

1 In view of the fact that social media are a relatively new tool, what is your background with social media and how did you get started?

I graduated in 2007 with a liberal arts degree and knew I wanted to work in communications. My first job was at a medium-sized architecture firm with about 400 people. I worked on the website and got a lot of practice integrating communications with graphics and digital media. I moved to HDR in 2008, where the communications team serves nearly 10,000 employees. As part of that team, I focused on the digital space. When social media and blogging began to ramp up, it fit within my domain, and it was really useful that I had that background at a smaller firm.

2 Can you recommend any current social media platforms that are proving useful for engineering and design firms?

It depends on what your goals are, because different platforms have different opportunities as far as the audience you're trying to reach. The big three that we've seen are LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. LinkedIn is the largest professional social media network, and you can find people simply by searching for names. As with any platform, however, you really have to have a strategy for how you're going to engage potential clients once you've found them. Twitter is where news breaks and where reporters and writers go to look for leads, so that has been extremely beneficial for increasing awareness and building relationships with traditional and digital public relations and media contacts. Instagram is about visual storytelling and provides an opportunity to build your brand and create awareness. It's a tremendous opportunity and we're seeing huge engagement rates, but you can't link to preexisting content.

Facebook is tricky because it is obviously a Goliath—you can't not be there. But because the audience is so broad and varied, it's much more difficult to home in on a specific audience or drive specific conversations.

3 What tips would you give a company on getting started with social media?

It's about the audience, the content, and knowing what constitutes success for you. You need goals and metrics that correlate to all three. People tend to think of social media as completely separate, where they have to reimagine everything they do. But social

Questions

WISDOM AND GUIDANCE FOR
SUCCESSFUL CAREER BUILDING

An interview with Maggie Scott Moros on social media

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Maggie Scott Moros is the company-wide social media manager for HDR, a global firm specializing in engineering, architectural, environmental, and construction services headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska.



media should be integrated with your existing communications plan so they just become a piece of your content life cycle.

The point of social media at their core is having a conversation with your audience—having a back-and-forth dialogue and not just blasting out links to your website without considering the needs of your audience. And you can't forget that people are using social media primarily on their phones. You have to be really conscious of how that looks on your phone, how readable it is, and how optimized it is.

4 How should a company develop its own social media “best practices” so as to avoid the pitfalls that some companies seem to experience with too little oversight of social media accounts?

As with any digital presence, it is important to have a strong governance document that outlines your guiding principles and what your chain of command is for making strategic decisions. But it's also important to have team members who have an awareness of and “get” social media. The realm has its own language and rhythm, and it changes so quickly that team members need to have the desire to keep up—and to keep learning.

You have to trust your team to have good judgment and to represent you appropriately. You have to know that they know your policies, they've signed the governance document, and then let them do their job. At HDR we have a flowchart for how we respond to comments, whether they are positive, negative, or neutral. If you require your team to come back to the head of corporate communications with every comment that they get, it's going to break the system. You're not going to be responsive.

5 How is HDR's social media work flow arranged? What are the pros and cons of this type of setup?

All social media flow through a small, centralized team, and that's been really good in terms of oversight of

accounts, outreach to employees for content to share, and coverage if people are out. Right now we're posting all our content on company-wide social media feeds on each platform. But we're looking into expanding our presence into market-specific feeds. Rather than have followers sift through all the content on our main Twitter feed to find, say, water-related information, we'll give people an opportunity to follow feeds based on the information they want to hear about.

We schedule probably 50 to 60 percent of our social media content ahead of time, typically on Mondays. At the same time, “social listening” is a big part of social media for us. We look for opportunities to join conversations and see what is trending or what our clients are saying. In instances where we want to join in, we'll touch base with the rest of the team, noting the opportunity, proposing a comment, seeing whom we have to run it by, but trying to be really responsive because we have a very short window before a comment becomes less relevant on social media.

6 What would you say is the return on investment from social media for engineering and design companies?

The return on investment [ROI] from social media is similar to the ROI of a website. You're not going to get a multimillion-dollar contract or recruit top-tier talent to become employees through any one page of your website or any one tweet, but the ROI is basically relevance. If people want to find information about you, you are serving them content and information about who you are and what you stand for in a place where they already live. You are not making yourself hard to find, and that's the huge opportunity with social media.

7 Finally, do you have any useful strategies for firms seeking to

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develop guidelines covering their employees' personal accounts?

You've got to be really clear about the behavior you don't want and that there are consequences for that behavior. These can't just be guidelines—it's got to be a policy. Once you have that in place, you then need to be clear about what you do want. Build up employee confidence to use social media with education, whether that's e-learning modules, webinars, person-to-person education, or even just sending out a couple of social media cheat sheets that

people can print out and have at their desks explaining how to tag your company or what hashtags your company is using. Your employees are your best advocates. **CE**

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