

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Mark W. McClennan, APR

Knowledge: Public Relations' Treasured Currency

To prepare for a speech I was giving at Syracuse University this past month on social media, I reviewed what had been said about that topic and about related topics in the past.

That led me to re-read the *Victorian Internet* by Tom Standage. It is a great book that highlights the similarities between the explosion of the Internet and the explosion of the telegraph in the mid 1800s and the impact it had on society. Two comments from the book really stood out in my mind.

Wise pundits of the day proclaimed:

- We are deluged with too much information
- Newspapers must submit to destiny and go out of business

Those pundits were wrong then and they are wrong now. Knowledge and information are power, and only by learning more and sharing it can we truly have a significant, long term impact on society.

The two guest columns in this month's newsletter each deal with the topic of knowledge in different ways, but as PR professionals our quest for knowledge and understanding needs to be broad, unceasing, and relentless.

-Contd. on page 2

SOCIAL MEDIA & TRADITIONAL PR – AN EVOLUTION, NOT A REVOLUTION

Tony Sapienza and Todd Van Hoosear

Citizen journalism. Buzz marketing. Consumer-generated content. Mashups. We might not be sure what to call it, but we all know that it is impacting how we do business as PR professionals. The change is not just in *who* we're reaching out to—more "new media" than "old media" these days—it's in *how* we reach out to them, and how we as PR professionals do our daily jobs.

These changes have frequently been described as "revolutionary" in nature, and to some extent this is true. Many long-held beliefs and practices have had to fall by the wayside as the PR profession adjusts to the new communications landscape.

Transparency is the order of the day in the social media world, and if you believe the blogosphere,

-Contd. on Page 2

In this edition:

From the President – Pg 1
- Mark McClennan

Social Media & Traditional PR –
An Evolution, Not a Revolution
– Pg 1
- Tony Sapienza and Todd Van
Hoosear, Topaz Partners

Web Analytics Help Tally Up PR
Successes - Pg 1
- Elizabeth Goldsmith

In the Limelight: 'PR Tactics'
Profiles Patrick Pollino – Pg 4

2007 Poker Tourney Recap – Pg 5

2007-2008 Scholarship Grant
Program – Pg 6

WEB ANALYTICS HELP TALLY UP PR SUCCESSES

Elizabeth Goldsmith

Traditionally it's been a challenge to show how public relations efforts contribute to the bottom line. Over the years, agencies have come up with many ways to measure the effectiveness of their efforts. These include counting clips or placements, reporting on "impressions", conducting "voice share" studies, or tracking changes in audience awareness or public opinions using surveys.

Ultimately, the most accurate way to quantify the effectiveness of public relations is to interact with your target audience and track their behavior over time. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this is using Web-based tools and tracking systems.

Web site analytics make it possible to quantify the success of your customer interactions, and then allow you leverage that data to improve the overall effectiveness of your outreach.

-Contd. on Page 3

From the President – Contd. from Pg 1

That is one of the reasons I am so heartened by the amazing turnout for the *Boston Globe* panel. Despite the buzz around new media, Twitter, and citizen journalism, traditional media will always be important and have a place.

Hopefully at PRSA Boston we are helping you increase your knowledge of issues facing public relations, giving you access to best practices to enable you to do your jobs more effectively, and promoting an environment where you can collaborate with other members to expand your knowledge. If we can do something better, let me know at www.prsaboston.blogspot.com.

I want to end my April letter by tying this all back to my talk at Syracuse. The University's motto is *Suos Cultores Scientia Coronat*. Loosely translated it means: Knowledge Crowns Those Who Seek Her.

It doesn't matter if you are new to the profession or have been doing PR for 30 years. Let's continue seeking. It's how we will all get better. I look forward to making the journey with all of you.

Social Media & Traditional PR – An Evolution, Not a Revolution – contd. from Pg 1

this is another revolutionary concept for PR agencies and corporate communications professionals alike. But most PR practitioners would argue this point. Sure, the corporate tone of voice has become more casual, but while this particular change might be difficult for some companies, it's not the revolution some are calling it.

Many of us on the bleeding edge of social media public relations have been fortunate to be able to dive head first into the new media waters, becoming the social media evangelists in our agencies and organizations—preaching a new way to reach our publics. But we cannot afford to forget that while use of these new communication tools implies requires organizations to change how they communicate, ultimately, they are still tools—means to an end, but not the end.

The “end” has not changed—it is still, for most companies, revenue growth, and for most PR people, relationship building and coverage. The old mantra of “if you build it they will come” works only in the very early days of any particular new technology lifecycle. Having a blog for the sake of having a blog in today's world is foolish. Tomorrow, the same will

be true of podcasts. The day after, videocasts. Our job as public relations professionals in 2007 is to understand how to use social media tools in an ethical and effective manner to achieve the same goals we needed to reach back in 2000 and before.

