

Social Media, Blogs and Music: Some Philosophical Thoughts

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Dave Allen in Promotion, Music Social Media

These days the music marketing world is all abuzz with phrases such as - Social Media, Social Advertising, Facebook Ads, Mass Media Networking Advertising.....etc, etc.. In recent months I have been a panelist at the **L I S A seminar** in Portland and the **Hawaii MusicTech Conference** in Honolulu. **L.I.S.A.**, which is an acronym for Lessons In Social Advertising, was aimed at marketers and advertisers who [for some reason] don't understand social networks or haven't yet worked out how to advertise effectively to them. It focused on topics such as 'What is social advertising?' and 'How do you get young people to recommend your brand?' The **Hawaii MusicTech** panel was presented by the **Northwest Chapter of NARAS** [The Grammy Org] of which I am a Board Director, and we discussed how musicians could effectively use social networks such as Facebook and MySpace to reach an audience and communicate with them.

Two sides of the table as it were. One group wants to advertise, or **push**, their messages to a mass audience, while the other wants to create a network of like-minded people who hopefully will **pull** content such as free MP3s and then "evangelize" on behalf of the musicians by spreading messages by electronic word of mouth. With no hint of schizophrenia I happily migrate between both camps. What follows here is an attempt to share my thinking with bands or musicians on what works and what doesn't when it comes to embracing the many social networking sites that are available to them.

To understand and embrace social networking is to place the idea that says "technology makes this possible" to one side and embrace the idea of the basic human need to stay in touch with other like-minded people *at all times*. As **Clay Shirky** says "The desire to be part of a group that shares, cooperates, or acts in concert is a basic human instinct." Think about rock concerts for a minute.....

Most people that take a position on social networking and advertising come at it from a technological point of view, as in "technology has created the means for everyone to be connected and to stay in touch." I disagree with that statement because it removes nature from the game. It is entirely natural for humans to want to interact as often as possible as we are all social animals. Cities are no more artificial (technological) than the hives of bees. Therefore the Internet is as natural as a spider's web. People who believe that technology is driving our interactions are

missing the point - we ourselves are technological devices, invented by ancient bacterial communities as a means of genetic survival. Bottom line - social media is as natural as apple pie as we all want to be as connected as possible - we can't help it. [A really good book from which I have borrowed some thoughts is 'Straw Dogs' by John Gray, professor of European thought at **LSE**, published in the UK by Granta.]

Online networks might be seen as antidotes to boredom at work, school or college. These new social networks do more than transmit information about their members, they change behaviour by propagating moods. These days we can all share "news" really fast, even about ourselves - for example, **my Facebook** or **Twitter** status might say "I'm heading to the beach in Waikiki..." and the mood that simple statement makes might become very contagious.

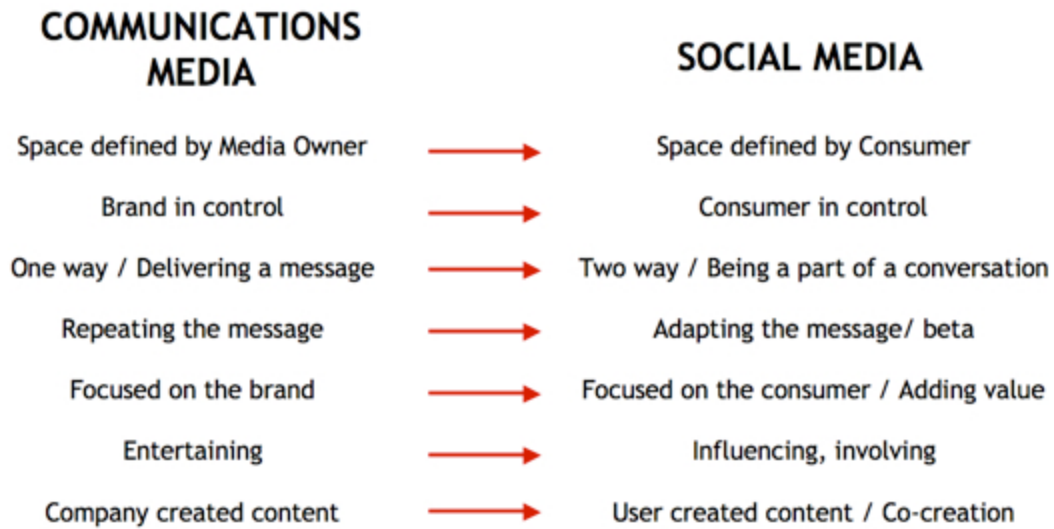
The Internet confirms what we have all known for a long time - the world is ruled by the power of suggestion but in the case of social networking it is "influencers" that lead the suggesting. Then suggestions might become "group think." John Gray writes - "in evolutionary prehistory, consciousness emerged as a side effect of language. Today it is a by product of media."

