

How influential are you?



By [Lindsay Grubb](#)

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Hi, I'm Lindsay and I'm just a "Socializer," just a K36. Apparently, I'm the hub of social scenes and people count on me to find out what's happening. I'm quick to connect people and readily share my social savvy. My followers appreciate my network and generosity.

A few weeks ago I was a networker and was briefly a pundit.

All started innocently

It all started innocently enough. A friend suggested I see how much [Klout](#) I have. He told me I'd be pleasantly surprised and I was - at first.

It was an amusing distraction from my daily tasks, but it soon grew into regular check backs and cries of "whoohoo" every time I went up and point and "noooo" every time I dropped. It became an addiction and I found myself constantly assessing what I should be doing to get a better score because if everyone's doing it, it must mean something, it must be important.

I panicked, worrying about whether I'd written enough articles, posted enough comments, tweeted and updated my status enough and then repeated it in case somebody missed what I said.

What can I say? It looks like I've let myself down. Or have I? Should I be panicking because I've dropped my score?

Much more personal level

In the past two weeks, I'll be honest, I haven't had much time to Tweet or to update my Facebook status. I've been really busy, interacting with people on a much more personal level. I've had eight new business meetings, researched and sent out proposals in response to each meeting and handled all the follow-up questions and negotiations. Some have come through, others not; that's life.

I've identified possible synergies between a number of my clients, suppliers and new contacts, and I've put them in touch with one another. I have spoken to thousands of people through my blog, online articles and client newsletters and originated ideas for social initiatives that have generated a flurry of favourable responses, and this week I get to roll these initiatives out. It's exciting times for both me and my company.

I don't say all this to boast; it's what everybody should be doing in a normal work week or your business won't grow. I bring

it up to illustrate the point that what's happening online shouldn't be your primary focus. You still need to pay attention to the "old-fashioned" traditional marketing and PR methods that have served businesses well for generations.

Get a grip

There's been a lot of talk lately about managing your online reputation. We're being constantly pushed to see what people are saying about us, where they're saying it, why they're saying it and how much influence we have over them.

It is definitely useful to measure your sphere of influence online; at the very least, it will give you an idea of how others see you.

It can also be a helpful tool when you're starting out or focusing on your growth phase to show if your online activities are having an impact. If you're engaging in and paying for social media, you should be assessing whether or not it is working for you, just as you should assess whether your offline activities are impacting positively or negatively on you and your organisation.

The problem with focusing too much on what all the online monitoring and reputation tools are telling you, is that you can find yourself spending a lot of time acting on their suggestions on how to improve your scores.

Churning out, not adding value

It becomes more about beating a number rather than performing valuable daily tasks that allow for a greater degree of personal interaction. It can become all about churning out information for the sake of posting something, rather than adding any kind of value.

You have to decide for yourself where the real value lies. My gut is telling me that it can't all be online, and that human interaction is still critical to the success of one's business.

My gut feel at the moment is that, while social media is playing a huge role in marketing these days, it's still just part of a bigger picture. Do it, but don't forget what brought your clients to you in the first place.

Focus on providing a great, personalised service, talk to your clients on the phone - or better yet, face-to-face - listen carefully to what they have to say, what they really need and want, and then give it to them, and continue to aim at surpassing their expectations.

No substitute for word-of-mouth

There is no substitute for a word-of-mouth referral; it really does seem to cut out a lot of red tape and the dance that you go through with prospective new clients. If your clients are bragging about you, that's the influence you really want to have, so work at making sure they are bragging and not bitching...

ABOUT LINDSAY GRUBB

I am a Johannesburg-based freelance writer and editor with a talent for crafting well-researched, strategically aligned, and professionally written communications and searching out and telling interesting brand stories that create interest in and loyalty to brands. I have worked with local and international clients for the past 20 years.

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