

You Posted What!?

How to Help Your Teen
Use Social Media to Gain an
Advantage for College and
Future Employment

TIFFANY SUNDAY

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Dreams

*This book is in memory of my late mother Judy Sunday,
who shared with me the passion for learning.*

*The book is dedicated to Dr. Mary Wakefield, a college
professor, who was committed
to changing the world one dyslexic student at a time.*

*I am forever grateful to Dr. Wakefield, as she offered sup-
port and guidance to my parents when few people un-
derstood dyslexia and the brilliance that lies beneath the
surface.*

Dreams give us hope and keep our souls alive.

Contents

Teens and Social Media	vii
Introduction	ix
Chapter One – Our Digital Transformation	1
Chapter Two – What is Social Media?	13

Teens and Social Media

Social media dominates our teens' lives. Here are a few statistics from a 2012, Pew Research Study which interviewed US teens ages 12 – 17.

Does your teen match this profile?

- 95% of the United States Teens Use the Internet
- 74% are Mobile Internet Users
- 37% of all Teens Have a Smart Phone
- 93% of Teens Have Access to a Computer
- 91% of Teens Post Photos of Themselves on Social Media
- Top Five Social Media Networks Used By Teens
 - Facebook 9%
 - Snapchat 39%
 - Instagram 38%
 - Twitter 26%
 - Pinterest 8%

Introduction

“...the future will be far more surprising than most people realize because few observers have truly internalized the implications of the fact that the rate of change itself is accelerating.” Ray Kurzweil

The purpose of this book is to provide parents with a resource guide on how to help their teen build a strong digital profile for college and future employment. Our digital profiles have replaced resumes, and all the digital content we produce can be used to our advantage. Understanding how your teen’s digital portfolio will be used to secure college placement, employment or funding a startup will be determined by the content contained in their digital profile.

I wrote this book after multiple requests from individuals and parents who had attended my digital profile presentations or read my blog postings. Following the presentations, the most frequent comments I would receive were “I wish my teenage daughter or son could have heard your presentation. My college-aged kid needs this information. I’m concerned that my son or daughter is

posting too much personal information on the Internet, and I do not know what to do. Do you have a book I can purchase?”

Our digital profiles can be an asset or a liability depending upon the content that is stored in our digital iceberg. These profiles consist of all our social media accounts and the digital content that we have posted along with all the content that everyone else has posted about us on the Internet. This digital content is creating a large digital iceberg which is invisible to our naked eye, and used by individuals, companies and governments to make decisions about us without our knowledge.

For our teens, social media has replaced physical shopping malls as a place to hang out and visit with friends. To find a place to call their own, they are forming groups online to share content, visit and have fun. The difference in social media and the Internet is that all the teens’ actions are documented for the world to see, which enables corporations to make money from their millions of “likes”, “retweets” and “shares” everyday.

The Internet has empowered the digital generation. Many teens are more sophisticated users and generate more social media content than adults. Teens are building powerful individual brands on social media networks and earning millions of followers along the way. They understand the importance of building a data-rich digital profile and how to use this profile as an advantage for building a career, gaining future employment or securing consulting projects. The individuals who do not understand the impact of our digital transformation will be left behind.

I interviewed startup founders, data mining executives, recruiters, colleges, futurists, educators, parents, students, and tech investors. This book contains information and recommendations derived from these conversations and personal experiences. Social media networks will continue to evolve, and our digital profiles will increase in importance from securing a bank loan to employment verification.

This book offers key strategies, action plans and resources for parents who need guidance navigating our digital world.

CHAPTER 1

Our Digital Transformation

“One of the biggest flaws in the common conception of the future is that the future is something that happens to us, not something we create.” – Michael Anissimov

We are undergoing a digital transformation. Understanding how the Digital Revolution is impacting us and our teens is important. Our teens are digital natives. They are the first generation to have their world defined and enabled by the Internet, mobile devices, social media networks and mobile apps. Their world is fully connected 24/7/365. This is a profound difference from previous generations who can remember life before the Internet. What separates the Digital Revolution and from Industrial Revolution is the speed of technology advancement and how we adaption to new technologies. This rapid increase in speed is based on Moore’s Law which has helped to define our digital transformation.

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Moore's Law was coined by Gordon Moore, co-founder of Intel. He observed and believed that processing speeds would continue to grow exponentially instead of increasing at a linear incremental pace. Therefore, with each new generation of faster and smaller microchips, it would take less time for the next generation to be invented and assimilated into society.

In a nutshell, digital technology advancements will continue to rapidly increase to the point where some futurists believe it will become instantaneous. Today, we have less time to adapt to new technologies than previous generations. Understanding the impact of Moore's Law is important as digital technology will continue to evolve at greater speeds in the future. There are two key factors that make the Digital Revolution very different from the Industrial Revolution: the increasing speed of new technology advancement and the invisibility of the Internet.

Managing Our Digital Transformation

First, understand that adapting to a new technology or any other significant change takes time and an action plan. What aspects of digital technology do you understand? In which areas do you need to learn more? My recommendation is to obtain an understanding of how digital communication is changing and become familiar with the social media networks that your teen uses.

