

Touch of Class

News about the Rowan University Graduate Public Relations Program

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Rowan University Brings Digital Media and PR into Focus

Blogging, chat rooms and social networking applications have changed the way that people and organizations communicate. These so-called "digital media," as well as the increasing availability of internet services, have resulted in a dramatic increase in both information and access to it.

One implication: Today's public relations classrooms have evolved to incorporate the many ways that practitioners use digital media in public relations programming--strategically and tactically. Practitioners use digital media applications for all types of relationship and reputation management, including prospect-, customer-, media-, employee-, and investor-relations, crisis communication, and specialized applications. Don Dunnington has taught online PR issues at Rowan for more than a decade. Today, he teaches the course "Online Public Relations."

Professor Dunnington is a true Internet PR pioneer. As Director of Internet and Marketing Communication at K-Tron International, Professor Dunnington developed and directs several international, marketing-oriented websites serving customers in multiple languages. He also oversees K-Tron's advertising and public relations.

We asked Professor Dunnington for his perspective on Digital media and today's public relations practice:

Q: How has digital media changed the way you do business in recent times, and what roles have changed the most?

A: The Internet has completely changed the way we communicate internally as well as externally. Email is the main mode of communication among K-Tron employees and with our customers. It has really facilitated the globalization of our business with work teams scattered around the world and across all time zones. The web has become the single most important source of sales leads for our companies, while trade press advertising has declined as a lead source. Search engine visibility has become especially important for reaching new prospects.

Q: How should students prepare to succeed with digital media?

A: Learn to write (and practice). Learn the art of headline writing (Search Engine Optimization and Twitter both require short, arresting and concise writing). Learn good design principles. Learn another language. Learn to be a self-taught learner--you can't keep



Don Dunnington

up otherwise. Get used to constant change. Don't be afraid of the technology. Don't try to make the technology substitute for good content and clear thinking. Know when to forget the email and IM and texting or tweeting and just pick up the phone, or walk down the hall, or get on a plane and look someone in the eye.

Q: How do you think digital media have changed the way organizations use PR?

A: Digital media have made PR skills more essential, if you're talking about PR practitioners who understand and use digital media. While media relations is still important, digital media opens the possibility of reaching your target audience without that intermediate step. In the age of electric ink, we're all publishers, and that gives a whole new meaning to the news release.

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Rowan University Brings Digital Media and PR into Focus

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Q: Which digital media applications do you believe hold the most promise for PR?

A: Websites, blogs, podcasts, wikis, online video and audio in all their permutations, social networking—they're all important. I personally have some doubts about Second Life as of now, but at some point it may be more main-stream. I'm not sure that will be a good thing, though, to the extent it takes people away from living a real life.

Q: How do digital media still rely on basic PR principles?

A: All the rules of good conduct still apply; in the long run, digital media have to make a profit, to be a reliable and trusted source of information, and to be a safe place to do business.

Q: How can students and practitioners best incorporate digital media experience into their portfolios?

A: Look for outlets that can use your skills. There are lots of places where you can join in the online conversation. Just make sure you're really adding to the conversation, and not merely venting or showing off to friends. What you say and do online leaves a very public and long lasting trail, so before you click the "publish" button; make sure you're posting something you won't regret later.

Rowan Students Investigate Social Media and PR

Social media now play a much more central role in today's practice of public relations. Internet users select and write their own content and spread word of mouth more quickly than ever.

As this new era of PR emerges, many organizations have shifted their focus on traditional communication practices. Social media tools facilitate all types of consumer and professional decision making. For practitioners to use social media effectively, they must carefully develop proper communication techniques. In the future, PR professionals will need to develop ways to increase the effectiveness of social media and set new standards.

Four students in the Rowan University M.A. in PR program recently investigated social media for their thesis work. We asked these four students about their findings, as well as their thoughts through-out the research process:

1. *Social Media's Effect on Consumer Perception of Organizational Reputation and Innovation*

For her thesis work, Rosie Braude (M '09) examined social media's effect on an organization regarding reputation and innovation. To test consumer perceptions, she conducted an online survey, content analysis, interviews, and an eight-person focus group probing American consumers' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors toward social media.

"In today's society, I think that consumers expect organizations to engage in social media as an alternative channel to send messages. PR practitioners still need to conduct a lot of research to find the best social media channels for themselves and to prove social media's benefits." Rosie explained. The results show that the majority of American consumers want organizations to interact with them through social media. Also, the majority of consumers consider organizations using social media to be innovative and that the use of social media can improve an organization's reputation.

"PR practitioners still need to conduct a lot of research to find the best social media channels for themselves and to prove social media's benefits."



