Empowering TIMES

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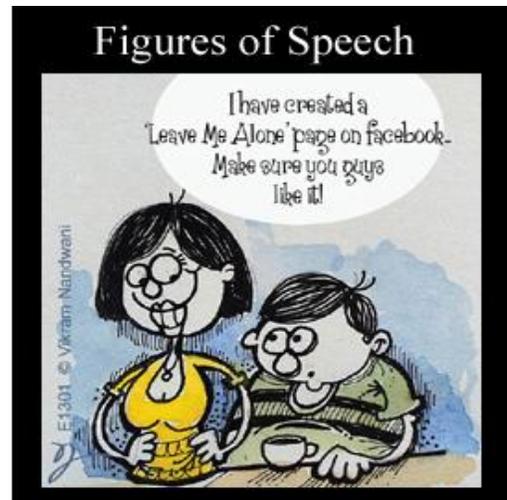| Thinking Aloud	Podium	We Recommend	Standing Ovation
Social Media and You: An on-going partnership - **Jay**	Interview with **Umeed Kothavala** - CEO, Extentia Information Technology	TED Talks	Vidya & Child

Dear Reader,

The internet has changed the way global business works, as physical distances remain no longer a hindrance and knowledge dissemination occurs at an exponential pace. The internet has also introduced us to Social Media, which is not only altering and enhancing personal relations, but is also influencing the way businesses reach out to their customers - existing and potential. This month's ET focuses on the latest trend which has made the world stand up and take notice. To put things in perspective, the major social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, etc., combined together have close to two billion active users across the globe, while almost 80 companies from the top 100 listed by Fortune have a Social Media profile to enable customer engagement. So, this month, we dive deeper into the arena of Social Media in the business space and try and provide information on the status quo, the latest trends and on what to expect in the future. I hope you 'Like' the issue and 'tweet' about it to your 'followers'.

Figures of Speech

I have created a 'Leave Me Alone' page on facebook. Make sure you guys like it!

In *Thinking Aloud* this month, Jay speaks to us about how Social Media which started on the fringes over a decade ago has rapidly moved to the center stage and is evolving at a rapid pace. The phenomenon is all pervasive and individuals and corporations are taking to Social Media with much fervor. He says that the virtual world being a replication of the real human behavior makes it possible for likeminded individuals to connect without physical distances being any barrier. But is it just a passing phase, or is Social Media going to stay the long course? Only time will help us answer this question, but Jay recommends that it is worth the effort to log on.

On the *Podium* this month we have **Umeed Kothavala**, Chief Executive Officer, Extentia Information Technology. Umeed, considered an expert in this emerging field, talks to us in detail about Social Media and some of the latest trends happening at the cutting edge. He shares with us that Social Media can be used and leveraged for internal

communication within organisations and that connecting with the consumers through Social Media can prove extremely beneficial for businesses. He tells us that there is much to look forward to as social media and engagement technologies evolve by the minute and it depends on how we look at it and adapt to it. For individuals seeking to build a career in this field, Umeed's piece of advice is that one should not just aim at mastering the tools, but she/he must understand, anticipate and motivate human behavior.

In *We Recommend* this month, we share with you links to interesting and insightful talks featured on the TED website, handpicked by Prasad Deshpande, Director at Empowered Learning Systems. Prasad, an avid movie buff and Social Media aficionado, shares his intellectual picks with us. The shortlisted talks include a simple and powerful idea presented in the talk 'How great leaders inspire action' by Simon Sinek. The second talk features Benjamin Zander on the 'Transformative power of classical music' and the third one is by a high functioning autistic savant, Daniel Tammet who can perceive patterns and meanings which we cannot even think of. Among the other two talks, one is about how to 'Dare to disagree' by Margaret Heffernan and 'The riddle between experience and memory' by Daniel Kahneman.

In *Standing Ovation* this month we feature Vidya & Child, a Delhi based NGO which aims to bridge the gap for children in need of education and who have no access to the requisite facilities. They reach out to the socio-economically marginalized sections of the society and provide learning opportunities so that such children can merge with the mainstream society. The organisation believes in a holistic educational environment which not only emphasises on academics, but also brings out the child's hidden strengths. For its benign cause and efforts, Vidya & Child deserves a Standing Ovation!

In *Figures of Speech*, Vikram portrays the 'unsocial' aspect of Social Media!

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To visit our previous issues you can visit the Resources section on the website or simply Click Here. You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Linked In & Google+ - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us!

