

Where Will Technology Take Us?

New Directions in Social Media

2010
A Whitepaper

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This whitepaper reports the results of an international Delphi study of technology experts that consulted with managers, communication professionals, academics, computer scientists, and entrepreneurs. Our goal was to learn what the world of tomorrow looks like from technology experts, as well as the trends and issues that they believe are worth watching. Much of what we found was predictable and routine—technology will continue to grow and become a greater part of people’s lives, etc.—however, other findings are less obvious and represent issues of great significance for communication professionals. Often overlooked is that social media are a major source of adolescent identity formation, privacy issues are being ignored, etc.

Perhaps the biggest frustration in studying technology is that everyone thinks that they know more than everyone else, even when they have never read a book or scholarly study about technology or social media, or conducted any original research to verify their assumptions. When you tell most professionals that “social media are probably just an organizational fad,” they think that you are insane. However, in just the last decade, we have seen the following trends: websites were the future in the '90s; in the 2000s, blogging and virtual reality like SecondLife were the future; right now it’s Facebook and Twitter, but Pinterest and others are coming on strong. Next year or the year after will see some new social media tools but professional communicators will still be half-a-decade behind, riding on the coat-tails of whatever came along a few years earlier. The rearview mirror approach to technology needs to change. As professional communicators we should be looking ahead, not behind.

What our study shows is that communication and advertising professionals need to know more about the historical path and future trajectory of mediated technology. The real experts, the people who invented the hardware and software and who write the applications, are more modest. They understand that technology has a lot more potential as a democratic and community tool than most citizens are aware of.

This whitepaper calls on social media and communication professionals to learn some new communication skills. We should lead the way in the use of mediated communication rather than spending our time chasing down every new trend. We should take part in the evolution of new technologies as they happen. When all we do is chase the latest trend, we make no headway in genuinely understanding the technology and being able to use technology for the good of our stakeholders and publics.

Social Media are not so Social

In an effort to understand the complexities of social media and new technology, three researchers from the University of Oklahoma conducted a Delphi study of 14 technology superstars from 6 nations.

The results of the study contradict much of the conventional wisdom on social media by public relations and advertising agencies, educators, and the media, that treat social media as harmless tools to help people communicate with others. The participants in the study warn of unintended consequences and possible harm that will come as people relinquish more and more of their online privacy, and allow corporations and governments unrestricted access to personal information.

Communication professionals need to become more aware of what is possible with social media. Social media are just tools—sometimes appropriate, sometimes not. But over the next decade, issues such as privacy, security, merging software and hardware, and understanding location based services will become important. More important still will be learning how to manage the enormous amounts of social data that are generated every day.

Facebook is a Fad

We know that this statement sounds like heresy to many, but the history of technological innovation since Moore's Law predicted in 1965 that computing power would double every two years, has been that new technologies and software continue to supplement and eventually supplant older technologies. The universe is ruled by entropy. Systems break down. Facebook *will* eventually be replaced or fall out of favor—it may already be happening as GM and other corporations have announced that they will no longer advertise on Facebook, and new social media websites like Pinterest emerge.

Technology advances in dog years. New technologies have dramatically altered the communication professions over the last decade. New features on websites, powerful mobile devices, and the subsequent restructuring of news services have also dramatically changed how we live our lives. Where once a news release mailed to a journalist, or an appearance on a radio talk show, might have been the obvious communication choice, professional communicators now must decide among dozens of choices: websites, videos, social media, hand-held devices, blogs, podcasts, and even (*gasp*) face-to-face.

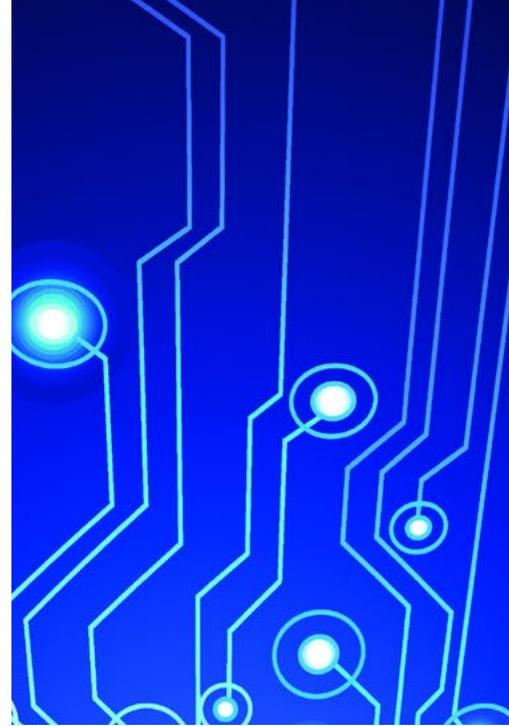
Most communication professionals are ambivalent about social media, believing that they need to understand how to use the tools, but are not really sure how to use them effectively. Many professionals pounce on every new social media innovation in an attempt to find the next holy grail of social media.

Unfortunately, a disconnect exists between what most communication professionals believe, from personal and anecdotal experience, and what is actually supported by research. The recent technological innovations and information haven't lead to a class of super communicators who are able to empathise with stakeholders and publics, and respond quickly in times of crisis. Rather, social media have actually lead to a new class of organizational technicians: corporate tweeters, Facebook posters, and bloggers who often understand very little about new technology or strategy.

