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Title: Invisible or Remarkable? The Power  
of Leadership and Tribes in Creating  
Marketing That Matters

Speaker(s): Seth Godin

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## **Invisible or Remarkable? The Power of Leadership and Tribes in Creating Marketing That Matters**

Seth Godin

[Presentation is live via satellite]

What I want to talk about today is related to that because there's all this new stuff going on online. You read about it in the paper all the time, there are massive changes in the business environment that we live in, the companies we buy from, the companies we sell to. Everything is in turmoil. You look at that and you say, "You know, this could leave a big, ugly red mark on my career or my firm that might take years to go away."

My job, if I'm going to succeed today, is to help you think about this issue in a fundamentally different way. I think we are living through one of the biggest opportunities in generations. Some people and some organizations are embracing it and taking advantage of it and a lot of people are just playing around the edges looking at all the shiny objects, but not actually accomplishing what they could accomplish. That's what I need to sell you on today.

So I want to start by explaining to you that your industry, the insurance business has been perfect for a really long time. Now it might not seem perfect every day, but all the pieces are aligned so that you, the cream of the crop, the best in the world, could afford to go to Hawaii and enjoy each other's company and learn a lot. The industry is organized in such a way that it works.

So let me, by analogy, talk about a different industry, an industry that also used to be perfect: the record business.

In 1965, the record business was perfect. Let me tell you why. Number one, music came on big 12-inch vinyl LPs. Now that's really cool, because they wear out. So if you like something a lot, you've got to buy another one. It's also really cool because if I like an LP, and I give it to my friend to listen to, I don't have it anymore. That means I need to buy another one. And, it was really cool because they were big and so there was a lot of room for display.

It was a very cool industry because Tower Records and other companies existed for the sole purpose to sell the music. MTV was a TV network whose only purpose was to sell the music. Radio's only function for 50 years was to play the songs the music companies sold so that people would hear them and go buy them. And not let's even get into the whole idea that senior proms were organized around music, and that *Rolling Stone* magazine was about nothing but music, and that rock stars were in the music business. So if you look at all these factors and combine them with the fact that if you were a musician and you wanted to make an album, it meant you needed to drop \$100,000 to go to a recording studio and record and produce it and make it. You couldn't afford it. So you went to the record people and they kept almost all the profits in exchange for giving you a chance to make a record.

Well, that was a perfect industry, wasn't it? And then they broke it. They moved all our records onto CDs. CDs are digital so they went online. Once they were online, they spread and Tower Records went out of business and MTV stopped showing music videos and *Rolling Stone*

became a political magazine and on and on and on. And any schlub who's got a computer can make a record in his garage and release it online. What are the record people going to do?

Now what's fascinating about that industry is this: We have more music than ever before. Music didn't go away. Music went up. What got hammered was the industry, the perfect industry, the industry that was organized around a set of circumstances and then those circumstances changed.

So the question I want to ask is: What are the underlying circumstances of what you do all day? What most people in the service business do is not dig ditches. We don't work on a factory line. We don't screw one thing into another. What people in the service business do is we spread ideas. That our job, whether we're running Starbucks coffee or we're a college professor or we're an architect or we are running for political office or we're selling insurance. Our job is to spread an idea: the idea of an intelligent way to invest your money, an intelligent way to protect your family, an intelligent way to grow your business or protect your business. Or, we're trying to spread the idea that voting for one person instead of another person will change things.

Here's the cool thing. If everyone knows your idea, if everyone knows why they need your product or your service, if everybody knows why it's worth it, if everyone knows that they should trust you, then your job is over. Then you just write business. The hard part, the only hard part, is getting everyone to know. And what marketers have done, traditionally, is they've gotten people to know by spending money. I call it the TV industrial complex. Most of you don't run TV ads, but you can imagine what I'm talking about.

