



THE FRESH THINKING SERIES



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jobsite

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The Fresh Thinking series is a forum for stimulating and sharing conversations with thought leaders from around the world. The May 2011 events focused on the power of social media and the changing expectations of employees, customers/clients and potential candidates.

Scott Stratten of UnMarketing and Amanda Hite of Talent Revolution provided an inspiring and entertaining look at how everything we do, from client services, networking, talent development and employer branding, is changing as a result of the new digital landscape.

So what were their top tips?

For the full video of their presentations, see www.jobsite.co.uk/freshthinking

Scott Stratten, President, UnMarketing

Marketing is not a job or a task or a role. It's not something in your business that someone needs to do. Marketing simply is.

It's always happening. It happens whether you choose to engage or not engage with your market. Every phone call, every text, every conversation is marketing. It's more powerful than anything else we put out there. It's more important than any company website or corporate brochure or any poster or advertising campaign.

Our actions are our marketing. The people answering your phones or your emails – if it's not you – are your strongest marketers and biggest engagers. And they're often the ones we pay the least and appreciate the least. A scary thought.

Wrinkled sausages. A brand opportunity.

I recently stayed at the Hilton Hotel in Hartford, Connecticut and on the first day helped myself to a late buffet breakfast. It was terrible. Old and cold and the sausages had gone wrinkly. These days our first instinct is to get on our phones and get on Twitter or Facebook and tell everyone how terrible the food is. But of course, when the server comes over and asks if everything is ok, what do we say? "Oh, it's fine. Thanks!"

Why do we do that? Because we're passive in person and aggressive online. So it's essential that businesses listen to what's being said about their brand online. Because online the feedback is unfiltered and brutally honest.

But I'm not like that. I want to give businesses the opportunity to put it right there and then in the real world. And if they don't – well, then I'll go online and go mad about it.

So I call over the waitress and tell her the food is terrible. She gets the manager, and he comes over and offers me another breakfast (I didn't want one), so then he tells me he'll take care of the cheque. OK. So not the great brand experience I was expecting but not enough to make me check out of the hotel.

This is important: there is no such thing as a neutral brand interaction. Every time you interact with a brand your opinion of them increases or decreases to some degree. If you told this to people that work with you or work for you, do you think they would do their job differently? You bet. Tell them that every conversation they have, every email they send will have impact. They have the power to change someone's opinion of your brand. The most powerful empowerment in the workplace is to let someone know they can make a difference. Let people – all the people – in your business make a difference.

**DON'T PISS OFF GEEKS...
THEY'LL BRING YOU DOWN!**

Anyway, back to the Hilton. As I leave, the chef comes running out, and for a second I think he's going to hit me but he says, "Sir, I have no excuses but I need you to know why this happened. Firstly, the water had evaporated under the heaters and so all the food had gotten cold. We didn't realise until we were packing up. And secondly, you looked like you were in a hurry so I didn't offer to make you anything fresh. And I should have done. I apologise."

Wow. He gave a damn. He cared about the customer. He cared about me! And as a result my view of Hilton was better than it had been before the terrible breakfast.

Think about that for a second. If there's a problem in your business, consider it an opportunity to come out looking even better than you did before. We're so good at being proactive in business we sometimes forget about the sheer impact of being reactive.

Actions speak louder than words

Too many companies focus on mission statements, rather than actions. The truth? No-one cares about what you say your aims are or what you say your brand stands for. Here's the reality: Your brand is decided by the people that interact with you.

WHEN DID ONE OF YOUR CUSTOMERS LAST BLOG ABOUT HOW GREAT YOU ARE?

Forget about meeting yearly to discuss brand strategy and mission statements. Your actual customers meet every day online and define your brand for you. Your actions and the resulting interactions with your customers are so much more important than any statement you put in a frame on the office wall.

Renew your vows

Ever tried to call your bank and got the automated recording that says "we're experiencing unusually high call volume"? Ever get that automated recording every time you call? So really it's "we're experiencing the same high call volume we always have but we just can't staff ourselves properly. You'll just have to put up with it."

The reality is we treat our clients horribly. Think about your top five clients for a second. Now picture them gone. Ouch.

