Building Your Public Image: When Less is More

July 5, 2017 | Jennifer Lefebvre

Ahh….social media. How it has changed our lives since it emerged all those years ago. It comes with its perks, but also has its share of drawbacks. For anyone with any form of public persona, these days it's almost mandatory. Used effectively, it can do wonders for creating a platform for reaching the masses. But social media is challenging to navigate because there are no definitive rules of engagement. There are recommendations-a-plenty, but they must be interpreted in the correct context because not all recommendations fit all public profiles.

I spent more than 15 years in the world of corporate communications and witnessed firsthand how organizations and people had to adapt and evolve to this new form of interaction. And because I have spent so much time in this world professionally, I must admit that personally, I have shied away. And so when I found myself at the point of acceptance – the point where I realized that this is something I needed to do to further my writing and my passion – I was faced with many questions.

When I started my Twitter account, I did what many organizations do when they're just getting their feet wet: I observed. I followed and studied how fellow writers interacted with the virtual world, and how agents did the same. What I discovered was fascinating, yet unsurprising: too many people overshare.

Don't get me wrong, I'm all for openness, honesty, and transparency and have preached this to many. But, how much is too much? When does sharing start to wade into the murky waters of unprofessionalism?

While I didn't write this post to give a definitive set of recommendations, the one thing I will say is this: **sometimes, less is more**. Remember that everything you put out there on the internet is public and it never goes away. Repeat: It Never Goes Away. And often unintentionally, it goes places you never expected or wanted it to go.

In communications, we have a sort of "litmus test" for the things we say and do. We refer to this test colloquially as the "*Globe and Mail* **Test**". For those of you who do not call Canada home, *The Globe and Mail* is one of our national newspapers. The test involves asking yourself one simple question:

If this were to end up on the front page of the Globe and Mail*, what would people think?*

If your answer to the above question makes you at all uncomfortable, or the answer is undesirable in any way, then you should think twice about what you're about to send and/or post.

This is a great rule for any person or organization putting themselves out there on social media. Think about your personal brand and how you want the world to perceive you. And then do the Globe and Mail test. Your image will thank you later!