THINKING OUT LOUD
A PSA WHITEPAPER

Leadership Communication and Speechwriting in the Age of Social Media

How to Use Social Media to Spread Your Leaders' Messages Far, Drive Them Deep, and Make Sure They Resonate.

By Ian Griffin,
Silicon Valley-based speechwriter and founder, Silicon Valley Speechwriters Roundtable

Social media came to the corporate communications department a decade ago. But one corner of that department—leadership communication—has resisted it, for a number of reasons.

It's one thing to write speeches and op-eds for senior executives, but how does one represent top leaders in the much more interactive realm of social media? Also, senior execs are often just that—senior—and thus are less likely than other bosses to urge social media participation. Finally, researching, crafting, and getting messages approved consumes so much time, energy and political capital, executive communicators often have little left for trying out their messages in the unpredictable world of social media.

The key to taking advantage of social media is to take advantage of social media—to make it not just another problem, but to use it as a solution to existing problems.

This white paper is designed to offer practical suggestions for using social media to make your work life easier, while increasing the relevance of your life's work.

You'll learn how to use social media to improve every aspect of your job, adding freshness and convenience to research and writing, interactivity to the communication event itself, and exponential amplification of every piece of leadership communication you create.

JUSTIFYING A FOCUS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Leadership communicators today struggle to:

- Identify trending topics that will grab the audience's attention

- Research fresh and compelling facts, opinions and stories to inform, entertain and persuade people

- Create buzz in advance of a presentation that will encourage people to attend

- Keep people's attention when they are tempted to check their iPhones and laptops during a speech

- Magnify the impact of the speech to reach a global audience

Social media can contribute solutions to every one of those problems, if used strategically.

Meanwhile, social media can make executive communication fundamentally more valuable, to an organization and its constituents.

Here's how to use social media before, during and after a leadership communication event.

1. BEFORE THE SPEECH: RESEARCH AND WRITING

There was a time when writers would head to the library when researching a speech. Today they head for Google and Wikipedia. But limiting searches for source material in this manner ignores the compelling value of personal anecdotes and first-hand information.

Consider:

Worldwide, there are over 700 million fixed broadband endpoints. Here's what happens every minute on the net (as of February 2015):

- YouTube: 100 hours of new content is uploaded on every imaginable topic. 70% of YouTube traffic comes from outside the USA.

- Twitter: 507,000 tweets are sent expressing a variety of opinions.

- Tumblr: 78,000 multimedia and sort-form posts appear.

- Instagram: 42,000 videos and photos appear.

- Yelp: 26,000 reviews are posted.

LinkedIn: Has 332 million members (107 million in the USA). LinkedIn membership includes executives from every company listed on the Fortune 500.

SlideShare: Has 60 million monthly visitors and 130 million page views.

All these facts, opinions, thoughts and images are a rich source of sentiment around any topic your speech might touch on. Rather than ignoring these sources of data, or being overwhelmed with the volume, it's better to learn some simple techniques that will allow you to research content and contact people in the know to discuss trending topics.

Of course, it's not just pungent popular sentiment you're searching for. You need to connect with subject matter experts, potential audience members and key influencers to understand what topics will resonate. Again, social media makes that infinitely easier.

As of February 2015 there are 2,112,554 Groups on LinkedIn whose membership ranges from a single person to over a half-million members. For any subject there will be multiple Groups you can visit to review current discussions, find influencers and participate in professional conversations.

Some Groups will be marked 'Private' and their discussions only visible to members. While LinkedIn limits you to joining 50 Groups at one time you are free to rotate in and out of Groups as you research different topics. Join Groups related to the specific industry and issues your leader discusses. Look for relevant Association, Trade and Professional Groups. Select the Groups you join based both on specificity to the topic you are writing about and popularity in terms of number of members. Don't forget the groups where leaders congregate such as the Technology Leadership Network (56,502 members) for CIOs and leaders in IT, or the Super CFO Group (50,803 members) for finance leaders.

See what interests the top contributors to the Group discussions. Be sure to view the most 'Popular' as well as 'Recent' discussions. Once you are a member of a Group you can start your own discussion, pose questions ("Does topic xxx warrant all the attention it's getting these days?") and see a full list of members. As a Group member you can send a direct message most members.

The LinkedIn Quintilian Speechwriters Group has over 1,500 members. Join today to connect with fellow members of this profession!

TWITTER SEARCH

Imagine being able to eavesdrop on conversations before an event. To be able to take the temperature of an audience and discover which issues are hot and which are not. There didn't used to be a way to do this, unless you wrote for the head of a 3-letter agency which authorized wiretapping! Now there is. Twitter search allows anyone to tap into any discussion between potential audience members and their clients. This gives you an important advantage in being able to write speeches that directly address audience issues, not just policy abstractions.

