

## Conversation About Social Media

02/08/14 982 W - + 6 - 3

Had a good conversation about social media on my Facebook page the other week. Allow me to repeat the thing, with my comments re-posted and the replies of others rewritten and repurposed. That'll solve the pesky problem of attribution. Think of this as a conversation with myself, that's pretty close to a real conversation along the same lines. Comments by myself are obvious. Comments by others are called "Q". Not to be confused with Ian Fleming's James Bond series character, the *Star Trek* series character, or [Q source](#).

**Legeros:** Really wish we had a virtual place around to "talk shop" between buffs and firefighters and anyone in-between. The blog past it's prime. The Watch Desk's long gone. The Carolinas Fire Page (CFP) mailing list isn't used much. Same for the comments section on FireNews.net, though that might change with their new publishing platform that's debuting any day now. There's no buff's club in Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill/Triangle, nor web-based discussions forum(s). I'm about THIS close to creating a Facebook group for such purposes.

**Q:** What happened to the Watch Desk? Is it still around?

**Legeros:** Was operated by one or more DCFD firefighters. They did a reboot of the thing a couple years ago. Don't remember what happened next. Might've turned into a members-only system.

**Q:** That was a good place to read about Baltimore City!

**Legeros:** Yeah, and folks got fighting mad over there. Lots of bashing of the chief and command staff, as I recall. For a while their Car 1 would engage in discussions, but he withdrew. Moved over to their IAFF local's discussion board, if memory serves. That was a members-only and more moderated place.

**Q:** So start a new Facebook page already.

**Legeros:** That might be the way of the future, at least to start. Don't have to moderate posts, per se. The requirement of real names tends to prevent too much malice. And people are pretty good at self-policing, and retorting to posts that are accidentally or intentionally a\$\$-showing.

**Q:** Retorting? Is that a real word?

No idea. And do you like how I'm thinking of the negative implications FIRST? And before any consideration to positive aspects?

**Q:** The blog has been good, but there's been a lot of complaining over the years.

**Legeros:** Anonymous comments have allowed a lot of pot-stirring and worse. There's some cognitive reason for that that - ologists talk about. It's one of the reasons more and more people are advocating retiring anonymous commenting.

**Q:** Wish we had a positive forum in our area, for openly discussing ideas and lessons learned.

**Legeros:** Like I said, am THIS close to creating a Facebook group for that.

**Q:** Just don't let the news outlets see the thing.

**Legeros:** Great question. Public or private? Open or closed? It goes without saying my preference is open, public, everyone. It wouldn't even occur to me to create such an animal as anything BUT public. But that's me.

**Q:** Go with a public forum. That way, we're always mindful of what we say and do. When it's private, we sometimes forget that private isn't really that private.

**Legeros:** It's easy forget the first rule of electronic communication, the one they taught when e-mail was invented. Even on a seemingly closed or private system, never type anything into a message that you wouldn't want shown to your friends, family, spouse, boss, pastor, district attorney, etc.

**Q:** Stop moderating on the blog and things would be VERY interesting! How about a "non-moderated" day? Call it Friday Free For All!

**Legeros:** Been there, done, that, got the t-shirt.

**Q:** The idea of an open forum is a good one. The blog gets burdened with too much emotion and beliefs, instead of facts, learning, and logic.

**Legeros:** Learning isn't supposed to be fun. Didn't you get the memo?

**Q:** Think about the fire the other week and a mechanical failure that was discussed. When something doesn't go right, and we talk about it in public, the wrong people can use it against us?

**Legeros:** That's a great point. Hell, even I started getting heartburn about that aspect of that conversation some weeks ago.

But what does "used against us" REALLY look like? Do citizens march on city hall with pitchforks? Do we see Detroit-style exposes on FD ops on the news?

What it FEELS like (or feels like it COULD be) might be a bit different than how things play out. Don't know. Need to ponder before further pontification.

**Q:** Our critics, these days, are primarily firefighters. But in a public purview.

**Legeros:** A wise Chief Officer once remarked to me, years ago, until butts show in seats at city council/county commissioner meetings, there's nothing on a blog that necessarily impacts things.

**Q:** With regard to "wrong people," I was thinking about lawyers and law suits.

**Legeros:** Great point as well. But what does reality look like? What are the actual trends toward legal actions against fire departments, based on fireground performance, as initially documented or reported in social media?

Arguing a bit for arguments sake, here. So sue me, ha. But it's something that I have long wondered about.

We can might also lump "bosses" into the same conceptual category. Everyone on the line has experienced a punitive reaction to some piece of "revealed knowledge."

**Q:** Try a closed Facebook group. If someone gets out of line, they can be booted off.

**Legeros:** Perhaps, but we're starting yet again from a negative perspective. From the "what will go wrong" versus the "what might go right?" Seems like the sky's the limit on the upside, and positive to be gained through open and public and transparent conversation?

Will work on that list.

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I'll be the first to flog this horse.... I think we do need a forum to "talk shop". Blogs have mostly become an arena for arm chair quaterbacking. There are many different backgrounds, departments and ideas represented in this area which equates to an enormous amount of information to be exchanged. Our tendency is to critique in the negative when we see pictures or videos of incidents which may not have been handled they way "we" think it should have.

What works in one department/ jurisdiction may not work in the other... manpower, equipment, funding, training, experience and politics among others influence what we "see" in social media.

I am 100% behind the creation of a forum where we can learn from each other while staying away from name calling and negatively critiquing an incident. There have been and remain many lessons to be learned in our profession – let's all work together to make it better for those who will come after us...

**Brandon** - 02/09/14 - 16:21

Any forum such as Facebook or one that requires authentic ID of the "poster" will do well. If anonymity is allowed... well, folks will post negative comments. One of the first steps to learning is honesty.

**A.C. Rich** - 02/09/14 - 17:06

I agree Chief Rich. I am all for a learning environment. As always I agree strongly on all sides of the issue...

**Brandon** - 02/09/14 - 20:34

Hopkins Tested, Hopkins Approved...

**Legeros** - 02/09/14 - 20:37

Name: (real name preferred)

E-mail: (optional)

Web Site: (optional)

Remember personal info?

Yes

No

Comment:

/ [Textile](#)

Comment moderation is enabled on this site. This means that your comment will not be visible on this site until it has been approved by an editor.

To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

**What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?**

[\(Register your username / Log in\)](#)

Notify: Yes, send me email when someone replies.

Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

**Small print:** All html tags except <b> and <i> will be removed from your comment. You can make links by just typing the url or mail-address.