

THE ETHICS OF FAKING REVIEWS ABOUT YOUR COMPETITION

Rod Carveth
Goodwin College

Abstract

Facebook secretly hired a PR firm Burson-Marsteller to plant negative stories about the search giant, Google. Specifically, Burson-Marsteller was pitching anti-Google stories to newspapers, urging them to investigate claims that Google was invading people's privacy. Burson even offered to help a well-known blogger write a Google-bashing op-ed, which it promised it could place in outlets like *The Washington Post*, *Politico*, and *The Huffington Post*. The plot backfired when the blogger turned down Burson's offer and posted the emails that Burson had sent him. USA Today then reported on the story, embarrassing both Facebook and Burson-Marsteller.

Employing the Potter Box, this paper explores the ethics of a professional communication firm -- Burson-Marsteller -- engaging in spreading fake news. How does a PR firm balance its obligations to the client with its generally agreed upon standards of ethics?

Introduction

In May 2011, the following email appeared in many in-boxes of journalists and bloggers: – "Google quietly launches sweeping violation of user privacy!" The intent of the all-caps headline was to get the media to launch into a major investigatory mode, which they initially did. What they quickly found, however, is that this was an anti-Google campaign commissioned by Facebook and implemented by Burson-Marsteller, one of the leading PR agencies in the world.

This paper is not designed to examine the actions, motives or ethics of Facebook. Companies often cross boundaries in competition with one another. What this paper examines are the actions of Burson-Marsteller. Employing the Potter Box Model, this paper explores why a professional communication firm would engage in spreading false information on behalf of a client.

Background of the Facebook-Google Dispute

As two of the major social media giants in the world, it is expected that the two companies will compete over similar products and applications. Financially, Google generated \$29.3 billion in revenue in 2010, mainly by selling sponsored ads to appear alongside specific search query results (Google, 2011). By comparison, Facebook made \$1.86 billion in 2010 (Horn, 2011). Yet, Facebook has 500 million-plus users, most of whom not only reveal the names of their closest friends and acquaintances, but also information about their online behaviors. On the other hand, Google can only profile Internet users based on their search queries and whom they e-mail and chat with. Consequently, Google's has pushed hard to expand its Gmail users' connections. Google Social Circles was part of that push.

Google Social Circles employs a social graph -- a map of the connections between you and everyone you interact with. Facebook first developed the social graph, but Google has put together parts of it and was further expanding it with Google Social Circles. This version allows users to view publicly available information of other users connected to their Google Chat and Contacts, and includes data such as Facebook accounts, Twitter feeds and personal websites. Both companies want their consumers to use their respective social graph.

For two companies whose book value each approaches \$100 billion, the expectation would be that the social media field would be big enough for both of them. Interestingly, in January 2011, Google's former CEO, Eric Schmidt, insisted Microsoft is Google primary competitive threat (Pepitone, 2011). Still, Facebook's massive database on personal relationships makes it a clear competitor to a company such as Google whose stated mission is to "organize the world's information and make it universally accessible." In April 2011, Google CEO and cofounder Larry Page sent out a memo telling everyone at Google that social networking was a top priority for Google—so much so that 25 percent of every Google employee's bonus in 2011 will be based on how well Google does in social media (Lyon, 2011). In fact, a mere two months later, Google released Google+, a direct Facebook social media competitor. In addition, with technology changing so fast, each company not only has to fend off challenges from each other, but new competitors as well.

Consequently, Facebook directed Burson-Marsteller (hereafter B-M) to circulate e-mails alleging that Google was using a Gmail feature called "Social Circles" to gather information from social sites around the web and share that information without users' knowledge or consent. The email sounded plausible, especially because the email came out during a time Google was responding to a raid of its Seoul office by South Korean privacy regulators and while also preparing for a U.S. Senate hearing over the location-tracking feature in Android smart phones. In addition, in early 2011, Google reached a settlement with the Federal Trade Commission for exposing Gmail users' contacts as part of an ill-fated launch of its Buzz social network in February 2010. But the content of the email was entirely comprised of misinformation.

