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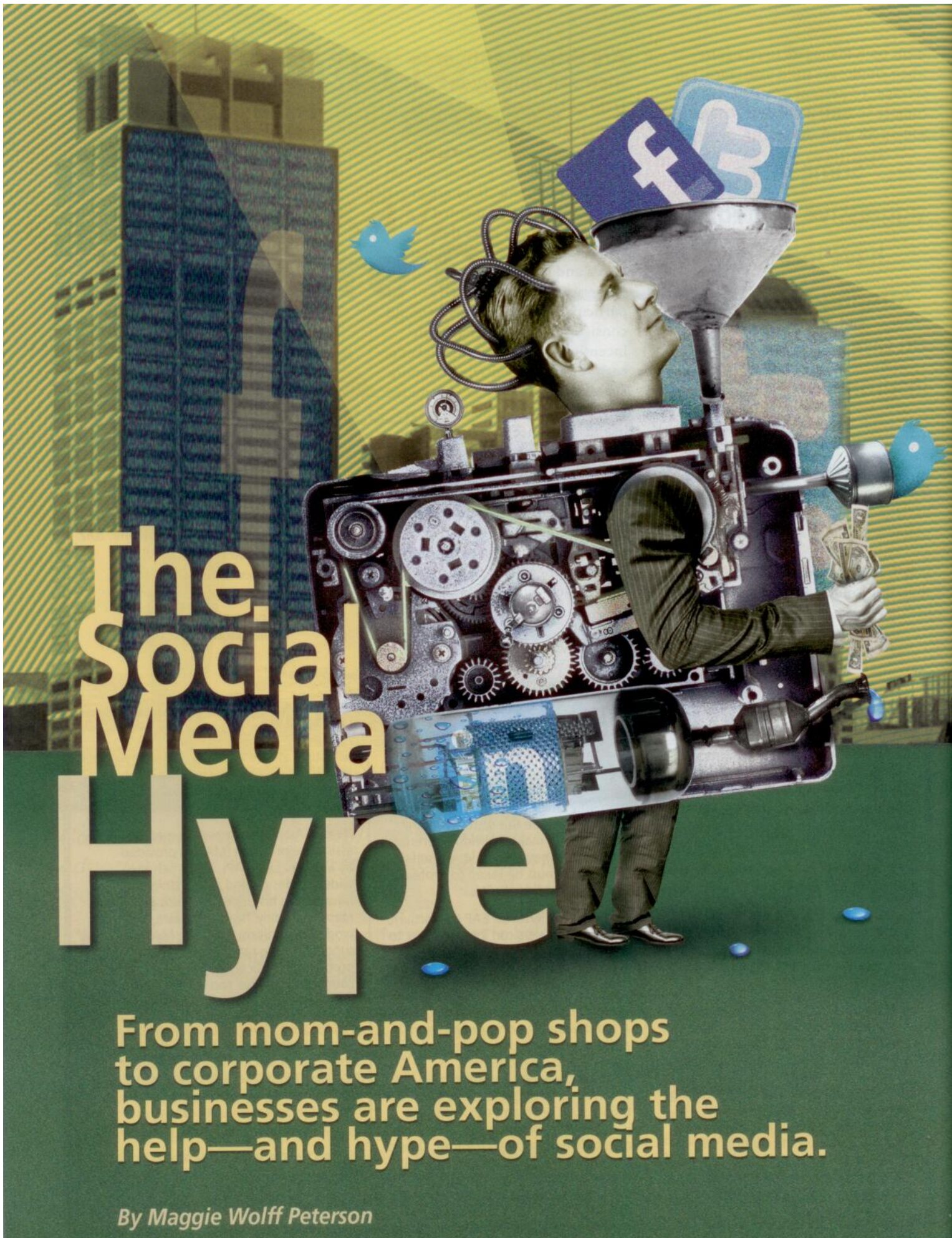
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The Social Media Hype

How Much Is It Helping?



The Social Media Hype

From mom-and-pop shops to corporate America, businesses are exploring the help—and hype—of social media.

By Maggie Wolff Peterson

important real estate on the site. The person responsible has to be able to write witty sales copy on the fly.”

No One Has to Fly Solo

Whereas large corporations have the personnel resources to assign brand or public relations specialists to manage social media, small organizations may not. And that is where consultants like Carrie Fox come in.

Those tweets from Bella Bethesda Salon? Fox is the behind-the-scenes voice writing the tweets that go out under the salon’s name. “It’s not just about churning out information,” says Fox, principal of C. Fox Communications in Silver Spring.

Fox offers media “boot camps” for businesses, in which she explains that using social media correctly means making them part of an overall marketing plan, with stated goals and outcomes. For some businesses, such as a hair salon, that might mean viral distribution of a cellphone photo showing someone’s new hairstyle, with just enough information to credit the stylist.

“You want to make somebody want to click and view that picture,” Fox says.

For a company launching a new product, it might mean engaging print journalists and prompting them to call for an interview. For organizations that once mailed information to constituents, “the company newsletter has become



Social media consultants, like Carrie Fox of C.Fox Communications, are available to tweet, blog or post on Facebook on a client’s behalf.

the company blog or the company videolog,” Fox says.

Fox counsels that used correctly, digital media is just another stream in an integrated marketing campaign, and that smart companies



“Digital media is just another stream in an integrated marketing campaign. Smart companies will still use traditional advertising.”

will still use traditional advertising. But businesses at every level will ignore social media at their own peril, Fox says. “In this day and age, you can’t communicate without it.” ■

Maggie Wolff Peterson is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in national and regional publications, including Newsweek, Women’s Day, The Washington Post and Washingtonian. She grew up in Montgomery County.

Did You Know...

- The number of adults using social networking sites has nearly **doubled** since 2008 (Pew Internet)
- **Two-Thirds** of adult smartphone owners access the internet or email on a typical day (Pew Internet)
- In the first quarter of 2011, of the **101 million** smartphones shipped, **37.3 million** were Android handsets and **18.65 million** were iPhones (Canalys)