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WHY THE GAZETTE WILL NEVER GET RICH ON BLOGS

Posted by Dave Hughes on September 9, 2009 at 11:30am [View Blog](#)

If the Gazette Telegraph thinks it will improve its bottom line in the face of Internet competition by adopting the worst national faddish feature of Blogs –anonymity - it is bound to be disappointed. For the life of me I can't understand its economic reasoning.

The online Internet version of the Gazette - from freely offering all its news, to posting the reaction to its editorials - permits those who log in – entirely at the GT's expense - to hide their comments behind cute 'handles' for names. As a result the comments posted are usually flip, demeaning to others, superficial, wander away to other topics, and seldom are worth being read by locals seeking to debate the serious opinion of others about particular local news or issues.

Almost as egregious, the interactive 'Blog' discussions are not effectively moderated by Gazette staffers who have written the story or editorial – by keeping the discussions on topic, privately or publically chiding others whose comments 'go over the top.' Only serious breaches of decorum – such as trying to post outright obscenities - are blocked.

What is interesting to me is that the very same Gazette staff, from its editorial writers and Board – or any other responsible organization in town, including the City Council - would never sponsor, or participate in, face to face public meetings where people could make outrageous, or irrelevant, comments without identifying themselves, and where no one really handled the gavel to keep a semblance of order and guide progress in the debate.

As a consequence, one very seldom sees a prominent official or citizen in their own name online. And those who have the fortitude to try it are demeaned so outrageously by the faceless, obscene, 'crowd' nothing is accomplished. It just becomes childish babble – at the Gazette's expense.

I have been online for over 30 years, starting by operating the first free computer bulletin board in Colorado Springs, wherein local political issues were debated. I moderate forums in Washington DC. I never let those who post do so behind pseudonyms. I always use my real name online. As a consequence, using the real potential power of 'electronic democracy' several local issues in the 1980s got resolved – the County management of its costly computer services, and the City's 'Home Occupation' ordinance. It even helped elect a local to City Council.

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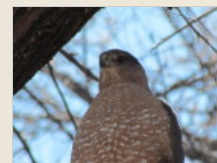
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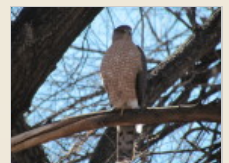

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PHOTOS



**COOPER'S
HAWK**

by Tanja Britton
0 0



**COOPER'S
HAWK**

by Tanja Britton
0 0

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If the Gazette got past its electronic adolescence, it might attract far more readers who would also read the ads – the declining part of its bread and butter. Grow up, Gazette. It's a new electronic age, and you are missing out on its potential benefit, even to you.



Democracy in Roger's Bar, circa 1980

Electronic

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YOU NEED TO BE A MEMBER OF FRESH INK TO ADD COMMENTS!

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Comment by [Dave Hughes](#) on September 15, 2009 at 11:47am

Last night, in the back room of Meadow Muffins, a perfect example of the American heritage of a face to face meeting by at least 50 small business owners took place. It was democracy at work. The issue was a prior decision by the Board of Directors (9 of 11 were present) of the Old Colorado City Associates –OCCA - a retail, dues paying, business association. The board on a contentious vote in a meeting not attended by the 'members' cancelled the marketing contract with a specialist.

When the members heard/read about it they were in an uproar. 35 emails got sent questioning the decision. So a meeting took place at 6PM yesterday. I was there (the Old Colorado City Historical Society is a member of OCCA).

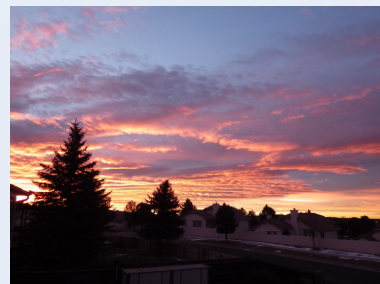
Even though none of those present were trained, the meeting was held under Robert Rules of Order, the discussion got heated and contentious. BUT the President of OCCA wielded the gavel effectively, everyone got to speak who wanted to – for a controlled period of time – straw polls were taken, and in the end, the Board voted to rescind the previous decision – and they set about to project into the future.

What is my point? The ENTIRE proceedings COULD HAVE been done online in a Blog!!!!!! Over a 24 hour period. And those who could NOT attend physically at that precise time in that exact place (at least 50 members of OCCA were not in attendance) could have participated from ANYWHERE they had an online connection.

Electronic Democracy works. But the Gazette has a long way to go before they 'get it' well enough to use the Blog medium for increasing readership (of the ads too).



