

Friends Who Give: Relationship-Building and Other Uses of Social Networking Tools by Nonprofit Organizations

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Abstract

Social networking is now the most popular activity on the Web (Qualman, 2009), with Facebook alone now having member numbers in excess of 500 million (Facebook, 2009). Social networking represents a major opportunity for corporations and nonprofit organizations to gain access to massive audiences with a medium that is essentially free and user-friendly. This research focused on how nonprofit organizations are currently using social networking tools, with a particular interest in how they use social networking as a relationship-building tool to create and maintain relationships and communication with volunteers, donors and other interested parties.

I. Introduction

Since the advent of the Internet, there has been exponential growth in the number of people using the Internet as well as uses of the Internet, including new marketing and communications uses that have arrived on the scene in unprecedented numbers and variety in a very short period of time (Ko, et al, 2005). Social networking is one of the platforms that have taken the marketing and communications world by storm.

Businesses and nonprofits are beginning to view social networking platforms as mediums to reach their key audiences and constituents in new ways because the number of users on social networking sites has been and continues to climb exponentially, especially since the founding of Facebook in February of 2004 (Facebook, 2009). In fact, social networking had already overtaken pornography as the most popular activity on the Web in 2009 (Qualman, 2009). Social networking is defined by Boyd and Ellison (2007) as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (pg. 1). Commonly used social networking platforms include Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Foursquare and LinkedIn.

The amount of brand-centered dialogue occurring on the Internet is substantial. According to current research, 34 percent of the 200 million bloggers on the Web post opinions about products and brands and 54 percent of bloggers post or tweet on a daily basis (Qualman, 2009). With large numbers of people talking at once in virtual environments, this amounts to a significant number of opinion posts that will be seen by a social network. In fact, 25 percent of search results for the World’s Top 20 largest brands are hyperlinks to user-generated content (Qualman, 2009). Companies cannot control the conversations happening on these sites, but they can influence them by getting involved and providing these people with updates and corrections or clarifications to existing information. They can also use the information as research or feedback that

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is unsolicited, honest, and comes free of charge (Safko & Brake, 2009).

Due to these statistics and the potential of reaching large audiences, nonprofit companies have jumped at the opportunity to access potential and current donors and volunteers through social networking, particularly since social networking is an efficient option for those nonprofits with low communications and marketing budgets.

This research will examine how nonprofits are currently using Facebook, Twitter and blogs for marketing and communications, with a particular emphasis on how they are using these platforms as relationship-building and dialogic tools. The results will be examined through a theoretical lens by using Grunig's (1992) two-way symmetric communications theory and Grunig's Excellence Theory.

II. Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The potential for more open lines of communication between companies and users of social networking sites follows some of the tenets of Grunig's (1992) two-way symmetric model of public relations. According to Grunig's Excellence Model, excellent public relations uses the two-way symmetric model, as opposed to Grunig's three other public relations models: the two-way asymmetric model, press agency, or public information models (Grunig, 1984). This two-way symmetric model is thought to be superior to the other three because it balances the needs of both the organizations and its publics, is based on research, and manages conflict through communication (Botan & Hazleton, 2006). Because the two-way symmetric model is balanced in its goals and uses two-way communication, it has been shown to be more effective than the other three models (Grunig, 1984).

Grunig's models have significance to this study in that "the Internet with its technical characteristics is the only medium which allows the application of all four models of public relations proposed by Grunig and Hunt" (Ingenhoff & Koelling, 2009, p. 67). This specifically applies to this research in that it explores Internet usage through social networking, and therefore the research will look at some of these models.

Grunig's (1992) study of companies found that excellent organizations stay close to their customers, employees, and other constituencies. This has led to Grunig's Excellence Model, which maintains that the two-way symmetric communication model is superior to the other three. It is important to keep in mind that Grunig's Excellence Model has received scholarly criticism for leaving out important considerations (Grunig, 1992). In response to such criticism, a contingency view of Grunig's four models was developed to suggest that it cannot be assumed that the two-way symmetric model is always the best choice, and that no one approach works under all conditions. Several factors determine which model should be followed, including the type of organization, the current state of the environment, and the issues at hand (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Social Networking by Nonprofits

Corporations have received a lot of attention recently for their use of social media, particularly companies that are considered social media superstars for their effective and creative uses of social media, such as Southwest Airlines and Zappos (Weber, 2009). However, the opportunity for social networking success is not limited to for-profit companies exclusively. Nonprofits can reap the same benefits, especially in how they can position themselves in a positive light in this new environment. Drawing on literature related to impression management (White & Pelozo, 2009), social networking allows companies (both for-profit and nonprofit) the ability to create, maintain, and extend their position within these sites that connect potentially millions of people to one another at little to no cost. It is logical for nonprofits to join social networking because users may look for ways to join a cause through social networking itself. A nonprofit with a popular Facebook page or Twitter account may be the first place they look at. Similar to the effect of Web sites, social networking sites give legitimacy to the agency and the cause supported by it.

Social networking also allows individuals to be recognized by others for their good deeds. Several studies have found that recognition plays a significant role in why individuals volunteer and donate to nonprofits. Researchers have found that people are more likely to volunteer or donate to an organization when they know they will be recognized for their service (Fisher & Ackerman, 1998). Fisher and Ackerman's two-part

experiment used a laboratory study of a random sample of college students who analyzed how effective several posters were in recruiting volunteers, while varying the amount of recognition publicized by the posters. The second part of the study was a field experiment asking for volunteers to run a soccer festival, with varying amounts of recognition available. In both experiments, recognition level and group need were manipulated, to conclude that “recognition publicly communicates the group’s respect for those who support the group, and thereby raises the recipient’s status and prestige,” thereby motivating people to volunteer or donate (Fisher & Ackerman, 1998).

However, the verdict is still out on how well nonprofits are using social networking. In a study conducted by Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas (2009) using a content analysis of 275 randomly sampled nonprofit organizations’ Facebook profiles found that most Facebook profiles were not using the social networking platform to its fullest potential. Most were lacking in particular areas, including multimedia use, direct contact with “friends,” distributing organizational news and publicizing public relations efforts, and had outdated and stagnant pages (Waters, et al., 2009).

