

Transcript

The Bill Walton Show

Mike Thompson/Beverly Halberg

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Bill Walton: Welcome. I'm here today to talk about social media. What it is, where it's going, what are the key components. I also want to talk today with our guest about how you can use Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat whatever to promote your product or service and how it can be useful to us in communicating ideas and causes and the third piece we want to talk about which is probably a little more upsetting is how social media can be used or abused by people for causes and maybe this is part of the reason we see it such divisions between the left and the right which leads to things like the terrible shooting we saw yesterday in Arlington, Virginia of a congressman aides and security to people. With me to talk about this are two subject matter experts in this. Beverly Hallberg and Mike Thompson.

Beverly is the president of District Media Group, a company dedicating to helping people present themselves and their messages with confidence and precision.

Beverly H.: So I better not mess up today.

Bill Walton: Yeah well you're on the spot here. She's trained members of congress, organization leaders, policy experts, among other professionals for appearances on local as well as national networks. Now you're on Common Ground. She's also a visiting fellow in communications at the Heritage Foundation and comments on communication tactics in popular and political culture and has been published in publications such as Newsweek, The Daily Signal, The Federalist, The Washington Examiner and The Hill. Welcome.

Beverly H.: Thank you.

Bill Walton: Mike Thompson. Both old friends. Mike and I have been working together for years. He's a senior vice president at CRC Public Relations. He's been there since 2003. He serves as strategic counsel to a wide variety of clients, while also overseeing the company's digital and social media practice. He's work with over 50 Fortune 100 companies, movie studios, associations, advocacy groups, startups, think tanks, political committees and more. Mike has worked on over 25 movies, including 2010's Oscar winner, The Hurt Locker. He's also worked for The World Trade Center, Amazing Grace, and The Giver. Referred to the national journal as a scruffy 45 year old tech whiz whose digital prowess is celebrated in conservative circles, Mike brings a wealth of experience in determining how to best use various communications and marketing strategies as well as different social and digital platforms to achieve organizational goals. Well, scruffy Mike. Welcome. Who wants to go first? Mike, why don't you give us an overview of what social media is about right now?

Mike Thompson: Social media is really a way that people are able to communicate quickly with each other, share thoughts. I think that in some cases it's sharing what's going on in their lives right now. It's what things are aspiring to. I think that you could break, for example, social media into a couple different categories. You have things like Facebook that are talking about what you've just done. Things like Twitter, more so things like SnapChat about what you're doing right now. Then you have other platforms like Pinterest that are things that you're thinking about doing in the future. It's a fast, easy way on a bunch of free platforms to give people information and to talk about anything that comes to your mind.

Beverly H.: I view it as virtual sharing. Whether that as you were saying sharing ideas, sharing your thoughts that you have, but it's been a way to whether it's the news or sports or culture, anything related to what's going on in the country and internationally for people to have a platform to share. I just view it in general as virtual sharing. There are a lot of different platforms that you can use to do so. Like you find with Twitter, that's more journalists that use Twitter except for the fact that we now read the president's tweets on broadcast TV. Twitter has been this interesting thing where plenty of people see Donald Trumps tweets, even though they don't tweet themselves because it becomes the new story.

It's interesting how even it can overlap with broadcast in general. Social media, especially when you think of young people, it's where they're going for their news.

Bill Walton: How much of the content or news do people get off social media as opposed to the old channels? Newspapers, TV, radio.

- Mike Thompson: I think it's tough. I think to answer that question you have to take a step back. I think that a lot of people are finding their news via social media platforms, but a lot of that news is still coming from other types of outlets. A lot of that news is still coming from the Washington Post, The New York Times, Fox News, places like that and that content is then being shared across these other channels. There is a huge growth in blogs and those other kinds of channels, but more and more you see even like Wall Street Journal doing an online video. They're doing online video but that video is often being shared and found via social media. Social media in a lot of ways is really a way to pour gasoline on the content fire and really cause it to spread.
- Beverly H.: What I could even say in addition to that you even look at let's say a host on a TV show. Let's say a Bret Bair or a Dana Perino or fill in the blank. A Jake Tapper. People will follow them on Twitter and therefore it drives it back to CNN or Fox News in general and the story itself. A lot of this is also people creating individual brands for themselves where if you like the person you're going to follow them and see what stories they're focused on. It also allows you, and this is I would say one of the positives and negatives of social media, it allows you to self select who you want to hear from and what you want to hear which I know we'll get to later on in the show today.
- Bill Walton: Yeah we're going to touch on that I think that's part of the fragmentation of the political culture.
- Beverly H.: You get to select what you want to hear. That's an interesting side of this as well.
- Mike Thompson: Well, in a lot of ways, we were talking about Twitter a minute ago. Twitter has replaced the AP wire. When I first started doing PR stuff over 20 years, you're still sitting in front of fax machines and trying to put in numbers in order to get to a redial. The news outlets throughout the country were getting their quick breaking news through the AP newswire. Now a lot of that breaking news is all found faster through things like Twitter, through things like Facebook Live and not only from journalists, but also from average people.
- We'll talk about the shooting later, but it's not just the shooting. It's everyday news where there is a Facebook Live component or there is somebody who got their camera out and took a picture and posted it on Instagram of whatever the incident was.
- Bill Walton: How many users are there say at Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat and how do the demographics break down?