Our Digital Transformation

For example:

- Each social media network attracts different groups of people. Think of your social groups and how each group is different, social media networks are digital social groups.
- Which social media platforms could present more problems for your teens than others?
- Which platforms have more safety controls and which platforms are more transparent on how they use your data.

Second, technology has always been a tool and always will be a tool. Since the printing press, we have used technological advancements to develop and build abundant resources. The Internet is quickly eliminating barriers for learning and obtaining knowledge which is creating space for new opportunities to develop and spread. Our teenagers have access to more collective knowledge than previous Presidents and Heads of State. Students can now access online education platforms to earn badges and certificates instead of waiting for the subject to be taught in school. When added to their digital rich profiles, these badges can provide an advantage later in their career.

The Internet has opened the door to a vast sea of information that is available for anyone who seeks to learn a new skill or build their digital profile. Having access to this vast resource is changing how teens learn and develop skills needed for the future.

Third, the biggest difference between our digital transformation and the Industrial Revolution is *speed* of how

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quickly new technologies are created. The hard part is the majority of these changes are invisible, and we are unable to see the speed of change. Like the frog in a pot of water that is slowly simmering on a stove top, the frog is unaware that he is being cooked. Our teens do not understand the speed of change nor do they know of a time when we did not have the Internet. They cannot see the mountains of digital content they are generating or understand the potential consequences that can occur from posting comments that reflect negatively on their personality, work habits and ethics.

For example my son, Brandon, has an Instagram account. Our social media rules are that we follow each other and keep our passwords in the same file. Just like financial records, it's a good idea to keep all your passwords written down and saved in a central location. Saving passwords on your device can potentially create problems, should you lose the phone or it crashes. Brandon knows that he can always ask questions about social media. My goal is for him to learn how to manage his digital profiles; therefore, I do not watch and micromanage every person he follows or his posts on Instagram. However, when I see posts on social media that is inappropriate or someone share too much personal information, like home addresses or license plates. I tell him why this information is not to be shared in public. I've talked with other parents who work in the tech industry, and their approach to social media with their kids is similar. One family has established unwritten rules about who Foursquares when they are eating out so that anyone following them will not know the whole family is out of the house. (Foursquare is

Our Digital Transformation

an app that allows you to “check-in” at locations and earn freebies from retailers and activity badges).

Fourth, it is crucial to know which digital technology skills your teen is missing and then develop an action plan for helping him or her learn these new skills. During every interview with a recruiter I talked to, the same phrase was repeated over and over – adapt and learn new tech skills or you will be left behind. Companies require employees to have both strong computer and social media skills. Today, for individuals to pay bills, apply for employment, or to check healthcare benefits they must have basic Internet skills and access to broadband.

Today, both computer and social media communication skills are required for most employment positions. Social Media is real time digital communication which involves writing our thoughts and comments in a digital environment. To help your teens their writing and communication skills, encourage them to write a blog about their interest or create an online newspaper publication using paper.li. Good communication and writing skills are prized by colleges and recruiters. Spencer Johnson said it best, *“If you do not change, you can become extinct.”*

Where Will This Digital Transformation Lead Us?

In *The Singularity is Near*, Ray Kurzweil, discusses about the mixed blessings of technology. With each

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transformation there are always benefits and costs of adapting to new technology tools. The Digital Revolution is here, and we are all undergoing a digital transformation. Our teens' world is very different than when we grew up in the 80's and 90's. They are seeking a place to call their own, a place where parents are not listening and telling them what to do 24/7. Teens today have greater demands on their schedules, from homework, to studying for standardized assessment test to after school activities or sports. The fastest and easiest way for teens to communicate with their friends is via social media networks. When I was a teen, my friends and I would gather after school in the band hall, not really doing anything important other than visiting, laughing, and teasing cute boys. For the most part, adults left us alone unless we became rowdy or disturbed a teacher's meeting. Even at home, we could sit along our street curb talking and looking at teen magazines without worrying about much other than homework or chores.

Our teens will be the first generation to have every aspect of their life digitized. From the moment they were born, their life has been documented on the Internet, which is creating a treasure trove of data for companies. Startups are launched each month that focus on data mining this information and then reselling or creating a service that uses for education technology, employment or targeted advertisements. Our teens' skills will be tested by sophisticated algorithms that can be calibrated in real time to assess their abilities. Smarterer is a company that provides over 900 tests to recruiters and job seekers with the sole purpose of quickly verifying the individual's

Our Digital Transformation

skills. The company crowdsources tests to make sure they are current and quickly add new skills to the tests if they're not. Teens will face different job demands than previous generations as testing and gaming are now the norm, and having strong computer, programming and social media skills has become a necessity not an option. The Digital Revolution is changing corporate employment. The old school economy is quickly disappearing and being replaced.

Digital Divide – Social Media Literate vs. Illiterate

There is a growing divide between families and students who possess computer and social media skills and individuals that do not have these crucial skills. For students to build a quality social media profile for college or employment, they must have access to broadband. For those of us who have always had access to high speed Internet, it is hard to understand the scope of the problem, but it is there, and the divide will continue to grow.

