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# **USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

A paper written for We Media, March 2009



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## Introduction

Net-enabled social tools have enabled new models for grassroots activism and community building, and they have changed how we function in society — how we communicate globally and locally, how we form ties and how we organize and connect.

What's tricky about deploying social media today is not access to the technology, but the knowledge of how to deploy it across multiple platforms.

This white paper is meant to take some of the fear and confusion out of the question of whether to use these tools or not. An accompanying resource guide and detailed case studies (available for download at [www.ifocos.org](http://www.ifocos.org)) provide a tool kit for using social media to promote, brand and organize around an idea, movement, program or campaign.

### What do we mean by social media?

When we talk about social media we're describing the web-based tools and services that allow users—ordinary people—to create, share, rate and search for content and information without having to log into a portal site or destination.

In other words, although in 1998 you might have gone to Yahoo or America Online to post pictures, send emails, chat in real time, today you go to various web services sites to perform various functions—which, nowadays, usually involve commenting, rating, communicating or creating and sharing content.

These tools that post pictures and share news are now considered “social” because in addition to the core functions they perform they are created in ways that also integrate users sharing and communicating with one another. Not that this is the opposite of the portal model, where a one-way flow of expert to user was the norm and community was not part of the experience.

In the U.S., the 2008 election of Barack Obama as president reflected unprecedented use of social media in a political campaign. The Obama campaign served as a stunning demonstration of a skilled team's use of widely available tools. According to a case study by James Burnes and blog posts by Jeremiah Owyang and others, the Obama campaign participated actively in more than 15 social networks and had 5 million active supporters through these vehicles.

- On Twitter, “BarackObama” had 112,000 followers.
- On Facebook Obama had 3.3 million friends, 500 groups, 33 applications

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- On YouTube, more than 14 million people watched the “Yes I Can” video. The campaign ultimately uploaded 1,800 “official” videos onto YouTube, 15 of the videos were viewed more than 1 million times.
- MyBarackobama.com, a “self-managed” social network, had over 2 million people create profiles on the site; those people created 35,000 volunteer groups and raised more than \$30 million dollars.

Importantly, though, effective use of social media to attract people to programs, organizations, brands and products doesn’t require the large-scale resources that Obama’s team so impressively deployed. The campaign’s sophisticated and proprietary voting database, CRM-focused campaign emails and the Neighbor to Neighbor calling software and scripts developed by Obama’s online campaign consultants at Blue State Digital helped raise an unprecedented \$639 million in campaign funds. But the services that were the workhorses of the campaign—Facebook, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, and Twitter—are free to use and widely available.

## **Lifestreaming**

The increasing adaptation of these tools has led to additional services that aggregate them together to provide an experience called lifestreaming. Lifestreaming is the ongoing broadcasting of information and events through a set of digital media — or what you might experience as the ripple effect of being able to watch the evolution of a news story, event, or person’s life through the aggregated media of their blog, their videos they post to the web, their Twitters, photos, and so on.

Interestingly, while lifestreaming started as a way for one person to make their life as seamless and transparent online as possible (think about bloggers who post personal details every day, and photographers who create self-portraits daily on their blogs and Flickr streams), it quickly morphed into what might be called event or promotion or community-casting — scenarios where anywhere from dozens to millions of people all used inter-related social media tools around a specific theme, event or issue, creating huge virality and awareness.

We saw this type of community-casting early in 2004 when thousands of people across the world reacted to the tragedy of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean and the planet reacted, then saw it again with the London subway bombings in 2005, when the defining photo — sent around the world — was taken not by a professional photojournalist, but by an eyewitness with a cellphone. When the terrorist attacks happened in Mumbai in November 2008, it was the citizen media

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— blogs, photos, videos — that showed the world what had happened, and the social media tools — Twitter, YouTube that shared the pain. When events happen, they are shared and communicated across multiple platforms, but people reference and link them together.

Over the past year, there has been an increasing use of social media not only to react to or cover an event, but as a means to create or promote an event. Even more interestingly, social media communications seem to have the effect of creating a virtuous circle where social media organizes data and then feeds information back out to the community, intensifying the experience both online and offline, building awareness, engagement and impact.

### **Money and mobilization**

When intelligently used, social media is reducing the need for both paid and volunteer staff and reducing overhead and operating costs for organizing. By tapping into the power of a network (and its good will), people can be mobilized, money can be raised, and programs promoted, often with surprising ease and speed.

Would you believe one woman could stand on a stage at a conference and spontaneously raise \$2,500 in small donations for Cambodian orphans from a techie audience within one hour using Twitter? Non-profit advisor and consultant Beth Kanter did it at Gnomedex, a tech conference in Seattle. While the sum is small, the speed and the donor pool was new.

Another social media consultant, Laura "Pistachio" Fitton, used Twitter to raise \$25,000 in a week, leveraging her contacts and her contact's networks. Asking each of her Twitter "followers" - all 44,000 of them - to donate \$2.00 each, Pistachio got enough response, and enough public re-tweeting, or re-publishing, of her request — to raise \$25,000 for [charitywater.org](http://charitywater.org). Based partially on the success of that, she participated in a worldwide effort — the Twestival — to raise \$500,000 for the same cause.