Mike Thompson: There are about two billion Facebook users in the world. There are over 230 million Facebook users in the United States.

Bill Walton: About 2/3 of the population.

Mike Thompson: The breakdown of the different platforms is very similar to the breakdown of our population except for SnapChat. SnapChat, over 50% of the users are under the age of 35.

Bill Walton: You're saying Facebook represents a cross section of every demographic.

Mike Thompson: It does. Yeah.

Bill Walton: What was the other one? SnapChat?

Mike Thompson: SnapChat is one that sticks out as very different. You can see this. We can put it in your show notes, but there's a [inaudible 00:07:26] study that actually shows a breakdown of the age demographics and SnapChat is the one that stands out because over 50% of its users are 35 and younger.

Bill Walton: Is this the app you were using before we started the show where you put a funny nose and funny ears on me?

Mike Thompson: I did.

Beverly H.: Any of your audience, if they notice that especially young people tend to look at their phones especially with a friend and stick their tongue out and make funny faces, it's because they're putting a filter on their face usually of some kind of animal ears and tongue.

Bill Walton: Okay. I didn't have funny ears and funny nose. I had a filter. Is that right?

Beverly H.: You had a filter.

Mike Thompson: You can do it now even with voices. That's one of the things that's happening with the technology. Instagram has introduced it as well where you can put filters on and you can change the way somebody looks and the way they sound. You no longer need to have that balloon with you and all the helium. You actually speak into your phone and it automatically sounds like you're inhaling helium. That's the way technology is stepping in and it's your first real look at augmented reality and the way that technology is beginning to change the way that we can see the world and interact with the world because it's no longer required something fancy. Your iPhone by itself with its camera can begin to cause those changes for you.

Beverly H.: What's been really impressive to me is how Facebook has still kept up even though they were the leader of social media, Facebook was is that even though I would say young people don't go to it quite as much as they used to. Even my nephew says that only old people use Facebook. He's talking about me because I do. I would say that was also said to me before Facebook Live. They keep reinventing themselves. I believe they own Instagram as well now so Instagram is also ... I love Instagram by the way which is a visual medium. Even your studio is filled with art. Your wife is a wonderful artist. If you like pictures and photography, it's a place for you to post that where Facebook is a really good combination of visuals and content. Good place to post your own thoughts as well as link to articles, but I find that what Facebook is doing is it keeps coming up with ways to compete with the other competitors. They're even pushing SnapChat out of the way with what Instagram is doing.

I think Facebook has always been the place, especially if you are more of a news organization or if you write articles, Twitter is important but Facebook is really important as well.

Mike Thompson: Yeah and just building off that for a second. Again you can look at the same survey. [inaudible 00:09:57] been doing it every year and if you imagine a graph where the penetration is the bottom of the axis and the minutes spent on a platform are the up of the axis, when you look at that, Facebook continues to be in that top right hand corner. Both in terms of the percentage that have the app installed and are using it and the number of minutes they spend on it.

Bill Walton: How many minutes does an average user spend on Facebook a day?

Mike Thompson: A day? I'd have to go check for you but they're spending-

Bill Walton: TV used to be six hours but nobody knew whether anybody was watching. It was just on.

Mike Thompson: On mobile, people are now spending over three hours a day with technology, with screens that are not the television. Starting two or three years ago, people started spending more time with screens that were not television than with the television screen. That was a fundamental shift.

Beverly H.: There's even, even when you take a look at millennials, most millennials do not own a TV or if they do, they don't have cable attached to it. They may just use their TV to upload something online so that they can view it that way, but where they are watching their TV, they'll either subscribe to Hulu or Netflix or other services. They're not getting broadcasts the same way. One question I often get

from clients is, "Well, why should I do media if nobody is watching this show? Especially MSNBC." They have low ratings. The reason I tell them, I said it's because what you get out of it when you put it on social media. If you tweet out a clip of you being interviewed by Chris Matthews, if you're at a nonprofit organization, you get more donations if you get more followers.

