

Understanding blogger trust and
and its impact on public relations

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Author Norman Mailer has been famously quoted as having said, “Every one of my books has killed me a little more.” This journey of completing my research has felt just like that, largely because of my own doing.

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May the story always evolve and continue to kill me a little more.

Abstract

Public relations practitioners must understand their various audiences and who their audiences trust. After “America’s most trusted man” Walter Cronkite passed on in 2009, it was suggested that the word trust should have been buried with him, as there were no obvious heirs to the role. In order to understand how we arrived at such a sentiment, we first must understand the metaphor by looking at history. For over 100 years, traditional media and public relations practitioners have had a love-hate relationship with one another that increasingly lacked trust. While new technologies were introduced, such as the fax machine, which shaped how they did their jobs, their relationship remained largely unchanged until the introduction of the Internet. With the Internet, the blogger was born. The blogger changed the game and humanized media relationships by establishing relationships built on trust. This paper explores whether bloggers can now be considered the new “Walter Cronkites” and also discusses the impact this has had on public relations.

To J. because I would give you the *A* if I could and to M. for your patience and for being
you

Introduction

Background to the Problem

After former CBS Evening News anchorman Walter Cronkite's passing in July 2009, Time Magazine published an article claiming that he "was so thoroughly and uniquely linked with the word "trust" that it is tempting to say that the word should be buried with him" (Poniewozik, 2009).

At the same time, *Time Magazine* conducted an online poll asking who was now America's most trusted newscaster. The poll had four choices including current CBS Evening News anchor Katie Couric, anchor of ABC's World News Charlie Gibson, Comedy Central host of The Daily Show Jon Stewart, and anchor of NBC Nightly News Brian Williams. While unscientific, the poll had Jon Stewart take 44% of the vote with Brian Williams in a distant second with 29% of the vote. (Time Poll Results, 2009)

From Cronkite's reassuring sign off "And that's the way it is" to Stewart's irreverent closing "And here it is, your moment of Zen" leading into a bizarre clip from current event, how does society's view of who should be trusted seemingly shift from someone respected for news to a cynical comedian on a satirical news program? Should the word *trust* have been buried with Walter Cronkite as Poniewozik suggested?

The origin of Walter Cronkite's tagline "the most trusted man in America" derives from a 1972 poll of current politicians in which Cronkite's name was added at the last minute. In the book, *The Control Room: How Television Calls the Shots in Presidential Elections*, Martin Plissner formerly with CBS includes an endnote on the Oliver Quayle and Company poll:

It was in May of 1972 that political pollster Oliver Quayle thrust on Walter Cronkite the designation "most trusted man in America" – for any reporter, an epithet to die for. In surveys done for candidates in 18 states, Quayle included a "thermometer" question regarding the level of public trust for candidates for the

Senate and governor in those states as well as most of the men running for President. For reasons not entirely clear, Quayle added Cronkite's name to the list. The top seven scores reported by Quayle from nearly 9,000 responses were

Cronkite	73%
Average senator	67%
Edmond Muskie	61%
Average governor	59%
Richard Nixon	57%
Hubert Humphrey	57%
George McGovern	56%

(1999, p. 218)

Even though Cronkite was the only newscaster on the list and was compared to politicians of the time – including Richard Nixon who was 16% behind Cronkite – the reputation stuck until his death in 2009. There were other polls, but the recognition became almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy. To this day people believe, whether rightly or wrongly, that he was the most trusted man in news.

“The powerful influence of one person's expectations on another's behavior has long been recognized by physicians and behavioral scientists” (Livingston, 1988, p. 121) suggesting that Cronkite could have lived up to the recognition because that was the expectation projected on him. Had the same poll been conducted today, it is highly likely that it would have been the subject of great scrutiny by the countless competitors that have sprung up in both traditional media and new media.

The daily web magazine *Slate* took a jab at Cronkite's *most trusted* reputation following his death in a column written by Jack Shafer outlining why Cronkite was not worthy of the *most trusted* recognition that was bestowed on him. (2009)

Worthy or not, does trust matter for an audience to have a relationship with the media? Does it matter in my career as a public relations practitioner?

I think it is still relevant, but it is evident that people's trust has shifted to new sources.

Stephen M.R. Covey outlines the importance of trust in everything that we do:

Trust impacts us 24/7, 365 days a year. It undergirds and affects the quality of every relationship, every communication, every work project, every business venture, every effort in which we are engaged. It changes the quality of every present moment and alters the trajectory and outcome of every future moment of our lives – both personally and professionally. (Covey, 2008, p. 1)

In examining trust and news, it is important to understand the potential factors that may have impacted the cynicism and shift in trust with traditional media.

Both the concepts of metaphor (understanding one thing in terms of another) (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) and remediation (understanding how one medium shapes another) (Bolter & Grusin, 1999) can help one understand where trust with media stands today.

For a public relations practitioner, understanding where your audiences go for news, who your audiences trusts and why they trust them is critical in being able to communicate with those audiences. This understanding can also create a shift in how to communicate with them.

This paper explores one of the factors that have impacted trust with media – the Internet. Before we can understand where we are today, we must first understand where we have been in terms of traditional mass media and their relationship with public relations practitioners. By examining the metaphor we can see how various media shape other types and how that affects trust in each of these relationships.

As I began practicing public relations the social web took off. As such, I will also focus on why people now seem to trust bloggers.

Throughout the paper I will refer to a number of terms related to the social Internet. Table 1 describes my interpretation for each:

Table 1
Social media terminology

Term	Definition
Blog	Short for weblog, a website on the Internet by a company or individual, which also has social features built in such as commenting.
Blogger	Someone who posts to an Internet website referred to as a blog.
Flickr	A social media tool for picture sharing, which also has social features built in such as commenting.
PR 2.0	Coined by public relations and social media author Brian Solis, this term refers to the change in how public relations practitioners practice their craft from one-way communication to two-way dialogue.
Social media	Online tools that have social features built in such as commenting, rating posts and sharing content on other social media sites. Examples include blogs, discussion forums, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Flickr.
Social web	All of the tools on the Internet that facilitate socialization such as commenting, rating posts and sharing content on other social media sites.
Tweet/tweeting	When an individual posts on Twitter.
Twitter	A social media tool for micro-blogging in 140 character posts.
Web 2.0	A term coined after people started realizing the value of the Internet beyond just providing information, but to also have a dialogue and establish a sense of community.

History of Public Relations and Journalism

In the foreword for the book *PR 2.0*, public relations author Brian Solis wrote a brief history of public relations. (Breakenridge, 2008)

After an accident at the Pennsylvania Railroad in October 1906, Ivy Lee created the first press release because he believed that public relations was a two-way street in that companies had a responsibility to inform their audiences. At the time, print was the dominant form of media.

Edward Bernays,¹ who was PR's first theorist, based his public relations approach on people's irrational and unconscious motives. Ira Basen's radio series Spin Cycles describes the work as

Bernays wanted to take Freud's theories about the individual subconscious and apply them to the group. He wasn't particularly interested in crisis communications or in repairing the image of a wayward corporate leader. He was more about persuading than educating or informing. Bernays was looking for the unconscious triggers that would stimulate consumers to choose one product over another. Once he found them, he would use his PR skills to attract the attention of the press. (2007)

For decades the work of Lee and Bernays shaped public relations, even as new technologies were introduced. Other forms of mass media came into play including radio in the 1920s and commercial television in the 1940s. Tools such as the fax machine and email also changed the way that the public relations practitioner could communicate with journalists and continued to shape their relationship.

Today's public relations practitioner was taught based on the practices of the founding fathers of public relations – Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays – started over 100 years ago. Media relations were essentially relationships between public relations practitioners and journalists.

Until the launch of the internet, a public relations practitioner's access to her audience was largely through mass media because they were the conduit that had the third-party monopoly on the perceived credibility that advertising or direct mail, for example, could not offer.

It was a one-way relationship that went from the public relations practitioner through traditional media to customers.

¹ Edward Bernays based his work on unconscious motives based on the theoretical frameworks established by his uncle Sigmund Freud.

William Wray Carney describes the relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists as “one of the most problematic, conflicted and rewarding relationships in business. The journalist relies on the communicator for basic information and access to expert authorities, while the communicator relies on the journalist to disseminate information and reach key audiences” (Carney, 2002, p. 27).

Solis says that the profession of public relations lost its vision somewhere along the way – leading into “hype, spin, hyperbole, and buzzwords” (Breakenridge, 2008, p. xvii).

Neither is mass media without its critics. The cynicism toward federally regulated broadcast media that has to act in the public interest, while meeting its advertisers needs had built some distrust with traditional mass media. Adrian Monck’s 2008 book *Can You Trust the Media?* presents compelling arguments based on a former media person’s perspective. He presents examples of how the media have betrayed the public trust and he asserts that the media do not care because they are just looking for an audience’s time and may stretch the truth to get it.

Both journalists and public relations practitioners have suffered from bad reputations. In my view, one of the best descriptions of the relationship between PR practitioners and the media was given in the 2007 CBC Radio series *Spin Cycles* by Ira Basen:

Over there in that corner – the evil public relations people. They were obviously the bad guys. Generating all that spin and teaching other people how to answer questions, without really answering the question. And in that corner – the good guys – the ladies and gentlemen of the press, who would cut through all that spin and deliver the truth – or as close to the truth as those evildoers would allow us to uncover. But here’s the thing, the more I looked into it, the less I believed the world actually worked that way. Oh, I still think we’re supersaturated with spin, that in today’s world perception seems to matter more than reality. Style more than substance. That we live in a time that what matters is not necessarily the truth

but something that could be close enough to the truth, that people will buy it. At least for a while.

While not all journalists, nor all public relations practitioners can be generalized as being unreliable, highlighting the negativity and biases within both vocations helps one to understand why there is cynicism with both professions. If another option was presented to the same audience that allowed for transparency would it change things?

The Internet Takes Off

In an October 8, 1993 video clip from CBC National News titled “A computer network called Internet” the Internet was described as

No longer just for nerds. With some 15 million users across the planet, the global online network is being used to discuss everything from science to sex, murder trials to recipes. As we see in this clip, the media is playing catch up. No longer merely a science story, the Internet is described as a “phenomenon,” a “revolution,” and “modulated anarchy.” (Cameron, 1993)

The strange new world of the Internet evolved eventually to what is termed as Web 2.0 where anyone can bypass traditional media outlets and to broadcast oneself. By enabling socialization instead of just broadcasting with media, social media came into existence. Solis and Breakenridge describe social media in their book *Putting the Public Back in Public Relations*:

Social media is the democratization of content and the shift in the role people play in the process of reading and disseminating information (and thus creating and sharing content). Social Media represents a shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model, rooted in a conversational format between authors and peers within their social channels. Social Media is, quite simply, anything that uses the Internet to facilitate conversations. People now have the opportunity to broadcast their thoughts, opinions, and expertise on a global scale. In many cases, these voices are as influential as many of the most widely renowned journalists and industry experts.

Social media is empowering people to become the new influencers, and is forcing PR and marketing professionals to recognize and include these powerful tools in their advertising and marketing communications strategies. (Solis, 2009, p. xvii)

In the simplest terms, social media changed the communications game that was once the sole domain of mass media outlets but “journalists versus bloggers is no longer the argument that we should spotlight. The new discussions will be how we embrace Social Media to improve the quality, the reach, and the conversations around the topics that matter to us” (Solis and Breakenridge, p. 65). This relates to the new metaphor that social media has created for its users, which this paper attempts to further explain by examining how people’s relationship with media has changed.

