Social Media Communications in Local Community Education Organizations: Researching and Implementing Social Media Communications for Rochester Community Education

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This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the thesis committee.

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Abstract

Community Education departments are generally constrained by tight budgets, which can create difficulties in marketing its offerings within the region. Social media is a marketing method with low entry costs, thus making social media an attractive marketing option to Community Education departments. This thesis attempts to determine which social media communications are best for the existing "best customers" serviced by the Adult Enrichment department at Rochester Community Education.

The research used a 22-question email survey with responses based on a 5-point Likert scale. The research found the online communication tools most often used by the "best customers" group included emails, texting, and Facebook. However, when asked what communication tools the "best customer" group preferred in receiving marketing messages, email and texts were preferred over tools such as Facebook. As far at the current "best customer" group, the results indicate social networking sites such as Facebook are not (yet) good marketing tools.

There is minimal scholarship in the realm of social media for local Community Education organizations. The results from this thesis project illustrates that social media holds promise as a better communication method for the Adult Enrichment department's "best customers" and adds to scholarship in the realm of local Community Education. Local Community Education organizations could benefit from more knowledge in this sphere.

Introduction

Rochester Community Education is part of the Rochester School District #535. This thesis project specifically deals with the Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment department. Like many other organizations, Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment department has been impacted by the poor economy. In addition to lower enrollment numbers for the classes, its annual budget from the school district is also under pressure. New marketing efforts are needed in order to boost enrollment numbers and justify their budget.

Social media is a relatively new marketing tool with low-to-zero entry costs. With a limited budget for new marketing efforts, the low entry cost is an attractive feature. However, the Adult Enrichment department does not know whether its "best customers" use social media and, if so, what social media communication tools are preferred by those individuals.

The implementation of any social media communication tool as part of the Adult Enrichment department's communication strategy hinges in part on the social media policy of the local school district organization. The Adult

Enrichment department is part of the larger local school district organization, which currently has a restrictive social media policy. While the Adult Enrichment department caters to a population aged eighteen and older, as a part of the school district they are required to abide by this policy. This policy will need to be revised or amended for the Adult Enrichment department to use certain aspects of social media as part of its communication strategy.

The Adult Enrichment department relies heavily upon a series of printed brochures for its marketing. The primary brochure is a booklet containing all of the classes for the session and is mailed out in the Fall to a total of 55,000 households in the Rochester area. A sizable booklet, the Fall 2011 brochure included seventy-two pages.

Another booklet, referred to as the supplemental mailing, is mailed out in between sessions and contains a less extensive list of classes. The mailing is sent to approximately 12,000 households which comprise an audience of households that have taken classes through the Adult Enrichment program in the past. The 12,000 subset of households is considered by the Adult Enrichment department to be its "best customers."

In addition to these mailings, Rochester Community Education also has a website where the brochure can be viewed online. Registration for classes can be done via a form in the brochures, via the website, or by calling the Rochester Community Education offices. In general, Rochester Community Education does not utilize any social media communications technology such as blogs, social networking sites, or video/pod casts. While the Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment department has used email newsletters in the past, these are not utilized on a regular basis. The goal of this thesis project is to help the Adult Enrichment department learn what social media tools its "best customers" are using and to develop recommendations on how the Adult Enrichment department can use social media tools to market its classes.

In one calendar year, the Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment department received a total of 43,934 individual registrations. Out of those 10,412 or 23.7% were received online. The rest of the registrations, a total of 33,522 or 76.3%, were received through the Rochester Community Education office; office registrations include registrations received by phone or mail.

When registration numbers for a class session are low, the Adult Enrichment department is forced to choose between either cancelling a class or waiting to see if any further class enrollments are received. Should they decide to hold a class, the Adult Enrichment program could end up losing money due to class enrollments not generating enough revenue to meet costs. Currently, due to economic pressures, the decision made most frequently is to just cancel the class.

I developed an online email survey in order to learn which social media communications technology its "best customer" population utilizes. The results of the survey will be shared with the Adult Enrichment department in a report detailing both the results of the survey and recommendations of social media communications tools preferred by its "best customers".

The objective of this research is to find which social media communications are best for the existing "best customers" serviced by the Adult Enrichment department.

Any new communication tool could help overcome the issues with lower enrollment and last minute registrations.

This will be done by determining, through the survey, how the Adult Enrichment department's "best customers" utilizes social communications tools.

The following are my research questions for this thesis project:

1. Which social media applications does the target audience of the Adult Enrichment department's initiatives use?
2. How does the target audience use social media?

In the chapter on method, I illustrate the email survey used for this thesis project. The email survey received a 15.78% response rate. The literature review chapter attempts to define social media and discusses important concepts in social media such as social capital, tribalization, and how all of this makes social media work. The chapter also discusses other technologies like email, blogs, and video and whether or not these other technologies should be included in the realm of social media. Culture and audience also play an important role in online communities. This information and other challenges, like the constant change found in social media, are also

discussed in the literature review. In the findings chapter, the minute answers to each area of the survey are shown and details are given as to how the Adult Enrichment department "best customers utilize online communication tools. The discussion chapter will include the results and some discussion of the findings. The conclusion will include these results, recommendations for the Adult Enrichment department, and include ideas for future research.

Literature Review

In doing research about social media, a number of concepts need to be defined and understood. Because of the variety of concepts in and around social media, this literature review is divided into several sections to focus on important concepts in online communication. The section titled "What is 'Social' media" reviews competing definitions of social media and seeks to define social media for the purpose of this thesis. The section titled "Beyond Facebook" goes beyond the popular social networking sites, such as Facebook, to other online communications like blog, video, and email. This section will attempt to determine which of those should be included as social media. The section titled "Other Aspects" looks at other important aspects of social media like mobile phone devices which, while not social media in of themselves, are devices used to access social media. The way social media works and concepts such as "friending" and "tribalization" are discussed in the section titled "Mechanical "Nuts & Bolts." The section titled "Social Capital, Culture and Audience" will discuss concepts like "social capital," how audiences and culture differ site-to-site, and how audience and culture affect social capital. How communities are engaged

using social media will be discussed in the section titled "Community Engagement." Social media also has challenges, such as the constant change found in social media and the lack of control over messages compared to traditional media. The section titled "Challenges" will discuss these and more challenges found in social media. These sections will explain new social media concepts and illustrate how communication in the social media realm differs from traditional media communications in terms of audience, community, and participation.

