

Be Your Own Media: In Real-Time

New Media's Role in News and
Reputation Management in College
Athletics

The times, they are a-changin’

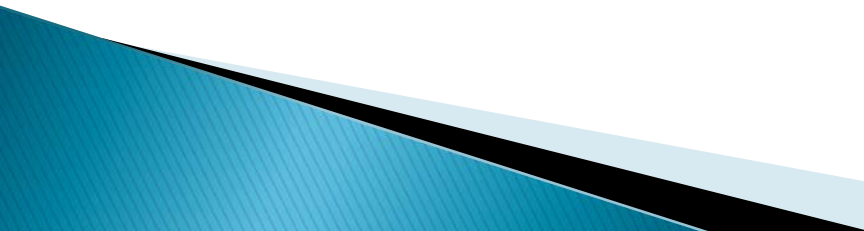
When communications moved online, the balance of power and speed of news changed irrevocably.

*“An immensely powerful **competitive** advantage flows to organizations with people who understand the power of real-time information.”*

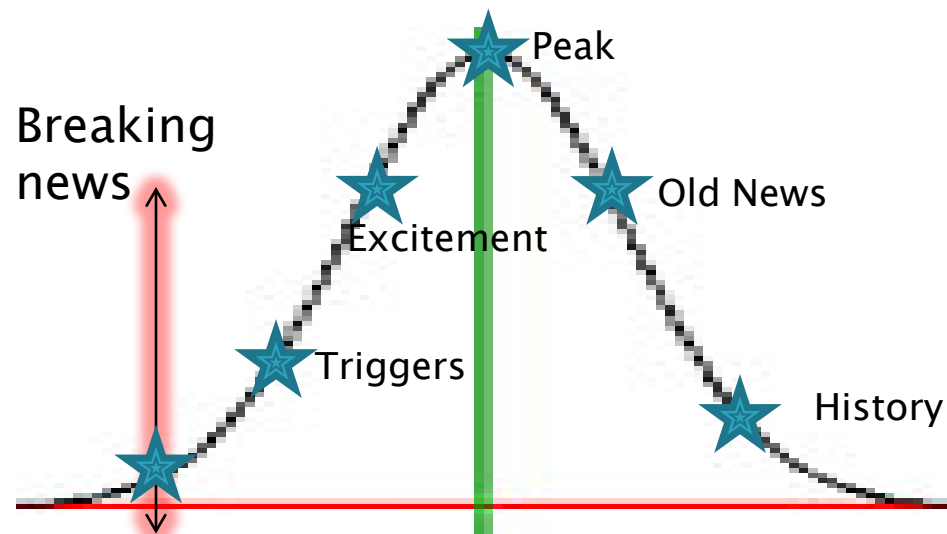
–David Meerman Scott in Real-Time Marketing and PR



A Case in Point: Montana State Timeline


- ▶ **Fall 2003:** Assistant football coach arrested for selling drugs.
 - ▶ **Summer 2006:** Murder and drugs. Two former student-athletes arrested for the murder of a local drug dealer.
 - ▶ **May 2007:** After the 6th former student-athlete arrested on drug charges/using scholarship \$\$ to buy drugs since 2006 murder, football coach is fired.
 - ▶ AD asks me to head a crisis/reputation recovery program.
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Principle One: The internet has fundamentally changed the pace of news, compressing time and rewarding speed.



Real-time law of normal news distribution*

Principle Two: News leaders get in at the “Breaking News” point

- ▶ Threads of conversation and quotation stem from what you have said
 - ▶ Early adopters build a larger following than those who come to the party late
 - ▶ Early connectors are seen by the fan base as more caring and authoritative
 - ▶ Just because you are “the company” doesn’t mean people see you as the source of information.
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Principle Three: Fan base sets the pace of news. You cannot control the speed of news anymore.

- ▶ Today, people demand their news on their timetables. Be the source that gives them that.
- ▶ Real-time response involves:
 - Commitment to training and empowerment
 - Changing from a comfortable “news cycle” attitude to a 24/7 on-call attitude when needed.
 - A willingness to be uncomfortable and take risks
 - An understanding that it is not an “either-or” proposition. A real-time mindset **works with** the process, not in place of it.

