

## An Interview With Amanda Vega, Amanda Vega Consulting - Comment Marketing

Hello, my name is Lon Safko, co-author of The Social Media Bible, published by John Wiley & Sons, the largest book ever written on the subject of Social Media. Today we're here with Amanda Vega, President of CEO of Vega Associates. Today we will be speaking about Social Media and more importantly, Comment Marketing, which Amanda is awesome at; that's what her company specializes in. She has a marketing and public relations company here in Phoenix and New York and one in China. Is that correct, Amanda?



**AV:** That's correct; Shanghai.

**LS:** (Laughter) totally cool. So let's get started.

So, Amanda, please tell our listeners a little bit about your background, who you are and what you're doing and what your company does; and kind of an overview of what Comment Marketing is?

**AV:** So, I'm Amanda Vega, as Lon said, from Amanda Vega Consulting. You can read more about all of this stuff in great detail, since I like to write a lot, on [www.amandavega.com](http://www.amandavega.com).

Personally, I've been on interactive space about 17 years now. I started out as the 22<sup>nd</sup> employee of AOL, where I was a lowly chat moderator at the age of 15 (Laughter). So, I got a start in my career doing what all teenagers like to do; chatting on line and then filling out reports about what people were chatting about (Laughter).



**LS:** Cool. That's cool!

**AV:** Yeah, moved my lamp from there and, let's see, the company now...and this is my 3<sup>rd</sup> company, I sold the second one to Ogilvy and Mathers some years ago then started this one which we consider the antiagency true consulting firm that happens to provide services that mimic some agencies. Like you said, the offices for this company are in Phoenix, New York City and Shanghai.

We specialize in interactive marketing applications such as search engine authorization, public relations, [01:53.2] integrated, and social media management. Social media, specifically, there is a PFN across 15 countries right now that fuse social media, management above and beyond just blogging and podcasting; so it's about the conversations and then all the nerdy stuff that tags them to make them have their own wings and spread from there. (Laughter)

**LS:** That's pretty cool, because Social Media is about building network on a global basis. And if I just heard correctly, you say you have 32 people around the world, the entire globe that are working on Social Media, probably using Social Media tools themselves.

**AV:** Yeah. And it's interesting, too, because what we've discovered throughout the years is that while Social Media, itself, is kind of global in nature you know, it's the conversations through blogs and podcasts and people posting things on UTube, and the bevy of conversations that happen from that, that the uses of Social Media across the world can be different, whereas...you know...U.S. bound and most of Europe, you see how the use of MySpace and FaceBook by countries like Korea and Japan...they have their own little segmented versions of

those two types of things. And, more importantly, when you start dealing with Korea and also Africa and some of your other southern European nations, they actually don't focus any of their Social Media through computers, because they just don't even have laptops at their disposal, especially in Africa. Everything is done through their mobile phone; and it's a way of life for them.

So they are actually way more active than the U.S. market, but just at a whole different level. So you have to start looking at what are the social networking spaces and then what are the needs and the ways that they use to do their blogging and their Comment Marketing and their communications just via the phone.

So you see a lot more use of short-messaging and a lot more snippets in conversations, with tiny links and things like that, so it is really interesting and fun.

**LS:** And that's one of the things that I keep hearing through these interviews. I was lucky enough to interview Kevin Marks from Google, who is working on OpenSocial and he brought up the whole idea of this international community, because so often we just think of the U.S. as U.S.-centric. You know, that everything Social Media is all about us...America. And we've got to get out of that because it really is international.

And he was discussing some of the cultural differences between things like MySpace and some of the other websites, but I didn't even think about what you just said. You are absolutely right! That whole mobile technology, where people cannot afford laptops, also changes the way we interface.

**AV:** Absolutely!

**LS:** Wow! That's really cool. I love those kinds of insights.

**AV:** You know I can see on the global perspective, I think more of what truly is "Comment Marketing" and "Social Media" throughout those countries than you do, I think, in the U.S., for sure. Because that's how...much like we exchange simple text messages back and forth, and you see that as our society...if you think it's frustrating here, it's like you said...it's a way of life. It's not the constant deluge of communication back and forth. And as quickly as we shoot text messages off to each other personally, they use their text-messaging to post across multiple social networks and to do commenting and they're much quicker with their keystrokes and they can create tags much quicker than we do. And to them it is second-nature, whereas to us, we are actually behind in that sort of communication.