During the course of my research, I did make an attempt to find information that specifically dealt with the area of Community Education. While no information specific to Community Education was found, the concepts I did find are applicable to the research questions for this thesis.

What is "Social" media?

Social media is not a brand-new concept; it is the latest evolution in communication via the Internet. Its predecessors include Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), listserv, and Usenet. Online communities such as the once popular Geocities (Green and Bailey 2010), existed long

before social networking sites such as Facebook. Public discussion forums were the primary structure of these early online communities and content was organized by topics. Social network sites diverge from their predecessors by structuring the community around the individual user, who becomes the center of that user's own community (boyd and Ellison 2007).

However, what exactly constitutes social media? It is a challenge to creating one all-encompassing definition. Fernando states "social media is a catchall phrase for everything that the old media is not, and it is where consumer-generated content rules" (Fernando 2007, 9). With consumer-generated content, the audience provides the content and "defines the rules of engagement" (Fernando 2007, 9). There are many stories of engagement attempts that are poorly received, such as a parody of Al Gore's documentary film "An Inconvenient Truth." This short parody featured Al Gore as he lectured some penguins on global warming. The problem was the author was at first described 29-year-old from California, when in fact the authors were a public relations firm that represented ExxonMobil. ExxonMobil is just one example of the companies which Al Gore's film blamed for global warming. The result

was the PR firm responsible for the video received "a public shaming" (Fernando 2007, 9). The parody is one example showing how the online audience is an active audience. Just like public opinion through traditional media, public opinion online matters. Unlike traditional media, public opinion online can spread quickly. When considering the definition of social media, the audience and the culture of the online community cannot be discounted in relation to the content being utilized.

    One problem with defining social media is there are no industry standards to define social media. Because the term "social" is used, it can be assumed that the social aspect is a factor that should be accounted for in any definition. However, Hogan and Quan-Haase note "all media have a social element" (Hogan and Quan-Haase 2010, 310). In practice, there is integration between various social media and other computer—mediated communication (CMC). In her book "Computer-Mediated Communication: Human—to—Human Communication Across the Internet," author Susan B. Barnes gives the definition "…the term *computer-mediated communication* (CMC) is used to refer to a wide range of technologies that facilitate both human communication and the interactive sharing of information through computer

networks, including e-mail, discussion groups, newsgroups, chat, instant messages, and Web pages." (Barnes 2003, 4).

Social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace include direct messaging that is similar to email. In comparing social media and email, it could be argued one difference social media has is that it requires two-way communication which includes interaction with an audience and allows the audience to react and respond to communication. But no real standards on what is or is not social media exist, as Hogan and Quan-Haase note when they state "…there is no single 'killer app' entailed in all social media sites" (Hogan and Quan-Haase 2010, 310). With no one feature or specific application to illustrate what social media is or is not, social media has come to mean different things to different people. Again, making a one, all-encompassing definition difficult to come by.

One key feature of social media is the "networking" or "connecting" aspect. Within social networks, users are expected to connect with others, share information, create, and engage with the community (Meyer 2009). On social network sites, users create profiles where they are encouraged to connect to and interact with other users with whom the original user may have an already existing

relationship. When an individual creates a profile and becomes a "friend" of another user, most sites then allow the first user to see all of the second user's connections. By seeing who is a "friend" of their "friends," users are able to enlarge their own personal network Tone, el al. 2008; boyd and Ellison 2007). Users of these social network sites are either creating new content or they are consuming content that others created (Trusov, Bodpati and Bucklin 2010). Social networking sites become an interaction site where users mix content, such as photos and videos, with personal information they put into their profiles (Skageby 2008). Content on a social network site is primarily, if not entirely, user-generated. Rather than providing the content, social network companies are providing site features and updates that permit these community activities (Trusov, Bodpati and Bucklin 2010).

The prevalence and popularity of social networking sites as a social media tool could explain why one of the popular definitions of social media combines the terms "social media" and "social networking" as if they are one entity.

Here is a definition by Boyd which was cited by a number of authors as being a well-defined definition of

social media. While defining "social network sites," this definition was used by a number of other authors as a definition of social media:

> "We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of others users with who they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site-to-site." (boyd and Ellison 2007)

This definition is commonly used by many other researchers in social media and has been cited by authors Skageby and Beer in their discussions of how to define social media.

Author Carfi also defines social media and social network sites together. Rather than using the above definition based on what social network sites allow users to do, Carfi creates a definition based on what online social networks have in common: profiles, which a user needs in order to access and network; connections, the ability of users to connect with other people; content, information that is posted and shared in the community

which can include text, video, and photos; and finally activities, which are ways individuals can participate in the online community. Carfi sees these components as being the "pillars of what makes a site 'social'" (Carfi 2009).

These definitions work well in defining social media within the context of social networking sites. However, there are a variety of sites containing a number of differences in what the site offers to users. Thus, it is difficult to fit all of social media within the above two definitions. For example while social network sites share many commonalities such as technological features, they can differ in the types of activities that are available on the site and the different types of populations each site attracts (boyd and Ellison 2007; Hargittai 2008).

In "The Social Media Bible" by Lon Safko and David K. Brake, the authors attempt the challenge of defining social media by breaking the task into two parts: defining and categorizing. They define social media as referring to "activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media" (Safko and Brake 2009, 6). They further define conversational media as "web-based applications that make it possible to create and

easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios" (Safko and Brake 2009, 6). Where many would use social media and Web 2.0 interchangeably, Safko and Brake state social media is not synonymous with Web 2.0: instead these are two separate but related entities. Web 2.0 is the technology that allows individuals to participate in social media. In other words, Web 2.0 is the tool that allows social media to happen. The website YouTube does not provide video communication. Instead, YouTube provides a technological tool allowing others to create or share video communications. The same could be said of Facebook. All the content on Facebook is provided by the users; Facebook is just the tool they use to create and share the content (Safko and Brake 2009).

In separating social media and Web 2.0 into separate entities, we are left with the question of what to do with the variety of tools and services that encompass what was known as "social media/Web 2.0." Safko and Brake resolve this question by adding categories to the definition of social media. By breaking social media up into categories, they illustrate how each aspect of social media, from social networking to blogging and podcasting, are separate

entities but related to each other under the umbrella of "social media" (Safko and Brake 2009).

