Refining, Prioritizing, Expanding:

Social Media and Advancement in 2015

by Jennifer Mack and Michael Stoner

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In reporting on last year's Survey of Social Media in Advancement, we emphasized the fact that social media in advancement has gone mainstream. And the results of our survey this year support that conclusion. **Furthermore, schools, colleges, and universities continue to refine their use of social channels as they learn how to use these powerful tools more effectively to engage constituents, communicate about institutional goals and priorities—and raise money.**

Still, despite the widespread embrace of social media and growing sophistication in its use, institutions continue to struggle with how to assess their overall success with these tools.

Here are some key observations about this year's findings:

- The number of institutions using social media in campaigns—which we define as "a broader, planned campaign to achieve a specific goal," including but not limited to fundraising—continues to grow, with 70 percent of respondents indicating they used social media in campaigns, up from 50 percent in 2012 and 59 percent in 2014. In fact, in 2015, 91 percent of institutions that rated themselves as highly successful with social media reported using one or more social channels as part of a campaign.

- The amount of visual content (photos, videos, gifs) institutions used on social networks this year increased substantially over what they said they used three years ago. According to the survey results, an average of 46 percent of institutional postings now contain images, and 12 percent contain videos, compared with 30 percent with images and 6 percent with videos three years ago. Multiple surveys by Pew Internet and other organizations reinforce the fact that people on social networks are more likely to read, click on, comment on, share, and otherwise engage with visual content.

- More institutions are using social media for fundraising. According to this year's survey, 57 percent of institutions are using social media to raise money, vs. 47 percent last year and 35 percent in 2013.

- And, institutions are experimenting with different kinds of fundraising. This year, 42 percent of survey respondents reported holding a giving day, and 84 percent of those individuals said those events went well (56 percent describing them as somewhat successful, 24 percent very successful, and 4 percent a model for success). Fifteen percent of institutions reported holding a crowdfunding or microfunding campaign, and 87 percent of those respondents considered the project somewhat successful, very successful, or a model for success.

This is the sixth year of our survey, and we added questions about new fundraising techniques, assessment, and frequency of posting.

New Approaches to Fundraising

In 2015, 57 percent of respondents reported using social media to raise money from donors, up from 47 percent in 2014. And 62 percent said they use social media for stewardship purposes and/or to communicate with current donors.

Social-media-based fundraising still accounts for small amounts of revenue, though: Only 13 percent of respondents raised more than $100,000 through social media in the preceding fiscal year, while 64 percent reported raising $10,000 or less. And 83 percent of respondents said that social-media-based fundraising represents 5 percent or less of their institution's total.

Still, there's a lot of experimenting going on to see what new fundraising techniques will inspire constituents to give. A majority of institutions (59 percent) are using at least one of these relatively new fundraising strategies: crowdfunding, holding "giving day" events, motivating and involving key ambassadors on social media, establishing a student philanthropy month, and providing a direct-giving button on Facebook. Figure 1 offers a breakdown of the use of these techniques.
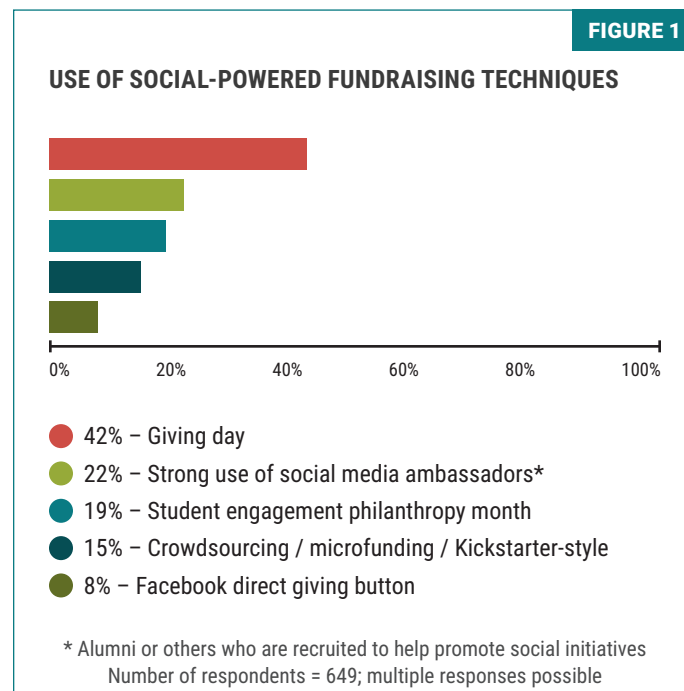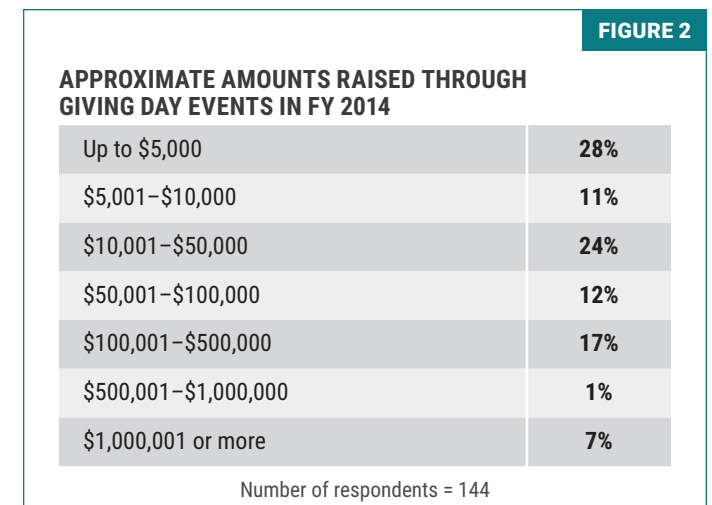
We probed more deeply regarding two of these techniques in particular—giving days and crowdfunding—since there is a lot of discussion about them, both in social media circles and among fundraisers. You'll be hearing more about these techniques, since they're becoming more widespread in education. We'll note, also, that identifying and energizing social media ambassadors is an essential step in conducting a successful giving day or other large-scale online fundraising initiative and also an important element in successful crowdfunding.

Giving Days

Briefly, a giving day (sometimes called a "day of giving") is a 24-hour fundraising event, often held on a day of significance to an institution (like the anniversary of its founding), in which staff, volunteers, and donors attempt to raise money. Giving days are increasingly popular not just for their philanthropic impact but also because they can generate considerable goodwill in the community.

