

Partner, Darren Barefoot  
Capulet Communications



Capulet Communications is a public relations firm specializing in work with high technology.

**HQ Region:** Vancouver, Canada  
**Industry:** Communications  
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**Status:** Operating  
**Company Size:** 2 employees  
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“Social media is influencing the way we build websites and web applications. My hope is that through the years social media becomes synonymous with the web. The word social media goes away and becomes part of the culture of the web.”

Darren Barefoot, Partner, Capulet Communications

Darren Barefoot is a writer, technologist and marketer who lives in Vancouver. A professional speaker regarding topics on marketing, technology and social media, and regularly does presentations, seminars and hands-on workshops which focus on marketing, social media, blogs and emerging technology.

**Q:** Can you give us some of the basic dos and don'ts of social media marketing?

**DB:** One of the first rules is to listen. If you are new to the space, you run a business regardless of size or industry. You need to find out who's there, who's taking about your products and services and who's influential in your industry. We see this with companies all the time, companies dive in with a big bold expensive project that goes nowhere because they haven't listened first and built relationships within the online communities that matter to them, staff or their industry. A good don't which we see all the time, is the assumption that if you build it they will come. If you build

your own social network or if you build a sophisticated cool Facebook app, people aren't going to magically flock to it. Typically the easy part is building it, the hardest part is getting people to use it or make use of it.

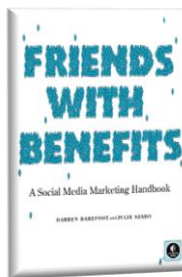
**Q:** Can you tell us the inspiration behind your book title? What is it like to write a book on social media?

**DB:** We batted around a lot of book titles, but our editor came up with that one and we liked it a lot. The book had its genesis in a shorter e-book we wrote which was called Getting to First Base. So there is a nice cheeky relationship connection between the two titles.

For more information about Webnames, go to: [www.capulet.com](http://www.capulet.com)

For more information about IIMA, go to: [www.iimaonline.org](http://www.iimaonline.org)

Everybody we've talked to about the book title has liked it except for one particular prudish person from Salt Lake City. So, that's alright. The nice aspect of writing a book on social media is that we could use the tools to gain information. We would ask questions periodically on Twitter if we wanted to clarify or remember something. We could also discover case studies quite easily using social media. The whole process took a year and a half (evenings and weekends) since we are a busy agency. We figure the book was about 40% research, 30% first draft and 30% revisions, edits and proof reading.



### Q: Isn't social media just a fad and a waste of time?

**DB:** I don't think it's a fad. Whether it is or not is not as important as asking is it popular right now? If you're doing web marketing what's important and popular right now matters. It's kind of a moving target to some degree as it changes from month to month and year to year. I do think in a sense that social media is influencing the way we build websites and web applications. My hope is that through the years social media becomes synonymous with the web. The word social media goes away and becomes part of the culture of the web. So that when we build websites we assume that they are going to be social as opposed to overlay that fabric or negotiate that process.

Our advice to companies or corporations considering social media need to be measuring everything they do. They need to measure their offline

advertising, billboards, traditional newsletter, email newsletter, and how their offline PR is working. Then they can add social media to that strategically and intelligently. They can dip their toes by starting something small and then measure the performance of that against all those other things. If the social media performs well then they should keep it as it's not a waste of time. If the social media doesn't perform then they should probably abandon it and stick with what's working.

The shocking truth is that most organizations and companies are lousy at measuring how they spend their marketing dollars whether it's online

or offline. And so, generally it requires a culture change within the company from the first day. They need to analyze what they're doing right now and see if it works and maybe add some social media to that. It may be a waste of time for some companies. Some of the companies we work with hit home-runs and double their traffic in two months with a social media campaign which is terrific if they are an established company. In other cases we'll only increase that by a little bit. Measure and determine for yourself if it's a waste of time.

### Q: Since I can't translate into sales what my brand is doing with social media, why bother?

**DB:** Does the company do PR, media relations or advertising? For instance, a lot of offline advertising can't be specifically translated into sales with billboards or newspaper ads. With traditional PR you can get an article

about your company in the local newspaper, but how does that translate into sales? It's difficult to measure. If you are comfortable with those activities and having some fuzziness around direct correlation to sales then you should be comfortable doing social media. If you are only comfortable doing marketing activities that you can absolutely and directly correlate to sales then social media may not be for you. For people who sell stuff on the web it's easy to

translate social media successes or failures to sales. However, if you are a real estate agent or sell enterprise software, making a direct correlation is harder.



### Q: How do you attract a crowd and build a base to make social media impact a lot of people?

**DB:** The first step is to "find your tribe" as per Seth Godin. When you start you have to do some audience analysis and figure out who they are and where the people you are trying to reach are. For instance, they might be on Facebook or Twitter or perhaps you sell wine and one of the places you need to be is [Corkd](#), which is a social news, bookmarking and review site for wine lovers. You need to be strategic and analyze where your audience is and start there. Start with the right bucket of people.

