

NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS TRUST

The 2007 Alan and Anne Beckett Award

a Study of

Web 2.0 & Social Media

Identifying the opportunities that new media
can bring to Farmers and Rural Business

by

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All the people I stayed with and interviewed on my travels.

John Stones - director of Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust

and Avery who found my credit card in Petaluma - and tracked me down online.

Declaration

The views expressed in this report are my own, and not necessarily those of The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust.

Disclaimer:

I am not a techy, or a geek.

I don't know how your computer works.

I don't know how to sort out your hard drive, or hook up your Blackberry.

I cannot coach you through your personal exploration of internet adoption.

But I do know this:

You don't need to know any of those things to benefit from my report.

You just need an open mind.



What Makes Me Tick

Having no formal qualifications (unless you are happy to count an art A-level and a design diploma) my path was pretty much laid out for me after Art College. I was expected to work for my father's drainage contracting business, which I did for several years. My role ranged from driving a road roller and JCB to measuring up the drainage projects and organising the payroll. However, having twin brothers 16½ years older than me, I found it difficult to forge a role within the company that would deliver self-fulfilment along with real value to the family enterprise.

So, whilst I cut my teeth driving a drainage machine, I was always looking for an escape route. My father had built his own business up just after the war; my Granny Flo had run a bakery and post office – highly unusual for a woman in her day. I, in turn, wanted to create *my* own business. It was in my DNA.

But what to do? By the very nature of where I live and all my influences it was likely to involve nature and the environment and worms became an obvious candidate once I had learnt how dependent we all are on them, and how undervalued they were. From my

kitchen table I began to sell worms and compost – Wiggly Wigglers was born, circa 1991.

I married Phil and he then took over the tenancy of Lower Blakemere Farm. Lower Blakemere is a mixed farm on the Duchy estate and, with other land, he farms 1200 acres altogether. I brought my fledgling business to the party and used a couple of the redundant old pig buildings to grow the operation and develop a set of products sourced on our own farm and stables and indeed on other farms and businesses locally.

But, of course even if Wiggly Wigglers had an enthusiastic owner and some interesting products – there would be no success without a market – I needed some customers, in fact I needed lots of customers! Our own village of Blakemere has a population of 63. I would have to look much further afield to establish a viable customer base. Right from the beginning, therefore, Wiggly Wigglers had to be a mail-order company.

Why Study Social Media and Web 2.0 (and - for that matter – what is it?!)

In my business I have been particularly lucky in having a very supportive husband and also very fortunate in forging key relationships that have held us in good stead over the years.

Early on in the life of Wiggly Wigglers I met up with Michael and Mary who run a graphic design business – Myst - a few miles away. They are talented and enthusiastic about graphics and computers and right from the start we used them for all our design needs without ever needing to have a quote or in fact any discussion about money at all. I like to work on a trust basis and hold the principle that you have to pay properly for technical expertise rather than compromise. Together Myst and Wiggly Wigglers have produced many mail order catalogues, many show stands, and lots of advertising materials for newspapers and consumer magazines. We developed a static website in the late '90s and developed the means to sell online as soon as the technology was available. Regular e-mails went out to customers. The business, which had endured a very slow initial development, grew considerably between 2000-05.

In June 2005 Michael told me about a new facility on iTunes called Podcasts - radio shows with the sound quality of Radio 4 that could be subscribed to on my own computer. Whereas previously a licence had been needed to produce a radio show, podcasts needed no licence, no outside editor, and could be created on equipment we already owned. The show

could be listened to on iTunes alongside Chris Evans or Nasa and downloaded worldwide. Listeners could subscribe to the show and it wouldn't cost them a penny. Perhaps even more importantly, it wouldn't cost me many pennies to make either!

I had always maintained that there was nothing to beat Word Of Mouth advertising – one satisfied customer telling another of their good experience – but Word Of Mouth is necessarily a pretty local thing. Podcasting was an evolution of word-of-mouth, with potentially a worldwide audience for the same initial effort.

By September 2005 we had our own radio show broadcast from the sofa in the farmhouse at Lower Blakemere Farm. It moved up to No. 34 in the iTunes chart. Three or four of us would discuss environmental issues of the day, farm news and Wiggly news in a light-hearted way. We were establishing contact with a global audience who, if they felt simpatico with the podcast and with us and our ideals/approach, could turn into customers. We set up our own blog where we could produce regular content easily and quickly but also where people could contribute, feedback and share the information.

From 2005 our business really took off by starting to use what is now termed Social Media while at the same time cutting our conventional advertising spend by approximately 80%.

The Heather definition of Social Media and Web 2.0...

The Static Website

Up until very recently the internet and websites were used as a monologue. A company would publish content on a website and you would read that content. Full Stop. You could read but you couldn't reply.

That was Web 1.0

There was no simple way to get together with other people wishing to express a view.

Let's take your Bank's website as an example.

Before Social Media and Web 2.0 your bank probably had a website and it told you how jolly brilliant it was. It would outline the services, the clever investments and its new all-singing all-dancing call centre...

You could sit at home frustrated at having to "press one for this" and "two for that" but you couldn't really express an opinion that the Bank would take notice of.

If you wanted to publish something in print or online about the Bank it would take an enormous amount of time and probably considerable money, and if you wanted to complain on the phone not only were you a lone voice but all you could do would be "press one..."! As the consumer you were the underdog and your only hope of mass media exposure was programmes like Watch Dog, and who could be bothered with that.

Web 2.0 and Social Media Technology

Along came Web 2.0. The technology it and Social media bring allows individuals to actually publish content at extremely low cost and with no technical expertise needed. It transforms readers into publishers. Sometimes this is referred to as user-generated content (UGC) or consumer-generated media (CGM).

Maybe this doesn't sound like a communication revolution? Well, it is, and we are right at the start of it.

This is the democratisation of information. Social media is a shift in how people discover and share news, information and content. The technology itself is changing the way humans interact. And so it changes monologues (one to many) into a dialogue (many to many). This allows people who could never have reached each other before to connect in the online world forming relationships for personal, business or - more likely - both.

Back to your Bank's example

The Bank itself may not embrace Social Media and you can't easily get back to them. It may well still have a website that tells you how jolly brilliant they are...

But you can publish content elsewhere to expose the problems, to share your issues and, even more importantly, to connect with people who have similar views. The fact that you can now publish your own online content changes the balance of power, and technology such as "Search" allows others to find and use that information to influence and change the status quo.

Web 2.0 and Social Media Technology – continued

Social Media means the development of blogging (and similar media tools) and thus the ability of anyone connected to the internet to:

- publish his own text, informally, easily, and at no cost
- Reply informally – or add content to – someone else's blog

This is a phenomenon that is sweeping the World.

- I wanted a Nuffield Farming Scholarship in order to study this developing Social Media in a worldwide context, and to see how it could be applied to, and benefit, farmers and rural businesses like mine.
- My study is not a guide to geekdom, or even a look at how the technical aspects work. In fact at home I find it hard to record a TV programme without my son to sort out the three (!) remote controls.
- But that's no problem. Not many of us actually understand the technology behind how the telephone works, (I know I don't). However that does not stop us having valuable conversations or doing a business deal over the phone.
- The same applies with Web 2.0 and Social Media – in fact it doesn't matter if you never use those terms again, all that matters is that you are inspired enough to use them to benefit you, your business and your industry or community.

"If you don't see the Internet as an opportunity, it will become a threat. In two or three year's time, the Internet will become as commonplace in the office as the telephone".
Tony Blair in 1999

My Study Tour

My study was one of two halves. The first was a real tour of the US, Canada and India, and the second was a virtual tour of the world.

the real journey...

I chose to visit the US and Canada as my initial research had shown these countries to be utilising the technology far more than anywhere else. Silicon Valley is where most of the new hip technology companies start and so it makes sense that adoption starts here physically too.

I went on to India where, despite the huge challenges, the country has become a global player in IT, which has overtaken many industries and now accounts for a substantial part of the country's GDP. It produces 400,000 computer engineers every year and is the workforce and tech department behind many huge companies. In fact the Bank's call centre I mentioned earlier? Almost certainly based in Hyderabad, in India.

Social Media and Web 2.0 often sits quite uncomfortably with organisations, governments and corporations. Much of the reason is that it helps information to be democratised and some control is naturally lost. For this reason in the main early adopters are individuals rather than organisations. My aim was to talk to ordinary people in whatever walk of life who were discovering how the new internet tools could benefit them, and their communities. I did not limit my net to business people. Why? I believe that Conversations are Markets and Markets are Conversations, and that for me the value was not necessarily in the content but in the way what they were doing could be adapted.

