

## **New Strategic Communications/Issues Management Initiatives & Technologies to increase awareness of the impact of environmental pollution.**

### **Trust & Reputation Management**

Thesis: We are witnessing a fundamental shift in how environmental information is communicated and processed, and therefore trusted. And many of us don't even know its happening right under our noses.

One reason for this shift's invisibility is that it is taking place so fast that whole new communication pathways are evolving almost at the speed of light.

Doubt it? I'll send you a Tweet.

And it seems to be proving out that these information shifts are permanent. (Not a fad e.g.: a CBS executive told me in the mid 1980s that the concepts of an internet and search engines were fads and would not be heard about again in a few years. "Maybe something a professor or researcher might be drawn to but not a large audience . . .")

In the world of the "savvy" v. "Luddite" - Savvy always wins.

Let's step back to those 1980's (a trip down memory lane for some – something your parents might mention for others.)

Computer maker's concerns targeting middle and upper management: (Also then a generational schism).

- Keyboards. Will individuals who have not typed since college learn and use a keyboard?
- Fear: Look like a secretary and not an executive. Keyboards and typing is lower management and women's work. "My God, will I have to learn shorthand next?"

The above were the driving factors for the mouse and graphic interface.

And now today's schism:

- "Why talk when you can type?"

Clue: 10 years ago . . . multiple lifetimes in computer years. People would talk to each other and just email documents.

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Now people, particularly our younger staff, email and text message each other even though their work spaces adjoin.

A Biblical analogy: the handwriting on the wall is a tweet on a Blackberry.

Simply put: No one judges the book by its cover anymore . . . they make judgments based on emails, Google, Blogs, Chat rooms, YouTube, Tweets, and MySpace postings.

And . . .

The Great Truth of this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: everyone who writes blogs, searches the internet, dips their toe into the water at MySpace and YouTube now reaches the state of Electronic Immortality. And if it is a Tweet you have now reached immediate electronic immortality!

To put it another way . . . you or your ideas can be what you want them to be unbridled by reality, truth, fact. Someone will control the message and it had better be someone who knows and cares about the truth. And controlling the message won't be done with dinosaurs.

My list of dinosaurs: the dead only they don't know it yet . . .

- Newspapers
- TV News (Not to be confused with Entertainment)
- Music Stores
- Movie Theaters
- Books (Paper: not Kindel)
- And in-depth cognitive thought/research

And my list of the new species: made sure we know they are out there . . .

- Tweets
- YouTube
- Blogs
- Kindel
- Google News
- And in the near future . . . or maybe this afternoon . . .

Finally, my list of oldies but goodies:

- Useful printed materials
- Public Availability Sessions
- Charrettes
- Volunteer Community Advisory Groups
- A real live person (available and engaging)
- Research (Costs more to not know that to find out)

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So what does this have to do with education and how people process information about environmental pollution?

Everything.

In my talk today I will review the new communications technologies and discuss my findings that to be effective, efficient, long lasting and trusted, they must be supported by a foundation of more traditional public educational approaches. For example, I will review a case study involving how Tweets can supplement a web page and how to format public meetings to be both web and Podcast friendly.

It is a new world out there. And understanding it is the key to effective environmental issues communication.

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