You run an ad. You interrupt a lot of people. Some of those people are interested enough to buy what you sell, which makes you enough money to run another ad. Well, even if you're not on TV, you send a piece of junk mail. You send enough pieces of junk mail, you make enough money to send more junk mail. You hire a sales rep. If the sales guy is any good, he makes enough money and you can hire more salespeople. You go out and you give a speech to a local community group. If you do any good, you'll make enough money to go give another speech. And around and around and around it goes. Average products, for average people, delivered over and over and over again. And, if you do it often enough what happens? You make money and you get the privilege of doing it again.

If we look at just about any industry from the last 40 years, over and over and over again we see exactly the same thing. How can I tell more people? If I tell more people, can I convert some? If I convert people, maybe I can push them for referrals. If I get the referrals, that gives me sort of a veil to call more people. And, if I call more people, then I can cycle it again and again and again.

So where does that leave us? Candy apples. My son is a vegan, and the other day I was under instructions to make candy apples. I don't know if you've ever tried to make caramel apples for someone who doesn't drink milk or eat butter, but the thing is caramel apples only have four ingredients: apples, sugar, milk and butter. Making a caramel apple without butter or milk is a foolish maneuver because, you may end up with something, but you will not end up with a caramel apple. My lesson here is that when an industry changes enough, when it changes a lot, sometimes the right answer isn't to say, "How do I use this new stuff to make the old industry

stay the same?” Sometimes the right answer is, “How do I use this new stuff to reinvent what the industry is?”

So, if I look at blogs and Facebook and Twitter and Google and all the noise that’s going on; if I look at mint.com; if I look at the push to make everything digital and I am a traditional insurance broker; if I tried to take all those tools to make my old business work better, I’m probably not going to make a good connection. But, if I rethink the opportunity, if I dig deep and say not, “how do I make a new tool for this time,” but “how do I make a different way of engaging that uses these new tools,” then amazing things can happen.

So I want to tell you a bunch of stories about that and about this transformation that is occurring.

The first one I want to tell you is about a guy named Nathan Winograd. Nathan is one of my heroes. About 15 or 20 years ago, Nathan went to work for the SPCA of San Francisco. Now you probably don’t know the history of humane societies and SPCAs in the United States, but here it is. They were chartered first in New York City by the city government to round up and kill all the dogs and cats in New York that were stray. That is their function. They get paid by various cities to diminish the problem with stray dogs and cats. Four million dogs and cats were killed last year, almost all of them within 24 hours of being picked up off the street. Well, Nathan got to the SPCA of San Francisco and he learned this and he couldn’t believe it. He was the number two person there and he wasn’t willing to let that stand.

He went to the city council to get a change in the charter of the SPCA. To get the change made, there were hearings. And, guess what? Humane societies and SPCAs from around the country flew to San Francisco and testified against the change. They said it was artificially raising hopes. They said it would never work. So with no choice, Nathan went directly to his public. He went to the people of San Francisco, one-on-one and, in a quarter of the time he expected, he raised more money and got more volunteers than he needed. Within a year, San Francisco was a no-kill city. Not one healthy dog or cat is killed by the SPCA in San Francisco.

You look at that and you say, well that’s easy, it’s San Francisco. But Nathan ended up leaving there and going to rural New York state, Tompkins County, where he was basically the dog catcher with no budget. And he did it again. And, then he left there and he went to Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, which couldn’t be more different than San Francisco, and he did it again. Then he went to Reno, Nevada, and he did it again. And, we were talking last month, and he said he got hired by the head dog catcher of Houston, Texas. He showed up, he was a consultant, and he showed up as a consultant. The guy said, “I don’t like you. I don’t like what you stand for. I’m only here because my board made me have you come in.” In three months, Nathan Winograd, with no money, just by organizing his tribe of people, turned Houston from a city where they killed 80 percent of the dogs and cats to a city where they killed 20 percent of the dogs and cats.

When you look at that, what do you learn? What you learn, most important of all, is that what the new marketing is about. It is not yelling about what you do. It’s about changing what you do so other people yell about it. Marketing, even in a small firm, is too important to be left to the marketing department. There are too many choices. There’s too much clutter. There’s too much

noise. If I want to buy insurance, I type it into Google and the chances of me finding you are close to zero. That if you are relying on strangers to somehow connect and then do a transaction with you, you're going to be waiting for a really long time.