The Internet created a medium for individuals with something to say but that did not previously have a platform. These individuals created weblogs of whatever they wanted to talk about – be it their thoughts, opinions, insights, news or any combination thereof – and the blogger was born. Where once only those involved in mass media could have a relationship with an audience, now everyone had the same opportunity.

The Public Relations Society of America defines a blog as:

Short for weblog; a personal online journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption. Blogs are defined by their format: a series of entries posted to a single page in reverse-chronological order. Blogs generally represent the personality of the author or reflect the purpose of the website that hosts the blog. (APR Study Guide, p.108)

Public Relations Becomes Public Relationships

The Internet helped shift PR from companies marketing to audiences to humanizing conversations with people. It was, in a way, a return to the two-way conversations envisioned by Ivy Lee in the early days of PR, which forced the profession to stop broadcasting and to begin a dialogue. (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009) More importantly, the key audiences reached through the relationship between a journalist and a communicator were now becoming more fragmented as some were turning to the web for their news.

The Canadian Public Relations Society describes public relations as “the strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals, and serve the public interest” (Flynn, Gregory & Valin, 2008).

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) offers a simpler definition in that it “... helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other” (2010). The PRSA also recognizes that early descriptions of public relations involved terms such as publicity and press agency, which really spoke to pushing out information, while more modern definitions speak of engagement and relationship building – coming back to a two-way relationship between the communicator and his audience. (2010)

In the 1990s Solis coined the term PR 2.0, before Web 2.0 was coined. The term was not about the technology but rather a philosophy that changed the game by getting organizations engaged with people on a level playing field. Solis argues that social media has allowed for a renaissance that puts the public back in public relations.

Changing the game changed the metaphor of a relationship between the journalist and public relations practitioner from one of relying on one another, to one with new players. These players may or may not be interested in playing with the same rules or playing with the original players at all. Solis and Breakenridge divide the relationships into four categories:

PR > Traditional media > Customers

PR > New influencers > Customers

PR > Customers

Customers > PR (2009, p. 31)

The web forced public relations practitioners into having public relationships with media, new influencers and customers. As such, understanding bloggers and how their audiences have come to trust them is invaluable to those in the field of public relations to help to build a relationship of mutual benefit.

As This Study Relates to Me

The Internet took off in 1994 when Netscape introduced a browser that allowed for a more user-friendly web allowing both text and images in HTML pages. (Time Magazine, 1994) That year I also graduated from high school. As a Generation Xer, I had grown up with computers but I had not grown up with the Internet. In the years ahead though, the web would play a significant part in my schooling and career. (Curriculum Vitae included in Appendix E)

I have been practicing public relations both in a volunteer and employment capacity for well over a decade. It was in the early 2000s that I realized that the web could be used for something more than just information; it could also be used for engagement.

The business association that I worked for at the time had introduced discussion forums for the Chamber of Commerce managers it represented across the province. Because of the isolation many of the individuals felt, particularly in rural areas, having a new forum where they could connect and share valuable resources became an indispensable tool in their daily activities.

Following this position, I moved into a communications specialist position at a local technical institute – the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT). The post-secondary environment generally fostered an environment of innovation, so when our

current website lacked some of the functionality that we felt was necessary to do our jobs in communications, we started exploring social media tools.

The first tool was Flickr. While our original purpose for using it was to better display and organize pictures on the site than we could on our own websites, the ability to now get feedback and interact with our audience started shaping our communication efforts. Our original content was now becoming more editorial in nature, as opposed to strictly corporate and self-promotional, and finding its way to places like YouTube, Twitter and Facebook.

The introduction of an organizational Twitter account in January 2008 seemed to augment our ability to communicate with our audience by facilitating one-on-one connections with bloggers. From there, NAIT expanded into another area that mirrored its traditional media relations but was focused on blogger relations.

From the launch of various tools to building relationships with local influencers, my career evolved into one that had social media integrated within many of our department's communication activities. However the question often was whom do we build relationships with? And whom do we trust? Conversely, do they trust us?

Asking those questions forced us out of our comfort zone and to look for new ways to engage with our audience. We had both successes and failures in our efforts, but we were always evolving.

In a July 28, 2010 online webinar author of the book *PR 2.0* Deirdre Breckenridge defined this new type of public relations practitioner as a “hybrid” public relations practitioner. She asserts that PR is being reinvented without “mass communication, a broadcast model, one-way messaging, corporate walls and questionable ethics” (2010). In her hybrid model, traditional media meets social media in an environment that is being

reinvented by a bottom up listening approach, one-to-one interaction fostering two-way conversations, meaningful communication is a valuable resource and where PR is poised to earn newfound recognition.

In order to understand how the web was changing my job, I wanted to examine a blogger as a case study to understand how my professional and personal experience in social media was becoming the hybrid model that Breakenridge outlines. I felt that by examining the change agent in the communications game, I could get some answers as to why and how my profession is changing. To me, the web was clearly having an effect on my praxis. Praxis is defined as

At its simplest, and most dramatic, praxis suggests revolutionary practice, and thus the point at which philosophers have ceased to interpret the world (Marx 1975: 423), and have developed a (materialist) account of the world that will allow the proletariat to understand their place in it, and thus transform it. In the second more complex sense, praxis refers to the early Marx's account of human nature and human history. The core of human nature is presented as the ability to consciously transform the environment. Humans therefore live in a world that they have built and that they continue to rebuild and change. It is through this practical engagement with the world (the praxis) that humanity can come to understand itself. However, in class society, humanity is alienated from what it produces and thus does not understand its essential nature. (Edgar and Sedgwick, 2002, p. 309)

For me, my praxis means not settling into what the practice of public relations should be based on its history, but rather looking at where the profession has come, combined with where the profession is going. This means I must continually challenge myself based on the environment.

Problem and Research Question

There is much to be learned from the history of public relations and traditional media, but bloggers are the ones that are changing the game. As such, I thought it was best to focus on them to see what can be learned from their experiences. From there I can see what can be applied to my work as a public relations practitioner, both in terms of

how an audience can be reached through a blogger but also in understanding how the audiences' trust is now further shaping my daily work.

The overall objectives of this study were to determine:

1. Do members of a particular blogger's current audience trust her?
2. What elements contribute to the level of trust for this blogger? What can be learned from a blogger who is trusted?
3. Given my practice, style and praxis, what can I take from a trusted media personality metaphor to evolve as a public relations practitioner?

Literature Review

Theoretical Perspectives

This study is based on theories relating to metaphors in terms of understanding one thing in relation to another, remediation in terms of how media shapes one another and the trust within relationships formed between these various forms of media.

Media Metaphors

Lakoff & Johnson describe metaphor as "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (2003, p. 5). Metaphor originates from the Greek word *metaphora* meaning transferring or carrying over.

But rather than thinking of a metaphor as a literary term or linguistic expression, conceptual metaphors are based on inferences that we have from other domains. They describe some of the fallacies of metaphor:

First, the locus of metaphor is in concepts, not words. For example, I understand one concept in my life (the leader in my workplace) as another concept in my life (the leader in my small town).

Second, metaphor is, in general not based on similarity. Instead it is typically based on cross-domain correlations in our experience, which give rise to the perceived similarities between two domains within a metaphor. In the example

mentioned above, my workplace and my small town are different things but I understand them based on a correlation I made from the CEO where I work to the mayor in my town.

Third, even our deepest and most abiding concepts – time, events, causation, morality and mind itself – are understood and reasoned about via multiple metaphors. In the example of my workplace, I may understand other parts of my work environment through other communities I also belong to such as my church, alma mater and my group of friends.

Fourth, the system of conceptual metaphors is not arbitrary or just historically contingent; rather, it is shaped to a significant extent by the common nature of our bodies and the shared ways that we all function in the everyday world. In the examples previously mentioned, others would likely also make the same correlations based on similar experiences. (p. 244)

Understanding a metaphor is helpful in explaining human behaviour, such as extending the metaphor of trust in a journalist to trust in a blogger because people tend to associate with media as if they were real people. In the introduction I discussed how people “trusted” Walter Cronkite although Cronkite did not know each individual in his audience personally.

Why Relationships Matter in Media

In the 1996 book *The Media Equation*, Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass demonstrate that individuals relate with media in the same way that they relate to people or places. The two Stanford professors studied television and computers respectively.

The media equation comes from a research project that we call Social Responses to Communication technologies. In short, we have found that individuals’ interactions with computers, television, and new media are fundamentally social and natural, just like interactions in real life. The key word is “fundamentally.” Everyone expects media to obey a wide range of social and natural rules. All those rules come from the world of interpersonal interaction, and from studies about how people interact with the real world. But all of them apply equally well to media. (p. 5)

In essence, Reeves and Nass argue that the media equation is very simple: media equals real life. (1996) This explains why when someone is speaking about a character on

television they will say things as if they know them such as “I hate her for doing that to John.”

Reeves and Nass outline that the media equation has five variables including manners, personality, emotion, social roles and form. (1996)

Along that same vein, people will maintain a relationship with those that they trust because social interaction is facilitated by trust. (Cook, Snijders, Buskens, Cheshire 2009) This is important to understand as traditional media numbers continue dropping and new media tools and bloggers’ audiences increase. People already related to media as persons, but with the introduction of the web, in my view, the relationship has in a sense become even more personal.

In the old metaphor of the media, trust was extended to the newscaster but the newscaster did not return the trust to his audience because it was a broadcasting model whereby one party would talk and the other would listen and the only interaction was in ratings (i.e. audience numbers). In this media trust equation, the public relations practitioner was one position removed from direct contact with her audience.

Even though traditionally the public relations practitioner has not had a very direct relationship with her audience, as a group they have been known not to be trusted.

In fact PR practitioners have been “perceived as less credible than unidentified sources in research. This indicates that further understanding and application of measures that increase trust and credibility are imperative to improve the practice” (Rawlins, 2007).

Trust is critical to the functioning of our society at all levels—interpersonal, small group, organizational, and societal—and is especially central to the practice of public relations. You can’t have credibility without it. And, trust appears to be the most central component to satisfactory relationships. If the purpose of public relations is to establish and maintain relationships with key stakeholders through communication and other efforts, then public relations is essentially in the trust-making business. (Rawlins, 2007)

In the new model that Solis and Breakenridge previously outlined (2009), there are far more ways for the parties to be working together and therefore many more opportunities to earn and extend trust.

In her book Barbara Misztal examined trust in modern societies and restricted her examination to social sciences. (1996) She outlines that sociologists have seldom studied or measured it except in terms of confidence such as in public opinion polls as was done by Oliver Quayle and Company in 1972 with the poll that made Walter Cronkite “the most trusted man in America.” The literature in social sciences has established trust as one of three forms including the property of individuals, the property of social relationships or the property of the social system. For traditional media, public relations practitioners and bloggers it is truly an examination of the social system that best defines why a particular audience trusts members within that respective grouping.