There's also in many ways there's a cross promotion of all of them so I even know with marketing some of my clients or marketing my own business, I don't just use one. I just a variety. There's a reason for that. One of the things you even want to do is change up the images, change the content a little bit so that if people follow you on all platforms, it's not, "Oh, I just saw this five minutes ago." There is a strategy behind all of it to try to reach the different audiences.

Bill Walton: Well, let's shift gears to how the internet, rather the social media is used to promote a cause or a product or something like that. If you're advising clients, where do you start? Let's say we have a podcast that's being broadcast from SpeakEasy in an undisclosed location somewhere in the Washington, DC area. Let's say that you're sitting in it and it's got some art, things like that and you're talking with very interesting people. How would you get the word out.

Beverly H.: Part of it is finding people who will share your content. Let's say if you're newer to this and you don't have a lot of people following you on Twitter, you don't have many people who are friends with you on Facebook or like your business page, what you need to do to start building up that viewership and the following is to interview people. Maybe in your case that do have large followings and have them tweet it out. There's a way-

Bill Walton: You both told me you had millions of followers.

Beverly H.: Not millions.

Mike Thompson: I'm hiring her to be my publicist to tell more people about it.

Bill Walton: Excuse me to interrupt, but Mike did design For America and For America has how many friends on Facebook?

Mike Thompson: Over eight million fans.

Bill Walton: Eight million.

Mike Thompson: Over eight million fans.

Beverly H.: Yeah. Make sure he shares this.

Bill Walton: Anyway, I didn't mean to interrupt. Continue with your point, it was interesting.

Mike Thompson: I think too, I think to what we're talking about is the fact that like with any business, you need to find out where your target market is and then figure out the channels that communicate to it. There are lots of social media channels. There are lots of graphics that show all these different opportunities. The analogy I like to use and it's not an analogy that I created. It's an analogy that I read in one of those social media things is that social media is free but it's free like a puppy not free like a beer. You and I could go out and we could all share a beer. I could buy you guys a beer. You might buy me a beer. We'll thank each other, we'll walk away. If you give me a puppy, I have to take care of it. I have to pet it, I have to feed it. I have to take it out for walks, I have to clean up after it. For me, every social media platform is a puppy. When you're a business, when you're an organization that is looking to use social media, you have to ask yourself are you ready for the puppy?

Because once you start Facebook, you have to continue to engage with it. You have to post on it. You have to regularly update it. If you're going to have corporate or organizational blog, you can't just not update it for six months. You have to take care of these things. Part of what you're doing is you're figuring out where your audiences are and you're deciding which channels you're willing to invest in to keep them up to date as part of that marketing cause.

Beverly H.: Yeah. Even with my business we've tried to figure out what makes the most sense. We have a social media calendar for both Twitter, Facebook and Instagram we're building, but we decided not to do SnapChat. The reason why for my clientele it didn't make sense to do it. Maybe it makes sense in five years, but as of now, that wasn't a place we wanted to go.

Bill Walton: 16 year olds can't afford your rates.

Beverly H.: That's what it is. They're not ready for prime time yet so that was part of it. No, there is an investment that I have put in, I encourage my clients to put in to of figuring out what your social media calendar is. You have to plan it out for the week because it's work. It takes time. I even know a lot of nonprofit organizations getting scholars to tweet out their information, their articles. I even tell a scholar to tweet out their white paper and that can be a challenge, but you find in so many different organizations, they're looking for social media experts to help the staff who may not be so inclined to do so.

Mike Thompson: Because I think what you touched on is critical and that is that it's not easy. You can't treat it like a checklist. You can't walk in today and say, "I have to do a Facebook post, 10 tweets, and three Instagram posts and just knock them out in the morning and go, "Oh that was easy it's done." Every time you communicate,

every time you post something, there has to be a strategic reason for doing it. What will that post do for you? Making sure that you do that takes some thought. How do you create the engaging image that you're going to attach to that tweet? How do you create the really good graphic that's going to go with that Facebook post? How are you going to leverage that to achieve your goals?

Bill Walton: I'm still a email user. A heavy user of email but my inbox, things show up and then after the third time, an hour and a half, you tend to get annoyed and want to start delete, delete, delete, so what's the right pacing for tweeting out or if you're not the president of the United States what's the right pace to tweet?

Mike Thompson: Depends on the organization and what you're doing. A news organization may tweet a lot because tweet every story that goes out, but even there, you're beginning to see more and more organizations create different channels. You might have a master channel that you're putting a lot of your stories out, but they'll create a technology channel that all their technology stories are going to.