The secret to Twitter is being able to sort the wheat from the chaff, or the tweets about what really matters from those about people's pets.

The advanced search function allows you to keep track of what's being said without having to read every single Tweet. This enables communications consultants to selectively listen in on important and relevant issues being discussed and see if the message they are crafting resonates with the trending topics that are being tweeted and re-tweeted. A speaker might even say "I see local residents have tweeted their displeasure with the new regulations…" or, to the members of an

association, "I see that your clients are mostly concerned about…"

New media expert Thomas Baekdal offers a number of tips for using Twitter Search.

An increasing number of leaders tweet, such as Zappo's CEO Tony Hsieh (@tonyhsieh) with nearly 3 million followers. He mixes inspirational quotes with financial updates and customer testimonials.

HOOTSUITE

Hootsuite is a social media management system with a dashboard that allows you to save searches for LinkedIn, Twitter and more. Saved searches allow you to monitor multiple streams of research on one screen. Consultants can use a set of tabs for each client project they are working on. Instead of having to conduct repeated searches during the course of a project, Hootsuite allows you to 'set and forget' a series of searches. For example, freelance writers can save searches to track opportunities.
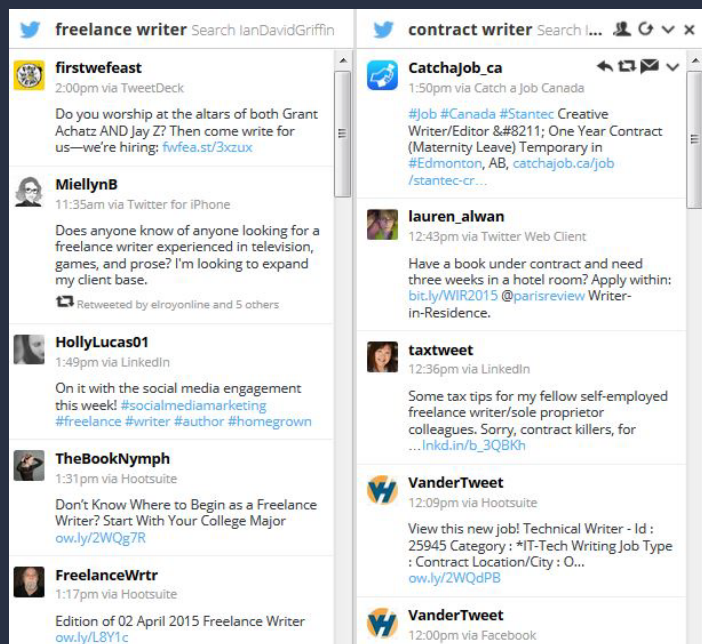
BLOGS

Another useful place to look for online influencers is Guy Kawasaki's Alltop. This aggregation of blogs covering a topic displays the most relevant blogs and shows the five most recent posts from each. Think of it as a digital magazine rack that allows you to check out your interests without maintaining a long list of bookmarks.
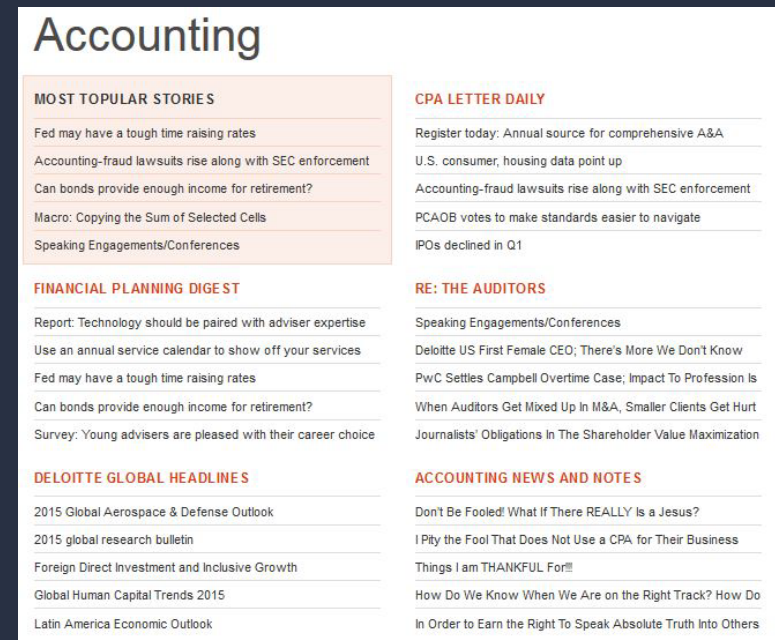
2. DURING THE SPEECH: THE AUDIENCE IS LISTENING … AND TALKING!

TWITTER:

Twitter gives the audience a backchannel for discussion during a speech.

