

## Rosien taking Natura into new worlds Communications chief is big on social media marketing

By Dorothy Whitcomb

**T**hough she got her start in print journalism and works for a mattress manufacturer, Julia Rosien is hardly bound by the idea of tradition when it comes to corporate communications.

Instead of mailing press releases, she tweets the news. At least that's what she's doing today. Tomorrow? It will likely be something very different. Rosien may be a firm believer in the power of new media marketing, but she's well aware that using it is like tap dancing on quicksand.

"In social media, the playing field is constantly changing," she says. "It's a fast-paced world and you have to stay agile and flexible."

Rosien, a self-described "information junkie," began her career as a print journalist, working as a magazine editor, freelance writer and creative writing instructor. But print journalism started to change and she watched as recessionary and other pressures pushed more and more print media outlets out of business.

At the same time, the world of Web sites, blogs and other new media began expanding rapidly. About three years ago, Rosien made the platform switch herself, plugging into the world of social media while working for an online media company.

Reinvention is something that comes naturally to her.

"I definitely make my life up as I go along," Rosien says. "Life throws so many curveballs at you that you have to learn how to change."

For Rosien, one of those many curveballs was being offered a job at Natura World, a manufacturer of natural and organic mattresses and sleep accessories based in Cambridge, Ontario. When Rosien joined the company a little less than two years ago, Natura



**Jumping into mattresses** Julia Rosien had a career in print journalism and online media before joining Natura World and the bedding business. 'I definitely make my life up as I go along,' she says. 'Life throws so many curveballs at you that you have to learn how to change.'

World had no communications department, relying on outside public relations firms to get its message out.

Ralph Rossdeutscher, Natura World president (or "head honcho" in the company's parlance), had positioned the company as a technologically advanced provider of sleep products since founding it in 1994 with his father, Harry Rossdeutscher. Natura World has always emphasized its use of natural and organic components and has been expanding its product line to include new technologies such as gel.

Rossdeutscher thought there was a disconnect between Natura World's innovations and the marketing tools it was using. Rosien agreed: Natura World, she told Rossdeutscher, should be as forward-thinking in its approach to marketing as it is to product development.

"Social media today is what radio

was in the '80s," she says. "Back then, if you wanted to be in front of your customers, you had to be on radio. Today you have to be on social media."

When Rosien joined Natura World, the company had a Web site, but consumers could only get to it by doing an Internet search for the company by name or through ads on Google. One of her first marketing initiatives was to begin interacting with communities on Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Today, the company has 5,000 followers on Twitter and 2,500 "friends" on its Facebook page.

"I've canceled all of those (Google) ads and now we can directly correlate about 50% of the traffic to social media," she says. "That's up from zero—and we're not paying for it."

Rosien pays close attention to "mom bloggers," mothers who host online support and information communities. "They are very influential and prolific," she says. "When one says something, the others listen."

Successfully promoting a company through social media requires transparency and a light hand, Rosien believes.

"You have to develop the art of selling without selling. Nobody wants to be advertised to anymore," she says. "Social media consumers want to be attended to as people and want a personal relationship with the company, no matter how large it is."

Although Rosien acknowledges the success she has had driving consumers to the Natura World Web site and, from there, to the doors of retailers, she doesn't consider herself a social media "guru."

"No one knows where all of this is going, but I do think it's going to be bigger than any of us can imagine," she says.

**Pioneering spirit** Rosien is a natural-born explorer who is always looking ahead to the next bend in the road. “Social media has taught me that there are still places in the world where you can be a pioneer,” she says. “But to do that you have to get out on the road and see where it takes you. Becoming too comfortable is dangerous. Innovation happens when you’re exploring.”

**Getting involved** Though relatively new to the home furnishings and mattress industries, Rosien is a member of the Better Sleep Council, the International Sleep Products Association’s consumer education arm, as well as WithIt, a professional organization for women in the furniture business.

**The power of running** Rosien began running four years ago and now covers

## ▶ Bio in brief

**Name** Julia Rosien

**Company** Natura World

**Title** Director of communications (aka “dot.communatrix,” according to her tongue-in-cheek business card)

**Location** Cambridge, Ontario

**Education** Rosien studied English literature at the University of Guelph in Guelph, Ontario.

**Family** She and her husband, Stacy, have three sons and a daughter.

about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles), four days a week. “My children love running because it makes them feel powerful and it does me, too,” she says. “It also

reminds me that I have to take all of the problems in my day one step at a time.”

**Small pleasures** As wine connoisseurs, Rosien and her husband, Stacy, are interested in not just the taste of wine but also the science. “I’m very good at drinking red wine,” she says, laughing. “And I adore old cheese, rosemary bread and dark beer.”

**Balancing act** “I place incredible importance on my family, but like many working moms, I struggle with work/life balance,” Rosien says. To make sure she stays connected to her children, she takes long walks with them. The family’s annual camping trip to northern Ontario also helps. “I live for those two weeks,” she says. “We leave all the BlackBerries and computers at home and disconnect completely.” **BT**