



"Mr. Hyde, I think?"

**Mr. Hyde shrank back with a hissing intake of the breath. But his fear was only momentary; and though he did not look the lawyer in the face, he answered coolly enough: "That is my name. What do you want?"**

"I see you are going in," returned the lawyer. "I am an old friend of Dr. Jekyll's—Mr. Utterson of Gaunt Street—you must have heard of my name; and meeting you so conveniently, I thought you might admit me."

"You will not find Dr. Jekyll; he is from home," replied Mr. Hyde.

***The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson, 1850-1894***

# The Social Media Jekyll & Hyde Principle

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## Why split-personalities online are both a threat and an opportunity for marketers

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Ask yourself. How hard would it be to maintain two different personalities? To be Dr Jekyll by day and Mr Hyde by night? To be one kind of person in one situation, yet to revert another when talking to different people in another?

New research suggests this is happening already. If you are an established user of social media networks, you have your own Jekyll & Hyde. But there is nothing abnormal, or even worrying about this. The development of social media - and the people who use it - has reached a point where we are doing this more and there is an excellent reason for it.

Some recent figures by Pew Research shows that people are increasingly fragmenting their social networking experience - a majority of those who use social networking sites (52%) say they have two or more different profiles. That is up from 42% who had multiple profiles in May 2008.

A small increase, but indicative of a general principle that we need to understand as marketers if we want to use social media effectively to target potential customers.

## Simplicity v complexity

Like everything on social media, it all boils down to human nature.

When a complex or far-reaching new technology comes along, we tend to simplify it so we can understand it. Whether we are talking about the very first PC, the first use of the web or the first adoption of social media, it is the same. We start off simple, because otherwise we have no chance at all.

So, to start with, we take small, uncertain steps. We sign up to Facebook. We sign up to Twitter, but we're not sure where it's going, so we don't go too fast.

But here is the problem. We are not simple creatures. We are, by nature, enormously complex, and we lead complex lives. We are driven by sophisticated needs, ranging from the requirement for basic subsistence to our advanced social desires for fulfilment, belonging, esteem and so on. We are torn between emotional and rational considerations. Add to this the constant, churning complexity of the business demands made on the modern worker and we have something that is far from simple.

So we have a mismatch. Complex needs that have, so far, only been met with a simple, one-dimensional use of social media. The complexity we need, hopelessly out of kilter with the simplicity delivered by our initial grasp of social media.

But it is changing fast, and the increasing adoption of multiple online personalities is a symptom of this change. It shows we are learning fast because we realise that we want to do more.

***The complexity we need is hopelessly out of kilter with the simplicity delivered by our initial grasp of social media.***

## **Social media mirrors real life**

Let us not forget that social media platforms should not be seen as technologies, but as enablers. The interesting thing about them is not the advanced technology, but the advanced behaviour they enable.

And so, we need our social media platforms to reflect how we live our lives. And that means we need them to allow us to show complex behaviour patterns - which means being different things to different people. It may sound duplicitous, but it's what we do.

The point is that people have a need to say some things, in one way - then at other times they need to say other things in another way. We cannot fit everything we want to do into a single online persona - so, as we get more adept at managing our online profiles, we are increasingly deciding to maintain more than one.

## **The work-play divide**

The most obvious reason for this is the work-play divide. You work. You play. But often not at the same time, or in the same environment. And, crucially, it is often not the same 'you' who does it. Consider the introverted accountant with the amateur dramatics hobby, the quiet office girl who lets it all out on the dancefloor, the scary senior manager who transforms into family man every Friday night.

We know these hidden lives are there, because we have them ourselves. But while there are multiple personalities, there is only one Internet. The answer? Multiple profiles.

***You work. You play. But it is often not the same 'you' who does it***

## Meet Larry...

The best way to demonstrate the Jekyll & Hyde effect is to look at how a typical social media user might choose to behave in different social situations on the web.

On Twitter, Larry is necessarily brief, but also very informal. Light-hearted. Sociable. He can hide behind an avatar, he can adopt a handle instead of his real name. Half-anonymous, he feels protected and comments quickly, lightly and even controversially to a wide range of people he barely knows.



**crazy\_larry21**

**@melissamay Hey - check this out.  
The coolest thing! <http://bit.ly/32r5s>**

On LinkedIn we have different picture. Larry - I mean Lawrence - can no longer act so freely. Actually, he can - but he is driven by his perception of the LinkedIn environment [and by the restrictions of the platform] to present a different persona. His boss might be watching. He is expected to sound professional. He's on show and doesn't want to let anyone down. His avatar is replaced by a formal photograph. His punctuation even improves. Crazy\_larry has become Lawrence Smith.



**Lawrence Smith**

**I believe integrated marketing is a must-have  
in today's hyper-connected business society.  
Read my latest blog: [Connect And Survive](#).**

An interesting third example of Larry's online split personality can be seen in certain niche forums. Whether the niche interest is bird-watching, war gaming, or the example here, sports forums, Larry is free to revise his persona once more. He adopts a name that helps him fit in with the immediate peer group, and he talks informally once more, but via a personality that is guided by the environment around him.



