

Episode 170 - Dorlee Michaeli: How Social Media Expands Social Work Career Choices

[00:00:08] Welcome to IN SOCIAL WORK the podcast series of the University of Buffalo School of Social Work at www.insocialwork.org. We're glad you could join us today. The purpose of in social work is to engage practitioners and researchers and lifelong learning and to promote research to practice and practice research. We educate we connect. We care. We are in social work western New York is a region of seasons and with three months of summer we try to get a lot done Buffalo and our surrounding communities have events going on constantly. One of note was just completed the Juneteenth festival of Buffalo Juneteenth is the oldest known observance of the end of slavery in the United States. We commemorate that day and emphasize the achievements of African-Americans and all of us celebrate our freedom civil and human rights. This is Buffalo's 40th consecutive festival and the third largest in the world. I'm Peter Sobota in this episode our guest Dorlee Michaeli describes how current and emerging social media expands social or career choices and practice. Ms Michaeli tells us how she developed herself into a social worker who is social media savvy and why she believes social media competence is important for current social work practice. She discusses how she believes social media is altering the landscape of social work practice and education as well as promoting innovation in both because of its prevalence. Ms Michaeli lays out some guidelines for starting a blog and describes trends in the field related to specific social media tools. She concludes with specific recommendations for helpful sites and guidelines for self branding for social workers.

[00:01:59] Dorlee Michaeli MBA LMSW is a social worker and social media consultant for both the Center for Financial social work and the University at Buffalo School of Social Work. Her work is centered around educating social workers and community advocates on how to help their clients develop a better relationship with their money and how to employ social media to enhance their social work practice. She is also the creator owner of the W. W. W. social work career blog Ms McColley was interviewed by Pat Shelly MSW the director of community engagement and an expansion here at the School of Social Work. Pat interviewed Dorlee in March of 2015 Hi my name is Pat Shelly. I'm the School Social Work director of community engagement an expansion. And I'm very pleased to be able to interview Dorlee Michaeli today. Dorlee has been my social media coach for the past two years and I'm pleased to be able to interview her about her career path her use of social media and her expertise on an advice looking at what we might expect in the future of Social Work regarding social media. So Dorlee welcome. Thank you. Glad to be here. So tell us how did you enter the field of social work after your initial career in the field of marketing with your MBA. Well I had always been interested in how people think as well as how the business world works. Therefore both my undergraduate degree and my MBA reflected this as well as my work in marketing research. This work was very interesting and I have progressively moved up the ranks so to speak. But then the market had a downturn.

[00:03:47] But this was a blessing in disguise because I had been thinking for a while that I wanted to make a difference in a personal level. And I went for my MSW and never looked back. Today you have a substantial reputation particularly through your blogs social work career. Used to be called social work career development but you know I think tightened it up now and that website is W W W dot social work dot career particularly popular is your best in mental health guides where you will publish articles. Tell us about trends and current research that we should know about. And I think you put that out weekly. You're also an influencer on multiple social media sites and you coach and consult. How did you develop this new career for yourself and particularly you know the steps you've taken along the way. Thank you you're very kind. Actually all those pieces the blog the different social media platforms and my coaching consulting work are all connected. So where or

how did it all began. It actually first began with me playing around with Twitter. I have to confess I didn't think much of Twitter when I first joined it. Back in June of 2009 the only reason I did it was as a favor to my mom. She had asked me to follow her but it didn't take me long to soon discover that by following the right people on Twitter I could learn a lot about any topic.

[00:05:15] One of the things I soon noticed was that a lot of people seem to have blogs and so when I started going for my MSW. I thought that starting a blog may be a fun idea and perhaps it could also be something helpful for current or future students. Because I didn't know how to blog though. When I first started it was more like a journal. But over time thanks to all the generous knowledge that other experienced bloggers share I learned how to blog and began to purposely cover other topics that will be of interest to others social workers whether they were new or experienced. And then I use Twitter and other social media platforms like Pinterest Google Plus as a way to stay informed provide others with useful information help promote my blog. And last but not least stay connected with other people who would become my friends. And this is where all three pieces connect the blogging the social media platforms and my coaching consulting work because I had interviewed Reed Wolfson who's the president of the Center for Financial social work for my blog. And since then I've been working with her. And similarly I got to know and became connected to Nancy dean of the School of Social Work for my blog and Twitter and she kindly thought of me when you had the need for social media coach right. And so for the past two years I've been learning from you this new skill set that I use here at the school and the purpose of the school of social works social media platforms is to promote our unique trauma informed and human rights based curriculum. And of course I find you a very effective and engaging coach. So I'd like to ask you what your definition of a good coach.

