her through Facebook.

My finger is poised and I know that what I do with it next will have long-term effects. It could take me to new heights or plunge me into the chaos of frustration and self-doubt. It could be life-enhancing, mind-expanding and even educational. Or not. What will I have to surrender in order to embrace this aspect of the modern age and why has it always felt like a Faustian pact, the full debt not quite known until it’s too late.

In the interests of full disclosure I must admit I did venture into this territory before, probably to about second base. I tried to engage but it didn’t quite work. In fact I was sure one day I had broken it, and by ‘it’ I mean Facebook. So I left and decided to explain my absence by declaring myself a Luddite.

This is a position I held proudly for quite a while. Time passed and what I know now as Moore’s Law seemed to apply not only to the technology itself but to the people using the technology. As they and their devices strived to outpace each other, I dug my heels in even more firmly believing I could avoid embracing touch screens forever.

As a Luddite I adopted an attitude of disdain for technology but in reality it hid a fear, because things were moving so far and so fast I was getting farther and farther behind. In my defence I believed that one day I would press the wrong button and end up selling my first-born online. But mostly I was afraid that I would discover a most profound truth at the bottom of a wine bottle and feel compelled to share it.

Eventually life happened and a gentle nudge turned into a firm push. And I fell slightly in love. But still Social Media remained my nemesis. I looked at conversations conducted on Twitter and felt the faint tug of my Stone Age days. What was a tag and did I want it to happen to me? I wanted conversation and debate, not a scavenger hunt. I wanted to broaden my horizons but did I have to be directed down so many rabbit holes? How did they know I would even like it there?
As I begin the sign up process the need for my date of birth eludes me. I feel some freedom is being taken from me, as if I am no longer allowed to decide what I like. Material I see will be filtered to be age appropriate. I will have certain preferences because of some algorithm probably designed by a guy who has little experience of women. I know I am stereotyping but they started it!
Jacqueline Connolly #11 pictograms

Now age is not an issue for me; I have and will continue to celebrate the milestone birthdays with a bang not a whimper. But stereotyping makes my blood boil. It drives me to distraction that someone can pick up a grain of sand and think they know the whole shoreline.

Yet it is foolish to think that online or off we can have any real influence over the perceptions people have of us. And seeking to influence or change those opinions? Well that way lies madness.

But still I was plagued with doubt. What if I can’t turn off? What if this final frontier becomes my new drug of choice? What if my grammar and punctuation start to slip? In this high velocity nether world the poor apostrophe is usually the first casualty.

After that it’s a slippery slope. Lost capitals and ambiguous shortenings may have to be used to maintain speed in this world where skimming is substituted for reading and that’s a mere hop, skip and a jump to using pictograms and hieroglyphics. But hey, that brings me right back to the Stone Age.
One month - A micro marketing plan. #12

By Alan O’Rourke

Synopsis:
A straight forward, one month, micro marketing plan.

4 Takeaways:
1. Write once, publish everywhere and every way.
2. Do less content and more promotion. (30/70).
3. Automate it.
4. Result = 300% increase in leads

About Alan O’Rourke:
Alan is an ex artist, ex film maker, ex designer, ex product manager and ex entrepreneur. Alan is now Marketing Director at WorkCompass where we sell B2B performance management software to enterprise companies around the world.

Contacting Alan O’Rourke:
You can follow Alan on Twitter or contact him by email.

I know, sorry about yet another ‘30 day’ post but a month is such a nice round measure of time and it’s easy to compare months to see how you are improving. It appeals to my sense of world order :)

At WorkCompass.com (B2B enterprise software) we have a small marketing team so the constant drive is to push our limited resources as far as we can.

At the start of this year our focus was to produce more content. Inbound marketing / content is the future seemingly. We tried it for a few months but found we were just sending more content to the same people. Our audience and reach was not growing.

So instead we cut back on our content but tried more ways to promote it. The results were fantastic. So I am happy to share what we do :)

It is based on the premise of Write once, publish EVERYWHERE and EVERYWAY.

One month - Micro marketing plan

- Publish ebook
- Email subscribers (Ask to share)
- PPC promotions
- Tweet quotes from ebook daily x2
- Weekly blog post excerpts
- LinkedIn groups
- Use content to answer questions on Quora
- Track mentions and questions
- Post images under Creative Commons
- Press release
- Do webinar
- Post presentation on slideshare
- Post recording on Youtube
- Automate with CoSchedule
- Report results

Your email  Subscribe

@alanorourke
Over a 30 day period we do the following:

1. We aim for 1 piece of anchor content a month.
   An ebook on a single topic. Pretty small, about 6-7 pages. Big text and lots of pictures. But it must cover the topic well. In our case we would produce an ebook guide on “How to do a performance review.”

2. We send an email to subscribers to download and share.
3. Split the ebook into weekly blog posts.
4. Tweet excerpts from the ebook.
5. Repost the blog posts to linkedin pulse and groups.

We put a week delay on these to let the blog get indexed first.

We also post these through every team members linkedin accounts.

Go ahead and post the full content. People will appreciate it and still click through to download the ebook.

6. Use the content to answer questions on Quora.com
7. Set up alerts on social for people asking questions around the topic so we can share the content.
8. Take the images from the ebook and post to Flickr under creative commons so people can use (if they link back to you).
9. Do a press release (I’ll be honest, we do not do this often due to lack of time)
10. Do a webinar for the content.
11. Post the webinar slides on Slideshare.
12. Post the video recording of the webinar on Youtube.
13. We have not done much with PPC yet, that is our next experiment.

EVERYTHING must end with a call to action, usually back to our site, we here we try and capture an email address and so grow our audience and leads.

I time all this promotion around our blog posts going live and I use a great tool called CoSchedule.com to automate most of the promotion across the social networks.

The timing of tweets etc is based on research done by Neil Patel over at QuickSprout.com.

Below is an example of the spreadsheet the timing we use.
We put in the date of the blog post at the top and it gives back the day and times every tweet, facebook post and linkedin update must go out.

After every blog post I spend about an hour in CoSchedule putting in all these dates and then everything is automated for the rest of the month.

(Tip, install the coschedule google analytics custom report for great insights.)

At the end of every month we can measure how the content performed and compare it month on month.

Overall we split our time 30% content production and 70% promotion.

Changing our focus from more content to more promotion increased our leads each month by 300%.
From a career spent in technology companies, a brief dalliance in academia and more than my fair share of statistical analysis, the concept of the “autistic workforce” is not new to me. We’ve all worked alongside the eccentric CTO, the quirky sys admin and the maybe a little too direct developer who will pick out and announce your shortcomings quicker than you can say “autism spectrum disorder (ASD)!”

The link between IT/technology and the spectrum is nothing new. Steve Silberman’s ground breaking article “The Geek Syndrome” published in WIRED back in 2001 discussed “the recurring theme in case histories of autism.. is an attraction to highly organized systems and complex machines … computers are an ideal interest for a person with Asperger’s syndrome … they are logical, consistent, and not prone to moods.”

Employers and NTs [“neurotypicals” as they call us] have become increasingly aware of the value of the skill sets but how do we make sure that our own recruitment processes don’t turn away or filter out this talent? Speciaisterne Ireland is a consultancy that focuses on job creation and employment concept geared towards people with ASD. I’ve been working with Speciaisterne Ireland to produce a set of guidelines for employers and we’re also conducting asynchronous video interviews with a number of their candidates, the results of which should be ready for #Cong15. In the meantime, here is some top-level advice.

4 Takeaways:

1. The “autistic workforce” has a lot to offer the IT/Tech Sector.
2. Traditional recruitment and selection may screen out this talent while traditional onboarding may not be the best recipe for success.
3. Luckily we have Specialisterne to help us integrate these “unique skills” into our organisations. You can help too by supporting their goal: To provide meaningful and productive jobs for one million people with autism and other invisible disorders.
4. Interviewing candidates with Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome is easy when you know how so we’re delighted to provide you with tips and guidelines.

About Joy Redmond:

Freelance Authority Marketer, blogger, #13
• Honesty – be prepared to hear all about your mistakes! (Only for the greater good.)

Hiring Employees with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)

“I believe if you look at any business process, there’s a good chance you’ll spot opportunities to employ people with autism.”

Avaneesh Dubey, SAP Labs India

Following a successful trial of employing a small group of people with autism in India as software testers, German software giant SAP has declared that it intends to gain “a competitive advantage” over its rivals by actively employing people with autism spectrum disorder.

Announcing that it will employ 650 people with autism by 2020 (approximately 1 per cent of its total workforce, which roughly reflects the frequency of autism in the general population). It is now expanding its autistic workforce in Ireland, Germany and the US.

Is your recruitment process ASD friendly?

So if everyone agrees that the “autistic workforce” has a lot to offer, then how do we make sure that our own recruitment processes don’t turn away or filter out this talent?

In order to answer this question, I’ve been lucky enough to work with Speciaisterne Ireland to help me help you. Speciaisterne Ireland is a consultancy that focuses on job creation and employment concept geared towards people with ASD.

They meet and assess the candidates, set up and prepare them for interview and then assist the hiring companies with appropriate staff training and onboarding to assist in making the hire or college work placement a success. (See more about Specialisterne and SAP below.)

We’re working together to provide employers with a set of guidelines on the best processes and indeed questions for candidates on the spectrum. We’re also conducting asynchronous video interviews with a number of their candidates, the results of which I hope will be ready for our meet-up in Cong in late November but in the meantime, here is some top level advice:

How to Assess Candidates with ASD?

Social Skills:

Candidates on the spectrum may have poor social skills. This should not be mistaken for an inability to function as an effective member of a team. An ability to socialise is not necessarily a requirement for a technical role. ASD candidates who are low on socialising skills can be very passionate and knowledgeable about IT and may not have any difficulty making key interventions at team meetings.

Clarity of language:

a. People on the spectrum tend to have three issues with received communication.

i. Literal interpretation. The use of similes and metaphors should be avoided (e.g. Instead of saying: “What part of IT rocks your boat”; say: “What part of IT are you most
interested in?"

ii. Ambiguity of language: Clean language is important when interviewing candidates on the spectrum. For example, if you were to ask a candidate “What will you bring to the job?”, you might well get a list of the physical items they’ll bring such as laptop, pencil case, lunch, water etc.

iii. Try not to ask a multitude of questions simultaneously.

iv. Specific questions tend to elicit very specific answers. This can be both a positive or a negative depending on what information you seek. For example if you wanted to assess a candidate’s IT experience you would be better off asking a really specific question because some candidates are very modest or unaware of the range of their skills comparable to other applicants so:

What computer packages have you used or what computer languages do you know?

Is much better than a general question such as:

Explain your interest and experience in the field of ICT (Information, Computers and Technology)

b. In contrast to what is generally regarded as best interview practice, questions which are framed in a very “open” manner can be difficult for people on the spectrum to interpret. So, when asking questions which are designed to elicit discursive answers it is better to get the information by asking questions as a series of “logical follow-ons.”

c. What’s hot in recruitment might not be applicable:

Behaviour-based interview questions are all the rage – they use past behavior to predict future performance. For example, “Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.”

Behaviour-based interview questions are wonderful in many circumstances but unfortunately the statistics reveal that working-aged individuals with ASD have not held previous jobs.

About SAP and Specialisterne (which translates from Danish as “The Specialists”)

SAP works with Danish company Specialisterne, a consultancy that employs software testers and programmers who have autism and whose ambition is “to enable one million jobs for people with autism and similar challenges.”

Snapshot: SAP Ireland

SAP Ireland are equally as supportive as their global HQ by providing Specialisterne Ireland with office facilities, its assessment room, additional support funding and importantly about 40 volunteers from the company have given their time as mentors and supporters. SAP currently has 10 Asperger employees supported by Specialisterne Ireland.
Feedback

“People with autism are technically minded and think in a structured way and there’s absolutely no reason they shouldn't be able to do the job.”

Liam Ryan, MD, SAP Ireland

“Specialisterne has enabled me to work in a job I love. The people here are very friendly and I really enjoy the work here”.

Nick, in SAP.

Nick has been an employed candidate of Specialisterne since April 2013. He is a graduate in Computer Science of DIT. He started work in Microsoft, after being unemployed for some time and after 14 months was transferred to SAP as a contractor. Nick has recently become a fulltime staff member of SAP.

“No university, no job, and no work experience. And now, a year later, my contract’s being renewed:”

Dara, in SAP.

Dara was a student in UL but did not complete his course. He joined SAP in the summer of 2013 and is now a full staff member. Dara is now truly independent with his own apartment and a car. He is like many of our candidates a true advocate for Specialisterne who have appeared in public and on both TV and radio on our behalf.

References:

The Geek Syndrome

Rise of the autistic workforce

Conversations and advice from the amazing Specialisterne Ireland team.

11 years harassing, interrogating and encouraging my son to converse!
When Tech Innovation Meets Brand Purpose. #14

By Darragh Rea

Synopsis:

By focussing on their own purpose and maximising the opportunities that exist through tech developments, brands can stand out from their competitors and demonstrate their worth to their audiences.

4 Takeaways:

1. Focus your energy on communicating the Why rather than the What
2. There’s no point in using technology for technology’s sake – it needs to be brand relevant and help to reinforce your vision
3. Investment costs can seem high but the potential rewards can far outweigh these costs
4. Lower level investment with smart thinking can deliver exceptional results - be brave

About Darragh Rea:

Darragh Rea is a Director in Edelman in Dublin.

Darragh leads the digital division in Edelman which includes work for clients such as Mars, National Lottery, Visa, The Westbury, Balfes, My Legacy, IOOA, ABFI, Roche, Xylem and IMRO. Darragh is passionate about implementing integrated communications strategies with digital at their core and has a wealth of experience working across a variety of sectors including Food, FMCG, Tech, Public Sector, Entertainment and Financial Services.

He has written articles for national publications and spoken at conferences on the area of digital media as well as sponsorship management.

Having just passed that momentous #BackToTheFuture Day of Wednesday October 21st 2015 it seems fitting that just a few months back we got a glimpse of technology that just might enable many of us to fulfil a lifelong dream of emulating Marty McFly’s hoverboard skills. Back in August, Lexus Chief Engineer Haruhiko Tanahashi told us that “There is no such thing as impossible, it’s just a matter of figuring out how” before going on to unveil The Lexus Hoverboard in a YouTube video which has since been seen nearly 12 million times.

This hoverboard first received public attention in June of this year when a short YouTube clip entitled “Lexus has created a real, rideable hoverboard” was released and went on to be viewed over 8 million times, sparking a global conversation as people rushed to question whether it was in fact real or just a hoax.

With the August 5th release and the participation of some pro-skaters, Lexus blew away all the rumour and scepticism and in doing so helped to reposition the brand in a way none of their new car releases ever could.

For me this example of marketing genius, which also included a 5 minute documentary shot over 403 days and capturing all the highs and lows of the project from concept
Darragh is also a Board member of Triathlon Ireland.

Contacting Darragh Rea:

You can contact Daragh by email, follow him on Twitter, connect on LinkedIn or see his work at Edelman.

In one amazing (all be it expensive) campaign, Lexus were able to communicate their vision or purpose in the world, and just like Apple are not just about phones or computers, Lexus are not just about cars – their goal is much loftier than that – “to help solve problems and create a better future through unique, innovative ideas”. The campaign was also notable in how it was rooted in online content which delivered global reach before expanding into other channels such as TV.

I’ve written before about how fundamentally important it is for organisations to focus their communications on their purpose in this world (i.e. the Why and not always the What), and for many organisations, the world of technology offers an Aladdin’s cave of opportunities to do this in a way that cuts through the endless streams of bland content that consumers are targeted with.

This is not a new concept and Lexus are not the only ones using innovation in technology to help communicate the organisations unswerving commitment to advancement, Google has been working away on various seemingly impossible projects since their very existence with their X Labs projects including a Self-Driving Car, Project Wing (airborne delivery system using drones), Project Glass (Augmented Reality Head-mounted Displays), or Project Loon (aims to bring the internet to everyone using balloons). Away from the tech sector, Virgin through Richard Branson, has expertly utilised technological innovation and exploration to communicate the brand essence, whether it’s putting people in space, ballooning around the world or attempting various record breaking ocean crossings, Branson has pushed the Virgin brand to become one synonymous with innovation and one which carries his own driving ambition of “finding new ways to help people have a good time”.

Whilst the ideas above grabbed our attention through large scale high investment vehicles (most also delivered large scale returns), technological innovation can happen at a much more accessible level. My own colleagues in Edelman Deportivo have created a number of superb campaigns over the last few years which have used...
technology to not only demonstrate product qualities but also to reaffirm their clients purpose, their Sweat for Water campaign for Unicef demonstrated how 780 million people around the world lack access to clean drinking water, by creating the world’s first machine that turned sweat into drinkable water, the campaign was an incredible success reaching over 1 billion people through media and 94 million on Twitter alone.

Innovation in marketing is not a new thing and companies like Coca Cola have consistently championed the need to invest at least 10% of your marketing budget into innovative, untested ideas, however the current pace of technological advancement means that for those marketing teams willing to sign up, there’s a world of opportunities out there which can win them brand fame and new customers. You’ve just got to know what you stand for first.
An introduction to Growth Hacking. #15

By Declan Clancy

Synopsis:

In this overview we ask: “What is Growth Hacking”, what type of businesses should implement growth hacking, the importance of the mediums you use to promote your product or service, the qualities needed to be a good growth hacker, what you can do to achieve growth and some useful resources.

4 Takeaways:

1. Learn what Growth Hacking is.
2. Learn the qualities required to be a good Growth Hacker.
3. Learn what businesses should implement Growth Hacking.
4. Useful resources to check out.

About Declan Clancy:

Declan Clancy is an enthusiastic, results oriented and creative Digital Marketer with 4+ years’ experience of inbound marketing. Declan currently works as a Digital Marketing Manager for a Cork Hotel Group.

Contacting Declan Clancy:

You can contact Declan via email, Twitter or LinkedIn.

In his audio blog Declan gives a 4 minute over view of growth hacking from its origins with Sean Ellis at Dropbox, an overview of some of the techniques, some tips for how to implement and a handy list of curated resources from Growth Hackers to GrowthEverywhere Podcast.

Click below to listen to Declans’ audio post.
Privacy by Design. #16

By Lisa Jackson

Synopsis:

Usually overlooked as an obligation on tech giants or multinationals, Privacy by Design is essential for all organisations collecting, hosting, using or otherwise processing data identifying a person. Every time a process is introduced or updated that touches on end user data, questions should be asked about the privacy impacts of those processes before launch. Our newspapers are filled with examples of privacy misadventures, making ignoring privacy issues destructive to both your brand and bottom-line as well as your end users.

4 Takeaways:

1. Privacy by Design is relevant for every business working with data identifying individuals.
2. Consider data collection, use, safety, retention and user controls in every project.
3. Always ask yourself, would a user expect me to do this with their information?
4. Privacy by Design avoids expense, bad user experiences, litigation & negative PR.

About Lisa Jackson:

Biography: Lisa is a data protection and privacy lawyer. Currently Data Protection Manager with Three. Previously Data Protection and Privacy Counsel at Facebook. Trained and qualified in Matheson and worked in Leman Solicitors specialising in data protection and commercial law. Also

Eh… Privacy by Design: Remind me about that again?

Privacy by Design is not new. For various reasons legislating for, litigating and reporting about privacy issues is now a sexy topic that brings catchphrases like ‘Privacy by Design’ back in fashion. So what is it?

It means exactly what it says: Where any project that uses data identifying a person is being planned, privacy should be considered at the outset of that project rather than the end. Far from being the purview of large technology firms and social media giants, it impacts all businesses interacting with data identifying people.

Ah… I remember now: But what do I have to do?

Most of us need to make a conscious effort to incorporate privacy compliance into our business. As a nation of hoarders it goes against our instincts to minimise data collection and to delete data. Incorporating Privacy by Design helps balance those instincts against the harm it could cause our business and end users if their data is processed in breach of law or user expectation.

This ground-up approach to privacy should be incorporated in all new or updated data collection, apps, websites, campaigns, customer profiling, IT systems, service provider engagement, data transfer and data destruction.

Six hundred words can only reflect some of the areas to think about but, this basic Privacy Impact Assessment will help highlight the privacy implications of any project involving end user data:

1. Fair collection

• If I’m collecting data identifying a person, do I have a right to collect that data e.g. gotten end user consent?

Contacting Lisa Jackson:

You can contact Lisa by Twitter or LinkedIn.

• Am I only collecting the data that's necessary for the job at hand?
• What are my apps/websites collecting through cookies, pixels, local storage?

  *Do I need a cookie banner?*

• Does my privacy statement and cookie policy explain my data collection and use?
• Are my direct marketing campaign lists clean?
• Do I have internal-facing policies to document data use e.g. Data Protection Policy?

2. Using data

• Have I designated someone internally to be the key contact for privacy?
• Is data only being used for the projects initially planned for?
• Where is the data flowing through and being stored?
• Who is it being shared with?
• Are my service providers privacy compliant and are there contracts in writing with each?

3. Safety and security

• Have I built-in system security and both user and staff access controls?
• Do I have a security and breach handling policy?
• Am I training staff about privacy?
• Do I allow *data to be accessed from outside the European Economic Area?*

4. Data retention

• Am I hosting the data for a client or for myself? If it’s for me, how long do I need to keep it?
• If I’m hosting the data directly for end users, can they delete it themselves?
• How will I destroy data safely when no longer needed?

5. End user controls

• How does the end user keep data accurate and updated?
• How can they opt-out of data use e.g. direct marketing?
• How can they *access a copy if their own data* on request?

Eek… that’s lots to consider: Why bother?!

Privacy by Design is not intended to delay projects; it’s intended to build protections in at the start as:

• Being proactive saves retrofitting privacy law compliance later on which is generally more expensive, time consuming, can cause service interruptions and can compromise data collected.
• It minimises inaccurate or irrelevant data which leads to more effective campaigns, better metrics and a better user experience.
• It minimises the risk of data breaches which can attract negative media attention causing brand damage.
• A new data protection law is expected by 2017/2018. One draft currently includes fines of €100 million or up to 5% of annual worldwide turnover (whichever is higher) and mandatory data breach notifications to data protection authorities.
Is your content geared up for rise of Mobile? #17

By Sean McGrath

Synopsis:

It’s a fact! As of last year, more Internet content is consumed via mobile phones and tablets than desktops and already this is fundamentally changing the rules of content marketing forever -- altering what people consume, where they consume it, dwell times, levels of ‘real’ audience engagement, and sharing practices. Listen in to this interview between Eamonn O’Brien, founder of The Reluctant Speakers Club, and mobile marketing expert Jamie Turner, founder of 60 Second Marketer, as we discuss changes marketers may need to consider to win attention and trust at personal and business levels in this new era.

4 Takeaways:

1. Context Matters -- In this new era where the majority of online content is accessed via mobile phones and tablets, marketers need to respond to changing content consumption habits (including shorter dwell times, a preference for visual experiences, and less inclination to read) to engage with their target audiences.

2. New Times Demand New and Joined-Up Thinking -- While blogs aren’t dead (yet), today’s content creators need to consider new ways to share their messages (including video and podcasts) and to ‘think integration’ as they use multiple platforms to share their ideas to better effect.

3. Embrace The Evolving World of Mobile Capabilities -- The quickest way to become a mobile content ninja is to embrace its power. The more you try things out and commit to learning by doing, the better you’ll understand and be able to use the technical

In his vlog - video submission - Eamonn discusses the importance of mobile with Jamie Turner founder of 60 Second Marketer and what marketeers need to do to maximise its potential.

Click on the video below to hear Eamonn's submission where he discusses how mobile is altering what people consume, where they consume it, dwell times, levels of ‘real’ audience engagement, and sharing practices.

By Eamonn O’Brien

Are You 'Content Ready' For a Mobile Era?

Photo Credit: Garry Knight
incredible opportunities it can offer you as a marketer. Jump in instead of standing back - you’ll be less likely to be left behind.

4. Love the Mobile Moment to Leverage Near Point Marketing — Find ways to boost interaction, engagement, and perceived value for your prospects or customers when they’re proximate to places where you can build value, through the content you create (eg when speaking at events) or products/services you offer.

About Eamonn O’Brien:

Eamonn O’Brien is the founder of The Reluctant Speakers Club, President of the Professional Speaking Association of Ireland, and the author of ‘How to Make Powerful Speeches’ book as well as the multi-award winning The Reluctant Speakers Club Blog. His podcast is included in the most recent list of the Top 100 Small Business Podcasts by Small Business Trends. He works with business leaders and owners to conquer their fears of speaking in public with confidence. Members learn how to hone their communication skills and speak with an unprecedented degree of clarity, persuasiveness, and authority.

Contacting Eamonn O’Brien:

You can connect with Eamonn on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Google+ or visit The Reluctant Speakers Club, email or call him at +353.1.5311196.
A Brief History of Storytelling. #18

By Sasha Kinch

Synopsis:

Oral, written, printed and digitalised, storytelling has evolved over the years, but has it changed that much?

4 Takeaways:

1. Oral storytelling is one of the most ancient art forms.
2. Writing was developed in two separate places.
3. The digital revolution changed many things.
4. Social media is not that different to oral storytelling.

About Sasha Kinch:

I love information, technology, science and social media. I studied physiology and BIS and have worked in television, radio and social media. Now, I cover all things social for Independent News and Media B2B. Doctor’s kids are always sick and plumbers never have running water, so my personal social accounts are rarely interesting, but follow/add me anyway.

Contacting Sasha:

You can follow Sasha on Twitter.

Storytelling is essentially the conveying of events in words, sounds and/or images, often by improvisation or embellishment. It’s the passing on of information, albeit in a more florid way and it’s an intrinsic part of human culture and human nature to share ideas, learnings and stories, but has the way in which we tell stories changed much over the past 200,000 years?

Oral Tradition

One of the most ancient art-forms, oral storytelling has a long and honourable history. Stories were passed on by word of mouth, taking many forms including songs, poetry, chants, dance, theatrical displays and so on. We have an obsession with narrative, and this is a characteristic in every culture. Epics such as the Odyssey, Beowulf, and indeed most of the Bible were passed along orally at first.

Written Form

Writing seems to have developed in two separate places, Mesopotamia around 3200
BC and Mesoamerica around 600 BC. It allowed for stories to be recorded and collated, probably preventing what we could call ‘Chinese whispers’. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance periods, storytellers would roam the countryside, collecting the stories of the people. We see this in the works of The Brothers Grimm. Our passion for narrative remained true.

With the invention of the printing press around 1440, stories could now not only be recorded, but circulated more easily, without the storyteller being present. This allowed rapid socio-cultural development. By 1500, printing presses in Western Europe had already produced twenty million books.

**Digital Age**

At this point, storytelling belonged to writers and collectors. The stories remained stories about other people, either fictional or newsworthy, but nevertheless, for the layman, the realm of the narrative belonged to someone else.

The digital revolution began in the late 1950s, and fundamentally change society with the development of the personal computer. The key thing about the proliferation of personal computers is that it created connections, and just like the roaming storytellers, information (stories) could now be shared with more people.

**Community Engagement**

And so began social media. Yes, as far back as the 80s, there was social media. It started with the Bulletin Board System which were online meeting places that allowed users to communicate, download files and games and post messages to other users. CompuServe also allowed members to share files and access news and events, and send e-mail, a technology that was new for the masses.
As the internet has evolved, with AOL, Yahoo, Amazon and Google, so too did methods of storytelling. Now almost anyone, anywhere could create a story to share online. Evolution continued, and connection methods and platforms increased, from Classroom.com to the annoying SixDegrees.com and onto MySpace, Bebo and Facebook.

With the proliferation of channels you get the proliferation of stories. Twitter lets you broadcast every thought, Instagram every meal, and Facebook… everything… and the stories grow.

Conclusion

But what does this mean? This clutter of stories and information? It means that real stories can get lost. That epics are no longer of interest, and visuals need to be intrinsically looped into your story to grab any attention. It seems like we’ve come a full loop. Social media is essentially oral tradition mixed with some cave painting. Is that a bad thing? No, but we just need to remember that at our core, we still need a good narrative.
Bringing the World of Twitter to a Local Level….#19

By Ben Miles

Synopsis:

Straight forward “Plain English” – no marketing terms Twitter tips on getting the best out of twitter, growing your follower base and bringing the world of Twitter to a local level.

4 Takeaways:

1. Follow people back, don’t be a Twitter Snob! But learn where your “mute” button is. #FollowBack.
2. Stuck on 2K ditch the celebs! They are never going to follow you back and if they do say something “Big” on twitter someone you are following will probably retweet it anyway. Don’t following back “Private” Accounts, no point you can’t retweet anything from them, and pending follows, stop you following other people. #CreateANetwork.
3. Twitter is real time, so use your phone as your primary tool for twitter. #RealTime.
4. Get yourself a good “managing app” and keep your account up to date, get in to the habit of looking after your account on a daily basis. #FirstCupOfCoffeeRoutine.

About Ben Miles:

The Quiet Man behind All Things Mayo, Galway and the rest of the All Things Family. Giving small business, community groups, local charities and local events a voice in the world of Twitter.

Contacting Ben Miles:

You can follow Ben on Twitter.

To Tweet or Not To Tweet, that is the question?

The reason I love twitter over other types of social media is down to two reasons.

1. Being dyslexic, I found the 140 characters format suited me, made me focus on the words with less chance of making mistakes and getting hammered by the unforgiving Grammar Police.
2. It’s real time and opens doors to people you would never get chance to speak to. Watching a big TV event, with twitter at your side can enhance your viewing pleasure.

I once tweeted Alastair Campbell (the ex-Labour Party Spin Doctor). And he used my words from our twitter conversation on the BBC’s Football Focus Show… I felt like a Spin Doctor for a Spin Doctor for the day!!

The Twitter age is before us, not behind us.

To understand how to bring the world of Twitter to a local level you must first understand what is local?

I came to Mayo with work, fell in love with the place. So moved over 3 and a bit year’s ago. Was a bit of a culture shock - being born and raised in Leeds, Yorkshire (You can tell a Yorkshireman, but you can’t tell him much!). So with no family connections to the area I found it difficult to find out what was going on in Mayo, where to go, where to buy certain items etc. Back in Leeds I would pop onto Google or Twitter and 99 times out of 100 the answer would be there in seconds. Here in Mayo when I started looking, Google & Twitter was not the answer. So what choices did I have?

1. Local Radio? Would guess that it is still the number 1 for information on what’s going on in Mayo. I like to drop in and out of radio, mainly listening whilst in the car. So it is hit and miss whether I heard the information I required.
2. Local Newspapers? Can’t remember the last time I bought a newspaper (whether here in Mayo or back in the UK). Do use the newspapers websites, but the local ones are
not the best.
3. Local Websites? Less said about them the better, out of date information, not mobile friendly. In fairness the mayo.ie website re-launched with a nice website, but it mainly focuses on the bigger events and news.
4. Local Social Media? Mainly Facebook and very tribal, North Mayo did not interact with South Mayo, West Mayo doesn't know what's going on in East Mayo!! And a number of accounts that have a good number of followers, but have not tweeted since 1842.

If twitter be the food of love, tweet on.

As you can see there was a need, but how and why can my story help you?

Starting from scratch and building an account:

Although the number of followers is not important, you can't be an expert in your field if you only have 65 followers, you can be an expert offline however you will come across more credible as you build followers and if you put in a little time and follow the below tips will not be long before you are a larger following, remember each of your followers can be classed part of your marketing team!

Plan how you are going to build your follower base, who do you want to follow you and why? Make sure your account is of interest to followers that you are going after. Remember there is a limit of how many people you can follow so choose wisely. Plan it weekly, target around 500 hundred people by following them, BUT make sure that you tweet something that will make them follow you (Example target Mayo GAA fans tweet 2 or 3 tweets about Mayo GAA before you follow them, they are more likely to follow you back). Starting off from little or more followers do this weekly, but as time goes on can be a monthly process to keep the account fresh. You will find once you get passed the magic Twitter 2K you will automatically get more people following you, as people are sheep and like to follow who other people are following (not a dig, just human nature).

Friday: Tweet your 2/3 tweets that followers are going to find of interest. Follow your targeted 500. Leave them as following over the weekend. Monday: Start unfollowing them by 100 per day (most free apps have a limited of 100). You will be level by Friday so repeat the process. Unfollowing rule Verified-Private-EggHeads-6months-3months-1months-Rest (I use android Unfollowers). As a rule out of the 500 you should gain between 150/250 followers. (I use android TweepMap).
Build your account base by using the following rotating methods:

LOCAL: follow people that are in and around your town/county/region. If you are a new business it’s a great tool to get your name out there, putting yourself on the local map. Do a Twitter search for the town or area (#Cong or #Mayo).
INTEREST: follow people that are in the same of similar fields of interest to you, make sure you spread your search wide, don’t forget look to the US or the UK – twitter is a great introduction tool. You never know what a Twitter connection will lead to.

COMPETITION: As well as following your competition, follow who they are following, they are following your competition for a reason!

COMMUNITY/CHARITY GROUPS: Make sure you follow Community Groups, Charities and other organisations in your local/interest area, and don’t forget to help them out with the occasional retweet, shows that you and your business is in touch with the “real world”.

Tweet, Tweet, mere tweets, no matter from the heart.

Do’s & Don’ts

Decide what you want from your twitter page, whether it will be primarily a business page or personal page, not an issue if you have more than one, but you can link them in your Bio! If you are the business, remember to keep it professional and don’t get involved in arguments or rants, will only look bad on your business.

Only use DM’s as private message service, do not send automated thanks for following DM’s it’s only going to be deleted! And DO NOT send a “Thanks for Following, PS don’t forget to check us out on Facebook” if I want to follow you on another platform I will, it’s like going into a pub and asking for a pint of Guinness, paying for it and then the landlord asking you if you want a pint of Heineken? If I would have wanted a pint of Heineken I would have asked for a pint of Heineken!!!!!

Be nice and helpful, Twitter is a NETWORK just like BNI or a Chamber of Commerce, if someone you are following needs a builder, and you know Bob is following you, connect them by a tweet. If someone new follows you, no need to send them a thank you tweet, better option is look at their tweets and if there is something relevant to your account give them a retweet instead. Don’t forget if someone retweets you for the first time do make a connection and thank them for the retweet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#MammyPagesChat</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#MultiLunchHour</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#SouthsideHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
<td>#WexfordHour</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#MonaghanHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#WaterfordHour</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#PippinHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#WexfordHour</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#AdareHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#Limerick</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#DownHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#Fenit</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#LimerickHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#Mallow</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#IrishFoodParty</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#Killarney</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#KillarneyHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#Castleisland</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#CarlowHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#Carlow</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#CorkHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#Cork</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#MayoHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#Mayo</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#RoscommonHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#RoscommonHour</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#SligoHour</td>
<td>Mon-Thurs</td>
<td>8am-8pm</td>
<td>#Sligo</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#WexfordHour</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
<td>#WaterfordHour</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#WexfordHour</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
<td>#WaterfordHour</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#WexfordHour</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
<td>#WexfordHour</td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
<td>12pm-1pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Look out for the Twitter hours, lots out there great FREE way of promoting (soft sell) you or your business and building your follower base, Join in the chat using the defined hashtags, good way to grow your followers and get new business.

If you have the time keep your entire social pages separate, but if you don’t have time make sure you use the correct tool to post updates. Nothing worse than seeing a tweet with just fb.me/48RqkquhD on it, you will gain twitter followers, if you are seen as a Facebook account on Twitter! (If you share links on FB make sure you add a comment).

Do use Twitter for customer service issue (especially with the BIG service providers) you get an issue resolved quicker than an email or hanging on the phone. Don’t forget to send a thank you tweet once the issue is sorted. But it works both ways if you are running a company make sure your customer service on twitter is also first class.

And last of all, the best Twitter (all social media) pages are the ones that act as themselves, don’t try to be something you are not, wear your heart on your sleeve! People will see through you very quickly, as the saying goes takes months to get a new customer, but only takes seconds to lose them. Don’t be afraid to try new apps or ways of tweeting – learn by playing with it, but do not be afraid to ask for help, put it out there you will be surprised how much help you will get!

Enjoy-Chat-Promote!
The Extinction of Trust. #20

By Gianni Catalfamo

Synopsis:

Can you imagine living in a Society where you cannot trust anybody and nothing can be taken for granted?

The focus of this post is on the underlying factor that accelerates the speed of transactions, called Trust: it is much easier and faster to enter a transaction with “someone you trust”: no need to double-check every detail, and you can take at face value a lot.

We need Trust to preserve the functioning of Society as we know it, so we need to think quickly about how to preserve Trust from Extinction and what actions we should take to uphold this universal value.

4 Takeaways:

1. Trust* is fundamental to almost any form of transaction between entities (individuals or organizations).
2. The components of Trust include the degree of direct or indirect knowledge (aka Reputation) you have about the other entity, as well as the importance of the transaction and the background of the platform in which the transaction takes place.
3. In the old days, intermediaries (journalists) and platforms used to contribute a lot to the Reputation of entities, but the demise of the publishing industry biz model as well as ramping abuse are challenging these.
4. We cannot live in a world without Trust, so we must take it upon ourselves as a key shared values that we must endeavor to protect.

Can you imagine living in a Society where you cannot trust anybody? Where nothing can be taken for granted and everything must be checked?

To answer these questions, we analyse the more general form of Transactions between Entities: which reads

\[ E_1 \xrightarrow{T} E_2 \]

“Entity 1 enters in a transaction with Entity 2”.

Personal relationship or commercial deals, individuals or organizations, this simple equation is general enough to encompass them all.

My focus is on the underlying factor that accelerates the speed of transactions, called Trust: it is much easier and faster to enter a transaction with someone you trust. There is no need to double-check every detail, and you can take at face value a lot, because your counterpart is “someone you trust”.

\[ T_{1,2} \neq T_{2,1} \]

So we shall call \(T_{1,2}\) the level of trust that Entity 1 (individual or organization) feels towards Entity 2 and it is obvious that \(T_{1,2}\) may not be reciprocated, i.e.

This post attempts to analyze what are the components of the Trust and how some of these are critically challenged by the transformation of the Society we live in.
The Fundamental Equation of Trust:

\[ T = \frac{K_d + K_i}{V} + T_0 \]

says that “your Trust of an Entity is directly proportional to your Knowledge of such Entity (direct and indirect) and inversely proportional to the Value at stake”, i.e. how important is this transaction.

Kd derives from your DIRECT experience with the Entity while Ki captures what others think about them (something also called Reputation); V may represent a monetary but also sentimental importance.

Finally, we add a constant T0 depending on the environment where you come in contact with the Entity.

Kd and Ki are complementary factors: when you know someone very well (very high Kd) you do not care too much for his/her Reputation; of course, when the Value (or importance) of the occasion needing trust is very high, you will be prompted to exercise more caution.

Finally, when your contact with the Entity happens within a Common Frame, such frame may carry a “default” level of trust: take for example trading platforms like eBay or Amazon, who feature built-in rating systems to attribute an artificial trust to entities trading on their platform. Or think of the Stock Exchange, which require a certain amount of disclosure to allow a stock to trade.

What is changing?

There is ample literature on how to professionally establish and maintain Kd and Ki: Customer Relationship Management and Reputation Management have created whole service industries.

The focus of this book is the analysis of how such established techniques are changing vis-à-vis the profound transformation of the landscape where information is exchanged and shared.

Therefore we will look at how Kd is influenced by others, analyzing the concept of Customer Journey, whereby someone moves from the consideration set (a range of possible Entities with whom to enter the transaction) to a short list (a much smaller group which you directly compare with each other) to finally enter the transaction.