But it's not only about raising money; social media has the power to mobilize people and drive conversation more effectively than many traditional brand marketing campaigns — and at a fraction of the hard costs.

For the Knight News Challenge, a \$5 million grant-making program I managed this year as a consultant to The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, our goals were to increase awareness, draw in more tech and social media applicants worldwide, and build community. To that end, we crafted an on-going Twitter campaign, a blogging outreach program and a series of local, real world meet-ups publicized through the web. Not only did the number of unique visitors

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to the web site double from the previous year, and the page views triple, but also the awareness of the program skyrocketed, resulting in a strong, innovative application pool.

And these are not isolated incidents.

Social media tools are providing the means for fundraisers to operate more efficiently, with less overhead and greater margins, and for organizers and brand managers of commercial and non-profit endeavors to build awareness, increase traffic and expand engagement with their brands.

### **How to use social media tools**

Having access to these tools does not mean everyone knows how to use them.

The gap in the market has moved from having access to having knowledge. While Twitter, Flickr, Upcoming, Seismic and so on are all free to the user, having the knowledge and skill to meld them together into an organizing strategy and marketing plan requires a fairly specific level of experience that most non-profit program managers, fund-raisers and community organizers and activists do not have.

Further, some of the micro-giving occurring with new, previously unaffiliated donors is based on principles of community participation, giving back and good will that may not align with specific non-profit traditions.

Moreover, much of the innovation in this area is coming from purpose-driven marketing, PR and social media experts, not from the non-profits, who can be notoriously slow to adopt new methods.

On the other hands, the transparency of the new efforts means everyone who is interested has a chance to analyze, learn, practice and integrate these new skills.

The accompanying case studies detail the hows, whys, and how-tos of planning and executing these types of campaigns so that organizations of any size are better prepared to use social media to create self-organizing groups and viral momentum.

The case studies detail the goals, planning and execution and outcomes of each campaign. The accompanying glossary categories the social media tools and includes a list of additional resources.

The full case studies and social media resource list are available for download at [www.ifocos.org](http://www.ifocos.org):

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*Knight News Challenge, 2008-09*

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation wanted to use social media to reach a wider range of prospective applicants, both in the US and abroad, for the third year of the Knight News Challenge, a program that provides grants to innovative news and information projects. Their goal was to improve both the quality and the diversity of projects. Using social media and transformative tools, the team met and exceeded most of their goals, increasing both the page views by 200% percent and unique visitors to the site by 100% percent while receiving a stronger pool of applications.

*Women Who Tech TeleSummit, April 2008*

An online webinar/telesummit was used to reach over 600 participants and present top talent, with almost no cash expense. After four months of planning, Women Who Tech brought together technology pioneers and evangelists ranging from Arianna Huffington to Lynne D. Johnson of Fast Company and Joan Blades of MoveOn.org. Attendance sold out within 36 hours due to online outreach and marketing via Web 2.0 tools.

*Twestival, January/February 2009*

Twestival was a world-wide, self-organizing fund drive that used a combination of Twitter, a series of aggregated local web sites, and meet-ups and events in 184 cities to raise money for Charity:Water, a non-profit organization that provides clean drinking water to communities in developing countries, with a focus on serving children and schools. Organizers built up to a series of simultaneous events — live in the real world and streamed on the web — on February 12, 2009.



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## **THE FULL CASE STUDIES**

### **1. Knight News Challenge, [newschallenge.org](http://newschallenge.org)**

The Knight News Challenge, a signature program of the Miami-based Knight Foundation, sponsors an international competition open to anyone who has an idea that can change the future of news and discourse in a local geographic community. Every year for the past 2 years (there are 5 years for which funds are committed), Knight has awarded \$5MM to approximately 16 projects from around the world, paying out over a 2-year period. Projects funded include Placeblogger, the world's foremost local blog directory and aggregator, EveryBlock, a Django-based framework for RSS feeds that organized and presents data based on your zip code, Printcasting, a web to print application tool, and the Sochi Olympics Project, which will let the people of Sochi, the Russian resort city hosting the 2014 Winter Olympics, use the latest online tools to both discuss and influence the impact of the games.

#### Program Objectives

For this year, 2008-09, the team wanted to improve the diversity of the applications, bringing in more from the tech and social media communities, as well as the online news area, improve awareness and grow international submissions, particularly in Asia. Two related goals were to increase awareness of the program, and to build community among the applicants.

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To help meet these objectives, they retained me, Susan Mernit, to act as the program manager and evangelist, in conjunction with Program Director Gary Kebbel, the program' developer and owner, Knight Journalism Program Associate Jose Zamora, and Knight Community Manager Kristen Taylor, webmaster Robbie Adams and Marketing and Communications VP Marc Fest. Working as a team, along with Heidi Miller, whom Knight hired as a social media coordinator, we crafted a strategy for raising awareness, recruiting participants, mentoring prospective applicants, and raising the quality of the applications. No one on the team worked on this 100%, but working against a well-crafted plan allowed us to maximize our time.

