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#ConnectChat Recap: Social Media for Business Journalists

Wednesday, March 14, 2012, 12:02 PM [[#ConnectChat](#)]

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Our latest [#ConnectChat](#), held Tuesday, March 13, featured [Robin J. Phillips](#), digital director of the Reynolds Center for Business Journalism, which helps journalists cover business better to improve the quality of American business journalism.

Phillips oversees the center's website, [BusinessJournalism.org](#), and its social media platforms. She also teaches journalists how to use social media tools to expand their sources and find new stories on their beats.

Among the topics Phillips addressed during the chat: what social media tools business journalists should be using; how they can use the different tools; how to tailor content to different audiences; the unique challenges business journalists face; tips for PR professionals on how they can reach business journalists; and more.

Following are highlights from the chat:

ProfNet: Robin, thanks for joining us today. Can you tell us a little about what you do?

Phillips: Thanks for having me. The Reynolds Center is dedicated to continuing education for business journalists. We hold regional workshops around the country and webinars on our site, all about business journalism. I run the website and manage the center's social media platforms. On Twitter, that means [@BizJournalism](#).

ProfNet: Do you think most business journalists are using social media? Do you think they "get" it?

Phillips: I don't think most journalists, nor most business journalists, are using social media -- but the numbers are growing. When I do training on social media, I get a lot of interest from business journalists. I think they are seeing others' success. One shameless plug: Here are recordings of that training, Social Media 101, 202 and 303: [bit.ly/SM101to303](#)

ProfNet: It's probably a good time to clarify what we mean by social media...

Phillips: Social media is almost any Web-based tool people use to communicate with other people who have some common interests. That opens up a pretty wide field -- games to comments on websites to Twitter and Pinterest. "Social" is key word in social media.

@PragatiVerma Are business journalists more active?

Phillips: I think business journalists are about as active as any beat reporter, and probably more than most. Business reporters need to constantly find new people to help illustrate stories -- both business folks and consumers.

ProfNet: What are some of the most useful social media tools for journalists, and especially business journalists?

Phillips: There are so many social media tools, and they are changing constantly. We use Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, flickr, Google+, Vimeo, YouTube. A reporter might narrow the field to Twitter and Facebook. A really good tool for business reporters is LinkedIn, because it is a career/company-oriented social media tool. We had 180 people turn out for this webinar: LinkedIn



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for Business Journalists (recording): bit.ly/LinkedInBizJ

@LouHoffman: LinkedIn has a program focused on training journalists.

Phillips: You're right. LinkedIn for Journalists is a great LinkedIn group. Also, journalists should follow @KristaCanfield. She does monthly training and has lots of great examples of stories people break by paying attention on LinkedIn. Local reporters -- business and news -- may find Facebook works well because it's a place they can connect well with local people. There's a business reporter now! Hi, Carlie.

@Carlie_Kollath: I'm hanging onto your every word. You really don't think most journalists use social media? It's pretty common, in my opinion.

ProfNet: It seems to me most journalists dip their foot in the social media waters, but don't really know all the different ways to use it.

Phillips: I agree. I think really busy journalists feel pressure to use social media, but can get overwhelmed before they see success.

@andrewknoc: Unsocial journalists are losing part of their audience.

Phillips: The thing is that unsocial journalists are not growing their audience, nor finding diversity in their sources.

@KenOnKM: People also misuse it. Exposing them makes great journalism, too.

@andrewknoc: I've seen social media used to great effect by a number of business journalists. There are several who do it well.

Phillips: Do you mind sharing who they are? It's always good to have great role models.

@andrewknoc: A shout out to @moorehn, for sure. I like all of what the @MktplaceRadio team does.

@L_McCormack: Really interesting conversation in today's #ConnectChat regarding social media for business journalism.

ProfNet: Thanks. While it's about journalism, it's also important for PR people to know how journalists are using social media.

Phillips: Right. This is about journalism, but social media is a place where journalists and PR people can meet.

@CommInternships: Not just PR people, but all communication professionals need to know the basics and nuances of social media.

ProfNet: Which leads me to my next question: What are some of the ways journalists can use social media?

Phillips: Journalists can expand their source list, identify what people are interested in, and find a new audience for their stories. Social media is a great tool for journalists, but they need to remember it works in both directions: Make sure to listen. Social media is also great for an exchange of ideas, learning new tools, finding out about new resources -- further education.

@PragmatiVerma: Do you see potential for new platforms like Pinterest?

@Carlie_Kollath: Ooh! I love me some Pinterest. It's not directly related to my business beat, but good for consumer trends.

ProfNet: Not all social media tools should be used the same way. How are they different?

Phillips: You're right. Each social media tool is different and reporters need to find what works for them. In general, Twitter is about common topics, Facebook is about personal contacts, LinkedIn is about career/work information. Some people sync their social media so what they Tweet goes to Facebook then to LinkedIn, etc. I think they need to be separate. Each tool has a different audience, and journalists -- or any user -- should use a different "voice" with each.

@Carlie_Kollath: So true! Too many people link Facebook account to Twitter, and it doesn't work. Do it right if you are going to tweet.

@Rachel_B_Berry: It isn't easy to keep business contacts out of your Facebook universe, but it's worth trying.

Phillips: Journalists used to think they can be personal and professional, but it's almost impossible to split.

@Rachel_B_Berry: It's a good argument in favor of a "personal page" plus a "brand page." That goes for Twitter and FB alike.

