

# *Noise to Signal 2011*



I have a hundred and seventy-three thousand, six hundred and eighty-two unread emails. You tell me what I have to live for.

**We are the silent multitude.**

The ones who watch you Getting Things Done, knowing we can barely get it together to Put Things Off.

The ones whose 4-Hour Workweek includes an additional Free Bonus Forty-Eight Hours of Additional Work.

The ones whose attempts at Lifehacks got us hacked by

**This is our manifesto.** Let the personal effectiveness gurus read it and tremble, for even now it is being broadcast over the airwaves, published in newspapers and shouted from rooftops in a carefully coordinated campaign... (Oh, wait, am I the one who was supposed to get it broadcast, published and shouted? I thought that was you. Hell. No, you're right, it's probably somewhere in my email inbox... that thing is a mess. OK... maybe next year?)



After being exposed to those mutating cosmic rays, my career options were super-villain or social media manager.

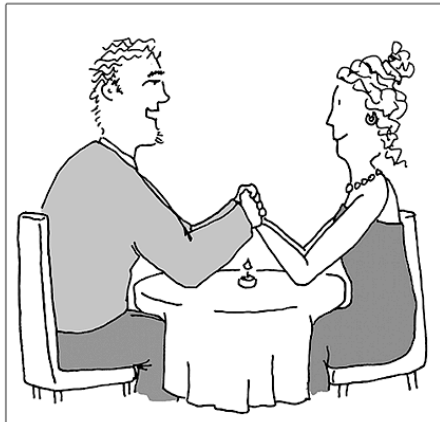
# January

2011

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But we can't break up! Think of all the passwords we'd have to change!



I'm so glad you agreed to meet in person. There are some things that just can't be said in 140 characters.

We say we "love" gadgets and technologies, but we don't mean it with the same sense of romance and passion as we do with spouses, boyfriends or girlfriends. (Maybe you do. In that case, I hereby withdraw any request to borrow your laptop.)

But love with people gets complicated. So, for those of us more used to emoticons than emotions, here's how you know it's really, truly love:

- **She manually strips out the rel="nofollow" attributes when you comment on her blog.**
- **He gives you a veto before tagging photos of you on Facebook.**
- **Your Klout finally surpasses hers... and she sends you flowers.**
- **He #followfridays you. Every day.**

# February

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Hi! We've never met, but I noticed you stopped following me on Twitter a few hours ago. Mind if I ask why?



henrietta44 is now following you on Twitter. Blue Mike is now following you on Twitter. MajorNews is now following you on Twitter. A menacing giant is now following you on the sidewalk.

Just got unsubscribed? Unfollowed? (gulp) Unfriended? Don't take it personally. There's a slim chance that it has nothing to do with your worth as a human being. Here are a few other possible reasons someone has ditched you:

- **Your content is just so compelling that it was interfering with their ability to lead a healthy, productive life.**
- The comparison between your life and theirs was driving them to absolute despair.
- **They were constantly scalding their sinuses because those LOLcats you share so often make them snort coffee through their nose.**
- Their insanely jealous significant others thought they had a crush on you (and not without reason), and demanded they unfollow you. *It was the hardest decision they've ever had to make.*

# March

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Have your people friend my people.

PROPOSED CATEGORIES  
FOR LINKEDIN CONTACTS



FRIEND



CREEPY HIGH SCHOOL  
ACQUAINTANCE



FAMILY



CAN'T REMEMBER THEM.  
TOO EMBARRASSED TO ADMIT  
IT.



WE'VE DONE BUSINESS  
TOGETHER



GOT DRUNK AT A CONFERENCE.  
FOOLED AROUND, WISH I COULD  
REMEMBER HOW FAR IT WENT



COLLEAGUES



GOT DRUNK AT A CONFERENCE.  
FOOLED AROUND, PAINFULLY AWARE  
OF HOW FAR IT WENT



MEMBERS OF AN  
ORGANIZATION



FREQUENT ALLY IN FLAME  
WARS



SOMEONE WHO'LL DIGG MY  
STUFF IF I DIGG THEIRS



I DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW THEM,  
BUT THEY'D MAKE ONE HELL OF  
A TROPHY FRIEND

The web is full of ways to build your LinkedIn following, but maybe you want to stand out from the crowd. Maybe you want to **actively repel** people with your LinkedIn invitations. If so, here are a few choice sentences to drop into your invitation messages:

