

In the Classroom 11

Three Takeaways From Social Media Marketing World That Can Benefit Higher Education

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Stan Skrabut: Thanks for taking time to listen to my podcast, it certainly means a lot. I know that you could be other places, but you're with me and I really appreciate that. This one is a little different because I'm going to talk a little bit about my experiences at a conference that I just went to. It is called Social Media Marketing World. I go to this conference to primarily learn new things that are related to my side hustle. I try to help small businesses figure out this whole social media thing, but these tips I think can apply just as well to higher education educators and instructional technologists. There's a lot a lot of good tips that they were sharing there. Let's get started.

Before I dive into the specific content I want to talk about, I want to take a moment to focus on the conference itself. This has to be one of the best conferences I regularly go to. The whole organization of the content, the conference, the vibe, everything about it is just amazing. They not only provide great content and repeatedly so, they also focus on networking and relations like no other conference that I have ever been to.

I've gone so far three years in a row to this conference and I'm already signed up for next March. If you're looking for me next March, I will be in San Diego at Social Media Marketing World. What makes this conference so amazing? Well, let me tell you some of the things they do that I really like. I talked about the networking piece. One of the things, when you get into the conference, there are tables everywhere, they provide an opportunity where you can sit down with somebody and talk about things that are important to you. I've been to a lot of conferences where there's no extra seating and you just stand and walk and go from place to place, but these guys invest in tables where you can just sit down and talk and make relationships.

That was a big theme of the conference. In the networking hall-- They have a place called a networking hall, first of all, and in there they have hundreds of tables, and each of these tables has a number and also an affinity, so if you were interested in Facebook live, there was a table for you. If you were interested in affiliate marketing, there was a table for you. If you were interested in blogging, there was a table for you. If you were into Realty, there was a table for you.

These tables also had tablecloths that were different colors, so one group focused on really social media and content building and so they would be one color, and then you had another color which focused on your areas of business like Realty or churches or something like that. It was really easy to find these different tables and get in and network to basically find people who were like you. This was wonderful. I think this

could be something that higher ed could do better, is create these networking opportunities.

They also provide a time for these networking opportunities, then when you check in, you got your badge. I have my badge, it's hanging in my office and you had a lanyard. Now one of the things that they do uniquely is they have two different colored lanyards. One for the alumni, folks that have been there more than once and another one for the newbies. They want to be able to rapidly identify who is a first-timer at this conference and go above and beyond to make them welcomed. They have special orientations just for the new folks to get them acclimated to the spirit and intent of the conference.

It's great for somebody who's been there before. We know what it feels like so we reach out just a little more to these folks that it's their first time there, to just make people feel welcomed. I think that's a nice touch. One thing I haven't seen at any other conference is in the bathrooms they have baskets and in these baskets, they have disposable toothbrushes, they have mouthwash, they have toothpaste, they have mints. When you get done, going out having some of the garlincy, it's always nice to just freshen up a little bit and make that nice first impression on somebody instead of having garlic mouth or something, but it's nice. You go in there and you just freshen up.

They also have a room where they got bean bags they got really comfy chairs where you can just go take a nap. You're worn out from the conference and you have a place where you can just go snooze first for a few minutes, and that's just another nice touch. Before the conference even started, you were receiving emails. They have this whole email campaign to keep you informed about the conference, they do a wonderful job there. As you're ramping up for the conference, they start pushing you to Facebook groups, and these Facebook groups are where you can go ahead and start meeting people before you even get to the conference.

Like I said, this is really about networking. They want you to make relationships with other people and so they provide all these different opportunities, and even doing so before the conference even starts. These also last throughout the conference. Naturally, they have their own hashtag. I've been mining the hashtag for blog posts right now. I'm putting together a set of blog posts of people who have done recaps on the conference. That's a strategy that you can do even for your classroom, is maybe have students follow a hashtag and mine it for content and be able to report back on it.

Another great thing about this conference is every single session of the conference is recorded. Already, and it's only been a one week since I was at the conference, I have the recordings in my hand. I can watch them for the rest of the year, go see sessions that I wanted to see that I couldn't see. Wonderful job right there on making those things available, and I certainly appreciate it because there's just so much content, it's hard to pick and choose. Sessions fill up but you're never left out. I had to leave a couple sessions because they were just too crowded, I didn't feel like standing, so I

left the session knowing full well that I could go back to watch the recording of the session.