**LS:** And that's interesting because you have to take a look at what your clients information and completely consider the format if you're going to be marketing it to mobile-intensive areas.

**AV:** Absolutely!

**LS:** Wow! Based on your experience, I know you've been doing this for a really long time, and you're also really good at conventional marketing and public relations...and over the last couple of years where Social Media kind of crept its way into marketing and public relations, what kind of changes, what kind of insights, what specifically have you seen changed. Like your customers; how do you change in the way you're doing business and the way you do business with your customers using Social Media?

**AV:** You know, I think in terms of the way that they're marketing, what you've seen is an influx of email. Ten years ago you saw the first actual adoption of the corporate website as a way of doing marketing; and that's not when it first started, right? I mean, we had websites well before that, and email almost 10 years before that as well.

But it was later in the mix where it was, "Okay, we have to have a website", and people started thinking through why you were having it instead of just saying, "Well, of course we're going to have a website; we're not sure what we're going to use it for, but we're going to have one because everyone else does."

You're inclined to see that now with Social Media. Ten years ago we... Social Media, and the breadth of what it was defined as, was purely blogging and podcasting. It really didn't even have this meaning "Social Media" back then. You had blogs and podcasts. And podcasts, at the beginning, were only voice and then you had video podcast for a while. So then, they are calling it "vlogging" and all this stuff, but now we kind of "bucket" it all.

So, for the clients what happens is they have to pay attention to email as more conversation. So before it was just a customer, base back where you were just doing traditional brochures and handouts, and you know your investor-relations meetings and your press releases, and things like that. Well now, they have to adhere to a bigger group of standards; how each of the communications tools and sites out there have their own kind of nuances and blogs that are, kind of, run by the masses. You know they have to pay attention to that and they can't shy away for it. And what we've seen is, you know, there's still a struggle, I think, especially in larger companies. We see Social Media as an ad-campaign conduit instead of an ongoing way of doing business.

So you know, like you were saying, it's a business shift. It has to change at the company culture level and not be seen as just an advertising gig (laughter), and it's also, you know, made them more accountable for their opinions and gives companies their personalities. And sometimes that's uncovered some negative things for companies that have, you know, old ways of thinking and doing business. And we've seen it to where, you know, brands are kind of, under a microscope now.

So you cannot run from it anymore. Although some think that they can, where it's the old, you know, early P.R. rules of thumb, where like if there are negative things going on, just ignore it they will go away. Like the bully in school where your parents told you that (laughter). In Social Media what we find is if you ignore it, it just gets worse because it just fires people up.

**LS:** That's a really, really good point. You can't ignore it. And you also pointed out, what I heard you say, is that the similarities between the way the corporations are adopting Social Media today is the way they were adopting the internet 10 years ago. And we were just simply throwing up brochure-ware because we didn't know what else to do with it; but we knew that if we didn't do something that our competitor would do something and we would, kind of, miss out.

And I'm seeing that same kind of lack of enthusiasm...also fear...for a lack of control, "What are my employees saying? What is the blog saying? How can I control it?" But the cool thing that I've experienced is it kind of monitors itself. It keeps everybody kind of honest!

**AV:** Yeah, I think that if people truly adopt it with the...you know, with the premise of actually wanting to do it... not as just kind of an add-on on a checklist of marketing things that can be done, than it actually can

streamline a lot of the work and help perfect your product. Especially with products, right. I think it's probably true with services, but we've seen it more with products.

You know, historically what you would do to launch a product, or to do Vernon 2.0 for Products, you'd have to call in and pay for really expensive marketing research groups, right. So anything like an OutBound, SitOff, you go for a pop of \$50,000 to do this. Whereas, you know which always... no matter how much they cut it... is always going to skew slightly towards the good part of, you know, commentary. These people are being paid to give your opinion and they know that this is the company paying for it...no matter how hard you try to hide it and, say, be objective.

Now, if you let things feed out there and let people have the conversation, something as simple as opening up your knowledge base, right, and letting people comment or using a Wiki and things like that. You can actually get \$100,000's of dollars of market research for basically what is "free", right. Invite some people, tie in the monitor and crunch the data and then make decisions to the company based on what changes should happen with their product or service. So, you know if you approach it the right way and, like you said, with the right attitude and with the heart, then this becomes a whole medium that gives you more insight to your company than you've actually ever been able to garner before through traditional means.

