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WEB CHAT ROOMS: Marketing Online

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If you are like most business people, the only chat rooms you are familiar with are the ones your teenagers refer to. So what is a Web chat room? Web chat rooms are literally spaces on the Internet where people can “meet” to discuss topics of mutual interest. Visitors log into a chat room online, post their questions to a moderator, and then the “guest star” types answers to the questions. The major disadvantage of chat rooms is that the participants need to schedule to meet at a particular time.

B2B marketing consultant Oveda Hancock of the Adevo Group has considerable experience with B2B Web chats and says they are

easy to run. Further, they are great places to generate warm sales leads and invaluable product user information. She offers the following tips for creating effective B2B marketing chats.

Basic Strategy—Chats are a good way to open conversations, educate a marketplace and keep sales leads warm. Don't expect to close deals with them. Your “guest star” should be an expert that prospects or clients want to interact with, such as an outside analyst or a techie at your own firm. Sales people are verboten.

Scheduling—Schedule a chat to last 30, 45 or 60 minutes. Hancock says the best days of the week are Tuesday-Thursday, and to try 2:30 PM. Mornings need to be free to be productive and at 2 PM people are just trickling back from lunch. So 2:30 enables people to re-group after lunch.

Getting Attendance—Market your chat through the media that works best for you (e.g., e-mail, telemarketing and direct mail). Hancock suggests sending the offer twice to your best list and to offer an incentive to get the highest response. Further, high-level execs prefer useful white papers featuring information that can improve the bottom line while influencers (e.g., mid-level techies) like concrete gifts such as a leather card case.

The Chat Itself—Allow attendees to choose whether they'd like to be anonymous or not, and let everyone know at the start of the chat that they will receive a transcript afterwards. This allows them to relax and participate, rather than worry about taking notes. Also, inform people that all pertinent questions will be answered, even if there's not enough time during the chat itself.

Post-Chat Follow Up—Hancock highly recommends you send every participant a thank you note after the chat. And, instead of sending the transcript as-is, bear in mind your company's professionalism will be judged by it. So, have a grammatical expert clean up punctuation, spelling and any incorrect URLs first. Plus, add in explanations for any acronyms or jargon.

Vendors: Hancock recommends five service providers who can power your chat:

- <http://www.conferencecallexperts.com>
- <http://www.imeet.com>
- <http://www.innovia.com>
- <http://www.peakpresentations.com>
- <http://www.placeware.com> ◇

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The Myths of GOOD HARD WORK

One of our own was honored this spring by being selected as the Spring 2002 Biola University a two-day period entitled “The Myths of Good Hard Work: Vocation and Destiny in the 21st C” provided below.

Work is probably the dimension of our life which absorbs the most time and energy, and for many makes the strongest psychological impact. Many Christians today find that what they do for a living takes an increasing amount of their attention. For some there is almost too much meaning in the job.

Work is discussed frequently in Scripture and historically the church has had much to say about this significant dimension of life. However, in this generation those insights have been largely ignored. One result is that many Christians suffer from a distorted view of their work and of God's relation to this part of their life, as expressed in two widespread myths.

Myth 1: Some Professions Are Better Than Others

Many Christians apologize when they tell you what they do for a living. They are “only” a forensic chemist or an accountant, a manager or clerk, not a pastor or a missionary or employee of a Christian organization. Many genuinely think that in the eyes of God there is a value hierarchy of occupations, specifically that vocational ministry—“full-time Christian work”—is more spiritual and more valued by God than secular occupations.* For those in secular occupations, the “helping” ones such as medicine or teaching, or those connected to the land or to crafts are considered more spiritual, more valued by God, than “money making” occupations such as being a real estate developer, a stock broker, or running a restaurant, which are fit only for second-class Christians. The 80% of Christians who work in for-profit businesses are too often left without a sense of vocation or purposefulness in their work life, which becomes either a necessary evil, a way to mark time until they can do ministry, or a fulfilling diversion largely cut off from their church and home life.

* Many others would deny this idea if it were presented to them in this way, but accept it by their actions and statements. For example, a church might have a goal of sending out 10 people into “full-time Christian ministry” in the next year, which implies that only those people are ministering full-time as Christians, and the rest are not.

Norm Geisler has called this stress on a division between clergy and laity and on the unsuitability of Christians occupying their mind with trade the most prevalent heresy among evangelicals today. He calls it the Two-World View heresy, which argues that a Christian's life is in compartments; his or her work world is separate from the church and ministry world and the latter compartment is the one that God really cares about. The consequence of thinking this way results in two errors that deprive many Christians of meaning in the large portion of their life given to work. These are:

- God is removed from our secular work and doesn't care much about it. Further, our secular work has no spiritual meaning and we can do what we like in this compartment of life.
- What God really does care about is the work we do in the church and ministry compartments of our life. Secular work cuts into time that might otherwise be spent serving God and does not further the Kingdom of God.

