

dialogue “
consulting

Social Media in NZ Governments

Research Report, 2012



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1 INTRODUCTION

“Social media is full of valuable information about customer experiences that can help governments tailor services to the needs of citizens and add value to the way they deliver services.

“Social media allows people to express their questions and opinions in incredibly diverse and numerous ways - from Twitter and Facebook, to blogs, forums and news sites. It also gives government departments and businesses more channels to listen to customers, tailor services for customer groups, identify issues of concern and respond to customers in a timely manner.”

-- CSIRO, Social media monitoring: identifying customer needs, May 2012

1.1 To social media

Without adequate consideration and management of risks, the public sector often finds it difficult to engage either through lack of buy-in from upper management or perhaps a lack of confidence. Additional challenges such as IT blocking access to common social networking sites often provide another barrier to effective engagement.

While this may be the case and is often frustrating, social media provides huge opportunities for governments to increase stakeholder engagement



activities both internally and externally.

Brian Solis provides a great definition of Social Media in his blog post¹ based on conversations and consultations with many of the 'big names' in the online sphere.

Short Version

Any tool or service that uses the internet to facilitate conversations.

Long Version

Social Media is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism, one-to-many, to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers.

Social media is infinite and boundless, and networks come and go on an almost daily basis into and out of fashion. Prioritising your activities and focus will be a primary part in how to evade overload.

Always remember: **It is better to do few things well than many things poorly.**

1.2 Social Media in NZ

1.2.1 Introduction

Social media has seen a rapid increase in use by New Zealanders (below), with Facebook reaching 78.8% of internet users in 2012 (ADMA, July 2012) and is currently the leading domain in New Zealand (Opera, July 2012) and social networks combined reaching 94.6%. YouTube ranks as the top website for entertainment content, reaching 61.8% of internet users (ADMA, July 2012).



Growth of Facebook users over the 6 month period to December 2012. Source: SocialBakers

1 <http://www.briansolis.com/2010/01/defining-social-media-the-saga-continues/>



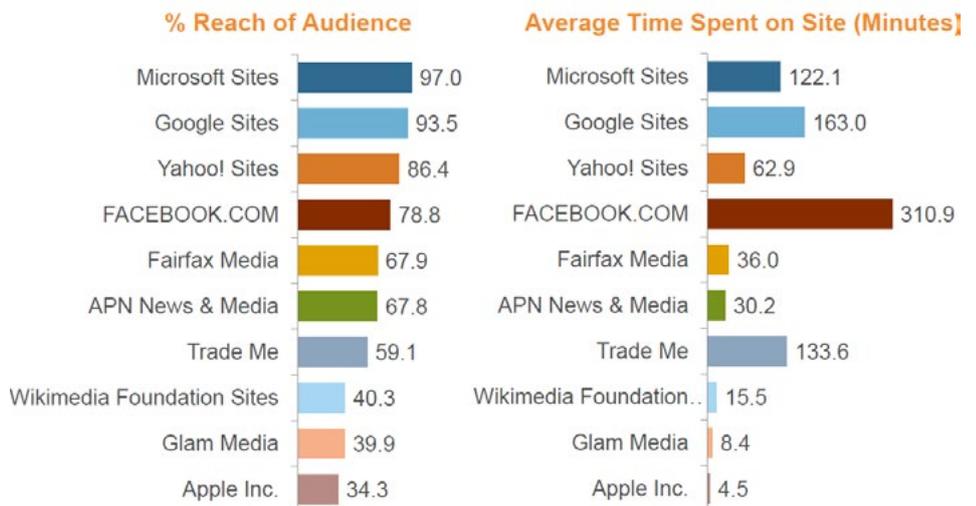
Different reports have provided differing views on the number and engagement level of New Zealanders visiting social networking sites. comScore reported that in July 2011 New Zealanders spent an average of 4.6 hours on social networking services (comScore, July 2011).

