Technology and Social Media

The ability to actively and effectively tap the latest social media and web 2.0 strategies, technologies, tools, and trends advocating for widespread use of social media while offering guidance on safe, ethical, and productive use of this technology.

Technology and Transformation

In a world where Facebook users post comments or punch the “like” button 3 billion times every day, the Twitter community launches 2.8 billion “tweets”\(^1\) every week, and YouTube attracts more than 1 billion users to watch 6 billion hours of video every month,\(^2\) diversity professionals must develop the knowledge, skills, and expertise to take full advantage of evolving social media applications and communications and information technologies.

According to New York Times op-ed columnist Thomas L. Friedman, “globalization and the information technology revolution have gone to a whole new level. Thanks to cloud computing, robotics, 3G wireless connectivity, Skype, Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Twitter, the iPad, and cheap Internet-enabled smartphones, the world has gone from merely connected to hyper-connected.”\(^3\)

Moreover, this intensity will only accelerate as another technology revolution, driven by “big data” and expanding processing power, broadens the horizon of opportunity for diversity and inclusion innovation. The growing ability to collect, manage, and use vast amounts of information offers the possibility of new strategies for overcoming issues from health disparities related to ethnicity, age, gender, race, and disability to innovative applications for producing, customizing, enhancing, and delivering products and services to communities of all kinds.

According to Victor Mayer-Schönberger and Kenneth Cukier, the immensity of data stored on earth in 2013 was barely comprehensible and it has been growing rapidly since then. In their book, Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think, they estimate that it would take five stacks of CD-ROMs reaching from the earth to the moon to contain it.\(^4\) Management consulting firm McKinsey & Company projects the growth rate of data at 40 percent per year. Add two more stacks to the five every year.\(^5\)
Two Revolutions

Consequently, while business and industry tackle the challenges and leverage the new opportunities created by today’s communications revolution, they must also strive to harness the transformative power of the evolving revolution in “Big Data”—a force with the potential to increase productivity, drive global economic change, and enable companies to collect and evaluate information on a massive scale.

This revolution is also turning upside-down today’s competitive landscape, giving rise to new competitors, and compelling companies to become more innovative, creative, and efficient. At the same time, everyone — businesses, government, and the public — will have to deal with the unexpected consequences and potential misuse of information that intrudes into our public and personal lives, documenting almost everything we do.

Companies that are most successful in enabling and leveraging the use of big data are also the ones most likely to dominate the competitive landscape of the future. And these companies will depend on technologically savvy diversity professionals who understand the importance of the tech and social media competency and strive to master it. For some, this may be a challenging Next Generation competency to acquire. Many experienced professionals may feel uncomfortable and insecure with technology and have been content to leave the bytes, gigabytes, and geophbytes to the company “geeks.”

We may feel mathematically challenged and intimidated by computer applications that do more than word processing. However, no one expects you to debate quantum mechanics with an MIT PhD, write a dissertation on string theory, or give a lecture on the nature of the universe. Yet, acquiring this Next Generation competency means that you will be expected to have the technical proficiency to keep pace with the latest advances in technology, recognize their capabilities and shortcomings, and leverage their strengths.

Diversity Best Practices defines this skill set as:

The ability to actively and effectively tap the latest social media and web 2.0 strategies, technologies, tools, and trends advocating for widespread use of social media while offering guidance on safe, ethical, and productive use of this technology.

This competency is not as complex or impenetrable as it may first appear. Dedicated human resources and diversity professionals are well positioned to acquire these skills, concepts, and techniques and use them to drive diversity and inclusion at their organizations. The first step in mastering this competency is determining why progressive businesses are so bullish on social media, web 2.0, and other advanced technologies.

Consumers and Social Media

Consumers have embraced social media much more quickly than businesses. While commercial television spent 13 years striving to reach 50 million households and Internet service providers signed their 50-millionth customer in three years, Facebook attracted 50 million users in one year and Twitter reached the same landmark in only nine months. In contrast, companies have tapped into only a small portion of potential value offered by social media, and many have followed the recommendation offered by the Conference Board’s Women’s Leadership: “Online networking and other forms of social media have become part of everyone’s daily personal and professional lives. Organizations need to understand how they work and how employees and customers are using them.”

