Web 2.0 & Social Networking Nonprofit Survey
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David H. Crusoe
William Nourse
Eric Whitney

Citizen Schools, Inc

Public Learning Media Laboratory

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The explosion of dynamic web technologies – both through data driven "Web 2.0" applications and the rise of "social networking" technologies – has presented nonprofit organizations with the challenge of adapting their mission to the technologies, and the technologies to their mission. We find ourselves asking two important questions:

1. "How can we effectively translate our outreach efforts into the technology-supported social/virtual world?'
2. "How do we develop solid, generative measures of success?"

This survey was designed to gather information about what works, and what doesn't. Key results include:

- Overwhelmingly, blogging was viewed as a sure, effective way to reach net citizenry and support the nonprofit.
- Respondents were optimistic about the value of social networking technologies to "organize an event" and "spread news" about the organization.
- Respondents were less optimistic about the prospects of social networking technologies to help raise significant monetary or goods donations for their organization.
- Respondents indicated that "web traffic" was the most prominent value they have gained through use of various technologies. Other specific gains were harder to quantify.

More helpfully, respondents indicated that a successful social networking technology integration strategy would include the following elements:

(1) Know your options, get informed, learn from others
(2) Identify:
    a. What you want to accomplish, and why you should use technologies
    b. An appropriate fit between the strengths of a particular technology and your organization's mission
(3) Indicate reasonable, realistic metrics and measures for success
(4) Develop organizational support and personnel
(5) Launch, evaluate, reiterate, repeat

While these elements may sound self-evident, a great number of us have tried launching a program without identifying the right technology for our purpose. Data from respondents also indicates that strategies fail when:

- Staffing is inadequate to support technology
- Organizational culture doesn't embrace the use of the technology
- Technologies with a nationally dispersed reach are used to support local programming

Importantly, most nonprofit respondents indicated measurement of awareness measures, such as an increase in web traffic. This is fundamentally different than engagement – a measure that's hard to define, especially in relation to web technologies, but that ultimately will provide tangible benefits to nonprofit operations.

Finally, nonprofit respondents indicated a lower prior value return on explicit "social networking" as compared with blogging and, interestingly, YouTube. Similarly, about 50% of respondents indicated that use of YouTube and blogging had "Great potential" to provide future value for their organizations.

Nonprofits strive to extend their reach and improve upon their program impact. While various mechanisms have helped nonprofit organizations accomplish and extend their mission, emphasis is increasing on the potential for "Web 2.0" and "Social Networking" technologies to powerfully harness new audiences.

Several surveys have been administered to explore nonprofits' use of social networking, including a recent 2008 survey operated by SupportingAdvancement.com and the annual TechSoup nonprofit technology survey (2007 results). However, while each survey indicated types of technologies that nonprofits were using to support their mission, neither did they gather data about how successful each technology was, nor did they explore participants' thinking about how to improve practice.

This survey was designed to take that extra step – to "disambiguate the hype" that surrounds "Web 2.0" applications and "Social networking" technologies[1] with respect to the value they provide to nonprofits.

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[1] It should be noted that definition of these technologies is beyond the scope of this report. Various definitions – and debates about definitions – can be quickly found on the web.

Survey Design and Limitations

Report data was collected through two steps. Qualitative data (replies to message forum postings) helped shape the survey design. The survey instrument, step 2, collected both quantitative and qualitative data (See Appendix 2).

This survey was created and administered through Survey Monkey. Of 59 total respondents, 49 both completed the survey and represented nonprofit respondents, and therefore were counted in the final analysis. However, not all respondents completed all questions.

News of the survey was spread through online discussion forums and blogs, including:

- Yahoo Nonprofit Groups "Nonprofit Networking" and "Information Systems Forum"
- Google Nonprofit Group
- TechSoup forums
- NTEN Technology Network Web 2.0 Forums
- Wild Apricot Blog

As such, respondents are self-selected, and vary in job description and capacity within the nonprofit organization. There is no assurance that any single respondent has a grasp on all the uses, values, affordances and drawbacks of any one technology in relation to their organization.

In addition, the survey instrument is imperfect. Questions could have been improved to glean more precise data.

