CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The way we share information over the phone, face to face, over the air and on the printed page all require different approaches. How well we master those approaches will determine our effectiveness in getting our message across.

The ever-expanding social media networks each have their own culture. Whether you’re texting, on-line instant messaging, sending an email, writing a blog post, Tweeting or Facebooking, the ability to frame what you want to say within the traditions of that culture will directly impact how it is disseminated.

Most of us hope that our message resonates with others and is shared beyond our circle of friends. Since each social medium has its own language and limitations, how we construct our thoughts will be different, depending on where we’re expressing them.

This volume will show you how frame your communication to maximize its effectiveness on the most popular social platforms around today. We’ll also explore the most important part of social communication: Strategy. What you say and how you say it is totally dependent on what you hope to accomplish as a result. And finally, we’ll tie it all together by exploring how these thing connect with the true definition of success.

This isn’t a journalism course, so we will limit our conversation to the true essentials you need to know to hit the ground running. Like most everything in life, the most effective learning is kinesthetic; we learn best by doing. As you finish each chapter, jump in to the fray and test out what you have learned. If “minutes make the man”, experience sharpens your social media sword. Each post you write will help you grow in skill and confidence. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes, and analyze what it is about your approach that inspires others to share it.

What we will teach you isn’t rocket science. But it is an art. The best thing about social interaction is that each of us have our own unique voice. Understanding what motivates your readers to pass on your wisdom can help
you become more effective in crafting relevant messages; messages that can touch the lives of people you may never meet.

Ready? Let's dig in!
CHAPTER TWO

*It All Starts With The Brand*

There’s no way around it. We create our professional persona everywhere we are, in everything we say and do.

From the moment you post something on Twitter or Facebook, comment on a blog entry or send an email, you are cementing perceptions that will impact your career. This is a lesson that needs to be taught early on. The Internet has a long memory and your future employers will likely tap that memory to determine your employability.

So watch your language.

With that in mind, how do we craft a Personal Brand? It begins with a little introspection. What do you want to be when you grow up?

Imagine yourself as working for a top tier talent agent, someone who is giving you 100% of her time to help you define and seek happiness. You’re about to go into a meeting with her and she’s asked you to answer the following questions:

- What is your passion? What would you do if you were working for love and not for money?
- What strengths do you bring to your passion?
- What skills, experience and relationships do you need to develop?
- If any company would hire you and let you write your own job description, where would you like to work and what would you do?

The answers to these four questions can give you a foundation to build on and the beginnings of a clearer career path. Whatever your passion, make it your life’s work to become a recognized expert in that space. Even if you decide to continue to stay with your current company or on your current career trajectory for now, spend 10% of your day working on filling any holes in your personal brand toolbox that may have been generated by how you answered these four questions.

The definition of success has been perverted by our culture of consumption
into a continuous acquisition of material possessions, increasing responsibility beyond our level of enjoyment, and a press for better and better results, even as the environment may indicate a time for re-evaluation.

In my dictionary, Success = Happiness. We should constantly be bracketing the things that keep us happy and healthy so that our life is one of both quality and quantity.

Of course, it’s impossible to avoid unhappiness. As you express your Personal Brand you will stumble. Get back up and keep moving. There is just as much pain and inconvenience associated with a fulfilling life as there is with an unfulfilling life. The problem of suffering arises when we don’t allow ourselves to fully feel the pain and understand its root causes.

A surprising amount of our suffering is self-created. Living life by looking back in the rear view mirror, holding onto grudges, sustaining un-productive relationships and staying in unacceptable situations; these are the behaviors that fuel unhappiness. And all of these are things we can largely control.

So Happiness, it turns out, is a state of mind. Seek it out. Understand and keep refining your own personal definition. Never give up your quest.

And incorporate all of this into your Personal Brand. A Personal Brand is the strategy you deploy to express your professional image. It drives the value proposition you offer to potential employers and can either expedite or derail your career progress.

The tactical aspects of Personal Branding involve how you utilize the many communications media out there to reinforce your Brand. Once upon a time, this consisted chiefly of how you wrote your resume. But now, it’s much more involved.

You will need a well-crafted profile at LinkedIn, which is quickly supplanting the resume is your vita of record. You will need to put thought into how you build your presence on the Internet. Will you create your own blog? What audiences and messages will you send out via Google+, Facebook, Twitter and the like? What face to face activities will you undertake to polish and promote your Brand? And how will you know if you are succeeding with all of this?

There are a ton of resources to help you answer these questions. Google Personal Branding for a starting point.

As you review what you find, not all of it may apply to your situation. Not every idea may resonate with you. That’s ok. Continuous learning, like feedback, is the breakfast of champions. Keep what helps you and let go of the rest.
Be open, and the teachers you seek will find you, just as you look for them.

An effective Personal Brand reflects the true essence of the person behind it.

Whether or not we want to admit it, we all have a Personal Brand. It’s the outward expression of our professional worth in an effort to aggregate the resources we need to sustain our chosen lifestyle. It’s at the center of every daily activity and is reflected in everything we write, we say and we do.