The third approach sees trust as a valued public good, sustained by actions of members of a given society. It can be found, for instance, in Tocqueville’s classic description of the civic community as marked by a social fabric of trust and cooperation and reliant upon the activities of a public-spirited citizenry. Also Putnam’s (1993) search for an explanation of what ‘makes democracy work’ in northern Italy points to trust within community. He views trust as social capital, which is the essential condition for effective, responsive and representative institutions. A view of trust as an emergent property of the social system as much as a personal attribute allows this popular approach to apply trust as a valuable concept for overcoming the macro/micro distinction. Seeing trust from this perspective makes it possible to show how building trust on the micro-level contributes to the more abstract trust on the macro-level. (Misztal, 1996, p.14)

So what is trust? Misztal examined many definitions, of which several define trust as an exchange. When Walter Cronkite was a newscaster, his audience expected him to deliver the news within the expected norms of what they perceived of a newscaster and in turn his audience tuned in for many years. (1996) Today the media exchange has changed with the introduction of new technologies. The media equation as outlined by Reeves and Nass earlier however remains the same as the audience still relates to bloggers in the way

that they have related to mass media personalities of yesteryear— as a person (1996) — even when they do not know a blogger personally. Because of the advent of the Internet people's attentions are divided amongst many media sources, and with the absence of one definitive poll telling them who they should trust, they are trusting a much larger entity to tell them whether someone should or should not be trusted. Misztal identifies this type of trust as the depersonalizing of trust.

Since modern life depends on contingent structures and changeable conditions and familiarity is not a dominant feature, there is also the need to examine the role of depersonalized trust — that is trust in the ability of the system to maintain conditions and to perform its functions. (1996, p. 22)

For example, an audience member will trust a blogger knowing that if the blogger is not credible, eventually the audience will call her on it. For a blogger, her audience is her reason for being, so when she makes a mistake she must admit to the mistake or else risk getting a bad reputation.

So how can one reconcile maintaining conditions and performing functions in a media environment where the entire game has changed and roles are presently being redefined? What is to be said then of traditional media and public relations practitioners who dominated the media environment and created the rules that in some cases do not seem to work or adapt within the environment?

In a very simplistic form, placed on a continuum, PR practitioners and traditional media tend to be at one end, staying somewhat comfortable in their more conservative and traditional models.

In a recent PR Newser article a new report outlined that while traditional media acknowledged the effect the Internet was having on their jobs, they still preferred more traditional means of communication.

But despite the rapidly changing landscape and talk of the death of the press release, “traditional” tactics such as an emailed press release are still effective. 75% of respondents said that an emailed press release is useful to receive from PR professionals, assuming the content is “high quality and well targeted.” (Ciarallo, 2010)

Along the same vein, the audience has come to expect certain things from traditional media and public relations practitioners throughout history. The problem, however, is that the environment has changed and delivering content in the same way that has been occurring throughout history is not working.

When applying the lens of the “ability of the system to maintain conditions and to perform its functions” (1996, p. 22) previously mentioned by Myszal in the current media environment, bloggers have created their own game whereby they embrace change, continue to learn and evolve from the model they have built. The audience expects that of them and because they most closely mirror the environment in which they operate they have been able to thrive.

Still, much can be learned from the dominance of the previous media models. In the spirit of remediation, all three forms of communicators – traditional media, bloggers and public relations practitioners – shape each other to evolve into a hybrid.

Remediation

When new technology or a medium is invented, there is a learning curve in that people first will use it in ways that they are familiar with based on previous experiences. Take for example the transition from Web 1.0 to 2.0. When the web first took off, many companies had brochure websites that were basically extensions of their current marketing materials. Then people started realizing the value of having their own platform and Web 2.0 evolved into conversations rather than broadcasting.

Bolter and Grusin define changes in media in terms of remediation whereby “new media refashion prior media forms. Along with immediacy and hypermediacy, remediation is one of three traits of our genealogy of new media” (1999, p. 273).

Immediacy or transparent immediacy is “a style of visual representation whose goal is to make the viewer forget the presence of the medium (canvas, photographic film, cinema and so on) and believe that he is in the presence of the objects of representation.

Hypermediacy is a style of visual representation whose goal is to remind the viewer of the medium,” (1999, p. 272) like the Internet or television.

Hypermediacy is the parallel between television and the Internet, as Bolter and Grusin outline,

The strategy that dominates the Web is hypermediacy, attaining the real by filling each window with widgets and filling the screen with windows. Hypermediacy is also the predominant strategy of broadcast television. Insofar as the web is like television, it is committed to monitoring the real and quotidian. Indeed, while television may still (barely) distinguish between the physical reality and its mediated presentation, the web is even more aggressive in breaking down that barrier and insisting on the reality of mediation itself. (1999, p. 309)

Just as various media remediated one another, in my view it can also be said that “the blogger” remediated journalists and vice versa. With the rise of citizen journalism on the Internet, bloggers have increasingly become popular sources of information. These individuals have taken on a role similar to a newscaster. For years, major broadcasters have equated popularity or influence with trust, which is a natural element of a relationship that people expect will be present.

The theoretical basis of understanding one thing in terms of another through metaphor and having one form of hypermedia remediate another relates to trust in that in my view people still want to trust their media sources, but how they go about doing it has changed drastically.

As Misztal previously outlined, trust is an exchange and it continues to be in this new media model. The factor that has changed is the depersonalization of trust in that people are no longer turning simply to one source to determine whether they should trust media, but rather they are trusting the system in that they are trusting that the audience as a whole will know who to trust and who not to trust. (1996)

With this constant evolution of media, both the journalist and the blogger have also remediated the public relations practitioner. As such, they must also examine and evolve their relationships to understand how to communicate with the audience.

Understanding Trust

Stephen M.R. Covey outlined the five waves of trust model in *The Speed of Trust*, which is based on the ripple effect metaphor. Covey argues that with trust, it is not simply present or absent, but rather that it can be built. “We can increase trust – much faster than we might think – and doing so will have a huge impact, both in the quality of our lives and the results we’re able to achieve” (p. 3, 2006).

The five waves included self at the centre, followed by relationship, organizational, market and societal trust. Covey further argues that when trust is established at the level of self, the ripple effect of that trust is that it manifests itself in all of the other four waves. So when trust is established in the role of leadership such as the president of an organization that trust is also present all the way to the level of societal trust. (2006)

Self includes how much confidence a particular person has in herself. The four cores of credibility for self-trust include integrity, intent, capabilities and results. The key principle of this wave is credibility.

The second wave is relationship trust and is about direct trust relationships that a particular individual has built with others. The key principle of this wave is consistent behaviour. Covey also outlines 13 behaviours of high-trust leaders including character-based traits: talk-straight, demonstrate respect, create transparency, right wrongs, show loyalty; competence-based traits: deliver results, get better, confront reality, clarify expectations, practice accountability; and both character and competence based traits including listen first, keep commitments and extend trust.

The third wave is organizational trust, which has the key underlying principle of alignment. The fourth wave is market trust with the key principle of reputation. The last wave is societal trust with the principle underlying it being contribution.

The suspicion and cynicism outlined earlier in this paper in regards to journalists and public relations practitioners are examples of how societal trust has deteriorated for these two professions. Even though both have ethical standards to adhere to in terms of conduct and accuracy, people still flock to various bloggers' sites even when they will openly admit that speed is more important than accuracy, as did Erick Schonfeld at TechCrunch:

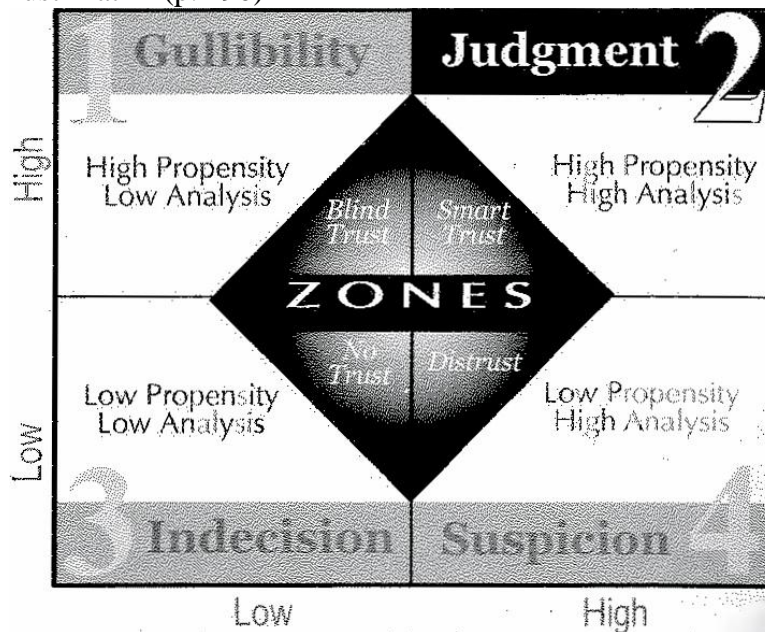
We hardly have time to proofread our posts, as anyone who's come across one of the frequent typos in TechCrunch knows. Luckily, our readers love to point out our mistakes in comments. They are our copy editors and fact checkers. (We love you guys). Our philosophy is that it is better to get 70 percent of a story up fast and get the basic facts right than to wait another hour (or a day) to get the remaining 30 percent. We can always update the post or do another one as new information comes in. More often than not, putting up partial information is what leads us to the truth—a source contacts us with more details or adds them directly into comments. (2008)

The one point I have to make is that while this model exists, it is far from perfect. In fact, there have been instances where people have taken advantage of the fact that people trust the Internet for certain information and later it was discovered to be a hoax or

that people were not who they said they were. Some highly trusted bloggers have also even come under fire for posting things that were later discovered to be false or unfounded. But the basic premise is that people who read blogs are instilling their trust in both the individual and the market to weed out inaccuracies. In the end, people trust that the system will work to uncover the truth based on judgment rather than blindly trusting a particular person.

Covey goes on to describe a smart trust matrix that includes a blind trust zone of gullibility, smart trust zone of judgment, no trust zone of indecision and distrust zone of suspicion. (2006)

Table 2
Smart Trust Matrix (p. 290)



I would categorize the relationship that audiences had with Walter Cronkite as one that falls into the blind trust zone of gullibility. In retrospect the notion of trust was based on a faulty poll that revealed that respondents blindly believed that he was trustworthy without questioning the source or how he became considered as such. This is

an example of high propensity. Respondents simply did not determine how or why he became “America’s most trusted man”, which is an example of low analysis.

Given Basen’s and Carney’s earlier descriptions of the relationship between media and public relations practitioners, the type of trust would be best categorized in Covey’s model as zone 4 in the distrust zone of suspicion. This zone has low propensity because of the lack of transparency in the relationship between the two and high analysis where you find the following:

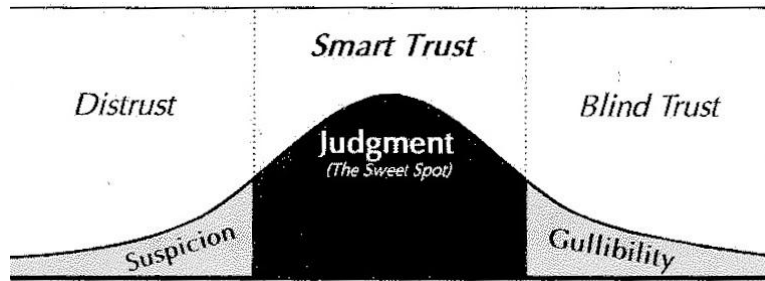
This is where you find people who extend trust very cautiously or not at all. In fact, some are so suspicious that they do not trust anyone but themselves. People in this zone tend to rely almost exclusively on analysis (usually on their own) for all evaluation, decision-making, and execution. (Covey 2006, p. 291)

The smart trust zone of judgment is the optimal zone to be in as it shows a high propensity to trust with high analysis. Covey describes it as follows:

This is where you combine the propensity to trust with the analysis to manage risk wisely. This is where you get both good business judgment and good people judgment – including enhanced instinct and intuition. If you have a propensity to not trust, instinct and intuition will disproportionately tell you not to extend trust to others. On the other hand, without analysis, you might well mistake a propensity to trust alone for instinct and intuition. Thus, a significant dimension of combining high analysis with high propensity to trust is the synergy that elevates instinct and intuition to the realm of good judgment. Smart trust doesn’t mean that you extend trust to everyone. (Covey, 2006, p. 290)

In order to establish that a relationship is within the smart trust zone of judgment in Covey’s continuum in table 3, Chris Brogan and Julien Smith’s trust agent model (2009) provides further insight as to which factors affect a blogger’s trust with her audience. In essence, the Covey model can be used to discover “who” is trusted and the Brogan and Smith model can be used to discover “why” this particular person is trusted.

