



Volume 1, Issue 5

August 2010

*Understanding customer needs and trends.
Honing your message and strategies to meet market demands.
Building a reputation to create and sustain your leadership.
Demonstrating value.*





These are all paramount to your success.

Inspiration and ideas come from a wide variety of sources. The ability to integrate new thoughts and make the strategy + communications + leadership link helps companies and executives alike elevate their performance.

Because it's challenging at the top, [The Aerie Company](#) offers you useful and thought provoking ideas to help you soar to new heights. Enjoy these latest insights.



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Luddite vs. Lazy

Like most teenagers, my son spends a great deal of time online. Even before easy access to the Internet, he's been an information junkie focused on quirky facts and stories. Given the ease with which he connects to social networks, product websites, news, etc., it's a wonder why the family can't get him to regularly charge or turn on his cell phone and check his email or voicemail so we can reach him with information we deem important.

He knows how to make complicated stop motion movies and post them to his YouTube account, but simpler tasks with what we consider everyday communications technology seem to be a challenge. At least that's what I thought until the other day when he said, "I'm not a Luddite, I'm just lazy."



This simple sentiment captures the state of many individuals and companies slow to embrace social media tools as part of their communications. Staying connected and engaged in today's world requires knowledge and adaptability and studies on consumer and business-to-business behavior continue to reinforce the importance of making the transition.

The most recent Nielsen [study](#) shows Americans spend nearly a quarter of their Internet time on social networking sites and blogs. In these early days of social networking, social media has surpassed email in terms of online time – 23 percent (that's nearly a 50 percent increase since last year) versus 8.3 percent for email (a 28 percent drop from the

previous year). Yet don't fret that email is dead. It is still the most popular online activity on smartphones where users spend over 40 percent of their time – a healthy sign for the mobile Internet industry. [Other surveys](#) highlight how even email is "going social" with links to sites that migrate and extend reader communities through their social networks.

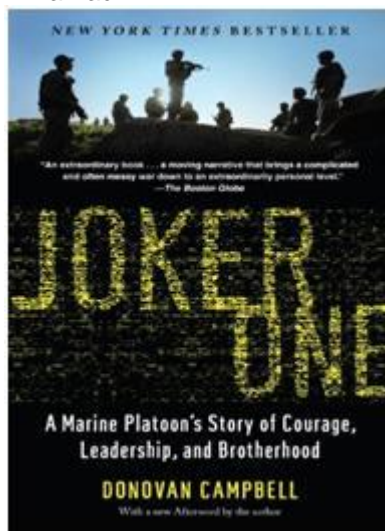
As you build your market leadership, it's unlikely you need a plan for how to reach teens like my son. However, if your communications strategy lacks specific social media elements, you are neglecting significant opportunities to engage your target audience. Blogs, enewsletters, interactive conversations and status updates to social networks provide another important and cost effective link to connect with your communities and share relevant information and support. By learning to adapt and connect through the new world of conversation and networking, companies are demonstrating value, building trust and respect and creating influence.

We're not suggesting we lose our humanity to technology, but as social media begins rewriting the rules regarding how we connect business with customers and with each other, lazy luddites need to prepare to transform into relevant 21st century communicators. Those who won't may be doomed to obsolescence like their predecessors. The good news is that since few of them have completely abandoned technology they should have some extra time to explore new tools and then start using them to their advantage.

Leading by Life and Death Decisions

If you thought you had a tough job, doubtful it compares to Donovan Campbell's just a few years ago. While his days were ruled by life and death decisions, those very experiences laid the foundation for his leadership and the kind of man he is today.

While at Princeton University, he thought Marine Corps officer training would look good on his resume. He got far more than he bargained for – by graduation the military was the obvious choice over corporate America because he wanted responsibility for something greater than himself. His first big challenge came when he was put in charge of a sniper platoon and sent to Iraq during the most violent days of the insurgency in Ramadi.



In [Joker One](#), Campbell chronicles his experience as a young military lieutenant in a vivid combat memoir on how war shapes individuals. Discipline, decision making and calculated management are skills he considers as important as any battlefield tactic or strategy. Beyond how Campbell embraced the Corps' ideals of service, honor and sacrifice, his experiences with leadership, loyalty and living the mission provide key lessons for business.

The influence of military training in building strong leaders has been well documented. Recently in [Businessweek](#) John Ryan, a former superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy and alumnus, chancellor of the State University of New York and now president of the Center for Creative Leadership, talked about the role of mindset in leadership. He believes leadership is a journey not just for the select few but is meant to be undertaken by everyone. During his academic career he was keenly aware of the importance of culture in leadership development and how living, working and training in an environment that assumes leadership is for everyone, as the military does, impacts success as an effective leader.

That military environment served Campbell well as he trained his men to think on their feet, work as a team to accomplish goals and succeed in a fast paced environment. His guiding principles, as relevant for individual as they are for business leadership, include:

- **Communicate the mission** – there will always be unexpected challenges on battlefields and in business, so the job starts with clearly defining the mission ahead and inspiring and supporting the troops to believe they can get it done
- **Listen with a sensitive ear** – effective leaders are perceptive listeners with compassion and respect for a wide range of cultural and business perspectives as well as understanding how these can impact the outcome
- **Earn respect** – despite a strict military code that defines superior/subordinate relationships, respect is not demanded but rather earned by the example leaders set for their teams
- **Trust, challenge and thank your team** – the best lessons are often learned from soldiers in the trenches who demonstrate leadership with significant contributions to the team's success when they are challenged and acknowledged

To learn more about Donovan Campbell's leadership journey visit www.joker-one.com . Should you or your colleagues need support to build your personal leadership brand, contact us at [The Aerie Company](http://TheAerieCompany.com).

New Links

At The Aerie Company we have a particular passion for working with health and wellness companies so we are always on the lookout for interesting new resources.

Steps2Give is a program for individuals, organizations, communities or associations that features a 10,000 steps a day challenge, health education, motivation and charitable giving. It can be a complement to existing initiatives or as a stand-alone program. Sessions begin in September 2010 and January 2011 and run 100 consecutive days. Learn more at www.Steps2Give.com .

See our website at www.aeriecompany.com for more links.

About The Aerie Company

At The Aerie Company, we help organizations and executives demonstrate their value and accelerate growth. Because it's challenging at the top, we show our clients how to go beyond where they are today and elevate their business and personal market leadership performance. We build a strategic stronghold with better understanding of your current market, an aligned and articulate vision, mission and strategy, a compelling position that resonates in the marketplace and effective communication so your stakeholders recognize your real benefits and value.



For more information, visit www.aeriecompany.com, email us at suzanne@aeriecompany.com or call 847-556-8873.

Watch for regular updates from [The Aerie Company](http://TheAerieCompany.com) on best practices, advice on communication and market leadership development, and other insights we gain as devoted lifelong learners to help you demonstrate your value and improve your performance.