I ended up talking to a huge variety of people who were publishing their own content and embracing the technology. I met "the face of L'Oreal" and interviewed her on aging well! I learnt about blogging from a Sherlock Holmes enthusiast (who now heads up Ford's social media strategy), I was given a cabbage by a fruit and veg wholesaler and I recorded a podcast in a hayloft in Indiana. Due to my own podcast I was a speaker at the Climate Change conference in Himachal Pradesh and went to look round the Dalai Lama's temple in Dharamsala with the former prime minister of Sweden!

and the virtual one...

I tried my own internet experiments en route including:

- I set up my own blog
- I recorded my own podcasts on tour in the US, Canada and India (which can be found at www.wigglywiggles.co.uk/podcasts)
- I asked on my own and other people's podcasts for folks to meet and places to go to that were relevant to my study
- I used review sites to decide where to stay
- I joined various online communities and set up my own Facebook group

The Real Journey

(a) Global Audiences:

the huge potential global audience, the very low entry level requirements, and the power of Viral Marketing.

Apart from NPR (National Public Radio) there is nothing close to the BBC in the US. Radio Channels are jam packed with adverts, and, if you've ever tried watching the television over the pond, you will find a myriad of channels with adverts interspersed with programmes!

It was increasingly difficult to reach many sectors of the audience. TiVo already meant that much of the audience was skipping the adverts but other sectors such as 18 – 34 year old men were spending more time online. (TiVo, a pioneer of in-home entertainment, created the digital video recorder (DVR). See www.tivo.com)

I met and listened to Tim Street at the New Media and Podcast Expo. He is an ex Hollywood director and producer who spotted the opportunities and freedom of New Media very early on.

When he started French Maid TV it was his goal to create a series of "PG-13" type videos about anything that would be on regular television: but his videos would have French Maids in them (!). He thought French Maid TV shown online would be the perfect way to solve the male 18-34 advertising problem and provide some entertaining content as well.

He developed the idea by using integrated advertising and product placement and attracted sponsorship and advertisers with the new marketing opportunities that existed in online video and video podcasting with iTunes and the video iPod.

continued overleaf

[*http://www.redorbit.com/news/technology/1580524/break_media_research_paints_portrait_of_men_aged_1834/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/technology/1580524/break_media_research_paints_portrait_of_men_aged_1834/)
<http://breakmedia.break.com/auwhitepaper>

Research commissioned by Break Tomato, the internet's premier entertainment community for men, shows for **18-34 year old men** that:*

- 69% say they can't live without the Internet, versus just 31% for television
- 63% have a smart phone and one in four use their mobile device to connect to the Web
- 40% use the Internet for more than 22 hours a week
- 36% say they can't live without the Internet for socializing
- 33% say they can't live without online entertainment

The first two episodes of French Maid TV were proof-of-concept pilots: How To Video Podcast and How To Give CPR**. Three days after they were listed on the iTunes Store they were number one. Now they have been seen over 30 million times.

***Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation*

(a) Global Audiences – continued

This demonstrated to me in pretty graphic terms (in more ways than one!) the power of viral marketing.

If you can produce something that people really want to share with each other, new media allows them to do that so easily and so quickly that your content – whether a written blog post, an audio podcast, or a video - can be shared at the click of a button. It's like Multi Level Marketing – or Pyramid Selling, but without the losers.

Here's how it works:

If I have 50 friends in a Group email contact list and want to share the latest video from Farmers Weekly I can do so – we all know that. But, if I manage to get them to share with their 50 friends and so on, 50 views becomes 2,500, which becomes 125,000, which becomes 6.25 million. Assuming the content takes 2 minutes to watch, listen or read, in principle your audience could be 6.25 million within less than 12 minutes!

Email is easy to understand but what if I have my own means of publishing content? Perhaps I have a blog where video content can be easily passed on to my audience and then passed on to their audience and so on, growing the whole thing even faster

Does this actually happen to non Hollywood producers? Yes.

- Lauren Luke posts hugely successful video tutorials on applying make up on YouTube. She is virtually untrained and films live from her bedroom. Views so far? Over 40 million.
- Ask your family if they saw Susan Boyle on TV or YouTube. One of her YouTube videos alone was watched by 67 million viewers at the last count.
- Or nearer to home what about Extreme Shepherding advertising Samsung TVs which has been watched by well over 150k as at June 09?

Whilst conventional broadcast media need a broadcast licence for the privilege of using a portion of the radio frequency spectrum, new media has no such needs or controls. Literally anyone can record or film and broadcast that content via the internet.

The New Media and Podcast Expo confirmed for me that new media had a huge potential global audience, mixed with very low entry level requirements.

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The Real Journey - continued

b) Authenticity:

The importance of engaging content and the potential longevity of your initial investment.

Contrast the previously-detailed high flying use of social media to gain a global audience and, indeed, make money from product placement, with **Cherie Cochrane**. I met Cherie at the New Media and Podcast Expo and went to stay with her in Michigan.

One of the highlights of my Nuffield Scholarship was staying with her – she gave me one of her hand made quilts, I gave her a bit of compost advice and we went shopping together, for red jackets, and had several beers!

She and her husband Bob ran a small grocery delivery business serving the Amish community of Indiana. One day in 2006 whilst out delivering his fruit and vegetables Bob's truck was hit by a train on a level crossing. Bob was killed instantly and his granddaughter very badly injured. Cherie had to cope with her loss and ensure the business survived.

At Cherie's I realised that traditional media has all sorts of rules that perhaps you and I have forgotten are there.

- The 25 minute format
- The tone of the interviewer
- The fly-on-the-wall style documentary.
- The play acting (like The Archers)

New media can cut through all those production rules and return us to basics. When you listen to Cherie you are eavesdropping (with their permission) on a conversation between mother and son. It can be as long as they want or, if there's not much to say, they can stop. The importance is her authenticity.

This podcast is recorded by her son over Skype (a free way of phoning and recording phone conversations over the internet.)

Here's the trailer:

"Welcome to the CherieCast

Hi. This Podcast was the result of the loss of my husband in a tragic vehicle accident which also resulted in severe injuries to one of my granddaughters. My story is one of recovery, survival and the regular life events of a widow who is forced by every-day events to continue to work and meet challenges that only one who has lost a spouse can understand. Email us at cheriecast@gmail.com"

Although Cherie now has sponsorship for her podcast that isn't the primary object. She explained to me that she and her son both find the recording of the podcast not only therapeutic but it also acts as a support tool to other widows and is her legacy.

Unlike television if I want to recommend the Cheriecast then new listeners can go back to the very first podcast and listen to episode one. This podcast reaches across borders and time, and I have learnt that you don't need a production team, or exotic subject or location, to engage your audience. You don't need expensive equipment, or huge amounts of time. You need to want to share your story with honesty to engage people.

The Real Journey - continued

(c) Challenging or Negative

What if your story is challenging or negative?

Here is what turned out to be a rather controversial chicken story:

On my travels I met up with a farmer who proudly showed me round his farms. I saw the apple trees, the crops, the bees for pollination, and I heard all about the conservation areas and the policy on hedging. As we were walking back to the yard I asked to see the chicken sheds. He refused. He said he hated them, that they had been set up by his father and that over the years broiler production had changed so much from how it had started when the corn and bedding was provided by the farmer...

Nowadays it was all controlled by the company that he sold the finished chickens to. He said he hated the way production had gone, and that if he could afford to he would stop tomorrow. I asked him if he ate his own chicken - he said he most certainly did not. He bought his chicken from the free range farm a few miles down the road.

At that time I had my recorder in my hand and, as a citizen journalist, could have made a pretty powerful piece out of that interview, a farmer who on principle would not eat his own produce...

I used this story in my Nuffield presentation and despite my best efforts it was taken as a slight to chicken farmers, which was not my intent in any way. The point of including this story was to illustrate that these days everyone you meet is a potential journalist and you need not only to be aware of that but also consider what you actually do and say. If your own values are not being upheld in the way you farm, or you have a set of business practices that you do not believe in, you need to change them. There is no hiding place anymore. Whether you like it, or

whether you don't, your children, your suppliers, your advocates and your enemies are already online and publishing viral content.

I know it is difficult to maintain control of conditions if a third party is in charge of inputs and outputs.

However, this does not mean that you cannot use Social Media, whatever type of farmer you are, to explain and benefit your business. There's only one condition - you need authenticity. If you believe in what you are doing, whether intensive, organic, or minimum-till there will be others who agree. Social media means you can find this community and join in with them before putting your cards on the table. You can build trust and fans and you can enter the discussion with a group of like minded people and you can start to have influence. So, if you are farming in a way you believe in, do not let others put you off engaging in the conversation. Some of the major problems that farming has endured over the past 60 years are because, as farmers, we have hidden ourselves away and refused to talk.