All our efforts are in recruiting new clients. We treat potential customers really well. We act like we're on a first date and schmooze them and wine and dine them and act on our best behaviour. But our old clients? We take them for granted. What we need to do is renew our customer vows. We need to remarry our clients on a regular basis.

So show your current clients you care. Ask them three things:

- **Stop**
What should we stop doing to make things better for you?
- **Start**
What can we start doing to make things easier for you?
- **Continue**
What should we continue doing, what are we getting right?

These three words will change your relationship with your client base. Guaranteed.

People share 'awesome'

If you have great content, whether that's videos, blog posts, or tweets, people will share it if it's awesome. They don't share average, normal, mediocre or 'meh'

Why we share hasn't changed. How we share has changed. It used to be email, then forums and chat rooms, and social bookmarking sites like Reddit and Digg. Now it's blogs, Facebook and Twitter. Likes, RTs, and comments mean we're consuming and sharing content more than ever.

PEOPLE DON'T SHARE 'MEH'

By blogging about your expertise you can quickly establish yourself as a recruiting authority. But how often should you blog? Only blog when you have something awesome to say. If it's amazing, say it. If it's not, don't. Don't blog just because it's a certain day of the week or day of the month. If you post and it's just ok-ay, it will kill your content. It's got to be awesome.

Don't ignore what you hate

Just because there's a tool you don't use or don't like doesn't mean your employees or clients aren't using it. Take Farmville on Facebook. As many people hate it as love it. But 48m people play Farmville – daily! Social gaming earns \$1 billion in revenue annually. Zynga, the company that owns Farmville has been valued at \$8 billion. Wow.

The point, however, is if you don't like Twitter or Facebook – get over it. It's being used, it's being consumed, so open your eyes to it. Don't think for a second that your market isn't using social media. If your market is people, if you're hiring people, and your niche is people – then they're all talking. And these conversations are occurring via social media.

Don't try everything at once

Social media doesn't change anything. It doesn't make you better at what you do. It doesn't fix the problems. It only amplifies things. If your products or services suck offline they'll just suck harder if you use social media.

The problem is there's such a huge choice: Twitter, Facebook, blogs, social bookmarking, YouTube. My advice is don't try and be everywhere. Pick a platform and grow it. Build your audience and community in one place before you move on to the next tool. Don't automatically think you have to have a Facebook page because everyone else has. If you're well known like Starbucks then use Facebook. If you're not, you'll look like a loser with only seven Likes on your page.

There are 600m active profiles on Facebook and no-one is listening to anyone. To start a new brand on there is nearly impossible. Remember, it's about reaching the right people. It's not just a numbers game. Run a competition to win an iPad and you'll get a 1000 Likes from people who want to win an iPad. Not a 1000 people who like you.

My hot tip? Excel on one platform. Don't be average on several.

Give, to receive

With social media it's all about the giving. And you need to give it time. It's not overnight. But it's not complicated. It's just talking. Think of Twitter as a networking event – but one that's online. Show up, start talking, get to know people and build relationships. It's not about gaining business or selling products. It's about tapping into a collection of amazing people that are smart, funny and caring.

Twitter is a conversation not a dictation. Sure, it's a horrible sales and marketing platform. But it's an amazing conversation platform.

Recruiters and social media

If you're in recruitment, your whole job is to network. Your industry is based on your ability to know people and for them to know you, and for you to find the best person for the job. Your business is all about relationships and conversations; social media is all about relationships and conversations.

DON'T TRY TO HAVE PRESENCE WITHOUT BEING PRESENT

Whatever social media platform you choose, you need to monitor, manage, and listen. If you're not going to do any of the above you might as well delete your account. It's like sending a mannequin to a networking event. You have to be present. You have to show up. You have to answer people to make a conversation.

Remember though, social media is not 1:1. It's 1:everybody. Everybody is watching you. Everybody can read everything you've said. So show some basic common sense. Don't tweet anything you wouldn't want your mum, boss or best client to see on a billboard with your name beside it. Remember, nothing good comes out of your phone after 8pm.

STOP HIRING MORONS!

From a corporate perspective, if you don't trust your employees with social media, it's not a social media issue. It's a hiring issue. My advice? Don't hire morons.

What's the ROI?