**LS:** Yeah, and again a good point. When I was first trying to come up with the original design of *The Social Media Bible* I thought it was going to be another 250-page business book. Then we threw it out and about 1,000 people actually participated in looking at the design, and they told us, "No, we don't want just another business book. There's a ton of them out there. We want all the tools; what the heck is it? Tell me everything I need to know; then give me a list of all of the companies that are doing it."

And then the most important part is the strategy part; "How do I actually apply it." And when we saw this, we've never seen two business books sandwiching a user's guide. That was amazing! Conducting research, I would have never figured it out. But that's what the people wanted. And you know what? All you have to do is ask your customers.

**AV:** Absolutely! Well, again, that's the key of the success of *The Social Media Bible*. It's not one of these business, you know, business-composition-of-the-week type book. It's a full reference guide and that's going to be key because, again, what you're not doing is saying, "I'm the only expert in this." It's about being the experts of the masses and how they all work together. And again, once you've got it, all of these people that say they want to protect themselves and say, "Well, I'm the *MySpace* expert. I'm the *LinkedIn* expert. I'm the blogging guy", and things like that. And, "Oh, my blog gets this many readers", but at the end of the day even the very concept of *The Social Media Bible* is social media in nature. And that's the key and that's what's going to have people embrace it; because, like you said, there are so many tools out there.

I know that when we checked, there is like over 250 different tools that are [12:04.6] rated... *Comment Marketing*; *Social Bookmarking*; things like that that to give conversation their wings that there's just no way that you could handle them all at the same time. And then the questions become, "Well, how do you know when to use this; when do you use that?"

And I think that the book is going to provide the breadth of it, right. It will end up being one of the books that we pick for clients, you know, and as a sales model, too. You say, "Look ! Bam! Here's the book. This is

what we're monitoring. It's not, you know, your profile on MySpace that we're throwing out there, or your corporate blog inside of your website. It's all of these things that have to be managed and on a daily basis."

So, I think it's great that people are coming together because it is about the masses and it's actually...it's kind of a neat thing... if you actually think about it. Social Media is lending itself to be a larger sense of collaboration out there, and if you use it the right way, people are more than happy to offer up their expertise and most of the time for free; or for just a little recognition.

**LS:** Yeah, we've been getting tremendous support. And, by the way, thank you for that observation. I'm not pretending to be an expert in any one of the categories. I think that that would be kind of foolish even to say that. I'm not an expert.

What I am is an aggregator. Take a look at, and bring in...as you just said...all the experts who really are experts in one particular field. Now if we can put them all in one place...that's kind of what the goal is. Kind of like, you know, the real Bible, if you would. Nobody actually wrote it or was an expert, but they compiled all of the best information of the time.

**AV:** Yeah.

**LS:** How did *Comment Marketing*, specifically...because I love that terminology and I really love what you do...affect your clients. How do you bring it to them and explain to them what it is? If they asked you, "What the heck is Comment Marketing" how would you, kind of, describe that?

**AV:** (Laughter)...I wish it was one quick sentence, really! Because you know, historically, it use to be about your blogging, you pushing conversation, right. It's like that consummate public speaker that talks "at" you. And you say that basically, that's outdated, and now you...at the end of all of it, right, the idea and the goal for any client, whether it's to increase sales or visibility or whatever...really what they're trying to do is become subject-matter experts within their space to then garner sales, better marketing, better reach, better brand, and so on and so fourth.

So, *Comment Marketing* basically is the whole concept of, "You can't just push your conversation out there." Other people are having the conversation related to your area of expertise. If you don't participate throughout all of those conversations and kind of stake your claim, add to the conversation, clarify things that you either disagree with or that you agree with, and use those to point back to who you are and what your capacity is, then you're not having a two-way conversation; which is what this whole thing is about.

So you can't...you know there's a lot of social media companies out there that we have come across as competitors. When you look at their offerings, what they're doing is they're putting up a blog, they're putting up a podcast, and they're setting up social networking profiles and then calling it a day.