Table 3
Smart Trust Continuum (p. 287)



Finding Those to Trust

Chris Brogan and Julien Smith outline the characteristics of bloggers who are considered trust agents in their 2009 book *Trust Agents – Using the Web to Build Influence, Improve Reputation, and Earn Trust*.

They are the power users of the new tools of the Web, educated more by way of their own experiences and experiments than from the core of their professional experiences. They speak online technology fluently. They learn by trying, so they are bold in their efforts to try new on applications and devices. They recommend more, and more often, on social bookmarking applications (Delicious.com and the like) than anyone else. They connect with more people than anyone else, and they know how to leave a good impression. As they do so, they build healthy, honest relationships. Trust agents use today's Web tools to spread their influence faster, wider and, deeper than a typical company's PR or marketing department might be capable of achieving, and with more genuine interest in people, too. (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 15)

The six characteristics (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 28) are used by all trust agents but in varying degrees:

1. Make your own game – They stand out by making their own rules.
2. One of us – They become a member of the community by sharing not only the good but also the bad within themselves and their organizations.
3. The Archimedes effect – They have the ability to leverage their relationships for action on various activities and initiatives.
4. Agent Zero – They are at the centre of a wide and powerful network.

5. Human Artist – They have really good soft skills and know how to recognize people’s strengths and weaknesses and build relationships, therefore developing understanding.
6. Build an army – They can bring together a mass of individuals to collaborate.

Methodology

Case Study Research

When I decided to do this research, I knew that I wanted to figure out *how* and *why* a blogger’s experience could be relevant to my own as a communicator. The metaphor of Christopher Columbus’ exploration resonated with what I was attempting to establish.

When Christopher Columbus went to Queen Isabella to ask for support for his “exploration” of the New World, he had to have some reasons for asking for three ships (Why not one? Why not five?), and he had to have some rationale for going westward (Why not south? Why not south then east?) He also had some (mistaken) criteria for recognizing the Indies when he actually encountered it. In short, his exploration began with some rationale and direction, even if his initial assumptions might later have been proved wrong (Wilford, 1992). The same degree of rationale and direction should underlie even the exploratory case study. (Yin, 2003, p. 23)

As such, a single-subject exploratory case study seemed a logical method to find out more based on what I had already come to know in my career, as outlined earlier in describing how this study relates to me.

When Walter Cronkite passed in 2009, it had me thinking about trust and whether the metaphor of the trusted media personality could be extended to a blogger. The theoretical bases really helped to further solidify my assumptions, but they were just assumptions that needed further exploration. Because the richness of my career came from my experiences (quality), I felt that examining one person in-depth as opposed to

quantifying results through statistical methods for example amongst many bloggers, would provide the best analysis that I could continue building my career upon.

The limitations of this study are that it is based primarily on two people's experiences, with the researcher's biases and the research is not exhaustive of all the possibilities that make communicators trustable. This exploratory research does however create a platform for others to consider and how they could evolve their respective practice, style and praxis.

The blogger I chose to examine could be recognized by the work he/she does, so proper names were not used to conceal identity. The blogger will also be referred to throughout this paper as she or her to avoid the use of he/she or him/her.

The data collection for the case study involved two steps, including the use of a survey tool and online observation.

Data Collection: Survey and Online Observation

Before being able to examine why a particular blogger is a trust agent I had to first establish that the chosen blogger was in fact trusted by a sample of her audience. In choosing the blogger I had assumed that trust existed based on her popularity (the blogger often is asked to take part in traditional media interviews, has a high ranking on the blog ranking website Technorati, has many followers on sites like Twitter and high engagement on her blog through comments).

The first step of this case study was based on Stephen M.R. Covey's five waves of trust model. (2006)

The blogger sent the survey at www.whotrustersyou.com on August 2, 2010 to 15 people within her audience. The *Speed of Trust* quiz recommends sending the survey to 5-10 people, but because it was summer (when people are often away), I asked that the

survey be sent to 15 people with hopes that we would get a good sample of respondents in the one-week timeframe, which would be at least five respondents. (Appendix B) The blogger acted as the intermediary to send out the survey to her audience members via email. The blogger chose the participants. As the researcher, I did not know their names and the results of the survey were compiled without any identifying characteristics as the survey tool is a third party application. She selected the audience members by targeting those who had previously commented on her blog. When someone comments they must include an email address.

Concurrently and following the survey (until August 18, 2010) I conducted online observation of the blogger's digital footprint through the various social media tools she uses. This was to establish why she fit into Chris Brogan's and Julien Smith's six-point model of a trust agent (make your own game, one of us, the Archimedes effect, agent zero, human artist and build an army). (2009) Basically an inventory was taken of the social media sites that the blogger had established a presence on. Then, examples from the book *Trust Agents* were documented to see if similar examples showed up on the blogger's sites. There was also an examination of the types of posts in the blogger's blog to see how they had changed over time from when the blogger went from relative obscurity to the present day when she is potentially considered a trust agent. Aside from the inventory of social media tools used, little of the data was quantitative because the frequency was not considered vital (as long as it was regularly updated – which is subjective based on the expectations of the blog).

The risk for the participants in this study was established as being minimal with the participants possibly feeling fatigued or stressed in being involved in the survey/observation and there was also a minimal cultural or social risk established for the

blogger because the survey was based on whether her audience trusted her. This could impact her status, privacy and/or reputation.

The blogger could feel upset by the findings should she not be as trusted as originally thought. She is used to scrutiny and criticism however, which is why the chance of her being upset by any findings was deemed as slim.

In order to mitigate any risks, the blogger was provided with a final copy of the research and given the opportunity to back out should she find any of the findings be upsetting to her.

Findings

This study is based largely on the theoretical perspectives of trust; as such the literature will continue to be referenced throughout the findings and conclusions.

The Blogger's Audience

While it's difficult to know exactly who comprises a particular blogger's audience, there are some characteristics we can establish about them. According to Forrester's Social Technographics Profile Tool, those who are involved in reading blogs would include three categories:

1. Creators make social content go. They write blogs or upload video, music or text.
2. Critics respond to content from others. They post reviews, comment on blogs, participate in forums and edit wiki articles.
3. Collectors organize content for themselves or others using RSS feeds, tags and voting sites like Digg.com.

In Canada, creators make up 18% of the web consumers, 29% are critics and 17% are creators. Of the age groups defined by Forrester the younger the range, the higher the proportion of members make up the audience as outlined in table 4 (2010):

Table 4
Creators, Critics and Collectors by Age Range

	Creators	Critics	Collectors
18-24	31%	42%	32%
25-34	24%	37%	25%
35-44	17%	26%	15%
45-54	14%	25%	11%
55+	9%	18%	8%

Establishing Trust

Covey argues that when trust is established at the level of self, the ripple effect of that trust is that it manifests itself in each of the other four waves. Self includes how much confidence a particular person has in herself. The four cores of credibility for self-trust include integrity, intent, capabilities and results. (2006) The key principle of this wave is credibility. In the case of a blogger, this could speak to the conviction that she has in providing thoughts on her blog.

The second wave is relationship trust and is about direct trust relationships that a particular individual has built with others. The key principle of this wave is consistent behaviour. Covey also outlines 13 behaviours of high-trust leaders including character-based traits: talk-straight, demonstrate respect, create transparency, right wrongs, show loyalty; competence-based traits: deliver results, get better, confront reality, clarify expectations, practice accountability; and both character and competence based traits including listen first, keep commitments and extend trust. (2006) A blogger for example has an audience that she regularly interacts with both online and in person and maintains those relationships.

The blogger's survey results are outlined in table 5 as follows:

Table 5

Personal Credibility Score & Report	
Integrity:	92%
Intent:	92%
Capability:	100%
Results:	92%
Others Trust Me:	100%
Character:	92%
Competence:	96%
Personal Credibility Index:	96%
Aggregate Personal Credibility Index:	82%
Here's What Others Say	
Character:	85%
Competence:	85%
Others Trust You:	87%
You Consistently Interact in a Way that Builds Trust:	86%
Your Personal Credibility Index:	96%
Your "Trustability" with Others:	86%

Five people from the blogger's audience responded to the survey. With an 87% percent rating of others trusting her and an 86% ranking of "trustability" with others, it is clear that this blogger is trusted by a sample of audience members. Because it is difficult to determine if this trust falls into the smart trust zone of judgment, the second step of this research involves examination of the blogger to see if she fits the profile of a trust agent. If so, it could be established that the trust is within the smart zone of judgment.

Determining Whether Someone is a Trust Agent

Brogan and Smith believe that all trust agents exhibit all six characteristics of a trust agent to varying degrees. (2009, p. 28) In choosing someone to study, this particular blogger recognized that in order to become a trust agent "writing everything online, where it's eternally visible to everyone, forever, has value" (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 25). No one starts by being a trust agent and in the case of this particular blogger, she

started blogging at her current URL in 2003 after having previously blogged on a different platform. She started the new blog while she was a university student and often posted personal information such as outings with friends, family news and school marks.

So how did someone who considered herself a technology blogger evolve into a trust agent? After examining this blogger's digital footprint there was, in my opinion, a turning point from when the blogger's audience was primarily a personal audience and those with an interest in technology to one where the audience expanded to include a much wider group. While the period cannot be pinpointed exactly, the social tool Twitter played a significant role in elevating this blogger's profile. Twitter is a microblogging tool that allows people to post 140 character "tweets" about anything. While not solely responsible, she was able to catapult herself into a more significant social media personality role with a more diversified audience because of the online presence she was able to establish for herself through Twitter. Twitter simply provided the exponential growth into diversified audiences for a blogger with a mature presence on the web, which later led to the blogger providing value by building on the popularity of Twitter. Brogan and Smith describe digital natives as those whose "awareness is coming to include a wide awareness of friends, colleagues, and coworkers all around the world" (2009, p. 149). In the spirit of someone who is always trying new things, this digital native experimented with technology and had blogged about Twitter in its early days under the name Twtrr. She spoke of her love-hate relationship with the tool. The noticeable growth of comments on blog posts occurred in 2007-08. Today the blogger is providing additional value to her audience via Twitter related content including monthly statistics on local usage based on statistics that she compiles by searching specific local keywords and providing statistics such as most popular users of the keywords.

