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The collective passion of
secret crowds
Breaks the cycle of blind insanity.
—RICHARD GUERRY

Before we get started, I am going to ask you to do something a little unorthodox for an author who wants you to keep reading. I am going to request that you go to your computer and open up the following 3 websites:

http://www.spokeo.com/
http://www.peekyou.com/
http://pipl.com/
http://www.wink.com/

Once you have them open, search for your name, and maybe the names of your friends, family, or even enemies. You may be astonished at what you find. You may be even more astonished to see that, as of August 2012, if you are logged into Spokeo.com as a member, one of the menu items available is titled, "Friends" and promotes their service with this text:

Uncover personal photos, videos and secrets...

Scan your email contacts and uncover surprising facts on everyone.

Want to see this page? Try this link:
http://www.spokeo.com/friends

> **"Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."**
> **– Albert Einstein**

You must understand that these "personal information sites" will continue to become more accurate, dig deeper and chronicle more of your digital life as we progress in this Digital Renaissance. These sites are essentially going to provide a "one-stop-shop" of information about you and your digital activity for your current and future friends, family and enemies to find. Realize that a great deal of your digital activity will be used to create your own personal digital encyclopedia entry.

Now, whether you already knew about these sites, or you are just learning about these types of websites and just had an "eye opening experience" does not matter. What matters is that you understand that there will always be some "new" trend or technology for you to discover in our rapidly evolving digital world, and your "new" discovery may not be so new for others. Therefore, to ensure you do not discover a new trend or technology the hard way – after a problem exists – we must communicate and install a preventative thought system that will help you avoid almost any digital issue or trend.

Here We Go

We cannot eliminate each new negative digital trend by reacting to it with surveys, safety tips and statistics. Reacting to digital issues is like placing a band-aid on a hemorrhaging wound. Wouldn't it be wiser to focus on preventing the injury? This Guide will illustrate how we can transform our focus on reaction to digital issues into the prevention of – current and future – digital issues.

Poor digital decision making starts in the mind – it is the "Cause" of digital mistakes. Abusing digital technology creates trends, such as sexting and cyber bullying. Those trends are the "Effects" of poor digital choices. And, as is often the case, mistakes have "Consequences" – the chain of reaction of negative emotions, events and situations that follow trends.

Therefore, poor decision making – Cause – will create issues or trends – Effects – which will produce a chain reaction of negative emotions, events and situations – Consequences – as illustrated in this true story:

> **"The sane use of digital tools requires the achievement of a Digital Consciousness™."**
> **– Yours Truly**

A 19 year-old Wisconsin teenager was convicted of using Facebook to blackmail classmates into sex between spring 2007 and fall 2008. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison for creating a Facebook profile belonging to a nonexistent teenage girl. He used the profile to convince more than 30 of his male classmates to send in nude photos or videos of themselves. The teen then threatened to post the photos or videos of his victims – teen boys – on the Internet if they didn't engage in some sort of sexual activity with him. At least seven of his victims said they were coerced into sex acts, which were documented with a cell phone camera (Musil, 2010).

Want to read more about this? Just enter this phrase, "Teen gets 15 years for Facebook blackmail" into a search engine.

As we continue to live, work and play in what I often refer to as the start of a Digital Renaissance, our global village requires a uniform social norm or "Golden Rule" to help eliminate situations like the one you just reviewed. We must establish appropriate values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors for responsible digital decision making in our rapidly evolving digital world. This very simple but effective 21st Century "Golden Rule" is defined as: "Digital Activity Is Public and Permanent," and by understanding and employing this Golden Rule while using digital technology, you are operating with a Digital Consciousness™.

Before we continue, a few things must be made extremely clear:

1) The first is that this Guide is not technical. It will not require any in depth knowledge of digital technology to understand its message.

2) The themes and information herein may seem redundant. The redundancy occurs to help you understand and develop your Digital Consciousness™; to ensure you do not over-think, dilute, misinterpret or lose sight of this simple but vital thought system being introduced.

3) This Guide is not designed to focus on or react to specific issues or what I call "Effects," and it is not "the Bible" or the final authority on digital safety and citizenship. Instead, this Guide will assist you with obtaining a new and necessary mindset for using rapidly evolving digital tools and technologies. It will help you prevent issues born from ignorant or "blind" decision making when using any digital tools and technologies.

   Note: An individual that makes a decision or takes action without knowledge to evaluate all of the potential Consequences of that decision or action would be making a "blind decision" or "acting blindly." Blind decisions often lead to unexpected and sometimes tragic results. Thus, we do not have to look far beyond common sense to realize that any decision, especially when the decision involves very powerful tools and technologies, made with no information, or worse, misinformation – made blindly – would be an insane method of decision making: Blind Insanity!