Bill Walton: You want to narrow cast. You want to make sure that your particular content goes to people who you already believe have an interest in that.

Mike Thompson: Right. Imagine it's like, imagine with this podcast, imagine with any other channel that you create. It's no longer just about the mass number. The New York Times may have a million subscribers. Who cares? That's not a million people that are reading every story. What you care about is if you have a cause, whatever that cause is, you want to hit the right 10, 20, 30, 50, 100,000 people that proactively care about your cause. If you can create communications that get them activated, whether it's to give money, whether it's to go volunteer for the cause, whether it's to call Capitol Hill or call their governor, that's where the power comes from.

Bill Walton: Where would you go to to learn about this some more? Are there apps, for example, that schedule your tweets and your posts on Facebook etc. etc. anything you recommend that people would use to do this?

Beverly H.: Yeah you can schedule it out in advance which can be helpful, but honestly what I would say if you're brand new to this, just find someone you know who does use social media and watch what they do and just dabble in it a little bit. Get a Facebook page, get some friends. Because part of it is viewing what other people do. Just seeing what is the rhythm? What does this look like? Let me get used to the platform. I find things like Facebook and Instagram very user friendly. Twitter would come after that. I think SnapChat can be very confusing unless you're just really familiar with it. In a lot of ways, if you're brand new to it and just trying to get used to it, I would just find somebody, friends, family that know how to do it

but if you're looking to invest in this in your business, I would hire someone who is an expert.

Of course you can Google things and read about it, but a lot of times it's just having somebody hands on with you guiding you through it.

Mike Thompson: Yeah. I think that first and foremost, you need to get involved in the platform. If you want to use Facebook for your business, for your cause, and you don't have a Facebook account, first thing you do is go set up an account and go start engaging with Facebook. Once you've done that, you'll begin to understand what it is that people are trying to either explain to you what you need to do or whatever. I think that there are some resources for folks that want to try and learn. There's a great resource out there. Social Media Examiner for example has been around for a long ... It's a great resource. It has a weekly podcast, a wonderful website. They do a huge conference out in California.

Bill Walton: That's a website?

Mike Thompson: socialmediaexaminer.com.

Bill Walton: Then they do podcasts and-

Mike Thompson: They have a weekly podcast. They do a big conference out in California every year. I think there were 7000 at their last one. Folks just in social media. They also have a lot of resources that it will say, "Hey here are eight ways that your brand might be able to use Instagram." It's great. Especially when you're just starting. For small businesses, for small organizations that are just getting going. It's a lot of tips and a lot of how to things but I think that ultimately as you grow, you will find that you either need to hire experts to help you and bring them in house or you're going to need to hire a firm or an agency to help really take it to the next level.

Bill Walton: Which organizations are the most effective users of social media?

Beverly H.: Oh gosh.

Bill Walton: Success stories. How about disasters?

Mike Thompson: I think different groups, some have been successful is some of the same groups have been very successful and not so. I think that there are certainly some groups out there that have been successful on social media. For example, just recently Tea Party Patriots. When USAA pulled their ads from Sean Hannity's show, they leveraged email and social media in order to put pressure on USAA and they were able to drive-

Bill Walton: USA was a big-

Mike Thompson: USAA was a big advertiser.

Bill Walton: Okay. Weren't they also advertising on Rachel Maddow?

Mike Thompson: They were.

Bill Walton: Didn't they try to use the excuse that they don't advertise on political shows? Opinion shows?

Mike Thompson: Opinion shows? Yes they did. Just as that information was coming out, that information came out just after this effort had started because you begin to see so many different people react negatively to pulling it off of Hannity's show. The Tea Party Patriots were able to leverage both social media and their email activity in order to drive lots of people. I gotta tell you. How corporations can use social media story, during that entire fight on Twitter, you had all these people going to USAA and complaining about why are you pulling out? I'm going to go take my insurance business elsewhere, that kind of stuff. Geico started stepping in and Geico started messaging in to them very publicly. Oh you want to switch? Here's the link to come switch to Geico. They jumped very quickly. Another corporation that does really well on social media is Wendy's. Wendy's has some great social media activity in terms of pop culture and timely and those kinds of things.

Bill Walton: It brings us back sort of where we started. The social media piece of it as it used to be mediums of one way communication. You had the company or the broadcaster and we were the passive recipients of it. This is social in that you were getting at influencers. Influencers of each other and you build your brand based on your ability to command the attention and respect of your group. How would you go about doing that?

