

TUESDAY, APRIL 6, 2010

Recap of Social Fresh Portland: Real Facebook and Twitter Results Panel

The first session of [Social Fresh, Portland](#) that I attended was "Real Facebook and Twitter Results Panel." Since I know many law firms are hesitant to get involved with Facebook and Twitter, the comments from this panel might be especially useful for you in evaluating whether these platforms will work for your firm. The panel featured [Justin Kistner](#) of [Webtrends](#), [Carri Bugbee](#) of [Big Deal PR](#), [Kevin Tate](#) of [StepChange](#), and moderator and panelist [Shauna Causey](#) from [Comcast](#).

After each of the panelists introduced themselves, they focused on their experiences using Facebook and Twitter for themselves and their clients. Tate said, about starting a Facebook page, that a company can often learn as much from its failures as its successes. Kistner agreed with this, saying that his company had thought about starting a new blog, separate from their original one, and quickly realized that it would make more sense to leverage their existing web presence and audience, because they already have put their trust in you. But in addition to thinking about the external audience, when deploying a social media strategy, it's just as important to bring your internal audience in and show them the value.

Tate used the [Travelocity gnome campaign on Facebook](#) as an example of a successful use of social media to engage the audience (the panelists agreed that audience engagement should be a key goal when using a social media tool like Facebook or Twitter). Facebook users could become a "Fan" of the Travelocity gnome, and were able to interact by voting on where he would go next. This was very successful and continues to see fan engagement. Tate pointed out that once people feel that they have ownership of something, you have to be careful about taking it away - an example of this from my own experience was when a Facebook user created a Fan page for the [Norwegian curling team's pants](#). The page was not endorsed or created by

the team, but during the Olympics, it suddenly grew very popular and attracted a lot of fans and activity. Facebook realized that the page wasn't created by the team (even though they had contacted the user who started it and invited him to their next match) and they took it down, citing their fan page rules. But because so many fans were attached to the page, they launched a campaign to get Facebook to bring it back. After a few hours, Facebook relented because of the outcry. So even though the Norwegian curling team didn't start the page, the fans were invested in it and didn't want to lose it. Tate also pointed out that even when a brand creates the Facebook page, the fans really own it and define the content and interaction.

Although there have been clear successes like these in Facebook fan pages, Tate mentioned that there is a dark side to fan engagement, like the [Nestle scandal](#). Bugbee cited this as a clear example of the need for crisis management. She said that when a company has an issue such as Nestle did, it needs to be sent up to the C-suite immediately and not handled by the community relations manager or whoever is responsible for the page. Not all fan engagement will be positive, so it's important to have a plan in place for dealing with any negative comments or coordinated attacks, like Greenpeace's. However, this kind of interaction can also be an opportunity.

Causey talked about how crisis management has been effective for Comcast in terms of their customer service - she said they have been working to be proactive by notifying customers through Twitter when they have an outage. She said that they took an opportunity where a number of people were initially upset by an outage and turned it into a success by keeping them informed and updated, which their customers appreciated. Using this as an example, Causey said that it shows how our jobs have totally changed - we have to be online and accessible, because the public is and expects companies to be.

Because social media is so ubiquitous (Social media is now the fourth most popular online activity, ahead of email), companies need to be aware that the conversation about them is taking place online, whether they're involved or not. Many people feel the same way that Kistner does, that emails make him think that someone needs his

attention for a long time, and they need him to spend a long time replying to them, while social media tools allow for more immediate, shorter communications. But there is also a drawback to the immediacy of this form of communication - people often underestimate how visible they are to everyone all the time, and react to what's happening, instead of carefully considering their responses and posts.

The panelists then talked a little bit about evaluating whether a social media platform is effectively working for you and your company. Tate said that the acquisition of Facebook fans has become the new metric for customer acquisition, though Bugbee later pointed out that while the number of followers may be important to some people, engagement is key. Kistner said that the first step is to build an online audience by getting fans/followers and using competitors numbers to estimate where you should be. Stage 2 is learning how to leverage them. He suggested giving a coupon out on Facebook or Twitter to encourage them to engage. For law firms, coupons wouldn't be a viable suggestion, but you can identify other pieces of information that the firm could provide to those who sign up for a newsletter or provide their email addresses for a future communication, like a relevant white paper.

The panel gave some advice on how to use social media effectively, emphasizing the importance of doing so by saying that when someone becomes your "fan" or follows you on Twitter, they've given you the right to be in their attention stream. Causey cautioned not to talk about yourself all the time, but to be generous. The panel recommended that for every tweet about your blog or your company, you should have 19 tweets that aren't about the blog or company. Kistner said that in terms of Facebook fan pages, you want to keep it simple because having too many pages can be confusing to the audience, who may think they've already "joined" but aren't getting the information most relevant to them.

Someone in the audience asked how the panelists have gotten buy-in from management. Causey suggested setting them up with LinkedIn profiles as a first step,

and then showing them how to use it. She also pointed out that showing them Facebook ads, and how they can be very targeted, is something that the C-suite can understand and buy into. When asked about the value of social media, one way to answer is to ask if they've done studies on whether they should use phones in the office, or email. The answer is no, so why question social media's value as a tool?

The panel finished up with some key takeaways including not to fragment online efforts, but to keep them simple and value your followers. Causey said that social media should be an everyday part of your business, and to get internal buy-in, you can highlight articles written about the company's social media efforts. The panelists agreed that these tools can be valuable for your company when used and leveraged effectively.