

An Interview with James Burnes, David Cain of MediaSauce

Hello, this is Lon Safko, co-author of The Social Media Bible, published by John Wiley & Sons, the most comprehensive book ever written on the subject of social media. And today we are doing something rather unusual for our Executive Conversation podcasts; we're here with two members of MediaSauce, the President David Cain, and Vice-President James Burnes.

We're going to be talking today about social media enhanced websites and, of course, social media. So David, James, wow...it's awesome to have you here today. This is great.

JB/DC: Thanks a lot; it's great to be here. I agree, we are very excited about the project.

LS: Yes, it's fun to have you on board. I'm really glad...it took a long time to find the right company, and I love your philosophy and that's why it's important to do this interview with you guys. So, David, can you kind of kick off the interview here with telling us a little bit about which your background is, who you are...MediaSauce...

DC: Yeah, absolutely! My name's David Cain. I'm President of Mediasauce. I've been with the company since it started, probably six or seven years ago. We're an organization that believes that the world is changing and we have for many years, and it's starting to pick up speed and happening more and more.... (and that is that) the world is realizing that it's more than just online's and other platforms, it's online as a transformational force that is going to drive into an organization and make it completely different than it ever was before.

Industries, lives, business...how everything works is fundamentally different, and we're at Mediasauce, a partner for that.

LS: That's exciting to hear and I love the term "transformational force." I completely agree, which is the purpose of the book. It is transforming the way people are doing business.

James, can you tell our listeners a little bit about who you are and what brought you to Mediasauce?

JB: Absolutely. I worked in the traditional media business for about seven or eight years, focusing on how the internet was impacting the way people communicate and engage and consume information. I have worked for both publically traded newspaper and television companies, and took notice to see how the internet was making an impact on those industries. It kept me constantly looking at what the opportunity was to integrate those behaviors of consumer engagement and consumption into the business world...leading right up to where Mediasauce is a leader nationally in internet strategy and creative [02:30.8]. I really thought it was a great fit to be able to enhance and take that education into, and spread it within the business community and the association community.

LS: Yeah, I think that's an awesome background to have because you, with social media a lot of times nowadays, we're hearing a term "citizen journalism" and I think that really is...there's a huge transformation between magazines, newspapers and other printed media, and online sources of information. I think that's a great background.

JB: Thanks, I totally agree. I think the biggest thing with citizen journalism and, earlier the higher level of user-generated content has always been the paradigm between trust and transparency with communication. I think that's the one thing that has kept the barrier there between traditional media and what we would call new media user-generated content media. I think that will be the ongoing opportunity for organizations to take advantage of to move forward.

LS: And again, I heard another word in there that keeps coming up in all these executive conversation podcasts, is "trust" and "transparency." We've grown not to trust conventional media because of the massive expenses associated with it almost always there is some kind of a hidden agenda with conventional media; where this inexpensive, and most often free, social media has a tendency to be more transparent, more truthful, more from the heart, and less apt to contain a hidden agenda. Do you agree?

JB: In some capacity I think yes. I think in some capacity the appearance of transparency often creates the opportunity to promote an agenda... (Laughter)...it's a very careful balance!

LS: Okay, that's a good point. Controversy, I like it!

As we go through these questions, what I would like to ask you guys...whoever wants to field it, that's cool, and if you both want to field it that's also cool...if you could just mention ahead of time...just tell us your first name because we're going to have this transcribed and put into the book, and for the transcription person...it will drive her crazy if she doesn't know who is talking...so if we can do that, that's cool.

Overall, social media has changed corporate...the development of corporate websites the way we're doing business on the internet. Who would address how that has changed?

JB: I would be happy to speak to that first. I think the biggest thing about it is the realization that we've gone from a one-to-many broadcast message. We're publishing information that we want our consumers, prospects and customers to be hear; to actually requiring ourselves to be prepared to actually have a real conversation with our customers. It's transforming the way we have to engage in sales and the prospecting process, the marketing process, customer relationships, customer support. The biggest opportunity that's bringing forth to us today is, "How do we create the use of conversations in a way that also allows us to promote our message and improve our product and services.

I think that the biggest challenge for organizations as this comes forward is the reality that people have the opportunity to nourish, they're not only going to be saying the things that you want them to say but the same context you have the opportunity to engage and really create transparency, as we mentioned before, by addressing both the good and the bad of how consumers are experiencing your product or your services or your brand, and then turning it into exciting consumers about your product if you properly engage in these tools.