The weaknesses in making direct contact with “friends” are of particular concern for nonprofits. Creating Facebook pages gives nonprofits a way to directly connect with current and potential volunteers and donors, gives social networking users the recognition they deserve and crave, and motivates these people to continue their efforts. However, Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas’ (2009) study showed that for the vast majority of nonprofits, direct contact on Facebook consisted only of providing a contact e-mail address (Water, et al., 2009). If direct contact were increased, this potential for relationship building, including recognizing the followers of Facebook pages on the sites themselves or through wall posts on the individuals’ walls or commenting on posts, could make social networking a powerful awareness building, volunteer recruitment, and fundraising tool for nonprofits.

A similar study by Ingenhoff and Koelling (2009) found the same problem of nonprofits not using social networking sites to their full capabilities. This study looked at the Web sites of 134 Swiss nonprofit organizations. The findings showed that generally nonprofits were not using the Web to its full potential for creating dialogue. Significantly, though, the data showed that the nonprofits seemed to “acknowledge the importance of engaging publics in dialogue,” (Ingenhoff & Koelling, 2009, p. 66), but had yet to find a proper way of carrying out these goals of creating dialogue, and were using their Web sites for news sharing or promotions.

A 2009 study conducted by Bortree and Seltzer looked at 50 Facebook profiles made and used by environmental advocacy groups and coded them for their use of dialogue and dialogue promotion (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009). They looked for activity on the sites, the amount of followers they had, use of applications, donation applications and other content categories to assess how well these advocacy groups were using their social networking Facebook pages to create and maintain dialogue. Similar to the Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas (2009) study, Bortree and Seltzer found: “Most of the advocacy organizations in our study seem to adopt the position that the mere creation of an interactive space via a social networking profile is sufficient for facilitating dialogue ... advocacy groups are not taking advantage of the dialogic strategies afforded by social networking” (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009, p. 319). It was concluded that these advocacy groups were not seizing the opportunity to build relationships using the convenient dialogic tools available on Facebook such as discussion boards and walls used for posting information or comments (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009).

Among the first published research to look at how organizations use the Internet for dialogic purposes was an article written by Kent and Taylor (1998). They define dialogic communication as meaningful communication between publics and organizations, which goes beyond quick feedback into conversation. Their research posits that organizations are not currently using the World Wide Web to its full potential for creating and maintaining dialogue and building relationships: “For all of its public relations potential, the World Wide Web still remains underutilized by many organizations and underexamined by scholars as a tool for building organizational-public relationships” (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 322). In this article, they call for research in this area, which this paper answers in part by analyzing the current uses of social networking for dialogic purposes and for relationship building.

Greenberg and MacAulay (2009) looked specifically at the use of Facebook, Twitter, RSS feeds, and blogs, as well as other Internet activities by 43 environmental nonprofit organizations in Canada in another study. Greenberg and MacAulay were interested in seeing if nonprofits were using a broadcast paradigm, which they defined as using their Internet platforms to disseminate information, or a dialogical paradigm, which they defined as using their Internet platforms to create engagement and relationships. The findings from this study reiterate the findings of the above studies but through analyses of the 43 nonprofits’ social me-

dia sites, concluding that these nonprofits were not leveraging the full potential of these Web-based platforms to create and maintain dialogue. The researchers do note that there are some notable exceptions to this rule, and that nonprofits are increasingly starting to get creative and innovative with the new public relations technologies and finding significant success, but that the sample they used did not demonstrate this (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009).

The degree to which nonprofits are able to utilize their online platforms for dialogic purposes (meaning that the use of the sites is to create, maintain and participate in dialogue with publics), contrary to the idea that social networking is free of cost, may be affected by budgetary factors. Kang and Norton (2004) looked at public relations on the Internet, and hypothesized that the Internet would level the playing field for nonprofits with varying budgets by providing an inexpensive way of creating dialogue.

Conversely, a study done by Goatman and Lewis (2007) showed that nonprofits in the U.K. with higher fundraising rates used their Web sites more as a communication tool than did U.K. nonprofits with lower fundraising rates. Along these same lines, Greenberg and MacAulay (2009) posit that "Dialogue does not emerge from thin air, but must be created, fostered, and nurtured – dialogue is time consuming and given its indeterminate nature can also potentially undermine the strategic imperatives of organizational communication" (p. 67). This shows the time and resources necessary to reach the dialogic potential held in social networking platforms, which may be a challenge for nonprofits with limited budgets and people resources.

III. Methodology

Multiple Case Study

To address the research questions, a multiple case study (Stake, 1995) was conducted. This case study examined a convenience sample of nonprofits that are active in social networking. These organizations were chosen based on personal contacts with employees who work on the social networking plans for these organizations and because these contacts were necessary in order to be able to get an inside perspective on the social networking strategies they employ. The organizations examined and contacts for each examined were:

- Autism Speaks, the largest autism science and advocacy organization in the United States – Michelle Preslar, Executive Director – Greater Charlotte; and Jennifer Parsons, Social Marketing Manger
- Christel House International provides impoverished children with education, nutrition, health care and a nurturing environment through several schools around the world - Nathan Hand, Senior Development Associate
- OE Enterprises is a nonprofit that works to place disabled individuals and others facing employment barriers in to jobs – Joe Bumgarner, Program Services Manager
- UNC Health Care is a nonprofit, integrated health care system associated with the State of North Carolina – Tom Hughes, Managing Editor

In order to examine these nonprofits' use of social networking, the researcher used a multiple, two-part case study. Part one consisted of interviews with employees at the selected nonprofits who take part in or are wholly responsible for the social networking platforms used. Part two consisted of a qualitative content analysis (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009) of the social networking platforms themselves, including the nonprofits' Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, and blog pages where available.

Part I: Interviews

A series of interviews were conducted with nonprofit leaders who have created social networking plans for the nonprofit they work for. The seven stages of an interview investigation outlined by Kvale (1996) were followed as a basis for this phase of the research. These stages are: *Thematizing* - develop a purpose of the investigation and describe the topic of conversation; *Designing* - plan the study; *Interviewing* - conduct the interviews based on a prepared guide; *Transcribing* - prepare a transcription of the oral speech for analysis; *Analyzing* - use the material to draw conclusions; *Verifying* - calculate the generalizability, reliability and validity of the findings; *Reporting* - communicate your findings.