They also have a live stage throughout the conference and they have that in the networking hall where they are presenting it live throughout the conference. They're interviewing people, they're interviewing leaders, thought leaders, and getting them up there. This is another thing I think that we could do as far as our conferences in higher ed be able to do that kind of things.

That was a conference, just the organization and the cool things that they do, that I really appreciate, but let's get into the meat of the matter. There was three major themes that they focused on or that I took away from the conference, and those themes were building relationships before selling. It was friend raising before fund raising, but it really focused on the relationship. I'll talk a little bit about that.

Video, video, video. Producing video is becoming more and more important and we're going to see just more and more video. This I don't think we do enough in higher ed, that we don't go out and put together our own videos. It's not very hard and I'm going to share some ideas there as far as putting together video. Finally, taking time to be creative, that we need some of this downtime in order to be creative and basically to produce better ideas, so a little bit on that.

There was a lot more of the conference that I focused on that got into the the gory details of putting ads together or on different platforms that I don't necessarily think that you'll be interested in, so I'm going to leave that part out but you can catch them on my blog post that I will link to the blog post as I put them together where you can get more information and feel free to do that, but let's get going.

The first part dealt with building relationships. Michael Stelzner who is the organizer of the conference, he also runs Social Media Examiner which they provide all kinds of wonderful content helping social media creators and managers figure this out, but what they're noticing, and this is related right now really specifically to Facebook, is Facebook is changing how it does business, that over a period of time we were seeing just so many ads. I have to be honest, part of my side hustle is trying to figure out how to get ads in front of people, but people are getting tired of it.

If you are using Facebook, you're probably seeing some of these changes, that Facebook is making a shift from content that's being delivered to getting people to do connections, that they want to have real conversations in Facebook. Right now people are just posting content. This is funny, but what Facebook is really trying to do is they're trying to shift in relationships.

I think this is something that once again higher ed also can get involved in, is working a little harder to develop relationships with students to help nurture, help the ad. Trying to stretch and mold this learning opportunity that very often we're just pushing content. What we need to really do is start digging into the why. Why do we do these things, why is somebody in college or going to a university, why are they doing that? Why are they in this discipline? Why are they taking this course? Why am I handing out this

assignment for the course? Why do they need to take an assessment? Why, why, why?

We don't do enough explaining why we do things and what we're hoping to achieve. I think we can spend more time doing that, that developing those relationships to have people buy into the why. We'll always provide content and sometimes we just jump right into the content but as I'm coming to learn more and more, we need to spend a little bit of time explaining why we do something and maximizing that.

We need Facebook or as Michael Stelzner figured out, before we were looking to increase in size, the bigger numbers, the more people we have the better. Well, this is not necessarily true, that what we need to do is provide better engagement, better resources, better connections with the smaller group. To work on those relationships and do that. Part of that is video. Let's talk a little bit about video, that everywhere we're going to see an increase of video.

Video has been steadily increasing and I think higher ed is not getting involved and it's really a shame because we have a lot of wonderful, very talented, very smart people who could be sharing their knowledge on a greater level, and video is a very quick way to do that in support of your course, in support of your program, in support of your college, that we could be out there using video, but they're also using videos to develop relations.

One of the challenges that was handed out during the conference was to create a one minute video every day for 30 days. Pick a topic, talk about it for a minute. That's it. Do it live. I have been doing this, I've been going out and I've been actually producing two videos a day. One for my side hustle business, my consulting gig, and the other one in support of my instructional technology group that I have. I've been going out and putting videos out.

Now, this is new for folks, so it's too early to tell, but I'm hoping to start developing some engagement where people will come back and start asking questions, start giving me ideas to post and just keep going. This is a great way if you set up a Facebook group for your class, for example, or even using the e-learning management system where you could go ahead and create a video, post it and just keep going with that.