Well, that's only half of the battle and actually it's the easiest part of the battle. You can get that done in a day; that's not the bread and butter, that's not even making sure that there is content on those things once a week, or more. What it is is what are other people saying about the same subject and how are you participating in that conversation so that, eventually, what happens is all of your commentary all across the web, your participating in hundreds of conversations, then basically all point back to you. So that when someone does search for your service or your product or for you as a speaker or an author, something like that, that it all pulls back to you and

says, “You know what, hey, Lon Safko is always talking about Social Media, so you know what, he’s got to be an expert because we see his conversations in all-purpose territories.”

We try to explain to clients, too, because they...I think they approach it sometimes thinking of it just like P.R., right. We get public-relations clients that come in and we say, “Okay, let’s talk about where you would like to see your name in print, or on T.V., and you know what, every time it’s always two, right! I think we’ve talked about this before. Everybody wants to be on “*Oprah*” and everybody wants to be in the *Wall Street Journal*. (Laughter) And to a lot of traditional P.R. clients, that would be the “be-all/end-all. That’s it. They could go to bed, shut off the company, that’s it! That’s all their looking for.

But the reality is... is that you could have, you know, a 100 other stories written about you in a relatively small...even news letters or local newspapers...or things like that. And at the end of the day, if it reaches your target reader, it actually may be better for you than some of those large-scale publications. So, when we go into clients we explain that to them and say, you know, “At the end of the day you could pull a simple RSS feed of a key word that is important to that company, and then see.”

You know, there are 10,000 conversations being had in a day. Now, do you actually have to participate in all of them? Maybe not, but they’re going to have a key word that is, kind of, mindlessly related. But there could be 1,000; and it could be 1,000 and you know what, maybe only 15 people read that guy’s blog so why is it important; is what we get.

You know what? Out of those 15 people, if his blog is narrowly focused on what you provide, then you know what, those are 15 potential buyers. And you need to participate and you can’t think of it in terms of a scale of importance. It is more important to be Google-ized than it is to be on, you know, Annie Mae’s blog about fudge, or whatever. (Laughter)

Well, you do have that division of, you know, what are the “highest-end” and what are, kind of the “cream of the crop”, right? Everyone knows if you get Google-ized, chances are it’s going to have a really bid pick-up and eye-balled.

Just like if you appear on “Matchables” it’s a good thing. But that’s not to say that the other ones, as a whole, don’t equal the sum of what the big one is.

**LS:** And that’s a really good insight. When I had a previous company, a technology company, I developed the first computer to save a human life and we helped physically disabled. We did an article and we were actually featured in *Popular Science* which was distributed out around the world, the entire globe. As a matter of fact, the first time I saw it it was in Manchester, England on the newsstands. And I thought, “Boy, this was a...like you say...the “end-all” start!”

The reality was that I got five telephone calls as a result of that, and never made a sale.

So you’re right. It really is about participation and not pushing that P.R. or pushing that marketing message the way we use to do. Without mentioning any names...before our interview started you had mentioned, like, one of the biggest “no-no’s”; one of the worst things that you can do on LinkedIn that you just saw somebody do.

Can you just, kind of, summarize what that was?

**AV:** Yeah, we got a request to connect on *LinkedIn* by a... first of all, someone that I didn't know and had never heard of, which is kind of a... You know, *LinkedIn* is...has its own...it stood apart, right. It's always been kind of a "business-users" social network. The beauty of *LinkedIn* has always been the fact that, you know, you won't just pass along "anything", right. Your network is protected by the people within your network.

You know, there are a lot of times where we'll request some information or a meeting, and it gets "point-blank" turned down, even if it has all good intentions behind it; just because people are tired of being blasted. But one thing if you do get passed along, it's nice because it's like, "Oh, hey, you know Lon wants to meet with this person and Amanda knows Lon, and I trust Amanda. So therefore, okay, she probably wouldn't waste my time with talking to Lon so I'll take it.

This morning I had a request for someone who I never even heard of, who I basically put a sales proposition together, inside a *LinkedIn* request. You know, it was like, "I'd like to connect with you; here's what I offer; you'll remember me from this. Here! You can go to my website and look at what I do and then I can send you a free brochure, and don't forget to book me for this, this and this... and think of me when your clients need this."

It's the complete "wrong" use of *LinkedIn*. And I basically wrote a nice note back and said, "This may sound harsh, but you completely "bastardized" the whole *LinkedIn* concept; and you're likely to get stoned." (Laughter) You know, someone eventually is going to pull that and blog about it...which then is going to create a reputation issue...because you misused the whole concept of *LinkedIn* and people are very protective of that, and they're very vocal, right? Which leads you back to the...you know, going into it, it's very nerve racking for some clients. Because, yes, you've made a miss-step and it can be publically broadcast, right?