So, the question currently being asked by companies and advertisers is "how do we market and advertise to social networks?" Having to ask that question suggests the rocky ground that online advertisers are standing on. For instance, **Jack Myers sees nothing but doom and gloom in online marketing**: He says "Advertising is simply not a sufficient revenue model to sustain content companies into the long-term future." And goes on -

"I have preached evangelically for nearly three decades about the bifurcation of the media and advertising marketplace into 1) a transactional commodity business model and 2) a relationship-based brand-focused premium marketplace. Most media companies and agencies are investing appropriately in the technology resources required for their transactional businesses. [But] Brand building, relationship-based business models and premium-priced enterprises require completely new and innovative models, and can take years before they generate returns that justify the investments. Industry realities place enormous pressure on executives to adhere to traditional business models, and companies that foster and advance innovation are often drained of resources before they can deliver the return-on-investment demanded by the stock market, equity rights holders and VC investors. Typically, implementation of new business models must be forcefully imposed by the CEO, need the blessing of investors, and they cannot be managed by executives trained exclusively in the **ways of traditional media and advertising.**"

Neil Perkin in a slideshow entitled 'What's Next in Media' **that can be found here**

says that today - **Social Media is counter-intuitive to communications media**. Here's one of his slides that shows just how counter-intuitive things have become for marketing online:



[The right hand side of the graphics above and below are where bands and artists ought to be focusing their efforts.] Meanwhile, the old way of marketing is through **push messaging** and therein lies the mistake of many of today's marketing managers. Take a look at this slide to see how things don't stack up nicely into a marketing message or 'drop' that has been long planned waiting its turn on the calendar.

LINEAR	→	NETWORKED
Scheduled	→	On demand
Appointment	→	Whenever, wherever
Sit back	→	Participative
Messages	→	Experiences
Content we think you'd like	→	Content we know you like (because you've told us)
We control the way it is delivered	→	We allow you to play with it, pass it on

The Linear model above reminds me of traditional TV and Print advertising. Some people in advertising and marketing today still view the Internet as a "channel" rather like TV.

Let's consider another buzz phrase - **viral marketing online**. The success of **YouTube** in extending an advertising campaigns length and reach is now common currency. We've all seen the videos, perhaps even this one - **My girlfriend and the Wii Fit**. 2.2 million views and going strong.

The viral aspect of YouTube pleases marketers as well as bands and musicians because they can take pride in the statistics - 2.2 million viewers, that's great! Not so quick though. The wise online marketer and musician knows that it's not all about page impressions. Broad use of metrics is far more important - users, time-spent, interactions and pass-alongs. The Wii certainly got a lot of exposure in that video but how can the results be tracked? Where's the ROI?

Those YouTube stats don't show the whole picture. It

is clear that the video is very popular and it fits the rules of users, time-spent, interactions and pass-alongs, but there is no clear ROI except in its "value." By value I mean that the brand or band is being talked about, the brand or band via the video is being shared, people are "spending time" with the brand and band. The ROI though is difficult to judge. Even if Wii sales were to jump by 5% in one week can we really say it was due to this "viral" campaign. Probably not. The video's value will continue throughout its lifetime on YouTube. Talk of value over ROI makes marketing managers queazy and also may confuse musicians who don't understand the concept.

Chris Anderson, editor-in-chief of **Wired Magazine** and blogger at **The Long Tail**, has pitched in to the social media advertising conversation with a post entitled **You may be on Facebook But the Money's in the Long Tail**. He also posits that **social networks should be a feature, not a destination**.

