

Social Networking: How Much is Too Much?

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I'm an aspiring novelist, and my writing has recently hit a snag – a big one. I haven't even looked at my manuscript for a week, let alone worked on it. Why? I just returned from a conference sponsored by a major writers' magazine, during which time the editors encouraged, nay, *exhorted* us to get busy and start social (socially?) networking. After viewing a bewildering amount of info on the screen while an editor clicked from website to website to demonstrate the genius of the Internet, a member of this largely graying audience raised his hand. "How many social networks are you on?" he asked Ms. Editor. She thought a minute. "I mean, about a dozen, but I'm not doing anything with most of them."

Aside from the fact that I can't stop fixating on how young people begin declarative sentences these days with "So," and "I mean," I'm trying to implement her suggestions, because she is wildly intelligent and tops in her field. Plus, if you want to sell a book these days, you have to do all the work yourself, and the Internet is a cheap and powerful way to build a customer base. But there are problems, and here's one: what is the new etiquette regarding such networking?

For example, a colleague sent me an email to check out her new blog, in which she mentions her book (as a hyperlink, no less) in every other sentence. This is exactly like turning up the volume on the TV for advertisements: more noise isn't going to make your product more appealing. I'm sorry. Another friend posts status updates on Facebook half a dozen times a day, and sometimes it's about eating a ham sandwich for lunch. I mean I like her but I barely have time to read one post.

But it's addictive, I admit. For example, when a family member tells you she just uploaded a bunch of new pics on Facebook, you naturally have to look at them, and then just as you post a comment ("Like!") you see she's reconnected with an old friend you've been meaning to talk to.

So right in the middle of all this complaining and feeling overwhelmed, I just found out that I can maintain my website, update my blog, and post to Twitter all at the same time, using a new free blogging network called WordPress. So every five minutes I'm rearranging commas and other useless activities on my website/blog. But, dang, it looks good. I can't wait until they add Facebook to the automatic update feature.

Like all self-employed business people, we writers must exercise a bit of self-discipline, because all whining aside, if it weren't for all this social networking, I wouldn't have the opportunity on More.com to express my thoughts about this developing phenomenon or anything else. Once my article is posted, I'll receive comments from my friends who will weigh in, one way or the other, and then possibly continue a conversation about this. If it weren't for social networking, not only wouldn't I have a place to put it, I wouldn't have all these new friends to discuss it with. And that would be a problem, because I've pretty much exhausted everybody else I know.

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