Rosie Braude

2. *Viral Marketing Efficacy of Use in Feature Films*

Joseph Staudenmayer (M '09) investigated the effectiveness of viral marketing by film studios to consumers within the 18-to-24-year-old demographic. To ascertain the necessary data, he used in-depth interviews, intercept surveys, and two separate focus groups.

“The thesis challenged me to improve my writing skills, which in turn helped me write papers for my classes more easily.” Joe commented on his studies. Results of his thesis show that critics/experts and a majority of men and women feel that viral marketing influences 18-to-24-year-olds and contributes to them going to the theater to see feature films. Furthermore, critics, experts, and a majority of consumers believe that more males are affected by viral marketing than women.



Joseph
Straudenmayer

3. *Transactional vs. Relationship Marketing: An Analysis of the Long-Term Effects on the Food Industry*

Natalie V. Layton (M '09) took the opportunity to explore the emerging importance of using relationship marketing to build longer-lasting relationships between organizations and consumers in today's society. In this study, Natalie compared various aspects of Wegman's Food Markets, Inc. to Acme Markets using a content analysis of each organization's website, 50 intercept surveys, and a focus group.

The findings support the premise that relationship marketing, particularly in the food industry, produces longer-lasting results than transactional marketing. Also, certain relationship marketing techniques effectively garner a more positive image for the target audience. This thesis serves as a useful guideline for PR practitioners to keep up with the emerging trend of relationship marketing.



Natalie V.
Layton

4. *Using Community for Podcasts and Web Shows*

Brandon Werner (M '09) found that podcasts that focus on a community aspect in their audiences increase subscriptions and repeat visits among the 18-to-24-year-old demographic. In his study, Brandon distributed a survey over Twitter, Facebook, and e-mail to determine preferences and habits for listening to music and watching video online. An in-depth focus group explored the survey results in greater detail.

The conclusions show that the more a web show interacts with its audience, the more likely it funnels that audience to companion content. Since web shows develop narrow targeted audiences, advertisers can focus on segmented target markets. The findings also show that the internet offers increased power to independent and lower budget productions. As long as the audience feels connected with the material, the audience will return.



Brandon
Werner

Rowan Alumna Wins Multiple NJSPRA Awards

Congratulations to Marlene V. Coleman, Publication Manager for the Camden City Public School District, for winning the following NJSPRA Print and Electronic Media awards:

- ◇ Print Newsletter or Newspaper: “Camden City Public Schools Highlights, Special Spring Issue,” Silver
- ◇ Calendar/Handbook: “2008-2009 Calendar,” Bronze
- ◇ Annual Report: “Building Bridges Toward Success,” High Merit

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Edelman Digital President to Keynote IAOC Conference

The International Association of Online Communicators (IAOC) will host its fifth annual international conference on October 1-2, at the State Plaza Hotel, in Washington D.C. The hotel is conveniently located between Georgetown University and the White House, near the Foggy Bottom metro station, within miles of many of the city's finest attractions. Suites for this conference have been reserved for a rate of \$109 per night. Please contact the State Plaza to secure this IAOC rate.

Join us to present a paper or to learn more about online communication and digital media. Communication professionals, educators and graduate students will enjoy this conference featuring keynote speaker and digital media guru, Rick Murray of the Edelman Group.

Rick Murray, President of Edelman Digital, helps the firm's day-to-day account teams create and execute their PR-centric campaigns – providing clients with integrated programs. Rick oversees the development of the firm's interactive design, media and events and Edelman's street marketing group called "Edelman on the Go."

Before joining Edelman in 2001, he served as executive vice president of Golin/Harris International, and worldwide managing director of its CrossMedia division, an integrated marketing communications business he founded in 1996. Rick is a governing member of the Word of Mouth Marketing Association. He holds a B.A. in economics from the University of Vermont.

Paper topics may include (not limited to):

- ◆ Writing for webs, blogs, social networks, search optimization and readership
- ◆ Trust and ethics for PR & journalism in a Web 2.0 world
- ◆ Can we have transparency, trust and anonymity on the Web?
- ◆ Social networking dangers and opportunities
- ◆ Best practices in teaching online communication
- ◆ Measuring the effectiveness of Web-based classrooms
- ◆ Using social media tools for Intranets
- ◆ Web content management tools & methods
- ◆ Multi-lingual website guidelines
- ◆ Multi-lingual search optimization
- ◆ Twitter's impact on PR

A one-page abstract must be submitted via e-mail to sparks@rowan.edu, attention Suzanne FitzGerald for consideration. Please include a cover screen with your credentials for blind review. More detailed information about this event can be found at:

http://www.onlinecommunicators.org/Seminars/2009_Online_Communicators_Conference.cfm

Please join our Facebook page as well:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/pages/2009-IAOC-International-Conference/89444638984?ref=nf>

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