



Book Review: The Social Media Bible

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The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools, and Strategies for Business Success (2nd ed.) by Lon Safko, Hoboken, N. J.: Wiley, <2010>, ISBN 9780470623978 (pbk.), Pages 792, Price \$24 USD.

The field of education is often viewed as supporting other disciplines such as sociology, psychology and arts. From within education, however, the reverse holds equally true. We utilize the advances in those grand disciplines, both old and new, and make them ours in the benefit of education. Thus, research and practice in educational administration and management, for example, has been heavily nurtured by the field of business administration with its managerial knowhow, leadership discourses, decision making theories and perhaps even moral philosophy. With this backdrop, I took up the task of this book review with a single question in mind: What can a book on social media marketing offer to education?

At first sight, the book *The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools, and Strategies for Business Success* by Lon Safko appeared as having little relationship to my research interests in education. This was to be proven wrong as “What’s in it for me” kind of signposts in the book started turning my attitude into “What’s in it for education” sort of mindset. In fact, most beneficial reading attitude for this book would be that of translating on the go the business context into the contexts of pedagogy, content and knowledge management relevant to our field.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part entitled ‘Tactics’ provides a review of the state-of-the-art of social media. This part accounts for about two third of the book and, I believe, it is where the readers in the field of education would benefit most. After a practical definition of social media, the book goes on to provide readers with details on the Web forum, Podcasts, Wiki, RSS feeds and other social media tools. While reading, I realized that I have been overestimating my knowledge about several social media tools, for example, the best time of the day to send out a bulk email. I was now subconsciously translating it into my own context: “What time is the best time of the day to send out promotional bulk emails about my X degree programme?”

A typical chapter of this twenty two-chapter long first section is organized into subsections such as ‘What’s in it for You?’ (relevance for reader); ‘Back to the beginning’ (historical background of a social media platform); ‘What you need to know’ (applicability); a subsection on smart usage with different subtitles; ‘Commandments’ (suggestions to reader) and a ‘Conclusion’ that comes with resources and references. The informative strength of this part of the book with its descriptions of the social networking tools gets furthered with text boxes inserted throughout with practitioners’ essay-interviews called ‘Expert insight’ and the ‘Return of investment (ROI) of social media’.

I found inadequate the title ‘Tactics’ for this first part of the book not only because there is an ad hoc section devoted to strategy later in the book but also because it is mainly descriptive in nature. The second part of the book by the title ‘Tools’ is a two hundred-page long classification of extant social media platforms into 15 major categories, to name a few, Social networks, Microblogging, Livecasting,

Virtual worlds and Gaming. This second part gave me the impression of a handbook within a treatise because the social media tools already discussed in the first part are repeated, except that now they are presented succinctly and distinctly categorized. The added value of this yellow pages directory-like section is the exact information where to find service providers, for example, ‘Second Life’ and ‘Kaneva’ for virtual worlds-platform. The latter makes this part of the book a resource section, handy perhaps for those education practitioners in need of a first generic information about a social media platform and its service provider.

Reading the last and the shortest Part III ‘Strategy’, what lingered in my mind was some scenarios with protagonists such as faculty deans, program heads, school principals and administrators of educational institutions. Suppose that you are in charge of a Master degree programme and you are about to kick off a PR and media campaign to promote your programme. After identifying all the currently available resources, you will find yourself having no other choice but to make use of several social media tools. You are also likely to realize that all the chosen social media tools should be integrated in order to be implemented and its effects measured after the implementation. This is exactly what the third part of the book is all about.

It would be rather pointless to give a biographical profile or credentials of Lon Safko in this book review. This is because this book is to be read on an “as is” basis, which is the only way of reading a book of this kind. As for reading experience, I felt neither spectacular surge of enthusiasm nor ebbing interest throughout. I think that calling this book a handbook of social media is a disservice. It is a resource book of almost biblical proportion and comprehensiveness that has been written based on a serious research undertaken by the author and his apparent team of fact finders.

To conclude by returning to my opening remark, the many contributions of business administration to the field of education have been on the organizational management of educational institutions. I believe that The Social Media Bible with its eyes wide open street smartness that characterizes all profit-oriented business book genre—perhaps it transcends the genre—have much to offer to education or, the other way around, education could draw important insights about social media and use them for the benefit of contemporary education. This is obviously a must read for teachers and students in direct contact with media-communication education programmes let alone theorists looking at sociology of education, which is rather unfathomable today without social media. With the current speed of developments in social media, readers will probably see many more editions of this book, each with significant amount of updates.

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Dr. Jae Park is an Assistant Professor of International Education and Lifelong Learning at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. He holds the degree of Doctor of Education from the University of Hong Kong, where he continues as a research associate and a visiting lecturer. His interest in communication and technology in education is part of his broader research interest in sociology of education (technological, cultural and ecological discourses) and philosophy of education. He recently published in *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, and *Ethics & Behavior*. He serves as the Secretary of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong.

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