### Strategies for outreach

The Knight Foundation has well-established relationships with influential journalists, bloggers and educators in the online news and international online news arenas, and deep ties with journalism, new media, and communications programs at many universities. However, for this program, Knight wanted to reach beyond their core audience to connect with technologists, social media innovators, product developers and local organizers who might have innovative ideas for sharing news and information and supporting engagement and discussion in a specific geographic area.

To achieve this goal, we did an analysis that suggested using a suite of social media tools would not only be extremely effective for outreach, but would reinforce the message that we were innovative and cool. Our plan relied on using tools that had worked in previous years—web site, email, purchased ad words—but we put more emphasis on the new tools: blogging, video blogging, Twitter, seismic, Flickr in particular.

To communicate these messages, we created a three-month strategy to execute against. Some of the tasks in the plan were to:

- Create a means to have on-going events—digital and real-world that we could both blog about and have bloggers cover
- Create a list of about 100 social media and Web 2.0 bloggers, entrepreneurs and technologists whose attention we could engage with these events
- Send information about the 2008-09 Knight News Challenge to about 7,500 people on a mailing list, asking them to spread the word in their communities



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- Create a Twitter account and tweet 3X a day with interesting news and updates to drive participation in the Knight News Challenge
- Create a #hashtag—a tag that makes a phrase discoverable in a twitter search ([search.twitter.com](http://search.twitter.com))-- for the Knight News Challenge--#knc08—and promote it, making it possible for interested parties to track our efforts.
- Interview past winners and post to the blog; have past winners do Seismic videos we could promote
- Conduct a strong email campaign to our constituent base of online journalists and educators and a wider pool of tech, social media and community influencers.

At the same time as we mapped these ideas, we explored other ideas that would allow us to create more of an applicant community to spread the word and support one another.

Inspired by incubators like ycombinator and TechStars, we decided to create a Drupal site called the News Challenge Garage ([garage.newschallenge.org](http://garage.newschallenge.org)). This would be a destination where prospective applicants could post ideas and projects, receive peer comments and request online mentoring before they submitted their applications for judging. The budget for this site was low, and we built it within 3 weeks.

Finally, we also decided to create and execute a series of real world meet-ups, in addition to an online webinar. Knowing how effective the BarCamps and media meet-ups for groups like the Social Media Club have been, we decided to see if we could create low-cost equivalents for the KNC08, focusing on cities where Knight staff was already travelling.

To deliver on our international aspirations, we built an international outreach and marketing plan that relied on the support of Jose Zamora, our Journalism Program Associate, Joyce Barnathan and the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), Professor Rosenthal Alves of The University of Texas at Austin, Global Voices, and other connections with good international contacts. This program was heavily email based, but also included a real world meet up.

## Execution

In August, 2008, we started our program by updating the web site's FAQ and call to action to broaden the appeal, then followed up with a press release and an email blast to about 7,500 influencers, friends of Knight, past applicants, journalism educators and bloggers. This was followed by the start of a Twitter

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campaign, the creation of the #KNC08 hashtag, and an ongoing series of blog posts on the Knight Foundation blog.

Very soon after, we launched the News Challenge Garage; we promoted its launch with an email blast to a broad target and individual outreach to the 100 influencers on our list. The site generated great interest, and applicants began to immediately register. Bloggers also began to write about it, and about the program. We used Twitter to communicate with potential applicants and encouraged people to follow our twitstream; within a short period of time we had 300 followers on Twitter.

To meet our goal of having fresh blog posts on the Knight blog and the Garage site, three times a week, we created an editorial schedule and assigned posts out for specific dates and themes to the team of 3 staffers. In addition, we did some podcasts with past winners, and asked some past winners to do Seismic videos about the program. This material generated page views, commentary and linking around the blogosphere, driving links and awareness way up (results date below).

At the same time that we were using the new tools, we also used the old ones. Three times during the application period we sent out email blasts; analysis showed that the email was extremely successful in driving applicants to the site, more so than advertising.

We planned the meet-ups so they could piggyback on travel and conferences already planned. We were able to do 9 meet ups--in New York, Boston, Miami, Washington, DC, Seattle, Vancouver, Austin, San Francisco, and Chicago. In many cases, we were able to also visit J-Schools and speak to students in the same trip, and to add meet-ups to other conferences, such as the Online News Association. During a meet-up (typically 90 minutes long), we spent 20 minutes explaining the program, using a live web browser to show key URLs and examples, then used the rest of the time for discussion and Q&A. Meetings were generally well-attended, with 35-40 people as an average, but with some meetings have as many as 75 people.

To get the word out, we created Facebook groups for each meet up, listed them on Upcoming.org, and blogged them. Interestingly, many people in the social media and online journalism communities treated them as important events, exhorting friends to attend (and apply for funding). This drove awareness.