In analyzing the four industry sectors—consumer packaged goods (CPG), advanced manufacturing, professional services, and consumer-facing financial services—that account for nearly 20 percent of global sales, consultants at McKinsey discovered that “social platforms [could] unlock $900 billion to $1.3 trillion in value in those sectors alone.” Consequently, the global market for social-media applications is growing rapidly and is expected to “swell to $4.5 billion by 2016, up from $767 million in 2011.” This estimate is based on the assumption that business investment in social-media technologies will increase approximately 40 percent annually for the next five years.

Social media’s capacities to facilitate interaction and networking create value. Newly Weds Foods, a global wholesale food supplier serving institutions and restaurants, for example, leverages social-media to enable the company’s 2,700 employees to work collaboratively in global, virtual teams. Its chefs use a social media platform developed by IBM to share their expertise and create specialized menu items for their most demanding customers. Chefs in Chicago and Sydney, Australia, for example, worked together to fulfill a European customer’s challenging request for an exclusive batter recipe.

Employees and Social Media

The use of social media and technology abound. Progressive human resources and diversity leaders prove their competency in applying social media every day. Retired employees at computer giant Microsoft, sales associates at retailer Old Navy, new
employees and interns at Deloitte Milwaukee, and Muslim Employees at American Airlines use their Facebook pages to encourage interaction and collaboration.

Samples from September 2013 Twitter posts include: Praises from technology manufacturer HP Canada for its ERGs that “provide a unique environment where peers and management work together;” Latina Style celebrates the ERGs selected by the magazine as the top five in 2013; Google publicizes an intern’s blog posting on his experiences in an ERG; and PG&E alerts its Twitter followers that its ERGs will announce their scholarship awards for 2013.

ERGs rely on social media to serve their members and constituencies, and advance the strategic goals of their companies. At Sodexo, for example, the African American Leadership Forum (AALF) created a virtual chapter to reach members dispersed throughout many company locations. The company’s Intergenerational Network Group (i-Gen) uses virtual meetings to share intergenerational workforce experiences with co-workers in numerous locations simultaneously. Sodexo also created a virtual platform called VDBLS to transform its Virtual Diversity Business and Leadership Summit into an ongoing diversity resource, enabling employees to interact with diversity experts in live chats, access online courses, and participate in 50 learning activities focusing on the many dimensions of diversity. Employees have participated in 3,798 training events using VDBLS.12

HP uses social media platforms to engage its employees. In 2012, the company launched OneHP to create a more inclusive workplace where all employees can inform their colleagues of who they are and what they do. Employees use this social network to share their profiles, interests, and expertise and to seek the counsel of co-workers in solving a problem or creating better ways to do their jobs. HP’s WaterCooler is another internal platform that helps employees maintain contact with co-workers they know or connect with ones they have not met.13

Using Social Media to Connect with Specific Groups and Target Market Segments

ERGs have played key roles in advising companies about efforts to use social media to connect with specific groups and target market segments. Consumer product giant Procter & Gamble’s Hispanic Leadership Team (HLT) has been instrumental in the success of the company’s efforts to reach out to Hispanic women through the “Orgullosa” (Proud) initiative launched in 2011, which, according to the website “celebrate[s], empower[s], and fuel[s] Latinas’ accomplishments and dreams.”14 The website, Orgullosa.com, and the Facebook page, www.facebook.com/orgullosa, provide the platform for the initiative. These virtual communities are electronic forums where “Latinas can engage in a dialogue with one another.”15 By offering counsel on beauty, household, and lifestyle choices, Orgillosa also provides P&G a channel for promoting its products relevant to Latinas.

The Ford Motor Community uses Twitter to reach social-media savvy consumers, especially Millennials who make up a large portion of Twitter’s customer base. In a 2011 Advertising Age article, Sheryl Connelly, global consumer trends and “futuring” manager at Ford, said Millennials are “an incredible market opportunity, but the way that Millennials interact with brands is totally different from earlier generations.”16

Connelly explained that Ford engages Millennials by recognizing their priorities and developing messages relevant to this generation and then delivering these messages via social media. Ford has found that traditional marketing approaches that highlighted engines, high speeds, and body styles do not work for Millennials. To this cohort, an “automobile is about basic transportation. A bigger engine might not attract Millennials, but adding information technology to turn ‘the car into a ‘lifestyle enabler’ does.”17

