

## Do I dare call bullshit aloud? Do you?

by Jason Cohen on May 9, 2011

A side-effect of my moderate, only-in-bubble fame is a barrage of “special” offers, guest-post requests, pleas for attention, and modest, tasteful bribery.



“Ugh! I could feel them monetizing me with their eyes!”

It’s not awful; most are sincere, and even those blatant marketing ploys requesting me to “review this *fantastic* new book that’s so *relevant* to your *readers* who are *aching* to read it” are professional, direct, and come bearing gifts (even if it is just a free book).

My response is well-mannered, even when the correspondence lands squarely in the class of spam:

Thanks so much for extending me the privilege to let me “e-interview” Person You Claim is a Celebrity who you’re writing-on-behalf-of, but I’m compelled to pass on your offer because “Vampires: Under the Cape” is not, in fact, directly relevant to my audience.

But tonight I’m thinking I shouldn’t be so kind. That maybe it’s even my duty to not be.

Why am I so kind in the first place? Why not just ignore it?

I think the answer is terrible: That I’m afraid I might piss off someone famous or potentially famous who then might not want to work with me in future or even say something bad about me in public.

Pathetic.

Here’s what’s bringing this to a head.

Recently I got the worst solicitation to date. The title of the email was excellent: “Guest Blogger Proposal—An Interesting Twist.”

I won’t repeat the entire contents of the email, not because of “privacy” but because it was 729 words which is almost the length of this article and who has time to read all that? (Present company excepted. And yes it’s “excepted” and not “accepted.”)

Besides employing the conventional turns of phrase including “We are only looking for a handful of sites where we can contribute and *don’t want you to miss out*” (their excited emphasis) and “saving you time and effort!!” (their excessive use of bang), they had the audacity to suggest that I should “provide us with our own restricted login (preferred)” (their ludicrous parenthetical recommendation) **enabling them to autonomously publish articles directly to you**, dear reader, which they “guarantee will include sub-headlines and bullets written on topics like ‘how to ...’, ‘7 tips for ...’, ‘5 reasons...’, etc.”

Bullets and numbers in titles *guaranteed?!?* Fantastic!

If this weren’t sufficiently absurd, it turns out these people are affiliate marketers, and what they neglected to mention in the introductory email is that these auto-published articles would furthermore push products for them to monetize.

This time I couldn't just "take a rain check" with the customary social niceties. Maybe it was the two "poor-man's martini's" I had just consumed (drop three ice cubes and swirl instead of getting out the shaker). OK yeah, it was definitely that.

But the ancient Macedonians used to make important decisions *only* when inebriated, the idea being that only when mentally lubricated are you free of societal filters and self-doubt, and therefore think and act as your true self. Therefore you are thinking and acting *truthfully*, and hence *correctly*.

With this in mind, my response was:

What a fascinating scam! I'll have to let everyone I know about this ridiculous offer to pollute my blog with garbage. I'm sure my readers will be thrilled to know I'm introducing anonymous, self-serving posts filled with "bullets" and promotional offers.

Please send me more email with your contact information so I can post it on the Internet. I'm sure many people would like to send you a token of their appreciation.

Surely the recipient of my missive couldn't care less, but it's important to me because **I finally grew the stones to say what I feel even if it pisses someone off.**

I mean, as much as Social Media is supposed to be about "honesty" and "being human" and "genuineness," of course most isn't. Bloggers fluff their feathers, coming off more confident, smarter, and more sure than they are (present company included, though at least I make an effort to reveal the emotional underbelly). Twitterers RT and "follow" and pander to the most minor of celebs

(present company again included) in the hopes that someday that lesser deity might deign to RT one of their tweets or accept an email as non-spam because they've already "joined the conversation."

I do too. Still do.

Do I dare to publicly disagree with a solitary thing Seth Godin says, lest he not consider me for his Domino project? Do I dare to disagree with Jason Fried lest he lay into me like he did Mint? Do I dare make fun of Joel Spolsky lest I not get invited back to Business of Software?

**When do I earn the right to say what I think?** Why do I think I need to "earn" that right? How many RSS subscribers or Twitter followers do I need before I decide it's OK to rail against asinine offers like that email, or even gently disagree with luminaries who I do, in fact, respect?

I guess the answer is: This many.

To take Amanda Palmer a little out of context:

How strange to see  
that I don't want to be  
the person that I want to be.

And maybe it's funniest of all  
to think I'll die before I actually see  
that I am [already] the person that I want to be.

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