When teaching the course that I was working on an episode on video in the classroom and that happened to be, let me think here, episode number six. Episode number six, I was doing video in the classroom and one of the things that I did during that whole class that I had students and I'm talking about a multimedia development course, is the feedback I provided in the discussions, I created a small video for each of those discussions, at least for the main one and then we used text otherwise.

It wasn't hard to do. It was five-minute videos maybe, but I was able to talk about a lot more than I typically do when I just type the information. This is something you can do. One minute video on a topic, just get it out there, post it. If you're not able to do

one a day, do one a week, but I would challenge you to do that. I would challenge you to go out and go live. It can be scary initially, but you're going live all the time.

Every time you walk into a classroom, you're going live so this is something that you can certainly do. What are you going to put in this video? You can talk about your discipline. Why are you in your discipline? Why are you doing this? You can answer questions. You could share expert secrets that how does an expert think about something? Why do they think this direction? You could do a lot of just short videos on that.

It could be that you see an article and you talk about the article real quick. Something that you happen to catch in your research and just pop a video out saying, "Hey, I just read this article, great research on this, blah, blah, blah," and put it out there. You don't need any special equipment. I pull out my Android smartphone and that's it. I turn it on, I go live and at the end of it, it's done. I don't have to go back and edit it. We'll talk about that in a second, that folks think that has to be highly produced, that we're going to be Spielbergs and George Lucases. We don't need to be that. We need to be authentic. People appreciate when you mess up.

In this podcast, it's pretty much one take. Now, I will spare you the long pauses that I have between things and I condense it a little bit and I remove all the different ums that I have or not all of them, but a great majority of them because that can be annoying, but for the most part it's one take. I don't go in and edit the material and let me rephrase this again and it put that, I don't do that. I just turn it on, let's go and then I do a little bit of cleanup just to condense it so it's not going to be four hours long. Same thing with a smartphone, when I'm recording a live video, it's a live video.

I was recording a video one time in San Diego, a recap of the day and those are a little longer, but I do those at the end of conferences. I'll do a recap of what happened during the day and that was in San Diego and behind me comes a freighter and it just started blowing its horn. Well, we just suffered through that and we just kept going and that was just part of the take, but it was live. I couldn't really do a lot about it.

Other ways to think about this video just capture your learning journey, for example, that we're all learning and show people why you're excited about this profession. Why are you teaching this? As an instructional technologist, for example, why are you doing what you're doing as an instructional technologist? Go out there and share this. We can also give a behind the scenes look at what we do that sometimes it looks like it's easy, but it may not really be that easy. We can just give a glimpse.

People are fascinated. They may be thinking about getting into a field. What is a professor do all day? Give a behind the scenes glimpse of what you do as a professor or as an instructional technologist. Another reason why we need to be out doing video is we have declining enrollment pretty much across the nation. We need to be also marketing our programs. We are doing amazing things in our little part of the world that nobody's getting to see. They don't know the cool things that we have going on in higher ed. We are not doing a great job of telling our story.

Going back to my side hustle roots, that for people to do business with you and honestly, higher ed is a business. No matter how many people say it's not, it is, there's money involved, that people need to know they can trust you. If they are going to be part of your program, they need to know they can trust you. That starts at the university level or the college level and that works its way down to your individual program and your individual course.

People need to know they can trust you before they'll do business with. That's why they're always looking different places. Rate my professor, rate my school, all these different places they're trying to get intel on if this is a worthwhile experience. Well, be upfront, show them, get out there and do that. Those kinds of things. Otherwise, you can use videos and I talked about this in episode six on using videos.

Develop playlists, create content, answer questions, create that content, get students pointed to that content. We don't have to individually create a video to share content. Other people may have done this, and we just have to vet the stuff and put it out in front of our students, so let's leverage that content. A lot of us don't create this video because we are afraid. We are afraid that we're going to make mistakes and we're afraid that we're going to look foolish, but what people really gravitate to is when people are authentic, and they are gravitating to you in your discipline because you are authentic. They have come to know, like and trust you. Let's just continue sharing that. Let's focus on that, be authentic.

All right, last section. This section happens to be focusing on creativity. I sat in on a presentation by Duncan Wardle, who was a former cast member with Disney, and he basically was assigned the role of head guy in charge of innovation and creativity. He gave the most wonderful presentation talking about creativity. I will try to share some in my blog post that I'll put the link to eventually that you can go to that blog post and see what a little bit about Wardle and how he teaches, but he was just a wonderful presenter during this, but he talked about creativity.

