



What Successful Companies Know About Social Media Communications Strategy That You May Not.

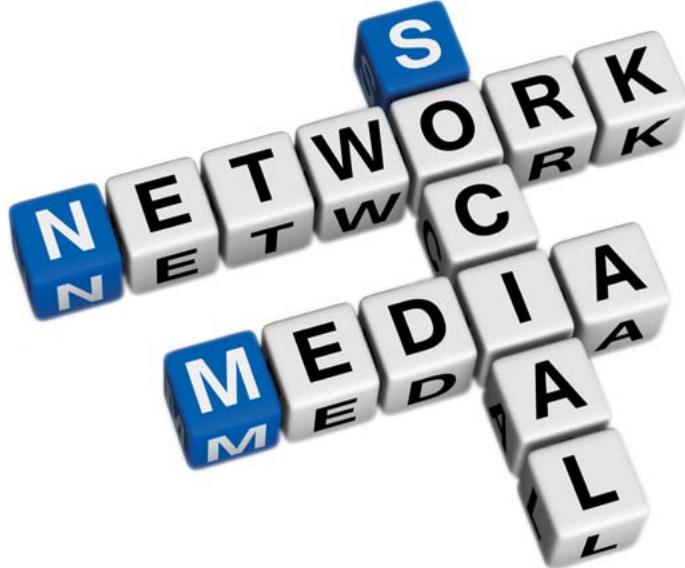


Chief Outsiders

Fractional CMOS for Growth & Midsize Companies

Social Media Has Revolutionized Where, When, And How We Communicate Personally and With Businesses

In today's world of consumer connectivity, you need to beef up your communications strategy or get left behind. Whatever business you're in, you have a story to tell but the complexity of getting that story out in the face of social media and an ever increasing number of connected devices causes companies to constantly be evaluating their traditional communications strategies. This eBook is designed to help business leaders improve their communications strategies and design a communication plan for the future



This eBook is organized as follows:

1. What's Changed?
2. 8 Reasons Why You Need A Social Media Communications Strategy And Plan In Today's Business Environment
3. Neuromarketing And Social Media Content
4. Social Media Skills Every Business Leader Needs
5. Today's Digital Marketing Communications Options
6. But Which Social Media Network is right for my business?
7. Template for Developing a Communication Strategy and Plan
8. Summary

What's Changed?

Well, quickly said; just about everything. In our consulting practices we are finding that most if not all CEOs are troubled with the fact that **what worked two or three years ago is not working today**. This has lead to some creative ideas springing up but looking at the big picture and how the company interfaces with their customers, employees, prospects and stakeholders is still something that executive's today struggle with. Very few businesses today have been untouched by the social-media revolution and very few leaders today have embraced this change in the market.