An interesting observation is while the blogger was getting busier writing posts in 2005, she started posting weekly summaries of notes for the week, which were basically bulleted points of things she found of interest. Back in 2005, these notes were most often focused on personal content such as wishing a friend a happy birthday or a movie outing, but five years later, in 2010, these notes evolved to information that the entire local community would value such as events, topical news and trends. As more people turned to this blogger for information, the information began appealing more to the masses. Interestingly, most of the bullet points however were around 140 characters or less, which is a Twitter post.

Following is a description of how the blogger demonstrates each of the six aspects of a trust agent. While there is much to be said about each of the six characteristics of the blogger, only those areas that she demonstrated most prominently are discussed in this paper. It is not that the blogger has not demonstrated other aspects, it is that these are the ones I chose to focus on because they resonated with me most.

It is important to note that this approach of online observation was taken without access to private information such as traffic statistics because I wanted to be able to identify whether this individual could be in fact be identified as a trust agent through what anyone could see online. Identifying a trust agent is the first step in knowing a trust agent and understanding her. Also, in some instances it is difficult to find evidence supporting a particular aspect that falls under one of the characteristics (ex. private interactions that have also enforced this blogger's reputation as a trust agent), which also helped determine which of the aspects would be focused on.

Make your own game.

“Making your own game is not just about trying to find innovative ways to improve your brand or business: it’s about understanding that the tools to let you do this are at your disposal, and most of them are free” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p.34). In describing “making your own game,” Brogan and Smith outline their version of the three steps in the game. They talk about taking advantage of systems (not people) in playing, hacking and programming.

This particular blogger started playing the game the day she started blogging. At that point she was primarily blogging personal content and experimenting with various technologies and writing about it. One such tool she experimented with was Twitter. Her first post about the tool was in July 2006 under its previous name – Twtr. This is when she signed up with her current account. From that time forward, she talked about both the good and bad aspects of the tool.

Once the game was understood, the blogger started hacking the system and in Brogan and Smith’s description, started “hacking life” in relation to Twitter. Hacking life basically means finding an easier way to do something in day-to-day life. The theme of “life hacking” is prevalent in everything that this blogger has done in terms of her social media presence. At one point the blogger mentions in her blog that she is lazy and wants to find easier ways to do things. This runs parallel to the example that Brogan and Smith use in describing lazy programmers in that they will spend a great deal of time developing code so that it does as much as possible for them, thereby making their lives easier in the long run.

One such example is that the blogger started aggregating tweets (posts on Twitter) to provide additional value to the local Twitter audience and launched a website that

aggregated tweets related to particular events. In this way she started adding additional value by extending the value of Twitter.

Because this blogger was one of the first to the game locally, she was often the one to set the rules or part of the group that began creating the rules. In the spring of 2008, this blogger had the means to organize the first “tweetup” – a face-to-face meeting of local twitter users. This blogger was also able to encourage others to use local hashtags or keywords preceded by the number symbol (#) so that the audience was able to more quickly identify those who were tweeting locally. This use of hashtags would later have greater significance as the blogger started aggregating the keywords to generate statistics about its local use.

Another example of life hacking that this blogger is passionate about is making government data publicly available so that users can use the data in sites like her events aggregator in order to be able to synch up bus transit data for example. This gives users the ability to go to one website to get all the information they need about a particular event.

One of us.

“Being one of us means investing the time and effort in others” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 101). The importance of being human was first demonstrated when the blogger started blogging personally, but an interesting parallel back to traditional media is that this blogger has been highly critical of traditional media and her perception of their lack of ability to adapt to the functionality and tap into the humanizing opportunities of the web. While being critical of traditional media, the blogger has become a sought-after subject matter expert when it comes to commenting about the social web in traditional media. This also led to the coordination of a local one-day event that brought traditional

media, social media and all types of other communicators together to discuss how they could learn from one another and improve their day-to-day jobs. The blogger led this initiative along with a well-recognized member of the traditional media community.

Mass microevangelism.

“Trust agents work to grow relationships that eventually influence people’s experience with an organization” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 90). In the case of this blogger, she started as a technology blogger who spoke mostly about her relationship with technology. Then as Twitter became more prominent, more local content such as news and events became more prominent. She also has time and time again demonstrated her concern for the people in the equation and does not incessantly promote her company or product – in fact, she rarely promotes her company or product, which I suspect has further added to the reason why people trust her. This blogger has mastered the art of not evangelizing - “in fact, they plant seeds so that there can instead be a kind of mass evangelism, whereby word (the message!) spreads on its own” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 112).

Archimedes effect.

“Archimedes of Syracuse was a famous inventor from the third century BC. He’s the one who said “Eureka.” He also said with a lever large enough, I could move the world” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 115). This is the essence behind the Archimedes effect – “putting in a certain amount of effort and getting a greater result than normal human effort would give” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 115). The Archimedes effect has been particularly evident around planning events for this blogger and in fundraising for various causes. She has planned and executed events with seemingly little effort in terms of

getting people out. The same could be said of some of her fundraising efforts for issues such as clean water.

Agent zero.

“When it comes to networks (Twitter, Facebook, whatever) learning where to stake your claim is a bit more complicated, because it involves a continuous commitment” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 157). This particular blogger was at the head of many initiatives for gathering people or working with other key individuals locally to make them happen, which in Brogan and Smith’s words she became “the priest, and built the church” (2009, p. 159).

While she posted more frequently five years ago (not quite two posts per day for the year), she is more popular now with her posting frequency dropping to almost one per day (2007 to 2009). The most important thing to take away however is that she has maintained her regular pace more or less for the past three years, which her audience would have become accustomed to.

Human artist.

“Everyone who sees [your site] for the first time should be convinced that you know what you’re doing on the Web and in real life” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 209). As such, first impressions including a domain name similar to that of a business using .com or .ca have the appearance of being more professional and a picture of yourself go far to give your presence credibility. The blogger does both. This particular blogger has also had a pseudonym since she began blogging, but as many technology bloggers have done, she also uses her personal name in all areas where she has a social media presence. The use of fifteen social media tools including her blog – most with regular updates – were prominently displayed on her website.

Build an army.

“With this in mind, your soldiers must be able to take your ideas and develop their own uses for them” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p.234). This is described as giving your ideas handles. This particular blogger has given handles to a few key projects. Two that were previously mentioned included: creating statistics for local Twitter usage that individuals can use in presentations and creating an aggregator of local Twitter content to feed into an events website that local organizations can use to promote events.

Dominant traits.

While trust agents have all six traits present, Brogan and Smith outline that some are stronger than others. They state that building trust is like playing the game Pac-Man. In their examples, they state that when you “master the patterns, you master the game” (2009, p. 55). They outline two types of systems: open in which the user is constantly guessing and always allowing for a margin of error and a closed system, which is fully understood. This game for the blogger is clearly an open system whereby the rules are always changing because the social media tools are evolving. The blogger understands that very intimately so she is mastering methods, strategies and building a reputation and corresponding relationships around those methods to become the best at many things. (Brogan & Smith, 2009) This is a pattern throughout all six aspects of her trust agency, which often carries the theme of Twitter. In my opinion, “make your own game” is this blogger’s strongest trait.

Another pattern that is prevalent is that she has a passion for life hacking – basically finding easier ways to do things in day-to-day life. This is another aspect of game changing that the blogger is strong in because she is always looking for easier ways to solve everyday problems.

The last pattern that I noticed is that she is often at the core of creating a sense of community within her audience. She is a connector – from being a go-to person as a subject matter expert on social media with traditional media to bringing together a mass of people for a particular event. This makes her a strong agent zero and strong at building an army.

Discussion/Conclusion

So should the word “trust” have been buried with Walter Cronkite as Poniewozik suggested in his piece in *Time Magazine* that was mentioned in the introduction to this paper? The answer is no, but it is not simply because a particular person has taken his place.

Stephen M.R. Covey wrote about how trust impacts us every day of the year and that it is critical in every single interaction that we have. (2006) Because people relate to media personalities as they would with people with whom they have relationships, as Reeves and Nass argue in *The Media Equation*, trust will continue to be vital. (1996)

The answer will not be found in any sort of praise, award or list as it was with Cronkite however. The environment has changed. The Internet has remediated traditional media and vice versa. In their work on trust agents Brogan and Smith outline that focusing on this type of praise is essentially pointless. “If you focus on the awards and the praise, you’re missing the real value of the attention” (2009, p. 250).

Reflective of the work of Bolter and Grusin (1999), the metaphor of the traditional television newscaster has been remediated to one where *how we trust* is more complicated, but the humanization is familiar to us all.

All this humanizing is normal; in fact, the only reason we think it’s crazy is because most of us were born in the brief period where mass media was the only game in town. But remember, that’s only been the case for a few decades; for the rest of the time, people have communicated mostly with people in small groups.

We've said it before: Why we trust people is the same; it's only the ways we come to be trusted that have been changing, and that's because communication has been changing. (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 260)

I would in fact argue that the game created by mass media has been going on for far more than a few decades and started changing after the printing press came into existence a few centuries ago. A big game changer was when public relations became a profession with the work of Lee and the introduction of the press release just over a century ago. This was followed by Bernays' use of people's irrational and unconscious motives to communicate with audiences. That game stood for a long time but the literature is quite clear that trust did not necessarily exist. It was however the only game and people created their rules and played within them.

Journalists and public relations practitioners created codes of ethics in response to separate those communicators who *should be trusted* and those who *should not be trusted* based on truth and objectivity. Then the game further evolved with the introduction of the web.

As far as we're concerned, much of journalism has a faux objectivism that can't die fast enough. In the Web's new reporting and editorials, there is an emerging mass of people who are expressing their true opinions, not those scrubbed clean for an imagined audience of septuagenarians. (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 77)

So who is the "trust media personality" now? Everyone, but everyone has to work hard every day and in everything that they do to maintain that metaphor.

This requires perpetual lab work. Technological advancements won't stop. The steps you must take to stay in the game (your own game) require you to keep innovating and to move from the tools of the day to the new generations of tools that come along. (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 241)

Old Metaphor, New Game

In an effort to engage with the social web, in my opinion many public relations practitioners are applying the old metaphor of their relationships with journalists to that

with bloggers. The problem with applying this approach, which is based on the inference that it is a similar type of relationship, is that the media game has completely changed and a different metaphor needs to come into play – one not based on processes and tools but primarily on a trusting relationship.

PR practitioners used to only speak of traditional mass media in media relations but, today public relations involves a trifecta of communicators including public relations practitioners, journalists and bloggers.

Understanding communications in its current environment is important because “attention is and will continue to be our scarcest resource” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 258). Public relations practitioners must understand the game and keep playing it to remain relevant.

So how will this affect my praxis? In examining a blogger as a case study and taking into consideration my own personal and professional experience there are some key areas that resonate that I am applying the trust agent model. (Brogan & Smith, 2009)

While I am making the recommendations for my own career, all of these recommendations could be applied to those just starting their careers in public relations. More importantly though, these recommendations are also for those seasoned veterans that I have had conversations with who still do not see or understand the value of the web.

Make your own game.

“But making your own game is not just about trying to find innovative ways to improve your brand or business: It’s about understanding that the tools to let you do this are at your disposal, and most of them are free” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 34). What I have found in my career is that people do not want to take the time to understand the

tools and how they can build trusting relationships by using them. An example is that some corporate communications departments will use the video-sharing site YouTube to post their most recent ad campaign for example, and then claim to be on YouTube. The analogy would be like having a commercial on television and then claiming to have a television program. Your audience is generally not interested in being overtly sold to on YouTube. It is important to find out what type of information your audience would turn to your company or organization for and start tailoring your content.

