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Q: Our search for wisdom in the world of social media has taken us to the author of the Bible. No, not that Bible. I'm talking about the social media bible. Welcome, this is Chris Kenneally, host of Beyond the Book for Copyright Clearance Center, and joining me today is David Brake, who is the co-author of a fascinating new book from Wiley called *The Social Media Bible*. Welcome to Beyond the Book, David.

A: Chris, it's good to be here with you.

Q: Well, it's a pleasure to have you join us, David. We'll tell people a bit about your background. You began in publishing as a textbook sales representative, covering what I imagine was fairly difficult territory, at least took you a while getting around it, in Nebraska, South Dakota and Iowa. Since then you've been an editor, executive editor, and publisher for major publishing houses, including Times Mirror, Prentice Hall, and McGraw-Hill. And prior to starting a company called Content Connections, which is online at [contentconnections.com](http://contentconnections.com) in 2002, you've been working with scores of authors, published several best-selling books in the areas of business, information, technology and science. And at Content Connections, you specialize in helping publishers, authors and prospective authors use innovative technology and a special five-part model that seeks to give your clients an edge in what I'm told you think of as the competitive and unforgiving publishing world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

David is also a blogger, and his blog can be found online, it's called Social Media: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly. Maybe we might just get right down to some things that sort of stuck out for me in *The Social Media Bible*, some various passages that I want you to elaborate on if you can, David, and that is about one of the oldest forms of social media, and it's in a section called It's Not Your Father's E-Mail. You know, it's funny, when you mention social media, everyone thinks of things like Twitter or Facebook, but your suggestion is that the very first form of social media was e-mail. Tell us some more about that.

A: Well, you know, I'm not even sure if the first form of social media was e-mail. There are actually cave paintings and (inaudible) from pre-historic times that show



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two figures with a straw drinking what essentially is beer out of a large clay urn. So I'm not sure if that may have been an example of one of the first beer commercials, or some kind of an instructional device to communicate with that particular audience. But, you know, Chris, social media is really about engaging people in conversation, and I like to say there are four pillars to social media: communication, collaboration, education, and entertainment. And I know that a lot of people may look at e-mail as being a very old technology. I mean, gosh, it's been around for what? Thirty years or more. I think that you pointed out in one of your recent podcasts that the first e-mail was actually sent from somewhere in the Cambridge area. E-mail is still a very viable way to communicate with people.

We hear a lot about Twitter. I don't think there's a newscaster alive who doesn't direct you to his or her Twitter account, but one of the things I know is that there are a lot of executives who simply do not have time to keep up with Twitter. Well, you can actually use a product called Tweet Beep, which will send you a daily e-mail that will list all of the topics – it would essentially establish a Twitter alert, and it will highlight for you the various topics that you may be interested in that you want to follow. I know that I subscribe to Beyond the Book, which, I'll promote what you do – I think it's a great podcast, but I don't know that I would remember once a week to go there and check it out. So the fact that through an RSS feed and the magic of e-mail, I can receive an alert letting me know that there's a new podcast there, is really terrific.

So e-mail, yes, it's an old technology, but it is still a very viable technology for business through programs such as Constant Contact, you can maintain a newsletter, you can have a group of people who have opted in to receive e-mails from you, you can track those e-mails, you can literally see how many of them have been opened. You can embed a survey into that e-mail, you can see how many people have clicked through to your survey. So e-mail has become, or has evolved, along with some other productivity applications, to be a very powerful tool, not only for business, but for entities and organizations that want to engage an audience in conversation. So I consider it to be a foundational part of social media.

- Q: Well, you know, and it's interesting because as you were speaking about that, I was thinking about putting my e-mails to the test about the four pillars of having a social media strategy. Communication, collaboration, education and entertainment. And you know, I think we can all sort of admit that communication is obvious, the collaboration part, perhaps less so, but then once you say it, it seems to go together with communication. But I'm curious about the education and the entertainment piece, and how that applies or ought to apply to what we do, particularly what we do as authors in trying to promote our work, or to advance our reputation. How do education and entertainment fit in to a social media strategy, David?