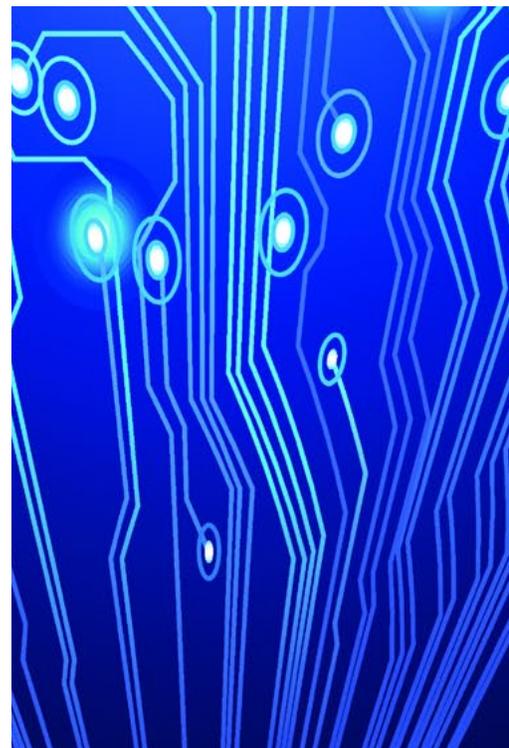
As educators, we regularly see students assume that the solution to every problem is a tweet or Facebook page. Professional agencies increasingly demand that students graduate with technology skills, and then ask new professionals to do things that are on par with what high school students already do (post on Facebook, blog, and tweet). What educators and professionals really need to understand is how to use social media *effectively*. The point of this Delphi study was to learn where our technology is going, and what it is capable of.

Has the Tweet Already Left the Keyboard?

The unstated assumption of new technology often is that *if you use it, you know how to use it well*. Unfortunately, as fifty years of media literacy research has taught us, watching television does not make you an expert filmmaker, any more than posting blog entries or sending out tweets makes someone a strategic communication expert.



“A huge disconnect exists between what professionals believe, and what is actually supported by research and reality.”



Social media seem deceptively easy to use: write a short message (a tweet), make it interesting, give it a hashtag so other people can retweet it, etc., But that is like saying that television is easy to use. Twitter (and all social media) is influenced by timing, audience, situation, language, issue salience, etc. The social media *tool* is easy to use, strategic communication is hard.

What much of the current public relations research focuses on is Twitter use by journalists, the credibility of bloggers, and the failure of most social media to be dialogic (two-way). What researchers and professionals take little interest in are the ethics of the technologies and whether we *should* be trying to reach stakeholders in this way? How will we protect our stakeholders and customers' privacy? What will we do with the data that we gather? The potential of new technologies is still tremendous. Where will technology be in ten years is almost never asked. Where will technology be in ten years if we just keep chasing the latest social media trend? The metaphor for what professional communicators are doing is *whether we can* sell Chocoloops to children with cartoons, and not *whether we should* be selling Chocoloops to children at all.

What most social media tools offer to publics is what they have been craving for decades: *information*. Individuals and publics are not responding to social media per se, but to being paid attention to. Psychologists will tell you that humans like to be paid attention to. We are social animals. We need to understand the principles and psychology of new technology if we hope to go further with it.

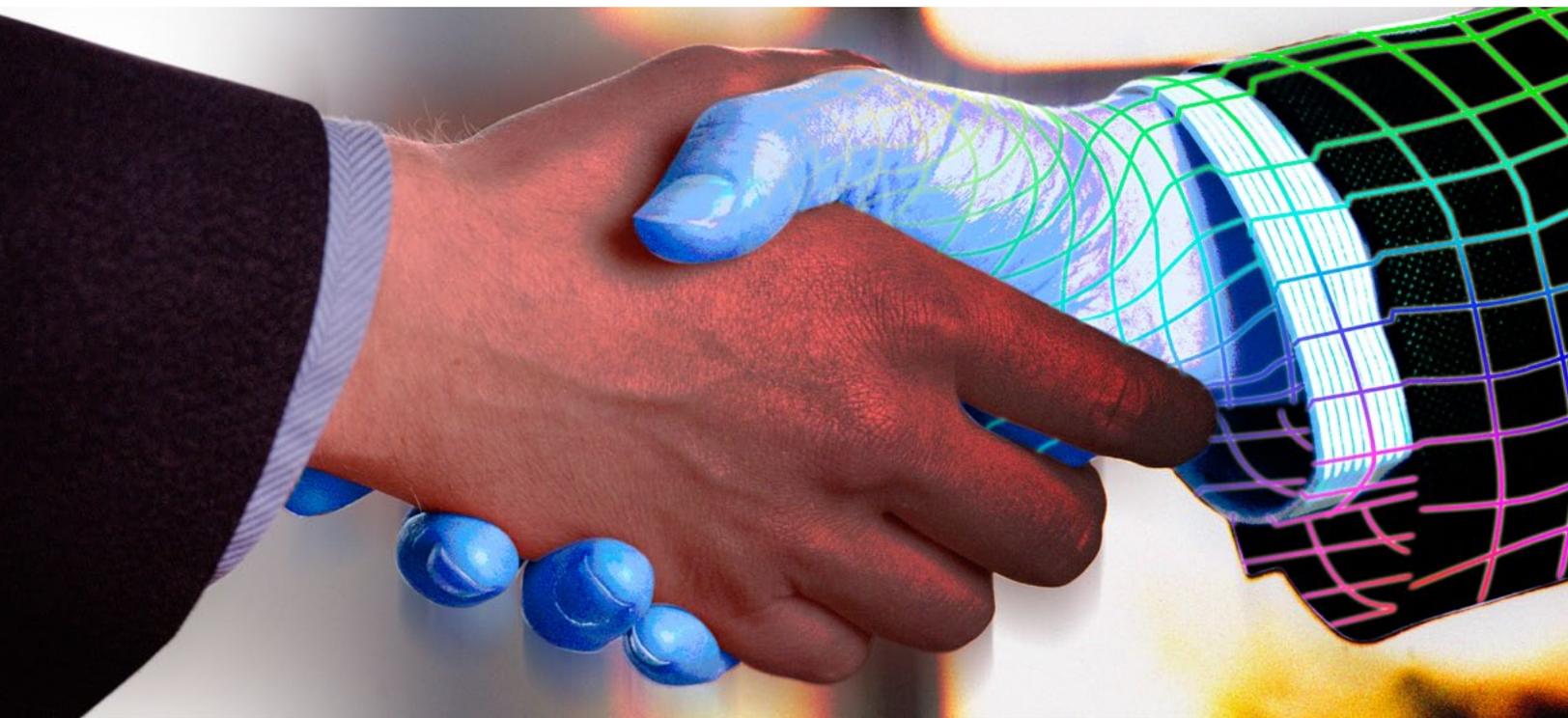
But social media "content" is illusory. Research on social media shows that the organizations considered to be model social media communicators spend more time reading other people's blogs and social media content (conducting research) than actually sharing their own content with publics. As every marketer and advertiser already knows, social media offer a treasure trove of information useful for selling people stuff. But few organizations use social media because of a genuine concern for stakeholders and publics.