If you are sat reading this report thinking - what is this woman on about?....the general public will not accept the TB argument, the BSE discussion, the pesticide row, pigs on slats.... have a rethink. Do you not think the public's view may have been slanted by the media over the years? Do you not think your government has helped? In my experience if you can have a one-to-one chat with people about your views and why they are how they are, in 99.9% of cases you will find it helps to bridge the knowledge gap, it helps with understanding, and there is usually empathy. You can start to change minds.

(c) Challenging or Negative – continued

Now think about your influence using new communication tools where your sentence cannot be taken out of context, where you can speak direct from your farm and from your heart, and imagine the change you can deliver.

A lot of small businesses and farmers are frightened of this. They imagine a world of people against them. All the statistics point to the opposite and yet we are still fearful of the extremist - of the activist. We have

to learn that silence is not golden, silence is suspicious.

We need to engage, using new media in the same way as in real life. We need to be polite, to engage, to entertain if possible, all with respect. Once we do that, just like in real life, it will be returned.

Once you have built a community online it is just like real life, if someone is unreasonable or unduly critical of you, your community will speak up and support you.

“The Internet has been the most fundamental change during my lifetime and for hundreds of years”. Rupert Murdoch

The Real Journey - continued

(d) Loyalty, Friendship and Relationships

Building all these using social media

I wound my way up the West Coast, up the Pacific Highway, over the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, in my automatic with my window open, radio blasting – singing “Let’s Go, let’s go to San Francisco”. I stopped off at various places including Mendocino. One of the many, many conversations I had in the US about social media was here with a preacher and community worker who was using a podcast and blog to reach out to his community and back up his sermons, and to re-iterate his points.

Sometimes the physical isolation is not yours but in fact that of your potential consumers. Perhaps it is more difficult for them to get out and about and come to you. Social media enables you to reach out to *them*. If they have impaired sight perhaps a podcast will connect, where a physical store would be redundant. If they are disabled perhaps a Facebook group will appeal where a tour of your farm would be impractical.

Whatever social media tools your potential audience are using these are the tools you need to use too. At this moment in time they include Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, Wikipedia, Squidoo, Blogging, Ning and a whole host of others. It is easy to find out where your potential audience is – just join the various networks and ask. If you don’t do this you will be doing the equivalent of trying to strike up a one-to-one conversation whilst that person is already on the phone talking to somebody else!

But can this connection actually be as powerful as a one-to-one meeting? Of course not.

No matter what social media you use you cannot bring into play all your senses. However it is not practical to have a one-to-one conversation with thousands or millions of people, whereas with social media you can broadcast a one-to-many

conversation to individuals, connecting on a personal level.

The power of this connection was brought home to me in California. Having put out a message on my own podcast suggesting that I would like to meet listeners and have a look around their garden or farm I was contacted by Patrice Reed, a gardener living in Arcata, a small town near Humboldt County in North California. She and her friend Margot were Wiggly Podcast fans – in every sense of the word. When I went to find her, since it was a bit remote, she had left a sign out for me on the road - “Welcome Heather” - with some flowers and, when I got there, she asked her husband to come home from work and take some photos. If this all sounds a bit over the top – it isn’t. She and Margot don’t watch much television but listen to the Wiggly Podcast on their iPods in California every week and they are of course completely connected with our lives at Lower Blakemere Farm – they know when the dog is ill, they know our views on TB, they’ve listened to one of our cows giving birth, they know what is in a Wiggly Bouquet. The relationship has already been built to some extent and, when you meet a podcast listener, there is an instant rapport. Because they are listening they share your values, they have a relationship with you.

This relationship is formed over time and, by communicating regularly, you can build on that and change opinions and views – isn’t that what all leaders want to do?

The first podcast I listened to was “For Immediate Release” and it is now on episode 454. At an average of 1hr and 15 minutes many listeners have listened to Shel Holtz and Neville Hobson for well over 550 hours! No wonder the preacher I met and the church as a whole has one of the best take-ups of social media in the US!

(d) Loyalty, Friendship and Relationships – continued

But what makes social media so “sticky”? Why does it encourage loyal audiences? Think of your Farmers Weekly. If you just buy it ad hoc and have to go to the shop to get it, it is highly probable that you will miss many weeks. After a while you will have lost touch with who’s who – which columnist is the most annoying and so on. However if you take out a yearly subscription on a direct debit, it will simply arrive on your doorstep when it is published – i.e. every week.

Social media uses this model. It’s called RSS – really simple syndication. I won’t go into the technicalities of it (probably couldn’t if I wanted to) but essentially you subscribe to a blog, podcast, or video channel and the content simply lands on your computer as it is updated.

In other social networking sites like Facebook you might join an interesting group and when that group is updated you are automatically told about it. In Twitter you choose to follow someone and so your home page is a series of feeds from all the people you are following. The result of all this is just like your magazine subscription, with two important details...

- Almost certainly the content is free.
- Unsubscribing is as easy as subscribing – you press a button.

This means once you make a commitment to subscribe to something that interests you - and unless you unsubscribe - the content will automatically land on your computer. This ensures that you are more likely to be loyal than if you visited websites on an ad hoc basis.

“The drops of rain make a hole in the stone, not by violence, but by oft falling.”
Lucretius

“The Web as I envisaged it, we have not seen it yet. The future is still so much bigger than in the past”. Tim Berners-Lee

The Real Journey - continued

(e) Lobbying

Using Social Media to Lobby for your cause

While I was in Washington we learnt where lobbying government started – in the lobby of hotels, where leaders and business men would informally badger and influence the Members of the House or Senate.

Author and journalist Amy Stewart was a major part of why I was in California in the first place. She had listened to our podcast and featured it in the San Francisco Chronicle. I wanted to know more about her, her writing and her blog. Eventually I reached Northern California where the red woods grow – Eureka! I found it - and Eureka was the name of the town.

Amy has written several successful books including *Flower Confidential* and *The Earth Moved* (about earthworms). She writes regularly for many newspapers and magazines such as the San Francisco Chronicle. Although her blog is sponsored the main purpose is to set out her and the other three bloggers who contribute to this blog as experts in their niche.

Garden Rant – Uprooting the Gardening World - has its own manifesto which includes: -

- We are Convinced that gardening matters
- We are Suspicious of the “horticultural industry”
- We are Bored with perfect magazine gardens

The blog does generate some income from advertising but the strength it has is in the readership – they have had approximately 1 million visitors over the past 2 years and have won several high profile awards. Their blog post attracts controversy and comment and this sets them in good stead in terms of conventional and online PR.

*www.pesticidescampaign.co.uk

Amy told me:

“Social networking has certainly got people out to my book tour events and allowed me to connect with readers. At Garden Rant we set out to change the conversation about gardening and I think we have succeeded - we are read by a lot of editors, publishers, and writers and we challenge them to move beyond boring the basic “How-To.”

If you are a farmer, businessman or organisation who has found the PR failure of agriculture frustrating, these new tools give you the opportunity to be the media and, as Amy says, to change the conversation. If you want to shed new light on the Georgina Downs* case, or the NFU view on Set-a-side there is an opportunity to engage. (Please note if you want to just “inform the general public” you will come very unstuck very quickly...)

Do you want to share your expertise with farmers in other areas of the World? Could you make a videocast on how you have saved water and dealt with your waste? Could you run a webinar (an online video seminar) to talk and share fertiliser issues? Should you set up a Twitter account to share information?

Tom Phillips, a dairy consultant, came to see me and within 24 hours here was his email back:

“Dear Heather,

A massive thank you for our discussion yesterday. I've made a start. I've set up a blog: <http://pasturetoprofit.blogspot.com> I've also registered at Twitter.....I've scoured my email list to encourage them on to Twitter. Twitter name @tiphillips”

(e) Lobbying – continued

I used Twitter recently to lobby for action when BT let us down very badly. Within 20 minutes of my negative Twitter post the operations director had phoned me from his local office and organised the appropriate credit - £6500! It took 20 minutes of social networking compared to the two month period in which I had been attempting to get a positive response to a huge overcharge and terrible service!!

“Basically our goal is to organise the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful”.
Larry Page, co-founder of Google

The Real Journey - continued

(f) Communities with No Physical Boundaries

The influence of individuals who form communities online without physical boundaries

An excellent example is the Mommy Bloggers*.

Maybe you are a male farmer living in a fairly male-dominated World. What on earth are the Mommy Bloggers and why should you pay any attention to them?