- Social Networking
- Publish
- Photo
- Audio
- Video
- Microblogging

- Livecasting
- Virtual Worlds
- Gaming
- Productivity applications

- Aggregators
- RSS
- Search
- Mobile
- Interpersonal

(Safko and Brake 2009, 23)

Boyd and Ellison also try to get more detailed within their explanations of social media and attempt to separate "social networking sites" from "social network sites." While the two terms are regularly used interchangeably, Boyd and Ellison reason a distinction is needed to provide emphasis and scope.

"'Networking' emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers. While networking is possible on these sites, it is not the primary practice on many of them, nor is it what differentiates them from other forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC)" (boyd and Ellison 2007).

YouTube, for example, is considered by some to be a social network site. While YouTube offers social networking features, such as being able to subscribe to certain users

to follow their updates or participate in a discussion of a particular video through comments, social networking is not the primary purpose of this website. People go to YouTube to watch video content. In addition, people don't need to actually be on YouTube in order to consume the video content. Videos hosted by YouTube can be viewed on other websites without the user ever needing to go to the YouTube website. And if a user does go to the YouTube website and watch video there, a user does not need to sign-in in order to watch any videos. The consumption of video media is the primary purpose of YouTube. The social networking aspects are secondary.

Compare this to Facebook. On Facebook, the purpose of the site is the interaction amongst users just as much as it is to use the content provided on the site. While Facebook has a default setting of "Everyone," which allows anyone on Facebook to see what an individual user has posted, individual users have more control over how the content they post is viewed. If a user goes into the Facebook privacy settings, there are additional settings for "Friends" and "Friends of Friends." With a "Friends" setting, only those individuals a user has "friended" on the site can view that particular user's Facebook

activities. With a "Friends of Friends" setting, a user's friends and people connected to those friends can view the user's activities. In addition, a user must be signed into Facebook in order to see any of another user's activities, such as viewing wall posts. This is a remarkably different social interaction compared to YouTube, where you don't even need to sign in to the site in order to watch the video.

For Facebook and similar sites, the primary goal is the networking interaction described by Boyd and Ellison. For YouTube and similar sites, the primary goal is the content being consumed. While both sites share similar features, the goals of each community and personal interaction is different. This is the distinction Boyd and Ellison argue for regarding "social networking sites" being a distinct entity separate from "social network sites."

Author Beer disagrees and sees this distinction as being too broad:

"…it stands in for too many things, it is intended to do too much of the analytical work, and therefore makes a differentiated typology of these various user-generated web applications more problematic." (Beer 2008, 519)

Rather than separating "social networking" and "social network" into separate entities, Beer recommends keeping the two terms as variations of one concept. The focus should instead be, similar to the discussion from Safko and Brake, to include this term as one part of a broader typology. Instead of using the Safko and Brake hierarchy based on the term social media, Beer picks Web 2.0 as the primary component with categories below it to encompass wikis, social networking sites, and other social media (Beer 2008).

Beyond Facebook

This paper will focus on the social media areas of social network sites and how social media relates to email as well as a brief overview into video sites (such as YouTube) and the use of mobile phone devices as another social media tool. This paper will not discuss all the various categories of social media but will instead be limited to those specific categories of social media pertinent to my research. Even in accepting Safko & Brake's definition and choosing to use categories, there will always be debate as to which categories of online communication belong with social media and which do not belong. Hogan states the boundaries of the term social media are not rigid and thus

"certain media will be on the fringes of social media, with their inclusion being endlessly debated" (Hogan and Quan-Haase 2010, 310).

In looking at other CMC tools, blogs cannot be overlooked. Blogs permit users to participate as editors, commentators, and even reporters of news and other information. In fact, bloggers themselves made the news in 2004 when they pointed out errors in a news feature by Dan Rather and the subsequent fallout prompted his retirement (Aikat 2009).

Microblogs such as Twitter or Tumblr are another subset of social media; it could also be argued they are subset of blogs. Like blogs, microblogs contain timelines and are stored in reverse chronological order. Unlike blogs, microblogs posts have a limited character count. Just like other social media tools, microblogs allow users to interact with their online community and share information. Unlike other social-networking applications, information is posted in a continuous manner. Microblogs are often used for quick information feeds (Hricko 2010).

Another type of CMC with a social aspect is the previously discussed site YouTube. YouTube has profiles, the ability to follow other users, and could be considered

a "social networking site." But the numbers of people who actually use YouTube as a social networking site are small. YouTube is more often used as a tool to upload and share video content through embedded or shared links from other websites. People are "more likely to watch videos hosted on YouTube than they are to log into the website regularly" (Burgess and Green 2009, 24).

The video content found on YouTube comes from a wide range of sources and is used for a range of communication objectives. The creation of the content is less important than how that content is used (Burgess and Green 2009). Users use content in a variety of ways. In some cases, it is a simple matter of sharing a link with friends. Some go a step further by adding comments to the link they share, thus inviting discussion. Others might go even further than that by creating brand-new content in reaction to the content consumed. Parody videos are one example of this usage.

Websites like Flickr and LiveJournal are also built around creative content similar to YouTube. But unlike these sites, YouTube "does not overtly invite community-building, collaboration, or purposeful group work" (Burgess and Green 2009, 26). While content is uploaded in the form

of video ranging from video created by individual users to traditional media companies, uploading the video is only the first step in the life of the video. It could appear as shared link on a Facebook page or find itself being embedded on a blog or website. It is possible for a video to take on a life of its own, perhaps even going beyond what the original creator intended, such as sound bites used on television shows like "The Daily Show" on the channel Comedy Central. In addition to moving past what the original creator intended, these videos can also move past YouTube as a social networking site, such as cased where a video is embedded on other websites.

During July 2008, Americans viewed more than 11.4 billion videos online. Out of that same time frame, YouTube received 5 billion U.S. video views (Aikat 2009). Traditional media also creates and uploads video on YouTube and those videos are represented on the "most viewed" list within YouTube. But many of the "most subscribed" channels, which most YouTube users want to follow or subscribe to, are channels of YouTube users "whose brands were developed within YouTube's social network" (Burgess and Green 2009, 24). So, while traditional media may receive a lot of views on their video, users prefer to actively follow channels

created by other YouTube users rather than following channels created by traditional media containing content from traditional media sites.

