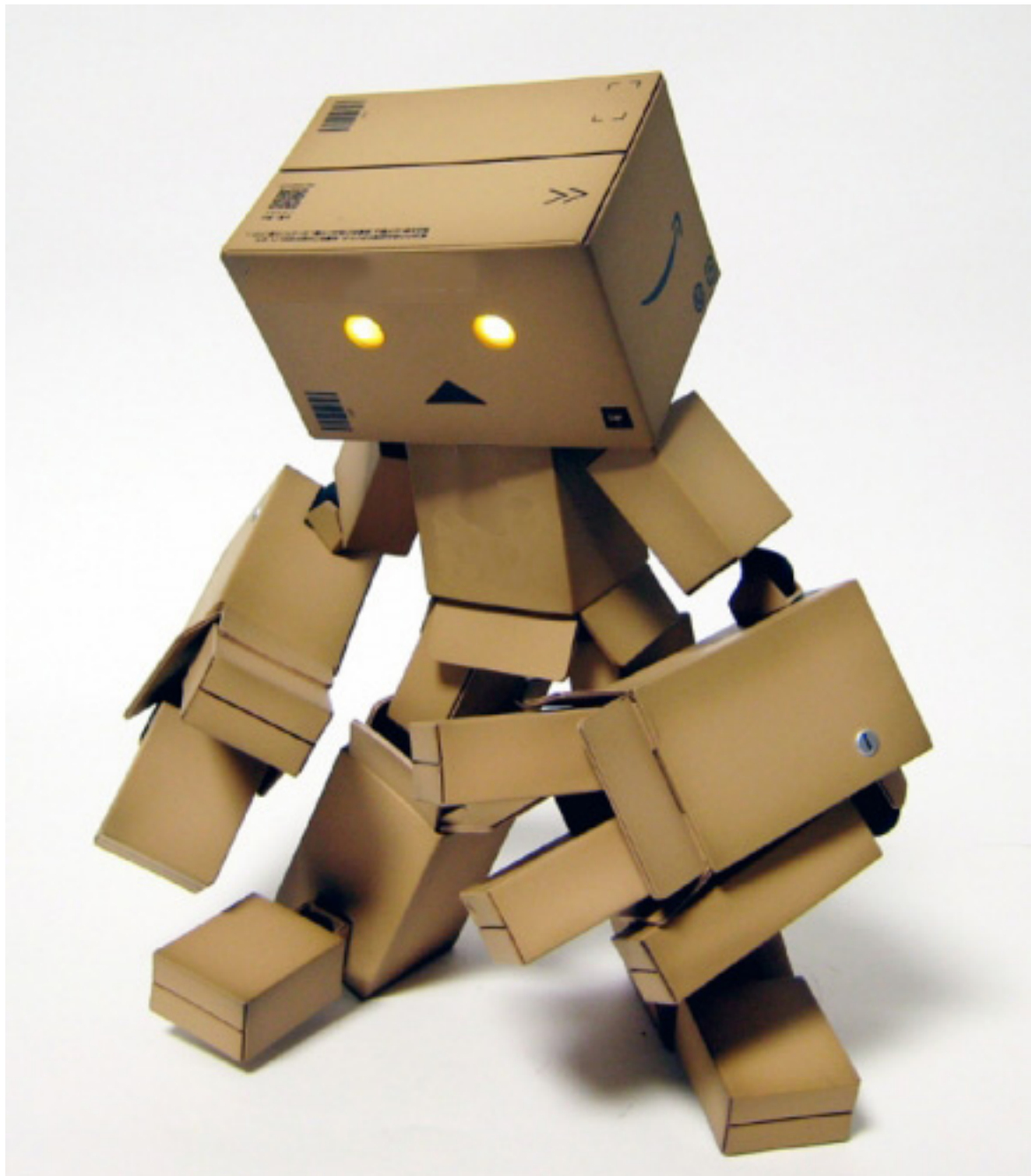


Don't Be a Robot

How to network using social media



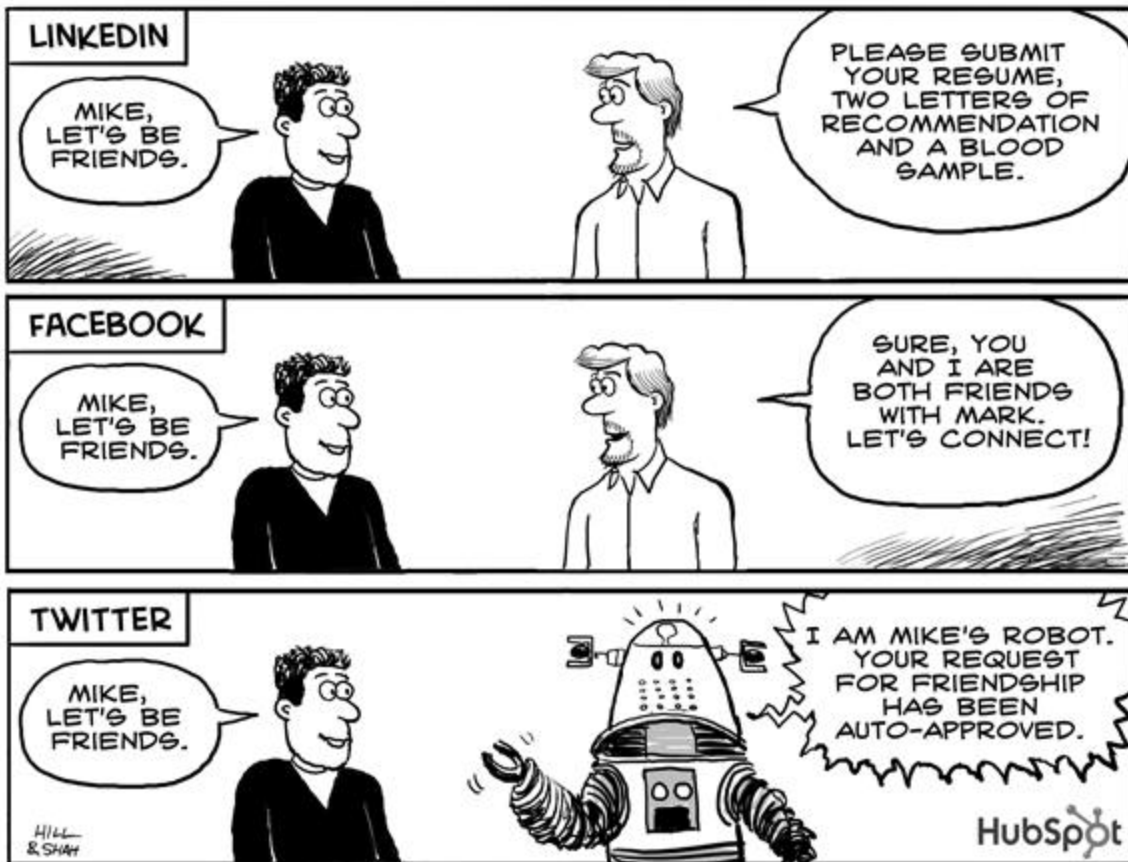
May 8, 2009

IT'S A

Wonderful Word

WITH JULIE ESPINOSA

MAKING FRIENDS IN SOCIAL MEDIA



Social Media's Importance Today

It can seem like the perfect storm...markets are down, layoffs are up, the world economy is crunching to a halt. Nowadays the media you get (whether by turning on the TV or flipping open your laptop) is nothing but doom and gloom, and it's getting to you.

Yet at the same time social media use is on the rise. Maybe it's not just a coincidence. Maybe people are trying to reach out and plug back into social communities that they've long been absent from. It's almost as though the arc of technology is coming to a point where it has great potential for turning us back to our community roots.

You know that for success in your career, it's crucial to get connected and stay connected. Essentially, social media is about making normal connections with other human beings you have something in common with. That's it.

There's something about having a conversation that fulfills a basic human need for communication. Social media allows people to discover commonalities that might otherwise be exposed only by chance. But social media is just a platform: what you get out of it depends on how you use it.

Some people will get into a com-

munity online and forget that they are people: they turn into robots. They send form e-mails, use auto-replies, and as a result their communication is forced. What you say needs to always sound natural and be relevant to the conversation at hand.

This paper is meant to show you some tricks to avoid being a robot and stay human in your communication through social media. Caveat: I'm no social media expert or anything. I just happen to find social media very useful tools and if you get anything out of this paper, then it's met its purpose.

Principle 1: Being Interested is More Important than Being Interesting

Being interested in professional topics in general and in others in particular is a key ingredient to successfully using social media. If you're too inwardly focused on your own priorities and problems, you're not getting it. During this recession, just when you may be most blinded by your own job anxieties, is the most important time to reach out to others.

Principles

for social media mastery

Principle 2: Meeting People In Person is More Important Now than Ever

While all these tools may seem very high-tech, and consequently impersonal, nothing could be further from the truth. Just because you are doing things to fortify your personal brand online, doesn't mean you can stop doing old-fashioned in-person socializing. In fact, the paradox of social media is that it increases the amount of person-to-person contact you're like



Principles into Practice

So, how does one apply these two principles to real life? I'll give you specific examples for Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and other social media applications.