Principle Four: Have a real-time communications policy & a designated director. Make sure to cover these pieces in policy:

- ▶ Team/training piece: Who is on your real-time team? Lines of responsibility? Digital IQ training a must for all online. Train until it's second nature, knowing that when people are tired and grumpy, they will be responsible. Practice makes perfect.
- ▶ Rules/policy piece: existing institutional guidelines, best practices, lines of responsibility, “who, what, when, where, how?” Who is designated to comment online in the event of a crisis? On an everyday basis?
- ▶ Engagement piece: Who do we respond to? Who is thoughtful? “If they are critics or if they're supporters, it's who is really thoughtful and who is just lobbing bombs?”

Policy Guidelines:

- ▶ Policy is determined by:
 1. Existing culture
 2. Culture you're trying to create
 3. Your risk tolerance
 4. Level of social media savvy

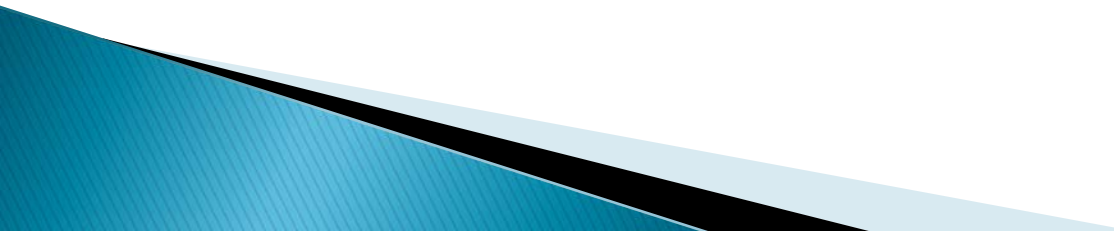
Source: [The Now Revolution](#)



Cultural Roadblocks:

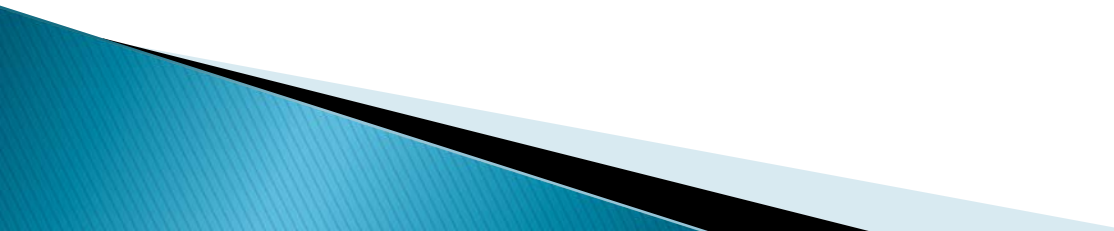
- ▶ Fear of losing control over message. Answer: your best method of control is how you present your business and how you act. What you are trying to control is a façade.
- ▶ Accountability and risk-aversion. Are you willing to be part of a community?
- ▶ Change: it's hard. But change is also the bedrock of new opportunity. Are you ready? It's a process, not a project.

Need crisis strategy? Get “A-PIE”

- ▶ Assess First: Get buy-in from administration first, set-up a listening and monitoring in real-time, do a real-time SWOT.
 - ▶ Plan: select team members, lines of responsibilities (including 24-hour, if necessary), what channels are you going to develop, relevant policy already in place, look at best practices, go through collaborative drafts, training procedures, develop online contingency sites
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Implementation: Work on integrating these tasks into the daily work you already do. (email alerts, Twitter monitoring, Facebook monitoring) Seamless integration is key to success.

Evaluation: Pre, mid, post. Evaluate every aspect of the event in light of the policy and feedback. Don't be afraid of mid-course correction.



Listening (Assessing) Levels:

▶ Level One:

- Monitoring by one person, using free tools (bit.ly, Facebook Insights, SocialMention, TweetBeep, Google Alerts), dedicate 2–4 hours/week to listening and evaluating, spend 1–2 hours/week responding.