What do profitable personal brands have in common? Deborah Shane, identifies thee dimensions that strong personal brands share in her book, “Career Transition-make the shift”.

They are laser clear on knowing who they are, what they do, and whom they serve.
They differentiate themselves from the competition.
They’re always evolving the ways they serve and the ways they present themselves through their brand story.

“Branding,” Deborah writes, ”is the combination of your tangible and intangible characteristics that make you unique. It is the development of that internal and external ‘package’ with the promise and potential delivery of your results to match.”

Andy Wright, the former president of brand loyalty for Carlson Worldwide observes that, “An iconic brand plays a valued role in a consumer’s life. It delivers a feeling that the consumer just can’t get from any other brand.” Some of these feelings may include: security, safety, familiarity, excitement, and satisfaction.

Ed Burghard, a branding consultant and proprietor of The_Brand_America blog identifies five principles that iconic brands shrare:

• Relevancy,
• Competitiveness,
• Authenticity,
• Clarity of promise, and
• Consistency of communication.

“The hard work.” Burghard says, ”is the proactive management of the brand (including product development) to ensure the five criteria are delivered.”

Once you have developed an authentic clear, consistent relevant and competitive personal brand that reflects your passion. How do you best express it?

In Words: Your LinkedIn Profile should reflect the key dimensions of your
brand, right down to the head shot you use as your profile picture. Your Social Media presences will make a strong statement about your personal brand. These statements should be consistent with the vibe you are trying to create. When you write a blog, comment on a post, send a letter of compose an email, be sensitive to the words you use. The “what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas” maxim does not apply when you are building a brand.

**In Actions:** Our every day behaviors build the habits that define a lifestyle that determines the extent of joy or pain we experience in the course of a lifetime. How you spend your days has a direct bearing on the success of your personal brand. Concentrating on the most productive activity for every given moment is a skill that is easy to practice, but harder to sustain. Those who can do it can quickly lead the field.

How do we measure the success of our efforts? It’s easy to fall prey to the metrics of a material society: The Lexus versus the Camry, a gated community, club memberships, flying first class. Nothing is wrong with enjoying these things.

Truly successful people tell us that satisfaction is based on something deeper. The maxim “It’s better to give than to receive” becomes real when you enable others to benefit from your good fortune. To help someone else discover and express their own personal passion, to contribute to a cause that addresses fundamental human needs, to nurture valuable personal relationships, to give your body with the respect and daily attention it needs to provide you with the strength you need to do the things you want to do; These are a few of the things that might be metrics you associate with a profitable personal brand.

Our world is filled to the brim with brands and the images we associate with them. Many contend, but only a few consistently and effectively connect with us in a way that adds real value to our lives.

Endeavor to create a personal brand that stands above the many. It will not be an easy task. But the rewards will be worth it.
CHAPTER THREE

Your Social Media Strategy

Watch a video version of this chapter.

The first step in any communication project is to decide on Strategy. And in the social media world, three primary strategies contend:

Broadcasting
Interaction
Engagement

Broadcasting is in essence old school public relations. You decide what you want to say and write it up in a press release. You then write a Tweet that encourages the viewer to click through an attached link to the web page where your press release is. Although you may decide to monitor the response to a broadcast tweet, feedback does not necessarily guide your future actions. Your primary goal as a broadcaster is to blast your content out there and hope that somebody takes positive action as a result. The person who sends out your messaging is almost always anonymous and the brand is focused on the company, not the individual team member who is doing the work.

Interaction is a transactional approach to social media. It’s basic customer service. Someone posts something about you, your organization or your company and you reactively respond. Once you address the concern, that’s the end of the relationship. Think of a bot when you think of an interactive social media strategy. Someone spits out a sentence, your bot analyzes it and answers. Interactors are more likely to catalog transaction types, looking for trending topics and issues. This information might guide a conversation on process improvement, pricing or communication style. But it doesn’t dig deeply enough to understand your customer’s motives and deeper needs. The Interaction strategy may or may not include associating individual company team members with the social media brand. Often, many team members are involved in the transaction, but the customer rarely remembers who they are.

A social media strategy that focuses on Engagement is all about building mutually beneficial relationships. You seek to understand the deeper
motivations of your audience, to discover brand promoters among your users and turn unhappy customers into brand fanatics who drive more traffic to you, advise you on improving service processes and enhancing the quality of your product. Often, an Engagement approach involves a tightly knit team of voices who become well known to your target audience as individual personalities. They may act as the face of your brand on other platforms, speaking at conferences or engaging with focus groups to personalize the company, moving away from the faceless entity and toward the trusted friend.

Your strategy will determine your tactical approach to social media. Interaction requires more investment than does broadcasting. And engagement spreads well beyond the Internet. It’s a reflection of the organizational culture. If you’re doing it right, the engagement model can provide valuable feedback to improve how you serve and increase your market share.

What are the operational requirements for each of our three strategies?

Broadcasting requires the fewest resources. You can literally automate it, so that when you post a press release to your website, tweet or post is automatically created and fired out to the world. The rules of traditional PR apply, aside from the initial effort to create a dissemination mechanism, your current head count can execute it.