A return on your investment is not about money. The investment is normally time. And the return is often customer service, finding candidates, better client relationships or just listening in to your competition. There are many benefits to social media and they're not all to do with £££s. Does anyone know what the ROI is on picking up your phone each day?

Social media gives you the opportunity to be awesome every day. You just have to take it.

Amanda Hite, CEO, Talent Revolution

Let's just put it out there. Yes, social media can – and does - work well for recruiters. For a start it can be used to help dramatically reduce your recruitment costs. But social media tools can also be used to make lives better: our own lives and the lives of others. We can use the influence we have in our networks to make changes. And we can make money along the way. Because when you set out to make 'meaning' you can also make money.

Join in. As you would in 'real' life

So how do you actually go about using social media tools?

There's no trick to it. It's just a conversation. If you're stuck for what your first tweet or blog post should be, just think, "What would I say if I was listening to this chat in real life?" The way you act online should only reflect who you are and how you act offline. Be authentic and be yourself. Everything else follows.

IF YOU BELIEVE BUSINESS IS BUILT ON RELATIONSHIPS THEN START BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

However, until you truly live it you won't see the value and benefits of social media. It's not an excuse to say you just don't 'get' social media or haven't got time for it. If you have a purpose, a use for it, you'll learn it. It's not rocket science.

Join rather than create

Don't aim to start out and immediately create a community. Join a community first and build credibility. Ask "Where are people like me?" "Where's my market online?" Then go and join them and let them get to know you. You can be a great influencer by participating. You don't have to be the owner of a community.

Best practice in your community is to ask – what do you want? Starbucks does this well. On their site they ask customers for their ideas like new coffee flavours or what charities they should contribute to. Starbucks lets their community drive company innovations.

You earn social currency by giving. Ask “How you I help you?” “What can I do for you?” “Who can I introduce you to?” “What problem can I help you with?”

Social media superpowers

The particularly cool thing about social media is the superpowers it gives you. This isn't an exaggeration!

How would you like the ability to: Read the minds of your customers, gain competitor insight, connect across the world, or obtain wise advice from an industry guru or mentor?

You can with social media. It's a powerful tool. Use it.

Employees are the new marketers

Handling your own Twitter account or LinkedIn profile is one thing. But what happens when your employees are tweeting or posting?

It's said that HR is the new marketing department and your employees are the new marketers. So when it comes to engaging online, it's vital that businesses allow their employees to be who they are.

To me, three things make up the ultimate employment brand:

- Letting employees be who they are so that they can maximize the potential of their own talents (Authenticity)
- Improving their lives while they are at work and away from work (Lifestyle)
- Being a part of something bigger than themselves that creates meaning (Purpose)

Take a company like the Hard Rock Café. They give their employees a great experience and make them famous by letting them tell their own stories. The result? A global community of highly engaged ambassadors who promote, protect and personalise the brand with every move they make, an incredibly loyal employee fan base and low staff turnover.

Likewise, the Wildflower Bread Company. They actively encourage their employees to tweet about their experiences working for the company and their journey through the training programme using the Twitter hashtag #WFJourney.

Don't gag your employees!

Letting employees be who they are uncensored and online can be difficult for some companies, particularly those that are used to controlling the message. But the truth is people don't trust what brands say. They trust what people say.

And yet 52% of UK companies don't allow their employees to use social media. Which means all the people who could say great things about

your brand are gagged. And the bozo employees who are going to say stupid stuff about your brand are going to say stupid stuff anyway - irrespective of whether they've signed a social media policy or not.

IF YOU BLOCK SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE YOU BLOCK YOUR AMBASSADORS AND FUEL YOUR DETRACTORS

Trust your employees to tell their stories about what it's like to work for your company. Give them an avenue to communicate their story digitally. Think about setting up an employee blog. Or invite them to join online live streams and chats to answer questions from job seekers. Why not use your employees as part of the recruiting process? Invite them to recommend and engage with job seekers both on and offline. Who better than your own employees to attract like-minded people to the company.

The hard fact is that if there's a problem about trusting your employees online - it's not a social media policy you need: It's a new hiring policy. Rather than stopping people using social media, focus your energy into training people on how to use social media. Educate and empower them. But don't stop them.