What has become clear is that technology researchers and professionals in advertising, marketing, and public relations are too close to social media technology. Cognitive dissonance theory tells us that people who are heavily invested in an idea or social practice are unable to be objective. When ethical lapses of judgment occur, we make excuses, ignore conflicting information, and try to justify our actions. Indeed, a recent article in *The New Scientist* argues that humans are almost never objective, we just look for ways to justify our beliefs to others. When clients demand social media solutions, we give them what they want. Gone is the notion that public relations professionals should act as "ethical counsellors" for their organization or clients.

“Social media communicators spend more time reading other people’s content than actually sharing their own.”

Technology Professionals and the Social Media Landscape

Where are we going—where should we be going?



“In China, a large group of low-income workers (probably in the magnitude of hundreds of millions) tend to surf the web using non-smart cell phones. Their online activities are mainly limited to simple games, online chatting, and book downloads. The enabling technology may not be high tech but it eliminates barriers by providing net access with cheap, non-smart cell phones. This could be a model of universal Internet access for the poorer nations.” (Anonymous)

The point of our study was to learn some of the things about new technology and social media that most communication professionals did not already know. We already *know* that social media are important. We *know* that social media are powerful. What we do not really understand is why those things are true?

Many professionals claim to be building “relationships” with publics by sending tweets or posting Facebook messages. Some organizations have tens of thousands, even millions of “followers.” Starbucks, for example, has 32-million “likes” on Facebook, 3-million followers on Twitter, and is *following* 78-thousand people on Facebook. The problem is, the average human is not capable of having a “relationship” with more than about 150–200 People; and relationships are not built solely on liking, they also include, trust, affinity, interactions over time, social desirability, etc.

People like movie stars, but they do not have a relationship with them. We like *Jersey Mike’s* sandwiches, but we don’t want them commenting on our Facebook vacation photos. The places that we should be looking to for how to use social media better are rhetoric, psychology, sociology, political science, interpersonal and group communication, and persuasion theory.

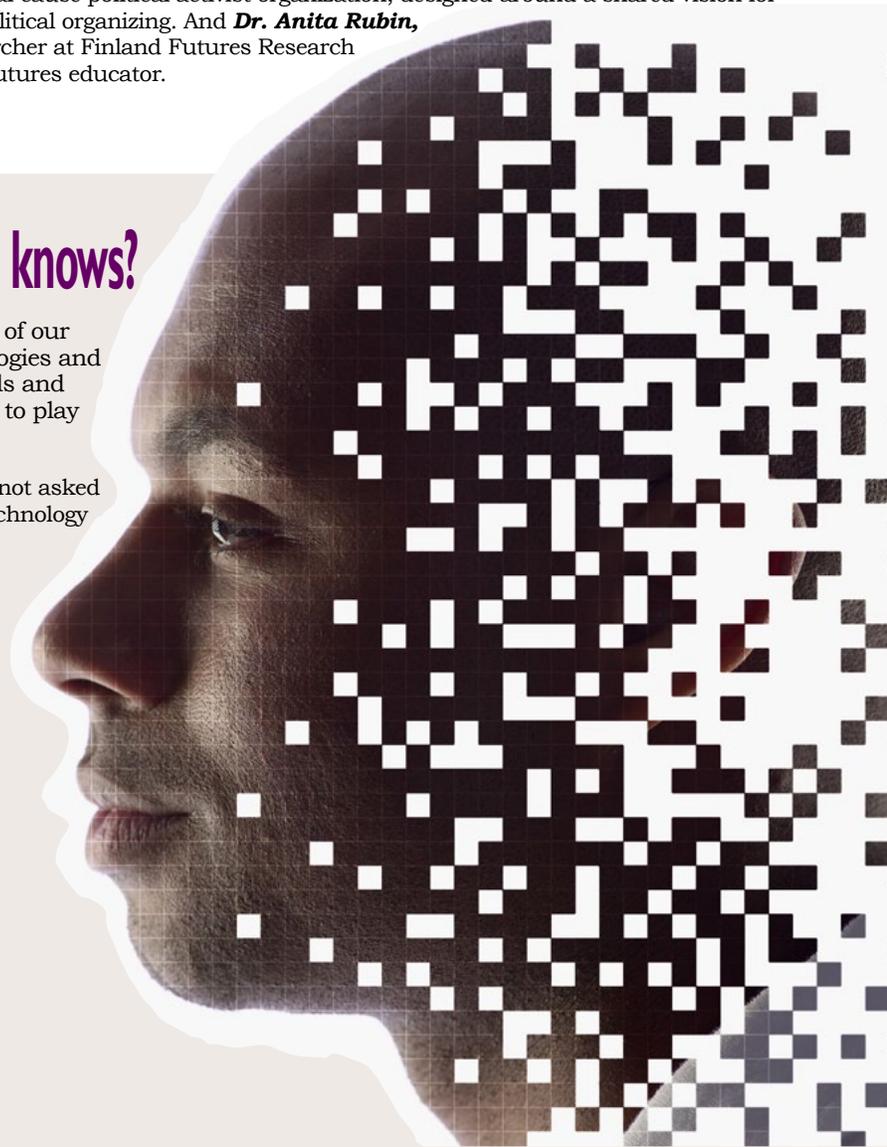
This 2012 Delphi study solicited the participation of 14 world leaders in new technology, academics, art, engineering, communication, public relations, professional writing, organizational communication, computer science, and other fields. Participants included: **Vladimir Oane**, CPO of *uberVU*, a global media monitoring firm serving thousands of clients, including Fortune 500 firms. **Mel Odom**, a professional writer with more than 150 mainstream books, and several successful online publishing ventures. **Dr. Jeroen Lemmens**, a professor at the University of Amsterdam, and expert on the psychological and behavioral consequences of online computer game addiction. **Rob “CmdrTaco” Malda**, creator of the wildly successful “News For Nerds” website *Slashdot.org*, and Chief Strategist & Editor-at-Large for the *Washington Post’s* “WaPo Labs” team. **Dr. Zizi Papacharissi**, Professor & Department Head, University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of Communication, whose work focuses on the social and political consequences of online media. **Dr. Ronald E. Rice**, Arthur N. Rupe Chair of the Social Effects of Mass Communication in the Department of Communication, University of California, Santa Barbara. **Assaf Weinberg**, CTO of *Ruck.us*. A social cause political activist organization, designed around a shared vision for the future of political organizing. And **Dr. Anita Rubin**, a Senior Researcher at Finland Futures Research Centre, and a futures educator.