But while the relationship never stopped there, modern times give the next phase as much (and often even more) visibility than the previous ones: existing clients can heavily influence the decisions of other by sharing their own transaction experience, therefore heavily influencing Ki.

We will also look at how “modern times” Ki and Kd depend more and more on direct contact between Entities: in this frame, the job of professional communications intermediaries, or journalists (to assess the veridicity of what Entities proclaimed to offer readers their own, filtered view of the facts) depended on a business model that has been largely disrupted.
The consequence of this disruption is twofold:

1. communications intermediaries are not able to sustainably continue to perform their duties therefore Ki becomes solely the result of “what people say” (largely experiential and un-managed)
2. T0 plunges towards zero: people develop a radical distrust for all they hear anywhere.

Can we live without Trust?

The world has been made much simpler: each Entity is assigned the task of preserving the factors contributing to its Trust factor. No one else will. No external contribution can be negotiated, managed, cajoled or extorted.

- People judge us on how we behave, not on what we say.
- People check out everything, because they will assume that we will lie through our noses.
- Imagine the cumbersomeness of a commercial transaction where your counterpart does not trust credit rating and asks for a full audit before extending credit.
- Imagine intensive background checks for job candidates; imagine every diploma or certificate must be checked.
- Imagine having to prove beyond doubt anything you say or claim.
- Imagine financial transactions, contracts, marriage promises...

My conclusion is that we need Trust to preserve the functioning of Society as we know it, so we need to think quickly about how to preserve Trust from Extinction and what actions we can and should collectively take to uphold this universal value.
Is The Crowdfunding Market Overcrowded? #21

By Fiona Ashe

Synopsis:
Crowdfunding is one of the buzzwords of the networked age. In this blog post, I examine whether the crowdfunding marketplace is overcrowded, how to “ask” effectively in a crowdfunding campaign and whether every concept – no matter how bizarre – should be entitled to raise money through the power of the crowd.

4 Takeaways:
1. Design a strategy for your crowdfunding campaign.
2. Build an audience through social media in advance of the launch day.
3. Allow two months preparation time before launching your campaign.
4. Approach it as an audience-building exercise, not just a fundraising technique.

About Fiona Ashe:
Fiona Ashe is an award-winning film/video producer/director. She has a 20-year track record in professional film and video production and has achieved success with a viral video. Fiona is also a renowned presentation coach and excels at relaxing people in front of the camera. Through her digital agency, FlasheForward Communications, she designs and delivers content marketing training – with an emphasis on how to create content – for a variety of clients, including Fáilte Ireland, Irish Times Training and the Irish Internet Association. Her other skills include expert copywriting and screenwriting. She is currently writing "Give and you shall receive" is an age-old adage, which is relevant to the practice of crowdfunding in more ways than one. Supporters contribute to projects to help them move to the next stage or achieve completion. These givers receive in return a reward/incentive – as well as a warm and fuzzy feeling for aiding the advancement of (usually) cultural projects which may not be realised without such generosity.

The “Give and you shall receive” principle is also a valuable mindset for those running crowdfunding campaigns. With more and more crowdfunding campaigns being launched, the competition for those precious dollars is intense. So crowdfunders, try this: put yourselves in the mind of your online contacts whose inboxes contain crowdfunding requests as numerous as falling leaves at this time of year.

Now imagine how it feels to have every email asking for something. This is especially pertinent if you (still inhabiting the recipients’ persona) are receiving requests (sometimes badly phrased as demands) from crowdfunders to whom you are connected through a social network but with whom you have had no direct contact.

Hop bodies again back into being a crowdfunder and ask yourself how you would feel if an acquaintance you had met in the lift a few times suddenly asked you for money? Wouldn’t you be more likely to comply with their request if they had given you something first – even if it was just a cup of coffee!

How do you feel when someone gives you something? The majority of people feel a desire to give something back. So this is an effective strategy in the planning stages of your crowdfunding strategy. Okay, so you can’t give everyone a cup of coffee. It doesn’t travel well in the post! But you could share other people’s content, endorse their projects or contribute to their campaigns. This goes a long way to building goodwill,
her second feature film script, which will mark her directorial debut.

**Contacting Fiona Ashe:**

You can contact Fiona on [eMail](mailto:) or follow her on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/). which will elevate the chances of success of your crowdfunding campaign.

There's nothing less convincing than desperation, so whatever you do, don't plead. Please don't plead! Instead, stay in the giving mindset, identify the benefits to your supporters and promote these benefits in your updates (by the way, this is also an effective approach to writing marketing copy!)

Now hop back into the mind of a potential funder. What are the criteria you use to decide which projects to support? Sometimes contributors want to support the person who is crowdfunding and buy into their passion. This is true of the projects that I have supported. On the other hand, it can be the project itself which makes people dig deep into their pockets. I recently met someone whose top incentive was priced at $5,000. Out of the blue, someone she didn't know contacted her to ask how to contribute $10,000!

This situation is a crowdfunder's dream. But it is all too rare for cultural projects. Some quirky ideas, on the other hand, have generated huge success. Kickstarter member Zach “Danger” Brown launched a campaign to raise $10 to make a potato salad. The result? $55,492! Since then, he has become a movie star (of sorts): being featured in the media in many countries and achieving viral engagement on social media. But not everyone is happy. Many people are outraged, claiming that this makes a mockery of crowdfunding and devalues worthier uses for the cash, especially in the context of unsuccessful campaigns to raise money for cancer treatments.

This case study generates the question about whether there should be more discernment about what kind of projects should be eligible for crowdfunding. One platform which has comprehensive assessment criteria is Seed & Spark, a film crowdfunding organisation which requires wannabe crowdfunders to develop a comprehensive strategy in advance. The team behind Seed & Spark help to refine this strategy to maximise each project's chances of success.
So the topics I'm throwing out for debate at Congregation 2015 are whether you think there should be criteria for the type of project which can be crowdfunded and whether you feel there is crowdfunding fatigue?

I look forward to debating with you.
Friction: Don’t eliminate it, embrace it. #22

By Dermot Casey

Synopsis:

We have a habit of trying to make the world a smoother place by eliminating friction. From Uber to the Internet of Things technology is accelerating this habit. The real problem isn’t friction, but what happens if we do eliminate it using technology. And what kind of people do we become when this happens.

4 Takeaways:

1. Friction is an important feature of the world not a bug.
2. Technology is always a tradeoff. We lose and we gain. This is OK as long as the technology doesn’t eliminate our ability to engage with the world and change it.
3. Automation in eliminating engagement takes power away so we need to be careful what we automate, where we automate and why we automate.
4. Everything of value is earned. Things that appear free sometimes have the highest price.

About Dermot Casey:

Dermot is a husband of one and father of three, three who bring plenty of positive friction into his life. When not staying up late writing blogposts for Congregation he wrestles with the frictions of people, projects and process with Startups and SMEs bringing his unique skills as a change catalyst to companies through his consultancy Near Future. Reading, writing and running too little he has recently discovered that he also sails too little.

“Friction: the resistance a body encounters in moving over another body” OED

As I sit down to write this the deadline is three days away and I’m aware that I’m dealing with one particular form of friction: procrastination. As I sit down and rewrite it the piece is now due tomorrow. The push to complete the paper on time forces me to deal with this form of friction. And it forces me to engage with the material and the idea that’s been floating around in my head for months.

Friction is one of the key forces in our lives. And we constantly try to eliminate it, particularly through the use of technology. Uber (love it or loath it) was created in a moment of friction in Paris when two Americans couldn’t get a Taxi, looked at the phones in their pockets and thought, “there has to be an easier way to do this.” While we’ve always sought to eliminate friction, (the wheel ruts in Roman roads are one example) there’s a question of whether or not we’re going too far.

Eliminating friction is a bit like creating snail trails. Paul Quigley explained snail trails in blogpost about the great Snail Derby of 1998. Faced with the problem of getting the Snails to race in the same direction, an innovative 6 year old came up with Snail Trails, a streak of water, placed in front of a snail using one’s fingertip.

You see, snails prefer pushing themselves over wet surfaces than dry surfaces. My girlfriend observed that a simple streak of wetness leading directly from the snail’s current position to the finish line kept them on the straight and narrow, so to speak. Snail trails saved the day, and the snail derby of 1988 was a roaring success.

Snail trails are about the path of least resistance.

Demming said that

A bad system will beat a good person every time.
A snail trail is a better system. It's a very clever use of lightweight technology to reduce friction in a process. And the value of reducing friction in processes and conversations is very very large. (Valuation of Uber which is Taxi's minus the friction $50 Billion)

Friction is important. All learning involves some form of friction. There is a cycle of learning that we pass through whether its learning to ride a bike or learning to read a book. All learning and all engagement with the world involves some form of friction. What unifies engineering, medicine, business, architecture and art is engagement with the world, not with how things are but with how they might be. The nature of great art creates friction in the mind and forces engagement. Progress in science and engineering comes through paying attention to frictions in the world and by physically engaging with the world to change it into something new. Asimov pointed out that The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not “Eureka!” (I found it!) but “That's funny …”

What's funny is the thing that catches our attention. Some result or observation that is in some way different from what we expected it to be. What we've experienced at this point is a little bit of friction, just as a stone in the shoe will cause you to pause and pay attention. When we eliminate friction we eliminate our engagement with the world. Worse we eliminate our opportunity for engagement with the world and our opportunity to participate in and shape that world. When we eliminate the grain of sand from the Oyster, we eliminate the opportunity for the Pearl.

Technology continually changes how we engage with the world. New technology has caused concern for thousands of years. Socrates railed against the development of writing because of the damage it would do to memory. In Phaedrus he's quoted as saying “they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks. What you have discovered is a recipe not for memory, but for reminder.” He was right in that people memorise far less than they used.

Where he was wrong was that writing and reading create a new way of engagement and a new set of skills for engaging with the world that had to be learned. Writing was a transformational technology. Oral and literary cultures are different. Humans didn't evolve to read and we have to contort and rewire our brains to enable us to read. The benefits that come from reading are hard earned. And the pleasures and rewards that come from it are long lasting. It's also not a little ironic that without writing by Plato we may never have heard of Socrates.

Technology builds on technology. As technology advances it enables new ways of engaging with the world and new ways of learning and new ways of understanding the world. Programmed has evolved from physically wiring machines, through punchcards, assembly language, compilers and higher level languages. In software technology expands by abstracting and hiding the layers beneath. Eliminating friction. If you're a programmer you've little desire to go back to the era of punchcards. The same is true in other areas of our lives. Few of us want to go back to spinning our own yarn and making our own clothes. Where technology becomes dangerous is where we completely eliminate our engagement with the world and create a friction free world.

In a friction free world we treat technology as magic, we enchant objects and we do not understand or engage with them. “Computer says no” is one example. Nicholas Carr refers to the “Law of conservation of intelligence.” He states “there is a fixed
amount of intelligence in the world, and every time we think we're creating new intelligence, what we're actually doing is just redistributing the intelligence that's already there.” It's less that the machines are becoming smarter it's that we humans are meeting the machines halfway.

He uses the diagram below to illustrate

![Diagram of Distribution of Intelligence in Development of the Internet of Things]

Technology, as Soshana Zuboff points out, can automate or it can informate. Automation is different to informating. Informating empowers people and automation takes power away. Uber is an automation technology. Writing is an informating one. In reality automate doesn't just take power away it redistributes power. It creates a new high priesthood.

Nicholas Carr refers to the world that this creates as “The Glass Cage” I prefer to call it “The Furlined Mousetrap”.

How do we think better about how we use technology and what technology does? A number of years ago Bernie Goldbach introduced me to the idea of the “Cellphone Amish”. A people who very carefully chose what technology they use, asking not just what technology does but what kind of people they become when they use it. Technology and automation through technology and the elimination of friction doesn't just supplant it changes. Sometimes these shifts are subtle. The instant gratification that comes from the appification and the uberfication of everything extinguishes previous ways of engaging with the world.

By enchanting the world it eliminates engagement with the world. It creates a world where there is no ability to tinker with and no ability to improve things. Herbert Simon said our purpose is to “act responsibly in the world by transforming existing situations into more preferred ones.” Over automation will extinguish this possibility. We then end up with technological solutions to human problems. One story I read a while back talked of a disused space in Spain that was repurposed by a group of citizens. Their key technology need was wifi and connectivity. This enabled them to establish a vibrant community space. It stood in contrast to the “smart city” initiative that often seems more to be about selling technology than enabling people to engage with the world.

I don't pretend there is a simple answer. There is no “people of the earth throw down your apps and be everywhere free”. I love technology. My word processor, my browser and my laptop have enabled me to tinker with this idea and to engage with the idea of friction. And I think there are somethings we can do to make the world better, to
transform existing situations into more preferred one. I think that thinking about the difference between technology that informs and technology that automates is important and deciding what to automate and why is critical.

We should look to technology which asks something of us and beware of technology that doesn’t. I think we should be wary of closed systems or any system we can’t engage with. The open-source movement started in software because Richard Stallman couldn’t change how a printer worked by reprogramming it himself. Creating a world where all our experiences are so mediated by technology that without the technology we can’t function is a step backwards. Maker movements, tinkerers, coder-dojos are all ways of engaging with technology productively. In a world where its program or be programmed it is one place to start.

At an event I ran with my colleague Keith Bohanna recently, Mary Carty asked a number of really critical questions two of which stick with me in relation to this piece “Why don’t we push against or find answers to the known unknowns?” and “What are you going to do about it?” I travel to #Cong15 to engage some minds to seek begin some conversations around these questions.

References

- The quote from Plato’s Phaedrus can be found here http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html
- It’s not 100% clear if Asimov did say the quote I’ve attributed to him above, but if he didn’t he should have. http://msgboard.snopes.com/cgi-bin/ultimatebb.cgi?ubb=get_topic;f=32;t=000470;p=1
- Herbert Simon commented “Engineering, medicine, business, architecture and painting are concerned not with the necessary but with the contingent - not with how things are but with how they might be - in short, with design” and “Our professional responsibility is not to discover the laws of the universe, but to act responsibly in the in the world by transforming existing situations into more preferred ones”
- The quotes are taken from his “The Sciences of the Artificial”
- Summary of Mary Carty’s talk can be found here http://www.nearfuture.io/mary-carty-candid/
#Clueless: the bluff, bluster and baloney that is putting digital marketing at risk #23
By Alan Tyrrell

Synopsis:
Digital marketing without a robust backbone of objectives and measurables can be smoke and mirror reflected in ‘emperors new clothes’ syndrome.

4 Takeaways:
1. Question if digital is the right channel.
2. Reputation and Measurement are key issue for digital marketing.
4. Digital must obey business logic.

About Alan Tyrrell:
Alan Tyrrell is director of PSG Plus the corporate communications and reputation management agency of PSG Communications, Ireland’s leading communications group.

Contacting Alan Tyrrell:
Alan can be contacted by email.

I am happy to admit that I am clueless on lots of things. Other people also tell me I am clueless on lots of things too so it must be true! My children, for instance, tell me I am clueless on music and fashion (they are of course right on neither of these points!). My team tell me I am clueless regarding their workload and brilliance (and of course, they are not correct). My wife tells me I am simply clueless (and she is, of course, absolutely correct.)

The thing that I am most clueless about, and therefore most curious about, is the magic sauce that some ‘digital marketing consultants’ appear to be able to sprinkle liberally over one of the most important marketing and communications tools of our era – the digital world. I see, with some regularity, digital marketing campaigns being touted with a barrage of jargonisms that sound good, and which then get implemented with no clear business objectives, no measurement, no significant outputs but all done with very significant budgets.

Digital advertising spend levels are promoted with vim and vigour and many companies rise to the clarion call to go digital without ever stopping to question whether digital (in its entirety) it is the right channel to reach their customers let alone ask which platform is best for them.

I think it was Lord Lever who famously quoted that 50% of his advertising budget was wasted; he just did not know which 50%. For digital marketing the fact that fraud in the advertising spend is so unknown but accepted as being very high makes Lord Lever’s quote seem almost quaint.

Lest I be accused of being out of touch, let me add that there are many, many really strong campaigns I see on digital that deliver unquestioned brand engagement. HB’s clever use of newsjumping when Ed Sheeran was in town among them. Moreover, the vast majority of those in the digital marketing arena are hard-working, honest people going about their jobs to the best of their ability.

However in the bright shiny world of digital strategy I am forever reminded of my kids and the ‘Bee-bah, bee-bah, bee-bah’ noise they use when making an alarm noise or a fire engine sound. Because it is that ‘bee-bah’ noise that goes off in my head whenever I hear jargon creeping into a conversation. And it sure does creep into talk about all
things digital and with such alacrity that it is accepted as uncommon wisdom that only
the foolish would question.

For digital marketing, the biggest challenge is measurement and regulation. When it
comes to social media, the failure of so many companies to put in place simple sense
checks on where they are spending on-line marketing budgets and what value for
money they are getting is the first step on the road to perdition.

Whenever I hear jargon, what strikes me is that people are using it in one of two ways
and neither way is particularly helpful. For some people, jargon is a tool they use to
erect a 10ft wall around their area of work so that they are seen as irreplaceable. It
tends to happen mostly in large organisations and particularly one's that are going
through significant change. In a worst-case scenario, it becomes such common
currency that ‘Buzzword Bingo’ is actually unplayable. Loads of people go to loads of
meetings where no one has a clue what is being discussed but they discuss it at length
with each attendee using their own jargon-filled lexicon to protect their turf. In the
parlance of Twitter, everyone is left #clueless.

The other bee-bah jargon alarm is where people use jargon as a tool to bluff their way
to a sale. More prevalent in some areas of consulting, the jargon of some people puts
to shame the old joke about the builders apprentice being sent across the site to get a
glass hammer to put in the skyhook. Once again, #clueless.

For me the bee-bah noise really, really, really blares on all things digital. Time and time
again, I see and hear ‘digital strategists’ say things that simply confound logic. And yet
they say it with such gusto and with such an array of language that it takes someone
really brave, who is prepared to risk being seen as really stupid, to ask the question –
‘yes, but what will the result be?’ And when the result is measured in the numbers of
‘likes’ on a page or the sign-ups from bots in far flung reaches of the universe rather
than actual customers, that is when the need for a really strong regulatory framework
comes to the fore.

As a news junkie, I do appreciate the importance of using all channels to share
news and promote products. However I also appreciate the basic facts of running a
business, satisfying customers and using my budget as a guide to optimise my spend
rather than as a target to maximise my spend.

The greatest threat to digital marketing is the cowboys and cowgirls who use bluff,
bluster and baloney to sell a sow’s ear as a silk purse. It is therefore incumbent on all
of us in the wider marketing and communications world – client side and agency side
– to pursue much greater regulation of our space, much more robust measurement
benchmarks and much more focus on achieving the business objectives of our
organisations rather than simply amusing or interesting content.
How Slack became the backbone of our distributed company #24

By Jochen Lillich

Synopsis:

In 2010, Jochen Lillich decided to start a location-independent IT business. In his post, he outlines how his company uses Social Media platforms, with Slack as the centre piece, to tie together team members working from all over Germany and Ireland.

4 Takeaways:

1. A business is a community which needs to be nurtured.
2. In a distributed team, you can not overcommunicate.
3. Slack is much more than web chat.
4. While tools create efficiency, it’s culture that creates effectiveness.

About Jochen Lillich:

Jochen Lillich grew up in Germany, where he studied Computer Science, worked as an IT manager and started several IT companies. He works currently as the founder and managing director of freistil IT, an enterprise web hosting provider. In summer 2013, he moved to Bray and enjoys living in Ireland with his family since.

Contacting Jochen Lillich:

Apart from his company’s website and social media presence, Jochen writes on StartupCaptain.co and his personal blog Associative Disarray

You can contact Jochen via eMail.

Doing business without a central office has become more popular over the recent years. These distributed companies vary widely in size, well-known examples being Automattic, GitHub, AgileBits, Canonical, Acceleration Partners, Doist, Lullabot and Trello. Other businesses join in and get rid of their existing office:

The obvious advantages are savings on rent and a far wider reach in recruiting new team members without them having to relocate. But the “remote work” approach also has downsides that make businesses shy away from this approach, most notably Reddit and Yahoo! “Remote Work: Why Reddit and Yahoo! Banned It”).

Five years ago, I decided to build a virtual company, and I’ve not regretted it ever since.
In this post, I’m going to outline why.

Going remote

After I had left my job as Head of IT Core Services at 1&1 in 2009, I had a few months of garden leave for deciding what to do next. I had started a number of IT businesses before, and the entrepreneurial itch was strong enough that I was going be my own boss once again.

My daughter had been born a year earlier and while sketching out my business (literally, using the Business Model Canvas method), I much enjoyed being at home with my family. When I was in a productive mood, I did some work. When I felt my mental batteries draining, I took a nap. When I wanted to cuddle one of my girls, I shut my laptop and went next door. When I needed a change of scenery, I packed my bag and left for Starbucks or the Botanic Gardens. Not until much later I learned that what I was enjoying was called “work/life blend”.

A few months later, I started an enterprise web hosting business. Right at that time, Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson published their new book. In REWORK, they share their view of business, strategy, customers and how to run a successful team, and this view differs a lot from the common corporate approach. Immediately, I fell in love with their philosophy of “keeping it real”. Inspired by statements like “Planning is guessing”, “Mission statement impossible” and “Decisions are temporary”, I named my new company “freistil IT”, German for “Freestyle IT”, and I was determined to do business my way. For example, freistil IT was going to be set up from day one as a virtual business with its employees working remotely. I wanted everyone on my team to enjoy the same level of freedom, flexibility and sense of achievement as I did.

Running a remote team in a sustainable way isn’t trivial. While there are lots of tools that allow a distributed team to collaborate, it is a challenge to foster effective communication and build a coherent company culture. Quoting from REWORK:

“You don’t create a culture. It happens.”

But where does culture happen within a virtual company? When there is no central office, opportunities for a few minutes of chat don’t present themselves randomly. In a distributed team, communication and social interaction need to be much more intentional. Many of the things we had to learn you can now find summarised in the latest book from Fried and Heinemeier Hansson, REMOTE — Office not required. In the following section, I’m going to highlight what I found to be the essential aspects of remote work.

You can not overcommunicate

A company lives and dies by communication. And I don’t mean just the intentional transfer of information in one-on-ones and conference calls. That’s what email and a host of video conferencing tools are for. But on top of that, there’s a huge spectrum of information floating around freely within healthy companies. The fact that Sue finished her first marathon last Saturday. The huge enterprise deal Sales managed to win. The reasons why Alan’s putting in a lot of extra effort to make a certain customer happy. In a distributed company, this information doesn’t disseminate as easily as where people are co-located.
Project management platforms such as Teamwork (a great fellow Irish company, BTW) or Asana are important tools to coordinate work with a remote team. But as much as they give structure and focus to project-related communication, they can’t fully prevent frustration and loss of efficiency. “Why did she assign this task to me of all persons? Surely she knows that I’m already booked to my ears this week!” Yes, she does indeed; she just didn’t take the time to add a short comment that this task doesn’t need to be done until the end of next week. Had this happened in a real-world meeting, she would probably have noticed the frown creeping onto her colleague’s face, or the hesitation in their voice, and would have quickly clarified the timeframe. In written communication, though, this immediate feedback just isn’t available. You’ll only find out that your teammate is grumpy later, if at all. I’ve been guilty of the sin of omission so many times that I’ve put a sticky note on my monitor saying, You. Can. Not. Overcommunicate.

That’s why in a remote team, the barrier to getting in touch with a colleague needs to be as low as possible. We’ve decided to use Sqwiggle as our internal video conferencing tool. Sqwiggle displays a photo of every team member, and you simply click one to launch a video call. More remarkable is the fact that these photos are actual snapshots that get updated automatically every minute. It takes a bit of getting used to “Big Brother” but this allows us to see at a glance who’s actually at their computer and available to chat. It’s like peeking into their office -- well, it is peeking into their office. But it’s more than just practical: On a subliminal level, simply being able to notice the T-shirt someone’s wearing today or smiling about a funny facial expression in one of the snapshots strengthens the sense of working within a team and not in solitary confinement.

Much more than web chat

A running text chat can be the backbone of a distributed company. We started with using IRC, then switched to Campfire, later to HipChat, and now we’re among the 200,000 users paying for Slack. Within less than two years after it was created by Flickr co-founder Steward Butterfield, Slack has gained 750,000 daily users every day, and a 2.8 billion dollar valuation. There are reasons for this impressive success.

As a first impression, Slack is easy to the eye. Other than a plain IRC client and even other web chats like HipChat, Slack is nicely designed. You can already see how much thought went into this product when you log in for the first time: Instead of presenting you with a plain input form, you’re greeted by “Slackbot” who asks you a few simple questions about your details and sets up your account. Slackbot will also notify you of important events and send you helpful hints.

In Slack, you can create as many chat channels as you like and we’ve set up quite a bunch of them to keep topics separated.

Here are a few conversation channels and how we use them:

- #Company - our “virtual water cooler” where we talk about what’s going on. This is also the place to let the team know when we’re leaving our desk for a while: “Got to fetch my daughter from school, BBL!”
- #Ops - discussing IT issues: “db12 seems to have an unusual load. Does anyone know why?”
- #backoffice — sorting out administrative stuff: “Do you think I should simply call them and ask why they haven’t yet paid their invoice?”
- #helpcenter — consulting the team on support requests: “Here’s someone having a
problem with Memcache. You’re more familiar with it, can I assign this to you?"

We also have quite a few “log channels”. And that’s where Slack’s value for us goes through the roof. What differentiates Slack from other solutions is the huge number of integrations that allow us to connect third-party services to a chat channel. With these integrations, we can make sure we get all the information we need simply by subscribing to the right channels.

For example, we make an effort to respond quickly to support requests. While our ticket system will notify us via email, checking our mailboxes every five minutes would completely destroy our productivity. Instead, everyone doing support joins **#helpcenter-log**. Whoever is free to take on a new request and sees one scroll by can immediately click its link and send out a first reaction. It’s that easy to impress your customers.

Our on-call engineers subscribe to the monitoring channel where our monitoring systems post continuous updates on the health of our IT infrastructure. That way, they’re able to spot a negative trend even before an alarm is triggered.

In sales-log, we can see new followers of our Twitter account and who subscribed to our mailing list. Our CRM system also posts updates there when a deal is created, updated, won or lost.

If an update is important enough, we even let services post directly into conversation channels. A team’s Google Calendar might post a reminder for an upcoming conference call right into the team’s channel 10 minutes in advance. New tasks added to an Asana project trigger an immediate notification in the respective project channel.

Slack enabled us to switch from “information pull” to “information subscribe”. Instead of visiting an endless number of web services to get up-to-date on our work, we simply click through a few chat channels. What information is important always depends on the person, on their current role, even on the time of day. Slack allows every member of our team to curate their individual “river of news” from a vast pool of updates. It’s easy to join a channel, and with a click you can leave it again. If there’s a new project or topic, you simply create another channel and invite others with whom you’d like to collaborate.

It’s even possible to extend Slack to people outside of the company, and we’re experimenting with creating permanent channels for key customers where they can engage with us whenever they need.

Mind you, it doesn’t have to be all about work. Slack also helps us learn more about each other as persons. For that purpose, we have a #random channel where we post things that might not be important but interesting or entertaining. Here we post links to articles we’ve just read in Pocket, location check-ins from Swarm or links to new posts on our personal blogs. It’s another way of adding a human touch to sitting alone in front of a screen all day.

A business is a community

A team is more than the sum of its parts. In particular, a team is more than a few people working on company objectives. To achieve a common goal, we need more
than tools to coordinate our work. The team machine needs the grease of social interaction. In distributed organisations, social interaction must be facilitated. I can't just by chance meet Markus on my way back from the toilet and can ask him a quick question about the new test automation infrastructure. These interactions need to be actively sought by everyone on the team and encouraged by their communication tools. It's similar to an online community where it's the community managers' job to foster lively exchanges. With Slack, we find it very easy to strike up a conversation because the combination of posts by team members and the additional information from external services creates a vast pool of opportunities to get in touch. Reactions can be as small and quick as attaching an emoticon to a colleague's post, like a "heart" or a "thumbs up".

Tools increase efficiency. Culture grows effectiveness.

With electronic communication tools, there's always the danger of them doing more bad than good. Information overload, notification fatigue and constant distraction come to mind quickly for everyone who's ever used Instant Messaging and Social Networks. That's why it's important to create a common understanding of their intended purpose and clear expectations for how to use them early on.

We use Slack as a synchronous, real-time communication channel, just like the phone or video conferencing. The convention is that whoever has the time to respond will join the conversation. The others who miss it (intentionally or not) will be informed of any important results in due course. Especially during "Away From Keyboard" time, this prevents FOMO ("Fear Of Missing Out"). While it's great to be able to scroll back to see what I've missed during lunch, I'm not expected to catch up on everything that went over the wire during my absence. Especially after having a few days off, I can rely on my colleagues to have documented everything important somewhere outside of Slack. I can start off again with "Chat Zero".

Chat notifications help with getting a quick response -- when they're used sensibly. The latter part is important because constant electronic nagging will quickly erode any willingness to keep the chat client running during work that requires any amount of focus. That's why we use the "@person" or the even more sweeping "@channel" mentions only in exceptional situations that require immediate feedback from a person or a whole group. Everything else we'll either ask another time later or move to an asynchronous medium like email altogether.

While our Sqwiggle snapshots show who's in front of their webcam at the moment, we found this indication not reliable enough to determine who's available to talk. When I'm in a coffee shop, it may be too loud for productive conversations, or I might not even have the necessary bandwidth for a video connection, so I'll keep Sqwiggle closed although I'm able to chat. Another time, I may want to be visible to my team in Slack but not be distracted by non-urgent messages. So we've agreed to switch our Slack status between "active" and "away" to indicate if we're okay with having a conversation. That way, we avoid the frustration of asking questions into the void without getting any response.

These are only a few examples of how important it is to create a common ground when you're using electronic communication tools. Especially for people who are new to an organisation, it helps tremendously to have an understanding not only of the "how" (using them efficiently) but also of the "why" (their purpose and the organisation's expectations around them). That's why we've written a "company runbook" that
explains all the different services we use as well as how and especially why we use them.

In five years of working as a remote team, we found that when we apply social cloud services with a clear purpose, they can create an ROI by orders of magnitude. Slack is a great example.
Social media from across the water, the joys and perils of remote working. #25
By Simon Cocking

Synopsis:

The Irish social media community is a great, supportive, inclusive, helpful bunch of people. From attending last year to writing the piece for this year, it’s been great to meet people in person, then virtually, and then in person again. Only last night, on Cape Clear, I bumped into Calvin Jones, (last year’s most retweeted article for CongRegation). Even though we had never met in person before, it was great to chat with him. Going to Mayo last November was a great decision to take, and actively helped us with our own rural relocation while at the same time becoming more connected locally and globally.

4 Takeaways:

1. Irish social media community is inclusive and accessible.
2. We are becoming able to be more connected despite being more remote locations.
3. It is possible to make a living from remote locations.
4. Remote doesn’t have to be isolated

About Simon Cocking:

@Irish_TechNews Senior editor|Winner best 2014 Science Tech site | 2015 Irish Blog Awards, Silver Award best Tech Blog
#writer#photographer New book ‘How to Crack Websummit 2015’
upcoming publication on Werner Herzog & Fitzcarraldo | 1st inductee in

What does remote mean?

For us, it’s now Cape Clear. Ireland’s most southerly point, 45 minutes by boat from Baltimore, West Cork. Population 80, to 120 ish, (depends who’s asking).

We moved, wife, kids and dog to live on an Irish speaking island. Slightly smug gaeilgeoir Irish speaking summer regulars to the island said

‘but oh don’t you know the school is taught in Irish, and what about the winter …’

Islanders also told us cautionary tales of other families’ who only lasted a month or two, after the idyl of summer had ended, before fleeing the island. People ask, ‘why Cape’, as if we’ve had some long long romantic attachment to the place.

But we don’t. We just knew what suburban Dublin was like. We also knew that after eight years in one particular part of Dublin, the next 12 years could also be much the same. We came to the island at Easter, for a site visit, literally. 10 days to test the broadband, see how the kids fared, and put the word out that we were hoping to move down. In those ten days we spoke to, or rather more people spoke to us, than had in the previous 8 years in our Dublin suburb.
It became clear that moving to a ‘remote’ island in Roaring Water Bay might actually give us a more connected life style than we currently had. Connected both digitally and locally. Moving to an island meant rethinking how we might make a living. In this regard social media provides a great opportunity to be able to make a living remotely. On the island the older ones bemoan that there are no more jobs in fishing and agriculture to be had on the island. Completely missing the point that plenty more people would / could migrate to the island if they ensured good, always on broadband.

We’ve been fortunate so far. Two mornings were lost to ESB shutdowns, but they were signalled in advance so we walked, went to the beach or kayaked, and learned to love the enforced shutdown, not unlike when the fire alarm goes off at work. Another time we discovered no broadband working, to eventually realise the blind goatherder who supplies half of the island, had accidentally knocked off his server. We walked over to his place, found several young female woofers, who pointed us to his computer, turned it back on, and bingo, we were good to go again. As a consequence of this variability, some local IT workers have backup sources for the broadband, and with that they have been able to work through the year.

Four months in, the social media work has grown, managing twitter accounts, doing a little bit of telesales (necessary evil, and only calling to ‘warm leads’). More importantly the writing side of it has developed. Content for successful online sites is vital. If you can write and hit deadlines they will love you, and they won’t care where you are based. Being located on a rocky crag far from the urban centres may even increase your allure. The more ridiculous job offers have definitely increased with seemingly direct proportionality to our distance from Dublin.

Insistent recruiter. ‘Xbank want you to be vice president of comms’

Me ‘is this a joke, I have no background in banking, apart from having a bank account’

Them ‘no it’s not, we want you, can you pop into the office this afternoon for a chat, it’s just in D2...?’

[Needless to say the job never came off]

Last year’s Congregation predated our move, but was still part of us looking at how social media whiz kids make a living in rural areas. 12 months on, we are now another one of those who have moved out of the big cities. There’s nothing that is missed yet. Work has taken me back to Cork, Dublin and even Paris, but it doesn’t leave me wanting more of it. The greens, blues, greys and reds and pinks and yellows of the island all remain beautiful. The broadband ensures skypes to East coast, West coast US and beyond, all remain possible, without having to jump on a plane every day or week.
There will be challenges. Heating damp houses, enduring your own personal rain cloud at times (literal not psychological), searing, sheeting rain, stir crazy kids at half term. But still great to have become connected with this fantastic social media community via CongRegation, and then also locally with the people actually living around you. Going remote enabled us to become more local and yet also more global too!
The Ashley Madison® hack: The psychology behind vulnerability to cybercrime. #26
By Grainne Kirwan

Synopsis:
In the summer of 2015, the user data of the Ashley Madison® website was illegitimately acquired by cybercriminals, who later attempted to use this information to force the website owners to remove the service. Because of the nature of the Ashley Madison® website – supporting connections between individuals who wish to have sexual or romantic encounters with people other than their long-term partner – the data obtained was highly sensitive, including email and home addresses, as well as descriptions of sexual fantasies. So why might individuals place themselves at risk of having such personal information publicly exposed?

Many issues arose as a consequence of the hack, including that pranks and typographical errors could result in an Ashley Madison® account being set up by someone other than the eventual victim of the intrusion, as well as the uncovering of false accounts on the service and extortion attempts from cybercriminals who identified the users. All of these are serious issues of their own, but this blog will primarily concern itself with the legitimate users of both Ashley Madison® and other online services, and examine why they (or we!) might share such sensitive information without considering the potential risks.

Firstly, we can consider why we are willing to compromise our security by sharing private information. Adam Joinson and his colleagues (2010) describe how high levels of trust compensate for lower levels of privacy. So if we trust a person or agency, then we are more accepting of risk in sharing information with them. The users of Ashley Madison® trusted the organisation to take appropriate care of their data, although unauthorised intrusions on online services are frequent despite the best intentions and efforts of organisations to secure this information. Users of the site might also have felt an additional level of trust due to the perceived ability to have all of their data removed from the service if desired (at additional cost to the user). Unfortunately for many, this did not result in a more desirable outcome, as their data remained open to the hack.

The concept of high trust compensating for low privacy is also reflected in Sandra Petronio’s Communication Privacy Management theory (2002). In short, Petronio’s theory suggests that we, as individuals, feel that we own our information, and can decide how it is managed, even if we share our information with others. So the users of Ashley Madison® likely expected that the website would take care of their details and...
fantasies in a similar way that they would themselves – only sharing the information in a manner that is approved of by the individual. The users would have certain expectations about the data – that some items (such as sexual fantasies) would be shared with fellow users, while other records (such as credit card details) would only be used to pay for subscriptions. As all of this data was unintentionally shared with the infiltrators, and later shared more publicly online, this is a clear violation of the user expectations under CPM theory.

For many of the victims of the hack, one of the most identifiable items of data was the email address used by the account holder. Given the ease of obtaining a new and (relatively) anonymous email address by any internet user, it is initially surprising that so many victims used emails that were provided by their employer, or included their real name, or were their primary social email address (and so were easily identifiable by family, colleagues, acquaintances and friends). However, it is more easily understood when the research of Tam et al (2009) is considered. They identified a ‘convenience–security trade-off’ with regard to password management. Specifically, their findings indicate that whenever the setting of a difficult password is an option rather than a requirement, and the user feels that there is little risk involved, then they are likely to choose a simpler, less secure password (often one which they have used many times before). Similarly, when the Ashley Madison® users set up their accounts, they probably defaulted to the convenience of using a previously established email account which they already checked frequently, rather than setting up a new account.

While there are many other psychological theories and phenomena which are applicable to why individuals might share such sensitive data online (for example, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, Social Learning Theory, and many others), one final possibility will be considered here. While we might often think of ourselves as pessimistic, in actuality the majority of us demonstrate ‘Optimism Bias’ (Weinstein, 1980). We tend to believe that good things will happen to us, and that negative events are more likely to happen to other people. Users are not immune to hearing about successful hacks of other systems and services, and few could have avoided news items about government agencies monitoring online communications. Nevertheless, Optimism Bias suggests to us that we are less likely than the ‘general’ internet user to fall victim to such surveillance. And so, while the users of Ashley Madison® might have been aware at some level of the risks of a hack, they probably considered that outcome to be unlikely to occur, and even if it did, that their own data would not be identifiable.

To conclude, given the psychological phenomena described above, it is unsurprising that the users of Ashley Madison® took such risks with highly personal and potentially incriminating information. And it will remain unsurprising that when the next unauthorised infiltration of a major user database occurs, users will have demonstrated similar flaws in reasoning and decision making. Individuals will continue to engage in the sub-optimal behaviours described above, even though they are aware of the risks, and so innovative methods must be employed to ensure that users and online organisations engage in more secure behaviours. I look forward to discussing what some of those innovative methods might be with the other delegates in Cong!

References


How To Win Followers And Influence Them #27

By Marie Ennis-O’Connor

Synopsis:

Social media are powerful tools – but they are so much more than tools. In the past few years we have seen new social media platforms emerge, while others have become virtual wastelands. While technology will continue to change, what should remain unchanged at the heart of any good social media strategy are timeless principles of good communication, principles which enhance understanding in ways that are mutually beneficial, principles that when applied the right way will help you win followers and influence more people.