The plan might have worked if not for a skeptical blogger. On May 3, B-M sent the email to Christopher Soghoian, who blogged on Internet privacy issues. B-M offered to assist in the drafting of an op-ed piece and to pitch the article to media outlets including the *Washington Post*, *Politico*, and the *Huffington Post*. Soghoian asked, "Who is paying [you] for this?" When, the B-M representative wouldn't disclose who had hired the firm, Soghoian posted the e-mail exchange online on May 7. Soghoian added:

Google is at it again -- and this time they are not only violating the personal privacy rights of millions of Americans, they are also infringing on the privacy rules and rights of hundreds of companies ranging from Yelp to Facebook and Twitter to LinkedIn in what appears to be a first in web history: Google is collecting, storing and mining millions of people's personal information from a number of different online services and sharing it without the knowledge, consent or control of the people involved. (Naone, 2011)

Three days later, *USA Today* wrote about B-M's Internet "whisper campaign" for "an unnamed client." (Acohido & Swartz, 2011). The authors discovered that former CNBC technology reporter Jim Goldman and former political columnist John Mercurio were directing the B-M campaign. Goldman pushed the reporters hard to get a story placed about the privacy dangers of Google Social Circle. The reporters

investigated the claims, but found them exaggerated. Acohido and Swartz also found that, ironically, only a small percentage of even avid Google users knew of Google Social Circles, despite the fact that Social Circles had been launched in October 2009. When Acohido and Swartz asked Goldman to comment about the lack of foundation for the claims being made, Goldman refused to answer.

The next day, Dan Lyons of the website *The Daily Beast* revealed that the “unnamed client” was none other than Facebook. Lyons’ investigation found incontrovertible evidence that the company had hired B-M to spread the story. Lyons contacted Facebook, and the company confirmed his discovery. A Facebook spokesperson justified the company’s actions with two reasons: first, Facebook believed Google was engaged in social networking activities that compromised user privacy; and second, the company resented Google’s attempts to use Facebook data in its own social-networking service (Lyons, 2011).

It was this second reason that really drove Facebook’s actions. For example, Google built Google News by taking content created by hundreds of newspapers and repackaging it. Google Social Circle employed a similar model, building a social-networking business by using the user data that Facebook has gathered. As a result, Facebook has claimed that Google is violating Facebook’s terms of service when it uses Facebook member data in that manner.

The company took a slightly different stance in an interview with Julianne Pepitone of CNNMoney (Pepitone, 2011). The company told Pepitone “no ‘smear’ campaign was authorized or intended.” Rather, the company merely “wanted third parties to verify that people did not approve” of Google’s using their personal data -- including Facebook data -- in Google Social Circles. Thus, Facebook hired Burson-Marsteller to “to focus attention on this issue.” The company did admit it could have handled the matter “in a serious and transparent way” (Pepitone, 2011).

Meanwhile, B-M spokesperson Paul Cordasco quickly issued a statement that admitted that it should not have kept the identity of Facebook a secret, and added: “Whatever the rationale, this was not at all standard operating procedure and is against our policies, and the assignment on those terms should have been declined (Pepitone, 2011).

On May 12, B-M announced it would no longer be working with Facebook. In addition, while the company would not fire any of its employees, it would give some employees additional ethics training. Facebook responded by saying it hadn’t instructed Burson-Marsteller to plant the Google story in the way the PR firm attempted. In other words, both agency and client were trying to throw the other company “under the bus.”

In the meantime, Google stayed out of the fray. Chris Gaither, Google’s senior manager of global communications and public affairs, stated, “We have seen this email reportedly sent by a representative of the PR firm. We’re not going to comment further. Our focus is on delighting people with great products” (Rodriguez, 2011). This appeared to be a very shrewd public relations strategy because so long as the story concerned a potential corporate smear, any potential privacy concerns about Google Social Circles would be pushed into the background. In an indirect way, the refusal of Google to comment on the clumsy smear tactic also communicated that Google does not take Facebook seriously as a competitor.

The next section of the paper briefly reviews business ethics in general, and then describes the Potter Box as a model for applying ethics in business operations. The paper then applies the Potter Box to Burson-Marsteller's actions. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of Burson-Marsteller's role in the smear campaign.

