MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

ITSO…GOOD

The Social Issue

A Second Chance Through Second Life
Connecting Social Media and Autism Spectrum Disorders

Whether it's skyping with her son studying abroad in London or her 18-year-old son just a few minutes down the road, Carole Burns uses technology for communication every day.

Burns, a faculty member here at Marquette University in the J. William and Mary Diederich College of Communication, has been able to combine her profession with her passion as a result. I first read about her in the Marquette Magazine's Web Exclusive "Social Media Spotlight" and decided to interview her for our November ITSO...Good, which we've deemed "The Social Issue."

Burns' son suffers from Asperger's Syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder most commonly known for its' sufferers' inability to interact socially and pick up on nonverbal communication cues. In 2003, she saw that her son and his friends were indeed struggling socially—and immediately knew that technology had the ability to change this.

Through involvement with the New Media Consortium, a Texas-based non-profit that stimulates and furthers the exploration and use of new media and technology for learning and creative expression, she worked to get her son and four of his friends involved with Second Life. Burns jumped right into the ways they started using Second Life when I had to stop her and ask: *What IS Second Life?* "A world," she answered. And what a world it is, I soon found out.

With over three million accounts created worldwide, Second Life is "a free, 3D, virtual world where users can socialize, connect, and create using free voice and text chat," as they state on their website. The reason she immediately thought to get her then-11-year-old son and his friends on Second Life was because within the environment, which is completely web-based, your character is an avatar.

The avatar has no facial expression and can look anyway you want it to. "I have an elf avatar. And my first one was a dragon. See what I mean?," Carole inquired, showing me avatars of every shape, size, and color on her Second Life screen. The avatar she was logged in as was a brunette female donned in a gold Marquette crewneck sweatshirt and jeans.

Whether it's playing a game of backgammon or listening to actual college lectures, on Second Life you can do everything from learning the value of money, to getting a job, to going to a dance club…to flying. Yes, it's a world, though it doesn't mirror the real world to a tee, which is why it's so successful.

Once her son and his friends had their avatars, they dove right into the "world" and picked up on the technology even faster than Burns and her colleagues. "They were the ones teaching us how to use it," Burns said.

Not that this comes as a surprise; eleven-year-old boys tend to know video games better than anyone, another

> "This isn't my thing. It's his generation's thing. It's YOUR generation's thing. But it's also something the autism community can thrive within."

Inside this issue:

Don't Miss:

- *The Social Network Movie Reviews*
- *An Alum's Take on Liberty Mutual*
- *Tales from RMH*
- *Paul Stillmank Speaker Review*

A Second Chance Through Second Life, cont.

reason Burns thought to get them online. But that's not to say she didn't have to get past the idea of online gaming at first. "I hate video games," she told me. "This isn't my thing. It's his generation's thing, it's YOUR generation's thing. But it's also something that the autism community can thrive within."

Her son and his friends did just that. They all became noticeably-more outgoing in school and other social settings, ventured outside of their comfort zones when interacting with their peers, and found themselves able to communicate better. Burns said the reason was undoubtedly because in the Second Life environment, those suffering from Asperger's are able to experiment in multitude of social situations without fear of discrimination.

The kids feared being themselves less in person when they tried out being themselves through an avatar. When they found success in socializing online, they were more apt to try out these social situations in actual settings.

People on Second Life didn't know them, and therefore they couldn't be judged.

It's the same reason Second Life is enormously popular in countries other than the United States. In the U.S., we have the ability to go everywhere, interact with everyone, and speak freely—all without fear. We start making independent decisions from the second we wake up in the morning. Other countries have limitations

that make people afraid to be themselves and speak for themselves, making online "worlds" like Second Life a place they can get away and experiment socially.

Burns' son also suffers from dyslexia, so Second Life helped him in that he was forced to both speak *and* type to communicate. She attributes an increase in his reading abilities to Second Life, and uses it as a place to interact with her son two-three hours a week.