The transaction model that says, "I'm going to somehow turn a stranger into a customer and grow my business" has always been difficult, but now it's getting close to impossible. The reason it's impossible is because Oreos have 19 different flavors and Starbucks comes in 19,000 different varieties per store. Now, if you want to go on vacation you don't have the usual four choices like you did when you went to a travel agent, you have 400 or 4,000. You want to stay in a hotel in London, you type London hotel into Google and, the next thing you know, there are an infinite number of choices.

At the same time this is going on, the amount of clutter, the amount of people making sales pitches, the amount of people pushing us to listen to them continues to increase. That is basically what marketers have done. We've become spammers. We have spammed people over and over and over again until we hope they will be wrestled into submission. And, the thing is we're not listening anymore. We don't want to talk to you, even if your deal is a great deal, even if your service is a great service, even if I need it for my kids or for my business or for my home. You're invisible because I've turned off all the clutter. You don't get a shot.

But there's an alternative. My wife has a fictional disease she got shortly after we got married called travelers' narcolepsy. What happens is every time we get on a plane or in a car she falls asleep (unless there's a really good movie on the plane). We were traveling to France with the kids and we missed a flight. We missed a connection. For 17 hours, my kids had been making a ruckus. And, for 17 hours, my wife had been asleep. So we were almost there. We were driving through this pasture. The sun was shining. The sky was blue. There was a cow over there. I listened and it was quiet in the backseat. For the first time in 17 hours it was quiet. I looked in the rearview mirror figuring the kids were finally asleep. They were not asleep. They were staring out the window transfixed by this perfect specimen of a cow for about four seconds, and then they went back to making a ruckus. You know why? Because cows are boring and if you've seen one cow you've seen five cows, 10 cows, 50 cows, 100 cows. They're all the same. No one cares about cows. No one cares about pain relievers. No one cares about picture framing stores. No one cares about insurance brokers. Sorry. We don't. We're busy.

But what if, out the window, there had been a purple cow -- a real honest to goodness purple cow. I'll tell you what would have happened. I would have pulled over. My wife would have woken up: "What's going on?" I would have gotten on the phone. I would have called people back home and told them I was looking at a purple cow. My wife would have gotten out the camera and taken pictures so she could show her friends a purple cow. My kids would have ignored me as usual, opened the door, run across the street, jumped over the fence, and run over to the cow. They would have rubbed the side of the cow to make sure it's really and truly purple so they could tell their friends at show-and-tell in two weeks that they'd seen and touched a purple cow.

Do you know what a purple cow is? A purple cow is just one thing: remarkable. A purple cow is remarkable, as in worth making a remark about. Not remark about because the cow wants you to,

remark about because I want to. Remark about because it will increase my status. Remark about because it's fun to talk about it.

So the question is, when you do a transaction with a wealthy consumer or a doctor or a business or a homeowner, do they talk about you when you leave? Why would they? Are you remarkable? Do you do something worth talking about? Let me show you a little bit of math here. This circle to scale is how much money the BMW Corporation spends advertising every car they sell in the United States. That much. And to the same scale, Lincoln-Mercury. That much. Lincoln-Mercury has to hype the car because they're making average cars for average people. BMW gives the advertising money to the engineers and they turn it into a car worth talking about.

You can't do this at the same time you still do what you do all day. That's what the market is demanding of you. If you want the market to talk about you on Twitter, if you want people to read your blog, if you want people to choose to connect with you, what the market is demanding of you is that, on top of the stuff that you sell, a fair product at a fair price, there needs to be a new layer. There needs to be a new layer of connection, of leadership, a new layer of taking people somewhere they want to go. We are desperate for you to do that for us, and if you don't do it for us, we'll find someone who will.