Thinking Aloud

Social Media and You: An on-going partnership - Jay

The world moves on and new things get discovered or invented. It all begins on the fringes and the larger numbers often watch with amusement, predicting the early demise of a new fashion. But this new style does not fade away, and becomes a trend, and before you can quite comprehend, it is now common place, and after a few decades, you have a new custom! There it is, the complete cycle.

A decade ago social media too was on the fringes and many of us noticed it with curiosity. But, then it grew - and

grew till it could be ignored no longer. What began as a youngsters cool virtual hang-out (Orkut, MySpace, blogs, etc.) has become today's most widespread media.

Some confusion still exists about what Social Media is. A look at David Scott's definition would be useful: 'Social Media provides the way people share ideas, content, thoughts, and relationships online'. And, that 'it can take the form of text, audio, video, images and communities'. What makes it different is that its organic property comes from the fact that access to it is with everyone online - therefore, by participating (commenting, creating, and/or viewing) the medium is kept alive and growing. All this with just a click - it couldn't get any easier!

So, is that all there is to social media - trivial pursuit for those with time on their hands and hanging loose? Or so it seemed, till the world of business adopted social media and brought it to the mainstream. And, with that, things have changed.

While Facebook may be the most frequented social media site, LinkedIn is the preferred site for business professionals, showcasing themselves in a never before manner, touting their achievements and expressing their preferences by joining virtual communities. The media has also provided access to potentially new business relationships by laying out the path for contacting those you want to meet. And, by specifying your network, working on the principles of six degrees of separation, we find that are all truly connected.

One keeps hearing about the potential business that can be generated through social media channels. Perhaps, it is early days still, but clearly there isn't any real, substantive evidence to prove this. While there are speculative stories in the press, it would not be perhaps all together wrong if skepticism still abounds.

What is undeniable of course is that the virtual medium replicates human behavior of the physical world. Just as much as birds of a feather flock together, communities get created because of common interests and passions, however quirky they seem to those who are not a part of it. This has led to the creation of innumerable sites - and organically, some of the sites fade away after some years.

Which begs the question, will this trend too die in due course? There is no clear answer to this, but one would not be too far off the mark to predict that given the technological changes, this trend will definitely morph into something new, and perhaps, more exciting. With the rapid growth of smartphones, and improvements in the telecom sector, social networking through voice and data will grow exponentially in the next 5 years.

Are firms ready to accept social media at the work place? Do they have a choice in this matter? Organisations that in the past attempted to regulate the use of internet failed, and the wiser ones are now trying to harness the power of social media and use this medium of group communication to their benefit.

Smart businesses are therefore eagerly participating in fertilizing this growth and will be ready to harvest the returns for their investments by mining it for all that is worth. If you are concerned by issues of privacy, it is a moot question why you choose to join such sites. If you cared to read the fine print when you became a member of the virtual community (and you probably did not!), you may find that the entry price was deliberately kept low (read, free) for precisely this reason. Usually, loners do not fit in large communities and more often than not stay away from this virtual world, though there have been some elements who have attempted to express their existential angst through this medium by masking themselves.

In the world of 'Likes', where do you stand? With social media going main stream, one can safely state that the urban Gen Y moves to its rhythm. However, what began as a 'cool trend' for youngsters is now the playground for

grandmothers! People are connecting like never before and thanks to technological innovations, admission to the virtual world is becoming progressively easier and cheaper. While there are still no clear rules of operation (notice how governments have floundered in the Arab spring, or even the ham-handed censorship efforts in India), it is an exciting time to do business for marketers who realize that they can personalise content to suit individual orientation, at economical price points. While monetizing this opportunity is still some time away, visions of El Dorado are driving their instincts. Is it good news for us as customers? Most definitely, yes! But the firms that have felt the adverse impact from irate customers from the virtual world have become cautious after the realization that social media can sting you in ways that you could not predict.

Suffice it to say, that it is early days still and everyone is still coming to grips with the potential of the medium as it evolves.

Podium

Umeed Kothavala - CEO, Extentia Information Technology

Umeed Kothavala is the CEO and co-founder of Extentia Information Technology. Established in 1998, Extentia is a technology services company which is headquartered in Pune and has over 250 employees. Along with an extensive experience across the domains of marketing, operations management, education, travel, healthcare, and content management/publishing domains, Extentia offers professional online marketing services that include SEO, social media optimisation, PPC, and QR coding. As CEO and technology visionary, Umeed is responsible for ensuring that Extentia continues to be a key player in the highly competitive software development and information technology solutions business. An avid technology enthusiast, Umeed is closely involved in the technical direction of the company. He is instrumental in driving and overseeing new initiatives such as social media optimisation and app store marketing.

In addition to this, Umeed also consults with several technology and investment firms on strategy, branding, private equity and IT implementation management. In line with this, he set up ExSeed, a partnership venture to assist start-ups, early stage companies and small businesses in IT and related spaces.

