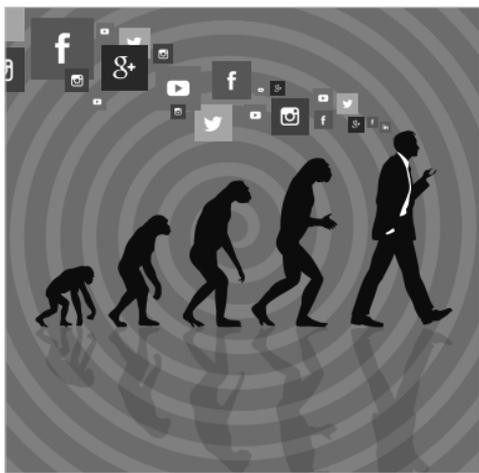


THE *Bluffer's*[®] GUIDE TO

**SOCIAL
MEDIA**



Susie Boniface



Hammersley House
5-8 Warwick Street
London W1B 5LX
United Kingdom

Email: info@bluffers.com
Website: bluffers.com
Twitter: @BluffersGuide

First published 2015
Copyright © Bluffer's® 2015

Publisher: Thomas Drewry
Publishing Director: Brooke McDonald

Series Editor: David Allsop
Design and Illustration: Jim Shannon

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Bluffer's®.

A CIP Catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Bluffer's Guide®, Bluffer's® and Bluff Your Way® are registered trademarks.

ISBN: 978-1-909937-40-6 (print)
978-1-909937-41-3 (ePub)
978-1-909937-42-0 (Kindle)

CONTENTS

Social Intercourse	5
It's a Tribal Thing	9
Users and Abusers	23
Cyberbucks	33
Tweet the Truth and Shame the Devil	41
Becoming a Social Media Monster	49
Engage Brain	61
Social Media? LOL	77
Hang 'Em High	93
Anti-Social Media	105
Into the Unknown	119
Glossary	125



‘I have Social Disease. I have to go out every night. If I stay home one night I start spreading rumours to my dogs.’

Andy Warhol

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE

You will often hear people complain that before the invention of social media, people used to talk. They used to meet in ‘normal’ ways; there was none of this ‘sexting’ business; we had friends before Facebook, you know... or at least, that’s what my dad tells me.

In fact, what people used to do before social media was socialise using different media: cave paintings, storytelling, gossip, smoke signals, carving initials in trees. Updating your Facebook status about your lunchtime ham sandwich is much the same as prehistoric man leaving a handprint on the cave wall to tell everyone he’d caught a really big bison.

And that’s the trick to successfully bluffing your way in the confusingly high-tech world of internet networking and sharing: realising that it is really no different to every other way in which human beings talk to and about one another.

As a species, humans have always wanted to share information – and the reason social networking services like Foursquare, Twitter and Vine are so popular is because they make it easier than ever before. Where once you had to corner someone in the next cave to boast about who you

just snogged, today you can put a picture on Instagram and shout it to the whole world.

While some welcome the mass exchange of information, others mistrust technological developments for fear they make us less human. Charles Dickens, confronted with the development of the telegraph, said: 'Electric communication will never be a substitute for the face of someone who with their soul encourages another person to be brave and true.'

Which ironically is the perfect 140-character length for a tweet (if you lose a full stop).

So when someone wants to bore you rigid complaining about social media being the death of proper talking, point out to them that apes grunt, *Homo erectus* had basic symbolic communication, and *Homo sapiens* uttered the first words sometime between 30,000 and 100,000 years ago. If anyone should be in any doubt about this, remind them that humankind is a storytelling species and is unique in that regard.

In the 1960s, some Californian geeks began linking their computers together in what became known as the internet and in 1982 Britain's Tim Berners-Lee developed a way of getting around it with addresses, links and readable pages – the World Wide Web. At this point, the evolution of human communication sped up exponentially, with email in 1993, blogging shortly after, Facebook launching in 2004 and Twitter in 2006.

Four years later the internet went into warp drive, when astronaut T.J. Creamer sent a tweet unassisted from the International Space Station in orbit above the Earth.

And here we are, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, at the point where any of us can have a long online conversation with someone on the other side of the world who we've never met, and simultaneously read the news, share amusing animal pictures, watch porn, and farm jelly beans competitively, all while our boss thinks we're working hard.

Of course, your boring pals might have the wit to point out that we're so busy with all these distractions that we merely grunt at our nearest and dearest, which means evolution has sped ahead so far it's actually gone backwards in time. If they do, you can respond with 'AHA! Social media invented time travel too!' and after that they'll probably give up and leave you alone.