The Argument for Ethics in Business

In a broad sense, American culture may be suffering from a crisis in ethics. As we see our politicians, business leaders, and religious figures become entangled in self-woven webs of unethical behavior, natural questions arise as to which behaviors are "correct." More specifically, we see one President impeached for lying, another President perhaps distorting the truth as a pretext for war, news bulletins about the latest Enron-like scandals, televangelists making public apologies for transgressions, and the Catholic church commenting (or not) on priest-child sexual abuse (Crane, 2004). We look to our leaders for moral and ethical guidance, but instead find humans as imperfect as ourselves. How, then, do we learn to behave and communicate ethically? Of course, there is no easy answer. Clark (2003, p. 18) offers a baseline for ethics training: "Business ethics should be an attempt to develop and apply basic principles of fair play to the area of human economic relations. Many problems in business are social problems, involving groups of individuals and dealing with relative positions rather than absolutes."

It is reasonable to wonder if there is a crisis in ethics, particularly in business. The answer is a resounding "yes." That there should be ethics training is without question, but current models are perceived to be inadequate (Crane, 2004). Although most businesses have explicit codes of ethics, very few employees follow such codes, and many are not familiar with the content of those codes (Carlson, 2003). The rise of the economic perspective in business, that is, making profit, appears to make teaching ethics a more difficult task (Gioia, 2002). In fact, Rothenburg (2003) questions the ability of anyone to teach ethics given capitalism's profit motives. Those very profit motives, though, make the need for ethical behavior all the more compelling. Adler (2002) cites a lack of confidence in business due to recent ethics scandals. Furthermore, unethical behavior reduces a company's ability to make a profit (Clark, 2003). Complicating matters is that while there is a growing awareness of the need for ethics training, but the approaches are fragmented, heading in different directions (Freeman, Stewart, & Moriarty, 2009).

Development of the Potter Box

During the tumult of the 1960s, Harvard University theology doctoral student Ralph Potter faced the ethical questions of his time with some degree of bewilderment. In particular, Potter (1999) observed the growing concerns over the build-up of nuclear weapons and saw an ethical quagmire. By asking the simple question of the ethics of nuclear weaponry, Potter began an arduous process of self-examination and inquiry that would form the basis of his doctoral dissertation (Potter, 1965) and lay the theoretical groundwork for what is now called the Potter Box. Just as Potter used this rubric to reach conclusions about nuclear weapons policy, we, too, can follow these steps to determine ethical courses of action as we communicate with others.

The Potter Box developed over the course of decades, reaching its present form through clarifications and modifications from a number of sources. Potter devised the Potter Box and was instrumental in its early development; others have applied the scheme to the analysis of the ethics of particular communication behavior. Potter's original task was to identify a Christian position on nuclear arms policy (1999). Rather than one position, Potter isolated myriad positions. Potter notes that, "Policy

preferences could not be traced back simply to worldviews, religious belief, philosophical orientation, or any one factor. A number of elements of belief were coming together in the establishment of people's concrete decisions about what ought to be done. I set out to identify these ingredients" (1999, p. 2). Potter began this task by sorting his notes, eventually creating four piles of notes. The first pile concerned questions of fact. The next pile contained information on social responsibility for those affected by a policy. "[N]otes on traditional moral philosophy and ethics" (1999, p. 3) constituted the third pile. The final pile "dealt explicitly with underlying philosophical or quasi-theological perspective that gave a hue to all that was said" (1999, p. 3). After sorting his notes, Potter's next step offered the theoretical grounding for his analysis.

The Potter Box is about social ethics; it is not individualistic. As such, the model is as much about sociology as it is philosophy. Thus, it is not surprising that Potter detected strong similarities between his four stacks of notes and Talcott Parsons' Theory of Action. In particular, Potter saw parallels between his stacks and Parsons' Cultural Subsystem of the General Theory of Action (Parsons, 1961). Parsons identifies four elements of the cultural system: adaptation, goal-attainment, integration, and latent pattern maintenance. Parsons maintains that for a culture to survive, these imperatives must be met: a culture must change with changing times and conditions; a culture must create and meet objectives relevant to its functioning; the culture must bring together its diverse elements to form a coherent system; and a culture must provide guides or models reflective of the reality perceived. In narrowing the broad needs of society, Parsons focuses on these four factors in the Cultural Subsystem. Parsons operationalizes the factors as follows: adaptation takes the form of empirical ideas; goal attainment takes the form of communication; integration occurs through evaluation; and latent pattern management provides the grounding for meaning. And these explanations of Parsons' cultural subsystem parallel, strongly, the categories Potter identifies as essential qualities of any ethical debate.