Other Aspects

Another component of social media that should not be discounted is mobile phone devices. Mobile phone devices indicate the hardware and software individuals can use to consume social media. Many of the categories of social media can be accessed via what is referred to as a "smart" mobile phone. You can view websites via a mobile smart phone device. You can also watch video and listen to podcasts via these same devices. Thus, Safko and Brake refer to mobile phone devices as an appliance used to access social media (Safko and Brake 2009). According to the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, 134 million American adults have cell phones (Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project 2005).

Mobile phone devices offer more features and technology than the term "mobile phone" would otherwise indicate. Mobile phones are part of changing landscape of social media. By 2007, a total of 84% of the U.S. population subscribed to a wireless network. Out of those households, 16% possess only a cell phone rather than a

cell phone and landline phone. The amount of talk time on wireless networks increased 40% from 2005 to 2007. Short message service (SMS also called "text messaging") increased 350% during the same time frame (Lefebvre 2009). The strength of mobile devices is the ability to maintain the strong-tie relationships. Mobile devices offer a variety of technologies including the previously mentioned SMS, multimedia services (MMS), and Internet access (Lefebvre 2009). A mobile phone user has mobile phone numbers with only those individuals with whom the user is likely to have a close connection. Through text messaging, sending of user created photos and/or video, or using Internet sites such as Facebook, a user is maintaining these strong-tie relationships.

Another aspect of social media is the link between email and social media. There is debate between whether email and social networking can co-exist or whether one will replace the other. In comparing email and social networking sites, there is definitely an overlap with functionality. The main difference is in how the connections are made. Email "allows one-off or regular contact between correspondents" (Judd 2010). This is very different from communications on social networking sites,

which require a user to become a part of a network prior to any communication taking place. In addition, email allows both informal and formal communications where the communications on social networking sites are more personal (Judd 2010).

In comparing usage, Judd's study of the use of email and social networking by university students found a rapid increase in the use of social networking from 2005 to 2009. Social networking use increased from 3% to 38%. In that same time period, use of email decreased from a high of 68% down to 38%. From 2005 to 2008, students were still apt to use email exclusively. But by 2009, the exclusive use of email over other methods fell to 21% (Judd 2010).

Mechanical "Nuts & Bolts"

After defining what social media is, it is also important to understand the mechanics behind what "social media" is. The nuts and bolts of social media are the ability of a user, with social media tools, to connect with other users and share information regardless of their relative location.

Social networking websites illustrate the path of this communication. Social networking sites allow users to extend offers of "digital friendship" to other users, also

known as "friending." Users can accept or decline friends with a click of a mouse (Boyd 2006). Social networks are not the first tool to allow these connections. Early online virtual communities allowed people to connect with other people based on some shared interest or hobby. The advantage is people are not limited by geography (Steinfeld and Lampe 2009).

On social networks, community is defined ego-centrically. Whoever a user "friends" defines the context and the audiences the user believes is addressed whenever the user participates with the site (d. boyd 2006). By providing this information onto a public site, users attempt to "show face" through the "technological affordances of a given system and their perception of who might be looking" (d. boyd 2006).

Early on, Facebook lumped all connections into the "friends" category. This meant close friends, casual acquaintances, family, and others were all in the same group. Eventually, Facebook offered a feature that allowed users categorize their connections (Steinfeld and Lampe 2009). There is an assumption that "friending" is equivalent to offline friendships. The assumption is if

individuals are friends on a social networking site, this must also be true in other contexts (d. boyd 2006).

The problem is the definition of "friend" is subjective and can mean different things depending on the individual. There is a low social cost when adding a friend on a social networking site, but rejecting a friend request can involve a high social cost (Steinfeld and Lampe 2009). In research to find out how users view the friends in their network, only 36% of the total Facebook friends were considered "actual" friends by research participants (Steinfeld and Lampe 2009). Each individual makes a decision regarding these choices and those decisions vary from person-to-person. Some will only include close friends and others may include close friends and acquaintances. One participant will include family members but others don't even include their spouse (d. boyd 2006). However, the most common behavior found was in maintaining connections with close friends (Steinfeld and Lampe 2009).

Social networks also allow individuals to expand and diversify their network of connections. Research on traditional (offline) social networks suggests "the number of people with whom an individual maintains close relationships is about 10-20" (Tong, et al. 2008, 532).

This numbers tops out at around 150 total social relationships individuals can manage (Tong, el al. 2008; Steinfeld and Lampe 2009). But studies of social networking sites indicate the number of "friends" usually exceed 150 (Tong, et al. 2008).

There is a definite overlap between online friends and offline friends. Social network sites and the friends found there are usually connected to a participant's offline social life (d. boyd 2006). When people are online, they usually bring with them the same "constraints and opportunities from their offline lives" (Hargittai 2008, 277). Beer states "we cannot think of friendship on SNS [social networking site] as entirely different and disconnected from our actual friends and notions of friendship, particularly as young people grow up and are informed by the connections they make on SNS" (Beer 2008, 520).

Because of this overlap, many information and communication technologies (ICTs) are integrated with offline experiences "creating transformative effects on how we define, attach to, and retain communal identity across online and offline venues" (Haythornwaite and Kendall 2010, 1083). The Internet, through these technologies, creates

opportunity for "unexpected alliances for social action, and activities online that happen in reaction to location conditions," and provides "a vital information source for reconnecting during and after disasters" (Haythornwaite and Kendall 2010, 1087). It could even be said that ICTs and the Internet keep some communities alive "when people can no longer go home" (Haythornwaite and Kendall 2010, 1087). Rather than replacing offline interactions, social media can assist individuals, such as strangers at the same university, in learning more about people in their network with whom they may already share an interest or other connection. Thus, social media facilitates offline interactions rather than replacing them (Steinfeld and Lampe 2009).

A Canadian study involving a remote town of Chapleau in Ontario dispels the widely believed myth that use of the Internet replaces in-person communication. Instead, the study found hours spent in communication online "were each positively correlated with frequency of participating in outdoor recreational activities with friends" (Collins and Wellman 2010, 1354). Residents who actively communicated online and offline were more socially active, more

civically engaged, and had a great sense of community (Collins and Wellman 2010).

Social Capital, Culture, and Audience

Social capital is difficult to quantify and is heavily influenced by the unique audience and culture of the various social networking sites. To the dismay of many public relations, marketing, and other organizations who would like to use social media, the success of social media is difficult to quantify. The currency of social media can be described as social capital. Social capital generates benefits such as new information and broader social perspectives which are received from social relationships. Social capital refers to "resources that are accumulated through interpersonal relationships" (Steinfeld and Lampe 2009, 15).

Social capital is created as users reach out to others and make connections in online social media sites. (Barnes 2003)There are two forms of social capital. One form is bridging capital, which consists of "weak ties" or networks formed from loose connections. Information is exchanged between individuals without being emotionally attached or offering emotional support (Skageby 2008). The other form, bonding capital, consists of close networks such as family

and friends where the relationships are emotionally close (Skageby 2008; Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe 2008).

Social capital provides individuals with a way to capitalize on their connections in order to gain benefits such as support or information. Social capital can also increase commitment in a community and provide the ability to collectively mobilize (Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe 2008).

Sites like Friendster or Facebook, where users can maintain larger networks, might augment bridging capital by providing individuals with a greater network of relationships to use as resources (Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe 2008). "Intense Facebook use is closely related to the formation and maintenance of social capital" (Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe 2008). Online social networking offers social affordances, such as posting to a friend's wall or sending messages, which help maintain weak ties (Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe 2008; Hogan and Quan-Haase 2010).

The use of social capital, how individual users make use of their own strong and weak ties, directly relate to the culture and audience of the online community. There are a variety of ways users can make use of these ties, from

just sending links to interesting content to engaging in more in-depth discussions through comment or chat features. The behaviors of the users can vary site-to-site or even within different segmented populations within a larger site.

For a majority of social media users, the focused activity when online is interaction with their peers, other people they know (boyd and Ellison 2007; Skageby 2008). Passive participation in social media does not derive any benefit for the user. Social networks ask "you to connect, to share, to create, and to engage" (Meyer 2009, 48). While not everyone on a social network is active, success in the form of some benefit from social media arises from "nurturing your connections and contacts" (Meyer 2009, 48).

But audiences and culture can vary from site-to-site or within the site itself. Another study using a diverse group of college students found Facebook was the most popular networking site. However, this study also found students of Hispanic origin are less likely to use Facebook and more likely to use MySpace compared to other groups. White students, Asian students, and Asian American students are more likely to use Facebook and less likely to use MySpace. They are also more active on Xanga and Friendster

and are more likely to use Xanga and Friendster than white students (Hargittai 2008).

An interesting find from this study indicates education may also influence what social networking site is preferred. Students with one parent with a college education are more likely to be Facebook users. The same preference is found with students who have at least one parent with a graduate degree. Those students also prefer Facebook, Xanga, and Friendster. But students with parents who have less than a high school education appear most often on MySpace and less often on Facebook. However, Facebook initially required college affiliation in order to join the site. This requirement could have an impact on the demographics of the Facebook audience. Access is now open to anyone regardless of college affiliation. MySpace, in comparison, has allowed anyone access since its inception. When dividing results along age-lines, four out of five younger students (18-19) were on Facebook. With older students (20-29), this number fell to three in five (Hargittai 2008).

Thus we find a variety of factors that could influence the audience and thus the culture of a social media site. The ethnic group that dominates an audience can influence

the community found there. Age and education can also cause an impact. Any organization seeking to use social media needs to know what audiences they will find and how that audience communicates with its members.

Audience and culture are not stagnant; they can grow and evolve. Sites will come and go in popularity. The culture of a site can also change and evolve based on users. One example is with the social networking site, Friendster, which started out as a site popular with groups called "burners," gay men, and bloggers (d. boyd 2006). However, as the site became more popular, more people joined who were not a part of the initial sub-culture of the network. That caused the culture to change and also caused "context collisions" within the community (d. boyd 2006).

Moran and Gossieaux refers to this combining of community and culture as "tribalization." This element is found in successful online communities. The sponsor or owner of an online site or their goods and services are not an important part of the community equation. It is "the importance of person-to-person affinity" and "the ability to interact with these other humans" (Moran and Gossieaux 2010, 232) that are most important to the community rather

than other features, products, or services (Moran and Gossieaux 2010). In addition, members of these communities are more attuned to these social aspects rather than trends in social media or Web 2.0 technologies (Moran and Gossieaux 2010).

Within successful online communities, social factors rather than technology are important. This is what leads to both the value and the challenge of social media. Moran and Gossieaux state:

> "People united by nothing more than a common interest can now have a voice equal to that of corporations; companies no longer exclusively control the platforms on which messages are sent." (Moran and Gossieaux 2010, 237)

This is not different from what people have done for years. It is just that now they can act "hyper-socially" in new ways with a much larger area of participation (Moran and Gossieaux 2010).

During the dominance of traditional media, it took large amounts of cash to buy communications such as ads in magazines, on television or radio, or even on billboards along-side a road. Now it costs nothing for someone to create a profile on Facebook or start a blog. Traditional

media's strength is in how many members of a captive audience view their communication. Social media allows individuals to participate in the message. A Facebook user not only sends an article of interest to a friend, that same person can add comments for the recipient to read. The ability to share and communicate is part of the "hyper-social" behavior which Moran and Gossieaux discuss. As Moran and Gossieaux state, people have behaved this way for years. The term in marketing was "word-of-mouth." The difference now is people don't have to wait to share information until they see a friend at work, at a social event, or just passing street. They don't even need to call the person. With social media sites, they can post the information at their leisure for their contacts to read at *their* leisure. In addition, the cost of time is greatly reduced. Rather than remembering content to share and either waiting to see the target audience or taking the time to call them with this information, with a few seconds the sender can click a link to send the information instantly. This is an entirely new way of communicating that gives much more power to the audience than the communicator (Moran and Gossieaux 2010).

This "hyper-sociality" of social media can be used to the benefit of a company that can successfully work with an online community. In order to do this effectively, Moran and Gossieaux recommend organizations first understand the cultural and behavioral characteristics of the "tribe" or community. Organizations must also understand that within the community, the organization must focus on what the community's needs are rather than what the organization needs from the community. Organizations also cannot control the media the communities use. Instead organizations should "find and engage with networks that matter most to tribes" (Moran and Gossieaux 2010, 238). The final hurdle is within an organization itself. Internally, organizations often have rigid processes but they should in fact include this socialization within the organizational structure (Moran and Gossieaux 2010).

For example, some organizations have layers of review required before issuing a press release. Or, not sure what to do with the new social media world, an organization will issue a policy forbidding the use of a particular site rather than taking the time to write guidelines on how a social media can be used to benefit the organization. In order to incorporate social media use, current

communication policies need to be reviewed. How many people are currently needed to approve a press release? Is there a way to shorten that list in order to post information to social media sites? Flexibility is something many organizations with rigid policy structures do not have. Thus, instead of considering social media as separate, organizations have to take social media into consideration in the revising and creation of communication policies and procedures.

Community Engagement

Research indicates that word-of-mouth within a community by other members of the community creates more valuable customers. In addition, online communities provide additional uses such as "customer support, product development, knowledge management, and recruiting" (Moran and Gossieaux 2010, 239). Unlike traditional media, success with social media doesn't come from reaching a large audience. Success is based on how deeply the message moves through a network (Paine 2007). The message moves through the network via the online community. The community either reads or doesn't read the message. The community either doesn't pass on the message because either the message wasn't read or the community has read the message but

chooses to ignore it. The last alternative is the community both reads the message and passes it on to others, thus engaging with the message and with other users in the community. Community engagement is a core activity to social media. Without it, social media would not work.

In a study on how environmental advocacy groups use Facebook, authors Bortree and Seltzer found that the activity-level of communications between both the organization and its community and between the individuals within the community with other community members are key factors for successful use of social media. Return visits correlated to user responses to others. Both user and organization responsiveness are needed to create positive outcomes (Bortree and Seltzer 2009).

"Using dialogic strategies to create opportunities for dialogic engagement may produce positive outcomes such as increasing the number of stakeholders who interact with the organization by growing the organization's social network. This is especially true when the organization takes the first step to stimulate dialogic engagement by posting comments in dialogic spaces on their profile where users within the social

network can then capitalize on dialogic loops."

(Bortree and Seltzer 2009, 318)

What Bortree and Seltzer are discussing is the process of two-way and multi-way communication found in social media. When putting communications out in the social media realm, there must be a way for the organization to talk with those individuals who consume their content. There also must be a way for the community consuming the content to talk with each other. There are many methods which will promote this dialogic exchange between all involved parties.

Using the same type of advocacy organization example, an environmental organization could create Facebook page and publicize a bird watching event. Leading up to the event, the organization could post information about local birds. Perhaps they could host a poll on the page asking the community "which is your favorite bird" or try to educate with "which one of these birds does not belong." Quick polls solicit responses and are shared among users who also want to see what their friends are saying. After the event, the organization could ask community members who attended to post their own pictures from the walk. To encourage more participation through fun activities, the organization might host a contest where people vote on the

pictures or include a journal application where individuals can track all the species they have ever identified.

By frequently participating on their own Facebook page or other social networking site, organizations can engage online communities. By being responsive to comments and questions on their page and the profiles of their community, organizations would show they are participating in the two-way and multi-way communications. Research suggests this kind of participation does pay off for the organizations willing to take the time to do so. The research suggests "advocacy organizations should post frequently to their own profile via applications...that will service to stimulate discussion" (Bortree and Seltzer 2009). Thus it is the level of engagement between the organization and its community as well as within the community members themselves that is the primary factor in the success of social media.

This participation is critical for any organization. According to an article in the *Harvard Business Review* by Soumitra Dutta, top CEOs are regularly discussed in various social media communities online. But few of those CEOs are utilizing social media for communicating their own messages about their organization. Out of the top 50 CEOs,

individuals such as Google CEO Eric Schmidt, a minimal number were on the most popular social media platforms: 19 on Facebook, 6 on LinkedIn, and only 2 were either tweeting or blogging.

Compare this to the online activities of the founder and CEO of Blendtec. A virtual unknown, Tom Dickson leapt into the social media world on the advice of his marketing director. His YouTube videos showing the Blendtec blender grinding up things like marbles and an iPod have garnered more the 9 million views. Sales dramatically increased over the past three years. Tom Dickson is a well-known CEO of a thriving company who has appeared on TV, radio, and is a sough-after speaker. Dickson, a grandfather, is not part of the social media generation. And yet, he is a well-known example of how active participation on social media can be a powerful engagement tool (Dutta 2010).

As part of community engagement, the message cannot be a one-way monologue. Communications must be two-way. CEOs and their organizations need to listen to their audiences and to connect with both online and offline activities. Kramer shows the importance of these offline, personal connections in his article on how French companies are using social media. Kramer states that "…while technology

is changing consumer behavior, it's the relationships that matter—and sometimes, the best interactions still take place offline" (Kramer 2010, 121). This is illustrated by the French usage of the Internet, which lags behind most Western countries.

Some companies heavily utilize social media and use it as just another medium to broadcast a message and choose, instead, to scan social sites for negative comments and only then engage to resolve complaints (Kramer 2010). This style of communication is unpredictable. Also, the relationship is still what matters, no matter what technology is used to facilitate that relationship.

The lesson to be learned here is, just as some companies are too slow to adopt social media communication strategies, some companies are too quick and rely too heavily on social media versus personal relationships. In order to successfully navigate the social media landscape, organizations should pay particular attention to what their customers are saying instead of attempting to guide those customers to a preferred communication platform or forum. Social media technologies should complement existing communications but should not be seen as a replacement (Kramer 2010).

The primary reasons individuals participate in social networks is for collaboration and not to be targets for marketers. In dealing with the public, organizations need to be cognizant of the reasons why people are on the social network in the first place. Organizations also need to be aware of the unique and changeable cultures found in online communities. It is possible to have different social norms depending on the community being engaged. Facebook may have a different culture than Twitter. Different strategies will be needed for each environment (Vorvoreanu 2009). The culture of the community must be recognized and communications should adapt to that culture, including avoiding undisguised sales or marketing campaigns, whenever trying to engage audiences within that culture. Failure to do so could result in a failure to communicate, being labeled as spam, or cause other damage to the organization's image (Collins and Wellman 2010; Vorvoreanu 2009). Students participating in focus group research were found to be suspicious of corporations being on Facebook but were much less so of a small businesses (Vorvoreanu 2009). The reason cited by the students was "corporations' presence on Facebook is somewhat inappropriate because it

is not aligned with the purpose of using Facebook" (Vorvoreanu 2009, 73-74).

