**Book Study**

**Platform: Get Noticed in a Noisy World**

***by Michael Hyatt***

***Derrick L. Black***

**Houston Baptist University**

**EDAD 5319-20**

**Dr. Alysa Cozart**

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 Getting noticed and building a platform using social media as tools is the main thrust in this book by Michael Hyatt. Having been a successful author, book publisher, and CEO, Hyatt has seemingly mastered the art of using blogging, Facebook, and Twitter to promote and expand his personal platform and leading national brand. He highly endorses using social media to garner exposure and followers of your product or concepts. Since the Internet is universal and world-wide, the possibilities are endless in maximizing one’s voice in the world. Hyatt quoted William Shakespeare as saying, “All the world’s a stage.” Hyatt believes that this statement has never been truer as now. Quite literally, one’s voice can be heard around the world by using social media to push your cause or product, whatever that may be. The author likens this to a stage that’s crowded. It’s pretty much a lost cause if the spot light is not on you or if there is no one in the audience to hear you. Throughout the book, Hyatt gives key pointers on how to attract that audience and cause them to stay “with you through every line, every scene, every act.” (p. XV) With the “new” social media stage emerging, creating and maintaining a stage presence can be tricky and frustrating if one does not have the proper insight and knowledge base. Learning how to turn on the brightest spotlights so that you stand out from the crowd on this worldwide stage is Hyatt’s goal in writing *Platform*.

 The book is basically divided into five parts. They are: Part One: Start With Wow, Part Two: Prepare to Launch, Part Three: Build Your Home Base, Part Four: Expand Your Reach, and Part Five: Engage Your Tribe. Although Michael Hyatt believes that a platform provides visibility, amplification, and connection, he also believes that your platform success has to first start with creating a “WOW” factor for your audience. Before stepping onto the platform, Hyatt firmly believes that you have to first create a product that is compelling and unique in some way. After watching Steve Job’s 2007 keynote presentation from MacWorld, Hyatt says that he gained three insights. They were, 1. Create products you would personally use, 2. Create products that solve problems in unexpected ways, and 3. Create products that exceed your customer’s expectations. (p. 4-5) Do not settle for mediocrity is Hyatt’s message. As Hyatt states, “If you create outstanding products, everything else becomes much easier. If you don’t, then your attempts to build a platform is doomed to failure.” (p. 5) Hyatt encourages his readers to be adamant about greatness; be stubborn, speak up, and don’t settle for anything less than the original vision of your product. “Listen to your heart”, says Hyatt. After getting the product just the way you want it, then preparing to introduce it to your audience is the next step. He encourages his readers to take responsibility for their product. Make strategic plans for implementation, define your platform goals, surround yourself with a team, set up your branding tools like a website, email account, Twitter and Facebook accounts, secure raving reviews and endorsements, get a really good head shot taken of you, and develop an online media kit that includes things like contact information, product information, promotion information, interviewer resources, fan resources, and media reactions of your product. These are all things covered in detail in part two or the book. Part Three and Part Four of the book are really the technological “meaty” sections of the book where he describes how to incorporate blogging, Twitter, and websites into the desired platform to promote your product and what you have to say about it to create dialogue with your followers. The one thing that Hyatt reiterated over and over was the importance of making blogging and Twitter posts short and to the point. Keeping things short and simple rather than long and complex draws readers and followers to your work. He reinforces the concept of quality over quantity throughout the whole book. With the proliferation of social media and the whole concept of subscribers and followers, *tribe-building* is rapidly replacing the traditional concept of marketing. He spends the remainder of Part Four and Part Five describing, in detail, how to build your tribe and follower numbers. Also, he details how to engage your tribe. Some suggestions to generate more blog traffic includes writing content worth sharing, increasing blogging frequency, adhering to a consistent schedule, engaging in conversation, and making it easy to subscribe to your blog. Hyatt spends almost 30 pages on the importance and benefits of using Twitter as a means of connecting with family, friends, and followers. He says that Twitter can help create traffic for your blog or website. It also can help build your personal brand. The more that people hear your name and brand, the more they will become familiar with what you have to offer and what your brand represents. Because of the importance of Twitter, Hyatt explains, step-by-step, how to set up a Twitter account, adjust settings, set up your phone, learn the basic commands, follow family and friends, and start tweeting. The one thing that Hyatt highlights throughout the book is the idea of creating dialogue with your followers and tribe members. The “new” stage requires interaction with those that follow you on Twitter, Facebook, and your blog. You can’t just write a blog or a tweet without interacting with those that respond to you. Participation is a must. To not respond to comments from a blog posting is like not responding to someone who has just verbally asked you a question. It is considered rude and will, most likely, lead to probable unsubscriptions and decrease in followers and tribe members. Hyatt concludes with words of encouragement to his readers. In his last chapter of the book, he states, “All you have to do is take the first step. You’ll figure out the rest.” (p. 218) By taking that first step, one deals fear, doubt, and confusion a major blow. Hyatt encourages to not let fear of the unknown, of failure, fear of technology or the Internet, stop you from becoming a major voice on your “stage”.