While what we say is much the same as it's always been, the way we do it is changing at an alarming rate. From a handful of academic web pages in 1969, there were a billion websites in 2014, a number which has dipped since then but is expected to grow again in 2016. About 75 per cent of them are inactive but there are still about 100 web pages for every man, woman and child on earth. About 2.4 billion people use the internet, most of them in Asia. Population penetration varies widely between countries and continents, with 78 per cent of Americans online compared to just 15 per cent of Africans.

And it's not just for youngsters. One in four people over the age of 65 uses social media; 35 per cent of couples who married in the USA between 2005 and 2012 met via social media; and one in five divorces is blamed on Facebook. This

is, increasingly, how we live – online, where there's little privacy, constant data harvesting and ever-lurking trolls.

The pace of change being what it is, this guide will probably be out of date before there's been time to hit 'print'. Perhaps one day people will abandon it entirely and go back to banging rocks together, but until then this book will be your best way of learning how to navigate the ever-changing waters of social media.

Maybe you're one of those people who can't go five minutes without checking Pinterest. Perhaps you have bought or been given this guide in an attempt to haul you into the daunting melee of twenty-first-century communication. Either way, this book will tell you things you don't know, warn you about the perils of online intercourse and arm you with the kind of bite-sized knowledge that will make you sound like an expert with very little effort on your part.

It sets out to conduct you through the main danger zones encountered in discussions about social media and to equip you with the vocabulary and evasive technique that will minimise the risk of being rumbled as a bluffer. It will give you a few easy-to-learn hints and techniques that might even allow you to be accepted as a social media expert of rare ability and experience.

It will give you the tools to impress legions of marvelling listeners with your expertise and insight – without anyone discovering that, until you read this, you probably didn't know the difference between a tweet and a dweet.*

*It can mean a tweet sent while drunk, while on a date, or even... ahem... while defecating. Humans, eh?

IT'S A TRIBAL THING

The first thing every bluffer needs to know is that the internet is a tribal place. Most people use just one or two social media sites, and presume all others are crap.

If you read the newspapers, which concentrate on celebrity users, stalkers and murderers, social media consists entirely of Facebook and Twitter, where you're most likely to find all three.

In fact, any site on which humans share social information online qualifies. Here's a quick rundown of the current giants, the up-and-comers and those so passé they're already in the social media graveyard:

FACEBOOK

Born in 2004 to help American college students 'rate' one another's attractiveness, and already the ageing granddad of social media. These days even your mum's on it. Facebook consists of a network of 'friends' who have to request access to your page, where you can bore them to death with pictures of your latest holiday/child/dental procedure.

Best defined as like being invited to a dinner party – it's increasingly middle-aged, varies from dull to shouty, and the guests are mainly old friends from years ago who make you wonder why you're still talking to them. You might hook up with an old school sweetheart and get married or you might realise your unrequited love for David or Davina in the sixth form was entirely misplaced because he or she has ears like Dumbo.

Bluffer's tip For that reason alone, it might be a good idea to move to China, where this classic example of the tool of the running-dog capitalist bourgeoisie has been banned since 2008.

TWITTER

At the time of writing this is the king of social media, so by the time of publication it could be dead and buried under social media's back porch. Social media is that fast. And so is Twitter, which every bluffer needs to know is officially a 'microblogging' site. Every user can write posts limited to 140 characters, which leads to a lot of grammatical and spelling innovation, and read the posts of whoever they 'follow'. You can make your account private, but if privacy is what you want, you should be on Facebook. Twitter is like a bustling pub – half the people are drunk, you can interact with whoever you choose, and if a famous person talks to you, it's AMAZING.

If anyone says Twitter is boring, it's because they are following boring people and therefore have no idea how to make Twitter work for them. (This is exactly 140 characters.)

Most bluffers know singer Katy Perry is the most followed person (at the time of writing), with 74 million-odd people hanging on her every word; a good bluffer knows she calls them 'Katycats'; and a really excellent bluffer can point out she only follows 157 people (again correct at the time of writing), so is presumably more interested in broadcasting than listening.

(All tweeters can be judged by their ratio of tweets to followers, too – if someone's tweeted 47,000 times but still has only 75 people following them, 60 of whom have the default profile picture of an egg, you can safely assume they're mad.)