Let me give you a little bit of a history lesson and then we're going to come back to this idea. The last industrial revolution (we're in one right now) was in the 1940s and 50s when advertising started to work, when marketing started to work, when asking for referrals really paid off. That's the one you grew up with. The industrial revolution before that was Henry Ford and the assembly line and the one before that was the ability to ship goods around the world and there have been several. About once every 50 years we find one.

Let's go back way in time to the 1700s. Josiah Wedgwood, born poor in rural England. His father is a potter. His brother is a potter. He was going to be a potter and be poor. But Josiah Wedgwood, you've heard of him, Wedgwood china. Josiah Wedgwood looked around and realized that the world had changed. So he didn't become a one-off apprentice potter. He built a pottery factory. And, in that factory he did all sorts of remarkable things. He put in windows. He had health insurance. He trained workers to do one job. He invented brands. He had the very first brand in the world. He invented direct mail. Josiah Wedgwood mailed his china to the crowned heads of Europe with a note saying I'll make you more if you order some. He spent \$2 million in those days' money doing the mailing. He invented quality control. His goods were the same from item to item. He invented the idea of shipping his goods around the world.

When Josiah Wedgwood died, he had more money in the bank than Bill Gates has today. He left that money to his grandchildren, two of whom married each other. One of them, Charles Darwin, used the money to travel around the world and change everything again.

The key lesson here is this: It would have been easy for Thomas Wedgwood, Josiah's brother, to say to him, "Josiah, why don't you just make pottery like everybody else?" But what Josiah Wedgwood did was he saw an industrial revolution. He saw a difference in the way the world was working and, on the base of the family business, he built something brand new.

I want to give you about a dozen tactics that we're seeing in this industrial revolution now. I want you to think hard about how a competitor, a competitor who wasn't afraid of shaking up the status quo, a competitor who didn't care how you ended up, would put these tactics to work in a way that would make you really uncomfortable. Because, guess what. Your competitors know about this stuff. Your job, the possibility, the opportunity is for you to take these tactics and run with them faster than anybody else because you are unafraid to make that difference happen.

So the first one is this: There are two ways to get married. Right? The first way to get married is to go to a singles bar and walk up to the first person you meet and propose marriage. And, if they will not marry you, repeat that process at every person in the singles bar until someone says I do. If it doesn't work, realize you're prospecting in the wrong singles bar and you're wearing the wrong outfit. So get a new suit. Go to a new singles bar. Do it again. This is a stupid way to get married.

The alternative is to go on a date. If the date goes well, go on another date. Wait until the third date before you tell them you're out on parole. And then you meet their parents. They meet your parents. You get engaged. You get married. It worked for me. Maybe it worked for you. So if dating is such an effective tool, why aren't you dating your prospects?

Does your business, does your agency have a process in place to turn strangers into friends before you try to send friends a policy? Or are there only two kinds of people, strangers and policyholders, strangers and customers. Guess what, if you walk up to people and say buy my policy or go away, most of us are going to go away. But if you can figure out a way to earn the right to deliver anticipated personal and relevant messages to people who want to get them, people will listen.

So I'll give you two examples. One guy I know runs a business doing alarms and personal security and things like that. Every week, he sends out a newsletter giving away all his secrets. He puts in photos of places that could be secure but aren't. He tells people how to go to Home Depot and buy stuff way cheaper than he sells it and install it themselves. He outlines which things on the market are high quality and which ones aren't, and he just gives it away all the time. Drip, drip, drip. He earns the trust of an ever-growing group of engaged people, and you know what happens. What happens is the husband says to the wife I'll take care of it and the third time he says I'll take care of it and he doesn't take care of, who's he going to call? He's going to call the person he trusts. He is going to call the person who has never once tried to sell him something. It's not like, "Blah, blah, blah. Buy my stuff." It's interesting, interesting, interesting. No sales pitch. Well, of course you're going to trust that person when the time comes.

Another person I know runs a small insurance brokerage in Canada. It's four times bigger than it was when he took it over from his dad a year ago. A 400 percent increase in size. How did he do it? By honestly and clearly describing what smart consumers should know about what he sells and what other people sell. He often recommends competitive products. If he didn't, why would anyone trust him? Drip, drip, drip.