Finally, to execute on our international outreach we not only asked numerous international organizations to reach out on our behalf, we also sent about 200 emails to personal international contacts, asking them to spread the word in their communities. Finally, during the last three weeks of the program, we worked with

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the Knight Foundation Webmaster, Robertson Adams, to purchase keywords that could drive awareness in China, Korea, Japan and other part of Asia.

### Evaluating results

So, what were our outcomes like? Did we meet our goals? The short version would be yes.

- Traffic to the Knight News Challenge site increased 47% compared to the same time the previous year. The site had an average of 2,930 visitors a day, during the course of the application timeframe.
- On the final day of the contest, 17,000 people came to the site, a record high. Both these metrics were 50% higher than the previous year.
- 2,323 projects were submitted to the Knight News Challenge. 258 were invited to submit a full proposal, 70 became finalists for the funding are going through final review this February (results not yet released). The staff considers the quality to be extremely high.
- In 2008, there were 224 independent blog posts about the Knight News Challenge, compared to 24 the previous year. Blog posts appeared in blogs published in European countries, the UK, Korea, China, Russia, the Middle East, Africa, Canada and Latin America as well as the US.
- The Knight News Challenge got major press during the program-we were written up in Valleywag in October
- A post in the New York Times by “Freakonomics” author Steven J. Dubner, titled “Free Money” sent 1,442 visitors to the site.
- 1,600 people registered for the News Challenge Garage site (required to comment). 800 posted projects. 466 applied for a grant. Discussion of the Garage generated 10,000 links that Google indexed, 6,000 of which did not originate from the Garage site.
- The 8 meet ups had 400 attendees, many of whom blogged, shot video and pictures and shared about the program. Roughly 50% of the meet up attendees applied to the program. There are 700 links to mentions of the events indexed in Google, 30 photos on Flickr tagged Knight News Challenge meet up, and 4 videos).
- Google reported over 60,000 mentions of “Knight News Challenge” on non-Knight sites in 2008; this was a 110% increase from 2007.

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## Conclusion

Social media tools—combined with the usage of a web site, email campaign and webinar—vastly increased both the awareness of the Knight News Challenge and the diversity of the applications, particularly in the English-speaking world. Marketing costs were applied to supporting a part-time social media manager, rather than to agency fees, and a greater return occurred. The innovative Garage site helped to brand the program as interested in innovation and drove ongoing awareness and discussion\* on the net, as did the real world meet ups.

Overall, we were able to create an interactive, virtuous circle or open loop, where our real world community, which we successfully targeted online and off, not only got our message but then went on to publicize it on our behalf. This created a bigger impact that we might have gotten otherwise and led to a lot of success with carefully measured resources.

## 2. Women Who Tech TeleSummit, April 2008

A virtual conference/telesummit using webinar technology was used to reach over 650 participants and present top talent in a daylong web-based conference. With just four months of planning, Women Who Tech launched as a new program and brought together technology pioneers and evangelists in a one-day event. Participants in the first program included Arianna Huffington, Lynne D. Johnson of Fast Company and Joan Blades of MoveOn.org. Attendance in the telesummit sold out within 36 hours due to online outreach and marketing via Web 2.0 tools.

### Program Objectives

Women Who Tech is a nonprofit initiative launched in September 2008 and developed by Allyson Kaplin of RAD Campaign, a progressive web strategy and development company in Washington, DC.. WWT's first major event, held in March 2008, was the Women Who Tech TeleSummit for Women in Technology in the non-profit and political world. This all day tele-conference featured virtual workshops and panel discussions on fighting sexism in the tech sector, women and social capital, breaking through the digital ceiling and how to get more women involved in open source. Sessions were conducted by prominent women in tech including Arianna Huffington of Huffington Post, social media marketer Tara Hunt, and open source and open standards advocates Kaliya Hamlin and Michelle Murrain, founder of the Non-Profit Open Source Initiative.

The larger agenda of Women Who Tech is to speak out against and be a resource to correct the lack of gender balance at tech conferences through

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creating a database of potential speakers, reaching out to conference organizers and connecting women through occasional brunches and regional events, and the organizers saw the telesummit as a critical step to establish the group's credibility and buzz-worthiness.

### Strategies for outreach

Women Who Tech planned an outreach campaign that began in the fall, ramped up in January and counted down toward the April event. Since one segment of the WWT TeleSummit's audience was women working in the non-profit and political arena it was critical to reach out to key stakeholders at major nonprofits. To accomplish that goal, WWT developed a contract list of women in technology, non-profit groups and online advocacy/online communications departments at major non-profits and political organizations. An email program was used to message them.

For broader outreach and awareness, WWT put together a plan involving the development of groups on Facebook and Linked In, an opt-in email list, and a Twitter campaign. A live after-party event was planned for San Francisco, New York and DC.

### Execution

WWT developed and sent a series of targeted mailings using the Democracy in Action CRM software to send to the groups in their email campaign. They also did outreach to women tech based listservs, paying special attention to cross-promotion and blanketing women-focused lists including from Linux Chix, San Francisco Web Women, and DC Web Women, along with other lists that share data on tech, social media and the non-profit community such as NTEN and Radical Techies.