Recent research from Nielsen Online found that Mommy Bloggers are an online force to be reckoned with as their number, and power, continues to rise.

Newbie Moms use the internet to gather information about everything from nursery décor to choosing the right pediatrician. As they navigate caring for a newborn, returning to work or managing a growing household, the internet acts as a lifeline to answer worrisome middle-of-the-night questions and to build community.

Established Moms, aged 40 to 50 with three or more children at home, are heavy online shoppers, found Nielsen.

In fact 83% of buying decisions in the home are made by women.

I spoke at Blogher, a conference for Women In Social Media in New York City, and shared my own experiences of using Web 2.0 and my Nuffield study. I talked to many of the bloggers there and what struck me was the strength of community that these people had formed online. To an extent they were customising motherhood in a way that has been impossible until now. They are using technology for conversation, and thereby influence their purchasing decisions. 86% of US mothers do not live in built up areas.

In the real world we are probably all aware of how powerful the queue can be when mothers wait for toddlers, or how things get organised outside the school gates. Leverage these tiny conversations on a global scale with full networking power and search ability, and you will start to realise the influence of all the different online communities such as the Mommy Bloggers.

* see http://www.bizreport.com/2009/05/nielsen_mommy_blogger_power_grows

The Real Journey - continued

(g) Can a Farmer Do It?

The proof of the pudding is in the eating – I present to you the one and only PODCHEF

Meeting Podchef

Neal Foley is a farmer-cum-chef. He contacted me after my plea for places to visit and he is a great social media advocate. I decided I would “pop” to see him.

First of all to get to him was an effort in itself. I met up with my husband and son and, after travelling down through Vancouver Island, there was only one ferry a day to get to Shaw Island ... and we missed it! This brought my concept of rural isolation to new heights.

Podchef's statistics speak for themselves. Bokashi is a Japanese method of fermenting kitchen waste. Neal actually heard about it for the first time on the Wiggly Podcast. He made his own Bokashi and then put a video up on You Tube which, at today's date, has been viewed 34,130 times. Because the very nature of social media means it is updated regularly this brings the content high up in the search engine rankings.

What Podchef – aka Neal Foley – said

“Social Media, for me, is a window out to the world. As a farmer I find I can communicate with other farmers from around the world and share my perspective, and gain knowledge from theirs. As a farmer who lives on a tiny island, Social Media helps me keep sane. It allows me to meet and communicate with all sorts of people from all walks of life whom I would never be able to physically meet otherwise. When I first started my podcast, The Gastrocast, I wondered who would want to listen to a show about "Food, Farming, and the Politics of What We Eat" presented from a mostly self-sufficient farm on a tiny island. It took a while, but now 20,000 people seem to enjoy it well enough. Through the podcast I've met some amazing people, some of whom have come to the farm for visits. Others I maintain regular email or Skype contact with. A core group of listeners which grows daily enjoys the message I share and gives me feedback. This in turn prompted me to begin a Facebook site:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php> (contd below)
[#/profile.php?id=682986807&ref=profile/](#)

in addition to my two websites centered around the show—

<http://kitchengardens.net> and
<http://gastrocasttv.com/blog> .

These sites, and the comments left on them, are another way to connect to listeners and anyone else who stops in. By using tagging and relevant keywords, a surprising number of people view my topic-specific posts. These websites also allow me to post the videos I create for YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/Podchef> -

beyond just the YouTube community. Here again a community of viewers - quite different in some regards than the regular listeners of the Gastrocast - has formed and asks me questions or responds by email or the comments section of each video.

(g) Can A Farmer Do It? – continued

Meeting Podchef - contd

Pop the word “Bokashi” into Google and you will see that, despite the fact that Bokashi is a multimillion pound business sold worldwide through companies of all sizes, right on that home page is Podchef’s homemade video “How to make Bokashi”. One farmer based in a place where the ferry runs once a day, with one shop and one primary school, has competed with business on a global scale and heads up the search! What other method of communication could deliver that profile?

Neal Foley – contd.

“Lately I have been using Twitter-<http://twitter.com/podchef> - to communicate with an amazing group of people. A community of like-minded individuals has quickly formed and we can share our lives, our stories and our messages with a broader audience. This isn't without its pitfalls. 140 characters is a strict limit for communicating some messages. It forces you to focus what you want to say and how you say it. It gives small farmers, and small businesses, like myself, a chance to engage and interact with large corporations in a direct, and often instant way. It has also become, for me, another way of engaging with people outside this tiny island. Even in a close knit community of 600, on a seven square mile patch of rock, surrounded by other, larger, populated islands, it is easy to feel isolated, by work, by viewpoint, by choice. Social Media has become one more way of making the world smaller and allowing the education process to continue beyond school: learning from other's views, exchanging ideas, web links, and information. I cannot imagine what life as a rural farmer would be like without it”.

What would you as a farmer or organisation like to target in terms of content and search ranking?

“One of the Internet's strengths is its ability to help consumers find the right needle in a digital haystack of data”. ~Jared Sandberg

The Real Journey - continued

(h) Small Business – Local Markets

The relevance of Social Media for Small Business with a local market

This is best illustrated by example.

On the right is part of a blogpost from April 2008 when I was in New York City and interviewed Connie Reece from Austin, Texas, and Anna Farmery from Bradford, Yorkshire.

I asked whether or not a small business which only wanted to market locally could benefit from a blog.

In the right hand column are our conclusions based on running a fish and chip shop in the UK:



1: The blog will help your search rankings in Google. So, if someone wants to know where the nearest or best fish and chip shop is, when they google "fish and chips" your blog will help get you to the top of the list.

2: If you have particular points that make your fish and chip shop special your blog is a good way to communicate that added value. For example how fresh is your fish, what oil do you use, where are your potatoes from? etc. All these elements are important if you want to communicate why you are in business and share that with your potential customers.

3: Your web presence is global but will also access local customers who are looking for that special taste.

4: Your blog is free to set up and run. Provided you have internet access you can set up your blog (which in effect will be your website) free and it takes about 10 minutes to get started.

5: Comments: encourage your customers to comment on their meal not only to back up your marketing but so that you can find out what is cool (or not) about your product. Ask in your blog - if in doubt:

- what's the most authentic way of eating your fish and chips - in the paper - on a plate?
- how many calories do we need to run off to offset the meal?
- which fish is the best?
- can I have sustainable fish - should I ask for pollock?
- which evening is fish and chip night for the family and why.

6: Become a leader in your area... mmmm....a fish and chip shop expert? Why not? If a newspaper or your local radio station wants to talk about fish and chips - where do you think they will look?... in Google. If you are there and have an authentic voice it will be you they interview.

7: Warning: if you are not operating with good business practices, one where you are willing to share your values and be transparent - best not to talk about it... and hope your customers aren't already blogging about it.

(h) Small Business – Local Markets – continued

Example

One such farm marketing themselves within a very small physical locality is City Farmer in Vancouver.

City Farmer in Vancouver is not large by any means. In terms of land there are just a few acres and, in terms of people, Michael, Marie and Sharon run the non profit enterprise.

The farm not only teaches local authorities about composting and small scale farming and gardening, but hosts literally hundreds of school visits and talks.

The farm has a webcam that updates with a new photo online every hour. It has produced podcasts and videoblogs for many years and actually connects on a worldwide scale. Michael told me that he has had contacts and people watching his videos worldwide. What a great case study - local action, global inspiration.

They take every opportunity to collaborate and cross promote. While there they made a videocast of my visit and posted it on YouTube. Cost – virtually nil, and of course I have helped promote it as I am in it!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3rv-U1eBY0> Views as at today 1453.

"If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been to bed with a mosquito." Betty Reese

The Real Journey - continued

(i) Business to Business

Networking using Social Media

Whilst in Miami I was lucky enough to hear Reid Hoffman speak – he is founder and CEO of Linked In. The idea behind Linked In – a social networking site - is that all individuals need a personal brand and to be able to preserve relationships with the people they meet.

Valuable and convenient communication has been one of the fundamental reasons that cities have prospered as opposed to the countryside. The simple fact is that you can talk to more people more quickly if you are based in a city. It's known as the water cooler phenomenon - a place where people get together informally and share a few ideas: where Jane knows Geoff in PR, and Geoff knows a great accountant next door and recommends him.

Linked In is the online equivalent of this with knobs on! You can connect with your existing contacts, recommend them to others, add your profile plus what you are looking for, and much, much more. Whilst it cannot replace a face-to face-relationship I believe it can and will narrow the gap between rural and town.