Ford’s success underscores social media’s effectiveness in cultivating personalized relationships with consumers. By providing two-way, customized communication to individuals or specific customer segments cost-effectively, social media enables companies large and small to profit from customer-cultivating strategies.18

The Clorox Company developed a social media vehicle particularly attractive to Millennials. The company’s social media team created Clorox Connects “to increase Clorox’s virtual research and development capabilities [and enable] brainstorming with customers and suppliers.”19 The site encourages participation by awarding points to visitors who post answers or rate comments. Contributors who demonstrate expertise advance to higher levels of difficulty. The site recognizes the most creative and involved participants, giving them visibility and enticing them and visitors to return to the site.20

For Millennials in the construction and engineering industries in the San Francisco Area, Construction Millennials of America (CMA) also uses Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/ConstructionMillenials), a website, and other technologies and social media to create “opportunities [for its members] to develop leadership skills and chances to cultivate relationships with industry peers.”21

Millennials are not the only groups that find social media attractive. A Pew Research Center study characterizing the “Landscape of Social Media Users” identified the
population groups most likely to favor particular social media platforms. They found Facebook to be “especially appealing” to women and young adults (ages 18 to 29), while Blacks, urban residents and young adults favor Twitter. Pinterest is most attractive to women, adults 50 years old and under, Whites, and people with some higher education, while Instagram is favored by young adults, Blacks, Latinos, women and urban residents. According to the study, 26 percent of Blacks use Twitter, almost double the use by Whites (14 percent) and seven points higher than Latinos (19 percent); 23 percent of Blacks use Instagram, exceeding the percentage of Whites (11 percent), and Latinos (18 percent).^{22}

A study by multicultural authority Felipe Korzeny also affirms, “Emerging minorities are more engaged with new media and are likely to use it as a source of information for their lifestyle and consumer behavior. He reports that, “Brands that facilitate interaction [on social media] seem likely to have an advantage as that plays directly to what is important to these consumers.”^{23} Social networking attracts more Latinos than non-Latinos. The former spend 4.0 hours per week social networking, and the latter 3.7 hours. Latinos also outpace other population groups in time used text messaging, instant messaging, and calling on landlines, cellular phones, and Skype.^{24}

Human resources and diversity professionals should heed the message inherent in these findings. Social media platforms not only offer effective ways to build more diverse and inclusive workplaces, but they also are preferred by many of the people served both inside and outside of our organizations. This underscores the importance of acquiring Tech and Social Media Competency.

Unleashing the Power of Advanced Communications and Information Technologies

Of course, social media is only one of the ways that human resources and diversity professionals employ advanced communications and information. These innovations can help us take on some of the most critical issues facing the diversity community.

People with disabilities, for example, are benefiting from an abundance of new products and services that give them greater control of and access to their environments. The assistive technologies of today are forerunners of extraordinary tools of tomorrow. A mini-computer in a lapel may someday enable a blind person to navigate an office building with ease. Google Glass also offers great promise. This technology could help people with autism overcome their inability to understand human facial expressions, which makes social interaction difficult, isolates them from the community, and makes employment difficult. By providing real-time analysis of social clues, such as a raised eyebrow or a quizzical look, Google Glass could give people on the autism spectrum the information they need to read human emotions.^{25}

“Big Data” offers powerful tools for addressing health disparities, both in equalizing the provision of quality care and in addressing the disparate ways diseases affect different ethnic groups. According to the National Civic League, the availability of electronic health and demographic information benefits us all, but they are of particular value to “racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with lower health literacy, individuals with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and persons living in rural and other isolated geographic areas—populations that often experience the greatest disparities in health care and health status.”^{26}

By analyzing and processing demographic and health records according to race, ethnicity, or other diversity dimensions, healthcare professionals can determine if a hospital is providing better treatment to one population than another. They can also proactively target resources where they are most needed. If the data shows an area with a large Vietnamese or Cambodian population, for instance, hospitals and clinics know they should hire physicians and nurses with special language skills or interpreters. These technologies will also increase our knowledge of if, how, and why, one health condition is more pervasive and severe in a particular ethnic or racial group than in others.^{27} For example, stomach cancer is more prevalent among people with Japanese ancestry; and young Black women are more susceptible to a particularly fast growing and difficult to treat form of breast cancer.

