
Best Practices in Social Media

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

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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 this year on a new venture: researching educational institutions about their social media activities. From what we could tell this would be one of the first studies conducted of the institutions themselves about how they use social media.

Our overarching goal was 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 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 18,000 CASE's members – in the US and abroad. We received nearly 968 responses across all types of institutions – a testament to the interest in this topic. We analyzed the responses and compared them to CASE's membership profile and found that our sample of nearly 1,000 professionals was very representative of all of CASE's membership.

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

For any questions about the study please contact:

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Thanks for your interest.

Initial findings

Note that questions 1–8 are for profiling purposes to ensure the representativeness of the respondent base.

1. Are you affiliated with an institution in:

North America	91%
Asia Pacific	3%
Europe	6%
Other	1%

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

Higher education/university	84%
Elementary/primary/secondary/high school	13%
Special focus institution (e.g. stand-alone business school, medical school, etc.)	2%
Further education/community college	1%
Other, please specify	0%

3. [NORTH AMERICA ONLY] What district or region is your institution a member of?

Mid-Atlantic (District II)	19%
Great Lakes (District V)	18%
Southeast (District III)	16%
North Atlantic (District I)	15%
Far West (District VII)	9%
Southwest (District IV)	9%
Mid-America (District VI)	7%
Pacific Northwest and Western Canada (District VIII)	6%

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

Doctoral/research university	31%
Baccalaureate (four year) college	24%
Master's college or university	19%
Independent elementary/secondary school	16%
Special focus institution (e.g., stand-alone law school, medical school)	3%
Associate's (two year) college	2%
Independent alumni association	2%
Institutionally related foundation	2%
System office	0%
Tribal college	0%
Other, please specify	2%

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

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

Less than 1,000	19%
1,000 – 4,999	29%
5,000 – 19,999	28%
20,000 or more	25%

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

Director/manager	45%
Associate, assistant or deputy director/manager	25%
Specialist	12%
Associate or assistant vice president	4%
Vice president/vice chancellor/assistant head of school	3%
Associate dean/assistant dean	1%
Dean	0%
President/chancellor/head of school	0%
Other, please specify	9%

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

Development	41%
Alumni Relations	40%
Communications	38%
Marketing	25%
Advancement Services	24%
Enrollment management or Admissions	3%
Other, please specify	7%

9. 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	4%
Another unit manages all of our social media activities, without any input from us	5%
Another unit manages all of our social media activities, with input from us	14%
We handle our own social media activities, with some input from others	53%
We handle our own social media activities, without any input from other units	24%

10. Which types of social media do you 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	94%
Twitter	67%
LinkedIn	61%
YouTube	59%
Institutional website w/ social network features	58%
Blogs	36%
Social communities provided by vendors	33%
Flickr	33%
Ning	5%

Percent communicating with this audience at all (using any type of social media):	
Alumni	96%
Friends and Supporters	77%
Current Students	69%
Donors	66%
Current Faculty and Staff	64%
Prospective Students	57%
Parents of Current Students	49%
Parents of Prospective Students	43%
Media	42%
Employers	37%
High School Guidance Counselors	23%
Government Organizations	18%

12. 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%	2%	10%	27%	59%	4.4
Create, sustain, and improve brand image	4%	5%	20%	35%	37%	4.0
Increase awareness/advocacy/rankings	12%	8%	22%	32%	26%	3.5
Improve community relations	10%	12%	28%	28%	23%	3.4
Engage current students	13%	12%	28%	27%	20%	3.3
Engage current faculty and staff	13%	17%	34%	24%	12%	3.1
Engage prospective students	28%	16%	15%	18%	23%	2.9
Engage admitted students	26%	13%	20%	24%	17%	2.9
Raise private funds	16%	22%	31%	18%	13%	2.9
Engage parents of current students	23%	18%	29%	21%	9%	2.8
Recruit students	30%	16%	14%	20%	20%	2.8
Crisis and issues management	32%	30%	20%	11%	7%	2.3
Recruit faculty and staff	47%	31%	16%	4%	2%	1.8

13. What other goals does your unit have for its social media activities? *[open-ended responses]*

14. 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	2%
Not very successful	11%
Somewhat successful	64%
Very successful	20%
A model for successful use of social media	3%

15. Which of the following do you consider the most successful in meeting your unit's goals? *Select all that apply.*

Facebook	85%
Institutional web site with social network features	31%
LinkedIn	27%
Twitter	25%
YouTube	23%
Blogs	15%
Social communities provided by vendors through proprietary software (such as Harris Connect, iModules, etc.)	12%
Flickr	8%
Ning	1%
Other (please specify)	3%

[In questions 16 through 21, select the circle closest to your unit's situation and then identify how you personally would like this to change in the coming year.]

16. 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
8%	13%	21%	23%	22%	13%				12%	18%	71%

17. 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%	21%	11%	10%	9%	6%				6%	54%	41%

18. 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%	11%	11%	15%	15%	32%				34%	54%	13%

19. 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?		
61%	12%	8%	4%	5%	10%	More unit control	Good where it is	More control by another unit
						18%	77%	6%

20. 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?		
64%	17%	8%	4%	4%	3%	More unit control	Good where it is	More outside approval
						12%	83%	4%

21. Does your unit have an umbrella social media strategy for all audiences or individual strategies by target audience?

Umbrella strategy			Individual by target			How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
18%	14%	23%	13%	16%	16%	More umbrella strategy	Good where it is	More individual strategies
						31%	30%	39%

22. Does your unit develop social media exclusively in-house or do you use freelancers, consultants, or vendors to help?

In-house resources			Outside resources			How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
75%	14%	5%	3%	2%	1%	More using in-house resources	Good where it is	More using outside resources
						17%	61%	22%

23. 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,” members, participants, people who post	7%	6%	23%	40%	25%	3.7
Volume of participation (unique person counts)	10%	10%	25%	36%	18%	3.4
Number of “click-throughs” to your website	14%	13%	25%	32%	16%	3.2
Event participation	15%	14%	33%	28%	10%	3.0
Anecdotal success (or horror) stories	16%	18%	36%	23%	7%	2.9
Volume or proportion of complaints and negative comments	23%	31%	31%	11%	3%	2.4
Penetration measure of use among target audience	32%	22%	24%	18%	5%	2.4
Analysis of content of/number of mentions in blogs	41%	23%	22%	10%	5%	2.2
Donations	37%	22%	24%	14%	4%	2.3
Surveys of target audiences	41%	21%	23%	13%	2%	2.1
Number of applications for admission	57%	16%	13%	11%	3%	1.9

24. What is the mix of qualitative measures, such as anecdotal evidence and focus groups, and quantitative measures, such as counts of usage and surveys, used in your evaluation of the success of your social media efforts? *(Skip question if you do not currently evaluate social media efforts)*

Qualitative						Quantitative						How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
												More qualitative	Good where it is	More quantitative
7%	21%	35%	17%	16%	5%	24%	28%	48%						

24b. To what degree does your unit conduct evaluations of your social media in-house vs. hire free-lancers, consultants, or vendors? *(Please skip question if you do not currently evaluate social media efforts.)*

In-house resources						Outside resources						How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
												More using in-house resources	Good where it is	More using outside resources
70%	16%	10%	2%	1%	2%	18%	52%	30%						

25. 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	1%	1%	5%	23%	41%	30%	71%
A high level champion is essential to the successful implementation of social media in our institution	2%	8%	14%	24%	33%	19%	52%
My unit benefits from institutional support and buy in for social media deployment	4%	10%	12%	28%	33%	13%	46%
It is difficult to measure “return on investment” from the use of social media	3%	11%	15%	37%	25%	9%	34%
Expertise to help our social media efforts is readily available	4%	19%	23%	28%	21%	5%	26%
In the education sector, no one has figured out yet how to use social media effectively	12%	26%	26%	23%	9%	4%	13%
The main reason we’re engaged in social media development is because our competitors do it	17%	32%	21%	19%	10%	2%	12%
It’s too soon to say whether social media will be useful at all in our line of work	25%	38%	18%	12%	7%	1%	8%