Main Benefits of Linked In

- Speeding up contact between people in business
- Finding a huge pool of passive employees
- Reaching people in your network
- Reference checking
- The recommendations are two way which means all parties are answerable for what they say

As Reid said:

“Success as an individual is often achieved by leveraging the knowledge and experience of your network.

“The hallmark of successful entrepreneurs and businesses is the ability to quickly assemble high quality teams to solve problems.”

The Real Journey - continued

(j) Potential

The Potential of Social Media in India and beyond

I had got used to an automatic car in the US, cruising up the Pacific Highway with air conditioning on:

- stopping for a Starbucks without even getting out of the car!
- wondering why Americans like it hot outside and have to wear a jumper when they go in! (I still don't understand that one).
- a world of automatic: automatic updates on your computer, automatic check in, automatic smile, and automatic toilet flushing!!

Landing in India was far from automatic – even the taxi from the airport turned out to be a fraud on a joyride. Everything I had taken for granted in the US had gone. You were more likely to see a camel coming the wrong way up the dual carriageway (and we did see many) than a farmer with a laptop.

However the attitude to technology was impressive.

It is estimated that 7% of the population of over a billion have internet access. With India's can-do attitude, adaptability, innovation, lack of red tape and regulation, plus the willingness of government to encourage technology, the country will probably still leap ahead using mobile communications such as the blackberry and iPhone.

I went to see One World Asia who run a podcast for rural areas from the centre of Delhi as well as a mobile phone project where several coordinators would go out to really remote farms on a weekly basis and offer a mobile phone with which the farmer or, much more often, the farmer's wife, would phone in and ask questions about problems on their farm, leaving a message in a database. The questions would normally be about cropping, or adding value, or pesticides etc.

At the other end there would be experts recording answers so, when the same question came in again, the appropriate piece of advice could be played back. When a new query came in the answer would be recorded for future use, leveraging the content and database.

Comment

I spoke with Rohit Gupta, ex-Agriculture Minister and current Scientific Consultant to the Indian Government, who explained the challenges in terms of poverty and what it will mean to bring people out of poverty in terms of adopting Western measures of success and Western values.

Currently there are 260 million people on or below the poverty level. Only 50% of homes have access to electricity. He believes that India needs a different paradigm to the Western model and that it would be a disaster to emulate the West, especially in terms of deforestation and agriculture. He is part of a communications and educational programme to encourage re-forestation, green planting of bamboo, the use of solar energy and growing biofuels on degraded land.

He feels that new communication tools via the mobile network can help to pass on the full story without repeating the mistakes the West has made.

The Virtual Journey

Conventional communication

Whilst on my Nuffield Scholarship tour I spoke live at 3 conferences with an audience of over 300 people in total and I interviewed and spoke to at least another 300. Hopefully this report will perhaps be read by another 100. Conventionally therefore I would guess that a part of my Nuffield Scholarship has been shared directly by between 700 – 1000 people.

Virtual communication

What becomes interesting is the knock on effect of those connections in terms of information spread and the effect of my virtual journey. So far:

- I have been in over 20 of other people's blog posts
- have been interviewed for 4 other podcasts
- appeared in 2 live streaming videos and 4 web videos.
- used 9 interviews from my tour as my own podcast content
- have interviewed 6 other Nuffield Scholars,
- and used my Facebook page and blog to update people on where I was and what I was doing (and upload my photos).

I would conservatively estimate upwards of 150,000 shared my virtual communication

Comment

The virtual audience is a fifteen fold leverage and was achieved with virtually no extra time or effort and very little cost. I was talking to the relevant people in any case for my Nuffield study so why not record and write to share the content? For those scholars where reach and profile is an important part of the goal then Social Media has a real part to play.

To join my virtual journey check out my blog at the time:

<http://heathergorringe.blogspot.com>, and my podcasts through 2007.

To join in with my continuing virtual journey you can find me on Twitter or LinkedIn or Facebook.

Address details on the front page of the report or just search for Heather Gorringe in Google.

Conclusions and Recommendations

(a) The Digital Divide

Conclusions

The Digital Divide refers to the gap between people with effective access to digital and information technology and those with very limited or no access at all. The lack of technology causes lack of useful information and communication technology and contributes to the knowledge divide.

In the US people are grasping the opportunities provided by Social Media faster and more effectively than in the UK. Rural based business and particularly farming and horticulture have been slow to adopt this technology. Sometimes this is because of Broadband issues but more often it is due to fear, cost, complexity, time and ignorance.

In Herefordshire many farmers still do not use email! If we as the rural sector and the agricultural industry do not communicate with people in the way they are now receiving information we have no hope of building a relationship let alone leading the conversation to some of the difficult issues we want people to understand and have empathy with.

Recommendations

We must aim not just to catch up but lead. We need to embrace these tools quickly and use the current public fascination with farming to change opinion.

There are early adopters within our families already. Your children will probably already be on many social networks. Don't be put off by the teenage giggle-sounding names such as Facebook or Twitter. Your children may not be using the tools in the way that you need to but the technical knowledge is probably there.

Bear in mind that whatever you publish can be read and seen by anyone. Understand that your content will probably last a long time (yesterday 43 people listened to the first podcast I made in 2005).

From the moment you start to embrace the medium ensure you are savvy. Treat social media just as you would when you enter a party where everyone knows everyone else (or could do). Be polite, be friendly, and find out about your audience. Join in with the conversations that are already happening. Start following the farmers and rural leaders already experienced in this area.

Use the etiquette guide at the end of this report to start using all the tools we now have to build relationships inside and, just as importantly, outside farming.

For my part I intend to help lead and push the benefits of Social Media and continue to encourage farmers, rural business and organisations to embrace this medium and become part of the conversation.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

(b) Social Media for Organisations

Conclusions

For the last 60 years most farmers have buried their heads in the sand and left organisations like the NFU to fight the PR battle alone. An impossible task, and on the whole they have taken a very sound beating.

The pro-active and positive PR of organisations such as the RSPB has put our representatives continually on the back foot. With a few notable exceptions (in particular Guy Smith's efforts and LEAF's Open Farm Sunday) our industry's attempts at PR have been too little, too late.

Isn't it a real irony that it took the foot and mouth crisis to bring a tranche of positive PR to farming?

Currently we are in what I think of as a "fluffy" stage. We spend our time romanticising farming while still covering up issues, still reacting to media exposure and yet failing to engage and take the debate to the masses. The silence is deafening. Just think of the reaction to Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall from the poultry industry. Farmers are fearful of the public's reaction to their farming methods and do not trust our representative bodies to deal with the matter.

Yet, in my experience what people are most suspicious of is silence. They are wary of what is going on behind closed doors.

Surely we have all learnt from Open Farm Sunday that when you open up the farm and talk candidly about a very contentious issue people want to understand the challenges and empathise.

But what happens at the moment? Let's take TB. The media get hold of the word "cull" and the farming industry is immediately placed on the back foot and then attack. Then farmers like you and like me are afraid to speak frankly for fear of backlash or targeted activism.

contd overleaf

Recommendations

Accountable individuals able to represent our organisations such as the NFU, the CLA and the NFST need to adopt a social media strategy as part of their proactive (and reactive) communications. It's time to join the networks and research what other organisations and competitors are doing to engage their audience and use this medium to push proactive PR, and address really difficult issues head on and build a fan base of supporters to help when times get tough.

Organisations need to provide a platform online and offline where their members can share views and speak openly and engage with other organisations already in the picture.

When the RSPB starts to talk about Skylarks or whatever it is, the farming industry needs to answer clearly and quickly within the Facebook Group or the forum or Twitter feed. Conversely the NFU needs a social media strategy to take the conversation out to the public and other groups to add to the "Why Farming Matters" campaign.

Nuffield Scholars should be aware of social media before their study tour starts. They can then not only use the technology to benefit themselves and their families whilst away, but also take their audience on the journey with them, so leveraging the reach of their content and sharing their learning more rapidly.

See the example of Ocean Rower Roz Savage who uses all sorts of tools whilst she is rowing across the Pacific. www.rozsavage.com I interviewed her here:

www.wigglywagglers/podcastepisode60

contd. overleaf

(b) Social Media for Organisations - continued

Conclusions – contd.

If you think this mission is impossible and people just will not understand, let me tell you about Wiggly Wiggles' experience. Despite being a reasonably green company with a pretty green customer base of 100k, Wiggly Wiggles addressed the TB issue on our podcast and, with open candid conversation, understanding and support has been built. I believe with this approach, and the new tools, a ban on hunting could have been avoided.

The organisations who have been more successful have already taken up social media. For example there are already thousands and thousands of people on Twitter following the RSPB, the CPRE, even the Dog's Trust.