- **I have the most wonderful pyramid scheme to tell you about.**
- **I'm really trying to build my network back up, as all of my other connections have died violently under mysterious circumstances.**
- **I figure, I'm already opening your mail, following you home and cutting your face out of all your family photographs. Why not connect on LinkedIn?**
- **Remember me from high school? I undermined your self-esteem with ridicule and social exclusion at every opportunity. Ha, fun times!! Would love to reconnect.**
- **Good news: you're one of my known past associates that the court has allowed me to communicate with!**
- **I'm using LinkedIn to connect with people whom I don't actually like, but who I believe could do me some good professionally.**
- **Every once in a while, I choose someone to be a "pity contact". Today's your lucky day!**



# April

# 2011

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Time was when social media gurus were lords of all we surveyed. Our every offhand comment made nation-wide headlines; the mere rumor of an impending appearance would cause supplicants to begin queuing outside of conferences and seminar venues weeks in advance.

What a difference a few years makes. In 18 of the G20 nations, it is now legal to hunt social media gurus for sport. And a halfway house in the Bay Area recently opened, devoted to rehabilitating former social media gurus and teaching them useful skills such as bicycle repair and talking about things. (Write me if you need the address.)

YOUR RESUME SAYS YOU'RE A "SOCIAL MEDIA GURU". WHAT DOES THAT ENTAIL?



I RETWEET OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA GURUS.



WOW! THAT'S THE KIND OF SKILL WE JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF! YOU'RE HIRED!

REALLY?!

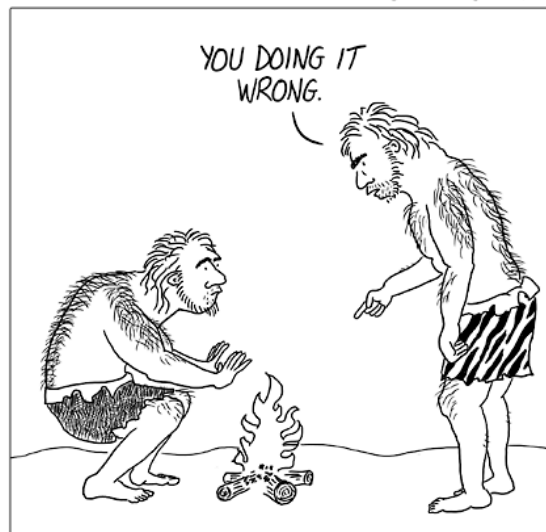


NO, OF COURSE NOT.

robcottingham.ca/cartoon

NOISE TO SIGNAL

Rob Cottingham - socialsignal.com/n2s



First known ancestor of the social media consultant.

# May

# 2011

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Yes, it's a fishhook lodged painfully in my nose. But it's an Apple fishhook, so the user experience is surprisingly pleasant.

What makes us Mac fangirls and fanboys? Is it the gorgeous hardware design? The outstanding user interface? The alchemy of simplicity, power and innovation? A black-turtleneck fetish?

Or perhaps it's just our ability to stand tall and announce to the world, "I'm not a slave of the Microsoft machine! I think different! And I don't have the tech chops to pull off a successful Linux installation!"