Interaction involves assigning a specific person or team to watch the social media stream, identifying opportunities to respond, and taking action to do so. Part of the job involves aggregating and analyzing what’s being said and providing senior leadership with a summary. The size of your customer service team is dependent on the volume of traffic you expect and the response time standard you set.

An Engagement approach may lead to identifying a group of evangelists who have distinct and popular personalities. Readers know them by name and they know many of the readers by name, too. They are often interviewed in the press about your social media effort and sit at the strategy table as valuable voices that provide input on the future direction of your overall efforts.

Which strategy is right for you? It all depends on your objectives.

Traditional news organizations tend to be broadcasters. They may seek feedback but gather it through more traditional means, via a comment section on their website.

Interactors are an extension of your customer service team. They usually work on shifts and handle customer issues using legacy support tools, filling out trouble tickets, pointing people to online knowledge bases FAQs and providing updates as needed. When the ticket closes, the relationship ends, until the next
incident.

Engagement is the approach visionary companies take. They see every customer as a focus group. They want to understand the whole person and their motivations for engaging. It’s much harder work to take this road and your investment can be exponentially greater. But when you look at the companies that do this well, Southwest Airlines and Comcast are two good examples, you’ll quickly see that the ROI can be substantial.

Before you begin your social media adventure, take some quality time to figure out what you hope to gain out of the interaction. Strategy drives tactics. Tactics drive behaviors. And behaviors trigger action.

It’s all about cause and effect. If your causes are excellent, your effects will be equally so.
CHAPTER FOUR

Where the Action Is: Choosing Your Social Media Networks

The proliferation of social media networks seems to increase with each passing month. Just as everyone thought that My Space was king of the mountain, along came Facebook. Twitter is considered to have evolved out of AOL Instant Messenger and Google Talk, which, themselves, are products of the earliest texting platform, Internet Relay Chat (IRC). Facebook is the current dominant provider in the western world, while RunRun has gained traction in Asia. Some countries block Skype. Others block Facebook. Deciding where to plant your social media flag requires thought.
Beyond our strategy discussion, the most fundamental question is: What is your ultimate goal in using social media? For most of us, it’s a social goal. We want to keep in touch with people we care about and exchange news and information about what’s happening in our lives.

The current top 3 mainstream social media networks in the United States are:

- **Facebook**
- **Twitter**
- **Pinterest**

As of this writing, most of you will have connected with Facebook. It’s the place to find old friends, track your favorite stars and engage with popular brands. You can communicate in real time via the Facebook chat application and there are a variety of tools available for just about every device that let you create content and catch up on what others are creating with relative ease.

Riding Facebook’s slip stream is Google Plus. There’s a joke going around that Google Plus is where Google employees hang out to talk about Google stuff. That’s not really the case. Google Plus is building a devoted cadre of followers who appreciate it’s interoperability with other Google products, like the ease with which they can target what they share using Google Circles, love the elegance and power of Google’s video Hangout feature and feel a deeper level of trust in Google’s track record of preserving and protecting privacy user privacy.

If you live outside of the US, there may be another network that best serves your purposes. RenRen has emerged as the leading social network in China. And Google owned Orkut has had a head start in building market share in India and South America.

Twitter is, by far, the leading short messaging social network. For a while, Identi.ca seemed likely to challenge it as an open source alternative, but the Canadian based company has vectored more toward the tech and international community. The new kid on the block as of this writing is app.net, a pay-for social network that promises 240 characters for communication, no ads and total control over your data.

Further in the niche are sites like Yelp, FourSquare, Spotify, Pandora and Instagram. Each of these target a more narrow audience, although they all have hooks that allow you to cross-post your information to the more mainstream social networks. Emerging from this pack is Pinterest, a lifestyle themed network that is growing exponentially. Targeted toward the female demographic, Pinterest has crossed over to become more widely popular. Time will tell if it stands on it’s own or remains independent.
The danger of writing anything down about social networks is the speed of change that happens in this space. New ideas are constantly popping above the radar. Waze is one of them; a way cool application that combines geo location data, maps and real time crowd sourced information on traffic, construction and where the cops are, to give you a high tech GPS system. What’s hot today can crash and burn tomorrow. MySpace is the most visible example, but services like GroupOn are headed in the same direction. While it feels to some observers like Facebook and Twitter are the two sustainable business models today, it’s anybody’s guess what killer app might be created tomorrow. The best course is to keep your eyes open, test drive a few new ideas and watch for signs of mainstream adoption.

The only constant on the Internet is change.

With all this in mind, let’s begin our exploration of the intricacies of writing for social media.
CHAPTER FIVE

Writing for Twitter

Watch a video version of this chapter.

Om Malik writing on his GigaOm website says, “Today, the Internet is how we do (almost) everything. Our phone calls are made using Skype. We video chat over Google Hangouts, we communicate via Facebook, Twitter and iMessage. Twitter is the new Associated Press. Vimeo is our PBS and YouTube and Hulu are the new broadcast networks. Amazon is the mall and iTunes is our Virgin Megastore. Pandora is our radio and Spotify is our jukebox.”