I'll be calling out specific examples of tools that very well could be outdated years or even months from now (now being May 2009). So be it. It's important to keep up with the changing dynamics of tech tools, but remember that the underlying principles of connecting with people and being relevant are always going to be the same.



Twitter

“The cocktail party”

Yes, Twitter can connect “friends, family, and co-workers,” but its most valuable function—the one that most Twitter users single out—is its ability to connect you with people you don’t know. In that it’s completely unlike other social-media platforms such as LinkedIn or Facebook, which require permission to connect and which even (in the case of LinkedIn) warn you not to connect with anyone you don’t know. Twitter sets no such barriers. —*Nancy Friedman*

Robot-Neutralizing Tips

- Space your tweets out and put some thought into them.
- Never auto-respond to new followers.
- Use TweetDeck to track the conversations of your field. Create a column for professional contacts and a column or more to search for key words in your industry. (See illustration at right.)

How do you find people?

- If you read blogs already, check out bloggers’ actual sites (not RSS) for signs they use Twitter.
- If you have the e-mail addresses of contacts in your field, make sure they are input into your e-mail account contacts and then use Twitter’s Find People function to check Twitter profiles against

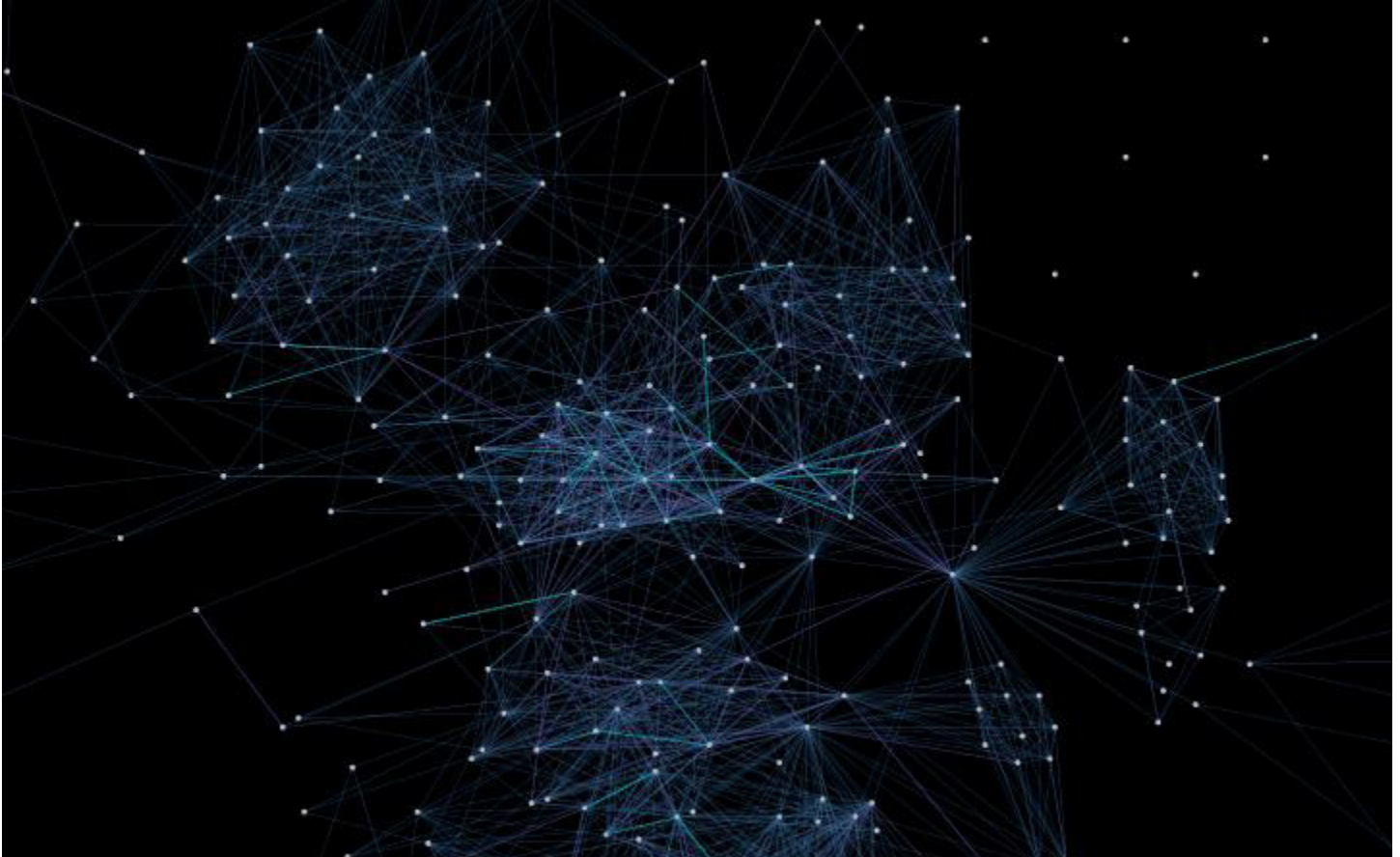
The screenshot shows the TweetDeck v0.25b interface. It features two columns of tweets. The left column, titled "Group: contacts", shows tweets from users like halvorson, rlovinger, heathr, IATV, and a photo of a man. The right column, titled "Search: #contentstrategy", shows tweets from users like jeffmacintyre, RSGracey, danbarley, jpwest, and craigbromberg. The interface includes a top navigation bar with various icons and a bottom status bar indicating "Last Updated: 10:49 with 0 replies".

