

The 4 Ps of the Internet: Personal, Private, Professional, and Public

Posted on Monday, April 13th, 2009 at 7:00 am and is filed under [Highlights](#), [Social Networking and Web 2.0](#).



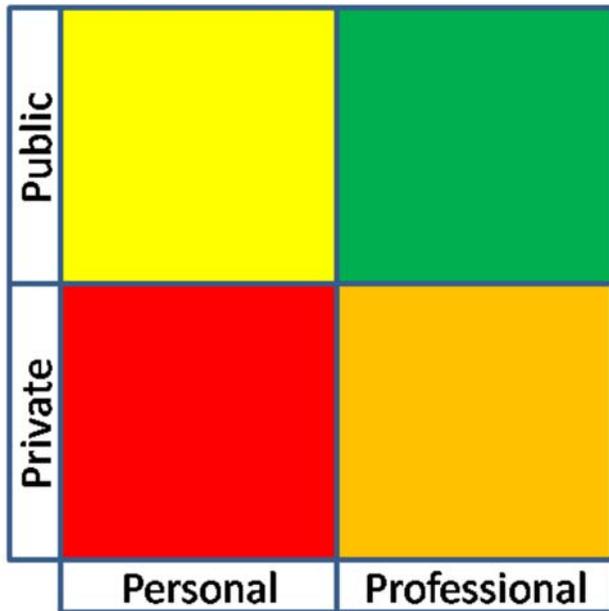
I often hear the challenge of using the social internet as struggling with the balance of social (or personal) information and professional information. This never seemed to frame the issues correctly for me. Was it really one or the other?

So I started thinking about the 4 Ps: Personal, Private, Professional, and Public.

These seemed to be the terms that most people talked about. Many people struggle with the balance of what information they make available on the internet. Some of this was information published through personal choice. Some of this was information published because it is public information.

If you are a professional, you are marketing yourself and want some of your professional career public. Conversely, there are aspects of your social life that you want to be private. But there are many personal things you would want to be public and some professional things that you would want to be private. There was a struggle with balance, but was it really one against the other.

So I sat down with the 4 Ps and tried to draw out my thoughts to see if I could change this analysis. I came up with this drawing:



There is the balance of professional versus personal and another balance of private versus public. With any item of information you need to evaluate which area it falls into. Public and professional information is in the green zone and can go right out there. Meanwhile the personal and private information is in the red zone and you want to hold on tight to it.

So what goes in the yellow zone? An example for me is my kids. I often talk about The Son and The Daughter, but rarely use their actual names. I put up a few pictures of them but in more limited location.

What about the orange zone? I am sure everyone has some black marks in their professional career that they want to keep out of the public eye. (Not me of course!) If you are a lawyer and have a disciplinary action against

you, that may be public knowledge. You may not want to publicize it.
(Avvo does!)

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What do you think of this analysis?



Tags: [4 Ps](#)

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9 RESPONSES TO "THE 4 PS OF THE INTERNET: PERSONAL, PRIVATE, PROFESSIONAL, AND PUBLIC"

1.  [Sadalit Van Buren](#)

[April 13, 2009 at 8:49 am \(Edit\)](#)

Doug, well done! I've struggled with this too, and it does indeed go beyond just two categories. Your matrix expresses it very well. The Yellow Zone creates the loose connections that help professionals work better together by finding common ground outside of work topics. Will you be posting to Slideshare? Would be great there, maybe with some text in the boxes to give examples for each quadrant.

[Reply](#)

#536



o [Doug Cornelius](#)

[April 13, 2009 at 9:40 am \(Edit\)](#)

Great thought about adding it SlideShare, so I added it there:

<http://www.slideshare.net/dougcornelius/the-4-ps-of-the-internet>

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#539

2.  [Ann Lee Gibson](#)

[April 13, 2009 at 8:50 am \(Edit\)](#)

Doug, thanks for this contribution. I think your model is so sensible and simple that it's brilliant. The most useful models are just this simple. I'm sure yours will guide many conversations.

[Reply](#)

#537



o [Doug Cornelius](#)

[April 13, 2009 at 9:41 am \(Edit\)](#)

Thanks for your thoughts. I have to admit that the use of colors came from the proximity of the Easter holiday.

[Reply](#)

#540

3.  [Susan Cartier Liebel](#)

[April 13, 2009 at 7:57 pm \(Edit\)](#)

This was a nice chart to set up. Any extreme in 'social' media no good but there is a fine balance based upon your own personality. I do not post much of anything about my son because of the very 'public' nature of the internet and I'm not sure I have the right to violate his privacy even though I am his parent. Other than saying I have a son, or chatting about his tooth falling out...that's about it.

Professionally, one must have a certain amount of transparency or the 'social' part of social media doesn't work too well. Others I talk to say,

'I'm very private' and they fail to grasp you can't be opaque or it works against your efforts.

Thanks for the effort and giving perspective.

[Reply](#)

#542



4. [Steve Matthews](#)

[April 14, 2009 at 5:56 pm \(Edit\)](#)

The four-quadrant approach makes a lot of sense. Now, if you can blur the colors between each quadrant into little 'grey areas', then you might have it perfected. :)

Well done Doug!

[Reply](#)

#546



5. [Alin Wagner-Lahmy](#)

[April 15, 2009 at 9:51 am \(Edit\)](#)

This is great mapping of these 4 dimensions. Just like Steve here, I am curious if there is a clear distinction between the 4 areas or some 'blurry' bits, especially where the personal overlaps the professional - like Scoble et al blogging about their personal experience and thoughts in Microsoft's Channel 9, or updating one's Facebook Status talking about work and getting replies from colleagues or referrals from your school there.

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#557



6. [Doug Cornelius](#)

[April 15, 2009 at 10:01 am \(Edit\)](#)

Steve and Alin -

I agree the lines between the four sections are blurry. There is no clear distinction. I tried to get the colors to fade into each other, but my graphic skills are limited.

The main point I was trying to get across was that it the analysis is not between two factors, it is between more.

There is also a third dimension of what information appears in what location. For example, you may put more personal information in Facebook and less in LinkedIn. Again my graphic skills were too limited to pull that off.

Lastly, the boxes are not an equal size for everyone. The wife puts everything into red and orange. Her picture is on her firm's website because they made her and she accidentally signed up for LinkedIn.

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#558



7. [Christoph Schmalz](#)

[April 15, 2009 at 4:25 pm \(Edit\)](#)

Doug, I like your analysis and drawing! I agree with you and the other commenters that the lines between those quadrants are blurred in reality. Maybe you should try to replicate the drawing using a Venn diagram?

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#567

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