For the students, the purpose of Facebook is "to digitally hang out" (Vorvoreanu 2009, 73). Commercial messages are seen at odds with this purpose. The only cases where students were more open to corporate communications was in cases of special discounts and offers, more specifically ones special to Facebook users (Vorvoreanu 2009). Facebook advertisements were also seen as more appropriate forms of corporate communication. If, however, corporations help them accomplish their main social purpose on Facebook through using gifts and applications to keep in touch with others then "they are not perceived as inappropriate, because they help Facebook users accomplish the purpose of interacting with their friends" (Vorvoreanu 2009, 74).

While open to interacting with employees of a corporation, the students said the interactions must be personal, authentic, and not scripted. Thus "any communication that does not come from an individual and is not personal is considered inappropriate" (Vorvoreanu 2009, 75) .

Overall, the group of students didn't see corporations receiving any advantage from being on Facebook. Students were not more likely to trust the corporation more, they were not more likely to "engage, purchase, or interact with a corporation simply because it had a Facebook presence" (Vorvoreanu 2009, 78).

This attitude changes when discussing small businesses and non-profits. Students interacted with small business owners, writing on their Facebook walls, discussing products, and communicating on a regular basis. This appeared to be motivated by a more personal connection as one student explained,"…I like to help small companies get their name out because you know you have an effect on them" (Vorvoreanu 2009, 76).

Compared to small businesses and non-profits, corporations were not believed capable of open dialogue and many students felt communications would be censored, especially any negative communications (Vorvoreanu 2009). In addition, the participating students wanted engagement to be on their terms. But even with some of these misgivings, the students still "present Facebook as an appropriate medium for marketing and advertising, and

specifically for increasing awareness of a company, product, or brand" (Vorvoreanu 2009, 80).

Since the interest in connecting with "like-minded people" is an important feature of successful online communities, it is better for an organization to connect with existing communities rather than attempting to create a new community from scratch In fact, four common misconceptions cited by Moran and Gossieaux include thinking you can build a community and guarantee people will join, ignoring existing communities and trying to get them to join yours, thinking communities are too small and shutting them down, and having one corporate voice rather than allowing individual voices (Moran and Gossieaux 2010).

Other important features are a focused community, usually around a particular topic: facilitation and moderation and the ability for community members to help others. Moran and Gossieaux state, in a survey of companies that utilize online communities, 25 percent of respondents cited "'finding enough time to manage the community' [and] 'not being able to find skilled community managers'" (Moran and Gossieaux 2010, 235) as the biggest challenges to making any community work (Moran and Gossieaux 2010).

Even though facilitation is seen as important, even by community managers themselves, most of the communities have very minimal staffing that is not likely to be "sufficient to deliver the level of service necessary to meet community expectations" (Moran and Gossieaux 2010, 235).

Challenges

Prior to the advent of the Internet, businesses and other organizations engaged audiences to create positive relationships between their organizations and the public. The challenge was to choose the right audiences in the right locations. Geography could prove to be a challenge. Businesses would focus on audiences close to them rather than ones which were far away. Social media helps alleviate some of those challenges, such as geography. But social media also brings to the table challenges of its own, such as the constant change in what social media tools are popular or changes to the technology itself.

With the connectedness of social media, communities now form with amazing speed using tools such as social networks, wikis, and blogs. Geography is no longer a barrier and the new technologies allow greater reach into communities as well as impact (Kane, et al. 2009). Social media is capable of deepening relationships and allows for

rapid organization. Communities participate in knowledge creation, knowledge synthesis, and information filtering (Kane, et al. 2009).

With one billion people connected to the Internet and four billion with a mobile phone, the scope and speed with which information can travel has never been greater. No organization can control what other individuals say about them or in what media those communications are made. Information is spread much more quickly to a wider audience (Bulmer and DiMauro 2009). What may be viewed initially as an unimportant event can become the next day's lead story.

The constant change found in social media also creates a challenge when attempting to make a study of its features and impacts. In the time it takes to prepare a study and receive approval for research, the public interest has moved away from the topic of the study to the next site of interest. Best practices and theories and methods are quickly outdated (Subrahmanyam and Greenfield 2008; Hogan and Quan-Haase 2010).

In addition to the challenge of study and use of social media in general, there are other challenges organizations can encounter as they implement social media as part of their communication strategies. These challenges

involve content, social capital, and momentum. What content do you communicate and how do you communicate that content? Do you develop a written blog or a video blog? The success of social media depends on "your resources and the quality and authenticity of your message" (Dutta 2010, 130). How do you manage the social capital within your online community? Privacy and other issues arise from online communities. Once you achieve a momentum within your online community, how can you maintain that momentum (Dutta 2010)?

Social media is also more than a new way to transmit the same messages as traditional media. Social media concepts can be found in all aspects of business, including product development, project management, and customer service. But organizations should not use social media just because it's the latest trend. Organizations should approach social media with a set of business goals in mind and also support goals within the communities with whom they wish to communicate. If the community is not taken into consideration during the development of business goals, the community might find any communications supporting those business goals to be irrelevant and tune the message out. If the community is not listening to the message, this leads to a failure of the community (Carfi 2009).

Measuring the effectiveness of social media is a challenge, especially since previous analytics do not. There is also some discussion about what metrics should be included. Paine recommended organizations utilize six criteria: dominance/visibility, type of interaction, nature of discussion, sentiment, messaging, and positioning. Dominance and visibility indicate how your content/brand is mentioned in online media. Type of interaction indicates what interaction was the goal of the posted content. Nature of discussion analyzes the format the online discussion used. Sentiment wants to know the sentiment used in the online discussion, such as whether a brand was shown positively or negative. Messages include the types of messages used and whether or not any online discussion contained any of your key messages. Finally, with positioning, how a brand is positioned in any message also needs consideration (Paine 2007).