"I was on all the time at the beginning, trying to stay one step ahead of the kids," she said. "But you still have to be a parent and make sure socializing doesn't turn into 'I-don't-need-to-leave-my-room-because-my-world-is-online.'"

This is a fear for every parent, as 75% of Millennials hop aboard the Social Media train and have profiles on at least one networking site, according to Brazen-

Second Life: a virtual world in which you can do just about anything.

Careerist, a career-management tool for next-generation professionals, whose CEO is none-other than long-time ITSO-friend Penelope Trunk.

It is here that Burns combines her passion with her work, using the platform to research the answers to questions like "How much online is too much?" and "What parts of social media still need to be developed?"
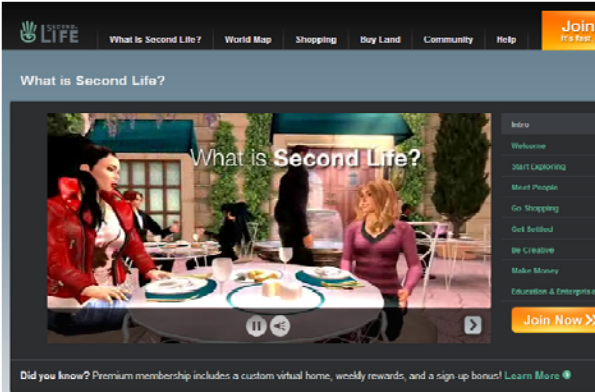
As director of the College of Communication's Wakerly Technology Training Center, she researches the latest methods of

social media, where they're headed, which ones will last, and the ways they are revolutionizing daily experiences.

We all have a thing or two to learn from social media, which we're constantly reminded when we log onto our various portals. In Burns' case, though, she learned how to give her son a second chance at communication, which is something worth noting.

~Colleen Osborne

Many thanks to Carole Burns for allowing us to conduct the interview for this month's issue. Carole can be reached via email at carole.burns@marquette.edu

The Wakerly Technology Training Center (WTTC) offers training and support for Diederich College faculty, students and staff, promoting education through use of communication technology.

Just Face It

I'm still not sure how much of "The Social Network" is true.

I'm also not sure that Justin Timberlake should be acting.

But, I am sure that "The Social Network" tells a great story about the creation of Facebook, fictional or not.

More importantly than that, the film captures the true spirit of Internet entrepreneurism, as well as the digital generation's incessant need to belong.

"The Social Network" characterizes Facebook's creator and CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, as highly-intelligent, but extremely cold and calculated. After getting dumped by his girlfriend, Mark comes up with a program to rate female attractiveness and calls it "FaceMash".

Perceived as a nerdy computer programmer, Zuckerberg is obsessed with status and getting an invite into Harvard's most prestigous social clubs. In order to do this,

he decides to create something that will get him some notoriety on campus. Eventually, Zuckerberg creates "Thefacebook" (and with the advice of Napster creator Sean Parker, played by Justin Timberlake, changes the name to "Facebook").

My favorite scene in the movie is a martini-induced conversation between Zuckerberg and Parker about whether to profit off of Facebook. Parker tells Zuckerberg, "You know what's cooler than a million dollars? A billion dollars."

It's amazing to understand the vision that Zuckerberg had while creating the site. Yet Zuckerberg wasn't striving for money. He was looking for social acceptance. More than simply his character though, his *exaggerated character* represents the entire digital generation's use of social networking to gain some kind of social acceptance.

> "On the surface, it is a look into the exciting , entrepreneurial, Silicon Valley culture."

Another great scene involves an interview competition, where eight programmers are competing for a Facebook internship. They have to hack a particular program while taking shots of liquor every few minutes.

This scene captures the indescribable spirit that pervades so much of the entrepreneurial tech culture of the Silicon Valley. The excitement of the competition, the talent of the candidates, and the party atmosphere glorify this culture. It just screams the anti-Microsoft, pro-open source, 'let's-make-it-for-the-sake-of-coolness' culture throughout the scene.

