

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

HOW A MODERN PA WORKS



A new feature in CareerSuccess giving voice to the current PA of the Year. Anel Martin (PAOTY 2011) pioneers this page.

With the rise of social media and the tremendous advances in technology that we have seen in the last ten years it is amazing how the world of work has evolved, and so too the role of the modern PA

Smartphones and tablets are becoming common place in most large corporates today; this is also true of South Africa.

Android and Apple Markets have become a place to purchase or download free applications. There is a tremendous assortment of creative, useful and time saving apps, giving you easy access to currency converters, time zone calculators and all sorts of amazing organizing and note taking tools!

In doing my research on international trends in the PA profession, I instinctively reached for my new 7 inch tablet, accessed LinkedIn and posted a message, and that was the light bulb moment for this article.

Five years ago I would not really have considered social media as a platform to

gather information or get advice on problems or best practice but now in 2012, it is my first point of reference. So what has changed?

Well in 2012 we can access Social media platforms from anywhere and at any time of the day or night! Making friends or professional connections worldwide at the touch of a button is now the norm.

WHAT DOES THE SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE LOOK LIKE?

There are approximately 550 million Facebook users and 90 million professionals on LinkedIn. There are on average 65 million tweets sent per day and 2 billion videos are viewed on YouTube daily, the stats are truly astounding!

It is also estimated that 92% of companies in the US have a presence on social media, and many large companies (also in South Africa) actively monitor and inform top management of what is being said about the company on Twitter and other networks on a daily basis.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO PAs?

PAs are extremely active users of social media, there are multiple groups across all social network platforms. There are numerous blogs, LinkedIn groups, Facebook and Twitter groups that are specifically geared toward PAs. They share opinions and best practice, also motivation and information which are specific to our profession.

My international benchmarking and personal research



has revealed that PAs are networking, sharing ideas, making friends, getting advice from each other and sharing their personal experiences across all social media.

They are also informing others in their network of career opportunities in their respective organisations, job hunting and using the platform to inform each other of training events.

Recruitment and headhunting on forums such as LinkedIn has become very prolific with many large corporations' HR personnel having created profiles to view potential candidates.

Social media has also resulted in some new spin-off PA functions, such as Social Media Assistants (So, for those of you who don't know what a Social Media Assistant does, it is a PA with marketing/PR or Communications related experience, who spends his/her day attending to the company or individuals social media profiles). It may be a while before this job hits the South African market, but watch this space!

The social media scene has also greatly enhanced the popularity and accessibility of Virtual Assistants by connecting them to potential clients more efficiently than ever before.

WHAT TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA ARE OUT THERE AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (who created a classification scheme for different social media types in their Business Horizons

article published in 2010) you get the following varieties:

- Collaborative projects like Wikipedia
- Blogs and Micro blogs (Twitter)
- Content Communities (YouTube)
- Social Networking (Facebook)
- Virtual Game and Social Worlds (Gaming platforms and Second Life).

Each has its own purpose and unique functionalities that go with it. So you need to review what works for you and what you can apply as a tool in your life and work, but remember once your unique content is out in the digital world it can never be retrieved or erased, so use social media wisely to enhance your personal brand.

Building a good brand or presence in the social media space according to Kietsmann et al. comprises of 7 building blocks and this applies to individuals and companies.

1. Your need to create a strong and unique **identity**
2. **Conversations** are essential; you cannot be passive in the experience
3. **Sharing** is a core principle of such forums
4. An active and dynamic **presence** is critical
5. **Relationships** are enhanced, generated and maintained
6. **Reputations** can be made or destroyed
7. **Groups** with a common purpose or interest are formed.

If you are doing all these things correctly you are building "social authority" which means that you are positioning yourself as an expert or market leader, which enhances your value to your organization and your personal profile, which is a handy asset in recruitment or salary negotiation situations.

Kietsmann also states that social media presents an enormous challenge to firms, as it has created a radical shift in how customers and employees want them to communicate. They no longer want companies to talk at them but instead to listen, appropriately engage and then respond on a personal level. This is expected to create many spin off activities and specializations for PAs in the future.

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