

## The Social Capitalist: Simon Mainwaring



In this episode of the Social Capitalist, *Never Eat Alone* co-author Tahl Raz interviewed the marketing consultant, author, and speaker Simon Mainwaring, about his book, *We First: How Brands and Consumers Use Social Media To Build a Better World*.

Some of the key points from the discussion included:

- How individuals can use social media to leverage their personal brand as well as the brand of their organization.
- How shifting thinking and behavior to better serve the interests of others can also lead to opportunities to help ourselves.
- How companies can make money from social media by building communities that increase profits.

This is an edited transcript from a Social Capitalist Live Event. The Social Capitalist is sponsored programming of myGreenlight, the only comprehensive online learning platform for critical relationship development skills. The interactive interview series is dedicated to delivering in-depth discussions on relationship science with the best and brightest thought leaders in business and academia. Enjoy!

**Tahl:** Hi, everyone. I'm Tahl Raz, and this is the Social Capitalist. Today: Is technology teaching us to be more human? Could the future of profit actually be purpose? What does all that have to do with social media? Can we learn to use that media rather than feel used by it as so many of us do today?

The answers come to us from Simon Mainwaring, the CEO of a brand consulting firm. Simon was inspired by Bill Gates' call at Davos in 2008 to engage in “creative capitalism” to harness market forces for social good. That's precisely what his first book sets out to do. *We First: How Brands and Consumers Use Social Media to Build A*

*Better World* explores what Simon calls "the new social business marketplace," where we all now have a platform not only to express our own voice, to be heard, which is new, but also to join with other forces and become a chorus for change and innovation. Welcome, Simon.

**Simon:** Thank you so much, Tahl, and thank you, everyone, for listening.

**Tahl:** Let's start with some of your counter-intuitive core beliefs that, if they go unexplained, might seem overly idealistic or needlessly provocative. Core belief number one: Technology is teaching us to be human again. That is, indeed, counter-intuitive. How so?

**Simon:** Well, it's interesting, I think for a long time the presumption in the marketing and advertising world was that companies had your best interest at heart. Over the last several decades we've realized exactly how powerful the medium is, whether it's television, radio, print, or otherwise. In which case, we started to use it to serve our bottom line, whether or not it authentically served the interests of the customer. But recently, in the last three or four years, that monologue, in which the advertising agencies, or the networks where they had a monopoly, were pushing out their messaging in a one-way, broadcast sense, that monologue was replaced by a dialogue, thanks to social media.

Suddenly, through social, consumers could have a feedback loop far more profound than either writing a letter to their senator or complaining to a brand by picking up the phone. This has really allowed the monologue to shift to a dialogue, as we've seen with Arab revolutions, as we've seen with the BP oil spill, as we've seen with Occupy Wall Street, as just some of the more obvious examples. There's now a level of citizen engagement. There's now a level of customer engagement. There's activism, which is pushing back against brands.

In a sense, the very nature of dialogue is such that it has allowed us to share people's feelings equally. You can no longer just solely serve the interest of the company or a corporation.

This dialogue is very, very powerful. To give you a concrete example, you can witness people trapped between the floors of a building in Haiti during the earthquake, and then respond just as quickly by texting a donation into your phone. It taps into our innate empathy for each other. We are social animals by definition, and it allows us to express that in a real-time, very simple and easy way. That's what I mean by "it's allowing us to be more human." Both in the sense of it being a dialogue where there was a monologue before, and also that we can respond in real time to the experience, the lives of others, very easily.

**Tahl:** I'm not surprised that the case study you just cited is what you might consider a non-profit, which lends itself very well to that incredibly well-explained context for that core belief number one. But, and maybe this ties into your core belief number two, you've also said that "the future of profit is purpose." How does that happen?

**Simon:** Well, this operates on several levels. Just as a given, there's nothing idealistic, naive or unrealistic about what I'm talking about. I'm an ex-lawyer, now ad guy. I'm everything you hate in other people. I have very high BS radar. I approach this shift in the marketplace as a pragmatist. As someone who has spent 20 years in the corporate world, someone who spent the last four years becoming an entrepreneur himself and learning the difference between marketing and sales, and between having the security and network of a corporation behind you versus having no security. That's a given.