ERGs are also using technology to serve the health needs of their members and constituencies. WellPoint’s Latino ERG SOMOS (“we are”) collaborates with the company’s business units to create culturally appropriate content for educational health and wellness websites aimed at Latino members and communities. Linda Jimenez, chief diversity officer at WellPoint, believes that SOMOS “has significantly improved disease management/prevention service delivery, while simultaneously achieving major cost reductions.”^{28} SOMOS created a teleseminar, “Leveraging Opportunities in the Multicultural Marketplace,” to educate the workforce and promote awareness of Latino issues.^{29} WellPoint’s Abilities Beyond Limited Expectations (ABLE) ERG has worked with the company to deploy assistive technology and make six customer-facing websites accessible to visitor with disabilities.^{30}

Information technology tools are making it more difficult in subtle ways to maintain the status quo. In the legal profession, corporate in-house counsels are discovering how to use technology to make the playing field more level. For example, as more minority and women lawyers take high positions in corporate legal department, they are using technology to ensure that the outside firms they employ actually follow
diversity guidelines. Joseph West, president and CEO of the Minority Corporate Counsel Association, observes that information technology enables corporations to ensure that contracted firms are truly diverse. According to West, “Gone are the
days when you can trot out your token minorities on the pitch team.”

Creating more Diverse and Inclusive Societies

Leading-edge companies and organizations are using advanced technologies and social media to transform society, such as addressing health disparities, bringing people together, and helping them to be better informed. In the United States and abroad, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, social reformers, and activists are also using social media to effect community and political reform and, as demonstrated by the Arab Spring of 2012 and, more recently, the #BlackLivesMatter campaign that resulted from shootings of Black men by local law enforcement.

As human resources and diversity practitioners, we must be aware of the efforts outside of our organizations to drive social change, which links with the global mindset competency. We can support efforts that promote diversity and inclusion and have positive impacts for society and our organizations. We can also counter those groups or individuals that harm our communities by being aware of these social forces, we can refine our strategies to prepare for and address changing situations.

Nurturing Your Inner “Geek”

Up to this point, we have presented many of the reasons for becoming competent in Tech and Social Media, so let us look at how to master this competency. Earlier in the chapter, we declared that becoming knowledgeable and proficient in these areas is not as difficult as it may initially seem. As we explore how to develop Tech and Social Media competency, there are two major ways we believe you can become more confident in your ability to develop and nurture your inner “geek.”

Exploring and Developing a Social Media Presence

The first step is to explore and develop a social media presence. This will help you walk the social media and technology talk.

Early-Career Professional/Individual Contributor

Early-career diversity professionals should begin developing Tech and Social Media competency early. A large proportion of early-career human resources and diversity professionals already have experience in social media, because they use it often in their personal lives. If you are one of these professionals, explore and demonstrate how these applications can be used successfully to meet diversity and inclusion and employee engagement goals. For example, since you may be more technologically astute than some of your more seasoned co-workers who have years of experience in the company but not in social media, consider offering to “reverse mentor.”

Doing so will leverage your expertise, help your company prosper, and enable you to connect with a more experienced colleague. By becoming a reverse mentor, you will be able to “show your chops” while gaining valuable insights that can help you develop ideas on how to use these applications to promote employee engagement and pursue diversity and inclusion objectives.

Reverse mentoring will also enable you to learn how to share your social media expertise with colleagues who may have varying levels of comfort with technology and social media. Some of your colleagues already have an understanding and comfort with technology and social media. Others will be novices who may need a great deal of handholding. Being able to help both kinds of colleagues demonstrates a “can-do” attitude for a very common technology challenge: sharing information with others who have various levels of knowledge and expertise.

Of course, you will not become or remain a “go-to” person for advice on social media and technology if you do not continually enhance your skills and expand your knowledge. There are many ways to build expertise. Your company likely has training opportunities you can take advantage of and there are many internet resources online to explore during your off hours.

Prices for hardware, software, and online training are dropping dramatically, enabling you to economically develop expertise on your own. Lynda.com, for example, has numerous training programs for a small monthly or annual fee. You can gain access to an enormous library of books via computer technology and applications with a subscription to Safari Books. The monthly fee for Safari Books is less than half the cost of buying even one paperback copy of many of the books in this online library. These are just two examples of a wealth of information training available for free or a modest fee.