The next trend is this idea that middlemen are going away. I'm sure most of you have had the experience of a long-time customer saying I'm going to GEICO. How can GEICO afford to do what they do? Easy. They got rid of a whole bunch of people in between. They went straight to the consumer.

Now, there are certain things where we don't want people to go straight to us. But what we're seeing over and over and over again is that if someone is a mere middleman, like a travel agent used to be...

You remember, you used to go to the travel agent and sit there and watch while she typed on to the computer to book your tickets. Now, you just do what she used to do at home. The airlines saw that happening and they got rid of travel agents as fast as they possibly could. They realized they were giving more money to the travel agents than they were making. Because most travel agents positioned themselves as quiet computer operators, we don't miss them. The travel agents who are still in business, like my friend Betty Ann, never did that stuff. The ones who are still in business are the ones who were remarkable, who were engaging, who connected you to places you were going or to other people in your community. You go and say I want to go to Tanzania and Betty Ann says do you know one of my customers lives five blocks from you. She went to Tanzania last year. Give her a call and after you talk, come back. That's a valuable service. There's a connection being made.

What we're seeing again and again, for product after product, for service after service, is business is either going straight to the consumer because middlemen are boring or middlemen deciding they don't want to be boring anymore and them going straight to the consumer.

This next trend is this idea that no longer is a restaurant critic or theatre critic so powerful. They used to be the only person who could give us a point of view. But now with YouTube and Yelp and Zagat and the blogosphere and Twitter, everybody you talk to is a critic. Everyone you talk to is super powerful. And as a result, if you cross somebody, they're going to tell 100 people or 1,000 people or 10,000 people. We see it happening again and again online. What you have to understand now is that every transaction you're having with everybody is on the record. Every transaction you're having with everybody might as well be online. All it takes is one guy in your agency to be a jerk one time to the wrong person and it's over.

So the question is: Do you have one of those guys? Have you decided to hire someone cheap or put a computer in place to save you a little bit of money?

One agency in Washington heard what I was talking about and they did a fascinating thing. You've all heard the recording your call is very important to us, please stand by. Well, if it's really important to you, why don't you just answer the damn phone? What this guy did, he had a huge agency in Washington state and he spent \$2 million to rip out all those systems. Now if you call, it's mostly a business-to-business firm, every single time a human being is going to answer that call after two rings. Think about that, is that value-added? Is that worth not switching? Is that worth talking about?

I want you to imagine what would happen if you called United Airlines and a supervisor who was a human being answered the phone, after one ring, and actually helped you in less than five minutes. How many people would you tell? Is United Airlines in the airplane business or is United Airlines in the answering-the-phone business? I think they're in the answering-the-phone business. Anyone can do airplanes.

Another one: a little tiny change that makes a big difference. If you give people something to talk about, they will talk about it. A little company called Little Miss Matched makes socks. Guess what? Twelve-year-old little girls have a sock problem. What's their sock problem? They don't have enough to talk about during recess. So Little Miss Matched makes socks. They make socks, they come in 133 styles and none of them match. What does that mean? What it means is the 12-year-old girl goes to school and says to all of her friends, want to see my socks? My socks never match. Want to see my socks? "Want to see my socks" is the entire company's business model. When they started five years ago they had \$1 million in revenue. Last year, they were at \$40 million in revenue because they gave someone something to talk about.

When was the last time one of your people talked about what you do? Do they tell a story about you? Does something magical happen when they're sitting in the waiting room? Do they get things occurring because you know their birthday and their kids' birthdays? Do you engage with them in a way they want to be engaged with, not the way you want to engage with them? None of this stuff I'm talking about is a bonus tactic to help you build your business. If you do that, you will fail. What I am arguing is just as Little Miss Matched had to reinvent everything they did so that 12-year-olds would decide to talk about it, so do you.