One interview was conducted with each organization, with the exception of Autism Speaks. Two interviews were conducted with two separate employees from Autism Speaks to get both a national and a local perspective from the Charlotte, North Carolina branch from the organization. These interviews were each 30 minutes to one hour in length. An informal, but structured conversation was maintained in the interviews. Each person interviewed was initially sent a set of questions via e-mail, which included topics such as how and why the organization started using social networking, current goals and objectives for the social networking use, challenges and obstacles of social networking, and the level of interaction and use of recognition by the companies on the social networking sites. A full set of questions can be found in Appendix C. These questions were used as a starting point. It was important to have a general idea of the types of information I wanted to receive in order to give the interview a more formal direction and purpose. From there, the participants were able to discuss any issue they deemed relevant to the research and the conversation, and additional questions were asked as appropriate.

The transcribed data was then analyzed using the constant comparison method (Dye et al., 2000), as well as possible quantification of the data where possible (Kvale, 1996). The constant comparison method is used to group answers from interviews, compare answers and categories, and to analyze the data from different perspectives (Dye et al, 2000).

According to Glaser and Strauss (cited in Dye et al, 2000), there are four stages of the constant comparison method: comparing incidents applicable to each category; integrating categories and their properties; determining the theory; writing the theory.

The constant comparison method essentially says that categories emerge from looking at the data, and that categories will undergo continuous change and refinement as the data is further analyzed and categorized. A crucial element of the constant comparison method is that as data is analyzed in the context of category, it is also compared across categories for a deep analysis of the data (Dye et al, 2000).

For this research, the constant comparative method was used for the interview, and the final categories includes such topics as motivations for using social networking, how the social networking was launched, whether there was a plan for social networking, which social networking platforms were used, who maintained the sites, interaction, recognition, goals of social networking use, obstacles, effectiveness, and lessons learned.

Part II: Qualitative Content Analysis

The second part of the study examined how these organizations are using social networking sites through a qualitative content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon define qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through a systematic classifications process ... identifying themes or patterns” (as cited in Zhang & Wildermuth, n.d., p. 1). Qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to hand pick subjects of study, as opposed to random sampling used in most quantitative data analysis (Zhang & Wildermuth, n.d). Mayring (2000) defines this process by saying: “Qualitative content analysis defines itself ... [as] following content analytical rules and step by step models, without rash quantification” (2000, p. 2).

According to Altheide (n.d.), the creator of qualitative content analysis, the basic steps in this process are to pursue a problem to be investigated; become familiar with the process and context of information sources, and explore sources of information; familiarize yourself with relevant documents; list several variables to guide the data collection; test the protocol created based on these variables; revise the protocol and select several additional cases to further refine the protocol (Altheide, n.d.).

Because there is currently limited research in this field and the social networking platforms are constantly changing and being updated, this research took mainly an exploratory content analysis approach. The researcher looked to gain a depth of knowledge into how nonprofits are using social networking tools through qualitative content analysis, as opposed to a breadth of knowledge of more shallow types of data that can be gained through quantitative data gathering (Altheide, n.d.).

According to Carpenter (1998), qualitative content analyses are meant to focus on meaning, and the results show subtle, thematic data. Qualitative content analyses are very interactive, with the investigator constantly interacting with the data, with concepts, with theory, and with analysis (Carpenter, 1998). In this way, the processes used to analyze the data are adjusted and manipulated throughout the analysis process as new themes emerge and become significant (Mayring, 2000).

As a follow-up to the study done by Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas (2009), and in following the

steps defined by Altheide (n.d.), the researcher looked at how the nonprofits use social networking sites to interact with volunteers and donors, how often they post, how they position themselves on these platforms, and the participation they receive from users in return.

For this content analysis, the social networking platforms of Facebook, Twitter and blogs were used from each organization, where available.** Two non-consecutive weeks were chosen at random, and were used to collect data from each of the three social networking platforms from all four nonprofits. The weeks chosen were December 1 (12:00 a.m.) to December 7 (11:59 p.m.), 2010, and January 12 (starting at 12:00 a.m.) to January 18 (11:59 p.m.), 2011. All posts made by the organization were collected, as well as comments made by other users. For each platform, an effort was made to collect comments by those who “follow” or “like” the pages, which is possible for Facebook and the blog because the comments are collected and grouped together by the platforms themselves. Twitter, on the other hand, is a bit more complicated in this manner. On Twitter, users comment to the nonprofit by making a post on their personal pages using the @ symbol (i.e. @UNC_Health_Care). These messages go directly to the nonprofits, but only the nonprofits’ social media employees have access to these pages. As a result, the only comments that could be collected accurately that were made to the nonprofits were the ones they responded to, as those show up on the nonprofit public twitter feed page. This missing data is a weakness in this research and also of the platform of Twitter itself. When new tools are created to remedy this problem, future research will be able to look at all comments made by users on Twitter.

Categories for analyzing the collected data were made using a mix of both inductive category development and deductive category application, as defined by Mayring (2000). Inductive category development “has few answers to the question from where the categories come, how the system of categories is developed” (Mayring, 2000, p. 3). The categories are developed by those who are closest to the material, in this case researchers, who have been able to look at the data and decide what categories should be used in order to analyze it. Then, as the data is being analyzed, the categories are further developed and changed as more themes emerge or categories are deemed irrelevant to the research questions, using feedback loops (Mayring, 2000).

IV. Findings

Part I: Interviews

The five interviews conducted over the course of this study shed light on the inner working and strategies of those in charge of the social networking for each of the four nonprofits: Autism Speaks, Christel House International, OE Enterprises, and UNC Healthcare. These nonprofits varied in size, scope, mission, and social networking uses, which made for varied answers and perspectives to the interview questions. Still, despite the variety, themes did emerge from the interviews.

The interviews showed that the main motivation for using social networking among the nonprofits was the desire to not be left behind, and they saw that their competitors were taking part in social networking. Autism Speaks had a more specific reason in that most of their donations from supporters were received online, so moving into the social networking world was a natural step.

The varying amounts of social networking use, found in the content analysis, can be linked to the different resources used by each company. Autism Speaks, for instance, has an entire department devoted to its social networking efforts. OE Enterprises stood on the other end of the spectrum by relying solely on local university student volunteers to maintain its Facebook page.

Another theme that emerged was a lack of a plan on the outset of social networking. All of the organization responded that initially they did not have a strategic communication plan, and had simply jumped in. Eventually, they have created goals, which include garnering awareness for their causes and raising money. Autism Speaks said, “We raise both money and awareness through our social marketing channels, [so we are] always aiming to raise more money and increase engagement” (personal communications, 2010).