Umeed holds an engineering degree from the Pune Institute of Computer Technology, and a Master's Degree in Computer Science from Purdue University. Other than technology, his interests are in painting, acting in theatre and photography.

ET: Could you please share what comes under the ambit of Social Media? And, what are some of the latest

trends in business social media?

UK: Social media are platforms that allow people to connect, interact, and most importantly to communicate, engage and potentially form virtual communities. These groups underlie social networking - building on basic human needs to share, talk, connect and belong to something larger than our individual existences. A growing trend currently is the involvement of businesses in social media – as a way to reach out to their customers, fans and communities; and also as a tool to facilitate bi-directional communication. By encouraging conversations and communication, businesses and organisations are getting social media to work for them at a level beyond merely attracting or demanding attention. The social media platform can serve to level the playing field for organisations of different capabilities and scale; can help gather feedback from customers, users and critics; can help test and validate ideas; and serve as a channel for quick, direct conversations about products and services.

ET: What are your thoughts about the use of Social Media within the organisation to enable knowledge transfer?

UK: Knowledge transfer within an organisation can definitely happen through social media. Creating groups on Facebook or LinkedIn, for example, will allow users to discuss important topics, within a closed environment. However as a tool or platform purely for internal knowledge transfer, social media has its limitations. It works best in an open environment and encourages linking and the finding of resources in one's expanded network. There may be better ways to facilitate internal knowledge transfer in an organisation and have social media serve as one tool in a more comprehensive strategy.

Many enterprises are increasingly implementing social networking to encourage collaboration among their employees. While there was a huge increase to 92% (from 77%) in 2009 of Fortune 500 companies using social media, there remain concerns around privacy and transparency that slow down adoption. Some popular platforms used in enterprise social media include Yammer and Zyncro.

ET: Social media is one of the contributors to the 'Big Data' problem. What should organisations bear in mind to benefit the most from Social Media?

UK: They should bear in mind that big data is not a problem! While big data may be challenging, it is not a 'problem' that needs to be eliminated, but a challenge that needs to be addressed. While the thought of managing and handling big data may appear daunting, most businesses need not concern themselves with that - instead their focus should be on extracting value from big data, social media and other platforms that facilitate business and decision making.

There are several great examples of businesses using data mining from social media to gain customer insights and information on habits and decisions. Among many success stories is that of American Express and their 'Link, Like, Love' campaign, which encouraged users to link their cards to their Facebook accounts. AmEx was then able to make available deals and offers to users based on their Facebook activity - driving up user satisfaction through targeted offerings, AmEx usage, and of course the feel good factor when everyone benefits. This becomes possible because AmEx is able to see user activity and mine that information across users, demographic segments and purchase patterns to determine what might work best for specific users; creating compelling personalised opportunities based on large volumes of aggregated data.

ET: Social Media is used by many organisations these days, but what according to you is the road ahead?

UK: The good news is that there is much ahead of us - many new, transformative technologies that will continue to change the way we think, work, decide and interact. The bad news is that there is much ahead of us - many new, transformative technologies that will continue to change the way we think, work, decide and interact. As always, in the face of change, we, as individuals and organisations need to determine how we react – by adapting, shunning, using, building upon, etc. Even the current state of the market is far from stable. Rapid changes, an environment that demands constant learning and new paradigms for decision making and user engagement mean that there is no opportunity for stability of the benefit of accumulated wisdom!

Even as social media and engagement technologies continue to evolve and give us more options, power and control, the need for human creativity will not diminish. Ultimately, we are responsible for the use, mastery and beneficial deployment of these tools. That includes thinking of strategy, choosing wisely, integrating humour and art, humanising, etc.

ET: Social media as a career option - what advice would you like to give to individuals considering a career in this field?

UK: Social media tools have certainly created a new set of career options - with exciting opportunities, growth paths and skill requirements. My recommendation would be that individuals keen on building careers in the space go beyond mastery of the tools, those will change and evolve. The underlying need to understand humans, anticipate and motivate behaviour and the value of strong communication will be critical to combine with knowledge of tools, platforms and process. The sheer nature of the career will demand an open mind, a network of connections to stay in touch and learn, a flexible attitude that can learn and adapt to changing environments and a high level of enthusiasm that users and participants can get a real feel for in our increasingly virtual, digital and physically isolated world.

We Recommend

TED Talks

This month we share with you links to talks on TED (http://www.ted.com/), a nonprofit devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. The talks have been shortlisted by Prasad Deshpande, Director at Empowered Learning Systems, who is an expert on Whole Brain Thinking and is a licensed KEPNERandFOURIE Program Leader in Problem Solving, Decision Making and FreeZone Innovation Thinking.