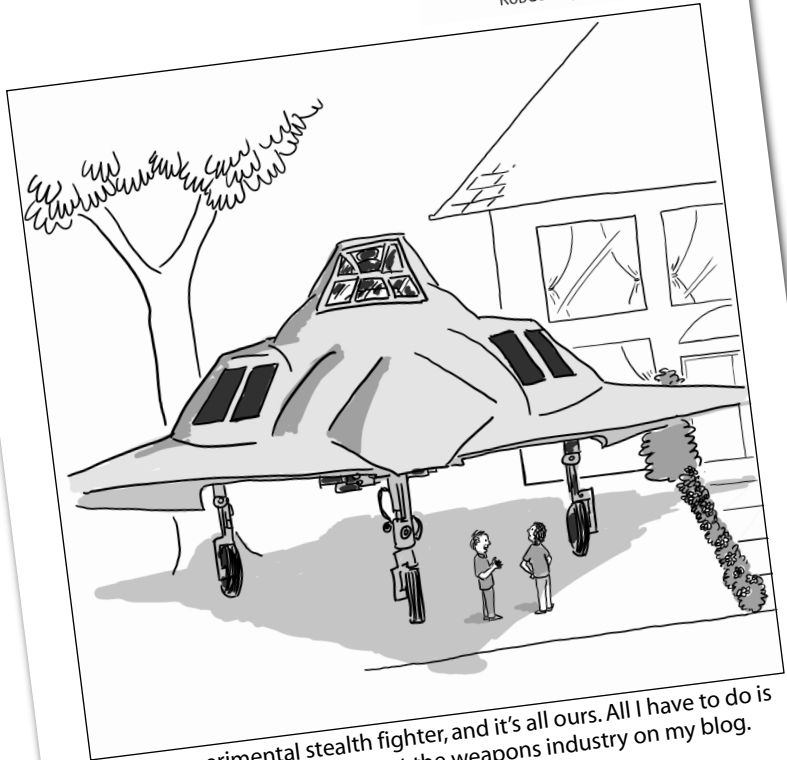


You'll never feel a greater sense of awe at the enormity of the unknown, the vastness of the universe's infinite possibilities, than on the eve of a new iPhone release.

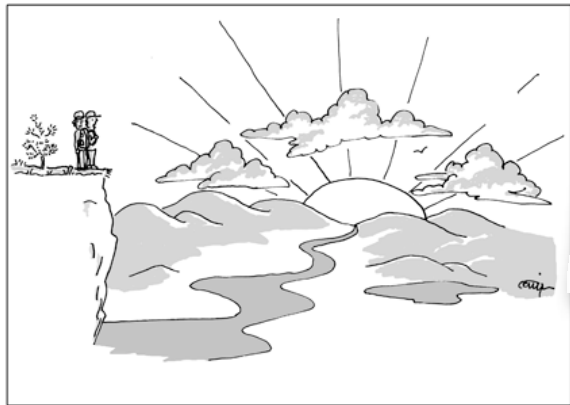
# June

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It's an experimental stealth fighter, and it's all ours. All I have to do is write something nice about the weapons industry on my blog.



I look at this, and it fills me with hope that there's some way to monetize it.

Yes, all that personal self-expression is lovely, but it doesn't pay the Skype Out bills... and chances are your local barista has stopped accepting retweets as tips. So it's time to monetize your blog.

You'll find plenty of well-meaning advice about affiliate marketing and AdSense... but really, that's just nickel-and-dime stuff. If you want to make real money, consider these high-impact income streams for your blog:

- **Use your blog comment feed for live sex chats! Given how long it can take for replies to go back and forth, a single encounter could last for days... even weeks! Beat that, tantric sex!**
- **Sponsored blog posts and links are so 2010. This year's big thing will be sponsored punctuation. Big Pharma alone could keep you in the black: periods brought to you by Midol, em dashes by Cialis and colons by Imodium.**
- **Thinking of product sales? You won't get rich on t-shirts and coffee mugs. Sell just one Soviet-era nuclear warhead, on the other hand, and you can tell your boss to go shove that day job. Pro tip: those Russian hackers trying to break into your blog's database could be valuable links in your supply chain!**

# July

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I have a nagging inner voice that says I'm trying to fill a profound spiritual void by buying more technology. Do you have a device that can shut that voice up?

We're constantly told that we need to choose between a spiritual life and a material one... and, by implication, between spirituality and technology.

But surely that distinction is a false one – as artificial as any gadget or gizmo. We can bridge the gulf between the spiritual and technological worlds with one simple step:

**Start worshipping technology.**

It isn't that big a leap. Chances are you're already tithing – spending at least 10% of your income on tech. All you have to do now is devote your entire being – every thought, every desire, every utterance, every deed – to technology.

Those of us who are Apple fans are pretty much there already. We have a network of places of worship around the world, and have plenty of practice organizing and executing religious wars – just check any forum thread.



See? Right between where you instantiate the class and declare your variables? That's your optimization chakra.