▶ Level Two:

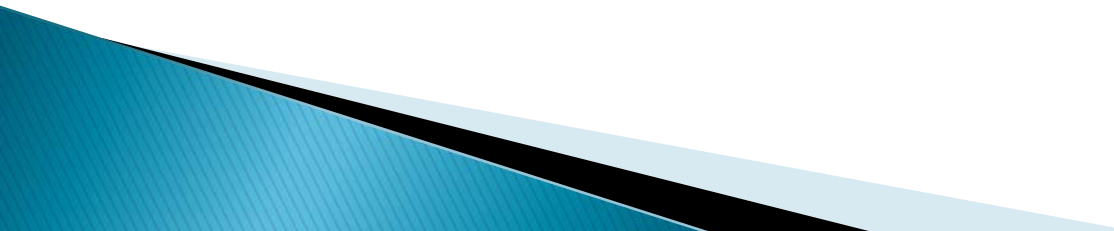
- Monitoring by 1–2 in department, 10–20 hours/week combined for analyzing, reporting and responding, routing posts along to others for response (if needed), conducting brand and industry searches.

Source: The Now Revolution

Learn how to spot a fire...

- ▶ When are your crucial times?
 - (news reporter: fight and Groupon Super Bowl debacle on a Sunday)
- ▶ Crises:
 - Are Unstable: info asymmetry, others know more than you, velocity
 - Have Decisive change: know your baseline level (Nike) Can you spot a tipping point?
 - Have an critical mass: issue affects or is of interest to a very large portion of your fans. Clamors about a coach firing over a bad season is not a crisis.


What is your crucial role?

- ▶ Answer in real-time (it's ok to say "I don't know, but I'll find out")
 - ▶ Pass info along to proper people
 - ▶ Answer information
 - ▶ Maintain a schedule of information
 - ▶ Don't leave people hanging or turning to others. YOU be the message.
 - ▶ Respond in the channel where the fire started. Honor your stakeholders (Obama VP)
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Road to Recovery

- ▶ **Assess and acknowledge:** nothing more irritating than an organization that doesn't admit what is going on and express empathy.
- ▶ **Have a crisis messaging plan in place** (Jeff Ansell's When the Headline is You is good. Media train and practice!
- ▶ **Communicate as quickly and as precisely as possible** (FAQs, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, website)
- ▶ **Use the channels where fans are** (message boards, etc.) Develop these relationships now!
- ▶ **Be ready for the new morality** (fake posts and misinformation) Designate your official sites (FB, Twitter, etc.)

Smart real-time tactics (Case)

- ▶ Sentiment analysis: monitoring positive, negative and neutral at all points of incident
 - ▶ Building relationships with media beyond news
 - ▶ Develop real-time messaging points for each incident that reflect department mission
 - ▶ Be available
 - ▶ Communicate early even if you don't know answers
 - ▶ Put a human face on what you're doing
 - ▶ Don't let legal make strategic decisions—they are team members, not dictators. They are not communicators. (aggressive disclosure)
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Smart real-time tactics

- ▶ Have a solid policy on dealing with critics—remember thoughtful vs. bombs. Monitor to correct vital misinformation.
 - ▶ Never add your “two-cents”
 - ▶ Make sure a competent person is “on-call”
 - ▶ Always respond first where the fire showed up
 - ▶ Develop a long-term value-added strategy (reputation management)
 - ▶ Solicit core stakeholder help
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Smart real-time tactics

- ▶ Spread the word: Remember: the same people who are “talking up” the event will talk up your comments
- ▶ Proactively embed the real-time mindset throughout your organization. **Train it, demonstrate it, discuss it, and review it** until it becomes second nature to everyone. Do this until it is deeply embedded in their everyday. Don't have a “shelf mind-set.”

Additional info:

- ▶ Contact 2cksyme@gmail.com
 - ▶ Montana State reputation recovery article in *Athletic Management* magazine:
 - ▶ http://www.athleticmanagement.com/2008/08/24/turning_the_corner/index.php
 - ▶ On Twitter @cksyme
 - ▶ Blog: www.cksyme.org
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