So it's about transforming the way you communicate in the website itself, as the platform, to answer your question, is the way that we're going to be able to do that more effectively, efficiently in the 24/7/365/50/50 world.

LS: And that's a really...in some ways I think you touched on every one of the major points that I'm excited about, and also the fact that you touched on...up until now...for the last six thousand years, whether we're selling goat bladders six thousand years ago, or Admen/Madmen in the 60's with marketing and advertising, it's

always been pontification. We've always pushed out message in front of the customers in hope that we might strike a chord; but what we're seeing is this change from us pushing our message to really listening to the customers for the first time. Do you agree, David?

DC: Yes. This is David. When I look at social media and I hear the term, and I think of how it changes the average webpage of corporate America, I think that it's really a scarier word than it has to be for most people. Social media to me, if you just eliminate the term from what we are doing, nobody would have a problem if I sat down at a table and I said, "Tell me about your company; what it does and how it works?" Everybody has some level of comfort with that in a conversation in the off-line world. You have to or otherwise you wouldn't be able to make it in business. And really, what the on-line world does is it's taking that conversation to a URL...to any kind of social platform or any kind of platform, for that matter, where you can have this conversation in your own time and you can move from corporate messaging to the self-discovery of when I think of "on-line" I think that we're creating an experience here that's happens to max what's going on in the off-line world.

But they are fundamentally different than what you have when actually sitting across the table. And the difference is going to be that the audience is a lot more selfish, and the audience is a lot faster. So you have the time to engage like you would if you sat at the table and you've got to make it happen fast and you've got to make it relevant and interesting, and that's were all those buzz words of transparency and being authentic and all that come up. And to me, it's just what normal people do when they sit down and have conversation. You've got to be trustworthy, you've got to be honest, you've got to be real; otherwise people are going to look at you and say, "Whatever! Get out! I don't what to do business with you?"

LS: And that's a really good perspective, too, and I totally agree with it that the art of conversation is definitely intact here. We have digital tools to facilitate that conversation, but we don't...we're not sitting at a bar table with a beer in front of us and have two hours to communicate our thought. With Twitter we have 140 characters and about ten seconds to communicate that exact same thought, but the communication tools are, kind of, the same. You have to listen and then participate. Would you guys agree?

DC: Absolutely, I'd sit there and...one of the examples that I like to use, as I said, if I were to...you know have you ever met that guy at the party that never shuts up? You stand there and you listen and you listen and all he has to do is talk, talk, talk about himself. And when you're all done all you're doing in your head is thinking about ways to get away from him.

You move that to an on-line experience and the same thing happens. All that's going on is your talking about yourself, your company, all those things you do, and everything's about this "corporate message," then nobody's going to listen. Because when I go to a party, I go there to mingle, get to know people, network, etc., and in that context I've got to like somebody first before I even want to hear what they've got to say.

LS: Great point!

JB: I think that's a great example of how we act in the on-line world vs. the real world. I want to point to the one difference between having that face-to-face real world conversation and the digital conversation is that everyone else gets to listen in because generally speaking, it's not in a private setting or secure setting; it's in a public setting. So you know there's this conversation taking place with those prospects, but there's going to be

thousands of people and thousands of prospects sitting around watching you have this same conversation without telling you they are even there. So you lack the anonymity, or the privacy that you might receive in the real world, and move it to a public space where everyone thinks they can have the opportunity to listen, even though they might not necessarily tell you they are...

DC: You make a great point there, James, because that drives right into the whole idea about a lot of business leaders who look at this and say, “We need to start worrying about liability and what these conversations are, and how they are taking shape.” And it something I hadn’t really thought of because when I look at that comment and say we’re concerned about what people say about us, what are your salespeople saying when they meet you face-to-face. You don’t have recorders sitting on tables, but the difference is you also don’t have the whole world listening in.

LS: So it’s quite a different conversation. And the same can be said, too, is what happens when you, as a company, aren’t at that conversation. You’re not having that conversation, you’re not blogging, and you’re not out there. I think that has a negative effect, as well. You’re not at the party.

JB: You do have to be seen. That’s the big thing...that companies who aren’t being seen at the party, aren’t being in conversations online, are missing the opportunity to get customers who are “? Cool prospects” to become customers.

LS: And that’s our goal. I mean, that’s two goals...to retain customers and to convert prospects; and social media is an incredible set of tools that does that. Let’s talk just a second about those tools, if we could.

