

Diagnosis: Confusion

By Randy Jones

The condition: Social Media, its rise to prominence and its seemingly never-ending variations currently dominate the business landscape.

The symptom: Every business professional seems to feel that, to have a HEALTHY BUSINESS, social media must play a significant marketing role.

The prognosis: I am not an expert on all-things social media. Candidly, with the daily changes in product offerings, applications, sites and such, other than Mark Zuckerberg himself, who can claim to be an expert?

However, I am an authority at asking my clients the right questions about their marketing goals, resources, budgets and developing marketing strategies based on their answers. Every marketer will always have more opportunities available than budget. Social Media, just like all media, must occupy a place in a marketing plan

that is proportionately appropriate.

And despite the fact that my agency has been blessed with a client roster of household names like Walgreens, TJMaxx, GEICO and *The Washington Post*, I am, like the majority of the Southwest Florida business community, a small business with the same limitations on time and budget as everyone else.

And like many other businesses, both large and small, I can't help but wonder:

Is this hoopla over Social Media, in fact, the American Business World's newest Social Disease?

My major concern is that there can be a disproportionate amount of marketing funds allocated to Social Media marketing. Both challenging to track and almost impossible to evaluate from a return-on-investment standpoint, Social Media remains, to a large extent, a new toy in the media sandbox that every marketing child simply must play with. Social Media is best when viewed as part of a broader media mix including direct marketing, broadcast, print, etc.

For example, the power of Social Media to influence purchase decisions may be overstated, according to a new survey. The survey, conducted by market research firm ForeSee Results, found that only 5% of 2010 online holiday shoppers report that they were primarily influenced to visit top retailer sites by social media channels.

And, of course, there is a view that Social Media is FREE. But let's look again. Clearly Facebook's Zuckerberg isn't making his fortune on a FREE site as Facebook features paid advertising content. Even business-connections site,

LinkedIn, offers fairly pricey options to users who desire enhanced features.

And what about the time involved in learning the social media ropes and building your business's social media empire? *Time is money* and never before has this phrase been more appropriate.

That being said, the most basic advice on Social Media I most often share with the small business community is as follows:

Of course it's a good idea to offer those who love you, your business, your products and your services a place to come and share that love in a public forum.

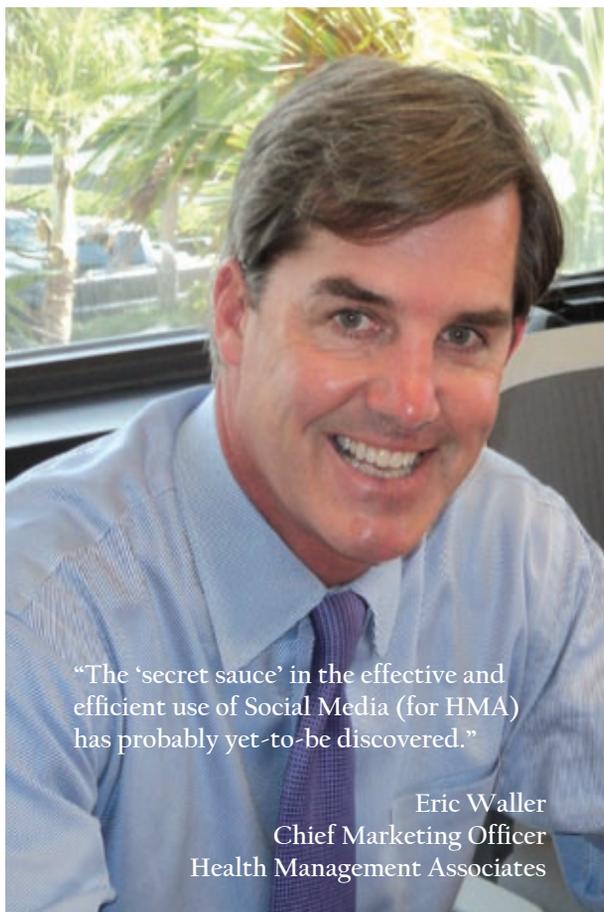
This article will not answer all your questions on Social Media and its irrefutable link to all online content and websites. That's an impossible task for 1,743 words to accomplish. Nonetheless, by providing you case studies on Social Media use for a major Naples healthcare company and my modest Marco Island-based marketing firm, I hope to help influence your thought process and guide your next steps. And lastly, I will introduce you to the celebrated business writer I always turn to when I need to get myself motivated.

Case Study #1: Health Management Associates

With the concept of a "healthy business" in mind, it occurred to me to take a look at how Social Media and online strategies in general are being used by one of the nation's largest healthcare system providers, Naples-based Health Management Associates (Health Management).

Founded in 1977, Health Management operates 59 hospitals in 15 states with approximately 8,000 licensed beds in primarily non-urban acute care hospitals throughout the United States. For those of us in my new hometown of Naples, Florida, Health Management is the parent company behind Physicians Regional Healthcare System.

For anyone familiar with my work,



"The 'secret sauce' in the effective and efficient use of Social Media (for HMA) has probably yet-to-be discovered."

Eric Waller
Chief Marketing Officer
Health Management Associates

I am not an unbiased reporter. I am a columnist who openly shares personal experiences on everything from business ethics to cattle breeding. So for the record, I patronize Physicians Regional Healthcare System because two of the more than 300 doctors in their network have become a vital part of my personal healthcare.

Respected podiatrist, Dr. Loan Lam, tends to my perpetually ailing feet. Family practice physician extraordinaire, Dr. Michelle Becker, is stuck with the very daunting task of caring for the rest of me. Basically, these two women are medical ROCK STARS in my book.