In addition, founder Allyson Kapin conducted 1:1 outreach to 75 top tech bloggers and reporters across the country, with a focus on women. Since WWT does not host a blog, special effort was made to identify bloggers who could post about the group and the event, and to develop a press list to cultivate.

### Results

The Telesummit sold out very quickly, meeting both the financial and the promotion goals. During the 3 months of promoting the program, the site received 21,162 page views and had 8,800 unique visitors.

As a result of the promotions, over 2,000 people signed up for email notifications of Women Who Tech programs, 1,273 joined the WWT Facebook group, and 490 joined the LinkedIn Group. The Twitter account has over 2,700 followers.

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WWT is planning a second telesummit for Spring 2009, and will use the same tools for what is expected to be an even bigger event.

### **Q&A with Allyson Kapin, Women Who Tech:**

#### **SM: How did you use social media to attract an audience?**

AK: We use a variety of Web 2.0 and social media tools (mentioned above) to spread the word about Women Who Tech and discuss issues such as fighting sexism in the tech sector and getting more women on panels at major tech conferences. Our favorite two tools that we use to build community are Twitter and Facebook. Twitter allows us to constantly engage our followers not only on WWT events, but on relevant research and articles, generate suggestions for future panels and WWT initiatives, and to discuss any tech and Web 2.0 issues that the community feels is important. It's also space to connect other women in tech who are working on projects and live in the same city. We like Facebook because it offers a different type of community atmosphere and allows us to quickly message our members on WWT events and share essential information. The WWT Facebook group is also used to post questions, share job postings and recruit candidates, and promote other women who are coordinating tech events and initiatives.

On the day of the WWT TeleSummit, participants were using a variety of web 2.0 tools to report on the different sessions. There were tweets, blog posts, videos, SlideShare presentations, and Utterz recordings being blasted across the web. It was so invigorating to see happening in real time.

#### **SM: What advice would you give others who would like to become more expert in promoting their programs with social media tools?**

AK: Engagement and transparency is key to a successful Web 2.0 strategy. It's important that organizations take online social networks more seriously and learn how to truly engage online communities. Use social media as an opportunity to respond to negative comments or the opposition and take ownership of the issue at hand. Remember transparency truly engages supporters. My definition of transparency is being open about process, engaging people in the process of developing a campaign or product, content, and using a bottom up approach rather than top down. Be open to criticism and feedback by your consumers or supporters. Many organizations are just not comfortable with this type of transparency but transparency is what Web 2.0 is built around.

In terms of engagement organizations need to be using a variety of tools to build their online presence and engage existing and new supporters, which is going to be very important in a bad economy where many traditional ad budgets may get

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cut. Don't rely on just your website to get your message out. Engage across the board.

### **SM: Have any tips?**

AK: Have guts and don't be afraid to turn your ideas into action. I meet so many people who have great ideas but they are too scared to take risks and are afraid of stepping on other people's toes. You are not going to get anywhere by being timid and watching the web 2.0 world pass you by.

### **3. Twestival**

On February 12, 2009, people in 184 cities across the globe will gather online and in local parties as a fundraising effort for charity: water, a New York city based, 2 and a half year old organization that organizes projects to improve drinking water in countries where access to clean water is not universal. The goal: to raise \$500,000 to help bringing drinking water to 250,000 people.

Organized by a tiny team of people in London, notably designer Tony Scott, event planner Amanda Rose, and PR professionals Ben Matthews, Tom Malcom, Renate Nyborg and Tim Hoang, Twestival is a self-organizing, global event that will raise a large sum of money—and is already generating gads of awareness—for charity: water, the non-profit founded by NYC-based former club kid Sam Harrison. The Twestival mission statement says that 100% of the money raised will go to fund projects in various countries; that means 0% going to general G&A or overhead. As blogger and non-profit consultant Beth Kanter says, “the big picture goal of efforts like Twestival is to begin to develop larger ecosystems of activists that are connected and coordinated with one another.”

Partnering with global partners the event planning tool Amiando, Web 2.0 tech blog Mashable, video platform and fundraising promotion engine Live Earth, Twitter micro-donations tool TipJoy, and t-shirt producer Desired Hearts, the core Twestival team is managing and supporting teams in 143 cities around the world who are all planning independent events, with their own local sponsors and giveaways (and their own decentralized ticket sales, via Amiando, of course).

Twestival organizer Ben Mathews told Beth Kanter in an interview that his intent was to both raise money for a good cause and to help people who connect on Twitter meet up in real life. This team's first effort, organized in about three weeks in September 2008, was a party for The Connection, a support service for the homeless. 300 people attended (and donated); there was a waiting list as well. Looking for a charity to support for a subsequent project, they wanted one that was active on Twitter, like Kiva or charity:water, and that had a transparent style, so it could model this type of fund-raising (and how the money was spent).

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After some conversation with charity: water about goals and the need for a centrally managed and trackable donation vendor, the teams agreed to partner and the current project was born.

### Organization and strategies for outreach

Twestival is a self-organizing series of events, orchestrated by a sophisticated team providing just enough of a template to add process and structure. At the Twestival site, Tony Scott, a designer and technology volunteer, has web site templates, naming conventions, Twitter naming conventions and so on for the volunteers running the local programs. Amanda Rose, who is coordinating with the 184 services, communicates with them via email and Twitter. At the charity: water site, Scott Harrison, the founder, has posted a complete media kit with photos, videos, downloadable posters and collateral materials for his cause to help with outreach, promotion, and marketing.

Twestival has a main Twitter tag, @Twestival, with over 4,500 followers--<http://Twitter.com/Twestival>. This account is the cheerleader and communications lead for the local events, highlighting programs to note, asking for support for specific cities or issues, assigning blog logins and publishing schedule and being the linchpin for a diverse effort.

In addition, each Twestival city (example: @Twestivalsf) has its own Twitter account; these accounts vary in the size of their followers and their activity level, but their mission is to promote the local events and organize and incent the local community to participate. All Twitter accounts are listed beside the host cities they are supporting on the @Twestival home page.

Besides Twitter, the organizers are using blogs, Seismic, Vimeo, Flickr, and YouTube to drive awareness and page views. Currently there are over 80,000 links indexed on Google to Twestival URLs; 24,000 of them are tweets; 71 are on YouTube, 385 are on Flickr, 21 on Vimeo, 7 are on Seismic. 26,000 blog posts mention Twestival as of Feb 3; the number will increase by 300% or more after the Feb 12<sup>th</sup> event occurs.

### Partnerships

A small number of significant marketing and services partnerships further the Twestival brand and reach. Live Earth, the cause-related entertainment marketing firm is hosting Twestival multimedia, and will feature video submissions from Twestival volunteers and participants as well as footage from the 140+ events on February 12th at Live Earth Video.

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Mashable, an ambitious and popular technology blog, is partnering with them to deliver lots of promotion as their primary global media partner.. Amiando, the events service, is donating tools and resources.

As Beth Kanter says in one of her blog posts about Twestival, “this event combines the lessons learned from previous fundraising activities on Twitter:

- \* A local, face-to-face component
- \* Decentralized event organizing - anyone can organize an event
- \* Micro donations using TipJoy
- \* Live event with broadcasts and all local partners participating.”

According to the Twestival web site, the event will unfold in three phases:

\* Phase one: Launch the homepage with a list of cities which have already registered. Over the next day, organizers will be given a password and instruction to upload information to their own city site (start thinking about a first blog post). Please have a bit of patience as we are working as quickly as we can.

\* Phase two: All of the cities should be linked up to the homepage. Features to donate, bid on an auction, raffle and other fundraising projects will come online as buttons as they are completed.

\* Phase three: On 12 February 2009, Twestival will be working with partners to have live broadcasts of the events around the world.

Looking at the @Twestival Twitter account, it is possible to chart the trajectory from one local event in the September 2008 to organizing a worldwide movement in 184 cities. Using Twitter, the organizers are able to recruit volunteers to lead fund-raising in their city. They provide them with a template, web site and set of tools to organize and promote their event. Each event has its own localized web site, and since they are all linked together via the Google juice—the ability to move up in the search rankings—is excellent.

Even better, the self-organizing folk of the web, and the Twittersphere, are excited about this new way to make money. In the course of a month, three weeks before the event is to happen, over 1,000 links and sites to this event are indexed at Google; there are over 14,000 tweets about it. The program is so viral—and so visible that vendors who normally charge—like the ecommerce company handling the tickets for all the events—waive a fee, enabling the organizers to give yet more money the charity—and giving them more exposure.

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Do you think charity: water will reach their fundraising goal on February 12<sup>th</sup>? If one woman could raise \$25,000 in a week, what can Twestival raise? \$500,000? And at what cost? Early reports indicate that 80% of the cities reporting in the first 24 hours after the event have met their goals, but it will be a few more days till all the revenue is tallied from the 184 participants.

### Evaluation

Although it is too early to evaluate whether Twestival met its \$500,000 goal, it's clear that a new paradigm is emerging that Twestival represents. On one hand, as Beth Kanter points out, Twestival is an all-volunteer effort; on the other, it is highly organized and highly templated, presenting both a united face to the planet and a focused set of directions and materials for volunteers.

Further, Twestival meets the new paradigm of web based global events with strong local components; this emerging model for competitions (think Ashoka, Knight News Challenge) and community (the Twitterverse) will definitely succeed in this case, bringing in the money they seek—and building tons of awareness.

### **Q&A with Amanda Scott, principal organizer, Twestival.**

SM: How did the team move from one event in London to a global event?

AS: I was the main organizer of the first one. After it was over, I knew that we could do something more powerful with this concept. I spearheaded the global element on my own. The rest of the team were just thinking about the next local one. But I did run the charity by them (this was also my choice - for a variety of reasons) to get their feedback, as it would effect the London Twestival. And at meetings I would bring up what was happening or what was planned. I used my network first to establish some Twestivals internationally via Twitter

SM: Who is driving this event?

AS: The global team is Me and Tony Scott, who came on board to do the website for me - I don't think he realised how big this would get, but he's loving it.

I brought on a few teams to tackle larger things, event management support, sponsorship, global PR, broadcasting, prizes for the auction, sideline fundraising projects (which there are many). A lot of organic collaboration happening.

SM: Anything else to add?

AS: I am trying to keep my name a bit low key - as the story is about the 200 teams around the world doing this - Not a girl in her studio in London UK. I will tell the full story after we raise the most money for this cause as we possibly can. Wish I had more time, but I'm only sleeping about 3-4 hours a night right now.

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## **COMMENTARY: What makes a social media campaign stand out?**

By Lisa Williams (Placeblogger, Knight News Challenge 2007 winner, hyper-local expert)

"To me, it's worth making a point that goes beyond the mechanics of a social media campaign.

People who aren't themselves participants in social media tend to view social media as a medium to "game the system." At the same time, they resent the fact that they must engage in it because they experience relatively little personal return for their efforts. People who are bloggers, deeply engaged by Twitter, Facebook, etc have a constant stream of personal contact with others that runs alongside their "work." In fact, many of them do not experience a dividing line between their work and their personal life.

We need no permission to blog or tweet about the cheese sandwich we had for lunch, as we know that it's being offered in an opt-in context. Nobody has to pay attention to us. But what gives us the right to ask for another's attention? Or ask for their sustained attention?

It is here where clarity of purpose is paramount. I think a lot of social media campaigns fail for two reasons:

They have no reason to live. They want to build awareness for the sake of building awareness.

They have no guiding ethos. Not only do they have no wider, overarching goal that transcends their personal success or failure, they cannot tell you anything about the right way to achieve their goals. Think of the "unconference." The point wasn't just to have a conference but to democratize and enliven the experience itself.

So it's not so much about the "what" as it is about the "why bother." Why bother to do Twestival, and why is it meaningful to operate Twestival in this specific way?"



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## **Resources: Web 2.0 Products and what they are**

*Which are the tools used by social media strategists, and how do they fit together?*

This section offers a look at the basic tools, URLs and descriptions for each, and a review of which tools each project used.

Tools discussed include:

### Blogging & Microblogging

- [WordPress.com](#) & [WordPress.org](#): Blogging platforms
- [Moveabletype.com](#): Blogging platform
- [Twitter](#), [Twitter.com](#), micro-blogging platform

### Photo & Video resources

- [Flickr](#), [Flickr.com](#), photo & video community and repository
- [YouTube](#), [YouTube.com](#), the largest video hosting site
- [Seesmic](#), [Seesmic](#), online video blogging, done through a web cam

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- 12seconds, 12seconds.tv, online video microblogging, done through a web cam
- Utterz: utterz.com, group messaging service via phone & web.
- Vimeo, Vimeo.com, online video hosting site
- Viddler, Viddler.com, online video hosting site

#### Social networks

- Facebook, facebook.com, large viral social network with integrated tool sets, including group and invitation functions
- LinkedIn, LinkedIn.com, online professional social network with viral groups function
- Ning: ning.com, templated, build it yourself social network toolkit & hosting service

#### Utility applications

- Upcoming, Upcoming.org: Post & share events via online calendar & community
- Eventbrite, eventbrite.com, Buy tickets online
- Amiando.com, Buy tickets online
- Slideshare, slideshare.com, Post, display and distribute powerpoint presentations.
- PBwiki, pbwiki.com, create and manage a wiki for your group
- Constant Contact, constantcontact.com, Manage email campaigns
- Democracy in Action, democracyinaction.org
- TipJoy, tipjoy.com, Twitter micro-donations

#### WordPress.com & WordPress.org: Blogging platforms

Blogging platforms are the starting point for any social media strategy and two of the most popular are WordPress.com and WordPress.org. Both are easy to use and reliable. What's the difference between the two?

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With WordPress.com, you create a blog that is hosted at WordPress and has a URL such as [myblog.WordPress.com](http://myblog.WordPress.com). You can use skins to create distinct look and layouts, and you can customize the blog, but it is hosted at their service.

Using WordPress.org, you download the software, establish your blog, and pick a service to host it on.

*WordPress.org, WordPress.com*

Moveabletype.com, typepad.com: Blogging platforms

Moveable type & Typepad.com are blogging platforms from Six Apart. Moveable Type, know as MT, is a downloadable application to create a blogging platform hosted at a third-party provider or on your own servers.

Typepad is a \$129 per year hosted, turnkey service running on Six Apart servers.

*moveabletype.com, typepad.com*

Twitter, micro-blogging platform:

Twitter is a popular micro blogging platform that allows users to distribute their 140 character updates to their Twitter social network, aka followers, across multiple platforms (computer, PDA, phone).