“If you get really good at the game you’ve been playing, and you’re mastering it consistently, it might be time to look at different games, different challenges” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 74). This is particularly true of seasoned practitioners. They have won countless awards in their careers and have received praise and recognition for their work, so there does not seem much incentive to change. Change however should be instilled in everyday practice for PR practitioners because the communications game is changing daily.

One of us.

“Being one of us means investing time and effort in others. Employers might find this concept difficult to swallow, but this part of the strategy is vital. Others have called it “givers get.” In the online world, being present and commenting on other people’s work and engaging in general connectedness are just as important as any direct marketing initiatives or other traditional business strategies” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 101). This will require educating upper management on why it is important to stay on top of what is happening in the social media community, which often requires commenting on things that are outside of what your organization does as its core business. The social media community wants to know a real person, one with other interests outside of work. They

want to know that you are legitimately interested in the community and someone who genuinely cares about people, not a one-dimensional individual who is strictly there to advance her career or business.

The Archimedes effect.

“The easiest way to build on that relationship is in person” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 121). Traditionally, PR practitioners reached their audience through the intermediary of mass media. Now there is the opportunity to get to know the audience directly, but interestingly, in my experience, some public relations practitioners are reluctant to take part in events to get to know people in person. This often means attending a meetup or tweetup after hours or participating in a volunteering activity on the weekend. This is a total shift from what public relations has been and, in my view, meeting people in person is the most important step in gaining trust.

Agent zero.

“Businesses are starting to understand the value of having strong connectors on staff. The old way of doing business was to use the resources at hand within your company” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 146). It used to be that the CEO and perhaps a handful of other people including PR departments were the “face” of the organization and spoke on its behalf. Now, everyone within the organization has that capability and where appropriate it should be explored. An answer to an issue involving front line staff for example is seen as a more genuine response when it comes from front line staff.

Human artist.

As bloggers, we’re not interested in your press release. We’re looking for something that’ll interest our audience. Or, even better, our blogger friends who will link to us or at least notice. We don’t usually find that with dry business copy, because no one has made that effort to try to appeal to us; they’ve just repackaged something (sometimes not even that) and expect it to stick. (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 186)

This is probably the mistake that most PR practitioners make. They do not take the time to tailor messages to those they are trying to appeal to because they don't have time. The point is that they will have to learn to find the time or else risk not being able to engage with their audience in the future.

Build an army.

“Work with your armies instead of simply commanding them” (Brogan & Smith, 2009, p. 219). Often companies see their roles in the communications game as one where they control the message. This is often seen when a company will have a contest asking people to submit a comment, picture or video stating why as customers they love their company's product or service. This approach often fails because no one can control a message. If you really want to build an army behind your product or service, start working with them to build that mutual trust and respect.

Final Thoughts

This study was strictly exploratory in nature to provide some future direction to my own work. As I had mentioned earlier, my praxis means that I must continually challenge myself based on the environment. I have made many mistakes, but I learn daily.

When I am asked about social media by communicators, they often do not know where to begin. This study was intended to shed some light in that respect. These recommendations will continue to shape my praxis. To date, the five top lessons that I have learned in the time that I have been immersed in social media include:

1. Be a real person.
2. Be willing to poke fun at yourself.

3. Face-to-face interaction is just as important as online.
4. Don't get put off by swearing.
5. Most comments are neutral.

These points address how public relations is no longer about corporate messaging and a perfect media release. The first three address what is expected of anyone involved in social media and the last two speak to the lack of control and informality that has been introduced in the dialogue.

While I am not advocating swearing or abusive behaviour of any type, we often would find comments in a public forum that were not addressed at our organization that were expressing frustrations about us. I often would reach out to those individuals to see if we could address their concerns. Most of the time they were surprised that someone from our organization was watching and once their comments were addressed often the individuals would become ambassadors for our organization simply because we were listening. I would also suspect that their level of trust was elevated by that action alone.

Some people however have also taken the social media platform to take advantage of a situation, such as complaining just to see what they can get out of the situation. I have had to deal with those as well. Fortunately the abusers are in the very small minority.

In fact most comments about our organization were neutral. Some were also good. The point was if we were not involved in social media, we would not be aware of any of it. The game changed and we decided that we wanted to be in it.

You cannot make people trust you because of some poll or because you have won awards or because you happen to be at the top of the next "popularity contest" tool on the

web. It takes time to earn and it is a journey every single day to maintain that trust through all of your actions.

When I speak to public relations students I often give two pieces of advice, which are reflective of how the environment is changing but also remains the same.

1. Whether or not you chose to have personal profiles on social media tools, know how you can use them in a business setting. This is because future employers will expect that recent students will know how to use social media to extend the company brand. By doing this before finding employment, students can also start building their profiles as trust agents.
2. Apply for many awards. While awards will not help establish anyone as a trust agent, many employers are baby boomers. Individuals from that generation place higher value on work that has received an award. The process also provides valuable critical feedback on your work.

The public relations environment is evolving but until today's younger generations are leading most companies, there is still place for more traditional public relations practices.

While the blogger that was chosen for this case study would be considered popular, it is due to the fact that she has established a level of trust that she is respected. While not everyone aspires to achieve what she has in terms of a social media presence, becoming a trust agent in whatever you do should be your goal every single day. Trust begins in you. Trust will continue to be the key for our scarcest resource of attention. While there is a lot of discussion about game changing in this study, trust is not a game.

Humans complicate things with systems and procedures beyond belief. This paper is a testament to that when it comes to media relationships, but relating with humans is really not that complicated. If trust were a game though, the rules of the game would be so simple they could be tweeted in 140 characters:

Trust yourself. Be genuine. Follow through. Always question. Extend trust to those who earn it. Repeat constantly in no particular order.

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Appendix A – Consent Form/ Information Letter: Participant

Diane Bégin is doing this study for her Master of Arts in Communications and Technology degree at the University of Alberta. She wants to determine what it is about a blogger that an audience trusts. What she finds out will be used to better understand how communication is changing. You are being asked to participate in this study. You are a volunteer. That means you can choose to join or not.

If you choose to join this study, you will take part in two steps that will be wrapped up by August 10. The first will involve completing an online third-party survey at www.whotrustersyou.com and providing the initial results of your own responses to the researcher. You will then send the trust survey to 15 of your audience members over email (in the hope that the estimated 5-10 people will respond, as suggested by the survey organizer). By answering the survey, your audience members have implied their consent to participate in the research. After one week, you are requested to provide those final results. Screen shots of each of the steps are attached for your reference. Diane will include the final tally of your personal rating and the group rating in the final paper in order to establish that trust exists between yourself and your audience members.

The second step in the research involves Diane examining all of the online material that you have accumulated over the years to categorize it and determine a profile for you as a blogger that people trust. You will not be required to be present or to participate in this aspect since it will involve examining the digital footprint you have already accumulated over the years.

She will not use your name in the final report. No one can link your name on this form with anything you say or write in this study. The data will be collected regardless of the trust level established. The information in the report will be presented to you to decide whether you are willing to have the data used or not. Please advise the researcher within one week from receiving the report of your intent. Diane will keep results for five years in a safe place. After 5 years, she will destroy the data.

You can quit this study at any time. You can choose to not answer any question for any reason. You do not have to explain why. If you do, Diane will not include anything you have said or written in the study. If you have a question, please contact:

Diane Bégin
University of Alberta Graduate Student
Tel: 780.000.0000
Email: dab2@ualberta.ca

Should you feel uncomfortable with any part of the research, you can contact the researcher's supervisor:

Dr. Katy Campbell
Dean of the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta
Tel: 780.492.2681
Email: katy.campbell@ulberta.ca

I have read and understand the above information. I am over the age of 18. I agree to join this study.

Participant's Name: (Please Print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____

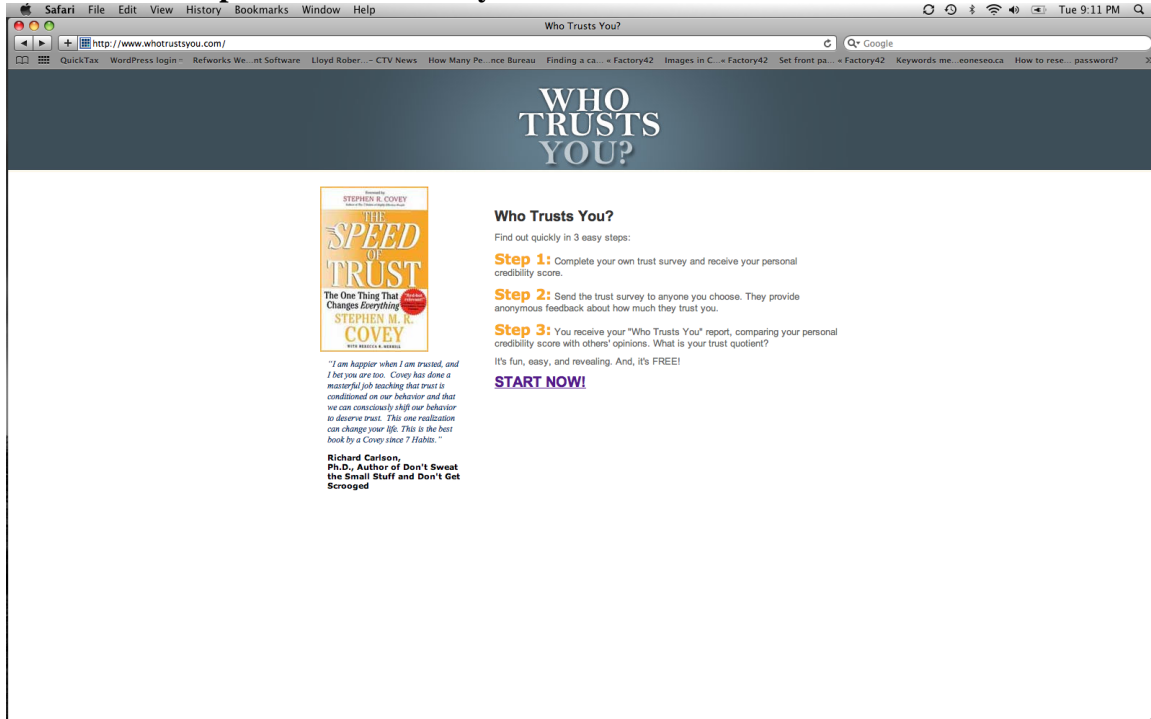
Date: _____

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614.