4 Takeaways:

1. Show your sincere appreciation for your followers.
2. Get your audience excited about your content; involve them and they’ll amplify your messages for you without you even having to ask.
3. Become a good listener. Set up social alerts for brand mentions, industry topics, competitor names, and customer concerns.
4. Go out of your way to publicly acknowledge others’ expertise and you’ll find the impact is twofold - those that you acknowledge will be flattered and other followers will respond to the social proof you’ve created.

About Marie Ennis-O’Connor

Almost 80 years ago, Dale Carnegie published his now-classic book, How to Win Friends & Influence People. The book went on to become one of the first best-selling self-help books ever published and was named No 19 in the top 100 books of all time. Carnegie’s timeless wisdom has been a resource for many generations on the art of communication and success in both business and everyday life. While the opportunities to win friends and influence people are exponentially greater than they were in Carnegie’s day, human nature has changed little over time. The essentials of collaboration and meaningful communication are as important in a digital age as they were eight decades ago.

Social media exists at the intersection of humanity and technology. This fact can easily become lost in our drive to build follower numbers. Counting followers isn’t what counts; you need to know how to connect and engage with your followers in ways that build trust, credibility and influence. In the modern age of social content sharing, we should still look to Carnegie’s age-old truths in deciphering the code to grow an audience online and influence them.

Principle #1 Give Honest and Sincere Appreciation

According to Carnegie, a law of human conduct is to always make people feel important. “Appreciation”, he wrote, “builds our image faster than any other practice”. Meet effort with effort. Every user who takes the time to engage with you online should be acknowledged. One of the simplest ways to acknowledge others is to @ mention people online. Be alert for those who re-tweet you or share your blog. Thank them sincerely for sharing your content. The more people see that you appreciate their efforts, the more you increase their loyalty. The more your brand or Twitter handle is shared by others, the more likely you will generate more organic following.

Actionable Takeaway

Here’s a simple but effective example from Mashable. Create your own graphic to thank your community members and post it on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest.

About Marie Ennis-O’Connor

Named one of Klick Health’s top 50 global social media influencers, Marie specializes in providing social media...
consultancy and training services to companies in the health technology, pharmaceutical, and allied healthcare fields.

**Contacting Marie Ennis-O’Conor**

You can contact Marie on her [website](#).

---

**Principle #2 Arouse In The Other Person An Eager Want**

To arouse a desire in people to want to be part of your community, share your content, and amplify your messages you need to develop a deep understanding of your audience. Where do they like to hangout online? What content is most relevant to them? What kind of information are they looking for? How do they like to consume that information? Once you deeply know your audience, you can then start to create content that is relevant to them—content they will be eager to share. If you can get your audience excited about your content, they’ll amplify your messages for you without you even having to ask.

**Actionable Takeaway**

Before posting online, stop and ask yourself

- Why would I want to click on this information?
- Why would I want to share it with my friends/family?
- What useful tips can I share with my online community that will solve their problems today?

**Principle #3 Become Genuinely Interested In Other People**

We all know people online who only tweet you when they want you to read, comment or re-tweet their content. Don’t be one of those people. Don’t get a reputation for only being interested in others when you want something for yourself. You can’t expect people to care about your community, if you don’t care about theirs too.

**Actionable Takeaway**

Take note of these words by Shafqat Islam, co-founder of content marketing software company, NewsCred: “Behind every tweet, share and purchase, there is a person. Care more about the person and less about the share.” In other words “focus on how to ‘be’ social, not just how to ‘do’ social.

**Principle #4 Use A Person’s Name**

According to a Twitter survey of 14,000 people who engaged with branded customer service Twitter accounts, when brands created personal interactions – that is, when brands included the customer’s name and the customer service representative’s signature in the response tweet – 77% of the customers on the receiving end of that personal touch indicated they were likely to recommend that brand.
Actionable Takeaway

When replying to a Twitter user, or blog commentator, use their first name (where known). “Remember”, wrote Carnegie, “that a person’s name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.”

Principle #5 Be A Good Listener

In my opinion the most underused value of social media is listening. When I work with new clients who still remain sceptical about the value of social media, I recommend if they do nothing else, they should listen to what is being said about them online. You must understand that your brand isn’t what you say about yourself—it’s what your customers tell their friends about you. This is even truer in a digital age. As MIT's Michael Schrage observed: “The water cooler hasn’t vanished; it’s simply become virtual”. What’s fundamentally different now is the new speed and scalability of sentiment shared online.

Actionable Takeaway

Set up alerts for brand mentions, industry topics, competitor names, and customer concerns.

Principle #6 Sincerely Make The Other Person Feel Important

Go out of your way to publicly acknowledge others’ expertise and you’ll find the impact is twofold - those that you acknowledge will be flattered and other followers will respond to the social proof you’ve created.

Actionable Takeaway

Any time you find a great quote from an expert, simply add it to a spreadsheet for future use. I like to use Evernote for this because you can tag and organize your quotes easily. You can then include these quotes in your content to add extra credibility and weight. Just be sure to always link back to the original source and give full credit to the originator. Tag the person you’ve quoted when you share the finished article online. Your readers will feel like they’re benefiting from the advice from a top expert in your field, and therefore the content immediately becomes more valuable to them – increasing the likelihood they will share it.

These principles are just six of the thirty principles contained in Carnegie’s prescription for success, but they are six key principles. Social media exists at the intersection of humanity and technology. This fact can easily become lost in our drive to build follower numbers. Counting followers isn’t what counts; you need to know how to connect and engage with your followers in ways that build trust, credibility and influence. In the modern age of social content sharing, Carnegie’s principles have lost none of their potency with time. The tools of communication may have changed, but Carnegie’s age-old truths of engagement, encouragement, collaboration and meaningful communication still hold true in our digital age.
Building Communities #28

By Paul O’Mahony

Synopsis:

Communities are conversations

4 Takeaways:

1. Be very clear what you mean by “community” + what you don’t mean.
2. Make explicit why you want to build a “community”.
3. Remember you never own nor control a “community”.
4. Be humble, kind, curious & encouraging (in addition to being knowledgeable, skillful, energetic & imaginative). Build with taste.

About Paul O’Mahony:

Business storytelling consultant - Cork Ireland - fondly engages humans - gentle frequent podcaster - father to uncompliant children - playful poet - servant of others - livestreams on @Periscope - Foodie - naturally ambitious + loves to share connections - copywriter.

Contacting Paul O’Mahony:

You can connect with Paul on LinkedIn or follow him on Twitter.

In his live periscope submission Paul O’Mahony covers the concept community with a collaboration of 58 other live viewers and 181 comments. In his submission Paul covers:

- Communities are conversations (a phrase inspired by “The ClueTrain Manifesto”)
- Humans breathe, live in, grow & yearn for communities.
- Humans identify themselves with communities - individually & collectively.
- Socially & commercially everyone at Congregation15 desires to discover the secret of building, developing, strengthening, growing & supporting communities.
- No one owns communities - and every full member feels an owner, and a vested interest in sustaining their community.
- Communities are as much against “others” as they are in favour of their values, icons, possessions & conversations.
- Via the Internet you find many interest groups masquerading as communities.
- The quality of the conversation shows the rapport, trust, resilience & likely longevity of the community.
- To build a strong community - strengthen the conversation - widen & deepen the chat.
New Media – It’s pointless putting lipstick on a pig #29

By Fergus Ryan

Synopsis:

There have been an increasing amount of digital innovations over the last few years, or even months, that have made it easier to push out content in multimedia formats. The danger is we focus too much on the medium and not the message. If you get your message right there are huge advantages to using new media. There are few if any barriers to entry. The output is easier to view. They can be very cost effective to use. And they allow you demonstrate your innovative and creative side. The growth in the Irish digital economy has been a two speed experience so far with the consumer way ahead of business. A relatively new medium, called Blab can be used as a powerful tool to reach out to potential customers with a view to bridging the digital gap. However, when you’ve finished creating your content and you’re picking your medium ask yourself honestly – ‘Am I just putting lipstick on a pig?’ Remember, it should be all about the message not the medium.

4 Takeaways:

1. There have been an increasing amount of digital innovations over the last few years, or even months, that have made it easier to push out content in multimedia formats.
2. The danger is we concentrate on the medium and not the message. Weak content is pointless and will not be made more engaging by a flash new medium.
3. Consider the medium during your content creation process. Pick one that will allow you sweat your content.

I’d better explain…

I’ve no idea where I heard it first but it fast became one of my favourite phrases. I have frequently used it to describe an exercise in futility – ‘Ye did what? Sure, may as well be putting lipstick on a pig!’

A little research (and by ‘research’ I mean I looked it up in Wikipedia) tells me there have been many variations but the meaning is always the same – there is no point in dressing up something weak to try and make it look good.

There have been an increasing amount of digital innovations over the last few years, or even months, that have made it easier to push out content in multimedia formats. The danger is we concentrate on the medium and not the message.

What is ‘New Media’ anyway

In my Congregation post last year on podcasting I spoke of the Four Horsemen of Traditional Media - TV, Radio, Newspaper and Magazines. 30 years ago the barriers to entry were significant. There was a finite amount of media space – a set number of TV stations, radio stations and printed media. You couldn’t just create content and push it out.

In 1991 the media world was smashed wide open with the advent of the World Wide Web. Since then the progress and development of ‘New Media’ has been astounding. We are at a point where anyone with a connected device (it doesn’t even need to be a computer anymore) can create content and push it out.
Though we are only one year removed from the launch of the one billionth website, the one trillionth will probably launch in 2016. At some point though we’ll have to drop the ‘New’ and it will all just be ‘Media.’

Especially when you consider we’ve been Google-ing since 1998, building Wordpress websites since 2003, liking things on Facebook since 2004, watching YouTube since 2005 and Tweeting since 2006.

The Benefits of New Media

1. There are few if any barriers to entry

Imagine how hard it would be to get a TV programme commissioned. And now think how easy it is to start your own YouTube channel.

2. The output is easier to view

Sticking the YouTube v TV angle - at a recent company earnings announcement Omid Kordestani, Google’s chief business officer, revealed “YouTube reaches more 18- to 49-year-olds in the US than any US cable TV network.” Mobile devices have increased the reach of new media to the point where traditional media are powerless to compete.

3. They can be very cost effective

In a lot of cases you can start off by only spending your time and effort. There are lots of free platforms that will allow you create a meaningful web presence.

4. Allows you demonstrate your innovative and creative side

With barriers to entry down you now have to step up and prove you can add value using new media. Done well you can create a little ‘wow’ factor as well as delivering your content.

Companies need to catch up with the Consumer

While the internet and new media make it sound like plain sailing all the way to the checkout… its not.

The growth in the Irish digital economy has been a two speed experience so far.

On the demand side we are seeing an incredibly tech savvy Irish consumer quickly adopt and embrace all the advantages and benefits provided by the internet.
On the supply side we are seeing Irish businesses and brands lose money to overseas competitors because they are slow to connect with their audience online.

Consumption is the main driver of an economy and that includes the digital economy. The Irish consumer is willing to do business online

- Irish consumers have an average of 3 connected devices
- Ireland is 6th (out of 46 countries) globally for multi-screening
- Over 90% of Irish people aged 25-34 browse the internet every day.
- This penetration slides down through the age groups but still comes in at over 70% of 55 years olds are daily browsers.
- 93% of people who research on mobile go on to make a final purchase

Irish consumers spent €3.7 billion online in 2013 but a staggering 70% of that went overseas companies.

Go and compete… But Remember…

Irish companies need to take their online presence seriously. Even if you consider yourself a traditional offline business, you’ll benefit from a meaningful online presence. 50% of consumers who research online still prefer to buy from a physical shop even if the purchase could be completed online.

When you’ve finished creating your content and you’re picking your medium ask yourself honestly – ‘Am I just putting lipstick on a pig?’

Weak content is pointless and will not be made more engaging by a flash new medium.

If you work hard to ensure your content is

1. engaging,
2. provides a solution through your product/service,
3. is so helpful its worth sharing
4. and has a clear call to action

Then the medium is irrelevant. Sure, it might add a little ‘wow’ factor as I said earlier, but only if the content is all of the above.

New Media will help you sweat your content

When you sit down to create your content you should have more in mind than banging out 600 words of text. You should also be considering the keywords for Search Engine Optimisation and what is the best format to produce the content in. For a little extra effort you may find that an eBook, a video or a webinar might go a whole lot further than just a text blog post.

I won’t dwell too much on this topic because Alan O’Rourke has a fantastic blog post already covering this called A One Month Micro Marketing Plan all about promotion
For my #Cong15 I thought I’d demonstrate this a little.

Similar to Alan’s post I would have turned this submission into either a short eBook or a series of blog posts. Once you have that piece of anchor content finished you can then begin to think of ways to sweat that content. Alan demonstrates that perfectly in his Micro Marketing Plan so I won’t steal his thunder.

All I will add is a piece of new media I’d encourage you to try.

Blab is a relatively new video streaming tool that works in conjunction with Twitter. If you’re familiar with Periscope or Google Hangouts On Air it has similarities with these. It was created in April 2015 and has become popular with digital marketers.

The main attraction to Blab is the ability to repurpose your content.

For example, in this post I’ve added a video of the live stream I held to discuss my blog post. Minutes after your livestream has finished Blab will send you a recording of the video in mp4 and the audio in mp3. This allows you upload the video to your YouTube channel and the audio to your podcast. Apologies for the poor picture quality, it’s usually much better.

So, your one piece of content (eBook) can be repurposed into a livestream, a video and a podcast in one sitting. Then you can go to town with social posts, blog posts and everything else Alan mentions.

The bottom line is, it should be all about the message not the medium. I’d highly recommend reading Alan’s post if you haven’t done so already.
If PowerPoint is the answer, it must have been a stupid question. #30

By Rowan Manahan

Synopsis:

How on earth did anyone communicate anything of importance prior to Gaskins and Austin developing ‘Presenter’ for Forethought Inc in 1984. They released ‘PowerPoint 1.0’ in 1987 and were acquired shortly afterwards by Microsoft. But the question remains – in most professional environments now, the idea of ‘presenting’ without PowerPoint is rarely entertained. So, is technology impairing our ability to present ideas? Let’s talk about that …

4 Takeaways:

1. Why are you talking to these people? Exactly what is your desired outcome? Define that.
2. What balance of Credential / Logic / Emotion will move this audience toward that outcome?
3. What tool(s) – if any – do you need to deliver your talk optimally?
4. How many hours of rehearsal do you need to assure that outcome? (Hint – take that number you just thought of and multiply it by three).

About Rowan Manahan:

Rowan is the Presenter Mentor, working on professional communications since 1989.

He has contributed to speeches, pitches, roadshows and profile-building with startups, upstarts, disruptors and established companies; honing their message and working with speakers on their presence and delivery. He is...
a founding organiser of TEDxDublin events, and works with the majority of the speakers, preparing them for the 2,000-strong audience in the Grand Canal Theatre, honing their messages and visuals. He also speechwrites in every sphere except politics and prepares clients for media appearances on television, radio and in print. Some of his clients call him ‘The Presenter Mentor,’ others ‘The Insultant.’

Rowan describes himself, depending on the circumstance, as a writer, speaker, TED addict, husband, father or dancing bear.

Contacting Rowan Manahan:

You’ll find him at RowanManahan.com or chirping away on Twitter.

If you quickly recall the pitches and presentations that you have seen so far in 2015, they almost certainly can be placed on a bell curve – a few exceptionally good ones, a few truly atrocious ones and a bunch of not particularly memorable ones. Cast your mind back through your working life and back through your education years and the same bell curve will hold true. Very very few speeches, talks, lectures, seminars, or presentations really make much of an impression on you.

This is most obviously evident in the daily instance of death by bullet point – a careless, lazy, self-involved presenter who has put almost everything they intend to say down on their slides and then proceeds to read those slides out to the audience.

Do you think Cicero would have done that? Or Lincoln, or Pankhurst, or Churchill, or Malala, or Douglass, or Eva Peron, or Ang San Suu Kyi? How about Aristotle? Remember him? The guy who wrote ‘On Rhetoric’ 2,300 years ago? Logos / Ethos / Pathos and all that? I can’t envisage any of those great orators disrespecting their audiences by clumsily reading to them.

The problem I see with the majority of current efforts at speaking or presenting is that everyone is hung up on Ethos (establishing their credentials) and Logos (“sciencing the shit” out of things) but their messages are eminently forgettable. Now, make no mistake – you’ll get precisely nowhere if you don’t have the right credentials or if you add your sums up wrong. But to be memorable? To be effective? To woo your audience, to move them in the direction you want (or need)? That requires Pathos – the emotional appeal. And the way most people use PowerPoint sucks all of the Pathos out of the room.

I guess what I’m saying is that my title is a little misleading. PowerPoint can be a hugely useful and effective tool when it is used right. But that rarely happens when someone sits down and opens their PC in PowerPoint in order to begin authoring a talk. People did just fine before the advent of slides. Go back to the old ways – try paper and ink. Find the story you need to tell. Write with your audience in mind. Who are they? What is their disposition? Where do you want to take them? Woo them …
Synopsis:
‘Right the write’. As an educator whose graduates are being employed in the social media space, initial findings from my recent doctorate work show immense concern amongst practitioners in industry in relation to literacy skills. Has text/facebook/twitter and all other social media channels just exasperated the issue? Or does it matter anymore? Hope to ‘c u’ in Cong.

4 Takeaways:
1. Let’s give positive re-inforcement to students before there’s serious – and permanent - writer’s block.
2. Does the issue of writing ‘properly’ really matter in the social media space as long as we can communicate visually and communicate interesting, pertinent content to our relevant publics?
3. The issue of student identity needs to be borne in mind when giving feedback.
4. Read, read, read to our children before it’s too late

About Pauline Madigan:

Pauline Madigan is a lecturer in Public Relations, Public Affairs and Sponsorship and Media Management in Sport at the Institute of Technology in Carlow. She is currently in the final throes of her doctorate in education which is analysing (interpretively) practitioner perspectives on the status of the Public Relations profession in Ireland with particular emphasis on
third-level education as preparation for employment in Public Relations in Ireland. She has no choice but to have an interest in social media, but believes that communicators should never deviate from their core job which is ultimately to ‘Listen. Then tell a story and keep engaging’. She uses twitter to teach and loves the engagement of learning that the social media space is giving. She is looking forward to attending #cong15 and discussing a core issue that she has found in her preliminary doctorate research in relation to literacy skills.

Contacting Pauline:

You can follow Pauline on Twitter or contact her via Email.

Nigel (not real name) suggested that the problem may be because of ‘texting and tweeting’:-

…… it’s all to do with texting, it’s all to do with tweeting, it’s social media, it has sort of, social media I think has had a very significant impact on writing ability and writing skill, and I think that’s something that we need to address as a profession, not to lose sight that the written word is still a fundamentally important part of communications, and I think we have to be very careful in the profession, and educators in the profession have to be extremely careful not to let the writing standards slip because that’s hugely important because it’s the way companies are, it’s how we manifest a message on behalf of our client companies.

We can see in the above sample quotations that the issue of writing is of real concern to senior public relations practitioners in the industry in Ireland. Nigel (not real name) in the quote above put it succinctly when he suggested that there is a collective responsibility between the educators and practitioners to ‘not let the writing standards slip’. Nigel also blames ‘texting and tweeting and social media’ for the demise of adequate writing skills.

But one wonders whether texting and tweeting are to blame for the issue with writing and literacy skills? Is the case? For example, another practitioner, Peter (not real name) felt that there is perhaps a bit too much focus on the written word when the emphasis in the communications world now is on visual communications:

There is so much focus to my mind about the written word whereas, like, you know, we are moving on to more of a sphere of visual communication, like, you know, you will see that as well in terms of social media, the type of content that actually engages people, you know, it’s by and large more image or a video-based and, you know, we need to kind of move to that quite quickly to be able to do it.

Peter, who is an avid social media communicator, additionally referred to the graduates entering the communications space now as being ‘fascinating’:

Some of the people that we have had come through the door here now recently, like, the skills that the young people have is fascinating, like I might say and people sometimes think of me as some, you know, oh, I’m a digital whizz, I know things, like, I view myself as a dinosaur. I can’t, you know, I can take a photo, but I can’t do any kind of Photoshop around it. I have very basic video editing skills, but there are people I have met, young people who are just unbelievable communicators in terms of the skills they have got. It’s not just the written word. They are equally adept at creating compelling images, being able to put through, to develop videos and they are a whizz in terms of understanding how social media works and how to promote things and engage with people online.

It seems to me that there are plenty commentators more than willing to lambaste our students for what skills they’re lacking in. But I’m with Peter (above) on this one. Some academic literature I’m reading for my thesis is suggesting that some of the concerns in relation to student writing do not adequately take account of the importance of issues of the identities of students and the institutional relationships of power and authority that surround and are embedded with in diverse student writing practices. But take a look at this image which is from one of my student’s blog writing:
The image above is taken from one of my first year students who already has her own very successful fashion/consumer blog and the full class (including me) are indebted to the student for showing us how she successfully manages her online communication.

This is not to say that I won’t continue to be aware of my responsibility as an educator to continue to encourage better writing skills amongst my students – in fact, since becoming aware of how serious an issue this is, I have initiated more of my classes to be held in computer labs where writing during classes has become more of a focus.

However, I see this responsibility of continuing to educate students as a collective one, where development of reading and writing skills must be encouraged moreso not just in the classroom, but within industry and most importantly, in the home. Research shows time and time again that reading to children every day has a significant positive effect on their reading skills and cognitive skills (i.e., language and literacy, numeracy and cognition) later in life.

This pedagogy across education – in its broadest sense – must be done however within an encouraging framework, where students can achieve understanding through positive reinforcement and dialogue and collaboration.
Using Twitter to build your Digital Personal Learning Network (PLN) #32

By Geoff Lovatt

Synopsis:

Twitter can be a powerful tool to extend and build a personal learning network.

4 Takeaways:

1. Personal Learning networks are valuable ways to learn
2. One of the most powerful ways that people can create and use PLNs is by using Twitter
3. The diversity of our connections leads to more valuable information
4. More learning is needed in how to use the tools

About Jane Leonard:

Jane Leonard set up Really Useful Training to deliver a new model of training and business development to organisations. She also lectures on Sociology and Psychology in Cork Institute of Technology. Jane is at heart a networker and a connector. She believes that Twitter is one of the most social of all the digital platforms, allowing users to connect across the globe. She has conducted research on how Twitter makes Entrepreneurs more effectual thinkers which she presented at International Conference of Small Business. She has also researched how educators use Twitter to build their PLN for Edtech 2015.

Contacting Jane Leonard:

You can contact Jane via Email or Twitter.

We are somewhat of a contradiction. We are surrounded by co-workers, managers and colleagues, yet we often spend most of our time working independently and alone. We work in organisations that need high levels of performance and productivity to achieve real competitive advantage. Because of this we need to have a strategy around our professional development is imaginative, innovative and offers a wide range of learning experiences.

We could go on training courses or we could Google stuff, we could even watch something on YouTube. But, the reality is that most of what we learn at work and about work, comes from engaging in networks where people co-create collaborate and share knowledge. This way of learning or sharing knowledge as called Personal Learning Networks (PLNs). These networks are characterised by sharing and reciprocity. We all have a network even if it is informal and unstructured. Within this network we learn by sharing ideas, solutions and questions in the canteen or the corridors. The network becomes more valuable as the social capital increases, not just because of you know, but also who you now have access to via the people in your network.

Yet, while this can be effective, very often the person we need to connect with is not available at the time we need them. Also, that person may only have access to the same knowledge or experiences as us. Granovetter’s work on networks suggests that while people with whom we know well and form strong ties can provide support and trust. People we don’t know as well and with whom we have weaker ties can provide access to information we may not have or have experienced different problems or solutions.
Twitter is a key part of my PLN. Although most people consider Twitter as a way to comment on celebrities, or even as an always on, instant newsfeed. For me it has another use as virtual Personal Learning Network that supports my professional and personal learning and development. It has allowed me to benefit from strong ties with people I already know from offline life and from weak ties with people I only know online.

Social platforms such as Twitter have encouraged people to engage in social learning opportunities. They have changed how we capture, create, store, access and share knowledge. They allow us to broaden our reach and access diverse people. Yet, the thought of connecting with others or expanding our networks, can seem overwhelming to those who are unaware of the power of web based technologies.

I know how they feel. It can seem a little strange and Twitter is difficult to explain to those who have not tried it. But the thing about Twitter is that it gets better and more enjoyable the more you use it. I started off slowly, dipping my toe in the Twitter stream. Lurking at the edges of conversations. Reading and following up on links shared. Clicking on the Hashtags. Getting lost in the rabbit hole like Alice in Wonderland. Finding diamonds of information and people who were willing to share.

It was like going to a great bar or conference, where I could listen in to the most interesting conversations. Then once I began to engage, I have connected with so many people through my Twitter network. Even though my network of followers and people I follow is small, I feel part of the wider interlinked community of Twitter users. I hear about conferences, articles, journals and tips that I would never have encountered without Twitter. I have asked and answered questions. I co-created solutions to problems I did not know existed.

Marcia Conner suggests that Twitter provides a Digital Audit Trail. This allows other people to see how the conversation unfolds, what discussions branched off into different areas, what ideas had merit and which were disregarded. This allows my PLN overlap with someone else's PLN and we cross fertilise. The discussions are one to many and others can join or leave as the mood takes them. For me, Twitter and Twitter chats have created a more social web that is alive, moving, proactive, and personal.

Yet it is not all positive. Social media sites such as Twitter, make it easy to connect, share information, and develop relationships. But they can also provide the means to wander aimlessly, discovering people and information that only provide entertainment. That can be valuable too, but it is often too easy to follow each shiny object and hide out online.

Building a PLN where you co-create new and valuable knowledge doesn't happen on its own. Whether online or offline, relationship building takes work. If we don't consciously seek out weak ties, we may find it easier to remain in the homogenous groupings, connecting online to people who are demographically or professionally similar.
We all have choices when it comes to how we learn and where we learn. For some it will always be the traditional methods. For some they will always want to follow the newest technology. But I suggest that using Twitter as part of my PLN blends the oldest form of social learning and sharing with modern technology.
Pricing and Revenue Generation in the Digital Age #33

By Helen Cousins

Synopsis:
Increasingly, customer opinion and computer algorithms are having a direct impact on the profitability of a business. This post looks at ways that a micro business can win profitable business online in the holiday home market. These principles apply equally to many other online businesses and not just the tourism sector.

4 Takeaways:
1. Booking websites now offer cost effective sales channels for even the smallest tourism operator.
2. Customers can affect your business with reviews. You have nothing to fear from this if you run your business well and the odd bad review lends credibility to the good ones.
3. You need to be mindful of algorithms when running your business. Algorithms generally reward good business practice, but the devil is in the detail. You need to constantly watch out for tweaks that sales channel operators make to their algorithms as even a small tweak can have a big impact on your business.
4. Pricing has a psychological element to it. You need to know your customers’ behaviour and lifestyle patterns to maximise what you can charge them.

About Helen Cousins:
Helen Cousins is a corporate finance advisor by day, securing finance and providing financial control services for tech companies in expansion mode. She also operates “Kilmore Cottage” with her husband on the

Today, on a dreary-nothing special-October-weekend, instead of tumbleweed blowing through the grounds of our holiday homes, we have the patter of tiny feet. And we have the crash of more energetic ones. Exhibit A – a family from Malaysia, here for a week. Exhibit B – a French family, here for the weekend. These exhibits were brought to us by Booking.com and Airbnb. We love the sound of footfall, even after commission :)

It’s hard won business though and the way in which customers use the web or bookings websites changes all the time, so it’s a challenge to keep up, especially as we are neither marketing professionals nor full time employees.

The Market Just Fell Off a Cliff
For 16 years, we have been conducting a live trial, in pricing, in marketing and in selling. We have three holiday homes on our organic family farm in Co Wexford.

When we started out in 2000, you could build a good business by advertising in print media, and British visitors were plentiful. Our customers in the early days were drawn largely from the UK’s M4 corridor. They booked at least 6 months in advance and came to Ireland for a week or more. Bookings for a fortnight were commonplace.

The market fell off a cliff in 2008, taking our UK customers with them. On top of the fact that there were mass job losses and pay cuts, there was an unfavourable movement in sterling exchange rates for Irish business. A holiday priced in Euro in 2007 at €585 would cost a British person £400, but for the next six years that same holiday would cost British guests up to 30% more at £520. The Brits either stayed at home or went elsewhere. Tourism Ireland set up a task force to try to win them back. Meanwhile, tumbleweed gathered mass in holiday home complexes across the land.

The short break became more popular worldwide as people had less money to spend. As economies began to recover, demographics and lifestyles changed too and the short break is now an important tourism product.

Google is a Slot Machine
In 2007, already more than half of holiday makers booked their holidays online. Live online booking was a necessity, but the challenge for a micro business is how to get customers into the sales funnel in the first place. SEO is a skilled occupation. You can blag, facetube and instatatwit all you want, but there’s a lot of content on the web and it’s
organic family farm in Wexford. Helen is a former Chair and director of the Irish Self Catering Federation and a former director of Irish Tourist Industry Confederation. She has previously worked as both a finance and self catering mentor for Fáilte Ireland. She is currently also an executive producer at Wytao Films.

Contacting Helen Cousins:

You can follow Helen on Twitter or contact her via Email.

shouting louder and better than you are. For a Google Adwords campaign to succeed, constant monitoring and change of parameters is essential. Otherwise Google is a slot machine. Also, the bidding on key words in the tourism industry is fierce, driven by professionals with large budgets, who can devote their time and expertise to outbid the little guy.

UX For Everyone

In this decade, sales channels became more user friendly, not just for the consumer, but for the merchants too. Trip Advisor, Booking.com, AirBnB and others wanted more product in their virtual shops as well as more customers to buy them. Many of the travel sites had previously focused on the hotel market which made it difficult to wedge a holiday home offering in, because a holiday home is more than just a room. Key questions for a holiday home booker include not just the number of bedrooms but the number of beds. These channel websites put resources into making it as easy as possible for holiday home owners to get on board. Now, with more channels, we have more ways to get custom in exchange for commission.

It’s all about the Algorithms

Channel websites have a lot of product, so now the problem moves from being found on the first page of Google to being found on the first page of the channel’s website. Fortunately, these sites often give you commentary on how their algorithms work and some even notify you when they make changes. The two most important algorithms to rank your property in searches are based on response time and reviews.

Working the Algorithms

1. Reviews

The only way to get a critical mass of reviews is to ask for them. Some sites, like Booking.com, automatically send out review invitations once a guest has departed. If the site, doesn’t ask for them, the owner should. You need to send a brief note, using a ‘no pressure’ undertone in the language, and a direct link to where they can leave a review. Bad reviews are not necessarily a bad thing, as they make the good reviews seem more credible, and imply that you didn’t just write all those nice reviews yourself. TripAdvisor gives weighting to properties that reply to reviews, so it’s good practice to respond in some way to all reviews and not just the bad ones.

2. Response Time

Most channels expect you to reply within 24 hours and the faster you reply, the more pixie points you get, (so to speak). So it makes sense to have SMS alerts on or to use an app if there is one. This is one occasion when it literally pays you to move notifications to “On”.

One current annoyance with Trip Advisor is that when a guest makes an initial enquiry and you respond speedily, then the guest counters with a conversation closer and a final “thank you” - you are left with a tricky situation in which you have to have the last word or be marked down as not responding.

Many channels generate a unique email address for each booking or enquiry and if you don’t use it to respond, your response is not counted in the site’s metrics. If you use a CRM for all enquiries and bookings, you need to copy & paste all enquiries from the channel dashboard into your own CRM, which is a bit of a pain. However, as long as you use the channel email address to respond and not the customer’s real email address, then your response time metric is calculated correctly and you get to maintain a good ranking within the channel’s website.
Short Breaks
Many holiday homes in Ireland still only offer breaks of one week or more in duration. However, customers want short breaks and if an operator doesn't offer them, they are leaving a lot of profit on the table. They often don’t realise that by blocking short breaks, they are not even being returned in searches, so it doesn’t matter how fantastic their product is, they’ve made it unsaleable. Bookings of less than 7 nights comprise 52% of the value of our bookings as you can see from the graph below. If we didn’t offer short breaks, we’d lose half of our business.

![Graph](image)

Pricing
Pricing is as much art as science. The customer has to see a price as fair before they will pay it.

1. The Cleaning Conundrum
In the holiday home business, you have to be careful with short break pricing as one of your biggest costs are triggered on the first night of a stay – cleaning. The cost of cleaning a house for a one week stay is slightly higher than a one night stay, but not much. Guests don't want to find someone else’s socks in the back of a drawer, no matter how fast you are turning around bookings.

Therefore on a site that forces you to offer per night booking, such as AirBnB, you need to consider adding a cleaning cost per booking to make up for this operational anomaly.

2. Less for More
One corollary of offering short breaks is that to make money, your per night pricing has to be higher on a short break. You still have to cover your cleaning costs and you may not sell any of the other remaining nights that week. There are a lot of other factors to be taken into account for pricing, such as seasonality, events and day of the week. One fundamental of looking after your business is that you remain in business. Parents may not like the concept that holidays cost more in the school holidays, but you have to make a profit to stay in business and your prices therefore have to be demand driven.

The graph below shows the effect of the recent Papal Visit to Philadelphia on the supply of AirBnB rooms. You can imagine how the price of a room was similarly affected. The upshot of this of course is that wherever the Websummit goes, room prices will go up. It’s how hotels optimise for profit. Hotels have software for doing it, the same as airlines do.
If you run your business well, you will provide a good service and answer all queries quickly. The good news is that this can translate into more bookings because the channels will rank you accordingly, and your property will be returned for more enquiries than those who are not so customer-centric.

Finally, no matter what your business, you have to collect the cash. While not true from an accounting or legal perspective, a sale is not a sale until you get paid.
Social Media for Social Good. #34

By Ailish Irvine

Synopsis:
Social media can be harnessed for more than entertainment and offers the opportunity to help disadvantaged groups of society.

4 Takeaways:
1. You may be actually more valuable that you thought in terms of your ability to influence something.
2. Don't underestimate your social media abilities or the power of your network to make change.
3. Charities may not be using the wide range of tools available to them through new Social Media Technologies.
4. Don't take your Digital Skills for granted or the power of your network to help someone who could do with a social media hand.

About Ailish Irvine:
Ailish Irvine is a workshop facilitator based in Mayo. She blogs about technology in Education and developed a new course called Virtually Living, which shows people how to find remote working opportunities. She also develops educational resources for online language learning. She is a mammy of 3, an ever hopeful Mayo GAA fan and she's quite fond of social media.

Contacting Ailish Irvine:
You can follow Ailish’s updates on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn or via email.

The hours can ebb away on social media. There are only so many cats you can look at in one day. You can find yourself unconsciously flitting from one channel to another in the same way that you flick through Sky and convince yourself that someone’s nether regions on ‘Embarassing Bodies’ are just what you need to see before going to sleep.

So how do we use social media for something good instead of just mindlessly scrolling through feeds feeling inadequate and boring compared to our network? I’m particularly interested in Social Entrepreneurship and love the idea that people can combine their business brain with their social heart and that got me thinking……

So what is a social entrepreneur and could you be one without realising it?

CEO of the Skoll Foundation Sally Osberg and the University of Toronto’s Roger Martin assert that social entrepreneurs: Address a pressing need relative to “the exclusion, marginalization, or suffering of a segment of humanity that lacks the financial means or political clout to achieve any transformative benefit on its own.”

So can we represent any marginalized group with our social/political clout Can we highlight an issue or get publicity for a cause, or will we just keep looking at photos of cute kittens or strange ailments in strange regions? Here are some tips and tools to help.

Social Media For Social Good

**So Do You Know What You Are Worth On Social Media?**
Democratisation of Data Science #35

By Cronan McNamara

Synopsis:

Data is a precious and ever growing resource, but it is imprisoned in silos and there is a risk that its potential will be monopolised by a small number of global technology companies. Democratising data offers a bright future but the route needs to be managed.

4 Takeaways:

1. Data is growing and your organisation needs to harness it.
2. Data science is currently restricted to specialised teams of experts in companies and organisations who can afford them.
3. ExpertModels is a platform which facilitates data sharing and collaboration.
4. A community of experts will be available to help you in your data science journey.

About Cronan McNamara:

Cronan is CEO and Founder of Creme Global, chair of the Irish Software Association and organiser of the Predict Conference. Previously he worked in financial derivative option price modelling and financial risk analysis with Merrill Lynch Capital Markets Bank.

Cronan holds a BSc in Physics from University College Dublin, an MSc in High Performance Computing from Trinity College Dublin, a post graduate diploma in International Sales from the Dublin Institute of Technology and a certificate of completion from the

Data is one of our greatest raw materials and can hold the key to unlocking some our biggest problems. It can be the catalyst for great change in our society.

But … data is a prisoner, it is trapped in silos, restricted, controlled and under the thumb of data owners, often well intentioned, but sometimes with no vision of how to use it.

Data is the new oil – a lubricant of business, an ingredient of everyday life and a potentially explosive agent of change. Oil when liberated in democratised societies has fuelled powerful economic growth and propelled societies to ever greater levels of innovation and civilisation.

However oil is a limited, shrinking resource while data is limitless and exploding in supply.

In ways we are at the early stages of the data revolution – we have discovered its presence, acknowledge its value and are now starting to uncover new ways of extracting value from it.

Also similar to oil the elite few who really understand it are starting to control its flow and although the majority have it, they cannot make best use of it and the uncoordinated efforts by a few disparate groups without collaboration makes little impact.

For our world to truly grow, data needs to be liberated. It needs to be democratised.

The reality is that change has already gone beyond the point of no return and global levers are benefiting from and impacting on data in new and exciting ways.

In areas as diverse as marketing, risk analysis, weather forecasting, fraud detection, food safety, nutrition and dietetics, data is being used to provide insights to businesses and consumers to
In his spare time Cronan enjoys playing tennis and spending time with his family.

Contacting Cronan McNamara:

You can follow Cronan on Twitter, LinkedIn or check out Creme Global and the Predict Conference.

We see and experience the impact of data and digital services every day:

- Globalisation
- Mobile Computing
- Sharing Economy
- Social Media
- Crowdsourcing
- Open source software

All of these are fueled by data and give us a glimpse of the power of this raw material.

As a society, we are literally drowning in data. We only scratching the surface with less than 4% of data that gets generated ever being analysed.

And this is the key point. Having data is meaningless until it analysed. Similar to being surrounded by a thick black sticky oil it adds nothing until it is refined and turned into a value added substance.

This is where the movement to democratising of data gets difficult. We have some tricky challenges ahead of us, of these are a few:

- Although, there is a huge growth in data companies, data grows faster than we can interpret it and storage capacity is only keeping slightly ahead.
- There are data analytics software tools, but these are specialised and only useful to those with the right skills (data scientists).
- We face a real headache with a shortage of data science expertise which can harness this new powerhouse.
- We need to govern it in an ethical way and build trust between data owners and analysts in order to fulfill its potential.

From where we stand, we see a world of many possibilities where ultimately data becomes monopolised by a few mega data companies. The result of this is that the many good businesses that should be able to benefit from data remain stymied and the wealth of individual data is stolen from citizens.

My vision is different. I know the power of data and properly used, I believe it holds the key to ensuring better decisions are made and individuals and companies can prosper.

In order to democratise data science, we need to make a connection between analytics experts, data sets and decision makers - an online community sharing mathematical algorithms and raw data, combining it with expert industry insights and reformatting it to predict future outcomes and risks.