Plus, when I first moved to Collier County in 2009, I was also probably the only man on Marco Island who had a Physicians Regional-affiliated OBGYN, Dr. Joseph Lang, for a few months—but that’s *another* story.

Considering Health Management’s Chief Marketing Officer, Eric Waller, possesses a strong “new media” background, it is not surprising that he has big plans for Social Media and online strategies. Under Waller’s well-informed guidance, Health Management is using



“I’ll tell it like it is: the good, the bad, the ugly and the bunny.”

Randy Jones
AttackBunnies.com

Social Media and the internet to enhance the flow of information to the benefit of both patients and physicians.

- ✓ Health Management, via Physicians Regional Healthcare System, regularly tweets information about healthcare seminars, events and health fairs to their followers on Twitter;
- ✓ HealthManagementhaslaunched

a mobile media application, ER Extra, that informs patients in real-time of current wait times at its Emergency Room facilities and provides directions to the closest facilities;

- ✓ Health Management’s plans include the recording of critical doctor/patient consultations to be streamed online to approved family members.

But with 59 hospitals across the country, Health Management is operating with the advantage of scale. They have the option to test various online strategies regionally before rolling out nationally. In addition, as individual Health Management affiliated hospitals are allowed latitude as to their individual online strategy, Health Management can gather “best practices” derived from the successes garnered at a regional level.

Responding to the ever-changing Social Media landscape, Waller astutely commented, “The ‘secret sauce’ in the effective and efficient use of Social Media (for Health Management) is probably yet-to-be discovered.”

In my mind, that goes for *all of us*.

Case Study #2: MindZoo

There is no doubt that my company, MindZoo, has built its brand based on powerful *creative thinking*, not just with copywriting and design but the creativity in which the Zoo Crew approaches individual marketing challenges.

At the suggestion of MindZoo Vice

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Linda & the team at the

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On being the first to spot Chester this month!

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(contest open to Greater Naples Chamber Members Only)

President Kelly Hill, and based on my completed book manuscript, we chose to enhance the creative power component of our brand by launching a blog: AttackBunnies.com.

Containing equal parts business exposé, parenting handbook, sales training text, personal memoir and how-to-NOT guide, *Attack Bunnies* is based on the premise that every person you meet, and every situation you navigate, influences the one multi-faceted person you ultimately become: at home and at the office.

And, to quote myself, "I'll tell it like it is: the good, the bad, the ugly and the bunny."

Attack Bunnies launched in early February 2011 with a focus on maximizing a combination of WordPress Blog Software and Facebook: my personal page, MindZoo's Page, a new *Attack Bunnies* Page, and yes, my dog Tony's Page. Add in my existing LinkedIn network contacts, plus announcements of updated blog content in MindZoo's ongoing email marketing communications, and I was able to *sell* my blog to approximately 1,300 unique sets of eyeballs while skillfully imploring readers to "share" my content.

My team chose to focus on Facebook and LinkedIn as both MindZoo and I have a strong presence on each Social Media site. Though we have used YouTube to host the *Attack Bunnies* video content, other sites, such as Twitter, will be integrated into the mix once we have "mastered" those sites chosen to support the launch.

My Cracker Jack intern from Florida Gulf Coast University, Lauren McAuley, also sent press releases to select local and national media promoting my unique content of Personal Development + Professional Development or, as I call it, **Confessional Development**.

Let me end by saying, if one is launching a new blog, and one can leverage their personal media contacts to promote that blog, that's a smart move. But wait, did I just take advantage of my association with Business Currents to promote my blog, www.attackbunnies.com, to a larger audience?

Yep—I sure did.

Treatment Option: Get Gitomer

I happen to be an avid disciple of business author, Jeffrey Gitomer. (www.gitomer.com)

Gitomer is the author of *The New York Times* best sellers *The Little Red Book of Selling*, *The Little Black Book of Connections* and *The Little Gold Book of YES! Attitude*. All of his books have been number one best sellers on Amazon.com and have appeared on best-seller lists more than 750 times and have sold millions of copies worldwide.

There are more specific reasons for my undaunted loyalty to Mr. Gitomer:

First and foremost, he knows what he's talking about.

Second, Gitomer's informed, passionate and witty writing style makes his work relatable to professionals of various ages and experience levels.

Third, he knows how to turn a phrase and make me laugh. It was Jeffrey Gitomer who taught me that business writing and humor actually make for a good marriage. Candidly, I would not be writing today if it weren't for his inspiration.

And lastly, he put a stuffed elephant, adorned with my company's logo, in his new baby's crib. I would like to believe that means that one of my professional heroes thinks about me and MindZoo every day but it's much more likely the child has destroyed the little critter at this point.

Gitomer recently advanced me a copy of his new book: *Social BOOM!: How to Master Business Social Media to Brand Yourself, Sell Yourself, Sell Your Product, Dominate Your Industry Market, Save Your Butt, ... and Grind Your Competition into the Dirt*.

"The formula for business social media success: Attract people. Engage people. Connect people. The best way to accomplish all three is with value."

Jeffrey Gitomer
Social Boom

Available in April 2011, Gitomer's text promises to deliver "every aspect of social media, including the business periphery that you need in order to create the real law of attraction." Gitomer, along with his supporting team of experts, have certainly served up enough inspired content to keep me and the Zoo Crew busy on advancing our online brand for months to come.

For what Gitomer's insightful book will represent to countless business professionals, and in spirit of hope for *healthy businesses* everywhere, thank you, Jeffrey Gitomer, for this latest in your long line of exceptional business literature.

I laughed.
I cried.
I can't wait for the movie.



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