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A: Well, let me give you one example, that – it doesn't come from the book publishing world, but it is an example of a viral video that has literally made a company CEO and a company famous. There's a company in Utah called Blend Tech, and they manufacture high-speed blenders. Now I've always viewed a blender as a kitchen appliance that's fairly ubiquitous, kind of a commodity. I really don't distinguish between various blenders. But a few years ago, Blendtec had a director of marketing, who was taking a tour of the factory, and the CEO was explaining to them the benefits of their particular blenders, and in the process of the tour, as the story goes, he took a two-by-two piece of pine, and literally ground it down to sawdust in the blender. The marketing director was so struck by this that an idea was born. And that idea has been a series of viral videos called, Will It Blend?

And in fact, if you go to [willitblend.com](http://willitblend.com), you will see that every once in a while, it's every week or two, the CEO of this company will blend something that you would not normally associate with the blender. For example, about a year and a half ago, when the new iPhone came out, he blended an iPhone. And so you go and you watch this, you hear this wonderful music, it's kind of a 1950s retro, throwback sort of music that opens with him saying, hello, welcome to Will It Blend? Today, I've got my new iPhone, and the question is, will it blend? And then he puts the iPhone into the blender, and literally makes an iPhone smoothie out of it. He's done that with golf balls, he's done that with a number of different things. Consequently, he has made appearances on the *David Letterman Show*, he's become a celebrity of sorts. Not surprisingly, the sale of blenders have increased.

And this is all by establishing a relationship with customers and prospective customers through entertainment. And whoever would have thought that blenders could be entertaining? But there's a perfect example of how that's done. One more quick example is a guy who goes by the name of Tony the Plumber. And I think at one point Tony realized that his business was going to be limited to about a 50-mile radius, but he realizes that he has expertise. So he has created a series of instructional videos that explain how to do things relative to plumbing. I find them useful because I'm not a particularly handy individual, but before I call the plumber, I'll go to Tony's website and take a look at one of his instructional videos that will at least acquaint me with the terminology and the problem and the issue enough that I can have an intelligent conversation with the plumber.

So in this instance, we have a master plumber, Tony, doing a series of educational videos, which I subscribe to. Now, by the way, Tony makes his money through advertising on that web site and product placements. When he's talking about the importance of replacing your toilet, not surprisingly, he's showing the advantages of a Kohler power flush toilet, and he's received a product placement sponsorship for that. And so, I, as part of his audience, am getting a product pitch as I'm



getting information, educational information, from Tony the master plumber. Now, those are two examples of people who have nothing to do with books, but they have managed to create content that is relative to their offering, and now they're monetizing that content.

And the same is true for a number of book publishers. There are a number of authors who are using this very same thing, entertainment, education, to get closer to a pre-publication audience and consequently, it helps to get the word out about their book. And Chris, as you know, the publishing business is going through a major – I really dislike the word paradigm shift, it seems so ten years ago, but it's going through a major paradigm shift. There are authors who are realizing that what the authors do has more to do with the success of a book than what the publisher might do. Or at least they have to work in a complimentary fashion. And I think it's important for authors to realize the power that they have with social media.

Q: Well, in fact, that was what I was going to mention to you. It really strikes me that this is putting – you mentioned, you used the word power, but you could also say it's putting the responsibility for the success of a book much more on the author's side of things, which I'm sure has its good and bad sides, depending on the author. Some authors may find that particularly liberating, and maybe just they were born to be in a YouTube series. But there may be other authors for whom this is really a challenge, and you work on the content connection side of your business. In engaging authors and helping them understand better how what they know, what their material is, what they're writing about, can be developed or can be promoted in such a way as to help them make that engagement a successful one. Are there some tips that you can share with us from your experience in working with other authors, who as I said, might not be born stars, but you've made them into stars?

A: Well, the key is to start early. Even before social media was a term that was bantered around as it is now, I always believed in creating a pre-publication community for these authors. Now, granted in textbook publishing that's a little easier to do because with every college professor, and I published college textbooks, every college professor is in a position to leverage 50, 100, sometimes as many as two or three thousand students who will go to the bookstore and buy a book, so to the degree that you could influence that professor, that professor could leverage so many purchases of a particular book. With that in mind, just kind of as some of my background, what I learned very early is that it's important to test your concept with an audience before you publish the book.

I know a lot of authors think that well, they've got to get that contract. If they can get a contract with the publisher, they'll publish the book, and the publisher will promote the book and the rest will take care of itself. I try to disabuse authors of



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that, I think it needs to start very early. I encourage authors at the point at which you have a basic concept for your book, meaning you've identified the audience you're writing for. Maybe you have a table of contents. In addition to the table of contents, you may have a list of features of your particular book, and maybe some sample material that you have written. We do something called a market opportunity analysis, which is essentially a 20-minute online exposure of the author's content to a representative audience.