- The true power of data is not just drawing a picture of the past and interpreting the present but in looking into the future.
- No one person or data set holds all the keys or answers so I believe we need a
platform on advanced predictive analysis that brings together a community of data modellers, data owners and business to solve big problems.

- We need to remove the complexity of coding for individual models by using a series of user friendly building block so generating models rapidly is possible.
- We need to be able to import very large hosted and stores data sets – both open and proprietary into analytical models.
- We need to create an ecosystem which allows problem solving where people can build models and crunch data in minutes rather than weeks, but more importantly those without all of the required expertise can solve data problems through collaboration with experts online.

When studying the democratising process, it becomes clear that commerce is a powerful force, so a marketplace is essential to reward data owners and technologists. This can act as an engine of innovation in data science and a catalyst for rapid problem solving. I see this commercially beneficial relationships with two groups:

- Those who have expertise in data science and / or who have built up valuable data sets can monetise these while the expert data modelers can build, share and curate models for financial gain. What this means is that businesses who lack these capabilities can immediately benefit from the network.
- An ecosystem where free and commercially available data sets and models are made widely available where individuals, businesses and governments can unleash the power of seeing new futures and solve big problems.
- A system developed to the point where technical complexity is not a barrier and a world where collaboration will create wealth, know how and a better future.

We are in the first wave of this democratising process and without some guidance, governance and structure could replicate the mistakes of the past.

Rather than just setting out a future gazing vision we have built a platform called **Expert Models**. I will introduce the platform at Congregation.

At the event, I would love to hear about your data sets and challenges and to get you involved in this movement. Together we can move predictive analytics from its powerful but narrow deployment to truly enhancing a better future for us all.
Status: Providing insights into the essence of who we are for artificial intelligence. #36

By Billy MacInnes.

Synopsis:

Much attention is focused on the effect artificial intelligence (AI) could have on the future of human kind. Our interactions with social media platforms could deliver an awful lot of digitised insight into what makes us human. The more we engage with social media, the more insight we provide those platforms into the essence of who we are. We know that's true because companies like Facebook base their business model on it.

4 Takeaways:

1. We have created machines to help us overcome or improve on our physical limitations, are we now accelerating the evolution of our intelligence through the development of AI?
2. Could digitised social content in Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and other platforms be useful in providing clues and markers as to how we deal with each other socially as an aid to the evolution of AI?
3. The more we engage with social media, the more insight we provide those platforms into the essence of who we are.
4. The IT industry’s talk about the arrival of the digital era is only focusing on a small part of what a digital world means. We can convert and replace physical media and interactions with digital versions but we may end up replacing our physical selves with digital versions as well.

About Billy MacInnes:

Freelance editor/journalist/trainer
Billy MacInnes is a former editor of For all the work taking place in the development of artificial intelligence (AI) there seems to be an air of pervasive pessimism over what it will mean for the future of the human race. As I’ve stated previously, you don’t have to think of the Terminator films or Blade Runner as documentaries to be wary of the dangers AI poses. It wouldn’t be unfair to suggest that fears of human kind being superseded by machines of our own creation probably first emerged about two minutes after we first dreamed up the notion of robots.

The optimistic view is that robots have been put upon this earth to make it a better place for us all. The more credible version is that they will evolve to become super-intelligent beings that will overthrow or render the human race that created them extinct.

To date, these fears have been brought to life in books or films, but it’s not just creative types that are starting to question the effect AI could have on our futures. AI experts around the world recently penned a letter recommending “expanded research aimed at ensuring that increasingly capable AI systems are robust and beneficial: our AI systems must do what we want them to do”.

Professor Stephen Hawking and Elon Musk have also expressed their concern over the dangers posed by AI. Hawking wrote that “the short-term impact of AI depends on who controls it, the long-term impact depends on whether it can be controlled at all”. As for Musk, he warned of the need to be “super careful with AI” arguing it was “potentially more dangerous than nukes”.

I can’t help but wonder if this fear is a symptom of something else: namely, a subconscious awareness that we have reached the limits of our evolutionary adaptation coupled with an acknowledgement that machines will be the vehicle for our future evolution.

We rule the world and everything in it to the point where there are few external biological pressures or threats spurring us to evolve further physically. But what about in terms of intelligence? This is where I think we can take a step back and examine a parallel but far more rapid evolution taking place at the machine level. We have already created machines that can help us to overcome or improve on our physical limitations and handle many manual and physical tasks better than we can. Now it looks as if
we’re in the process of accelerating the evolution of our intelligence through the development of AI.

What does this have to do with social media? Well, here I start to wonder just how useful all that digitised social content in Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and other platforms will be to providing clues and markers as to how we deal with each other socially and as an aid to the evolution of AI. Our interactions with social media platforms may not provide a complete roadmap to how we behave as human beings but they can deliver an awful lot of pointers to what makes us human. IBM’s Watson can already read 800 million pages per second but the sum of human knowledge consists of more than the written word, our music and our art. It consists of us. The more we engage with social media, the more insight we provide those platforms into the essence of who we are. We know that’s true because companies like Facebook base their business model on it.

At the moment, most of the focus on AI is on creating individual machines but at some point, the evolution of AI will take it to the stage that we, as humans, are physically and mentally incapable of attaining: telepathy. AI telepathy is already possible today through wireless technology and the internet. It is quite conceivable this could lead to a single, super intelligent entity connected across a multitude of robots or androids that will, to all intents and purposes, have reached the status of hive mind or collective consciousness that has been a popular concept in science fiction ever since Olaf Stapledon introduced it in his novel Last and First Men in 1930.

The IT industry likes to talk about the arrival of the digital era but it’s only focusing on a small part of what a digital world means. Yes, we can convert and replace physical media and interactions with digital versions but we may also end up replacing our physical selves with digital versions as well. Our intelligence could well end up surviving as a strand in the DNA of AI as it mutates and evolves. The fact we appear to be embarking willingly on the digitalisation of our existence demonstrates the sheer intensity of the evolutionary drive within us to find some way to progress life further.

Somehow, I don’t think that’s a status update most of us are going to ‘like’.
The Growing Pains of Social Media. #37

By Calvin Jones

Synopsis:
Social media is growing up – and, like a surly teenager, it’s presenting us with an intriguing new set of challenges. Are you ready to step up, look beyond the humdrum prescriptive formulas and stand out amidst a tidal wave of social mediocrity?

4 Takeaways:

1. It’s getting more difficult to reach customers organically through social media today
2. Creating and sharing posts that are “good enough” is never good enough.
3. Recipes are for cakes… there’s no such thing as a “one size fits all” formula for social media success.
4. Cutting through the social media noise requires an understanding of your community, and how you can help solve their problems in an authentic and remarkable way.

About Calvin Jones:
Calvin Jones is a writer and online content specialist based in West Cork. He is co-author (with Damian Ryan) of “Understanding Digital Marketing” and “The Best Digital Marketing Campaigns in the World”. In his “spare time” he runs Ireland’s leading wildlife and nature website.

Contacting Calvin Jones:
You can follow Calvin on Twitter here (writing / digital) and here (wildlife). For business stuff you’ll

WARNING: BORDERLINE SOCIAL MEDIA RANT AHEAD

Do you ever get tired of social media? I know I do.

That may seem like a strange admission for someone who spends a chunk of their time helping businesses harness its potential. Nonetheless it is true.

Take today, for example. Facebook is throttling back the organic reach of my pages again... strong-arming me into paying to connect with communities I’ve spent years nurturing. Disillusioned I head over to twitter, only to find my feeds replete with 140 character bursts of mundane irrelevance. That, and links to content whose only noteworthy trait is how utterly un-noteworthy it all is.

It’s not always like that, of course. But mining the growing mountain of dross to unearth scant nuggets of social media gold gets tiresome. It’s easy to become disenchanted. Sometimes I find myself wondering if it’s still worth the effort. I bet, if you’re honest, you do too, and you can be damned sure that your customers do.

What’s changed?

When my twin daughters were very young I’d watch them explore the world around them full of wonder and delight at the new discoveries they made every day. It was a joy to be a part of. In its infancy social media was a bit like that: it was new to everyone, full of potential, unknown and exciting.

Back in the day social media platforms seemed full of interesting people engaged in thought provoking discussion on every topic imaginable. We were explorers back then, sharing ideas, posting links to remarkable content and engaging productively with more people than we ever thought possible. This was prospecting on the frontiers of collaborative possibility, and it was a wonderful place to be.

Let’s fast forward a little, and stretch our original analogy. The twins have just turned 15, and stomp through life with the singular disinterest of surly teenage girls. Growing up is a challenge, for them and for us. The road through adolescence to maturity is bumpy, with many a twist and turn along the way, but the destination ultimately makes the rigours of the journey worthwhile.
Social media is also growing up... and it's not a painless transition.

Social's “perfect storm”

When social media works well (or when you “work” social media well... depending on your perspective), it can deliver outstanding results for your business. But connecting with the people who are important to you online isn't as easy as it used to be.

Ironically, one of social media’s real strengths, it’s almost universal appeal, is also proving to be its Achilles heel. We’re social creatures, so technology that enables interaction between more people was always going to strike a chord with a massive chunk of the online population. But as more people jump aboard the social media juggernaut (it outgrew the bandwagon moniker long ago) it’s becoming a very congested and noisy place.

Bizarrely as the social media population expands, organic reach across social media for most individuals and businesses is contracting. Social media is becoming the newest incarnation of mass media, its burgeoning “audience” attracting prospectors of a different kind.

There's a perfect storm brewing: a three pronged deluge that's diluting the effectiveness of your social media engagement.

• Mass-media-style marketing: mass-media marketing junkies, eager to exploit the sheer scope of the social media “audience”, are flooding networks with low-quality spammy content and irrelevant offers.
• Paid advertising: understandably social networks are pushing their advertising products to boost revenue. Social media advertising can be a great way to cut through the noise and reach a highly targeted audience... but it plays into the hands of big brands with deep pockets.
• Poor advice: “training” is the new big thing online. The ability to learn new skills on-demand is fantastic. But as technology lowers the barriers-to-entry for online learning self-styled “experts” are clamouring to sell you what you want to hear, rather than teach what you need to learn.

Prescriptive formulas and the curse of the lowest common denominator

We like formulas.

A+B=C is straightforward and easy to understand. It's like a recipe for your favourite cake. Take the same set of ingredients, follow the instructions and you'll get a similar outcome every time. Pass that recipe to a friend and they can easily replicate your results.

Simple. And it works... for cake.

But I have a problem with the notion that a single “recipe” can work for everyone when it comes to social media. Effective social media marketing demands an understanding of the unique relationship between your customers (or potential customers), your business and the value you bring to the table. That relationships is, by definition, UNIQUE.

While it may sell a lot of online courses and e-books, one-size patently does not fit all.
And yet people continue their ceaseless quest for a social media magic bullet. They follow one recipe for success after another... churning out copycat content and formulaic drivel, and wondering why it doesn't deliver.

"As good as" is never good enough

It's an unfortunate but all too demonstrable fact that, when a lot of people gather in the same place... online or off... there's a tendency to descend to the lowest common denominator. There's an urge to belong, to fit in, to be a part of the collective. Instead of following our convictions and striving to stand out by doing something remarkable, we capitulate, emulate and conform.

It's human nature. We strive to be like everybody else... and in doing so we fade into the homogenous whole.

I see this happening across much of today's social media landscape (and online content in general, come to that). There's an epidemic of "as good as", when in truth "as good as" is never good enough, especially when the benchmark tends to be alarmingly low.

Stand up, stand out, be remarkable

So how do you stand out amidst the tidal wave of mediocrity that's sweeping across social media today?

I don't have an answer, because there isn't a single answer. It depends on the myriad variables that define the complex relationship between your business and your customers.

Finding the best way to reach out and connect with them through social media is ultimately down to you, but here are a few pointers that may help get you started:
• Understand your customers, your business and the value you offer: an old chestnut, I know -- but essential for all of your marketing endeavours -- social media included.
• Find your authentic voice: stop striving to blend in with the homogenous masses, be remarkable, be unique, be yourself.
• Never accept mediocre: good enough is never good enough. Your contribution to the social media conversation is a direct reflection of your business; strive to make it the best it can possibly be.
• Focus on value: you know what your customers want and need -- so help them find it.
• Less can be more: don’t be drawn into the volume game at the expense of quality. Quantity and consistency are important, but where resources are limited you have to strike a balance… and you should always err in favour of quality.

How do you see the social media landscape evolving? Does my perspective strike a chord, or is your experience completely different? I’m looking forward to chatting about this at CongRegation, but in the meantime I’d love to hear your views in the comments below, or via @WriterCJ on Twitter
Top 10 Tips for Building a Tribe. #38

By Aoife Porter

Synopsis:
Influenced by Seth Godin's book, Aoife Porter offers 10 practical tips for building a community of true fans. Also included: a few golden nuggets from some of Ireland's leading tribal shepherds

4 Takeaways:
1. Have an idea worth spreading
2. Enable your tribe to get involved
3. Host physical events: they offer the best engagement for tribes
4. Use killer technology tools to measure your tribal pulse

About Aoife Porter:
Aoife Porter runs Bua Marketing, a digital agency established in Sligo in 2009. Bua delivers digital marketing advice and services to a wide variety of clients including LookWest.ie, Yeats2015 and start-up businesses across the North West. Aoife also runs Swell Sligo, a network for web, creative and start-up communities in Sligo.

Contacting Aoife Porter:
You can follow Aoife on Twitter or check out her work on Bua Marketing.

Of course this blog is inspired by Seth Godin’s ‘Tribes’ book. Seth Godin argues the Internet has ended mass marketing and revived a human social unit from the distant past: tribes. Founded on shared ideas and values, tribes give ordinary people the power to lead and make big change.

I agree. Any digital work I have done that has had an impact has been led by this idea. People want to belong. If you have a good idea / product / service you’re half-way there. Needless to say if you don’t, don’t even bother trying to build a tribe around it. Go on, be honest, is it really good?

Building an online tribe means finding your true fans, the people who will help your work spread.

Like Kevin Kelly has taught us is that we don’t need everybody. We just need true fans. 1,000 true fans.

We don’t need everyone, we just need a group of people who become as passionate about what you are offering as you are. Who will promote it unprompted because it’s that good. And who would sing a song about it if you took it away.

People want to belong. We need to find others who share our passion and provide the tools for the tribe to connect and communicate.

So how do you do it? Here are my Top 10 Tips for Building a Tribe.

1. Have A Strategy

Ask yourself what you can do to inspire and engage the tribe. Are you inspiring? Do you have visible passion for your cause?

2. Spread An Idea Worth Spreading:

Tribes form when people are passionate about ideas.
The best recent examples in Ireland include:

**#WakingTheFeminists:**

The campaign ignited in the wake of the launch of the Abbey Theatre's programme of commemoration for the centenary of 1916 which features just one play written by a woman among the ten chosen. The national theatre's outgoing director Fiach MacConghail has come under fire for his 'Waking the Nation' programme with the hashtag #WakingTheFeminists trending on Twitter as people weighed in on the debate.

**#Hometovote:**

In May 2015 Irish emigrants flocked back from all over the world to vote in the same-sex marriage referendum. Twitter was lit up by their photos, videos, messages and stories.
3. Encourage Your Tribe:

Challenge the tribe: give them a project to work on together with a shared goal. Lead the conversation, make it easy to participate and then reward those who do the most.
Example: In 2015 I supported the digital activities to celebrate WB Yeats’ 150th birthday. For our Yeats Day 2015 campaign in June, we asked our audiences to post a Yeats poem. The Yeats Day digital campaign created blanket coverage of the Yeats’ birthday celebrations online through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and reached an audience of around 900,000 via social media.

4. Tap Your Audience:

Do they have something special to contribute? Do you know what talents exist within your tribe?

Example: I created content for LookWest.ie on living in Sligo. I did this by asking those influencers who I knew locally to answer a survey. They did because they trust me to create something good with it and that LookWest.ie has a wide audience. In the content I credited everybody who contributed. Once the content was live I prompted all contributors. Of course they shared it to all their networks. It became the most shared piece of content on LookWest.ie in 2015.

5. Measure Your Tribal Pulse

You need to decide what your key metrics are based on the tools your tribe uses to communicate. However communication is at the heart of it. And it needs to be two-way. Members must engage or else they are just names on a list and not part of the tribe. You must check these metrics often or risk losing the power of the collective.

6. Make Epic Stuff

Create epic content. Of course this idea isn’t new but it works. This content should be totally unique and super useful. Make sure your tribe are included in the creation of this content; ask their opinion and credit their contribution. Use social media to crowd-source this input. Provide value. Give them something that will make their lives easier,
time at work more fun / interesting / easier. Do it in a nice format, give them bite-sized chunks in ebooks etc.

Then of course once you have put all that time into creating epic content: spend much more time sharing it well. Alan O'Rourke has an amazing blogpost here on a marketing plan to promote your content. I will openly admit that I very often spend ridiculous amounts of time creating content and then promote it once and move on to the next idea.

7. Meet Them

Physical events can have the biggest impact on energising and mobilising your tribe. For the last two years I have run Swell Sligo: a network for the web, creative and start-up community in Sligo. We offer off-beat networking events with great speakers, good food and interesting locations like a seaside, an unused airport and an old factory. Our events are always over-subscribed, speaker requests are never turned down and our engagement rates through social media and email newsletters are ridiculously high. People trust the brand and want to be a part of it. The physical events make that happen.

Killer Tribal Tools

8. Use FollowerWonk to analyse a brands followers. Check via excel to see how many journalists they have. If they follow you in Twitter you can target them with your assets.

9. Engagement is truly vital, it’s much more important than numbers. Use Buzzsumo to find influencers sharing similar content to yours. Look for content with lots of rts.

10. Custom Audiences / Tailored Audiences: take customer email lists and upload them to the appropriate platforms e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Google AdWords which then enables you to display very specific ads to very specific people.

Insights from Tribal Leaders:

Christian McLeod, Adventure Photographer. (41,000 Instagram followers)

What is your top tip for building an online tribe / community / following as you have done on Instagram?

Focus on being creative, inspiring, or useful, then interact with the people that follow you, its called “Social” network for a reason.

Who in Ireland / on your radar has built a good online tribe / community? Why do you think they have done such a good job?

Forest Woodward has done it perfectly, and so has Jack Harries. Follow what they do and follow how they do it. They interact with people, spur them to interact back, and they encourage creativity and a wonderfully simple lifestyle. That’s why they are successful.

cmcleod.com ::instagram.com/christianmcld

John Breslin, Engineer and lecturer at the NUI Galway, Co-Founder, Boards.ie (11,800
Twitter followers)

What is your top tip for building an online tribe / community / following as you have done?

It’s great to have an online community but you have to make the link to the real world things that bring people together. To make the online community more sticky it is very important to have a parallel physical manifestation through meetups, activities, shared interests, etc. Have a look at this blog post on social objects

Who in Ireland has built a good online tribe / community? Why do you think they have done such a good job?

Obviously the team at boards.ie :-) Dav and Niamh, the community managers, do a fantastic job there, linking in the real-world meetups and events and trying to be as inclusive and responsive as possible online.

I also like the work that you do at LookWest.ie, as it spans an interested audience but once that is dispersed across multiple platforms (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.), and you can’t necessarily focus on just one because LookWest has informational, business and social elements that necessitates being on all the networks related to those types of engagements.

(Note from Aoife: thanks John!)

http://www.johnbreslin.com/ :: @johnbreslin

Annie West, Illustrator (8,872 Twitter followers)

What is your top tip for building an online tribe / community / following as you have done?

Stay out of arguments, avoid swearing, try to amuse people.

Who in Ireland has built a good online tribe / community? Why do you think they have done such a good job?

Loads of companies and individuals, too many to mention. But the ones I follow are people who actually take the time to reply to people and have a sense of humour even when being complained to.

www.anniewest.com :: @anniewestdotcom

Useful references:

Book: Tribes by Seth Godin

Video: Seth Godin: The Tribes We Lead Ted Talk from 2009

Blogpost: Kevin Kelly: 1,000 True Fans Theory
Your world is not my world. Why? #39

By Mariann Unterluggauer

Synopsis:

Don't underestimate humans. They are many bits better than machines & platforms. Hardware- and user interface designers know that very well. We are still able to misuse their ideas & to break their codes. Still, why are we so eager to comfort boring gizmos and trust ads? Let's find out how we ended up on the other side of the equation – but did we?

4 Takeaways:

1. There are no answers. There are many questions, and they need to be asked.
2. Too many things online are build on misunderstandings.
3. Don’t add to the problem, think to solve some
4. There is a life outside the screen*. Our machines don’t know that but we do, and are not doomed to be happy slaves.

About Mariann Unterluggauer:

Tech journalist since 1995, former producer from the weekly radio show “matrix - computer and new media” of the national austrian broadcasting corporation, orf, radio division oe1. In order to keep my independence I went abroad for a while. Today I cover different areas of computing and its effect on politics and society for different media programs and a wider audience within Europe. Was called into the advisory team and later became an observer of the young advisor group for Neelie Kroes at the EU Commission. Especially interested in tech and computing history, as there is still I am probably the sum of all people I met, but I am for sure not the sum of all programs I use. Yet, I get the impression that more and more companies want to reduce me to exactly that. Funny enough they all point me into one direction: Facebook. That is like sending me over to meet your adversaries and pay tribute to them first before you tell me what you actually have to offer to me.

How come that so many are convinced that the only market place they can meet their clients are in the hand of a few & social media? There is no satisfactory proof that their statistics are telling the whole story. I can’t check their data nor do I get access to their data. Still, in order to get from A to B you send me over to C, an unfriendly environment where too many companies I have no interest in are eager to collect my data first, in order to influence the life of too many in a way I find scary. For example the idea that my financial credibility can be judged according to my digital “friends”/followers. So what is happening here? Feeding the monster? Too big to fail? One size fits all? Social media means madness? … Why do we think we need to run in this direction? It’s the shortest path, stupid, they say. I would argue: There is too much noise in that channel, and I am not amused.

At the moment I have the opportunity to see a small business grow. It has been unexpected smooth and by doing exactly the opposite of what marketeers and advisors would tell you: less investment and time spent on “social media” and more focus on their own product. It is a product developed to solve a real problem that people have right now and acts without greed in chasing numbers as there is no need to aim for a million user base within a country like Austria. Besides only a few businesses will ever solve the problems of millions anyhow.

Creating a market by acting human and giving real answers to costumer’s questions, might be a better choice for many. Cynical enough US-Internet companies don’t call human labor as “human” any longer. Instead they hide human involvement by inventing the term “artificial artificial intelligence”**.

The question is: why do we human support this notion, and adding freely to the problem which is: reducing everything human until it is programmable.

Still my argument is: There is choice out there. There is less need to feed the purse of others in order to reach your goal or – to be more precise – the 16 remaining
a lesson to learn, especially for Europe. For that hat of mine see: netaffair.org

Contacting Mariann Unterluggauer:

You can follow Mariann on Twitter or her website.

companies “that collectively hold the power to shape the digital lives of billions of people across the globe.” (Ranking Digital Rights, Nov. 2015)

More of the same is not the answer, but instead makes life more boring

Don’t add to the problem sphere, try to solve a problem

There is a life outside the screen

*‘artificial intelligence’ was invented in the 1950s in order to let machines learn from human. ‘artificial artificial intelligence’ was invented recently. Adding another “artificial” turns the coin and defines humans more or less as slaves to the machine, doing jobs machines are not capable of – and too expensive.
Is Technology Killing Creativity? #40

By Joan Mulvihill

Synopsis:

With fast fashion killing great design, and with technology powering and enabling fast-fashion I wonder if technology is in fact killing creativity. In an always-on world, where can we find time and place to absorb, reflect and daydream? In a data-driven world, has human intuition lost its place and value? With shortened attention spans, a disposing rather than investing generation of millennials and a low prices, who will invest in great design anymore? And with no one investing in anything for keeps, who will bother building anything to last?

4 Takeaways:

1. Creativity is a process, one that is facilitated and nurtured by time and space. In an always-on world, if we value our creativity we must prioritise giving ourselves the space to be creative.
2. The genius of technology is in part its ability to decipher complex and voluminous data for decision making. The genius of the creative human spirit is the ability to intuitively ‘feel’ for what is right. We should not lose sight of or value for this genius. Lies, damned lies and statistics!
3. In a faddish micro-trending world we need to think about our physical legacy for future generations. We are wearing disposable clothing and using transient trending apps. Will the museum of our generation’s great designers, artists and creatives be an incinerator?
4. Where everything is really cheap or completely free, we need to value creativity in a new way.

I should have written this weeks ago but that’s the whole point of this post. I am so busy responding and reacting, I’ve no time for reflecting much less creating and writing. Flicking through Facebook last night I was struck by an article on fast fashion and how its killing couture. It got me thinking. Is technology killing creativity?

Fast fashion is killing great design. Major design houses are in decline. Burnt out couturiers that used to turn out two collections a year are now being forced to turn out six. Meanwhile, the fast fashion following retailers are turning out 52! That’s one per week. The upshot is that the thought leaders, the iconic designers from Dior and Givenchy have no creative downtime, no space for reflection and innovation and as a result fashion is stagnating. We’ve been in an endless cycle of recycling since the early 90’s. The major runway shows are where the fast-fashion followers seek their inspiration but who will they follow now and are they worth following at all? By their own admission designers can no longer work to the high standards and design ideals of the once revered brands they represent. In an effort to satisfy the needs of a faddish consumer they indulge ‘designer limitations’ #BalmainforH&M.

So what has this to do with technology and its impact on creativity. First of all, it is technology that is powering fast-fashion and it is fast-fashion micro-trends and micro-prices that devalue the great designers and quality standards. Secondly, it is technology that is shaping a generation who live their lives on ‘free services’, consuming ‘free content’ and where almost anything can be acquired ‘as a service’, the result is little appreciation for investing in anything for keeps. Thirdly, technology is constantly beeping, pinging, ringing, poking and alerting a generation that CANNOT rest.

So again on facebook in recent days, I saw a post on the behaviours and needs of creative people. Creative people need to daydream. It’s hard to daydream when constantly interrupted by a ping or ring. Creative people work to a flow of time that works for them. With pervasive technology, we are now ‘on’ almost all of the time. How can I find time to ebb when I am expected to constantly flow? Creative people use intuition over logic. In a data driven world of analytics, there’s little value placed on intuition and no matter how hard working the daydream believer, they will rarely cut it with the VC patrons of their arts.

I was at Web Summit last week, the open submission gallery for start-ups. Wandering
the endless aisles of alphas, everything seemed tagged as a recycled version of an existing design – the ‘Uber for laundry’ or the ‘Tinder for dogs’. Beta boys showcase their brilliance on these start-up runways. Less of a runway for take-off, it is the slow sashay designer runway that leads to a modelesque heel pivot where they back track from whence they came to remerge in a slightly different version of essentially the same design moments later. To master the pivot is to fail without falling – and to fall would be the end of any burgeoning runway career!

These ‘creatives’ are racing to get easily replicable, disposable apps trending for a few seasons but then they are gone. Few survive and those small number that do will inevitably be caught, like their fashion designing peers in a constant race against time to keep the attention and favours of a faddish marketplace with shortened attention spans and a distorted sense of price and value. The only winners seem to be the ones who build the platforms and the runways. The designers whose work they showcase are of fleeting interest and so I wonder if technology is not killing creativity but rather the value we put on it.
Meaning and Narrative. #41

By Tom Murphy

Synopsis:

Science, rationality and reason are necessary and vital to the workings of the modern world. However, this has come at the cost of reducing our subjective experience of life to something entirely secondary and entirely irrelevant to workings of the world. But this is not how we experience life which for most humans is an ever-changing kaleidoscope of meaning and emotion. The danger of a hyper-rational world view is that existence is reduced to material objects devoid of humanity. That is the path that leads to alienation, dehumanising totalitarianism and wholly avoidable nihilistic suffering.

4 Takeaways:

1. Memory recall is more reinvention than objectively factual.
2. We remember things according to the stories we tell ourselves and the biases we have.
3. The narratives that we have our lives are based around the meanings we derive from our experiences and how we connect those meanings together.
4. What we think of as being objective is mostly a post hoc rationalisation. Our initial encounter with the world around us is determined by meaning which always has an emotional component.

About Tom Murphy:

Ex-Journalist and occasional writer.

Psychology, as a discipline, has made important strides over the last decade or so. Especially in the area where psychology and neuroscience overlap. We now know our memories are not fixed and static. Every time we recall an event we effectively rewrite it distorting the ‘facts’ with the introduction of new biases and perspectives. While this lack of solid foundation to our ability to remember incidents and events accurately can be unnerving to contemplate it does fit more comfortably with the idea that our lives are one long, epic narrative story rather than just a series of undifferentiated events happening one after each other.

One clear benefit is that by having access to that narrative we can reduce or eliminate the effects of traumatic events, cheer ourselves up in the present if we need to, and plan alternative futures for ourselves. If our memories, and thus our perspectives on the world were completely fixed, our lives would be a difficult to change mechanical process. There would be no way to take a different perspective on a given event and perhaps learn something we otherwise wouldn’t.

Another very intriguing finding is that we don’t see the world as an array of objects. We really see the world as a field of meaning where according to our disposition, needs and perspectives some meanings are more salient than others.

For instance when we are hungry, food takes on a different meaning to that of when our appetite has been sated. Likewise when we are thirsty having something to drink becomes something one needs to attend to. The longer we leave it before we take care of these matters the more room they take up in our psyche. Ultimately to the exclusion of all else.

Another example that Professor Jordan B. Peterson of the University of Toronto uses is that when we are, say, near the edge of a cliff, we don’t see ‘cliff.’ We see, ‘falling off place.’ When we walk into a room, the room itself tells us how to behave. We position ourselves and act differently in a lecture theatre than in a cafeteria. This is all so ingrained from habit and culture that most of the time we have no idea that how we behave at any given time is as much to with our immediate environment as it does with our supposed notions of agency.

The more we understand about how we really work the more we have the opportunity to make changes, (or at least better understand them.) We have had tremendous benefits derived from the domains of science and technology with their systematic labelling, categorisation and characterisation of the constitution of the physical
But we, as human beings, don’t live like that and we don’t like to live like that. In fact, terrible things happen when we objectify each other. At the local level we have mindless bigotry and discrimination that serves no one and causes undue pain. At the wider level objectification leads to the mass exterminations of whole peoples because they were considered nothing more than a category. Arbitrary concepts to be crossed off the list of existence.

However, living life as though it has a narrative with meanings that are salient and important to us obviates the need to categorise and dehumanise either ourselves or others. Looking for what is meaningful to us at any given moment and allowing that to guide us in its essential humanness may save us from totalitarian part of our natures as well as save us from the drudgery of being automatons.
It’s interesting really when you think about it digital and technology have advanced the world in so many ways. Letter writing has become email, filing cabinets have become folders on a screen and shopping can now be done with the click of a button.

So... why is it then that when celebrating we essentially do so in the same ways as we always have done, by gathering together and going to an event? Even when it’s a digital and technology celebration?

I have often wondered about this.

At the beginning of this year I decided to investigate and find out why events remain popular in the digital age (also I needed a thesis topic and this one seemed interesting and relevant for my PR masters.)

I focused on a particular type of event, the special event, which is a PR tactic. Special events have the power to emphasise existing values and beliefs so they are reinforced, motivate the target public in attendance and inspire attendees to engage in a particular action.

Here are some interesting things that I found:

• All special event organisers (PR professionals) interviewed felt that running events are important so that the host organisation can engage with their audiences on a personal level. The interviewees were focused on the human connection and interpersonal communication between an organisation and its audiences.
• The main reasons people attend special events are to learn something new, to network and to experience something new.
• Social media tops the list of successful promotional activity in the lead up to an event (successful here meaning promotional activity encouraged attendance.)
• Neither special event organisers interviewed nor attendees surveyed thought that the digital age would replace the events industry. Yes, they both agreed that the digital age has and will continue to change events but not replace them.

While researching and completing my thesis I learned quite a bit so selecting just a few points to include in a blog was quite difficult.

Ultimately I think the digital age has augmented the special event. What has been enhanced are the experiences people have at events, all kinds of things now happen like live video feeds, social media activity and apps to let you know what’s what at the event.

Life has become so much more convenient and connected; yet bringing people together, face to face, remains key in the building of relations between an organisation and its publics.

The attitude in the events industry is one of excellence and continuous improvement, meaning that digital and technology are utilized to allow the organisation and its publics to engage in meaningful interpersonal communications at events. Exchanges which aim to impress, make publics feel valued and feel important. Events have the ability to allow organisations to communicate with the attendees through information sharing and how they feel about that information.

Events remain popular because people prefer to meet people than computers, and personal contact just can’t be beaten. What we will experience when we attend these events however is what will change. I for one am excited to see how the events industry continues to grow.

http://www.tedxvienna.at/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/europe_connection_by_axilien-d41gw0y.jpg
We Need to Talk about Robots. #43

By Niall McCormick

Whether we like it or not, we now find ourselves at the dawn of the Robotics Revolution. Like the Industrial Revolution of the late 1700’s and the Computing Revolution of the late 1900’s, our world is about to change forever. However, we have a choice to make; will we use automation to improve the lives of billions of people on our planet, or fulfill the countless prophecies of science fiction films that spell the end of human race? I believe that widespread automation could be one of the greatest technological advancements in history, but our education system must change to acknowledge this and ensure that future generations understand how and why these technologies should be used to improve societies around the world.

Takeaways:

1. Armageddon might not take the form of science fiction films, there is a far more pressing danger that is much closer to home.
2. We have become slaves to technology and we are rapidly approaching a time when very few people understand how the technology that controls our lives actually works.
3. Technology has the potential to propel entire countries out of poverty, but it also has the potential to make the gap in equality into a gaping chasm.
4. Education is key. If you can educate people about technology and the digital world, you can empower them. It is essential that this technology is used for social good.

Despite the warnings from Hollywood over the past few decades, I do not believe that robotics and automation will lead to Armageddon – at least, not in the way that films have portrayed it. I don’t believe that Artificial Intelligence is anywhere near the power of the human brain, nor will it be near it in the next 20 years. However, I do believe that there are immediate dangers associated with this technology and warning signs that must be heeded. I see two problems rapidly approaching us, thankfully they can both be solved with one solution.

Problem 1: We are slaves to technology

I walked into a classroom of 12 year olds in Galway a few weeks back to deliver a robotics workshop with them. Out of the 28 pupils, 24 had a smart phone, but not a single one knew how it operated, even at a high level. When asked what would happen if they had to go for a weekend without their phone, in typical 12 year old fashion, I was told that they would “die”. This may be a slight exaggeration, but it shows just how much of a crutch technology has become. What used to be a tool has become a crutch that we now depend on for everything from basic mathematics to management of our social lives. We are rapidly approaching a point in time where nobody will understand, even at a very high level, the technology that controls our lives.

Problem 2: Technology could lead to further inequality

In the modern world in which we live, where technology controls most aspects of our day to day lives, it is very easy to forget that more than two thirds of the world’s population does not have internet access. Used properly, technology has the ability to propel developing economies into the 21st Century. But without it, the gap in equality will continue to widen into a chasm. Many of you will have heard of Moore’s Law, which states that computer processing power roughly doubles every 2 years. If developed
About Niall McCormick:

Niall is a recent graduate of Electrical & Electronic Engineering at the National University of Ireland, Galway. In 2013 he co-founded Colmac Robotics Ltd. with Colman Munnelly. The company specialises in robotics education and educational product development. Besides robotics, Niall has a keen interest in the fields of emergency medicine and pre-hospital care and regularly volunteers to provide medical cover to events. In 2014, he became a member of Team EXCITED and an Advisor to The Digital Youth Council of Ireland, a youth council to advise government on digital strategy. This year, he won the Best Established Business category in the Mayo Finals of Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur and was a National Finalist in Nissan’s Generation Next programme.

Contacting Niall McCormick:

You can contact Niall by Email, follow him on Twitter or check out his work on Robotics.ie

nations have access to this computing power and developing nations don’t, it won’t take long to figure out that the chasm of inequality will widen at a frightening pace.

The Solution: Education

Thankfully, both of these problems can be solved, relatively quickly. Like so many other problems in society, Education is the key. Take Rwanda for example. To many, the landlocked East African country that suffered horrendous losses to a genocide in the early 1990’s may be seen as a typical developing country. But Rwanda is different. They made a conscious decision to educate themselves about the benefits of technology and have made incredible leaps in the past few years. Mobile penetration has risen by 30% over the past 4 years, broadband penetration is also rising rapidly following the completion of a 2,300km fibre optic cable and 4G wireless access is standard on all public transport in cities. Rwanda is the perfect example of a developing nation that is using technology to combat poverty. Technology companies are also joining the party. Facebook’s secretive drone project, codenamed Aquila, aims to use high altitude, solar powered drones to beam down connectivity to parts of the world where internet is still only a dream.

Education systems around the world are slowly changing to reflect the digital economy. Just a few weeks ago, The National Digital Strategy was unveiled. This strategy will turbo charge Ireland’s delivery of digital education, teaching young people important skills in the areas of robotics, technology and code. These skills will allow young people, wherever they may be in the world, to use the technology that controls our lives, to empower theirs.

I believe that widespread automation could be one of the greatest technological advancements in history, but our education systems must change to acknowledge this and ensure that future generations understand how and why these technologies should be used as a tool to improve the lives of billions of people on this planet.
In a world where your phone holds the technology to make a film, the traditional film industry faces a challenge to get people to pay for their content – be it through cinema stubs, or video-on-demand rentals. However, the very gadgets that provide the biggest threat to the industry may ultimately prove its saviour, and it is interesting to chart how the film industry is beginning to harness people power via Social Media, in order to build advocates.

The challenge to ensure content remains current in a global world has changed the way we consume film – improved technologies including digital film projection have resulted in a world where increasingly films are released simultaneously in different territories. This global immediacy has an increased pressure, where the pressure to make an impact on opening weekend has become the defining factor in whether it remains in cinemas. Film Distributors need to get the general populous excited about a film in the lead up to release, in order to drive them into their local cinema as soon as possible.

Films like Twilight had a unique opportunity to harness the huge teen fan base from the Twilight Saga book series. The marketeers understood this and targeted the notoriously hard to reach ‘tween’ market through social media, offering new content exclusively through social platforms, and becoming the first film property to exceed 1 million Twitter followers. This groundswell can arguably be said to contribute to a bumper box office for a film that was only moderately received by critics, and created a direct conduit to fans to keep them engaged, releasing content continuously between each release of the subsequent films in the franchise.

Social media can be viewed at its best when creating and sustaining hype well in advance of scheduled release dates. Star Wars, always a popular franchise, has seen a social campaign lasting a number of years – well in advance of the kick off of a traditional marketing campaign. Arguably the Social chatter was not always part of a campaign, perceived leaks in 2013 being met with a standard response that all new information was ‘not confirmed until it is on the website’. Disney and Lucas films did manage to get their heads around the excitement, embracing Social and generating stand alone campaigns for May The 4th Be With You. In 2015, Disney marketeers used this new ‘National Day’ to release a highly anticipated trailer for The Force Awakens, which was viewed over 88m times in 24 hours, and the continuous drip feed of content from the film will surely maintain the hype through to release in December 2015, in fact The Force Awakes has already smashed records for advance ticket sales.
Traditionally distributors have been fiercely protective over characters depicted in films, with only select images being released and strict guidelines over how imagery and characters may be used. The different nature of digital marketing requires a new approach which greater interactivity required. Universal Pictures have understood the potential, developing an interactive campaign around their Minion characters for Despicable Me 2 that allowed fans to become Minions and, by extension, become a part of their marketing team and creating awareness within their own networks.