When you create a web presence, you hear things like blogs, and Flickr, and Twitter, and e-mail collection, and the list just goes on and on. It’s kind of confusing. What’s the right tools? How do you start? How do you pick the right tools for your corporate website?

DC: I would say that that are so many tools that when we meet people, a lot of times what’s happened is they either become paralyzed with so many options...and then they make no progress...or worse yet they just go out and they just use the “Just Try Something” approach. So they amass a bunch of tools and they decide whatever hot, or being used, or they heard about, or they’ve read about...and they just start saying, “Let’s implement that; let’s implement this.” The reality is that we liken this to building a house. You know, when you make a decision that you’re going to build a home, you wouldn’t just send out a backhoe and start digging. You wouldn’t start your home-building process by going to a furniture store (although my wife does), but regardless...I say that because it’s true. Some people, I guess, would start at the furniture store, and pick out what they want a room to look like. But still, fundamentally, if you’re starting at the furniture store, you’ve made a decision about what you want the house to do.

So the difference between what type of home you build if you’re retired and have no kids vs. what you have with a family of six. So how you look at your business, and fundamentally what you want to accomplish there, and how you want to live, is going to be how you decide what your web presence and that experience should look like; in the context of what you’re going to do there and what kind of audience is going to be coming over.

So if I’m going to be a big entertainer, then I want a house built for entertainment. If I don’t want anybody over and we’re going to raise a family, then I might have a whole different layout. In any case I don’t start with experimentation, I don’t get caught up in the fact that there’s so many choices. I have to step back and say,

“What am I trying to accomplish, and what am I going to do here,” and then build the right kind of experience that fits my audience...and that might not include all these tools and it might get it down to where there’s a handful that are irrelevant.

JB: I agree with that, David. In addition to that point, it’s also the fact that there’s a traditional mind-set that up to 2005/2006, that everything had to be in one location. The reality is that you have different audience members, different prospects, different customers who have different needs in different places on the web. And you’re initial issues online can have multiple presences. You can have micro sites for specific needs. You can have tools and applications set for different platforms. You can have your own site that has different integration of each of those pieces that serve your different audiences.

And so people try to be everything to everybody they want to serve on one site, but the reality of it is that the way people search to find information and the way social networks are influencing where people go, even to find information...you have to look at where your customer’s going to be at in the moment in the process of a decision-making method...you know exactly where they’re going to be at in that moment of making a decision...where you might become relevant.

LS: Excellent! The two things that I’m hearing is that before you sit down and just start implementing, you really need to develop a blueprint; kind of think it through. And the second thing is that you cannot be everything to everybody, or you’re really nothing to everybody! You have to understand the psychological marketing to understand what your customers are looking for.

JB: I totally agree! In fact, you use the word “blueprint.” In the process that we use for determining the proper places and methodologies to reach prospects and turn them into customers, we call our process the “visible blueprint process”, appropriate to breaking down audiences; their behaviors online, how they consume and get their information online, and create strategies and tactics that if they hit certain goals based on where their value systems are going to be at. And that process is a plan that’s created specifically for an individual business. The biggest challenge we see when we work with business, the first question we tend to hear is, “Well, do I need to blog, or do I need a Twitter account; do I need these things and how much is it going to cost me?”

Those are the wrong questions to start with. We will get to those points, but at first we have to get to what we want to accomplish online, and who you want to reach. Then let’s go from there.

LS: So don’t jump into the tactics until you understand the strategy.

JB: Exactly.

LS: Now you guys also have some kind of a copyrighted formula...the “vision gap” or something, we’ve discussed? That’s pretty clever. Can you just give us a quick overview of what that is?

JB: I’d be happy to. The Vision Gap is sort of our CEO’s brainchild, Bryan Gray. We have to give him credit because it’s something that he brought to the table, and that’s how we see organizations opportunities to succeed in life.

You think about all organizations that are perfectly aligned to get results that they get. In other words, everything you’re doing today, if you want to change them a year from now, two years from now, three years

from now, you probably continue with the same kinds of results...whether it's for sales or marketing or product development, etc., etc.

We call that your “Present Past.” In the context of what we see in organization and how we seek to pull off really big things, the organization should recognize, “If I were to change something today, if I want to aspire for something higher and greater than we have ever achieved doing the things we continue to do, what would that be?” We call it the “Highest Aspirations.”

To get to the highest aspirations, think about big things...like your life depended on these things. If your business is a success or failure depended upon big things, what would be the difference between the highest aspirations two to three years from now in your Present Past. What is the difference between those spaces? We call that your Vision Gap.

