



2011 Continuing Marketing Education Recap

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Last Friday, I attended the 2011 Continuing Marketing Education program hosted by the Legal Marketing Association's Los Angeles chapter. I was on the planning committee and sponsored the day-long event at the Beverly Hills Hotel. The theme of the event centered around attracting and retaining clients and the sessions focused on client service, business development, public relations and technology, including social media.

We were also treated to a presentation by Simon Mainwaring, who gave us insight to what consumer products and services companies are doing to attract customers. He said that we have never been in a more combative climate in terms of competition with other companies. And, as a result of social media, we can all take advantage of the resources that will help us to better compete.

In what seems like a breakdown in our society, education system, political structure and economy, Simon reminded us that customers truly want a better world, not just better widgets. And, he uses his latest book "We First" to discuss how to use social media to build consumer goodwill, loyalty and profit while driving sustainable change in the business world.

His roadmap for making this happen was not complicated and not even new. But it was a great reminder, even in Public Relations, about what great brands go through when determining how to better communicate about their products or services.

Success is defined by clarity of purpose, he said. To do that, craft a manifesto, which is the compass that will guide you, internally and externally in what you are doing. And, write a vision statement. Commit to a purpose and align those goals internally so that everyone, including staff, is speaking the same language.

Simon says the future of profit is purpose. Many well-known consumer brands provide great case studies that align their products with great causes and as a result, many have developed incredible followings. Examples include Nike, Coke, Pepsi and Pampers.

A few years ago, I judged the LMA's Your Honor Awards. I was shocked that we had less than five entrants to the Community Relations category and a few of the firms that entered thought their pro bono cases were a part of giving back to their communities. But, why haven't law firms followed in the footsteps of their clients and gotten involved in projects "with a purpose?" Doing so is a great way to take your mission into the community and differentiate your law firm's brand, Simon said. In fact, he said, brands must become "community celebrants not celebrities."

Furthermore, brands need to own an emotional idea that is category defining, he said. How many law firms have defined a category?

My favorite quote of the day from Simon: "Don't lead better. Risk better." And, how many law firms are willing to do that?