

FIVE FAST FACTS:

Social Media in the Nonprofit Sector

THE WEBER SHANDWICK SOCIAL IMPACT TEAM UNDERSTANDS THE CRITICAL ROLE THAT SOCIAL MEDIA PLAYS IN ENGAGING AND MOBILIZING ADVOCATES.

In July-August 2009, in partnership with KRC Research, we surveyed 200 foundation and nonprofit executives and senior communications officials to explore how leading nonprofits and foundations are using social media and the value they derive from these efforts.

What we found is that nonprofits are increasingly using social media to engage key audiences, but many struggle to quantify its value and use it to its full potential. Key findings are below. To learn more, visit our Social Impact blog at impact.webershandwick.com.

METHODOLOGY

KRC conducted 200 telephone interviews between July 29th – August 17th, 2009 with nonprofit and foundation executive directors and senior communications officials. The margin of error for the entire sample is +/-6.9 percentage points.

ABOUT WEBER SHANDWICK SOCIAL IMPACT

Weber Shandwick Social Impact builds insight-driven strategic communications programs that bring nonprofit and foundation missions to life, inspire advocates to take action and demonstrate impact. The team, which spans the Weber Shandwick network, includes professionals dedicated to helping private and public sector organizations amplify their voice in key issue debates, advocate on critical causes and inspire donors to give. The team combines the strength of Weber Shandwick's public affairs, corporate and consumer practices. To learn more, visit impact.webershandwick.com.

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1 Extensive Experimentation

Nonprofits are experimenting with social media, but just half are active users.

- Almost all nonprofits (88%) are at least experimenting with social media, but only 51% are active users.
- Almost all (85%) say they plan to use social media more in the future.

➔ **IMPLICATION:** Nonprofits have an opportunity to differentiate themselves by moving from experimentation to active engagement with social media.

We continue to pursue traditional media exclusively

11%

We continue to pursue traditional media, and are experimenting a little with social media

37%

We use traditional media and social media equally

9%

We continue to pursue traditional media, and are experimenting a lot with social media

34%

We are changing focus, relying less on traditional media and more on social media

8%

Organizations with an operating budget of \$25mil. or more are more likely to be experimenting heavily—51%

51% are active users of social media

2 Reaching Broad External Audiences

Most nonprofits say social media is changing how they communicate with broad external audiences, but not narrower categories of stakeholders.

- Two-thirds (67%) of nonprofit executives believe social media has had a positive impact on communications with their external audiences, but are less certain about narrower categories of stakeholders, such as donors (45%), media (39%), and policy makers (31%).
- Most believe traditional media is still more effective in supporting fundraising efforts (67%) than social media (22%).

.....> **IMPLICATION:** To achieve greater success, organizations will need to increasingly focus on fostering two-way conversations and building meaningful and sustainable connections.

3 Expertise & Infrastructure

Nonprofits do not currently have the infrastructure, staff and expertise necessary to take full advantage of social media's potential.

- Many (38%) say they are still struggling with how to best implement social media and almost a quarter (23%) say they are intrigued, but haven't really used social media yet.
- Many nonprofit organizations of all sizes say they need additional or deeper expertise in the area of social media (78%).
- Less than half (47%) say their organization has enough staff to manage their current social media program and 65% say they do not have enough communications staff overall.
- Nearly 70% also face flat or decreased communications budgets in 2010.

.....> **IMPLICATION:** Organizations that invest in social media capacity will build value on multiple fronts—brand building, advocacy and fundraising, to name a few.

4 Staying Relevant

Nonprofit executives understand that social media makes it easier for supporters to organize independently.

- Most believe social media makes it easier for their organization to organize advocates (84%)—but also for advocates to organize independently (83%).

.....> **IMPLICATION:** In order to remain relevant to supporters, nonprofits need to frame their work in terms of impact—the most persuasive way to make the case for why people should get involved.

5 Real Value

For most nonprofit executives, the true value of social media has yet to be determined.

- Less than one-quarter (24%) of nonprofit executives believe social media isn't yet worth the investment, while three-quarters say it is more cost effective than traditional media.
- Although most believe the rewards of social media outweigh the risks (61%), for most the value of social media for them has yet to be determined (78%).

.....> **IMPLICATION:** Organizations should conduct regular assessments of the effectiveness and impact of social media, using key metrics that measure visibility, engagement and advocacy.

The value of social media has yet to be determined for our organization.