One of the first questions he asked, "Why are children more creative than adults?" Well, primarily it's because school has beat it out of children, that children start off-the-charts creative but over time, school has just beat them into submission and they are no longer creative. Kids ask the question and why, why, why? Why does this happen? Why is this doing this? Why does it look that way? Why, why, why? We need to start just asking why. Why, why, why, but also in our classes as I mentioned before, talk about why.

Kids also have no fear. Where did we become fearful? Where we become worriers, we worry about what other people are going to think of us, and that's just holding us back. Kids, they have no fear, they'll go try something. Now, maybe our fear comes from that experience that it was just unpleasant, but they haven't had that experience so they just keep going. Kids also think expansively where adults think reductively.

What I mean with this is that kids will look at something and figure out something to the next level. You give kids a box and it becomes all kinds of wonderful magical things, where adults, we're just trying to pare it down. We see this a lot in meetings

that we have the no because. We use no because a lot in our meetings that somebody comes up with an idea and it's like, "No, that's not going to work here because this is why," and we just shoot things down.

Wardle talked about a strategy that Pixar uses and it's called plussing, plussing meetings they have, where when you go in and somebody provides the idea, you use the phrase yes and. Whatever the idea is, you just follow it up "yes and we can take it to the next level," and that's what they work on, that there are ways that you can be reductive even in a 'yes and' scenario, but once you start using the 'no because' people start getting quiet, because it's a waste of their time, why am I doing this? Where 'yes and' you can keep adding to the conversation.

The other thing that he shared which was a wonderful idea, was to take your presentation and post it around the room that. When we sit in those conference rooms and we're sitting across from people, we start to take an adversarial role that it's us against them, where if you take the conversation put it on the wall get everybody standing and gathering around each slide and move around the wall, you start moving into this expansive idea of adding to the conversation that you reduce the reductiveness and you move into this expansive place, which helps develop this creativity.

The other exercise that he shared was called what if, and this is basically a way to do rules breaking. You start with one column, the left-hand column is all the rules, so you write all the rules about whatever it is. It could be tenure and promotion, for example. What are the rules behind tenure and promotion? Blah, blah, blah. The middle column is what if. Here, you start throwing ideas, "What if we did this? What if we did this? What if we did this?" You put that in the center column and then the final column is 'imagine if'.

The example he used started with blockbusters. Blockbuster, the rules are that you could only check out a video for X amount of time, if it was late, that you had a penalty assessed to you and he just kept going down the rules, and then they said, "Well, what if you can check out the video for as long as you want? What if we don't give-- we assess the penalty? What if you don't have to go to the store but you could be at home in the video comes to you? What if--?"

Blockbuster morphed into Netflix or another company to make Netflix, but it was fascinating to watch how the conversation moved. Those were three ideas for developing creativity. The other thing that he really stressed is we need more diversity, that we need to fill our teams with people who are not like-minded. He gave an example that he had all these Pixar older white men went to a place in Asia and they had one woman who was an Asian chef and they were asked to do very simple exercise, draw house.

Everyone basically in the room drew the same type of house, except for this Asian woman, and that's the power of diversity that you can have, bringing new ideas that will just blow things up. We need to stay curious, keep thinking new ideas. I'm going to encourage reading, go out and continue to read, read, read, read. That way you

keep bringing in new ideas, and also take time to think, that you need reflective time to think about these ideas.

Coming up, we have artificial intelligence and robotics. This is going to significantly shift the future of the world as we know it. I've been doing a lot of reading on this and it is concerning on where we're going, but one of the things Wardle emphasize that cannot be programmed, are creativity, imagination, curiosity, intuition, and we need to weave those into our classrooms, we need to develop future leaders who are going to be adept at those areas.

Those are one of my big takeaways. Wonderful conference. I think there's a lot for higher ed and I hope that you put some of this into place. I'd love to see your videos. If you create a video, please definitely share it with me. As I said, a great way of picking up knowledge is through reading, so here's a quick plug from my book.