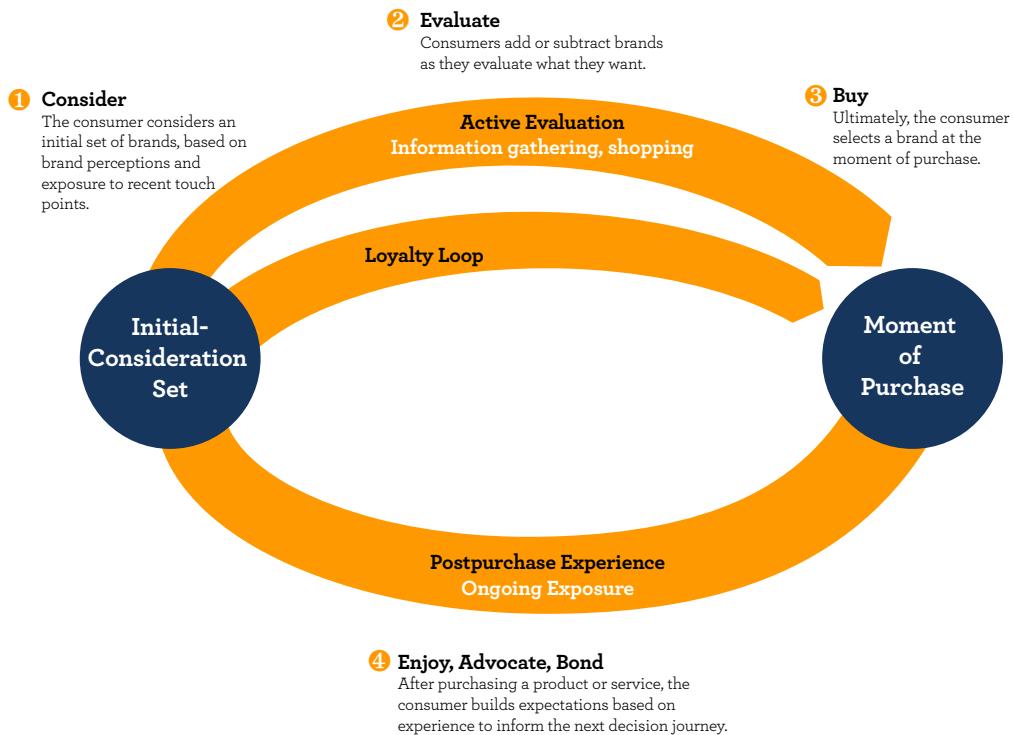
It is not just social media that has changed the business environment but expansion of the internet and mobile communications are changing buyer behaviors. Worldwide, there were over two billion Internet users in 2011, up from one billion in 2005, 420 million in 2000, and 45 million in 1995. The U.S. has now eclipsed Europe in terms of penetration of mobile media, with 47 percent of American mobile audiences using connected media in 2010 compared to 34 percent of Europeans. The pervasiveness of mobile technology is creating a whole mobile lifestyle, providing accessibility to banking, insurance, utilities, products and services and has revolutionized where, when, and how we communicate personally and with businesses.

More importantly, from a communications standpoint, it is now just as important to communicate with constituents both before as well as after the purchase. For example, a McKinsey research study found that more than 60 percent of consumers with facial skin care products conduct online research about the products **after** purchase.

A communications plan today needs to embrace the whole customer life cycle as is illustrated in McKinsey's Consumer Decision Journey on the following page:



The Consumer Decision Journey



Source: McKinsey Quarterly https://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/The_consumer_decision_journey_2373

The post-purchase experience is an opportunity to build customer loyalty through engagement and brand community building.

8 Reasons Why You Need a Social Media Communication Strategy and Plan in Today's Business Environment

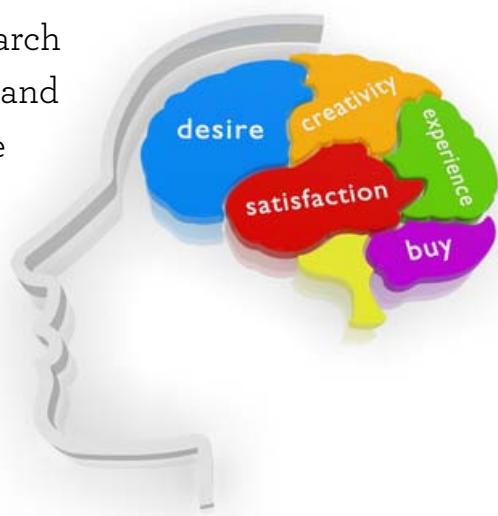
The following pertains to both internal and/or external communications:

1. To personify your company and tell people why you exist. Keep in mind that people don't necessarily buy what you do but why you do it. In addition, the perception of your brand can be solidified from the company's standpoint and not necessarily from the public's.
2. To articulate the goals and objectives of your company in a market relevant manner.
3. To clarify the relationships in an Omni-Channel world: The myriad of communications vehicles in today's technology enhanced, consumer powered world, make it extremely important to consider the messaging, audiences and types of activities that will get your story out.

4. To identify the primary and secondary communications channels. You cannot forget the traditional channels but the choices are immense in the age of social media so this element has to be carefully thought through to maximize your exposure.
5. **To establish a senior executive led communications process.** Yes it is time for the leadership team to jump into the fray and especially in social media with all its inherent risks, uncertainty and additional time required. Early adopter companies are now building competitive advantage through social media communications. For example: Richard Branson (@richardbranson) of the Virgin Group tweets every day and has 2.8M followers. (we are followers and he tweets on all sorts of subjects)
6. To engage your employees and create community. Seek their input. Involving your employees will produce creativity and camaraderie. Often the best ideas come from people you work with every day.
7. To solicit real-time and relevant feedback from prospects and customers. Times have changed and the customer is control of your brand and your reputation. You need to engage or run the risk of one of your competitors doing a better job at it.
8. To measure the effectiveness of your communications and adjust on the fly if necessary. Do a Communications: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) review on a regular basis and take action.