As a result of the small number of respondents and imperfections in the questions, this survey data can be used to draw general, but not exact, conclusions about the values and challenges associated with nonprofits' use of Web 2.0 and social networking technologies. Nonetheless, the data provide an interesting disambiguation into a complex technological world.

Note: A follow-up survey, designed to clarify data gleaned through this survey, will be made available in April, 2008.

Question 2: How large is your nonprofit?

Of those 49 who completed the survey, 42 indicated whether they represented a small nonprofit of 10 or fewer employees (15 respondents, or 36%) or larger nonprofit of 10 or greater employees (27 respondents, 64%).

Q2: How large is your nonprofit organization?
(n = 42)

1-5 Employees 24%

6-10 Employees 12%

11-50 Employees 24%

51+ Employees 40%
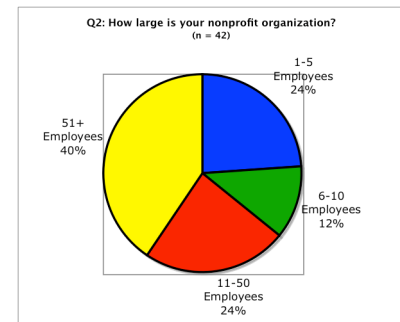
Question 3: Which of the following popular Web 2.0 technologies have you used to support your nonprofit organization?

Overall, 71% of respondents indicated they "had used" blogs and blogging to support their nonprofit. Similar, but smaller proportions of all respondents indicated they had used Facebook (65%) and YouTube technologies (55%). Fewer than half (41%) had used MySpace, Delicious (39%), Flicker (37%) or Linked In (35%), and Digg (18%) was the least likely to be used in the nonprofit space.

There were notable differences between small and large nonprofit organizations. Small organizations were significantly less likely to have used YouTube and Flicker in support of their organizations. Responses indicate that smaller organizations were also less likely to tap into other technologies, such as Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn. However, respondents from both small and large nonprofits both indicated use of blogging tools in support of their work.

Additional responses included:

Question 3: "Other" responses

Web Applications	Wikipedia Twitter Google Applications (Mail, Documents, Calendar) Survey Monkey Diigo Picasa Slideshare Dogooder.tv Change.org Blip.tv Livejournal Eons BlackPlanet WiserEarth
Open Source Software	CiviCRM Drupal Wiki software
Methods	Podcasting RSS Feeds Web conferencing

Analysis: The prevalence of the use of blogging and YouTube (and other video sharing technologies) among nonprofits came as a surprise. It wasn't surprising, however, that large nonprofits were more likely to be taking advantage of video sharing sites, as the resources to produce YouTube videos still present moderate barriers to entry.

Question 4 asked respondents to indicate several specific ways in which "social networking technologies have contributed evident value" to their organization.

- Most predominantly, respondents indicated that technologies helped to increase web traffic, although they were ambiguous about the specific traffic increases.
- Respondents also indicated that the availability of Facebook allowed them to create informal supporter networks. Networks were used for:
  - E-mail newsletter blasts

- o Volunteer outreach (to a minor extent)
- Fundraising did not emerge as a significant value derived through social networking technologies. Several respondents indicated that only modest amounts had been raised.
- Several respondents indicated that Wikipedia helped to increase web traffic to their website, and act as an advertising medium for their organization.
- One organization indicated that a joint Facebook campaign was helpful to their organization, and others.
- Several respondents indicated that weekly blogging brought modest numbers of return visitors to their website.
- Others have indicated that Video hosting through YouTube was helpful to their program.

Overall, respondents indicated that technologies provided specific benefits that were tough to exactly quantify. Several respondents indicated that they were working under the *assumption* that social networking technologies add value to their organization, but could not point out specifics.