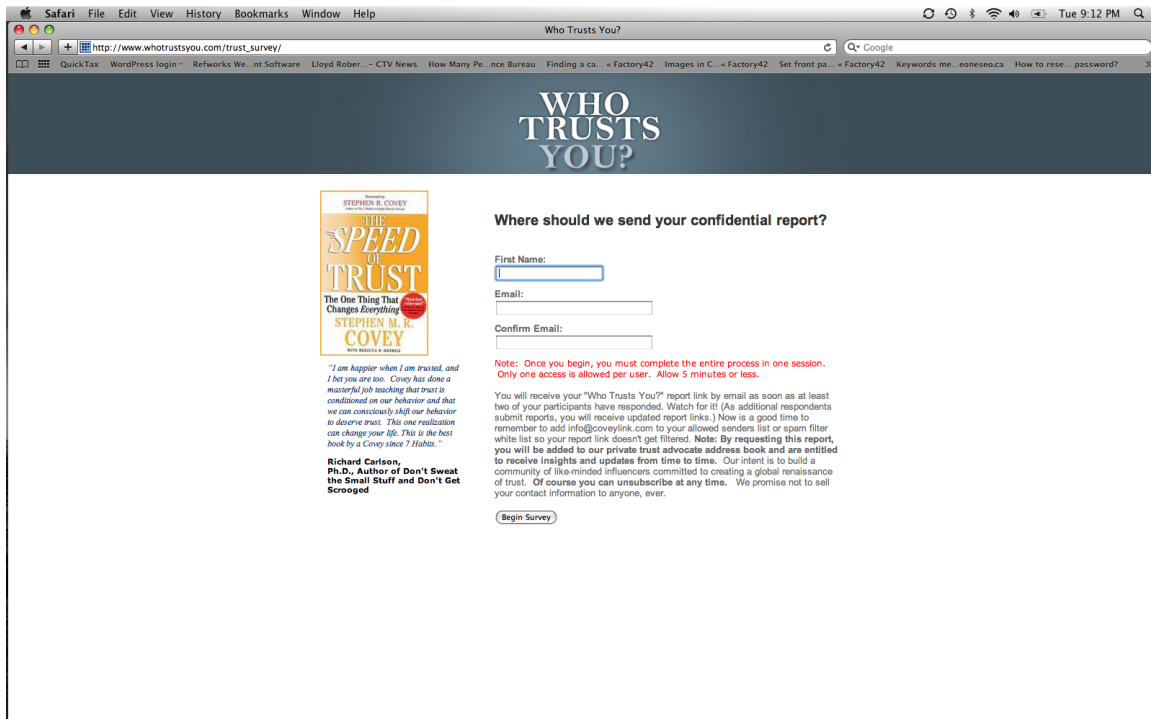
Appendix B – Trust Survey

Blogger instructions

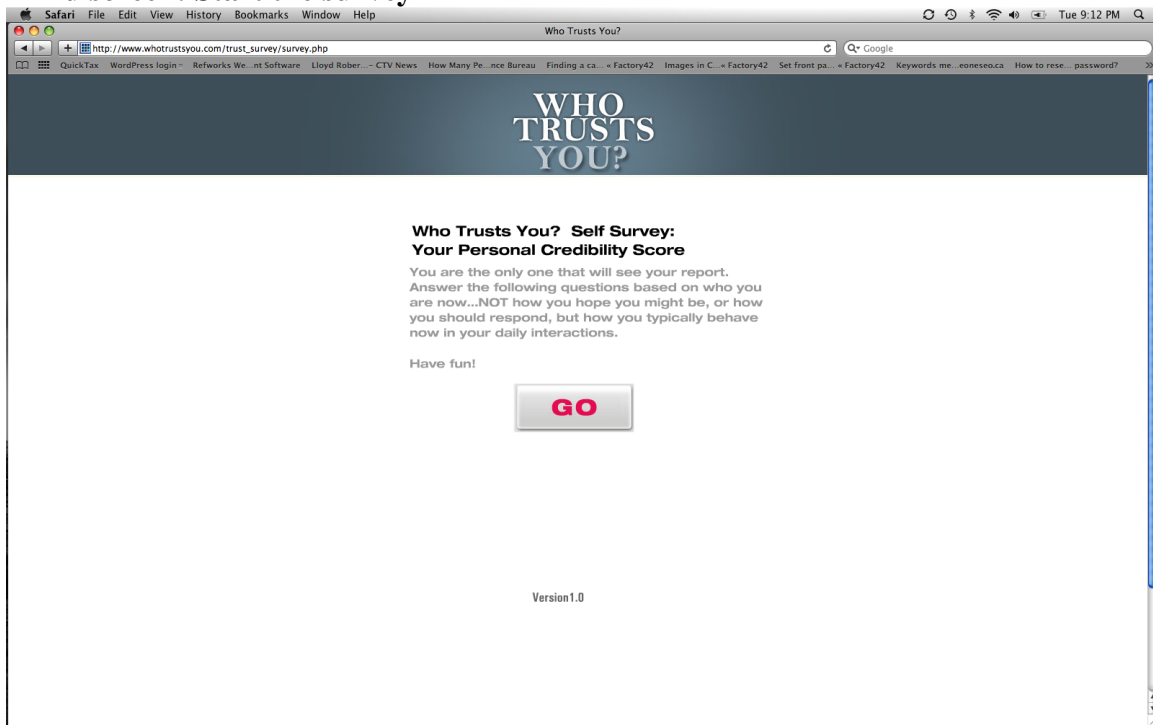
First screen: <http://www.whotrustsyou.com/>



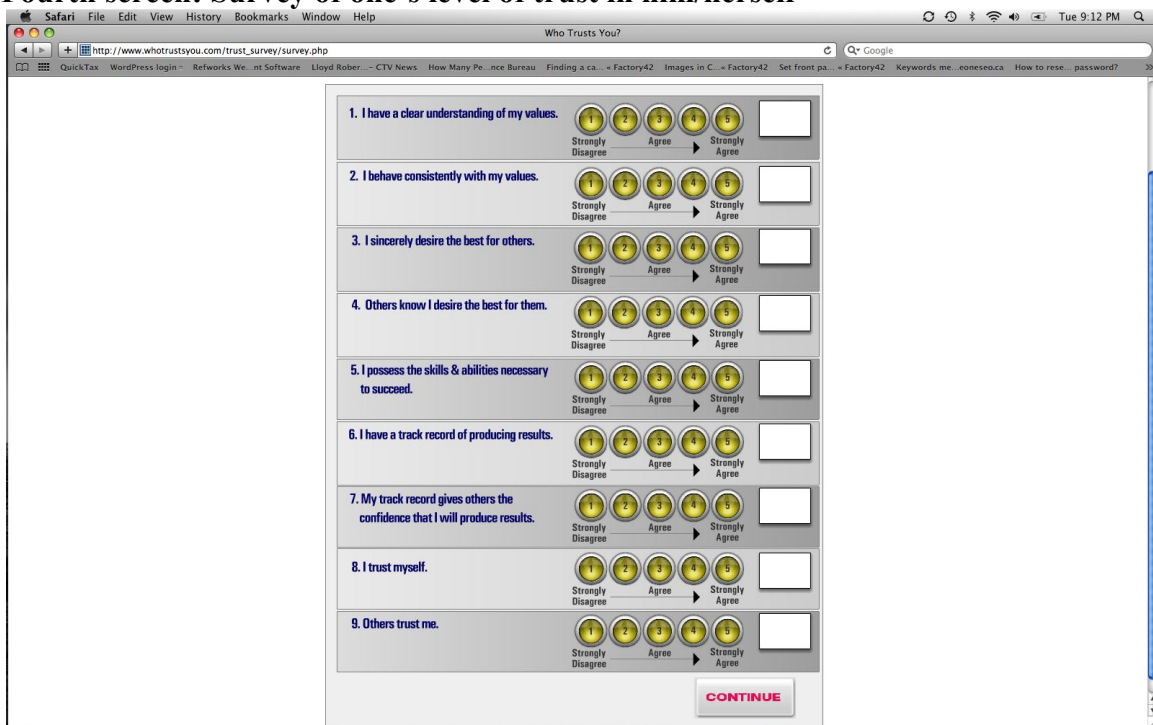
Second screen: Enter contact information



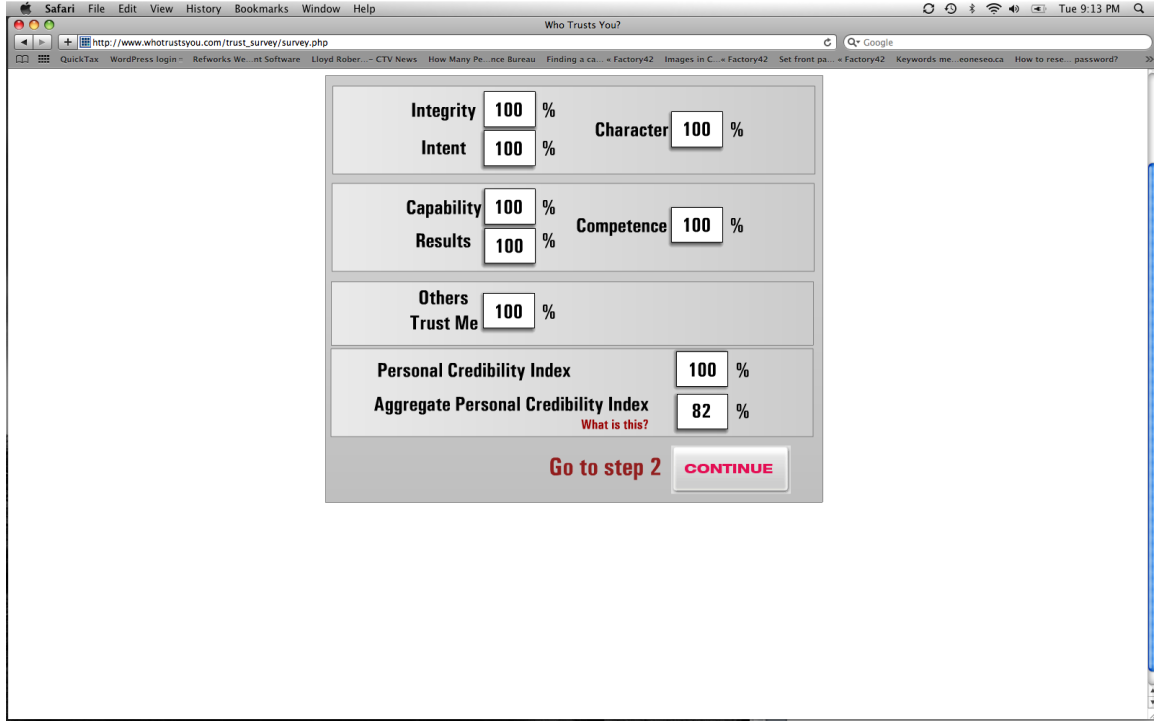
Third screen: Start the survey



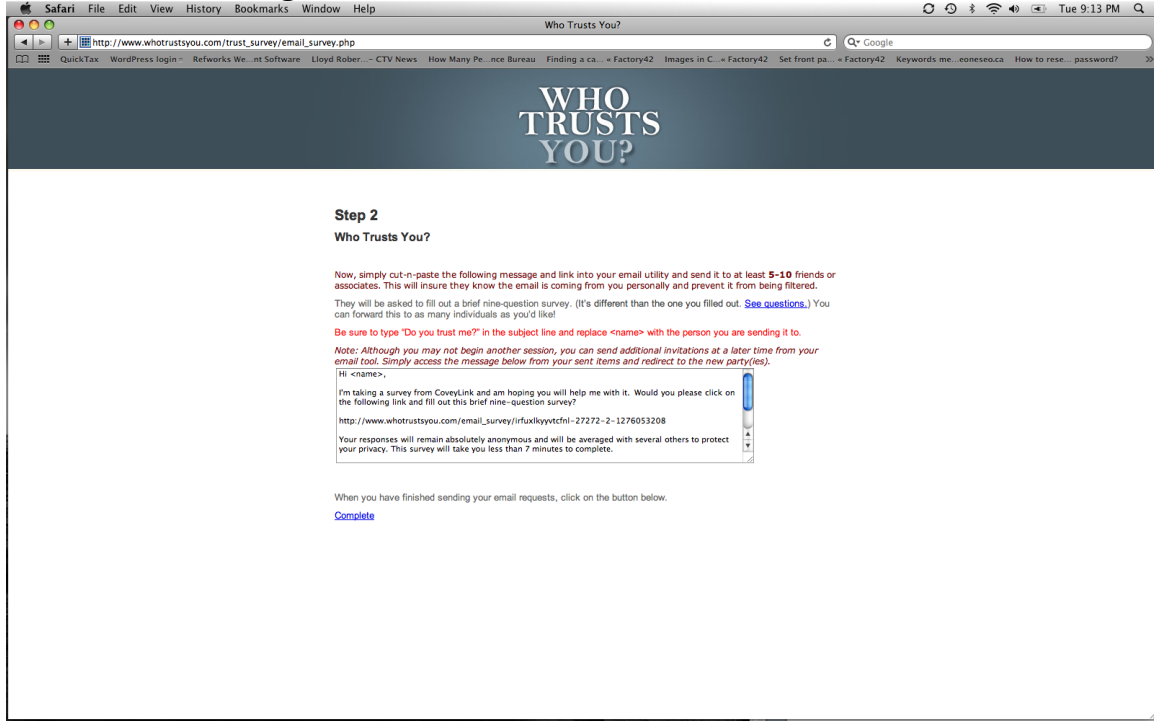
Fourth screen: Survey of one's level of trust in him/herself