When I say the future of profit is purpose, there are three benefits. Most companies, in my experience, don't know who they are. I say that on the basis of 20 years working in Asia, Europe, the United States, on many Fortune 100 brands, and also 10 years of being a hired gun, going into Fortune 100 brands to teach them messaging at the last minute. Companies don't know who they are, and when you define the purpose of a brand, that becomes very powerful from a strategic point of view when you sit there in the C-suite or if you're the CEO or even a sole proprietor, saying, "What decisions should I make in this fast-changing marketplace? Social technology is

changing very quickly. New markets are all available to us. What are my competitors doing?" *Purpose* becomes very strategic to the C-suite level.

Secondly, the future of profit is purpose because one of the great challenges for any employer of a business of any size is attracting and retaining top talent. There's research from Edelman and all the major players out there showing that when an employee understands what a company stands for they are much more likely to join that company and to stay with that company. And as we all know, it's much less expensive to keep an employee than it is to replace one.

Then, finally, the consumer is a very different animal today. They are having a much more difficult experience of life. Throughout the United States and also all across Europe, they are much more distrustful, as research like the Edelman Trust Barometer report of 2011 bears out. They are also much more connected. They're much more vocal in the sense of being a citizen or a customer activist. In which case, if you want to connect with your customer and inspire them to use social media like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to promote your brand, you have to be meaningful to their lives.

One of the most powerful ways to do that is to contribute toward a cause that is in alignment with the core values of your brand. So you're not only supporting that customer in terms of the change they want to see in the world, you're also reinforcing the fundamental for-profit narrative of your brand. It's not like cause-washing or brainwashing or pink-washing or local-washing. You're actually doing something that makes sense in the customer's mind. "The future of profit is purpose" makes sense in terms of a strategic guide for leadership: a way to attract and retain top talent in terms of employees, and a way to be meaningful to the lives of your customers in a very difficult economic context.

**Tahl:** You've listed some recent examples of consumer pushback. You've listed Netflix, Bank of America's debit card fees, Verizon's online \$2 payments, and most recently, Congress backing down from SOPA. Are these examples of a lack of purpose, or is this an issue of caring and how that's a key to the brand's success?

**Simon:** It's a complicated issue in that the government is riddled with historic debt, in which case consumers are now looking to brands to play a more active role. Now, many of those brands don't know who they are. Or some of those brands act inconsistently with the image they present of themselves. There's no authenticity there, there's no transparency there. It's one thing to know what your purpose is and to articulate it in a wonderful mission statement. But if you're not actually living that truth, you're just opening yourself up for exposure in a marketplace that is more transparent, a marketplace where citizens are more activists by nature.

It doesn't matter if you're a real small company, a startup, or a large corporation. What we're seeing is the very real tension between having to survive in this marketplace and all the economic ruthlessness that comes with that, and the demand of the new consumer to be served in an authentic way.

In a lot of cases, like Netflix or Verizon, or even Bank of America's debit fee, these companies rightly or wrongly, and I don't mean to generalize, are trying to find new ways to raise revenue. They're trying to find new ways to survive. But today's consumer not only won't tolerate it, they will actually push back in a very public way. That is why you're seeing companies back down.

That's why social media is so important. That's why, suddenly, social media is serving as PR for people, for customers, for citizens, where before companies had a monopoly on PR through media channels.

**Tahl:** So, to crudely summarize a basic idea that's emerging from what you're telling us: The challenge for all of us seems to be to humanize ourselves and to make ourselves into purpose-driven, enchanting brands with communities that we care for and that care for us. But, on a very basic, tactical level, where do we start as individuals with all that information?

**Simon:** It's a very good question. You can approach it from a macro point of view in terms of the global community and global economic challenges we face, but that can be a little bit alienating for the individual business person. So let's start at the other

end. I will say that the overriding presumption here is not that, suddenly, businesses have to do good. That is important and it's admirable, but as we all know as business owners, that's not necessarily the first drive out there.

But, that said, we can no longer continue to run capitalism the way that we've been doing it, simply because it's unsustainable. The middle class, our customer base, is disappearing. The ranks of the poor are growing to because we still have long-term unemployment. I look at it from a pragmatist's point of view in terms of sustainability and the economic wellbeing of the global community. The private sector has to play a role. That's the 30,000-foot view.