To Conclude:

The Film industry, along with many other creative industries, has a wealth of potential content to feed the ever-hungry social media machine. Developing stand-alone digital strategies will become more and more important to the success of a title, and will likely change the face of film marketing by beginning way in advance of the traditional campaigns. It will be interesting to see how film companies react – whether they will continue to try and control the content, or whether they embrace their audiences and let them help shape the story.
By Gerard Tannam

Me and my big mouth? It seems that we're offered so many opportunities to hold forth that many of us grow heady with power, and simply talk for the sake of talking. And that's just as fatal online as it is in the offline world of meetings, get-togethers and social events. So, before you rush to tweet, mail or post and risk putting your foot in it, beware these six common ways to lose friends and alienate people online.

4 Takeaways:

1. Don't just say the first thing that comes into your head.
2. Show that you appreciate what's been said by building on previous contributions, then offering your own take on them.
3. Check whether something really is worth repeating before reaching for the share button.
4. Be discerning about who you connect with and remember that, over time, you're judged by the company you keep.

About Gerard Tannam:

With a soft spot for the all-important but often ignored customer, serial entrepreneur, brand-builder and Kickstart Your Business expert on Newstalk, Gerard Tannam draws on his experiences from both sides of the shop-counter to offer a practical hands-on, heads-up on how to make sure that you're in the right place at the right time for your customer, every time.
Contacting Gerard Tannam:

You can email Gerard or follow him on Twitter.

trying to follow the discussion.

- Suggestion: Show that you appreciate what's been said by building on previous contributions, then offering your own take on them; rather than simply raising a cheer.

- The Gatecrasher: Wherever two or three are gathered online, this party-animal assumes an invitation, and barges in to offer an ill-judged comment or criticism or simply hoover up contact details. Often taking advantage of lax moderation and determined to outstay their non-existent welcome, the Gatecrasher samples the best of what's on offer before barrelling on to the next get-together.

- Suggestion: Build trust and establish rapport by only going where invited or by politely requesting an invitation to join in the conversation, and don't be an opportunistic fly-by-night when you're welcomed to the party.

- The Lampard Echo: Mario Rosenstock's Gift Grub used to feature a parody of footballer Frank Lampard, who in interviews seemed to simply repeat the unremarkable comments of his England and Chelsea colleague John Terry: “Well, as John says, at the end of the day…” This habit has become a particular favourite of those on Twitter who simply retweet news and comments from elsewhere without thinking for a moment how relevant these are to their readers or adding anything to the conversation. Twitter, and other instant messaging, quickly becomes background noise unless it's both timely and relevant. Followers may appear to be listening but really they just switch off.

- Suggestion: Check whether something really is worth repeating before reaching for the share button.

- The Know It All: Some contributors are so determined to make the most of every opportunity available that you find them posting on every forum, regardless of the subject. Wherever you turn, they're online, pitching their wares and twisting themselves into knots in order to present themselves as experts on the topic in hand. It's no fun being in the company of a know-all and participants soon grow tired and fade away into the background, leaving the bore all alone.

- Suggestion: Be prepared to listen first and learn from the expertise of those around you before bringing your own knowledge and experience to the party.

- The Messiah: Followers, connections and fans, and the more of them, the better; that's what this busy networker is about. Pass on your details and sooner or later you're receiving invitations to link this way, fan that way and befriend in any number of ways. Quantity, not quality, is the name of the game and once you've become another trophy 'sign-up', you're unlikely to hear anything again, unless you're on the receiving end of another mass mailing.

- Suggestion: Be discerning about who you connect with and remember that, over time, you're judged by the company you keep, and the quality not the quantity of those following you is what really counts.

To Finish…

So whilst there are numerous ways in which we can connect with our customers online, let's not make the mistake of assuming that we have a captive audience and can say what we like, whenever we like.

The same rules of engagement apply there as they do offline: Before opening your mouth, ask yourself how you can help make the conversation even better (and sometimes that's by simply being a good listener) and be thoughtful and generous in your contributions.
Ulysses VR: A personal creative collision. #46

By Eoghan Kidney

As a child in the 1980s much of my summer was spent in my grandfather and grandmother’s house in the well to do coastal suburb of Sandycove south of the city of Dublin, Ireland. I would be brought down to the popular bathing spot The Forty Foot to swim. Looming over the rocks was one of the many Martello Towers which dot the edges of the island of Ireland - stumpy fortresses which were built for and are still waiting for a Napoleonic invasion. One day my grandfather pointed at the tower and told me that this was where the most famous book ever written began.

My grandfather also gave me another gift - in the early eighties this retired architect took it upon himself to teach his grandson how to code on a Commodore Vic 20. If I wasn’t swimming in the freezing Irish Sea I was banging the thick keys of this paleolithic home computer, inputting code from magazines and creating games from scratch. So began my obsession with creating things through new technology.

Last year I was finishing my second read of Ulysses (the read that was really opening the book to me as possible Joyce readers might attest to), and simultaneously fostering an obsession with the development of the Oculus Rift. Then, one day, the idea sprung up, as Werner Herzog says “broke into my house like a thief in the night”. We could say that ideas are the meshing of previous external stimuli, which have brewed in the brain, served up to us by surprise. I have made many short films and music videos, and can almost trace back every influence and combination that led to the ideas within them, but for Ulysses VR, it means more that just chaos to me.
I grew up in Sandymount, beside the strand which is the location for Proteus, on the street where Joyce was staying on the real Bloomsday, 16th June 1904 (there’s a plaque to prove it). Now, I feel like I’m lucky that I was there at the right time and place to see Ulysses and virtual reality cognitively overlayed and I’m sure it is only a matter of time before many other people want to use VR to bring more difficult pieces of literature to people in new and experimental ways.

My grandfather died in 1995, a week from 20 years ago today, but what he gave me was the seed to a creative collision which took over two decades to gestate, an example of the creative collisions that we all have throughout our lives, that lead to new and weird places, some of which we cannot ignore.
Social Media Measurement is the Elephant in the Room. #47

By Maryrose Lyons

Synopsis:
Ideas and discussion around social media measurement. Social media measurement is the elephant in the room. How do you measure your activity in a meaningful way? Surely there are alternative measures that aren't tied in to the platforms own, or merely relying on Google Analytics?

4 Takeaways:
1. Stage 1 was a pissing contest: measures were about likes.
2. Stage 2 was about making those new fans talk to you (engagement).
3. Stage 3 is about calculating ROI utilising GA on your site.
4. Stage 4? Are we there yet?

About Maryrose Lyons:
Maryrose Lyons is the Founder of Brightspark Consulting. A veteran practitioner, and 2nd year Congee. Looking forward to another year of great connections, idea sharing, and craic.

Contacting Maryrose Lyons:
You can follow Maryrose on Twitter.

A significant 92% of marketers said that social media was important to their businesses. But is it a case of half the money spent on advertising doesn't work, the other half does, I just don't know what half? According to The CMO Survey, companies spend only 2.3% of their marketing budgets on measuring ROI. Yet 88% of marketers want to know how to measure their return on investment for social media activities.

I think we're moving on from stage 1, 2, to stage 3 social media measurement.

It's generally accepted that you can’t directly link social media to sales, unless you're dealing with ecommerce. It takes time to develop the kind of social media relationships that lead to sales. And they can be hard to measure. So the activity to date has often been about brand building - here’s a good post about how we’ve inherited archaic brand measurement systems from a bygone era. If brand building is your goal, social media engagement can be an appropriate measure. But I’m no longer that comfortable measuring social media activity with specific FB/TW measures - likes/comments/shares and likes/loves/retweets/replies.

It’s often been about likes, comments, shares leading to page views and clickthroughs. I’m finding myself proposing with increasing regularity that it should be about page views and clickthroughs, with the others secondary. In this way, Google Analytics becomes your social measurement dashboard.

But surely there's more than that?

At Cong 2015, I would like to talk about social media measurement. (I would also really like to talk about your stuff too). I’m really interested in discussing alternatives to the platforms own measures. I know there is an appetite for this. And I’m really keen to run some of my ideas past other social media practitioners to sense check.
Making the Past a Place - Augmenting Reality. #48

By John Tierney and Bernie Goldbach

Synopsis:

Discover how the past has been crowdsourced, geolocated and published through Augmented Reality to bring people from all over the world to boreens, roads and fields in parishes all over Ireland.

4 Takeaways

1. Crowdsourced heritage datasets work for tourism development.
2. Geolocating the datasets builds for augmented reality.
3. Stories & data bring the audience.
4. The digital media must be engaging, informative & low in bandwidth.

About John Tierney and Bernie Goldbach

Bernie Goldbach & John Tierney have been working together on developing the use of digital media for heritage projects for the last 5 years.

Contacting John Tierney and Bernie Goldbach.

You can follow both John and Bernie on Twitter.

In Ireland the past is all around us. For the last 5 years Bernie & I have been collaborating on a number of web projects using digital multimedia to bring the past into the present. We have crowdsourced the survey of over 700 historic graveyards generating a geolocated dataset which has brought people from all over the world to boreens, roads and fields in parishes all over Ireland. We've 'cracked' how to use historic headstones for tourism development and now we are developing a project to attach genealogical/historical datasets to the historic homesteads of Ireland.

Over the last 3 years we have received funding from diverse sources to develop our vision. LEADER companies in ten counties have supported our community-led approach as every parish is equal in the eyes of the past. Today we have funding from the Dept of the Taoiseach Local Diaspora Fund and Dublin City Council for pilot projects taking place in 8 counties.

The key to developing our past as a resource for community engagement and tourism development is to build geolocated datasets. We can go into a graveyard and take a single geolocated photo of each headstone - we convert the epitaph on the headstone to a database and each name on those headstones is then geolocated. We can add audio, video or textual stories about key people, places and events and in that way build a geolocated dataset, potentially rich in media and thereby capable of augmenting reality.

Our first attempt at this approach took place 4 years ago when we followed www.daft.ie's use of LAYAR for real estate in Ireland. Had just bought a Samsung SII, turned on LAYAR and scanned a 360 circle to find that my neighbour had just put his house up for sale - reality was indeed augmented then - at least on a noseyness level. We took this same technology and poured our graveyard surveys into LAYAR with the intention of encouraging genealogical tourists to use AR to find their family headstones - cutting out the confusion of which county/parish was the graveyard in, how to find the
graveyard and thereafter how to sift through 200 historic headstones to find the right one.

With the Historic Graves Project we have been building geolocated databases of names and surnames - all with temporal attributes if a date is inscribed in the stone. We have come to view the Irish landscape as being populated by historic name clouds hanging over our places of the past - graveyards, national schools, factories, crossroads, fields & homes. And we are working with communities to construct these digital

name clouds and attach them to places for tourism purposes. With appropriate digital media (geolocated) we believe we can guide people through the physical landscape and walk in their forebears footsteps. This house is where Paul O’Connell’s grandfather grew up in Co. Cork - it won’t surprise ye to know he was a blacksmith and some of the tools he made are still hanging in the ruined homestead.

Our methodology crowdsources surveys of places of the past and then transposes something onto it - the simple action of taking a 2 dimensional image & adding a third dimension (geolocation) is easy to learn & right now we are training groups in Galway, Clare, Limerick, Cork, Tipperary & Dublin to do these surveys with the view of escalating the project in the next 3 years with the goal of surveying every parish in Ireland.
At the same time we have started to link the Irish parishes with their corresponding diaspora communities using digital media & heritage. The simple action of taking a geolocated photo of a heritage place in one country becomes a tool for building relationships between communities & between countries. This geolocated image then becomes a hook to which we can attach a range of media to build community tourism experiences which can be designed, layered and augmented in the coming years.

If one’s great-grandmother served in WW1 as a nurse in the Whittington Hospital in London then to visit that place is to walk in her footsteps. If one’s great-grandfather served with Sean Heuston in their takeover of the Mendicity Institution on Ushers Quay in Easter 1916 then to visit the Mendicity is to trace their path. If your people from Kilgefin in Roscommon moved to Lewis County in West Virginia in the 1860s then how can you trace their footsteps? We are answering these challenges with crowdsourced surveys, by adding geolocated datasets and by telling the stories of people and places.
Your website visit is(n’t) very important to us – please continue to hold.

#49

By Gareth Dunlop

Synopsis:

When an organisation has digitally transformed, marketing teams will have less budget, influence and power. If that’s not the case, then you haven’t done the digital transformation right. The product or service team in a properly digital company will have all the budget, influence and power.

Put the user at the centre of your design process. Understand them inside out to design with empathy. Make their voice the loudest for all design decisions you have to make.

4 Takeaways

1. Digital success is more to do with product design and less to do with marketing.
2. Don’t put people who’ve never met customers in charge of anything to do with strategy or planning.
3. User empathy is at the heart of creating lovable digital products
4. Your users aren’t fools, they value their time jealously and they are trigger happy on the back button

About Gareth Dunlop:

Gareth Dunlop is the CEO & Founder, Fathom.

Following 15 years of direct commercial experience helping businesses use the Internet more effectively, Gareth established the dedicated User-Experience agency Fathom in September 2011 to advise companies on how to

It is only a matter of time before a word is invented to describe the very particular kind of rage induced by a customer support call comprising five minutes on hold, three transfers between departments, a failed attempt by the system to automatically process your request through key strokes and an unsatisfactory conversation with a call operative for whom English isn’t a first language. The only way that experience could be made worse is if they teased you whilst holding with the lie “your call is very important to us, please continue to hold.”

What kind of monster would create such an experience?

A monster sitting in a Board Room valuing rows and columns in a spreadsheet above customers, that’s who. For the sake of convenience let’s call him Excel-zilla.

Excel-zilla has spent his entire life in the finance department and has never once spoken to a real-life customer. He hears about them from the commercial people in the organisation but doesn’t like the sound of them. He views serving them very definitely as a cost to the business, a somewhat inconvenient side effect of taking money from them.

Before we get too righteous about Excel-zilla, we do well to remind ourselves that he has a number of first cousins, monsters who create that same customer experience in the online world.
Let’s call these three ugly sisters Feature-obsession-zilla, Technology-focus-zilla and Pretty-pictures-zilla.

These monsters create websites where it take the user five minutes to accomplish what should be done in thirty seconds, where she needs to visit lots of different places before finding what she wants, where the content and vocabulary of the site is so organisationally-focused that it sounds like a second language, and where ultimately the disillusioned user picks up the phone or goes to a competitor.

**Russell Davies** is Director of Strategy at Government Digital Services (GDS) and possesses a clinically insightful, straight-talking, irreverent understanding of his customers that has facilitated a programme of extraordinary digital transformation in the provision of UK public services online. Asked recently how his users felt about the excellent online service gov.uk provides them with, he responded bluntly yet accurately “Hopefully most of our users don’t think about or notice us. They just use the service and get on with their lives.”

His response drips with accuracy, empathy and emotional intelligence and suggests total alignment between user intention and design direction.

Pertinently, he goes on to make it clear that for organisations to get close to their digital potential, they need to kill the Zillas.

“When an organisation has digitally transformed, marketing teams will have less budget, influence and power. If that’s not the case, then you haven’t done the digital transformation right. The product or service team in a properly digital company will have all the budget, influence and power.”

Users are much too smart to interpret the online equivalent of “your call is very important to us, please continue to hold” as anything other than “your website visit and your time aren’t important to us, in fact we haven’t made any effort to consider either, please continue to invest your time and emotional energy to get what you are looking for while our Zillas obsess on features, focus on technology pursue pretty-pictures.”

For those who don’t take their online customer experience seriously enough, Davies makes it clear what the future looks like “Digital transformation is inevitable, either your business will do it, or you will be replaced by another business that has digitally transformed already.”
Video killed the radio star and nothing interesting has happened since. #50

By Sean McGrath

Synopsis:

Digital music seems to be stuck in an early Nineteen Eighties mindset. We use smartphones as more convenient versions of the Sony CD Walkman with a built-in MTV T.V. station.

4 Takeaways

1. Music innovation appears to be “stuck in a rut”. Nothing particularly interesting has happened as a result of new tech since the early Eighties.
2. We use smartphones today the same way we used CD Walkmans and MTV in the Eighties.
3. Music is perhaps the most social of all attributes of mankind. How come we make so little innovative use of social media in the world of Music.
4. Is the fact that music is no longer clearly a viable career a factor in the lack of artists presently testing the limits of new media?

About Sean McGrath:

Sean McGrath. Blogging from Ireland since 2002. Based in Galway now.

Contacting Sean McGrath:

You can contact Sean by email.

Digital music seems to be stuck in an early Nineteen Eighties mindset. We use smartphones as more convenient versions of the Sony CD Walkman with a built-in MTV T.V. station.

History is full of examples of new technologies enabling entirely new music genres to form. From the emotionally expressive innovations of piano(forte), to the happy-accident of the blues harmonica, to the acoustically bad-on-purpose electronics of the Marshall Amplifier beloved of guitar players. Each new innovation has brought with it entirely new types of music and new types of artist. J.S. Bach, Little Walter, Jimi Hendrix...

...until now. Now we have the equivalent of a Seventies supercomputer running in the palm of our hands and all we have so far managed to do with it in terms of music innovation is to get better recommendations for new music to listen to. We listen to MP3 stuff we could have listened to on CD Walkman. We watch stuff we could have watched on MTV but now it is Youtube. Nothing much seems to have changed.

This strikes me as extremely odd. After all, we talk a lot about the enormous power of Social Media and yet one of the most social attributes of the entire human race – the production and, in particular the shared consumption of music is largely bereft of compelling new media features.

Looking back at history, there are pivotal points where technologist+artist get together and technology-driven music innovation happens (Wendy Carlos, on the Moog Syntesizer, Mike Townsend on the Marshall Amplifier). I don’t think we have a shortage of new technology to take advantage of. We do seem to have a shortage of digital-native artists thought.

Sure there are occasional glimmers. Björk has dabbled in iPhone App development. Suzanne Vega has appeared in Second Life. Prog Rock band, 65daysofstatic, have created an infinite soundscape for a video game called No Mans Sky. Michael Nesbitt (remember the Monkees?), has created a 3D performance space called VideoRanch.

Nothing, to date, that jumps out at you and screams “this changes everything!” Perhaps it is just a matter of time. Today’s teenagers are, after all, the first generation of internet
natives. One concern I do have, perhaps unwarranted, is that it is far from clear that music is as viable a career as it has been in the recent past where sales of physical media such as LPs and CD’s made the cash registers sing.

Will the next generation of teenagers be willing to put in all the effort during their formative years without at least the possibility of the financial rewards enjoyed by their heroes of the CD and MTV era?
The Human Link - Competing within an Online World. #51

By Ginger Aarons

Synopsis:
Is there a way to compete with the giants of the internet to provide better customer service and engage your customer through human interaction to drive online sales?

4 Takeaways

1. Is there a way to compete with the giants of the internet to provide better customer service?
2. Discussion: The issue of “not everything you read on the internet is true”, applies to Ancestry.com and to Orbitz, Expedia as well as other industries. How to relay the information to your client and what it means to your integrity as a company.
3. People still crave real human interaction, as long as it is on their terms. Baby Boomers / Silent Generation - Happy to speak to someone at length. Generation X - Happy to speak but you better know exactly what you’re talking about. Millennials - Talk briefly then text incessantly demanding instant feedback.
4. How important is customer service and human interaction to your business? Do you feel comfortable taking your customer service to the next level? (ROI)

About Ginger Aarons:

Ginger is the founder of Time Travel, LLC ... often called Time Travel Tours. She offers bespoke travel to Ireland & The British Isles. Passionate about what she does by offering a way to learn while

Back in the late 90’s the travel industry was faced with the internet and what that meant to us, as companies such as Expedia and Orbitz slowly took over the space from the brick and mortar agency. Commissions were cut from 10-40% to 5% and overnight, we scrambled, not knowing the future of our livelihoods and how to deal with the new craze of booking travel yourself as it came into fashion. That was when I reinvented my company to doing tours in Ireland. It was the only way I knew how to compete in the online world and offer my clients something special that could be booked online with my company, yet know that what I really offered to close the sale, was customer service.

Today, 17 years later, while I feel I am versed in helping my client on a customer service level whilst helping them look online, there are others in service industries still struggling with the giants of the internet. In my current line of work, as a tour operator doing genealogy tours, I find the small county, town and state run genealogy centers struggling to make ends meet and compete with the giant of Ancestry.com. While many make the argument that they shouldn’t be able to access our records and charge for something we already possess (we felt the same in the travel industry) the fact is, that to really compete you have to embrace the change and use it to your advantage and realize that just because there is a lot of money in some of the giants of the internet, they are still, very much just that, online, with no one to talk to for customer service. So letting go of that fear and moving towards how you, as a business and as an individual can make your client’s experience online and with you, the thing that keeps them coming back for help and for using your company time and again, is paramount to survival.

Some of the ways I do this personally is getting to know the client. In travel, you are very intimate with your client, from how they sleep as a family on holiday, to knowing if, for example, a couple do the same thing on holiday (active / non active) and how to make the holiday work for both of them. Getting a client to talk to you instead of just booking online or looking at your site online is having a call to action button to get in touch by way of making sure the potential client knows you won’t charge to ask questions or vet you, can make all the difference you need for the human touch within an online world. On average I spend at least an hour or more with serious clients wanting to research their roots in Ireland and the British Isles to vet them for the tour and for them to decide if my small, intimate way of touring is for them. No whistle stop touring here, and never the same tour twice. But tons of customer service from
beginning to end by linking into their personal ancestry.com profiles to follow their genealogy and make suggestions or changes from the very beginning (back to vetting your clients on high end tours) and also by linking in what you’ll be doing along their routes by sending online links to hotels, sites and activities, to walking them through how to navigate airline websites if they don’t already know. Using the internet as a teaching tool for older clients is a great way to take the fear out of travel as well. For the more tech savvy, there seems to be a breath of fresh air with transparency in what they are getting for their money. So, being customer service oriented is key in making the sale.

Originally from South of the Mason Dixon Line, and after 30 years, she has become an all around Portland girl that loves the fact that she gets to live and work in two of the best places in the world, the Pacific Northwest and Ireland ... what could possibly be better?

Lover of music (it DOES make the world go round... not money), supporter of the arts, do gooder, Masterpiece Theater watcher since the age of 12, supporter of the historic house, genealogy nut and avid antique collector.

Contacting Ginger Aarons:

You can contact Ginger on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook or follow her thoughts on her blog.
The Digital Age Gap? #52

By Noreen Henry

Synopsis:

Are you a Digital natives or a Digital Immigrants?
1. Do you usually turn to the internet for information second rather than first?
2. Do you read the manual for a program rather than assuming that the program itself will teach you how to use it?
3. Do you sometimes print out your email or even a document written on the computer in order to edit it?
4. Do you sometimes bring people into your office to see an interesting website?
5. Have you ever phoned someone to ask if they had received your email?

4 Takeaways

1. How to use a pay phone.
2. Sending a handwritten letter is now as easy as using Gmail.
3. The iPhone 6 has a million times the RAM of the Commodore 128.
4. The 60-74 age group use Google, Facebook, Ryanair, online banking facilities and Skype.

About Noreen Henry:

Noreen Henry is a lecturer in IT at the Mayo campus of GMIT. She lectures in IT support, training, project management & service management on the IT Support and Computer Services Management course and chair the new B. Sc. (Hons.) in Digital Media & Society. She has a particular interest in developments in IT and education.

In a lecture today I looked at the fresh faced first years and asked “Who remembers a time before we had the internet?” They laughed. In a world where we say “There is no such thing as a stupid question”, this was the stupid question.

This year we reached the destination date from “Back to the Future II” but how have we changed?

In 1989 when “Back to the Future II” was released the world had the Commodore 128 PC with 128 kB of RAM, the Atari ST home computer was launched, Nintendo released Super Mario, Steve Jobs quit Apple and the first Internet domain name symbolics.com was registered.

Yet, the film correctly predicted a number of technologies available today such as the rise of ubiquitous cameras, drones, flat panel widescreen TV’s, video chat, hands-free video games consoles and wearable technologies amongst others.

I asked a group of 14 year olds on the “Back to the Future II” day what technologies would they like to have in 25 years’ time the only thing they could think of was the hover board. Their reasoning was that it would be much easier than the bike.

Noreen Henry #52 disc

Most of the fresh faced first years were born around 1997, when the world had 28k modems, Windows 95, Netscape and a CD-RW was the latest introduction to the desktop. The Y2K bug was the software industry biggest issue and the programmers “Celtic Tiger”, and Steve Jobs was rehired by Apple.

Yet in the same year the domain facebook.com comes online in March, craigslist.com in
Contacting Noreen Henry:

You can email Noreen.

September and netflix.com is online by November.

We consider these 14 years old's and the fresh faced first years as Digital Natives.

The Digital Native is defined as:

A person who was born or has grown up since the use of digital technology became common and so is familiar and comfortable with computers and the Internet.

In 2001 Marc Prensky wrote “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants.” According to Prensky, “digital natives spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, video games, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age.” While Digital immigrants have adapted to the digital environment.

In 2004 Prensky also wrote “The Emerging Online Life of the Digital Native: What they do differently because of technology, and how they do it”. In this article he identifies the online life of the Digital Native “has become an entire strategy for how to live, survive and thrive in the 21st century, where cyberspace is a part of everyday life.” He says that they communicate, share, buy & sell, exchange, create, meet, collect, coordinate, evaluate, game, learn, search, analyse, report, programme, socialise, evolve and grow up differently.

CARDI (Centre for Aging Research and Development in Ireland) published a report “Focus on Internet use and older people” in 2012. This report states that according to the Central Statistics Office 21% of the 60-74 age group use the internet almost every day. They most often use Google, Facebook, Ryanair, online banking facilities and Skype.

One can only deduct that age may not be a greatest factor in how we communicate, share, buy & sell, exchange, create, meet, collect, coordinate etc. differently.

Today the iPhone 6 has a million times the RAM of the Commodore 128, facebook.com has 1,000 million daily users worldwide. Fortunately Colgate toothpaste surpasses Facebook with 3,000+ million daily users.

Considering that we have websites titled: “Sending A Handwritten Letter Is Now As Easy As Using Gmail”, “How to Use a Pay Phone” and “Ditch the sat nav and use a map!”

Still all they want is the hoverboard instead of the bike.
How Social Media has allowed me to build a successful business living in the wilds of Erris. #53

By Barbara Heneghan

Synopsis:
Social media has the power to allow us to work from where we want and to build a viable community around our interest areas.

4 Takeaways

1. By posting daily on social media you build a wide customer base.
2. Your customers can tell you what they want, via post clicks, likes and comments.
3. Your work can become more innovative as you find new ways to market yourself online.
4. You can connect with a worldwide customer base, and people will buy from you anywhere in the world, once they connect with you and your product.

About Barbara Heneghan:

Barbara is based in Belmullet, Co. Mayo and her business is Gaol Siar owned and managed by me Barbara Heneghan. I run foraging walks with wild cooking or self-sufficiency workshops. I have also produce a range of Foraged Soaps and Candles that capture the essence of the wild plants of Erris. I was reared in the lighthouse dwellings in Blacksd, Co. Mayo. I spent my childhood foraging and fishing in Erris. Childhood holidays were spent picking strawberries in my mother's native Wexford. I am a trained chef, historian, accomplished artist and forager. For the past 200 years my family have lived in Blacksd, they have tended the lighthouses, fished the waters, farmed the lands, foraged and traded in Erris. Most of the businesses run by my family involved working with nature from exporting lobster, crabs, winkles, seaweeds, processing and exporting fish oils for the international market, as well as quarrying I have a wealth of knowledge, archives and experience passed to me from generations of my family.

In October 2011 I established my business Gaol Siar, which means connecting back in Gaelic. I returned home to my native Erris after 17 years away. I was always in love with Erris, its people, nature and heritage. I wanted to connect this beautiful place with the Erris diaspora around the world. Having worked across Europe and Africa I had always spoken about my native Blacksod where ever I went. I understood that as a member of the diaspora the connection to home was important, however there was no one in Erris reaching out to their diaspora. Using social media, I began offering ancestry research service, which eventually evolved into heritage workshops and tours. My heritage workshops were themed on different aspects of Erris culture. I recorded many presentations and videos that our diaspora all over the world could pay to view. Not only did social media allow me to connect with these people, also using Skype I have business mentors across the world who are closely connected to the Irish diaspora, they are able to advise me on the needs and trends affecting our diaspora and I'm able to work to fill this gap.
from exporting lobster, crabs, winkles, seaweeds, processing and exporting fish oils for the international market, as well as quarrying she have a wealth of knowledge, archives and experience passed to her from generations of my family.

Contacting Barbara Heneghan:

You can see Barbara's work on GaolSiar, phone 0872169625 or connect on Facebook.

All of my workshops had some reference to nature, whether it be the colour or scent of the different plants in season, this appeared to be the biggest draw for the diaspora, they wanted to connect with the very essence of this place, and there was no better way than to connect with the wild plants. I began working more and more with the wild plants in both cooking, drying, blending and distilling the oils from the plants. Each step was developed by posting daily pictures of my foraging walks and my foraged products on Facebook, from the post reaction I was able to determine which products were more popular and develop that product further.

Presently I have developed a range of 7 Foraged Soaps and 6 Foraged Candles, these capture the essence of the wild plants of Erris, I’m developing these products for export to the USA and eventually to the Irish diaspora world wide. My products are unique as they are scented using the oils from the wild plants such as Gorse, heather, clover, dandelion etc. All other Irish made candles and soaps are scented using foreign oils which lose the scent of Ireland in the process. If it were not for social media and the feedback from my LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram posts and my monthly newsletter, I would not have developed these unique products. The Erris diaspora would not have been able to communicate to me what was the strongest symbol of Erris for them. I now sell my products from my website and ship them to the Irish diaspora who connect with me via social media.

Because of Social media I get to live in the best place in Ireland to Go Wild, I enjoy daily foraging walks, the relaxed pace of life and I’m able to earn a living, doing what I love. Although it does take a lot of commitment to continuously market yourself through social media, I find that the daily posts have encouraged me in my work. As I post daily I need my photos and posts to differ, therefore I’m constantly exploring new locations in Erris to forage, and I’m constantly inventing new recipes and ways to use the wild plants of Erris. If it were not for social media I would not need to constantly innovate and I would not have the loyal customer base who have found me through social media. I recently attended a BNI meeting in Castlebar and was greeted at the table by several people who said so you are the foraging lady I follow you on Facebook, I was surprised how well known especially considering I live a very remote place, however social media has allowed me to speak to a broad audience and influence many people to get out into nature.
Using Hashtags and Social Media to Make an Income. #54

By Chris Collins

Synopsis:

A Quick Guide To Using Social Media To Earn An Income

4 Takeaways

1. Hashtags are a method to keep online expenditure low.
2. Hashtags are a method to get potential online customers to your website.
3. Hashtags are an opportunity to connect your promotions for free into search streams viewed by the largest online populations.
4. Hashtags are an extremely powerful and affordable advertising social when used with automated social marketing tools.

About Chris Collins:

Chris is Founding Geek of Tweet Eye Limited

Behind every successful business and colourful website is the ‘tech’ who does the ‘geeky’ stuff by analysing all that boring grey data that unlocks the mysteries of a business. Chris is that individual. More comfortable with a computer and spreadsheet, he is a self-professed geek who does not like to miss a trick on where there is monetization potential and opportunities to reduce expenditure. He will analyse the data of the business to the finest degree to make better profits for users and investors! He has extensive experience analyzing

Billions of dollars have been invested in social networks which support the growing communication phenomena of indexing words with hashtags. Find out how you can earn from hashtagging.

As Director of Tweet Eye Limited, co designer of Tweet Eye Software, author of #Hashtag Your Way To The Top, co author of ‘Picture Yourself @ The Top’, I have been looking for simple ways to help sellers make money from social media.

There are many self proclaimed experts in social media.

When I first approached Dan Mazzini the owner of Hashtagify.me with an idea to partner his hashtag research tool with my idea of frequently posting pictures from the eBay partner network to Twitter with hashtags he said to me isn’t that hashtag spam.

When I setup a Twitter account tweeting eBay photos of cars for sale in the Exeter area with my eBay affiliate link and hashtagged the word #Exeter quite a few local business owners on Twitter eventually got cross with me. My automated software routine was monopolising the hashtag for Exeter. Jealousy is a terrible thing. I thought never mind, there are 196 countries in the world, 50 American states, 35000 American cities. I can hashtag those places and get my goods and services seen, nobody knows me there.

It taught me hashtagging works, it gets you real eyes on your business.

That is what I am, I am not an expert, I am not an academic, I am a hashtag spammer. I
commission data in the telecoms industry and has studied affiliate marketing over many years. He understands the link between data analysis and monetizing the opportunities across large networks of users.

Contacting Chris Collins:

You can contact Chris by email.

have written three books about it :) My software which churns out tweets with pictures and hashtags it has helped eBay sellers, selling 25k in our first year. Then Etsy sellers discovered it and started sharing it with the Etsy community. Pretty soon we were asked if we could make our download into a web-based tool. My aim is to get better at it.

Others call it spam, but I am proud that I have helped others affordably make a living.

Pinterest is valued at over 8 Billion dollars or Tumblr recently purchased for over billion dollars, these networks are essentially pictures and hashtags. The reason hashtag traffic is so valuable to any business is that pay per click traffic is so unaffordable, hashtag traffic is free.

While your business competitors are wasting their time and resource buying up the next crazy sounding domain name and wondering if they can afford that huge advertising space on the side of a doubledecker bus or pulling their hair out as search engines suck the life out of their business with expensive pay per click advertising. With a simple hashtag you can potentially gain for FREE more views of your product on a free website blog than your competitor would get with a ten thousand dollar advert on a high street bill board.

Who has seen the film ‘Wolf on Wall Street?’ Sell Me This Pen?

I once set a challenge on linkedin for any social media expert to create an effective campaign to sell a pen, only one responded. None were prepared to say how they would do a high converting sales Twitter strategy for selling their pen or give me advice on the best hashtags to pick.

How do you pick the right hashtags?

Twitter offers a massive stream of potentially free traffic to your website from hashtagging. Millions of people every day read other peoples tweets, click on hashtags contained in Tweets and end up looking at a stream of hashtags where they might see the pen you are trying to sell.

Do you hashtag:

1. the brand of the pen, #biro
2. its colours or its features #pink #plastic
3. the location you are selling the pen from, #Paignton #Devon
4. the location of the target market you want to buy the pen #NewYork
5. hashtags to grab the attention of your target market e.g. #backtoschool
6. do you ride a social trend, perfect pen for writing #xfactor opinions
7. any other suggestions?
8. almost forgot ... hashtag #pen

Do you even bother to use hashtags?

Do you tell jokes and have social chit chat and not even mention the pen in your Tweets, and first build a rapore with your audience?

With 140 characters do you give a long description about the features of the pen and just hope people will find your business or website selling the pen?
• Do you include a web page link? Do you include a photo of the pen or do you include a photo of the office party showing the relaxed side of the team selling the pen?
• Do you think about the time you tweet your message?
• Do you Tweet your message just once at an optimum time of the day? Optimum for where?
• Do you Tweet several times of the day?
• Do you Tweet manually or do you send your Tweets on automation?
• Do you ignore the opportunity to get free interest in your pen from people on Twitter and keep social media social and pay between 13 cents and $5.23 per a click on Google Adsense campaign to sell your pen?

Perhaps your strategy to get a sale of your pen does not even involve mentioning the pen. Instead you use a tool to datamine and follow the kind of people you think will buy your pen, retweet their tweets.

Some advice from the pros

" Reuse Tweets. Remember that Twitter is much like a ticker tape. Unless someone is just following your Tweets all day long, chances are many of your followers will never see your Tweet. This is why you want to share the same messages with some variation to the copy and the message timing"

https://gaggleamp.com/blog/twitter-as-a-ticker-tape-machine/

" We found that Tweets including photos averaged a 123% increase in engagement"

SimplyMeasured.

It is fairly logical conclusion, that whatever message it is that you think will work best for selling your pen, if you are doing it on Twitter, you need to be Tweeting it frequently and with pictures. Which is why my associates and I came up with the idea of Tweet Eye.

The reason I will NOT give you THE BEST strategy for marketing your pen, is that 3 billion conversations pass through Twitter a week, which use millions of hashtagged words, and using any hashtagged word to create your “common field” to any one of 3 billion conversations your potential is not limited to just a couple of choice words.

Social conversations that are completely unrelated to your business can suddenly bring life and interest to your business promotions from the simple use of a hashtag, that captures the attention of thousands of eyes to your business when you use the “hashtag” (the common field) through which many instances of social media conversations are joined.

The Secret of Hashtagging.

Hashtagging is about helping the millions of individuals who use social media networks research their niche and interests easily. With hundreds of millions of active social network users regularly clicking on hashtags of interest to them all you need to do is regularly Tweet relevant hashtags for your affiliate or sales offers.

Hashtagging as an Index.

Learn from the librarian, supermarket shelf stacker, fisherman; Approach Twitter and
Hashtagging in the same way a librarian would set about to index books in a library. Twitter is open for business and there are 500 million people searching for something so make sure they can find that something!

Hashtags as a correct place to find things.

You must approach Twitter and Hashtagging in the same way a shelf stacker in a supermarket puts everything in the correct place before the supermarket opens its doors to crowds of people looking for stuff they want. People may not always come to buy but they always come to look! Make sure your keywords are hashtagged!

Hashtags as bait.

Approach Twitter and Hashtagging in the same way a fisherman sets the bait. Do you want to catch millionaires? Research the richest zip codes and place names, link your hashtagging for Gold Bullion and Ferraris against those place names using affiliate codes directing to eBay sellers in those areas. Want to profit from football fans? Coin Collectors? Stamp Collectors? Research their interests and hashtag the keywords which will be frequently discussed in those sorts of circles on Twitter. If you want to attract buyers in a certain geographic area do the same tweet but add the various towns in that area. For instance, promoting your original ladies jewellery line in the New York area might include these tweets that focus on particular towns in New York:

- original #ladiesjewelry unique designs #silverandgold #whiteplains NY
- original #ladiesjewelry unique designs #silverandgold #elmsford NY
- original #ladiesjewelry unique designs #silverandgold #yonkers NY
- original #ladiesjewelry unique designs #silverandgold #rye NY
- original #ladiesjewelry unique designs #silverandgold #scarsdale NY
- original #ladiesjewelry unique designs #silverandgold #thornwood NY
- original #ladiesjewelry unique designs #silverandgold #purchase NY

Hashtags as spam.

#Don't #spam #with #hashtags. Use sparingly and respectfully. Twitter best practice recommends no more than 2 or 3 hashtags per tweet.

Hashtags have potential.

Why would Instagram or Pinterest free image sharing networks which index with hashtags be valued in the billions of dollars, if sharing images for free on Social Media that could potentially make YOU revenue and sales wasn’t worth it?

Listen to a PodCast interview below with Chris on TheHashTag Show
Outbox Incubator - Supporting the Next Generation of Women in STEM. #55

By Mary Carty

About Mary Carty:

Mary Carty is a creative entrepreneur. Over the past ten years she has built a startup and run digital agency, Spoiltchild. Mary is passionate about building profitable businesses whose core product or service, comes from creative practices. She is an experienced mentor and advisor with a passion for startups.