Beverly H.: I think part of it is figuring out what your brand is. I think it's a combination. There is what is the brand that you're trying to sell either for yourself personally or for your company and all of this too is to show personality. This is supposed to be fun. If you can find ways to engage in just general interest that people have to your content in general. That can be helpful. This is, for example, where Facebook Live can come in. Let's say you like politics, but you like baseball. You go to the congressional baseball game and you do a Facebook live and you combine the two of those. Anytime you can combine that aspect, you get a lot more followers that way. I would say a lot of this too is just determining your brand because if you only tweet out, let's say articles, if you don't have good

visuals, if you don't have anything that's entertaining, it doesn't tend to do as well. I'll even give you example of someone who I think does a really good job with brand and that's Dana Perino.

Her dog is very much a focus of her content so, Jasper, a book was written about him. Everybody knows she has a dog named Jasper and that makes people like her more. There's this element of showing yourself, showing your personality and I would even say brands that do well tend to show not only who they are and what they represent, but give people an experience. This is also why you see so many organizations taking political stands on certain issue areas. People can choose whether or not to boycott it, but you find that people want to go to a Starbucks per say if they agree with the motto of what Starbucks is. I just went to Starbucks before I came here and I saw that Lady Gaga is teaming up with Starbucks. They have social media posts on that. If you like the brand that Lady Gaga is, maybe Starbucks is your coffee. If you don't, probably want to go to Seattle's Best or whatever else is there.

There's a lot of what they stand for is also being woven in and should even for you personally so that your audience feels like they can connect with you. There's a connection from it.

- Bill Walton: Well, in the Lady Gaga category, I think I learned that Kim Kardashian gets \$1 million for a Facebook post.
- Mike Thompson: At least as a couple years ago there times that she was then was being marketed that way.
- Bill Walton: Why?
- Beverly H.: Because she has a lot of followers.
- Mike Thompson: Because she has built an incredible personal brand of people who care about what she wears and what she's saying. That's actually led to a lot of new regulations that have come out through the FDC and folks like that.
- Bill Walton: This gets at one of the things that I find ... Influencers, your friends, you listen to your friends. You go do something because you've got a real personal relationship with them, but when you learn that your friend is being paid \$1 million to push something, at some point you're just buying from another corporation. You're not buying from a trusted friend. It seems like if you monetize your influence, at what point do you lose the trust factor?

Mike Thompson: That's always the balance but that's been true forever. That's true for anybody that is trying to build a personal brand and wants to go be a speaker and is getting paid 25, 50, \$100,000 for a speech. I think that again, I think that's why the FTC and others are beginning to look at regulations and [inaudible 00:25:41] regulations where if you are being paid to post something, you have to indicate that you are being paid to post that so that folks understand that there is a financial relationship just like you're seeing more sponsored content. Where it is easier now. One of the best things going on in the marketing world is sponsored content but they want to make it clear that that content is sponsored and not native to Forbes or the Wall Street Journal or Fortune Magazine or whatever.

Beverly H.: I would say the sponsorship of it is something that we've seen for years. It's just maybe promoted a little bit different way in social media, but look at sports stars. I'm a huge Golden State Warriors fan, they just won the playoffs, right? [inaudible 00:26:19] Steph Curry Under Armor was the brand that he chose and it increased the value of Under Armor I don't even know by how much. It did. People know that he only wears those shoes and he's getting paid to do so but if you like the person, you're fine with it. I would say if people are following Kim Kardashian and like what she represents, they know she's not going to promote something that maybe she isn't at least willing to say it's okay, it's an okay product. She's not going to want to promote a product that's completely disastrous.

Bill Walton: I think you're fine if you disclose the relationship, I think it's all-

Mike Thompson: Look at-

Bill Walton: I'm not a big fan of regulation but I think that reg is a really good one.

Mike Thompson: Right. If you go showing my age, you go back far enough and you see Mean Joe Green walking off the field and tossing his shirt to a little kid with a Coke-

Bill Walton: I remember that ad.

Mike Thompson: Or go back even further, luckily I wasn't alive then but when TV was mostly live and literally you would have somebody who is involved on the show and turn and pull out their cigarettes and start smoking a cigarette right there as the commercial. It's been going on for as long as there's been these kind of mediums.

Bill Walton: Shifting gears just a little bit. The shape of the social media world. It's a subset of the internet and the internet people thought of as completely open, you can have access to everything on it. There is a trend though for people to spend more and more time just on Facebook and not leave Facebook or just on Twitter.

Maybe that's not a good example. Is there a risk of Google or Facebook getting too much control of what happens in the blogosphere or internet sphere?