When done successfully, social media public relations is nothing more than an extension of traditional PR—the same basic principles apply, we just have to take them a little more seriously. The tools we use have changed dramatically over the years, but the principles with which we should apply to them have in fact changed very little. To give you an example, the PRSA Member Code of Ethics core principle, as stated in 2000, was as follows:

Protecting and advancing the free flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making in a democratic society.

How might the code of ethics be updated to reflect the realities of social media? The only major change might be adding a reference to speed. Reading on, the 2000 PRSA Member Code of Ethics states that members shall:

...[p]reserve the integrity of the process of communication; [b]e honest and accurate in all communications; [a]ct promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the practitioner is responsible; and [p]reserve the free flow of unprejudiced information...

Trimmed down to leave out the reference to gift giving, this reads like a check list of a successful social media practice.

This is not to say that we as PR professionals don't have work to do to succeed in this brave new world. We have to learn these new technologies and understand how they can help our companies and clients meet their business and PR objectives. We must strive to understand the ethical and practical implications of our actions. But we must not lose sight of the forest for the trees—while ignoring the

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Contact the editor at:
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business drivers behind a social media initiative is not quite as dangerous to your company as ignoring the written and unwritten rules of social media, it is just as dangerous to your budget.

Today's successful PR professional may spend less time on the phone than yesterday's star, but relationships are as important as always—if not more so. The tools are different, but the principles remain the same. As a whole, the PR profession is evolving quite successfully to adjust to these new tools—to the new world of social media. The tools may seem revolutionary, but the changes we're making are clearly evolutionary, thanks to the strong foundation we set for ourselves.

If you haven't had the time to learn these new technologies, don't give up hope. The hard part isn't learning how to use social media. The hard part is aligning your use of these tools with your clients' and companies' businesses, finding the right tool for the right job, and maintaining your ethical standards in the process—a challenge that hasn't changed in more than 100 years.

Tony Sapienza's background includes agency, corporate communications and journalism experience. He has helped a broad range of clients take advantage of the public relations opportunities resulting from the growing influence of blogs, podcasts, newsgroups, message boards, forums and other online media.



Todd Van Hoosear heads Topaz's Buzz Media and Online Communications (BMOC) practice. A founding member of the Social Media Club (SMC), Todd helps both his agency and its clients understand the impact that social media tools including blogs, podcasts, video and wikis have on PR practices.



Web Analytics Help Tally Up PR Successes – contd. from Pg 1

Unfortunately many PR practitioners and companies are not yet tapping into this powerful tool. While many companies do monitor their Web sites, fewer look at the with an eye to how it can be used to improve communications. Unfortunately, in some

companies, the Public Relations staff isn't even involved with the content of the Web site!

One of the first steps is for PR practitioners to routinely review the analytics for their company's or client's Web site. By looking at this data, you can establish a baseline understanding of your Web traffic -- where your visitors come from, how many of them find the site of enough value to return, which content holds the most interest and how many pages the typical viewer visits. With this information in hand, you can start to configure your most important content to best accommodate your visitors' viewing habits.

For example, on one site I monitor, it became clear that the most frequently visited section of the site was the FAQ section. As a result, we started to format our most important messages as FAQs, introducing them on a weekly basis. From the FAQs we provided links to other sections of the site which provided more detailed answers. Although that content had existed on the site previously, we saw much higher readership of those in-depth pages after using this technique. This approach was validated by measuring readership over time.

Knowing which pages are most frequently read on a Web site provides valuable feedback about what's important to your visitors. Sometimes, companies are surprised by what their customers and prospects are reading . . . and which pages don't get much attention. If visitors are not landing on specific pages that content might need to be recast or repositioned in ways that more closely align with how users navigate through the site. For example, I have a client that was amazed that many of their visitors primarily read pages that provided what they considered to be "old news" about their technology. In fact, it pointed to the fact that many in the industry still needed more education. As a result, we "beefed up" this section of the site to meet this demand.

Monitoring referring URLs gives you an idea of how people are finding your site – are they going to you directly? From search engines? Or, are they coming from on-line publications, Wikipedia, or links from other companies sites. Once you know where people learn about your company, you can start to increase awareness by adding information on sites that should offer a pathway to your Web site. For example, placing reciprocal links on the sites of your partners or affiliates, including your company in on-line directories, and building more hypertext links into your press releases and newsletters can both increase your web traffic and boost your search engine ranking.

Once you have a baseline of how people are using a particular site, you can use other Web-based tools to help drive traffic and/or build awareness. Almost every PR practitioner issues press releases, but not everyone builds in hypertext links to the products or services that they are promoting. People don't want to be linked to the home page of a company Web site; they want to go straight to the information that interested them. Keep the "three click" rule in mind; if someone doesn't find what they want in three clicks or less, they are likely to click over to a competitor's site.