your address book. Do this regularly, every month or so.

- Use search.twitter.com for key words. Find people to follow from a wide variety of fields and conversations.

Going along with principle two, attend local “tweetups,” low-key casual, food-centered networking events that connect twitterers from a given geographic area and/or interest sub-set.

Facebook



The above image is a visualization of my network of Facebook friends, created by the application Nexus. It's fascinating to see the different clusters I am connected with, separated by age, interest or place. Install this application and discover connections between groups you know!

Facebook is a fun place, and I'm not here to caution you about not posting drunken photos or political declarations: there are plenty of other people willing to lecture you and I don't do didactic so good.

In fact, unless you want to convey that you're a robot, you ought to personalize your Facebook profile by writing status updates, writing on others' walls, sharing relevant links, joining groups, becoming a fan of organizational pages, etc. Bonus points if you have a blog that you can feed into your

Facebook profile.

My policy with Facebook is generally only to connect with someone who I've met in person. But you can find people through different ways that you may want to connect with on Facebook.

How do you find people?

Search by geographic area, common interests, school and e-mail address book.



LinkedIn

In addition to having complete information on your profile, you've got to connect with people through connections, recommendations and answers to others' questions.

How do you find people?

If you have the e-mail addresses of contacts in your field, make sure they are input into your e-mail account contacts and then enter your e-mail login to LinkedIn to check against entered profiles. Do this regularly, every month or so.

- **Groups:** Join groups based on your education, profession and interests. Some groups are very active, with discussion boards, job postings and even live events.
- **Answers:** A unique opportunity to show your expertise and help others on LinkedIn is to answer questions posed by your network and the LinkedIn network at large. (See graphic at right.)

The LinkedIn blog, <http://blog.linkedin.com/>, has a continual stream of articles about how to take advantage of the service's function.

Answers

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Ask a Question

Thousands of professionals are available to give you an answer.

Answer Questions

Recommended categories for you:

- Business Plans

New Questions From Your Network

- Q. Who are nationally known experts on financial planning for unmarried couples?**
1 answer | Asked by Susan Weiner, CFA (2nd) | 9 hours ago in Retirement and Estate Planning
- Q. Do you have plans to attend the Biotechnology Industry Organization BIO2009 International Convention, May 18 - 21 in Atlanta, Georgia?**
6 answers | Asked by Jeffrey Taylor (2nd) | 12 hours ago in Venture Capital and Private Equity Biotech
- Q. Do you know of good examples of 'foreign' companies using social media effectively to reach western (B2B) buyers?**
0 answers | Asked by Rusty Weston (2nd) | 14 hours ago in Offshoring and Outsourcing, Internationalization and Localization
- Q. Good source of generic market CE market data?**
1 answer | Asked by Kurt Haug (2nd) | 17 hours ago in Wireless
- Q. Motivation...**
19 answers | Asked by Danny Small - Life & Business Coach (2nd) | 18 hours ago in Mentoring

[more open question](#)

This Week's Top Experts

Experts	Answers (This Week)
1. FRANK FEATHER ★ "2020 Forecasts" - see all my answers ●Business Futurist / Strategist / Ex-Banker ●Start-up / Re-invent / Turnaround CEO ●Innovation + Change Agent ● ★ Best Answers in: Using LinkedIn (97), Organizational Development (48), Change Management (38), ...	291
2. Bryan C Webb, P. Eng - see all my answers	170

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- <http://mariosundar.wordpress.com/2008/07/29/and-so-can-linkedin-answers/>
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- <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/4514/Making-Friends-LinkedIn-vs-Facebook-vs-Twitter-cartoon.aspx>