If you want executives at the country club to talk about the policies you're selling them, you better sell them something other than the standard policy from Chubb. Because if it's the standard policy from Chubb, someone else can sell it to him, too. Right? You shouldn't have topless brokers (maybe you should), but the point is you need to do something where there's a value-add that's remarkable, that is amazing, that Google will find and highlight. It's not a stunt and it's not a gimmick. It's what we're demanding today.

I want to encourage everyone here to go to a site called [mint.com](http://mint.com) because Mint which just got bought by Intuit for millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars connects people to one another. There are other people in your zip code who are spending one-tenth as much as you are on this kind of expense and more on this kind of expense. You want to see what they're doing? And people learn from each other. Everyone who uses Mint tell other people about Mint. So Mint grows with no advertising. They grow like this, doubling in size regularly because they figured out how to connect and lead and organize a group of people who want to be led.

So to wrap up before questions, I just want to say this: A lot of people I grew up with, a lot of people who are my friends, now do what you do for a living. They have the trust of people who matter, the money of people who matter, and information and access to information about the things we think are really important. And all of them are community based, all of them are local. What your community is asking of you, demanding of you is for you to participate. Participate at a level that makes you uncomfortable. Connect with people, change them, make a difference. I really appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Q. A two-part question. The first part, did you think very much before sticking that toy on your head? Because I don't think before I can oftentimes and now you've taught me what consequences can occur. Second part, I think that what you're saying in so many examples like mint.com is, I know I myself am looking for service. I'm looking for value for my money. Can you amplify on that, please?

A. The first question is I'm really bad about thinking about it the first time, but every time I screw up, I don't screw up the second time. So that's my lesson from the suction cup thing. The second one is this, if you are under price pressure, if people say I'm leaving because you cost too much. It means you're selling the wrong thing. Because, if you were selling a commodity, of course you cost too much. Someone will always be able to sell a commodity cheaper than you can. What you need to sell is something so unique, so extraordinary and so remarkable that people will go out of their way to buy it and talk about it. If all you've got is commodities, that's your fault. You decided to be in the commodity business, get out of it. Take the nugget of what you sell and put stuff around it.

I can buy a hamburger, a commodity hamburger, at McDonald's for \$1.49 or I can go to DB Bistro Moderne in New York City and pay \$19. What's the \$19 for? Two dollars for the hamburger and \$17 for the place to eat it in. There's no law that says you guys can't take what you've got and provide such an extraordinary level of connection and service around it, that no one will ever challenge you on the price because they will be so eager to join your tribe, so eager to connect with you and the people around you. That's the opportunity. What the net did was it amplified that need we've always had and it allows us to find the people who do the extraordinary stuff so much faster.

Q. My first question is we have a generation gap, people under 50/people over 50. How do we reach people over 50 who are basically not so internet savvy? What's your feedback on that? Second question is 10 years ago I attended a conference and everybody was pushing: "You should be connected. You should have internet. You should have e-mail." For the past two days all we've been hearing is "Don't use your internet. Throw your BlackBerry" and so forth, because there's an overflow of information. How can you break through this?

Q. Great questions. First one, I'm 49, my dad is 70-something so I don't know which side of the 50-year-old line I'm on. I don't think it's fair to say it's totally based on age. It is certainly based on attitude. At my dad's factory in Buffalo, he bought a \$1 million laser cutter and uses the laser cutter to totally revolutionize the way he makes his stuff. It's about an attitude. You can make the decision that you want to sell to people who are on one side of the attitude or the other side of the attitude. You should just pick and then focus on that group.

In answer to your question about getting offline and throwing things out: The reason people are telling you that is because you're boring. You shouldn't have a Facebook page, because no one wants to be your friend. You shouldn't be on Twitter, because no one wants to hear what you have to say. My mission is to get you to decide first to do something remarkable. Once you do something remarkable, you'll find hundreds of reasons to go online, hundreds of reasons to

connect. There are artists who now have waiting lists for their work. They are oil painters, but the oil painting is so compelling that it's fueled by what's going on online. So my job is to take you back to square one and say, guess what, there are two forks in the road now. You can do what you're doing and sell to people who are disconnected, or you can do something really interesting, engaging and remarkable and there are a huge growing number of people who can't wait to hear from you.

