

In this day and age of blogs, aggregation sites, personal recommendation sites, link publishing, twitter and more, its not unusual to get a news alert email, or to wake up and google a person, place or thing and find hundreds of references originated in just the past 24 hours. Does it matter ? **Could something be published hundreds, if not thousands of times on the net and be read by no one ? Fewer than 100 people ? Fewer than 100 people that you care about ? The answer is yes.**

When should you care if something is published on the net about you, your company, or someone you care about ? The answer is not often, and only when it comes from a “professional outtie”

Whats an “Outtie” ? An Outtie is someone who publishes on the web.

There are two kinds of “Outties”. Those that attempt to publish in a limited number of locations to a maximum number of readers or listeners, with a reasonable expectation of building a following. They are the professional Outties.

The 2nd type are the amateur outties. Those that attempt to publish in as many places as possible hoping they are “discovered”. They publish in the comments section of a newspaper. They produce videos and response videos. They comment on blogs. They may write a blog. They post comments on facebook and myspace. They may tweet and often reply to other people’s tweets. They may call talk radio stations. They may send anonymous or even signed emails to people they don’t know. They forward emails. They post comments on aggregation sites like Digg or Hacker News. Some use their writings to brand themselves. Others had behind anonymity and publish in volume to try to amplify a message. Many engage in “sockpuppetry” and publish anonymously under any number of “handles” on blogs, forums, editorial boards, twitter and email. Whereever there is a platform, the “Amateur Outties” will search it out and write and speak on it. Even worse, some will automate the entire thing and escalate the volume to enormous levels.

The “Innies” on the otherhand are passive consumers of web writings. They are traditional media consumers, where the media, regardless of platform is coming one way to them. They only very rarely respond in public to the information they consume. They read , watch and listen to the Professional Outties. They ignore the amateur outties.

Why does this matter ? Because the Amateur Outties may be creating most of the volume for blogs, tweets, recommendation and news sites on the internet.

What got me thinking about this was after talking to some people in the businessworld that were getting upset about things that were being written about them. They were sending me links to blogs. They sent me a link to something posted on some newspaper sites. They were sending me cut and pastes of tweets. They were sending me links to comments. They were upset because in their mind they were under attack and an issue they were addressing had become “a huge media debacle”.

I tried to explain to them that the “amateur outties” really had no impact on 99.99pct of the population. That because its on the net, even if a newspaper puts it on their site, doesn’t mean more than 100 people had seen it or cared about what they read. I had to repeat to them over and over, that even if something is tweeted and retweeted. If its published on 200 blogs. If its on some newspaper sites, it probably has no impact.

How could that be ? The first step was to click through from tweets to the home pages of the tweeters and show them that most had under 20 followers and then show them that it looked like some of the followers linked back to accounts that looked like they were set up by the same person. In otherwords they were following and retweeting themselves to make it look like they were important. The same held true with blogs. I would use some different webstats sites to show they werent in the top several hundred thousand websites and to notice that there were zero comments on the blog and no original sites linked to the blog. Then there were the newspaper sites. I couldnt show them the specific amount of traffic for a given article, but I could show the lack of a single comment . That for any articles for which there was probably more than a couple hundred readers , there would be at least a single comment. If the “amateur outties” didnt know or care about your issue, then the innies/the rest of the world, didnt either.

It soon became clear to them that vast majority of what is written on the web goes unread and even that which is read, is quickly forgotten. That even when something is heavily commented on, it is usually just an onslaught by the “amateur outties”.

Fragmentation applies to 100pct of media. We have gotten to the point where it is so easy to publish to the web, that most of it is ignored. When it is not ignored and it garners attention, the attention is usually from those people, the amateur outties, whose only goal is to create volume on the web in hopes of being noticed.

Thats not to say there are no sites that people consume and pay attention to. There obviously are. Thats where the “professional outties” come in. They are branded. They have an identity that usually extends beyond the net. They are able to make a living publishing, even if its not much of one. They are the sites that people consume and may possibly remember.

The moral of the story is that on the internet, volume is not engagement . Traffic is not reach. When you see things written about a person, place or thing you care about, whether its positive or negative, take a very deep breath before thinking that the story means anything to anyone but you.