

J. Michael Locke

Musings

#159: Musing **January 1, 2022**

Much has been written about the power of algorithms in social media applications. A related topic is the rise of curation in general. Technology has led to a proliferation of content. The easy self-service tools for user-generated content means that everyone can record a song, post a video or write a newsletter! Content is no longer king, now it is curation. In this world of unlimited content, individuals cannot absorb everything and lean on “curators” either in human or bot form. The TikTok algorithm is curating videos it thinks will engage the user. Getting a friend’s Spotify playlist is leaning on him or her as a curator. These musings are mostly just curation where I try to pass on interesting articles etc. IMO, the key to success is to create your own network of curators feeding you information. You can also work on your own curation skills – speed reading, quick judgment on informational value, and pattern recognition – so you can process more content efficiently.

The angst being expressed by some on the CDC moving the guidance on quarantine length reminds me of a basic management tenet -- the world is gray. People often seek black/white guidance and a set of rules (exactly what should I do if someone tests positive etc.) but at the end of the day, most issues do not have a black/white resolution. It would be easier if things had clear answers but that simply is not where leaders have to operate. Leaders need to make risk-based decisions, preserve flexibility and optionality, avoid getting painted into a corner, and don’t give ultimatums. Focus on picking and developing people who have good judgment in a dynamic environment and are comfortable with ambiguity. Real performers love ambiguity because it empowers them and gives them the space to be creative and innovative. When interviewing, consider giving “assignments” without clear rules and see how the prospective employee handles the ambiguity.

Directions on how to assemble your product should not be gray. It drives me nuts how little attention manufacturers give to the clarity and ease of the assembly instructions given to consumers. Christmas always highlights the issue. Kudos to Sonos who has followed Apple’s lead and created simply 1-2-3 processes to get the product in use.

Put me in the Hubert Joly camp on running business for omni-channel and customer first rather than separating out your digital business. Use your physical locations as support centers for your digital operation. Make sure all management has right incentives to put customer experience first. should-retailers-split-e-commerce-from-stores

I often comment on the importance of naming conventions. Here is the latest example. The CDC is thinking about changing from “fully vaccinated” to “up to date vaccinated.” The booster now has created a problem with the old definition of “fully vaccinated.” If someone has two shots of Pfizer but not yet boosted, are they fully vaccinated? “Defund the police” will go down as one of the worse naming conventions. I believe there are some legitimate policy discussions to be had about the use of police for mental health situations and other social services but very few really want to “defund” those who serve and protect.

Never give a ROFR (right of first refusal). The Denver Broncos are in the middle of a lawsuit on this right now. ROFRs diminish the value of your asset when you go to sell it because potential buyers will be hesitant to put in all of the work if at the end of the day someone else can then buy the asset using their ROFR. Don't let someone advocating for a ROFR tell you it is no big deal.

The data continues to come out on the rapid increase in compensation as a result of the talent shortage. "U.S. professionals toward the end of this year saw their compensation jump at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years, federal data show....Wages for all private-sector workers grew 4.6% year over year in the third quarter, according to federal data, with the biggest gains going to workers in service occupations and industries such as retail and hospitality." salaries-start-to-swell-for-white-collar-workers

Interesting fact: for the first time ever, less than 50% of doctors work in private practice (AMA). Most work for a larger physician practice management company or for a hospital.

Another fact: Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet (google), Amazon and Meta (Facebook) account for 27% of the value of the S&P (WSJ).

Rip John Madden. I think he had two great traits — passion and relatability. The latter was heavily influenced by his practice of taking a bus across the country to wherever he was going (he never flew). There are lots of good people in "flyover country" and spending time with them is a treat. Don't get caught up in our coastal influenced media narratives.

Happy New Year!

jml