Interaction and Dialogue

** OE Enterprises only has a Facebook; the other three organizations participate in some manner using all three platforms listed.

A major section of social networking that this project addresses is interaction with users. As previously addressed, it was expressed that the organization work to respond to complaints or issues brought up on Facebook, but some of the nonprofits go beyond that. Parsons of Autism Speaks reported interaction with donors “on a daily basis. We are always looking to re-post what they post and conversely, to see what they re-post of ours” (personal communication, 2010). Her colleague, Preslar, added “with Autism, families and volunteers and contributors are very passionate. We use [our social networking platforms] as open forums for people to discuss, and put info out there” (personal communication, 2010).

Christel House International suggested that they do interact with users, but on a much less active level. “We don’t respond to every comment, unless it needs it. I try to encourage or go around the back end and message the person and say ‘Hey, I do social networking for Christel House, thanks for commenting on our site.’ We’ve only had a couple instances where we’ve really started a conversation” (personal communication, 2010). UNC Health Care, on the other hand, said that they mostly use their social networking platforms for news sharing, and therefore have little to no interaction with users. OE Enterprises said, “We haven’t yet [interacted with users on Facebook], but we plan to start doing that. For now it’s mostly a news and update center, but it is in the plans” (personal communication, 2010).

Along the same lines, the nonprofits also discussed if and how they use their social networking platforms to recognize donors and volunteers. Preslar says she uses social networking in “as many ways as I can recognize people, because obviously that’s the cheapest way to communicate for us” (personal communication, 2010). Parsons added, “We share donors stories and volunteer stories on our blog. In turn, these blog posts are promoted on Facebook and Twitter. I think it offers recognition to those who respond to that type of reinforcement. It also shows people who have not yet gotten involved, the many ways they can be” (personal communication, 2010).

Just as Christel House International interacted on a less active level, they also recognize less. “We try to [recognize donors] once in a while, we’re starting to do more, or at least I want to” (personal communication, 2010). UNC Health Care does not use social networking for recognizing volunteers and donors; OE Enterprises said they also do not, but that they would like to in the future.

Part II: Qualitative Content Analysis

The content analysis analyzed two weeks of data from the social networking sites of each of the four organizations over the course of two nonconsecutive weeks. The data coded for categories related both related to interaction and not related to interaction, and coded both posts by the organization and posts by the users. The final categories can be found in Appendix A.

Overall Social Networking Use

The overall use of social networking by the organizations is reflected in tables A, B, C, and D (found in Appendix B). As these tables demonstrate, the organizations had varying amounts of activity throughout the two weeks examined. Autism Speaks had far more activity by both users and the organizations than the other nonprofits examined, which is likely a reflection of the fact that they have the most people resources working on social networking compared to the other nonprofits. On the other end of the spectrum, OE Enterprises did not have any activity throughout the two weeks, which is significant in that it reflects their lack of resources and perhaps familiarity with and knowledge of social networking.

When looking at the posts by organizations, Table A shows that the most common category used was respond to other user followed by promotion/sweepstakes/events. The least common category was response to problem followed by tips/advice/words of wisdom and retweet. The reason retweet, which happens when an organization reposts a tweet by another user on its own page, is not common may be because it is only possible on the Twitter platform, not on Facebook or the blogs, which means this data is diluted when totaled with the data from Facebook and the blogs.

Table C shows the posts made by the users of the social networking sites. The most commonly used category was tips/advice/words of wisdom followed by share story/personal information and praise/agreement with organization. The fact that praise/agreement with organization falls in the top three categories shows that the users of these social networking pages appreciate the work and uses of social networking by the nonprofits examined. The other two categories, tips/advice/words of wisdom and share story/personal information shows that the users like to use these sites to talk about their personal experiences and the reasons that they feel personally close to the issues addressed by the nonprofits.

The least common categories were criticize other users and report problems/resolutions of problems. The fact that these were the least common categories was a positive reflection on the nonprofits' use of social media, showing that negative feedback was uncommon.

Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks had far more activity than the other nonprofits. Overall, the top category for posts fell into the respond to other user as shown on tables E and F in Appendix B. This is significant in that this category involves interaction and dialogue with other users. The fact that it is the top category shows that Autism Speaks interacts with users more often than they post information themselves, which makes the Autism Speaks social networking sites sources of dialogue and interaction instead of news sharing sites. Autism Speaks shows that they are listening to users and monitoring the sites frequently, and are able to spend the time to respond to users.

Users of the Autism Speaks sites were very interactive, with users commenting or posting on Facebook 2,327 times over the two weeks, and 32 times on the blog. Comments and posts on Twitter cannot be monitored. Users also "liked" posts by the organization 2,313 times. This activity is quite high in comparison with the other organizations. The most common posts made by the users fell into the categories of share story/personal information and praise/agreement with organization. This shows that the users tend to use the sites to discuss their personal connection to the issues addressed by Autism Speaks, and also shows that they appreciate the way that Autism Speaks is using social networking.

UNC Health Care

The data shows that UNC Health Care, overall, mainly used social networking as a news sharing service. It was the most common category for all three social networking platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and the blog). Categories that reflect interaction, such as respond to other user, request feedback/solicit information, and retweet are far less common, as shown in tables G and H.

Similarly, there are not many comments and posts made by other users – six over the two weeks in all of the social networking platforms. However, it is significant to note that the majority of these posts fall into the category of praise/agreement with organization, which is evidence that the users of the sites appreciate the news sharing services provided by the organization. No posts or comments by users fell into the criticism of organization category. Thirteen users "liked" a post by the organization over the two weeks, which shows there are users listening and appreciating the posts, but not posting or commenting themselves.

Christel House International

Tables I and J show that Christel House International mainly used the social networking sites as news sharing sites for Twitter and the blog, but on Facebook, predominantly used it for promotion/sweepstakes/events. The only other category represented was the thank users/volunteers/donors. This data shows that the main focus of the use of social networking sites was not interaction, but that they did use it for that purpose on occasion. Overall, the sites are used to share news and events or promotions that support the cause. This makes sense in that the audience or public for the Christel House International social networking sites are not likely to be the parents or children directly affected by Christel House International, who are living in extreme poverty. Instead they are donors or interested parties in the cause, but have less of a personal connection to the issues addressed by Christel House International, and therefore may be less interested in participating in dialogue and conversation, and may be looking for updates on the organization without actually discussing the issues. Christel House International used Facebook most often for posts, and Twitter the least often.

Like UNC Health Care, the Christel House International pages received only six comments and posts by users over the two weeks analyzed. The categories these posts fell into were distributed throughout the praise/agreement with organization, request information/ask for advice/ask a question, promotion, and not in English. It is important to note that there were no criticism of organization posts or comments by users, which implies that the users appreciate the social networking usage by the organization. On Facebook, users "liked" posts by the organization 20 times, which shows that there are people reading and listening to the organization without posting themselves.

OE Enterprises

There was no data available for OE Enterprises. This nonprofit does not have a Twitter account or a blog, and made no posts on Facebook in the two weeks examined. This may be a reflection of the lack of resources allocated to social networking.

V. Discussion

Interviews and Content Analysis

Interviews demonstrated that the motivations behind using social networking, while varying between organizations, were mainly based on the idea that it was important to be present in social networking, even if there was not a real plan or goal in mind through using social networking. The organizations felt that other nonprofits, including other organizations working for the same cause, were going to be using social networking and therefore they needed to be out there as well. Autism Speaks did have more of a plan in mind in that they already were using online tools for fundraising, so complementing this with social networking was a natural maneuver for them to reach their target audience and meet their organizational goals.

Like motivations, the goals and intentions of the nonprofits' use of social networking were also varied, but overall they were characterized by having undefined goals and objectives. All of the organizations reported that they started using social networking without making a formal communications or marketing plan. For the most part, this meant that they did not have measurable goals or objectives from which to evaluate their efforts. Instead, the planning was vague. Autism Speaks and Christel House International wanted to be involved and familiar with conversations going on about their nonprofits and their causes in general. Autism Speaks argued that social networking could be used to raise funds as the bottom line goal. OE Enterprises also expressed an interest in having an informal way of communicating with clients, while UNC Health Care said they were mainly interested in the platforms as a news sharing service. Overall, the nonprofits started out by mainly experimenting with some, like Autism Speaks, working on more concrete goals as they became more familiar and accustomed to using Facebook, Twitter and blogs.

As with any experimental use of a new communications tool, the nonprofits ran into obstacles and learned important lessons, which can be applied to other nonprofits' use of social networking. The most commonly identified obstacle was monitoring, both for content and for evaluation purposes. They had trouble with monitoring for inappropriate content or responding to posts that were not in line with organizational beliefs in a timely manner because social networking is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For all organizations studied, it would be impossible and impractical for the nonprofits to have someone monitoring the platforms at all times. The nonprofits have also not yet found a way to measure the effectiveness of their social networking efforts, particularly in dollars raised for the organization. At the time of interviewing, the respondents were not able to measure the direct impact that social networking was having on fundraising, but could only speculate that it was a contributor, but not a main factor in contributions.

This obstacle is a sign that there is a need for tools to be created for better evaluation of data. While there are currently no tools available for these purposes, the nonprofits could find some creative ways of gauging impact if fundraising is the goal behind an organization's use of social networking. For instance, when a donation is made, the nonprofits could ask the donor why they are donating, including what information they used in making their decision, such as Internet research and social networking use. While social networking may not be the sole reason for a donation, it is likely a contributing factor, and this type of measurement would help prove that to upper management and to the social media practitioners themselves that social networking has value in fundraising and awareness initiatives.

The interviews also addressed the interaction and recognition purposes of using social networking. Autism Speaks, Christel House International, and OE Enterprises stated that they intend, in varying levels, to use social networking as a way of creating dialogue and interaction with their constituents. Autism Speaks also mentioned that they intend to use social networking as a way of recognizing volunteers, donors and users of the social networking sites for their efforts. Christel House International and OE Enterprises said that they would like to interact on the sites, but that they had not managed to do much with interaction yet. UNC Health Care reiterated that they mainly use social networking for news sharing, so recognition and interaction are not top of mind in their uses of social networking.

While the interviews gave insight into the intentions of the social networking by the nonprofits, the content analysis of the sites showed what was really occurring online. The data showed that Autism Speaks had far more posts, users, and comments than the other three organizations. OE Enterprises actually did not have any posts over the two-week period, and therefore no interaction occurred in social networking.

The data from the content analysis showed that, overall, the most common use of postings on the

social networking sites was to respond to other users, followed by promotion of a sweepstakes or event and news sharing. The most common categories for posts and comments made by other users on these sites was to share tips, advice, or words of wisdom, followed closely by sharing a story or person information and praising the organization.

With this data, it is important to note that it is heavily skewed by the Autism Speaks data because there were many more posts by them as well as posts and comments by the users to their sites than the other three organizations. Therefore, the data for the other three organizations was overshadowed by the data from Autism Speaks.

For UNC Health Care's Facebook, the most popular category for posts made by the organization was news sharing. This finding is in line with the motivations outlined in the interviews, during which Hughes identified the main purpose of social networking as news sharing. The top use of Twitter and the blog was also news sharing. Only on Twitter did UNC Health Care show any posts in the respond to other user category, and on the blog the only interaction was to respond to a problem.

Similarly, Facebook use by Christel House International fell mostly into the promotion/sweepstakes/events category, followed by news sharing. The top uses of Twitter and the blog was news sharing for both. However, they did sometimes use both the blog and Facebook for thanking volunteers and donors, which may reflect the intention of adding more recognition and interaction as expressed in the interviews. Posts made by users to these pages fell into the categories of praising or agreeing with the organization, promotion, and requesting information, advice or asking a question.

Autism Speaks, therefore, had much more interaction on their pages, as demonstrated in the findings section of this paper. The top use of both Facebook and Twitter was to respond to users. There was also evidence of the organization thanking users, donors and volunteers on Twitter and the blog. All three platforms (Twitter, Facebook and the blogs) were used to request feedback or solicit information, and Twitter and Facebook were both used as tools for the call to action category. Still, the number one use of the blog was news sharing. Similarly, users made many posts to these pages to further interaction, mainly to share tips, advice and words of wisdom or to share stories. Facebook was even utilized by users to answer questions posted by other users, which was a category that was not met with the other three organizations. This made the Facebook page somewhat self-sustainable as a forum for discussion among users without the intervention of the organization.

Theoretical Discussion

As discussed in the literature review, one of the purposes of this study was to examine the results through the theoretical lens of Grunig's Excellence Model, which posits that the two-way symmetrical form of communication is superior to the other three forms (Grunig, 1992).

Through the responses during the interviews, it is apparent that three of the four nonprofits in this study (excluding UNC Health Care) have the intention of, and see the potential for, using social networking for interaction, which would fall into the category of two-way symmetric communication. In practice, as gauged by the content analysis, however, Autism Speaks was the only nonprofit that seemed to be succeeding in communicating in this manner on Facebook, Twitter and the blog.

As mentioned in the literature review, Grunig's Excellence Model has received some criticism for being too narrow-minded in the assumption that two-way symmetric communication is always superior, because it does not take into account motivations and goals of the organization. UNC Health Care's social networking could be used as an example to support such a method. From the interviews, it was found that UNC Health Care did not have the intention of using social networking for interaction or recognition with users, and instead intended to use it for news sharing purposes, which is more of a public information model formula for communication. The content analysis showed that they did, in fact, use the platforms for news sharing purposes, and did it quite successfully. The majority of comments on these platforms made by other users were praise of the organization or of the social networking use. From this data, we can conclude that for UNC Health Care's audience, this type of news dissemination may be the best way of communicating. This data supports the criticism of Grunig's Excellence Model, and provides the tenet that looking at the audience may greatly impact the type of communication that is effective for the organization.

Another adaptation to Grunig's model found in this research came from Autism Speaks' Facebook page. On this page, users were extremely active. When Autism Speaks would post, hundreds of users would

respond, which would often turn into a conversation between users in which Autism Speaks could monitor, but was mainly uninvolved. Users showed satisfaction with this method, and in turn would thank each other for information and Autism Speaks for hosting the forum of discussion. In a way, instead of having two-way symmetric communication between the publics and the organization, Autism Speaks serves as a facilitator for communication between users, which they seem to be happy with. Like the point made with UNC Health Care's successful news sharing above, this shows that two-way symmetric communication may not be the best choice for every organization and every audience. It is necessary to examine the audience and how they like to communicate, both with the organization and with each other, when deciding the best communications strategy to accomplish organizational goals.

For a passionate and informed audience like that of Autism Speaks, the best form of communication may be to provide an outlet for stories and emotions and a forum for discussion, only loosely linked to the organization itself. In this way, the organization may serve as a moderator or inspiration for communication, but is not always directly involved. This type of communication, which is somewhat unique to social networking and the Internet, is a new type of communication that does not fit neatly into Grunig's four types of public relations communication models.

This type of communication used by Autism Speaks is not effective for all organizations. Several factors go into determining the type of communication that the audience most craves and will respond best to and will also help achieve the goals of the organization as a whole. These factors, which determine how effective social networking for nonprofits is, are discussed in the next section.

Factors Affecting the Success of Social Networking Platforms

From this study, some conclusions can be drawn to explain reasons why some social networking plans are more effective than others. The cause itself and the audience interested in the cause plays a large role in the amount of time and energy spent on the social networking platforms by the users.

Autism Speaks was by far the most effective at gathering user interest and interaction through posts and comments. While there are several reasons for this, one may be the cause itself. Autism is becoming more prevalent in the U.S. and throughout the world and currently there is not a cure or preferred treatment. This issue affects the children of the users of the social networking platforms. There are very few issues that come close to raising the amount of passion and drive for answers than diseases impacting one's children. It is close to these users' hearts and they have a vested interest in research and advocacy in this field.

As discussed in the literature review, Southwell and Yzer (2009) found that increased salience, or closeness, to an issue could be used as a predictor for the involvement in conversation about the issues. Therefore, because Autism is an issue that users are extremely passionate about, they are naturally more inclined to join in conversations about it, and the social networking platforms used by Autism Speaks provides an outlet for this. Therefore, Autism Speaks was naturally positioned to succeed using social networking for purposes of communication to audiences and audiences communicating to one another.

Of course, Christel House International also affects children through providing education to those living in extreme poverty. Therefore, we could expect similar levels of passion and interest in the topic. However, due to the nature of the cause itself, poverty, Christel House International did not have the positional advantage to succeed in social networking in terms of creating a similar type of dialogue like that of Autism Speaks. The parents of the children impacted by this organization are also living in extreme poverty, and, therefore, are very unlikely to own or have access to a computer with Internet access. It is unlikely that they would be active on Facebook, Twitter, or a blog. The potential audience of Christel House International, instead, are potential donors with little direct contact with the children impacted by Christel House International, and, therefore, the salience of the issue is different, making them less likely to participate in conversation about education, whereas the supporters of the Autism Speaks page are very close to the issue because they themselves or their children are affected by Autism.

The literature review discussed Kang and Norton's (2004) hypothesis that the Internet would level the playing field for nonprofits with varying budgets. As in Goatman and Lewis's (2007) study, this research found that this is not entirely true. While the budgets of the nonprofits are not publicly known, we can see that the allocation of funds and resources allocated to social networking has a direct impact on the amount of posts and effectiveness of the platforms. Autism Speaks reported having an entire department devoted to their social networking needs, and also had far and away the most posts and most interaction across all

three sites (Facebook, Twitter and the blogs) of all of the examined nonprofits. UNC Health Care reported that social networking was a project for multiple people, but was not a full-time job for anyone. UNC Health Care had several postings, and while they did not often use interaction, their social networking can be considered a success because it is in line with their current goals of news sharing. Christel House International's social networking was a side project for one employee, with interns contributing seasonally, which is reflected in the sporadic use of the sites and limited interaction. OE Enterprises relied solely on students from a local university that were able to contribute during some semesters and not others, and this is evidenced by their lack of any Facebook posts during the two week period the sites were analyzed, and the fact that they are not yet on Twitter or have a blog. They simply do not have the resources to allocate to social networking. This shows that social networking, contrary to popular opinion, is not free; It costs the organization human resources and time, which are often limited by budget and other duties. In this case study, the playing field was not leveled by the Internet, as posited by Kang and Norton. Social networking, like other marketing and communications tools, is limited by the resources and size of the organization.

Weaknesses in Research & Call for Further Research

A weakness in this research is that it is narrow in scope, looking at only four nonprofits. While some conclusions were able to be drawn from these in-depth analyses, a more comprehensive study using many more nonprofits' social networking sites would lead to conclusions that are useful for generalization across all nonprofit organizations. Similarly, looking at more than two-weeks worth of data for the content analysis would have yielded results more suitable for generalization, but due to the scope of this project, more than two-weeks would have been unmanageable.

Another weakness was the inability to collect and analyze comments by other users on Twitter. I was able to collect this data for Facebook and the blogs, but there is currently not a method to accurately capture the full picture of comments by users on Twitter, which may have skewed results. This study also only looked at American nonprofits and, due to my language skills, could only analyze posts and comments in English.

Current limitations in monitoring of social networking's impact on fundraising and awareness by the organization serve as another weakness. In the future, tools may be developed that will more concretely show the impact, or lack of impact, on these areas, which would make for meaningful future research in this field.

VI. Conclusion

This research addressed a call for further research on nonprofits' use of social networking as a relationship-building and interaction tool (Kent & Taylor, 1998). This research shows that, for the most part, nonprofits are not using social networking tools to their full potential. I also found that Grunig's Excellence Model (1992) has some weaknesses, and that it needs to be modified to take into account the type of audience and the needs of the audience to decide what is the best communications strategy. Future creation of tools to monitor social networking results may help organizations decide which strategies and methods are most effective for the organizations' audiences.

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The Researcher would like to dedicate this work:

To my parents, who make all my dreams possible, and to Steven and Christine, who always keep me laughing; To Leadtackped, for their boundless friendship and unwavering support in everything I do; And to Tommy, who is always there when I need tough love.

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Appendix A

Category	Description
Posts by organization	
News Sharing	Posts in this category simply share or distribute news; can be written by the organization or link to another organization's news; use is to distribute information
Story/Narrative	This post features a personal story or narrative written by someone in the organization or by a guest; is anecdotal in nature
Guest Post	Someone outside the organization writes a post
Promotion/Sweepstakes/Event	The organization is spreading the word about a promotion, sweepstakes, or event. Can be run by the organization or by someone outside of the organization.
Response to problem/issue	The organization addressed an issue with the social media site or Web site; usually a technological issue
Thank user/volunteers/donors	A post used to recognize the efforts of donors/volunteers/users; for these purposes, can not be an implied thanks – must include the words “thanks” or “thank you”
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	Offers users helpful tips, advice, or words of wisdom related to their cause
Request feedback/solicit information	Asks users to answer a question, provide information, or give feedback on the organization and/or social media practices
Call to action	Encourages users to take an action beyond social media
Respond to other user	Organization's response to another user
Retweet (RT)	Applicable only to Twitter; RT function of this platform
Total Posts by organization	Total number of posts made by the organization – can be a post or a comment to a post

Category	Description
Posts by users	
Share story/personal information	User tells a story or offers personal information
Request information/Ask for advice/Ask a question	The user asks the organization and/or other users to advice or to answer their questions
Praise/agreement with organization	User praises the organization, thanks the organization, or shows agreement or appreciation for a post or the organization as a whole
Criticism of organization	Expresses negative emotions toward a post made by the organization or the organization as a whole
Provide new information/point of view	User makes a post that gives an update or new information, or shares another point of view
Promotion	User makes a post that promotes a Web site, organization, or event they are involved in. This can range the gamut from employees of companies offering their services, to someone running a charitable 5K looking for sponsorship and support
Report problems/resolutions of problems	User makes a posts that points out technological difficulties, a missing link, etc.; or acknowledges a resolution to a problem
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	User provides helpful tips, advice, or words of wisdom related to their cause
Not in English	Post is not in English and there for can not be coded
Criticize other users	User makes a posts in disagreement or showing negative emotions toward a post made by another user
Praise/encourage other users	User makes a post in agreement or showing positive emotions toward a post made by another user
Answer questions by other users	User addresses a question posted by another user
Neutral post	A post that not meet the descriptions of the other categories and is neutral in nature
Number of likes of organization post	Only applicable to Facebook – number of likes given to a post made by the organization itself
Number of likes of user post	Only applicable to Facebook – number of likes given to a post made by another user
Total Comments	Number of comments made by users on organization's posts
Total Posts by User	Number of individual posts made by users, independent of posts made by the organization (it is not a comment)

Category	Description
Posts by users	
Share story/personal information	User tells a story or offers personal information
Request information/Ask for advice/Ask a question	The user asks the organization and/or other users to advice or to answer their questions
Praise/agreement with organization	User praises the organization, thanks the organization, or shows agreement or appreciation for a post or the organization as a whole
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Praise/encourage other users	User makes a post in agreement or showing positive emotions toward a post made by another user
Answer questions by other users	User addresses a question posted by another user
Neutral post	A post that not meet the descriptions of the other categories and is neutral in nature
Number of likes of organization post	Only applicable to Facebook – number of likes given to a post made by the organization itself
Number of likes of user post	Only applicable to Facebook – number of likes given to a post made by another user
Total Comments	Number of comments made by users on organization's posts
Total Posts by User	Number of individual posts made by users, independent of posts made by the organization (it is not a comment)

Appendix B

Table A

Category	Total (All organizations)
Posts by organization	Number Percentage of total
News Sharing	28 9.7%
Story/Narrative	16 5.5%
Guest Post	14 4.8%
Promotion/Sweepstakes/Event	33 11.4%
Response to problem/issue	1 0.3%
Thank user/volunteers/donors	23 8.0%
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	9 3.1%
Request feedback/solicit information	17 5.9%
Call to action	10 3.5%
Respond to other user	60 20.8%
Retweet	9 3.1%
Total Posts by Organizations	289

Table B

Category	Autism Speaks	UNC Health Care	Christel House International	OE Enterprises
Posts by organization				
News Sharing	18	16	4	0
Story/Narrative	15	1	0	0
Guest Post	14	0	0	0
Promotion/Sweepstakes/Event	28	1	4	0
Response to problem/issue	0	1	0	0
Thank user/volunteers/donors	20	1	2	0
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	8	1	0	0
Request feedback/solicit information	17	0	0	0

Call to action	10	0	0	0
Respond to other user	58	2	0	0
Retweet	6	3	0	0
Total Posts by Organizations	254	25	10	0

Table C

Category	Total (All Organizations)
Posts by Users	Number Percentage of total
Share story/personal information	569 24.0%
Request information/Ask for advice/Ask a question	170 7.8%
Praise/agreement with organization	564 23.8%
Criticism of organization	34 1.4%
Provide new information/point of view	33 1.4%
Promotion	68 2.9%
Report problems/resolutions of problems	6 0.3%
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	752 31.8%
Not in English	5 0.2%
Criticize other users	7 0.3%
Praise/encourage other users	50 2.1%
Answer questions by other users	20 0.8%
Neutral post	91 2.8%
Number of likes of organization post	11,893
Number of likes of user post	2,314
Total Comments	2,203
Total Posts by User	165

Table D

Category	Autism Speaks	UNC Health Care	Christel House International	OE Enterprises
Posts by Users				
Share story/personal information	569	0	0	0
Request information/Ask for advice/Ask a question	169	0	1	0
Praise/agreement with organization	557	5	2	0
Criticism of organization	34	0	0	0
Provide new information/point of view	32	1	0	0
Promotion	67	0	1	0
Report problems/resolutions of problems	6	0	0	0
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	752	0	0	0
Not in English	3	1	2	0
Criticize other users	7	0	0	0
Praise/encourage other users	50	0	0	0
Answer questions by other users	20	0	0	0
Neutral post	91	0	0	0
Number of likes of organization post	11,860	13	20	0
Number of likes of user post	2,313	0	1	0
Total Comments	2,197	2	4	0
Total Posts by User	162	1	2	0

Table E

Category	Facebook	Twitter	Blog
Autism Speaks			
Posts by organization	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total
News Sharing	7 12.3%	9 5.0%	12 70.6%
Story/Narrative	5 8.8%	8 4.0%	2 11.8%
Guest Post	4 7.0%	6 3.3%	4 23.5%

Promotion/Sweepstakes/Event	8 14.0%	19 10.6%	1 5.9%
Response to problem/issue	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Thank user/volunteers/donors	0 0.0%	19 10.6%	1 5.9%
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	5 8.8%	3 1.7%	0 0.0%
Request feedback/solicit information	6 10.5%	10 5.6%	1 5.9%
Call to action	5 8.8%	5 2.8%	0 0.0%
Respond to other user	11 19.3%	47 26.1%	0 0.0%
Retweet	-	6 3.3%	-
Total Posts by organization	57	180	17

Table F

Category	Facebook	Twitter	Blog
Autism Speaks			
Posts by users	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total
Share story/personal information	560 24.1%	-	9 28.1%
Request information/Ask for advice/Ask a question	169 7.3%	-	0 0.0%
Praise/agreement with organization	540 23.2%	-	17 53.1%
Criticism of organization	33 1.4%	-	1 3.1%
Provide new information/ point of view	31 1.3%	-	1 3.1%
Promotion	64 2.8%	-	3 9.4%
Report problems/resolutions of problems	3 0.1%	-	3 9.4%
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	752 32.3%	-	0 0.0%
Not in English	3 0.1%	-	0 0.0%
Criticize other users	7 0.3%	-	0 0.0%

Praise/encourage other users	50 2.1%	-	0 0.0%
Answer questions by other users	20 0.8%	-	0 0.0%
Neutral post	91 3.9%	-	0 0.0%
Number of likes of organization post	11,860	-	0
Number of likes of user post	2,313	-	0
Total Comments	2165	-	32
Total Posts by User	162	-	

Table G

Category	Facebook	Twitter	Blog
UNC Health Care			
Posts by organization	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total
News Sharing	5 62.5%	10 66.7%	1 50%
Story/Narrative	1 12.5%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Guest Post	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Promotion/Sweepstakes/Event	1 12.5%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Response to problem/issue	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 50%
Thank user/volunteers/donors	0 0.0%	1 6.7%	0 0.0%
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	1 12.5%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Request feedback/solicit information	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Call to action	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Respond to other user	0 0.0%	2 13.3%	0 0.0%
Retweet	-	3 20%	-
Total Posts by organization	8	15	2

Table H

Category	Facebook	Twitter	Blog
UNC Health Care			
Posts by users	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total
Share story/personal information	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Request information/Ask for advice/Ask a question	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Praise/agreement with organization	2 66.7%	-	3 100%
Criticism of organization	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Provide new information/point of view	0 0.0%	-	1 33.3%
Promotion	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Report problems/resolutions of problems	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Not in English	1 33.3%	-	0 0.0%
Criticize other users	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Praise/encourage other users	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Answer questions by other users	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Neutral post	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Number of likes of organization post	13	-	0 0.0%
Number of likes of user post	0	-	0
Total Comments	2	-	3
Total Posts by User	1	-	-

Table I

Category	Facebook	Twitter	Blog
Christel House International			
Posts by organization	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total
News Sharing	1 16.7%	1 100%	2 66.7%
Story/Narrative	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Guest Post	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Promotion/Sweepstakes/Event	4 66.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Response to problem/issue	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Thank user/volunteers/donors	1 16.7%	0 0.0%	1 33.3%
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Request feedback/solicit information	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Call to action	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Respond to other user	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Retweet	-	0 0.0%	-
Total Posts by organization	6	1	3

Table J

Category	Facebook	Twitter	Blog
Christel House International			
Posts by users	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total	Number Percentage of total
Share story/personal information	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Request information/Ask for advice/Ask a question	0 0.0%	-	1 100%
Praise/agreement with organization	2 40%	-	0 0.0%
Criticism of organization	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Provide new information/point of view	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Promotion	1 20%	-	0 0.0%
Report problems/resolutions of problems	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Tips/advice/words of wisdom	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Not in English	2 40%	-	0 0.0%
Criticize other users	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Praise/encourage other users	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Answer questions by other users	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Neutral post	0 0.0%	-	0 0.0%
Number of likes of organization post	20	-	0 0.0%
Number of likes of user post	1	-	0 0.0%
Total Comments	3	-	1
Total Posts by User	2	-	0

Appendix C

1. Why did your Autism Speaks first decide to join the social networking world?
 2. How did you first launch your social networking plan? When?
 3. What social networking outlets do you use? Why?
 4. Who is in charge of maintaining these sites/profiles?
 5. How often do you interact with volunteers and contributors through social networking?
 6. What are the goals you aim to achieve through social networking? Have you added any goals since you launched your social networking plan?
 7. What obstacles have you encountered using social networking? What are your “lessons learned”?
 8. How effective has using social networking been for your organization?
 9. Which social networking outlet has been most effective? The least effective?
 10. Do you use social networking to directly talk to volunteers and donors? If so, how?
 11. Do you use social networking to recognize volunteers and donors? Why or why not? If so, what kinds of results are you seen with this?
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