What do we know that no one else knows?

Quite a lot actually. This is the first question that we asked of our experts. There are dozens of online communication technologies and communication principles that public relations professionals and researchers overlook including the role that technology has to play in democracy, ubiquity and scale, trust, and fairness.

The 14 technology leaders who participated in this study were not asked about social media per se, but rather were asked about new technology in general. The three questions initially asked:

1. What do you know about Internet communication technologies or social media that no one else knows?
2. Which Internet communication technologies, social media innovations, or trends, will prove to be the most important over the next decade and why?
3. Thinking 10 years out, how do you see software, technology, social trends, etc. influencing Internet communication or social media?



Better Relationships Through Technology

Public Relations Professionals Need to Become More Sophisticated Users of Technology

Probably one of the more important findings to come from this study was the reminder about how much we take technology for granted. **Many of our handheld devices, like smart phones and iPads, have applications that take advantage of something called Location Based Services (LBS).** Basically, LBS keep a record of where you are when you use your device to take photographs, search for information or locations, etc. As some privacy experts suggest, “Your cellphone is a tracking device that lets you make calls” (boing-boing.net/2012/09/04/your-cellphone-is-a-tracking-d.html). The problem is that most people do not understand the risks that disclosure of personal information pose. Aside from the geodemographic data that is made available to marketers, personal profiles are built up around such data that have consequences for how people live their lives.

Let’s take an issue closer to home. When Google was launched in 1998, *PC Magazine* rated it as having the most accurate search results. Indeed, most people just assume that when they conduct a search using Google they are finding the same information as other people. They aren’t. Over the years, search technology and Google have changed. Users are now given “targeted results” that are based on a personal profile built around previous searches and one’s browsing history. As one of our

“So, a liberal Democrat who does a search for Herman Cain is more likely to get search results that question or attack Cain and his record, than a conservative Republican who would see search results that support Cain.” (Stromer-Galley).



Delphi participants noted: “So, a liberal Democrat who does a search for Herman Cain, is more likely to get search results that question or attack Cain and his record, than a conservative Republican who would see search results that support Cain.” The results are different.

The cliquishness of the Internet and social media is making people increasingly partisan and insulating them from the views of others. The technologies that we have created aren’t contributing to world peace or leading to beneficial relationships between organizations and publics. Our technologies separate us. When we expose ourselves only to what we like, we make it easier to ignore the ugly side of life and the suffering of the have-nots.

Study after study of dialogic public relations, going back more than a decade, has shown conclusively that social media (Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and to a lesser extent Blogs), are not relational development tools. Social media tools like Twitter and Facebook are making citizens *less* tolerant of others, not more tolerant of cultural diversity and differences.

A related issue is that **dynamic lists and smart technologies will emerge. Intelligent systems will mine data and map our social world.** Public relations and communication professionals need to be considering where they stand on such technologies. Here again, advertisers will undoubtedly be excited about the potential to track customers and offer products and services to them as they live their lives, but public relations is an ethical profession where mutually beneficial relationships are developed. We need to spend more time developing practical and ethical stances on how to interact with our stakeholders and publics via hardware and software applications. Because we *can* track people does not mean that we *should* track people.

A more subtle issue involves identity. **Social media and integration will make identity harder to manipulate and change.** The history of the internet and social media has been filled with technologies and software tools that allow people to express their own identities and create their own personas. YouTube, for example, is a place where users control content. But other technologies like Facebook have already begun to change in ways that serve advertisers, site owners, and content providers, rather than individuals and publics.

Facebook recently required all users to switch to a new “historical” interface that forces users to present themselves to others, and to think of themselves in a sequential way. The shift in how the interface works makes it easier for the data to be mined by marketers, and for advertisers and others to use the data. But Facebook’s new interface also makes social and personality change difficult. Most people remake themselves several times over the course of their lives as they take new jobs, attend new schools, move to new cities, develop new interpersonal relationships. The inescapable sequentially of social media like Facebook give the impression that the status quo is an inevitability. For younger, impressionable, school-age children, the story created by Facebook will undoubtedly have consequences for how they see themselves when they graduate from high school, and still are surrounded by the same circle of “friends.”

