

NOTES FROM MEMBERS' SESSION

USING

SOCIAL MEDIA

**FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
AND CONSULTATION**

London Cultural Improvement Programme (LCIP)
on behalf of London Councils

THESE NOTES

The following notes relate to the Community Engagement and Best Practice in Public Consultation conference held on 23 March 2011.

It is part of the London Cultural Improvement Programme, on behalf of London Councils. The Consultation Institute (TCI) was commissioned to design, deliver and manage the conference in addition to producing a number of guides and notes from the sessions. There are two Guides available to download: Stakeholder Management and Mapping; and Facilitation Skills.



The opinions expressed in these notes are those of the participants involved in this workshop and not of any particular organisation .



The Consultation Institute
w: www.consultationinstitute.org

These notes were designed by Participate Ltd March 2011
www.participate.uk.com

MASTER CLASS NOTES

Jonathan Bradley led an afternoon Master Class on Using Social Media for Public Engagement and Consultation at the London Cultural Improvement Programme conference on Community Engagement.

Social Media Glossary - Page 6 <READ>

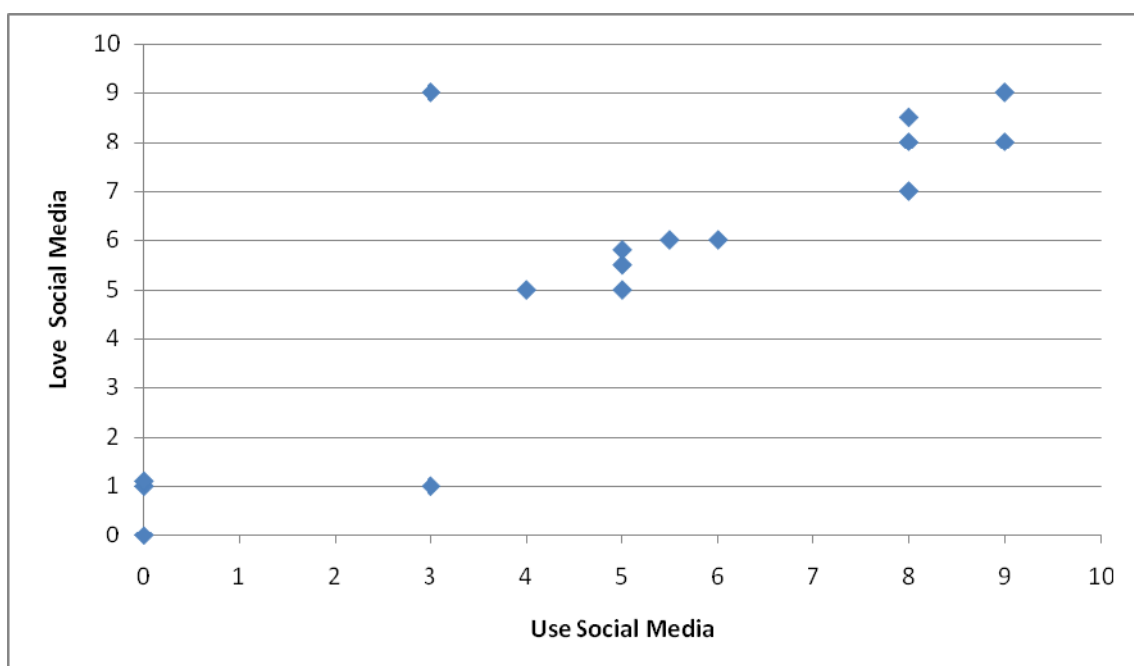
The attendees were made up of a mixture of officers and elected members. Jonathan began the session by establishing how the group felt about social media.

Jonathan explained that a similar pattern (re Figure 1) is replicated across many areas of the UK where he has delivered social media courses and coaching services.

It reflects the fact that whilst many believe that social media is revolutionising the way we communicate, managers in the public sector (and elected members) tend to be at many different levels in terms of their own engagement with social media. And obviously some embrace it and some "hate it". Interestingly a common statement from those that are sceptical or claim to hate social media is that, despite this, they feel the need to get involved and use it more.

The masterclass then went on to look at some social media facts in detail and a [video](#) was played detailing how pervasive social media use now is in the UK. During this session participants were asked to consider what they thought this "social media revolution" meant for public services and more specifically for people involved in public engagement and consultation.

Figure 1 - How Much Do You Love and How Much Do You Use Social Media?



NOTES *cont...*

Feedback focused on:

- **The need to be involved.** It is not an option to stay out of social media
- **Amazement** at how dynamic the social media space is
- **Concerns** over the "darkside" of social media like risks of cyber bullying
- **Excitement** about what can be achieved through social media
- **Terrified** that personal information was being made public by so many people, but for many this is now a cultural norm
- **A fear** about losing control of dialogue
- The inability of many officers to engage in social networks currently places their organisation's **reputation at risk**.

The group discussed how social media provided opportunities and threats.

The ability to influence debates and opinions. This is how many people are now finding and sharing their news. If you're not involved you can't communicate as effectively with many citizens and stakeholders.

How social networks create a trust that, if harnessed, could be very powerful for public services and for engagement specifically. Research shows that people are more likely to trust what their friends recommend on social networks.

Making customer experiences remarkably transparent. More and more people are sharing their experiences of good and bad public services in social media places. They update all the time and everywhere. This makes the customer or citizen experience transparent, engaging,

shareable, and very raw. Not only that, but it also sticks, and can be found, for a long time. Just plug your organisations name into www.socialmention.com and see what you find out. Or search for comments about your town on Twitter. Or see what people are saying about the place where you work on www.foursquare.com.

Creating the ability for organisations to listen to what people are saying about their services or the places that they live in. In many ways we no longer need to ask questions we can just listen to the answers that are already out there.

It's no longer a sensible option not to get involved. The community expects organisations to be listening and expects them to get involved. If they tweet about a bad experience then they expect people to comment and the organisation to respond. Who is doing that in your customer engagement team?

Ignoring social media is not a strategy for success as more and more organisations' reputations are formed and manipulated online. Managers in public services and those responsible for public engagement and consultation have no choice but to get involved and joust in social media spaces.

If you aren't involved you can't hear what people are saying about issues that concern you. And just because you might not be asking the questions does not mean that people are not talking about your business or your community of interest. They are just out there, waiting to be found, to be engaged.

NOTES *cont...*

The group then went on to examine some of the detail of how different social networks operate and the differences between them.

Things they covered included:

Facebook: how a Facebook page can be used to engage target audiences in public engagement and consultation. A reminder that this is **social** media and in order to get people to “like” your page and to engage with you, you need to be social and communicate in a sociable way. And therefore, Facebook pages should not be used to replicate the type of copy found in a corporate newsletter, or an annual report or a glossy consultation document! Failure to remember this means that organisations will have a Facebook page (the easy bit), but not many people will “like” it and it won’t work properly. And after all the hype everyone will be disappointed.



Twitter: how the power of Twitter can be harnessed to broadcast messages from one to many. How by shrinking URLs Twitter can be used to signpost people to rich

content about issues they are interested in (or should be interested in); how ‘hashtags’ can be used to share views and disseminate information around a common cause or a piece of consultation.

Youtube: the importance of Youtube as a search engine where people will find out more about you and your consultation. How it offers an excellent resource to provide information about our consultation or public engagement project in an informative and accessible way.

Blogs: how blogs can be used as a dynamic tool for engagement. How they can be set up very easily but can still be used to post pictures, videos and other rich content for people to comment on and engage in dialogue. And that for consultation managers dealing with contentious issues it means they are likely to face bloggers that are against their plans with the ability to broadcast quickly and imaginatively.

Foursquare: (and other similar sites) how the integration of social media and mobile communications is taking social media local. What this means for public services that are location based in terms of monitoring the customer experience and engaging service users.

This session rounded off with some discussion about the importance of synchronising social media. It was concluded that the trick to mastering social media engagement is very much about integrating these social networks and using them all (or several of them) in harmony.

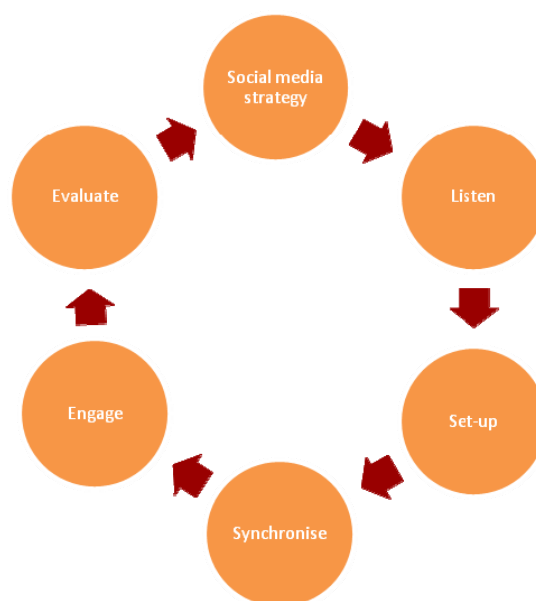
NOTES *cont...*

During the masterclass the group also discussed the challenges that social media presents to people working in public engagement and consultation.

The main comments made were as follows:

- **Monitoring.** How do managers start to monitor what is going on in social media?
- **Delegation of responsibility.** Who will be responsible for looking after social media engagement?
- **When and how to respond?**
- **The Digital Divide.** Not everyone uses social media so we can't just use this method for public engagement and consultation. It is not the silver bullet of public engagement methods, but another important tool.
- **Tone.** It's all about social communications so officers need to communicate in a different way.
- **Resource.** Local authorities (and others) are not geared up to use social media effectively so how will this be resourced? Whose job is it?
- **Control.** We (public bodies) are no longer in control of the dialogue in the social media world. This presents many risks and requires a culture change.
- **What do we do about conflicts** between what corporate policy is and what politicians may say on social networks?

The session also discussed the importance of having a social media strategy and included some top tips on how to be sociable in this brave new world.



How to be social in social media engagement?

- **Give "something" away**
- **Listen, ask** questions and **respond**
- **Take time** out to do it
- When the time is right invest in something **viral**
- Remember there has to be an **incentive** to get involved in you
- Don't PR too much – **80:20 Rule**
- Short and **snappy posts** with links
- Be **humorous**
- Recommend **useful** things
- Recommend and **support others**
- Evaluate and **evolve**.

NOTES *cont...*

The group also had chance to examine many of the useful tools that are available to help them manage social communications more effectively.

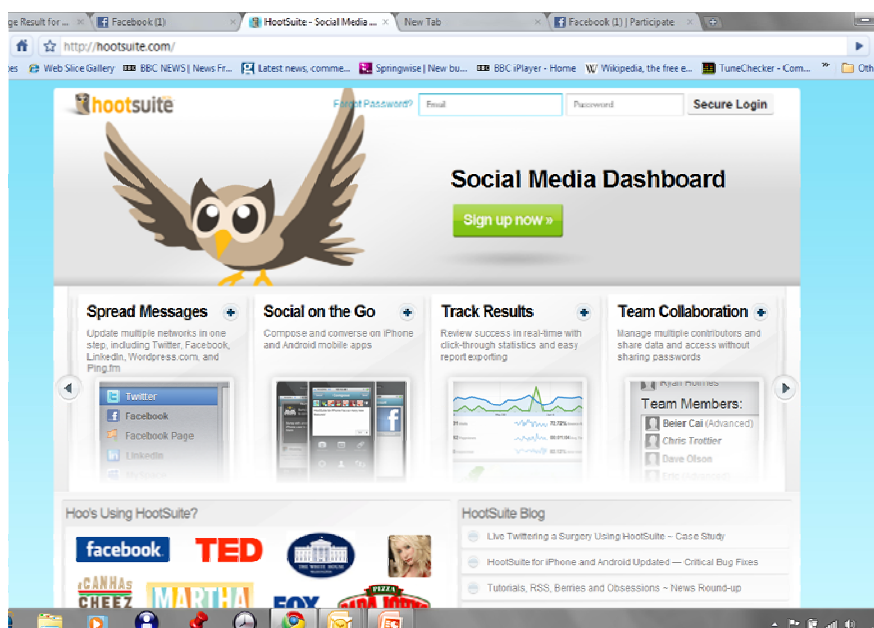
These tools help to do things like scheduling social media updates, posting them across networks simultaneously and therefore synchronising their social media content. Others help them to listen more effectively and the more advanced tools enable them to be used more for actual customer or citizen engagement. Links to some of these tools follow.

"In the future there will be no such thing as spare time. Only update time!"
Jonathan Bradley

www.hootsuite.com
www.tweetdeck.com
www.twellow.com
www.twollow.com
www.socialmention.com
www.staysocialsafe.com
www.mashable.com
www.socialmediatoday.com
www.technorati.com
www.techipedia.com

"We don't have any choice on whether we DO social media the question is how well we DO it."
Erik Qualman

Social Media Glossary on page 6.



Glossary

FACEBOOK TERMS

- **Friend** – Someone who has opted to stay connected either with personal facebook users or an organisations' page. In regard to a 'page', facebook users automatically become friends of that page by pressing the 'like' button.
- **'Like' button** – A button users click to show their support for specific comments, posts, images, organisations, celebrities etc. This also enables them to be kept up to date with what they have 'liked'.
- **Page** – A public profile specifically for businesses, organisations, brands, celebrities etc.
- **Wall** - A wall is a section on a page where you can post messages or images and others can write back. The wall is a public writing space so others who view your page can see what has been written on your wall.

TWITTER TERMS

A full Twitter Glossary can be found at:
[Twitter Glossary](#)

- **Follow** - To follow someone on Twitter means to subscribe to their Tweets or updates on the site.
- **Tweet** - A message posted via Twitter containing 140 characters or fewer.
- **Hashtag** - The # symbol, called a hashtag, is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet. It was created organically by Twitter users as a way to categorise messages. People use the hashtag symbol # before relevant keywords in their Tweet to categorise those Tweets to show more easily in Twitter Search.
- **@Reply** - A reply is any update posted by clicking the "Reply" button on another Tweet. People say lots of things on Twitter, and sometimes you want to say something back. Your reply will always begin with @username (insert username of the person you are replying to). Any Tweet that is a reply to you will show up in your @Mentions tab on your homepage.
- **A Message** - A Message (previously called a Direct Message) is a private message sent via Twitter to one of your followers. It will show in their inbox.
- **Shrink URL** - There are a variety of websites that can shorten your long web links (URLs), making them easier to fit into Twitter's 140 character limit. These services can provide you with a shorter version of any URL you want to share. Then, you can use the shorter version in your Tweet, and anyone who clicks on it will be redirected to the longer URL. A few examples of link shortening services are: <http://bit.ly> and <http://tinyurl.com>
- **Retweet** - Sometimes you come across a Tweet that you just have to share. Twitter's retweet (otherwise known as "RT") feature helps you and others quickly share that Tweet with all of your followers.

NOTES FROM MEMBERS' SESSION

USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

London Cultural Improvement Programme (LCIP)
on behalf of London Councils
March 2011