Readable Tweets: From ReadWriteWeb.com

Columbia Journalism School professor and social media guru Sree Sreenivasan says every tweet should include three elements to increase its chances of being retweeted. In his popular social media training sessions, he advise people that every tweet they write should include:

• One @ mention: Mentioning at least one Twitter user in each tweet insures that at least someone will read it and, hopefully, share it with their followers. If you're not sure who to mention, Jasmine Davis of the Content Factory recommends mentioning the author of the article, which can encourage engagement.

• One hash tag: Hash tags make your tweets more searchable, which increases the chances they'll be found by someone not currently following you.

• One link: Links are love. Whether its an embedded photo or video, or the url of the article you're sharing, a link is a way to give your followers something useful. Recent studies, according to Internet marketing consultant Steve Webb, show that tweets with links are up to three times more likely to be shared.

Twitter truly has become the Internet’s news wire. History is often reported first on Twitter and it has become a medium for customer engagement and is even supplanting the text message as a means of direct communication. For
some, it’s a platform to point our friends to more detailed information on other websites. For others it’s simply a way to shout out to people we care about.

So understanding how to speak Twitter’s language can help you get your message across effectively.

Writing for social media resurrects the age-old concept of the inverted pyramid.

All newspaper journalists are taught to put the most important information in the first sentence, followed by a summary of the story, followed by additional background, based on the space limitations of the medium.

Twitter is at the top of the inverted pyramid metaphor as it pertains to social media. With just 140 characters to get your message across, you have to be judicious with every one of them. In fact, you actually have fewer than 140 characters because a key objective of every tweet is to get it re-tweeted and you want your twitter handle to fit within the retweet. In the case of my twitter handle: @msuscottw, I have only 127 character for my message, because 13 are taken up for the letters “RT”, a space, and my handle.

So brevity rules in the twittersphere. If there are two words that do a good job conveying your message, use the shorter word. Be liberal in your use of contractions. Your high school English teacher might not like them, but twitter loves them. Can’t, won’t, don’t, we’re, you’re, and so forth should be near the top of your tool box.

Where one symbol conveys a word, use it. The ampersand (&), the letters UR for the words “you are” and the letter w for the word “with” are universally recognized across all short code media. Text messagers know what IMHO and LMAO means. Tweeters will too.
Another powerful character in the Twitter lexicon is the pound sign (#). This symbol precedes what are called “hash tags”; words or word combinations that Twitter’s spiders look for to track trending topics. #MSU, #U2 and #BigTen are examples. If you are talking about a trending topic, using a hash tag can get your message seen by a significantly greater audience.

Referencing other Twitter handles serves much the same purpose. And it has an additional plus. When you include @CrazyMSULady in a tweet about Mary Lou Moore, the tweet will show up in her “mentions” tweet stream, too. Here’s an example of a tweet that incorporates many of the Twitter tools.

This tweet will show up on three timelines, @CrazyMSULady, @AustinSpartans and @MSUAA. It will also show up in a hash tag search for #MSUAdmissions. And it’s short enough to be retweeted without going over 140 characters.

In addition to generating amplification through re-tweets, another goal of a Twitter post is to get the reader to want to read more about it. So include a hyperlink to additional content. Herein lies another challenge. Most web addresses are, by necessity very long, often more than 140 characters. That’s where link shorteners come in.
Link shorteners are precisely that, websites where you can plug a long web address into a box, press submit, and generate a much shorter link, designed to fit in a character limited space. Two examples of link shorteners are the web sites bit.ly and goo.gl. These tools have an added value, too. They make it possible for you to track how many people clicked on your truncated link. Bit.ly and hit.ly are included in the social media publishing tool hoot suite. We’ll talk more about tools like hoot suite in a later webinar, but for now, Hoot Suite let’s you track how many people are clicking your truncated link and when they do it. Goo.gl offers a similar functionality.

A couple of quick thoughts about adding photos and location information. Twitter allows you to upload a photo or tag a location by clicking a camera or compass icon beneath the tweet entry box on your home twitter page. The major twitter applications have this functionality, too.

Twitter stores your picture file on their servers and a thumbnail image appears embedded in your tweet. Your device will also try to divine your current location when you click on the compass. The accuracy depends on what device you are using. When used judiciously, images can add another dimension to your message. Tagging a location can make it easy for people to find where you are. This becomes valuable when you are trying to guide someone to an event you may be promoting.

Don’t feel you have to use these tools unless they genuinely add value to your message. One of the things people expect from twitter is “just the facts”. Avoid throwing the kitchen sink into everything you post or you may risk people un-friending you as a result.
A little later on, we’ll talk about when and how to tweets effectively, along with how to identify tweet topics that will get attention. But just ahead, we’ll break down the essentials of how to write for the most popular social network in the world: Facebook.
CHAPTER SIX

Writing for Facebook

Watch a video version of this chapter.

If Twitter is our news wire, then Facebook is our back fence. In the days before the Internet and the telephone, we actually talked with our neighbors face to face. You have probably seen the classic image of two people conversing over the fence that separated their back yards. Facebook is one huge back yard where all your friends can lean over one another’s fences and share words, pictures and videos about what’s going on in their lives.