So how do you handle a 'social media crisis'

Actually, there's no such thing. An outpouring of online anger or insults about your company, your product or even yourself is not a 'social media crisis'. Nine times out of 10, any online negativity will be ignited by a problem with either your personal brand or your employment brand in the physical world.

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A SOCIAL MEDIA CRISIS.

It's easy to blame social media. But don't. Just think, without it you may not have been made aware there

was an issue to begin with. And the sooner you know there's a problem, the sooner it can be fixed.

The easiest way to avoid social media negativity online? Ensure you're already giving people a great experience offline.

How the recruiting community can make a difference

If you ever doubted how truly significant your job as a recruiter is, remember that the average adult will spend 97,464 hours of their life working. That's over 12,000 days. Or 33 years without a break.

And who has the insight and knowledge to help shape these 97,464 hours of an individual's life? You do.

As a recruiter, either in-house or agency, you have the power to change the lives of candidates and shape the cultures of companies on a daily basis. The actions you take can cause chain reactions starting with

your candidates and employees and reaching all the way out to local communities.

With such power, comes responsibility. Such as considering if it is the 'right' thing to focus on mere placement filling. I challenge you to take a look beyond pure skill matches and ensure the candidate's values align with the work they're doing and the company they're joining. Can you honestly say that you understand each candidate's passion and values, and what they truly want from their job?

Let's not forget the unsuccessful applicants either. How can you use your influence and redirect them to other resources within your talent communities that can help them find a job? Or share tools to help them discover what kind of job is the best fit for them? Or connect them to a community online of other job seekers and job experts to give them a sense of support and belonging?

We're more than mere placements

The recruiting community has some serious clout. But what are we doing with it? Are we building more movements that advocate business-driven education and putting people back to work? Are we rallying our community towards common causes and correcting injustices in the workplace? Are we fighting for better work environments, for the end of discrimination? And if not, why not?

Social media allows us to connect, communicate, organise and take action faster, more efficiently and more powerfully than ever before. Use your talents to come up with a recruiting model that better serves the world now and for future generations.

Use your influence. Use your network. It's time to go beyond making placements. Start making a difference.

For more Fresh Thinking:

For videos of Scott and Amanda's Fresh Thinking sessions, the 'best bits' panel session or the first HR Happy Hour Europe internet radio segment, see www.jobsite.co.uk/freshthinking

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Our Fresh Thinkers - May 2011

About Scott Stratten

Scott Stratten, is president and customer relationship officer at UnMarketing, and an expert in viral, social, and authentic marketing.

Formerly a recruiter, national sales training manager and a human resources professor, he has been running his 'UnAgency' for eight years and has been guiding clients like PepsiCo, Adobe, Red Cross and Fidelity Investments through the viral, social media and relationship marketing landscape. He now has over 90,000 people following him on Twitter and was voted one of the top influencers on the site.



His book "UnMarketing: Stop Marketing. Start Engaging" became a best-seller before it was released.

He recently appeared in the Wall Street Journal, Huffington Post, USA Today, Entrepreneur Magazine, CNN.com and Fast Company and was just named one of "America's 10 Marketing Gurus" by Business Review USA.

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About Amanda Hite

Amanda Hite, CEO and founder of Talent Revolution, Inc., lives her message of "Be The Change". Amanda is revolutionising the way companies think about social media, employment branding, marketing, and maximising their return on talent. And most importantly, she's an innovator who shows that it's truly possible to make both meaning and money by utilising social media for social good.

Amanda spent 15 years in the hospitality industry, in talent and development and was recognised as an innovator in the industry. In 2008, Amanda founded Talent Revolution, Inc., a talent and brand consulting agency.



As a social media strategist, she has used her experience in the food service industry to successfully run marketing and communications campaigns for international brands such as the Hard Rock Café. Her ability to teach, train and develop a team strategy for social media campaigns is second to none.

Amanda is a highly sought-after international keynote speaker and has spoken to audiences across the US, the UK and Canada. As an acknowledged thought leader, Amanda has been featured in several major national and international publications. She is a board member for Share Our Strength's "Dine Out for No Kid Hungry", as well as the Association of Hospitality and Recruiting Executives (AHRE).

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