4) It is important that you clearly understand what is meant by having a Digital Consciousness™ – having a mindset that your digital actions are Public and Permanent. This does not mean that every single keystroke you make or picture you take will absolutely show up on the front page of a major website, an adult website, the computer of a criminal or on the news. However, having and maintaining the mindset that, "I am prepared for the digital world and future generations to know what I am about to do with my digital device" helps us pause and think before we act. It reminds us that it is possible for our digital actions to be seen by the world for generations. Therefore, it helps us evaluate risk vs. reward, it helps us to prevent our "private" content from becoming available to the world by never (digitally) creating it in the first place!

5) Finally, it is very important to understand that this Guide is absolutely not designed to scare or deter anyone from using digital tools and technologies. We are living, working and playing in a digital world, and to successfully communicate and succeed in each of these aspects of our lives, we must use our

digital tools, but we must know how to use them responsibly, safely, and with awareness. Saying, "don't participate in sexting," "don't cyber bully," "don't talk to strangers online" is great advice, just like "don't touch a hot stove" or "don't play with matches." However, what we lack in our digital world is the communication of a preventative "consciousness" when we deliver these lessons. I will elaborate on this more throughout this Guide, however here is a brief example of this point:

We are taught from a very young age about responsible use of fire or heat before we have a chance to harm ourselves with this element. When we say "don't play with the stove" or "don't play with matches" we concurrently communicate a "Heat Consciousness." In other words, we instill knowledge that abusing fire or any tool that uses or creates fire (such as matches) is dangerous because you and your surroundings can get burned.

In a digital world however, we say things like "don't sext," "don't cyber bully," "don't do "It" (which makes some people want to do "It" more) but we neglect to accurately communicate a Digital Consciousness™! The "Public and Permanent" thought system must be communicated with reactionary safety tips and advice. What we need to say is, "hey, by participating in sexting, cyber bullying (whatever the trend is), you are abusing digital technology, and abusing any digital tool is dangerous because what you do in a digital world is Public and Permanent – in just one moment you can alter your entire life and legacy."

The mass dissemination and understanding of a Digital Consciousness™ will ultimately construct a global digital community free from negative, life altering and tragic consequences that stem from making uninformed or blind decisions with digital technology. Sure, individuals and organizations will still abuse digital tools and technologies even with a Digital Consciousness™, however, with a consciousness, they will at least realize they are doing it. They will have the ability to evaluate risk vs. reward. They will clearly understand the potential folly of their decision before they make it, which eliminates the excuse, "I didn't know" ensuring they can be (fairly) held accountable for their actions.

Think about it this way:

• We do not wait for a child to run towards a burning building because it might look awesome to communicate that fire can burn (Heat Consciousness).

• We do not wait for individuals to contract a sexually transmitted disease or become pregnant to communicate information about responsible sexual health (Sex Consciousness).

• We do not wait for an individual to drive recklessly harming themselves or others to provide them with the necessary information and skill sets to operate an automobile safely and responsibly (Driver Consciousness).

So why are we mass distributing rapidly evolving digital tools and technologies of incredible power to citizens across the world (including kids and criminals) without communicating a uniform social norm, a Golden Rule – a consciousness – to help citizens prevent mistakes that may lead to Permanent and life altering consequences?

Why are we waiting for Effects like sexting, cyber bullying and sextortion to surface in media typically after a tragedy, to start trying to "deal" with them, or react to them, after they cause issues for so many people? Does this not seem insane when compared to how we proactively handle social and life issues offline (as illustrated in the heat, sex, and driver consciousness examples above)?

Digital technology as a whole is like water in a river – never static, constantly flowing and changing. How we use and rely on evolving (flowing) digital tools and technology will always change, as will the Consequences from our abuse. Trying to focus on all the ways our "private" content can become public and the myriad of Effects and Consequences that ensue from poor [digital] judgment is like trying to dissect, identify and review each drop of water in a river. This would be overwhelming, frustrating, unnecessary and impossible.

Throughout the remainder of this Guide, the necessity of a uniform mindset that our digital actions are Public and Permanent and its practice by all digital citizens will become clear. It is not only vital that you as an individual maintain this thought system when using digital tools and technologies, but it is equally as important that you become an ambassador of this information for your friends, family and peers as they can (blindly) place you at the epicenter of a very serious situation just as quickly as they can harm themselves – just ask Olympic Gold Medal winner Michael Phelps who was suspended from competition for three months by USA Swimming because of a digital photo taken by somebody else at an "event" he was attending. The photo showed the Olympic champion inhaling from a marijuana pipe. By unconditionally using digital technology responsibly, you protect yourself and your community from the negative Consequences that often accompany abuse.

Celebrities, media, and national organizations will not ultimately create the necessary shift in consciousness. You and every citizen in our global neighborhood – the "Secret Crowds" – will ultimately establish the Golden Rule of "Public and Permanent" and will break the cycle of ill-informed decision making – Blind Insanity.

Members of our global village must be independently responsible for their own actions. It is up to each of us as individuals to change the way we think about and use our very powerful digital tools and technologies – to evolve – and to ultimately set an example and standard for future generations to learn from.

"Digital Consciousness™" is the blue print and foundation for informed and responsible use of all current and future technology, despite application, forum, or form.

It is now time to embark on your Course to Digital Consciousness™.