

47 Tough Social Media Questions – Part I

By Randall Craig

How does your organization decide to invest in Social Media? A Social Media plan might be proposed by one of your more junior (but Facebook savvy) staff, or perhaps your traditional ad agency. It may not be strategic, or even appropriate, but how are you to know? With all of the fluff being written on Social Media, it's hard to figure out – especially because associations are different. Here is a list of tough questions to help you reason through the recommendations that you are given.

1. What are others doing – including 'competitive' associations?
2. What evidence do you have that they are actually successful?
3. Do they already have a first mover advantage?
4. How have they organized the implementation – internal/external mix?
5. Who has organized the implementation – consulting firm, ad agency, third world workers, etc. – and why this way?
6. What profile has their Board and Executive Director/CEO chosen to have? And why should our leadership follow the same approach (or not)?
7. How has their strategy leveraged their unique advantages?
8. How will the proposed Social Media plan take advantage of our unique advantage?

Opportunistic discussions during networking sessions always yield an idea or two - but the answer to the fundamental question of "what are others doing" has already been answered. The CSAE 2012-2013 Social Media Best Practices and Benchmarks survey, due to be released in December has responses from 300 organizations across the country. Before starting any strategy, it makes a lot of sense to first learn from others.

9. How might other organizations respond to our Social Media initiative?
10. What are the technical risks, and how can they be mitigated?
11. How do we know we're not too late to try what is being suggested?
12. Over 500+ Social Media sites; justify why you've chosen the ones you have.

13. What proof do we have that our members/volunteers/other stakeholders actually are on the sites you propose for us to be on?

14. The plan assumes different groups will work together in a new way for the first time – how will this actually work?

15. Who is accountable for the success of the initiative?

16. How will that success be measured?

Probably the most important part of a Social Media strategy is the connection to your overall organizational strategy. How does it leverage and extend what you are currently doing? What new opportunities does it open? Indeed, might the opportunity of social media cause you to consider a mid-course correction to the overall strategy itself? Many associations are grappling with the question of membership cannibalization from externally-controlled LinkedIn groups, and are recognizing that a strategic shift is happening now, smack in the middle of their five-year plan. (Just Tweeting more won't solve this last issue.)

In the next installment of this series, we'll look at another group of questions. Whether you are the Executive Director responding to the Board, or a manager pitching an idea up the line, remember that the best answers come when you ask the best questions. Before asking for anything, put your feet in the shoes of the person you are asking. What would their top five questions be? Answer clearly, and it's more likely you'll get a yes.

Randall Craig is the author of seven books, including [Online PR and Social Media for Associations](#) and the upcoming [Everything Guide to Starting an Online Business](#). He is the co-author of the [CSAE 2012-2013 Social Media Best Practices Survey](#), and moderates the [Driving Event Attendance: Bums in Seats LinkedIn](#) group. Randall is the President of [108 ideaspace](#), consulting and speaking on web and Social Media strategy and execution. More at [www.RandallCraig.com](#) and [www.108ideaspace.com](#) and [@RandallCraig](#).