# August

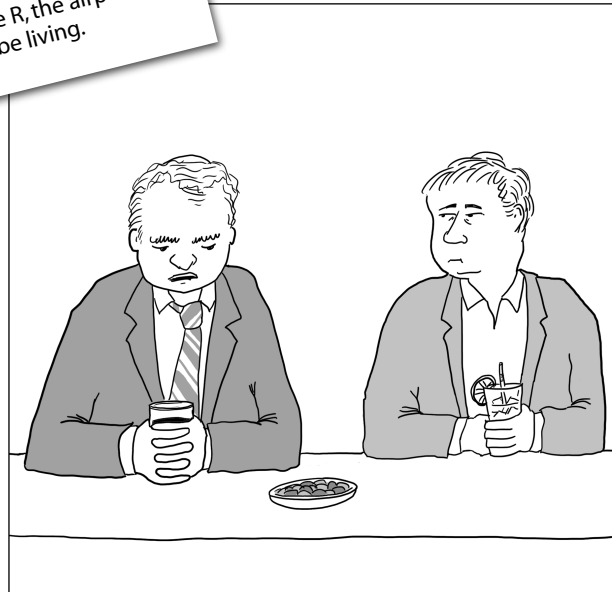
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Next stop: 83rd Avenue, with transfers to the F, the R, the airport shuttle, and the life you were supposed to be living.

I have my share of regrets. I wish I'd started posting my cartoons years ago. I kinda wish I'd chosen a different typeface for this calendar. And I wish I'd never agreed to become a confidential informant for the—  
But enough about me. This is your calendar, and it ought to be about your regrets. Such as not getting the calendar that had a kitten holding onto a chinup bar with "Hang in there!" written on the cover.



Life needs an "Undo" command.

# September

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Hey, everyone! The RFP Fairy is here to finish our proposal!

You may have heard the term "work-life balance". And you've probably heard that you should be aiming to have one.

Yet if you look at who's spreading this idea, you'll find it's the same familiar faces: Self-help authors. Medical professionals. Concerned friends. In other words, **the powerful giant industry known as Big Equilibrium.**

Sure, you could be a sucker. You could knuckle under to The Man and spend more time with your family, enjoy your hobbies, get together with friends...

...or you could be a **real** rebel. Put in 18-hour days. Bring a sleeping bag to the office. Make it your life's ambition to be on a first-name basis with the overnight custodial staff. Only then can you enjoy true, transcendent satisfaction with ~~your job~~ your life.

Define  
"workaholic":



# October

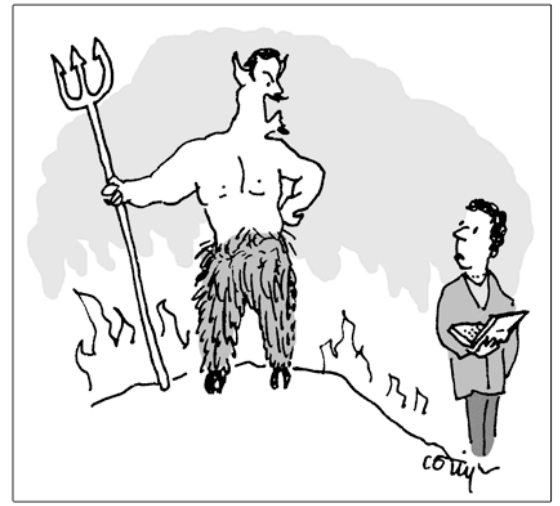
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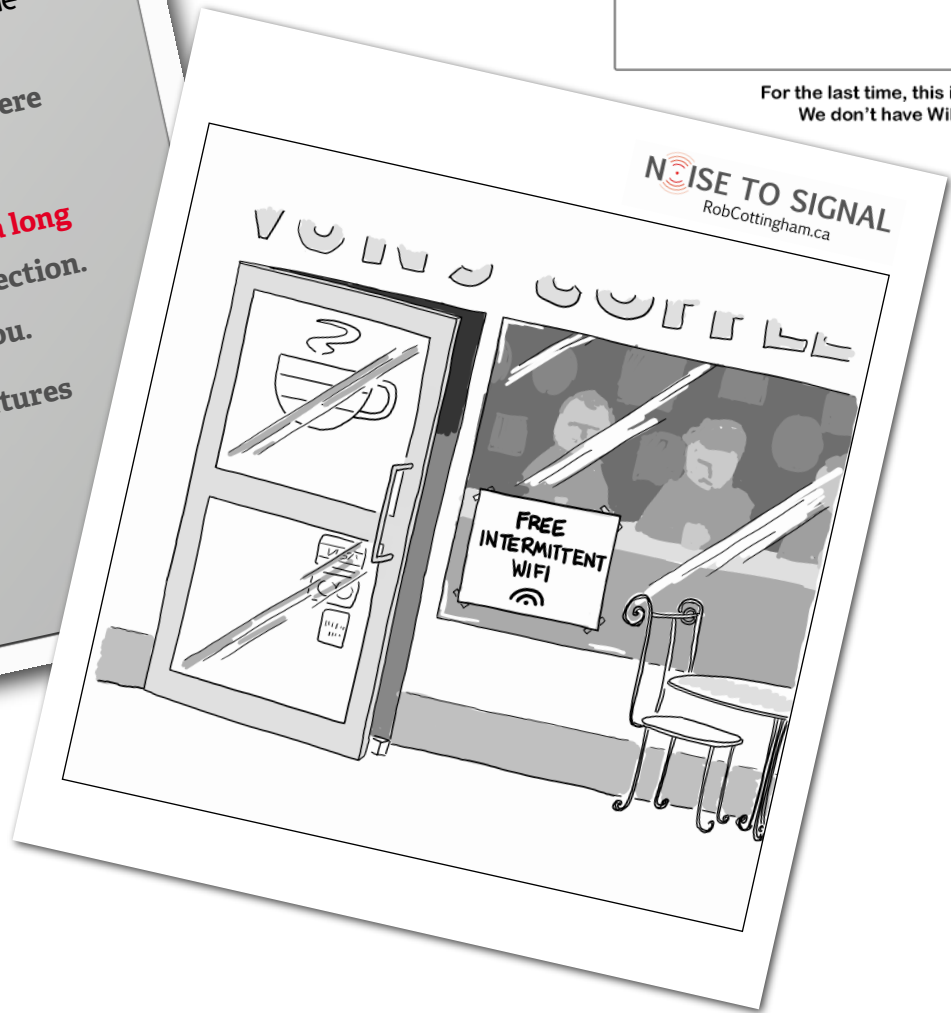
You sit down at your favourite net café, flip open your laptop, look for the WiFi signal... and there's nothing. Whether it's because the router's down or because you've angered the connectivity gods, you aren't getting any Internet today. So now what?