There's one mistake that a lot of companies make. Three years ago, corporations or brands were sitting there saying, "Social media is a fad. Why should I tell someone what I had for lunch on Twitter?" That conversation has gone away. Instead, they've almost overcompensated, where you have a lot of clients coming to you and saying "We want a million Facebook fans tomorrow." They're treating this technology as an end in itself when it's not. Social media is just another channel through which to manage your reputation and through which to generate word-of-mouth advertising. These are timeless propositions.

Where do you start? The most important and powerful place to start is by knowing who you are as a brand. I've mentioned before how this has strategic employee and customer benefits.

Imagine, if you treat social media as an amplifier, whether it's in a professional context like LinkedIn, whether it's friends and family perhaps with Facebook, whether it's more real-time with Twitter, you don't want to broadcast your schizophrenia, which is what most companies do. They've either told their customer base 10 different things, and therefore, no one knows what they stand for, or some of them do this amazing, amazing thing where they spend \$100 million on marketing and *still* no one knows what they stand for. Which, I think, is actually quite a gift. How do you do that?

What you need to do is define what your purpose is first. If you're a small company, a social entrepreneur, a start up, that may come as a function of being a founder and sitting down with your family partners or your few employees and deciding what the purpose of the company is. Why does it exist? What makes it different from its peers? What are its core values? What is its mission statement? What is its vision for the future?

Once you've done that, you then need to make sure that purpose is integrated within the company itself. One of the big problems with a lot of the brands that do the hard work of defining themselves is that they then jump straight to the customer and tell it to them. Then the customer deals with the company. The customer's service experience, or the different experiences of the brand, don't gel with this mission statement. You need to create internal alignment around your purpose.

So get leadership buyoff first. Define what the purpose is. Secondly get that internal alignment with your employees – and if that means providing them with social media protocols, policies, and training so they can be a more social animal, that's absolutely critical. Thirdly, go to market with that purpose in an authentic way. And what I mean by that is to make sure there's an alignment in the core values of the brand and the outreach you do. Don't get a disconnect in the customer's mind where they say, "Well, that's great that they're contributing to the Breast Cancer Foundation," or, "that's great that they're planting trees in Yosemite, but that doesn't make sense in terms of who the customers are." It just smacks in terms of greenwashing and PR.

Actually, Edelman's Trust Barometer report that came out recently said that 64 percent of global consumers believe that brands that are addressing social or environmental issues are only doing it to serve their own interests. We have a very distrusting, cynical marketplace. Leadership needs definition of purpose, integration and alignment internally, then go to market with that. And when you do it, make sure there's an alignment between the core values of the brand and the outreach that you're doing, the social effort that you're making.

I'll give you three examples. One is a massive corporation, Proctor & Gamble. They have a Pampers brand, which makes diapers. I chose that one, because you would think, "Diapers and social media? What are you going to do with that?" What Pampers has done for the last four years is that every time you buy a packet of Pampers, you fund one Tetanus vaccination for a mother or newborn child in the developing world. Over the last four years, they've funded 33 million vaccinations, saving an estimated 100,000 lives. So, there's one of the biggest marketers in the world, with all the inertia that comes with being a massive corporation, still bringing their core values to life in a way that's meaningful to their customer base.

This is alignment with your customers that I was talking about. Do you think, just personally, that if you're a mom and you're going in to buy a packet of diapers that you can relate to the fact that you will save the life of a child or a mother in the developing world, simply by getting what you need for your family? I think there's a wonderful alignment there.

Secondly, at the technology end of the spectrum, let's talk about something that is equally hard to get your head around: Pizza Hut. What would Pizza Hut do to contribute to the world? What they've done recently is to partner with Zynga, the social game maker which uses the Facebook platform to launch all these games like Mafia Wars and Farmville.

Inside those games, they have virtual goods, those little digital pictures of things with which you can populate your game. So, if it's Farmville, you can buy a haystack. Now you can buy a McDonald's restaurant and put it in your farm, and you compete to build out your farm. In terms of the size of this market, in 2010, Americans spent \$2 billion on these virtual goods and in 2014, it's supposed to be a \$6 billion marketplace. It's a big marketplace.