E-newsletters are very effective tools for both disseminating information and learning from your customers. Unlike printed publications, with an e-newsletter, you can tell your client how many people have opened each issue and even dial down to who has read which articles. With this type of information, you are able to identify which topics interest readers the most, segment interest by salesperson or territory, and query readers about their concerns by adding in short surveys. Typically I recommend hosting the newsletter on the client Web site, so that also serves the purpose of driving more traffic there.

The information that you can glean from tracking Web-based metrics is eye-opening. Not only do you gain hard data that quantifies the current success of your public relations initiatives, but it provides the feedback you need to continually improve.

Elizabeth Goldsmith is President of GoldsmithPR in Lincoln, Mass. In addition to more traditional public relations services, she offers counseling to agencies and corporate clients on leveraging the information obtained through Web-based metrics through Message-Metrics, a subsidiary company.

**PRSA Boston and Publicity Club
of New England Program
April 23, 2007**

**“Breakfast with *The Boston Globe*
Editors”**

**THIS EVENT IS SOLD OUT!
PLEASE VISIT
<http://www.prsaboston.org> for
more details**

IN THE LIMELIGHT.....

‘PR Tactics’ Profiles Patrick Pollino



Patrick Pollino, APR, Fellow PRSA, is profiled by Sarah Knowles of *PR Tactics Magazine* in the March 2007 edition of the magazine.

Pat was the distinguished recipient of the 2006 Beacon Award for Lifetime Achievement in Public Relations.

Read the article and get some valuable insights into the PR profession from Pat's interview with Sarah Knowles in the March 2007 edition of *PR Tactics*.

2007 Poker Tourney Recap – An Evening of Fun for a Good Cause



The winner and his winning hand: Jon Siegal, Swartz Communications



Winners proudly hold up their trophies. Left to Right: Dan Evans (PR Newswire) George DeTores (Best Corporate Player, MultiVu) Jon Siegal (Champion, Schwartz Communications) Tim Whitman (Best Agency Player, Schwartz Communications) Mark W. McClennan, APR (President PRSA Boston, Schwartz Communications)



The final table (from bottom left clockwise) Patrick Richardson (Schneider), Joe Pacheco (Schwartz), Jess Fiorelli (Schwartz), Tim Whitman (Schwartz), David Weiner (PR Newswire) Chris Poisson (Schwartz), George DeTorres (MultiVu), Mystery man (sorry), Peter (the dealer), Jon Siegal (Schwartz), Darlene Hollywood (HollywoodPR)

More than fifty PR professionals came together for the First PRSA Boston/PR Newswire Charity Poker Tournament. The tournament was a great success and a lot of fun.

There were a lot of new faces, and many different agencies were represented. There was a strong contingent from Schwartz Communications, with Racepoint, Topaz, Text 100, LP&P, Schneider, EmergePR, Horn Group and other agencies and independent practitioners well represented. Somewhat lesser represented was the corporate segment of our industry, but we hope to get of these folks to participate next time.

The food was plentiful, the drinks were good and the poker was fast and furious. It was a great chance to network and have fun.

The event started at 6:45 PM and wrapped up by 10:30 PM. Players came back from the brink numerous times, a straight flush, first time poker players making it to the top twenty and lots of laughs.

Most importantly, due to this event, the PRSA Boston Scholarship can now be \$2,000 for a deserving college student. Thank you for all your support - and special thanks to our sponsor - [PR Newswire](#), they do a great job. Without their support, the event would not have been possible. Thanks also to the Waltham Elks for letting PRSA Boston hold the event on their premises.



Announcements

PRSA BOSTON ANNOUNCES 7TH ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP GRANT PROGRAM FOR COMMUNICATIONS STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Boston chapter is accepting applications for its 2007-2008 Scholarship Grant Program, which provides financial support – on the basis of financial need and academic merit – to worthy college students or researchers in the communications field.

Grant Amount: \$2,000

Undergraduate and graduate students attending a college or university in eastern Massachusetts are eligible, as are individuals conducting communications or public relations research. Additionally, the grant can be used by a student working in an unpaid internship at a nonprofit organization.

The winner of the 2006-2007 grant, Nicole Pignatello, is a Bentley College junior who is majoring in information design and corporate communications, with a concentration in public relations, and a minor in marketing. Her professional goal is to become a corporate event planner.

Grant applications are available now.

Applicants can obtain a copy by contacting Boston chapter administrator Beth Bryant at 617-926-9595 or bbwrites@verizon.net.

Application Deadline: May 15, 2007

The grant winner will be announced at a chapter meeting during the summer.