"The Social Network" is hardly a tech-lesson on algorithms. It isn't a character study nor is it a biopic of the slightly-loony Mark Zuckerberg. On the surface it is a look into the exciting entrepreneurial Silicon Valley culture. The ultimate underlying theme, however, is the need for social belonging that Zuckerberg himself tried to fill with technology.

~ Eric Wendorff

What the Critics Said

> "Impeccably scripted, beautifully directed, and filled with fine performances, The Social Network is a riveting, ambitious example of modern filmmaking at its finest."
>
> **-Rotten Tomatoes**

> "The Social Network' is a great film not because of its dazzling style or visual cleverness, but because it is splendidly well-made."
>
> **-Roger Ebert, The Chicago Sun-Times**

The Social Network (2010)

TOMATOMETER	All Critics | Top Critics	AUDIENCE
97% CERTIFIED FRESH	Impeccably scripted, beautifully directed, and filled with fine performances, The Social Network is a riveting, ambitious example of modern filmmaking at its finest.	**90%** liked it
Average Rating: 9/10 Reviews Counted: 251 Fresh: 244 | Rotten: 7		Average Rating: 4.2/5 User Ratings: 100500

> "The sizzling ethical-dramatic question that drives 'The Social Network' is: Why did Zuckerberg betray these people? Or, in fact, did he really?"
>
> **-Owen Gleiberman, Entertainment Weekly**

Liberty Mutual: An Alum's Firsthand Account

There are many great IT new hire programs available to undergraduate students. When I began my full time position search, I came across an article in Business Week, "The Best Places to Launch a Career." Using this list, I began researching the different options available.

Many programs provide details about benefits you receive as a full time employee. An important goal of organizations, who hire new college graduates is to build an environment in which they can succeed. Support structures are in place at these companies to do just that.

Liberty Mutual in particular placed a large emphasis on the continuation of learning.

> "What I discovered immediately at Liberty Mutual was the investment they make in your future. "

Since I began my position about five months ago, the continuation of learning has been the focus. The position that I was hired for was part of the Specialty Testing team, which builds automated tests for Liberty Mutual's commonly-used applications. Coming out of college, I knew I lacked the technical coding skills to be effective and succeed in a position like this.

What I discovered immediately at Liberty Mutual was the investment they make in your future. From day one, I received email after email confirming my enrollment in training. Over an eight- week period, I attended classes, completed assignments and took tests to better prepare me for my position. Even though I my skill set was minimally-technical, Liberty Mutual made necessary arrangements for the new hires to build out our abilities in this area.

Another important aspect of the new hire on-boarding program is the opportunity to build a strong support network. I was introduced to my mentor during my first day at Liberty Mutual. Most companies provide new hires with a mentor to discuss development and any issues that a new hire maybe experiencing. Liberty Mutual takes the mentor program one step further, enrolling the pair in a year-long curriculum. The curriculum includes monthly "Learning with Liberty" sessions which cover a variety of topics such as personal and professional development, networking, and graduate school opportunities.

As a result, you have the opportunity to work with new hires in different time zones while learning the different areas of the organization.

Question that I always get asked are: Have you enjoyed your experience with Liberty Mutual? And, Do you enjoy the work you do? The answer to both is undoubtedly "Yes."

From the first day I walked into my job, I met people who I could relate to and who held the same position a few years earlier.

They come from a variety of backgrounds and have diverse skill sets, enhancing the learning environment which, in turn, results in a more efficient work place.

> "The diverse group of people I work with only enhance the learning environment, and in turn result in a more efficient work place."

As a member of the Specialty Testing team, I'm a part of the overall Quality Assurance effort at Liberty Mutual. We work with various teams across the organization that have needs for a platform to test their applications. Through collaboration with a business analyst from a project team, we develop automated testing solutions to meet business requirements through technology.

Testing is a critical part of a project cycle that is often times overlooked. Typically, there are delays in the project deliverables that lead up to testing. Because the deadline for a project cannot change, testing gets cut out when time is running short.