Mike Thompson: There's always a risk. Absolutely. Over 80% of all traffic to news sites is driven by either Google or Facebook. Google and Facebook control over 80% of the advertising dollars that are going on online right now. It's interesting at some of the big film festivals now, Google and Facebook have started showing up. Some of the agencies at first were really concerned about it. They're like, "Wait a minute. I'm the big agency. I'm the one that's supposed to be working with these guys and bringing their ads to you," but they're beginning to step into that space. Facebook is now going to produce television like content that will be broadcast over Facebook.

At the same time, take a step back and remember that first, 97% of the internet people typically don't access. 97% of the internet is the dark web, the not indexed by Google. That kind of stuff. Facebook and these other places are successful because they're able to help you find what you think you care about. We were talking earlier about the algorithms and how you may only see the things that you want to see. One of maybe the big negatives is the fact that back in the day I'd get the Washington Post or the Wall Street Journal and you'd look through the paper because that's how you found the stories. Now you get an email newsletter that says, "Here are the top five things that in the area that you care about," or your newsfeed on Facebook is showing you what it thinks you care about and so you are really self selecting into an ecosystem where you're going to be reinforced more and more of just what you believe.

Bill Walton: Yeah I always liked the serendipity of flipping pages. You don't know quite what you're going to want to see.

Mike Thompson: Right.

Bill Walton: I like that. I miss that because you can see ... You search for something to buy on the internet and next thing you know-

Mike Thompson: All the remarketing ads are coming right at you

Bill Walton: You're set for life with ads for that.

Mike Thompson: Right. I think that's the bigger fear. The bigger fear is that all three of us can sit down at our computer on our own device, we can search for something on Google and get completely different results. We can all open up Facebook and see something completely different and if I were a liberal democrat and you're a conservative republican, we can open up our news feeds and mine will say,

"Trump is horrible and here's all the proof," and yours might say, "Trump is awesome. Here's all the proof."

Bill Walton: That's a great segue to the last topic I wanted to talk about which is how it's been used to narrow cast and drive people more deeply into their beliefs without getting any contrasting points of view. Let's continue that thought. Beverly?

Beverly H.: Yeah and just picking up on what Mike just said, one of the things I do with a close friend of mine and she's liberal, I'm conservative. We actually will open our Facebook pages just to see what's there. Especially after the election because she was like, "Let me show" ... All the memes she had were completely different than memes that I had on my Facebook page. I wanted to see what is that because sometimes you think everybody else is seeing the same stuff. You have to think through that but here's what I would say about all of this too. Just one more thing about Facebook. They did get themselves into a trouble about a year, year and a half ago because of the way their algorithm was pushing out content and actually hiding or not prioritizing conservative content.

There is an aspect of keeping these companies honest that they aren't self selecting based on their own preferences what they would want you to hear. I think they've corrected that for the most part because they got into trouble about it or at least they've invited conservatives to come meet with them. Even The Daily Signal went. Rob Lou from the Daily Signal met with them. I do think that there's an aspect where they're trying to be honest with that. Going back to your comment on Donald Trump, I do think it's extremely concerning that there is ... While it's a great thing to be able to have other points of view and not just use the mainstream media to get your news, I do think that it can be dangerous if you're only hearing your own side

I think that's dangerous and I think it's dangerous the way we talk on social media. When you can be anonymous and comment, it can lead to a lack of civility. I always say anonymity breedeth a lack of civility in many ways. You will even have people on Twitter who create accounts, won't put their photo up, it's whatever their Twitter handle is, nobody knows what it is who will go on and just say horrible things to people who put content out there. There are a lot of positives of social media, but there's also this other aspect.

Mike Thompson: There's I think a lot of that also isn't just anonymous. I think that they're also many politicians. This is no different than when somebody back in the late 1700s was creating pamphlets and distributing pamphlets all around. It's so much easier to do now. Anybody can do it but-

Bill Walton: Yeah but the pamphlets didn't have algorithms.

Mike Thompson: No.

Bill Walton: This is directed content and that's the thing that-

Mike Thompson: What happens is a politician can make a comment. I don't remember the exact quote, but Tim Kaine said something like, "We have to fight Republicans in the streets." All the sudden you can take that quote and it can be pushed everywhere and there are some folks who are going to take that literally and it might be used in a series of memes. Also starts building out. I don't think Tim Kaine who I didn't vote for. I live in Virginia, I didn't vote for him, I don't think Tim Kaine meant let's go grab AK 47s and fight Republicans in the middle of Burke, Virginia or in the middle of 95. What happens is these memes start getting created. These statements start getting called together because there's a desire to ignite your base to get them to make phone calls, to get them to give you donations.

