

Making the Time for Social Media

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WHENEVER I PRESENT on social media, I am invariably asked, “Where do I find the time to regularly participate?” It’s a good question. To paraphrase Steven Covey, “I make the time.”

Still, I found keeping up with social media to be difficult at first. Over time, I’ve developed a process



Social media has transformed the way we communicate. This column discusses the intricacies and ramifications that social media has on our everyday personal and professional lives. Suggestions for topics are welcome. Email me at rich.maggiani@solari.net.

that works for me (most days, at least). Before I get into details, let’s back up a bit to consider the larger perspective.

First, let’s talk rationale. Why engage at all? Two big reasons. One: social media is one of the primary uses of the Internet; it has exploded over the past few years.

And two: your engagement can enrich your professional career.

Second, let’s talk strategy and answer a most relevant question in communication: Where are you going? Define the overriding goal for your social media presence, then make sure that everything conforms to this goal. For example, because I am an independent communication consultant, my goal is to be perceived as an enlightened, knowledgeable expert. I know this is a lofty goal, but it certainly gives me something to continually pursue. In that respect, George Bernard Shaw has motivated me when he wrote, “I like a state of continual becoming, with a goal in front and not behind.”

Now that the foundation is set, let’s talk process. I spend at most 20 minutes each morning on social media. It’s time that I can more easily fit into my schedule if I do it first.

When I open my browser, I double-click a folder I created that bookmarks my pages on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and my Toward

Humanity blog. This causes each bookmark to open in its own tab. You can set up your folder anyway you want (for instance, Europeans might want their Xing page to open). I could have set my browser to open these pages on start up, but I only want to open them once, and creating the folder enables me to control when they open. Once open, I spend some time on each one.

There’s so much to do on these social media sites; here’s a list of ways to engage on the three that I use most often: LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. Choosing different ones every day allows you to diversify and actually is more fun.

LinkedIn

You can appreciably enhance your experience on LinkedIn by adding



applications. Currently, I use Reading List, Events, Polls, WordPress, SlideShare, and Tweets. I will refer

to these in the list below. Consider these as well as all the other LinkedIn applications. (While I don’t subscribe to it yet, I’m intrigued by Google Presentation.)

- ▶ Review your profile summary and consider editing it to ensure its accuracy.
- ▶ Write an update and share it on Twitter (the first 140 characters, at least).
- ▶ Review the People You May Know section and invite five to connect. Or search for people to invite as connections.
- ▶ Scroll through your All Updates feed and find something that inspires you. Then do something: Like it, leave a comment, send a message, share it; click a link in the entry and investigate it. If the entry was also tweeted: retweet it, favorite it, or reply to it. Or click the hashtag (if there is one) and check out those tweets. Doing just this can easily consume your 20 minute allocation.

- ▶ Write a recommendation for someone.
- ▶ Ask for a recommendation for one of the entries under Experience and Education in your profile. Consider working toward at least one recommendation for each entry.
- ▶ Join a group (or leave a group you are no longer interested in).
- ▶ Click a link under your LinkedIn Today headlines; read and comment on the post. Today's interesting headline was: "What To Say on LinkedIn When You've Been Laid Off."
- ▶ Review the people who have viewed your profile recently. Consider connecting with them.
- ▶ Follow a company or engage with one of the companies that you already follow.
- ▶ Add a book to your reading list; be sure to write a comment to accompany the book. Watch someone's reading list in your network. Check out a connection's reading list. Of course, if you have written a book, add it!
- ▶ Browse the events of your connections, comment on one, RSVP to one (as Attending or Interested). Today, in my profile, there is a free Webinar: "Better PDFs with FrameMaker-to-Acrobat TimeSavers." I'm interested!



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- ▶ Add an event that you are planning to attend or present at in the future.
- ▶ Check out a presentation on SlideShare. Comment on it, recommend it, favorite it.
- ▶ Answer a question; ask a question.
- ▶ Start a discussion in one of your groups.
- ▶ Read and comment on a group discussion. (You can tell a lot about someone by what they write in their comments, so consider your words and tone.) Like the discussion. Follow the author if you find them particularly provocative. With enough activity in a group, you can become one of the group's weekly top influencers.
- ▶ Peruse the promotions in a group; see if there are any that interest you. (Not all groups have a Promotions tab.) Again, comment on it, like it, follow the author. Or post your own promotions.

Twitter

Get the most out of your Twitter experience by carefully choosing



the people you follow—unless, of course, you want an audience for your tweets, then you probably want to get as many followers as you can. Just make sure that you balance the number of people you follow with those that follow you.

And, consider this division of your tweets: one-third about your industry; one-third about tech comm and your company; one-third about you.

- ▶ Tweet something every day. You can get ideas by reading what others tweet. I get tweet fodder from various email lists I subscribe to plus STC's *News & Notes*.
- ▶ Tweet about what you are reading (for example, an *Intercom* article or column), what you have learned, what you are doing so long as it is important to your followers (such as a conference you are attending, or a webinar or presentation you attended).

- ▶ Include an appropriate hashtag on your tweets if you want: *#techcomm* and *#stcorg* are good ones to use. Use *#stc12* for tweets concerning the 2012 Summit in Chicago.
- ▶ Find and follow ten people whose tweets would fit your goals.
- ▶ Tweet an inspiring quote.
- ▶ Scan your Twitter Timeline and retweet something interesting.
- ▶ Reply to a tweet or send a direct message to its author.
- ▶ Create a list and add people to it. This makes it easier to follow the tweets from a certain group of people that you decide.
- ▶ Follow someone else's list for a while and read their tweets.

Facebook

While I use LinkedIn and Twitter almost exclusively for business and professional endeavors, I use



Facebook mainly for personal issues. So why include Facebook as part of my professional social media presence? It gives

me an avenue for pursuing a personal part of my life. And besides, even with Facebook's privacy settings, in reality, everything you post can be viewed some way or another. I "friend" a select group of people for my Facebook account, and certainly enjoy their repartee. Besides, Facebook enables me to have a bit of fun.

- ▶ Update your status. Think about doing it every day.
- ▶ Add a couple of new friends.
- ▶ Scroll through your News Feed and share items of interest. (I particularly enjoy this.)
- ▶ Add a new photo or two.
- ▶ Post on a friend's page.
- ▶ Ask a question.
- ▶ Post an event.

Of course, there is a lot more you can do, but this list ought to keep you busy. Choose a few to do everyday. And reap the benefits of actively engaging in social media. ■