Potter's four stacks reproduced his assessment of a particular issue, but reflect widely observed societal issues: empirical definition of the situation, loyalties rooted in preference, modes of ethical reasoning, and theological or quasi-philosophical religious worldviews (1999). Potter argues that, "any sustained argument, waged by alert, persistent interlocutors, would have, eventually, to deal with each of the four types of questions I had isolated" (1999, p. 4). That is, Potter's ideas are relevant to virtually any contentious issue. And, these four categories parallel Parsons' Cultural Subsystem categories. While the Potter Box moniker has been attributed to theologian Karen Lebacqz (Gillis, 2002), Potter himself claims that "waggish graduate students" first used the term (1999, p. 4).

The next stage of development of the Potter Box came about as a result of the war in Vietnam. Potter, echoing the feelings of much of society, was deeply concerned about the morality of the war. Starting as an attempt to examine Just War doctrine, Potter expanded on his four ideas in *War and Moral Discourse* (1969). Potter examined the morality of the war through the lens of his category scheme, concluding that in the case of Vietnam, ethics demand action. As such, Potter takes ethics from being an intellectual exercise for philosophers and makes it a moral imperative.

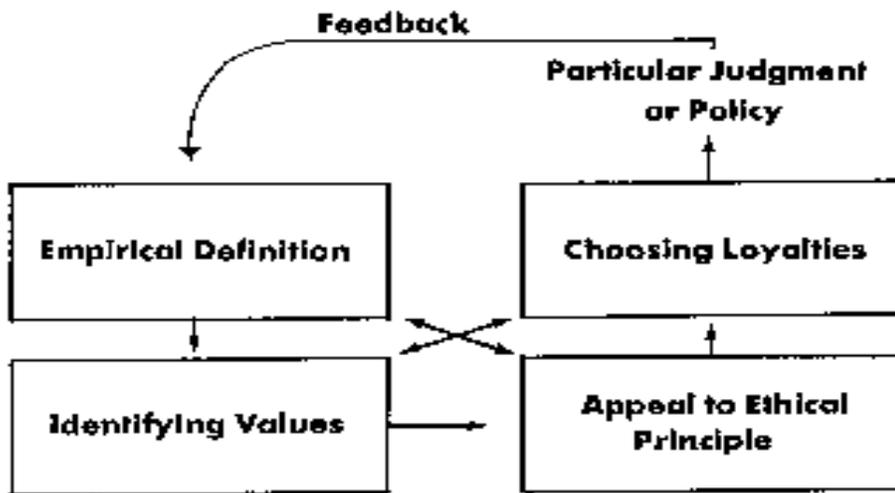
The Potter Box provides opportunities for the critic as well as the communicator. It has been used for scholarly analysis of decisions. Williams analyzes television news coverage decision-making concerning AIDS using Potter's framework (1997). Park and Park utilize the model to assess Korean newspaper coverage of the Starr Report on the Clinton scandals (2000). Potter notes that, "The scheme can be used as a template or paradigm for content analysis" (1999, p. 5).

The rubric has also been employed in public relations (Christians, Fackler, Rotzoll, & McKee, 1998; Guth & Marsh, 2003). The Potter Box provides a method of making ethical decisions, regardless of context. To date, there appears to be no usage of the Potter Box in business communication outside public relations. Kienzler (2004) notes the complexity of ethical decision-making, as well as the challenges posed by teaching ethics, for both teacher and student. Given the contemporary business atmosphere, business communication should investigate the use of this grounded and accessible tool.