At the outset, you should answer this question: **Who do you want your Facebook friends to be?** Some people accept every friend request that comes their way, while others build a smaller, trusted inner circle. The Broadcaster social media strategy favors a big audience. If you are an Engager, keep your circle small enough so you can effectively interact with it.

**Make it Visual** - Compelling Facebook content is more visual. The pictures and video links are what catches your eye. The words that you write to accompany them are designed encourage people to watch, read and share.

**Use the Extra Space** - While Twitter’s magic number is 140, Facebook’s key character count is 400 (240 for comments). At one time, Facebook limited how much text you could put into a single post. These days, they give you much more space. But they truncate what appears on your time line at 400 characters. Returning to our Inverted Pyramid, think of this space as your opening paragraph. Succinct, compelling prose rules here. And if you must go “below the fold” make it worth your reader’s while to click the “more” button.

**Follow the Three Keys to Great On-Line Content:**

Relevancy, Recency, Usability

What you post should be RELEVANT to your audience. Your personal brand must have meaning to others or they won’t connect with it.
Your content needs to be **UPDATED REGULARLY**. Websites, Facebook pages and Twitter feeds that lie dormant for any length of time lose their power. Engagement requires commitment. You can’t dip your toe into a social network if you want to make waves. So if you post, post often.

And finally, your content must be **EASY TO CONSUME**. Clear communication, compelling graphics and useful links make all the difference. There’s an unwritten rule about web surfing that you want an answer to be no more than one click away. The nano-second attention spans that proliferate on the Internet will not suffer through five click-throughs to get to the meat.

Where Facebook and Twitter are concerned, I add a fourth key point: **INTERACT**.

Like life in the real world, you attract based on how you interact. On Facebook, this means clicking the “Like” button on someone’s post when you like it and taking the time to weigh in on a Facebook conversation with a comment.

Begin at the top:

Your profile picture and cover photo say a lot about you. Make them memorable. Update them often.

Here are some specific examples of effective Facebook posts.
When you upload a picture, provide some context for what your readers are seeing. Imagine sharing a photograph with a friend. What would you say as you hand it over? Facebook allows you to “tag” pictures with the names of other Facebook friends. Do this ONLY if that person is in the shot or the graphic specifically applies to them, because that content will automatically appear on their timeline. Friend fatigue can set in quickly if you tag too much distracting content. The same three rules apply to tagging: It should be relevant, up to date and easy to use.
Whenever you insert a link to a website or a video Facebook recognizes and renders a thumbnail picture and header information. Here’s a secret: You can edit these for clarity by clicking on them. The headlines and descriptions that accompany some YouTube videos don’t do them justice. It’s ok to change them to better reflect the content. Again, use the words in your post box to enhance your reader’s understanding of the content you are sharing. A best practice is to put the link at the end of your post.

**Share** - Another useful Facebook feature is the “Share” button. It allows you to post someone else’s content on your time line with a comment of your own. Facebook aggregates these so you can see how other friends who have shared the same link or graphic have commented on it. And “share with care”. Keep the three rules of great content in mind when you press the button.

**Celebrate** - One of the best Facebook features is the birthday alert. Have a birthday on Facebook and you’ll be showered with love. Make it a habit to post a quick comment on the birthday person’s page on that special occasion. And here’s a tip. Don’t just say “Happy Birthday”. Use the opportunity to express heartfelt admiration that is unique to the individual. Posts like, “You were my all time favorite teacher,” and “The world is a better place with you in it,” have power, get noticed and will enhance your status.
And don’t forget to periodically manage your timeline. When someone visits your Facebook page, they can easily scroll through your content. From time to time, take a broad look at your timeline. Some of it may be outdated or incorrect. You can delete these posts and hide posts where others have tagged you with ease. Part of keeping your content up to date is occasional pruning of things that are no longer relevant or usable.

And here’s a warning: Don’t ever think that what you post on Facebook is private. Indiscretion in the social media world can have the same negative effect as if you had made the mistake in person. Jobs have been lost and relationships damaged by a few insensitive words. A good rule of thumb is to assume that everything you say and do will be read by your mother, your significant other, your pastor and your boss. If it might offend any of these people, it’s probably not worth saying. You may also want to think twice before posting about the three so-called taboo conversation topics: Religion, Politics and Sex. We hold our views on these things close to our hearts. Proselytizing, candidate bashing and off-color humor take you into risky waters. Unless your personal brand is based on one of these three things, it might be best to avoid them.

That’s it. Your Facebook content should be: Relevant, up to date, and easy to consume. Take advantage of the “Like” and “Share” tools and comment on your friend’s posts when you have something useful to say. The personal touch is just as important on the web as it is in real life, so celebrate important events in the lives of your social media friends, too.

Do all of these things and you will develop an on-line personality that is attractive, effective and influential.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Should You Blog?

Do you need a blog? That’s a great question. The weblog has become a key portal for expressing your personal brand. It’s also the most time consuming.

