

Best Practices in Social Media

Summary of Findings from the Third Comprehensive Study of Social Media Use by Schools, Colleges and Universities

April 18, 2012

sloverlinett
STRATEGIES

mStoner

SMART SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

In collaboration with the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)

Overview of findings

Background

Slover Linett Strategies Inc. and mStoner partnered with CASE for the third year in a row in order to research educational institutions about their social media activities. Our 2010 inaugural study was, from what we could tell, one of the first studies conducted of the institutions themselves about how they use social media.

Our overarching goal of this research is to create knowledge and resources to assist education professionals as they assess and implement social media strategies for communication and engagement.

Some of the questions we hoped it would answer include:

- How do professionals in education incorporate social media into their marketing and communication strategies, initiatives, and campaigns?
- What are their goals for social media?
- Which social media sites and tools are in use in the education sector and which are most successful?
- What are current best practices?
- How do they staff their social media efforts?
- How are schools measuring the ROI or impact of social media initiatives?
- What contributes to the successful use of social media?
- What are the barriers to the effective use of social media?
- What does the near future look like for social media in education?

We conducted an online survey among a random sample of approximately 18,000 CASE members – in the US and abroad. We received 1,187 responses (the highest response of all three years) across all types of institutions – a testament to the interest in this topic.

We are just beginning to mine the data from this third round of research and will be releasing a full white paper later in the year. If you're interested in receiving this white paper, please email research@case.org or mstoner@mstoner.com.

For any questions about the study please contact:

Cheryl Slover-Linett
President
Slover Linett Strategies Inc.
505-820-7256
cheryl@sloverlinett.com

Thanks for your interest.

Initial findings

Note that questions 1–7 are for profiling purposes to ensure the representativeness of the respondent base.

1. Are you affiliated with an institution in:

United States or Canada	88%
Europe	8%
Asia Pacific	3%
Latin America	1%
Other	1%

2. [INTERNATIONAL ONLY] What type of institution do you work at?

Higher education/university	79%
Elementary/primary/secondary/high school	13%
Special focus institution (e.g. stand-alone business school, medical school, etc.)	7%
Further education/community college	1%
Other, please specify	0%

3. [NORTH AMERICA ONLY] What type of institution do you work at?

Doctoral/research university	29%
Baccalaureate (four year) college	25%
Master's college or university	15%
Independent elementary/secondary school	19%
Associate's (two year) college	3%
Special focus institution (e.g., stand-alone law school, medical school)	3%
Independent alumni association	1%
Institutionally related foundation	1%
System office	0%
Tribal college	0%
Other, please specify	3%

4. What is the name of your institution? *[open-ended responses]*

5. How many students does your institution have? Please include ALL students, both full- and part-time.

Less than 1,000	22%
1,000 – 4,999	28%
5,000 – 19,999	26%
20,000 or more	24%

6. Which best describes the level of your current position?

Executive director, director or manager	38%
Associate, assistant or deputy director/manager	30%
Specialist, coordinator, or administrative assistant	20%
Associate or assistant vice president	4%
Vice president, vice chancellor or assistant head of school	3%
Dean, associate dean or assistant dean	1%
Other, please specify	4%

7. Which of the following describes your unit, that is, your immediate department or division? *(Please select all that apply).*

Communications	46%
Alumni Relations	40%
Development (including Annual Fund)	37%
Marketing	30%
Advancement Services	22%
Enrollment Management or Admissions	5%
Other, please specify	9%

8. Which one of the following best applies to your unit, that is, your immediate department or division? *(Please select one).*

We have no current involvement with the use of social media	3%
Another unit manages all of our social media activities, without any input from us	2%
Another unit manages all of our social media activities, with input from us	13%
We handle our own social media activities, with some input from others	56%
We handle our own social media activities, without any input from other units	26%

9. Which types of social media do you (your unit) use for each of the specific audiences below? *(Please select each that applies).*

Percent using this type of social media for <u>any</u> audience:	
Facebook <i>(create/manage communities within Facebook)</i>	96%
Twitter	80%
YouTube	73%
LinkedIn <i>(create/manage communities within LinkedIn)</i>	68%
Blogs	55%
Flickr or other photo sharing sites	51%
An institutional website that is an aggregator of social network sites	43%
Social communities provided by vendors through proprietary software <i>(such as Harris Connect, iModules, etc.)</i>	33%
A community created in-house by your unit <i>(create/manage communities)</i>	27%
Geosocial services (such as Foursquare or SCVNGR)	17%