**Red4Ever**

**How did we not win that game last night? Too  
defensive. Wrong formation. Getting tired of this.**

## The barbecue at the boss's house

As we become more familiar with social media, we are getting much better at this. But then, in real life, we are experts, having learnt the fine art of social duplicity from an early age.

The classic metaphor for this is to imagine you are attending a barbecue at your CEO's house. You are now straddling the gap between play and work. It's a leisure thing, but you're still on best behaviour. Yet we instinctively know what is the right thing to do and say, and what is not acceptable. We set our rules and we all try to play by them because we all need to belong.

But the Jekyll & Hyde principle applies not just to end users. If marketers want to use social media, they need to show similar flexibility and manage different personalities to suit each social milieu.

In effect, this is what marketers have been doing for years. It is audience segmentation. It is sub-branding. And it is fascinating that people are doing it themselves, without needing to attach any marketing theory. It is human behaviour at its most natural - and it is behaviour that need to be adopted by the brands themselves.

## ***If marketers want to use social media, they need to manage different personalities to suit each social milieu***

### **The branding parallel**

The principle of sub-branding or market segmentation is well-documented. In short, it is about separating different audiences in order to provide them with a more focused, and therefore more effective set of messages. From the audience segmentation point of view, it means dividing up a total audience into smaller groups that share common characteristics; from the brand angle, it means refining the personality of a brand that it might better suit that audience.

In a way this is what we need to do, but at a personality level that exists below the brand. This is subtly different to what brands have done before because they have always been able to communicate as corporate entities. But the whole nature of social media forces them to 'get human' and they now find themselves needing to communicate in ways that reflect the personality of the person they are talking to and the place where that conversation is happening.

On social media, this therefore means creating a number of different identities. But how do you decide on these identities?

## ***The whole nature of social media is forcing brands to 'get human'***

### **Meet JB Software...**

On Twitter, JB Software needs to talk to people like crazy\_larry21, not Lawrence Smith. The marketing team should be aware that he expects communication within the Twitter community to be less formal, more helpful, more instinctive, more personal. He does not expect corporate speak here, even though he would in other situations.



JB\_software

@crazy\_larry We've got distributors in Reading and Slough - see link here <http://bit.ly/32f5g>. Get back to me if any probs!

The LinkedIn environment requires not just a name and a photo, but a much more thoughtful approach. It is known as the place where people share business ideas, so companies have to be very sure of their choice of ambassador. In this case, JB himself represents the company, and he takes great care over his responses. They are polite, respectful, considered, but they lack the casual warmth of some other platforms.



**Jerry Barnyard**

I agree Larry - nice point. But aren't we just paying lip-service to the idea? Here's a good case study I read of a company that's really doing it.

In niche forums, there is once more the chance to adapt the company persona. Technical staff, for example, offering product support understand the environment they are working in, and behave accordingly. The identity chosen is an alias - ie a team name - which allows more than one person to use it.



**JBS\_troubleshooter**

It's usually a code conflict. Try deleting your cache and re-installing. If it doesn't work, get back to me.

A company can have many personalities online. They must all be sympathetic with the overall brand, but it is possible - in fact, it is increasingly expected - to act differently in different situations.

This point extends naturally to the content that companies distribute on the social web and the offers they make. Even though they may be talking to the same people about the same issue, they will need to do it very differently in different parts of the social media world.

Take for example, a company that wishes to use social media to communicate with potential customers about its environmentally responsible approach to business. To the various 'green business' forums on LinkedIn, it might start a debate on environmental business issues, by asking: "How important are green credentials to your supplier relationships". A thoughtful dialogue will follow, giving the company - or rather its representative - a chance to show off its strengths.

The same kind of outreach on Facebook, however, might be conducted very differently. The very same people who responded to the LinkedIn discussion, are less likely to engage in such conversations in the lightweight, highly social, highly leisure-oriented world of Facebook. This is a place where real friends [ie people you knew offline first] hang out, and people can be reluctant to 'put on their work hat' out of hours. So a more appropriate approach might be something like: "How Green Are You? Take our fun test and share it with your friends".

I have made some extreme assumptions, but this is only to illustrate a valid point. It's the same people we're talking to, but they exhibit different personalities in different places, and must therefore be spoken to in different ways.

## Speak to the whole person

In summary, we simply need to be aware of the fact that things - or rather people - are not what they always appear to be. If you are targeting a business prospect via social media, you will be more successful if you factor in the different ways that he or she may behave on different social platforms. As people become more able to manage their natural complexity, they will do so. You need to speak to the whole person in all their complex glory, not just the average in the middle.

We don't like being restrained and as our [different] personalities begin to show themselves on the web, marketers should perhaps give themselves a little more freedom to experiment in how they talk to them.

Social media is just one a number of areas where Base One is helping B2B brands to go beyond business as usual. If you'd like to chat about the issues raised in this whitepaper, or any other marketing and branding topics, we'd be delighted to hear from you.