Bluffer's tip Be able to talk confidently about Twitter's peculiar ability to lose money for its parent company compared to the Facebook cash juggernaut, which is due to fewer users and even fewer adverts. Twitter v Facebook is socialism v capitalism, and humans are the commodity.

REDDIT

A huge bulletin board to which registered users called Redditors submit posts or links, which are then voted up or down the newsfeed according to their popularity. Founded, as so many sites are, by university students, it was snapped up by the owners of Condé Nast publishing in 2011 and is now worth an estimated \$500 million.

Different to other sites in that all posts are categorised, first labelled for example as 'education' or 'image sharing', and then with 5,400 further detailed tags within those categories known as 'subreddits'. For example, the

education category has subreddits for movies, gaming, music and 'creepy', which is a place you are advised to enter with caution.

Bluffer's tip The most popular and newsworthy bit of Reddit is AMA – Ask Me Anything. It's where a person can be asked literally any question, and everyone else can follow the thread of their replies to the community. The most popular AMAs have been done by Barack Obama, Madonna and George Clooney; celebrities who refuse to answer questions unrelated to whatever they're promoting get a bad reaction.

The best AMA ever was the anonymous user called Double Dick Dude, who started his session off saying: 'I am the guy with two penises. Ask me anything.' Educational AND creepy.

LINKEDIN

An online Rolodex, and about as much fun. Used by 'professionals' to 'connect' with 'networkers' and post their CVs. Makes money with subscription-only recruitment tools, so employers can hunt down the right candidate and agencies can harass people who've forgotten they joined it. Many of its 340 million users have long since marked its twice-daily 'invitations to connect' emails as spam and realised it's not a good place to post photographs of the night that was lost to tequila. Despite all that, it's a networking behemoth worth \$40 million and taken very seriously by people who are very serious. Not enough fun to be blocked in China.

Bluffer's tip Don't join. Your dad's on it.

INSTAGRAM

Wildly popular method of taking a photograph of yourself, digitally enhancing it so you look hot, then posting it online with a smug comment about how crazy/fun/cool you are. Populated by celebrities like Kim Kardashian and the members of One Direction, as well as newspaper journalists who can rip the pictures down and use them without fear of copyright infringement. Bought by Facebook for \$1 billion, it had 300 million monthly active users at the end of 2014. Social media began eating itself when 'Rich Kids of Instagram', with pictures of daddy's helicopter, skiing holidays and Cristal-laced proms, stopped being a piss-take on Instagram and got its own entirely-serious Tumblr (*see next page*).



'It is said that if you know your enemies
and know yourself, you will not be
imperilled in a hundred battles.'

Sun Tzu

Do say 'Did you know 68 per cent of Instagrammers are female?'

Don't say 'God, the paparazzi are awful. Here are some of my holiday snaps.'

YOUTUBE

Responsible for Justin Bieber, which is good enough reason to call for its immediate global ban. In the meantime, it's a way of sharing videos, exploited not just by TV types, but by anyone with something to market – in Bieber's case, his singing. In 2007, his mum uploaded a video of him singing at school and kept doing it. He built up a fan base, was discovered by a manager, introduced to Usher, and so began his inevitable ascent into the madness of hyperfame. You can set up your own 'channel', subscribe to channels you like, and post comments which vary from 'LOVE THIS!' to 'U so fat.' Criticised widely for its content, which can include porn, Arab Spring disputes, jihadist beheadings and explanations about what's inside your laptop and how to replace the screen. Also home to every half-amusing cat video on earth.

Bluffer's tip Can be surprisingly useful, especially if you need to replace your laptop screen.

TUMBLR

Basically a blogging site which encourages people to use pictures and as few words as possible. A Tumblr might be a collection of videos of George Osborne's girly hands, a series of pretend conversations with your dog, or a thoughtful study of the British love of queuing. A few minutes on Tumblr leaves you with the feel and look of mild sedation. Texts From Dog – a Tumblr featuring mocked-up iPhone messages from, yes, a dog – was so popular it became a book. In August 2015 Tumblr's users were uploading 75

million posts a day – and a sizeable chunk of them are pornographic.

Bluffer's tip Stay off it if you want to achieve anything with your life.

PINTEREST

A bit like Tumblr, but you add your pictures to a pinboard in any one of a number of categories, so all of your 'my beautiful baby' photos are in one place and other people don't have to look at them if they don't want to. You can follow boards, set up new ones, post pictures to different boards, but this is fundamentally Pictures Only I Am Interested In.

