

## The World Is Flat, Again

D. J. Capobianco (COM'10) puts social media to work for business

WHEN D. J. CAPOBIANCO signed up for Facebook and Twitter as a homework assignment a few years ago, he had no way of knowing his early expertise would lead to a job at a big advertising firm before he'd even graduated.

Capobianco (COM'10) remembers using Twitter back in 2008, well before it became popular to make 140-character pronouncements. "I told my friends about the different stuff that's big now, like Twitter or Foursquare, and they thought it was so silly," he says. "Now everyone's using them."

Capobianco majored in communications studies and completed several internships that taught him how to use social media in the professional world. He interned at the public relations and marketing firm Schneider Associates, whose clients included Baskin-Robbins, Necco, and First Act Guitars, and he was chosen from more than 600 applicants to intern at Mullen, a national advertising firm with headquarters in Boston. At the end of that internship, he was asked to continue as a part-time social media specialist during the school year.

There, he worked on the company's social media efforts while juggling a full course load and mentoring local BU alumni on how to use social media in their businesses.

"The idea of communicating briefly, even in 140 characters like in Twitter, has trained us to take less time to grab people's attention," Capobianco says. "It helps you network and get the conversation going faster. And it's great when we can use social media to make money or spread the word about great causes."

Capobianco used metrics to track how many people saw his tweets. He also tried to learn what was being said about his clients and if they had reached new customers, and he worked to stay on top of news that might affect them.

In the case of Timberland, one of Capobianco's clients at Mullen and a company that bills itself as environmentally conscious, Capobianco's team followed tweets having to do with new environmental regulations, such as news from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Copenhagen Conference. "When the Copenhagen Conference was going on," he says, "Timberland sent people over to film podcasts and then linked to those in the Twitter feed."

Capobianco believes that social media can also help company-client relations. If he saw that a customer had tweeted about a shipping problem with one of his clients, for instance, he would try to remedy the situation in seconds.

"It's appropriate to send a direct message saying that you'll try and help, and then show it to the people who can actually do something," he explains. "People might

also get excited when they get a new pair of shoes, so I might tweet them saying we're excited that they're excited. They feel cool knowing the company cares."

One of the more perplexing parts of his job was figuring out how frequently to reach out before people are turned off and tune out.

"If you're a sporting company, figure out if your audience wants tips about the outdoors or other people's experiences," he says. "It's fun and a challenge to figure out how to respond. You have to be flexible, and you have to make sure you have the ability to respond right away."

He also has a personal Twitter account (@djcap),

Staying ahead of the social media curve led D. J. Capobianco to a job at a national advertising firm even before he'd graduated.



MELODY KOMYEROV

where he tweets approximately twelve times a day and has more than 2,000 followers.

With the help of social media sites such as Foursquare and LinkedIn, Capobianco recently landed a job as an assistant digital strategist at the communications company Hill Holliday.

And he continues to tap programs that many people aren't familiar with, such as Delicious, which allows users to create bookmarks of their favorite Web sites to share with friends, as well as Google Wave, WordPress blogs, and Yelp.

"Social media has made the world flat," Capobianco says. "It's added to the trend of hyperlocal news. Instead of interplanetary mass media, you can find the news of your block. And love it or not, I think social media has really helped to bring people together." AMY LASKOWSKI