Public relations professionals need to stop seeing social media tools simplistically and naively as neutral technologies and begin to treat them as what they are becoming: tools for socialization, democratization, and interpersonal relations. Public relations professionals need to shift the focus away from social media as marketing and advertising tools and begin dealing with stakeholders in more sophisticated ways. In principle, social media offer tremendous potential for relationship building, but in practice, social media are naively used as marketing and promotional tools.

Remote collaboration technology will become the norm. The professionals who participated in our Delphi have once again raised the spectre of remote collaboration technology—which is indeed reaching critical mass. But the attention of public relations research has been on whether Twitter is a useful tool rather than on the more subtle and sophisticated features of technology. We are failing as organizational counselors. Communication professionals need to move their eyes toward the horizon and stop staring at their feet.

Consultants, educators, government agencies, and many other types of organizations already use remote collaboration and communication tools. Skype is the preferred tool among the media development community, as are tools like *Dropbox.com* that allow information to be easily shared. Consultants, educators, and business professionals have for years been predicting that remote collaboration would become the norm. Overlooked in the predictions, however, has been the impact on users.

It’s Time to Learn From the Past

The issues raised by the technology professionals and educators have a certain banality. The focus is on how users interact with the technologies, and not on the technologies themselves.

Many professionals focus a great deal of attention on each trendy new social media technology to come down the bend, but spend almost no time thinking about how users will want to experience each tool. Indeed, some agencies have entire departments devoted to the User Experience (UE) and User Interface (UI) but spend no time asking whether the users they are studying should want to interface with the organization.

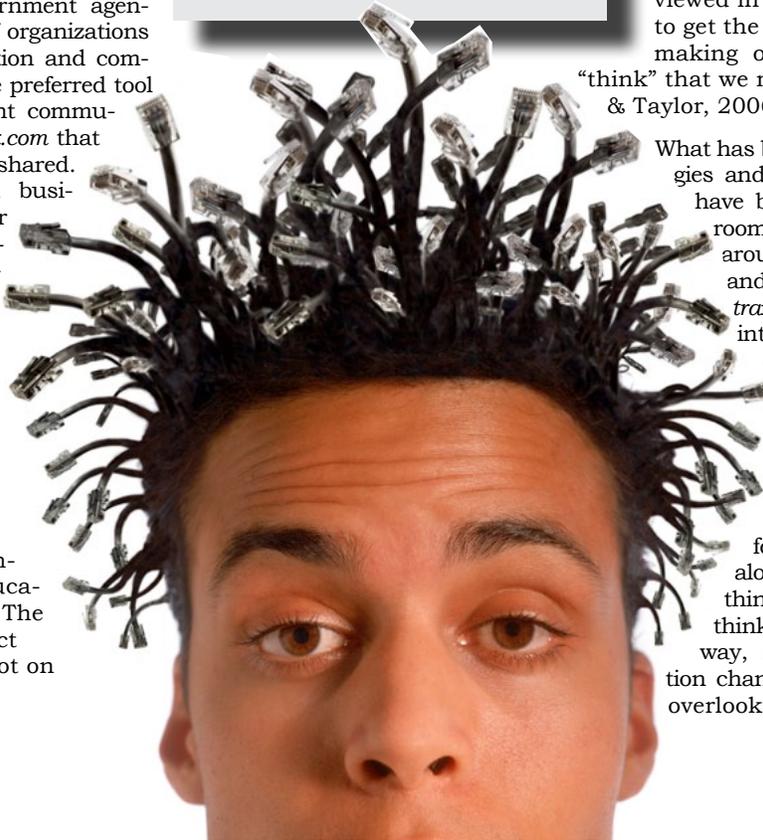
The best example of misunderstanding a technology and UI might be the humble call center which, as some pat-

“What do you know about new technology or social media that no one else knows?”

E-mail/Chat (ARPANET)	1972
Hypertext	1977
Usenet/Newsgroups.....	1980
MUDS.....	1980
Hypercard.....	1987
IRC	1988
HTML/Internet.....	1993
Wiki/Wikipedia	1994
Amazon.com	1995
eBay.....	1995
Blogging.....	1997
The SIMS.....	2000
MySpace	2003
SecondLife	2003
Skype.....	2003
Facebook.....	2004
YouTube.....	2005
Twitter	2006

ents reveal, have been designed to deter and annoy users (thereby making them hang-up or go elsewhere for help) rather than aiding them. One patent indicated that by forcing users to input personal information like zip codes and account numbers (which, as everyone knows, are just requested again once the customer reaches an assistant), fewer staff people are able to handle more calls. In other words, by intentionally inconveniencing and annoying thousands of customers, the organization can save some money on the call center—which is often already located in another country “to save money.” Social media are being viewed in the same way: let’s find a way to get the most out of social media while making our stakeholders and publics “think” that we really care (cf., Kent, Harrison, & Taylor, 2006).

What has been missed is that the technologies and tools that we think of as new have been with us for decades. Chat rooms and news groups have been around since the early '70s, Wikis and Blogs since the late '80s, and *Intranets* have been around since the internet in the early '90s. Only recently are organizations realizing that social media technologies can be used internally by employees to build relationships, create institutional memory, and provide a forum for expert advice. We didn’t need to wait for Facebook or Twitter to come along decades later to do these things, but since most people just think about social media tools as one-way, sender-to-receiver, communication channels, their potential has been overlooked.