Contacting Mary Carty:

Say hi on Twitter, email, read about her latest project or connect on Linkedin

The idea for Outbox began over a conversation in the Duck and Waffle in April 2014. Little did we know then, that a year to the day, Outbox would be launched by HRH Princess Anne, fully funded by the Salesforce Foundation.

We wanted to create a place where young women would flourish; where their ideas and interest in STEM would be celebrated and supported, learning from the best minds in the industry. Trailblazers like Dame Martha Lane Fox, Dr Sue Black, Dame Steve Shirley: all imparting knowledge and inspiration.
What is Outbox?

Outbox is the first incubator for girls in STEM aged 11 to 22 in the world. The programme consisted of three weeks germination with Demo Day followed by three weeks of intensive incubation. As well as lectures from industry leaders on everything from financing and marketing to coding and presentation skills, the girls visited Bloomberg, Etsy and Goldman Sachs all while working diligently on their startups. It wasn’t all work though, we had more than 30 downtime sessions dance, drama, art and a spot of knitting!

The whole operation took place in a large house in South London with a very well stocked pantry! Food, fun, learning and collaboration was the order of our days.

115 Outbox Alumni from 6 countries and 35 startups later; we have changed the world.

What we proved this summer is Outbox is needed. There is a huge gap in the market to support young women with innovative business and startup ideas. Girls have gained confidence and skills and an incredible peer network by working and learning together. They have demonstrated that they are top class entrepreneurs and many have gained funding already.

We have big plans for Outbox and our wonderful alumni have inspired us to push harder and make it so. What an incredible summer it has been. Watch this space. We are just beginning. The future is in very safe hands.
Do you remember the days before “Entrepreneur” became an acceptable job title? I do and it wasn’t that long ago. I remember when it would be up there with pop star or spaceman. The closest examples known to our parents were the likes of Richard Branson or Sir Clive Sinclair and they seemed just as hard to emulate as flying into space.

Your choices were, become an inventor and hope that your crude garage prototype would get bought out for millions by a GE or an IBM allowing you to live off the royalties for the rest of your life etc. Run your own small business and by that I mean setting up a shop or window cleaning round perhaps.

The inventor’s stereotype was one of eccentric ways and quirky personalities who lived and breathed their invention and could see nothing other than huge success. A lot I’m sure went to financial ruin filing patents or endured grueling sessions of presenting their prototype in large corporate boardrooms full of dower faces and harsh cutting remarks.

Fast-forward to today. You never really hear of an inventor do you? You hear of engineers and entrepreneurs. The quirky and the eccentric are now an almost celebrated set of traits that are very common with many founders or software engineers. Being a nerd is the new cool I guess and being different is a better way to fit in. What was one the boardroom environment of your perspective purchaser is now the all-powerful venture capitalist conference room.

The truth is being an Entrepreneur has never been more on trend, accessible or acceptable and the way I see it the world is full of opportunity whether you are 16 or 80. But what about the next generation? As a parent I try to teach my kids that they can be whatever they want to be and that they should dream big.

The innocence and simplicity of a world without limits is summed up perfectly by my 7 year old daughter after she came up with an idea for a new product she felt would solve a problem she had. She felt pretty determined to make it happen too. The thing was, she was having bad dreams from time to time and simply wanted a device to wake
her up before it got too scary. I said “sounds great, how are you going to make it?” she said confidently and almost as if it should have been obvious to me, “Dad, it’s easy, get your old iPhone, a piece of flexible pipe and a sucker cup and stick them together”. “Run a load of wires through the flexible pipe to the sucker cup, stick it to your head and plug it in. If you’re having a bad dream the alarm sounds and wakes you up, you could even set it to give you a nice new dream to go back to sleep again”. She paused and looked at me all smug. I thought for a second and decided rather than making a joke by asking what about the red ring on your forehead going to school or something like that. I simply said, “sounds good Emma, what kind of price point were you thinking?” She said €2 Dad”. “Why” - I asked. She then said, “because that’s what I think they can afford and will happily pay”. SIMPLE. No issue about cost, logistics or anything like that and I thought wow!

Whether it’s an idea for a business, a brand name or just a way of simply doing things better. Just like listening to and encouraging our kids we have to listen to our gut. I think that gut feeling is the inner child inside us saying, “look, of course there are challenges, of course it’s not as easy as you think but if you’re determined and stay focused and retain belief, you will get there”. I also think that if you stop listening to it, eventually, it will stop trying to encourage and support you.

Lastly I always wonder what will the older you say when he or she looks back on your younger self? “Why didn’t you just give it a shot or well done for trying?”
We live in a strange and wonderful world. A world where we have, as a species, progressively adapted ourselves to our surroundings using our intellect and our stubborn refusal to be beaten back by the wilderness and elements, to survive against all odds. We have harnessed our capabilities and used our ingenuity to conquer the planet. We have created great things through art, music and science. While at the same time finding new ways of destroying ourselves and vast parts of our ecosystems and the planet as a whole.

With the ever-quickening advancements of technology in the last 150 years we have seen a growing trend of technologies coming about that have quickened the pace of life to an unthinkably fast level. We have prolonged life expectancy, which is and will be a double-edged sword as the planet becomes more crowded. We see now technologies emerging that even to someone 50 years ago would of seemed only possible in the realms of science fiction. So where does all this leave us? What is all this technology that we have developed doing for our performance as a species? Finally and most importantly are we, in creating highly advanced systems and networks of technology, making ourselves redundant in the process?

Human performance and our relationship with technology has been an area that has interested me for some time. While in university I wrote my dissertation on the claim that the human has been progressively disappearing from the arena of performance. I chose themes that were rooted in the context of musical performance in relation to the rise of the DJ and the electronic music producer. This led me on to the development of the K2S-VR, the Kinect 2 interactive synthesizer that I developed this year through my creative applications company Code Switch. My goal when developing this musical application was to subvert the traditional synthesizer experience and reinterpret the synthesis performance process through emerging technologies.

I am an advocate of technology and have been an avid science fiction fan from an early age. I can still remember watching Blade Runner with my mother when I was young, and being hypnotized by the flying police cars and biomechanical sentient humanoid. Although with the prospect of artificial intelligence being a tangible possibility in the coming years, questions must be asked and the implications for us as a species must be addressed early on.

At Cong 2015 I will be discussing human performance in the context of how
interactive technologies. With unique positioning between the music industry and the education sector Code Switch deliver forward thinking musical solutions that are easily transferrable within an educational framework. network for entrepreneurs.

Contacting Max Hastings:

You can follow Max on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or email him.

technology can be viewed both as a blessing and a curse. Areas I will address in relation to technological advancement and its implications are transhumanism and warfare, through interviews I have carried out with two journalists writing on these two subjects On one hand technology has enhanced our capabilities to astronomical heights (literally) and on the other with the growing prospect of artificial intelligences becoming a reality we are, in a way becoming instrumental in our disappearance.
In our increasingly connected world it’s becoming harder to focus. We’re constantly being distracted by the promise of a bright shiny thing at the end of the next click. I struggle to concentrate, particularly when reading blog posts or articles, and as my focus begins to ebb I find myself wondering how much more I have to read before I’ll get to the end.

Sound familiar?

We’re always on but that doesn’t mean that we’re always engaged. Digital distraction pulls our concentration away from the task at hand and can also be used to procrastinate or entertain ourselves in not so entertaining circumstances. Digital distraction is two-fold. Offline pulls us into online through vibrating, pinging smartphones, and even through our brain’s craving for connection. After we’ve attended to that first task we’re pulled further into the online world – scanning through newsfeeds, speed reading articles, managing multiple tabs, struggling to retain information, blocking out ads and draining our precious time.

If, like me, you’re over 30 you’ll be able to remember what life was like before the internet. As digital immigrants we respond most empathically to the internet because we experienced the Before and the After. There’s not many of us around, and in half a century there’ll be even less of us. We are currently experiencing what Marshall McLuhan defines as the adjustment phase, where we work to make sense of how these technological developments are affecting our personal and social lives.

Every new technology brings with it fearmongering and speculation of negative implications. A recent article in the Irish Times explored how technological devices impact our memory and recall. It could be seen as ironic that what was once a new technology, thanks to the invention of the printing press, is now warning us of the negative implications of the latest new technology. I’m sure you’ve all seen the photo showing a packed train carriage with its occupants busily holding the newspaper reading that day’s stories with the statement that this spells the end of humanity as social beings because no one is conversing. Speculators said that newspapers would spell the end of humanity of social beings. This photo is often used as an example that the same fears we have over phones killing our social skills are unfounded. It didn’t happen with newspapers so all this worrying is obviously unfounded.
But what’s wrong with comparing newspapers, or any technological development in the history of humanity for that matter, to smartphones? As Nicholas Carr points out in his book The Shallows there is one major flaw in this argument – you’re not comparing like with like. His book explores how the internet is changing how we think, read and remember. The major flaw in comparing reading newspapers to being glued to a smartphone screen, or any computerized technology, is that the one is unidirectional (output only) and the other is bidirectional (input and output).

But what if, as was pointed out by Kevin Hoffman in his article on Medium, this new behaviour of constantly scanning and tapping screens actually makes us more social? We read news online, Facebook posts, Tweets, blog posts and watch videos in order to educate ourselves about what’s happening in our society. So if technology isn’t making us antisocial what is it doing us?

Take for example texting and driving. First off we need to stop calling it this. People are doing much more than texting when they’re driving. If drivers are just texting they must be composing long, detailed texts to multiple recipients because it appears to take up a significant amount of drive time. We know this behaviour can have irreversible consequences for ourselves and others yet we still do it. Is it fueled by curiosity? We hear the vibration or ping and we just can’t help ourselves, we have to look. Are we lonely? We reach for our phones to feel connected to something or someone in the vacuum of our car. Can we contain our impulses until we reach our destination or find a safe place to pull over? The answer to this question appears to be a resounding no. It’s completely irrational, we’re willingly distracting ourselves while completing a task that demands our full attention.

Still with me?

What are we doing to our brains when we’re flicking through our social media newsfeeds? We’re looking for a diamond in the rough, a random reward that justifies all that time we’ve just spent scrolling through those not so exciting Instagram photos. Every now and again our brain resurfaces to asking what exactly we’re looking for before diving back down into the abyss. Constant connection is great. We have access to a wealth of knowledge that we never had before. But all of this information can be really overwhelming, it’s no wonder we’re getting distracted. Taking a break from our phones has benefits for our psychological wellbeing. Dr Paul D’Alton, the President of the Psychological Society of Ireland, has even called for smartphone users to digitally detox on a regular basis in order to reduce anxiety, depression and sleep deprivation.

We need to turn away from our devices and start daydreaming – that’s when our creativity shines. As Pixar founder Ed Catmull puts it in his book Creativity Inc., start paying attention to what’s in front of you. When we’re alone with our thoughts, with no distractions, we truly understand who we are. When a child says they’re bored that’s their imagination calling out to them. Let them get lost in their thoughts instead of giving them a screen to entertain or distract them. Why not stop multitasking and start daydreaming!

You’re nearly there.

As we adjust to our new technological world will we evolve to accept digital distraction as part of our everyday lives? It’s getting easier to be distracted. Just take a look at Apple watch. It’s visible at all times, sitting pretty on your wrist. How will this constant...
visible wearable impact our social interactions and already low levels of concentration? According to Sherry Turkle in her latest book Reclaiming Conversation even the presence of a phone in a social environment reduces the quality and depth of the conversations happening around it.

You got to the final paragraph, congratulations!

One final note before you go. As technology becomes ever more engrained in our day to day lives we need to consider how would be cope if something were to take our connected wonderland away? You may laugh but this is entirely possible. A storm on the surface of the sun could release a mega flare that would knockout all of the earth’s electrical systems. In other words, a Carrington Event. It’s not a question of if this will happen and more a question of when will it happen. The probability of such an event occurring in the next decade is 12% and the next two centuries 95%. The last one happened in 1859 and had devastating effects on the earth’s, at the time, infantile electrical systems. But that’s a conversation for another day.

So, answer me honestly. Are you distracted yet?
3 Simple To Use Apps For Better Life Management #59

By Pauline Sargent

Synopsis:

There are a huge amount of productivity apps promising to make you better at GTD (getting things done). But do we make them work for us and use them consistently. Unless you stick with one app you are never going to understand it or use it to its full potential. This post reviews 3 apps that are making a difference to how this writer manages some of her daily activities. The apps reviewed are AnyList, Bullet and My Fitness Pal.

4 Takeaways

1. Make your apps work for you.
2. Hopping and jumping between apps that do the same thing is a waste of time.
4. Getting small tasks done every day and using apps like the ones above to record these tasks is a great way to eat the elephant.

About Pauline Sargent:

Pauline Sargent runs Social Zavvy, a digital marketing business set up in 2011. She is a part-time lecture in Dublin Business School and is currently finishing her Masters in Digital Marketing in DCU. Pauline also set up DigiWomen in 2013 for female makers and users of tech. She loves all things to do with Hyperlocal, community activism and local politics.

There are a huge amount of productivity apps promising to make you better at GTD (getting things done). And over the years I have downloaded many of them in the hope that they will change me for the better.

And of course, I’ve ended up with tons of apps sitting on my phone and I wasn’t really using any of them consistently. In fact I was using 2 or 3 apps for the same thing and not really understanding how to stick with one and use it properly.

At the recent DigiWomen Time unConference, one of the most popular sessions was ‘all about apps’. We talked about which apps were great for tracking daily tasks and managing big projects. So, for the last few months, I have been experimenting with some of the apps cited by DigiWomen as must haves.

One of the things I really wanted to do was develop a daily workflow and I was ready to stick with the apps I had selected. I mean, every app has its pros and cons. And unless you stick with one app you are never going to understand it or use it to its full potential.

So for what it’s worth, here are my 3 chosen apps that I can say are changing how I do things.

1) ANYLIST

This is an app worth raving about. It has changed my grocery shopping habits forever. Roseanne Smith of OnlineHub was singing its praises at last year’s Congregation. And yet, I only started using it for real this September and I’m sorry that I did not start using it sooner.

AnyList makes it simple to make food and shopping lists. And best of all you can share the list with your partner, family members or room-mates. You create a list, say, for the weekly family shop once, and then you can hide or unhide items with one tap as you need them. We have over 100 items on our family shopping list.

It took some time to remember to check the app but once you get into the habit of using it, you will not look back. As soon as the list is modified AnyList sends a notification to the other people using the list. This is helpful when you’re out and about and haven’t had time to check the cupboards at home.
Another list that I am finding successful is one I created for my 14-year-old son. I know, I can hear you groan. But anyone with teenagers will know that getting them to do things around the house is a nightmare. So I created a list for him with today only, daily, and weekly categories, and lists of tasks under each one. It saves us having to ask him to do things over and over again. And better still, it stops him saying he didn’t know he had to do something or forgot. He says he doesn’t like it but secretly I know he likes ticking the items off. And it has cut down on the drama around household jobs.

There are so many uses for AnyList, I think my head will explode. Xmas lists. Holiday lists. Fun things to do lists. Bucket lists. I could go on. I loved it so much, we upgraded to get some of the pro features at a cost of $11.99 per year for the family. Download it today. I can guarantee it will change your list writing habits forever.

2) Bullet

So, managing my finances has never been my strongest point. Looking after cash flow on a daily basis is something that I tend to avoid as much as possible. Deciding to use the Bullet accounting software app has helped improve my receipt management.

Instead of stuffing my receipts into an envelope and trying to sort them out at the end of the year, I now take a photo of each receipt everyday using the Bullet app. Every evening I then upload the receipts into the Bullet accounting system. It takes less than 5 minutes.
Bullet’s focus is on simplicity, consistency and usefulness. And for me it is all these. Having used other accounting systems in the past, this app is for me, the most effective.

Bullet helps keep you up to date with logging your finances. I have learnt from bitter past experience that this is vital for keeping your business going. Using the Bullet app has helped me understand my daily expenditure better. And most importantly, it has given me a better interest in tracking and monitoring my cash flow. Which in turn is making me better at generating sales.

3) My Fitness Pal

These days there are 100s of apps out there helping us to track and improve our fitness. And the My Fitness Pal app is one that I will be using forever. My husband used it last year consistently for 9 months to track his daily eating and fitness habits. And went on to lose over 3 stone.

What makes My Fitness Pal so good is that it remembers what you eat the most often. So you are not always having to enter in the calories. And the absolute best bit is being able to scan the products using the barcode on the packet. It then adds the calorie details automatically.

Best of all, food data is crowd sourced through the My Fitness Pal community. And a lot of them are fanatics about what is in our food which is great. Because that way, you are not relying on the food producers who sometimes have confusing, even slightly misleading information on their labels.

It only takes a few minutes after each meal, or before it, to log what you are eating. And then you get a nice little graph at the end of the week telling you how you are progressing.

So, I guess for me, the big lesson is to pick one app for one task and stick with it. Hopping and jumping between apps that do the same thing is a waste of time.

We all want to be more productive. And technology can help us do that if we are smart about how and what we use. Getting small tasks done every day and using apps like the ones above to record these tasks is a great way to eat the elephant.

I know I feel better and more focused when I use the apps consistently. There are less arguments with the teenager. My grocery shopping is so much easier to manage now. There is not that sense of dread about my accounts anymore. And well, hopefully next year I will be reporting back as a slimmer and fitter person.

What about you what apps are making a difference to how you do things? And why?
How our reality is already being augmented. #60

By Jimmy Healy

Synopsis:

Augmented Reality is still a mystery to most people but it is likely to become an area of increased digital activity in the years to come. This blog post looks at some well known examples of how augmented reality is already being used, showcasing the capabilities it offers and outlining some of the developments we can expect to see in our lives in the months and years to come.

4 Takeaways

1. Augmented reality generally involves overlaying digital information on a real world setting.
2. The value of the AR market is forecast to reach $120 billion by 2020.
3. The IKEA AR app was downloaded 8.5 million times in its first year and received 42 million visits.
4. Blippar, which is a visual recognition AR app and has been used by companies including Coca-Cola, Heineken, Pepsi and Heinz has been downloaded by more than 50 million people.

About Jimmy Healy:

Jimmy Healy is Vice President with multinational consulting firm Teneo. With a background in a range of communications and public affairs roles, Jimmy has worked with major multinationals, state bodies and publicly traded companies. He has also acted as communications advisor to the Irish Government. Immediately prior to joining Teneo he headed up the communications, public

You’ve probably heard lots of talk about it, but for a lot of people augmented reality (AR) is still a mysterious topic to many. Regularly confused with virtual reality (VR), the two share some characteristics but are different in many ways. Generally speaking, perhaps the best way of distinguishing AR from its virtual brother, is that augmented reality uses digital information overlaying a real world setting, while in VR the environment is entirely created via computers.

VR seems to be attracting a lot of focus at the moment, with the release of the Oculus Rift scheduled to take place in the first quarter of next year and Google Cardboard becoming more and more popular. But for all the attention that virtual reality is gaining, augmented reality is expected to become a larger market in the years to come.

According to AR/VR, mobile and game advisory company Digi-Capital, the forecasted combined value of the Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality markets will reach $150 billion by 2020. Of that market, Augmented Reality is likely to represent 80% with a value of $120 billion compared to virtual reality’s $30 billion.

While those numbers are vast, the timeline involved seems far away. But augmented reality is already being used in the modern world and utilised in a range of different ways. Here are some examples of AR and how it is already in general use.

IKEA Catalogues

One of the most widely known examples of AR use has been in the IKEA catalogues. Since they published their 2013 catalogue, IKEA have been allowing potential customers to use augmented reality to see what a piece of furniture might look like in any given room. All they have to do is download the IKEA app, place a hard copy of the catalogue where they want to see the piece of furniture, scan the catalogue with the app and they can superimpose the piece of furniture they want in true to life size. This technique also allows people to look at the furniture from different angles and try out various colours. The app proved very successful, attracting approximately 8.5 million downloads in its first year and 42 million visits and by October 2013 they had placed more than 600,000 3D augmented furniture models in people’s homes.
affairs and marketing activities for the Irish construction industry, successfully guiding their recovery post the Irish recession. Jimmy is also undertaking further education and research in digital marketing with a specific focus on augmented reality.

Contacting Jimmy Healy:

You can contact Jimmy by email.

The IKEA AR app

Blippar

Blippar is an app that uses image recognition to provide AR content. Probably one of the best known AR apps, it already claims to have more than 50 million users worldwide. Blippar has already been utilised by a number of well known brands in Ireland and Europe – eg. the Argos catalogue, Heineken bottles, Coca-Cola and separately Pepsi cans, Heinz Ketchup and Maybelline cosmetics.

Coca-Cola used Blippar to turn their products into Spotify jukeboxes
A Heinz Tomato Ketchup bottle comes to augmented life through Blippar

Yihaodian

Yihaodian are China’s largest online grocer. They have been using augmented reality to bring its products to people where they live and work, without even using a store. They have been utilising approximately 1,000 ‘virtual’ stores in parking lots, parks and near famous landmarks. The stores are completely invisible unless you use the Yihaodian app. But once you do you can see a whole grocery store on your screen – allowing you walk aisle by aisle picking out your shopping and they getting them delivered to your home.

American Apparel

The US clothing store is using augmented reality to help drive and enhance sales. Customers are encouraged to use the app while in store. They can then scan products to see how they would look in different colours. The app also provides customer reviews and other product details relating to these products. They can even buy the
item online via the app – meaning if the right size or colour isn’t in store the business will not miss out on the sale.

Using the American Apparel app in store

Walgreens

Walgreens, the American equivalent of Boots, are providing their customers with AR enabled tablets as they go around the store. As customers view aisles and shelves through the tablets, items pop out in front of them, highlighting items on sale or offering special reward points. The tablets also allow customers to search for a product of choice and a 3D arrow will appear guiding them to the correct location in the store.

An image from the Walgreens AR tablets available to customers

iTagged

This Irish company combines augmented reality with social media. Using holographic tags which are tied to specific places or events, people can share photos, videos and comments with the world all around them. Just by looking through the app on your smartphone or tablet you can see posts tied to the world around you. For example if you take a look at what has been iTagged in Cong you’ll already see a couple of posts left by a certain ‘eoinken’.
Conclusion

These are just a few small examples of how augmented reality is already impacting on the world. As these practices gain traction and as further technological advancement is made, it seems only a matter of time before most people's world become augmented.
Post-Consumerist Society: Life in the New Digital Age #61

By Damian Costello

Synopsis:

Society is changing and in a Post-Consumerist Society, the elites will no longer hold the monopoly on the ‘Knowledge is Power’ truism, as the gap between the knowing and the ignorant shrinks.

4 Takeaways

1. Biggest transformation in history is fast approaching.
2. 2020s will see a global change for the good.
3. Digitisation will be the cornerstone of a new future.
4. Genuine contributors more fairly rewarded.

About Damian Costello:

Damian Costello is Managing Partner in Disruption Strategy Consultancy Decode Innovation. Damian has more than 20 years’ consulting experience, having delivered successful strategy, product and service breakthroughs in Ireland, Europe, North America and Asia.

Damian has worked with leaders from multi-nationals to start-ups across the Energy, Medical Device, Pharmaceutical, Retail and ICT sectors. A natural storyteller, he is passionate about the Ireland’s potential to become a leader in the next wave of global economic prosperity.

Contacting Damian Costello:

You can see Damians work on Society is fast approaching the biggest transformation in history. A combination of the digitisation of everything and a reimagining of capitalism will create a more evolved ‘Post-Consumerist’ society.

My work has seen me on the front line of such shifts as; the original dotcom bubble, the emergence of biopharmaceuticals, the development of the touchscreen and the impact of Generation Y on the workplace, but this time it is different. This time, we are facing the mother of all ‘once in a life’ time transformations.

The ‘Once in a Lifetime’ Transformation.

In 1997 in their seminal work on generations The Fourth Turning, the William Strauss and Neil Howe described a societal dynamic that ‘turned over’ every four generations or approximately every 80 years. They claim that after a predictable period of war and austerity, a new world order emerges. Little could they have imagined, back then as the dial up internet was just kicking off, the impact and influence that digital technologies would have on this historic transformation.

Strauss and Howe identified 80 year cycles in Anglo-American Society going back over 500 years. Each occurrence sees a proportion of the masses win concessions from the elites. In the 1780s the American War of Independence brought democracy to land owners at least. In the 1860s the American Civil War brought an end to the concept of slavery in polite society at least. In the 1940s, the aftermath of World War 2 saw the end of colonialism in Western Society. This sequence suggests that in the 2020s something global and fundamentally good is going to happen.

A lot has changed since 1997. Today we know now that the Internet of Things and its associated Cloud-based data handling will be the cornerstone of this new future. The digital technologies that currently record and monitor an analogue world will soon create and control, large tracts of the physical world in the same manner as the Internet controls music, books, newspapers, video and all the easily ‘digitise-able’ industries it encountered so far.

Why is this ‘once in a lifetime’ transition likely to be the biggest in history.

Historically society has organised itself into hierarchical pyramids, with an elite at the
top and slaves or slaves to the system at the bottom. Up until the shift in the 1860s, inherited monarchies held sway. Some were tempered by a duty to their subjects and some by the lack of intelligence that entitlement permitted at the top. In the United States, in the mid-19th Century an elite emerged that was not tempered in any way. The latest iteration of this elite now presides over the biggest gap between rich and poor in history. If society is to improve in the 2020s, it will be because this injustice has been redressed.

Why might this happen and why would the pioneers of the digital society be so instrumental? If the Internet, and its even more potent progeny the Mobile Internet, has achieved one thing it is that the gap between the knowing and the ignorant has never been smaller. In a Post-Consumerist Society, the elites will no longer hold the monopoly on the ‘Knowledge is Power’ truism. The elites won't go away in one cycle, they still control most of the capital in the system, but the days of society accepting their imposed doctrine without question and without viable alternatives are almost over.

Who do you want to be in this new world order? What do you hope to contribute? If you are a genuine contributor the system is likely to reward you more fairly that any system in history.
Banks don’t get IT! #62

By Mark Leydon

Synopsis:
Retail Banks appear to have lost their way... In a world that is going more digital every day, Banks can’t keep up. Soon money will be in a purely digital form. It will be transferred anywhere on earth as fast as the Internet allows. However Banks still shut down their Core systems from 6 o’clock in the evening, running thousands of batches, so as to produce an accurate financial position by 8 o’clock the following morning.

FinTech disruptors are nibbling at their heels. Banks must react if they are to survive. They have to upgrade their organisational capability, start hiring technology talent and embrace failure.

4 Takeaways

1. Retail Banks have found themselves in a technology driven industry, but without the organisational capability to deliver anything in a timely fashion.
2. Legacy Bank systems are so complex, and brittle, not because of what they do, but because they evolved rather than being designed.
3. Banks really struggle to operate in our real-time world, the world that FinTech startups thrive in.
4. There is hope. Banks need to build their technology capability, and adopt the development techniques of their younger competitors.

About Mark Leydon:
An Electronic Engineer by training, working mainly in software these
days. Currently ‘hacking’ a small, challenger bank out of a very large, traditional bank.

**Contacting Mark Leyden:**

You can connect with Mark on LinkedIn and Twitter.

to play catchup with technology.

Why is this a problem? Complexity increases, while quality of communication decreases. If Core maintains the ‘real’ position of the bank, and only presents this the next morning, how for example do you transfer money instantly from one account to another? The only solution is to get one service to communicate directly with another, outside of Core. This leads to multiple financial positions for the Bank which need to be resolved during the batch process overnight.

As the complexity of services around Core increases, the possibility of error also increases. We have seen Bank wide technology failures with increasing regularity over recent years. Banks, contrary to their internal view, do not have overly complex, fault tolerant systems.

Four independently developed computer systems, running four separate software systems, all voting to produce a consensus as to what to do next, allow the Airbus to fly by wire. No-one would fly if the pilot apologised to passengers because of a problem with a software update! The new Boeing 787 will produce 0.5TB of data for every flight. William Hill process 464 bets per second, 5M price changes, and 160TB of data per day. Facebook process 4.5 billion ‘likes’ and 968 million logons a day. Every 60 seconds on Facebook, 510 comments are posted, 293,000 statuses are updated, and 136,000 photos are uploaded. And all of this is available 24/7/365. It is companies such as these that Banks need to compare themselves against.

Banks have historically viewed their technology and IT services purely as an expense of doing business. In the recent past, many have outsourced these services to many of the ‘big four’ consultancy companies. This has proved to be a big mistake. Yes, overheads have been reduced - but at what cost? Agility has been lost, with a corresponding increase in bureaucracy. But more than anything else, strategic technological capability has now moved into external companies hands. Why would it be in the interest of any of the ‘big four’ to challenge the existing way of doing business?

Banks are regulated. Legally. With fines and prison if it goes wrong. Internet companies, in general, don’t have to worry about a similar framework. This regulation, coupled with bureaucracy, increases the organisational fear of failure. Banks, in general, don’t try something to see how it will work out. They prefer months of testing with consumer groups, ask the regulator, look to see what the competition is doing, and perhaps ask some of the ‘big four’ for advice.

Money will soon no longer exist in any physical form. Governments are increasingly pushing people towards electronic forms of payment. Convenience will make customers adopt payments through their phone or watch. All of this electronic money will be collected, processed and distributed by technology. Banks will become technology driven companies. It is already possible to transfer ‘value’ from one location to any other on Earth in less than 5 seconds - without requiring a Bank.

So, is there hope for the industry? There are many startups attempting to build a new Bank, and they are following the development methods used by the leading Internet companies. They have the advantage of no legacy technologies to support, but they do not have the customers. And people are notoriously slow to move their bank accounts. So, yes, there is hope. But Banks will have to learn a new way of delivering services to their customer… and fast.
Bank executives will have to become more technologically aware. Organisational capability will have to be radically improved to allow modern Banks to deliver services that customers now take for granted elsewhere. They will have to attract people with non-financial experience into their organisations. Simply hiring more IT staff is not the solution. Banks need to hire highly skilled technologists, architect a new competitive Core banking system with a DevOps approach to service delivery, embrace failure as a means of natural selection and provide APIs to attract other companies to collaborate in delivering the solutions their customers expect.
When I was in primary school, like most children I had a piggy bank. I got excited about saving, it gave me great joy to drop my coins into the slot. I’d dream of things to spend the money on once I’d filled it to the top.

One day my very intelligent best friend came by to play. She saw me lusting after a toy and suggested I stopped saving and spent my money on that toy now.

‘Oh no’ I said ‘I want to wait until the piggy bank is completely full up’

‘Well then’ she said ‘just go to the bank and get them to change it all up for 1p coins, they’ll fill it up.’ I sat there aghast. I couldn’t do that, it would be cheating wouldn’t it?

I kept my piggy bank the way I always had. I knew changing up the money to coppers wouldn’t satisfy me, I’d be cheating my way to my goal. Recently I realised that all the years I’ve been blogging I’ve been cheating myself. I’ve been collecting coppers instead of euros.

Over the years I’ve told people the numbers don’t matter. Twitter followers don’t matter, Facebook likes don’t matter, your Klout score is irrelevant. I’ve said all this whilst closely following my own vanity stats, whilst secretly feeling smug as I saw them grow. I knew they weren’t supposed to count but somehow in my heart they still did.

I’m not cured but I’ve stopped believing, something has changed. It happened when I started getting geeky about stats. I decided it was time to stop marketing in the dark and started to measure with intent.

The first site I analysed was We Teach Social, the business I run with business partner Lorna Sixsmith. I’d never really delved into our stats there. The business was bringing in an income and our website stats were small enough not to interest me. I’d been playing with Facebook ads for the site and had added some landing pages. I needed to know if the work I was putting in was effective so I started digging into the stats.

I discovered that the landing pages were doing well. I discovered that some of the blog posts we wrote were resulting in sales. I discovered that traffic coming from Lorna & my individual sites were driving sales. I discovered that we weren’t converting from our Facebook ads. I discovered that our email newsletter was singly the best sales tool we had.
This was great news, that site, with its tiny monthly visitor score was working.

It’s easy to look at the statistics in isolation, but there was more to it than that. The site was also working because of the years Lorna and myself had spent building our personal reputations. We make sales as a result of traffic that comes from our existing sites: Write on Track & Spiderworking.

Now I can recognise this. I looked beyond the headline vanity stats and discovered the site was working. Now I know why I can make sure we focus our efforts in the right places. To start with:

1. Monthly emails (every month, we’ve been slack in the past)
2. Better CTA’s from our own blogs and sites

Today I can still recite vanity stats for my own site and for We Teach Social but it doesn’t feel good anymore. I’ve changed, I now know and more importantly, BELIEVE that they aren’t important. I know where to focus my time for better results. I’ve changed all my coppers up for euros and although my piggy bank isn’t quite as full the contents are more valuable.

So it’s now with confidence and with true belief I can re-share the advice I’ve been paying lip service to for years:

1. Know what you want to achieve from your blog/website
2. Identify the metrics that will help you measure the success of your goals
3. Build your content strategy around these goals and metrics
4. Constantly analyse your success to identify where you need to concentrate your time and money

On a side note I’ve started a Podcast to share the journey I’m taking with my own blog as I strive to improve it. You can listen here or subscribe on iTunes.
I started to write this blog, diligently, in early September. Having a title in mind and fresh from reading Jon Ronson’s latest book, “You’ve Been Publicly Shamed”, I had a pretty good idea of what I wanted to write about. The world has changed dramatically since.

The book includes a story of two individuals that attracted worldwide attention because of a distasteful tweet – Justine Sacco (Figure 1) and a tongue in cheek image – Lindsey Stone (Figure 2). They may have said/done the wrong thing, but their actions weren’t malicious or didn’t cause one death, yet they have had their lives threatened and reputations utterly destroyed.

Figure 1 “That Tweet” by Justine Sacco

Figure 2 Lindsey Stone at Arlington Cemetery

Synopsis:

The online world is our oyster. We feel that we are empowered with the information and knowledge available online. Mass media may have had a stronghold on the information we were fed pre WWW, something that we revolted against with the new frontiers of the WWW.

However, in recent years, the subtleties of various search engines and social platforms “helping us” by only showing us the content that is relative to us is creating a new information vacuum. Is personalisation and filtering feeding our own biases and affirming our beliefs?

4 Takeaways

1. Personalisation and filtering comes at a price.
2. Dig deeper to challenge your beliefs and biases.
3. People that say/do stupid things online don’t deserve a burning at the stake.
4. “You’ve Been Publicly Shamed” is a great read!

About Sharon Boyle:

Sharon Boyle is a Lecturer in GMIT Mayo Campus. She lectures in digital media, eBusiness, and databases. She was part of the development team for the campus’ new BSc. (Hons) in Digital Media & Society which examines the impact digital media technologies are having on society.
At the time I was mystified at how people that had made (major) bloopers on social media could have such international hatred poured upon them and their lives effectively destroyed. Meanwhile, innocent people were dying in plastic boats while trying to escape extreme violence and tyranny, and the same politically correct mob didn’t seem to have much outrage to express at this unfolding tragedy.

Then it happened, one image of one tragic death in the midst of thousands of deaths, and the world was ready to listen, and react. A small body that washed up on a Turkish beach lit up social media overnight and suddenly the world was ready to “like and share”. Why did it take this image to make people understand the harsh reality of what was happening?

The positive side of igniting the mob like this is how effective it can be in pressuring governments to act – fast. Everyone is afraid of the mob. CEO’s, celebrities and politicians are all terrified of that “faux pas” they may utter (or tweet) that could bring the mob’s ire upon them.

In the last 10 years, technology has made the world seem smaller, borders disappear and make vast amounts of information easily available. In this ever connected world, we feel empowered, we can express our feelings and outrage and feel validated when others mirror or respond to our outpourings.

Google makes us feel like we can query the world of information, but how accurate is its response? When we type in our search, we are goal orientated, how valid the responses are isn’t really a consideration. We all know that Facebook unashamedly filters our newsfeed, but, Google wouldn’t lie to us...or would it?

If we take our blinkers off and dig a little deeper, the realisation may be that many people don’t want to know about “the world of information”, and aren’t on a quest for enlightenment – they want to validate their world, their beliefs, their passions and they want to find information that affirms rather than enlightens.

There is always a conflict for me between the convenience of personalisation and the filtering of my online world. If our beliefs aren’t challenged, how can we grow and extend our horizons? How can we escape being sucked into the mob and answering the call to a public flaying? I know I’m often guilty of being the bystander – not wishing to get involved because the angry mob might turn on me if I tell them to “cop on”, unsure if anyone else would come to my rescue.

Friday the 13th of November changed our world in a swift and brutal way. As dramatically as the image on the Turkish beach caused outcry to help the Syrian refugees, the social tide turned to demand borders to be put up, many calling for no more refugees to be accepted because of the risk that one ISIL radical might cause an international crisis.

Naivety is as the heart of this reaction. Humans want to feel safe, it is in our nature to follow the path or people that validate our biases and, above all, make us feel safe. The problem is that puppet masters understand this and use it to manipulate mob sentiment.

As a technologist, I embrace big data, analytics, cloud, social platforms. But as a human, I’m fearful of the dependency, exploitation and manipulation that can spring from these technologies. We are fast approaching a point where we are utterly reliant on
these technologies in our everyday lives.

One of my muses in the 90’s was Dilbert (Scott Adams). Working in corporate America, the comic strips were cathartic. “The Dilbert Principle” (1996) was written before social media and Google rocked our world. This excerpt (Figure 3) gets the last word:

Once we had printing presses, we were pretty much doomed. Because then, every time a new smart deviant came up with a good idea, it would get written down and shared. Every good idea could be built upon. Civilization exploded. Technology was born. The complexity of life increased geometrically. Everything got bigger and better. Except our brains.

Figure 3 The Dilbert Principle, Scott Adams

References:

So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed, Jon Ronson (2015).

Work Local. Deliver Global. #65

By Clodagh Barry

Synopsis:

The planning and the success of our rural towns as functioning 21st century towns with a vibrant & thriving enterprise & population is in our hands. This should be a central tenant of our local & county planning activity at this time. The future for Cong, Headford and other modern rural towns will develop and progress as motorways and broadband is enhanced. In the meantime, we need more of ‘The Hub in Headford’ to take an economic role in each town at this transformative time. The Hubs could work towards our future economic performance, economic sustainability, job growth & population retention in our town. These modern rural towns needs to stand up and take their place locally and then at the county & regional economic planning discussions.

4 Takeaways

1. Modern Rural Ireland is in our hands, let us do this.
2. Work Local, Deliver Global.
3. Economic growth requires a modern rural network of towns in order to deliver sustained, economic growth that offers a quality of living.
4. 4th Take away – your own perspective.

About Clodagh Barry:

Clodagh Barry specialises in entrepreneurship and innovation and is employed in the Research Office in NUI Galway. Clodagh’s campus role involves delivering strategic initiatives to the research community as well as having founded The Hub.

Balanced economic development is strongly connected to a place and dependent on being connected to a successful place. Galway City is a recognised successful micro city. This success of Galway city is connected to and enabled by the hinterland. It is my view that our city & county economies are interwoven. The Teagasc 2014 Rural Towns Index, which ranked 302 towns in Ireland, gave a comparative measure of a town’s success based on an employment/net migration metric. It revealed a strongly uneven picture of success amongst the towns proximate to Galway City. However, Galway City is supported by a diverse set of towns within a radius of twenty miles, which have the potential to or which are already – providing critical infrastructure, which presents the opportunity for sustainable coordinated county wide growth.