Some speakers are offended by audience members who text while they present. They see it as a real challenge—they are not making eye contact and seem distracted. What to do?

First, realize that it's irrelevant whether or not a presenter likes it. More and more audience members will use their smartphones to tweet as well as fact-check the speakers' claims, and publicly opine in real-time on the speaker's message.

You can change the dynamics of the speech by deploying a Twitter "backchannel" to enable communications between audience members in the room; between the audience and the presenter; and even as a "stage pass" to remote non-attendees who can be included in the live proceedings—magnifying the speech both within and beyond the auditorium. Tweet those top-level insights that are valuable not only to the onsite participants but also benefit your wider audience.

Plan to proactively manage the backchannel. Consider deploying an assistant to monitor the conversation and "live-tweet" updates from the speech that summarize the main points.

You can even schedule tweets ahead of time that make it look like you're live-tweeting them during the event. For example, knowing when a session starts allows you to tweet something like "@JoeCEO will present in 15 minutes: don't miss it! #bigevent."

Ask your Twitter audience questions to boost engagement and give you insight for your next speech—things like "What's your favorite part of the talk so far?"

Be sure to choose a suitable Twitter #hashtag for the speech or use the one provided by the event organizers.

Spice up your tweets with rich media (audio snippets, photos, video) wherever possible, these have a greater chance of being re-tweeted.

POLLING

Poll Everywhere is an audience response system that allows speakers to gather feedback via text messages, browsers or tweets and immediately share real-time, live results. This is especially useful for speakers who have a projector and screen hooked up and can display graphs of the responses onscreen. However, any speaker could view the results on their laptop at the lectern and share the information verbally.

Speechwriters can embed multiple choice, true/false and open-ended free-response polls in a talk to improve attentiveness, increase the impact of a message and create an interactive, rather than a one-way, stream of communication. Unlike the traditional 'show of hands' online polling is anonymous and creates a lasting record of the sentiment expressed.

Unleashing the power of polls enables a presenter to understand the audience's concerns and deliver a story that resonates. They are an enormous help in focusing the audience's attention on what is being presented.

Open-ended polls allow for genuine one-to-many, two-way communications to occur. You can ask large audiences to text their answers to questions such as:

• WHY do you like this conference?

• WHAT questions do you want me to address?

• WHERE should we invest?

Polls have been used to manage strategic planning sessions, defuse an organizational crisis and tap into the expertise of the crowd.

3. AFTER THE SPEECH: IMMORTAL WORDS?

After a speech is delivered social media lets you spread your leaders' message far and wide. Unless you write for someone whose remarks are carried on the ten o'clock news, there's no reason for all the hard work you've put into the speech to be lost when the applause dies down at the end of the presentation.

VIDEO

While your speaker might not attract the 21 million views of Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford University Commencement Address, video is an excellent way to promote a speech.

Video recording options range from the low- to high-end. Many larger events will have professional quality video recording in place. Ask for rights to re-post the recorded talk to YouTube, or consider hiring a 2-camera video crew who can produce professional quality content.

The raw footage will need to be edited using iMovie or Final Cut Pro on the Mac. On the PC the options include Windows Movie Maker or Adobe

Elements. Include opening titles and closing credits. Rather than posting the full speech consider edited highlights of the main points. TED talks have set a standard of 18 minutes for a talk, so consider excerpts that short or even much shorter.

Each organization should create a YouTube Channel where speeches can be posted. Be sure to make full use of the text fields for speech title, description and keyword tags so that your video shows up in searches. Embed the video in company blogs and webpages and, of course, tweets.

Examples of good corporate YouTube channels include Cisco, UPS and Oracle. These all include executive presentations as well as videos from subject experts, customer testimonials and more.

Even though I was only using a hand-held Flip camera, this keynote by JFK speechwriter Ted Sorensen at the 2009 Ragan Conference has been seen by over 1,400 people. There were only 300 of us in the room at the time he spoke. Now that he is, sadly, no longer with us, this video is a lasting record.

PODCASTS

A podcast is on-demand 'syndicated' audio—think of it as TIVO for your ears. Unlike a live audio stream or radio broadcast of a talk, podcasts are stored online and accessed by listeners whenever people choose to listen. Podcasts have become tremendously easy to create and distribute as their popularity has grown.

Many commuters load up on podcasts. Others listen while working out at the gym. Despite the name, people don't need an iPod to listen, any computer with audio will work. The largest single source of podcasts is the iTunes Music Store.

The White House releases the President's weekly radio address as a podcast.

Podcasts of the great speeches of history are available on iTunes to inspire you.

Podcasts which feature organizational leaders include Richard Rierson's Dose of Leadership, the HBR IdeaCast and the Stanford Entrepreneurial Thought Leaders Series. So if you don't have a podcast of your own, pitch your leader as a guest on these popular shows.