Neuromarketing and Social Media Content

Neuromarketing is a new field of marketing research that studies consumers' sensorimotor, cognitive, and affective response to marketing stimuli. From the standpoint of developing a communications strategy that includes social media, blogging and content marketing, paying attention to Neuromarketing principles is extremely important to be able to engage your target audience and ultimately get them to buy.



In a book by Christophe Morin entitled **Neuromarketing: Understanding the Buy Buttons in Your Customer's Brain**, the author has translated the science into a methodology that helps marketing and sales professionals develop messaging, content and collateral that engages the audience at the instinctual level of the brain called the “Reptilian Brain.” Mr. Morin’s research and experience has led him to believe that in order to engage an audience and eventually get them to buy your product or service you have to be cognizant of the six stimuli that trigger action in the reptilian brain. The six stimuli are: (i) Self-centered, (ii) Contrast, (iii) Tangible, (iv) Beginning and End, (v) Visual and (vi) Emotional. From a communications standpoint you will need address these stimuli in the following process: (i) Diagnose The Pain, (ii) Differentiate Your Claim, (iii) Demonstrate The Gain and (iv) Deliver To The Reptilian Brain. The concept of Neuromarketing as part of your communication plan can be incorporated in your sales approach as well to help your sales team in lead nurturing and closing business faster.

Social Media Skills Every Leader Needs

Roland Deiser and Sylvain Newton have just released a **study** they conducted with GE in which they talk about six dimensions of social-media-literate leadership. In the study they point out the following leadership characteristics required to effectively engage an entire company in today’s communications environment:

1. The leader as producer: Creating compelling content
2. The leader as distributor: Leveraging dissemination dynamics
3. The leader as recipient: Managing communication overflow
4. The leader as adviser and orchestrator: Driving strategic social-media utilization
5. The leader as architect: Creating an enabling organizational infrastructure
6. The leader as analyst: Staying ahead of the curve

I need to emphasize that companies that develop a communications strategy today built for tomorrow need to engage the entire leadership team in the process as ambassadors and active participants.

Today's Digital Marketing Communications Options

| Platform | Description |
|---|--|
| Website | Websites today need to be more who you are, what you stand for and why you do what you do rather than just what you do. Compelling content is not only required to keep your audience on your site longer and visit more pages, it's expected by the content driven online society. |
| Social Media | Social media marketing refers to the process of gaining website traffic or attention through social media sites but it is more than that. Social media is a complete shift in the paradigm of communication. It is a way of connecting with your audience, unearthing consumer insights, managing your reputation and creating brand loyalty never seen before in the history of marketing. |
| Internet-Specific Advertising and Videos | Video as a means of getting your message across is extremely important as audiences prefer video over other forms of content. According to a recent Forrester report advertisers will spend more than \$9 billion on video ads by 2017. Not to mention that YouTube is the second largest search engine on the Internet. |
| Display Advertising | Internet display advertising appears on web pages in many forms such as banner ads or ads placed on relevant websites. LinkedIn for example is fast becoming a preferred site for certain types of companies. |
| Search Advertising | Often referred to as paid advertising or pay-per-click advertising, is reputed to be 40% of all online advertising. |
| Mobile Marketing | Mobile marketing is marketing on or with a mobile device, such as a Smartphone or tablet. This field of marketing has expanded in recent years to include: SMS, MMS, push-notifications, in-game mobile marketing, mobile web, QR codes, proximity systems and location-based services. |
| Microsites | A microsite is an individual web page or a small cluster of pages which are meant to function as a discrete entity within an existing website or to complement an offline activity. The microsite's main landing page can have its own domain name or subdomain. |
| Online Communities | Also referred to as online social networks is a common way for you to associate yourself with people of common interests. In recent years this concept has expanded rapidly in the business community to include both public and invitation only communities. Many means are used in social software separately or in combination, including text-based chat rooms and forums that use voice, video text. |
| Interstitials | An interstitial ad is a full-page ad that appears before the actual webpage. It can be further classified as a prestitial ad or an interstitial ad. A prestitial ad, or splash ad, displays before the homepage. An interstitial ad displays before a certain content page. |
| Blogs | Blogs are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, new ideas or insights and often include graphics or video. A common component of content conscious companies is the CEO Blog. Most good quality blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other. |
| Email | Email marketing is commonly used to enhance the relationship of a business with its current or previous customers, to encourage customer loyalty and repeat business or to prospect for new business. Many technologies have been developed to automate this form of communication as well as using opt-in marketing or permission marketing. While many people believe that email marketing is slowing, researchers estimate that United States firms alone spent US \$1.5 billion on email marketing in 2011 and will grow to \$2.4 billion by 2016. |