Specifically we look at what it would take using these visual social media tools to help you pull off your biggest aspirations to succeed long-term.

LS: Wow. That's an incredible way to develop...that's the best way to start to develop this blueprint.

JB: That organization helps with the language; the kind of company that do and incorporate new things. David, you were talking about, in the context of that, like how it helps us identify organizations, relative to what [17:28.9]

DC: Yeah, absolutely, thanks James. Where I was going to comment there is...James does a better job of articulating that than I would, but I would say we live that model and when you live that model you're only good partners with people who are growing something as well. When we look at the marketplace we have to find people that are trying to pull off something that is...if you're getting what you want, we're a bad fit. And a lot of people, when you ask the question, “Are you getting what you want?” They always want more. But there is truly only a few organizations that really do...that really live that. Everybody would agree that you want more, but deep within, where the fundamental desire is that is driving that is not present, it will never happen.

An example I use that's simple but I knew two guys who were going to quit smoking. And one of them, at the New Year, five days into the New Year were smoking again. And I asked him when talking to both of them, they both seemed committed, but the underlying desire for why you wanted to quit smoking...one of them was thinking about having a family and raising kids; the other one, his girlfriend told him to....

LS: (Laughter)

DC: So the “girlfriend-told-you-to” only lasted five days before he was smoking again. The other guy that had the fundamental life change coming quit smoking forever. So the whole idea here is that everybody can say they want something, but truly, your desires have to match it. And we look for it and it's a tough prospect to find organizations that really have the desire to do something different than they're doing now.

LS: But it seems to me that if you can find those organizations, that's really where the exciting work is, because you are making these major transformations using the most incredible tools available to us today.

DC: Yes, I think that's right.

JB: I agree!

DC: And when you look at it, that's where we come up and start talking. And we want to be in the transformation business because we want to help somebody, an organization, that has really grassroots desires to do something different and to pull off something great, and to live the model we're living. That's what we want to work with because that's where the exciting work is.

LS: Wow. I love that idea.

JB: From a business perspective, that's how we recruit, too. And we're looking to hire people that will work in this organization who want things big every single day, and don't want to do boring, average, mediocre stuff.

You know, we are talking about prospecting for customers, or even building for us so we can align ourselves with the right business partners. It's all about people who have the highest aspirations and understand that achieving your highest aspirations requires risk. It's not the safe route. It's the road that requires recognizing that there's a massive difference between where you want to be and where you're going, and being willing to make a commitment, personally, mentally, culturally, as an organization...to align the resources and the initiative to get you to a place to achieve those highest aspirations.

And that's a good place to stay. I mean, fundamentally if you say all those things it's like, "Yeah, we're looking for people that really want it because they want to do something different, and they want to change; not because their girlfriend told them to.

LS: (Laughter) Absolutely! And change is often painful. Most people do not like change. There are certain people like us that, I think, thrive on it. But change can be somewhat painful and costly and risky, and that's painful. But there's a reward.

JB/DC: Our CEO, Bryan, talks about the fact that real transformation is not an evolution, but a revolution, in the context of being able to recognize that with a revolution, and being in revolutionary times as a new organization, you have to admit that some people are probably going to get hurt. And I think about that. Do you know any real revolutions in the history of man where somebody didn't get hurt? You would probably have a hard time naming one where that's the case. So from this perspective, this risk also includes the upset of some potential cultures; the reality that some people just aren't meant to be in an organization that's going to transform. And the reality that you might have to hire some kinds of people who are looking to completely change the paradigm in the way that going to cause some uncomfortable situations, it's going to cause some tough business decision challenges to be made; but that's okay because if you really want to pull off something big that's going to lead to this necessary evil.

LS: That's terrific; what you speak of, because I think the corporations that I speak to, they're scared and they're scared of those types of people and they're scared of that kind of change, and they're scared of losing control. But I think you're absolutely right. You're going to have some kind of chaos anyway, it's better to have controlled chaos than just random...excellent!

DC: We have a client right now who is a Fortune 500 company and the executive in the organization who is engaged in some services to re-launch one of their products, you know, the reality of it is what you've asked us to do is to transform the organization and it even threatens your opportunities; threatens an individual's career path.

But the recognition that things have to be different, and it's going to be better and be more effective with using more affected social media tools than the traditional old methods is something that really creates promise for the organization because there is a future. And I think that executives are willing to not be selfish about the decision making but be selfless for the organization...are the ones who are going to prosper the most for the long-term

LS: I love it, that's a great summary. And I hate to go from this incredible bird's-eye view, down into the weeds, but I want to talk just a little bit about some of these tools.

