

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **The Thought Leader's Viewpoint Episode 1**

Governors State University School of Extended Learning presents The Thought Leader's Viewpoint.

Felicia Townsend : Hi I'm Felicia Townsend from Governors State University School of Extended Learning and I'm here today with Deborah James, assistant professor and coordinator of the media studies program at Governors State University and Vernon Smith a broadcaster, journalist, writer, editor and blogger.

Deborah and Vernon, thank you for joining me today.

Deborah James and Vernon Smith: Thank you, Felicia.

Felicia: Today we are going to discuss how thought leaders can use social media and other mediums to strengthen their personal brand. We hear so much about thought leadership and it starts to sound like a buzzword of sorts. Debbie how do you define thought leadership?

Deborah: Let me start by saying that a thought leader really is a trusted source on any particular topic and thought leadership is really the process by which you develop or demonstrate your expertise. Here we're talking about developing your expertise online and through social media. Today it's really not enough to tell people that you're an expert. You really have to demonstrate your expertise and using an online presence developing your presence online is really what we call branding and even on an individual level it helps you define yourself for what you stand for.

Felicia: Now Debbie, what are some of the social media tools that thought leaders can use to develop their personal brand?

Deborah: I'm glad you asked that. You know I was just reading an article on what is sort of hot in 2017 and the top tools for the upcoming year are going to continue to be Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat as it transitions to Snap, and Twitter. But really having said that, there's more to it than launching a Facebook page or an Instagram account and sort of letting loose. There are really over a hundred different sort of social media tools available to you right now. So when you choose your brand and when you develop your brand on social media, it's really going to depend on what you are trying to accomplish and who your audience is. So you're actually going to be creating a social media mix that feeds and supports directly to your brand. So for example, if you are an expert chef and you want to promote your catering service you need to choose the social media mix that shows off your food and this, most certainly, will include Instagram and Facebook because, of course, both these platforms, these tools focuses on images and video.

So if you also want to do event planning, you also want to consider something like Snapchat where you can post short videos and stories of videos on your party

preparation or people who are in attendance.

Felicia: That is so interesting. Can you talk specifically about how a faculty or scholar can use social media tools to, you know, heighten what they're doing in the area of their research?

Deborah: For sure. So one of the amazing tools that we have or the many amazing tools that we have allow you to not only broadcast on something like Twitter where you can act like a DJ of the information. Through this and through something like Facebook, you're able to create your expertise online. So if you're trying to reach other academics, you're now able to reach other academics around the world. If you want to speak to people in the public, there are many opportunities, many news platforms and you can also develop an audience based on people specifically interested in that topic and develop something of an audience and develop yourself as a thought leader, as an expert in that field that cross all these different audience areas. You're no longer limited to academia. You can talk to the people who are relevant to your actual research in a way that we have never been able to do before. But if you are looking to develop an audience and you are trying to reach the millennials keep in mind we are all getting older. Millennials are going to move into the next generation of online users. Currently, as of today, Snapchat, in particular, has almost thirty-three percent of the market and Instagram has forty-three percent of the market. So it's important even as a faculty member, as a researcher. You want to be able to understand who you're broadcasting to and each social tool has a demographic attached to it.

Felicia: Now Vernon, how can a thought leader use audio podcasting to strengthen their presence in their field?

Vernon: Well thought leaders as podcasters can strengthen their presence in their field by a) bypassing the mainstream media and b) becoming part of it by sort of becoming an in demand expert in your field. In terms of the bypassing, podcasting allows an expert or thought leader to take a view of what the mainstream media is both doing incorrectly and what they're flat out missing. Trust in the mainstream media is at an all-time low and polling data tells us that. So people are looking for alternative sources that they can trust. As a leader in your field, you can win that trust by providing people with access to a consistent, credible podcast with high standards and, most importantly, a podcast that gives people interested in your field information presented responsibly that they are not getting from the mainstream media or anywhere else. If you provide all that as a podcaster, you'll position yourself to become a part of the mainstream media as an in demand expert in your field to comment on developing issues and narratives as a talking head. That will be one of the major themes that we'll be discussing: how to bypass the mainstream media through your podcast with an eye towards becoming a part of the mainstream media as an expert.

Felicia: Vernon is it difficult to create your own audio podcast?

Vernon: It's not rocket science but it's a lot of hard work. You do have to master the

software and there's as much planning put into a good podcast, a quality podcast as there is to any other broadcast. That is what a podcast is, it's just a different form of a broadcast. It's consumed and offered in a different way. So there's a lot of hard work. There's a lot of planning. There's some technical matter that has to be mastered. But the fact of the matter is that everything is available in such a way that anyone can do it if they're willing to put the work into it.

Felicia: I think it's fascinating. I truly love audio podcasting and I think it's a wonderful thing to have in your back pocket if you're trying to increase your presence as a thought leader.

Now as an alternative to audio podcasting, some thought leaders may want to maintain a blog. So Debbie what are some of the benefits of blogging?

Deborah: Well a definition of a blog is really a writer or a group of writers own experience, observations, and opinions. Now this format is interactive and it allows for links to other resources. It allows for input and it can live for quite a long time. Not only the original post but also the discussion that happens afterwards. This provides a writer from any field an opportunity to write a longer piece, to author and develop credibility and authenticity, and to develop community. So ultimately blogging is about creating a deeper and in depth conversation which today people are looking for and it provides content and connection with like-minded people.

Felicia: How often should one blog? Is it every week? Every other week?

Deborah: You know there's no magical formula but consistency is important. So if you commit to blogging once a week, then you need to stick to that schedule. If you're going to blog three times a week, then you stick to that schedule. The nice thing about blogging is that everything doesn't have to be done and posted. You can actually write a post ahead of time and schedule them if you need a week off or something else is interfering with your blogging schedule. So I would argue, you want to have a regular schedule. You don't want to really go much more than a week, a week and a half on a blog post because you want your audience to be constantly having something they can read and something that's fresh on your site.

Felicia: Debbie and Vernon, thank you for sharing your insights.

Do you want to position yourself as a thought leader in your field? Starting March 29, 2017, Governors State University School of Extended Learning will launch its thought leadership workshop series which will cover topics related to personal branding, social media curation, developing and maintaining a blog, and producing a credible and consistent audio podcast.

These workshops will be taught by Deborah James and Vernon Smith. For more information visit [govst.edu/oce](http://govst.edu/oce). That's [govst.edu/oce](http://govst.edu/oce).