Most Important Technology Issues

Responses to the questions asked in the Delphi study were thematically analyzed. Twelve themes emerged. Within each major theme, several subthemes were also identified. The participants ranked the following themes as the three most important issues:

1. **Our identities and social relations are becoming bound up with technology.**
2. **Social media and new technology are powerful tools for democratization.**
3. **Ubiquity and Scale: Technology will be everywhere and part of everything.**

Virtually all of the issues that emerged from the study focus on social issues rather than technological or software issues. The fact that the expert technology panel members who participated in the Delphi were able to see the social trends while public relations professionals cannot is telling. Our “occupational psychosis” prevents us from seeing the broader picture, instead focusing our attention on how the technologies can serve organizations, rather than publics.

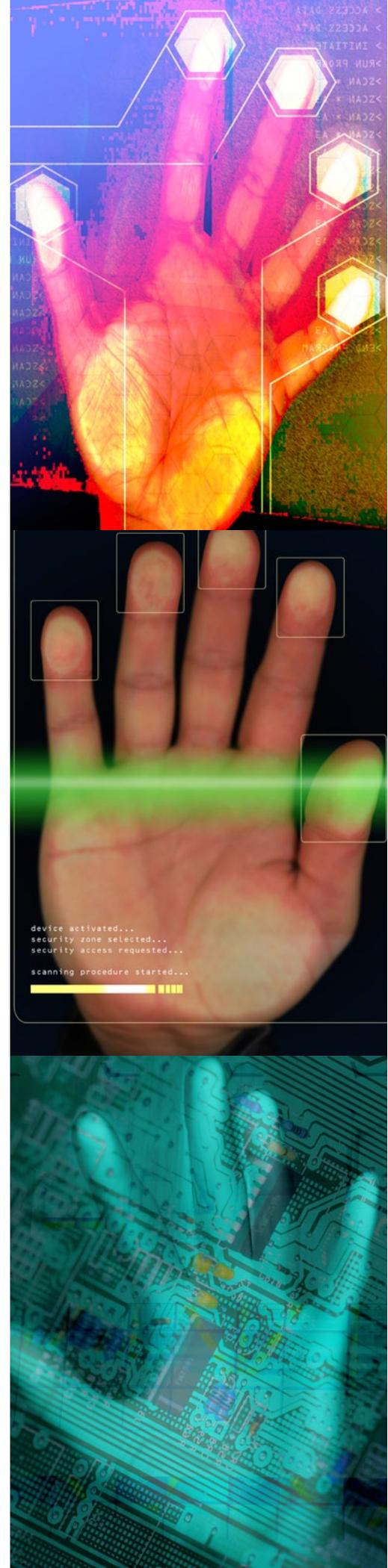
Recommendations For Professional Communicators

The results of the study suggest several communication principles that public relations professionals and researchers currently overlook: privacy, trust, and fairness. **Our recommendations include the following:**

1. **Identity and social media as tools for democracy calls for more scrutiny.** Given the diversity of expertise among the participants, complete agreement on any issue was unexpected. However, the high level of agreement about identity and social relations being bound up with technology, and that new technologies act as tools for democratization, suggests that communication professionals and researchers should begin to consider how technologies effect our Identities. Professionals need to be more cautious about seeing social media as just another marketing tool. On a broader level, professional communicators should consider how technologies play out on the larger scale of democratization. Journalists, professional communicators, lawmakers, scholars, and others need to recognize that there is more at stake on the internet.
2. **Online user privacy needs to be enacted more fully.** If the predictions made by participants are true, privacy is not something that is becoming a privilege, but a right, that may (or should) lead to serious punishments for violations by organizations. The concern over whether organizations like Facebook or Google should be able to enact “privacy” policies that allow organizations to use members’ data without permission is growing.

Legislation might be coming, but first, lawmakers and communication regulators probably need to be provided with a crash course in media literacy. The average age of a U.S. senator is 62. Many are more fearful of new technology than accepting of the potential benefits. How our technologies influence things like personal “identity” and social interactions are generally not well understood by older, “typographic minds” (cf., Postman, 1984). Many of the people making decisions about the direction, scope, and purview of new technologies do not fully understand the implication themselves. We should be leading the way as communication technology experts and ethical counsellors for our organizations and clients, and for lawmakers and public officials.

3. **Theoretical and practical concepts from communication, sociology, psychology, political science, and other disciplines should inform what we do online.** We’ve spent too long ignoring new technology, and treating every new social media tool that comes down the bend like a new invention. They aren’t. E-mail has been around for 40 years, hypertext for 35 years, blogging for 15, Facebook and YouTube for almost a decade, and Twitter turned 6 years old in July. All of these technologies were informed by prior technologies, and all of them were based on principles of effective communication that go back thousands of years to the ancient Greeks and Romans. Communication professionals don’t need courses in how to use Twitter, they need courses in effective persuasion, psychology, sociology, and ethics.
4. **Conviviality.** Over the last two decades, a number of researchers have talked about the conviviality (ease of use) of our technologies (cf., Kent, 2010; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Christians, 1990; Pearson, 1989). Many have suggested that our technologies should be both easy to use, but also meet the needs of citizens and organizations. Conviviality as a principle requires academics and professionals to understand issues of privacy, use trends, user expectations, and other issues. Based on the responses from the study participants, a strong belief exists that technology can be used to improve democratic participation and make citizens’ lives better.



5. **Developing robust technological infrastructures that are free and open to the public is likely to be a necessary part of providing access to resources for everyone.** One theme that came up again and again in this study is the sense that technology is a social good. Many participants had concerns about citizen privacy, others about creating classes of haves and have-nots, others saw technology as offering a path to better governance, and still others were looking to the technologies of the future where people's lives are made better through human augmentics (e.g., eye implants or biological computer interfaces, etc.), and human computer interfaces. One theme that remained constant was that the technological infrastructure that we build should be something that benefits everyone.