At Liberty Mutual, projects are on-going and applications are constantly being updated and altered pre-release, emphasizing the need for testing. Automation testing is efficient because it runs on its own, allowing employees to work on other projects while an automation test runs.

Our specialty testing team focuses on building automated testing solutions, which consist of a framework and test scripts that can be transferred to a project team. Once transferred, they execute the automated tests before the release of an application to ensure there are no bugs in the application. My team then assumes a role of support, providing assistance if the automation needs to be changed to meet additional business requirements.

It is important to search for a position that will cater to your interests and desires. As both an undergraduate student and full-time employee, it is important to continue investing in your education while building a supportive network around yourself.

At Liberty Mutual, the necessary training has been provided to ensure that I am successful at what I do. When considering a company, make sure that it is one that will provide you with this environment to succeed.

~Jon Giel,
Class of 2010
IT Analyst,
Liberty Mutual,
Indianapolis, IN.

If you are interested in learning more or would like to apply, please visit www.libertymutualgroup.com/lookinside or contact Jessica.Fredette@LibertyMutual.com

A Home Away From Home

While today, as students, many of us find a bad grade on our most recent exam the very-worst thing that could possibly happen to us, we should take some time to think about those who are not as fortunate as us. ITSO members got reminded of this on our annual trip to Wauwatosa's Ronald McDonald House on November 6th.

Thousands of families find their lives drastically altered when their children become terminally ill. This forces these people to put their lives on pause and seek the best medical care-no matter the distance. Circumstances force families out of their comfort zones and often times across state lines.

This is where Ronald McDonald House Charities comes in to make this this transition a little bit easier. Ronald McDonald Houses are set up in close proximity to hospitals that treat children for various ailments. The cabin-like, familial, environment allows parents and siblings of patients to live, dine, and play in a comfortable setting while avoiding the costly burden of hotels and meals.

Durations can range from a single night to six months; however long treatment lasts. Funding for the spacious homes is provided by corporate and individual donors, and the charity has truly made an impact on the lives of both parents and their children.

Although only about half of the families staying at the house are able to make donations to help support the charity they rely on for support, no one who is in need of a room is turned away.

Ronald McDonald Houses (RMH) also make it possible for families to connect with other families who face similar situations. The Wauwatosa RMH that we annually visit holds a special place in the heart of our community as it was the very first Ronald McDonald House that was established.

The commitment to giving back to the community and helping those less fortunate is important to us as ITSO members. Upon entering the house, we were greeted by the volunteer staff and families. There was a feeling of familiarity and warmth in the home.

Complete with a game center, bright living-room, and McDonald's Play Place, the house very-apparently provides all the comforts of home to inhabitants of all ages.

After setting up the dinner buffet of salad, fruit, ham, macaroni and cheese, green bean casserole and brownies, the residents humbling formed a line and made plates for themselves and their children.

Some of the conversations at the tables were silent, through sprinkled throughout were the loud voices of children, like one boy who asked, "Do I like green beans or not, Grandma?'. This personable little boy provided some much-needed comic relief in the understandably-quiet house dining room.

Cura Personalis

It has become a tradition for ITSO members to bring small toys and games for kids living in the house and for parents to bring to those in the hospital. As the kids were having their discussions in arms-reach of the toy pile, a husband and wife came over to pick up a pack of a Disney's "Cars"-themed playing cards. There was a heartfelt response as I heard the husband say "Cars, he loves Cars. This will really make him happy".

Knowing how happy you've made the parents makes the RMH event a truly comforting and worthwhile experience. ITSO returns year-after-year because of these rewarding experiences and their connection to our Jesuit commitment of 'cura personalis.'

~Matt Kendzior

The mission of Ronald McDonald House Charities is to create, find and support programs that directly improve the health and well being of children.

To find out how you can donate or volunteer, visit their website at www.rmhc.org.

What's All the Hype?