Coming back to the point, Pizza Hut has partnered with Zynga so that when you buy a pizza, there are barcodes that you can use to access and buy limited-edition virtual goods, those little avatars you can put inside your social games, to compete with your

peers. And the sale, the cost of those goods, is 99 cents, or \$1.99, each, which is nothing to you, and all goes towards the World Food Program. So there's an alignment between Pizza Hut, which makes food, and their desire to get some scale and community building through social gaming by using virtual goods to actually support a cause that is related to hunger.

And then, finally, one example for those in a smaller company like myself. There's a nursery that developed something called "The Invincible," which is the first pink hydrangea flower. All they did was say, "The pink of the flower connects to the Breast Cancer Foundation." So every time you buy a flower, one dollar would be donated to the Breast Cancer Foundation.

Or, there's a single restaurant, actually a burger joint, in New York called 4Food. Their tagline is "De-junking fast food." Their big passion is healthy living and eating, and ending obesity. When somebody goes into the store, there's a lot of menu items and you can create your own burger from those menu items. Once you've created that burger, it goes up on the leader board. The more people that order your burger, you go higher or lower on that leader board. You're actually co-creating the menu of that restaurant to drive the success of that business, whose purpose is to address obesity by selling healthy food.

So there's all these different strategies, whether you're Proctor & Gamble or a nursery with a flower.

Tahl: So for individuals, this means showing a bit more transparency about the causes that are important to them and pushing that out?

Simon: Actually, I'll explain it in these terms: There are three tenants to my book *We First*. One is the partnership between these brands and consumers, in which brands get good will, loyalty and profits from their customers, and consumers get greater social responsibility from the brands. That's the first part.

The second part of the book is something called "Contributory Consumption," which is the simple idea that a small proportion of sales of any product or service goes toward a cause that's in alignment with the core values of the brand.

This is not a new idea in the sense that it builds on the wonderful work done by One Percent for the planet ([onepercentfortheplanet.org](http://onepercentfortheplanet.org)) and (Product)Red ([joinred.org](http://joinred.org)). But really, Contributory Consumption expands on how this has been done before in the sense that too often, the cause work, or the meaningful work that brands do, is either an afterthought after their profits have been taken and their duty to the shareholders has been discharged, or it's window dressing in the sense that it's cause marketing from a PR point of view.

I'm saying we can't do that anymore. We need to integrate purpose into the for-profit business model. The way to do that is to make a small contribution from the sale of products and services toward a cause that's in alignment with your brand. So, say you're a sole proprietor, or you're a company of five or ten people. I'll give you my example. I struggled to think about what I wanted to support. It's kind of like online dating. I like to heli-ski. I like good food. You make this idealistic portrait of yourself. Of course I care about world hunger. Of course I care about the environment.

But you've got to get more specific than that. I have two daughters and my wife is a Montessori-trained teacher. So I decided I wanted to support women in education – young women in education. I support the United Nations GirlUp Foundation because they get teenaged American girls to mentor girls in the developing world, who are less fortunate in life, and to support them through education and so on. That's how I came to my personal conclusion about what's important.

If you're a founder or CEO, sit down and ask what is important to you and your company. For example, to your point about Patagonia, as to transparency, Patagonia now has done three things I'll mention to show you how they bring their concerns for the environment to life. The first thing they've done is the Footprint Chronicles. If you Google "footprint chronicles," you'll go to the Patagonia site and you'll see a series of

videos. You can enter the SKU number, the number of the item you bought, the shirt, whatever it might be, and you'll be able to see videos that show you how that shirt was made and how the fabric was made, how much trucking was involved, the good, the bad and what Patagonia thinks about how they can improve the carbon footprint, et cetera, of that item.

Secondly, they launched a campaign recently that says, "Don't buy this product." You've probably seen the ad, "Don't buy this jacket." Instead, they want you to come in and actually let them repair your jacket so that we actually consume less, which is a very counterintuitive business strategy. But it's also created a lot of very valuable PR.

Thirdly, with their commitment to the environment, they realized they can't scale that sufficiently on their own. They led the charge of something called the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, which created a single sustainability metric for all the apparel and footwear manufacturers out there. Now they have over 30 percent of the global marketplace signed up, including ADIDAS, Nike, Puma, M&S, H&M in Europe, and Walmart. And they're imposing it on their supplier chain.