> *Question 5: On a scale of 1–4, how much value has each technology ALREADY contributed to your organization?*

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(Average responses across large organizations vs. small organzations)
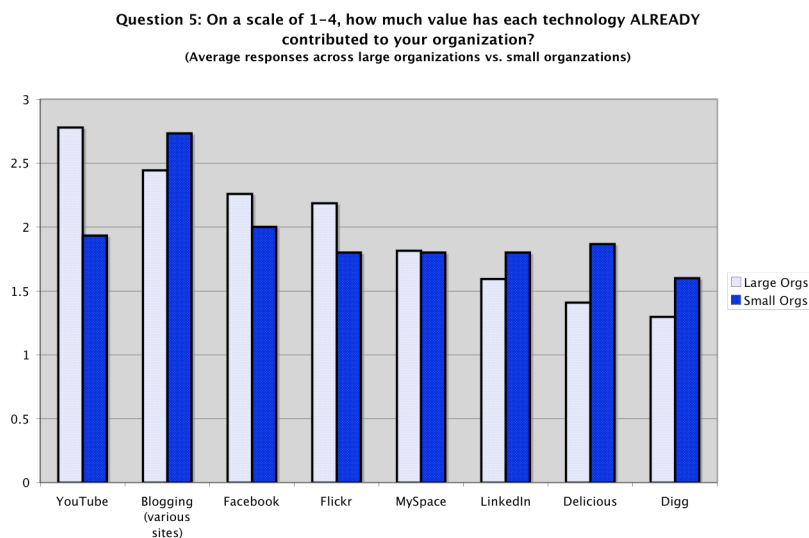
Across all organizations, reported value averages ranged, at the upper end, between "Very Little" and "Moderate" for all technologies reported. Clearly, there was no great winner, and once again, YouTube and Blogging scored more highly than popular social networking software.

Question 5: On a scale of 1-4, how much value has each technology ALREADY contributed to your organization?
**(Percent of No/Low Value responses to Medium/High Value resoonses)**
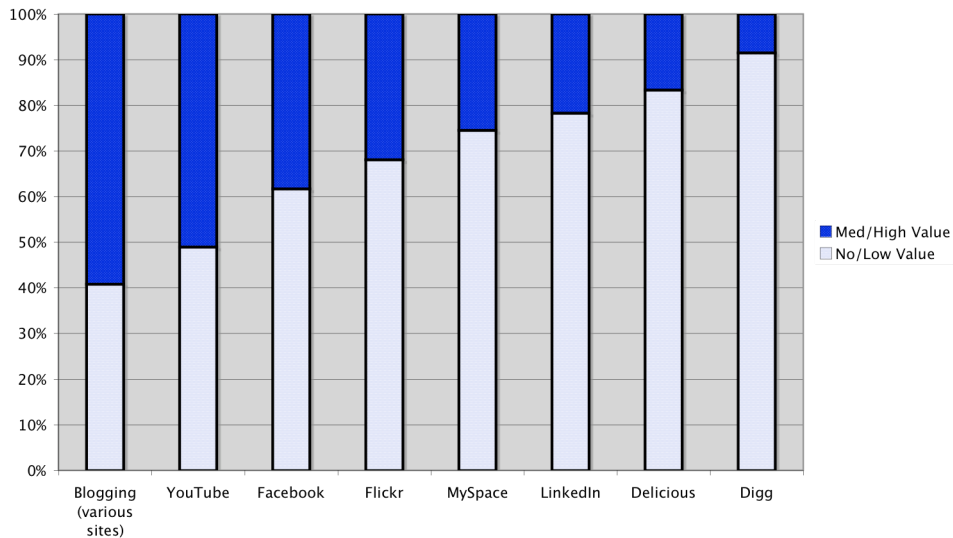
However, when viewed by the percentage of respondents who concurred about either "Great" or "Moderate" value, a small majority of all respondents agreed that Blogging (60%) and YouTube (51%) had contributed significantly. Once again, various social networking technologies lagged behind.

Question 6: How have social networking technologies ALREADY been SUCCESSFULLY applied to assist your organization?

Respondents indicated that technologies had been helpful in organizing events, spreading news about the organization, and to a lesser extent, recruiting volunteers. It is interesting to note that small organizations reported a slightly higher measure of success with volunteer recruiting than large organizations.

