

A Nine-Year Longitudinal Analysis Tracking and Measuring Social and Emerging Media Use in Public Relations Practice

*Paper presented to the 17th Annual IPRRC, Coral Gables, Florida, March 6, 2014.
By Donald K. Wright, Ph.D. (Harold Burson Professor, Boston University and
Michelle Drifka Hinson, M.A. [ABD] (Adjunct public relations faculty University of
Florida and Director of Marketing Communications, Nue Medical Consulting)
DonaldKWright@aol.com – Michelle.Hinson@rocketmail.com*

- This is a preliminary report of our eighth annual study examining how social media and other emerging technologies are impacting public relations practice. Our methodology involves a web-based survey that's part of a longitudinal trend analysis. Our data set includes more than 3,000 public relations practitioners since 2009 and nearly 4,500 respondents since our first published report in 2006.
- Our 2014 analysis is based on 393 responses and results show public relations practitioners continue to agree strongly that social and other emerging media are changing the way public relations is practiced. This impact continues to be much more pronounced for external than internal audiences.
- Mean scores in 2014 also were significantly higher than previous years when subjects were asked (a) if blogs, social and other emerging media have enhanced public relations practice and (b) if social and emerging media influence traditional mainstream media.
- Our major finding this year involves Twitter narrowly replacing Facebook as the most frequently accessed new medium for public relations activities. This is the first time Twitter has been on top of this list in the five years we have been asking this question. Another major finding, for the third year in a row, mean scores continued to get significantly lower on the item asking if traditional mainstream media influence social and other emerging media.
- This result involving Twitter and Facebook is very close. Twitter's mean score was 4.12 and Facebook's was 4.07. This question focused on how frequently subjects access specific new media sites as part of their work in public relations. Respondents were specifically asked not to count personal use on these sites. Facebook access was the lowest we've recorded in the five years we've been asking this question. Twitter access was the highest it has been during that time.
- Ironically, social networks (including Facebook) scored higher than micro-blogs (such as Twitter) when subjects were asked how important a list of 12 categories of new media were "in the overall communications and public relations efforts of (their) organizations." A similar result prevailed for the question asking how important each of these categories should be.
- On the topic of which organizational function is responsible for monitoring and managing social and emerging media communication in organizations, a clear majority (64% this year) told us this IS the responsibility of communications and public relations in their organizations. When asked whose responsibility is SHOULD BE, 77% answered public relations and communications.
- Aside from Twitter and Facebook, 2014 results found LinkedIn and YouTube (in that order) to be the next most frequently accessed sites by this year's respondents while they were working in public relations. Thankfully, usage scores of fictional sites "prSpace" and "PRnet" were very, very low.
- Subjects also were asked several questions about public relations strategy and social media communication. Results indicate while most (77%) recommend using different messages for various social media platforms, only 57% of their organizations actually do disseminate different messages for different social media platforms.
- We continue to ask questions about research and measurement. This year 46% said their organizations (or their clients) are measuring social and emerging media use. That's the highest percentage in the six years we've asked that question. Of the measurement actually taking place, most of it involves content analysis but mean scores continue to rise for research focused on impact and other outcome measures.

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Presented to the 17th Annual Public Relations Research Conference
By Linda A. Swartz, Ph.D., Director, Public Relations Research Center
Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824
Linda.A.Swartz@msu.edu

- This is a preliminary report of a nine-year study tracking how social media and emerging technologies are changing public relations practices. Our methodology involved a longitudinal study of a national public relations firm. Our sample included more than 2,000 employees and 100 clients over 2005 and 2014. We will discuss the findings of this study.
- Our 2014 analysis based on 203 responses and results show public relations practices continue to evolve strongly. Social and other emerging media are changing the way public relations professionals do their jobs. The impact continues to be more pronounced for external firm practices.
- Mean scores in 2014 also were significantly higher than previous years when subjects were asked about social and other emerging media. Public relations professionals are embracing social and other emerging media influence and using it in their practices.
- Our study found that year-over-year Twitter and Facebook use has increased significantly. We measured how much time public relations professionals spent on these platforms. This is the first time Twitter has been included in our study. In the five years we have been doing this question, Twitter usage has increased significantly. This is the first time we have included Twitter in our study. We will discuss the findings of this study.
- This study involving Twitter and Facebook is very close. Twitter's mean score was 4.10 and Facebook was 4.01. This question focused on how frequently subjects used these platforms. We found that work in public relations professionals was significantly related to their use of these platforms. This is the first time we have included Twitter in our study. We will discuss the findings of this study.
- Social media and emerging technologies (including Facebook) are used more frequently than ever before. Public relations professionals are embracing social and other emerging media influence and using it in their practices. We will discuss the findings of this study.
- On the topic of which organizational function is responsible for tracking and managing social and emerging media communication in organizations, we found that 60% of respondents reported that the responsibility of communication and public relations in their organizations was shared among several departments. This is the first time we have included Twitter in our study. We will discuss the findings of this study.
- Aside from Twitter and Facebook, 2014 results found LinkedIn and YouTube (in that order) to be the next most frequently accessed sites by the year's respondents. While they were working in public relations, Twitter usage among respondents "frequently" and "regularly" was very low.
- Subjects also were asked several questions about their relationship with social media and emerging technologies. Results indicated that while 60% of respondents reported that the responsibility of communication and public relations in their organizations was shared among several departments, 33% of respondents reported that a single department was responsible for tracking and managing social and emerging media communication in their organizations. We will discuss the findings of this study.
- We continue to see significant changes in public relations practices. The year-over-year increase in social and emerging media use is a testament to the power of these technologies. We will discuss the findings of this study.