Those are concrete examples of purpose in action. If you care about the environment, how do you bring that to life? If I care about women in education, how do I bring that to life? If I care about obesity as the sole proprietor of a burger joint, how do I bring that to life? That's a personal challenge for each of us.

**Tahl:** This really resonates with me. I'm familiar with the Edelman study you often cite about trust and how low trust is these days. There's a flipside to that, in my own mind, in that I feel like I trust people and groups of people I otherwise would not trust because of social media. For instance, I follow people on Twitter I don't actually know, but they are very good at using the medium and subscribe to a lot of the ideas you were preaching - cause and storytelling and humanity - are now these are people that I'm going to relate to or do business with in the future, because I just have a sense of who they are through the medium. And I'll use your own words and say social media has "upgraded the ability of the regular citizens to become more persuasive

communicators about who we are, what we care about and the change we want to see in the world.”

**Simon:** It's absolutely true. I've found this in the corporate world and now that I'm an entrepreneur. In the entrepreneurship world, people are almost relieved to be able to talk this way because we all do care. Given half a chance, we do want things to get better. I think we were all a little bit exhausted, and certainly disappointed, by the results of climbing over the backs of each other in the run of 2007 and 2008 and the global economic meltdown.

We all want to serve our self-interests, but we now realize that we need an expanded definition of self-interest that includes the greater good. We have so much trouble on so many fronts that we need to address these issues. I see a question in the Webex chat here, which is, “How do we bring this down to an individual level? How do we do this with our friends and family and colleagues?” And I mention that because this is a bit of a set up, in the sense that we now have permission to show that side of our soul.

If you look at the *We First* site, we have a bit of a manifesto up there. We have our core values up there. That was a very difficult process to work out for myself, as far as what that actually meant. It's incredibly powerful for reasons we've discussed before. Another example, if you look at Zappos, which is touted as the best example of new media customer service, they do incredible things. They start with defining what their core values are, the ten core values that Tony Hsieh has put up in the office.

I'll give you story about my direct experience with the Zappos culture. I was on the *Delivering Happiness* bus with Tony Hsieh and chatting to him about his business while we were down at TED, or I think it was South By Southwest. We finished talking and he left. There was a young lady with us, and I said to her, “Wow, it must be great working for a guy like Tony. He seems like a really down-to-earth guy.” The young lady said, “I'm sorry, I have to correct you.” I said, “Go on,” you know, in the John Stewart way. She said, “I don't work for Tony Hsieh, we work together.”

It's very, very powerful. Whether it's personal or business, you can bring your best self, your highest self, to market in a way that will be absolutely profitable for your bottom line, because the marketplace is such that people are having a difficult experience at life, there's so much transparency. There's been so much exposure of corporate practices, so much intolerance for running capitalism into the ground as we've done before, that we're now looking to brands to take a leadership role. That's why you see Howard Shultz leading the job creation program and getting a boycott of 140 CEOs against campaign donations.

**Tahl:** These questions that are coming from the audience, asking, "How do we start?".... I think what they're getting at is they understand how this humanizes us, they understand how it upgrades our ability to tell the story we want to tell about ourselves, but it's "the how" that they need. And I may be wrong, but I don't think you can get around discussing the how without discussing content: what you're putting on your Twitter feed, what you're putting onto your blog, what you're putting onto your Facebook timeline. Isn't that what they're asking: What is the kind of content we need to create? Isn't that the currency for telling your story?

**Simon:** That's part of it. Let's start with the how question because I totally hear you. As you know, I just did this *We First* seminar a couple of weeks ago, and I spent a lot of time at events in the last couple of years. The one takeaway was that a lot of us go to these events, we take a whole bunch of notes, and then we put those notes on the shelf. They don't really translate to value to our business. So when I put together the seminar, I created this *We First* social branding blue print that walks you through the "how."

There are eight modules to that, and I'll use them as instruction as to the overarching architecture for the "how." Then I'll get specific as to the content. You start off with a realization of the marketplace in which you live. It's a new marketplace. A lot of people are still doing business like it's the early 2000-somethings or early 1990s. But as we've talked about, the customer today is different, the technology is different, the economy is different.

