

## Web 2.0 Marketing

### Moderator:

Paula Maylahn, Industry Consultant

### Panelists:

Frank Catalano- Pearson

Kenni Driver- Driver Public Relations

Adam Frey- Wikispaces.com

Erik Qualman- EF Educational Tours

The panel began by discussing a hypothetical company name, "K to Grey"—what's the best way to spell it, should a numeral replace the "to", etc.

Catalano, who spoke first on the panel, said he discovered that some of the best names can be the worst domain names. Entrepreneurs should register every single typo of a potential name before employing it. Even if the name isn't bad, the best domain names may be shorter or more memorable.

Frey and Driver agreed that the name had some obvious problems with that name, as people will easily misspell it or won't know how to search for it. Catalano recommended that the entrepreneur check out [domaintools.com](http://domaintools.com).

### **As far as blogging strategies go, is it free from a cost standpoint?**

Catalano responded that it's not free like a beer, but free like a puppy. The problem is not coming up with the design, or getting it going, but rather maintaining it. Some good questions for entrepreneurs to ask themselves include: Why are you blogging? Who will be doing it? There are some free applications to utilize for blogging purposes-- you could set it up on something like Blogger.com and you will see easy tools. Blogging, an easy-to-use new publishing mechanism, is not a medium. Companies are not talking about a category of publishing. The panel reminded the audience that blogs are easy to start, but hard to maintain and promote. Technorati keeps track of what blogs are being looked at regularly.

**How much time does blogging take? Do you feel that a blog can replace other kinds of customer communication?** Catalano responded that yes, it can, depending on the nature of that company's particular brand of customer communication. A blog, for instance, could replace a newsletter or serve as a customer place to learn about new products and services. A company could also utilize a blog for thought leadership. He recommended the ShowedInFormation blog on Pearson's website, which is a group blog for customers and easy to subscribe to with RSS. Catalano referenced TrueScores, also a Pearson blog, as an example of one person's perspective on psychometrics and, more importantly, proof of Pearson's position as a thought leader in psychometrics. Most good blogs have a strong voice. He conclude by reminding potential bloggers to prepare for a blog's death, as they can archive and index entries once they are finished.

### **I don't have a lot of money, but I have a lot of wisdom. How can I leverage my knowledge of the marketplace?**

Driver replied that there are many new ways for companies to gain advantage in the industry. He recommended that entrepreneurs with knowledge but sans funds should start a page on their website that showcases his or her expertise. Sharing and networking is crucial, so these people should make sure to link to other websites and vice versa. In bio section, there is a photo (to be downloaded for press needs). Linked In profile on the page.

List the presos or webinars, etc. by your CEO, etc. give a way to bookmark (delicious, etc.) The more you get out online influences the print media as well. Have news feeds back and forth to blog. Bloggers should pick out their favorite five blogs and link to them to increase your searches.

### **What should I take into consideration on a news release?**

News releases, Driver said, try to get as many postings as possible; on that note, he told companies to get as many people writing about them as possible. Companies can use EON to increase exposure of their press release.

The panel talked about good tricks that can be used to get more hits, including keywords. Entrepreneurs should think about what things represent the most important parts of the company and then use those concepts in press releases. It's all about frequency—so companies should determine a keyword and use it once for every 100 words in a news release. This shouldn't detract from the overall thought or content, but it should increase search rankings. Also, the panel suggested, companies should look at the headline. Google will pick up 22 words on a headline before sending it on. Boldfacing and italics are also important. Lastly, businesses should use hyperlinks to different pages within their website to increase their chance for exposure.

### **Can a company be marketed without a budget? Does viral marketing work as well as traditional?**

Frey said that he and others started Wikispaces three years ago. The user count grew from zero to 1,054,733, substantiated by a \$12,000 marketing budget. Initially, the company wasted money and failed. The key message, then, is that customer service is marketing. Marketing is affordable and more effective than anything else you can do. He first advised listeners to "speak to people as if you like them"—that in mind, how many people had ever told a friend that "your call is very important to me"? Don't be a company speaking to an individual, but a person speaking to a person.

Pricing is up front on wikispaces.com's website, he said, in one simple table. They don't hide anything, and people don't have to provide personal information or call a sales person. The product is described accurately and clearly on the website. Initially, they didn't know anything about teachers, but then learned a lot by talking to them as people. Primarily, he wants to make people love what the company does; if they do, they will spread the word to their colleagues. People need and want products that are of value to them, so developers should give them something valuable and make them love the company for it.

He also told companies to refrain from hiring a bunch of first-level customer support people and have them sit and respond; instead, companies should make their programmers and CEO and executives answer the calls and emails and respond quickly. Customers will appreciate this directness; however, no matter how much they love a company, they must also be able to share what they love easily. For instance, customers can use all of wikispaces.com products free for 30 days without even giving info—the base-level product is free ("Fremium"). This "fermium" can't be a crippled product, but rather a good, effective one. People are more than happy to pay for things they value. He named blogging, forums and showing support for others' blogs as good mechanisms.