1) **How great leaders inspire action by Simon Sinek:** This is a simple but a very powerful idea. Leaders must make 'why' the centre of everything they do - Simon's golden circle as a model for inspirational leadership. According to Simon, all great leaders talk, think and behave in the same way which is exactly the opposite of

what others do. His examples include Apple, Martin Luther King, and the Wright brothers ... very inspiring.
Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action.html

2) **The transformative power of classical music by Benjamin Zander:** 'Who am I being, that my children's eyes are not shining,'? Is a powerful question that Zander asks of us at the end of this absolutely riveting talk. Through the power of classical music and his own prowess, Zander demonstrates how we all hold our selves back with a narrow definition of 'Who we are and what we can do' and how commonly held assumptions that we never stop to question for example -classical music is only for the few – are so limiting.
Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_zander_on_music_and_passion.html

3) **Different ways of knowing by Daniel Tammet:** Daniel is a high functioning autistic savant – this means unlike other savants, he is fully aware of his abilities and can communicate with 'less gifted' people like us. In this fascinating talk, Daniel allows us a peak into his wonderful world, where numbers have colors and words can take on shapes and how because of his condition called synesthesia , he is able to perceive patterns and meanings that we just cannot imagine. The point of his talk is for us all to move beyond a two dimensional perception of words and numbers and realize that our lives can be richer, if we only deign to see with new eyes.
Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_tammet_different_ways_of_knowing.html

4) **Dare to disagree by Margaret Heffernan:** This deeply insightful talk is by a former CEO of five businesses and she describes how important it is for all of us to adopt a model of thinking that views conflict as constructive. Through some great examples, she describes how important it is to honor differences and to learn the skills to work with people who think differently from us.85 % of organizations are poor at handling conflict because people are afraid to air their views, do not know how to stand up for they think, to disagree constructively and view conflict as an effective way of arriving at what is right. She calls for creating a thinking society where we are taught the skills of constructive disagreement at formative stages of our lives.
Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/margaret_heffernan_dare_to_disagree.html

5) **The riddle between experience and memory by Daniel Kahneman:** Simplicity and clarity of thought have always been hallmarks of the greatest living psychologist Daniel Kahneman - noble prize winner in behavioral economics and author of 'think fast,think slow'. Daniel does not disappoint in this very engaging TED talk.
He describes how important it is to distinguish between the experiencing self - the one that experiences life on a second to second basis, the one that actually lives for us and the memory self - the one that 'remembers'. The memory self is the 'editor' of our continuously unfolding narrative, is the one that weaves our story and most importantly is the one that, writes 'the ending of our stories. According to Kahneman, even if the whole narrative is pleasant and enjoyable , if the ending is unpleasant, then that is what our memory-self will retain and our happiness is then a measure of what we remember rather than what we think... Fascinating.
Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory.html

Happy viewing!

Standing Ovation

Vidya & Child

Vidya & Child, established in 1998, works with the mission to help bridge the gap for children in need of education and who have no access to proper facilities for learning. It is a project managed by the Jayaprakash Narayan Memorial Trust in New Delhi.

They reach out to children who belong to the socio-economically marginalised sections of society, majority of them with parents who are illiterate/semi-literate and work as domestic servants, industrial workers, rickshaw-pullers, street vendors, plumbers and carpenters.

Their objective is to develop a creative learning environment for children and help them merge with the mainstream society. Initially started with two children, they now work with over 1,200 children across five centers through their non-formal and after-school support centers, supported by a team of over 100 people. There are over 200 children who have been mainstreamed into formal schools and over 30 children who have finished Class XII and are currently pursuing higher studies. They cater to the entire education life cycle of a child's educational process and support the child till she/he finds a meaningful career.

It is their firm belief that every child has a right to be educated and that their skills need to be explored and channelised. They strive for a holistic educational environment where academic excellence is as important as recognising one's strengths within. The NGO's children recently won the 1st prize at the International Children Film Festival in November 2011 for their film 'Hamari Duniya'.

Over the years, they have strived to put in place a structured education model that is scalable and replicable. Greater improvisation has helped them make their processes more efficient and outcomes more effective. The organisation provides an opportunity wherein children are initiated into an academic environment and an equally strong creative learning process. For their cause and the efforts, Vidya & Child deserves a *Standing Ovation!*

If you want to get more information and support Vidya & Child, you can visit the website http://www.vidyaandchild.org/ or write to them at info@vidyaandchild.org.

Empowered Learning Systems Pvt. Ltd.