Bill Walton: What starts out as a figure of speech ends up being a call to arms.

Mike Thompson: Correct.

Beverly H.: I always say Donald Trump made this mistake recently against the mayor of London who took a statement out of context and tweeted about it.

Bill Walton: What did he say?

Beverly H.: The mayor of London wasn't talking about the terrorist attack in this comment. He was talking about the police activity which was increased on the streets after the Manchester shooting and Donald Trump said, "The mayor says not to be concerned about terrorism." I'm paraphrasing, but it was essentially that's what his tweet was. He took it out of context as far as what the mayor was talking about. He was referring to the police activity which was increased. You do have to be careful because it's very easy to take statements out of context and tweet them out. Part of my work with clients is making sure they don't say anything that can turn into a bad tweet or a bad sound byte.

Mike Thompson: Which is important. I think at the same time-

Bill Walton: That's being extremely careful.

Mike Thompson: When you think about the shooting that occurred yesterday and we're still learning about the shooter and some things about the shooter.

Bill Walton: Since this podcast is going to be obviously available for a while, let's talk a little bit. We're now in June of 2017. Yesterday-

Mike Thompson: Yesterday, June 14th in the morning, the Republican baseball team was out practicing in Alexandria, Virginia and a deranged man decided to target them and had a rifle.

Bill Walton: Full disclosure, serious Bernie Sanders supporter was also using the internet, using social media to push a lot of really incendiary stuff out.

Mike Thompson: Yeah. He started firing and luckily, the majority whip was there and he has protection. He had two Capitol Hill police officers and those two Capitol Hill police officers were able to engage the shooter relatively quickly. Both were injured. [inaudible 00:35:45] as of right now I believe is still in the hospital in critical condition, having been shot in the hip. There was a lobbyist who was shot. I think that with that framework, something to think about is I'm not going to blame Bernie Sanders.

Bill Walton: Well, no and I want to clarify. Bernie Sanders, what happened to him with this guy is what happened with Donald Trump and David Duke. If you're labeled by your worst of your supporters that's a problem because you can't really-

Mike Thompson: Right. When Ronald Regan was shot, it wasn't Jodie Foster's fault. It was a crazy man. John Hinckley is crazy. I think that what the danger is that there are people like that out there and the internet and social media, when they begin to have only one point of view reinforced on them, they can take that and quickly migrate to an extreme. When they migrate to the extreme, you can see these crazy things. These actually horrible things happen. We live in a world where it is ... When ISIS is trying to radicalize people using the internet and using social media. When you see those kind of ... They're praying on people who are not fully engaged in the world the way you and I and the three of us would be.

Bill Walton: A couple related points. Arthur Brooks who is president of American Enterprise Institute is also terrific social scientist wrote a piece on trolling which is vicious comments on anything that you've written or put out there and it's just part of the world. He went so far as to associate people who troll with personality disorders which is a separate point story I want to make. I used to be CEO of the New York Stock Exchange company and back in those days, we didn't have social media per say. We had chat boards. We had Yahoo chat boards. I developed my 1% theory. This is a different 1% theory. That is if you take 100 people randomly and there's going to be 1% of them that are nuts. If you have 100,000

shareholders, you're going to have 1000 people in that category nuts and they were all on my chat board.

Mike Thompson: Sure. No. They're the ones that engage.

Beverly H.: Yeah. These days any public figure is just you have to be prepared for horrible things being said to you and sadly, these days with the internet, people can't find out where you live or you have security to protect yourself. I would say when you're dealing with what I would call the fringe or this extreme behavior, nobody's words that they say is ever the one ... Bernie Sanders and others are not to blame for it. It's this individual and I think that people are going to do horrible things. There's not a whole lot you can do. However, I will say on that, the rhetoric that we have these days is very extreme just in general. I don't think it's responsible for it, but I think that there is an element where you have to take that into account. I'll even use a recent example with a Paris protocol, Paris agreement that Donald Trump, President Trump pulled out of last week.

You had Nancy Pelosi saying that your children and grandchildren won't have air to breathe. That is a pretty extreme statement when it comes to healthcare that people are going to die. If you do think through that and think that people are going to die, someone may take a very extreme step for that.

Bill Walton: Let's look for silver linings. I have to restate my earlier story. Not everybody on my chat board was part of the deranged 1%. There were a lot of lovely people, but we had our bad days. Do you think that there's some silver lining here where because of what happened yesterday that the political rhetoric, Mike's making a face here.