Is a blog all that necessary for a company? I mean, do you really need it...can you speak to why that's important.

DC: I love blogs. I love them. I read them all the time. I'm not much of a blogger myself, which sounds contradictory, but I think that blogs as a social media tool...my thoughts on social media always is this; you have to do what fits you and if blogging doesn't seem comfortable for you just yet, or neither does Twitter...I pay attention to both of them and I'm involved in both of them, but I always liken social media to just help how the social world works.

I'm a 47-year-old guy with two small kids, so I don't go to the bar every night; and that's kind of what Twitter is to me. I may be interested in it and I can bring it right into my phone and pay attention to it, but blogging...the same thing goes; it's something I read and it's my major source of information. We use it as an opportunity to drive traffic to our site, but we're very strategic with how that happens. In other words, I think a lot of organizations would say, "I need a blog, let's start blogging." And then the topics aren't really centric to a strategy of what you're trying to accomplish.

So, for instance, if you can have some outlandish blog post that generates 100 comments, and 100 comments from people you don't want to talk to or have in your audience pool, or anybody who is going to drive a transaction or cause something to happen within your business, then I much rather see a more pointed blog post that had four comments from people who were our audience and were creating conversations with the people we're going to do business with.

So when I look at blogs as an example of a topic, I say I love what they do; primarily we use them to drive traffic and to get our customers engaged in conversation and as a platform to put our thoughts in topics that establish ourselves as thought-leaders and get the dialog started, but we make sure, always, that they are based on a strategy that fits our business.

JB: I agree. And you know, being a blogger myself isn't the answer to driving business. There are 100's of companies who have blogs who that don't do, apparently, any business whatsoever because they blog without relevancy or content that's unique or insightful. I think part of the opportunity for an individual to become a blogger is that they will share and showcase a level of expertise, or insight, that others don't have. That's what makes them successful.

Blogs are a fundamental tool if business is good, because blogs, with the proper use can drive traffic for long-tail searches on search engines because they're empowered by specified content, and typically very search-engine friendly.

Products like WordPress, and others, provide fantastic SEO capabilities so that when people are doing searches for very niche topic areas that you might have written about, you can drive business and awareness to your organization from that topic.

A blog, for the sake of being heard, isn't necessarily the value within doing it, it's the driving opportunity that David mentioned, in terms of having a strategy, and being aligned with that strategy with everything you do around it.

I use a great example of MediaSauce. We have seven individual that need thoughts and blog on a frequent basis on a personal level. It's all about their thought and ideas on a really cool, creative art concepts for the web. And that works very well for them in terms of creative expression. And in some capacity those blogs align very well with some of our strategic goals to showcase our skill sets and abilities, to do what are really highly interactive and engaging content. On the same note, we can make blogs about my experience last night at Pizza Hut, or I can blog about my experience yesterday buying a [26:20.4], which are interesting but not necessarily relevant to social media. I'm not going to find a perfectly aligned message with a strategy that's hooked up to our business. I think the challenge for an organization is to choose a blog that going to (1) find someone who's going to blog and is engaging and insightful and then (2) understand and clearly communicate the expectations of the blog aligning with the strategy. We use these two rules.

LS: Wonderful! And the more I get involved in social media, the more I keep likening the marketing to being at this proverbial cocktail party. If you just go into the cocktail party and just continually blog, or talk about yourself, you're going to lose the interest of people around you. But if you have this, "What's in it for me." If you're adding relevant, good content to that conversation, then you'll have everybody's attention.

DC: Yes.

JB: Excellently put.

LS: Cool. Here's kind of a big question that kind of builds onto this blog thing. You hear the words "building community." I interviewed Gary Vaynerchuk, who is an awesome guy. He's the king of building community with his 600 + videos and his Wine Library.com. Does the blog help build community? What does "build community" mean and is that important?

DC: I'll go first because I've got a simple response to that, that really fits with my comparison to how off-line works. It's like the term "community" comes from, you know, a neighborhood; how you live and interact in your personal community. So when I look at...I live in a sub-division in which the houses are very close together and everybody has to become acquainted with one another, and you develop good friendships in there. And there are some people that you are less friendly with, but everybody knows everybody to some degree.