PHOTO GALLERIES



EVENTS



THE NETWORK MEETING FOR PARENTS CARING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES & SPECIAL NEEDS

April 8, 2016 from 6pm to 8pm – [Zach's Place](#)



PINE FOREST SPRING SHOW & SALE

April 23, 2016 at 10am to April 24, 2016 at 3pm – [Lewis Palmer High School](#)



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Comment by [Dave Hughes](#) on September 15, 2009 at 9:55am

Pete, my basic contention is that Americans, since they organized Town Hall meetings in New England in the 1700s and 1800s, have known how to meet, debate local issues while someone wields the gavel, and then vote to decide the matters before the house. Americans are really good at that method of doing the three things that I say is the essence of a working democracy – first, get information – learn – about an issue, secondly debate it – where usually the most knowledgeable or most affected do most of the talking, while the rest listen, and each makes up his or her mind. And finally all act – vote, or support, or withhold support for the issue. From local taxes to going to war.

Now the Press has been increasingly good at getting information about issues to the public. And its right to do so is guaranteed by the 2d Amendment to the constitution. And we have developed pretty clear procedures for acting on issues – by formal vote, which often as not requires ‘going to the polls’ which only a minority of voters do.

But what I contend has atrophied is the debate itself. More often than not the ‘debate’ only happens between competing news anchors on dominant television or by publishers of newspapers who tell us all in their ‘editorials’ how to think. Or over mass radio talk shows. Or the opinions of moneyed people or organizations are able to use costly, clever, ‘paid’ advertising to try and influence the vote on an issue.

Where is the voice and opinion of just ordinary grass roots PEOPLE? Who don’t own a newspaper, or radio or radio television station?

Until the Internet they had very little opportunity to express to EACH OTHER, effectively, their views.

I saw, from the very beginning – in 1979 – of the personal computer revolution linked to others by, dial up, wireless, or now broadband internet connectivity, the ability of every INDIVIDUAL to go online, read what everyone else has to say, sound off themselves, and through that, over time, make up their individual minds.

But UNLESS the system they log into – whether it be the Gazette’s editorial section, or one set up by city government itself, or is set up as a ‘server’ at small cost today, by individuals – identifies the person registering with their own real name and insures that real name is what appears to all others when they ‘read’ the comments, AND unless those who operate the system MODERATE the discussion – the posters fall into the worst habit of useless Blogs – name calling, baiting and belittling each other, and rarely addressing just the substance of the ‘issue’ at hand. Sound and fury, signifying nothing.

So how do you know I am Dave Hughes online? Well, how does the City Council know that those who come to the podium are who they are AND are residents of the City thus have a right to influence their policies? First of all the Council requires you give your name and who you represent when you step to the podium. City government can check if there is any doubt. And they certainly do at voting precincts.

But why doesn’t City Council – or more precisely the Mayor wielding the gavel – let those who rise to speak call other speaker’s before them names, and deride them. And why does the Mayor keep the speaker on topic, and not let him or her drag in irrelevant – to the issue being debated – or extraneous matters?

Why are appearances before almost EVERY public forum – no matter how hot and contentious the topic or issue – civil debates? While almost ALL online debates by anonymous posters AND in the absence of a pro-active Moderator – are uncivil, noisy, and almost NEVER reach either a consensus or a clear, responsible, division of those who are ‘for’ and those ‘against, or ‘undecided.’ So that those who JUST MONITOR the debate – where few are outspoken – can make up their own mind, silently. Following the old truism, that two can bargain or argue, but it takes three to politic.

As for those who ‘don’t want to give out their real names’ – who says they have to SAY anything online?

The day the Gazette Telegraph sponsors online debates on issues where EVERYONE knows who is sounding off AND a skilled Moderator is present, and wields the gavel, is the day I will take the Gazette’s blogs seriously. Not before.



Comment by [Dave Hughes](#) on September 14, 2009 at 11:24am

Well you raise important points, Pete. But I can assure you my views have come from having engaged in, and thought about, online interchanges for over 30 years now – yes since I put up the very first dial-up-modem line computer Bulletin Board in Colorado Springs in 1979 – which for a number of reasons including being branded by media as one of the first serious efforts to experiment with ‘Electronic Democracy’ using just-invented personal computers and BBSs in the world.

That 1980-1985 ‘Roger’s Bar’ BBS, not only made an impact on public policy in Colorado Springs, it became internationally famous – visited online and personally by reporters who wrote about it from all kinds of publications and programs including the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Denver Post, San Diego Tribune, New York Times Magazine, Rocky Mountain News, Wired magazine, Germany’s ‘Stern’ magazine, Tokyo’s 9 million reader Yomori Shimbun newspaper, McNeil-Lereher PBS News Hour, NPR, National Geographic. And locally in the Gazette Telegraph, long gone Sun newspaper, and other local publications and media programs. It even got put in chapters in many books touting subjects from Virtual Reality to Electronic

governance and has been the topic of Master's and Doctoral Thesis.

Why? Because the public, media, and universities, as soon as the first 'personal' computers were invented - Apple and Radio Shack by 1977 - and I connected them by the first 300 baud modems to the first national networks - the Source, Compuserve, Delphi (long before AOL or internet services) realized something revolutionary in human communications was going on. And that I was a very, very early pioneer in using that technology connecting humans both for politics and education.