Mike Thompson: I think that there are often horrible incidents-

Bill Walton: You think this is going to last about a day.

Mike Thompson: Yeah. No I think it'll last more than a day because the baseball game is tonight. It might last through the weekend because everybody will go home and disappear on Friday. I think that we live in a changed world in a lot of ways. Because of instantaneous communication and the desire for people to raise money, the desire for people to motivate their core supporters that often Nancy Pelosi will take an extreme position in order to get more people involved. To make them make the phone calls, to make them send the letters or to make them show up at a town hall meeting where the [inaudible 00:40:21] congressman is. I think that the silver lining is that everybody can engage. Social media empowers people and empowering people is not a bad thing. We've often heard about the fact that it's not new that that power and those outlets, that people can use that

and use false information to cause people to believe things that are just wrong and to act on those things.

I think it's incumbent upon everybody. If I see a news story that just seems a little off to me, I go check it out. I think that you can't just take everything at ... I learned a long time ago. Just because it's on the internet doesn't make it true. Just because it's in the Washington Post doesn't make it true. Just because it's on Facebook doesn't make it true. It's up to us to actually go out and do some research. Use our brains. We should be responsible in that way and go find out if it's true before we spread it as if it is.

Beverly H.: What I would say to that too I think with power and this does empower people, with power comes responsibility. I would encourage-

Mike Thompson: Great Spiderman plug.

Beverly H.: There you go. With anyone who does want to engage in social media and I think that's a good thing to do, you have to ask yourself how are you talking about these issues. I think there is a tendency to get frustrated and you yourself wanting to write back whatever comes to mind, but what I would ask you is what are you trying to accomplish? Are you just trying to get the people who agree with you just as mad as you are? Or are you actually trying to change the persuadable middle? As you refer to, what I refer to and others to as the persuadable middle. If you really want to change minds, you don't go in guns a blazing. Maybe that's a bad metaphor right now, but you don't go in that way with your verbal communication. I actually think you make a reasonable argument. This would go back to even the title of your show. I would say there's a lot more in common that we have with our neighbors than what we realize.

Mike Thompson: Well, and I think that part of it also, there is some research that's being done that it's not only that our Facebook newsfeeds are so one sided. People are more and more self selecting and where they live and they're being surrounded more and more by people who think more like them or are more like them. Literally I had friends that they're stunned. Wait, Donald Trump won? I can't name a single person I know that voted for Donald Trump. That's because of where you live

Bill Walton: This is Charles Murray's book Coming Apart

Mike Thompson: Right.

Bill Walton: Which talks about how siloed people are.

Mike Thompson: Absolutely. That silo-

Bill Walton: By age, income, whatever IQ.

Mike Thompson: Right. It crosses not just social media anymore. It's where you live, its' who you hang out with. That becomes in and of itself dangerous. That's why I think it's really important for people to engage in their communities. To spend time as a soccer coach. Spend time volunteering on a local board. Do things that get you out and see because you will find for the most part, in my opinion that 99.999% of the people that you perceive as being on that other side, they want to do what's right. They want to help the community.

Bill Walton: They're okay.

Mike Thompson: They are.

Bill Walton: You're definitely right. That is the general topic of this show which is we've got a lot more in common than what separates us. Final thought?

Beverly H.: Yeah. Just on the institutions. I would say where the breakdown is and you mentioned even Charles Murray's book which does hit on this and other books have as well, it's when we lose our community intuitions. Meaning churches, rotary clubs-

Bill Walton: Civil society.

Beverly H.: Civil society. When you lose that and it's just you and your friends and your social media page, it's very hard to see that there are people with different perspectives and you remove yourself from helping other people in need. I know even my church in general a lot of people have different political persuasions. We agree on our faith and that's so helpful to be with people who work with different individuals on different issues. I think a lot of it is just our civil society and our community institutions. I encourage people to get involved in their community because I think once we meet our neighbors and get to know that, "Oh we have similar goals. We disagree on how to get there but we're good people who want to help our neighbors," that's how you solve this problem.

Bill Walton: Mike, Beverly. Thank you

Beverly H.: Thank you.

Mike Thompson: Thank you.

Bill Walton: If you want to learn more about what we've talked about today check out our website cgtv.us and we will have links to some of the topics we talked about and some of the books and some of the ideas and I'm looking forward to having you both back because we clearly didn't exhaust this topic but we did exhaust our time.

Beverly H.: Are you going to sign up for SnapChat?

Bill Walton: Definitely. I can't wait to draw some ears on some of my closest friends. Thanks.

Mike Thompson: Thank you.