Blogging requires attention to detail from beginning to end. While you only have to worry about a profile picture and a cover / background photo on Facebook and Twitter, when you create a blog, you are responsible for the total user experience. The relevancy, recency and usability requirements are totally in your control. It will take time and thought to set it all up.

Think strategy again. What behaviors do you want to inspire? Which communications strategy will you use? How will you measure your effectiveness?
If you decide to blog, your blog should have a consistent theme. Writing about topics that are all over board won’t get you regular readers. And once you start posting, post regularly. As you ingest all the content from your other social networks, are there topics that are worthy of a deeper dive? Your blog is a place to do that.

And when you publish a blog post, share it across your other networks. Customize your link content to take advantage of the strengths of each platform and make sure to include links back to your blog too.

Blogging is another topic that deserves a detailed discussion. There are a ton of great books on the subject. Grab a couple and consider carefully whether or not you want to take the leap.

I love blogging. It’s been a great source for some wonderful relationships and it keeps me in the habit of regularly researching and writing about my favorite topics.

But it’s definitely a commitment. If you decide to do it, do it well.
CHAPTER EIGHT

When to Post and What to Say

While a ton of research has gone into the science of communication on Social Media, it’s still a “trust your gut” exercise. Every social platform has its own vibe. The best way to learn how much to say and when to say it is to watch.

There are social media rock stars like Robert Scoble and Chris Brogan who have figured a lot of this out and have a ton of followers as a result. Watch what they do and learn from them. Here are some of their common characteristics.

Have a Clear Objective – What behaviors do you want to inspire? What is the overall theme of your social communication (it can be different for each platform)?

Decide on Your Social Strategy – Will you be a broadcaster, an interactor or an engager?

Commitment – Once you decide what you want to say and start to say it, keep at it. One blog post every other month or an occasional flurry of tweets won’t build followers. When you find your rhythm, stick with it.

Listen to Feedback – Your followers will tell you, often very candidly, what you are doing right and wrong. Incorporate the feedback that works and throw away the rest. Use social media measurement tools to give you a feel for the depth and breadth of your outreach.

Choose Your Networks Carefully – Go where your audience is and be sensitive to the shifts. You may decide to stop using one network to concentrate on another. That’s ok. You don’t have to be everywhere.

Be Yourself – Study the popular people, but speak in your own voice. You’re not Robert Scoble, so don’t try to be Robert Scoble. Your value as a human being is in your uniqueness. Let it shine.

Tools for your Social Media messaging:
**Hootsuite** – At this writing, Hootsuite is the most popular and most feature rich tool for disseminating social media messaging. It allows you to post to multiple networks. And best of all, it gives you the option to post your stuff at a specific time.

I've learned that one part of the day where a large number of my Twitter followers are on-line is around 8AM. As a result, I post a daily motivational quote every weekday at 8:10. I load em up a couple of weeks in advance and Hootsuite fires them out on schedule.

**Zite** – Tools like Zite and StumbleUpon are great for finding good content to share. These are applications that learn what you like and don't like and offer your links that are most likely to interest you. Zite is a mobile application. StumbleUpon works on your smartphone, tablet or a browser. Both have buttons that let you instantly post stuff to your favorite social network. But don’t just hit the button. Look at how the link descriptions are rendered and edit them to make them more appealing and understandable to your audience.

**Google Alerts** – Since speed of dissemination is one of the keys to getting people to pay attention, create Google Alerts on topics that interest you. Google will spider the web and email you news and stories as they appear. This tool is great for keeping up to the minute on important news, too. Sign up for CNN, NPR and BBC breaking news updates, too and have them sent to your smartphone as text messages in addition to receiving them as email.

**Follow and Retweet Good Content Creators** – As you get to know the people who live in the various social media environments, you will find that some offer really good stuff that you will want to share. I follow BreakingNews on Twitter to get the latest news updates fast.

**Make it Mobile** – All of the tools I list above are available in mobile versions. Great content pops up at all times of the day and night, so use mobile applications to get it out when you’re not near your computer.
CHAPTER NINE

LinkedIn and Your Personal Brand

For many, LinkedIn is the primary method for expressing your personal brand. HR people use it as part of the reference check and head hunters troll there for talent. So it’s important to have a positive presence.

Create a Winning Profile – The first step is to carefully craft your LinkedIn profile. This deserves much more coverage than I’ll give it here, but, in short, follow the best practices for resume creation. Be brief. Be direct (don’t hide your skill sets behind a lot of flowery words). Be honest. And keep your profile updated! People who are interested in hiring you will always be trolling LinkedIn. Make sure you are easy to find.

Build a Good Network – Build your network BEFORE you need it. Seek out and connect with people you can help and who can help you. Follow the Keith Ferrazzi rule here. There are a limited number of people who will truly determine your success and happiness. Find them. Follow them. Help them. If you do, they will be there when you need them.

Join Relevant LinkedIn Groups – When you become a Spartan alum, you can join the MSUAA LinkedIn group. It’s home to the largest official alumni group on the network and is filled with people who instantly have something in common with you. Look for groups that discuss your particular discipline or job type, too.