But Which Social Media Network is Right For My Business?

We won't list them all but below are the top social media networks that we think businesses today should pay attention to and the reasons why each may be important depending on your marketing strategy. Keep in mind that the credo for success in any of these environments is no spam type advertising or annoying links.

Facebook

Although primarily a personal social network, Facebook is becoming increasing important to B2C companies and can be successful if you use it correctly. If your goal is to push product information you will likely fall short of your expectations for this site. If however you publish content that your fans love so much that they cannot help but share it you will likely succeed. Facebook has an equivalent to Pay-Per-Click (PPC) and is called Sponsored Results or Ads. Used in combination with the "fun" side of your company persona in conjunction with an enticing offer can produce new customers and grow your business.

Twitter

Did you know that Twitter is one of the top search engines in the world behind Google and YouTube? It is helpful from a business perspective to view Twitter from this vantage point. The problem with Twitter for business is you have to



have interesting and fun tweets so people will want to follow you. With Twitter it is imperative to have a well thought out communication strategy and understand how to frame messages with the correct tone. Once this is set and it works stick with it.

Google+

Although rather new, Google+ is worth paying attention to and is likely to grow rapidly given Google's marketing muscle.

Google+ works in circles like Facebook works with friends. In Facebook you can post updates and share videos, pictures and links within your friend network. With Google+ you can do the same but also share with extended circles giving businesses a far better reach.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business networking tool that operates in a similar way to Facebook and Google+ but is geared to business professionals. There are some distinct advantages for B2B marketers. LinkedIn also has PPC component but you are better able to laser target your audience by geography, business type, size of company and title of the member. LinkedIn also has a very large number of groups that you can join or get creative and start your own "by invitation only" group.

Pinterest

Pinterest is a great site for people who want to organize and share all kinds of things you might find on the web with their connections but it is also a great place to get market intelligence and for getting inspired by other people's ideas. Pinterest is integrated with both Facebook and Twitter making it a site you will want to work with if your social networking strategy includes these two sites.



YouTube

We are sure anyone reading this eBook has been on YouTube. YouTube can be used for a multitude of business purposes including hosting videos that are embedded on your website. More advance business users of YouTube are creating their own business channel to host topical and interesting videos directed at their target audiences. As for advertising or promoting your products or services one of the best methods is to create informational or educational videos for the benefit of others and either making reference to your products or services in the video or attaching a link to them in the information folder.

Foursquare

This could be a great site for companies who operate in a local area. Foursquare is a social media website that lets you manage your physical business locations on a sort of interactive web based map. This application allows for people to search for businesses in their area, which can lead them to your business if you have a listing.

Tumblr

If your business targets the youth market this could be an excellent site for you. Tumblr serves both as a blog and social network that's useful for posting and sharing images, video, audio or short pieces of writing. In that sense, Tumblr is a bit like Facebook -- but with a few advantages. For instance, Tumblr blogs can be accessed directly via the Web, whereas Facebook content is available only to its users. That means Tumblr content gets indexed by search engines and can increase your search visibility.

For a more detailed analysis of Social Media Marketing and the advantages for business owners we recommend the books , ‘The Social Media Symphony’ and ‘The New 3-Foot Rule’ also written by author **Mike Magolnick** both available on Amazon.

Template for Developing a Communication Strategy and Plan

The following are the components of a communications strategy and plan that takes into account the growing need to be relevant in the market.

