

Social Media Education and Awareness

Jesse Miller

My name is Jesse Miller, and I am a social media awareness consultant from Vancouver, BC. I am a father, a husband, a business owner and, for all intents and purposes, a self-described knowledgeable man.

As far as my expertise is concerned, I did not go to school to become a social media awareness consultant, nor did I work for a big social media company that changed the world with an app. For the past seven years, I have worked with youth, educators, law enforcement agencies, and corporate and nonprofit groups to design awareness campaigns to better the social media world we live in. Currently, I travel the world as a guest speaker at events like this, and I am completing my masters dissertation focusing on new media and society, specifically examining the impacts of new media and technology on youth within education settings.

My presentation today will focus on my speaking engagements with schools and universities and how my corporate clients engage a service you may not have thought necessary in your company.

Today we, as an interactive and connected audience, will highlight social media awareness, engage those of you in the room who may not think social media has an effect on your business, and for those of you who work in the higher end of major corporations, we will highlight how social media use by your employees might be hitting you hard on the bottom line. For all of you with families at home, especially a family that is connected through multiple screens and devices, we will have a conversation on being a digitally aware parent. These conversations will be interactive, humorous, and reflective of a connected and changing society.

As a guest speaker for the MDRT conference, I will not be teaching you how to get people to like your business, and I will not teach you how to get more followers. I am guessing you have a marketing department for that. What I will teach you how to do today is to use social media to make a decision—to make an ethical decision, to make a decision about the people you're about to hire and their network of peers, their time management skills, their judgment, their ability to share the right information at the right place and at the right time.

I will teach you how to introduce social media awareness into your company and challenge you to leave this presentation considering how social media abuse might be occurring in your workplace.

Our conversation begins with some technology from the past. Reflect on your childhood. Where was the family phone? What was it attached to. Who could call and at what time? How many televisions did you have in your home? What were your limitations on what you could watch and when? What did you do to earn an extra 30 minutes of TV from you parents?

When we look at how television changed our lives, what we saw in our culture shift, and how businesses vied for commercial time, I encourage you all to connect with your youth and take steps forward in your mind's eye to how television changed the way we view entertainment.

Today we can look at how our children connect using tablets, mobile devices, and social media. When we glance at the next generation of employees who will come into our workplaces with an existing social media presence, consider how that online presence might hinder their ability to move



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Miller is an international public speaker who has addressed thousands since 2007. He speaks on the topics of social media awareness, mobile communications and associated behaviors, and online content evaluation. His awareness programs for schools across Canada reached more than 250,000 students during the 2012-13 school year. He combines a diverse background in community policing, volunteer management, and online behavior analysis to develop awareness-based solutions for private and public sector clients. He has been featured in radio and television broadcasts, publications, and articles as an authority on the topics of Internet safety, social media, and mobile application-based technology.

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up the corporate ladder and also make you, as an employer, a target for those who find whatever your new employee has shared online and why it's interesting to a viewing public.

In previous years, my work as a social media educator focused primarily on Internet safety, but as social media and mobile technology evolved, my work shifted from safety to social media brand awareness. I teach youth about their online social media brand by exposing them to the reality of their networks by capturing their online content using geographic social media search and location-based, open-source search to highlight how an employer or scholarship committee might utilize social media to judge an applicant. I do this by highlighting to an audience their social media presence and showing them on a big screen what can be found with a simple Google search. Sharing online behind the veil of privacy settings doesn't hide everything, and it takes a trained eye and quick hand to source the right piece of information from the Internet.

Social media users find comfort in the knowledge that their social media content is protected behind some variety of privacy settings. The majority of users share with a network that includes a minimum of 300 to 500 participants.

Similar to any personal information or private client information, the more people who know, the more likely the information is to be released on social media. When we have a privacy setting, we tend to share content in a more liberal and relaxed way. Focusing on how we share, what we share, with whom, and why has become the biggest focus in social media safety today. Networks of peers can include friends, former classmates, spouses, ex-spouses, and various people whom we've connected with in the past.

- Who has a Facebook account?
- Who has ever used that account to look up someone from the past?
- Who would have done that if Facebook notified the other person immediately?

Social media allows all of us a vantage point, one that is not only perverse but also convenient to explore the human curiosities of our past and future. We do not have to maintain relationships with the same focus once required of us; the time management of connection seen in previous years has disappeared somewhat. We are able to add people, follow people, explore their vacations, and view life events in real time.

When I began speaking publicly about social awareness, I had to convince clients that social media might have a negative impact on their business. This wasn't done with zeal; this was done with concern and foresight. Over the past six years,

I have had to do zero marketing, zero cold calling, and have attended a minimum of networking events. As a speaker of social media, my brand has been built on reputation and for bringing awareness to societal shifts. In 2013, across Canada and the United States, I spoke to 250,000 participants in education, corporate, and community events about social media awareness and have become a noted expert in my field based on my knowledge of the perils and pitfalls of social media applications and their users. I have been involved in some very high profile events involving social media and have learned much from my access in work. To be fair, I am a social media advocate. I believe that social media has transformed the way we communicate, the way we share, the way we respond to events, and the way we vet a potential applicant. Social media is changing how we connect, how we learn, how we conduct our business, and how we connect with our families.