@Carlie_Kollath: Readers don't split the two. I represent my paper when I'm working and when I'm not.

@KRamirezDRC: All reporters are public persons, so I agree. We don't split the two.

@CarrieSBitz: I totally agree. They have different audiences, but for the crossover, [posting the same thing on both] is overkill. Engage, don't automate!

Phillips: Hi to another business journalist who is very active here,

@KRamirezDRC. You find stories and sources on social media, right?

@KRamirezDRC: Thanks, Robin! Yes, I do. Twitter so far is my No. 1 vehicle for finding sources, and in less than five minutes, too.

ProfNet: Shameless plug: If you're on deadline and send a ProfNet query, we'll tweet it out (if you want us to). Quick way to find sources! bit.ly/findexperts

@KRamirezDRC: Maria, I will remember that next time I am looking for a source. Thanks!

ProfNet: What should journalists consider when deciding which social media tools to use?

Phillips: Journalists need to find out what works for their personality, their beat, their location. What works for a finance reporter in NYC may not work for a retail reporter in Omaha. Is your audience daytime or nighttime? Are they people you've met or are you trying to find new readers/viewers/users?

@KRamirezDRC: It all depends on your location too, and what your needs are. It is different for everyone.

@Rachel_B_Berry: Consider the highest/best use of that channel and who your followers/friends/connections are. Mine the correct space.

@CommInternships: Three things journalists should consider: target audience, what the journalists wants to share, and how much time the journalist has to commit to it.

@KRamirezDRC: I complete agree! Time is very important. Social media is not something you can set up and leave alone.

@CommInternships: All things to consider posited here are strong. Really, it's a long list. Again, develop a strategy for each social media tool.

Phillips: Yes, but there's a whole other area too. Journalists need to remember to LISTEN on social media.

@CommInternships: Oh, absolutely. Listening should be one of the top social media strategies communication pros develop.

@KenOnKM: Engagement = readership.

@GnosisArts: To piggyback on @ProfNet's last question: What type of social media tools do journalists need?

Phillips: Journalists are probably going to find the most value from Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn.

@GnosisArts: Which aspects of Twitter, e.g., are most valuable to journalists?

Phillips: I think Twitter lists are underused. Setting up lists can make roaming around Twitter quick, useful. One example: We've got this list of Federal Reserve districts on Twitter: twitter.com/#!/BizJournalism/feds

@KRamirezDRC: Twitter lists are very valuable. Look at who is following who. For business, it is a gem.

@Andrew_Elery: They're a pain to set up.

@KRamirezDRC: It is a pain, but once you get those going, it will save time. Trust me.

Phillips: It's also helpful to follow lists other people have set up. Find an expert and piggyback on their expertise.

@KRamirezDRC: I follow a couple of lists and those are extremely helpful too.

Phillips: I'm often snooping around business journalists' lists to see what people are talking about. It's kind of like a school lunchroom.

@KRamirezDRC: I do that too, although I need to set up more lists. I have not had any time lately. Facebook also has a Twitter-like list component. I'm still learning how to use it

Phillips: Business journalists need to use social media for tips, but quickly take

the conversations offline to phone, email.

@KRamirezDRC: Finding sources under a hashtag is also very helpful, by the way.

@GnosisArts: We have an SMS-based tool to monitor Twitter keywords. It's good for trending hashtags, e.g.: s.gnoss.us/gnosify

ProfNet: Generally speaking, what are some tips and best practices for PR people to reach business journalists?

Phillips: Remember that everything on social media needs to be confirmed -- reputations, livelihoods are at stake in business journalism. So it is best to create relationships with reporters on social media in advance, before you need them.

@KRamirezDRC: Yes, very good point, Robin. Completely agree.

Phillips: Business journalists may be a little savvier than most -- don't try to fool them. It's important to be honest, straightforward. If you're pitching, know what the reporter covers, what stories they've done recently. Know what they talked about on social media. If you don't have answers, don't get in the way of the business journalist and the executive who knows the story. PR folks might set up lists of colleagues on social media, then direct reporters to those accounts. Build a network of relationships.

ProfNet: Sometimes PR people forget that the rules of good PR don't change on social media.

@MichaelHansen: Amen!

@KRamirezDRC: Yes, like sending a press release before they post it on their social media site. Just courtesy.

@GnosisArts: Can you elaborate on that statement? What "rules" are you referring to?

ProfNet: Meaning, you wouldn't cold-call a reporter with a pitch. The same rule applies to Twitter. Build the relationship first.

@KRamirezDRC: Do you have any social media PR rules you can share with us?

ProfNet: These are our "rules" for replying to queries. I think they apply generally too: bit.ly/dXyegV

Phillips: Good PR is good PR. But social media does allow PR folks to eavesdrop on reporters - maybe making it easier to develop a relationship.

ProfNet: This has been a great chat! Our time is up, but feel free to keep the conversation going. Thank you to everyone who participated. I hope you found it useful!

Phillips: Thanks for having me. Glad everyone came to talk business journalism and social media. Follow [@BizJournalism](https://twitter.com/BizJournalism) for more.

@KRamirezDRC: Thanks. It was very helpful.

@Andrew_Elery: I just learned about business journalism and social media through #ConnectChat. I read, engaged a little, and Googled whatever confused me. :)

@Carlie_Kollath: Enjoyed the chat today. Thanks for the insight!

ProfNet: I hope to see you all in two weeks!

@CommInternships: I'm looking forward to it!

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