1.2.2 Networks used

Of the top 100 websites visited by New Zealanders (recorded by Alexa²), social media websites are ranked (as at December 2012):

- 2. Facebook
- 4. YouTube
- 12. LinkedIn
- 15. Blogspot
- 16. Twitter
- 18. Wordpress
- 23. Pinterest
- 24. tumblr
- 42. Flickr
- 71. Reddit
- 92. Instagram

New Zealanders spend significantly more time on Facebook than other popular websites, with an average time spent of 310 minutes in May 2011:



Source: comScore Media Metrix, May 2011. Available at <http://bit.ly/VaUaYV>

² <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries;0/NZ>



While Facebook is by far the most popular individual social networking site for New Zealand internet users, it is worthwhile considering alternative networks to meet your objectives. For example, a program targeting mothers could utilise internet forums on parenting to distribute their content and engage with stakeholders.

1.2.3 Intent

A November 2011 study by TNS Digital Life found that the most popular reason for commenting about a brand on a social networking site was to “help”. Certainly many opportunities in government use social media to increase the speed and agility that a government department or program can respond appropriately to issues that are raised by the public.

1.2.4 Platform

63% of NZ smartphone users have accessed a social network via their mobile device (Our Mobile Planet, May 2012). Approximately 45% of these visits are on a daily basis, but fewer share information via their mobile device onto the network.

1.2.5 Level of engagement

A 2010 Nielsen social media report found that 79% of NZ internet users looked at a social networking profile, while 66% updated a social networking profile.

New Zealanders’ Social Media Activities

ACTIVITY	% OF USERS
READ A WIKI	66
UPDATED A SOCIAL NETWORKING PROFILE	66
LOOKED AT A SOCIAL NETWORKING PROFILE	79
CREATED A PROFILE ON A A SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE	61
SENT/SHARED A LINK WITH SOMEONE	73
POST PICTURES/PHOTOS ONLINE	75
“TAGGED” SOMETHING	15
DOWNLOADED A PODCAST	12
READ A BLOG	55
SUBSCRIBED TO RSS FEED	10

(SOURCE: NIELSEN 2010 SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT)

Social Media activities for NZ users (source: Nielsen 2010)



1.3 About Dialogue Consulting

Dialogue Consulting is a social media consultancy based in Melbourne, Australia but working internationally providing advice and best-practice guidance on using social media for organisations both large and small.

Dialogue Consulting's focus is to build capacity within organisations. Our approach is to discover the 'social' parts of an organisation and encourage staff to learn, discover and build their confidence in its use as a quality engagement tool.

Directors Hugh Stephens and Briony Walker have extensive backgrounds in risk management, consulting and online communications in a range of sectors. Dialogue Consulting has worked with a range of brands including Australian governments (local, state and federal), education institutions, not-for-profits, charities, and the private sector.

Dialogue Consulting provides services ranging from training and education workshops to campaign or creative development, content planning and presence benchmarking and analysis.

Dialogue Consulting would love to discuss your government or department's opportunities in social media, and can provide you with a cost-effective proposal recommending a project approach to meet your requirements and needs on request. Please get in touch with us to find out more. You can contact us via email at info@dialogueconsulting.com.au or phone 0800 884 325.

1.4 About social media in government

In New Zealand, internet usage is rapidly reaching saturation point, with 83.1% of the population being connected to the internet³. Globally, New Zealanders are the 12th most connected nation on Earth. Increasingly we are living in "multiscreen" households of more than one web-connected device, and tablet and smartphone computing is on the rise, with 44% of New Zealanders owning and operating a smartphone⁴.

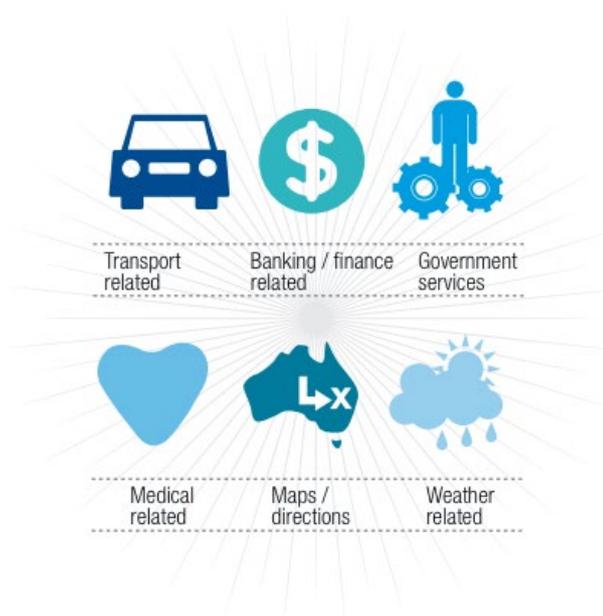
One area identified by online consumers as lacking in the *Nielsen Australian Online Consumer Landscape Report, 2012* was Government services:

3 Singapore Management University, May 2011

4 Our Mobile Planet, May 2012



IN WHICH AREAS DO YOU FEEL THERE SHOULD BE MORE DEVELOPMENT OF USEFUL MOBILE APPS?



1.4.1 Why use social media?

As we have established, a significant number of New Zealanders are internet-connected and heavy users of social media. As faster and more stable internet connections are rolled out across the country, these numbers are likely to further increase and this has the potential to revolutionise huge socioeconomic aspects of everyday life⁵; particularly in regional and rural areas, where new e-commerce possibilities will see an expansion of populations in these areas, and where high-speed broadband offers huge potential for the delivery of healthcare and educational services. Governments are poised to be right at the forefront of these changes, and a good social media communication and information strategy is key to most effectively delivering community services to your constituents.

5 The Australian, April 2012



Public Relations

Communication via social media is direct, unfettered and instant. It provides an extremely powerful marketing and public relations tool which allows you to disseminate news and publish press releases immediately. It is also perfectly tailored to direct engagement with your constituents – it is an open forum through which you can easily solicit participation on public submissions. It is, in effect, the town hall meeting that anyone can attend from their own home. We will show you the best ways to engage in this arena, how to mitigate risks and maximise and strengthen relationships with key stakeholders in your communities.

Direct Stakeholder Engagement

When introducing new services and initiatives, it is imperative to solicit feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of those initiatives with the view to them being ideally implemented and improved on. By using strategies employed on social media, governments can accrue invaluable real time feedback on initiatives and proposals which can be fed back into the tender or other ongoing development processes, both formal and informal.

Delivery of Services

Governments are ideally placed to provide the exact kind of content which is the most popular on social media platforms: information which is timely, useful and informative. The uses for this kind of information are multiple for local government, providing communities with information on everything from traffic conditions and upcoming road works, to soliciting for public submissions on policy development, to promoting local community events, to advising on policy initiatives and changes, to calling for entries on public art installations. Whatever it is that you want to promote to or engage with your community, an effective and clear social media presence is cost-effective, simple and easily integrated into your wider marketing and communications strategies.

Reputation Management

As the number of people on social media increases, so too do the number of unofficial profiles and accounts which are established by these users, sometimes claiming to act on behalf of entities they have no jurisdiction over. These unofficial accounts can damage the reputations of councils and



individuals and it is very important to take control of your presence in the digital space, and to execute a professional “official” presence which is in line with your larger branding and marketing plan. We will show you how to create an authentic and engaged official online presence which will strengthen your message and government business plans. Secondly, social media offers the opportunity to circumvent traditional PR relationships with media by letting you directly address the public with no middle man or opportunity for your message to be muddled. We will show you everything you need to know about managing your online reputation effectively and powerfully.

Upskilling Your Employees

Anyone working today in communications roles needs to have a firm grasp of best practise social media use in order to future-proof their position within an organization. Learning the ropes in this area can seem daunting when you are faced with huge amounts of technical data and jargon. There are, also, risks and accountabilities associated with the social digital space which we will show you how to safely and smartly navigate.

Your social media presence is likely to be managed by your communications department, but there are also great opportunities for involvement from other areas of government, from programs to projects and departments.

Being Ahead of The Curve

As there isn't yet much penetration of services offered by governments in this space, this provides an ideal opportunity to engage with new communications methods and ways of interacting with your communities ahead of the pack. It's a perfect way to position your organization as forward thinking, willing to experiment and to learn from your community directly and openly. What positions government so well for the social digital space is that the engagement and the audience is already there, you only need invite them to participate and be there to respond.