I guarantee there's going to be somebody today that mentions that person directly related to their misuse of *LinkedIn*; specifically because they claim to know Social Media! That was just a clear, like, "You don't know anything about Social Media if you use that as your sales tool." Not that you can't use Social Media as a sales tool. However, you have to know how to do it with grace and with ethics and within the rules that are set by each of the individual Social Networks, by use of the different Social Bookmarking sites. There are just all these little nuances.

It's like knowing what fork to use at dinner and what parties you can go (to) wearing slacks and others that you better be wearing a black cocktail dress to. So these are the types of things that we manage.

**LS:** Well, I had the pleasure of interviewing Krista Canfield from *LinkedIn*. She is the P.R. manager and she [21:20.6] at interviews. She stressed the fact that the reason *LinkedIn* is a success is because the value that it brings...the integrity, if you would...of those links.

**AV:** Absolutely!

**LS:** And here's another thing that was interesting about participating in the blog-a-sphere, getting out there and getting recognized. Not pushing your message but being recognized as an expert.

Can you tell me just a little bit, or as much as you can share with us in this interview... you found a blog that you thought that a particular company (wasn't a marketing company) really wasn't taking advantage of what

they should have been doing. And you simply blogged about it and then they contacted you and instead of it becoming inflammatory it actually resulted in a relationship?

**AV:** Yeah. (Laughter) it's our favorite case study in Social Media, right? It's our favorite one to take to clients and to talk about. We actually saw a traditional campaign happening over television that was amazing! I guess we're allowed to say who it is now; it's for LG electronics. And their agency record is [www.agency.com](http://www.agency.com). There in charge of all visual display. Basically they had a campaign called "The Scarlet Series" which made you look like an upcoming television show. I thought the creativity was amazing and I was hooked thinking that it was a T.V. show and I was on my TIVO trying to see when it was (playing) in the fall lineup and I would check. And every time I saw the commercial I got excited and said, "You know, this is interesting!" It looked like, kind of, a *CSI* meets and *Alias* or something like that.

It turned out it was just monitoring the feedback. So I just went through my list every day and there was the announcement that [www.agency.com](http://www.agency.com) had revealed that it wasn't actually a T.V. series; it was a series of TV's and that the whole thing was just an ad campaign. (Laughter) so I tried doing more searching on my own and couldn't find anything other than the press release that was put over the newswire. I couldn't find "The Scarlet" website or anything like that, so I used it as my weekly blog on our company website. And I just said this was amazing. I spend a lot of time on my blog talking about where agencies fail and where they are not meeting the needs of the clients in this day and age, especially with Social Media.

So I gave a visit to my readers and said, "Okay, you know what, I'm not always complaining! Here. This is a great example of when you hire an ad agency the concept, the creative, the mazing...it is insightful and it hooked me and it made me pay attention and now I'm going to follow it...and they basically captured me for three months of my life (which is more than most T.V. ads can do).

But then I left the codicil to the note saying, "However, you kind of missed the mark." Where was their Social Media, why were there not user groups, why weren't they talking about this on social networks, why were they not creating groups, or even setting up little groups to help spread the word, even if it was transparent to the end-user?

**LS:** There was no "buzz".

**AV:** They said they missed what could have been 1 million more eyeballs, or more, but it was just their T.V. bias. The whole concept and "reveal" of it would have gotten a lot of major insight of, let's say, like advertising-specific blogs that people read in my industry. You know, you could have sparked up a "conversation" which not only would have helped LG, but would have helped [www.agency.com](http://www.agency.com).

So I posted that blog and said, "Kudos, but here's what we would have done differently." Within 24 hours we actually had the agency and the President of LG out of Korea. So...all the way across the world...our little agency, one blog post... captured the attention of a major client saying, "Wait a minute! Is what she's saying correct? What could we have done differently?"

It alerted the agency and so you thought for sure, "O gosh, this is going to start a big battle...which is fine, you know...because again, that's what it's all about. It's challenging each other. But, instead, the agency emailed me off-line and said, "Okay, tell me more. Tell me more about what your recommendations would have been?"

We would like to hear.” And of course, we are saying, “We’re not going to give you all of it because that’s what we get paid to do. But we have given you some overview.”

