

Change is good

Michelle Blanc Recently, Michel LeBlanc, a prominent e-marketing strategist for Fortune 500 companies and one of Canada's most popular French bloggers, transformed into Michelle Blanc – and has been sharing her transsexual journey online at femme-2-0.blogspot.com. While the Quebecer's outlook on life and the world is different now, what hasn't changed are her cutting-edge insights and ideas on marketing, web and technology trends, which she writes about at michelleblanc.com.

How life has changed as a woman. I became much more emotional than I was before. I used to swear a lot – I swear much less. I'm still provocative, I still have very rough expressions, I like to shake people up and wake them up, but I do that in a much softer manner, and with more gentleness.

Public response to her sex change. I've had to learn to manage contempt for the first time in my life. Strangely enough, contempt came from places I did not expect, such as from minorities, from the street. I was afraid I would lose my customers, that the business community would not accept me, but they've given me support like you wouldn't believe. On the web, there was tremendous support.

When I started my journey, I started a MySpace area where I got to be friends with 250 transsexuals worldwide, so this was like my virtual support group.

Privacy and the web. Somebody asked me, if somebody asks to be your friend on Facebook, and you don't know that person, do you accept it? I said, if you go to a cocktail party, and somebody presents you with their business card, are you going to say no? Same thing with Facebook. When I go to Facebook, I get to know more about clients. Then you can get to a more personal relationship with your customers. The older generation will have to start grasping the fact that if you're not online, you're nobody.

On PR and bloggers. PR is so way behind, it's unbelievable. The press release – nobody reads it, and nobody cares. They still do the fast-buck writing, the same old s*#!, and they get to everybody on the planet. They do the same with bloggers. Bloggers are outgoing and very thoughtful individuals, and they *are* individuals. In life, you don't go to somebody you don't know and ask them to help you out. Start to ask me how I'm doing, start to know me, build a relationship with me, then you can ask me to help you out. But in PR, they go too fast.

The future of web marketing. Web marketing is a difficult business. An ad agency wants to make the fast buck. They'll make a Flash website, and it has a concept and it moves, and it's completely invisible to search engines and it's non-economical. But clients are starting to wake up: they say, we want to connect, we want ROI, we want to measure, we want to know who we talk to. And agencies, they'll have to start working for the money. I get affected by marketing through word of mouth, through social media, through other blogs, through Facebook, and I think this is where marketing is heading.

A web trend to watch. What really excites me right now is Twitter. Twitter is microblogging, where you have several conversations at the same time, several ideas. Twitter is not mainstream – it is for the most influential people of the web.

The big idea. A big idea is passion. A big idea is authenticity, a big idea is truthfulness.



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