2 REPORT: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY NZ GOVERNMENTS

2.1 Introduction

As discussed in section 3, social media presents both a huge asset and a risk that requires mitigation. After the success of Dialogue Consulting's *Social Media in Australian Local Governments* report launched in 2012⁶, there was a desire to see a report on the use of social media by our cross-Tasman counterparts to compare the current state of social media use within the sector and provide a benchmark for future activities to identify the process of governments considering and implementing social media as part of their everyday processes.

2.1.1 Australian report Executive Summary

Of **571** Local Governments In Australia:

358 Have no presence on Social Media at all.

68 have only established Facebook Pages

72 are only on Twitter

72 have both an established Facebook Page and Twitter URL

What does this mean?

Social media is gradually being picked up by Australian Local Governments. Many Local Governments are using social media as a communications tool for the betterment of their communities.

Though there are a large number that have started to move with the social revolution and so are using social media effectively, there is an even larger number that either aren't using the platforms properly or have neglected Social Media altogether.

What needs to happen?

Local Governments should to recognise that communication channels are changing. Social media's incredible growth has completely shifted the standard ways people engage with one another. Despite this rapid

⁶ Available <http://bit.ly/V3YQ0L>



change, social media is nothing to be afraid of. The benefits of a engaging in the social media space far outweigh the risks, and the potential for social media to revolutionise the way Local Governments engage with their communities are bound only by the resources made available to adequately explore and engage with this transformative space.

2.2 Methodology

As per the 2012 Australian report, this research project involved the identification and analysis of social media presences on the most common networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs) on behalf of a government or government department.

74 governments or government departments were identified for analysis, and presences were identified through searching social networks and popular search engines. In the event that multiple presences were found, the 'official' (i.e. appearing to be controlled by that government) or most popular (if unable to identify which presence was 'official') presence was selected for inclusion into the study.

Publicly available data was then used to create a quantitate and qualitative profile of each presence. Additional tools were used where appropriate to further analyse strengths and opportunities.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Overview

72 Facebook presences were identified (representing 96% of organisations in the study, but with only 47.2% of these non-autogenerated), 38 Twitter profiles (51%), 15 YouTube channels (20%) and 3 blogs (4%)⁷. Generally, at least one presence was identified (official or unofficial) for each organisation studied.

⁷ There were a very low number of blogs identified. It is not known whether this is due to a lack of blogging, or a lack of ability to easily access the blogs where available.



2.3.2 Facebook

Facebook Presences (n=72)

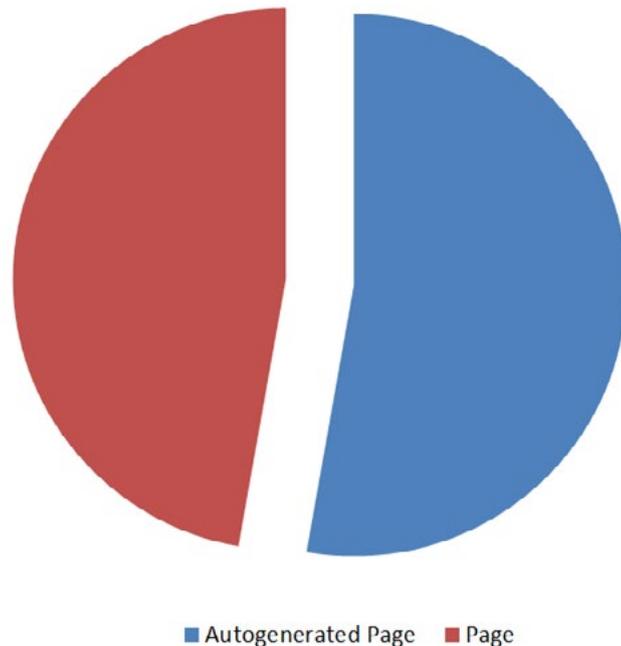


Figure 1. Facebook presence types identified

Facebook Pages were predominantly Autogenerated Pages (n=38), where content is pulled automatically from Wikipedia or other sources and no engagement is possible beyond users Liking the presence (see Figure 1). These presences offer little benefit to governments, and represent a missed opportunity - users appear to have an interest in the organisation but they are currently not engaging in the space.

The number of followers ranged from 2 through 26,283 (average 1,129), with People Talking about this ranging from 0 to 673 (average 57), which represented a range of 0-50% of Fans Talking About This (average 3.6%, defined as number talking about this divided by number of fans). Figure 2 shows the distribution of the engagement of users, with several notable quality Pages located in the 1,000-10,000 bracket alongside many with very little Talking About This.

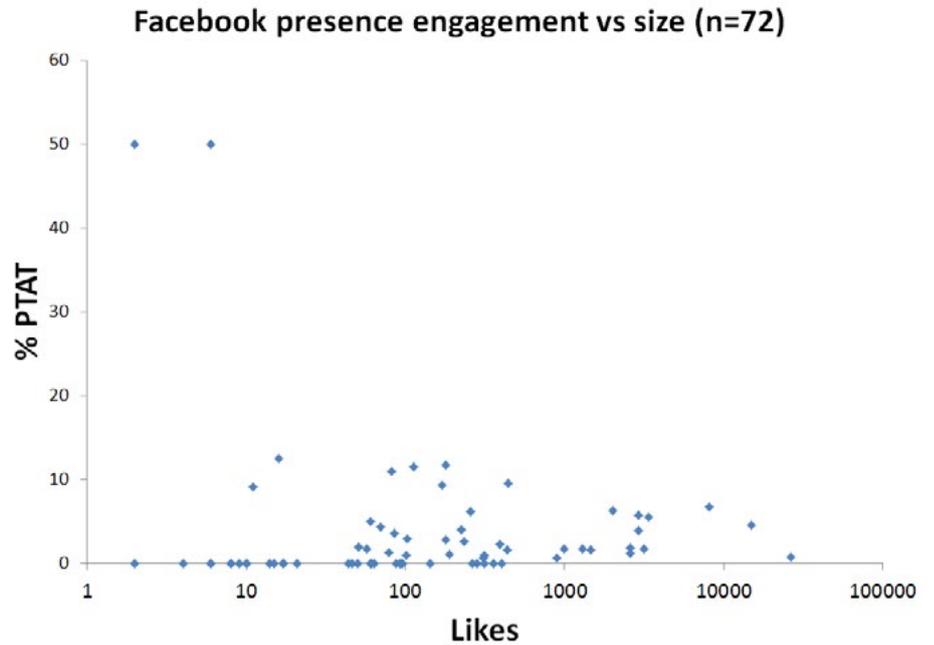


Figure 2. Scatterplot of engagement vs presence size

Engagement on a per-post basis varied, with most (official) pages having a low rate of engagement, with several exceptions. Autogenerated pages do not have posts, and so were not included in the analysis (Figure 3, below).

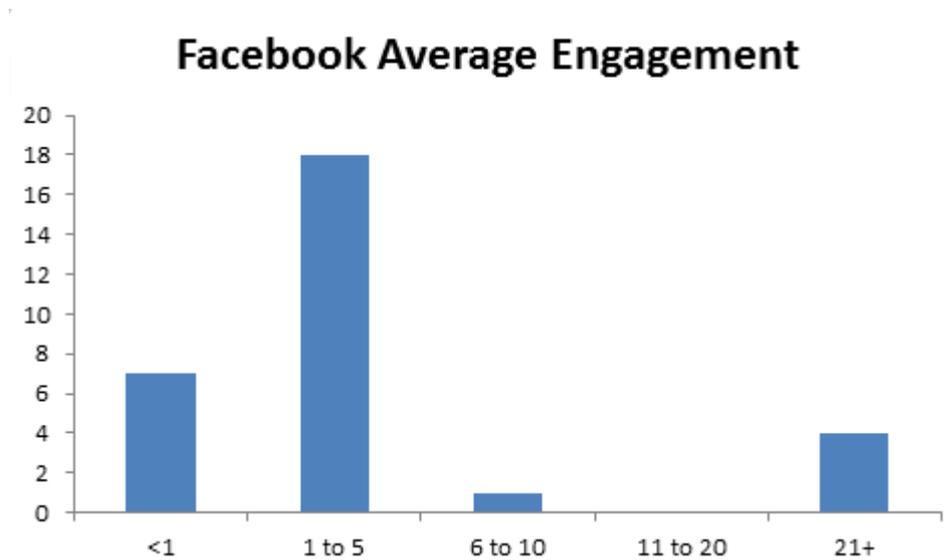


Figure 3. Average engagement in last 10 posts (n=31).



Post frequency was quite varied, with an impressive number of Pages maintaining a medium or high post frequency (Figure 4). This suggests that many of the Pages are being actively managed, although perhaps are not receiving the engagement that they could be.

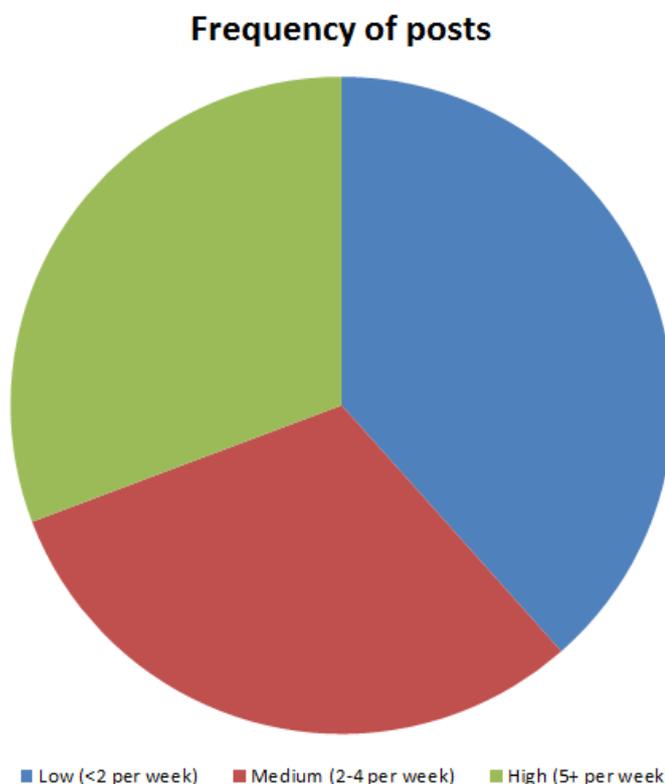


Figure 4. Frequency of posting to Facebook Pages

Facebook generally represents a significant opportunity given its large user base, and can be used both to communicate about customer service opportunities, events and more. It is also usually less resource-intensive than other networks such as Twitter who require a higher post frequency to maintain a well-engaged community. NZ Governments appear to be rapidly adopting Facebook Pages as a form of communication to the public. Given this, there are still a significant number of governments who have Autogenerated Pages, which represent a brand and reputational risk.

2.3.3 Twitter

There were 38 Twitter accounts identified, 4 more than the number of official Facebook presences included for analysis. The Twitter accounts were generally more popular than many of the Facebook Pages (especially



for those Pages with a smaller following but with more than 500 fans).

The range of tweets (indicating the level of use of Twitter and the length the account has been open) ranged from 4 to 6,077 (average 1,086), with the most popular accounts being the Caterbury Earthquake Recovery Twitter account. The number of followers of the accounts ranged from 28 to 6,363, with an average of 1,626. The number of accounts that the twitter accounts followed varied similarly from 0 to 4,623 (average 474). This is potentially due to the perspective that some organisations have that following a user is a form of endorsement, while others believe that following a user is not an endorsement and is etiquette when they follow you.

Thursdays and Fridays had the most tweets, but distribution of tweets was generally quite consistent throughout the week (~20% of tweets sent each day). Saturdays and Sundays had similar numbers of tweets.

2.3.4 YouTube

Few YouTube accounts were identified (n=15), with most having few videos or views. YouTube is often used more as a content host than as a platform for social media engagement, where conversations about YouTube videos often occurring on other networks such as Facebook or Twitter.

Given this, the metrics on the number of Subscribers is less relevant, but the number of video views on each channel becomes more important. The channels identified had a range of total views from 24 to 2,253,506 (most viewed videos from the NZ Defence Force channel) (average 190,413). The frequency of posting videos was also quite good on the whole, with most (80%) presences posting a new video at least monthly.

Local councils had an interesting distribution of YouTube views, with Bay of Plenty Council seeing the most views (113,645) followed by Auckland City Council (44,461). The number of Subscribers was the opposite (36 and 114 respectively), indicating that users desire less to subscribe to YouTube channels and discover the videos elsewhere.

Of note was that most of the channels had comments enabled, but few (n=2) had any comments on the most recent 5 videos. This is consistent with our previous experience and research, and also represents a brand or reputation risk if these comments are enabled but not monitored adequately. Dialogue Consulting recommends identifying whether comments are a function that viewers find valuable, and if few comments



are received it may be more appropriate to disable them to facilitate ease of monitoring and risk management.

2.3.5 Blogging

Very few (n=3) blogs were identified. This was often because many governments instead have a media release or latest news feed rather than a blog, which should contain a different (and more varied) style of content than these types of feeds.

Of the three identified, 2 had a medium post frequency (fortnightly or monthly) with 1 having a high post frequency (weekly). As a result of the low number identified, detailed analysis was not conducted.

2.4 Case Studies

2.4.1 Dept of Conservation: Sirocco Kakapo

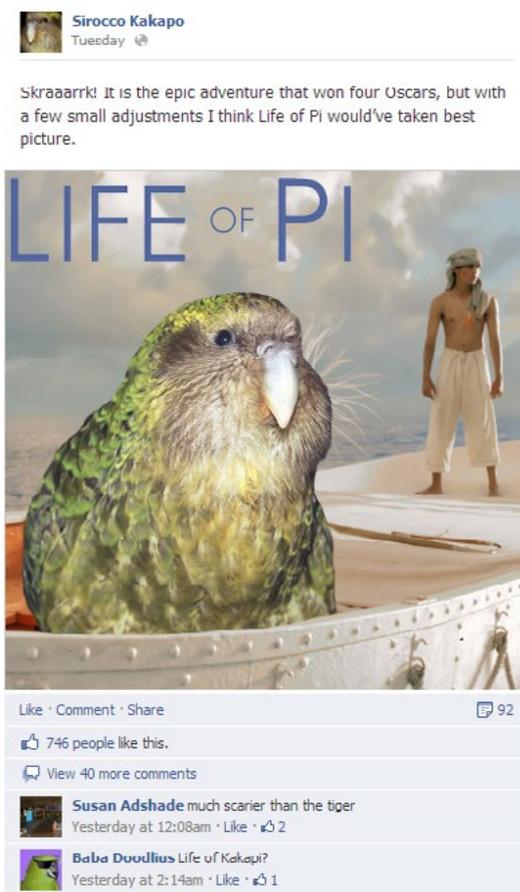


The Department of Conservation's Facebook page for 'official spokesperson' *Sirocco Kakapo* is certainly the most prominent example of a government department having a unique and defined 'personality'.

With posts often started with 'Skraaaarrrk' and the conversational tone always remaining very casual, the Department of Conservation has created a highly successful Page with consistently high levels of engagement.

A key part of the success of the Page is the use of humour, with the Department using events and situations that are occurring 'in real life' to

continue to build a casual, relaxed brand that is willing to laugh at itself. Take the below post as an example:



The above image has experienced significant success because of the following factors:

1. Discussion of realtime events: the image was posted immediately after the Oscars - an event that receives a lot of online attention.
2. Use of large graphic: the use of a large picture (rather than just a text update) means users see more of the post on their News Feeds
3. Easily recognisable brand: the image of Sirocco is easily recognisable to the Page's followers and it is immediately evident that the graphic has come from the Department of Conservation
4. Humour: following the consistent tongue-in-cheek style of humour used throughout the page has allowed users to laugh or giggle alongside the Department of Conservation

8 <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10152570697045596&set=a.10150273587615596.490200.417326760595&type=1>



2.4.2 City of Sydney (Australian case study)



City of Sydney is the leading Australian Local Government when it comes to Facebook implementation. With over 17,000 likes and an average of 400 different people discussing it on a regular basis, City Of Sydney sets the benchmark for well implemented social strategies on Facebook, and is positioned globally as a market leader in the space.