Technique: The Potter Box

Christians et al. (2001) provide an effective introduction to the four dimensions of the Potter Box -- definition, values, principles, loyalties -- and construct action steps. The authors are careful to caution that the steps -- usually applied in a systematic order -- are a linked system, a circle, or an organic whole and not a random set of isolated questions. The action steps include: Providing an empirical definition, identifying values, appealing to ethical principles, choosing loyalties, making a particular judgment or policy, and finally, providing feedback.

Figure 1. The Potter Box



Guth and Marsh (2003) elaborate on the concept of the four dimensions of the Potter Box and provide clear definition to the action steps. The authors' clearly defined eight-step process, aided by the Potter Box model, is presented in a summarized form. We believe it to be a meaningful technique for communication researchers and practitioners.

Box One: Empirical Definition

Step 1: Define the situation as objectively as possible. This requires detailed information that is relevant to the ethical dilemma.

Box Two: Identifying Values

Step 2: State and compare the merits of the differing values. Each value influences our discourse and our reasoning on moral questions. These values represent our notions of rights, beliefs, notions of right and wrong that are in conflict, and questions of fact and values.

Box Three: Appeals to Ethical Principles

Step 3: State a principle that each value honors. That means, imagine each value as the basis for a categorical imperative. These principles are broader ideas of justice. For example:

1. Aristotle: The Golden Mean

The moral virtue is the appropriate location between two extremes.

2. Immanuel Kant: Categorical Imperative

Act on the maxim that you wish to have become a universal law.

3. John Stuart Mill: Principle of Utility

Seek the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

4. John Rawls: Veil of Ignorance

Justice emerges when negotiations are without social differentiation.

5. Hedonism: Personal Gain

The best option to take is the most pleasurable option

Step 4: Consider and compare other ethical principles. Do these ethical principles suggest new values to consider?

Box Four: Choosing Loyalties

Step 5: Decide to whom I am being loyal. For each principle, answer this question: If I base my action in this situation on this principle, to whom am I being loyal?

Step 6: Evaluate if there are others to whom I should feel loyal. If you identify new loyalties, do they suggest new principles and values you have not considered? Are there individuals or groups noted in the definition toward which you feel no loyalty?

Step 7: Select a course of action that embraces the most compelling values, principles and loyalties. Examine this course of action in light of your definition. If this course of action still seems to be the best choice, implement it. In each course of action you can now see which values, principles, and loyalties you are honoring.

Step 8: Evaluate the impact of your decision.

Applying the Potter Box to Burson-Marsteller's Actions

The first step in applying the Potter Box is to define the situation. B-M defined the situation as trying to provide a service to its client, Facebook. Based on claims provided by Facebook, the firm would try to convince media outlets that Google's new social media service, Google Social Circles, violated users' privacy. Yet, in dealing with the media, if you are pitching a story, the story at least has to be true. Very early on in the "pitch" process, an influential technology blogger and two *USA Today* reporters found the story that B-M was pitching to be false. At that point, the media are not going to drop the story. Rather, they are going after a different story – why is a PR firm trying to pitch a bogus story? The consequence is that the attempt to manipulate the public backfires, and publicly embarrasses both Facebook and B-M. For a company that trades on its credibility, the error in defining the situation cost B-M more than Facebook.

The second step is identifying values. Clearly, as with any business, B-M needs to attract and keep clients in order to remain economically viable. So, one value that could be applied here is that "the customer is always right." Thus, when B-M's client, Facebook, asks the agency to put out a story raising concerns about the privacy concerns of a rival's products, B-M does what the client asks. B-M could also have truly believed that the charges were true, given the privacy issues that Google was already mired in.

On the other hand, B-M also subscribes to a profession's value system. Below is the statement of the Public Relations Society of America's professional values:

PRSA Member Statement of Professional Values

This statement presents the core values of PRSA members and, more broadly, of the public relations profession. These values provide the foundation for the Member Code of Ethics and set the industry standard for the professional practice of public relations. These values are the fundamental beliefs that guide our behaviors and decision-making process. We believe our professional values are vital to the integrity of the profession as a whole.

ADVOCACY

We serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those we represent. We provide a voice in the marketplace of ideas, facts, and viewpoints to aid informed public debate.