How many technological devices do you interact with daily? I'll name a few: cell phone, laptop, desktop, iPod, iPad, netbook, Kindle, headphones, radio, speakers; the list goes on forever. A more daunting question: how much time lapses between each habitual use? Can you go more than an hour without checking your cell phone, let alone ten minutes? In today's world, people have access to an unprecedented amount of technology and are more connected than ever. In the last ten years, the way people interact and communicate has fundamentally changed.

Everyone is talking about e-mail, text messaging, Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, etc. Recognizing this, many corporations are looking for ways to jump on the social media bandwagon. Why stop at TV commercials, billboards, magazine ads, and newspapers when they can join in on the constant connectivity too? It would be crazy for companies not to tap into social media, right?

Large corporations are known for being wary of new technologies and trailing behind the general population when it comes to the adoption of new ones. However, this does not seem to be the case with social media. Many companies have rushed to cash-in on the new craze, diving head-first into the social pool. While this may seem like a great idea at first, there are potential pitfalls. Will customers experience information overload and get tired of all of the non-stop viral marketing? Is it really necessary to invest in every facet of the social media outlet? Is it manageable, let alone measurable?

These are all questions that Paul Stillmank, President & CEO of 7Summits and

Marquette alum, addressed in his presentation to ITSO last month. Paul began his presentation explaining that "One of the things we often see in the IT world is that people apply technology for technology's sake…businesses are asking: 'what should we be using?'" There are a lot of obvious benefits to companies using social media, particularly if they are the first in their industry. But how is social media really helping their business? Is it when they have thousands of followers on Twitter? How many 'fans' on Facebook are necessary to see an actual return on investment? A lot of people sign up to a fan page, and rarely check it after simply hitting the 'Like' button. Do all 17,415,931 people who "like" the Starbucks page make a substantial difference in Starbucks's growth model? Would it be different if there were only 13 million?

Paul steered the conversation in the right direction by realigning everyone with the original goal. He addressed the common pitfall question of "Should we be on Twitter, or Friendster, or Facebook?" and redirected with:

"Stop asking these questions and start asking the questions you've always asked: How do we increase market share? How can we reduce our costs to operate our business? How do I push out my competition? Can we improve the time to productivity of new employees?"

Once businesses get past the instant bug-to-light attraction of social media, they will be able to focus on which social technology can be applied to the normal business questions affecting the bottom line.

Rather than looking at blogs as a source to spread company awareness, why not use it as a resource? The current mind-set

is along the lines of: "if we can get enough people to read our blogs, our content will automatically go viral." The current approach is to find that secret ingredient that will make a blog a must read. However, 7Summits has switched the focus from creating the perfect blog to finding the perfect *resource*. For example, key opinion leaders and customer advocates can be used as leverage to influence and persuade massive amounts of people.

Rather than starting a blog from scratch, which requires a lot of time and effort, companies would be better served by applying *social listening* tools, tapping into an existing resource, and then meeting prospects in their preferred media. Think about this for strategy: gaining more market share by analyzing what the key opinion leader focuses on and marketing with that in mind. Get them to support your product and a big portion of the leader's 50,000 followers will probably "follow" him or her with this product.

Technology is certainly an integral part of moving a business forward, but even more important than the technology itself is the strategy behind it. Just as Paul clarified, businesses should continue to ask the questions they've always asked. Instead of using technology for technology's sake, they should be using technology for "optimization of cost." So what's all the hype then? Social media definitely has a place in the enterprise environment, but it must be implemented with a strategy in mind that will actually affect the bottom line in a measurable way.