Mid-career Professionals/Leveraged Contributor

A mid-career human resource or diversity practitioner may possess the same wealth of knowledge, resources, and experiences with social media that someone early in his or her career may have. However, both will still have to continue to learn and experiment. Technology evolves quickly and constantly; it is a living, changing stream constantly flowing forward. Wherever and whenever you jump in, there will be new applications to investigate that can be adapted to fit the needs of your company and constituency.
Do you have a social media presence? Are you on LinkedIn, Twitter, or Facebook? Whether you are technology savvy or struggling to determine the difference between a wiki and a blog, you should have a social media presence as you encourage others in your organization to leverage this compelling technology. To help you manage your function’s social media presence, develop a team of energetic, enthusiastic early-career professionals and technologists. Do not hesitate to recruit team members and other staff as your own reverse mentors to accelerate your education in technology and social media. Begin integrating your diversity and inclusion expertise with the team’s talents and experience in technology and social media.

This process will help you embed social media and technology into the diversity and inclusion strategies, programs, and processes. Discovering ways to marry your diversity and management expertise with technology and social media tools could develop into one of your passions, where you frequently find yourself ruminating on how to leverage innovations to applications to advance company and organization goals and objectives.

Strive to be a trusted adviser and partner. Look for opportunities to support human resources and recommend technology and social media as a way to source, attract, hire, on-board, engage, develop and advance all employees in ways that take into account their diversity. Provide valuable insight to functions across the organization, actively encouraging them to use the full spectrum of technology and social media platforms to advance their missions and objectives to broaden D&I integration in their practices, policies, and procedures.

Senior-level Professionals/Leaders
As the person who is most responsible for ensuring that the diversity and inclusion strategy aligns with the corporation’s overall business strategy, you determine whether the technology and social media initiative for D&I meets or exceeds expectations. As McKinsey & Company and other experts have explained, company leaders are often wary of social media and uncertain about its value. While you may embrace the power of social media and its ability to engage employees, capture customers, and promote diversity and inclusion, other leaders may see a chaotic outpouring of information that was recently kept under tight control. Such leaders remember the days when they waited for the printer to deliver the announcement that they and the legal department had reviewed and edited a dozen times. Innovative communications are risky; they multiply the voices that can commandeer a megaphone. The freedom, risk, and energy of social media are far different from the traditional communication process.

This caution and uncertainty is understandable but problematic. According to McKinsey, it can “inhibit collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the tapping of employee capabilities that collectively can create a competitive advantage.” It is the senior human resource or diversity leader’s responsibility to address these concerns, and ensure that the risks are managed, including concerns about productivity-dampening distractions, privacy, the potential loss of proprietary information, and reputational issues.

CHRISTUS Health’s Velois Bowers understands these concerns and admits that privacy and ethical issues have slowed the organization’s foray into this realm. “We are still in a little bit behind, but we’re moving forward,” she said. “CHRISTUS has a Facebook page and there is a person on my team who is tech savvy and who leverages what we’re doing on Facebook as it relates to the work of diversity and how we attract talent.” She cautions, though, that there is some pushback because some are concerned about “going back to the dark ages when people put their picture on resumes and the resume got tossed to the side. Going forward, we have to make sure that we educate our employees and have some of the bells and whistles in place to ensure that those past occurrences don’t happen.”

How do you make that happen?

Senior human resource and diversity executives must understand the value of technology and its ability to drive inclusion and diversity. In large measure, the Millennials have embraced social media, while those with a bit more life experience are catching up. Just think of all the teenagers moaning about their parents and grandparents’ discovery of Facebook. Consequently, senior executives need to envision how social media can be at the heart of the company’s diversity and inclusion strategies. In addition, these leaders must stay abreast of technology and social media advances and engage the best ones to support the diversity agenda.

These efforts prepare you for the next step—becoming an evangelist for social media and technology. Take the social media message to the people, the industry, the workforce, and leadership. Cultivate a presence as thought leaders in the internal and external social media space.

These behaviors, attributes, and actions provide strategies for overcoming the obstacles created by corporate leadership’s concern and skepticism. They are designed to bring the benefits of the latest innovations to your company, and to integrate diversity and inclusion throughout the company’s global practices, policies, and procedures.