[00:06:59] I feel good coaches someone who can provide you with the guidance tools and support you need in order to achieve your objectives whatever they are and inspire you to do your best. The ultimate goal of a coach I believe is to work him or herself out of a job. And I find that there are many similarities between therapy and coaching. Your goal is really to meet your clients where they are in terms of their readiness to change and adapt your approach or interventions accordingly. The importance of establishing a rapport with your clients is he being empathic. Having strong listening skills and providing support to your client through the inevitable setbacks is key to the success of your work. Yes I remember a time of deep frustration that you were able to bring me out of you and encouraged me to forge ahead with my learning so thanks for that. Let me ask you Do you think your style or how you coach changes depending on what profession you're working with. So social work versus somebody from another profession. No. My experience has tended to be with other social workers but I believe that my style would be the same whether I would coach non social worker or someone from a different professional background. Because regardless of my clients background I would need to find out what his or her needs are where he or she is in terms of the readiness to tackle social media. I need to establish a trusting relationship so he or she would feel comfortable tackling new challenges me and so on.

[00:08:29] And as you said very similar to the therapy process where you're assessing building rapport you know setting goals or a treatment plan that's a really good way or a really good analogy you've used. Why is social media becoming so important in today's social work practice. I think that social media is so important today because it's a way for all of us to become educated and trained and stay up to date with the latest developments in mental health and social practice. Many mental health organizations now offer FREE webinars to help us stay up to date. That's one of the things that I also provide on my Web site every month is the list of free webinars one of my favorites. That's a great resource and I attended many of the free webinars thanks. It's also important in terms of the way we social workers access resources to provide services for our clients. There's for example right now and Bertha. Bertha dot com is one online resource that you can enter your clients zip code and find all the available programs in your client's zip code. It's a way of networking and

collaborating with your colleagues. It's a source of empowerment for advocacy and it helps us meet the client where the client is and so many particularly young people are on social media now. That's a good point. How is it going to change social work practice. Do you think it's changing the way social work education is being taught. For example Laurel Hitchcock from the University of Alabama along with Jimmy Young from the University of Nebraska have recently designed an assignment for their students to watch and write about the documentary *Inequality for All*. And they will be using a live Twitter chat. Actually I think this is something that you probably would speak to better.

[00:10:25] You've not only participated in this beforehand but you're going to be doing it. You're going to be participating in it next week I believe. Right. On March 12 Thursday March 12 at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time the hash tag Macro STW Twitter chat so macro social work chat is going to have Laurel and Jimmy hosting the discussion on the documentary *Inequality for All*. And it's just a great experience both oneUB the Twitter trend itself is if people haven't done a Twitter chat it's similar to webinars where you type in your questions only in the chat you're typing in your comments and offering examples and giving your input. So for the macro social work chat next week students in classes and there's one or two classes here from the UB School of Social Work who are going to be part of the chat are going to be offering you know their views on why there's such inequality and income gaps and wealth male distribution here in the United States. The experience of social work education I think has changed to this particular social media mechanism because it's sort of levels out the hierarchy that can exist in education in a classroom where there's the professor the expert teaching the less expert you know graduate students or undergraduate students. So in that way it's just a new and exciting experience I think. So in other words you're seeing that social media has kind of changed almost the educational paradigm where the professor is more like a mentor or a coach to the student versus like the the superior expert.

[00:12:10] That's a good way of putting it yes more mentoring particularly during these Twitter chats and then the students feel more empowered and probably almost more like independent and more capable that they are proficient and can do things on their own right. Yes so the dynamics are changed there and hopefully it will help students develop that professional identity and the confidence in their ability to acquire and share knowledge to develop some expertise so I guess it's a good exercise. So kind of stemming from that some additional trends are that more and more of our advocacy work and way of building awareness of mental health or social justice issues will be done now through social media and by social media. I include YouTube. YouTube is the number two search engine in the world. And videos increase people's understanding of your product or service by 74 percent. So it's a very effective mechanism to reach the general population mental health services will also expand via social media. Some therapists already provide therapy online. But I anticipate this growing and I envision some therapists perhaps providing counselling via a HIPPA compliant type of messaging system particularly with the younger generation that are used to just constantly texting and recently just a few days ago Facebook for example announced that it was going to provide some sort of tools to make it easier for laypeople to respond and informed the national suicide prevention line. When a friend of theirs appears depressed not sure about the details but the point is that thanks to the use of social media we'll be able to ultimately help people sooner and hopefully prevent some suicides. That's great. Yes.