In today's connected world, we are using mobile connectivity and are continually changing how we view and share the events of our lives. The majority of my audiences have encountered social media and technology issues with employees and competitors and at home with their children, including issues within their homes concerning social media distractions.

Every new day has a new application, a new form of mobile technology, and a new trend that everyone is catching up to. As it applies to an ever-changing business world, the markets are always eager to keep up with those trends and, at times, are sorting out how to incorporate their business into the trend.

The world we live in is now mobile. The genie isn't going back into the bottle, and we need to look at how we as a connected society are changing.

In examining this slide, participants will be able to see the interconnectivity of the behaviors of social media and technology use. We will ignore the platforms and focus on how the behaviors are still the key component to understanding the trends and uses of participants.

We can talk about Instagram #hashtags; we can talk about Facebook likes; we can talk about Twitter followers; and we can talk about the sociology of social media. However, every presentation and webinar that I've seen from a social media expert focuses on how to market your business within the trends, how to grab the dollars of a culture that has a short attention span.

The majority of my work focuses on how children, families, and schools weather the ongoing shift to a society that is digitally immersed. I speak to audiences of teenagers and

primary students. I guest lecture at universities across North America to various programs and faculties educating your future employees about the expectations of the real world and how their frivolous use of social media may be accepted in their chosen field of study. I work with health care providers who need to educate employees that taking pictures of private patient charts and sharing them online is absolutely forbidden. But when every employee is armed with a smartphone and many choose to share with their network of social media connections, what may seem like sharing a daily event is most likely a privacy act violation.

When we hear examples such as these, we must ask how your business has addressed the next generation of connected employees. What if an applicant walks into your business with an existing social media presence?

- What can you use in a social media search to identify character?
- What is a “red flag” online?
- What are your internal boundaries?
- How do you search without becoming a friend?
- What will you share with a prospective employee?
- Will you enlighten a reference?

Looking at a resume can teach you about a person’s background, education, and even her or his grammar. The reality is that a resume is necessary to get a foot in the door, and the interview can sell an applicant to a manager, to a hiring board, or even to a CEO. Social media, though, can judge the character of an applicant, the applicant’s ability to make a smart decision, and her or his personality; it can even preface a human resources disaster.

With all due respect to this audience, you are not my favorite type of audience. Kids—your children, my child—children are my favorite audience. They’re interactive, brutally honest, and overwhelmingly transparent when it comes to this topic. They even sell their parents out when it comes to how Mom and Dad use technology, especially when they are not supposed to.

Our kids are the experts when it comes to social media. They’re the ones who connect, who have the time, who know the trends, and, unfortunately, are the most vulnerable.

My work with children inspires me, terrifies me, and today helps me raise a child who will live and learn in the digital world. Social media has changed how we connect in our personal and professional lives. The day-to-day connection of mediated communication has increased our reliance on social media in our daily lives and opened new forms of communication successes and conflicts in the business world.

Those of us who are parents most likely see our children connecting via multiple screens. They use tablets, mobile phones, and iPods for entertainment, to connect to friends, and for gaming; these devices also have provided kids with the ability to document their everyday events, no matter how benign.

With trends like this, it shouldn’t be a surprise that we are seeing increases in disengagement within the workplace. Employees seem to connect to their daily life events on your clock, utilizing your dollars to update life events on social media websites and mobile applications. Parents are operating on a 24-hour clock when it comes to the work world. We’ve vacated the nine-to-five clock that used to guide our lives. Vacations include prefaces from parents and kids such as, “Does the hotel have Wi-Fi?” If all adults, young people, and kids are overly connected, at what point do we lose total focus? Is it when we send that email by mistake or the text message from behind the wheel just when the child stumbles into traffic or when the big deal is on the line and an employee overshares on Facebook?

As you consider these trends in your own home, please reflect on the following questions:

- Do you have an existing social media policy in your workplace?
- Does your code of conduct suffice?
- How does an employee utilize your brand online?
- Have you addressed social media use with staff?
- Can the workplace have dedicated personal versus professional social media accounts?
- Should you be “friends” with your staff?

These dialogues will prompt you and your business to reflect on how social media may be costing your workplace employee hours, human resource conflicts, internal information leaks, and a workplace where the Internet might know about your business plans before you want the world to—potentially costing you thousands or millions of dollars.

In considering your customer base and client relations, are you prepared for the role social media plays in connecting your entire company to the world?

- What will customers capture with mobile technology while in your office or business locations?
- Where will customer focus and patience be with the distraction of social media at their fingertips?
- How will a client utilize social media to advertise events as they occur during the development of a business agreement?
- Should you have a clear social media sharing policy attached to customer contracts?

- What will clients think they are allowed to share online that you would prefer stayed quiet?

In examining social media awareness, we have highlighted a number of trends, behaviors, and stories that, as business executives, managers, and parents, may have made you cringe, laugh, and reflect about how social media is being used within your business. As you use social media and your business develops further connectivity platforms, consider the following for you and your staff.

Approach your use of social media in your private life as you expect your professional life to be seen. For employees, a social media policy should dictate online sharing as needed within the job description, limiting representation of the brand with guidelines or requirements of social media conduct.

If social media policy does not exist, refrain from connecting with those you may be responsible for outside of job parameters or as defined by acceptable use.