 There are many who would disagree with Michael Hyatt’s position on the use of social media to create or enhance your visibility on the Internet stage. One of these individuals is **Denise Lee Yohn**, marketing writer for QSR. Although she agrees with many of Hyatt’s points, Yohn disagrees with his belief that traditional marketing is “dead’. Hyatt is an advocate for the tribe-building marketing design of social media. He deeply believes that social media has, quite literally, replaced traditional marketing by being able to reach so many more potential customers and followers to promote your brand and product. Yohn acknowledges the advantages of social media but also emphasizes a more balanced approach in using traditional marketing, such as direct mail, email, and advertising, along with the social media to reach maximum exposure. As she states, “Advertising, point-of-purchase materials, direct mail, e-mail, local marketing, and community relations are still important tools. A mix of these efforts and social media optimizes marketing reach, frequency, and engagement.” In addition, **Steve Carter**, senior partner of Apter Development, believes that social media devices could be a distraction to company productivity, thus being a threat to the welfare of the company culture. Although Hyatt does not directly address this issue of devices affecting the corporate workplace, he does support the use of Twitter and Facebook to grow your brand. He believes that as long as one sets boundaries in how they are used, then such use is beneficial for the brand. Carter states, “To put it plainly, the balance of probability is that the members of your corporate tribe are connecting with other tribes that have no particular use to your business. To put this even more plainly, they are wasting your corporate time.” Even **Ritchie Hunter**, blogger from eSocialMedia, agrees with the damaging effect that the social media can have on the company brand and culture. Hunter states, “…issues such as…damaging publications, including inadvertent disclosure of company confidential information, and the cost to the business of working time lost to social media are very real concerns.” These are concerns that Hyatt either disagrees with or avoids which gives the expression that it’s not really a concern of his.

 As I read the book by Hyatt, I began to evaluate my own personal feelings about the social media “phenomena” and this Internet community concept. My first instinctive reaction is that of uncomfortableness and distrust. I’ve always been a rather private person in spite of the fact that I grew up being a music performer; frequently performing in front of an audience. I’ve always felt more comfortable alone than in a crowd. As I contemplate and plan my return to the music and singing stage, I realize the marketing landscaping has changed, as Hyatt has made very clear in his book. Am I ready to “put” myself out there and let people know me? I’ve always had a following throughout my life because of my music director position and performances, so it was easy to do what I did. People came to me to request me to provide music for their special occasions like weddings, conferences, banquets, etc. I didn’t have to really market myself in the traditional way. Each and every performance was my marketing tool. I have not had that platform since moving to Texas from California 13 years ago. People don’t know me. I actually agree with Hyatt on the advantages of using social media to advance your cause or product. I’m just very particular about putting my personal information out there to be floating around in cyberspace. I must also agree with Denise Lee Yohn in that some traditional marketing tools has its place in the marketing world. We need to know how to use the two types of tools, traditional and social media marketing, to create the best marketing platform to stand on. I also agree with the arguments of Steve Carter and Ritchie Hunter in that policies and procedures need to be in place before incorporating social media tools into your everyday company’s business. There has to be a distinction between Twittering for your job and twittering for personal reasons. Employees have to know the policies and stick to them. In regards to Hyatt’s emphasis on a “Wow” product, I agree 100%! I’ve had numerous experiences where a product was advertised and packaged to be one thing, only to use the product and find out that it didn’t hardly measure up to what it was advertised to be and was something totally different. These are very disappointing experiences that leaves a lasting impression of that product and brand. This is why some do not last. I’ve completed two cd’s that, quite honestly, was not

based solely on my live performances. I know people were expecting more. On my next cd project, I will make sure that I take my time to create a “Wow” product that won’t disappoint. Just like Hyatt said, once you have a product worth promoting, you won’t hesitate advertising it and marketing it. Because of the world we live in, even though I’m very uncomfortable with the idea, I will need to network and create a following through Facebook and Twitter. As Hyatt said, this will initiate tribe-building and connections that will promote your product through establishing relationships one person at a time. In the end, this is really what we are all looking for.

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