Bluffer's tip Avoid – it's filled with pedants complaining that your arty picture of cinnamon sticks doesn't belong on a board about ground spices.

GOOGLE+

Basically, The Matrix. Everything you do online – searches, blogs, videos, email, photos – all get linked together and have your name put on them. Great for megalomaniacs and businesses, just bothersome for individuals who don't like Google's total domination of the multiverse. If you join, you'll need Laurence Fishburne to get you out again.

Bluffer's tip If you're tempted to join Google+, reach behind your head, pull out the cable connecting you to the robots' mainframe, and get on with your life. If you're already signed up, you're lost forever.

VINE

A video service where users post looping six-second video clips and can upload them to Twitter or Facebook. It began in June 2012 and was sold an astonishing four months later to Twitter for a reported \$970 million, and has since been used to document the aftermath of the bombing of the US Embassy in Ankara, criticise actor Ryan Gosling for not eating his cereal, and it even got obscure twerking song 'Don't Drop That Thun Thun' to number 35 on the US music chart.

Bluffer's tip Be aware that Vine is the reason the UK was introduced to controversial 'comedian' Dapper Laughs, a former estate agent called Daniel O'Reilly who posted what he claimed were character-based sexist rants about women – 'she wants it' and so on – and was commissioned for a TV show on the back of it. The show was cancelled after he made jokes about rape, thus proving that what might seem funny in the privacy of your smartphone is less than amusing in the living room in front of your mum.

SNAPCHAT

One of the newer developments in social media, this is an app which allows users to send messages, pictures or videos available to the recipient for between one and 10 seconds, after which it seems to disappear from your device. As of 2014 it was being used to send 1.2 billion Snaps a day by 100 million monthly users, and was valued at anywhere up to £12 billion.

Bluffer's tip Some will claim Snapchat is used by teenagers to sext one another, attracted by the fact that saucy pictures are instantly deleted. While most of its users are aged 13 to 23, less than 15 per cent of them admit to ever using it for sexy times; instead most, 60 per cent, say they use it to send 'funny faces'. Oh, and for a superbluff, point out that Snaps can be retrieved with minimal technical knowledge on your device and, of course, they remain forever on the Snapchat servers.

WHAT'S APP

Instant messaging service where subscribers can talk to each other for free – circumventing pricey text and picture messaging, and also enabling you to send messages to a group of contacts. Subsidised by Facebook and with 800 million active users as of 2014, it was criticised for being too open to hackers so it decided to encrypt all messages, which in turn meant it was criticised by governments worldwide for being unhackable and therefore a safe haven for terrorists. Goes to show, you just can't win.

PERISCOPE, MEERKAT, LIVESTREAM

A series of new broadcasting apps, allowing users to upload live video. Useful to witness live events perhaps, but a minefield for privacy and piracy issues – particularly at pay-per-view sports events, cinemas, or if used to peek at someone who doesn't know you're doing it.

A good bluffer will say 'of course, they're mainly used by TV reporters to prove they're waiting for a press conference'

but also know 'the trolling is atrocious because commenters are anonymous.'

A respectful silence now as bluffers pause to consider the social media sites that are either dead, dying or gravely ill.

BEBO

This was basically a profile page where you could post quizzes, photos, videos or blogs. Set up by a Brit in 2005, it smashed MySpace, was then sold for \$850 million to AOL in 2008, was overtaken by Facebook, went phut, was bought back by the original owners for \$1 million, and is now shut 'pending relaunch'.

Don't spend Any money on it whatsoever.

Do say 'Bebo? Deader than disco.'

Bluffer's tip If you set up a social media website, sell it as early as possible.

MYSPACE

Social media with music, bought by Rupert Murdoch for half a billion dollars just two years after it launched back in 2003. He later sold it to a partnership including Justin Timberlake (yes, old Trousersnake himself, really). Used to be a great place to find new bands; now utterly moribund and populated by teenagers who want to 'make it big' and *X Factor* production assistants promising the world if you'll just come on TV to be humiliated. It's the Casio keyboard of the twenty-first century.

Bluffer's tip If asked about MySpace, you must be too cool to have ever known about it. The correct bluff is to screw up your face, look confused, and say 'Huh?'

FOURSQUARE

A method for combining geography and smugness and multiplying it by one-upmanship. You get a notification when users 'check in' at venues, i.e., 'Sam checked in at the Cutest Bakery Ever', 'Sam checked in at Trump Tower', 'Sam checked in at GirlzGirlzGirlz and then quickly deleted it'. Entirely pointless unless you're Microsoft, which in 2014 spent \$15 million on it to harvest data about user habits for targeted marketing purposes.