Basically, through conversation that was sparked from that one blog post...a thoughtful blog post about something that interests me...we ended up going to meet with them and have picked up work with LG, to help fix what is there Social Media challenges. So it’s turned them into one of our biggest partnerships of this agency; and some of our best work.

So what we are doing is re-visiting. And they came back to us and said that there is a *MySpace* and there is a *FaceBook*, and they posted all these things on UTube. And we said, “Well, why are they not found... (and that is) because they are not properly packaged, and #2, you didn’t respond to anyone who commented on these *UTube* videos. You’ve actually created a Social Media nightmare in the process.”

(Laughter) so we just need to clean this up and we need to think about these things the next time you go down this road. I guess I brought to attention that, again, here’s an agency that does great work, but they cannot just use Social Media as an afterthought, or as a plug-in, for traditional advertising. It now becomes a bigger responsibility. And it, yes, actually creates a lot more work for agencies and a lot more work in arenas that they are a little trepadacious about going into. It is a reality that you cannot ignore, because you are missing out on eyeballs and then your brand can become seen as old and stodgy. With electronics, especially, that would be a killer, right?

**LS:** Yeah, geez. Well the exciting thing about this is, this is the type of stuff that you do for your clients and in your off-time you do it recreationally. And that actually resulted in a client for you, so what better proof to your clients that it works, than the fact that it actually worked for you.

**AV:** Well it goes back to...on the public-relations side of thing, just like Social Media...(it’s funny because our best case studies are those where...I guess it goes back and proves the point)...that it cannot be seen as advertising and you have to really be authentic in your conversations. We always say that, much like your examples in *Scientific America*, we obviously do a lot of PR and I’m quoted in *Brand Week* and *Ad Age* and I’ve been in the *Wall Street Journal* and all these great things. And I just thought, “*The Wall Street Journal*”; wow, this is great, this is what every client wants, this must be amazing for us!” We have had all these quotes in all of our industry magazines, all over the internet...you know, things like that. They really don’t result, necessarily, in sales. However, an article written about the fact that I’m an avid surfer in *Surf Rider* magazine 10 years ago...and here’s a girl who’s surfing and talking about how boy shorts do not fit...! So, I mean it’s just no more than just a cute little article because it was a hobby of mine. We actually picked up three big clients from that article.

So it goes back to if you are authentic and you really participate and kind of produce yourself out there...that those are the things that result in business...Because, at the end of the day we always say...”When you get home from a busy day, you spent 12 hours in the office, your phone’s ringing, you’re trying to eat dinner...if you have a spouse or kids, you’re trying to find five minutes to spend with them...if you sitting down, finally, what do you pick up?”

Do you pick up your trade publication or do you pick up *People* magazine, or *Sports Illustrated*, or *Playboy*, or...whatever! What we all pick up is what interests us, right! For me, it’s golf that grabs me, you know (laughter)!

My ad-agent mags sit there for four weeks and I have to read them all, once there, right? But you know when *Us Weekly* comes in the mail (laughter) that's what I'm reading on the treadmill! So the reality is, too, is that it goes back to what we're talking about. Those conversations cannot be just failed conversations, they show personality, right?

When CEO's of big companies want to put up a blog and just talk about, "Well, today at the company we did great things...because we always do great things and we wouldn't dare do anything that's not great!...and thanks for listening." And you are thinking, "Wow, that really...okay...revisits the brochure that I have. It's not interesting."

But if you show a little bit of personality, saying, "By the way, I'm the CEO of this major company. Did you know that this past weekend I just hosted a big dinner that was raising money for charity, and we raised one-million dollars for the National Arthritis Foundation...and here's some pictures linked to my Fotoblog area...showing some of that. Again, an authentic conversation that's passionate from the CEO, but the likelihood of them getting recognized by somebody else for the first time is pretty high; because you've actually related to a subject that more appeasable to other people. And, again, it's just another valuable inbound link.

**LS:** And that's what's engaging. That's how you engage in your potential clients.

**AV:** It's all about conversations, right! It's all about two-way conversations. You and I wouldn't sit across from each other and have a meeting and me saying...

"Well, we sell *Social Media* and *Comment Marketing*" and then you are saying, "I'm writing a book...I am writing *The Social Media Bible*, I'm an author, I've done this..."