**Q6: How have social networking technologies ALREADY been SUCCESSFULLY applied
to assist your organization?**
(average responses for large organizations vs. small organizations)
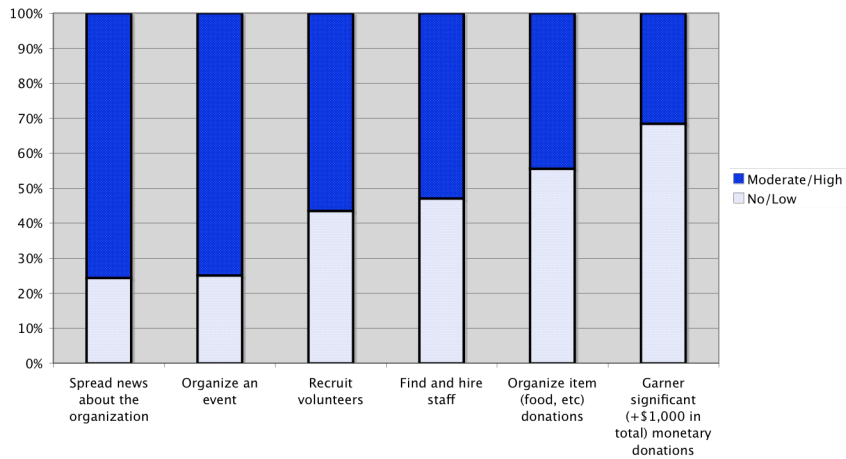**(1 = Tried, no success; 4 = Tried, great success)**
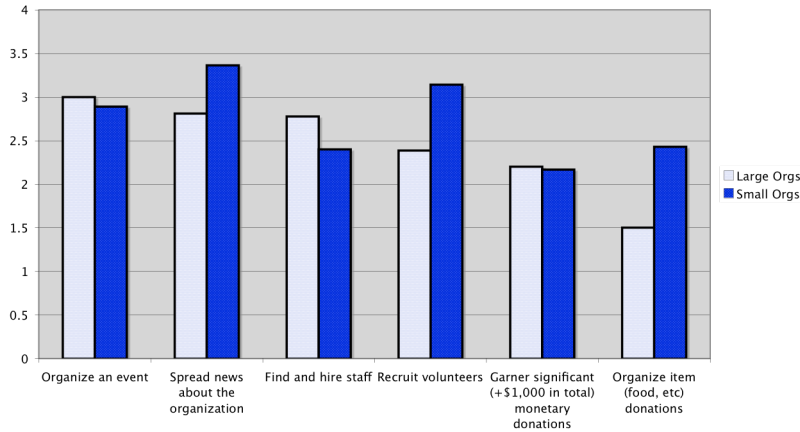
**How have social networking technologies ALREADY been SUCCESSFULLY applied to
assist your organization?**
**(Percent of respondents who indicated No or Limited Success vs. Moderate Success
High Success)**

The success of specific activities becomes more apparent when only the percentage of respondents who indicated "High success" are displayed. Of all respondents, the highest success was indicated for event organizing and spreading news about the organization. Finding staff, organizing donations and volunteer recruiting were less likely to have been rated as "Highly successful". No respondents indicated high success for raising large numbers of dollars.

Question 7: Why do you think technologies failed to meet their objectives?

Question 7 asked respondents to indicate why they thought technologies they had tried to implement failed to meet objectives. Several very clear trends emerged from open-ended response data:

- Many organizations are still early in their Web 2.0 / social networking technology implementation phase, and so did not indicate reasons for failure.
- Among those who have implemented a strategy, reasons for low success included:
  - A focus on the local scale is not appropriate to technologies with a national reach. Low adoption rate among target populations.
  - Lack of an adequate implementation strategy or road-map
  - Overcommitted staff. Gain a specific staff member whose responsibility is to design and guide social networking outreach. It's "not the tech, but how you use it".
  - Organizational culture that has not embraced the use of technologies.

Question 8: On a scale of 1-4, what potential do you foresee for each technology's ability to contribute to your nonprofit organization in the future?

Q8: On a scale of 1-4, what potential do you foresee for each technology's ability to contribute to your nonprofit in the future?
(1 = No potential at all; 4 = great potential; Average response across large organizations vs. small organizations)
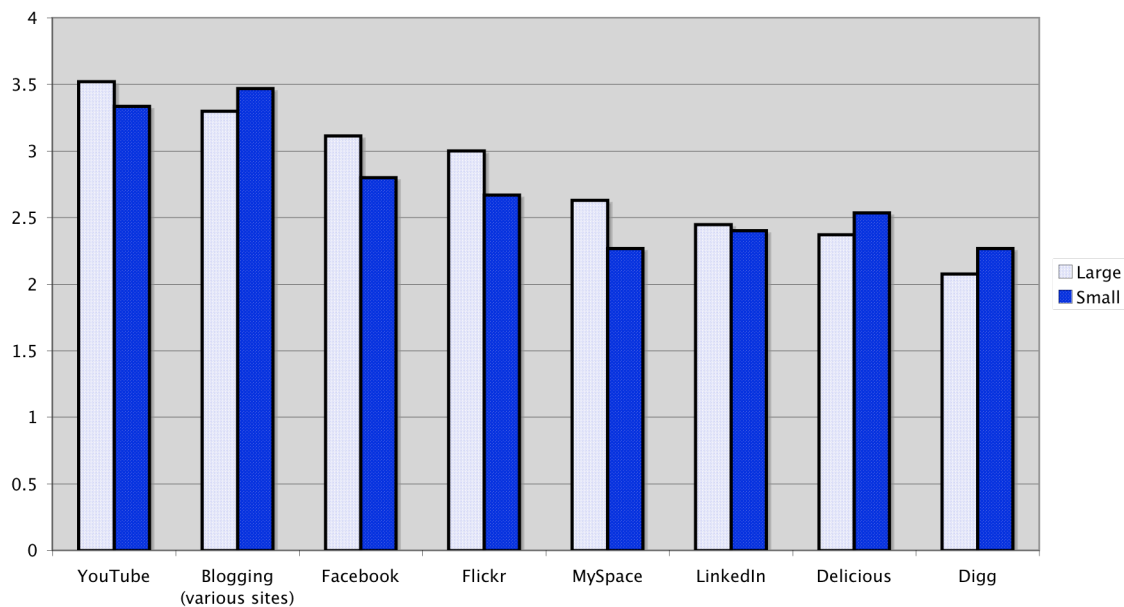
**On a scale of 1-4, what potential do you foresee for each technology's ability
to contribute to your nonprofit in the future?
(percent of respondents who answered "Great potential")**
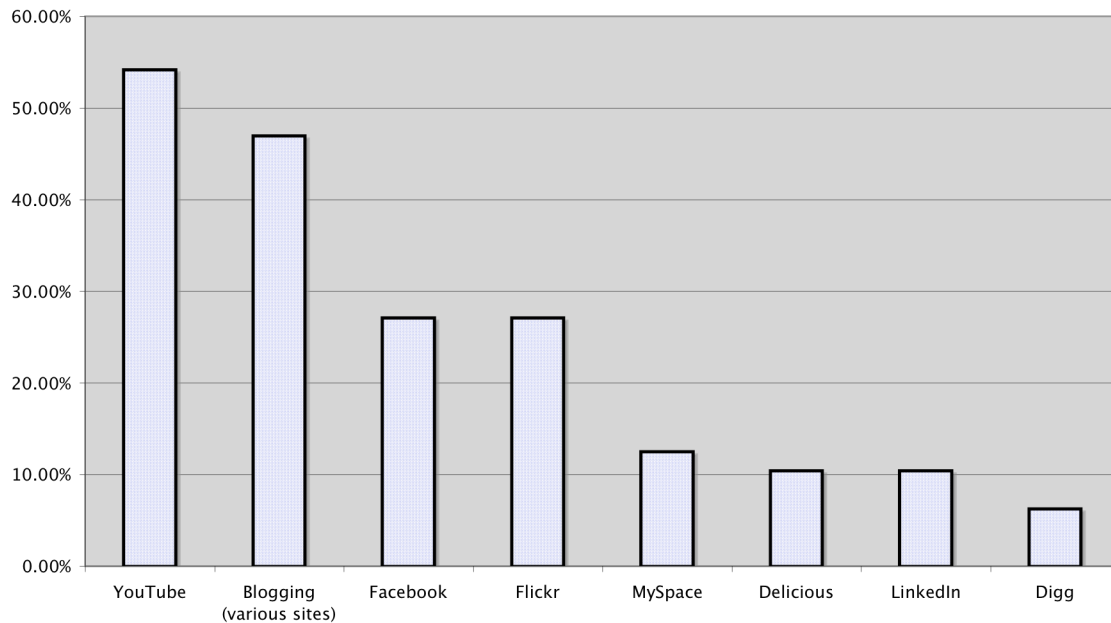
Of all technologies indicated, respondents were most positive about the potential for YouTube and Blogging to "contribute to their nonprofit" in the future. Social sites Facebook and MySpace were reported as having somewhat less potential. These divisions are especially clear through the results set indicating the percentage of respondents who reported technologies as having "great potential".

As indicated, there were only subtle differences between the outlook reported by small and large organizations.

> *Question 9: Describe the management of a successful strategy to employ social networking for a nonprofit's gain.*

In response to this question, respondents provided a range of helpful strategies. To help clarify the trends, data[2] have been complied into a series of step that, in totality, indicate how a nonprofit might gain value from through technologies.

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[2] When applicable, each respondent's response has been categorized and included below. Responses have been corrected for clarity, but not altered in content.

Steps include:

(1) Know your options, get informed, learn from others
(2) Identify:
      a. what you want to accomplish and why you should use technologies
      b. an appropriate fit between the strengths of a particular technology and your organization's mission
(3) Indicate reasonable, realistic metrics and measures for success
(4) Develop organizational support and personnel
(5) Launch, evaluate, reiterate, repeat

1. Know your options, get informed, learn from others

The various technologies can be divided into three major categories: social networking technologies, productivity tools and nonprofit technology grants / marketing tools.

Know Your Options	
Social Networking	Facebook (Groups, Causes) Linked In Myspace YouTube Flicker Ning
Productivity Tools	Google Documents, Calendar, Spreadsheets Google Checkout for Nonprofits Digg Del.icio.us Diigo

Nonprofit Technology Grants and Marketing	Google Grants: "… recipients use their award of free AdWords advertising on Google.com to raise awareness and increase traffic."

YouTube Grants: Provides "premium broadcasting capability", promotion of videos, and fundraising supports.

Facebook Fund: "bFund is a fund focused on continuing to create incentives for the development of applications on Facebook Platform."

Wikipedia: Although no grants are available, many respondents indicated that a Wikipedia listing greatly increased web traffic. |

Get informed, learn from others

- Research successful campaigns. Determine why you think they were successful, and determine what elements you will integrate for your own campaign.
- Don't start without a plan that includes defined goals, tasks, management and metrics.
- Decide and commit to a schedule before you commit to the technology!

Step 2: Identify what you want to accomplish, and why you should use technologies

What do you want to accomplish?

- Clearly determine what you want to accomplish.
- Start with one product at a time – Facebook, Flicker, YouTube – and become acclimatized before moving onward. Pick a technology that requires effort that staff can reasonably handle. It takes more effort to produce a movie for YouTube, for instance, than it does to create a FaceBook group and invite your friends.
- Use existing technologies rather than building new ones. Spend time marketing and contacting potential contributors. Be patient.
- Strategize in advance what the purpose of the network is and give it time to take hold.

Why use social networking or other technologies?

- Decide why you want to get involved. "You shouldn't get involved because it's "hip" but because it misrepresents a change in the way we do business, from a hierarchical model to a relationship building model. It should be integrated into all aspects of an organization's work, with a forward thinking strategy that is infused into each aspect."
- I think the best way to ensure success in any medium is understanding your target audience and how they want to be communicated with, and then employing (and layering) those communications. We made a conscious decision to increase our use of web 2.0, but selected the kinds of technologies to use based on who our audience is and how that group is shifting. We wanted something sustainable on our end, that would complement our other online and offline efforts, and would actually reach our targets.
- Avoid using social networking as a sales tool. Rather use it as an engagement strategy or an educational tool. Authenticity is key.

Step 3: Define Your Metrics

- Target a specific, measurable metric: increase in members, increase in number of donations through network, increase in volunteers recruited through social networks, or number of news releases sent through social networks.
- Develop metrics that you can meet through the technologies that you have chosen.
- Develop realistic metrics. Can your cause really garner 100,000 supporters in Facebook?