[00:13:59] And you know maybe picking up words in a Facebook communication will tip the individual that oh maybe I better check with the suicide hotline that's great. Right exactly. And it also the you know the better information out there is helping people kind of know that and to no longer think that visa suicide for example that when somebody is talking about it oh it doesn't mean anything. The lay person now knows to take people's statements about suicide seriously. And I'll mention I know in a recent New Yorker magazine article called are you there a crisis text Line was established for teens. Of course because they text all the time and it's anonymous and safe and have

even developed you know shorthand codes for parents in the room and so forth so that the crisis counselor will be able to know if the speech on the part of the teenager is curtailed at all. So yeah lots of exciting developments in that vein. Another nice development from social media is that you know it's going to force organizations and mental health professionals to be much more responsive to clients. The whole dynamics are changing. There are now campaigns. They're actually the clients have even on Twitter gone at hash tag campaigns. I think it was a year or two ago when they did one where it was like what patients say or something. And the takeaway it was very clear they were not feeling listened to by their psychiatrists or their therapists. They do not want to have their feelings ignored and if they're not going to be listened to they're not going to be quiet anymore.

[00:15:39] We're going to hear from them via social media that this is a good thing so that clients and people who are oppressed now have a place to express themselves to be heard. And so another way that we can hold ourselves in our profession accountable. Correct. Exactly. And then lastly the social media. I see it as leading to greater innovation in our field. It's going to and this is a result of the increased collaboration and networking that's occurring thanks to our involvement in social media. New ideas tend to blossom and stem from you know our seeing new connections basically from things that are in existence already. And the moment you have people working together from totally different organizations and countries so they may have applied solution a for one problem and then going like all of a sudden think Well how about applying solution a for a different problem. So you all of a sudden you have new innovative solutions to problems that once looked unsolvable. Now all of a sudden maybe you know we can solve them. So it's it's exciting time right and exponential expansion in one's network and you know around the globe I know on Twitter chats we often have people from the United Kingdom certainly Canada and I think we've even had participants from Australia. So yes it is great in the area of blogging. Now what formula or what outline would you suggest to social workers so that they could establish a similarly ethical and professional blog like yours like social work career. I would recommend that you start out by figuring out first what your passion is. In other words what it is that your primary interest is so that whatever it is that you're going to be working on it's something that you really enjoy.

[00:17:36] So that work is play because whatever you're going to be writing about you know it's going to take time. So you want to make sure that you really love it and it can change that's fine but you want to make sure that it's something you love. So that's one two I would recommend you use your own voice. Show your personality but at the same time keep in mind that this is a public forum so you want to exercise some question of what you will or won't share. 3 I would try to have some sort of regularity in terms of when you post so that people know when to stop by. I'd be willing to make mistakes because if you're going to be a perfectionist about your writing you may never write a post. And lastly give credit to any sources you use yes. And again that I think applies to ethics reflecting the social work code of ethics for sure in trends in social media. I've recently heard about simulation training for social workers. Do you know anything about that. Yes it's a very exciting time. People are definitely developing all kinds of simulation training programs. You know there's virtual reality and so on. Some of them are still in development but there are some that exist already today. The University of Southern California for example they have one program called Miles which they use for their current students which is actually a motivational interviewing learning environment simulation so that their students are able to practice their motivational interviewing skills within a simulation environment.