Secondly, you have to define your brand and its purpose. That's the second stage. And then you have to integrate that internally. You have to get that alignment. So that's the third stage. You work through being a community architect, which is the next stage. Then you work through then actually communicating with your audience, that's the next stage, which is where the content comes in. Then you work through how you maintain momentum. And then how do you maintain leadership?

So the content issue comes up in the communication-engagement stage. It's not a matter of just jumping to these different channels, and saying, "Great! I've got to create a YouTube channel, I've got to put out eight tweets a day on Twitter, and I need to do two or three posts on Facebook each day and maybe a couple on Google+ and respond." It's more than that.

You need to step back, define your purpose in a way that is very human, very accessible, and then differentiate it from your competitors. Then create an editorial calendar that speaks to this agenda, and put this material out in a varied way. By varied, I mean sometimes you do a video post, sometimes you do a long copy piece, sometimes you'll do an interview, so you keep people engaged.

But, most importantly, you listen throughout the process. So you create your editorial calendar, totally informed by your purpose, and you mix it up in terms of the media. Then, on an ongoing basis, you listen to what your consumers or your customers are saying. If one topic is flying and it's really resonating, run with that. If there's a big issue in your industry, have some opinion on that and play into it. If, suddenly, you're at a loss for what to say, start to curate information or content, even from your competitors to show that you're more interested in the issues themselves rather than only your own self-interest.

I think the content can be in many, many forms, but it needs to be defined by a purpose. It needs to be varied to maintain engagement. Then you need to always reconcile that with the need to listen and respond to the customer because they're, more often than not, driving that conversation now.

**Tahl:** Speaking of responding to the customer, let me start to intermix some of the questions posed by the audience. Tim Templeton has a fascinating question. He says that Gallup has done a study saying that social media only enhances the brand relationship, but doesn't start it. Do you agree or disagree?

**Simon:** Well, I think that, in as much that Gallup is a wonderful authority in research, it's probably true. But I think that result is particular to where we are in the transition phase between traditional and new media. The ones that are gaining the most traction with social media are the ones that are building on the relationship they already had before, or the brand awareness they already had before, from traditional media – Coke, Nike, Starbucks, Patagonia, Pampers whoever it might be.

That said, I have a lot of experience, and I think we all do, with companies that have built their brands in and around social media. Take a company like Threadless, the t-shirt company that was built out of the social dynamic going on between graphic artists and crowdsourcing which t-shirts would get made, and growing to a \$5 million or \$6 million dollar company in three or four years. Take Zappos, which has become a leader in customer service. And now a lot of the big brands are reinventing themselves through social. For example, Proctor & Gamble have digitized their entire operation now, to become a part of the world in which we live.

So I would tend to think that Gallup's finding is true, but it's peculiar to this transition phase we're in. We're now seeing more and more companies be successful. Obviously, Facebook is a clear example. I think it's a relevant one in the sense that a company of that scale, with that IPO valuation, can be born in just under ten years, and literally define and be driven by social media.

**Tahl:** You've said a couple of things that hit on one point I'd like to stress: listening to your customers, even listening to your competitors. That's a theme you talk about a lot on your blog, that need for brands and people to listen more effectively. I think we've lost that ability, and how powerful that ability can be. Even for solopreneurs, people who run small, boutique consulting agencies, they're often defined by the

quality of their listening, and the information they can find can be invaluable. Can you talk to us about the role that listening plays in brands and building relationships, and how use it?

**Simon:** Absolutely. I think we're all qualified to understand this, because we've all been in relationships where we either talk too much or we don't listen enough, and it never seems to go the way we want, right? And it's the same in this new social dynamic. A great example is the software maker SAP, which is at over a million unique visitors a month. They have over 600 bloggers, but that's less than five percent of their content. The SAP employees curate content from the entire industry, and they add value to the entire industry by curating content out there that's relevant to whoever they are – even their competitors' customers.

It's such a concrete example of taking leadership from this collaborative point of view. When you accept the fact that we now work in a global community, you either see that as a threat or you see that as an opportunity. Nike, for example, has seen that as an opportunity. What they're doing is saying, "Listen, we're going to share information from our competitors and we're going to share our information with our competitors because we want to establish that we're a leader in the context of a global community."