With the exception of a minority such as The Farmers Weekly, the Soil Association and Women in Rural Enterprise, rural-focussed organisations are sadly lagging behind.

Recommendations contd.

NFST should consider adding new media as a relevant part of the Scholar's study and reporting process. This will mean that, where relevant, the Scholars could gain momentum and coverage whilst on their study tour. Even the report itself could be a shorter summary of the content they built up. I am mindful that some interviews should not be recorded and remain confidential but, even so, a key visit or a life changing interview would be a powerful draw to the NFST website.

This would support the agricultural industry's view that Nuffield Scholars are ahead of the curve, and also ensure the NFST raises its profile on the global stage. The content should be published through a variety of means but be brought together under one roof on a community NFST website, searchable under topic, Scholar date etc. This would help ensure that the same research and contacts were not being repeated. What is the point of a scholarship where the Scholars visit the same farms, often repeating the learning of past Scholars?

Videos, podcasts, blogs and forums can support the transfer of existing knowledge so that Nuffield can move forward faster. Let's ensure that the UK Nuffield is as co-operative online as it is in real life with its international partners.

NFST and organisations like the Oxford Farming Conference should make their presentations into videocasts. Let's take an idea that already works such as TED - <http://www.ted.com>

They believe passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and ultimately, the world. Their annual conference now brings together the world's most fascinating thinkers and doers, who are challenged to give the talk of their lives (in 18 minutes).

contd. overleaf

(b) Social Media for Organisations - continued

Recommendations – contd.

Their website makes the talks and performances from TED and partners available to the world, for free. More than 400 TED Talks are now available, with more added each week. All of the talks feature closed captions in English, and many feature subtitles in various languages. These videos are released under a Creative Commons licence, so they can be freely shared and re-posted.

As farmers we should be watching all the relevant thought leaders at the talks as these people are shaping public and political opinion.

To start with watch best selling author of An Omnivore's Dilemma – a book which had changed my own views whilst on my Nuffield Study Tour. Go to

http://blog.ted.com/2008/02/michael_pollan.php and Dan Barber's foie gras parable

http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_barber_s_surprising_foie_gras_parable.html

It is the story of a small Spanish farmer changing the way foie gras is produced and gaining international exposure.

Let's encourage collaboration between the NFST and organisations like the Ted Talks to encourage Scholars to put themselves forward to speak at the Ted Conference when appropriate and relevant. If chefs and authors (and presidents) can do it, farmers and rural leaders can too.

Let's adopt their online model or similar to extend our reach and influence.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

(c) Feeding the World with Social Media

Conclusions

Some farmers and organisations are using the excuse of needing to “feed the world” to justify whatever next unsustainable method they come up with for producing more for less. The truth is if they really wanted to “feed the world” why aren’t they “feeding” 800 million people that went to bed hungry last night? We all know just producing more food won’t solve the problem really. The problem is far more complicated and based on poverty, politics and knowledge gap.

British Farmers are world thought leaders and experts in many subjects. Think of the expertise we have in water use, in minimum till, in forestry, gardening, pesticides and phosphate use. Yet so far there is evidence to suggest that the Internet economy with its emphasis on knowledge and innovation has widened the global gap. The Internet has the potential to improve everyday life for those on the margins of society and to achieve greater social equity and empowerment.

If the farmers of India and Africa have the opportunity to embrace some of these global changes in communication and technology they are going to be much better placed to feed themselves.

Recommendations

Let’s encourage UK farmers to share their knowledge and experience and effect change by using new technology. When a farmer or expert goes to Africa to build a well, or talk about water or phosphate he should record the event and publish the content to ensure that a rare opportunity to really effect change is leveraged and more people can benefit from the one event.

Invest in other ways. Support One Laptop One Child which aims to create educational opportunities for the world's poorest children by providing each child with a rugged, low-cost, low-power, connected laptop with content and software designed for collaborative, joyful, self-empowered learning.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Laptop_per_Child

Take a look at Kiva.org a Silicon Valley company using social networks to fund African business to change their own futures – with loans supplied from you and me at £25 at a time.
<http://www.kiva.org/>

Conclusions and Recommendations:

(d) Transparency and Authenticity

Conclusions

Many farmers are still uncomfortable with some of the things they do. People's values are their own and they vary.

The point is whether or not you run an operation that you are proud of, and that can survive scrutiny by the lay person.

Many farmers blame the public, or the supermarket or the corporate for the less palatable methods of husbandry or production.

Latest internet statistics show that there are 1.5 billion people online. Each of those users is a potential content publisher of positive, negative or indifferent material about you and your business or industry.

While there is a good side to the universal access to social media there is also a side which can be potentially dangerous to your business. Outspoken criticism of your product or business or service can be publicised and printed online for all to see by anyone who can two-finger type.

Whereas before you were waiting for a professional journalist to investigate and bring a subject to the top of the headlines, these days everyone is a potential journalist and it doesn't need the BBC or The Telegraph to make news. News is being made every day by individuals and, whilst you have the opportunity to use this, by its very nature a cover-up is just an exposure waiting to happen. Social Media brings a new tool to individuals who can bring untold damage to your business.

Recommendations

If you are operating a business with which you are uncomfortable and waiting for the next public exposé, it's time to stop.

If you run an authentic company that you yourself can justify (even this is not to everyone's liking) then you can take action and get positive content out there first. This way you build a fan base of like-minded people to promote, defend and discuss.

It is essential that you understand this change and follow your reputation online so that you can address any negative issues and encourage positive response.

Subscribe to free basic services like Google Alerts and you can receive all the new content relating to a specific subject or business, syndicated direct to your computer, as and when it is published online, from anywhere in the world. This means that whenever someone writes about your company or organisation details arrive directly on your desktop. So whatever your customers, advocates, enemies or other stakeholders are saying you will be aware of it and can take appropriate action.

Your overall risk strategy needs to include a section on online presence and reputation management.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

(e) Direct Marketing does not mean Direct Selling

Conclusions

British Farmers are still being bullied and a lot of it is their own fault. If you let the same company supply your inputs as well as purchase back your outputs what do you expect? You become nothing more than a workman with huge overheads!

Many farmers used to spend one day a week marketing i.e taking their produce to the market, building relationships, talking about their methods and selling their wares. As supermarket dominance has taken over, farmers' personal brands have been eroded.

A large number of today's consumers really want to connect to his/her supplier. Of particular interest to the British farmer is that the consumer is looking for local produce preferably with a story and provenance attached. That could be that Buttercup has calved, that there is frogspawn in the Lower Meadow, or even that persistent frosts have harmed last year's autumn crops.

Word of Mouth marketing has traditionally been a local phenomenon. Viral marketing speeds the process up and takes it global.

Social Media is so fantastically cheap! Assuming that you have a computer all you need is a broadband connection which is roughly £15 per month. From this start you can set up a website – (blog) for free. With a little more equipment – sound recorder and video - you can make your own video and podcast for uploading to You Tube and iTunes respectively, for no outlay. Tools such as Digg, Squidoo, Twitter, Facebook are free.

contd overleaf

Recommendations

British Farmers need to build their own personal brands and connect with consumers whatever the supply chain. Colgate is simply soap in a tube and yet it is they who have connected with the consumer through advertising. There are no conventional barriers to adopting social media. No distance constraints, no infrastructure is needed, and very little skill. What is required is reasonable social skills and a willingness to be relatively transparent.

British farmers need to concentrate on their own markets on a micro-scale. Even if you are fattening 1000 cattle the average consumption in the UK is 17kg. With 2.4 in an average household this means you need to connect and effect change in just 5000 households.

I don't mean you need to turn to direct selling – we are all aware how efficient and convenient and successful the supermarket model is. What I mean is that you have some sort of relationship with the 5000 households whose choice of meat you can affect, which parts of the beast they buy and how they cook it. You can build on this relationship using a similar amount of time it would take to talk to one person over the gate. This connection means you can gain trust and influence and address difficult issues like methane production, male dairy calves, and passport requirements.

Sometimes this can increase sales directly. When people were buying Spanish broccoli whilst English cauliflower rotted in the field there was one fundamental problem – they didn't know about the problem and knew even less about what to do. With an existing relationship and communication channel you can communicate clearly the problem and put out an appropriate call to action (to ensure 4000 people don't descend on the field with an opinel knife ...)

contd overleaf

(e) Direct Marketing does not mean direct selling - continued

Conclusions – contd.

Rural individuals and business need to build networks online to collaborate and benefit and trade with each other.