[00:19:12] And then last one that we can use for free thanks to the University of Kent in the UK to develop our Child Protection skills. They have five different simulation programs which basically allow us to kind of get the feeling of what it would be like to let's say work with a family where there is suspected child abuse or neglect. And perhaps there is a hostile environment and we're getting all kinds of negative responses from different family members or different responses from the child. And we kind of practice in the simulation model with our responses and we see the

parents or the child in one way or another and we learn how to improve our responses. So it's a very exciting time because it's one thing to learn it in the classroom. It's a whole nother thing to be faced with someone who's giving you these hostile feedback. How do you respond so it's kind of nice to be able to practice it before actually facing somebody who may be angry and you know you're trying your best to protect the child. And how do you do that. So this is an opportunity to role plays from a remote source. That's great. Yes. Also you know we've got new apps coming out every day. Are there any apps that are helpful in our social work practice. Oh there are so many. I'll just name three. You could use the one that just came out. I think like two days ago by SAMSA called suicide safe. That's a nice prevention app. You could. Another one is a provider resilience app which is a nice one that helps you kind of check see how you're doing in terms of your mental health and provide some self care tips.

[00:21:03] And then there is sex positive which is a nice shame free sex education one from the University of Oregon. That sounds great. And how about blogs. Do you see more and more social workers developing blogs. Are there particularly excellent ones out there aside from the school of social work at the University. Buffalo's social work synergy of course blogs are individuals that you would recommend people follow. There are so many. But if I have narrowed down I would probably recommend that if you specifically want to continue your education about the use of social media and social work to follow Jonathan Singer Nancy Smith Rachel West. Those are three good people in terms of blogs. You would do well with social work text of Shorouk helper social justice solutions and a new social worker of course. And of course there's a UB school of social works. New Resource their social work technology hub. Right. And if you go to our Web site you'll be able to find that under community resources resources technology and social work. Great. Thanks for giving us the plug there Dorley. We appreciate it. How about guidance for our colleagues regarding personal branding and you know OK and starting in social media on my Facebook page perhaps I'm starting my blog How can I develop that personal brand. Basically personal branding refers to the way you're perceived by others and your unique value and kind of the way you present that to others. Across social media platforms.

[00:22:47] And this actually originated back from the management guru Tom Peters almost 20 years ago actually he had this infamous article for Fast Company and also the series of books Brand you. So that's kind of where it all took off from. And the reason why it's so important this whole concept is that prospective employers use our social media profiles to screen us actually 91 percent according to a survey conducted by Rappler. So what we're doing or not doing on social media matters you know we can decide to go along with whatever happens to pop up in a random Google search for our name whether it's accurate or not whether it's positive or not or we can decide to take a proactive stance and increase the odds that some positive search results will pop up great. Yes very important. So what suggestions do you have. So I would suggest that you you first kind of determine what your values are and what you want to be known for. And then from there you build your track record and reputation that will support what you want to be known for. So in other words you would establish a profile on Linked In. You would look over your existing social media profiles. Do they reflect you as you'd like to be seen. You could consider creating your own personal website or you could simply use something simple like about me which is a one page Free Web site kind of thing that you would like fill out. That is a place that you connect to all your social media profiles. And you write a one paragraph description about yourself and then this could be something that when somebody looks up your name that will pop up along with your LinkedIn profile.

[00:24:37] And it's it's something that you wrote about yourself that hopefully that is favorable and it links all your social media profiles in addition to that you could share helpful content on a regular basis on a social media platform of your preference. Great. So I thank you for providing us with this interview today. Dorlee is there anything else you'd like to tell our in social work podcast listeners.

Yes I think it's important that you be authentic. Not only will people see right through you if your fake but people only connect with real people. So think of brand Brown's three Cs connection compassion and courage. To be willing to be a little vulnerable. Secondly we need to be consistent. We can't be one way one day and another way another day by being authentic consistent and providing helpful content on a social media platform that you feel comfortable at you could establish a positive reputation as someone who is knowledgeable about your area and that is something good to have in hand whether you're looking for work or just want to do a better job at your current works that you you're collaborating with others on a project and lastly have fun with social media. Social media is a fun place to learn and make friends. Indeed. And you know as I develop more skills I found myself relaxing and being able to be playful and have much more fun. Good points. So and again if you want to see a lovely example of a professional blog of that personal brand and resources please do visit Dorlee's blog www.socialwork.career. so Dorlee, Thanks again. Thank you. Pat.

[00:26:22] You've been listening to Dorley Michaeli discuss social media and social work practice on social work. Hi I'm Nancy Smith Professor and Dean of the University of Buffalo School of Social Work. Thanks for listening to our podcast. We look forward to your continued support of the series. For more information about who we are as a school our history our online and on the ground degree and continuing education programs we invite you to visit our Web site at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu. And while you're there check out our technology and social work resource center you'll find it under the Community Resources menu.