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# Social Media Networking

In the last column we were talking about the question of what conformed to the present. and perhaps also to the future, zeitgeist. One of the areas that definitely conforms to the present zeitgeist is social media networking. At the moment nothing is as hip, as in and as much in demand. Somehow you're completely out if you don't have a profile somewhere online. If you really want to belong, then you should be "connected" simultaneously in several places.

But let's be honest now: If Hollywood stars such as Ashton Kutcher and his beautiful Demi Moore, MC Hammer or best-seller authors such as Deepak Chopra and Paolo Coelho as well as politicians such as Obama and Angela Merkel, to mention just a few, are twittering us details of their lives, how "in" can it then really be? Nowhere is news so quickly discussed and distributed as on Twitter.

It's like a separate life on the Net. A virtual life. People connect with your or you with them, people you will never get to meet personally. On all the accounts I have not a day passes without me getting new friend requests. If anything, it takes a lot of effort to follow everything in order to keep up to date. As far as all this goes, until 2 or 3 years ago, except for Skype, it was all virgin territory to me. Actually I have a social media consultant who still isn't satisfied with me although I really try.

He thinks I should do a lot more. But without him I'd be completely lost in this respect. Since in my work I already spend a lot of time sitting in front of the computer, I'm always delighted to switch the thing off. Even though thanks to online-based methods my success has increased immensely, I simply can't get enthusiastic about it in private life. For me there is often something missing there. The real contact from person to person falls by the wayside. So indeed I do find it somewhat harder to keep up to date than the computer junkies. ;-)

***But what must be must be – and in the process I'm learning!***

If you want to do it really perfectly, then you remain connected not only on your computer, but also likewise when you're out and about. No matter where you are and what you are doing, you constantly send updates using your cellphone. Admittedly that's a bit too much of a good thing for me – but that's what the professionals do!

That is a life with its very own dynamic. The potential for addiction is certainly not to be underestimated, just like the compulsion to communicate. I don't know if you people aren't also in danger of withdrawing from real personal contacts and social life in order to concentrate only on building up virtual friendships or contacts. On the other hand, how many people are there who have enormous difficulties building up a personal network of people? For such people a social media network is a heaven-sent opportunity. They don't have to prove themselves personally somewhere in order to belong. It's enough if they can communicate well via the Net. There are some people who find it a thousand times easier on the Net than live in person.

Here, however, you can seldom speak of real "friendships" on the Net. When they develop, they are more of an exception.



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One reason is the fact that most updates you can send can only have a maximum length of 140 characters. So what exactly can you say in 140 characters? Practically it's no more than a short text message. It "only" makes sense, for example, to point to an interesting link, to give special news about what you're doing at the moment or just about anything that you could pack into a short text message. I don't want to play down the quality of this, but I don't want to push it too much either.

## ***What does this mean for us in networking?***

I know people who have collected many thousands of contacts using these opportunities and you should remember that the capital of all good networkers consists of their contacts and relationships. So it's a good opportunity to get contacts, as long as your primary goal is NOT to recruit them all! Because with this intention you'll never succeed in having many contacts. As soon as they see through you, they'll delete you!

There are many people who try to make contact with me only in order to present their wonderful company to me one day later – or to approach my contacts. That's not very clever because the next step is that they'll be deleted without mercy. I never send my contacts advertising about the company I'm working in. I think that's really uncool. It only shows how much you need it! As a successful networker you shouldn't need it. If people ask me, they get an answer. If not, then they don't! "Spamming" people without asking them has – in my opinion – something to do with lack of respect.

In any case, with social media it isn't a question of making your firm known – but of making YOURSELF known! That means everything about yourself in private that you want to give away and share with the world. You can place private photos of yourself on the Net. Photos of a weekend, of you at a great concert or of you enjoying a particular ambiance at a lovely dinner. Anything that conveys something about your-

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self. But also here it is important to be responsible. Never put anything on the Net that you would immediately delete yourself. This type of networking that I'm talking about here has something to do with patience and, as already said, with as little business intent as possible. It should be your intent to be present and to inform people about what is happening to you. Occasionally you can divulge something about business. Here it's really true that less is more! Another factor you should take into account is time. It's important to invest time in it. On average a good hour per day. In the field of social media it's a question of being able to listen, to be interested in your fans, to look at what they're doing, to occasionally give inputs and to comment on their updates. Don't consider only writing about yourself, instead build up contact with people. When you send a comment, then 2 or 3 people will immediately respond to yours. Don't put anything on the Net that would give your parents red faces if they were to read them by accident! If you pass on something from your fans, then make clear

that it came from them and don't take it over as your idea. Don't steal... and also try to write as correctly as possible. Our grammar is certainly not always the easiest and even I have problems with it – but too many mistakes on your part wouldn't be good either. Let your profile work for you. Formulate it authentically and in an interesting manner, but without exaggerating. The important thing isn't to have as many thousands of contacts as possible. I've now got accustomed to not accepting everybody. I first look at their profiles and, if I like them, then I accept them, if not, then I don't. Here too the rule is: It doesn't matter if it's in or out... It should be fun! If you can't really get a grip on it and it appears to you to be too much effort, then it definitely isn't the right thing for you. Then you will certainly find something else you can do. Here too you should trust your feelings!

Lots of fun and success, Yours, Dany

You can reach me via Twitter, Facebook, Xing, LinkedIn, Plaxo, Skype, etc. etc. :-)