~Mary Zidar

Paul stressed the need to ask the questions we've always asked, rather than social-media specific ones.
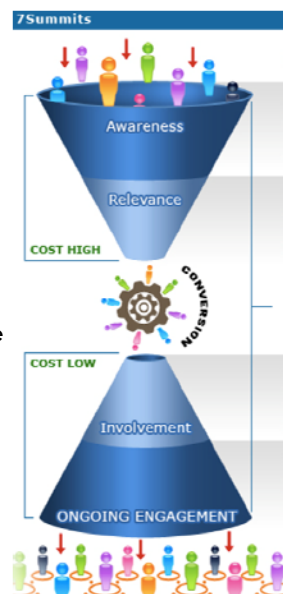
Web 2.o: The Challenge of Social Media in Organizations

"Drawing the structural details of a new data center" was my first tweet, blasted out into the Twitterverse on January 19, 2007. One small step for Lukas, but overall a giant leap for the way people and companies communicate. However, it has been almost four years now and there are still many companies struggling with questions about social media and its relevance to their business.

It is a well-known fact that users spend a LOT of time on social media discussing everything from their (least) favorite products to the fact that they are drawing a data center in Auto-CAD. This presents a unique set of problems and opportunities for companies. Corporate America has had to deal with social media from a number of different perspectives, both internally and externally.

Internally, companies struggle with how to appropriately manage their employee's social media usage. With services such as Facebook and Twitter bordering on digital crack from some people, lost productivity to employees checking in on their friends would seem to be a real issue. Other challenges arise from security concerns stemming from highly connected employees immersed in a culture of information sharing and working with sensitive corporate data.

Social media also presents a whole new set of challenges to companies attempting to maintain complete control over their brand through old-school means such as official press releases. In a time when a single message from a single user on Twitter can reach potentially hundreds of thousands of other users within the span of a few hours or days, companies need to devise new plans for managing corporate transparency and public opinion. This is especially relevant when a company gets in trouble or makes a mistake. All it takes is one whistle-blowing employee to alert the world of their transgression, and word travels fast. Because of these very real challenges, companies need to invest the time and effort to develop appropriate strategies to manage social media effectively in terms of both employee use and public relations impact.

Externally, corporations struggle to find how to effectively use social media to have a real impact on the bottom line. For the past few years, social media has been something executives were told they needed to do NOW, but there was no clear answer to what exactly the companies should be doing online. "Snake Oil" social media "experts", "mavens", and "gurus" seemed to materialize out of the woodwork promising answers to the problem of what to do with social media to use it most effectively. Most proceeded to create Facebook, Twitter or other social media accounts for the company and that was pretty much it. Businesses did not need another so-called expert to create them an account on Twitter. They needed a real strategy on how to use social media effectively to further their business goals and objectives. In the last year or so, many companies are finally learning that social media is not an island, but another way to engage company stakeholders as part of an integrated marketing/business plan.

An example of using social media to "move the needle" on key business metrics is social listening. Some of the great things about social media and the web in general are the amount of user-generated content and the fact that most of it is searchable. Companies can have a voyeuristic view into the conversations of the consumers of their product or service and use the information learned in many ways. Prior to the web and social media, in order for companies to listen to their customers, they would physically have to go to where their customers were and listen to the conversations. Companies have unprecedented access to consumer's thoughts and feelings, often expressed within moments of experiencing it.
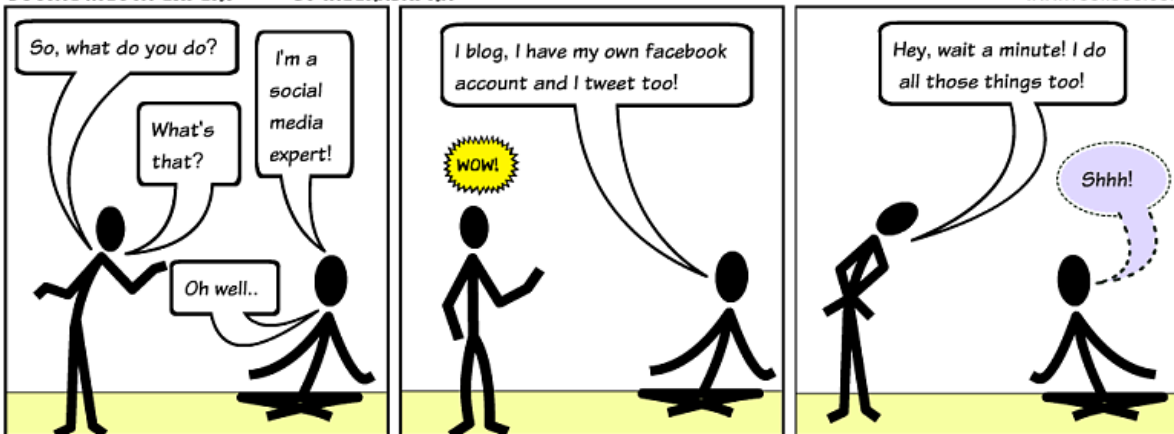
Imagine being a consumer goods manufacturer with a product that was not selling as well as expected. Prior to social media, you would need to conduct consumer surveys and interview to determine what people did/did not like about your product. Surveys are not particularly effective because they rely heavily on how they are written and actually asking the right questions. Now, social media allows you to search for your product or company and get first-hand data on what people think. If there are complaints about your product, you can find out quickly. The data is usually accurate, and the cost of acquisition is extremely low.

