

Best Practices in Social Media

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

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mStoner

HuronEducation

Overview of findings

Huron Education and mStoner partnered with CASE for the fifth year in a row in order to research educational institutions about their social media activities. Our 2010 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, especially fundraising 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 61,220 CASE members – in the US and abroad. We received 1,963 responses across all types of institutions – a testament to the interest in this topic.

We are just beginning to mine the data from this fifth 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.

Q1. Are you affiliated with an institution in...?

Total Answering	1963
United States and Canada	85%
Europe	9%
Asia Pacific	3%
Other	2%
Latin America	<1%

Q2. (International only) What type of institution do you work at?

Total Answering	288
Higher education/ university	80%
Elementary/primary/ secondary/high school	15%
Special focus institution (e.g. stand- alone business school, medical school, etc.)	5%
Further education/ community college	<1%
Other	<1%

Q3. What type of institution do you work at?

Total Answering	1671
Doctoral/research university	29%
Baccalaureate (four year) college	26%
Master's college or university	17%
Independent elementary/ secondary school	16%
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	<1%
Tribal college	<1%
Other	<1%

Q4. Is your institution...?

Total Answering	1955
Private	51%
Public	48%
Other	1%

Q5. What is the name of your institution?
[Open-ended question]

Q6. How many students does your institution have? Please include ALL students, both full- and part-time.

Total Answering	1957
Less than 1,000	16%
1,000 – 4,999	28%
5,000 – 9,999	11%
10,000 – 14,999	9%
15,000 – 19,999	7%
20,000 or more	28%

Q7. Which of the following describe your unit, that is, your immediate department or division? Please select all that apply.

Total Answering	1960
Communications	41%
Alumni Relations	37%
Development (including Annual Fund)	34%
Marketing	25%
Advancement Services	19%
Enrollment Management or Admissions	3%
Other	9%

Q8. Which one of the following best applies to your unit, that is, your immediate department or division? Please select one.

Total Answering	1960
We have no current involvement with the use of social media	2%
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	14%
We handle our own social media activities, with some input from others	54%
We handle our own social media activities, without any input from other units	27%

Q9. Does the leader of your institution (president, head, etc.) use social media in his/her professional role?

Of the 1946 responses, 344 (18%) were "I don't know." Figures below exclude these responses.

Total Answering	1602
No	54%
Yes, on Twitter	25%
Yes, on Facebook	17%
Yes, on a blog	14%
Yes, on LinkedIn	13%
Yes, through another channel	3%

Q10. Has your institution attempted to measure whether these efforts by your leader are successful?

Of the 1761 responses, 756 (43%) were "I don't know." Figures below exclude these responses.

Total Answering	1005
No	68%
Yes, through number of active "friends," "followers," "connections," or number of comments	24%
Yes, through anecdotal feedback	16%
Yes, through number of "click-throughs" to your website	12%
Yes, through another method	3%

Q11. We are interested in talking to CASE members about their experiences with institutional leaders' use of social media. Please share your contact information below if we can contact you to discuss these topics further. [Open-ended question]

Q12. Which types of social media do you (your unit) use? Please select all that apply.

Total Answering	1882
Facebook (create/manage communities within Facebook)	95%
Twitter	82%
LinkedIn (create/manage communities within LinkedIn or manage university page in LinkedIn)	76%
YouTube	68%
Instagram	42%
Flickr	37%
Blogs	34%
Pinterest	26%
Google+	26%
An institutional website that is an aggregator of social network sites	19%
Social communities provided by vendors through proprietary software (such as Harris Connect, iModules, etc.)	17%

Vimeo	16%
A community created in-house by someone at your institution (create/ manage in-house communities)	10%
Tumblr	9%
Vine	9%
Geosocial services (such as Foursquare or SCVNGR)	6%
WhatsApp	1%
Others	5%

Q13. Which types of social media do you (your unit) use for each of the specific audiences below?

Percent who said that they used any form of social media for the population.

Total Answering	1698
Alumni	97%
Parents	83%
Donors	74%
Current students	67%

Q13 Which types of social media do you (your unit) use for each of the specific audiences below?

Total Answering 1698

	Alumni	Donors	Students	Parents
Facebook (create/manage communities within Facebook)	90%	57%	72%	54%
Twitter	73%	47%	63%	43%
LinkedIn (create/manage communities within LinkedIn or manage university page in LinkedIn)	73%	28%	34%	15%
YouTube	56%	44%	54%	40%
Instagram	32%	15%	33%	16%
Flickr	30%	18%	25%	17%
Blogs	23%	16%	24%	17%
Social communities provided by vendors through proprietary software (such as Harris Connect, iModules, etc.)	19%	8%	6%	5%
Pinterest	18%	8%	16%	10%
An institutional website that is an aggregator of social network sites	18%	15%	16%	13%
Google+	16%	9%	15%	9%
Vimeo	11%	9%	12%	9%
A community created in-house by someone at your institution (create/manage in-house communities)	8%	3%	7%	3%
Tumblr	5%	2%	7%	2%
Vine	4%	2%	7%	2%
Geosocial services (such as Foursquare or SCVNGR)	4%	1%	6%	2%
WhatsApp	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%

Q14. To what extent is each of the following goals for social media a goal for your unit?

Percent who said "Quite a bit" or "Extensively" (5 point scale from "Not at all" to "Extensively")

Total Answering	1663
Engage alumni	84%
Create, sustain, and improve brand image	77%
Increase awareness/advocacy/rankings	61%
Engage current students	56%
Build internal community	49%
Engage prospective students	43%
Engage admitted students	42%
Engage the local community	38%
Recruit students	37%
Engage current faculty and staff	36%
Engage parents of current students	31%
Raise private funds	25%

Q14. To what extent is each of the following goals for social media a goal for your unit?

Mean rating on 5 point scale from "Not at all" (1) to "Extensively"(5)

Total Answering	1663
Engage alumni	4.33
Create, sustain, and improve brand image	4.10
Increase awareness/advocacy/rankings	3.65
Engage current students	3.54
Build internal community	3.41
Engage the local community	3.12
Engage current faculty and staff	3.11
Engage admitted students	3.11
Engage prospective students	3.06
Recruit students	2.89
Engage parents of current students	2.87
Raise private funds	2.74

Q15. Which of the following do you consider the most successful in meeting your goals? Please select up to three you consider the most successful.

Total Answering	1615
Facebook	90%
Twitter	58%
LinkedIn	36%
YouTube	22%
Instagram	14%
Blogs	8%
An institutional web site that is an aggregator of social networking sites	6%
Social communities provided by vendors through proprietary software (such as Harris Connect, iModules)	6%
Flickr	4%
Tools to build social network sites in-house	3%
Vimeo	2%
Google+	1%
Pinterest	1%
Tumblr	1%
WhatsApp	<1%
Vine	<1%
Geosocial services	<1%
Other	3%

Q16. Compared to the social media you selected above, how successful is email in meeting your unit's goals?

Total Answering	1611
Email is more successful than some of them	46%
Email is more successful than all of them	31%
The social media selected above are more successful than email	13%
Other	10%

Q17. Has your unit used one or more social media channels as part of a broader, planned campaign to achieve a specific goal?

Total Answering	1647
Yes	59%
No	41%

Q18. In 2013, roughly what percentage of your campaigns included social media channels?

Total Answering	946
1-25%	29%
26-50%	22%
51-75%	24%
76-100%	25%

Q19. In what types of campaigns have you used social media?

Total Answering	955
Alumni Engagement	79%
Brand/Marketing	61%
Fundraising/Development	60%
Student Engagement	52%
Admissions	37%
Other	6%

Q20. Please share with us some details of the campaigns. What goals did you have and what outcomes were achieved? [Open-ended question]

Q21. Which outreach and marketing methods do you use to promote your social media initiatives? Select all that apply.

Total Answering	1550
Email	88%
Website	87%
Social media	80%
Internal publications	63%
Outreach and marketing at events	52%
Direct print mail	45%
Alumni ambassadors or other influencers	43%
Search engine optimization or search engine marketing	19%

Blogging	19%
External publications (not your institution's publications)	15%
Radio	7%
TV	4%
Other	3%

Q22. How would you rate the overall success of your use of social media, in terms of achieving its goals?

Total Answering	1580
Not at all successful	3%
Not very successful	11%
Somewhat successful	62%
Very successful	22%
A model for successful use of social media	2%

Q23. Please tell us more about why you think your social media activities aren't that successful. [Open-ended question]

Q24. Please tell us more about how your social media activities could be more successful. [Open-ended question]

Q25. Please tell us more about why you think your social media activities have been successful. What goals did they achieve? [Open-ended question]

Q26. To what extent does your unit use each of the following outcome measures to evaluate your social media initiatives?

Percent who said "Quite a bit" or "Extensively" (5 point scale from "Not at all" to "Extensively")

Total Answering	1424
Number of active "friends," "likes," members, participants, people who post, or number of comments	72%
Volume of participation (unique person counts)	53%
Number of "click-throughs" to your website	50%
Event participation	38%
Anecdotal success (or horror) stories	24%
Penetration measure of use among target audience	18%
Donations	17%
Volume or proportion of complaints and negative comments	14%
Analysis of content/ number of mentions in blogs	12%
Number of applications for admission	11%
Surveys of target audiences	11%

Q26. To what extent does your unit use each of the following outcome measures to evaluate your social media initiatives?

Mean rating on 5 point scale from "Not at all" (1) to "Extensively"(5)

Total Answering	1424
Number of active "friends," "likes," members, participants, people who post, or number of comments	3.91
Volume of participation (unique person counts)	3.39
Number of "click-throughs" to your website	3.35
Event participation	3.08
Anecdotal success (or horror) stories	2.71
Volume or proportion of complaints and negative comments	2.39
Penetration measure of use among target audience	2.38
Donations	2.26
Surveys of target audiences	2.11
Analysis of content/ number of mentions in blogs	2.03
Number of applications for admission	1.86

Q27. In what way has social media been most successful for your institution? Please select only one.

Total Answering	1460
Increasing engagement with our target audiences	52%
Increasing awareness of our school	13%
Creating awareness of key institutional initiatives	9%
Increasing attendance at our events	8%
Recruiting students	6%
Building a stronger internal community	4%
Communicating during campus issues/crises	3%
Increasing donations	1%
Other	3%

Q28. With which audiences did you increase engagement through social media? [Open-ended question]

Q29. Does your institution use social media channels to raise money from donors?

Of the 1456 responses, 241 (17%) were "Don't know/unsure." Figures below exclude these responses.

Total Answering	1215
Yes	47%
No	53%

Q30. Does your institution use social media channels for donor stewardship purposes or to communicate with current donors?

Of the 1450 responses, 307 (16%) were "Don't know/unsure." Figures below exclude these responses.

Total Answering	1143
Yes	52%
No	48%

Respondents who answered "Yes" to Q29 were asked each of the next six questions on fundraising and stewardship.

Respondents who answered "No" or "Don't know/unsure" to Q29 were not asked further questions about fundraising. If they answered "Yes" to Q30, they skipped to Q35 to answer additional stewardship questions.

Respondents who answered "No" or "Don't know/unsure" to both Q29 and Q30 were not asked any further fundraising and stewardship questions; they skipped to Q37.

Q31. Which of the following do you consider the most successful in your fundraising efforts? Please select up to three you consider most successful.

Total Answering	541
Facebook	81%
Twitter	32%
YouTube	22%
LinkedIn	17%
Social communities provided by vendors through proprietary software	11%
An institutional web site that is an aggregator of social networking sites	11%
Blogs	7%
Vimeo	4%
Flickr	2%
Tools to build social network sites in-house	2%
Instagram	2%
Google+	1%
Tumblr	1%
Vine	1%
Pinterest	<1%
WhatsApp	<1%
Geosocial services	-
Other	13%

Q32. Approximately how much money did your institution raise through social media channels in FY13?

Of the 556 responses, 368 (66%) were "I don't know." These responses are excluded in the figures below.

Total Answering	188
Up to \$10K	57%
\$10K – \$50K	24%
\$50K – \$100K	9%
\$100K – 500K	6%
\$500K – 1M	2%
\$1M or more	2%

Q33. Approximately what percentage of the total funds your institution raised in FY13 was raised through social media channels?

Of the 555 responses, 387 (70%) were "I don't know." Figures below exclude these responses.

Total Answering	168
Up to 5%	82%
6% to 10%	10%
11% to 20%	4%
21% to 49%	4%
50% or more	-

Q34. What would you like to do differently in the next year or two to increase the amount of money your institution raises using social media? If nothing, please state that.

Q35. For which of the following types of fundraising does your institution use social media...

....for solicitations?

Total Answering 654

Annual Fund Gifts 78%

Major Gifts 5%

Principal Gifts 4%

....to thank donors?

Annual Fund Gifts 70%

Major Gifts 23%

Principal Gifts 15%

....for keeping donors up-to-date on institution news?

Annual Fund Gifts 87%

Major Gifts 48%

Principal Gifts 35%

Q36. What channels does your institution use for the following?

Thanking donors who gave to a social-media-based fundraising campaign

Total Answering 566

Use social media exclusively 4%

Use both social media and other channels 66%

Use non-social media exclusively 30%

Q36. What channels does your institution use for the following?

Sharing updates and institutional news with donors who gave to a social-media-based fundraising campaign

Total Answering 540

Use social media exclusively 5%

Use both social media and other channels 76%

Use non-social media exclusively 19%

Q37. For each of the following statements about the use of social media, please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree
Percentage who "Agree" or "Agree strongly" on a 6-point scale

Total Answering 1411

Social media have great potential for achieving important goals in my unit 75%

A champion is essential to the successful implementation of social media in our institution 71%

My unit benefits from institutional support and buy in for social media deployment 51%

It is difficult to measure "return on investment" from the use of social media 39%

Expertise to help our social media efforts is readily available 36%

Q38. To what degree is each issue below a barrier to the successful use of social media in your unit?