Interact – LinkedIn allows you to share your social media voice through posts and link sharing. Customize your content specifically to support your career skill sets. LinkedIn is NOT the place to talk about how great the Tigers are doing or who you met at Crunchy’s last night. Keep your chatter very relevant here. And listen to what your network is saying. Share the good stuff.
CHAPTER TEN

What All of This is Really All About

Why do all of this? Why spend time and effort crafting and promoting a brand and interacting with a ton of people on multiple social platforms?

Some would say that it best positions you for success in your chosen field. That’s true. Social media can either help or hinder your career, big time.

We talked at the outset of this volume about the relationship between success and happiness. Here’s a deeper look.

Earlier this year, I had the chance to visit with some Spartans in Malaysia. The first day I was there I found myself standing on a street corner in the center of Kuala Lumpur. Here you’ll find an example of nearly every nuance in the broad spectrum of humanity. Men and women in $1,200 suits share the same sidewalk with burquas and Nike t-shirts. Every form of commerce is in play here from oil executives and government ministers to prostitutes and peddlers of Rolex knock offs. The obese and the underfed, the well educated and the uneducated, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Jews, Confucians and I suppose more than a few atheists, all breathing the same air, existing elbow to elbow.

What, I wondered, do all of these people share in common? When you peel away the Maslow pyramid and get to the essence of these millions of concurrent lives, what is the common question that is in the back of everyone’s mind?

I decided to find out.

I was in Malaysia’s capital city for a meeting of our International alumni. We had attendees from a dozen countries, a variety of religious beliefs and a broad strata of employment. If ever there was a diverse laboratory for my experiment, this was it.

The question I like to ask Americans is this: If you won the lotto and all your financial needs were taken care of, how would you spend your days?

What would you do if you were working for love and not for money?
It’s a question very few of us ever really take the time to ponder, especially if we add this wrinkle:

What would you attempt if you knew you could not fail? If you could take a magic pill that would make you wildly successful at anything you attempted, what great adventure would you undertake.

These are life’s most fundamental questions:

Why are we here? And what are we going to do about it?

And what of my international friends? How did they answer the “why are we here” question?

- “I want to learn as much as I can about the things that interest me.”
- “I want to maximize pleasure and minimize discomfort.”
- “I want to alleviate suffering.”
- “I want to squeeze the most out of every second, sliding into heaven totally exhausted with a martini in one hand and my iPhone in the other.”
- “I want to leave the world a little bit better than I found it.”

“If you do these things,” I asked, “what’s the end result.”

To a person, they answered…

“I want to be happy.”

So, in essence, our lives are about defining, bracketing and chasing… Happiness.

Happiness, as defined by the ultimate information authority in the universe (Wikipedia), “..is a mental state of well-being characterized by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy.”

We humans have tried to define happiness psychologically, spiritually, philosophically, even biologically. And at the end of the day, no matter what your experience or education, happiness is a thing of our own making.

Researcher Dan Gilbert believes that there are two kinds of happiness:

The happiness we feel when we get what we want and
The happiness we create when we don’t get what we want.

How many of you have won the lotto? How many of you have ever come in first place in a race? How many of you have ever been in love? At the moment
each of these things happened to you, what did you feel? My guess is that there were some significant electronic impulses firing among the synapses in your brain that made you feel pretty good.

But what did you feel like three months later? Gilbert’s research seems to indicate that moments of pure pleasure don’t last. The lottery winner and the accident victim may find themselves in an identical state of mind within weeks of their watershed moments.

How do we do more than just exist with a brain that comes to us with these limitations? In fact, we can use them to our advantage.

We live in a world where the law of cause and effect rules. Our every day behaviors build the habits that define a lifestyle that determines the extent of joy or pain we experience in the course of a lifetime.

It’s not the big events that define us. It’s the little ones.

Our existence is an un-ending series of small decisions. And these decisions are influenced by the one true factor that impacts happiness: Our attitude.

We all know examples of both ends of the attitude spectrum. At one extreme is the unhappy person who sees a cloud behind every silver lining. At the other is that annoying individual who never sees a cloud. The world is always perfect and there are no such things as problems.

Reality is somewhere in the middle. One of my all time heroes is Admiral Jim Stockdale. He was the highest ranking prisoner of war during the Vietnam era and endured 8 years of imprisonment and torture at the infamous Hanoi Hilton. My mentor, Jim Collins, interviewed Admiral Stockdale for his best seller “Good to Great” about the attitude that determined whether you lived or died in prison.

When asked who didn’t make it back alive, Stockdale said,

“Oh, that’s easy, the optimists. Oh, they were the ones who said, ‘We’re going to be out by Christmas.’ And Christmas would come, and Christmas would go. Then they’d say, ‘We’re going to be out by Easter.’ And Easter would come, and Easter would go. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart.”

It turns out that the survivors lived what has come to be known as “The Stockdale Paradox”.

“I never lost faith in the end of the story,” Stockdale said. “I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life, which, in retrospect, I would
not trade.”

This is a very important point. Here’s another Stockdale insight to help drive it home.

“You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.”

