

# Social Media = Social Change

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## Social Media as Change Agent:

For a world in need of transformative solutions to pressing political, economic, health and environmental challenges, the breathtaking advances in communications technology and social media create tremendous opportunities to connect as well as inform people quickly and cheaply. These advances have and will continue to open up siloed institutions --- or bypass them altogether --- and dramatically speed the uptake of innovative ideas. The new and social media advancements in communication converge with the coming-of-age Millennial Generation who have never known a world without the Internet and for whom traveling the information highway is as natural as traveling the interstate highways was for their parents.

With these words Bill Novelli, Distinguished Professor of the Practice and Founder of the Global Social Enterprise Initiative and Rob Gould, EVP and Managing Director of Brodeur Partners, opened a forum led by on-line media expert and political strategist Joe Trippi along with three social media practitioners: business leader Paul Meyer, CEO of Voxiva; non-profit leader Katya Andresen and recently-graduated college student, Josh Nesbit, now CEO of MobileMedic.

Much like social media, the purpose of the forum was to make connections and spark ideas for leveraging the power of social media for good.



Sponsored by the Global Social Enterprise Initiative of the McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University and Brodeur Partners

# Guest Speaker and Panelist:

Joe Trippi, Political Strategist and Online Media Expert, Partner, Brodeur Digital:

When Nixon and Kennedy had the first televised presidential debate, those who listened on the radio felt Nixon won. But most watched Nixon on TV, with his sweaty brow, shifting eyes and five o'clock shadow. They thought Kennedy won. The visual image usurped the importance of verbal delivery. It literally changed what your "voice" sounded like.

However monumental this change from radio to TV was, it was still only a shift in communications. Social media is a change agent not because it's a communications shift, but because it's a power shift. Social media and new media have allowed power to move from the top – corporate heads and politicians – to everyone at the bottom.

In fact, Trippi said, there's only one example in history when a change in communications technology led to a similarly dramatic shift in power: Gutenberg's printing press.

Once it was invented, the power of the Scribes was greatly diminished and a new class got access to materials that provided them a voice that was originally only meant for the elite. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, social media is creating a similar power shift to the printing press.

Social media tools are like the stones in David's sling shot. The Goliaths are still trying to figure out what's hitting them.

This begs the question: **"What does this power shift mean for us as practitioners?"**



# Excerpts from the Panel Discussion

## **Katya Andresen, COO, Network for Good:**

In the non-profit world, people don't see the direct monetary benefit right away after social engagement, but that is often because non-profits aren't doing the personal follow-ups after the initial engagement. They often say: "We're tweeting but no one is giving us money!" She advises them to take a step back: **"Social media is a conversation and listening tool, NOT a command and control device."**

## **Josh Nesbit, CEO of Medic Mobile**

Nesbit thought about how communications worked so differently back at Stanford and thought he could find a way to help improve the situation in Malawi.

Nesbit found a software developer back at Stanford who had an application called "desktop SMS" that could transform a laptop at the hospital and mobile phones into a virtual health care response system via text messages.

He returned to Malawi, put the community health workers through text training and worked through some tough issues, but, overall was amazed to see how well the 500 community health workers pick up on the technology so quickly.

**"Our goal was for the mobile phone/SMS system was to make emergency care more efficient, to get answers faster in order to help these patients in need."**

## **Paul Meyer, CEO and President of Voxiva, Inc.:**

Meyer noted that once new technology created by Text4Baby was established and it could be remotely implemented efficiently, the Goliaths, big health insurance agencies, became interested. His health monitoring system carried Goliath weight at a David's level. That interest led to them receiving big sponsorships and partnerships, like Johnson and Johnson.

**"Our service was simple: sign up for text4baby and in exchange the customer would receive 3 messages a week on how to improve their baby's health. What makes this interesting is it provided babies a voice they otherwise didn't have before...This isn't about technology; it is just a tool that enables meaningful change."**



# The Question and Answer Session:



**How do non-profits differentiate in the middle of all the noise created by social media? And what about how social media lend itself to sensationalism?**

**Paul Meyer, Chairman and President of Voxiva, Inc.**

- *If social media was the only media source available and working, how can it be sensationalizing when someone in need is crying for help and they could only be heard to hear a voice that in the past would haven't had an option.*

**How do you keep movements sustained?**

**Katya Andresen, COO, Network for Good**

- *Social media is a first step. The movements themselves are responsible for sustaining themselves. The technology cannot take full blame when it is only a fraction of the equation. And the technology is still embryonic. Entities must use the tools they have in place to keep it alive. Social media isn't a replacement to social ties.*

**We often hear about the importance of alliances and partnerships across sectors. Do these alliances and partnerships help or hurt?**

**Josh Nesbit, CEO of Medic Mobile**

- *Partnering is a great thing because it can easily snowball a project. It's like B J Fogg's model for behavior change – you need motivation, ability, and a trigger to come together and create the behavior change you're seeking, to get results. Partnering and social media are helping all those things come together. The world is flat and we can do anything.*