As Chris says, and I agree, "I've been thinking a lot about how to integrate social networking into websites better. Right now the world is focused on stand-alone social networking sites, especially Facebook and MySpace, and the fad of the moment is to take brands and services there, as companies build Facebook apps and MySpace pages in a bid to follow the audience wherever they happen to be. But at the same time there's a growing sense that elements of social networking is something all good sites should have, not just dedicated social networks. And that suggests a very different strategy - social

networking as a feature,
not a destination."

He has a proviso too -
"social networking to me
means the tracking of
individual preferences
and behavior and giving
users the ability to draw
upon implicit or explicit
connections between
them and other users to
do something useful."
This brings me to Ning,
a social network
platform that both Chris
and I like. As he says
"Ning, suppresses its
own brand for the sake
of those of the microsites
it hosts." **Go here** to see
how the **hip hop/rap
label, Rawkus**, uses
Ning as its entire web
presence.

Chris goes on to say -
"As I think about the
current Facebook craze
and the notion of it as an
all-encompassing
platform, sucking in
functionality from other
sites across the board, I
find myself skeptical.
With my Long Tail hat
on, I think that one-size-
fits-all will fail in social
networking, just as it has
everywhere else."

Meanwhile MySpace
admits that it is not
making as much money

through
ads as it
would
like. **See**
Selling
Ads For
MySpace
is Hard
Work.

MySpace
COO
Peter
Chernin
said:

"We
remain
incredibly
optimistic
about
social
media.
But there
are
specific
challenges
1) Tons of
inventory.
Lack of
scarcity
creates a
liquidity
challenge.
Working
on
bringing
big brands
aboard. 2)
People
who are
visiting
social
networks
are there

for
different
reasons,
different
uses.

Figuring
out
how
to
target.

3)
What's
the
value
of
a
"friend"?

Trying
to
figure
out
new
metrics
to
communicate
with
marketers."

Bottomline:

It's
the
wild,
wild
west
out
there.

Anderson
points
out
that
ad
rates
on

MySpace
go
for
an
astonishingly
low
\$0.13
cents
per
CPM
(one
thousand
impressions.)
So
that's
\$0.13
on
a
general-
purpose
social
network
like
MySpace
and
on
his
Ning-hosted
network
DIYDrones
he's
getting
\$7.00.
Even
with
a
more
generous
scenario--\$0.50
on
MySpace
and
\$5.00
on

a
focused
Ning
site--the
difference
is
still
a
factor
of
ten.
He
believes
that
as
big
networks
like
Facebook
and
MySpace
struggle
to
target
ads
based
on
the
faint
signals
of
consumer
behavior
in
a
generic
social
network,
the
smart
money
is
going
to

the
niche
sites,
where
laser-
focused
content
and
community
makes
targeting
easy.

I
couldn't
agree
more.
Also
see:

**Facebook
Ads
Don't
Rock**

an
experiment
by
Bob
Gilbreath,
an
advertising
executive
who
ran
an
ad
on
Facebook.

It's
a
real
eye-opener.
And
another

-
Ad

**CPMs
Are
Higher
In
The
Tail.**

And
of
course
companies
are
springing
up
that
think
they
have
the
answer
to
your
problems
in
dealing
with
big
social
networks.

**Here's
one.**

What
this
all
points
to
is
that
musicians
and
bands
should
be
advertising

directly
to
those
niche
groups
and
networks
that
include
people
who
would
like
to
hear
from
their
band
or
artist.
A
mass,
scatter-shot
approach
to
the
large
social
networks
will
only
fail.

Musicians
should
take
note
of
what
Anderson
says
above
that
"social

networks
should
be
a
feature,
not
a
destination."

That
phrase
worries
me
when
I
look
at
how
many
bands

**use
MySpace
as
their
entire
online
presence.**

I
believe
that
is
a
bad
practice.
What
happens
when
MySpace
fades
away
as
it
inevitably
must?

Musicians
should
have
a
blog
as
a
blog
is
a
micro
social
network.

**My
blog**
garners
around
130,000
unique
visits
a
month
and
its
adherents
are
seeking
out
what
I
have
to
say
about
music,
technology
and
the
web.
I
am
well
versed
in

those
things.
I
have
an
opinion
about
them.
I
also
provide
free
music
downloads
from
artists
that
I
have
"filtered."
I
only
post
music
from
artists
that
I
like
and
I
believe
that
my
audience
will
like
them
too.
In
short
I
have
become

a
trusted
source
[people
like
my
opinions,]
a
filter
[people
share
my
musical
tastes,]
and
I
am
an
influencer
[I
push
certain
artists
and
online
companies
that
I
support,]
as
well
as
an
authority
[people
believe
that
I
know
what
I
am
talking
about.]