The Two-World View has left the contemporary evangelical church with a largely unperceived prejudice against secular work and workers that blinds it to the opportunities for evangelism in that area. (For example, see the “Business as Mission” article in the Jan/Feb issue of *The Mentor*). The real tragedy is that it has left individual Christians floundering in their daily activities rather than seeking the glory of God in completing them.

Myth 2: Hard Work Is Good In And Of Itself

Though it is commonly thought that the Puritans were a major influence upon our current attitudes toward work, this view is largely a caricature. Faced with the practical need to pursue a living in a society that was rapidly moving away from the ideas of commercial activity based on moral conduct, the Puritans created a systematic theology of work that may prove helpful for us as well. Specifically, they evidenced four predominate convictions about work, which are outlined to the right (see Leland Ryken for a complete discussion).

Christian Heritage Lecturer. Associate Professor Yvonne Smith presented a series of lectures over century.” Her treatise concerned the ways Christians distort the ideas of work. A brief excerpt is

- **The sacredness of all legitimate types of work.**

Like the Reformers the Puritans rejected the dichotomy between sacred and secular work. All honest work, they said, could be sacred to God, regardless of what the occupation was. If every part of life belonged to God it followed that God’s grace could be found in everything, even daily chores.

- **God’s calling to vocation.** A job was an arena for expressing love to one’s neighbor through service. Every Christian, said the Puritans, has a calling, often an occupation where God places him or her for the good of all. A man or woman should choose that employment which most honored God and benefited his or her neighbor. The Christian in any occupation should act as a steward, serving God as their boss.

- **The appropriate motives for work.** Economic benefits were not unimportant to the Puritans, but these were not to the major motivation for work. According to the Puritans, gaining wealth was not a proper motive for work. Nor should the Christian use work as a means for gratifying selfish ambition. Its purpose was not even to make a living for one’s family. Income was the by-product of work, not the goal. Rather, the goal was to show love and to create close integration between oneself, one’s God, and one’s neighbor. The appropriate rewards of work were spiritual and moral: glorifying God and benefiting society.

- **Moderation in work.** The Puritans scorned idleness and praised diligence and competence as honoring to God but they did not worship work. Rather, they strove to be moderate in all things, including time and attention spent on the job. This meant that the Christian was to work with zeal and skill, but not give his or her soul to work. Even a God-given calling was not to become an idol. Moderation in work, as in all things, brought glory to God and honored Him. (See J. I. Packer and Dorothy Sayers for more discussion.)

Where Does This Leave Us?

What does a theology of work have to say to the 21st century Christian? Based on this brief discussion, there are few principles that might be suggested.

- Any honest job can be worship. Any honest job can be a forum for vocation.
- God is interested in your work.
- Work is in relationship; you don’t have to do it alone.
- Yes, God does want you to have fun and have a life. ◇

Dr. Yvonne Smith is Associate Professor of Management and Organizational Behavior in Biola University's School of Business. She currently lives in Fullerton with her husband Dr. Virgil Smith and four computers, and attends Magnolia Baptist Church.

For Further Reading:

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On the MOVE!

Larry D. Strand

Dean of the School of Business

It's official: we are on the move to raise funds for a School of Business building. The University has placed this project in the priority list along with the expansion of the gym and the remodeling of the old Rose Library building. The theme chosen for the funding project is "A Place for Building Character."

The 30,000 square foot structure will be located at the main entrance to Biola (the former site of the president's house). In addition to 11 high-tech classrooms and 13 faculty offices there will be a cafe and outdoor patio for students, faculty and staff to build relationships.

Another significant step for the School is the launch of our new web site. We think it looks pretty good and invite you to take a few moments to browse the site and then give us your feedback. The address is www.biola.edu/mba.

Our search for two new faculty members has moved to the screening and initial interviews phase. The search seeks candidates with doctoral degrees in business, experience in teaching at both the undergraduate and MBA levels, research and scholarship potential, and the important commitment to Biblical integration.

These are exciting times for us and we are seeking God's wisdom and direction in all of the areas of impact. We continue to ask for, and be appreciative of, your prayers. ◇

"GO TO" WEB SITES

Companies today are very concerned about cyberterrorism and the security of their computers and digital assets. Respected experts say companies should create a response plan similar to an earthquake, blizzard or hurricane. To learn more, here are some web sites to help get started.

www.nipc.gov

Created by the FBI, it provides timely warnings of international threats, comprehensive analysis and law enforcement investigation and response.

www.cert.org

Studies Internet security vulnerabilities, handles computer security incidents, publishes security alerts, researches long-term changes in networked systems, and develops information and training to help you improve security Web sites.

www.sans.org

A cooperative research and education organization of security professionals, auditors, system administrators, and network administrators who share the lessons they are learning and find solutions to the challenges they face.

www.gocsi.com

Specifically dedicated to serving and training the information, computer and network security professional.

www.telenisus.com

Free tips on preventing security problems and cyberterrorism attacks.

www.ists.dartmouth.edu/ISTS/counterterrorism/cyber_attacks.htm

Report provides a detailed, fact-based assessment and predicts cyberattacks during the U.S. war on terrorism. ◇

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