Q. I get your message: Price is an issue only in the absence of value. In this value creation, we are all engaged in selling an intangible product. Besides doing customer appreciation events and things like that, what would you suggest we do?

A. I'll give you a couple examples. If I owned a real estate firm in a small town, I would kick the agents out of the office and take half my office space and turn it into a meeting room. I would let every community group have meetings there for free every day, all day in my office. Because I'd become the center of the community. If I try to put the local newspaper out of business by doing my own local e-mail gazette with sports teams' scores and what's going on in the school and everything else, if I become the center of the neighborhood and I get really good at it, not a little hobby but I do it a lot, aren't I going to get every listing in town? Or if I'm trying to sell super high-value life insurance, who wants to buy super high value life insurance? What other things do they need? Maybe I'm the guy who can get them into the Pritikin Center or I'm the guy who once a year runs a two-week seminar for the 12 other people who want this and together they as a group lose 30 pounds each. They buy the insurance just so they can come to this spa experience not the other way around. Customer appreciation day doesn't work because I don't want my insurance broker to appreciate me. What I want are things that make my life better and if I have to buy insurance to get it, I'm in.

Q. You mentioned the personal power that every critic now has on the internet. They can do anything and say anything. That, of course, can come with lots of abuse. In other words, when you put that thing on your head, you really didn't mean for anything to happen. So the question that something could happen to any of us these days, how do you deal with that red spot afterwards? In other words, what happens if you do get bashed on the internet or anything like that? Has nothing to do with your work, something that made someone in the community mad -- what do you do with that?

A. Well the first answer is baseball cap. Always keep a baseball cap handy. But the second answer is this: The answer to bad speech is not censorship. The answer to bad speech is more good speech. So Google will find the nasty things someone said about you. When they type your name in, the nasty thing will show up. But, if you're busy doing good things, it's not going to stay there for long. What happens is the nasty thing moves down, because it gets dated and your fans start speaking up, especially if you give them a place to speak up. If you start the community bulletin board for everyone in your town and they'll all busy posting back and forth and talking about this and talking about that, the more positive stuff that gets added to the pile, the more you are invulnerable to the bad actor who wants to take you down.

Q. I have a very simple question. I just want your thoughts on what kind of professional internet marketing techniques can we use like LinkedIn, Facebook. There are so many out there and

when we try to approach, which one from your experience would work the best for our industry and the people in our profession. There's just so much. And if we want to create a blog, how do we create a blog, where do we go.

A. It's not a simple question, though. If you said how should I go on vacation, should I take a plane, a car or a boat? I really need to know where you want to go, Cleveland or Tahiti. Because it's two different answers, right? So LinkedIn is this interesting tool that's basically a business card collector. The question I would ask somebody is: If I said to you I'm friends with your cousin Mary's sister-in-law, can I take you out for lunch, would you say yes? Just because I have your name doesn't mean I have permission to talk to you. The challenge of online networking, of having lot of (I've got to use air quotes) friends online is they're not really your friends. They're hardly even friendlies. They're just sort of people who are touched by you one bit away. That doesn't sell insurance. It doesn't even build friendships. What it does is give you a view of your Rolodex, which is nothing bad, but it's not enough.

What I want to know is what are you trying to do? If you said to me, "Seth, I want 100 of the high-risk, post-operation cancer patients in my town to meet each other," well there's a good tool for that. That's a different tool than you would use if you were trying to organize people who have Miniature Schnauzers, which is a totally different tool than if you have something to say or rant every day so that you can just get all the NRA members in your town to sign up for insurance with you. Each one of those goals will have different tactics. And the mistake your industry makes, like lots of industries, is that show me the tactics, I'll figure out what I want to do. No, because we can read it in your heart.