*twitter.com*

Photo & Video resources

Flickr: Flickr is the leading photo & video community and repository, with more than 1 billion photos stored. Owned by Yahoo!, Flickr offers pro accounts for easier uploading, but basic services are free.

*flickr.com*

YouTube, YouTube is the largest video hosting site on the net. Users can both upload and view videos here. Videos can be viewed at YouTube or embedded elsewhere.

*youtube.com*

Seesmic: Seesmic offers online video blogging, done through your computer's web cam. Videos can be viewed at Seesmic.com, or embedded elsewhere.

*seesmic.com*

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12seconds: This site offers online video micro blogging, done through a web cam. Videos can be played here or embedded elsewhere.

*12seconds.tv*

Utterz: A mobile blogging service that allows you to post via your phone to the web. Utterz provides a phone number for you to call in and “speak” your blog entry, which appears as an audio file on your Utterz stream. (*Listed here because it was used by Women Who Tech.*)

*utterz.com*

Vimeo is a video-centric social network site that allows you to post and display videos, much like YouTube, only smaller and with more community.

*vimeo.com*

Viddler is another video hosting service, with plug-in tools that make it efficient to display video at WordPress and other blogging sites.

*viddler.com*

### Social networks

Facebook is one of the largest and most mainstream social network sites, With 90 million active users, the site is a daily visit for many people. The integrated tool set, which includes a groups function, an invite feature, fan pages that support messaging.

*facebook.com*

LinkedIn is the largest online professional social network. Focused on careers and professional networking, Linked In has a groups feature that is useful for social networking, event promotion, and messaging.

*linkedin.com*

Ning:, Ning offers a set of web-based tools that allow anyone to create a social network on a hosted platform. The templated, modular elements can be customized and modified by non-technical people; over 71,000 networks have been created to date.

*ning.com*

### Utility applications

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Upcoming: This Yahoo-owned service allows you to post & share events via online calendar; the social network aspects aids in event discovery.

*[upcoming.org](http://upcoming.org)*

Eventbrite: A popular service for selling tickets online and keeping the funds in a centralized place.

*[eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com)*

Amiando: A popular service for selling tickets online and keeping the funds in a centralized place.

*[amandiano.com](http://amandiano.com)*

PayPal: An eBay-owned service that acts as a middleman for online payments, eliminating the need for the consumer to use a credit card in an online transaction.

*[paypal.com](http://paypal.com)*

Slideshare: Post, display and distribute PowerPoint presentations.

*[slideshare.com](http://slideshare.com)*

Constant Contact: Low-cost way to create and manage email campaigns.  
*[constantcontact.com](http://constantcontact.com)*

Democracy in Action: Non-profit that provides infrastructure and tools for non-profits and political groups, including email management.

*[democracyinaction.org](http://democracyinaction.org)*

TipJoy: Service supporting making donations via PayPal through a Twitter interface.

*[tipjoy.com](http://tipjoy.com)*

### **The social media ecosystem, or the virtuous circle of multiple tools**

One of the big questions for organizations who are considering using social media is how to make the best use of the tools while expending the least amount of resources. This paper does not attempt to counsel business leaders or executive directors on whether their organization should blog or Twitter; instead it makes the point that what is most impactful is to have a multi-pronged approach

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where maintaining a blog, using Twitter and posting photos to Flickr or videos to YouTube achieve greater impact than any one channel might have alone.

To reinforce and illustrate this point, here is a list of the tools used by each of the projects covered:

	<b>KNIGHT NEWS CHALLENGE</b>	<b>WOMEN WHO TECH</b>	<b>TWESTIVAL</b>
<b>Blog</b>	X	X	X
<b>Twitter</b>	X	X	X
<b>Flickr</b>	X	X	X
<b>LinkedIn</b>		X	
<b>Facebook</b>	X	X	X
<b>YouTube</b>	X	X	X
<b>Seesmic</b>	X		X
<b>12seconds</b>			X
<b>Utterz</b>		X	
<b>Vimeo</b>			X
<b>Viddler</b>			X
<b>Email management</b>		X	
<b>Online tickets</b>		X	X
<b>Upcoming</b>	X	X	X
<b>TipJoy</b>			X

**What do I get started with?**

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The basic tools for a social media campaign I'd recommend starting with are the following:

- Blog
- Twitter
- Upcoming
- Facebook group or events page
- flickr

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### **About Susan Mernit**

Susan Mernit is a former Netscape & AOL VP who worked at Yahoo! as a Senior Director till she left 2008. She is a long-time blogger, consultant, online news innovator, and social media maven who is a passionate about using technology to connect people and to solve problems. Most recently, she ran the Knight News Challenge for The Knight Foundation; she is also an organizer of She's Geeky and The Public Media Collaborative, a member of the 2009 ONA conference committee and an Equality Camp organizer. A long time associate of ifocus & WeMedia, she holds the title of EIR. Susan advises companies, start-ups, non-profits and foundations on product development and social media strategies and is passionate about training people to set goals and use these tools. She is based in Oakland, CA.