



# The Wisdom of Lincoln, the Flair of Barnum



Ideas for learning, leading & succeeding in business

by John Ribbler

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## Ask yourself, "What problem can social media solve?"

Is social media (or any media for that matter) inherently good or bad, value rich or worthless? If you spend any time following experts and pundits (thanks to social media, everyone's an expert and pundit), you have to wonder whether any business has a future if it doesn't drop everything to blog, tweet, optimize, network, or (at the extreme) stop selling altogether and just e-market.

Historically, new media come into a marketplace like wonderful, rosy infants. Radio, then its sibling television, made monumental arrivals when they joined the media family of newspapers, books, magazines, catalogs and billboards. Internet media — despite their awesome, high-tech auras — have landed like a boatload of orphans with strange sounding names who threaten to take over the house. It is no wonder that many are either scared of them or do not know where they will fit in.

Many business owners and executives struggle finding the best ways to launch interactive media campaigns to engage customers. Each social media guru has a special model for getting into the game. But, proprietary formulas are based on broad theories, not the real needs of an individual enterprise.

When companies ask me how they should implement social media, my response is: What problems do you currently have that social media can help you solve?

These new communication tools can help soothe angry customers, increase sales in an under-performing segment, boost morale, get lost customers to return, reverse negative perceptions, etc. Organizations rarely improve when they invest in new initiatives while long-standing sores fester. Social media provide versatile, flexible and affordable options for addressing critical sales and marketing issues.

If leaders try this approach and find that none of their problems can be solved by social media, then they should concentrate on fixing what is broken.

If the organization does not have any problems . . . please contact me. I would love to know which one it is.