When I operate in this community, there is a...you establish those friendships by being fair, honest, transparent, a good conversationalist...all those kinds of things; and then you find people with the same kind of interests. It

just takes more time to work an 1,100 house sub-division than it would be to find that online, as you start to poke around and spend hours in the evening while the TV's on you give it, kind of, your partial attention and you find relationships form there that make sense. But the whole idea of community, what the word's from, is friendship. And I'm not friends with anybody that I think is dishonest, that I don't know anything about, that I think are unfair. My friends, on the other hand, are people who are real and, like me, share common interests...good folks...people I want to spend time with.

You've got to look at how you create community from the same point of how you create business friends is just like how you create personal friends. And when you talk about the wine guy, as I am saying myself, all the tools he uses and how he acts, is like a feel like I'm in his living room every time I'm on his site.

LS: Trust.

JB: To add to that, I think the idea of creating community...didn't blogs create community? Absolutely! When people good create an identifiable affinity to the person who is writing a blog. In the context of creating a community, I think what makes the wine website successful vs., let's say other communities that have attempted blogs in it, is that it fills a void in a way that no one else has filled yet. Part of making a successful community is finding the niche and category and the void within that category, and that there's enough people who will align with it to seek affinity with you.

I think that's the biggest thing. There are people who create very successful communities being exceptionally controversial. There are hundreds of case data on one site, small groups, but nonetheless powerful and passionate groups who use the sites on a regular basis, use blogs, and other mechanisms of social networks to drive on a particular agenda or purpose. I think the biggest thing that when you're creating this idea of community and aligning with your organization's products and services, is identifying what might people be most passionate about, and more importantly, who can then lead those conversations in a way that has a transparent appearance of passion, belief, and knowledge.

LS: And I think passion is really important when it comes to a blog, because that gets back to the transparency. If you're doing it because the vice-president told you to do it, it's going to be a lot different than if you're writing something that you're positively passionate about...and it comes through!

DC: I agree completely, because that goes back to the whole thing of, "Did your girlfriend tell you to?" And when you looked at it and sense that at organizations, a lot of times that's how it starts. Everybody blogs! I don't care...blog!! And then what happens is people use that as a forum just to say stuff. And if you're saying stuff that doesn't matter to your business or what you're trying to accomplish, than it's just stuff!

But it just gets cluttered and messy and you start attracting people that don't have any interest and it doesn't do anybody any good. And I think that organizations have to...should be taking a more encapsulated approach to how that happens and then you find people who are passionate about subjects. We call them ambassadors in our organization. We find those ambassadors that match up with different pieces of social media that they're very passionate about and they're on all the time, and there's nothing you have to force...and we make them responsible for it. Then they're the content specialist and they're the person that brings the things to the table and informs the entire organization about a complete understanding of that platform.

LS: That's right. And I love that word "ambassador" because the marketing and public relations and communications department isn't necessarily usually the best ambassador. They're great when it comes to the technical application of communication, but often it's the line person, in a lot of cases it's the receptionist who is really the ambassador.

DC: Yeah, that's a great point and I look at it and I go, "It's every single person out there running a business." It's like there's somebody in your organization that is a perfect fit for the social media tools that you want to use, and it may not be your VP of marketing.

LS: Excellent!

JB: That's great!

LS: And it's going to scare people, especially the VP! (Laughter). When we're talking about two-way communication...I mean that's what we're talking about now...is two-way communication; because by creating a blog you get the opportunity to have people comment. But I hear often from the companies I do consulting with, is that they're afraid to start a blog because they don't know how to control the message. It's always about keeping it on message, keeping the corporate image, and limiting liability. Can you speak a little bit about approving and spamming and deleting comments, and how to manage the whole blog thing; that you can actually keep some control on it?

JB: I'd be happy to answer on that. The biggest fear, I think, when people are texting and blogging on the social network settings the companies sponsor or manage or promotes...is the idea that your competition might come online and try to take over the conversation and essentially misrepresent a fact as their own, a "sight-of-hand" so to speak. Or worse, that dissatisfied customers might come on line and actually tell you that they are not happy.

There's this immediate reaction, I think, for business executives who don't understand the importance of engagement to say, "Let's just remove everything." And, unfortunately, that's the worse thing that can possibly take place, not necessarily because the consumers who use the site will see it, because there are certainly times where comments are submitted or things are seen with requiring approval; the reality is if everybody was perfect and every business was perfect, we wouldn't have a need for social media to be a reference place for us to make businesses.

The reality is that we do know everyone isn't perfect and businesses aren't always going to be "ten" on a scale of one-to-ten, and that there's going to be its differences that makes the decision of a buyer of their products or services are right for me, or not. And organizations who can allow that diversity of conversation...in some cases the negative conversation...and embrace it and address it...will see the biggest success.