I have read and written over one million words on systems all over the world ever since. (do the math - 4+ hours a day, at 30wpm writing 1 hours, 300 wpm reading 3 hours, 365 days a year for 30 years). All online, never on paper - for Gutenberg is dead and I have been trying to bury him all that time) And lectured at and being lectured to academic and scientific institutions wrestling with the Information Age - from Harvard, to Tokyo, Istanbul to London, New Delhi to Caracas. I have really thought about the revolutionary potential in Electronic Democracy. But which - as the Gazette's use of the medium demonstrates - has never worked the way it could and should.

I will address your specific comments in the next response, a little later



Comment by [Pete Van Vuren](#) on September 14, 2009 at 9:46am

Well, First thought is simply "if you ain't man enough to put your name on it, than you ain't man enough to bother listening to". Ok, yeah...that is probably something my father said years ago, but for the most part I think it is true. I know I give alot more credit to things that are signed with a real name. Now...that being said... How do I know you are really Dave Hughes or how do you know I am really Pete Van Vuren? I remember years ago when I wrote a letter to the editor of the Gazette about keeping the lower section of Gold Camp Road closed. He called me and asked if I was really Pete Van Vuren. Yep.

Now, I can see one good side of the ability to be anonymous not so much when blogging, but rather when commenting on Gazette articles. This positive "feature" of course is abused by the masses, but I also know that it gives out officers and other employees of local and county government a chance to chime in as private citizens without risk of "representing the agency" or getting in trouble.

I have heard from some people that some folks get confused by the different rules and different logins for different parts of the Gazette. Blogging for Fresh Ink, is a whole different game then commenting on Gazette articles, yet I believe the article commenting portion still does have a blogging feature attached to it...nit sure how heavily it is used or read.



Comment by [Dave Hughes](#) on September 11, 2009 at 9:05am

I have two problems with that 'dual standard' by the Gazette. First of all, when the GT moved away from the HUB which WAS 'citizen journalism' in that it was for telling and posting 'stories' with a minimum of feedback, it named what it is doing here on Fresh*Ink as 'blogging.' Which is, in my book, two way dialogue, discussion, debate - not just one way 'entertainment.' And indeed, its software (as exemplified by our discussion here) is far more usefully interactive than the HUB ever war.

But since I have always been a strong advocate, from the days over 30 years ago when I set up my first 'Roger's Bar' BBS for 'electronic democracy' - interactive discussion and debate on local public issues, I find this form hospitable to that.

BUT, while the main Gazette online software outside Fresh*Ink supports interactivity, and while the bulk of all the 'news' items printed in the GT or posted online involves public issues - crime, politics, war, economics - the way the Gazette manages THAT opportunity for useful public debate on issues, is wrong! It lets the public post comments anonymously - which you can see encourages irresponsible cat calling and name calling all throughout the GT 'blogs' and there is no 'Moderation' by Gazette reporters or staff.

The GT has it backwards. The Gazette service that requires people to use their real identities and supports graphically supported discussions (electronic democracy) and where even Tim Bergstrom and Travis Duncan sometime comment is on Fresh*Ink. while the software in the Gazette where the 'issues' are, supports irresponsible anonymity, and there is no moderators in sight!



Comment by [Franklin D. Ohlin](#) on September 10, 2009 at 3:56pm

Dave; If the Gazette wishes to maintain a dual standard , so be it. Hopefully, the new Fresh.Ink will follow a more traditional route and continue to provide a venue for serious citizen journalists. To permit the antics associated with the paper to occur here would sooner than later reduce the quantity and quality of the submissions. We have been granted a real opportunity here to not only display (with some trepidation) our journalistic bent, but to also contribute to the community in a dignified manner.



Comment by [Dave Hughes](#) on September 9, 2009 at 12:23pm

You are right, Franklin. But just how much 'responsible citizen journalism' do you read in the current Gazette blogs about USOC, or Heimlicher's resignation, or Bruce's editorial?

And while anything you write intended for the print editorial page of the Gazette is subject to GT editorial approval for printing, I see none of that in the online blogs - or with rare exceptions in the comments following editorials printed in the paper. Its a

dual standard.

And I get tired of seeing the 'personal attacks' online, which are not even addressed to the issues, but to the poster.



Comment by [Franklin D. Ohlin](#) on September 9, 2009 at 12:06pm

While irresponsible posts following news items in the Gazette may go a long way in satisfying one's urge to go public without screaming, "I'm mad as hell , and I'm not going to take it any longer", to the annoyance of the neighbor's dogs and cats, they offer no competition to well well crafted thought. Responsible Citizen Journalism is as old as the republic; at least I don't think Ben Franklin ever took a journalism course.



Comment by [Dave Hughes](#) on September 9, 2009 at 11:52am

Of course the above 'blog' is about the main part of the online Gazette - not Fresh*Ink, where real names are the order of the day.