Fifth screen: Personal trust score



Sixth screen: Sending the email to one's contacts



The following alternate email will be sent out by the blogger:

Hi <name>,

I am part of an academic study on blogger trust and you are receiving this email as a member of my audience.

Diane Bégin is doing this study for her Master of Arts in Communications and Technology degree at the University of Alberta. She wants to determine what it is about a blogger that an audience trusts. You are being asked to take part in the first phase of the study – a trust survey through the third-party website owned by CoveyLink Worldwide. What she finds out will be used to better understand how communication is changing. You are being asked to participate in this study. You are a volunteer. That means you can choose to join by responding to the survey or not.

Your responses will remain absolutely anonymous and will be compiled by the website at www.whotrustsyou.com. The researcher (Diane) and I will also not know who responds and who does not. The website www.whotrustsyou.com is being used because of Stephen M.R. Covey's research on trust through his book "The Speed of Trust." All aggregated results of the survey will be provided to the researcher in the academic study. Your email address will not be shared with the researcher, simply the number of respondents and final tally for the survey. Diane will keep the aggregated results for five years in a safe place. After 5 years, she will destroy the data. This survey will take less than 7 minutes to complete.

You can quit this study at any time. You can choose to not answer any question for any reason. Because your anonymity will be protected, you will not have to explain why.

If you have a question, please contact:

Diane Bégin
University of Alberta Graduate Student
Tel: 780.000.0000
Email: dab2@ualberta.ca

Should you feel uncomfortable with any part of the research, you can contact the researcher's supervisor:

Dr. Katy Campbell
Dean of the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta
Tel: 780.492.2681
Email: katy.campbell@ulberta.ca

Should you wish to participate, please complete the survey by <one week from today>by clicking on the following link to fill out the brief nine-question survey. Please keep your participation in this survey confidential.

Insert generated link

Sincerely,
<blogger name>

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614.

Seventh screen: Questions that are sent to audience members

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the title 'Questions'. The browser's address bar and menu bar are visible at the top. The main content area contains the following text and questions:

Rate your trust level in this person on a scale of 1-5 by answering the questions below.

1. **Test tells the truth, talks straight, and doesn't leave false impressions.**
☐ Never ☐ Infrequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Usually ☐ Always
2. **Test generally cares for others.**
☐ Never ☐ Infrequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Usually ☐ Always
3. **Test treats people with respect, demonstrates concern for others, and doesn't fake caring.**
☐ Never ☐ Infrequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Usually ☐ Always
4. **Test has a track record of consistently delivering results and not making excuses.**
☐ Never ☐ Infrequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Usually ☐ Always
5. **Test does not skirt the real issues with people. S/he confronts reality and addresses difficult issues head-on.**
☐ Never ☐ Infrequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Usually ☐ Always
6. **Test makes promises carefully and always keeps his/her commitments no matter how small.**
☐ Never ☐ Infrequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Usually ☐ Always
7. **I trust Test**
☐ Never ☐ Infrequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Usually ☐ Always
8. **Others trust Test**
☐ Never ☐ Infrequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Usually ☐ Always
9. **Test consistently interacts with me in a way that builds trust.**
☐ Never ☐ Infrequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Usually ☐ Always

Every time a new audience member responds to the survey, an email will be sent to the blogger. After one week, the blogger will provide the initial self-survey results (screen 5), the number of people who responded to the survey and a final screen of the results of who trusts this person. Based on these results it will be determined whether the blogger is trusted or not and whether the research will move to the next step of creating a profile of the trust agent.

Appendix C – Trust Agent Profile

Dimensions of a blogger as a trust agent

Various attributes of the blogger's web presence (blog and other social media tools) will be examined and included in the six categories as outlined by Smith and Brogan in their book *Trust Agents*. An explanation will be included to determine why a particular attribute fits into a certain category. Some may fit into more than one. As per the authors, trust agents manifest each of the following to varying degrees. As such a blogger profile will be created to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of the trust agent included in the study. This part of the study will be done over the period of a week following the completion of the trust survey. It will involve strict observation of the blogger's web footprint as though someone stumbled across her site today and were determining whether this person is trustworthy.

[illegible]

Appendix D – Consent Form/ Information Letter: Participant

Diane Bégin is doing this study for her Master of Arts in Communications and Technology degree at the University of Alberta. She wants to determine what it is about a blogger that an audience trusts. What she finds out will be used to better understand how communication is changing. You are being asked to participate in this study. You are a volunteer. That means you can choose to join or not.

If you choose to join this study, you will take part in two steps. The first will involve completing an online third-party survey at www.whotrustersyou.com and providing the initial results of your own responses to the researcher. You will then send the trust survey to 15 of your audience members over email (in the hope that the estimated 5-10 people will respond, as suggested by the survey organizer). By answering the survey, your audience members have implied their consent to participate in the research. After one week, you will provide those final results to the researcher. Screen shots of each of the steps are attached for your reference. Diane will include the final tally of your personal rating and the group rating in the final paper in order to establish that trust exists between yourself and your audience members.

The second step in the research involves Diane examining all of the online material that you have accumulated over the years to categorize it and determine a profile for you as a blogger that people trust. You will not be required to be present or to participate in this aspect since it will involve examining the digital footprint you have already accumulated over the years.

She will not use your name in the final report. No one can link your name on this form with anything you say or write in this study. In the unlikely event that trust does not exist in the first step of the research, a new blogger will be approached for the case study. Diane will keep results for five years in a safe place. After 5 years, she will destroy the data.

You can quit this study at any time. You can choose to not answer any question for any reason. You do not have to explain why. If you do, Diane will not include anything you have said or written in the study.

If you have a question, please contact:

Diane Bégin
University of Alberta Graduate Student
Tel: 780.000.0000
Email: dab2@ualberta.ca

I have read and understand the above information. I am over the age of 18. I agree to join this study.

Participant's Name: (Please Print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University Committee on Human Research Ethics at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participants' rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Director of the Office of Human Research Ethics at (780) 492-6828.

Appendix E – Curriculum Vitae

Diane A. Bégin

Employment history

ALBERTA MOTOR ASSOCIATION

Association Writer and Editor

May 2010 – Present (Edmonton, AB)

- Writing and editing various internal and external communications pieces
- Scripting special events and video projects
- Creating promotional pieces for internal communications

NORTHERN ALBERTA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Communications Specialist

August 2006 – April 2010 (Edmonton, AB)

- Initiated and engaged in various social media including Flickr, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook
- Coordinated various print and online communications including techlifemag.ca
- Planned communications campaigns and helped execute special events

ALBERTA CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Director, Communications & Policy

March 2002 – July 2006 (Edmonton, AB)

- Created awareness campaigns regarding various business issues
- Managed all external communications including media, the website and online discussion forums
- Managed the policy resolution process, research projects and government advocacy efforts

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESS

Member Services Counsellor - Alberta & the Northwest Territories

January 1998 – March 2002 (Edmonton, AB)

- Assisted in creating awareness campaigns for various business issues
- Lobbied government on behalf of small businesses
- Researched various areas affecting small businesses

SCHENKER INTERNATIONAL

Administrative position

June 1997 - January 1998 (Edmonton, AB)

- Performed various sales and marketing duties
- Created and monitored sales databases
- Administered customs clearance processes

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF CANADA

Bilingual administrative position (temporary)

May 1996 - August 1996 (Edmonton, AB)

- Processed recruitment files
- Created employment postings
- Contacted individuals to arrange for interviews for various positions

Education history

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Master of Arts in Communications and Technology, May 2004-Present (Edmonton, AB)

- Completed course work and currently researching final project on blogger trust

UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE

Bachelor of Management (marketing focus), 1998-2001 (Edmonton, AB)

NORTHERN ALBERTA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Business Administration diploma with a major in marketing, 1995-1997 (Edmonton, AB)

Associations

- Member of the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS)
- Member of the Junior Chamber International (JCI)
- Member of the Junior League of Edmonton (JLE)

Volunteer experience

CANADIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY (CPRS)

June 2006 - Present (Edmonton, AB)

- Co-chairing the National Social Media Taskforce
- Serving as communications chair for the 2010-11 board
- Served as communications chair for the 2009-10 board, membership chair for the 2008-09 board and secretary for the 2006-07 and 2007-08 boards

January 2006 – May 2007 (Edmonton, AB)

- Served on the marketing committee for the 2007 national conference
 - April 2004, April 2005 & April 2006 (Edmonton, AB)
 - Acted as a judge for the national Canadian Public Relations Society Awards of Excellence
- September 2002 – May 2004 (Edmonton, AB)
- Acted as managing editor of the Edmonton chapter newsletter titled PR Edmonton

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF EDMONTON (JLE)

October 2001-Present (Edmonton, AB)

- Participating in Junior League volunteer projects on an ongoing basis, in addition to serving in roles such as public relations co-chair, secretary to the board, program chair and most recently webmaster

CONNECT2EDMONTON.CA

July 2007-December 2008 (Edmonton, AB)

- Represented NAIT as a steering committee member for the Edmonton-based discussion forum

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (GSA)

May 2006-March 2008 (Edmonton, AB)

- Served in consulting capacity on the elections committee
- September 2004-May 2006 (Edmonton, AB)
- Acted as a council representative for the Master of Arts in Communications and Technology program

ALBERTA CHAMBER EXECUTIVES (ACE)

November 2004-July 2006 (Edmonton, AB)

- Served as communications chair and scholarship committee chair

ALBERTAFIRST.COM

September 2003 & September 2005 (Edmonton, AB)

- Acted as a judge for the Community Profiles competition for AlbertaFirst.com

YOUTHONE.COM

January 2001-November 2001 (Edmonton, AB)

- Served as community relations editor for the online youth magazine at Youthone.com

2001 CIVIC ELECTION

October 2001 (Edmonton, AB)

- Moderated an election forum for council candidates in Ward 6