

COMMENT BY SASCHA AMARASINHA

## WHY ALL MANAGERS SHOULD LEARN TO FACEBOOK



This comment was inspired by own experiences as well as thoughts presented by Edgar H. Schein (Helping), Nadja Pass (Nadjas Reflexioner) and Morten Bay (Homo Connexus).

“Just for the record. I don’t facebook, blog or twitter!” This statement came with great fervor from a manager I recently met at a session on leadership communication. Not that I don’t understand him; the demands on management are many– but managers might as well familiarize themselves with the dynamics of social medias developing faster than you can say ‘corporate communication strategy’.

### Why? For 3 reasons:

Firstly because they hold the key to a new way of showing up in public as they enable us to mix different styles of messages e.g. present condition (status updates), personal stories (image building), recommendations and linking (knowledge sharing) and generous collective problem sharing (innovation). And to appear as a human being is becoming increasingly important for a leader to create and maintain credibility and trust.

Secondly because sharing your professional thoughts and challenges before they have reached their final form and thereby tap into the otherwise silent collective knowledge is a key to leadership of the future. Soon the internal communication vehicles of your company will copy this way of communicating. Through practicing on e.g. Facebook you will get ahead by learning what it takes to access the knowledge, the crazy twist or the missing piece to complete your task.

Thirdly because future interaction with key employees and teams will increasingly take place virtually across geography and time. The old mantra about the power of face-to-face com-

munication will be balanced with the need to re-create the intimacy of this conversation, and to create motivation and trust in the virtual team showing up in both personal and professional tone-of-voice at the right time is a must.

No doubt that this media development poses somewhat of a threat to the current view of the leader as the one with answers rather than questions. But to those who feel like the manager quoted in the beginning of this piece just remember that your future employees share many things in cyberspace, also their ignorance and need to learn from others. Perhaps your first entry should be: “Help me, please, I am the new kid on the blog ...” You’ll be surprised how many are ready to help you get going.

Five focus points when you begin blogs or Facebook-like activities:

- 1) *Be spontaneous.* Blogging or giving status updates is different than other written forms of leadership communication. Both tone of voice and frequency is more spontaneous and dialog driven. In other words: Rather than delivering information and facts that you really do not expect anyone to respond to, this is where you share your thoughts and give others an insight into what you are fascinated by professionally (or personally).
- 2) *Dish out a little bit of you.* The media is personal so feel free to speak on your own behalf rather than expressing the views of an entire board of directors. Speak in

your own voice. Then you won’t need to weigh each word, but expect to stand behind the intention of your statements. That goes without saying.

- 3) *Ask questions rather than give answers.* The media calls for dialogue and input not carefully edited truths. As expert in social media Nadja Pass puts it: “It’s all about moving from use of exclamation mark to use of question mark”. In other words being curious and open to input and insights that others might have to share.
- 4) *Be generous.* Rather than coming up with some clever and new thoughts yourself, you can let your readers become aware of information, links etc. that inspire you. The more knowledge sharing you provide the more activity you create and the wiser every one becomes.
- 5) *Play with the genres.* The media is more suited for short text pieces than long complicated explanations. Let Twitter inspire you to create meaningful messages in 140 signs or less. How short and sweet can you get? If you prefer a small video sequence to the written word, learn to create small sound bites that you can publish.

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