TRANSCRIPTS

An audio recording of a speech can easily be turned into a transcript. Professional services charge around $60 per hour of recorded material. Light editing is recommended to ensure the transcript accurately reflects the speaker's intention. If slides were used, the transcript can be added to the Speaker Notes for a complete record of the presentation.

Post the text to blogs and websites, invite comments and, once again, be sure to tweet a link to the transcript.

Organizations as varied as BP, KKR and Pfizer post transcripts of their Earnings Calls and significant management presentations.

SLIDESHARE

For presenters who use PowerPoint, their material can be archived on SlideShare which is the largest source of shared presentations on the internet. Think of it as a YouTube…for slides!

SlideShare is the world's largest community for sharing presentations. With 60 million monthly visitors and 215 million page views, it is amongst the 120 most visited websites in the world. Besides presentations, SlideShare also supports documents, PDFs, videos and webinars.

Taking advantage of SlideShare as a distribution channel means you will get more miles out of your work—and in a highly visual way that will intrigue your audience.

SlideShare is also a great research tool to use before a speech. Many find it one of the best resources in terms of content in the form of presentations from leading subject experts around the world.

Companies like Dell and NASA create branded channels on SlideShare to archive and distribute multiple presentations.

TOP TWEETS

Compile the best tweets from the event in a follow-up blog post. Make sure the tweets feature a healthy mixture of your own and your attendees' tweets. The people you include in your "top tweets" list will probably promote your blog post since they're featured in it and thus increase the aftermarket reach. I've been able to follow conventions I was not able to attend in person by <u>curating tweets</u>.

WIKISPACES

Why limit your content to the moment in time when it was presented? Much like the 'Authors Page' in Amazon, a presentation home page gives access to all of an executive's material in one place.

There are huge advantages to giving an audience access to everything associated with the event in one location. It's a cinch to refer people to a single URL rather than send them to a blog, Twitter, YouTube, SlideShare, and the event website to find the material.

I've created series of pages for my own presentations on <u>Wikispaces</u>.

These repositories hold details of each event: session description; bio and contact information; poll results; presentation slides; reference materials; overview videos; handouts; video of the presentation; blog postings pre- and post-event; and the backchannel chat room area.

IN CONCLUSION

The idea is to use social media to make your executive communication operation more efficient and more powerful. Obviously some of the tools described above will have struck you more immediately and more profoundly than others.

So try those tools first, and see how they work. The more you engage with social media, the more of its rewards your executive communication operation—and your leaders and your organization—will reap.

And show me your results, so I can improve this white paper in the next edition, with more real-life examples and case studies. Email me anytime, at ian.griffin@exec-comms.com.

APPENDIX

TWITTER

http://tweetlevel.com
Identify key online influencers on specific topics.

http://search.twitter.com/
Hot issues news on your topic

http://topsy.com/
Sophisticated searches on trending topics

http://www.tweetstats.com
Analysis tool

POLLING

http://www.polleverywhere.com/
Audience polling during an event for low or no cost

http://twtpoll.com
Gauge sentiment and share results of surveys via Twitter

VIDEO:

Windows Movie Maker – included with the PC

Apple iMovie – included with the Mac OS

Adobe Elements – Higher end PC option

Final Cut Pro X – Higher end Mac option

https://www.youtube.com/user/TEDtalksDirector
Over 1,000 TED Conference videos

https://vimeo.com/videoschool
Vimeo Video School for tutorials and help

PODCASTING:

http://audacity.sourceforge.net/
Free audio editor

http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/podpress/
Podpress plugin for Wordpress blogs

http://www.royaltyfreemusic.com/free-music-resources.html
Royalty free music

podcastingtechnology-subscribe@yahoogroups.com -
Yahoo Group on Podcasting Technology:

http://www.exec-comms.com/blog/2008/10/26/podcasting-101/ -
Podcasting 101 presentation.

REFERENCES:

http://execcomms.wikispaces.com/
A social media "hub" for all my presentations featuring links to
Twitter, Slideshare, YouTube Videos and more.

The Backchannel: How Audiences are Using Twitter and social
media and Changing Presentations Forever by Cliff Atkinson How to
create a wikispace as a Presentation Home Page (p.101).

BIO

Ian Griffin is a professional speechwriter and executive communications specialist. He helps CEOs and senior managers develop strategic messaging and content for presentations to audiences worldwide. Ian has spent more than 20 years working with mainstream Silicon Valley companies such as Hewlett-Packard and Sun Microsystems. He is Past-President of the Northern California Chapter of the National Speakers Association. His online blog "Professionally Speaking" is found at http://www.exec-comms.com/blog. Ian holds a BA in Sociology from Leicester University and has conducted graduate research in Sociology at Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts.