

Social media strategies, methods, evaluation explained

by **Mark Johnson**
WV State University

Social media has been the hot topic for public relations practitioners for the past three years, according to Robert Holland of Holland Communications. Holland said there are currently more than over 500 million Facebook users, with the average user connected to 80 groups. Meanwhile, there are 175 million Twitter users; however only 50 million users follow eight or more accounts. LinkedIn has only 100 million users.



So what do all these numbers mean? While there is a high number of users on each network, public relations practitioners must define how many active users consistently check group pages, and of those, how many are in the target public which are within the marketing objectives. When those factors are taken into consideration, suddenly the potential audience and effectiveness of social media is significantly diminished. “We are still struggling with being able to show a return on investment on social media” Holland said.

“There is no denying the impact of social media on corporate communication. The communication model is no longer lateral or bi-directional,” explained Holland. “It is now ‘all-way’ communication.”

This represents a new challenge for communicators according to Paige Nunn of Dominion Virginia Power. To many, the concept of social media is foreign, and it alienates many of the previous generations, which use the more traditional methods of communication and delivery.

So what’s next? According to Nunn, the first step Dominion took in creating their social media presence was research. However, Nunn cautioned that “analysis paralysis” may occur due to the large amount of information on social media.

How does a utility company use social media? Dominion is now able to relay important messages directly to their customers who are subscribed to their feeds, even though it is Dominion’s policy not to engage all the time, Nunn stated. Dominion does have play books which dictate which messages are to be sent to customers in the event of an outage or disaster.

Nunn and her team broke up their strategy into four pieces: operating, messaging, change management, and measurement strategies. “At the end of the day what does success look like to us?



It means we are not changing what we are saying; it’s how we are saying it,” she stated. Their objectives were to mitigate risk, strengthen relationships, improve favorability, and engage, but “not too much,” Nunn stated.

Social media, however is only one aspect of the internet. According to John Bolt, of West Virginia University (WVU), their communication strategy was to make social media and their website an integral part of its information delivery system.

The internet provides a rapid channel for information delivery that can be focused on target audiences. Developing audience research and effective communication is at the base of all social media strategies.

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New members recognized

Please join the Membership Committee and the Board of Directors in welcoming the following new members for 2011:

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Jennifer Turner

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WVU Office of Emergency Medicine
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Phone: (304) 293-5231



Donors

Amy Wentz Berner
Paul Helmick
Diana Martinelli, PhD
Helen Matheny, APR
Diane Slaughter, CAE, APR, Fellow
Debbie Starks
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50 for \$50 Campaign underway - please contribute

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June Meeting Notice

Crystal Awards Gala: Come celebrate

You've done the work. You've submitted the award entry. The entries have been judged and the results are in. It's time to shine!

Join us on Wednesday, June 15, when we present the Crystal Awards for outstanding campaigns and project entries for 2010. Additionally, awards will be presented for Best in West Virginia (campaign), plus individual honors for Chapter Service Award, Practitioner of the Year.

In addition, Jim Justice, owner of The Greenbrier, will receive the PRSA-West Virginia Chapter's Outstanding West Virginian award.

This year's master of ceremonies will be Charlie Cooper. We would

like to thank St. Joseph's Hospital of Buckhannon and The Manahan Group for their sponsorship of this event. This is an excellent opportunity to invite clients and co-workers to the Crystal Awards



Gala to see your work shine.

The cash reception begins at 5:30 p.m. at the Charleston Civic Center; dinner begins

at 6:00 p.m. and will be followed by the awards ceremony.

The cost of the Gala at the Charleston Civic Center is \$35 per person.

Reservations are due by Friday, June 10. You can register and pay online at www.prsawv.org.

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_____ Yes, I will attend the Crystal Awards Gala on June 15.

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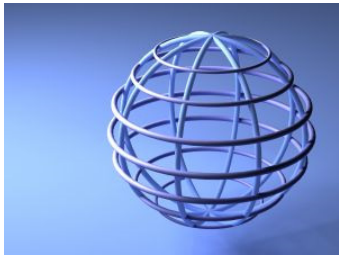
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Make check payable and mail with reservation form to:

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June 15, 2011
Crystal Awards Gala
Charleston Civic Center
Charleston, WV
5:30 - 9:00 p.m.



President's Corner

Lisa Wharton

This May, we held the first of our professional development seminars for the year. I believe that "Social Media: Strategy, Implementation and Evaluation" was a very engaging seminar for all of us. The topics discussed included development of a social media strategy, engaging audiences using social media, and how to ensure that we are getting the greatest value from social media.

In addition to it being a great session, I personally was excited that we

held it in the center of the state at the beautiful Stonewall Resort in Roanoke. We had a great turnout for the event and had public relations professionals from various parts of the state attend. I had the chance to meet many new professionals and hope to see some of you at future meetings.

Please keep in mind that our Awards Gala will be held this month on Wednesday, June 15th, in Charleston. The Awards Gala is our opportunity

to recognize many of you for the great work that you have done in the past year. Please make plans to join us at the Gala. You will have the chance to meet others in your profession and see the exciting and innovative work that they have done in the public relations field. Also, remember that we meet the third Wednesday of every month and have many exciting programs planned throughout the year. I look forward to seeing you again soon.