HONESTY

We adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public.

EXPERTISE

We acquire and responsibly use specialized knowledge and experience. We advance the profession through continued professional development, research, and education. We

build mutual understanding, credibility, and relationships among a wide array of institutions and audiences.

INDEPENDENCE

We provide objective counsel to those we represent. We are accountable for our actions.

LOYALTY

We are faithful to those we represent, while honoring our obligation to serve the public interest.

FAIRNESS

We deal fairly with clients, employers, competitors, peers, vendors, the media, and the general public. We respect all opinions and support the right of free expression (PRSA Code of Ethics).

Clearly, B-M fell far short of adhering to the PRSA's guidelines – the very values the profession of which B-M belongs espouses. Specifically, B-M violated the “honesty,” “advocacy” and “independence” provisions of the code. The information being disseminated was false, the company's advocacy on the part of its client was not in the public interest, and the counsel appears not to have been independent. Had B-M followed the PRSA's guidelines as its value system, it is hard to believe that they would have tried to engage in this smear campaign.

It is not clear what ethical principle B-M was following. If the company was merely trying to keep a client like Facebook happy, it was essentially following a principle of hedonism. If B-M felt it was informing the public of a potentially serious privacy problem, then it appears it chose Mills' utilitarianism. But, the PRSA statement of professional values states that PR firms need to disseminate honest information. That value embodies a categorical imperative – a PR firm only present information to the public that it knows to be true. At best, B-M failed to check the veracity of the information. At worst, B-M knew the information to be false – clearly an action governed by hedonistic principles.

In terms of choosing loyalties, B-M chose Facebook. That is consistent with not only generally accepted business practices, but also consistent with the PRSA statement of professional values. However, there is a difference between loyalty and blind loyalty. A PR firm can be loyal to a client, but give it counsel that is in the best interests of the client. That means if a client were to propose engaging in behavior that is unethical, the firm should discourage the practice. A PR firm operating according to blind loyalty will do anything that is asked, even if it hurts its client in the long run.

Conclusion

Burson-Marsteller is a PR firm that has represented lots of blue-chip corporate clients in its 58-year history. Mark Penn, B-M's CEO, has been a political consultant for Bill Clinton, and is best known as the chief strategist in Hillary Clinton's 2008 presidential campaign. In its history, the company has been lauded for its handling of the Tylenol product tampering, Bhopal chemical accident and Three Mile

Island nuclear plant crises. It is such work that has made B-M one of the top five global public relations firms.

Yet, B-M has also conducted itself at times in ethically ambiguous ways. It has done public relations work for countries, such as Indonesia and Argentina, with poor human rights records. It has helped military contractor Blackwater fend off attacks in the wake of Blackwater guards killing 13 Iraqis. Perhaps the action the B-M engaged in that is closest to the Facebook smear campaign is the work the company did in the 1980s and 1990s for tobacco company Philip Morris. During that time, the company engaged in disinformation activities designed to undermine attacks by anti-smoking groups against Philip Morris. Specifically, B-M put out reports casting doubts on Environmental Protection Agency research on the negative health effects of passive smoking.

If B-M were a small PR firm engaging in an ineffective smear campaign, the overall impact of its actions would be minimal. But when a top PR firm spreads disinformation on the behalf of its client – a clear violation of the principles of the profession – that action is far more problematic. As Paul Argenti, a professor of corporate communications at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth, observed, “It’s pretty sleazy on the part of the PR firm and it’s pretty naive on the part of Facebook. It’s kind of a low blow.” After all, if the top firms do not act as role models in terms of the profession’s ethics, who will?