- Vision
- Mission
- Strategy
 - Objectives
 - Audiences
 - Messaging
 - Tools and Delivery Options
 - Timetable
 - Budget, Committee and Skills
 - Organizational Buy-In
 - Evaluation and Amendment

Vision

A vision statement for a new or midsize company spells out goals at a high level and should coincide with the founder/CEO's goals for the business in terms of growth, values, employees, contributions to society, and the like; therefore, self-reflection is a vital activity if a meaningful vision is to be developed.

Mission

The mission statement should be a concise statement of business strategy and developed from the customer's perspective and in today's environment in order to differentiate you from your competition is should answer the question "Why Do We Exist"?

Strategy

The strategy should focus on communication but also incorporate an organizational strategy and public relations strategy as well. Components of the communications strategy should include the following:

Objectives

The objectives should be multi-faceted and all inclusive. For example:

- To clarify the corporate goals and objectives: Think of this plan as our roadmap; everyone involved should know where we want to go and how we intend to get there.
- To clarify the relationships between audiences, messages, channels, activities and materials: Going through the communications planning process will help identify who we need to reach, tell them what we want them to know, and how we will reach them. Each of our audiences has unique characteristics, needs, and motivations. Through planning, we will discover the most effective ways to communicate with them.
- To identify and implement a variety of communications activities: There are many different ways to spread our message. This will help us to settle on which activities we will engage in so that we aren't continuously pulled in different directions.
- To clarify roles of the Board, leadership team and stakeholders': People need to know what they will be contributing to the organization and



what they are responsible for. This plan will help manage people and their responsibilities.

- To develop creativity and camaraderie among our team: Involving many people will bring in different perspectives and diversity of thought.
To help our “team members” get on the “same page”: A well articulated plan will help people get on the same page and articulate a consistent message.
- To include team member input in the communications process: These people are important to our organization, and this will show them how much you do value their input.
- To allow everyone on our team to have a stake in our success: Getting involved in the process and integrating participants’ opinions brings a sense of ownership.
- To gauge our plan’s success and areas in need of strengthening: We must be open to review to determine strengths, weaknesses, and obstacles and then create and implement new approaches.

Audiences

You will need to develop a list of audience categories and then frame the messages.

For the purpose of Framing Messages, the “we” indicated in the framing questions needs to be determined (i.e: the CEO or the head of customer service etc.). Each message in each audience category needs to be evaluated under the following scenarios:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| What are we saying about ourselves? | What are they saying about themselves? |
| What are we saying about them? | What are they saying about us? |

Messaging

Messaging is the critical component in successfully communication to your audiences. It is no longer good enough to “invent” messages; they have to be relevant, focused on current customer needs and most importantly need to be

litmus tested in the market. Someone from the organization needs to be tasked with conducting market research or focus groups to find out the current views and opinions of the audiences both internal and external.



Tools and Delivery Options

With the large number of digital marketing communications options listed above you will have to select and market test the most effective in terms of return on investment.

We recommend an **Agile Marketing** approach which Greg wrote about in a blog recently.

- An iterative approach to developing programs and deploying tactics
- Open and transparent metrics for tracking those programs and tactics
- Efficient and lightweight collaboration that crosses traditional boundaries
- Daily communication among all the participants in an agile “unit”
- Continuous engagement in experiments and data-driven testing
- Deliverables that are measured in days and weeks, not months or years
- Flexibility to dynamically adjust plans and priorities when things change

You will also have to consider support tools to manage communications and marketing effectiveness. The entry level tools from vendors like HubSpot, HootSuite, TweetReach, Vocus WordStream and many other are geared for small to mid size companies and are very cost effective given the benefits they provide.

Timetable

A rollout plan needs to be developed and you might even see this as a project plan given all the various components, deliverables that need to be met and tracked. We have found it helpful to create a matrix as part of the project plan:

| Audience | Characteristics | Communications Needs | Preferred Media |
|------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Audience 1 | | | |
| Audience 2 | | | |
| Audience 3 | | | |
| Audience 4 | | | |

Various Communications mechanisms will need to be selected which could include:

- Workshops
- Focus Group Sessions
- Project Newsletter
- Corporate Newsletter
- E-mail memos
- Presentations at pre-scheduled meetings
- Information Sessions
- HR help center
- Designated Support Leaders throughout company

Budget, Committee and Skills

Do not fall into the trap of handing this off to a marketing manager for implementation. It is far too important. Marketing can and should be the lead but a cross functional team needs to be set up to evaluate the progress, create new ideas and make adjustments. Be sure that the team has the right skills and relevant customer/market knowledge. The team needs to be fully engaged through common interest. A realistic but affordable budget must be set and tracked for return on investment.

