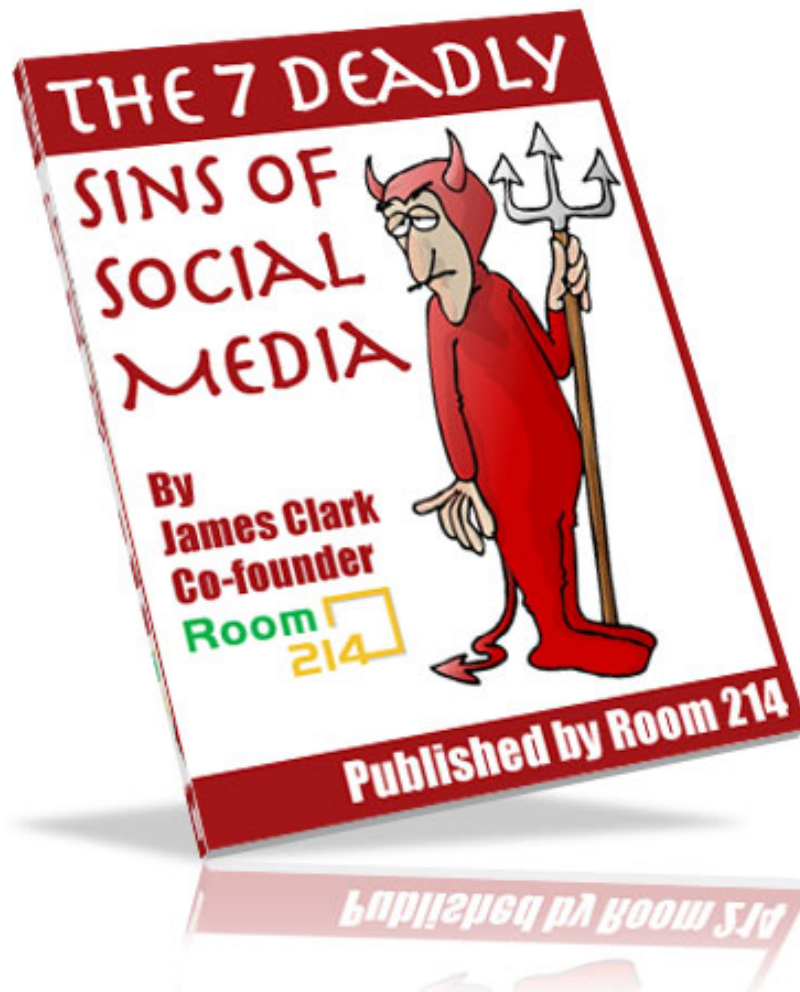


The 7 Deadly Sins Of Social Media



Companies seeking to leverage social media must realize the power of communities now more than ever. The quick differentiation between right action & wrong can make or break online reputations...

A Room 214 White Paper
By James Clark

The Seven Deadly Sins of Social Media: A Summary

Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Wrath, Envy and Pride. Yuck – the power of the word is evident in just looking at this infamous list.

The forces of good and evil are universal principles both online and offline. We all come into the real world (and the virtual one) as innocent babes. But once we arrive, our actions can bring us glory or shame.

In the world of social media, are you going to be a force for good? Or are you going to turn to the dark side – ruining your chances and infuriating those who cross your path?

The Fork in the Road

Building an online presence takes clarity of thought, tenacity and honesty. And it demands that we quickly differentiate right action from wrong. I've got two young children, and I watch this process all the time. With young kids, the reaction isn't the split-second decision adults make. I can see my son's brain working it out while he is holding the permanent marker, looking at his sister's homework and processing: "Should I do it? Should I draw all over her homework?"

More often than not, adults' intuition tells us the correct thing to do. It doesn't always come easily. In life, this kind of intuition is learned over years, through life experiences and influences and teachings from parents, family, community, religion, school, teachers, friends, etc.

But I'm drawn to saving sinners. For those wanting some form of moral compass to give a basis for understanding the right and wrong of social media, this article will capture the learning that takes a lifetime of community inputs in less than 2,000 words. How's that for vanity!

The Seven Deadly Sins of Social Media

Let's get at it. This list is in no particular order of importance. There is no hierarchy of social media sins. And for those reluctant to reform, you can't simply choose the least of the seven evils and get away with it – they are all bad.

Pride

The original and most deadly of the mortal sins, pride is the grim reaper of social media sins. When you have too much pride to admit you are wrong, and you go on defending your flawed position, even when conflicting facts

are made available, you are treading on some seriously thin ice. What's worse is when you "spin" facts in an attempt to convince others of one kernel or intent of truth in your statement. You must accept that it is OK to have made a mistake. Swallowing your pride and accepting that you were wrong is priceless – and in the long run this will make life easier. True character is revealed in times of adversity.

