



Sima Dahl (simasays.com) is a recovering job seeker turned marketing consultant, social networking coach and keynote speaker. To read more, go to MarketingPower.com/careers and click on "Sima Dahl's monthly column."

CAREER CORNER

Sleepless in Cyberspace: Managing Communication in a 24/7 World

The exact date is fuzzy, but sometime between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve, I raised the white flag of surrender: Social Networks 1. Sima 0. I could no longer keep pace with the volume of inbound communication and as far as I know, there is no "out of office" setting for Facebook.

As my loyal readers already know, I'm fairly active on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Add to that my three e-mail addresses plus AMACONnect, the awesome new social network exclusively for AMA members, and it's no wonder that I can't keep up. So this year, I'm trying something new and practicing what I preach: I'm setting realistic expectations and leveraging every touch point to reinforce my personal brand.

Whether you're climbing the corporate ladder or connecting with recruiters,

spelling out your personal rules of engagement is a powerful way to say you mean business. Here's how I do it:

1. Personalizing my "out of office" message:

I use "out of office" e-mail responses whenever I'm going to be offline for four hours or more and I try to reinforce my personal brand position in each one.

For example, one recent auto-response read: "I am on a client site for the remainder of the day performing amazing feats of social media marketing and digital communications with the Parlay team. If this is urgent, please leave a voice mail and I'll try to return your call on a break. Otherwise, I will get back to you tomorrow." Over the top? I say, why not?!

2. Signing off sincerely:

I've heard that when you respond to e-mail at odd hours, you set an expectation that you are, in fact, willing to work odd hours. That may be true, but I don't know anyone who only works between 9 and 5 anymore. Instead, I let recipients know that while I'm responding to an e-mail at 1 a.m., I am not actually open for business at that hour.

For example, I might say, "I realize it's quite late, but I'm booked solid tomorrow and wanted to be sure you got this." Ditto on Twitter. It's easy to get sucked into late-night conversation and I hate

cutting anyone off, but a girl needs her beauty sleep, so I have simply learned to say: "It's past my bedtime. Let's pick this up tomorrow." The message is intended as much for me as it is for the Twitter-verse.

3. Setting social ground rules:

This tactic has taken me a bit more effort but is beginning to pay off. When someone sends me a message via Facebook or LinkedIn that is work-related, I redirect the conversation by saying something like, "To ensure that this matter gets the attention it deserves, let's move the conversation to my work e-mail." Another tip is to close out any correspondence within a social network by saying, "And as a reminder, I do not check this inbox daily, so for time-sensitive or work-related matters, please use my e-mail."

Last month I took it one step further and typed up detailed ground rules for engaging with me on LinkedIn. Not only have I set the expectation that I take your networking request seriously, but also I have a quick way to edify novice networkers who perhaps need a bit more guidance.

Ultimately, only you can decide how available you want to be. For me, it's been an evolution. I'm actually considering picking one day a week during which I am entirely offline and available only by phone. I guess then I'd have to clarify if I mean landline, smartphone or Skype.

GET THE MESSAGE?

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AMA NEWS

Utah Joins the AMA Ranks

In March, the American Marketing Association International Board of Directors welcomed the Utah Chapter as the newest chartered professional chapter of the AMA, bringing the total number of chapters to 77.

Utah has been a "developing" chapter since 2010, when Christian Rytting began leading an effort to investigate the possibility of starting an AMA professional chapter in the Salt Lake City area. He soon found many other local marketers interested in bringing the AMA to their area and used a LinkedIn group to get the word out and build interest. Before long, the LinkedIn group had more than 200 members and the Developing Utah Chapter's kick-off event, held in January, was attended by more than 100 marketers.

The Utah Chapter is located in the Salt Lake City area and already has more than 80 members. Find out more at UtahAMA.org. Welcome, Utah marketers! **ma**