So they've got the Nike Green Exchange, where they exchange the IP for all the glues and rubber they use in their shoes. They've got the Environmental Designer Power Tool, which opens up how they reduce the carbon footprint of their supply chain. All because they want to demonstrate how we all need to work together to address issues like climate change, which is meaningful to their customers. But it also effects their business bottom line.

So that's one example of listening. The presumption is that you lead with listening. You also want to listen to your competitors. By doing so, you can demonstrate a leadership position in your industry. Let's imagine you're a small company, a single-proprietor lawyer in a one-man office. What you can do to build your profile is to start

to curate information on whatever your specialty is – intellectual property, copyright, whatever it might be – so that out in the social channels, people start to look to you for the latest and greatest information in that area.

The reason we lead with listening is because it enables us to be community architects. If I listen to you and I celebrate the work you're doing, you will connect back with me. Members of your community will connect back with me. Ultimately, we're all in the community architecture business now. We're trying to aggregate communities to build our own customer base. Listening is the first way to open that door to a relationship that will allow the cross-pollination of communities.

**Tahl:** We're going to end with a couple more questions from the listeners. Marketing consultant Colleen Newwine asks, "You're building or architecting this community, but what happens when you're hit with criticism or negativity, or some of the dark side that we hear about, or I've actually felt, in social media? How do you deal with negativity in social media? How have you dealt with it?"

**Simon:** I think it's a great thing and I've had it, too. I get everything from being dismissed as some sort of crazy, commie-idealist, through to being put on the Republican watch list, through to I had a gentleman get very angry with me because I wrote a piece about whether video games increase teen violence. He was very angry with me, which to me rather proved the point. But, anyway, you always will encounter that. As soon as you open yourself up to public scrutiny, you're going to have those who support you and those who don't, and that's fine.

What I do is I welcome it. I've been taken to task by people over various issues many times and rather than be reactionary and defensive, what you try and do is say, "Great. Someone is pointing out something that many people are already thinking," or, "They're highlighting a way that I need to improve my product or service if I'm really going to be authentic."

Patagonia is a great example of the best way to deal with critics in their Carbon Footprint model. *They* highlight what they think is wrong with their process. You put

your dirty laundry out there first. If you have somebody out there who is criticizing what you're doing, or saying, "Listen, it's great you're doing this good thing over here, but look what you're doing on the other side of things," that's wonderful news, because it's forcing you to get some alignment between who you say you are and what you actually do.

Now, that's not easy. It's even more difficult for corporations like Proctor & Gamble or Unilever or Coca Cola, these massive brands that have been operating on the basis of this monologue marketplace for a long time. If you're a small, solopreneur company, it's actually a lot easier to do.

My approach is that we are now operating in the era of WikiLeaks, of Anonymous, of an inability to bury stuff deep enough. The smartest business strategy you can take is to define your purpose and go to market in an authentic way and really challenge those things that aren't authentic, because the marketplace will expose them if you don't.

Now, that's difficult if your product or service has some negative impact on the world. Almost every product does. You have to get a balancing act between the positive of what you do and the unavoidable negative impact of what you do. Again, Patagonia: Their line is "no unnecessary harm to the environment." It's not, "Let's have a perfect environment," it's "no unnecessary harm." So it's a realistic position we need to take.

**Tahl:** Let me get a sense of your own social media activities. The channels you primarily use are your blog and Twitter, is that correct?

**Simon:** No, I use them all in the sense that.... Well, not all, there are hundreds. I'm a member of probably 100 different platforms, but there are only five or six that I use actively. One is Facebook. I have my own personal page and I have a fan page. On Facebook, I probably post one or two times a day on each of those pages. I put my blog posts on my personal page as well. Some people separate them out very cleanly. I started with my own personal page so I include them there.

On the personal side, I don't include any pictures of my family or my kids or anything because that's their choice, how much they want to be exposed. I see that we're on a very steep but slippery slope of privacy out there. Some practice privacy with a view to where the marketplace is going to be in ten years' time. I think it's better to err on the side of caution, but that's my personal choice.

Then, I use Twitter. We're all very busy and none of us have time. I'm a dad. I just got back from taking my kids to school. None of us have got time to spend all day on social media. The way I manage Twitter is this: I have a Google RSS feed, which is like Google Reader, so it's like a newsstand for all the things you like to read. In my case, I've collected things for the research of a book. I've got 2000 sources that come in every day.