### **What does "socialommerce" mean?**

Upon being asked to explain the term "socialommerce", Qualman stated that the future of the web has arrived. Companies are increasingly taking social media (twitter.com, facebook.com, etc.) and determining ways to make money off of that. For example, Qualman continued, say that a person were to go to buy a new vehicle and wants a hybrid

SUV—this person might do searches for the engines on different car websites, which could amount to 18-20 hours of research. Once they have narrowed down the search, they go in for a test drive. In socialommerce, a person goes to their Facebook account and searches for hybrid SUV. Beacon (in facebook) will tell this person that 40 of their friends have purchased a vehicle, and that 30 of them fit your demographic. Two of them bought hybrid SUVs and 14 of them bought the same one. Parts of facebook allow users to review cars, as well.

### **Do you feel that there is crossover between search and social media?**

The panel found that companies ignore it, reject it, treat it the same way they treat other media, or try to create their own. Over 500 groups exist on Facebook.com for John Deere. Theoretically, John Deere could embrace this popularity and have the top ten groups tell them what they want in a social network.

### **How do I placate angry groups?**

In Frey's experience, about 70% of angry groups will respond to cease and desist, so corporate targets of this anger should call them. It is harder to hate someone tries to communicate.

### **Could each of you give a parting word of Web 2.0 advice? What is the most critical thing to remember with respect to marketing on the web?**

Catalano suggested that companies have a clear idea of who they are trying to reach and then meet them on their terms rather than just doing it to do it. Driver told listeners to get out there and try it and then see what kind of traffic is happening. Frey reminded companies to humanize their content and to remove any and all barriers that prevent customers from accessing content or information. Qualman advised producers to reach saturation in their existing market before going after "shiny new things".

## **Q&A**

**We tried to build social networking into our own website so that kids could chat together. We found that none of the dialogues were math related. What is your theory on why?** Qualman believed that while some social networking opportunities of this nature will pick up steam and be successful—for instance, livemocha.com acts as a free tool that leverages people to correct language. Englishtown.com is also an example. While these examples and other prove that social networking can be successful at times, but nevertheless, the same construct can still fail. Social stuff is bound to happen. Catalano asked the questioner whether or not they had also created a designated area for non-math related chat, an alteration that could help re-focus the math focus in the initial area. Qualman brought up a new tool used to scale profiles.

**How important are RSS feeds in blogging?** According to Catalano, RSS feeds are extremely important. Most people have 7-10 bookmarks that they view regularly, so give them the RSS option in order to better market a blog. He cited this as an important reason to create a newsletter that allows comments. Newsletters, he said, can be blocked by spam—bloggers should give an RSS feed so that it can be delivered through email.

**Do you have any advice for large companies that want to start a blog but don't want to be subject to criticism?** Catalano recommended that companies either moderate comments or prevent comments entirely to avoid blog spam. He advised against editing comments, because that won't build trust. Blog owners should delete obscene or otherwise offensive posts, but both Catalano and Driver urged companies to refrain from deleting all

negative comments in order to preserve authenticity. They recommended the “Culting of Brands” book, which discusses companies that have created brands by simply not getting involved.

**Is social networking old hat for kids?** Kids just like to talk, Frey responded and companies should encourage their parents and teachers to get involved. They might not be excited about what companies want them to look at, but they want something new. Qualman contended that kids still want to brag and compete and that this behavior won’t change. Maybe they will use different tools or media, but the constructs will still be the same.

**Many of us are selling to district-level clients. Adults don't have a lot of unassigned time. Students have more time. How effective are Web 2.0 technologies in accelerating business done with the educational technology industry?** Catalano reiterated his prior comments. Blogs, he said, can be effective as thought leaders or as a source of customer information. On blogs, people can talk about more than one product, which facilitates cross-marketing. Frey encouraged listeners to engage in the conversations regarding topics of interest to them—if people talk about what you want to sell, then participate. Find customers, find out where they are doing their discussions and get involved.

An audience member advised companies to check education publications to determine which blogs potential customers are reading and using. Never engage in a sales pitch, Catalano warned—instead, be an expert. Individuals should put their company URL behind their name whenever they post comments. Qualman briefly referenced Comcast and Twitters as examples.

**Do you have any insights on future Web 2.0 tools?**

Qualman felt that search may soon become obsolete and that the search should be tailored (i.e. shiny fax paper). Catalano felt confident that location-based mobile technology will enable real time, location-based virtual communities. Driver believed that the market would see a bit of integration and find tools that incorporate some of the mentioned mechanisms.