How did they do it?

City of Sydney generates a rich variety of high-quality content to connect with its constituents, as well as a broader national, and international audience.

Engagement on the Page is kept consistently high and constructive by functioning as an informative source for community information and by directing the conversation about Sydney in a positive direction through highlighting the different components of its colourful culture.

Facebook's 'Milestones' features also play a big role on the City of Sydney Page. Facebook's new Timeline feature is fully utilised to provide the city's constituents with a publicly accessible archive through which they can trace Sydney's heritage and development.



2.5 Limitations

The major limitation of this report is inadequate ability to identify and research all programs delivered by governments. Often governments may not have an overarching 'official' presence for the government, but individual services, programs, campaigns or projects may have their own presences that were not identified as part of this study.

In addition, the focus of the report was on the most popular types of social media channel, and neglected some of the more emerging networks such as Pinterest, which represent a huge opportunity for governments with access to rich media content to engage. Additionally, these smaller networks often have a lower competition with other brands, and so can be a valuable place to develop an early presence to grow and engage.

Additionally, the study would be best served in the future to include data sourced from government employees about their use of social media in a professional capacity to identify reasons for presences to be unused or governments not to be engaging on social media (such as a concern about risk management).

2.6 Conclusion

Social Media is currently being slowly adopted within NZ governments, with a number of key presences being highly popular and comparable to some of the large brands using social media actively in NZ.

Given this, there were a range of risk issues around brand and reputation management, often driven by a lack of engaging or using the space. Governments should begin to ensure that they (at a minimum) actively monitor social media channels to identify when a critical mass of interested users has been reached and to justify investment into social media as a channel of communication.

Finally, the report shows a promising potential for the use of social media, with users actively engaging with a number of popular government channels. Given the right strategy, risk management, consultation and training, governments are well placed to begin to implement or develop their social media channels.



3 ABOUT DIALOGUE CONSULTING



Contact Us

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Dialogue Consulting assists our clients through one or more of the stages of what we call the *Social Transformation* process. Each client is at a different stage, has different needs or desires and requires a different approach – but through each of these five stages an organisation can become successful in initial and ongoing social media use.

Analyse

A key step to starting any social media process is the analysis of the conversations that are already occurring. This stage involves analysing both existing presences (if any) but also external presences, including international examples, competitors or similar organisations, community-driven presences and more. The focus of the Analyse phase is to get an overview of where conversations are occurring, who is talking, and why.

Consult

Key to the successful implementation of any new process or presence is consultation, both internal and external. The consultation process should be as broad as possible. Usually, this includes consultation with departments such as sales, legal and HR (especially for policy development), communications/marketing, customer service, community engagement and your executive team.

Develop

Every successful presence requires the development of supporting materials. This might include social media policy, social media strategy, risk management processes, training materials and more. Ideally all of these are developed in collaboration with key stakeholders (internal and external) through an open, transparent and inclusive process. A key part of this is identifying the tools, budgets, resources and process involved in using social media effectively within your context.

Train

Often forgotten is the training required to implement your social transformation. This might include training about day-to-day use of social media; training about online professionalism; basic training for executives to understand social media and how it can impact your organisation; training in specialised areas such as evaluating social media or running online consultations and market research; or content development and planning.

Implement

Dialogue Consulting provides both implementation services (for your whole social media presence on an ongoing basis or just for a campaign), and support services for organisations currently implementing social media channels. This includes our 24/7 emergency support line, formal reviews with your social media team and ongoing advice on the best content or strategy to use to engage with your target audiences.

For more details, have a look on our website at
<http://www.dialogueconsulting.com.au/social-media-services/>