A
band's
blogger
or
bloggers
need
to
have
all
these
bases
covered
if
they
are
going
to
safely
cover
the
band
or
artist's
communications
through
the
blog.

Meanwhile
band
members
or
artists
have
to
sit
back
and
allow
the
comments,
both
good
and

bad,
begin
to
flow.
They
can
never
interfere
if
they
want
the
blog
to
be
taken
seriously.
They
will
feel
insecure
and
perhaps
a
little
nauseous
but
if
they
wait
it
out
it
will
work
fine.

A
band
or
an
artist
with
a

good
blog
policy
will
be
listening
to
its
fans
and
then
shaping
its
communications
around
that
data.
It
will
also
create
content
that
is
both
relevant
and
hopefully
surprising.
Influencers
will
pass
along
the
good
stuff
creating
the
viral
moment
that
bands
and
artists

pray
for.
Then
people
in
the
outer
circle
of
the
influencers
will
also
start
to
talk
about
the
band
or
artists,
and
as
they
do
the
bands
and
artists
have
to
make
it
very
easy
for
their
core
fans
to
spread
the
word.
Do

not
fear
negativity,
it
is
just
more
communication

-
let
it
roll.
There
should
never
be
a
barrier
to
communication
or
interactivity.

Remember,
it's
not
about
technology,
it's
about
people.
Bloggers
have
to
be
about
having
an
opinion
and
sharing
it
but
never
about

reporting....it's
a
two-way
conversation.

As
I
said
at
the
beginning
of
this
post,
we
are
technological
beings
and
we
are
naturally
immersed
in
technology;
it
can't
be
any
other
way.
And
you
can't
enforce
social
cultures
online
as
there
is
no
central
"being."

Facebook's
"soul"
is
merely
the
millions
of
disparate
people
who
are
members.
When
Facebook
goes
away,
as
it
will,
those
millions
will
migrate
to
the
next
application
that
allows
them
to
socialize
freely
and
easily.

For
bands
and
artists
this
is
a
huge

dilemma.
In
social
media
we
create
a
selfless
or
virtual
"self"
-
for
instance,
in
the
Facebook
friends
network
or
on
MySpace,
one
might
see
a
coherent
global
pattern
but
that
pattern
only
emerges
from
the
activity
of
all
its
members
(friends).
The
group

or
network
seems
to
be
centrally
located
but
in
fact
it
is
nowhere
to
be
found.
No
one
has
the
slightest
idea
what
these
people
do
or
want;
they
actually
don't
exist.
The
good
news
is
that
within
each
of
any
of
these
social

network
groups
resides
at
least
a
couple
of
influencers;
again,
bands
and
artists
must
wait
to
be
invited
in.
These
are
parties
that
can't
be
crashed.

Dave
Allen,
Pampelmoose.com
and
founding
member
Gang
of
Four.

The
following
URLs
link
to
people,
companies,

articles
or
stories
that
are
referred
to
in
this
post:

**Grammy's
Hawaii
MusicTech
Conference
LISA
08
Content
Marketing
=
Brand
New
Marketing
What's
Next
In
Media
My
Facebook
profile
My
Twitter
My
music
and
technology
blog,
Pampelmoose
Clay
Shirkey's
blog
Jack
Myers'
Web**

Site
Neil
Perkin's
Blog
Wii
Fit
YouTube
video
Adrants
Obama
watch
story
Obama
watches
web
store
Wired
Magazine
You
may
be
on
Facebook
but
the
money's
in
the
Long
Tail
Social
networks
should
be
a
feature
not
a
destination
Rawkus,
a
social
network
on

**Ning
Selling
ads
on
MySpace
is
hard
work
Bob
Gilbreath's
Facebook
ad
experiment
Ad
CPMs
are
higher
in
the
tail
Lotame.com
Blog
reaction
to
Wal-Mart
blogs
NYT
story
on
Wal-Mart
blog
WalMart
blog**

Article
originally
appeared
on
Music
Think
Tank

(<http://www.musicthinktank.com/>).

See

website

for

complete

article

licensing

information.