I use a great example. I used to work with a television station where someone used to go onto the website on a frequent basis and constantly complain about the coverage...constantly complain...and the general manager of the TV station said, "I do not want that person's comments on the site and I want them blocked." And if you look at the actual commentary the individual sent, it wasn't to be confrontational, it was to make them better. And so the reality of it...the solution was...I was able, over time, to convince the station's general manager to actually embrace this person, invite them in to be a critic offline and to help create insight on to how make things better from a viewer's perspective. And it created a formal viewer's panel over time that gave the

opportunity for those harshest critics who had the highest expectations for the organization to be able to work in such a way that was constructive, and not destructive.

I think organizations, across the board, have a huge opportunity to look at criticism as an opportunity to either be negative...because they want it to be negative, i.e. when the competition storms your site... vs. when consumers have honest, authentic concerns and embrace them to make you better. And tell people you want to be better and that you're embracing their constructive criticisms to be better.

LS: Absolutely, I love that and I full-heartedly agree! Recently I interviewed Jody Gnant. She's a songwriter and musician. She's absolutely amazing and she was involved in the One Red Paper Clip...I think she was transaction #14; and I just got it up and I spent 14 hours that day writing the chapter, but I wanted to make sure that her podcasts got up. And my two paragraphs have like three or four errors...typographical errors...and that was my fault and I shouldn't have. And almost instantly I got kind of a scathing comment from one of her fans who said, "How are you going to write a 650 page book on social media if you can't write two paragraphs on Jody Gnant?" (Laughter)

And I've got to tell you, my finger was on that delete button for a full 30 seconds, because I was really angry about that. But then I thought, "You know what, she's absolutely right." There should not have been typos, I shouldn't have posted it. So I commented back at it and I just simply said, "How do I do it? With really good editors and help from the community." And then everybody had a big laugh about it and it showed that I was human, and we all make mistakes.

JB: Organizations online make mistakes and take the effort to correct them...it not only tells the existing customer who's having the issue that you care about them as an individual, and also as a source of income, it helps all the prospects who are anonymously watching and viewing what you're doing to recognize that you are a company that has an interest in the individual customer.

LS: And you care and you have integrity.

DC: I would also say, too, that the conversations are happening; it's where you want them to happen. And everybody's got to be concerned with their online reputation, just as you have to be concerned with your reputation in general. And that being said, those conversations are occurring out there in the online world, and why not host them.

LS: Yeah!

DC: I always look at conversations that occur and I think one of the things that's in every point, and it's not a subtly at all, but it's like work towards creating conversations, not arguments. And arguments are what happens when you don't like what somebody says and you respond harshly. And I speak a lot and a lot of times when you look at the room and you say to yourself, "Hundreds of people in here listening to what I have to say...how many are liking it." And at the end you do this evaluation to understand your performance. That being said, it's like, "What do you do with those evaluations?" Do you throw them in the trash when there're criticisms there, or do you try to make yourself better from it. And I think that's really the difference of how a company is successful or unsuccessful in this.

If you look at those criticisms or suggestions, no matter how harsh they are, they are opportunities to reach out to somebody and make yourself better. And if you don't want to, or want to appreciate that, then it's the equivalent of speaking to a large audience, taking all the negative things and throwing them in the trash and saying, "Well, they just don't get it."

LS: Absolutely! And you're doing this publically. There's a catharsis. You're showing everybody....

DC: Yeah, that's not healthy for an organization.

LS: Exactly, and again I liken it to this fictitious cocktail party. You're at the party and hear a group of people across the room talking about you and kind of dissing you...well, what are you going to do? Are you just going to stand on the other side of the room, or are you going to step into the conversation and just add your perspective and apologize, or whatever's necessary, and then by the time you leave that group the entire group knows that you have integrity.

DC: Exactly, you're not going to walk over there and fight with them and create an argument with them about it. You're going to try to, politely, get yourself into a better spot with that group. And that's what's "online" because it's more anonymous. It's easier to get into some kind of harsh conflict, as we've all experienced through email.

LS: Sure.

DC: The same thing's going on online. If it's on a website or a forum it is easier to be a little more critical, a little more harsh there. And I think that's just...you've got to be the better person and you've got to make a conversation out of it, rather than creating an argument.

LS: I love it. And to build on this...the comment marketing in particular...and subscribing and trackbacks, and all these terms that most of these corporations aren't familiar with. Can one of you address a little bit about comment marketing, participating in other people's blogs, subscribing trackbacks...that kind of stuff.