### Q: What are the building blocks of social media success in your view?

**DB:** Listening first, measuring and audience analysis of course. We don't

normally subscribe to cheesy acronyms for things but one of the graphics we use in the book and which we advocate is POST = People, Objectives, Strategies and Tools (Forrester Research). Those are the building blocks. Starting with people, where is your audience, what are your objectives or goals? Devise a strategy and choose tools around communities that will work.

**Q: What do you mean by online etiquette; don't I just message people and talk about my brand?**

**DB:** We like to apply the cocktail party rule which is: if we meet for the first time at a cocktail party and I introduce myself and spend the next half hour talking about how awesome I am then you are going to last five minutes and wander off and talk to somebody else. The cocktail party rule is to talk 80% about other things. So instead of talking about how awesome I am, if I talk about the Chinese restaurant I just discovered the movie I just saw or play I just saw, I'm delivering value to you by being an engaging human being. Eighty percent of the time don't talk about your company, talk about things around your company or that are peripheral to your company that deliver value. Establish yourself as an expert, entertain people or inform them about your industry and not your products or services.



[Home Depot](#) is an excellent example of that because they have a YouTube channel with ten minute how to videos about [how to hang a window](#) or how to reset a door frame. They provide value

first and it's secondary that they are Home Depot.

**Q: You teach social media at UBC and co-authored your new book Friends With Benefits with Julie Szabo. When did you first connect with Julie?**

**DB:** We're married and we met in University. Our 13th wedding anniversary is coming up in a couple of weeks. We started Capulet Communications which



is our marketing company seven years ago and we've worked together ever since. We work together, we teach together and we wrote the book together.

**Q: How do you view pay per click advertising on social media? Isn't that counter-intuitive to my activities already?**

**DB:** I think pay per click (PPC) advertising is okay as long as it's not intrusive to the social medium. Traditional PPC advertising in terms of Google Adwords or Facebook ads are generally quite effective. Social media works best when it's part of an integrated campaign that includes advertising, traditional media relations or other forms of offline advertising. I think PPC is fine when it's not overly intrusive.

**Q: I hear a lot about social media and lots of companies are doing it, but for me how do I go about starting and being successful at it right away?**

**DB:** You can't be successful at it right away because you start with an audience of zero. We always say it's a marathon not a sprint. You're going to make a big splash with a whole bunch of little drops, not a big drop. You hear about the big splashes, but those are the exceptions to the rule. We do our best to help people make big splashes, but often times it's a series of small splashes that helps them get to where they're going. You need to set objectives and metrics, but set humble objectives at first. For instance, try to initially get 1,000 views versus 10,000 views and call that successful. For the next video try to get 2,000 views. That's much more reasonable and people will be happier with the outcome. It's a long road and companies need to be realistic. And that works the same with traditional forms of marketing. There are no short cuts.

## About Capulet Communications

Darren Barefoot, co-founder, Capulet Communications, is a writer, marketer and technologist. He has spent the last decade working for technology companies in Canada and Europe. He regularly speaks about marketing and Web 2.0, and has been quoted as an expert on social media and marketing on the CBC, BBC, The Wall Street Journal and dozens of other magazines, TV and radio programs. Hes the co-author, with Julie Szabo, of "Friends With Benefits: A Social Media Marketing Handbook", published by No Starch Press in November, 2009.

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## About the International Internet Marketing Association

The International Internet Marketing Association started in 1998 to bring marketers, agencies and professionals together to discuss the capabilities and potential of Internet marketing. With over ten years of experience since our first event and our association remains focused on its original mandate – education. Each year, IIMA delivers a series of networking and speaking events hosted by subject matter experts, thought leaders, experts and panels of marketing practitioners. Each event has the same objectives:

- to provide insight into current and emerging practices in online marketing
- to deliver practical insights that are immediately relevant to your business
- to challenge participants to achieve greater levels of awareness of digital marketing
- to assist in the integration of digital marketing into your big picture marketing strategy

To engage you in the community of marketing and business practitioners passionate about the future of internet marketing. The meet-ups provide a theatre for the discussion of the trends, tools and technology shaping how marketing practitioners who are using the digital space to greater involvement with their publics. By providing a series of networking and educational events, IIMA creates an environment in which the trends, tools, opportunities and risks that are shaping how people interact with the online market place.

For more information about IIMA, go to: [www.iimaonline.org](http://www.iimaonline.org)

## Contributors to this interview



James Laitinen, Director of IIMA – James is an entrepreneur at heart with a flair for technology and marketing. Burning the midnight oil turning ideas into reality, he often attempts intimidation tactics during games of Scrabble. Connect with James online via [@jlate](https://twitter.com/jlate)



Charity Robertson, Director of Communications IIMA - Charity is a marketing, advertising and human relations professional. While not creating marketing strategies or studying, Charity can be found chasing the sun to the nearest beach. She is currently residing in Yucca Valley, California. Connect with Charity online via [@charityswab](https://twitter.com/charityswab)



Ean Jackson, Director of Events IIMA- When not running a marathon or snow Shoeing in gorgeous powder conditions, Ean helps us connect with professional speakers and industry experts to present to our membership. For speaking opportunities and events contact Ean online via [@eanjackson](https://twitter.com/eanjackson)



A special thank you to [@dbarefoot](https://twitter.com/dbarefoot), we know he is a really busy guy! Appreciate the opportunity to do the interview.