We need to stop using phrases such as “*educating the general public*” “*the housewife wants*” and “*the public doesn’t understand*” and accept that our customers have the right to know what they are eating and how it is produced. They have a right to opinion and to talk back and we will learn more from listening and joining in with the conversation as opposed to constantly defending our corner or - worse - fuelling gossip by ignoring the protagonists.

Recommendations – contd.

As part of our individual social media strategies we need to promote and build relationships with other rural enterprise and farms to bring us to the forefront of Social Media, utilising our strengths of engaging stories, great products, authenticity and accountability. As rural business we should take time to recommend others from within our community and build trade between us using online tools.

We and our businesses have to accept that all businesses need time for marketing and conversation outside the farm gate and that we as individuals have an obligation to ourselves and to our industry as a whole to be more open – not just on one day a year.

“I love the Internet because that is truly a way to make money while you’re sleeping”.

Sandra Bates, Bates International Motor Home Rental Systems, Inc.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

(f) The Power Shift – Politics, Retail and Media

Conclusions

We are in a period of massive change. If in any doubt about the breadth of it check out <http://www.chrismartenson.com>

The Government, the financial sector, the Media and Retail is radically affected and therefore so are we.

In particular our government and its work is a dinosaur: heavy footed, irrelevant and bloated. It is seen as incapable of foreseeing, let alone forestalling, the biggest international financial crisis of all time. It can only fiddle with politically correct policies which increase the numbers of people on welfare. Its clumsy attempt to cover up the expenses claims failed dismally. It does not trust its people and in particular its farmers, and constantly tries to apply more control, whilst losing goodwill. (Ironically it has just appointed the first Social Media Tsar!)

Alongside this conventional media is in crisis. Advertising has been dissipated by the increase in channels and content. Consumers receive their media through many different ways. Why buy a newspaper when I can get up to date news and weather online etc etc? Why wait for the 9 o'clock news when I can get News 24 on another channel or via Twitter?

As citizens I predict we will take more and more matters into our own hands wherever possible, bypassing government and formal media equally, by using the ever-developing social media techniques to assist in making our voices heard.

Recommendations

As farmers and rural business we must ensure we are part of this revolution and bridge the gap between country and town using a method that, by its very nature, does not discriminate.

What we need to do is invest some time for the long term in these new tools.

How to Start Using Social Media

The Situation Today

We are at the beginning of another great communications revolution.

Look back over the past 10-15 years and think about how computing has changed our lives:

- Did you even *have* a computer 15 years ago?
- Did you do any, let alone all your correspondence by email 15 years ago?
- Did you file your DEFRA passport applications, or your tax return online 15 years ago?
- Did you bank online 15 years ago?
- Did you purchase online 15 years ago?
- Did you imagine that the US Presidency would be massively assisted by Social Media? See www.barackobama.com

Today you've probably bought books, cars, pharmaceuticals, airline tickets and Tesco groceries via the internet. You or your friends have probably bought and sold anything online from a mobile phone through to a trampoline. Farmer Phil (my husband) has even sold his tractor seat on eBay (the John Deere standard seat was a bit uncomfy!). But did you even dream of such transactions 15 years ago? Almost certainly not.

Dare you begin to imagine what social and business changes will have been delivered by the World Wide Web in the next 15 years?

See Step One, overleaf

"The Internet is like a large jellyfish. You can't step on it. You can't go around it. You have to go through it"

How to Start Using Social Media: contd

Step One - Social Media Etiquette

There are vast tracts of information on this. However the easiest way to think about it is that the internet is a mirror of real life, but just about everything can be overheard by anybody, anywhere for a very, very long time.

I realise this sounds a little daunting but the way I treat the internet is in the same way as I would at a party where I know a few people but don't know the vast majority.

When you walk in to begin with you are on your best behaviour, you make sure you introduce yourself and you find out about the other people there.

You don't immediately get up on stage without a hello and give a 10 minute speech to share your views on tree surgery, Korea's nuclear policy or your ideas on subsidies. (NB: If you do actually do this in the normal course of your life please tear this report up and forget using online media....ever).

To have an influence in real life we know we need to listen, respect, and engage in a conversation before we attempt to influence and change opinion.

Respect means we have to build a community, we have to be prepared to recommend others, and we have to keep a sense of humour so that we don't just get into an argument and stomp off in a huff. (I am attempting to take my own advice here....)

The same goes online. We need to find out where the community online is happening and therefore where our potential community is talking, then we need to join in just as we would in real life.

This does not mean we can't shout our cause or make an impact, but that it should be done once we have a community of advocates and a degree of experience.

For more tips:

I like this blog post:

<http://www.techipedia.com/2008/social-media-etiquette-handbook>

I met Chris Brogan on my Scholarship and he has an excellent reputation

<http://www.chrisbrogan.com/etiquette-in-the-age-of-social-media>

Mashable is an incredibly useful resource for any one using Social Media

<http://mashable.com/2008/09/02/social-media-behavior-101-soon-a-required-course/>

How to Start Using Social Media: contd

Step Two - Your Social Media Strategy

Many companies have a very detailed Social Media Strategy but, in my opinion and experience, as long as you follow the Etiquette guide you can make this as simple or as complicated as you like.

The key thing is that, unlike advertising, you have to deliver value to whomever is receiving your content, otherwise they will switch off and you will not be able to measure the value to you and your organisation.

For Wiggly Wiggles it was a very easy decision to try podcasting and blogging. We were wasting money on advertising that was simply not working. We wanted to provide our leads and potential customers with stories in the belief that they would understand us better and that would lead to sales.

It's a valuable exercise to write down your main aims. These may include:

- Generating leads and increasing your customer base
- Establish yourself as a thought leader online
- Educate potential customers
- Build awareness and brand
- Use your contacts to source new products and ideas
- Improve internal communications.

You might also commit to a timescale – whilst there are stories of overnight success using Social Media it usually emulates real life and takes time to build equity. You will need to dedicate a regular amount of time to your strategy, perhaps a few minutes a day or a few hours a week.

You will want to measure your results and, as with one to one conversations in your daily life, one-to-many conversations online can be challenging to measure in monetary terms.

Some measurements are easy:

- How many people visited your blog
- How many people entered your website after following on Twitter
- How many people took up your special offer from Facebook

Some measurements are impossible:

- How many people actually listened to the podcast they downloaded
- How many changed their views because of something you said, and so on

For some information, examples and helpful sites see overleaf

How to Start Using Social Media: contd

Step 2 continued

Information, Examples and Helpful Sites contd.

For more information see:

<http://www.thesocialpath.com/2009/06/how-to-create-a-social-media-strategy-for-business.html>

Jeremiah Owyang is a Senior Analyst at Forrester Research

<http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/2006/12/18/10-social-media-strategies-for-the-corporations/>

I made a podcast with two Social Media experts – Anna Farmery in Yorkshire and Krishna De in Dublin where we access various Social Media Tools

<http://www.thepodcastsisters.com/>

For more details on Wiggly Wigglers social media strategy:

http://www.wigglywigglers.co.uk/cinema/index.html?actionbranch=play&video_id=4

Step Three - How to protect your online reputation

Whether or not you are online, 20% of the World's population is. If you are not protecting your reputation yourself, who else will? This risk strategy is not about how to say "no" to online information about you and your company, because you cannot control that, it's about how to say yes in as safe a way as possible.

- Regularly monitor your online reputation with tools such as Search and Google Alerts
- Actively embrace Social Media and networks so that you can understand what the impact could be for you and your company, and review regularly.
- Assess the social media activities you are considering then assess the counteraction plans and communicate them to whoever needs to know.

Please note through the whole of this process I would suggest the biggest risk to you and your company is if you fail to join the Digital Age. Those of us who were born and grew up with digital technology are now termed Digital Natives, and those of us who were born in another age and have to adapt to technology are now termed Digital Immigrants.

That leaves a group of people who refuse to acknowledge the impact and push aside the inevitable otherwise known as The Dinosaurs.

The Terms and Tools

There are different types of social media terms and tools and each category has a different focus and often some overlap in functionality.

Terms

1. Social Networking

This is probably the most widely known Web 2.0 term. From Facebook to Linked In, and other similar sites, the focus of social networking is to connect you with others - your friends, people with similar interests, potential employers - and then give you the opportunity to find more connections as your profile grows.

2. Social Bookmarking

Allows you to organise your favourite websites, tag them for keywords, and keep them all in one place. e.g. <http://delicious.com>. Handy but, more than that, what makes these sites social is the ability for you to share them with others.

3. Social Recommendation

These sites combine the best of social networking and bookmarking to create user generated recommendation sites. Sites like:

<http://digg.com/>
<http://www.stumbleupon.com>

encourage users to submit items they like and then give others the opportunity to vote on them.