But maybe this is a sign from the universe that you need to disconnect for a little while from all things online. So here are three ways to take this opportunity to reconnect with the offline world:

- **Read a book.** There are some great books out there about WiFi.
- **Call up an old friend you haven't talked to in a long time.** Talk to them about their wireless connection. Maybe ask them to describe some sites to you.
- **Take up a hobby, like oil painting.** Paint pictures of the web sites you'd like to visit.



For the last time, this is Hell!  
We don't have WiFi!



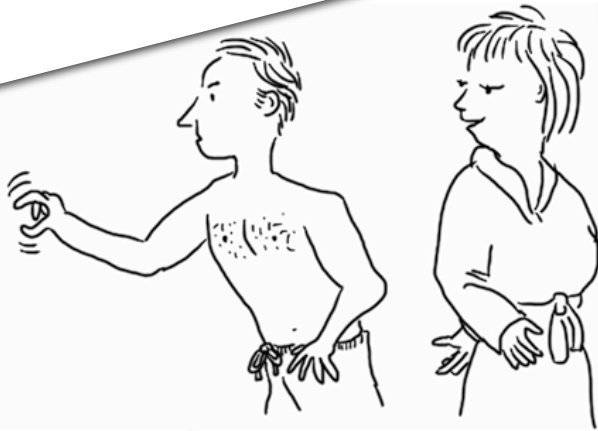
# November

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I had to give up driving. It was interfering dangerously with my texting.



We're a funny species, embracing technology long before we've worked out the social rules around how we're going to use it.

Take mobile phones. People can be incredibly rude about cell phone conversations – people like:

- **Fellow passengers, who stare at me pointedly while I'm having a phone conversation at a perfectly reasonable volume – especially considering the noise the plane makes taking off.**
- Theater staff who refuse to turn the movie soundtrack down so I can hear the guy at the other end of the phone. (Hel-LO – if I'm using the phone to talk, that means I'm not using it to record and pirate the movie... unlike certain people two rows down.)
- **The arresting officer on that texting-while-driving thing. It was all so Policing 1.0.**



# December

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Noise to Signal is a cartoon I've been drawing since 2007. Its first online home was at SocialSignal.com; it now lives in a tasteful two-bedroom walk-up at RobCottingham.com.

Several of these cartoons first appeared on ReadWriteWeb.com, which has been kindly running my cartoons weekly since 2008.

But enough about me. This is your calendar. Please add your biography below.

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