
Best Practices in Social Media

Summary of Findings from the Second 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 for the second year in a row in order to research educational institutions about their social media activities. Last year's 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, including contacts in admissions and enrollment departments – in the US and abroad. We received nearly 951 (on par with last year's response) across all types of institutions – a testament to the interest in this topic.

We are just beginning to mine the data from this second 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 mstoner@mstoner.com.

For any questions about the study please contact:

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Thanks for your interest.

Initial findings

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

1. Are you affiliated with an institution in:

North America	88%
Europe	8%
Asia Pacific	3%
Other	2%

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

Higher education/university	76%
Elementary/primary/secondary/high school	11%
Special focus institution (e.g. stand-alone business school, medical school, etc.)	7%
Further education/community college	2%
Other, please specify	4%

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

Doctoral/research university	31%
Baccalaureate (four year) college	25%
Master's college or university	18%
Independent elementary/secondary school	14%
Associate's (two year) college	6%
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	2%

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	18%
1,000 – 4,999	29%
5,000 – 19,999	31%
20,000 or more	23%

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

Executive director, director or manager	40%
Associate, assistant or deputy director/manager	27%
Specialist, coordinator, or administrative assistant	22%
Associate or assistant vice president	3%
Vice president, vice chancellor assistant head of school	3%
Dean, associate dean or assistant dean	2%
Other, please specify	4%

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

Communications	44%
Alumni Relations	40%
Development (including Annual Fund)	36%
Marketing	30%
Advancement Services	19%
Enrollment management or Admissions	8%
Other, please specify	7%

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	4%
Another unit manages all of our social media activities, without any input from us	3%
Another unit manages all of our social media activities, with input from us	12%
We handle our own social media activities, with some input from others	59%
We handle our own social media activities, without any input from other units	22%

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	75%
LinkedIn <i>(create/manage communities within LinkedIn)</i>	65%
YouTube	65%
Blogs	43%
An institutional website that is an aggregator of social network sites	41%
Flickr	40%
Social communities provided by vendors through proprietary software <i>(such as Harris Connect, iModules, etc.)</i>	36%
A community created in-house by your unit using a tool such as Ning <i>(create/manage communities)</i>	12%

Percent communicating with this audience at all (using any type of social media):	
Alumni	92%
Friends and Supporters	77%
Current Students	66%
Current Faculty and Staff	62%
Donors	61%
Prospective Students	56%
Parents of Current Students	47%
Media	43%
Parents of Prospective Students	41%
Employers	37%
High School Guidance Counselors	26%
Government Organizations	21%

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	2%	3%	11%	30%	54%	4.3
Create, sustain, and improve brand image	3%	4%	18%	40%	35%	4.0
Engage current students	9%	13%	26%	30%	23%	3.5
Increase awareness/advocacy/rankings	7%	11%	28%	32%	22%	3.5
Build internal community	9%	14%	31%	30%	17%	3.3
Engage admitted students	18%	15%	22%	24%	21%	3.2
Engage current faculty and staff	10%	18%	35%	23%	13%	3.1
Engage prospective students	23%	15%	17%	20%	26%	3.1
Engage the local community	14%	18%	32%	24%	12%	3.0
Recruit students	25%	17%	17%	19%	23%	3.0
Engage parents of current students	22%	20%	27%	21%	10%	2.8
Engage the media	22%	26%	26%	18%	9%	2.7
Conduct research on audiences (alumni, students, etc.)	17%	28%	33%	16%	7%	2.7
Raise private funds	23%	26%	27%	14%	10%	2.6
Crisis and issues management	31%	27%	24%	12%	6%	2.4
Recruit faculty and staff	47%	30%	15%	6%	2%	1.9

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

12. 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	10%
Somewhat successful	62%
Very successful	22%
A model for successful use of social media	3%

13. 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	43%
LinkedIn	29%
YouTube	26%
An institutional web site that is an aggregator of social networking sites	18%
Blogs	16%
Social communities provided by vendors through proprietary software (such as Harris Connect, iModules, etc.)	16%
Flickr	7%
A tool like Ning to build social network sites in-house	2%
Other (Please specify)	5%

14. 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	87%
Twitter	27%
LinkedIn	24%
YouTube	21%
An institutional web site that is an aggregator of social networking sites	14%
Blogs	13%
Social communities provided by vendors through proprietary software (such as Harris Connect, iModules, etc.)	13%
Flickr	6%
A tool like Ning to build social network sites in-house	2%
Other (Please specify)	4%

[In questions 15 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.]

15. 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
7%	12%	22%	23%	19%	17%				12%	23%	65%

16. 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			
39%	22%	11%	11%	7%	9%

How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
More local	Good where it is	More coordinated
7%	57%	36%

17. 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		
15%	13%	12%	10%	17%	33%

How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
More centralized	Good where it is	More dispersed
35%	54%	12%

18. 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		
60%	13%	9%	5%	5%	9%

How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
More unit control	Good where it is	More control by another unit
18%	78%	4%

19. 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		
66%	15%	7%	4%	3%	4%

How would you like to see this change in the coming year?		
More unit control	Good where it is	More outside approval
13%	84%	2%

20. 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?		
20%	18%	23%	10%	12%	17%	More umbrella strategy	Good where it is	More individual strategies
						29%	30%	41%

21. 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?		
79%	11%	6%	2%	1%	1%	More using in-house resources	Good where it is	More using outside resources
						13%	67%	20%

22. 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	5%	6%	21%	42%	27%	3.7
Volume of participation (unique person counts)	10%	11%	29%	34%	17%	3.4
Number of “click-throughs” to your website	14%	11%	26%	34%	15%	3.2
Event participation	16%	17%	32%	27%	8%	3.0
Anecdotal success (or horror) stories	16%	18%	40%	23%	4%	2.9
Volume or proportion of complaints and negative comments	24%	27%	35%	12%	3%	2.4
Penetration measure of use among target audience	34%	24%	23%	16%	4%	2.4
Donations	43%	24%	20%	10%	3%	2.3
Analysis of content of/number of mentions in blogs	44%	23%	19%	13%	2%	2.2
Surveys of target audiences	34%	26%	25%	13%	2%	2.1
Number of applications for admission	54%	17%	16%	10%	4%	1.9

23a. 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%	16%	38%	16%	18%	5%	24%	29%	47%

23b. 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
75%	13%	9%	2%	1%	1%	17%	55%	29%

24. 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%	4%	22%	39%	34%	73%
A champion is essential to the successful implementation of social media in our institution	1%	6%	7%	23%	35%	28%	63%
My unit benefits from institutional support and buy in for social media deployment	4%	10%	11%	30%	32%	13%	45%
It is difficult to measure “return on investment” from the use of social media	2%	12%	18%	36%	25%	7%	32%
Expertise to help our social media efforts is readily available	4%	17%	20%	31%	22%	6%	28%
In the education sector, no one has figured out yet how to use social media effectively	14%	33%	25%	18%	7%	3%	10%
The main reason we’re engaged in social media development is because our competitors do it	15%	33%	19%	23%	8%	2%	10%
It’s too soon to say whether social media will be useful at all in our line of work	33%	35%	17%	9%	4%	1%	5%

25. 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
Need to sustain and protect our brand	3%	7%	30%	40%	20%	3.7
Demand from alumni or other constituents	6%	15%	31%	35%	13%	3.4
Use of social media by peer institutions	4%	13%	43%	32%	9%	3.3
Strong support from an institutional champion	8%	24%	27%	31%	11%	3.1
Success stories at conferences and conventions	7%	20%	40%	29%	4%	3.0
Potential financial advantages	10%	25%	32%	24%	8%	3.0
Media coverage of social media success	10%	25%	37%	23%	5%	2.9