4. Social Content

Sites include:

<http://www.flickr.com>
<http://www.youtube.com/>
and Wikis <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

These are sites where users create and manage the content from photos to videos, information on a topic, and everything in between.

5. Other

Sites such as:

<http://technorati.com>
and <http://friendfeed.com/>

give users the ability to network, bookmark and recommend all under one handy roof.

There are many more and they are growing by the day! Google-search on "social media" to find even more or keep up to date at a site like:

www.mashable.com

The Terms and Tools - contd

Tools

So, if you haven't done so already, how do you join this social revolution? Here are details about the strengths of the tools and why you might find them beneficial, along with the links where you can find out more. Don't be put off by what the tools are called. Don't be put off by the investment in time you will need. Their impact is universal and, as you have read, they could be greatly beneficial or, alternatively, deadly to your reputation and your business.

This set of tools may well be out of date the moment this report is handed in and the ways of joining may well have changed. I have chosen this suite of tools from the many that are available for several reasons:

- They are easy to use
- I have used them myself
- They are currently popular

1. Google Alerts

<http://www.google.com/alerts>

Google Alerts allows you to track what is being said online.

They are emailed to you as a list as they occur, once a day or once a week.

This enables you to track mentions of your name, your company name, your website or words and phrases that are important to you. e.g. you may want to know what is being said about "Herefordshire Beef Cattle" or "Endocrine Disrupters".

2. Linked In

<http://www.linkedin.com>

With more than 40 million users representing 150 industries around the world, LinkedIn is a fast-growing professional networking site that allows members to create business contacts, search for jobs, and find potential clients.

Individuals have the ability to create their own professional profile that can be viewed by others in their network, and also view the profiles of their own contacts.

If farmers had adopted this technology it could be used to sell to each other and source product. I used LinkedIn to find a Software developer. It is based on two-way accountability and personal contacts and recommendations without physical barriers. Think eBay reviews and then pump up the volume.

3. Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/>

Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected.

Facebook is free to access and users can join networks organised by city, workplace, school, and region to connect and interact with other people. People can also add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about (*contd*)

The Terms and Tools - contd

Tools - contd

(Facebook contd) themselves and what they are up to, as well as upload their photos, share videos and lots more.

Facebook was started as a means of keeping up with friends in Harvard University and its adoption was taken up very quickly through schools and universities worldwide. However the fact that many people have used it for entirely personal use does not mean it shouldn't be a valuable business tool.

Apart from anything else it is a way of checking out prospective job candidates, and it's a way of keeping up to date with competitors and brands worldwide.

In particular this is a place where you must be aware of what you are posting and the longevity of it. You don't want to do a "Gerald Ratner" here!

This was the tool most adopted by my fellow Nuffield Scholars.

Having said that there is a fleet of tools for business – Groups and Pages particularly lend themselves to you. Wiggly Wigglers has over 1500 members including celebrities, journalists and MPs. (The reference for Facebook's Groups and Pages is: <http://mashable.com/2009/05/27/facebook-page-vs-group>).

If you are looking for a way of engaging with people and allowing them to discuss relevant topics with each other Facebook provides you with a forum that can be managed by you, and also various other beneficial tools for building a branded community. The groups also provide a messaging service where you can message up to 5000 group members without charge.

<http://mashable.com/2009/03/30/successful-facebook-fan-page/>
<http://www.facebook.com/dellsocialmedia?ref=ts>
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=3120520301>

4. Blogger, Typepad and Wordpress

Blogger <https://www.blogger.com/start>

Typepad <http://www.typepad.com/>

Wordpress <http://wordpress.org/>

These are all tools to enable you to blog.

A blog (*weblog*) is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning *to maintain or add content to a blog*.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs.

I've used Blogger and Typepad for my blog and found both very easy to set up. Most computer-literate beginners could set up a blog within half an hour.

contd overleaf

The Terms and Tools - contd

Tools - contd

Blogger, Typepad and Wordpress - contd

The important thing is what you want to say on your blog. Usually the best way to start is to learn how to comment on other people's blog. To understand who is blogging and their rank in terms of popularity go to

<http://technorati.com/pop/blogs/>

Seth Godin is one of the World's thought leaders on marketing. He is a popular speaker and popularised the topic "permission marketing" which is a term used regularly in Social Media. To get ideas of how to use blogging he is a very good start:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seth_Godin

http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2008/11/the-number-one.html

I use the Wiggly blog to put out topical information, behind the scenes news and updates.

See these ideas from other farmers and bloggers I follow:

Matt Naylor

<http://www.fwi.co.uk/blogs/lincolnshire-farming-blog/>

Jake Freestone

<http://www.farmerjakef.blogspot.com/>

Iain Dale

<http://iaindale.blogspot.com/>

Robert Peston

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/robertpeston/>

Pauline Harkin

<http://paulineharkinracing.blogspot.com>

Louise Manning

<http://www.thehumanimprint.typepad.com/>

Social media experts include:

Anna Farmery <http://theengagingbrand.typepad.com/>

Richard Millington <http://www.feverbee.com>

Hugh Macleod: <http://www.gapingvoid.com>

David Maister <http://davidmaister.com>

Beth Kanter <http://beth.typepad.com>

5. Podcasting and video (webcast)

A podcast is a series of digital media files, usually either digital audio or video, that is made available for download via web syndication. The syndication aspect of the delivery is what differentiates podcasts from other ways of accessing files, such as simple download or streaming. It means that special client software applications known as *podcatchers* - such as iTunes - can automatically identify and retrieve new files in a series when they are made available, by accessing a centrally-maintained web feed that lists all files currently associated with that particular podcast. The files thus automatically downloaded are then stored locally on the user's computer or other device, for offline use.

To you and me this means that, when I go to my computer or my iPhone, if there is a new podcast from whomever I am following then, as if by magic, it has downloaded and is ready to play. This is particularly useful during long flights, or train journeys with the family...

The Terms and Tools - contd

Tools – contd

Podcasting and video (webcast) - contd

Even better, the variety of podcasts produced is virtually endless. You can listen to a podcast from the US pig industry; you can listen to a podcast on knitting. Whatever your specialist interest you can find and subscribe with the click of your mouse!

The second most popular search engine these days is not Yahoo; it is in fact **You Tube**. Video has become massive in the last 2 years with the duration of most videos being 5 minutes or less. Even this is now low entry cost and sharing video is so easy the potential of your video being seen globally is perfectly possible.

Guides to How to make a podcast and Webcast:

<http://www.mahalo.com/how-to-make-a-podcast>
<http://www.apple.com/itunes/whatson/podcasts/specs.html>
http://www.ehow.com/how_2036208_youtube-video.html

6. Twitter

<http://twitter.com/>

Many people look at Twitter on the surface and conclude that it's just one big waste of time. But at the moment it is a valuable tool to an enormous number of individuals and businesses and, indeed, a network of farmers and rural businesses.

- It allows you to very easily and quickly connect and network with others in your industry or others who share your views.
- It enables you instant access to what's being said this minute about your organisation, people, products, and brand.
- It provides a steady stream of ideas, content, resources and links focused on your area of expertise and interest.
- If you are an advisor or a supplier you can monitor what is being said about your customers and their specialisms to help them protect their brands.
- It can help extend the reach of your thought leadership in your blog posts, website or other content.
- It can build relationships with influencers whether they be journalists or other commentators
- It can be a tool where you can promote your business direct to a targeted audience.

For more information of why and how to use Twitter:

<http://mashable.com/category/twitter-lists/>
<http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog/2008/08/04/twitter-for-business>

Last Word from Me – Your Turn Now

Now Farmers and Rural Business at last have the opportunity to talk directly with their audience using a global dialogue.

It is time to grasp this revolution with both hands.

P.S. How ironic is it that the day I finish writing my Nuffield Report on “Using Web 2.0 and Social Media”, The Global Language Monitor announced “Web 2.0” as the One Millionth Word. Apart from the fact it seems to be more than one word, the term has pretty much run its course.

According to Google Trends “Web 2.0” is much less popular as a term than it was a couple of years ago. Social networking and content-sharing have become so commonplace – just look at your local BBC News tonight and watch the videos generated by the viewer, not the professional - and just ask your son or daughter how much time they spend on You Tube or Facebook, and you will appreciate the title of my report and indeed the Millionth Word. Web 2.0 as a term is basically redundant as we stop using it in that context and adopt all the tools and terms to which it gave birth.

“When I took office, only high energy physicists had ever heard of what is called the World Wide Web. Now even my cat has its own page”. Bill Clinton