

I'm going to make this short and sweet. In the year 2011, I'm not sure I have a need for beat writers from ESPN.com, Yahoo, or any website for that matter to ever be in our locker room before or after a game. I think we have finally reached a point where not only can we communicate any and all factual information from our players and team directly to our fans and customers as effectively as any big sports website, but I think we have also reached a point where our interests are no longer aligned. I think those websites have become the equivalent of paparazzi rather than reporters.

Have you ever watched TMZ where they catch someone walking down the street and ask questions like "are you upset about your divorce ?" or "Who is better, Kobe or Babe Ruth". You know the type of questions that make the recipient look at the person asking and either roll their eyes or wonder why that person is even there. Those are the type of questions asked in locker rooms today. They are asked not for some journalistic purpose, but as a traffic generating opportunity.

Do we really need to ask Dwight Howard and Deron Williams where they think they will be going in TWO YEARS ? Do we need to ask players "are you upset about the loss ?"

There is never a loss of words or lack of depth in questions asked in the locker room after a game. Which got me thinking. Why are they there ? This isnt 1983. This isnt 2000. In the year 2011, we are in a completely different media landscape. So let's take inventory of the platforms in the locker room

Newspaper: Newspaper has to be in the room. I know this is counter intuitive to some, but it is a fact. Why ? Because there is a wealthy segment of my customer base that does not and will not go online to find out information about the Mavs. If I don't have a **PRINT** beat writer and /or **PRINT** columnist showing up and writing about the Mavs, both sides lose. So congrats Eddie, DP and friends. You are safe to dance another weekend. If you work for the local paper and only publish online...you could still be in the bottom two.

TV: The same logic that applies to newspapers, applies to TV. They own a segment of the population that doesn't always read the sports section, but will turn on the TV to catch up. It may be the local news broadcast for some. It may be ESPN. In any event, they get their news the old fashioned way, they find the remote. Unfortunately for the Mavs, we don't always have someone from the local news or espn in the locker room with a camera. They pick and choose when they think they should be there to get original footage, or to just pull highlights or other shared footage and add some voice over. We like anything that gets us on TV to reach our fans for whom TV is their primary source of Mavs info. TV, you are safe to dance another week. Producers of internet video on TV network/station websites... Your fate is not yet known. You are not at the top of the food chain.

Internet Reporters: Reporters whose primary job is to write for an internet site typically fall into two categories. Paid and unpaid. Unpaid writers typically do it as a labor of love and IMHO far exceed the influence and impact of their paid counterparts. Sure there are many who just rant and rave, but enough realize that if they work hard and provide support for their writing, they may just get noticed by a big website who will pay them to write. If you can back up what you say with well thought out and in depth analysis, you know the things that some people used to call journalism, you are welcome in the locker room

The internet reporters who get paid, IMHO, are to the Mavs and any sports team, the least valuable of all media. I'm a firm believer that their interests are not only not aligned with sports teams like the Mavs, but in fact are diametrically opposed. They tend to look at the number of page views they get for any article as "their ratings". More is better. Which in turn leads them to gear their work towards generating more pageviews.

Now at this point traditional wisdom might say "well if its about the Mavs and its generating pageviews, then it must be something that Mavs fans are interested in, so it must be a good thing. Its the equivalent of one of the dumbest sayings of all time "all press is good press". All press is not good press for a sports team.

Internet writers will tell you, transaction rumors generate the most traffic. From a sports team perspective, this is not good. Why ? Because internet writers have so little creativity and originality. Any idiot can start a rumor, at which point the writer says (and to be fair, its not just internet writers who ask, but its 99pct internet writers who publish), "I hate to ask this but the rumor is out there that you are being traded to the pismo beach panthers. Can you comment". From that point until the trade deadline, the same question in some form is asked over and over and over again of everyone in the organization. The hope isn't that someone will say "yes its true". The hope is that it will elicit a comment that is headline worthy. "George Mikan said he would happily consider a trade to Pismo" And on it goes and goes and goes. The result is that the team is often negatively impacted. Players get distracted. Team personnel get distracted and spend too much time dealing with the rumors. Its a negative for any team.

Of course rumors wont go away if a writer doesn't have access, but we can reduce the stress of a player having a mike shoved in his face and asked the same question day after day. We also don't have to legitimize the writer by giving them access to the locker room. We are better served making them the equivalent of the random "Maryslittlesportsblog.com" written by a 13 year old.

Right behind trades ? Negative Headline Trolls. Talking to the Mavs internet writers, you would think we were out of the playoff race and had lost 60 or more games. Every loss is a catastrophe of epic proportions. It is as if every other team in the league is winning every game. Only the Mavs lose games. Again, we can't stop anyone from writing what they want. Nor do we expect every article to be positive. If you want to disagree 100pct of the time and you back it up with facts. More power to you. But instead we get the equivalent of "Because I said so" as the depth of analysis. As one writer told me, his opinion counts for more because he is informed And he considers himself informed because he has access to the organization. I can fix that.

I'm not saying that all questions and columns are bad. But it is much, much harder to find the good. It is rare for me to encounter an article/post on one of the sites and think to myself "that is really good for us". And that is from a franchise that has won 50 or more games for more than a decade. I can't imagine how other teams feel.

So why do we let them in the door ? What value do they serve to the Mavs ? Its not like they are journalists. They are Fox News/MSNBC for sports. They may be popular, for now, but whatever benefit they served 4 or more years ago seems to have quickly disappeared.

Unlike TV and Newspaper, I have access to reach their online audience. Not only do I have access, but so does each of my players through their own twitter and facebook accounts. Why not just use twitter, Facebook fan pages, Mavs.com and or our own media platforms to communicate with online Mavs customers and fans ? How many customers and prospects could we possibly be missing by losing internet writers ? And could we just spend money to reach whatever of their audience we don't currently cover ?

By competing with them as an information source, can we pre empt their negativity with information that does a better job of selling the Mavs ?

By leaving them out of the locker room and organization, do we reduce their ability to have a negative impact on players ?

The last few years have brought about a lot of change in how people publish and receive information . It might just be time to change how teams communicate as well

What do you think ?