In July 2014, I set out to open up an enterprise centre in Headford town. Over ten years ago and in fighting the rising house prices, we found ourselves living in the hinterland of Headford. We had yet to discover that our blind good luck set us in a true hidden gem, which never fails to excite a young family of inquisitive minds that seeks out any opportunity to explore. The next challenge is staying in residence. Traffic passes through the town on the way to the metro centres, retail outlets continue to close, decent broadband is a local joke, unemployment & opportunity pass by along with the tourists…. Stop. Headford and every rural town deserves more.

The Hub opened in January 2015. The Hub promotes enterprise & opportunity to the community as well as providing professional office work space, supported by decent broadband in Headford. In addition, The Hub provides a professional meeting & training rooms, relevant events, networking and mentoring in Headford.

We plan to grow and develop the activities and opportunities for The Hub. Just this year we are working with Presentation College Headford, Bank of Ireland and Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre to deliver the first student enterprise competition. Following on from inspiration found at #Cong2014 I worked with some techies to test the waters with an ‘Hour of Code’ event in December 2014 - Coder
& leading **EXPLORE**, a campus innovation programme. Clodagh has both industry and academic experience and a background in Sales & Marketing. She has enabled a number of Irish companies to secure their place in the international market place. In addition she has a track record in the entrepreneurial arena, which has created a legacy of successful start-ups in NUI Galway as well as in Galway city and county. Most recently Clodagh’s innovation programme, EXPLORE has delivered 80 new projects, had 500 participants, engaged directly with over 12,000 school children as well as securing over €250,000 in funding.

Clodagh is Founder and Chairperson of **The Hub** in Headford, whereby she led an initiative to open an enterprise centre in Headford in 2015. This enterprise centre is now at full occupancy with a decent broadband service. Clodagh is also a SCCUL Mentor & this year Clodagh was invited to become a member of the Galway Chamber & the Atlantic Economic Corridor economic working groups.

**Contacting Clodagh Barry:**

You can contact Clodagh by [email](mailto:). Dojo is now underway since January 2015. The Hub has facilitated a communal kitchen in Headford food group as well as a town tourism group. As the economic tide is now reported to be turning nationally, this is an opportunity to plan for the future of the town, the population and the physical landscape that will secure the future for this modern, rural town, its landscape and its population.

The planning and the success of Headford as a 21st century functioning town with a vibrant & thriving enterprise & population is the focus of our planning activity at this time. The future for ourselves and other modern rural towns will develop and progress as motorways and broadband is enhanced. The Hub in Headford intends to take an economic role in this transformative time. We are now working towards our future economic performance, economic sustainability, job growth & population retention in our town.

The Hub is a dynamic workspace and an opportunity for professionals, entrepreneurs & students to exchange experiences, ideas, and avail of support and training in North Galway. The Hub sets out to co-work and co-operate. To date we have engaged with similar enterprise centres, networked with government and local agencies in order to bring vibrancy and long-term economic growth to our town and submitted on local policy paper opportunities.

Modern rural towns are a central critical cog in future sustainable infrastructure. To sustain a town’s purpose in a modern society, we must promote the opportunity to ‘Work Local and Deliver Global.’
The Power of the Dark Side: What is Dark Social Media & Why Does it Matter? #66
By Ruairi Kavanagh

Synopsis:
Do we have the history of the web wrong? That’s what one commentator argued in 2012 when he provided some insights into the massive influence which older, ‘darker’ methods of social sharing had on modern analytical tools. So, is dark social to more social of social media? If so, is sharing not something we have always done, and perhaps the questions could be asked, did we use to do it better?

4 Takeaways

1. The real birth of ‘social’ media occurred when people spent far more time thinking about what others might actually find interesting.
2. Chat rooms, (ICQ, AOL) were the incubators for content sharing. It was a lot more personal back then, just text and type, no video calls, mass sharing or GIFs!
3. There’s always a large segment of ‘unknown’ in anyone’s data analytics, a lot of this can demonstrably be assigned to ‘dark’ social.
4. How to try and harness it? Link shortening and branded URL’s which track clickbacks, separate from web analytics.
5. Dark Social drives fewer clickbacks than mass social sharing, due to volume, so are there marketing implications?

About Ruairi Kavanagh:
Ruairi Kavanagh is a journalist, author and media relations specialist, with particular previous experience in relation to military and law enforcement,

What is ‘Dark’ Social Media?
(Brief summary of Prezi file, embedded below or view online)

The term Dark Social was coined by Alexis C.Madrigal, tech editor at Atlantic.com, in 2012, to refer to web traffic that comes from outside sources that web analytics are not able to track.

Some facts about ‘Dark’ Social....

Dark Social is when someone shares content or a link by copying and pasting into communications such as emails, instant messages and forum posts.

Most consumers share content online. 84% of people share content online globally.

A large percentage of consumers only share content via Dark Social. Globally, 32% of people who share content online will only share via Dark Social.

The parents of today’s social media, applications like:

• ICQ
• AOL Messenger
• Windows Messenger

The web has been social for a lot longer than today’s social media giants would have us think....

‘Dark’ Social = ‘direct or ‘typed/bookmarked’ traffic

This very rarely means that someone went to the trouble of typing, frequently long, URL’s into browsers.

No, the root is far more often a link that was shared by chat room, or via forum or email....old school social media.
public affairs and the medical/emergency response sectors. Currently he is editor of gradireland.com and the gradireland range of print products. The undisputed leader in terms of graduate information and advice, gradireland.com has over 120,000 registered users and on average, has over 5.5 million page views per year. In addition, gradireland also run sector leading events and competitions, such as the National Student Challenge, which combines online psychometric testing with a live-event for finalists.

Contacting Ruairi Kavanagh:

You can follow Ruairi on the Grad Ireland main Website, Grad Ireland Competition site or their Blog. You can like their Facebook page or follow them on Twitter. You can also email Ruairi.

So, if your social media ‘optimisation’ is purely for the traditional SM channels such as Twitter and Facebook, Pinterest etc....

There’s a large ‘black hole’ of direct or dark traffic in your analytics.

How do you shed light on the dark?

Shortened and branded URL Sharing, which offers audience analytics on clickbacks.

Clickback=Someone clicking on a shared link

When done properly, with the right product (Bitly and Po.st for example), this can lead to very strong segmentation and activation, dependent on the sector. Branded URL’s particularly strong in sport and fashion and tech for example.

Best ways to use/incorporate shortened URL’s include:

- Blog posts
- Embedded in youtube/vimeo content
- QR Codes
- SMS
- Email signatures
- Email campaigns

Is ‘Dark’ Social the most social of social media?

It requires more effort to share, and is likely shared with a more directly relevant audience.

We have always shared content. FB, Twitter etc have just allowed us to personalise it and ‘brand it’

Two quotes from the originator of the phrase ‘Dark’ Social:

“I think there are some philosophical changes that we should consider in light of this data. While it’s true that sharing came to the web’s technical infrastructure in the 2000s, the behaviors that we’re now all familiar with on the large social networks was present long before they existed, and persists despite Facebook’s eight years (in 2012) on the web. The history of the web, as we generally conceive it, needs to consider technologies that were outside the technical envelope of “webness.” People layered communication technologies easily and built functioning social networks with most of the capabilities of the web 2.0 sites in semi-private and without the structure of the current sites.” Alex Madrigal, Atlantic Contributing Editor

“If what I’m saying is true, then the tradeoffs we make on social networks is not the one that we’re told we’re making. We’re not giving our personal data in exchange for the ability to share links with friends. Massive numbers of people -- a larger set than exists on any social network -- already do that outside the social networks. Rather, we’re exchanging our personal data in exchange for the ability to publish and archive a record of our sharing. That may be a transaction you want to make, but it might not be the one you’ve been told you made.” Alex Madrigal, Contributing Editor, Atlantic
Manufacturing has evolved over the last two centuries where we have come from the industrial revolution based on mechanical production and steam power through the 2nd revolution with the use of electricity to the 3rd revolution based on electronics and IT to today based on Cyber Physical systems. This new era will see transformational changes to not only how manufacturing is carried out with more robots and less humans but to completely new radical business models that will see some traditional manufacturing businesses disappear. For the first time ever with the low cost pervasive availability of powerful computer platforms, companies will be able to bring connectivity to the manufacturing floor like never before.

In Ireland this is known as Factory 4.0. It is about Connectivity & Data sharing between every entity that has a role in the Manufacture, Sale and Use of a Product – Suppliers, Manufacturers, Equipment, Systems, People - in an all-encompassing ‘Internet of Things’. Factory 4.0 is also referred to as Industry 4.0 (Germany), Manufacturing 2025 (China), and Manufacturing 4.0 (US)

Factory 4.0 readiness is required to meet new customer demands via the Internet of Things (IOT) and Supply Chain Traceability requirements.

Manufacturers must adopt a more agile approach to product demands and embrace new technologies like:

- Collaborative Robotics
- Augmented Reality
- Automated Visual Inspection Systems

if they want to survive and grow in this new era.

Challenges for industries are growing world wide. Increased productivity and cost competitiveness is becoming more challenging. Increased energy and resource efficiency is being mandated more by customers. Enhanced flexibility is now an even bigger requirement with volatile markets, high productivity demands and individualised mass production. A world with more shorter innovation cycles, more complex products, and larger data volume are becoming more and more a reality for manufacturers. This new world has been enabled through the pervasive and low cost availability of computer platforms.
In order to ensure manufacturers in Ireland protect and grow their business, they need to connect and understand this inflection point as it transforms their world. Organisations like Irish Manufacturing Research in partnership with Manufacturers on the island of Ireland are asking this question. Serious efforts are going in to try build leading edge SOA and beyond pilot manufacturing lines that showcase the possibilities manufacturing accounts for 22% of GDP.

Source: EDN.com
How do I know anymore? Online comments sections and a paralysis of opinion. #68

By John Magee

Synopsis:

The diversity of perspectives presented in the comments sections of online newspaper articles and social media fora have the impact of making us question our own previously held views and perspectives.

4 Takeaways

1. Online comments sections present us with a diversity of perspectives we might not otherwise be exposed to.
2. These perspectives are afforded equal status, and lead to an undermining of our own opinions.
3. We don't know how or who to trust online.
4. There is a lesson here in terms of how we ever formed an opinion - we're reminded that all of our opinions are an amalgam of others perspectives.

About John Magee:

John Magee is Acting Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Mayo. The LEO is the first stop shop for enterprise support targeted at micro businesses. The LEO is part of Mayo County Council and plays a key role in promoting enterprise development and a culture of entrepreneurship at the local level.

Mayo County Council under the Mayo.ie channel is delighted to be able to support Congregation and we're thrilled to welcome attendees to beautiful Co Mayo, the Heartbeat of the Wild Atlantic Way. Via a wide range of programmes and initiatives we are working hard to position Mayo

So, how do I form an opinion now

What is it about those comments sections you get at the bottom of an online newspaper or social media article? You know how it goes… you’ve just read a considered opinion piece on how to deal with ISIS or the latest on the Mayo football / Galway hurling managerial crises or maybe something on Mr Donald Trump (anyone?) and there they are. Starting as a trickle, they can morph into many hundreds of comments from anyone with a smartphone or keyboard to hand.

One of the most fascinating aspects of them is the sheer diversity of perspectives that appear. Who knew there were such passionate and stridently held perspectives in cyberspace? Who knew there were so many people with the time and inclination to share their views? Is this their chance to be heard?

These fora open up many topics for debate and discussion, but one that interests me in particular is that odd feeling that in some way being presented with this huge diversity of perspectives leads to me losing some sense of certainty or clarity on my own previously-held positions. Has anyone else ever felt this sense of crumbling? You read a couple of dozen posts and in doing so are presented with diametrically opposed views and somehow feel yourself getting pulled in different directions… almost agreeing with both. Or maybe it’s simply getting seduced by the author’s capacity to articulate such a cogently argued perspective.

So who do we trust now for a balanced or nuanced perspective? We used to trust books as we felt they represented the conclusion of something, they were the ‘result’ of a research process, and they shaped our opinions in a real way. They had a credibility that is now more elusive and had a validity of some sort, as otherwise they wouldn't have made it to mainstream libraries. The books are still there of course, but I'm wondering whether anyone is reading them anymore.

The incredible diversity of perspectives we witness seem almost to have the effect of inducing a paralysis of sorts – something akin to the ‘tyranny of choice’ concept. Obviously there are issues around the moderation of comments sections given that many keyboard warriors (and legal departments) offer little or nothing by way of right of reply or room for debate. Notwithstanding moderation concerns, though, this uncensored avalanche of perspective provides a bewildering range of reasons to doubt oneself.
as a location for investment, world
class business development and as
place where ideas are explored and
celebrated.

Contacting John Magee:

You can contact John by email or
connect with him on Twitter.

Given that these comments sections allow a broader range of perspectives to reach
us than might otherwise be the case in terms of what we’d expect to find via the usual
channels that inform us of what is happening in the world and how to feel about it,
they also provoke a crisis of confidence in terms of how I actually formed any previous
opinion. In so doing they’ve often led me into a warren of doubt as to what I think
about almost anything. This crumbling affords me the opportunity to question how
I was allowing my own opinions to form. Were they ‘uninformed’ previously or was it
simply that I was unaware as to how I was being influenced

Has anyone a template as to how we navigate our way through the anonymous
spectrum of perspectives?
“All is changing, changing utterly...” #69

By Padraig McKeon

Synopsis:

It’s worth dwelling on the real changes we’ll see as the power and scope of digital envelop our world. The changes that will get us are not the primary innovations but instead the knock on effects on everyday behaviours, the rituals that will cease. It’s about new ways of seeing and interacting with regular everyday situations; new behaviours that are enabled and/or facilitated by digital communications technology and distributed by social media. Let’s consider a few example situations for context.

• Observers of the media industry have been calling technology driven change in how we consume news for almost two decades. That’s happening. The Reuters Oxford Digital News Report for 2014 reports “a quickening of the pace towards social and mobile news... and significant growth in video news consumption online with 52% of Irish consumers accessing news via a smartphone”

• In cities all over the world organisations and applications like Hailo, Uber and Car2Go are changing the way that we think about moving around and accessing transport services... and that is before ever we consider the technology of vehicles themselves.

• In sports we see how technology has begun to impact decision making with Rugby World Cup final referee Nigel Owens recently arguing that “You can’t have a Test rugby match anymore without technology to help you make decisions, especially the big decisions, correctly... that’s how the game has gone”

But it’s not the big changes that will get us, not the ‘obvious things’ or even the actual primary innovations themselves. Instead it’s the knock on effects, the change to familiar little ‘default’ behaviours that will no longer take place naturally, the rituals that will cease. It is about new ways of seeing and or interacting with regular everyday situations; new behaviours that are enabled and/or facilitated by digital communications technology and distributed by social media.

4 Takeaways

1. It’s not the upfront effect of digital technology that will most impact us.
2. It’s the many little behaviours that will change as a result and the accumulation of those.
3. We can’t resist those impacts, we can choose to embrace them or see our word changed regardless.
4. We should consider what effect the changes in different areas will in themselves impact on change?

About Padraig McKeon:

Padraig McKeon has been working as a communications advisor for almost 30 years which means he learned the basics before the market had access to personal computers, never mind tablets and mobile phones, a deficit he is seeking to make up by studying now for a masters
in digital marketing. Padraig worked with two of Ireland’s bigger PR consultancies, Murray Consultants and Drury and is now an independent advisor working mainly in the education sector. He has worked across a wide array of industry sectors and alongside both private and public sector clients. As an advisor, he likes to pare every situation back to the basics and focus on the three never changing elements of any communications challenge - objective, audience and message… oh, and two things to know – he’s from Sligo and he’s ALWAYS happy to chat…

Contacting Padraig McKeon:

You can follow Padraig on Twitter, LinkedIn or contact him by email.

In the same way that the consumer can ‘pay to view’ premium content from a broadcaster it is only a matter of time before the premium seat attendees at a sports event will expect that seat to be bundled with a premium data feed, and in terms of equipping a stadium, the know how is already there.

So if everyone watching the event – either in situ or through a medium – has multiple views from which to analyse it, then it isn’t credible that the person with responsibility for officiating or regulating the event doesn’t. Consequently an element of the unpredictability or spontaneity of sport changes – basically the ref won’t decide, the analyst will! It is not of course the end of the world, but it will be very different.

The point is drawn out to illustrate but looking elsewhere:

    
    Commuting today is already substantially informed and increasingly influenced by a combination of mapping, real-time information and booking or ride management apps. The dots may take a few decades to join but already one can see a day when it won’t make sense to own a car. Why would you when it is more economical and more effective - time and connectivity wise – to use ‘pay as you go’ transport options.

    In education, the mix between teaching skills and teaching content will inevitably change as ubiquitous computing makes the necessity for anyone to learn off and personally retain content pointless. Instead of just educating to remember given content, there will be a requirement to master core skills in comprehension, articulation and expression, ‘train’ memory and more aggressively develop critical higher order skills to assess, analyse, evaluate and inform judgement. Those requirements will have a transformative effect on teaching with a follow up impact on how we assess and value educational effort.

    Think too of our systems of government where almost every democracy in the world operates to a ‘parliamentary’ model of representation that reflects a 19th century paper-based paradigm, with a concession to digital representations of material that are simply an extension of what has always been rather than a fundamental shift. This is at a time when a much more substantial and representative sample of the population could be mobilised to vote on any given issue at very short notice through an existing mechanic – their digital device. There would no doubt be challenges to managing such a scenario but now that the component parts of the solution are there, so in time will come the change.

And we could go on but now that we know all of these processes ‘could’ happen… so they will and as we default to digital tools, we have to embrace the change, or risk being like the Hem and Haw characters of Spencer Johnson’s fable ‘Who moved my cheese?’

So in considering the changes that digital will bring to your world, stop thinking about the ‘big’ changes and the changes at the ‘front end’. Focus instead on the cumulative effect of the many small changes and the effect on our interaction with what happens as a result. When we meet in Cong let’s see what picture of our everyday digitally enabled future we can piece together… and lets huddle to see what effect the changes we see in different areas of life have on each other; let’s explore what changes will in themselves impact on changes?

Then, in the year of the 150th anniversary of his birth, we can determine if there is a need to borrow from the poet Yeats and declare that, indeed, “a terrible beauty” is being born
These days we have wifi hotspots on buses, on trains, why not an entire village?

Over the past few months I’ve been investigating the possibility of turning the village of Cong into one big wifi hotspot.

When I first thought of the idea I investigated repurposing old wifi routers by installing DD-WRT[1] onto them and turning them into cheap wifi repeaters. Recently however during a conversation with a friend we got to talking about routers and networking, as you do, and she mentioned nodes.

This was a lightbulb moment for me and I immediately thought of creating a wireless mesh network instead.

A wireless mesh network is a much more suitable network structure for larger area networks containing more than a handful of nodes. Each node can communicate with the base station but can also communicate with other nodes within range, what this facilitates is a self healing network where if one node goes offline for some reason the other nodes around it can automatically re-route to maintain connectivity within the remaining nodes. This allows for easier maintenance and repair of faulty nodes which can be taken offline without much impact on the rest of the network.
production. His work has taken him as far as Africa with artafrica.ie and to the U.S. with Seneca. He is currently editing/sound designing for radio, with clients including Lyric FM and iRadio.

Contacting Mark:

You can follow Mark on Twitter.

A few years ago creating a wireless mesh network would cost a few thousand per node, not any more. For example the popular Open-Mesh OM2P (400-600ft range outdoors) can be bought for $75/70EUR. For a network of this size a low powered PC (Intel NUC) running pfSense[2] would be able to handle all firewall, DHCP, domain blacklist/whitelist duties.

With the help of local businesses each hosting a node we could have internet connectivity wherever we are in Cong. As a unique selling point I think this would benefit the village greatly.

[1] DD-WRT is a Linux based firmware for home routers, it adds features/options which are often not available with the OEM firmware

[2] pfSense is a FreeBSD based operating system which has all the features of very expensive firewalls/routers which can be installed on relatively modest hardware.
DisconnectEd - How do we fix an education system that is rapidly losing touch with reality? #71

By Ciaran Cannon

Synopsis:

There is a rapidly deepening disparity between what happens inside the walls of our classrooms and the world outside. Are we honest enough to acknowledge this weakness and courageous enough to fix it?

4 Takeaways

1. Everyone with access to the internet has access to a bottomless repository of knowledge that our ancestors could barely even imagine.
2. This instant access to knowledge is fundamentally changing the way we learn and the relationship between teachers and students.
3. Some teachers see this as a major challenge, others as an exciting opportunity.
4. If we don't acknowledge that this change is happening and work to incorporate into all of our educational provision, our schools are in danger of becoming redundant.

About Ciaran Cannon:

Ciaran Cannon is a TD (MP) for Galway East and a former Minister of State at the Department of Education. He is the founder of Excited - The Digital Learning Movement, a husband and dad, musician and songwriter, theatre owner and cyclist.

Contacting Ciaran Cannon:

You can follow Ciaran on Twitter and Facebook or contact him by email.

Let me start by asking you a few questions. To the nearest metre, how deep is the Marianas Trench? How many people live on the island of Mauritius? Who won the 1972 All-Ireland Hurling Final? To what species does the ring tailed lemur belong? I asked my ten year old nephew the same questions this evening, just before writing this blog and within three minutes he told me 10,971 metres, 1,283,415 people, Kilkenny (we could have guessed that one!) and lemur catta. Is my nephew some kind of prodigy, able to store and retrieve information at will? No, he's a typically bright and happy ten year old who is rarely found without some sort of smart device in his hand.

That device gives him access to the greatest repository of knowledge that mankind has ever known. His answering of those questions challenges us to finally acknowledge that, whether we like it or not, the internet has already changed the way we learn and there's no going back. It has also turned on its head the relationship between teachers and learners, a relationship that hasn't changed to any great degree for thousands of years.

For me, that fundamental change in the dynamic of the classroom was wonderfully described by a school principal from Co. Wexford at a digital learning festival in 2014. He told us of a recent experience when teaching the history of the Irish famine to his third class students. Before he uttered a word in class he asked his students to go online to research the famine and produce a three minute video about it on their iPads.

He was very impressed by the quality of the students' research and their technological skills but what really caused him to reflect deeply on his role as a teacher was the classroom conversation he then had with his students about the famine, after they had viewed the videos. He and his students debated all aspects of this tragic time in our country's history. Who or what was to blame? Could the famine have been prevented? Are there lessons to be learned from that experience? “I suddenly realised that I was no longer teaching history, I was in fact creating historians” were his exact words. In that one sentence he encapsulated the incredible opportunity we now have to create learning environments that are dynamic, exciting and inspire our children to learn more deeply than we could ever have imagined.

He and others in the world of education are now beginning to realise that the keys to the kingdom of knowledge have slipped from their fingers and are now in the hands of everyone with a connection to the Internet. The genuine trailblazers in the teaching profession see that fundamental change not as a challenge, but as an exciting
opportunity. They fully recognise that the greatest respect a teacher can pay a student is to say “we are all learners now, let’s learn together”. In Claregalway College, for example, teachers and students don’t use textbooks published by others. Instead they collaborate in producing their own teaching and learning content and store it in the cloud where it can evolve as knowledge evolves and can be shared across the whole school community. In the Stephen Perse School in Cambridge, teachers and students have created digital support materials for every subject, including video, audio, written materials and links to online resources. Last year they made those resources freely available online and so far they have been downloaded by thousands of schools globally. In Texas, 14 school districts collectively produce and share online course materials.

For now, these are the outliers. Elsewhere there is a rapidly deepening disparity between what happens inside the walls of our classrooms and the world outside. Right now if we were to somehow reawaken a teacher from 1915 and send them into an Irish classroom, they would find it relatively easy to take up where they had left off. Once they had gotten over the shock of seeing a television or computer for the first time, they would simply ask their students to open their history books on the chapter about the famine and within a few minutes that warm feeling of familiarity would wash over them. They could easily ignore the utterly changed world outside their classroom, a world connected by a vast and ever expanding matrix, because in most schools right now that is the normal practice.

Just nine weeks ago, those who argue against the use of technology in education felt somewhat vindicated when the OECD published a significant piece of research on the use of technology in education. The conclusions of that report were sensational and inaccurately reported in the mainstream media. Headlines included “Computers in schools may do more harm than good” and “Lack of computers in schools may be a blessing – OECD report”. The report was in fact much more nuanced, if anyone took the time to read it fully.

These are the words of the report’s author, Andreas Schleicher; “School systems need to find more effective ways to integrate technology into teaching and learning to provide educators with learning environments that support 21st century pedagogies and provide children with the 21st century skills they need to succeed in tomorrow’s world. Technology is the only way to dramatically expand access to knowledge. To deliver on the promises technology holds, countries need to invest more effectively and ensure that teachers are at the forefront of designing and implementing this change”

In essence the conclusion of the report is that technology on its own is not going to revolutionise education, but technology in the hands of expert teachers and eager students can be a powerful enabler of enhanced learning.

Those one dimensional headlines and the rush to use the OECD report to diminish the role of technology in education may point to a far deeper unease amongst educationalists. Is this resistance to technology, the handing over of the keys to knowledge, really about a difficulty in relinquishing power; moving from whole group to individualized instruction; from education meaning “knowing things” to education meaning “constructing knowledge”; from passive to active learning environments; from memorization to creation? So perhaps technology is the scapegoat, not the reason, for change reluctance.

Two years ago Excited – The Digital Learning Movement collaborated with the Sean
O’Sullivan Foundation to launch Mathletes, the world’s first online maths competition using the free learning resources of the Khan Academy. The idea was hatched on a Tuesday morning in Sean’s office in Cork and two years later Mathletes has now evolved into Learnstorm, a competition that will be staged across Ireland, California and Idaho in 2016 and will involve over 100,000 students. For me, Learnstorm is a perfect example of the collaborative and creative power of the internet. It was that connectivity which allowed a small group of people who are passionate about education to collaborate in creating something really groundbreaking, despite being 8,000km apart.

That opportunity to engage in almost any kind of joint creativity means that the very notion of a school, for instance, that is wholly constrained by its physical walls is now just laughable. And yet so many schools in Ireland and across the world continue blissfully and obdurately trying to deliver an education to their students while pretending that the enormously connected, massively collaborative world can be kept at bay.

It is no longer acceptable to tell my ten year old nephew and his peers to switch off their digital devices, their connection to the world around them, before they begin school each morning.

Ultimately we have two choices.

We can embrace the incredible new learning opportunities provided to us by the internet and modern technology, or we can slowly but surely turn our schools into museums of the 20th century, our last refuges of redundancy in a world being reshaped over and over again on a daily basis…..by ones and zeros.
Everyone has impairments. #72

By Kieran Hanrahan

Synopsis:

In the built environment, building regulations use universal design principles to accommodate people with impairments, e.g. ramps not steps. The next opportunity is the Internet. A radical suite of “building regulations” for the Internet will enable emerging technology to transform the lives of people with impairments, and move us past notions of disability and rehabilitation.

4 Takeaways

1. A ‘disability’ is really an impairment, e.g. a visual or mobility impairment.
2. Everyone has one or more impairments. Yes, everyone!
3. Universal Design reduces or eliminates disability and Ireland is a world leader.
4. A new suite of “building regulations” for the Internet will be transformative.

About Kieran Hanrahan:

Kieran has been mucking around with technology and the internet since the early nineties. He’s developed CoP websites, run online social experiments, built online training courses with PhDs, loves innovation, founded a not for profit project around Autism, and moved down to Mayo twenty odd years ago. Kieran works full time in business development and service design with a well known international disability service, with a strong focus on research and innovation.

Some of us have better eyesight than others.

Some of us have better hearing that others. Only 1 person in every 400 has perfect pitch, which, when you think about it, means that the other 399 have a physical impairment. Statistically that means every single person in this room probably has at least one impairment.

Some of you have more than one... I know I do! So I hope this alters your view of impairment or disability. It’s not about impairment or disability, it’s about diversity.

Some have better social skills. I bet we all know several people, with no obvious physical impairment, that can be said to be “emotionally challenged” - no mother-in-law jokes please!

In the medical model, the impairment was the problem. It was something to be “cured”.

Thankfully we have moved on, to a model of society, where the impairment is not the issue, the issue is how society arranges itself for people with impairments, how we cope with diversity.

If I am in a wheelchair, I don’t have a disability... so long as there is a ramp and not steps, so long as the doors don’t open out on top of me. Society has amended building regulations to make these and other design changes mandatory, so that people with a mobility impairment don’t have a disability imposed on them by the built environment. This is known as universal design and Ireland is the only country in the world (yeah!) with a statutory publically funded centre of excellence in universal design. www.universaldesign.ie

But the built environment is “old hat”. The fact that we’re at an un-conference, illustrates this change. The un-built environment, that Interweb thingy, that is where the action is at!

An IT guru type pointed to a dozen things, from people in jet packs flying into Dubai airport to Siri and said “Kieran, the future is now. It’s happening before our very eyes.” We’re easily persuaded as we both remember the original Star Trek, but his assertion is well judged.
Contacting Kieran Hanrahan:

Kieran is best contacted by email or by phone on 086 026 1163. He will say he doesn't have time to tweet or facebook but has accounts on every type of social media!

In terms of rehabilitation, I suspect that the word and concept will pass into history very soon. Rehabilitation will become something we did “back in the dark ages”. Medical science and technology are moving so rapidly that restoration of function is the goal.

Oddly it all started with Oscar Pistorius! The reason it took so long for him to be admitted to the summer Olympiad was the fear that his blades were so advanced that they conferred a physical advantage over his “able bodied” peers. Think about that. Someone with a physical impairment can access a technological solution that doesn't just replace the lost function, it exceeds it. In Manchester this year Second Sight Inc implanted a bionic eye into a volunteer that feeds its video data directly into the optic nerve.

The goal has moved to restoring lost function and not simply rehabilitating people to cope with their impairment. Most of this work has focused on physical impairments.

But the un-built environment holds far greater potential.

A mobile phone app that uses augmented reality to ‘read’ signs can translate these into symbols on the screen for people with dyslexia or voice prompts for those with impaired vision. Another app – a mention to Dr Cathal Gurrin in DCU– could use face recognition software and prompts someone with memory loss as to who they are meeting right now, where they met before, what their interest is in them... and even whether they like them or not!

“Oh no, it’s that guy from accounts!”

The un-built environment needs some universal design.
Emoji, hashtags, textual deformation: flesh on the bones of online language. #73

By Breffni O'Rourke

Synopsis:

Language is a wonderfully refined tool for making meaning, but it’s not the be-all and end-all of communication.

4 Takeaways

1. Language is a wonderfully refined tool for making meaning, but it’s not the be-all and end-all of communication.
2. Communication isn’t linguistic encoding by the speaker and decoding by the speaker – it’s a complex system of cues by the speaker interweaving with a complex process of inference by the listener.
3. Written “language” is not (just) linguistic, it’s inherently multimodal (exercise for the reader: re-read this post – or even just this bullet point ;) – and identify the meaningful elements that couldn’t easily be “translated” (”rendered”?) in spoken language.
4. Digital communication is multimodal – but so is all communication. Enjoy it.

About Breffni O'Rourke:

Breffni O'Rourke is Assistant Professor in Applied Linguistics in the School of Linguistic, Speech, and Communication Sciences, Trinity College Dublin. Online communication for language learning is among his research interests.

Contacting Breffni O'Rourke:

You can see Breffni’s profile on

People get unnecessarily het up about language.

Is “het” even a word?

Of course it is. I’ve just used it in a sentence, haven’t I?

Don’t make me laugh 😊 I just used in a sentence – twice – but that doesn’t make it a word, does it?

Well, Oxford Dictionaries just made it their Word Of The Year.

I don’t know whether to or

People who worry aloud about “what’s happening to language” often claim that communication is being damaged. If words are used with new meanings, if pronunciations change, if even grammar changes, then pretty soon we won’t be able to understand each other. And as for this emoji nonsense – they’re not even language! It’s beyond dumbing down, it’s plumbing the depths.

Well, first things first: Language ≠ Communication. Language is a highly refined tool for communication, yes. But it is rarely – I would say never – the whole story.

Alf: Is Ciara on her way?

Brenda: She’s not answering her phone.

Alf: Keep trying.

If you only look at her words, Brenda isn’t answering Alf’s question. The literal meaning of her sentence doesn’t contain the information Alf needs. But Alf gets it anyway: he understands the implicature of Brenda’s utterance.

Father: What’s that on the floor?
Daughter: La La Loopsies.

Father: Will we pick them up?

Daughter: I’m busy.

Father already knows what’s on the floor: Daughter’s toys. The point of his utterance – the speech act he was performing – was to get Daughter to pick them up. Daughter missed that point. She took Father’s request as a question. Likewise, “Will we pick them up?” looks like a question (if you’re a Martian), but it’s really a request, and this time Daughter gets it. But her refusal (“I’m busy”) doesn’t look like a refusal – she doesn’t say “No” – it looks like a statement of fact. Just like with Alf and Brenda, she leaves it to Father to work out that it’s really a refusal.

That’s the way communication works, practically all the time. We use words as a way of pointing listeners in the direction of our meaning, but we leave it to them to find their way to it. We have to: mind-melds are for Vulcans. We have to let our human interlocutors work out implicatures (those additional meanings of “She’s not answering her phone”) and speech acts (what exactly our utterances are meant to be doing – asking a question or requesting, stating a fact or refusing, and so on), and also our tone – urgency, impatience, friendliness, teasing…

So what we communicate goes way beyond the words and sentences we use. Sometimes speakers’ meaning is opposite to linguistic meaning (isn’t that ironic?). We rely on our audience to work out what we mean: and even when our utterances are highly explicit, to some extent we’re really only giving hints. Listeners have to triangulate from several data sources: shared knowledge, immediate context, previous personal history, common sense, gesture, facial expression, body language, vocal cues like melody and emphasis – and, yes, the words spoken: but the words are only one contributor to the meaning.

And hinting at meaning is the way even written language developed: at its root, it’s not language at all. It started off with pictorial representations of things (a picture of the sun, say). When that system reached the limits of its expressivity, the brilliant insight that moved things on was to use pictures to represent the words for things instead of the things themselves – which in turn meant that you could repurpose pictures to represent still further words: in English you could use a pictogram of the sun to represent the hard-to-draw concept of son.

Writing systems are still imperfect representations of language – there are ambiguities in reading and in spelling – but on the other hand, writing gives us resources for meaning that we didn’t have before. Take page-space: We exploit it all the time, using bullet points, paragraphs, tables, lists, brackets and quotation marks to structure our meanings. Then there’s colour, typeface, diagrams, and so on. So written language is not purely linguistic, it’s inherently multimodal.

What’s brand new in the human communicative landscape is rapid-fire communication using written symbols – chat, IM, SMS, Twitter, all that. But using just 2D symbols in a disembodied, virtual space, we’re missing shared context and embodied cues of voice, gesture, expression.
Emoji and textual deformation (elingongated words, stunt punctuation!!!!!!! and so on) are just additional semiotic resources that we can use to capture those elements of our meaning that aren't easily put into words. They express our attitude towards what we're saying, our attitude towards each other [we add a ;-) to an emailed reminder to show we're still being friendly, not aggressive]. They aren't a language: for one thing, there's no fixed way of reading them aloud; for another, though they have a meaning, that meaning is hard to pin down.

Emoji may go the way of all fads. But language is not communication, and I have moments where I think written language is not even language. What we always have, in any medium, is a box of tools and a bag of tricks for making meaning. In digital media, that includes little pictures, big pictures, animations, links, hashtags, text, voice, colour, context, and as always, common sense. Let's stop complaining and use them, thoughtfully, playfully, enthusiastically. Where communication is concerned, linguistic purity is not an option; and it never has been.
Learning from 12 Months of Conscious Social Media #74

By Alastair McDermott

4 Takeaways

1. If you’re using Twitter, do more than broadcast, be part of the conversation.
2. Instagram is growing rapidly, has engaged users and is a good source of social traffic.
3. If you’re experimenting with Instagram, pay careful attention to visual aesthetics.
4. Live video streaming is great for building relationships, audience and trust. Don’t be shy, turn on the webcam and give it a go.

About Alastair McDermott:

Alastair McDermott is an online business and technology consultant specialising in growing professional services businesses by using technology more effectively. He blogs, podcasts and makes media of all kinds at WebsiteDoctor.com

Contacting Alastair McDermott:

You can find out about Alastair on his Website, connect with him on his work and personal Twitter account or like him on Facebook.
Judge the fish by its ability to climb a tree. #75

By Naomi Freeman

Synopsis:

Using the Tetrad framework to evaluate new technology

4 Takeaways

1. Any technology/social media/medium creates consequences from its strengths.
2. It’s more important to understand what context a new medium brings (e.g. using a phone in public space) and investigate the consequences than it is to understand “what” the technology is (e.g. clicking a button adds a friend).
3. We can use frameworks like McLuhan’s Tetrad to investigate seemingly different technologies - not just in social media, but across time.
4. “The next big thing” is not going to be “the next Google” (or anything else you can name). It’s going to be something that balances the pendulum swing from that current big thing.

About Naomi Freeman:

Community organizer, poet, programmer. Naomi brings together knowledge from disparate fields, allowing new perspectives, pathways and intersections to be made.

Contacting Naomi Freeman:

You can follow Naomi on Twitter.

Have you ever been in one of these meetings?

“There’s no point in setting up Treebook. We already have Instasnap!”

“My niece is on Treebook though. Did you see it in Money Times Mega Magazine?”

“I heard it’s trending on the Grapevine.”

Someone senior cuts in: “Intern, please research the options. We’ll revisit this on the 30th.”

How do we evaluate the differences between all these new social media products?

What exactly is the intern going to be evaluating anyway?

In 1964, a Canadian fellow named Marshall McLuhan wrote a bunch of things about media. “The medium is the message” is one of his more famous aphorisms you may have heard.

He also argued that all media are just extensions of ourselves: cars become a space we use to extend ourselves. We gain awareness of its space and capabilities as if they were our own.

Every technology extends or enhances our capabilities. Facebook enhances our ability to socially connect over distance. Lights enhance our ability to see in the dark.

This is the first of four principles McLuhan presented as a framework to evaluate technology, long before social media, Super Bowl ads and the iPad.

His framework is a concept called the Tetrad. It is a framework for examining the effects of any technology or medium.

The idea is to create a more comprehensive understanding of the artifact (medium, technology) and its surroundings. It’s a process of asking questions – historical, technological, and sociological.
• What does any artifact enlarge or enhance?
• What does it erode or obsolesce?
• What does it retrieve that had been earlier obsolesced?
• What does it reverse or flip into when pushed to the limits of its potential?

Given that all technology is first an extension of ourselves, these questions are vitally important in evaluating the differences. The things that we lose with the new extension will point us in the direction of what we will desire to have next.

It is important to consider these questions simultaneously – not as cause and effect or in some chronological order. These 4 effects are all happening at the same time.

For example: let’s consider the mobile phone:

It enhanced interpersonal communication and response time for communication. It obsolesced phone booths, but along with that and the phone in the home, it obsolesced much of the privacy of a phone call. Even further than that, it has in fact obsolesced many of the “deep” conversations we had when we were focused just on speaking on the phone.

It retrieved cameras, oddly. Who would have anticipated that giving us acoustic enhancement would actually result in Instagram?

It has reversed into letter sending, really. Most of our social media, texts, etc. are actually the exact opposite of what a phone is meant to do: allow users to communicate acoustically.