**SOCIAL MEDIA
SURVEY FACT**

A 2008 Sapient survey indicated that 90% of the over 200 Chief Marketing Officers surveyed want their marketing agencies to use social media as opposed to only traditional "push" campaigns.

Note: If the clarifying response is not immediate and the apology not genuine, then all hell will start breaking loose. If your community or subscribers find out you are not walking the walk, then the revolution will be openly socialized.

Social Opposite to Pride: Humility

Gluttony

Gluttony – too much, too fast. We've all seen the social sin of gluttony in beginners who look at social media as a new channel that is built to serve them. They jump in and devour all the services they have read about and quickly find themselves swamped, ineffective and wasting everyone's time.

To avoid gluttony, we recommend starting on one or two social media platforms. Get to know the inner workings, leverage the value of each of those communities and then confidently start expanding your social network footprint.

Remember you are present to add value to the communities you join, not to push messaging in those communities.

Social Opposite: Temperance

Sloth

Sloth – I could easily say this sin is being lazy and not participating in the conversation – never posting comments, creating new content or adding value to the networks – and I would be right.

Sloth in the social media sense is more meaningfully the failure to apply and use your talents and gifts in the conversation. Just remember you're good enough, you're smart enough and people like you.

But I'll also stick up for those that have tried getting involved in the social web and failed. Sloth is often a symptom of non-believers. It usually comes from a culture where there is little support for a social media initiative and little commitment to its success. Immersing oneself or an organization in social media takes a tremendous amount of time, dedication and attention, and without a little R-E-S-P-E-C-T from your peers, the effort is futile.

Sloth creeps in for non-believers of the product or company, too. This means if a social media [community manager](#) is placed at the head of the program and he or she frankly doesn't care about the company, product or service – it's doomed. Listen, if the effort is not a passion, the creativity will dry up fast.
Social Opposite: Diligence

Envy

Envy – “Damn, I had that idea three months ago.” “I know twice as much as that idiot, and he's got thousands of followers.” “I wrote about that two years ago, and along comes this A-list blogger who gets all the credit.”

'Nuff said – these situations are painful experiences. But face it, the reality is that someone else spent the time, energy and effort to build their network to put themselves in the position to get the credit. You might have brilliant ideas and have written great articles, but if your network is non-existent, then guess what: If a tree falls in the forest... Can you confess your network is lacking punch? (See "Pride," above.) If so, gather the strength and commit to putting yourself into the conversation. Offer to help others in ways that genuinely and directly benefit them, not you.

Social Opposite: Kindness

Greed

Greed – a deliberate betrayal for personal gain. Greed has many different labels in social media: [astroturfing](#), link baiting, spamming, scum-sucking scourges that live in the bowels of hell... The sin of greed just might be the most reviled and hated of all the sins in social media. So I'm going to spend a little more time on this one.

Let's put the greedy in two camps: fakes and flacks.

Fakes: Fakes blatantly attempt to hijack social media platforms for personal, employer or corporate gain. Think [Wal-Marting Across America](#). Fakery is when a fraudulent blog site, Facebook page, Digg profile, etc., pops up, posturing as if it has no ties or biases to a particular product or company. Yeah, sure, it's just out of the pure goodness of these people's hearts that they are driving around the country visiting Wal-Marts and blogging about it (in the case linked above), or constantly submitting a company's content to Digg, or posting updates in a Facebook group. Just know this: You will be exposed. It is the duty of bloggers and other personal marshals of the social media universe to sniff out the fakes and shine a light on dark-hatched plans.

Flacks: Flacks are in the offing when a team of coordinated individuals premeditate their actions as part of a campaign to go out and fill social media networks and blogs with comments, tags, Diggs or Stumbles supporting a particular product or company. Think: Comcast “Big Ten”. Take note of this so I can say, “You’ve been warned.”

RECOMMEND:

The Post Zinger blog and podcast platform. Why? Built-in analytics, advanced RSS and tagging, intuitive posting for blogs and podcasts, open source solution, and a track record of success with respected brands like Alltel and Travel Channel.

Yes, bloggers can deduce comment spamming is happening by referencing the IP address from whence the comments are coming. If you have hired a PR agency, and those individuals are all connecting to the Internet via the same IP address, and all of a sudden three or four new commenters appear on a blog post from that IP address, then it’s a good indication the black horde of flacks has arrived.

Common traces of flacks include:

1. First-time comments on a blog. This is an error in the basic understanding of community. Most bloggers and group owners know who their most frequent commenters are, and blog platforms like [Post Zinger](#) can even keep a history of comments by name. So after a post that may be controversial or damning receives a flood of new commenters trying to contradict the statements of the post, somebody will likely sniff out the orchestrated reputation management effort.
2. The comments are lacking any anchor text link (the name of the commenter that links to a blog, webpage or social media page). If you’re an active participant in social networking there has to be some website, blog or social media profile you can link your name to.
3. Comments teeming with “messaging.” We can all spot buzzword messaging a mile away, so please refrain. (BTW, you must play [buzzword bingo](#) at the next event you attend.)

To tame greed, make the commitment to the 80/20 rule. That means 80 percent of the content you are commenting on, tagging and submitting is not yours or related to your clients or company.

Social Opposite: Charity

Lust

Lust – “Oh [John](#), Oh [Paul](#), Oh [George](#), Oh [Ringo](#).” Come on, people, excess in any form is not good for you. Excessive ass-kissing of social media experts is just downright annoying. I’m not talking teacher’s pet stuff, where you are trying to be good by paying attention, showing up on time and participating – that’s all cool with me. What I’m talking about is the freaky, inappropriate and relentless pursuit of an individual that is just in bad taste.

I'm not saying don't try to create relationships with these individuals; by all means do pursue those relationships.

What I am saying is have some skill and tact, and use common sense. Don't constantly link to your content in their posts, and spare us the smoochy comments like "Love this post. Thanks!" and "Thanks for sharing."

Social Opposite: Self Control

Finally, there is...

Wrath

Wrath – Uncontrolled feelings of hatred and anger where you lash out and post a stream of vile meant only to tear someone or something down with the intent to do harm.

Now, I can sympathize with the sin of wrath, and sometimes it's borderline justifiable. Do everything in your power to resist publicly berating an individual or company. Don't personalize anything. If you're getting bad service, find a way to creatively discuss your exact experience and stick to the facts; don't get into name calling.

If you're genuinely pissed off to the point of blindness, type up your diatribe in a Word document, sleep on it overnight and come back the next day to see if it's still a good idea to post it. More than likely, you'll come to your senses. It's always easier to catch flies with honey.

Remember: "Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering," states Yoda.

Social Opposite: Forgiveness

Who Are You – Saint or Sinner?

When it comes to social media, there are a lot of great voices in the conversation – let's call them saints – willing to help others understand the right things to do: [Chris Brogan](http://www.chrisbrogan.com), [Brian Solis](http://www.briansolis.com), [Jeremiah Owyang](http://www.web-strategist.com), [Steve Rubel](http://www.micropersuasion.com), [Peter Shankman](http://www.shankman.com), and [Dave Taylor](http://www.intuitive.com/blog), to name a few I personally enjoy.

Naturally, the shadowy side has personalities attached, too. Because I'm a Wikipedia addict, following is a link to information about the mortal transgressions, starting with the 4th-century monk who first delivered the seven mortal sins to the world:

Did You Know:
Maintaining consistency with your online identity is important to building your social media footprint. Sites like [UserNameCheck](#) will help you find id's available across multiple social networking platforms.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7_deadly_sins

If you read the Wikipedia entry you will see each of the Seven Deadly Sins is associated with a demon:

Lucifer: pride
Beelzebub: gluttony
Belphegor: sloth
Leviathan: envy
Mammon: greed
Asmodeus: lust
Satan/Amon: wrath

Who would earn a demon title in the social media world? Do yourself a favor: Absolve yourself of the risk of evil new nicknames being hung on your online identity by using social media virtuously. Now go forth, and sin no more.

About the Author

James Clark is a social media expert and cofounding partner of Room 214, a social media and word of mouth marketing agency. James is also author of the award-winning white paper, [Fire Your PR Firm](#). Some of his other notable articles include [The Placement Crash: The Failure of PR in the Conversation World](#) and [The Top 5 Reasons Why It's RSS or DIE](#).

James Clark and Jason Cormier co-founded *Room 214* (www.Room214.com) in 2004 to help companies with search marketing, online public relations and reputation management.

Leveraging the Cluetrain Manifesto doctrine, James and Jason originated the "Capture the Conversation" philosophy: search engines are media and markets are conversations (see their blog at <http://www.ctcblog.com>). To dominate a market, you must capture the conversation by pursuing a unified, multi-tactic approach to social media and high search engine visibility.

Take Some Next Steps To Keep in Touch

1. Subscribe to our blog at <http://www.capturetheconversation.com>
2. Follow us on Twitter at [/JamesOClark](#) and [/JasonCormier](#)
3. Get our quarterly Capture the Conversation email newsletter

Invite us to help your organization or speak at your event by calling James Clark or Jason Cormier at **866-624-1851** or by filling in the contact form at <http://www.room214.com/contact.php>