

Human Nature Is On Newspaper's Side

By Leonard Woolsey

Funny thing happened the other day to our local newspaper on the way to obscurity – my teenage daughter asked for a printed copy.

While the world media might be quick to put a fork in the printed media and declare them done, there just might be something lurking out there we can't fully appreciate.

Recently my daughter went to a small concert in our community. Knowing our newspaper wouldn't be staffing the event I suggested she might see about getting art and a cutline for us to publish. Armed with two friends and a cell phone, she left for the show.

The next morning I got up and found the photo emailed to me. Sitting down I quickly posted it to our newspaper website and shared the link to her Facebook account. Within minutes people recognized the drummer as a former child television star and her post became viral with her friends.

But then something odd happened.

“Think you can bring home copies of the paper for me and my friends?”

To be honest, I was stunned. Here was a child of the digital generation needing a physical copy of a newspaper to validate something she experienced. Suddenly, the digital version was second-rate when it came down to the ‘touching’ the experience.

Although I admit this is an unscientific piece of data, I do believe it helps to reinforce how we as humans instinctively harbor the need to touch the important things in our lives. While society races to embrace a digital world of communication, there is still something instinctive inside of us driving us to validate something with the tips of our fingers. Much like our urges to reach out touch someone we see in pain or high-five a stranger sitting next to us at a high school football game, the sense of touch is an instinctive and deeply personal emotional impulse hardwired in our human nature.

I realize each of us is awash in the noise of the digital explosion – a world where information can be published (or erased) with the simple act of a few keystrokes. Everything is instantaneous, yet somewhat impermanent. And our screens, much like our attention spans, refresh and change within minutes.

And then there is the printed newspaper: permanent in its final form and faithfully marking time and the world around it at the moment. And believe it or not, this means something to our individual psyche.

So even in today's world, our printed newspaper carries a 'secret sauce' embedded like no other medium— an emotional connection driven by human nature. And this instinct, fortunately, is not generational exclusive as I recently discovered.

And for me, a veteran of the printed world of business for decades, it was nice to relearn this lesson through the eyes of a member of the digital generation.

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