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Partners with Others to Advance D&I through Technology and Social Media

Your second step is to promote your diversity and inclusion strategy through technology and social media by partnering with others – inside and external to your organization.

Early-Career Professional/Individual Contributor
Learning about leveraging your company’s D&I strategy through social media represents only an initial step. Work to build expertise by following technology closely, knowing the trends and the emerging technology tools, and be alert for new platforms, applications, and communication vehicles that would be most useful for diversity and inclusion. Armed with this information, you can make recommendations about technology and social media, building your reputation as an astute associate who is well versed in how best to advance your organization’s mission through innovation.

Here is another suggestion that will demonstrate your high-potential capabilities: Make friends with the information technology department. Many of its experts would welcome a person from another function who is actually interested in what they do. Your willingness to work closely with IT, recognize their needs, and understand the value they provide will win you many technology-savvy allies. You will need friends in IT, because you are going to volunteer for as many projects you can that have important technology and social media components. Participating in these projects will help you:

• Learn all you can about the technology and how you can leverage its potential for the diversity and inclusion strategy.
• Demonstrate your “can do” spirit and provide credibility when you make recommendations on the use of emerging platforms and vehicles.
• Strengthen your reputation as a competent and reliable go-to person and troubleshooter when faced with the basics of engaging with social media in ways that support the accomplishment of diversity and inclusion objectives.

This invaluable social skill and your enthusiasm will enable you to develop priceless associations with technology experts and strategic thinkers throughout the company. By becoming an avid seeker of technology knowledge and experience, you will understand how to use technology and social media to communicate with employee groups, potential candidates, external partner groups, and customers. Moreover, since you have worked your way through a learning process recently, you will likely have a sense of the difficulties a “non-techie” faces when using new applications and method. Thus, you will be able take into account and adjust for your audience’s varying levels of technology and social media experience.

Mid-career Professional/Leveraged Contributor
Your developing expertise, curiosity, and your growing awareness of the many advantages technology can provide should intensify your enthusiasm. Use this energy to become an effective advocate for you and your team and the value you provide the company and its stakeholders. And, encourage other key leaders to participate in the company’s social media and communication programs.

The Women’s Leadership Conference recommends that ERGs use social media to extend their reach to connect workers located in the far reaches of their companies, create dialogues via blog posts between senior executives and ERG members that “capture issues that affect the employee population as a whole, and develop avenues for senior leaders to tap into the energy and diverse perspectives of employees.” Since ERGs typically are communities of employees with similar interests, diversity dimensions, or motivations, they can employ social media to create virtual communities that are aligned by the shared commonalities of their members.

For example, an ERG’s Facebook page is the online manifestation of its reality on the physical plane. Given that a virtual presence has no geographic limitations, social media frees ERGs to touch their company’s entire workplace and engage with distant colleagues anywhere on the planet. As a mid-level diversity practitioner, one of the most important tasks you have is to fuel and maintain the flow of “compelling, engaging multimedia content. Leaders need to excel at co-creation and collaboration—the currencies of the social-media.”

Featuring company leaders on your content will help ensure its relevance to your audiences, and will familiarize the leadership with the work you and your team are doing. Their awareness could be an invaluable asset at budget time and when you might need to request additional support to meet unexpected challenges or changing company needs. Your financial acumen – the comprehensive metrics your team has developed and employed to measure the ROI of your services and another Next Generation competency – will be instrumental in obtaining the resources you need.

The content the comes out of your organization needs to reflect your ongoing efforts to build insightful and encompassing knowledge about your company, audiences, corporate strategy, mission, and objectives, and what media is most effective in achieving the goals of each project. The foundation of each creative
product should be an informed strategy that addresses the fundamental questions that will determine its effectiveness, such as:

- Who are you trying to reach? What are their expectations, values, concerns, and objectives? What will they find compelling? What are the themes, ideas, or elements that will resonate with them? What others might they find objectionable and undermine your credibility and message? What is their level of understanding of the subject? Will they find the content too complex or too elementary?
- What is the purpose of the work? What is its message? Are you targeting the right audience? What are you expecting the audience to think and/or do? What is the best way to convince them to respond productively to your appeal to action? How will you measure effectiveness in achieving your goal?
- What is the best and most cost-effective medium to carry the information, motivate the audience, and drive home the message?