Public relations professionals should spend more time trying to create convivial tools and rewarding places for stakeholders and stake-seekers to interact with organizations and publics. The marketing and advertising rationale of control and profit are obvious. Less obvious is how public relations professionals benefit from acting as organizational bloggers and tweeters.

Although we have classrooms full of students who believe that blogging and tweeting all day would be a great job, most of them cannot yet construct compelling messages. After a year of blogging, and having had little of value to offer an organization, they'd quickly be replaced by younger, hungrier bloggers. And still, the organization would derive very little actual benefit from the arrangement.

“I know a lot about how to build community, how to maintain that community, how to build the tools that communities require to maximize their productivity, and how to work with human nature to accomplish bigger tools. I am also very in touch with the downsides of these technologies, particularly the negative stuff that corporations and governments can do when they are given control of our data.”

(Malda)



The Future is Social, But Not Social Media

There is no question that the invention of the Internet and subsequent evolution of social media has become the greatest communication revolution ever. Unfortunately, trying to convince professional communicators that social media skills are not the *only* skills that matter has become a lost cause.

In spite of the research that shows that social media do not lead to increased customer loyalty, in spite of the research that shows that people do not like to use social media for non-social purposes, in spite of the research that shows that organizations are very poor users of social media, in spite of the fact that organizations do not use social media to build relationships and foster trust, professional communicators seem unable to inure themselves to the fact that social media are just one tool (or one collection of tools) in the communication kit bag.

Social media are not needed to build stable relationships premised on trust and mutual satisfaction—effective communication is. The reason that most social media has little impact is because social media are used out of convenience and not strategy. Twitter is easy to use, and provides instant gratification to senders and receivers. Planning a strategic communication campaign takes time, research, and involves a lot more risk. Many professionals seem to act as if social media was an end in itself, rather than part of larger strategic communication activities.

We are not suggesting that social media have no place in public relations. Rather, what we are suggesting is that social media should be treated as strategic communication tools that involve more than just posting messages. Timing, content, language choices, the ability to construct compelling narratives, strategic deployment, and using social media to actually build relationships—the unrealized dream articulated over a decade ago—are

“Trying to convince professional communicators that social media is not the only skill that matters is rapidly becoming a lost cause.”

areas that deserve attention by our professional associations, educators, and corporate and agency professionals.

We give our clients social media because they ask for it, in some cases demand it, and social media work also means more money stays in an agency. But where is the counseling function?

The public relations bottom line has shifted. Our worth is now measured in terms of production (tweets and re-tweets). Although we do not “guarantee placement”—a clear violation of the PRSA code of ethics—social media *is* placement. The injunction against guaranteeing results was to avoid public relations professionals simply sending out news releases and media advisories just to meet a quota—and thereby damaging the reputation of one’s client or organization—now we are rewarded for it.

The ethics of the PRSA code seem to contradict the advice of many “award winning social media experts” to “Blog every Day.” “Write about 300-words for each blog,” etc. Enacting modern social media for clients and organizations seems a clear PRSA ethics violation

where organizational professionals intentionally communicate just to communicate.

So where do we go from here? The Genie is out of the lamp. We believe that the Delphi study and results reported here point the way. Social media are no longer the step-children of “real media.” The time has come for public relations and communication professionals to broaden what we know about these amazing communication tools and begin to use them to their full potential.

Public relations professionals should be leading the charge. Writing effective social media content is only the start. We also have an obligation to learn more. Just as Edward Bernays introduced social science to public relations in the last century, we should be introducing science and research into our modern practices and raising the bar on both ethics and professionalism.

“I think Internet communication on social media will be less of a Wild, Wild West. In ten years, social norms and etiquettes would have had time to crystallize and be widely accepted. Right now, we are experiencing a lot of chaos, misunderstandings, and lost jobs because of unclear social norms and low social media literacy”

(Vororvoreanu)



Researcher / Participant Biographies

Participants who completed both rounds of the study

Christopher Baker is an artist whose work engages the rich collection of social, technological and ideological networks present in the urban landscape. He creates artifacts and situations that reveal and generate relationships within and between these networks. Baker's work has been presented in festivals, galleries and museums in the US and internationally. Since completing a Master of Fine Arts in Experimental and Media Arts at the University of Minnesota, Baker has held visiting artist positions at Kitchen Budapest, an experimental media lab in Hungary, and the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Baker is currently an assistant professor in the Art and Technology Studies department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

William Barley is a 3rd year PhD student in the Media, Technology and Society program at Northwestern University. Barley is generally interested in how people use technology to support processes of organizing—particularly for the exchange and sharing of technical knowledge. Theoretically, he hopes to bridge the boundary between strategic individual actions, the materiality of technology and emergent group processes to explain organizational practices. Relying primarily on ethnographic methods, his current research concerns individuals' strategic use of physical and virtual objects to support the knowledge sharing in cross-functional engineering settings. Prior to coming to Northwestern, Barley studied automobile culture as a researcher at General Motors.

Dr. Mary Griffiths is an associate professor in the Discipline of Media at the University of Adelaide. Griffiths led the redesign of the University's media offerings and established a new department with offerings in digital and participatory media and close connections to industry (2006–2011). Griffiths' research interests include media and e-democracy, e-learning and pervasive environments, e-government, social media use and ethics, and digital creative praxis. Griffiths teaches Media Democracies and E-Participation, using an online role-play designed so that students experience the information flows in political culture. Its e-SIM is located in a fiction-

al polity, Incognita, which resembles Australia at the time of Gov 2.0, the National Broadband Network, digital initiatives, wikileaks and the national media inquiry.