For every technology this is going to be a bit different, and for sure my list on this one isn’t definitive. You can play Tetrad with any technology from a multiplicity of
perspectives and disciplines for hours, days, weeks. Please do feel free to discuss this one further! I've only done a quick overview to give you a taste of how to approach the framework.

As you can see, there is a relationship between these tetradic elements.

This is about to get a bit thick, but come with me.

Retrieval is to obsolescence as enhancement is to reversal.

What is brought back must also render something obsolete; what is enlarged will always do so at the expense of others.

We all famously know the “false promise” of Facebook’s connecting us simultaneously creating isolation through both the insularity of the communities it creates and the curation of our lives.

It also brings back tribal community connections – there is no “disappear to NYC and reinvent yourself” like an 80s movie without your aunt Marcie, that hot girl from high school and 2 guys you met on a train 6 years ago like your “Welcome to NYC” profile pic.

This internet forum age of anonymity has been rendered obsolete by these tribal villages and our quest for brand management zen: curating the perfect You Inc. portfolio online.

The other part of the relationship is this:

Retrieval is to enhancement as obsolescence is to reversal.

What is retrieved is an outgrowth of the enhancement. What is obsolesced creates opportunity for reversal.

In the Facebook example, the isolation of staring at a screen alone for social contact creates an opportunity for reversal: we see it in meetup.com – a community that aims only to set dates and times online for people to meet in person.

This is the online sociality taken to its extreme and reversal.

In doing so, it in fact retrieves the very thing it obsolesced in the first place (meeting in real life) but does so in this “new medium”.

In another example you might be less familiar with, we have Fliixel.

This is a technology that creates “living” photos – the photos are taken as a video, one frame is grabbed and held still like a photo and then an element of the photo keeps moving, like an earring or some grass flowing in the breeze.

What this technology is doing is retrieving the motion of video and television, through an extreme outgrowth of the enhancement of the medium: a photograph.

So how can we apply this to our everyday work?

Another way to consider the problem of comparing technologies is this: what is the
consequence of the technology we’re launching or considering for use?

For the mobile phone, the consequence of this new way of communicating using acoustic space was actually a return to sorts of written letters (texts) that can be sent without invading others’ acoustic space. It also, oddly, retrieved photography as a popular way to communicate.

For Facebook, the consequence of creating communities of real people you know with your real name were other technologies that allowed anonymity and privacy online (like secret.com) and technologies that allowed you to meet-up in person (think Tinder, meetup.com). These were the things Facebook was originally in fact sweeping the table of. This really illustrates the pendulum swing you can observe through the Tetrad.

Back to how we apply this in the real world. Inside of a business, it is important to embrace these consequences to allow growth.

Shopify is an ecommerce platform. Their business is to let businesses operate completely online.

Curiously, two years ago, they used the pop-up shop model to create a storefront on one of Toronto’s busiest shopping streets.

It may not have been conscious or intentional, but in setting up this brick-and-mortar space, Shopify was in fact embracing the furthest extension (inversion and reversal) of the very business model it made successful.

Rather than insulate themselves and commit to their success model, they in fact were able to embrace the very thing that could have been their undoing. Rather than allow the consequence, the extreme of their model to allow a space for another company, they leveraged it to bring more business to their already successful model.

In terms of choosing social media, consider the farthest outreach consequence of the technology. It can be used as a predictive tool to understand what your customers will desire next. In the meantime, you can evaluate the differences between potential technologies by understanding what each is missing, the extreme consequence of where one can go and if that’s somewhere you want to follow and what complementary technologies already exist to balance what it is doing. In that way, you can make smarter choices about which 2-3 platforms or apps you want to be on. There are already ecosystems out there. Using the Tetrad framework and questions can help you follow the lines and understand how these technologies are out there working together.

As for those starting new businesses, if you’re not in at the ground floor of an innovation, my next best suggestion is to find its inversion to start.

Google is automating cars – you know what niche needs filled once it booms?

Nostalgia will retrieve classic, human-driven cars – obsolesced by the automated version, these will become a masterful artwork to be coveted, much the way poetry chapbooks are.

Can you fill one out for Virtual Reality?
An important thing to remember with the mobile phone is the change in context. Many of the changes occurred because the space in which we could use the technology changed, and this resulted in all kinds of behaviour and usage change.

The point in using the Tetrad is really to change our question from "what does this technology do" (click a button – add a friend) to "what kind of context change does this technology create" (sitting inside alone to communicate vs. sitting in a coffee shop) and "what is the furthest consequence of this technology".
This week I have cooked dishes from Israel, England and the U.S. Each weekend I vary our breakfast menu with dishes from Austria, France, Germany, England and Ireland. All my research, recipes and methods have commenced or have been finalised online. The possibilities and access to instant information at one's fingertips (on your smartphone) while working in the kitchen is beyond the comprehension of my twenty-year-old self (racking my brains trying to impress my Head Chef with new menu ideas).

Now, back then I was under the self imposed impression that you were supposed to create these ideas from your own imagination (how naïve). As I moved from job to job I became more experienced and picked up ideas, influences and methods from the kitchens I worked in. If I wanted to do my own research, I'd hope Santa would buy me a cookbook for Christmas (never thought of the library) as I knew I couldn't really afford the cookbooks myself.

What joy then that with the advent of technology coinciding with my ever increasing maturity and enlightenment I can now inform myself of absolutely anything my culinary heart desires.

I recently wanted to BBQ whole chickens for a 21st birthday function (well paying gig) and wanted to pre-brine my chickens in lemon, rosemary and thyme (vac pack for three days, unbelievable flavour). To brush up I Youtubed ‘how to divide a chicken’ and brushed up on something I probably should have paid attention to twenty years previously. I can now look at videos on TopChefs and see the best way to fillet salmon posted by Japanese Sushi Masters or even the fastest Kitchen Porter in the world.

Anyone with basic cooking ability or nouse can train themselves further through video demos on any kitchen practice from how to debone a chicken thigh to making American pancakes.

The explosion of cookery programs, particularly from far flung locations, has led to a diverse range of restaurants and food outlets springing up. Maybe it's always been like this. However, we do seem to have really imported wholeheartedly the street food/diner style of the U.S. Really tasty stuff. You can't cross the street for the amount of pulled pork sandwiches donning menus all across the country.

The take on the Reuben is out the door roundabout these Isles over the last year or so.

The basis is the same. Quality ingredients, cooked well. The retail medium has and is changing. Anyone heard of @akillersandwich? This is a perfect example of how anyone can create a food business without a traditional shop front. Instant and clever imagery, limited availability and a must have sambo all combine to make this something you just MUST have. The fact that only 99 other people are having it makes it even more so.

This accessibility does however lead to deeper questions beyond the simple quandary of 'what will I cook/eat next?' We don't all live in the same regions of the world, we are not all subject to the same seasonality and our quest for having what we want, right now brings its own ethical dilemmas.
This is what really excites me about being a curator - what started off as a very evangelical idea about drones and new views of the world and what this technology was bringing us aesthetically - actually brought me to two works that in fact are dystopian in their outlook.

I think the films I have now selected, and the ideas they are mining, provide a really interesting stepping off point for an event like this, where we are all thinking of - where to next.

To look at the world that social and tech created for us and to consider it as we move into this next era of creating realities for ourselves.

So my curation adventure brought me to a dystopian view of Second Life utopia and an exploration of the possibilities that drones could play in the democratisation of surveillance.

LOITERING THEATRE

By Irish artists Caroline Campbell and Nina McGown

A film exploring forbidden and inaccessible space in Dublin through flying drones equipped with cameras, it focusses on the possible democratization of surveillance that drone flight affords.

- and -

UTOPIA 1.0: POST-NEO-FUTURIST-CAPITALISM IN 3D!

By New York based artist Annie Berman

Which explores the remnants of Second Life, a formerly thriving virtual 3D world, and investigates its susceptibility to the same economic pitfalls that plague our ‘real’ world.
http://annieberman.net/

Here is a trailer for Utopia 1.0 -

https://vimeo.com/134786956
Synopsis: Behavioural Debt is a way to think about the costs of time-pressure decisions. When we make a decision, we do so with the limited resources we have at the time and we will usually have to revisit it later. So there is an implicit commitment every time we make a decision that we will return and maintain the change that we sought to make. If we don't deal with these commitments (paying down out behavioural debt), they build up over time, like interest on a debt.

4 Takeaways

1. No decision is perfect
2. Make imperfect decisions to get feedback early
3. Keep some time aside to deal with the consequences of your decisions
4. Make commitments with your eyes open

About Denis O'Hora:

Dr Denis O'Hora is a chartered psychologist in the School of Psychology at the National University of Ireland Galway. He conducts fundamental research probing the processes of learning and decision making, and also develops applications of this work for organisational settings.

Contacting Denis O'Hora:

Denis can be contacted by email.
have something to do, but we will not, cannot or should not do it right right now - we commit to doing it later. This may sound like procrastination, but, just as in the company situation I described before, postponing tasks through such commitments is often necessary and efficient. However, we need to commit with open eyes.

Each task we commit to generates a little behavioural debt, and we will have to work it off. When we agree to complete tasks without considering how much time and effort it will take to complete them, we run the risk of living beyond our behavioral means. We can only do so much, and we need to be kind to our future selves who will have to pick up the tab for our decisions in the moment. Otherwise, we will end up missing payments on our Behavioural Debt; we end up breaking commitments to others and becoming unreliable in their eyes, because we do not have the behaviour available to fulfil our commitments.

So, next time you make a commitment, think of what you are really committing to and whether you have the behavioural resources to back it up. And be kind to your future self - check out Dan Gilbert on your future self here:

[[RAW HTML]]
Who’s Laying Down Your Life Story. #79

By Alec Taylor

Synopsis:

Recording your life story - your feelings and philosophy, your dreams and your lessons learnt, your personal contribution to life on this planet – requires a dedicated act of ‘journalling’…..by you.

4 Takeaways

1. Every life benefits from reflection and recording
2. Laying down your own life story opens up new possibilities ahead
3. Choose times and technology for ‘journalling’ that suit your needs
4. Don’t hang about…get started and be surprised by what your inner voice has to say

About Alec Taylor:

Born and educated in Dublin, Alec became a broadcaster in Cologne and then London, before specialising as a TV presenter and Media trainer. He set up a training company called Communication Skills International, based in London and Vienna. Since 2003, his entrepreneurial activities have focused on start-ups, including a property website Hidden Sunshine, creativity centres, a new brand of clothing Kansha and recording life stories on video Memoirs on Camera.

Contacting Alec Taylor:

You can contact Alec by email.

Recording your life story - your feelings and philosophy, your dreams and your lessons learnt, your personal contribution to life on this planet – requires a dedicated act of ‘journalling’…..by you.

Why Leave it to Others?

There are many persons and entities recording our lives, online and offline. We are a statistic if nothing else. We have an educational record, a medical record, a CV. But, without us taking action on our own behalf, this is what will remain of us. This is what – in advanced age with a less reliable memory – we will turn to, to piece our earlier life together.

A Diary is Not Enough

A calendar of meetings attended, both professional and private, is useful. It represents the bare bones of a lived life, but no more than that. Your experience of life is not a chronology of events alone.

You had feelings when you celebrated a birthday or buried a family member or friend. Your thinking and planning were influenced by these happenings.

In Vision, On Audio, In Words, We Exist.

From the day we were born, others took endless pictures of us, ‘shot’ us on video. We were written about before we wrote words ourselves and started to describe our reactions and feelings, to tell stories. Our ‘media’ self has become a reality whether we like it or not. All that before we got started on Social Media.

Too Late, Too Late
Life's uncertainty means we need to get on with it, to becoming the producer/director/scriptwriter of our own life story. And not just the bit that's gone by, but the bit that's up ahead as well. 'Journalling' is just as much about planning as reminiscing. It's about aspirations as much as memoirs.

How to Get Started.

My personal journal is still a handwritten one. It will probably stay that way. It's a bit of a scrapbook, too. I stick or staple drawings on restaurant serviettes, or an opera ticket, or family photos into it.

So, choose the medium that suits you. You can also type it, or dictate it (audio or video) on your phone. The main thing is to catch your thoughts and feelings, your plans and visions, starting NOW.

‘Private and Confidential’

Until you decide otherwise, everything you ‘lay down’ is your private property. So, separating this material from the rest of your files is no easy matter. You would be wise to store it with the utmost care in a special file, with its own cyber security. In my case, the notebooks are placed when they're full in an old briefcase which has a coded locking-system.

Storing the Stories.

This is the difficult bit. Where to store the computer files, the notebooks? In the cellar, in the attic, with a parent or a friend? Probably the latter, meaning ‘offsite’. This is a personal decision.

Triggering Each Entry, Including the Very First One.

Personally, I use an interlocutor I simply call ‘Friend’. He/she asks me a question and I answer it. A simple example would be: “How did this last week go?” or “How are you going to deal with the current crisis?” or “What are your goals for the rest of this year?”

Deep Emotional Stuff.

Some people say it helps to write a letter to your parents, or a valued friend/mentor….and then reply to it on their behalf, talking back to yourself, so to speak. I hold the view that it's best to be as frank as possible, but to bear in mind that those near and dear to you may one day read the entry. This is a fine decision, and it's worth giving it thought.

Business and Family Plans.

For me there is no restriction on what areas of life we include in our ‘journal’. Maybe I'd draw the line personally at spreadsheets, but a bit of ‘back-of-the-envelope’ business planning could be included. The key is to plan forwards as well as to record backwards.

You Owe it to Yourself…and Future Generations

Whatever way you look at it, we're talking about social history. About adding to the record. Does anyone really care? Yes, they do. The extraordinary lives of ordinary people is what we're talking about. Do your bit: for family and friends first and foremost….but for posterity, too.
AR and Education, and some Implications for Digital Marketers #80

By Alex Meehan

Augmented Reality is now firmly on the agenda for anyone interested in the digital world. Together with Virtual Reality, there is excitement at the opportunities the technologies offer in a whole variety of spheres – something that is reflected in this year’s Congregation. The purpose of this paper is to look at the technology from a personal perspective – that of an educator in the tourism discipline – and hopefully allow readers to draw wider parallels in the digital world.

Certainly AR has in recent years been a tool that has garnered increased attention at Education Technology conferences. Particularly in the US we can find examples of where it has achieved a degree of acceptance among educator innovators. DAQRI – a major player in the AR space in industrial contexts - have also a keen interest in its application to education. In recent years they recruited the team at Two Guys and some Ipad – and the authors have had the chance to meet and discuss issues with Drew Minnock who is constantly in demand to speak at education conferences, particularly education technology shows. One of the most common access points for students to AR technology is in AR flash cards: these are being more widely used for primary and secondary school going children and the development by companies such as DAQRI or Octagon with their 4D Anatomy and Animals 4D apps for example.

But to date, there has been limited evidence of use of AR being integrated into the curriculum and pedagogy in post-primary or third level curricula – and it’s to this latter group which is the focus of discussion in this paper, with specific reference to the curricula in tourism courses. In the paper the authors address three issues.

1. What are the curriculum and pedagogical issues facing educators in general?
2. What possibilities are there for AR in tourism curricula?
3. How to get started?

What are the curriculum and pedagogical issues facing educators in general?

A good starting point before examining any technology’s application in an education context should be what does it seek to achieve – if we are to be true to the mantra that technology should be an enabler, then first principles demand we look at what we are trying to achieve. Here, it is important to make a distinction between curriculum and pedagogy. Very often the two are conflated, but there is a difference between the two. Curriculum is all about what we teach. Pedagogy is about how we teach it. Both are very important and, in this paper, we try to address both dimensions.

A good starting point is to understand the holistic view of what we are trying to achieve as educators in the university context. In 2011, the Higher Education Authority in Ireland commissioned a major review of the third level sector, assessing among other things the process of curriculum development and pedagogical formats (Hunt 2011). Citing the OECD AHELO (2010) project on higher education learning outcomes, the report outlined current international thinking on the key generic skills that all students need to acquire as part of their undergraduate education. These include analytic reasoning, critical thinking, the ability to generate fresh ideas, and the practical application of theory. The project organisers also suggest that ease in written communication, leadership ability, and the ability to work in a group should also be included in the list. It is against this context that Augmented Reality as a technological aid should be assessed. An admittedly brief trawl of the literature yields few examples...
Also an annual Visiting Professor at ESSEC Business School in Paris, where he delivers the Strategic Marketing course on the MBA Hospitality Management. He is the only Irish academic member of the International Society of Hospitality Consultants (ISHC). He is a former Past-President of the Irish Chapter of Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) and has previously served on its European Board. Today he is a member of the HSMAI Resort Marketing group.

Alex’s professional background is in marketing, where he held roles in the food and hotel sectors with Nabisco, Danone and Holiday Inn. Alex presents The Persuaders—a weekly radio show on Dublin City FM which has allowed him to access the best in Irish and international marketing contacts. He was the recipient of the Marketing Educator of the Year award from the Marketing Institute of Ireland, and was conferred with Fellowship in 2012 for services to marketing in Ireland.

He has delivered presentations on strategic marketing at conferences in Europe, North and South America, The Caribbean, and Middle East. He has delivered Executive Education for Accor Vivier previously as well as Intercontinental Hotels. His current research interests centre on how Augmented Reality technologies can be harnessed by the marketing community to build superior brand engagement for the tourism sector. He is the founder and chair of the Augmented Reality Marketing Conference which takes place next on April 28th 2016.

Contacting Alex:

You can follow Alex on Twitter.

of empirical testing of AR in an undergraduate context. One area where there has been a degree of adoption to date is the medical field, where AR offers great opportunity to allow 3D models to replace heretofore expensive real models of anatomy. In one study of medical students they were taught the basic functioning and anatomy of the heart, using either an AR model or a fiberglass model (Patzer, B., Smith D., & Keebler J. 2014). Learning and technology acceptance were measured. Results indicated that the AR learning tool was as effective for participant learning when compared to the conventional fiberglass model learning tool. Furthermore, the AR learning tool was rated more enjoyable, curiosity inducing, and easier-to-use than the fiberglass model.

What possibilities are there for tourism curricula?

This short speaking slot does not allow a full discussion of AR for each of the desired learning outcomes on undergraduate programmes, but we can perhaps glean an insight from a few examples.

Consider the ability to create fresh ideas. Can there be any more creative tool than AR in this respect – to be able to merge the physical with the digital world offers endless possibilities – especially when students are given the tools to allow this.

In terms of where AR sits on an undergraduate curriculum, an obvious starting point would be the IT / ICT curriculum, but it is not clear that even here the diffusion of AR knowledge is happening at the pace it needs to. As research capability in AR increases, we are seeing the development of courses in AR but these currently sit almost exclusively on computer studies type courses, and are dedicated to those who will pursue a career in software development. Certainly there is a massive shortage globally of graduates in computer visioning specialisms, and addressing this is a top priority.

But what about the curriculum in undergraduate tourism courses? Typically students on these courses get exposure to tools such as business simulation tools, presentation and analytics software and travel software systems; the authors would argue that given the transformative nature of AR, they should be aware both on a theoretical and practical level of the range of AR technologies, and sister VR technologies, as they impact on the tourism sector. In this context I note that IFITT have been progressive in funding this conference and building awareness of the topic – it has certainly been a growing topic on the academic paper roster in recent years – and I would like to acknowledge the key role that Dr. Timothy Jung and his team at Creative Augmented Realities Hub have played in this. But of course if AR is to fully play its role in the curriculum, it’s essential that it not get siloed as a tech subject or module.

AR’s potential as a pedagogical tool is one that offers very exciting prospects in tourism education. Take the typical tourism studies course which often has tourism geography as a building block. AR can be used to allow students to be more immersed in the task of understanding key knowledge sets. Using simple tracker based AR, maps can be brought to life for students – no longer do they have to rote learn the location of key mountain ranges – now they can discover them in an immersive, 3D way. The use of apps such as Augment allow this type of lower level learning to be done in a way that aids retention.

But as students progress through their course the emphasis on higher order learning typically increases. And here AR offers great potential. Indeed, AR is a technology that can help students to effectively create their own curriculum. Take a typical assessment connected with a field-trip – students are often given a discovery type sheet to
complete a series of questions based on their navigation of the field trip location. How much more involving it would be for them to create their own trail – one that can be accessed subsequently by other groups, their friends, or the general public. Apps such as iTagged are excellent at offering this type of collective social sharing dimension – indeed this aspect is one that can connect the learning experience with the students’ own lives. It can even be used on a marketing curriculum as a practical challenge for them to promote their own tours on social, digital and traditional channels.

Again, taking the ability to work in a group as a key generic skill, the authors think AR offers huge possibilities. WYSIWYG Augmented Reality tools such as Aurasma Studio are easy to use, allow collaborative cloud-based working. Students could be set the task of taking an existing heritage attraction and creating their own AR layers of information for it – alternative languages, demographic user groups, navigation points, and historic information can all be required of student groups. A local art gallery might be selected in addition to building generic skills of creativity, story-telling, languages, leadership and project management skills are ones that would certainly be facilitated. And as a by-product the students would certainly have developed more competencies in digital creation, including graphic design and video skill-sets.

How to get started?

The final part of this paper discusses how educators can operationalise AR in the classroom. A starting point is to have the right resources. Typically for AR to be integrated into the classroom there is a need for devices – at present this means tablets in practice. The costs of these are reducing hugely and the issue of whether the institution or the student pays looms large. In the absence of ubiquitous use of tablets by students, it seems to the authors that institutions will have to put these devices in their budget line – or of course we may see some of the larger ICT companies get involved in sponsorship type activity. In relation to the software side, as mentioned earlier there has been huge progress in the past couple of years in terms of easy to create AR tools. Among the companies that have a particular focus on educational AR apps with ease of use, or freemium models are Aurasma, DAQRI and AugmentedClass – the latter is a Spanish company with whom the authors have been working on a project for the Natural History Museum in Dublin. The collaborative, cloud-based, nature of these tools is particularly attractive in helping build the crucial soft skills of teamwork and project management. The final resource needed is of course educator’s commitment – this is a more general challenge in connecting with today’s digital natives. In this context, there is a need for us to explore the development of more ‘train the trainer’ type initiatives.

And the wider implications for digital media and marketing?

Much of that which we know about how people process information is essentially borrowed from the world of psychology and learning. For marketers looking to enhance their audiences with their brands, a really good starting point is to understand how a technology such as Augmented Reality can be integrated with brand experience - indeed in some instances has the potential to be the brand experience. All the evidence points to the a deeper and more meaningful engagement with brands where the user is immersed in the learning process – especially where they are engaged the process of creation or co-creation with brands. To conclude, we need more research to assess the impact of AR on learning outcomes; the technology is set to become a key enabler in the armoury of the tourism educator offering positive impacts at both curriculum design and pedagogy levels.
References:


I thought I would be all fancy and create a video for my post, but that was never going to work for an e-book. So here is a blog post.

One of the biggest challenges when helping a client with their Social Media efforts is that they want to jump in and make a bunch of noise with no clear plan. They are so obsessed copying their competition’s poor social media tactics that they forget to attach any meaningful Business KPIs to their Social Media efforts. And whilst great social media tactics are a key ingredient of a successful Social Media Strategy…………. Tactics do not equal a Strategy. Time for a thought provoking quote:

Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.” - Sun Tzu

According to Smart Insights 2015 survey 50% of business where using Digital Marketing tactics, but had no clear strategy in place to support their efforts.

In many ways having no social media strategy is as “bonkers”as setting up a business with no business plan. So what exactly is a Social Media Strategy and how can you develop one that will deliver results for your or your client’s business?

A social media strategy is a working plan that maps out the actions needed in order to achieve your business goals. Rather than “high five” yourself for getting a shed load of “likes” on your Facebook page assign real business KPIs to your Social Media efforts. A clear plan will also help employees and key stakeholders “buy” into your strategy, increase effectiveness and make it easier to measure your Social Media ROI.

So what should be in a Social Media Strategy?

In a nutshell clear objectives, a defined target audience, a structured content plan, agreed social media channels, an approach and budget for social advertising and detailed costings for all Social Media activities. Smart Insights have some brilliant resources for a company or consultant looking to develop and implement a Social Media Strategy. Check out their RACE model – Reach, Act, Convert, Engage

Enough about Smart Insights……here are my 10 steps to developing a Social Media Strategy that develops real business ROI:

1. Align with existing business goals – Look at your existing business goals and even your offline marketing and business efforts and make sure all Social Media efforts are complementing existing efforts and working towards achieving the same business goals. Like a good football team – social media working together with all your other business efforts will out perform independent efforts.

2. Set Objectives – What is the job of your Social Media efforts? What do you need to achieve from your efforts? Clear objectives will make everything you do measurable. Don’t be afraid of attaching ambitious “Sales” and “Lead Generation” objectives to your Social Media efforts. Make sure your Objectives are SMART ones. (They need to “Specific”, “Measureable”, “Attainable”, “Realistic” and have a “Time” frame that they need to be completed by.)
3. Identify Ideal customers, Advocates and Influencers – Be clear who your audience is and take some serious time out to understand what interests them. Make sure your content and advertising efforts focuses around their “needs and wants” rather than targeting them with a “self serving” sales pitch. You should also look at where your target audience are “hanging” out online and what conversations they are having and what content they are engaging with. This will help decide on what social platforms to use and what content to create. Many companies will create “Buyer Personas” to try to get a better understanding of their existing and prospective customers interests. In fact Salesforce Pardot have life sized cardboard cut outs of their customers throughout their office so staff are always thinking about their clients needs and wants. Check out Hubspot’s free persona template here

Savvy Marketers will not stop at listening to and identifying prospective and existing customers online, but will also spend time looking for influencers and brand advocates. Develop a plan to engage and collaborate with these advocates and influencers. With 90% of people trusting an endorsement from a friend or influencers over a brand message….Imagine the ROI you can get influencers and advocates share your content and champion our brand.

Some cool tools to identify influencers online include – buzzsumo.com, followerwonk and Klout.

4. Research Competition – Rather than follow the competition’s poor Social Media tactics……….analyze what they are doing. Look at what platforms they are on, what the they are posting, how big their online communities are, who is engaging with them, what influencers are talking about them etc. Look at what they are doing badly as well as what they are doing well. Now develop a plan that trumps their efforts. Hootsuite have a nice competitor analysis spreadsheet which you can download here

Some free tools to help you benchmark your Social Media activity against your competition include: Agorapulse’s Facebook Barometer - and Simply Measured social media tools.

5. Select channels and develop tactics – Remember it may be better to be on less social media channels and build a meaningful community rather than taking a “supermarket sweep” approach and try to be everywhere. Pick the right channels to achieve your Social Media goals and “implement like hell”. Most successful social media strategies will have a variety of content. Eg. Short videos, Images, text updates, website links etc. Some tactics that you may currently want to consider - Use images and GIFs on Facebook and Twitter, add links near the beginning of your updates, Use relevant trending hashtags in your updates (check out ritetag.com), create 15-30 second videos, post content when your fans/followers are most likely to see them, tag and mention influencers and advocates in updates, involve your target audience and encourage user generated content.

6. Create a Content Marketing Plan - Once you know what you are trying to achieve, who you are targeting and where you are going to “hang out” online, it is vital that you engage you’re your audience through great content. The content you create should be “valuable” and “useful” to them. So don’t fall into the trap of creating boring, self serving and too “salesly” content. Consistency is a vital part of a company’s content plan: Companies should know where they are posting to, how often they are posting and what type of content they are going to create. This is vital as a sporadic approach to social media does not yield results. A well-thought out Content Calendar is the
framework that helps many companies succeed in the social world. So open excel and start putting together a Social Media structure in place.

A few tools that may help craft your content include: Buffer’s new content calendar - https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-calendar (NB. Only works if you use Buffer to schedule or post content), Canva – to add text and even logos to your images, Pixabay – for quality non copyright imagery (of course - where possible use your own images for your social media updates), Feedly.com to find great third party content for inspiration or even to repost, Pocket for bookmarking great content, Grammarly – to ensure one’s posts are spellchecked and well structured and finally Coschedule’s Headline Analyzer to craft the right titles for your blog posts.

7. Have a plan for Social Ads – In 2016 creating great content is not enough you will need to invest in advertising to ensure your content reaches your desired target audience.

Social ads have become so advanced; you can now be “super” targeted and serve up the right ad, to the right person, at the right time on the right platform. What is also great here is that social ads are relatively inexpensive if done right.

Create three types of ads to generate ROI:

1. Ads to generate awareness
2. Ads to build a relationship
3. Ads to convert

Remember you need to build awareness and a rapport with your target audience before they are likely to convert into sales.

Ads that are proving very successful right now include Re-Marketing Ads on Facebook and Twitter, Video Ads on Facebook (check out the new Slideshow Ads), Facebook Unpublished/Dark Posts, Instagram Ads, Slideshare.net lead capture ads and Facebook and Twitter Lead Generation Ads.

If you are creating multiple ads on Facebook you may want to look at AdEspresso a tool to help you manage and optimise the ROI of your Facebook ads.

8. Set a Budget - Social Media is not free. So you need to set a clear budget for it. Some of the costs you should factor in include:

- Salaries (A staff member spending 40% of their day on Social Media should be factored in. So 40% of their salary needs to included in your Social Media costings).
- Social Ads – How much money are we going to factor in for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram ads etc?
- Tools – What 3rd party tools are we going to use in your social media marketing that require investment? e.g. Listening tools, scheduling tools, video production tools etc.
- Equipment – Do you need to invest money software or hardware for your Social Media efforts? e.g. a tablet or video recorder.
- Images – Do you need to buy copyright imagery?
- Outsourcing costs – Do you need to hire a digital agency or even a graphic designer from time to time for your social media activity?
- Crisis Management Fund - Do you need to have money in the kitty in case of a crisis? It is a good idea to have some spend available should a social media crisis break out.
9. Assign Roles and Take Action – Decide who in the company needs to be using Social Media and make sure everyone has a clearly defined job description and relevant training. Remember Social Media stretches well beyond the marketing department. Looks at the Sales team, the Customer service team, the HR & Recruiting team, the IT team etc. Develop a process for all communications relating to social media across different departments. Eg. If a customer service query comes in via the marketing twitter account how is that message passed on and tracked to the Social Customer Service team.

10. Measure and Refine - Be brave enough to listen to the data and ditch what does not work. A Social Media strategy will constantly evolve. There is no end point. Review your activity regularly. Set and stick to schedule. Use Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, Twitter Analytics etc to measure your Social Media ROI. That said if your Social Media Goal is sales don’t forget to focus on the money in the till;) If using Facebook ads make sure you use conversion tracking pixels to calculate the exact ROI of your ad campaigns.

Finally – the Social Media world is constantly changing and what works today may not work in the future. A Social Media strategy will require regular reviews and constant change. Today’s innovative strategy will become tomorrow’s dinosaur if you do not tweak and iterate.
Being a CEO is tough. And no, I’m not talking about cashflow, customers, employees, product or any of the other rational things that I have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. No, I’m talking about the one irrational thing that I can never escape from; the voice inside my head.

The same voice that questions and analyses every single thing that I do. A voice that debilitates me at times. A voice that don’t seem to have an “off” switch.

And so, I started to ask myself where did this voice come from? Why do I have it? And how in the name of God, can I turn it off?

A couple of weeks ago, I attended the Web Summit in Dublin. I walked around the RDS looking at early stage start-ups pitching for their lives all trying to disrupt something. Everybody was so busy disrupting, that if you weren't disrupting you were clearly wasting your time.

After an hour of being disrupted, I finally found a coffee shop. I sat down and ordered a hot chocolate. It was divine. It was probably the most disruptive thing that had happened to me all day.

On the train home, I read an article by David Heinemeier Hansson (Founder of Basecamp/37Signals) called “Reconsider”. In this article, David questions the modern day obsession with unicorns and the idea that we need to disrupt everything. We're no longer interested in building simple products, for simple customers, for simple money.

Nobody wants to sell a simple mug of hot chocolate anymore.

Why? Because we want to feel special.

We want to prove that we're better than everyone else. We want to believe that we're the main character of a very special story called “Life” and that everything in the world revolves around us. Creating a unicorn would prove this.

But deep inside my head, I have a constant fear about being found out. A fear that I'm just regular normal person and that I'm not special at all. A fear that I'm just plain deluded.

Feeding one's ego is probably the easiest short-term way of suppressing these fears. Essentially, if I can collect enough social trophies I can convince myself that I'm successful and that my perceived reality is not in fact a delusion.

But will this work in the long term? Do I need to ground it in something more tangible? Am I special? Am I normal? Am I deluded? Does it matter? Who cares?
Smart Cities Will Be Driven By Open Data – but how do we access disparate data sets.

There is great talk of intelligent sensors and IOT in helping deliver smart cities. The commonly used description of a smart city is one that uses digital technologies or information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance quality and performance of urban services, to reduce costs, resource consumption and to engage more effectively and actively with its citizens.

But what does this mean in reality for us citizens. The talk is of things like smart sensors on road and traffic lights that can be responsive to real traffic situations. That apparently instead of lights being set on traditional timed sequences they could be responsive to large traffic volumes and change the sequencing to improve traffic flow.

Street lights that would be dimmed if the streets are empty or the intensity increased if there are large volumes of people on the streets. A road with sensors that recognise the road temperature and communicate to your car to slow down.

These are wonderfully aspirational concepts. But how real and close are we to the delivery of such. I would argue like the self-ordering fridge these are aspirations that catch our imaginations but not the reality of where IOT and smart cities will deliver real visible change to us citizens.

Firstly, how much more will these ideas touch us personally and directly enhance the quality of our lives? These will become intangible and invisible to most of us in their impact. As we will normalise their outcomes. However significant the quantifiable benefits, they could and will potentially improve traffic flows marginally, improve safety but maybe frustrate us users as the ultimate gains are eroded by increasing road usage. But who will pay for the investment in these technologies to commercialise them?

The reality in my view is that the first phase of smart cities will be the collection and dissemination of information in an open source basis. As per open sources like android and IOS it will be the tech industry driven by commercial opportunities that will develop the real innovative solutions and not the municipalities. Just as Apple opened its eco systems to developers, which allowed the development of apps and brought usability to smartphones so will the opening up of data on our cities to developers allow for the creation of user based applications?
Let me expand upon this idea. Imagine a city where all of the travel data is available in open source data for any user FOC. Then imagine when stepping out of your front door in the morning you are told the actual travel times to your place of work by Car, Bicycle, Foot, Luas/Dart or Local bus, based on my location and real-time information. Now instead of having to listen to the radio or Traffic reports, identifying traffic exceptions and maybe estimating your travel times based on weather (i.e. rain) you can make a real-time choice or decisions on mode of travel based on real-time geo-located information. How interesting would this be for you or me, the municipality or other users if for example 50% of commuters discovered it was actually quicker to travel by bike or foot to their destination than by car or bus. Would this change behaviour? Absolutely. If city cycle paths were designed using information from the city bikes showing routes actually travelled across and through or cities rather than designed by engineers to fit into our urban spaces and left unused. Local Hospitals planned staffed and resourced according to usage data geographical location of users rather than arbitrary geographical defined borders and budgets/resourcing based on historical practices.

Would this transform our cities to enhance quality and performance of urban services? Yes, reduce costs and resource consumption, yes, engage us citizens more effectively and actively with our municipality’s infrastructure, very definitely yes.

But how do you collect information from disparate and often legacy systems such as water infrastructure, roads, buses, pedestrians or commuter trains etc. Firstly we will need thousands of sensors and data gathering points. Secondly we need to make this available in a common format in one source location. Or do we? We have some of this information already but in different formats: take traffic info it is in video, traffic flow and densities, speed etc, but is this gathered for bike and pedestrians? I argue no? But the reality is we can’t gather all this data in one common format from legacy systems never designed to communicate in a common language or common format into one large single searchable database. This task is too large and too cumbersome.

Alternatively, we need to look at the internet and how Google and Yahoo manage data and information on the WEB. They don’t store all websites and information in one large database in a common format. Instead, they make the web “Indexable” allowing searches in multiple ways defined not by the host Google but by us the user. This is how municipalities will and should be progressing with smart cities. Information is power. Once we have data in common searchable indexable formats we can use it to inform how we manage and control our cities. Technology companies will also develop innovative user-based solutions.
I recently had a meeting with a technology company who wanted to improve their profile and particularly interested in inbound/content marketing. As I listened to their CEO in the glass walled meeting room telling me about how dynamic and exciting he wanted to position the company, I could not help but notice the rows of glum faced employees, the bare walls and overall lack of personality. The words all made sense, they were on a journey and wanted dynamic people but some how it felt vacant.

The conversation quickly moved to what channels and approaches could be used and predictably Inbound and Content Marketing featured high. The company wanted to be like Dublin based Intercom and required training and content creation/editing to help them get there.

In the consulting world it is hard to resist taking the money but this had all the hallmarks of a doomed strategy. Content is expensive and hard to produce – even bad content. It can also be an agonising process if a company has not thought through the process (like tone of voice) and is trying to be something its clearly not.

For me the process works best when you begin further upstream with some thinking on the culture and possibly some change management. You can intellectually understand how the platforms work and word-smyth articles but it can be very short lived if the ethos of the company does not match as the force of culture will eventually win.

Culture can be a very subtle and hard to grasp concept. In the services arena Leonard Berry talks about culture being “Shared perceptions of what is important in an organization, and shared values and beliefs of why those things are important”. Staff knowing why they are producing content and sharing insights and how it can be positive for them and the company in a way that reflects their internal values is a very powerful catalyst in uniting people in a common culture. Considering the effort it takes to create good engaging content and that most companies/individuals tend to hoard information it takes strong leadership to re-orientate people especially when results might not be instant.

Equally important is how employees internalise a culture. Christopher Love in Service Marketing advocated that
a previous life he was a secondary school teacher.

He is a graduate member of the PRII and MII and a judge on many online awards

Contacting Eoin Kennedy:

Eoin blogs on www.eoinkennedy.ie, can be found on twitter at @eoink or on LinkedIn or you can email him.

Employees rely heavily on their perceptions of what is important by noting what the company and their leaders do, not so much what they say. Employees gain their understanding of what is important through the daily experiences they have with the firm's human resource, operations, and marketing practices and procedures.

In short senior management need to write, share, motivate, be open, evangelise and lead (in this instance in creating great content) if they want to inspire the rest of the company to follow suit. This is time consuming task and requires specific skillsets, energy and belief but those that do it with conviction can harness lost water cooler conversations in to powerful marketing tools.

A content led culture also relies on customer centric view and those who intimately understand their target markets find this transition easier as they create content that resonates.

Once this culture is in place and nourished great content marketing is easier and more sustainable.

The choice of Intercom as the company they aspired to be like was interesting, one that many people admire and who produce great content. It helps when they have one of the country's leading technology writers on staff (demonstrating their commitment) but their journey began much earlier.

Intercom have a open culture where the most senior staff are happy to share insights, opinions and things they have learnt – some of it being at best tangential to their core business. Posts from senior management that sit along side new recruits are genuinely useful and shareable. The engrained culture of sharing is led from the top and I am pretty sure reflects internal activities and an atmosphere of openness. Faking culture even appears on topics they publicly discussed in a post on You Cannot Fake Culture.

As I left the technology company mentioned at the start, amid errie silence, my gut feeling was a pattern I had seen before. Sheer will and resourcing would propel this content journey so far but would always feel forced and eventually swimming against the tide would take it toll. Fostering some internal sessions on finding champions and management leading by sharing insights and company vision would not alone gain buy in but slowly create a new culture.

Knowing who you are is a better starting point than trying to convince others that you are something you are not.