

# Aligning Digital with Your Communication Strategy

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You can access the links and overview of the presentation here:

[http://www.thedudemanager.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/presentations/Budapest\\_Day3.swf](http://www.thedudemanager.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/presentations/Budapest_Day3.swf)

**Introduction:** For those who are interested in my career they can check out the [About section](#) of my [teaching site](#) or the [About section](#) of my [personal site](#). They each tell different sides to the same story.

**Prologue:** At the start of the presentation, I mentioned a wonderful book called *The Invisible Gorilla*, a book about cognitive science. The reason: people have a mental block when it comes to the Internet and the Web. We believe we have a deeper knowledge of how it works because we use it every day. *The Invisible Gorilla*, while not aimed at the Internet, explains why we feel this way. If we can wrap our head around the idea that oftentimes what we perceive to be reality isn't actually reality, then we can begin to delve into the mysterious digital world of the Internet and unlock some of its underlying principles.

**1. Brief Case Studies from the Digital World:** This section introduces the idea of targeting your audience online and the idea of building interactions online. Before you make any move in cyberspace, you need to understand your audience and then build components for those people. These aren't difficult steps, but they are necessary.

a. **P&G's BeingGirl.com:** One of the nation's largest marketing firms decided to pull much of its funding for American soap operas and shift that money into the development of digital communities. One of its first attempts: [Being Girl](#).

b. **New Line Cinema's *Lord of the Ring*:** After spending \$300 million to secure the rights for all three movies, NLC embarked on a bold public relations initiative that gave many of the movie assets away to its most strident fans. Those who built the largest online fan communities were then flown to the set of the movie. It marked a pivotal change in the way public relations could be done in the digital world.

**2. The Digital World, in Plain Speak:** The reason companies need to embrace the Web should be clear by now, but even still the urgency isn't always there. It's good to step back and think about some of the numbers to help grasp exactly what is happening. My favorite comes from a video in this section:

c. It took radio 38 years to reach 50 million Americans, it took Facebook 1 year to reach 200 million; Apple sold 1 billion apps in 9 months. Google will surpass that this year.

**3. The People of this World:** There is a marvelous book, *The Groundswell*, written by Josh Bernoff and Charlene Li of Forrester Research. These two analysts do an amazingly thorough job breaking down the types of people on the Web, presenting those to businesses in a way that's easily digestible. I break up their groupings into two groups:

d. **Builders:** Creators, Critics, and Conversationalists are the people who make things about your identity, critique what you do, and talk about it with other folks.

e. **Watchers:** Collectors, Joiners, and Spectators are the people who provide an audience for those builders, the people who oftentimes make up the bulk of your audience.

**4. The Interactions of This World:** Back in the late 1970s, two men -- Roy Trubshaw and Richard Bartle -- created the [Multi-User Dungeon games](#). The persistent text adventures were the first multi-player game-like stories on the Internet. After nearly two decades of creating and managing these games, Bartle explored in great detail the 4 types of interactions he saw within these digital environments and how game designers (or in this case, community managers) could influence those.

In the modern world, managers handle these interactions through "game mechanics," which are the tools of influence. In other words: Achievers are the kinds of people who want to solve problems, and receive a virtual badge. You can encourage Achievers with challenges.

**5. The Objectives of This World:** If we return to *The Groundswell*, Bernoff and Li break down the five objectives companies could have as they begin to develop their digital strategy. However, companies should be very careful not to over-reach as they begin. The best strategy is to take one objective and apply it to each platform. In other words, if Twitter is a customer service platform its best not to mix in sales or other objectives. Customers get confused, and your strategy begins to unravel.

**6. What We Know About Communities:** Returning to *The Invisible Gorilla*, we remember that sometimes what we learn about digital worlds runs counter-intuitive to what we believe. Two ideas stand out here:

- People are more likely to join online communities around an interest or hobby they have, and then move that interest into real life. In other words, if you want to build a strong online space, do that around activities and interests...not brands and identities; and
- The best way to diffuse information throughout a system is through Weak Ties, those built around an interest or hobby. Companies that try to form Strong Ties with customers (e.g. getting customers to invest lots of time with its digital properties) are actually creating an information problem as it limits the growth of the community.

**7. Community Management:** There are simple rules for managing a community, but businesses must first make a commitment to including the community at the executive level. That means giving the community manager decision-making abilities. That's how information is diffused through your business. After that, your community managers simply do what customer service representatives have been doing for generations: making it pleasant and useful to participate.

**Epilogue: Using in Business:** We talk oftentimes about using social media and emerging media with customers, but it's important to examine ways that businesses can use these same tools internally. As we wrap up the conversations, we examine how IBM -- one of the largest companies in the United States -- allows its employees to create on social networks without any rules or governance. Then we move to city governments, which are using these tools to actively engage citizens in a variety of project.