Dr. Eric J. Karson is an assistant professor of Marketing at Villanova University. Karson received his Ph.D. in marketing from Florida Atlantic University on the topic of Internet advertising, and the application of "mass media derived theory" towards marketing on the Internet. His research and teaching interests remain focused on interactive marketing (direct and Internet). Karson's main interests include not only consumer reaction towards Internet advertising in general, but what drives consumer evaluations of company-sponsored Web sites.

Dr. Michael L. Kent (Senior Project Researcher) (Ph.D., Purdue University, 1997). Associate Professor of Public Relations, University of Oklahoma's Gaylord College. An active technology researcher and critic, Kent conducts research on new technology, mediated communication, dialogue, international communication, and web communication. Kent consults on research methods, message design, mediated communication, journalism, and public relations. Kent has published dozens of articles and books, including a public relations writing textbook with Pearson, and two public speaking textbooks (for Amazon Kindle). In 2006, Kent spent the fall semester in Riga, Latvia on a Fulbright Scholarship.

Dr. Jeroen S. Lemmens (Ph.D., University of Amsterdam) is a professor at the University of Amsterdam. Lemmens' research examines the psychological and behavioral consequences of online computer game addiction in adolescents. His research has created a measure of video game addiction and studies the relationship between game addiction, impulse control, and attention bias. Lemmens' research has appeared in *Media Psychology*, *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, and *Computers in Human Behavior*.

Vladimir Oane is in charge of all aspects of the product at uberVU. Oane's design background and obsession about details has transformed uberVU into a top player in

the social media space. For 3 years before becoming the CPO, Vladimir was the CEO of uberVU. Oane is a serial entrepreneur who likes to get involved with early stage startups, as proven by his advisory role in many international startups and by his numerous startup conference speaking engagements.

Mel Odom is a professional writer who has published more than 150 books. He is best known for his novels of science fiction and fantasy, romance, and western, though he has also written non-fiction about computer gaming. Odom graduated from Byng High School, Byng, Oklahoma, in May 1976, and later graduated with a Bachelor's degree in English from East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma. Odom teaches undergraduate courses at the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication in the Professional Writing program at the University of Oklahoma.

Rob "CmdrTaco" Malda is the creator of the wildly successful News For Nerds web-site Slashdot.org. After 14 years there, he has joined The *Washington Post's* "WaPo Labs" team as their Chief Strategist & Editor-at-Large.

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Dr. Zizi Papacharissi, Professor and Department Head, University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of Communication. Her work focuses on the social and political consequences of online media. Papacharissi serves on several editorial boards, including *New Media & Society* and *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*. Featured

in *Who is Who of American Teachers* 2007, Papacharissi teaches courses on communication theory, political communication, the information society, digital democracy, and communication research methods. Her book, *A Private Sphere: Democracy in a Digital Age* (Polity Press, 2009) discusses how online media redefine our understanding of public and private in late-modern democracies, thus outlining new parameters for civic engagement in a digital age.

Rebeca A. Pop (Project Researcher) (MA, University of Oklahoma, expected 2012) received her BA in Communication and Public Relations from the University of Bucharest and has two years of experience in public relations and journalism. For her Master's thesis, Pop works with the U.S. Navy, exploring Issues Management and the transition of issues between stages on the issue life-cycle model.

Dr. Ronald E. Rice (Ph.D., Stanford University, 1982) is Arthur N. Rupe Chair in the Social Effects of Mass Communication in the Department of Communication, and Co-Director of the Carsey-Wolf Center for Film, Television, and New Media, at University of California, Santa Barbara. Rice has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Montreal (2010), elected President of the International Communication Association (2006–2007), awarded a Fulbright Award to Finland (2006). Rice was also appointed as the Wee Kim Wee Professor at the School of Communication and Information

and the Visiting University Professor, both at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore (August 2007–2009 and June 2010).

Dr. Anita Rubin is a Senior Researcher at Finland Futures Research Centre. As a researcher and futures educator, Rubin is interested in images of the future: what individual people, organizations and other actors expect, desire, or fear to happen in the coming years and how they relate to those expectations—the relationship of motivation, proactivity and the images of the future. Rubin mostly works at home in a small country village by the sea (Gulf of Finland, Baltic Sea) on the island of Kemiö, about 90 kilometers South-East of the city of Turku.

Adam J. Saffer (Project Researcher) received his Master's degree from the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, 2011. Saffer is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in strategic communication at the University of Oklahoma's Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication. Saffer's research has explored the effects of organizational use of social media on publics. Currently, he is interested in the effect individuals' social relationships have on their perceptions towards institutions and organizations.

Dr. Jennifer Stromer-Galley is an Associate Professor at the University of Albany. Her research and teaching areas are Political Communication, Communication Technology

and Democracy, Communication and the Public Sphere, Public Opinion, and Communication and the Internet. Stromer-Galley has recently signed a book contract with Oxford University Press. The book is tentatively titled *Presidential Campaigning in the Age of the Internet*. Also, she is starting the second phase of a grant studying behavior in virtual worlds, including Second Life and World of Warcraft.

Dr. Mihaela Vorvoreanu (or, as her students call her, Dr. V) is an assistant professor in Computer Graphics Technology and Technology Leadership & Innovation at Purdue University. Vorvoreanu studies the socio-cultural impact of new communication technologies. Before joining Purdue, Vorvoreanu was an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Clemson University, SC, and the Department of Communication at the University of Dayton, Ohio. While at Clemson and UD, Dr. V. taught various public relations and communication courses, and did academic research in the area of public relations and new Web technologies.

Assaf Weinberg is the CTO of Ruck.us. Weinberg coordinates design, development and product strategy teams to create what you see on Ruck.us. Before becoming a chief ruckus bringer, Weinberg spent 10 years hacking code, running development teams, and managing startups. When not working on Ruck.us, Weinberg is probably just passed out on his keyboard.



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