Morgan’s Top 5 Communication Trends and Predictions for 2012

By NICK MORGAN

This year is already shaping up to be a fabulous year for communications mavens. We have the quadrennial follies of the American presidential election. We have Europe flailing its way through a debt crisis, with the heat of words rather than the light of action likely to keep us entertained for months. We have the infection of democracy spreading from the Arab world to Russia and perhaps even China. With all this going on, and lots more no one can anticipate, what are the communications trends for 2012?

1. The public discourse is only going to get uglier. Thanks to the aforementioned political season, Republicans are going to go even more negative, and the Democrats even whinier. The US, just like Russia, the Arab world, and the Middle East, desperately needs statesmen and women who are willing to reach past invective and extremism to compromise and practical solutions to real problems. But it won’t happen this year.

2. If you can’t say it in a video, don’t bother. I’ve been predicting the transition from a print-based culture to an image-based culture for some time now. In 2012, even the most troglodyte of communicators will realize that we’re no longer primarily reachable via the news release, the headline, and the story. Now it’s the 1-minute video spot that holds sway. YouTube has won. Even Twitter is going to go visual. You’ll see.

3. If you can’t say it in 8 seconds, don’t bother. The other trend I’ve been talking about for a couple of years might be called the short-attention-
span effect. We are so over-stimulated and the demands on our attentions so many that you’ve got to make it short or our eyes cross and you lose us. The interesting exception to this rule is the Harry Potter Variant– if you can provide us an escape through immersion into someplace that we prefer, you’ve got us. In tough times, escape keeps looking better and better. But if you’re not providing epic escape into better worlds, keep your message short. Shorter than you can imagine. Shorter than you can possibly believe. No, even shorter than you’re thinking right now.

4. **Facts don’t matter anymore; stories do.** As a storyteller, I love the ascendancy of the story as more and more people recognize that they have to tell them in order to really engage their audiences. As a *responsible* storyteller, I’m a little worried about the vanishing regard for truth, especially in our public servants. For example, illegal immigration is way, way down since 2008, but you wouldn’t know it from our politicians who continue to beat that dead horse. We’ve got real problems, people – we shouldn’t keep attacking the mythical ones!

5. **Finally, 2012 is the year that hope won’t die and anger won’t triumph.** As angry as people are, they won’t stay angry forever. And as negative as the mood seems right now – especially in America – it won’t stay negative forever. I’m going to go out on a limb here and say that come spring 2012, we’ll begin to see the tiny green shoots of the hope plant growing once again. It’s part of the natural yin and yang of national mood. It never stays the same, and it has been really, really negative for some time now.

So welcome to 2012. And remember that no matter what the year, authenticity, integrity, and transparency still make for great communications every time. Here’s to your renaissance, growth, break out, or whatever you’re hoping for this year.