And what we're doing is we're gathering metrics about that author's work, and we're really trying to be in a position to advise the author as to whether or not their ideas are getting traction. Things that they may do to get more traction. And it's something that has really worked well for us because authors, before they even begin writing in earnest, are able to see how well their ideas are resonating with the marketplace. In fact, we have seen several examples of authors who realized the actual book that they need to write is somewhere inside the table of contents. They may have a table of contents with 12 chapters, and they realize that on the basis of the feedback that they're getting that their real book may be chapter 8, 9 and 10. And from there we're able to help craft their approach and continue to get reviews and feedback.

So, in essence, what they're doing is they are leveraging the collective wisdom of their audience for their book, and by doing that, they're establishing this community, they're developing relationships, and they're creating people who will connect with other people, and so if they like the book, they're going to tell other people about the book. Now, that's hard work. Not every author is in a position to do that. But if you do it right, it is a wonderful organic blend of using your audience as co-producers of the content, and using them in a viral sort of way to help promote the book before it's even published.

- Q: And I can imagine, particularly for authors, a first-time author or somebody who has a kind of niche expertise and who may not be sure just how well it's going to be received, doing this kind of market research and pre-conditioning for their audience is a way to build confidence that what they're going to wind up writing and publishing is going to find a market. That's probably one of the great unknowns for authors and for publishers, is how successful a book is going to be once you give birth to it. But here you're learning about the book even before it's written.
- A: Well, and I think that's very important for these authors, I think that it's a common mistake for authors when you ask them who's the audience for your book, to give you some variation of the following: well, everyone who can read. I mean, everyone is an audience for my book. We know that's not true, so often times it will help them be a little more realistic about the audience that they're going after,



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and how to narrow the search for that audience. We know that with 3,000 books published every day, there are very, very few books that do over 5,000 units in a year. And yet, by focusing on a micro community, I know plenty of authors who are doing seven, eight, nine, 11,000 copies of their book a year – some of them self-published.

And adding net revenues of 20, 25, \$30,000 a year to their bank accounts. And so, you don't have to publish the next version of *Harry Potter* in order to make money as an author. Now I'm talking primarily about trade and consumer authors, I mean the same thing could apply to text and academic authors, but the idea is to find that micro market, and that word micro can obviously be a little bit misleading because micro could actually mean an audience of a couple hundred thousand people. And I think that's what we help people do. Now, I wish I could say that we have the definitive formula for predicting best sellers. I won't go that far.

But I will tell you that we've been able to determine when a book won't work, when it just simply won't fly, and I don't like delivering bad news to authors but sometimes what that will do is to cause them to re-evaluate the return on the investment that they might actually be getting, or more importantly, to maybe adjust their approach so they can find the right segment, or the right audience persona who will be receptive to their book. I don't think any tool or any formula will guarantee a best seller. I think once they know that they have something that will get traction with a particular audience, well then it's up to them to message it, to work that audience, to really develop it. But I think that what we do gives them a real good foundation, a head start, and certainly the confidence to know that there is an audience out there for this particular book and their ideas will get traction.

Q: Well, to link it back to your earlier example, maybe at that point once you've done the research and find out that the direction you're going may not be quite right for this market, it's time to put the proposal in that blender, and see what you can come up with from that. Kind of remix or rearrange so that it has the emphasis that is going to hit the sweet spot in that micro market. You, in this *Social Media Bible*, which really, it is probably not quite as thick as the Bible, but it's close, so it really is an exhaustive look at the tactic tools and strategies for business success when you're using social media. There is some productivity applications that you cite, and you try to suggest that these are tools that will help an individual implement a successful social media strategy. David, any in particular you want to highlight for the audience today?

A: Well, the simplest one that I would recommend that everyone, whether you're an author or a CEO of a company should be using, is Google Alert. It takes all of about two minutes to go to Google and set up a Google Alert. What that means is that you enter a search term and you tell Google, send me an e-mail. That could be



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several times a day, or once a week, or once a day, but they will send you an e-mail with links to every mention of that particular search term. Now that search term could be your own name, it could be the title of your book, it could be some word that is important to an industry that you follow or the micro audience or micro market that you're looking at, but it's a wonderful application.