And if that was the only conversations...like pimping out our wares back and forth...it wouldn't be a conversation at all. It would be kind of annoying.

**LS:** There would never be a second conversation.

**AV:** There wouldn't. And the same thing applies in Social Networking. I think that's what scares people, maybe, is that you use to be able to hide behind your computer and now you have to almost expose yourself as you would, inside of a cocktail party where you don't know anybody.

**LS:** And I like that because when companies start to do that, that's where they really build trust.

**AV:** Yeah.

**LS:** So lastly, is there anything else that you would like to share with our listeners about *Comment Marketing* and your experiences with blogs and Social Media. Is there any way in which you would like to summarize what your experiences have been?

**AV:** You know, specific to *Comment Marketing*, I think that what listeners should understand is that pulling the feeds and monitoring conversations inside of your industry expertise, and also your personal passions, in terms of pulling the feeds it's easy. And you know what? It doesn't cost anything, you know. It's, you know, you can use *My Yahoo*, you can use *Yahoo! Pipes*, you can use the Google RSS feeds, things like that. But they do

need to dedicate a staff person or your own time. You know once again, we already talked about how limited that is, but you need to monitor it daily.

And when you're commenting, make sure that you're not just pumping out your wares; you're not just going to a website where someone's talking about a subject matter that ties into your offerings and then just saying, "Well, we do that! Here's a link to our website."

At the same time, though, you should be well-versed in how to properly use *Social Bookmarking* tools. How to *Dig*, how to *Diesel*, how to make sure you do the right *Tags* and *Clouds* and so forth. And that's what, we end up telling people, what separates our agency from the rest of them...is that it's all about that technology and how that conversation gets "legs" vs. just sitting out in the middle of nowhere and having no value, where no people pick it up.

And I think that *Comment Marketing* and *Social Media* management should be truly about having the "conversation" and being honest about the "conversation" and let people...you know even saying that [32:19.4] things, because that, you know, is very transparent when you only let the good comments come through.

Just like you would never only say good things to your friends. You would point out, you know always in a gracious way...you would point out where flaws are, where challenges are. And again, it helps everyone else and the likelihood of you also getting that in reciprocity from somebody else...it's highly more likely if you're participating across the board, as well.

LS: So really the best advice to companies is, really, make a commitment to participation.

AV: Yeah. Make it a priority to participate. I mean, take the first hour of your day, just like you do your email. I mean, pull your feeds and see what's going on. You do not need to comment every single day. I mean, we see lots of things come across in our industry, because it's probably the biggest one, right? We're pulling feeds on *Social Media*. Imagine how many links that is a day. Sometimes it's a sparse "conversation" and you don't have to feel pressured that you have to say something, but again, if something makes sense, just participate! I mean just comment! And I comment only has to be a sentence long. It's not that hard.

LS: Cool, cool. So, Amanda, can you tell our listeners where they can find out more information about what you do and more about *Comment Marketing*? Do you have a website...or...

AV: Yeah. You can look up everything on the website at [www.amandavega.com](http://www.amandavega.com) and you can also see our book at [www.prinajar.com](http://www.prinajar.com).

LS: That's a cool book, by the way. *The PR in a Jar!* Love that!

AV: The PR for Dummies for Dummies! (Laughter)

LS: It is really a great summary....

AV: It's easy!

LS: Yeah, anybody who does marketing or PR, they've got to get this book. I think it's awesome. Okay, alright Amanda, truly, honestly thank you so much for those insights. I think they were terrific and every time I talk to you I just learn 100 new things. I've been taking notes through the whole presentation and I'll be sure to listen to listen to this again, by the way.

AV: Well, great! That's good! And keep aggregating them. See, I think your book's going to be awesome because you're taking something very traditional and making it social, which is key. And I think that's worth hearing. In your marketing of your books, [34:24.9] Wiley, that's the whole spin. It's right there! (Laughter) so that's the first book written using Social Media. That's awesome!

LS: (Laughter) thank you. I really appreciate that insight, more than even the rest. Thank you.

Well, 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 in *The Social Media Bible* book and at our website [www.thesocialmediabible.com](http://www.thesocialmediabible.com).

For more information about me and how I can speak at your company, please visit my website for my background at [www.lonsafko.com](http://www.lonsafko.com).

And, again, Amanda thank you so much for being here today.

AV: Thank you, Lon.