Life is a series of story problems. We’re start each day with a game plan and life is fired at us point blank, adding twists and turns that can deviate us from our goals. The key to getting to where we want to be is to accept the uncomfortable dimensions of your current reality. To paraphrase Stockdale,

“Sometimes life sucks. Deal with it.”

But never lose faith that you will prevail.

What then, is happiness? In the final analysis: Happiness is a choice.

It is a decision we make about how we will approach our daily ups and downs. It’s having the courage to fully process both the pleasure and pain, so we can learn from each and grow.

Pleasure is only a bad thing when we get addicted to it. And pain only becomes suffering when we try to numb it and don’t allow ourselves to fully feel it.

With all of this in mind. How do we figure out why we’re here and move in the direction of our destiny? Here’s a tool that might be able to help.

Try this exercise. Put a sheet of paper in front of you with three lines on it. On line number one, write out, in one sentence how you would describe your profession to some one else.

When I did this exercise with a couple of my health care friends a couple of weeks ago, they wrote the following.

“As a Nurse, I provide moral support and physical care to people during some of their most challenging life moments.”

“As a Laboratory Technician, I work behind the scenes to seek out the early warning signs that can save a life.”

“My career provides the financial resources that enable me to focus on my true passion: helping the homeless build self esteem and self reliance.”
When you’ve finished number one. Let’s go one to line number two. Give yourself more space here because I want you to try to articulate the times in your life when you were the most happy.

Where were you? What were you doing? What was it about the situation that made you happy?

Now, number 3, the most important question. Based on what you’ve written in the first two sections, write down, in a sentence, what would your profession be if you were living your passion? What would you do if you were working for love and not for money?

It may be hard to answer all three of these questions honestly right now. Give yourself some time to really think about it. But do think about it. Only about 5% of the population ever considers issues like these. Perhaps that’s why so few of us are truly happy.

Once you’ve zeroed in on your passion. Give yourself some tasks to move in that direction. Google encourages their employees to spend 20% of their work day on their own projects. The company pays for this time because some of the most profitable, game-changing ideas develop during that 20%.

If you’re like me, your days are probably already pretty full with the work you’re currently doing to preserve your current career, your mind, your body and your spirit. How do you chase happiness in the middle of a busy life? I suggest what I call “The 10% Rule”. If you’re not where you want to be in your pursuit of happiness, invest 10% of every day inching in that direction.

If we assume that we spend 8 hours a night sleeping, that leaves 16 hours a day for everything else. The 10% Rule means you would spend about 1 hour and 40 minutes a day chasing happiness. Over the course of a year that’s 608 hours in a 365 day year or 76 eight hour work-days.

Imagine what you could accomplish if you focused on a single project for two and a half months?

Now here’s the final exercise. Once you’ve articulated where you are, where you want to go and the steps you’ll take to get there. I want you to write yourself a letter from the future.

My motivational mentor, Earl Nightingale used to say that, “we become what we think about.” Denis Waitley’s research into the workings of our mind tells us that our subconscious can’t tell the difference between what is real and what is vividly and repeatedly imagined. “Your imagination,” he says, “is your preview of life’s coming attractions.”
So I want you to paint a picture of your future state and start imagining yourself there. Write yourself a letter from that place and describe what it’s like in vivid detail. What is your job description? Where do you live? What kind of car are you driving? What does a typical day look like? Describe it from the perspective of your intellect but be sure to include a lot of emotion, too.

Objectives are our road map but subjectives are our motivation.

Describe the furniture, the gym where you work out, the people you interact with every day. Paint your picture in full color, in IMAX with 5.1 dolby stereo surround sound. The move vivid you can make it, the better your subconscious will be able to process it.

And once you’ve articulated all of this, watch the magic happen. Your body will manifest what the mind envisions. This is why we feel physical stress when we worry about something that hasn’t happened. Make sure you’re programming your subconscious robot with the right code.

We are, in a sense, just like a computer in this respect. Plug in good code and you’ll get good output. Plug in bad code and you’ll get bad output.

There you have it. We were put on this earth to chase happiness. To define what it means in our own minds and to do whatever it takes to manifest it, no matter how good our bad our current circumstance may be.

What’s your passion? What would you do if you could work for love and not for money?
If you’re not where you want to be right now, spend at least 10% of every day moving in the direction of your dreams.
Articulate your dreams in clear, simple sentences; statements that everyone, including your subconscious mind can easily understand.
And paint a vivid picture of where you expect to be 2, 5 and ten years from right now and create some simple, measurable action steps to start you on your way.

And one final point. Happiness is not a destination. Talk to some of the most successful individuals and teams and they will tell you that it wasn’t the achievement that brought the joy.

It was what happened on the way there.

I hope these ideas help you leverage social media so that –you- can chase happiness. In the end, that’s what it’s all about.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

Want to Learn More?

If you’re a visual learner and want some 5 minute injections on how to write for social media, follow the hyperlinks to my YouTube videos on Social Media Strategy, Writing for Twitter and Writing for Facebook.

There’s lots of stuff on chasing happiness on my website: ScottWesterman.com.

Got feedback? Have a question? Write to me: wsw@msu.edu