For example, I have a Google Alert set for *The Social Media Bible*. So every time *The Social Media Bible* or my name or my co-author's name is mentioned, I'll get an e-mail once a day from Google that will list those particular terms. And that's an example, by the way, delivered via e-mail so once again e-mail comes back to play a role here, but it's a very efficient productivity tool. Another tool that I will highlight, and there literally are thousands of them, but it's an online survey tool, the SurveyMonkey, which allows you to go in, set up an account, and create some very basic surveys online, with a link, that you can embed into an e-mail, and send to your clients, your customers, essentially, Chris, the things that I've been talking about, about a market opportunity analysis and reaching out to your audience. I mean, we do these things for our publisher clients, we do these things for our author clients, but an enterprising author could do this him or herself.

And I would say, set up a SurveyMonkey account, go to Constant Contact, an e-mail service, utilize that, and you can be real basic. There are thousands of tools in the social media ecosystem. And I think one of the things that paralyzes some people is to try to categorize these and keep track of all of them. I think what's important is to realize that true to the notion of an ecosystem, there is this Darwinian struggle for survival. Some of these things compete against each other, some of them compliment one another, I would dare say that a number of applications that are out there today won't be there a year from now, and there will be new ones to replace them.

So social media is not as much about trying to memorize all these applications and how to use them, as much as it is understanding that there are certain tools that you can use that focus on video, audio, collaboration, and experimenting with those so that you come up with a strategy and a mix that works for you. And again, it's all about engaging people in conversation. This is not a one-way push. You don't want to send an e-mail or do you a YouTube video highlighting your book as much as you want to do something that will engage people in a conversation.

Q: Well, we've been having a good conversation here, David, and I've enjoyed it, and I just was, while you were answering the last question there, took a look at your own blog, your Social Media: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly, and there's a fascinating recent entry which is called Street Food Meets Social Media. And I think maybe as a way to conclude the episode of Beyond the Book, we've been speaking with David Brake here, who is the author, co-author of *The Social Media*



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*Bible*, he's the founder of Content Connections and previously was a textbook publisher editor for many major houses, including Prentice Hall and McGraw-Hill. We've been speaking to David about social media and finding it in unlikely places. So tell us briefly about this fascinating entry in your blog on Street Food Meets Social Media. How does somebody who's selling falafel use social media?

A: Well, if you've had the experience of being in New York, you've certainly encountered street food cart vendors before, and if you've worked in New York and had the experience of coming down and ordering something for lunch from one of those street food vendors, you realize that they're not always in the same place. If you think about it, traffic patterns change and you're not always going to be able to get your cart in the same location. And these carts also run different specials during different times of the week, so what some of these savvy food cart owners have discovered is the power of Twitter. Now you're talking about a relatively small audience, if you will, of people who may work in Midtown Manhattan, but what these food cart vendors will do is they will send out Tweets, and the Tweet will indicate where they are that particular day, so on the corner of 52<sup>nd</sup> and Avenue of the Americas, and what their special might be.

In fact, they can even Tweet a link to a photograph, and so if you're not quite sure how to pronounce it or what it is, a picture being worth more than a thousand words, you can see a photograph of what they've got. And it's a very interesting use of Twitter that frankly doesn't require you to have millions and millions of followers as much as it does identifying that niche audience. And just to be fair, the blog that you're quoting from actually or referencing links to an article on Mashable, and that's where I first learned about the food cart vendors and the use of Twitter, on Mashable, because I had a Google Alert set that brought that to my attention. So there is an example of using Google Alert as a means to find content that ultimately winds up in my blog.

Q: Well, that's a really wonderful example, and I've enjoyed speaking with you. It's given me a few ideas about how I might use Tweeting myself. We've sort of put a toe in the water at Twitter for Beyond the Book, and I find that it's a bit of work, it's a challenge really, but considering the upside here, it's probably a challenge worth taking on. I've enjoyed speaking with you David. David Brake, who as I mentioned is the co-author of *The Social Media Bible*, co-author with Lon Safko, David thanks for joining us today at Beyond the Book.

A: Chris, it's been my pleasure.

Q: And ours as well. We hope that everybody in the audience is enjoying their summer, and we look forward to having you back at Beyond the Book very soon. Thanks for listening.



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