Sample Technology-Specific Measurement Metrics	
Facebook	• Membership size of group and cause • Each member invites 10 individuals every week • Increase in website traffic that originates from Facebook • Dollars donated through Cause or number of overall donations increases *(warning: survey respondents indicate weak online fund-raising through FB Causes)* • Volunteers recruited through Facebook
YouTube	• Number of videos produced by affiliate filmmakers increases • Viewership increases • Increase in website traffic that originates from YouTube • Increase in commenting about videos

Google Adwords	• Increase in website traffic • Expansion / Increase in keywords that draw website visitors
Google Applications	• Increase in number of organizational files that are kept up-to-date and/or public files that are shareable through an organized Google Docs system • Use and organizational / public reference to an organizational Google calendaring system

Step 4: Develop Organizational Support and Management

- Be sure to have a dedicated staff person who can dedicate at least three hours a week to it. I think that organizations that are able to hire new media specialists are ahead of the game in this way. These can be positions that bring the communications department, the program departments, and the technology department together to implement such a strategy.
- Executive level needs to believe and "buy-in".
- Budget needs to be clear and explicit.
- Online Outreach needs autonomy from IT budget and department.
- At least one staff person gives 100% time to online activities.
- At start, at least one person from the nonprofit needs to direct the activity and structure of a social network/community. Structure and Rules need to be explicit from the start.
- Manage social network/community expectations from the very beginning.
- Establish rewards structure for positive online/offline activities and contributions.
- Integrate offline activities with online communications as much as possible.
- Offline interactions will advance trust networks, establish norms, and increase buy-in.

Step 5: Launch and Manage

- Connect with people on web 2.0 technologies who are interested in your cause and leaders with their peers.
- Tap into pre-existing "offline" social networks to build a foundation for one or more online communities.
- Have an annual "Meetup" with attendance no greater than 150-- if greater than 150, then setup regional Meetups.
- Frequently report on campaign status to internal staff and external supporters. Be prepared to ask supporters for additional assistance.
- Don't expect short term ROI.

- Social networking is social -- it's not about putting up a billboard and waiting for the money (or members or volunteers) to roll in. You have to be willing to engage the community -- to go where people are, help them achieve your goals by equipping them with effective tools, and most of all empower them by trusting them with your message and allowing them to speak in their own words. That's the only way a social, word-of-mouth campaign is going to succeed.
- Be flexible and willing to change the strategy.
- If you are a small nonprofit with limited resources, you need to use technology as much as possible to save money by reducing the need to print and/or mail materials. Large nonprofits also need to save money, but more importantly, need to get the word out quickly and efficiently.
- Build it in as part of an integrated campaign (with website, email, advertising)

Additional Best Practices

- Get as many contacts as you can, search friends and people that share interests, start by requesting feedback, and then involve others actively.

In summary, there are several important steps that must be taken in order to ensure online efforts are a success. Through careful planning, management and iterative execution, online activities can provide a positive return on investment.

However, it was surprising to see that most respondents focused their attention on awareness measures, rather than measures of increases in engagement. While "website hits" provide a metric for return on investment, the metric does not indicate the real return on value that a program garners. A much more challenging, yet import, metric is engagement – or the number of volunteers recruited, for instance.

Additional Data Breakdown

Two additional demographics were pulled from the dataset: a set of respondents who indicated heavy blogging, and a set of respondents who indicated heavy use of Facebook. The following patterns emerge from analysis of this data set:

Blog Leaders: Those organizations who used blogging, and that derived either moderate or great value from blogging efforts:

- Predominately large organizations (63% 10 or more employees; 41% 51 or more employees)
- Reported only moderate use of Facebook and YouTube
- Reported strong value derived from blogging, but less value from YouTube, Flicker and Facebook technologies.
- Extremely positive about the future potential for continued blogging to contribute additional value to the organization. Likewise positive about the potential for YouTube to contribute future value.

Facebook Leaders: Those organizations who have used Facebook, and that derived either moderate or great value from Facebook efforts:
- A mixed-population group (33% small organizations, 33% medium-sized, and 33% large organizations with 51+ employees)
- Have already realized powerful contributions through blogging (82% moderate or great value) and typically lead in other technologies (YouTube: 82% moderate or great value realization)
- *Greater optimism for YouTube (70% Great Potential) and blogging (65% Great Potential)* in comparison to Facebook (35% Great Potential) in response to the question, "what potential do you foresee for each technology's ability to contribute to your nonprofit in the future?"

Appendices

Appendix 1: Question Set (see file located on the PLML Wiki)
Appendix 2: Response Data Set (see file located on the PLML Wiki)