This divide is more than understanding how to post a tweet on Twitter or upload a cat photo to Facebook. This digital divide is about understanding how digital technology and especially social media are being used as a tool and how to use this tool to gain an advantage and stay employable. Our world is changing. Everything we post can either be an asset or a liability or a combination of both. Mastering social media as a digital communication skill

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can be a valuable asset when your teen is interviewing for an internship or for their first full time job. Recruiters consistently mention the need to have strong writing and digital communication skills. Furthermore, recruiters have loudly voiced the difficulty in finding qualified college graduates who had good digital communication skills and could handle themselves professionally online.

My son becomes embarrassed when I “get all geeky” and talk about social media to people. He’s heard me speak multiple times and often pretends he is not listening. However, later when we are at home, he will ask questions about something I said or ask for advice. I am thankful that we have this open line of communication. He understands that people and companies can see and use the information he posts online. For now, he is on two social media networks and has decided to pass on Facebook. Colleges, recruiters and employers review our teens’ social media profiles to verify information, screen for potential behavior problems and to ensure there are no unwelcomed surprises.

**Which side of the digital divide is your teen on?
Which side are you on?**

How Will EdTech Change Your Teen's Future

Education Technology (edtech) is a rapidly growing industry which is being fueled by venture capital investment funding from groups such as Rethink Education. These investments are disrupting the education industry. Many of the funded startups are seeking to provide students with a better educational experience.

As teens become immersed in digital technology and social media, school systems are working to adapt to our new world. EdTech Meetups have formed across the country creating platforms for educators and startups to visit and explore new opportunities for educating our tech savvy teens. The Internet is open classroom with new education services that are available to individuals of all ages. In New York City, the EdTech MeetUp group hosts EdTech Titans, a forum that brings together some of the most influential thought leaders in the Digital Education Community. At last year's 2013 Ed Tech Titans event, CEO of K-12 Technology for Pearson, Jonathan Harber said "When people talk about disruption in K-12, they usually refer to disruptive technology. In reality the real disruption in K-12 is often innovative business models." Startups are using digital technology to develop customized learning applications that match students' skills and style of learning.

George Cigale, founder of Tutor.com, was another panelist at the event and believes that "It is a false dichotomy to talk about online vs. in-person learning. The question is not blended or online or offline, it's a question of talent.

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All of these media for learning can be implemented poorly or implemented effectively.”

Students who have access to broadband at home have a wealth of learning tools available online to help them improve their math and science skills or even learn a new subject that is not taught at their school. Students today have the opportunity to take the initiative and build their careers at their own pace instead of waiting until high school or college.

Last year, I had the opportunity to visit with Tom Segal, an analyst for Rethink Education. We had a very thought provoking conversation that lasted more than an hour discussing every aspect of the education system. When talking about the team’s vision, Tom stated “We are looking to disrupt the entire education spectrum with a focus on lifelong learning. We believe in the promotion of good ideas.” Our conversation moved from disrupting education to taking responsibility for children’s educational needs. Tom said “Purchasing a diploma is no longer sufficient today. We must all continue to reinvent ourselves and constantly learn new skills.” Rethink Education is providing funding to more than a dozen edtech companies and Image K12 is an accelerator that has a program for educational startups. For a peek into the near future, check out both Rethink Education and Image K12 websites for the next round of edtech startups and how these businesses are focused on changing education.

Our digital transformation will alter our lives and have the greatest impact on our teens for three reasons: the Internet is invisible, our online comments are traceable and the speed of change is making it hard to keep

Our Digital Transformation

up. During the Industrial Revolution, we could see the railroads being built, telephone lines installed along the roads and electrical lights in our neighbors' houses. We knew exactly how technology was changing our world. The Digital Revolution is different as we cannot always see how our world is changing, and if these changes are good or bad. As my son always says to me "Mom, the world is just different today, it's not old school anymore."

KEY CHAPTER POINTS:

- Digital technology, especially digital communication, is rapidly evolving, and it is important to stay informed on how these significant changes will impact your family.
- The digital world is normal for our teens, and they do not think twice about what they post on social media.
- Create an action plan to learn social media communication skills, start by subscribing to Mashable or Social Media Today for updates. Most of the information is about marketing; however, these platforms are very good about providing social media network and security updates.
- Remember, just because you cannot see how digital technology is changing, doesn't mean it is not happening.
- EdTech is disrupting traditional education by providing new opportunities for learning and obtaining career development skills.

CHAPTER 2

What is Social Media?

What is social media really? Is it a new marketing term that will fade into the sunset or is it a phase my teen will outgrow? Professionals who use social media for work understand how real time digital communication is changing. Our smart device is a tiny computer, telephone, and digital camera rolled into one unit. Social media in its simplest form is a real-time digital communication tool that can be used to communicate with family, friends, co-workers, business associates or customers anytime anywhere in the world.

To help you better understand social media, here are four key definitions.

Social Media – *It is how people share ideas, content, photos, text, images and videos online. In a nut shell, it is the sharing of content online with our friends, family, co-workers, clients, strangers, and anyone who will listen to us*