One of the earliest giving days in higher ed was conducted at Florida State University in 2011 and raised more than $186,000. (You can read about FSU's experience in the case study at mstnr.me/GrtGive.) Since then, many colleges and universities have experimented with giving days, including 42 percent of respondents in the past year.

Few institutions are raising large amounts of money through their giving day initiatives, as Figure 2 indicates, but 7 percent raised more than $1 million.

FIGURE 1

USE OF SOCIAL-POWERED FUNDRAISING TECHNIQUES

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

- 42% – Giving day
- 22% – Strong use of social media ambassadors*
- 19% – Student engagement philanthropy month
- 15% – Crowdsourcing / microfunding / Kickstarter-style
- 8% – Facebook direct giving button

* Alumni or others who are recruited to help promote social initiatives
Number of respondents = 649; multiple responses possible

FIGURE 2

APPROXIMATE AMOUNTS RAISED THROUGH GIVING DAY EVENTS IN FY 2014

Up to $5,000	**28%**
$5,001–$10,000	**11%**
$10,001–$50,000	**24%**
$50,001–$100,000	**12%**
$100,001–$500,000	**17%**
$500,001–$1,000,000	**1%**
$1,000,001 or more	**7%**

Number of respondents = 144

New Approaches to Fundraising

What has spurred some institutions to develop their own giving day is the success of Columbia University's Giving Day. Columbia's third such event, in October 2014, raised $11,064,924 for the university and its schools and programs, with 10,452 gifts from 50 states and 53 countries. (We included a case study on Columbia's first Giving Day in our 2013 white paper at mstnr.me/CASE2013.) For more detail about giving days, including additional examples, see Appendix 2.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding (also called microfunding), a technique exemplified by Kickstarter, is becoming a popular way to raise money for all sorts of things, from high-tech gadgets to recordings by niche musical artists. In education, institutions are using the approach for smaller, focused fundraising initiatives that usually seek to finance a program or other project starting with a group of engaged volunteers who are willing to help raise money. While the total amounts of money raised are often small, they can be significant sums to an academic department or a small program. In fact, 37 percent of those who conducted crowdfunding campaigns brought in more than $10,000 from them in 2014.

Most respondents (74 percent) reported taking on five or fewer projects, most (87 percent) with price tags under $50,000. A few (16 percent) reported taking on more than 10.

Figure 3 provides a sense of the total amounts institutions sought through crowdfunding campaigns.

Crowdfunding is often considered a grass-roots fundraising technique—and that's proving to be true at many institutions. This year, 63 percent of respondents reported that there was at least some crowdfunding conducted independent of their unit at the institution, while 28 percent indicated that, to their knowledge, there was no crowdfunding going on outside of their unit. And 5 percent of the institutions have a policy against independent crowdfunding.

For more information and examples of how various campuses have used crowdfunding, see Appendix 3.

TOTAL AMOUNTS INSTITUTIONS SOUGHT THROUGH CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGNS
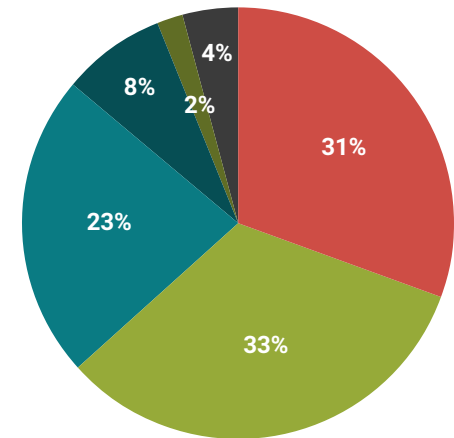
● Up to $5,000	31%
● $5,001–$10,000	33%
● $10,001–$50,000	23%
● $50,001–$100,000	8%
● $100,001–$500,000	2%
● $500,001–$1,000,000	0%
● $1,000,001 or more	4%

Number of respondents = 144

II.
What Does Success Look Like?

Each year, we look carefully at the responses to see what practices, if any, distinguish those institutions that are successful at using social media from those that are less successful.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents consider themselves "somewhat successful" in their use of social media, 23 percent say they are "very successful," and 3 percent say that their unit is a "model for successful use of social media." The remaining 16 percent rated themselves as "not very successful" or "not at all successful."

Here are some characteristics that distinguish the highly successful institutions (that is, those who rated their unit as "very successful" or "a model for successful use of social media") from the rest ("somewhat," "not very," and "not at all" successful).

They plan and measure. Highly successful institutions are more likely to plan, have goals, and measure outcomes (see "Measurement, Assessment, and Engagement," page 6).

They use more channels. In particular, highly successful institutions are:

- more likely to use YouTube (87 percent use it, as opposed to 67 percent overall and 63 percent of the less successful institutions).
- more likely to use Instagram (83 percent, as opposed to 54 percent overall and 49 percent of the less successful institutions).
- more likely to blog (44 percent, as opposed to 28 percent overall and 26 percent of the less successful institutions).
- twice as likely to experiment with Vine (13 percent, as opposed to 7 percent overall and 4 percent of the less successful) or SnapChat (10 percent, as opposed to 5 percent overall and 2 percent of the less successful).

They post more frequently. Among the highly successful institutions:

- 64 percent post to Facebook at least once a day (compared to 49 percent of institutions overall).
- 68 percent share on Twitter more than once a day (vs. 44 percent overall and 36 percent of the less successful).
- 34 percent post to their social media aggregator webpage more than once a day (vs. 24 percent overall).

They post more images than text. The highly successful institutions post more images (52 percent of their posts) relative to text (33 percent of posts), as opposed to less successful institutions, whose posts consist of 43 percent images and 45 percent text.

They have socially active leaders, especially on Twitter. The leaders of the highly successful institutions tend to be more active on Twitter (33 percent, vs. 23 percent of those at less successful institutions).

They use social media in fundraising and raise more money doing so. They do more with social media in fundraising by several measures:

- 64 percent of the highly successful institutions raise money using social media, vs. 57 percent overall.
- 31 percent raised $10,001 to $50,000 in the previous fiscal year through social media.
- 51 percent have giving days, vs. 42 percent overall.
- 33 percent of them have engaged their ambassadors, vs. 22 percent overall and 18 percent of the less successful.
- 75 percent use social media for stewardship of donors, vs. 62 percent overall and 57 percent of the less successful.

They use social media in campaigns. Of the institutions that are highly successful with social media, 91 percent have used one or more social channels as part of a campaign. In contrast, 70 percent of all institutions have done so. Among those who rate their use of social media as less successful, only 63 percent have used social media as part of a campaign.

II.

What Does Success Look Like?

Measurement, Assessment, and Engagement

We continue to be interested in how institutions measure the success of their social media activities. As noted earlier, 58 percent of respondents consider themselves "somewhat successful" in their use of social media; 23 percent say they are "very successful," and 3 percent say that their unit is a "model for successful use of social media." Among the key characteristics of those who rate their unit as "very successful" or "a model for successful use of social media" are that they are more likely to plan, have goals, and measure outcomes, as Figure 4 shows.

We've heard some discussion among advancement leaders about attempts to assess the level of connection individual constituents have with the institution. This is sometimes referred to as "engagement scoring." This year, 34 percent of respondents said that they assign some type of engagement scores to alumni and/or donors. Figure 5 shows some of the most common elements typically used in engagement scores and how frequently they are used by respondents.

FIGURE 4

PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES COMPARED

	Overall	Most Successful
We have checked that the social media channels we use align with the populations we are trying to reach	76%	89%
We adhere to a plan for how frequently we post	63%	73%
We have a clear and useful statement of the goals we want to accomplish through social media	47%	68%
We have a clear and useful statement about the voice we are aiming for in social media	43%	61%
We adhere to a plan for what time of day we post on social media	33%	42%

Number of respondents = 666; Highly successful = 169

FIGURE 5

FACTORS USED TO SCORE DONORS AND ALUMNI (AVERAGE POINTS ALLOCATED)

	Alumni	Donor
Giving	34	46
Participating in person at events	13	11
Volunteering in person	10	8
Participating in mentoring, internship, or employment programs	7	5
Engaging with social media	5	3
Alumni sharing of thought leadership and expertise	5	4
Engaging in recruiting prospective students	5	4
Participating in virtual events or online activities	4	3
Survey data on satisfaction	2	1
Volunteering online	2	1
Staff evaluations of satisfaction	1	1
Other	12	14

Number of respondents: Alumni scoring = 111; Donor scoring = 105

II.
What Does Success Look Like?

There's growing awareness among the 66 percent that don't score alumni or donors that this practice could yield important insights. Here are some of the comments that respondents shared:

> "We fully understand that it is something we should be doing, and we will at some time in the near future."

> "We don't have metrics built into our database to measure engagement levels (we by all means should, though!)."

> "We would like to work on developing engagement scores, but right now, we are strictly giving rating scores based on an individual's likelihood to give (based on their income, location, giving history, etc.)."

> "We are just beginning this! It's a new path for the institution and various colleges."

> "We are not currently scoring for engagement actions but we are in the active process of developing a methodology and plan for that."

> "We're just starting to measure engagement at the most basic level using three things ... event attendance, made a contribution, or serves on a volunteer board."

These responses, plus the overall responses to questions about how institutions measure engagement, indicate there's room for growth when it comes to measurement. In general, even sophisticated and successful institutions are not measuring and tracking as rigorously as they might.

The top forms of measurement associated with social media use are still numbers of followers/friends/connections/comments (89 percent), clickthroughs to a website (75 percent), and anecdotal evidence (55 percent). Only 9 percent tie such information back to a customer relationship management system.

Finally, the majority of respondents (54 percent) rely on free software platforms such as Facebook Insights and Twitter Analytics to derive data on social media effectiveness. Hootsuite is also popular—43 percent use it, as do 52 percent of those who consider themselves to be highly successful. No other platform—such as Radian 6, Meltwater, Sprout Social, etc.—is widely used by respondents.

Channels, Content, and Posting Frequency

This year, we've seen the number of social channels that institutions use proliferate. This is not surprising, since new channels are being developed and introduced regularly. Some never achieve any kind of widespread use; others become widely popular; and still others take off among key audience segments. For example, SnapChat and Instagram are currently very popular among American teens and young adults, who have migrated to them in the past few years from Facebook.

Every year we add several emerging channels to our survey and drop others that appear to be waning. This year, we dropped geosocial apps (such as Foursquare), since interest in and use of these in education, as is the case generally, has waned.

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram remain the most widely used social channels, both by consumers and by institutions that are seeking to communicate with and engage them. As Figure 6 shows, Facebook is used by nearly all respondents to our survey (92 percent), and large majorities use Twitter (81 percent), LinkedIn (76 percent), and YouTube (67 percent).

In general, this year's survey responses indicate modest declines in the use of some channels. In particular, there's a decline in the use of blogs: Use of blogs peaked in 2012 at 55 percent; this year we are seeing 28 percent using blogs, even lower than the level we saw back in 2010 (36 percent).

What Does Success Look Like?

