

A millennial take on things

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Two students' view of the Red & Yellow Exec Ed workshop on Social Media for Leadership

"Social networks: a fun place to be or a whole new way of being?" Being millennials, we are acutely aware of this phenomenon, having hit our much revered teenage years armed with the power of cellphones, Facebook and Mxit. Now we're all grown up and moving into the working world, with job titles that never before existed and which our parents would largely scratch their heads at. We grew up with the enormous rise of social media and saw how it evolved to permeate all areas of life. We have grown to be digital natives, often ogled at by our upper baby boomer counterparts.

Now as we begin to enter the workforce, many of us so-called millennials are being thrown headlong into social media roles, given our all-knowing digital expertise. But many of us only know social media as a tool for self documentation and not as a tool for brand bolstering.

So when we were fortunate enough to be invited to attend the Red & Yellow Executive Education workshop on Social Media Leadership by the very Mike Stopforth himself (termed the god of social media for those of you who did not know), we jumped at the opportunity.

After two days of gaining invaluable insight into the sometimes intimidating (yes, even for us digital-savvy millennials) world that is social media, these were the key career takeouts for us.

Getting paid to post

Community managers, once underappreciated for the extent of the work that they do, are starting to be recognised for the pivotal role they play in connecting and engaging with brand audiences. As social media has evolved from being a byproduct of a brand's communications to being one of the most important communication channels, so too has the position of a community manager developed from being a mere junior role to a solid career path.

However, being an effective community manager isn't all quirky Facebook posts and clever tweets. It requires a deep understanding of the brand's audience and knowing which content will resonate with them and get them to respond and engage on a day-to-day basis with the brand. So, not as easy as it sounds; but for us digital natives, definitely a path worth pursuing.

Getting paid to be cool

Becoming a full-time social influencer is like being paid for Instagramming, essentially. As the field of influencer marketing continues to expand, so too does the call for valuable influencers. Simply put, influencer marketing refers to using someone's perceived audience to spread a message.

The most important thing for brands when selecting influencers over and above their number of followers, is an alignment of values. Influence comes from shared values. If Eskom were to start posting about poor service delivery and corruption within the government, no one would listen because, well... it's Eskom!

If there is an alignment of values and your influencer is passionate about your organisation, then you don't need to pay them tons of money to say something about your brand, you just need to give them the opportunity to talk. If you're paying them large sums then there is clearly a misalignment. So if you're looking to be an influencer, define what you're passionate about and align those values with a suitable brand.

Challenge our perspectives

We surround ourselves on social media with people we agree with and who share the same opinions as us. In an attempt to broaden our horizons and to learn new things, we need to follow people who share a different world view than ours. Don't follow people who edify your world view. If we want to grow, learn and become both valuable citizens as well as valuable employees, we need to consistently challenge ourselves and extend our ability to listen to others. Only then do you get a good understanding of people - and that, ladies and gentlemen, is what this new world is all about!

Today, we are seeing jobs cropping up that weren't even a twinkle in your mind's eye five years ago. These jobs may not even have titles yet or be properly recognised, but don't lose faith, their time is coming. If you are energetic, have an overwhelming desire to learn, and an open and curious mind, then the world, quite literally is your oyster.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kirsten Gray and Rebecca Richardson are students at Red and Yellow.

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