Bluffer's tip If the product is free, you are the thing on sale.

LAST FM

This records which tracks you listen to online, on your computer or on a device. Users can network, get info about bands and get recommendations. Basically a way of letting the whole world know you're the last person still listening to Mel and Kim.

Bluffer's tip When asked about Last FM, say: 'Can't you make up your own mind about what to listen to? LOSER.'

FRIENDS REUNITED

Launched in 2000 as a way of spying on old school friends, it once had 19 million users. It now has a lot fewer, and a place in the history books. Owned by the Dundee publisher

of *The Beano*, it is today used mainly by grannies who want to know 'how this internet thing works'.

Bluffer's tip: Say you're too young to remember it.

But that's not all. Aside from the websites and apps you can use on an individual basis with your own page and your own little network of people who might be interested in it, there are a bunch of social media sites that are more of a team effort.

For example, Blogger and Wordpress both provide you with the tools to build your own blog (short for web log) by laying out a page, getting an unique web address or URL, editing the format and so on. But there are so many people using them that they have become a social network on their own. There were reckoned to be 173 million blogs in 2010 and the numbers are growing all the time; partly because social media sites like Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr now all count as blogging too. It's entirely possible to do nothing but cruise blogs all day, linking them to your own, commenting on theirs, and obviously wincing at daylight and sudden noises.

Then there are sites which aggregate their content. Some bright spark starts up their own page, and adds other people's work to it. Some sites aggregate news, like the Drudge Report which finds the best stories on newspaper websites, repacks them slightly and puts them all in the same place with links out to the original content. Others aggregate blogs, like Mumsnet, which hosts the blogs of those who want to join and highlights a select few, massively

increasing the audience of those lucky enough to be chosen.

Sites aggregate polls, videos, the best animal videos, car insurance offers, anything. And get this – there are even apps and sites that let you aggregate your social media, after someone worked out that users normally use more than one and there's a lot of overlap. Eventually of course, there'll be ways of aggregating the aggregators, and when that day dawns it's time to turn the computer off and go outside for some fresh air and sunshine.

There are also collaborations, when a random bunch of users combine their efforts to create something. A prime example is Wikipedia, a free online encyclopedia where registered users can add and edit entries on everything from the biographical details of Bill Clinton's love affairs to an analysis of Mao Tse-tung's military strategy. It's basically a 'hive mind' to dip into, and you can frequently find the right answer, but as editing can be done by anyone, it's easy to get caught out – partly because Wikipedia always sounds believable even when it's not, and partly because the internet is filled with people who like pranks and getting drunk.

Celebrities are prime targets, with journalists frequently getting caught out claiming they have died, once dated Liz Taylor or said something they didn't. Hoaxes include a 4,500-word entirely fictitious article on the Bicholim conflict of India, which never happened but remained online for five years – an achievement any bluffer would be proud of. Award-winning British journalist Johann Hari was disgraced after it was found he used a pseudonym to

alter his own Wiki page and edit the pages of his enemies.

Cynics know it as 'Nickitpedia' because it's so easy to cut-and-paste supposed facts – and even Sir Brian Leveson was caught out when his report of a two-year-inquiry into press practices quoted *The Independent* newspaper's Wikipedia page. Unbeknown to Brian, a 25-year-old Californian called Brett Straub was not a founder of that august organ. And unbeknown to Brett, a mate of his had added his name to the page for a laugh.

You know you've made it in social media bluffing if you can not only figure out how to edit a Wikipedia page, but then find that edit later stated as fact in the *Daily Mail*.

Game worlds also qualify as social networks – sites like Second Life where users adopt a persona and build a whole online existence, battling demons or falling in love and even running profitable businesses. Do not get involved with one unless you want to become morbidly fascinated with things that aren't real, and always remember the salutary case of Dave Pollard and Amy Taylor.

Their online avatars met in Second Life and got married in Second Life. Then Amy's avatar discovered Dave's avatar having cybersex with an avatar operated by Linda Brinkley, and demanded a Second Life divorce.

Needless to say, in reality they all looked a little different to their avatars, and made even less sense. A wise bluffer avoids this sort of thing – there is no way to successfully bluff someone who lives, quite literally, in a different world. In the words of William Shatner in a *Saturday Night Live* sketch set at a *Star Trek* convention: 'Get a life!'