JB: The biggest opportunity that businesses have is instead of trying to spread your methods to your own material, to go out and find people who are already talking about you, your services and/or your competition; and engage or participate in those conversations.

We hear clients often say, "I'm not even getting in the door and my competition is the one out getting the business, and I'm not even on the radar screen. And this is because I am smaller or not in the geographic area, or because my brand does not have the recognition they have, etc."

And I say to them, your biggest opportunity is to actually create an outgoing/outbound marketing communication strategy online where you actually go out and follow people talking about them...or you...and doing something off of your site, off of your normal communication...or formal communication channels...and "popular" yourself. And it doesn't mean, "Hey, I think "blank" services are so much better." It's not that. It's actually being a part of the conversation like you're a real person and not just a marketing machine.

It's a difficult challenge, I think, for most corporate marketing and communications professionals to recognize that in the online world being part of those conversations is as relevant and pertinent to the conversation, and being present as an organization needs to be more subtle than direct.

It's almost like you imagine a used-car salesman on a TV ad where it's, "Buy, buy, buy now!" That loud noise and annoying voice...coming into the conversation that you're in. All of a sudden it's like it's spam, and information about the organization is like saying, "Here's what I have to offer." The reality of it is if you can predict certain communication you bring credibility in a way that people can see before they make purchasing decisions.

LS: Great! Can you imagine that same plaid jacket used-car salesman walking up to a group at a party and saying, "Sunday! Sunday! Sunday! Bring the kids!" It would have a different response.

JB: I think we've had that guy at a party or two, haven't we?

LS: (Laughter) everybody's got one of those!

JB: There's always one of those at a party, that's the way it is.

LS: (Laughter)

DC: I don't know where you guys are going!!

LS: (Laughter) yeah, do not go there.

This is incredible. We're over forty minutes. I love this. I just want to keep talking to you guys. We've got to do some kind of a follow up, subsequently, because I still have a whole list of questions I want to ask you guys. But for our listeners' ears, we're going to try to wrap this one up.

Is there any success stories, or anything else that you would like to add about social media/social media-enhanced websites; somewhat that you want to summarize what we've been talking about?

DC: I'll go first with this and spin those thoughts. I think everybody's got to work at their audience first, and their goals...their goals and then their audience will have them achieve it. So you've got to put together a plan and you've got to think in terms of moving from an online destination to an experience. You've got to think in terms of moving your customers...thinking of people as customers or your product and consumers of your brand. I think you've got to work from corporate-selling to self-discovery and allow that conversation to just blossom; and really think of it as...think of yourselves as platform agnostic and decide what platforms work for your business and for your goals and your strategies. And then pay attention to what goes on in the world, because there's a lot of them are immersing and changing every day.

LS: Wow, great summary...

JB: I completely agree with David and I add on the plate, "Do you want an evolution of your business, or do you want revolution of your business?" And I think organizations...if you had to think through...what the opportunities of evolution might create for your bottom line and your day-to-day activities that you do for the

future of your business. Identify with what evolution might mean to you, and what would be worth investing in to achieve that two or three years from now. And then go forward making that plan. Because if you can identify your highest aspirations, you're much better off to make a big impact in your own personal life, as well as your organization's long-term success.

LS: Excellent, wow. Excellent summary. I love that. And I know that the listeners are going to want to know the answer to this question...."Where do they find out more about you guys and MediaSauce?"

DC: <http://mediasauce.com>. Is where you can find all our online experience and I would say that our business, like most businesses, is all about the people. So at <http://mediasauce.com> you will see a showcase of our people, what they're about, what they like, what they do; because they are MediaSauce.

LS: And you have "saucers."

DC: Yes, exactly.

LS: You call the "saucers"...I love that.

Well thank you guys. I would really like to thank David Cain, President of MediaSauce, and James Burns, Vice-President of MediaSauce, for being with us here today to talk about social media, enhanced websites, and social medias. So David, James, thank you guys!

DC: Thank you, Lon.

JB: Thank you for the opportunity, Lon.

LS: This has been Lon Safko, the co-author of The Social Media Bible. Be sure to check out our other valuable social media tactics, tools, and strategies that can be found at The Social Media Bible book and its companion website, www.TheSocialMediaBible.com.

And for more information about me, Lon Safko, please by all means go on over to my website at www.LonSafko.com.

And again guys, truly thank you for being here today.

DC: Thank you...enjoyed it!