FIGURE 6

TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA USED IN ADVANCEMENT

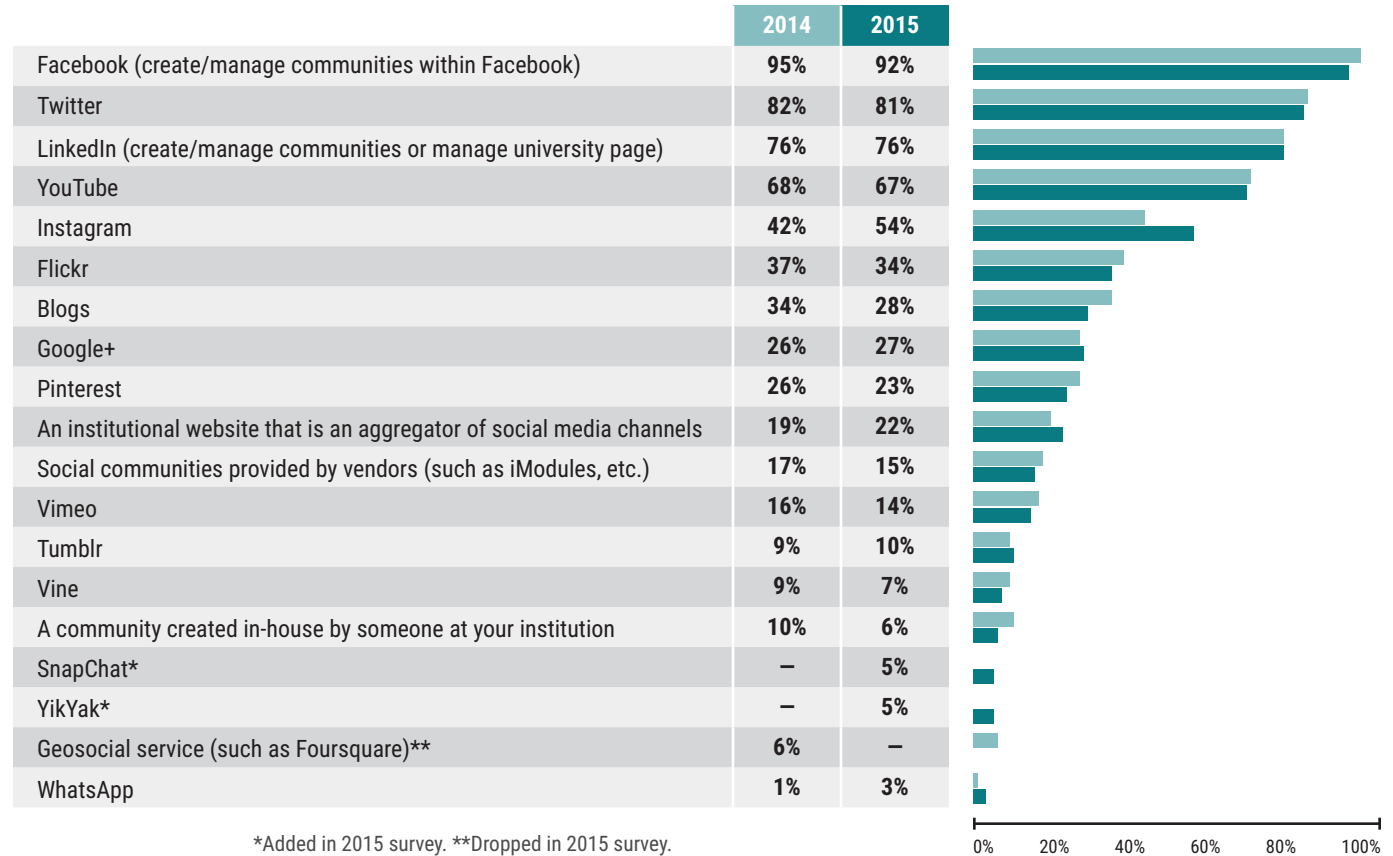|	2014	2015
Facebook (create/manage communities within Facebook)	95%	92%
Twitter	82%	81%
LinkedIn (create/manage communities or manage university page)	76%	76%
YouTube	68%	67%
Instagram	42%	54%
Flickr	37%	34%
Blogs	34%	28%
Google+	26%	27%
Pinterest	26%	23%
An institutional website that is an aggregator of social media channels	19%	22%
Social communities provided by vendors (such as iModules, etc.)	17%	15%
Vimeo	16%	14%
Tumblr	9%	10%
Vine	9%	7%
A community created in-house by someone at your institution	10%	6%
SnapChat*	–	5%
YikYak*	–	5%
Geosocial service (such as Foursquare)**	6%	–
WhatsApp	1%	3%

*Added in 2015 survey. **Dropped in 2015 survey.
Number of respondents: 2014 = 1,882; 2015 = 894

There's been notable growth in the use of Instagram in the past three years—this year, 54 percent of respondents reported using it, making it the fifth most-used social channel. Instagram is widely popular among consumers in general, reflecting a trend toward more images and video that is showing up across all channels, from Facebook to emerging channels like Vine and Periscope, which support real-time video streaming.

Institutions are responding to this widespread interest by posting more images and video than ever before on their social channels— and less text. Figure 7 shows the changes from three years ago.

FIGURE 7

CHANGE IN USE OF IMAGES AND VIDEO, 2012–2015

	2012	2015
Text	65%	42%
Images	30%	46%
Video	6%	12%

Number of respondents = 694. Respondents reported on what they believed their media consisted of three years ago.

II.

What Does Success Look Like?

This year, we asked about how often institutions post on key channels. Here are some benchmarks about a few of the most important channels; a comprehensive view of the most significant channels and how often institutions post to them appears in Figure 8.

- 49% post to Facebook at least once a day, and another 38% post a few times a week.
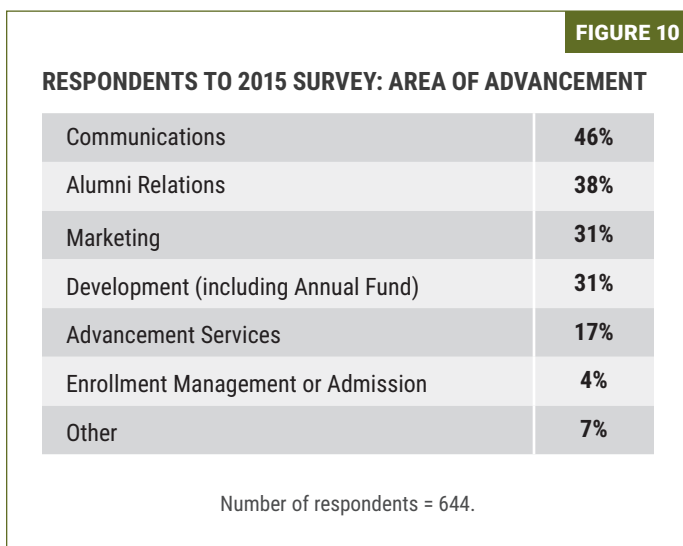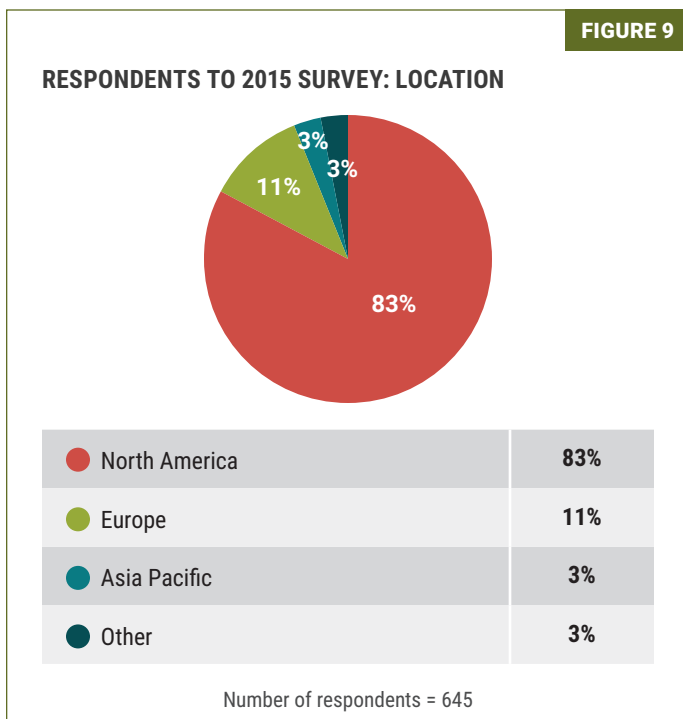
- The majority of respondents post to Twitter at least once a day, and those most successful at using social media tweet more than once a day.

- The bulk of institutions who post on Instagram, do so a few times a week (44%).

- A majority (67%) post on LinkedIn a few times a month or less.

- Eighty-six percent post to YouTube a few times a month or less.

FIGURE 8

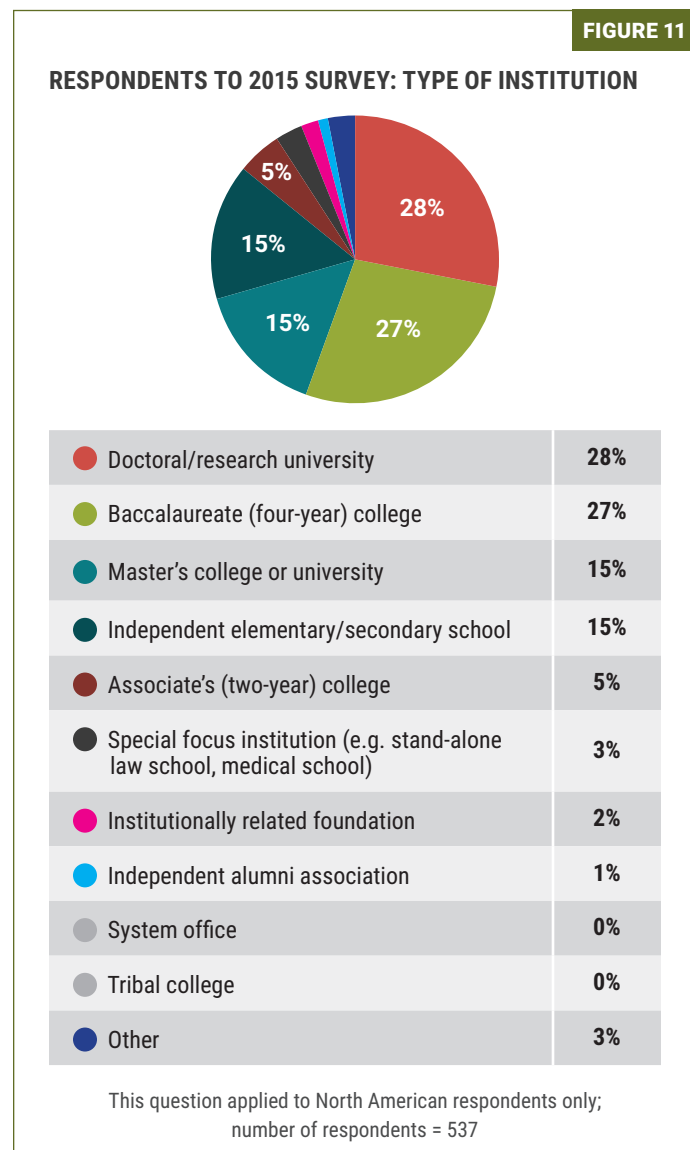**HOW OFTEN INSTITUTIONS POST TO WIDELY USED SOCIAL CHANNELS**

	Number responding	More than once a day	Once per weekday	A few times a week	A few times a month or less
Facebook	741	24%	25%	38%	12%
Twitter	647	44%	17%	27%	13%
LinkedIn	605	1%	5%	26%	67%
YouTube	522	1%	2%	11%	86%
Instagram	432	6%	14%	44%	36%
Flickr	278	0%	2%	17%	81%
Blogs	233	6%	9%	28%	57%
Google+	218	4%	7%	24%	65%
Pinterest	178	2%	2%	16%	80%
An institutional website that is an aggregator of social media channels	165	24%	13%	26%	38%
Social communities provided by vendors (such as iModules, etc.)	106	12%	7%	26%	55%
Vimeo	114	0%	2%	11%	88%
Tumblr	73	3%	5%	33%	59%
Vine	49	0%	2%	4%	94%
A community created in-house by someone at your institution	46	0%	7%	26%	67%
SnapChat	36	8%	6%	31%	56%
YikYak	37	0%	3%	14%	84%
WhatsApp	22	41%	5%	14%	41%
Other	40	5%	5%	30%	60%

Appendix 1

Demographics

We conducted this year's online survey among a random sample of 28,000 CASE members in the United States and abroad, receiving 894 responses across all types of institutions. Of U.S. and Canadian residents, nearly half of the respondents work in universities, 27 percent in four-year colleges, and 15 percent in independent schools.

Figures 9, 10, and 11 provide a breakdown of the demographics of our respondents.

RESPONDENTS TO 2015 SURVEY: LOCATION

● North America	83%
● Europe	11%
● Asia Pacific	3%
● Other	3%

Number of respondents = 645

RESPONDENTS TO 2015 SURVEY: AREA OF ADVANCEMENT

Communications	46%
Alumni Relations	38%
Marketing	31%
Development (including Annual Fund)	31%
Advancement Services	17%
Enrollment Management or Admission	4%
Other	7%

Number of respondents = 644.

RESPONDENTS TO 2015 SURVEY: TYPE OF INSTITUTION

● Doctoral/research university	28%
● Baccalaureate (four-year) college	27%
● Master's college or university	15%
● Independent elementary/secondary school	15%
● Associate's (two-year) college	5%
● Special focus institution (e.g. stand-alone law school, medical school)	3%
● Institutionally related foundation	2%
● Independent alumni association	1%
● System office	0%
● Tribal college	0%
● Other	3%

This question applied to North American respondents only; number of respondents = 537

Giving Days Explained

Imagine: an event during which an institution can raise a lot of money—potentially millions—during a single day, while growing its donor base and creating goodwill in its community.

This isn't a fundraiser's fantasy. Giving days—fundraising events lasting 24 to 48 hours, conducted largely online and often held on a day of significance (like the anniversary of an institution's founding)—have been run at many different kinds of education institutions, and also across communities and even whole states. They often return great results for institutions that plan in advance and follow some basic (and mostly common sense) rules.

Consider these examples:

- On its first Giving Day, held in October 2012, Columbia University raised $6.8 million in 24 hours. In October 2014, the total was $11,064,924, with a total of 10,452 gifts.

- In the first giving day held in Australia, the University of Sydney raised $932,964 from 1,058 donors in September 2014.

- On its first Giving Day, held on Feb. 26, 2015, Ithaca College raised $735,249 from 2,306 gifts.

- In March 2015, Cornell's first Giving Day raised $6.96 million from 9,600 gifts.

As a result of success stories like these, giving days are becoming increasingly popular in education. This year, 42 percent of the respondents to the Survey of Social Media in Advancement reported that their institution had run a giving day.

In addition to the money raised, there are other very good reasons to host a giving day. Here are a few of them:

- By creating a campuswide event and publicizing it broadly, your institution can leverage efforts of people all over campus, plus those in your extended community. In fact, to be successful, you must identify and mobilize online ambassadors among your alumni and community. And giving days often generate continued benefits in terms of community spirit.

- A giving day provides an opportunity to tell stories about your institution and what makes it worthy of support. This is important not just on the day itself, but also in helping to build longer-term awareness.

- Giving days are fun. The best ones involve competitions among departments or other campus entities, which may vie for recognition or perhaps matching funds. A leaderboard can track who's ahead and, as the day progresses, the community can watch the rankings change.

Arizona State University's third giving day, held on March 19, 2015, raised $1,429,035 from 1,653 donors. For the 2015 challenge, ASU's planners developed a series of images that participants could post on various social channels (givingday.asu.edu/Resources). The first ASU giving day, called "Mark It Day," was held in 2013 and featured a live interactive donor map populated with "markers" placed according to the ZIP code of each gift's origin, thanking donors by name. The goal was $73,373, ASU's enrollment number; it raised more than $170,000.
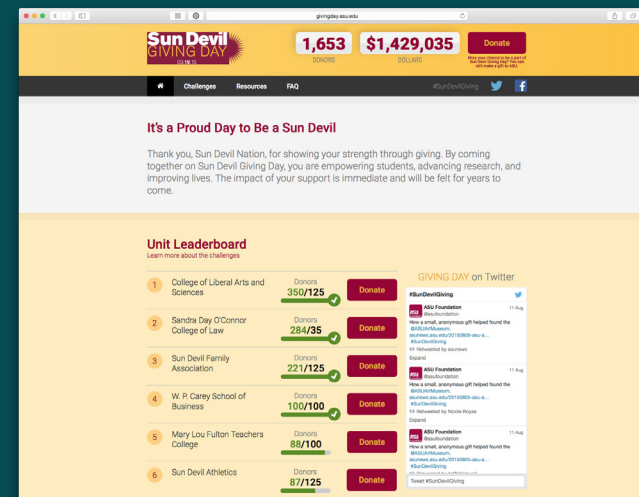
• Giving days can spur continued fundraising; on many campuses, the event creates such good spirit that giving continues after the day itself ends.

• Giving days help attract new donors. That happens for a couple of reasons. Because an institution needs to "spread the word about its giving day, then spread it more" (as Kim Anderson and Stacey Prohaska note in an article about Muhlenberg College's Day of Giving in 2013), people who aren't already donors often hear about the giving day. They may connect to videos, images, or stories about what's happening and become inspired to join in. Also, because the most successful giving days involve a cadre of online ambassadors, people within the social networks of these folks are bombarded with giving messages on the day of the campaign.

Just because a giving day is brief doesn't mean that it's easy to carry out. Rather, the best giving days, like any successful events, are carefully planned and staged.

Here are some important considerations for planning and pulling off a successful giving day.

Don't skimp on planning. While giving days usually take place in 24 hours, if you want yours to be successful, planning will take a lot longer. Justin Ware, a social media expert and vice president for digital fundraising strategy at ScaleFunder, recommends that institutions devote at least six months to planning an online giving day.

Set explicit goals. You want to be able to measure how you're doing and report on results. But be realistic, especially on your institution's maiden voyage. Many institutions launch giving days with a dollar goal attached to an institutional metric. For example, the goal for Arizona State University's first Mark It Day, held on March 7–8, 2013, was $73,373, ASU's enrollment number. Wabash College sought 430 donors to match a $43,000 challenge gift on its 4/30 Day of Giving, held on April 30, 2014. Ithaca College's Giving Day on Feb. 26, 2015, sought 607 gifts—the college's area code is 607. You may also want to consider setting goals for participation and for new donors, especially in the first year.

Develop or acquire the technology you'll need. You can't have an online giving event without technology to power it, especially the ability to take online donations. While some institutions develop their own platforms, others use commercial tools like ScaleFunder, Kimbia, or Razoo. Many institutions that are already on the iModules platform have used it as the foundation technology for their giving day. In addition, you'll want to have a dedicated website or webpage for your event. Finally, your established social channels, especially Facebook and Twitter, will be essential during the buildup to your giving day and on the day itself.

Create an appealing identity for the campaign. You'll use this identity to market your giving day itself, of course, and your success will largely depend on how effective your marketing is. So your community and constituents are going to see the giving day branding a lot. Make sure it has eye appeal—and makes an impact!

Muhlenberg College's first Day of Giving campaign, #MuleMentum, was held on Nov. 12, 2013 (or 11-12-13), attracting 1,430 donors and a total of $212,617—setting single-day records for both participation and annual fund giving. In a report on the event, Muhlenberg staff members Kim Anderson and Stacey Prohaska reported, **"We made real progress with young alumni, parents, and students—groups that have been challenging for us in the past."** They cited comments by donors:

"Proud to be part of the Berg Family."
"Wish we could give more this year, but every little bit counts."
"First time giving! Great work on this!"

Appoint a cross-department planning and execution team. You'll want to make sure that there's an energetic, committed planning team on campus and that its members are supported by colleagues who will help to pull off a successful event. For Columbia University's first Giving Day, the core team involved fundraising and marketing staff from the university's development office and volunteers from other offices across campus. Eventually, this team trained staff in each of Columbia's schools and colleges to help them maximize participation of their unit on Giving Day. Many others on campus contributed to the effort as they developed stories, images, and videos to share on Columbia's websites and social media during the buildup to Giving Day and on the day itself.

Identify ambassadors and enlist them early. You may already know who your best online supporters are: those people who are passionate about your institution, who are willing to volunteer to make your giving day a success, and who have their own networks that they can mobilize on your institution's behalf. If you haven't identified them, get busy! You'll want to cultivate their assistance well in advance, since they'll be key to the success of your event.

Develop content and games for engagement, enlightenment, and fun. Your giving day provides an unprecedented opportunity to engage people throughout your entire community, enlighten them about some of the exciting activities and developments on campus, and have fun. So be prepared. You'll want to develop a robust communications plan for your on-campus participants, for your ambassadors, and for the community at large. You'll also need a content strategy: You'll want to think about the stories, images, and videos you want to create in preparation for sharing them on giving day.

For example, in preparation for its Great Give, Florida State University prepped sample emails, tweets, and other content to share with its ambassadors. Then, when it was time to announce an update or encourage participation, they sent the ambassadors an email telling them how to use the content: "If you are at your Facebook page in the next five to 10 minutes, here's a suggested message to put on your wall."

You'll also want to make sure you've thought about how to "gamify" your day using matching funds, challenges, teams, and other types of competition. On Columbia's first Giving Day, the planners developed a variety of challenges that enabled the competing

On its first Giving Day, held in October 2012, Columbia University startled advancement officers around the world by raising $6.8 million from 4,490 donors, 40 percent of them new or reactivated. The university's giving days in 2013 and 2014 were also highly successful: In October 2014, the university raised $11,064,924 from 10,452 donors. Here are some of the challenges and results from that Giving Day: givingday.columbia.edu/leaderboards/

schools and colleges to boost their giving; for example, some challenges were based on money raised in specific time periods; others, on the number of donors gained in specific time periods.

Thank, report, repeat. Thanking your participants and donors is essential, as is reporting on your giving day. Many institutions do this by recording a thank-you video. A successful event is also a newsworthy achievement: Many institutions have had successful giving days featured in their local or regional press. Remember that communicating how grateful you are for the help of participants, ambassadors, and supporters will go a long way toward engaging them in your next giving day, when you can apply everything you learned from your first effort to make the second an even greater success.

Finally, always remember that while a lot of the action around a giving day is focused online—via email, the web, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and elsewhere—you ignore offline channels at your peril. For example, in a blog post about Cornell Giving Day, Andrew Gossen recounts how a giving officer at the university called a donor and encouraged her to log in during a video segment he knew she'd enjoy. She did—and made a gift. As Gossen points out, "It wouldn't make any sense to plan a major on-campus event without considering how digital tools could be used to drive attendance, amplify its message, and expand its footprint. It would be equally obtuse, however, to plan an online fundraising campaign without thinking carefully about how to leverage existing offline affinities and relationships to meet its goals."

Crowdfunding Explained

Maybe you've heard a story about someone who supported a project in an urban public school by contributing $50 through the website DonorsChoose.org to a teacher who was trying to raise a total of $3,000. Or about how 100 people donating $25 each through the website Kiva lent money to a Bolivian farmer to help him buy a tractor, cultivate more of his land, and increase what he earns to support his family. And surely you know about how Barack Obama in 2012 and Bernie Sanders in 2015 raised large amounts of money by encouraging many people to contribute small amounts of money to their presidential campaigns.

These are examples of crowdfunding, in which a group of people can join together to support a project that's of interest to them. Crowdfunding certainly isn't new—the concept has been around for millennia. Today's version is already widely popular among nonprofits, so it's not surprising that education institutions, too, are exploring how they can use crowdfunding to raise money for research projects, academic programs, student initiatives, and other purposes. And, because Millennials are more prone to give online—and have proven elusive for many colleges and universities—crowdfunding provides a way to reach this desirable group of givers.

Today, crowdfunding is more accessible than ever. The internet provides unparalleled infrastructure and makes crowdfunding easy and nearly effortless:

- Websites like Kickstarter, Kiva, IndieGoGo, ScaleFunder, USEED, and many others enable anyone to create a public web presence for a project and collect money online.

- The web and social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube in particular—provide simple, accessible tools for raising awareness and gaining support from one's own social network. If friends and even strangers get interested in the project, they can increase the size of the funding network, providing much wider support.

- Social networks and email make it easy to ask for money. And then, closing the loop, they provide ample opportunities for donor stewardship once a project has been funded.

- Because social media and email are accessible, familiar, and easy to use, people can volunteer as ambassadors to help raise money for a cause they care about, whether or not they give money themselves. For schools, colleges, and universities, this is a perfect way to engage students and young alumni as volunteers in an activity where their involvement is really useful.

Education institutions of all sizes have experimented successfully with crowdfunding in the past several years. For example, Arizona State University's PitchFunder website (pitchfunder. asufoundation.org), developed with USEED, featured a number of campaigns. In one of them, ASU's chapter of the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project sought to raise $2,500 to send a group of high school students to the National Moot Court Competition in Washington, DC. It raised $2,626—105 percent of the goal—from 20 supporters.

Cornell began exploring crowdfunding in 2013 with seven pilot projects—including campaigns supporting its autonomous vehicle team, a student-run organic farm, an LGBT leadership academy, the Latino Studies Program, AguaClara (a project in which students build and install water filtration systems in Honduras and India), the Baja racing team, and a global health program. Each had a fairly modest fundraising goal—$30,000 was the highest—and all were funded within a month of launch. And funding the projects themselves wasn't the only successful aspect of this initiative: 40 percent of the alumni who supported one or more of the seven projects were first-time donors, many of them fairly young.

Cornell's experiment confirmed that crowdfunding could pay off, both in support of small-scale projects and in donor acquisition. In 2014, the university developed a larger crowdfunding initiative. Working with ScaleFunder, it created a crowdfunding website, called Small Projects, Big Impact (crowdfunding.cornell.edu), that enabled Cornellians to support any of a number of projects, such as an international development experience for Cornell students, a student trip to a debating championship in Alaska, or a shelter for homeless animals.

Experts are quick to point out that crowdfunding isn't a magic formula; success requires planning and hard work. To begin, you need to consider how crowdfunding connects with and supports other fundraising on your campus. Many different models are evolving, reflecting the needs of different campuses.

At Carnegie Mellon, for example, crowdfunding is sponsored by University Advancement and is designed for students and student organizations to pitch projects for the support of the university

community. A team within the Office of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving coordinates a committee to review proposals and picks about half a dozen projects for posting. When a group's project is selected, it must develop and maintain website content and a short video, provide an email list of at least 100 individuals to receive the pitch, produce updates, spend all funds raised, and meet deadlines.

Here are some considerations for pulling off successful crowdfunding.

Don't skimp on planning. Successful crowdfunding initiatives involve identifying partners on campus who have interesting projects that they want to fund—and who are willing to help create and run a campaign, enlisting as many supporters as they can. The group doesn't have to be large, but its members do have to be passionate—and connected. Even people who can't donate, like many students, can play a key role as volunteers.

Andrew Gossen, senior director for social media strategy in Cornell University's Office of Alumni Affairs and Development, helped to develop Cornell's crowdfunding initiative. Gossen says that a crowdfunding campaign requires, at minimum, an eight-week commitment for a campus partner. In a Dec. 10, 2013, blog post, he wrote, "It takes four weeks to get a project ready to launch. This includes writing text, producing videos and other branding or marketing collateral, recruiting and orienting the fundraising team, and putting everything together on the platform. The campaign itself then runs for four weeks. During this time, the team will be sending emails, spreading the word on social media, posting campaign updates to the platform, and thanking donors. This requires attention on a daily basis."

Develop a communications plan, starting with a great video. If you look at most crowdfunding-project websites, from Kickstarter to various university partnerships on USEED or ScaleFunder, you'll see a video highlighted front and center. Video is a way to bring your project proposal to life. And while it doesn't have to be a Hollywood-style production, the video should contain clear messages about what you're trying to accomplish, why, and what kind of impact the project will have.

A good communications plan will also lay out who's going to do what, when, and where: on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram during the campaign. And don't forget email, which is an essential tool of any successful crowdfunding initiative.

Finally, you'll need a website: A site enables online contributions and provide updates about research, gift options, and campaign progress. And, of course, it provides plenty of ways in which a supporter can share news of a gift or encourage others to support the campaign themselves.

You'll note that crowdfunding sites often offer a "giving pyramid" that offers examples of how donations of all sizes will benefit the project. For example, a $50 gift to Cornell's iGEM project for genetically engineered machines (crowdfunding.cornell.edu/project/739) "allows us to purchase the enzymes and other such lab reagents needed for synthetic biology research. Additionally, the money covers the cost of plastic fiber needed to 3D print our fish tag device."

Get the right technology. Aside from a website to host your video, project description, and updates, you'll also need a platform for giving. Some institutions, like Georgia Tech, built their crowdfunding platforms in-house; others work with a provider like USEED, IndieGoGo, or ScaleFunder. The benefit of using platforms like these is that many of them provide tracking and record-keeping capabilities that link with the institution's existing fundraising systems.

Keep it personal, and remember to say thank you. Often. Successful crowdfunding initiatives often involve relatively small groups of people, many of whom may be quite passionate about the project they're supporting. So updates are often personal. Stewardship for those who do give should be similarly personal; thanking people in imaginative and creative ways can build ongoing relationships and encourage giving to the project—or others—in the future.

Crowdfunding may not be for every institution, and it definitely has its risks. Successful experiments are usually viewed as an extension of existing fundraising activities—at Cornell, for example, they're part of annual fund activities. The goal there, and at other institutions, is to reach beyond the typical university supporters and seek those who haven't donated or aren't otherwise engaged. Crowdfunding may not work well, or at all, if your institution is simply seeking to raise additional money from the same small group of supporters.

It's advisable, therefore, to think carefully about how you'll approach crowdfunding and run some tests first to see how your community responds. By testing different initiatives and approaches, institutions can discover what causes, if any, their constituents respond to best. That's a low-risk way to determine if it will work for you.

Don't skimp on planning. *Successful crowdfunding initiatives involve identifying partners on campus who have interesting projects that they want to fund.*
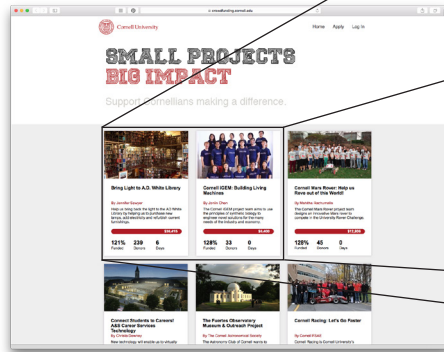
Bring Light to A.D. White Library

By Jennifer Sawyer

Help us bring back the light to the AD White Library by helping us to purchase new lamps, add electricity and refurbish current furnishings.

$36,415

121%	239	6
Funded	Donors	Days

Cornell iGEM: Building Living Machines

By Jonlin Chen

The Cornell iGEM project team aims to use the principles of synthetic biology to engineer novel solutions for the many needs of the industry and economy.

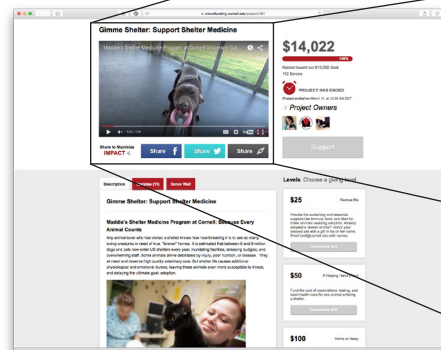$6,400

| 128%	33	0
Funded	Donors	Days

Get the right technology. *The benefit of using platforms like these is that many of them provide tracking and record-keeping capabilities that link with the institution's existing fundraising systems.*

Develop a communications plan, starting with a great video. *If you look at most crowdfunding-project websites you'll see a video highlighted front and center.*

Gimme Shelter: Support Shelter Medicine

Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at Cornell University Col...

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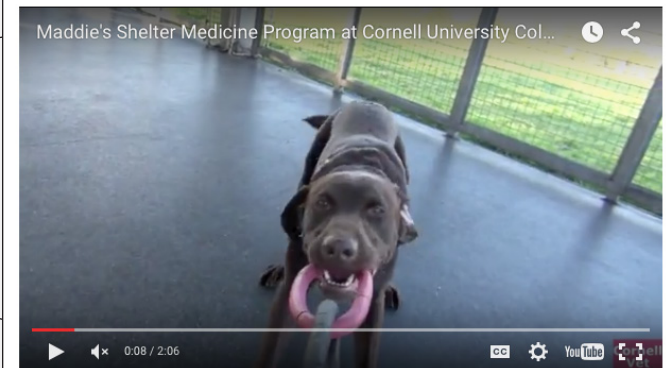
Share to Maximize IMPACT

Share f   Share   Share

Sources and Resources

Additional Survey Data

For those who'd like to delve more deeply into the data, we offer a number of different views:

"The Topline Report" contains survey questions and responses. bit.ly/CASESocial15

"Segmentation Tables, CASE-Huron-mStoner Survey of Social Media in Advancement 2015" presents differences in survey answers based on institutional characteristics of geography, public/private, size, and population served. We compared survey data for these specific groups and tested for statistical significance between the groups. bit.ly/CASESocial15

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