References

- Acohido, B., & Swartz, J. (2011, May 10). Google deflects PR firm's attack of Gmail privacy. *USA Today*. Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2011-05-06-google_n.htm
- Adler, P. S. (2002). Corporate scandals: It’s time for reflection in business schools. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16, 148–149.
- Backus, N. & Ferraris, C. (2004). Theory meets practice: Using The Potter Box to teach business communication ethics. *Proceedings of the 2004 Association for Business Communication Annual Convention*.
- Carlson, D. M. (2003). Moving beyond traditional codes of ethics. *Proceedings of the 2003 Association for Business Communication Annual Convention*, 1–11.
- Christians, C. G., Fackler, M., Rotzoll, K. B., & McKee, K. B. (2001). *Media ethics: Cases and moral reasoning* (5th ed.). New York: Longman.
- Clark, C. K. (2003, Summer). Reviewing the value of ethics education. *Pennsylvania CPA Journal*, 18–19.
- Crane, F. G. (2004, January/February). The teaching of business ethics: An imperative at business schools. *Journal of Education for Business*, 149–151.
- Freeman, R., Stewart, L. & Moriarty, B. (2009, Nov.-Dec.). Teaching business ethics in the age of Madoff. *Change*. Retrieved from <http://www.changemag.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/November-December%202009/full-teaching-business-ethics.html>
- Gillis, T. (2002). *Ethical foundations and moral reasoning*. Elizabethtown College, Department of Communication Website. Retrieved from <http://users.etown.edu/g/gillist1/com311/stall.html>

- Gioia, D. A. (2002). Business education's role in the crisis of corporate confidence. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16, 142–144.
- Google Investor Relations (2011). 2011 Financial Tables. Retrieved from <http://investor.google.com/financial/tables.html>
- Guth, D. W., & Marsh, C. (2000). *Public relations: A values-driven approach*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Horn, L. (2011, January 18). How Facebook earned \$1.86 billion ad revenue in 2010. PC World. Retrieved from <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2375926,00.asp#fbid=h0hZCdTlbEs>
- Karr, S. S. (2004, June). Accounting school gets an ethics makeover. *Financial Executive*, 28–30.
- Kucera, D. (2011, May 12). Facebook hires Burson-Marsteller to pitch story on Google. Bloomberg News Service. Retrieved from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-05-12/facebook-enlists-pr-firm-burson-marsteller-to-pitch-google-privacy-story.html>
- Kienzler, D. S. (2004). Teaching ethics isn't enough: The challenge of being ethical teachers. *Journal of Business Communication*, 41, 292–301.
- Lyons, D. (2011, May 11). Facebook busted in clumsy smear on Google. *The Daily Beast*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/05/12/facebook-busted-in-clumsy-smear-attempt-on-google.html>
- Naone, E. (2011, May 13). Oh, the Irony! Facebook's Google smear campaign. *Technology Review*. Retrieved from <http://www.technologyreview.com/blog/editors/26760/>
- Park, J., & Park, J. (2000). How two Korean newspapers covered the Starr report. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 21, 83–98.
- Parsons, T. (1961). Part four: Culture and the social system: Introduction. In T. Parsons, E. Shils, K. D. Naegele, & J. R. Pitts (Eds.) *Theories of society: Vol 2*. (pp. 963–993). New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Pepitone, J. (2011, May 12). Facebook vs. Google fight turn nasty. *CNNMoneyTech*. Retrieved from http://money.cnn.com/2011/05/12/technology/facebook_google/index.htm
- Potter, R. B. (1965). *The structure of certain American Christian responses to the nuclear dilemma, 1958–1963*. Doctoral thesis, Harvard University.
- Potter, R. B. (1969). *War and moral discourse*. Richmond: John Knox.
- Potter, R. B., (1999, October). *The origins and applications of "Potter Boxes."* Paper presented to the State of the World Forum, San Francisco, CA.
- Potter, R. B. (1972). The logic of moral argument. In Paul Deats, Ed., *Toward a Discipline of Social Ethics* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1972): 93–114.

Rodriguez, P. (2011, May 15). Facebook and Burson-Marsteller: A cautionary tale. The Huffington Post. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pedro-l-rodriguez/facebook-pr-google_b_862199.html

Williams, R. B. (1997). AIDS testing, Potter and TV news decisions. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 12, 148–159.

ROD CARVETH (Ph.D., University of Massachusetts) is Assistant Professor and Curriculum Coordinator for Communication at Goodwin College in East Hartford, CT. Rod has edited two books, *Media Economics: Theory and Practice* and *Mad Men and Philosophy*. His current research examines the use of image restoration discourse in crisis communication, and ethics in public relations.