

In Real Life

 By [Angela Horn](#)

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Angela Horn is one of 20 speakers who will be sharing an 'idea worth spreading' on the TEDxCapeTown stage on Saturday 20 July as part of TEDxCapeTown's 2013 'Amazing People, Crazy Places' event.

Ever since I first came across the term IRL (In Real Life) sometime in the latter half of last year, it's been hovering there in the back of my mind.

I grew up in the eighties when Bonnie Tyler and big shoulder pads were de rigueur; back then it was real life. Things have changed considerably since then, I get that. While by no means an early adopter, I'm no laggard either.

The social media bug

Yet still I find myself perplexed by the notion that my 'normal' has been reduced to an acronym (a mere three letters, no less).

That's not to say I haven't tried to create a life for myself online mind you, in fact I went the whole hog -Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, heck I even dabbled on Pinterest for a while.

By my urban hippie standards I was a right social network whore.

It was fun for a while too, keeping up with friends via their status updates, posting 'look at me on Table Mountain' photos, even networking a little.

But then I reached that 'full' point.

I suddenly felt underwhelmed by it all, not to mention completely sucked in.

Taking a break

So at the beginning of the year I decided to take a month-long digital sabbatical to clear my head and immerse myself in real life. I have something of an addictive nature, so I expected the experience - at least in the beginning- to be something of a challenge.

I'm prone to procrastination and since I no longer smoke, checking Facebook and Twitter for fresh updates became my

time-waster of choice in recent years (well that and snacking).

But honestly, after I logged out I didn't give the online world another thought. If anything I felt all free and easy, kind of like that feeling you get on a Friday afternoon after a particularly long week at the office.

The deliciousness of it all enveloped me and before long my self-imposed deadline had come and gone unnoticed. I only dipped a reluctant toe back in the water when I took on a new writing gig that included managing the client's Facebook and Twitter accounts. Determined that I wouldn't be sucked back down the social media rabbit hole again, I remained largely inactive.

TEDx

It was only once I secured a spot on [TEDxCapeTown](#)'s 2013 speaker lineup that I finally went back online. For bragging purposes obviously, but more importantly to engage with a bunch of like-minded folk. Suddenly being online was fun again.

Taking a break from social media affords you the much-needed opportunity to be fully present and just live in the moment without distraction. It's also a great time to reassess your online priorities and give your contact list a bit of a clean out.

As a minimalist I'm equally ruthless when it comes to digital hoarding, and that concept extends to people I'm no longer in touch with as much as it does e-books I downloaded and never read.

While I can't say I'm exactly enamoured with the virtual world, neither am I suggesting we ditch social media entirely. Even I'm not that old school and besides, remember Bjorn Borg and his ill-fated 1991 'wooden tennis racquet' comeback?

There's a reason for progress and we need to embrace it. Just not at the cost of everything else. I guess what I'm saying is that it's great to share the good stuff, just not right there and then. Right there and then is for creating memories to tweet about later.

ABOUT ANGELA HORN

I'm a Cape Town-based freelance writer and minimalist lifestyle blogger looking to join a team of like-minded creatives.
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