continued on page 8

SOCIAL MEDIA EXPERT — BY MEERASAPRA

WWW.TOONDOO.COM

So, what do you do?

What's that?

I'm a social media expert!

Oh well..

I blog, I have my own facebook account and I tweet too!

WOW!

Hey, wait a minute! I do all those things too!

Shhh!

Web 2.0, cont.

The second thing social media listening allows companies to do is interact and engage with customers. Taking a proactive stance on customer service is one of the best ways to build positive consumer sentiment. Personally, I become more engaged with a brand when I'm having a problem and they reach out to me rather than the other way around.

> "What was the cost to acquire the new customers I referred to them? Not much."

An example of this was with Backblaze (http://www.backblaze.com/), an offsite backup service provider. I was having an issue with their installation process and mentioned it on Twitter. A few minutes later, they sent me a message with contact information for a support technician waiting to help me. I sent the email, they sent the patch for my particular problem, and the issue was fixed. That positive experience, along with a great product, has turned me into a brand evangelist. Whenever the issue of backups come up with clients or friends, I immediately recommend Backblaze, and so far three people have signed up because of my recommendation. Three people may not seem like a lot, but multiply that number by everyone that has had a positive interaction with Backblaze online, and it quickly adds up. What was the cost to acquire the new customers I referred them to? Not much. The only costs were spending some time using social listening tools and five minutes of tech support.

The ideas outlined here only scratch the surface of how social technologies can be utilized in the enterprise environment. In addition to external customer and public relations, social technologies can be implemented internally to create efficiencies in workflow within large organizations. Utilizing social design concepts in enterprise applications for internal knowledge sharing and organization can greatly increase efficiency, reduce time to productivity, and in turn reduce costs.

Social media definitely has a place in the enterprise world, but it in many cases it is not as simple as just creating a Facebook page or Twitter account. Companies need to take the time and allocate the budget to create a real social strategy that best matches technology with business needs, and not just jump on the social media buzz-word bandwagon.

~Lukas Sparks

Announcements

Upcoming Events:

Java and Jobs, February 2011
8:30 - 10:00 am, Date: TBD. AMU Ballrooms.
Get your resume ready!

Zywave Student Visit and Facility Tour, Spring 2011. Dates and times: TBD.
Zywave, an insurance technology company based in Milwaukee, is opening its doors to the public. Students will learn about a day in the life of a Zywave employee, and the various opportunities at Zywave.

Thinking of joining ITSO?

Sign up today! Just fill out the online application (see muitso.org) and bring it to the next ITSO meeting along with a $15 check made out to ITSO.

Recruiting Zone:

This space is available for job or internship postings. Please contact jean.proctor@mu.edu for more information.

Suggestions:

Do you have any ideas for articles you would like to see in ITSO Good? Write to colleen.osborne@mu.edu

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