What I want to know, like Nathan Winograd did, Nathan Winograd looked at 4 million dead dogs and cats and he said this will not stand (he wanted to make something change): What change do you want to make? Selling more insurance is not the answer, because I don't care. But, if you want to make a change, that I care about. I'll find you and I'll connect with you.

Q. Followup question. My main objective is my local market is primarily south Florida. I work in that community. We, as a firm, have a very unique process that's very different from a lot of the advisory groups. I want to connect to a group of community people, high net worth physicians and what would be the best way to connect to the local market that I work in, the high net worth business owners and physicians.

A. If I think about what does a physician want? A physician does not want another visit from a sales rep. A physician does not want you to send him a desk calendar either. What does a physician want? Well, they want more patients. They want to meet other physicians. They want to increase their standing among other physicians and have their reputation go up. So the question is, if you were charged with doing one of those things for no money, could you? Could you put together a publication that profiled the best physicians in your area, whether or not they were your customers? Could you put together an event where you invited 50 physicians to go to seven Cuban restaurants and they could vote as to which one the best one would be and you publish the answers in the *Miami Herald*? Could you do something with a local retirement home where you create a lecture series where these physicians go and give speeches. If you didn't worry about selling insurance, all you were trying to do was build a tribe of physicians, what

would you do? Because, it turns out, if you're doing all those things, one day the physicians are going to say, "You know what, that guy, if I get on his good side I'll move up. I'll get more speaking engagements. I'll get to sit at the front of the bus. I'll get invited more often. How am I going to get on his good side? Oh wait, I trust him. I've known him for a while. I need insurance anyway. I'll buy it from him." You got the gig because you were the leader of the tribe, not because you were constantly needling them. You've got to buy from me or I'm going to go away. When you become part of the community, if you're really part of the community, you're doing it because you want to lead, not because you want to sell something. And what we see on the internet over and over again, because the connections can be really tight, is if you can build that community, they will take care of you.

Q. We all deal with compliance departments and not very successfully. Do you have some other resources you could recommend for viral marketing? This is a new framework of thinking and we have to do it within conjunction with compliance and yet we have to be creative at the same time.

A. I have a couple of answers. When I talk to the pharmaceutical industries, they love to yell about the FDA, they love to complain about the FDA. They say of course we're boring, the FDA won't let us be interesting. Except when I tell this to my friend who's an assistant commissioner at the FDA, he rolls his eyes because the FDA doesn't care whether they're interesting or not. They just want them to be truthful. The answer is not to go anywhere near stuff that makes the compliance department uncomfortable. Only someone who loves insurance cares enough to want to mess with that part. You need to go as far away from insurance as you can if you want people to actually talk about you. Because guess what, no one talks about insurance. What we talk about is: "My house burned down. I couldn't believe it. The broker drove all the way from Long Island to help me clean up." What we talk about is, "I couldn't believe it. We were in the hospital. We weren't covered, but they felt really badly and, out of their own pocket, they sent us a case of oranges. I don't know what it is. It's stuff you do because you care. That's what we talk about because we're humans.

Miss South Carolina goes on that stupid video where she can't even answer a question and she's babbling. It's been seen 31 million times. Why? Because we like to laugh at other people. But right next to it is a video some insurance broker made explaining the difference between whole life and partial life and half life and no one is going to watch it. Because we don't care. What we care about are people and the way we interact with other people. So if compliance wants you to stay away from something, stay away from it. We'll do viral easy when you invent something that's viral. Thank you very much. Enjoy the rest of the day. I really appreciate it.

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**Seth Godin** writes the most popular marketing blog in the world and is the author of 10 books that have changed the way people think about marketing, change and work. His books have been translated into more than 20 languages, and his eBooks are among the most popular ever published. Godin's latest book, "Tribes," is a nationwide bestseller, and the *Miami Herald* listed it among the best business books of 2008. Godin was founder and chief executive officer of Yoyodyne, the industry's leading interactive direct marketing company, which Yahoo! acquired in 1998. Godin worked as vice president of direct marketing at Yahoo! before leaving to become a full-time speaker, writer and blogger. He was called "the ultimate entrepreneur for the

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