



Strengthen Community Bonds by

Being Social



By Jay Daughtry

Jay Daughtry started ChatterBachs in 2010 as a social media and communications consulting firm focused on social media, content, technology and communities. Daughtry understands that engaging with an individual's professional and personal interests is vital for building trust. He believes that everyone has a story and getting to that story motivates his personal and professional interest in online and offline engagement. Follow him on Twitter @ChatterBachs and visit his blog www.chatterbachs.wordpress.com.



I'm here to talk about social media; you should absolutely be involved in it. I'm not going to discuss the basics; there are enough resources for that. I'm not going to give you a "how to" either. Look, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are established. Be involved with them as much as your schedule permits and post regularly. Don't get going on these platforms if after a period of time you're going to let them lay dormant and form cobwebs. Make the investment, but do it to the extent you can with the resources and time you have. Commit to listening and engaging with your community.

Can I assure you that you'll have success? I cannot. But, I can tell you that social media is here to stay. If you're not tapping into the power of these platforms, I can guarantee you that someone else is and they're getting the attention of your audience.

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What I would like to present to you is what I'm seeing. First, visual social media is big and getting bigger all the time. Look at platforms like Instagram, Flickr and Pinterest. A picture is worth a thousand words and that seems to be truer now than ever. YouTube has been cited as the second largest search engine behind only Google. Short videos are garnering a lot of attention. Look at the creativity of what can be done in only six seconds on Vine or 15 seconds with Instagram's new video feature.

Here are a few ways I want you to think about this:

- First, think about how you can represent any message you want to convey visually. Instagram's filters can give professional quality or character to most any smartphone camera image. In other words, storytelling has gone to the amateur

through this media. You become the reporter, the editor, the storyteller, the photojournalist. People and organizations who capture what's happening are rewarded with greater attention.

- Moments and highlights can be immediately spread to the Internet and potentially thousands of eyes instantly. I recently took a Vine video of a church youth group tradition of throwing new members in a pond. As we're walking away from the event, I had already shared it on Vine and Facebook so those who were not at the event could experience it right then.
- I've heard a number of people talk about building on a social media platform where your audience already is. I disagree. I believe you need to be ahead of them and give them compelling reasons to join you where you are. The landscape is rapidly changing and you can't afford to get locked in. Last year, no one was talking about Vine and two years ago, very few had heard of Pinterest. Those organizations that had established their presence on the "Big Three"—Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn—and thought they were done were sorely mistaken.
- Don't think about what you have to post everyday. Think about campaigns and themes. Think about what you would find interesting. Be curious. Be spontaneous. Find a new angle on an old story.
- With some organizations, it seems like their primary objective is to accumulate followers/friends. When I get messages such as, "Thanks for following us on Twitter. Find us on Facebook at . . .," it makes me wonder, "Is that all they really want?" I ask, "What is it that you're after with your community?"

So, here's how I would advise you:

- **Develop ways you can be a resource for your community.** Pinterest is a great platform for this. You could put together boards on area restaurants or nearby activities or contractors who have worked in the community. You could highlight area schools and their events or the community theater and upcoming performances. You might even be able to get sponsorships for these boards.
- **Conduct contests.** Get others to come up with their own Pinterest boards on the community. Or hold a photo contest on Instagram. Again, you may be able to involve nearby businesses by asking for prizes and participation.
- **Ask questions.** Perfect for Twitter or Facebook, asking genuine questions and soliciting input is a great way to engage the community. You may not have to wait until the next board meeting or community meeting to get feedback on an upcoming project or community priorities.
- **Have community members put captions on or tag themselves in photos.** This could be along the lines of a contest or just a fun way to engage the community. Think about the numerous events you host: pool parties, summer block parties, golf tournaments, etc. Capture these in photos and have the events live on afterwards as participants remember the good times; and those who missed them will make extra effort to be there next year.

Think creatively and stay engaged on social media and you'll see both your online and offline presence strengthened in the community. 📱

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