25. 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
stories by businesses, nonprofits, or other organizations						
Request from leadership (Trustees, President, Dean, etc.)	16%	31%	27%	20%	7%	2.7
Institution rank in U.S. News and other rankings	32%	35%	19%	11%	3%	2.2

26. 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	9%	14%	28%	28%	22%	3.4
Staffing for site development	9%	16%	31%	28%	16%	3.3
Lack of relevant human resources in my unit	16%	20%	28%	21%	15%	3.0
Expertise in how to implement it	14%	29%	33%	18%	7%	2.8
Slow pace of change	14%	27%	35%	17%	8%	2.8
Funding	18%	31%	27%	16%	8%	2.6
Lack of IT resources	19%	32%	26%	15%	8%	2.6
Concerns about loss of control over content and tone of postings by others	14%	36%	30%	15%	5%	2.6
Lack of institutional clarity about who is responsible for social media initiatives	19%	32%	26%	15%	8%	2.6
Lack of commitment by decision makers	23%	38%	20%	13%	7%	2.4
Uncertainty about usefulness of social media	25%	31%	30%	11%	3%	2.4
Privacy issues	20%	44%	28%	7%	2%	2.3
Turf battles	27%	38%	22%	9%	4%	2.3
Institutional red tape	26%	42%	20%	8%	5%	2.2
Lack of interest from those in my unit	32%	36%	18%	10%	3%	2.2
Ethical issues	35%	44%	18%	3%	1%	1.9
Legal issues	33%	47%	16%	3%	1%	1.9

27. 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	11%	12%	27%	33%	16%	3.3
Content management and control	16%	20%	34%	24%	6%	2.8
Privacy issues	18%	24%	32%	19%	8%	2.8
Negative postings	20%	24%	33%	18%	5%	2.7
Ethical issues	22%	27%	31%	15%	5%	2.6
Legal issues	22%	28%	29%	16%	5%	2.5

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

Communications	55%
Marketing	36%
Public Relations	29%
Alumni Relations	21%
Advancement Services	12%
Enrollment management or Admissions	12%
Information technology	12%
Development (including Annual Fund)	11%
None	10%
Other, please specify	6%

29. 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	6%	13%	30%	32%	19%	3.5
Expanding current social media programs to new audiences	7%	14%	34%	35%	11%	3.3
Expanding current programs to add new social media tools	7%	14%	35%	33%	11%	3.3
Developing formal policies	10%	19%	30%	26%	14%	3.2
Getting help from your professional association (e.g. CASE) in the area of social media	23%	33%	30%	11%	3%	2.4
Hiring staff for social media implementation	40%	28%	18%	9%	5%	2.1
Getting help from a social media consultant	41%	35%	15%	7%	2%	2.0
Hiring a vendor for social media evaluation	53%	30%	12%	4%	2%	1.7

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

Do not have any	50%
Not able to share	37%
Able to share	12%

31. 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:	

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

Do not know of any	61%
Please specify	39% <i>[open-ended responses]</i>

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	85%
1	11%
2 or more	4%

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	41%
2	23%
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	19%
0.5	50%
1.0 or 1.5	21%
2 or more	10%

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	74%
1	16%
2 or more	10%

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	15%
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1	23%
2	16%
3	12%
4	9%
5 or more	26%

33c. 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	27%
1.0	17%
1.5	12%
2.0	9%
2.5 or more	26%

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

Specialist, coordinator or administrative assistant	34%
Associate, assistant or deputy director/manager	34%
Executive director, director or manager	23%
Associate or assistant vice president	2%
Vice president, vice chancellor or assistant head of school	1%
Dean, associate dean or assistant dean	1%
Other, please specify	6%

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

Executive director, director or manager	53%
Vice president, vice chancellor or assistant head of school	15%
Associate, assistant or deputy director/manager	11%
Associate or assistant vice president	10%
Dean, associate dean or assistant dean	5%
Specialist, coordinator or administrative assistant	2%
Other, please specify	6%

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