Organizational Buy-in

If your company is an operational focused company vs. a market-driven company you will be in for significant cultural change in implementing a new communications strategy. A blog recently wrote entitled **Top Business Growth Driver: 100% Employee Engagement** may be of some assistance in getting buy-in.

Below are some quick tips on how to get organizational buy-in for your new communications strategy:

- Create a sense of urgency and excitement and show how the plan will ignite the company
- Clearly layout roles and responsibilities and game plan providing immediate next steps.
- Don't hide the difficulties that you will encounter along the way. Be open and honest.
- Don't **tell** your employees this is the right decision **ask** for their support and tell them what is expected of them.
- Set up a mechanism for soliciting feedback on a regular basis.

Evaluation and Amendment

Keep in mind that when executing a communication plan your company will think about this logically but your audience (prospects and customers) will not. It is then critical to regularly evaluate the strategy and plan and make adjustments as required. You will need to find the sweet spot through trial and error. The criteria for finding the sweet spot are:

- Practical and easy to absorb
- Attracts attention
- Makes narrative sense
- It is relevant and focused
- It is honest and realistic

By definition this is a creative process so set benchmarks so that everyone knows success when it happens. Evaluation and amendments should be done

by a committee of stakeholders which would include key members of the leadership team.

Summary

From the perspective of seeking new customers and retaining old ones, business has changed so much in the past couple of years that new and creative thinking is required to meet the challenge. We believe that what is evolving is that the communications strategy is becoming the prime business growth strategy and that a sales, business development and marketing strategy are components of this strategy.

The key to effective marketing communications is getting the consumer to feel the way you want them to feel about your company, employees, products and services. A communication strategy that encompasses both traditional as well as social/digital media and content marketing can provide your company with significant competitive advantage and most importantly keep you **relevant** in today's business environment.

Here are some questions you that you can ask to ensure your strategy is effective:

- Have you “litmus tested” the messages to ensure they are relevant to the audience?
- Does the communications strategy/plan help with the sales process?
- Does it leverage the skills of participants in a way that increases revenue and enhance customer value?
- Is the communication well designed and written?
- Are the graphics and videos eye-catching and do they support the focus of the communications efforts?
- Are you continually getting and responding to relevant market feedback?

About Chief Outsiders

Chief Outsiders, headquartered in Houston, TX, is unique among strategic marketing consulting firms, taking growth and mid-sized companies to the next level with outsourced CMO services. Unlike most marketing consulting firms, Chief Outsiders believes that delivering a world-class marketing strategy creates very little value. The value is created by helping the organization implement the growth vision. ■



About Greg Spindler

A high-impact marketing and business development professional, Greg Spindler has demonstrated throughout his 30-year career an uncanny ability to create effective strategies and actualize development to ensure companies' commercial success. His continuing professional development in both domestic and international markets has given him a unique ability to identify issues, formulate plans and implement decisive action. Greg is a builder by nature, accomplished in crafting, implementing and evaluating cross-functional decisions to help an organization achieve its long-term objectives.

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About Mike Magolnick

Mike Magolnick is an industry-recognized executive with twenty years of proven leadership in addition to being a Bestselling Author and Public Speaker in the field of Social and Digital Media. He has extensive experience with marketing, sales, brand management, strategic analysis/intelligence and business planning. As a social media pioneer, Mike is among the most connected people in the world with a personal reach of more than thirty million people including business and political leaders, celebrities, authors and more. Mike has personally worked with dozens of companies on strategic planning for social infrastructure and growth. He frequently speaks at conferences and business events as well as hosting training for thousands of people on social media and advanced marketing strategies.

Mike has also been a recognized expert in the Internet industry having appeared in the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, American Venture Magazine, Direct Selling News, Entrepreneur Magazine, eCommerce Times, The American Business Journal, Daily Disruption and several other national publications. Mike is a member of American Mensa, he has a Ph.D. in Organizational Science and Marketing and he received a degree in Corporate Governance from Tulane Law School.

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