As a mid-career human resource or diversity professional, your goal should be to use the appropriate technology and social media tools to deliver content that does the job. The surest way to hit this target is a solid commitment to a strategic focus that insists on a clear understanding of each project’s purpose, audience, and medium.

**Senior-level Executive/Leader**

We urge you to develop partnerships with technology and social media experts to establish a global social media ecosystem that builds and leverages organizational diversity and inclusion best practices. Use social media to spread your message and your efforts in the social media space. Blog, tweet, use instant messaging, and appear online in videos and articles. You are the executive producer of the content your organization creates, and you should help carry the message and demonstrate your commitment by maintaining a high profile online and off.

One of your most important audiences is the leadership team. In this realm, become the prudent, extraordinarily competent adviser who advocates for the robust use of technology, and understands and explains the risks and how they have been mitigated. Be the one who describes the benefits of technology, documenting their value with cost-benefit analyses and well-researched, carefully developed arguments. Be sure to emphasize your personal commitment to social media by discussing your experiences with technology, how you have overcome obstacles, and created value. Underscore the integrity of your advocacy by personifying the gifted executive who is adept at leveraging technology for the benefit of the company and its stakeholders. Be strategic and savvy about costs, benefits, and approaches for leveraging technology and social media to attract and retain diverse talent and experience while enhancing the organization’s diversity and inclusion brand. Make effective use of information about technology and social media best practices in decision-making and resource allocation to advance your organization’s agenda.

**Derailers to Becoming Competent in Tech and Social Media**

Of course, none of these measures will eliminate all of the rocks lying in wait threatening to sink your journey to becoming competent in this sphere. The major derailers to becoming tech and social media competent is a failure to recognize the enormous potential and the rapidly changing nature of advance technologies and social media. Whether you are an early-career professional, a mid-career practitioner, or a senior executive, you will have to pilot your way past the shoals of complacency, personal discomfort, or lack of knowledge.

A flagging commitment to learning and keeping pace with this evolving technology and its potential to energize diversity work and upend traditional D&I efforts is your greatest threat. When you jumped into this fast-moving river, you made a commitment to keep swimming. If you fail to stay attentive to what is going on in technology and social media, you will quickly fall behind. Your diversity and inclusion organization is counting on you to stay ahead of technology curve.

Of additional concern is the failure of top executives who decide social media is not worth the time, and avoid becoming an active presence on social media. They may also lose sight of the need to maintain standards, which can create security risks, lower quality, and discourage users. If not carefully monitored, your social networks can be misused by employees or others. Instead of promoting diversity and inclusion, these platforms can become a negative influence, dividing the workplace and creating a hostile environment. Moreover, advanced technology can quickly lead to frustration, wasted time, and disgruntlement if proper training and oversight is not provided.

But those situations do not have to occur. Such circumstances can be avoided with proper insight, continuous learning about technology, and proactive strategies to help all employees understand the power and influence of technology and social media platforms. Many of the potential hazards we have just discussed relate to one failing—flagging enthusiasm—and one sure cure—abundant curiosity that engenders lifelong learning. Driving transformation, learning new tasks, and leveraging new technologies and trends are exciting pursuits, but they are also stressful, demanding,
and puzzling at times. The ultimate challenge is staying energized and engaged when others are losing conviction and commitment.

**Conclusion**

Technology and social media competency presents many opportunities for human resource and diversity professionals. We should use social media to activate support for our corporate objectives quickly and cost-effectively, to fulfill our roles as trusted advisors alerting our organizations when actions may give rise to controversy, and to ensure our leaders appreciate the effectiveness of technology-equipped activists.

Moreover, we should proactively seek out and serve the needs of communities, ensuring that our companies operate with cultural sensitivity and pursue brand building that defines our organizations as diversity allies to the communities we serve. Tech and social media competence is essential, because it provides the skills needed to employ the tools of the future, but we also need be bold enough to accept the risk and daring enough to seek out and leverage these platforms into opportunities.

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**Conversation Starters**

What is your organization’s social media strategy?

How is your organization’s strategy for diversity and inclusion aligned with your social media strategy?

How do you keep your senior leaders up-to-date and connected to the technical and social media strategy?

How do you connect all employees to the social media environment?

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**Endnotes**


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