26. To what degree does each of these motivate the implementation of social media at your institution?

Potential Motivators	Not at all	Not much	Some-what	Quite a bit	Extensively	Mean
Demand from alumni or other constituents	3%	11%	35%	34%	17%	3.5
Use of social media by peer institutions	5%	11%	43%	34%	7%	3.3
Strong support from an institutional champion	10%	21%	29%	32%	8%	3.1
Success stories at conferences and conventions	10%	14%	39%	33%	4%	3.1
Media coverage of social media success stories	13%	22%	37%	23%	5%	2.8
Institution rank in U.S. News and other rankings	36%	33%	20%	9%	2%	2.1
Marketing by social media providers	31%	37%	23%	7%	1%	2.1

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	7%	9%	27%	33%	23%	3.6
Staffing for site development	9%	14%	30%	29%	19%	3.4
Lack of relevant human resources in my unit	12%	22%	26%	22%	18%	3.1
Expertise in how to implement it	13%	25%	34%	22%	6%	2.8
Funding	17%	27%	28%	20%	9%	2.8
Lack of IT resources	15%	30%	27%	19%	10%	2.8
Slow pace of change	15%	27%	35%	16%	7%	2.7
Concerns about loss of control over content and tone of postings by others	14%	35%	32%	15%	4%	2.6
Lack of institutional clarity about who is responsible for social media initiatives	19%	29%	30%	15%	7%	2.6
Lack of commitment by decision makers	19%	37%	24%	14%	5%	2.5
Lack of champions at the institutional level	20%	37%	26%	13%	5%	2.5
Uncertainty about usefulness of social media	19%	34%	31%	14%	2%	2.5
Privacy issues	20%	39%	31%	9%	2%	2.4
Turf battles	25%	37%	25%	10%	4%	2.3
Institutional red tape	23%	44%	19%	10%	4%	2.3

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
Lack of interest from those in my unit	32%	41%	19%	6%	2%	2.0
Ethical issues	33%	48%	16%	3%	1%	1.9
Legal issues	32%	48%	17%	2%	1%	1.9

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	13%	13%	24%	34%	16%	3.3
Content management and control	17%	21%	33%	21%	7%	2.8
Privacy issues	22%	27%	30%	15%	6%	2.6
Negative postings	25%	31%	25%	15%	4%	2.4
Ethical issues	26%	34%	24%	13%	3%	2.3
Legal issues	27%	32%	26%	12%	4%	2.3
Impact assessment	29%	38%	24%	6%	2%	2.1

29. What units, if any, are responsible for creating, monitoring compliance, and enforcing institution-wide social media policies? *[open-ended responses]*

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%	16%	31%	35%	15%	3.4
Expanding current social media programs to new audiences	6%	12%	39%	31%	12%	3.3
Expanding current programs to add new social media tools	7%	16%	36%	29%	12%	3.2
Developing formal policies	9%	24%	30%	26%	11%	3.1
Getting help from CASE in the area of social media	29%	34%	28%	7%	2%	2.2
Hiring staff for social media implementation	40%	27%	19%	9%	5%	2.1
Getting help from a social media	41%	36%	17%	6%	1%	1.9

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
consultant						
Hiring a vendor for s.m. evaluation	51%	34%	11%	3%	1%	1.7

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

Do not have any	62%
Not able to share	31%
Able to share	8%

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:	

33. As far as you know, which organizations (other than your own) use social media most successfully?

Do not know of any	59%
Please specify	41% <i>[open-ended responses]</i>

34a. How many full time people does your unit have working on social media?

0	17%
1	45%
2	23%
3	8%
4	2%
5-10	3%
11 or more	2%

34b. How many part time people?

0	48%
1	30%
2	14%
3	4%
4	2%
5 or more	2%

35a. How many full time people does your entire institution have working on social media (just your best estimate)?

0	7%
1	13%
2	13%
3	11%
4	10%
5	11%
6-10	20%
11-19	6%
20 or more	10%

35b. How many part time people?

0	36%
1	16%
2	9%
3	9%
4	4%
5	9%
6-10	9%
11-15	3%
20 or more	7%

36. What position manages the day to day aspects of your unit's social media activities? *[open-ended responses]*

37. What position or institutional unit does that person report to? *[open-ended responses]*

38. What units, if any, are responsible for creating, monitoring compliance, and enforcing institution-wide social media policies?

None	40%
Please specify	60% <i>[open-ended responses]</i>

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