Percent who said "Quite a bit" or "Extensively" (5 point scale from "Not at all" to "Extensively")

Total Answering	1384
Staffing for day-to-day content management	53%
Staffing for site development	45%
Lack of relevant human resources in my unit	42%
Expertise in how to implement it	24%
Slow pace of change	23%
Funding	23%
Lack of institutional clarity about who is responsible for social media initiatives	20%
Lack of commitment by decision makers	20%
Lack of IT resources	19%
Concerns about loss of control over content and tone of postings by others	17%
Uncertainty about usefulness of social media	16%
Institutional red tape	13%
Privacy issues	10%
Legal issues	4%
Ethical issues	3%

Q38. To what degree is each issue below a barrier to the successful use of social media in your unit?

Mean rating on 5 point scale from "Not at all" (1) to "Extensively"(5)

Total Answering	1384
Staffing for day-to-day content management	3.44
Staffing for site development	3.23
Lack of relevant human resources in my unit	3.07
Expertise in how to implement it	2.70
Slow pace of change	2.67
Funding	2.61
Concerns about loss of control over content and tone of postings by others	2.51
Lack of institutional clarity about who is responsible for social media initiatives	2.48
Lack of commitment by decision makers	2.46
Lack of IT resources	2.45
Uncertainty about usefulness of social media	2.42
Institutional red tape	2.24
Privacy issues	2.21
Legal issues	1.91
Ethical issues	1.78

Q39. What units, if any, are responsible for creating, monitoring compliance, and enforcing institution-wide social media policies? Please select all that apply.

Total Answering	1394
Communications/Public Relations	72%
Marketing	40%
Alumni Relations	21%
Information Technology	15%
Advancement Services	12%
Development (including Annual Fund)	12%
Enrollment Management or Admissions	9%
None	7%
Other	9%

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.
[Open-ended questions]

Q40. Lessons learned on deployment of a specific social media tool or platform:

Q41. Lessons learned on implementation of a specific evaluation approach:

Q42. Lessons learned on application of social media to a specific target audience:

Q43. Lessons learned on effective policies and guidelines for use of social media:

Q44. 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)?

Total Answering	1379
0	84%
1	13%
2	2%
3	1%
4	<1%
5	-
6	<1%
7	<1%
8	<1%
9	-
10 or more people	<1%

Q45. 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?

Total Answering	1372
0	29%
1	43%
2	17%
3	7%
4	3%
5	1%
6	<1%
7	<1%
8	<1%
9	-
10 or more people	1%

Q46. What is your estimate of the FTE (Full-time equivalency) effort of all staff in your unit working on social media?

Total Answering	1336
0	8%
0.25	37%
0.5	18%
0.75	9%
1	11%
1.25	5%
1.5	4%
1.75	2%
2	2%
2.25	1%
2.5	1%
2.75	<1%
3	1%
3.25	<1%
3.5	<1%
3.75	-
4	<1%
4.25	<1%
4.5	<1%
4.75	-
5	<1%
More than 5	1%

Q47. 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)?

Total Answering	1236
0	62%
1	20%
2	8%
3	3%
4	2%
5	2%
6	<1%
7	<1%
8	<1%
9	-
10 or more people	3%

Q48. 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?

Total Answering	1197
0	15%
1	24%
2	16%
3	9%
4	7%
5	6%
6	3%
7	<1%
8	1%
9	<1%
10 or more people	18%

Q49. What is your estimate of the FTE (Full-time equivalency) effort of all staff in your institution working on social media?

Total Answering	1157
0	3%
0.25	16%
0.5	11%
0.75	6%
1	11%
1.25	5%
1.5	6%
1.75	2%
2	7%
2.25	1%
2.5	3%
2.75	1%
3	5%
3.25	1%
3.5	1%
3.75	<1%
4	3%
4.25	<1%
4.5	1%
4.75	<1%
5	4%
5.25	<1%
5.5	<1%
5.75	<1%
6	1%
6.25	-
6.5	<1%
6.75	<1%
7	1%
More than 7	12%

Q50. What training resources are provided for staff who focus at least half of their time on social media? Please select all that apply.

Total Answering	1032
Internal social media and branding policies	53%
External best practices in social media	52%
Technical assistance, or how to implement social media	37%
Content development	34%
Engagement strategies	30%
Other	23%

Q51. What is the level of the position that manages the day to day aspects of your social media activities?

Total Answering	1351
Specialist, coordinator, or administrative assistant	36%
Associate, assistant or deputy director/manager	32%
Executive director, director or manager	25%
Associate or assistant vice president	1%
Vice president, vice chancellor or assistant head of school	1%
Dean, associate dean or assistant dean	<1%
President or head of school	<1%
Other	5%