I scan those actively a few times a day, star articles I think would be of interest to my community, or else of value, and then schedule those on Hootsuite, which is a platform that allows you not only to track direct messages and your Twitter stream and things you searched with hashtags, but also to schedule tweets. In the morning, I will schedule one tweet, roughly, every hour for the day. Then, I will keep Hootsuite, or another option, Tweet Deck, open all the time, and I'll respond when I can.

I'm constantly in meetings or on a plane, so there's long periods of time when I'm not available and that's just the way it is. The scheduled tweets go out, but there's nothing you can do. I think it's absolutely critical you do it yourself.

Beyond that, I was like everybody else when Google+ came out and got traction. It was like, "Oh no! We've got another platform! Another mouth to feed!" So I post there once every couple days, probably not as much as I should. It's a very high-level, engaged audience on Google+.

I then also post my blog posts on LinkedIn. I also do video interviews on a regular basis and post those on my YouTube channel. LinkedIn, Google+, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube that are the five main ones I use. Then there are sharing platforms that will send things out to all the others, but that's where I find I get the most traction.

**Tahl:** I'll end on this. Anastasio Martinez asks, "What's the one thing that I can do today as an individual to effectively leverage social media, not to make more money, but in order to build a better world?"

**Simon:** To build a better world? You know what? It's interesting. If you're really going to make a contribution, and I've been through this experience myself, it's going to take passion. Sometimes it's thankless, sometimes it's disheartening. The only way you're going to have that passion is if you do something that's authentic to you. So the one thing you can do is to go through the exercise of really working out what you care about. I'd love to say I'm an uncaring, too-cool-for-school guy, but I'm not. I'm a family guy, and when I see people suffering and they're having a difficult experience of life, it affects me. I want to do something about it.

I went through that process of thinking it through and I identified that I wanted women and education to be the two places I focus, because I think clean water, women, and education are the three main pillars where we need to start.

Then, my issue was, "What's my skill set?" Ask yourself what's your skill set? How can you bring that purpose to life? How can you bring that contribution you want to make? Now, I'm an ad guy who's got a long time in the corporate world. My solution was I'm going to help companies bring their purpose to life in ways that are meaningful to their customers so it'll drive their bottom line. That is a solution that fits my skill set.

So, what is the solution specific to your skill set that will bring the purpose that is meaningful enough to you to generate the passion you'll need to maintain that over time, to market. That's where I'd start. Then, you can characterize all these social channels appropriately. They're just amplification channels. That very definition will tell you what to share, how much to share, and what to listen for. You'll get this feedback loop over time, so don't give up in the first two or three months. Those two or three months on Twitter, you'll say, "What on Earth am I doing? This is nuts." Then, suddenly, you start to see this community get built. You start to get engaged within

relationships. Over time you suddenly realize how deeply meaningful this industry can be.

**Tahl:** Simon, equal parts pragmatic and idealistic, I have to say yours is a refreshing voice in the otherwise shady world of social media experts. I'm just giving you a compliment there. I like the message; it's one that's needed. I want to express my gratitude for you taking the time to teach and share with us today.

Simon: Absolutely. I have so much respect for what myGreenlight is doing and the ability it has. I know Keith and he's such an inspiring leader in terms of how you optimize the relationships within a company, because those two are complimentary if you want to bring the purpose of the brand to life.

I'd love to share that people are interested in the specifics. I'm like everybody who is listening: You need to know if I'm going to put time into social media, am I going to get raw, bottom line benefits for my business?

This event I did recently, this social branding seminar, was all about creating this actionable blue print that walks you through these eight different modules. Everyone who attended this event could invite their favorite non-profit. We had 43 non-profits there for free, doing meaningful work from ocean clean-up to cancer research to childhood literacy. So it's very, very powerful, and by coming you get to make a contribution.

It's done for the West Coast this year, but there will be one for the East Coast on October 10th of 2012, and if you are interested in information about it, go to [Wefirstseminar.com](http://Wefirstseminar.com). You can give us your information there, and when we have all the details that we'll send it to you first. We keep the event small.

Tahl: Excellent. Everyone who's watching or listening, thank you all. Thank you, Simon. Until next time, bye-bye.

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