Percent communicating with this audience at all (using any type of social media):	
Alumni	95%
Friends and Supporters	81%
Donors	70%
Current Students	69%
Current Faculty and Staff	66%
Prospective Students	56%
Media	53%
Parents of Current Students	51%
Parents of Prospective Students	45%
Employers	40%
High School Guidance Counselors	23%
Government Organizations	23%

10. To what extent is each of the following goals for social media a goal for your unit?

Goals of social media	Not at all	Not much	Some-what	Quite a bit	Extensively	Mean
Engage alumni	3%	3%	11%	26%	57%	4.3
Create, sustain, and improve brand image	3%	4%	16%	35%	42%	4.1
Increase awareness/advocacy/rankings	9%	9%	22%	35%	25%	3.6
Engage current students	10%	10%	26%	31%	24%	3.5
Build internal community	9%	13%	28%	31%	20%	3.4
Engage current faculty and staff	9%	16%	32%	28%	15%	3.2
Engage admitted students	19%	17%	19%	28%	18%	3.1
Engage prospective students	22%	14%	22%	23%	20%	3.1
Engage the local community	14%	16%	32%	24%	14%	3.1
Recruit students	27%	16%	20%	20%	18%	2.9
Engage parents of current students	20%	18%	27%	22%	13%	2.9
Engage the media	21%	24%	30%	15%	11%	2.7
Conduct research on audiences (alumni, students, etc.)	17%	26%	33%	20%	5%	2.7
Raise private funds	20%	26%	28%	16%	10%	2.7
Crisis and issues management	27%	29%	23%	14%	8%	2.5
Recruit faculty and staff	42%	30%	21%	5%	2%	2.0

11. If your unit has goals for its social media activities not mentioned above, please tell us about them here: *[open-ended responses]*

12. Which of the following do you use the most in meeting your unit's goals? *Please select the three you use the most (Select no more than three).*

Facebook	91%
Twitter	56%
LinkedIn	34%
YouTube	28%
An institutional web site that is an aggregator of social networking sites	17%
Blogs	17%
Social communities provided by vendors through proprietary software (such as Harris Connect, iModules, etc.)	11%
Flickr	8%
A tool like Ning to build social network sites in-house	3%
Geosocial services (like Foursquare or SCVNGR)	0%
Other (Please specify)	6%

13. Which of the following do you consider the most successful in meeting your unit's goals? *Please select the three you consider most successful (Select no more than three).*

Facebook	86%
Twitter	43%
LinkedIn	29%
YouTube	24%
An institutional web site that is an aggregator of social networking sites	16%
Blogs	13%
Social communities provided by vendors through proprietary software (such as Harris Connect, iModules, etc.)	10%
Flickr	7%
A tool like Ning to build social network sites in-house	3%
Geosocial services (like Foursquare or SCVNGR)	0%
Other (Please specify)	6%

14. Has your unit used one or more social media channels as part of a broader, planned campaign to achieve a specific goal?

Yes	50%
No	50%

15. [If "Yes" above] In 2011, roughly what percentage of your campaigns included social media channels?

1-25%	40%
26-50%	19%
51-75%	20%
76-100%	21%

16. Please share with us some details of the campaigns. What goals did you have and what outcomes were achieved? [open-ended responses]

For the next few questions, please select the circle closest to your unit's situation and then identify how you personally would like this to change in the coming year.

17. Is the use of social media developing spontaneously or is it the result of planning in your unit?

Spontaneous			Planned			How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
						More spontaneous	Good where it is	More planned
6%	12%	21%	26%	22%	14%	9%	21%	71%

18. Is the use of social media by your unit under your unit's complete control or is there a coordinating committee or group for the institution as a whole?

Local			Coordinated			How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
						More local	Good where it is	More coordinated
43%	22%	11%	8%	7%	10%	8%	58%	35%

19. Is the use of social media at your institution centralized in one institutional unit or is it dispersed throughout the institution as a whole?

Centralized			Dispersed			How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
						More centralized	Good where it is	More dispersed
16%	14%	12%	9%	15%	34%	30%	58%	13%

20. Does your unit control the support staff that maintains its social media or is that resource controlled by another unit?

Under unit control			Controlled by another unit			How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
63%	12%	10%	3%	3%	9%	More unit control	Good where it is	More control by another unit
						16%	81%	3%

21. Does your unit completely control the content of your unit's social media sites or does it have to be approved by another unit, a committee, or an individual outside your unit?

Under unit control			Must be approved			How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
70%	13%	6%	3%	3%	5%	More unit control	Good where it is	More outside approval
						11%	87%	3%

22. Which outreach and marketing methods do you use to promote your social media initiatives? Check all that apply.

Website	91%
Email	88%
Social media	79%
Internal publications	67%
Direct print mail	52%
Outreach and marketing at events	52%
Blogging	23%
External publications (not your institution's publications)	21%
Search engine optimization or search engine marketing	21%
Radio	6%
TV	4%
Other (please specify)	4%

23. How would you rate the overall success of your unit's use of social media, in terms of achieving its goals?

Not at all successful	3%
Not very successful	11%
Somewhat successful	65%
Very successful	20%
A model for successful use of social media	2%

24. To what extent does your unit use each of the following outcome measures to evaluate your social media initiatives?

Outcome Measures	Not at all	Not much	Some-what	Quite a bit	Extensively	Mean
Number of active “friends,” “likes,” members, participants, people who post, or number of comments	3%	7%	22%	41%	27%	3.8
Volume of participation (unique person counts)	10%	9%	29%	37%	15%	3.4
Number of “click-throughs” to your website	10%	13%	28%	36%	13%	3.3
Event participation	15%	18%	37%	24%	6%	2.9
Anecdotal success (or horror) stories	17%	19%	39%	22%	4%	2.8
Volume or proportion of complaints and negative comments	26%	27%	32%	11%	4%	2.4
Penetration measure of use among target audience	30%	25%	27%	14%	4%	2.4
Surveys of target audiences	32%	31%	25%	10%	3%	2.2
Donations	40%	26%	21%	10%	4%	2.1
Analysis of content of/number of mentions in blogs	43%	22%	22%	11%	2%	2.1
Number of applications for admission	52%	20%	16%	10%	2%	1.9

25. In what way has social media been most successful for your institution? *Please select only one.*

Increasing engagement with our target audiences	57%
Increasing awareness of your school	14%
Building a stronger internal community	9%
Creating awareness of key institutional initiatives	7%
Increasing attendance at our events	4%
Recruiting students	3%
Communicating during campus issues/crises	3%
Increasing donations	1%
Other (please specify)	3%

26. For each of the following statements about the use of social media, please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Some-what disagree	Some-what agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Top 2 Box
Social media have great potential for achieving important goals in my unit	0%	1%	3%	20%	43%	33%	76%
A champion is essential to the successful implementation of social media in our institution	1%	6%	9%	24%	36%	25%	61%
My unit benefits from institutional support and buy in for social media deployment	3%	9%	12%	26%	35%	15%	50%
It is difficult to measure “return on investment” from the use of social media	3%	13%	16%	36%	23%	10%	33%
Expertise to help our social media efforts is readily available	4%	16%	18%	31%	24%	7%	31%
In the education sector, no one has figured out yet how to use social media effectively	14%	33%	23%	18%	10%	3%	13%
The main reason we’re engaged in social media development is because our competitors do it	19%	33%	20%	19%	7%	2%	9%
It’s too soon to say whether social media will be useful at all in our line of work	31%	39%	16%	8%	6%	1%	7%

27. To what degree is each issue below a barrier to the successful use of social media in your unit?

Potential Barriers	Not at all	Not much	Some-what	Quite a bit	Extensively	Mean
Staffing for day-to-day content management	10%	15%	26%	28%	21%	3.4
Staffing for site development	11%	16%	32%	28%	14%	3.2
Lack of relevant human resources in my unit	13%	25%	26%	23%	14%	3.0
Expertise in how to implement it	17%	27%	32%	18%	5%	2.7
Slow pace of change	20%	29%	29%	15%	7%	2.6
Funding	21%	31%	27%	16%	6%	2.6
Lack of IT resources	23%	31%	26%	15%	5%	2.5
Lack of institutional clarity about who is responsible for social media initiatives	23%	34%	24%	14%	6%	2.5
Concerns about loss of control over content and tone of postings by others	18%	38%	28%	14%	3%	2.4
Lack of commitment by decision makers	26%	35%	22%	12%	5%	2.4
Uncertainty about usefulness of social media	28%	34%	26%	10%	2%	2.2
Privacy issues	25%	45%	21%	7%	2%	2.2
Institutional red tape	32%	39%	18%	7%	4%	2.1
Legal issues	34%	48%	14%	3%	1%	1.9
Ethical issues	39%	47%	11%	2%	0%	1.8

28. To what degree does your unit or institution have policies and guidelines to address the following related specifically to social media?

Policy Areas	Not at all	Not much	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Extensively	Mean
Branding and graphics	8%	10%	25%	37%	20%	3.5
Content management and control	12%	20%	34%	26%	8%	3.0
Privacy issues	13%	25%	30%	24%	8%	2.9
Negative postings	15%	24%	31%	23%	7%	2.8
Ethical issues	16%	27%	32%	20%	5%	2.7
Legal issues	17%	28%	29%	20%	6%	2.7

29. What units, if any, are responsible for creating, monitoring compliance, and enforcing institution-wide social media policies? *(Please select all that apply).*

Communications/Public Relations	74%
Marketing	39%
Alumni Relations	27%
Advancement Services	15%
Enrollment Management or Admissions	12%
Development (including Annual Fund)	18%
Information technology	17%
None	10%
Other, please specify	7%

30. To what degree is your unit considering each of the following?

Potential Plans	Not at all	Not much	Some-what	Quite a bit	Extensively	Mean
Creating a comprehensive social media plan	5%	12%	29%	33%	22%	3.5
Expanding current social media programs to new audiences	6%	13%	33%	36%	12%	3.3
Expanding current programs to add new social media tools	6%	12%	36%	32%	13%	3.3
Developing formal policies	8%	21%	30%	29%	12%	3.2
Getting help from your professional association (e.g. CASE) in the area of social media	20%	32%	31%	13%	4%	2.5
Hiring staff for social media implementation	34%	29%	19%	12%	7%	2.2

31. Would you be able to share any written or web-based documentation of your social media policies?

Do not have any	46%
Not able to share	40%
Able to share	14%

32. If your unit has distinctive “lessons learned,” significant experience, or success stories in any of the below areas that could help others, please note them.

Area	Lessons Learned
Deployment of a specific social media tool or platform:	<i>[open-ended responses]</i>
Implementation of a specific evaluation approach:	
Application of social media to a specific target audience:	
Effective policies and guidelines for use of social media:	

Staffing in Your Unit

33a. Number of staff dedicated to social media: How many full-time people does your unit have working on social media that are 100 percent dedicated to it (all of their job responsibilities relate to social media)?

0	81%
1	14%
2 or more	5%

33b. Number of staff who work on social media but not fully dedicated to it: How many full-time people does your unit have working on social media who are not 100 percent dedicated to it but spend at least 25 percent of their time on it?

0	20%
1	42%
2	21%
3 or more	17%

33c. What is your estimate of the FTE (Full-time equivalency) effort of all staff in your unit working on social media? (For example, one full-time staff spending 50 percent time (.5 FTE) plus two half-time staff spending all of their time (.5x2=1.0 FTE) = 1.5 FTE total.)

0	17%
0.5	45%
1.0 or 1.5	29%
2 or more	9%

Staffing at Your Institution

34a. Number of staff dedicated to social media: How many full-time people does your institution have working on social media that are 100 percent dedicated to it (all of their job responsibilities relate to social media)?

0	68%
1	19%
2 or more	13%

34b. Number of staff who work on social media but not fully dedicated to it: How many full-time people does your institution have working on social media who are not 100 percent dedicated to it but spend at least 25 percent of their time on it?

0	13%
1	23%
2	17%
3	12%
4	9%
5 or more	26%

34c. What is your estimate of the FTE (Full-time equivalency) effort of all staff at your institution working on social media? (For example, one full-time staff spending 50 percent time (.5 FTE) plus two half-time staff spending all of their time (.5x2=1.0 FTE) = 1.5 FTE total.)

0	9%
0.5	24%
1.0	14%
1.5	13%
2.0	11%
2.5 or more	29%

35. What training resources are provided for staff who focus at least half of their time on social media? *(Please select all that apply).*

External best practices in social media	55%
Internal social media and branding policies	52%
Technical assistance, or how to implement social media	43%
Content development	37%
Engagement strategies	28%
Other (please specify)	19%

36. What is the level of the position that manages the day to day aspects of your unit's social media activities?

Associate, assistant or deputy director/manager	37%
Specialist, coordinator or administrative assistant	34%
Executive director, director or manager	22%
Associate or assistant vice president	1%
Vice president, vice chancellor or assistant head of school	0%
Dean, associate dean or assistant dean	0%
Other, please specify	5%

37. Who does that person (selected above) report to?

Executive director, director or manager	57%
Vice president, vice chancellor or assistant head of school	13%
Associate, assistant or deputy director/manager	10%
Associate or assistant vice president	9%
Dean, associate dean or assistant dean	4%
Specialist, coordinator or administrative assistant	0%
Other, please specify	6%

38. What resources would you find most helpful to help your unit or institution better understand or manage social media? *[open-ended responses]*