The most challenging aspect of social media is how to take the actions in the social realm and be able to translate them into trackable, meaningful data for the organizations using these tools. But online communities provide opportunities for organizations to know customers better and to learn customers' needs and behaviors (Bulmer

and DiMauro 2009). It becomes a matter of determining whether the gains made from social media make the work involved worthwhile. In addition, this area shows a potential for growth if these challenges, especially in the analytics, can be overcome.

Summary of Literature Review

For the purposes of my study, I will be using Safko and Brake's definition that social media is the "activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media" (Safko and Brake 2009, 6). Web 2.0 is the technology used for these activities, and social network sites and other tools should be considered separate categories within this wider definition. I selected this definition because, with the constant change found in social media, the Safko and Brake definition both fits social media as it is now and allows room for the definition to grow and change with future changes in social media.

In addition, social media makes a contribution of entirely new concepts of communication. Communication must now be more audience-centric and requires language which contains no overt marketing messages. Organizations must

provide information that is needed, wanted, and welcomed by their audiences. In addition, there are many existing communities out there waiting to be tapped. Organizations should start with an existing community first rather than attempting to create their own branded communities.

Methods

I created a 22-question email survey using the online website Survey Monkey. The majority of the questions were measured by five-point Likert scales. In order to ensure the privacy of the survey participants, the Adult Enrichment department sent out the actual email messages to the potential survey participants. All contact information and any possible identifying information remained with the Adult Enrichment department, who previously received this information from past relationships with the survey participants. I provided the cover letter email text, the follow-up email newsletter text, and the link to the survey to the staff for all the emails. All of these documents can be found in the Appendix of this thesis.

The survey sample size was based on the contact list for all of the Adult Enrichment department's "best customers" and included 5,791 survey recipients. There are 12,000 "best customers" in the contact list. Out of that 12,000, only 5,791 have an email address on file with the Adult Enrichment department. Thus, only 5,791 emails were sent out.

The first survey was sent out on Monday, June 6, 2011. The first reminder email was sent out a week later on Monday, June 13, 2011. The final reminder email was sent on Friday, June 17, 2011. The email survey ended on Monday, June 20, 2011. Out of the 5,791 emails which were sent out, 914 individuals completed the entire survey. Based on the sample size of 5,791 survey recipients, this equaled a response rate of 15.78%.

At the start of the survey, the first screen seen by the survey respondents was the informed consent form. At this point, participants had the option to not continue with the survey. The survey progressed forward only if they accepted the informed consent form.

In order to encourange participation, a post-incentive was included, meaning a prize will be received only if a participant completes the survey. A gas gift card was to use as the post-incentive in order to appeal to as many people as possible. At the end of the survey, survey participants were asked to provide their email address in order to participate in the post-incentive drawing. The email address was optional and survey participants had the

freedom to ignore this request. Three participants were chosen to receive a $10 gas card.

This type of post-incentive can cause a negative effect when people are interested only in the prize and submit more than one survey (Sanchez-Fernandez 2008). The SurveyMonkey software includes a setting that allows only one response per computer. While it will not prevent a person from submitting another survey via another computer, it helps limit individuals who would repeatedly take a survey just to enter the drawing.

The positive effect of offering a post-incentive is increased participation in the survey. In research by Sanchez, an email survey without an incentive received a 41.67% completion rate. An email survey that included only a post-incentive received a 50.5% completion rate (Sanchez-Fernandez 2008, 366-368).

It should be noted that Sanchez-Fernandez's survey incentive had much higher value than the one offered for this survey. Sanchez-Fernandez's survey also included more email contacts with survey participants. His survey included one initial email and five follow-up emails for a

total of six email contacts. My survey will only have a total of three email contacts in my survey. Based on these discrepancies, the lower quality of the incentive and a larger number of email contacts, I forecasted I would achieve one-third of the response rate achieved by Sanchez-Fernandez. Considering both the number email contacts in my survey are lower and the lower value incentive, I aimed to achieve one-third of Sanchez-Fernandez's 50.5% response rate, which is approximately 16.5%. The actual response rate of the survey was 15.78%. This is close to the 16.5% rate I envisioned.

I use a qualitative approach with descriptive statistics and a five-point Likert scale was used to analyze the data. The results were surprising in that many of the "best customers" do not heavily utilize the most popular forms of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Small minorities of the survey participants use blogs and podcasts, but the majority do not. Email newsletters and text messaging were the most popular methods of communication.

The full text of the survey follows here:

Proposed Survey Questions for Best Customers of in Adult Enrichment Program

1. Indicate the degree of effort required to access information regarding Adult Enrichment Department's class offerings?

    a. Likert Scale 1-5

        i. 1 – Extremely difficult

        ii. 2 – Difficult

        iii. 3 – Neither difficult nor easy

        iv. 4 – Somewhat easy

        v. 5 – Very easy

2. Indicate how often you have participated in an Adult Enrichment Class in the last year?

    a. Likert Scale 1-5

        i. 1 – no classes in the last year

        ii. 2 – one to two classes in the last year

        iii. 3 – three to four classes in the last year

        iv. 4 – four to five classes in the last year

v. 5 – five or more classes in the last year

3. After registering for a class, have you ever not shown up for a class for which you had paid?

    a. Yes

    b. No

4. If yes, please indicate the reason you missed a class you registered for:

    a. Not Applicable

    b. I forgot about the class

    c. I was not longer interested in the class

    d. Last-minute scheduling conflict

    e. Other reason

5. Indicate the total time you personally spend on the Internet, including times for recreation and for work, each week?

    a. Likert Scale 1-5

       i. 1 – less than an two hours per week

ii. 2 – more than two hours but less than ten hours per week

iii. 3 – more than ten hours but less than fifteen hours per week

iv. 4 – more than fifteen hours but less than twenty-five hours per week

v. 5 – more than twenty-five hours per week

6. Where do you primarily access the Internet?

   a. Home

   b. Work

   c. School

   d. Other location: please specify

7. What is your primary device for accessing the Internet?

   a. A desktop computer or laptop you own

   b. A computer or laptop someone else owns, such as a work or library device

   c. Smart mobile phone

   d. Another electronic device, such as an iPad or

      iPod : please specify

8. How often do you check or respond to email?

   a. Likert Scale 1-5

      i. 1 – less than once a week

      ii. 2 – once a week

      iii. 3 – two to three times a week

      iv. 4 – four or more times a week

      v. 5 – one or more times a day

9. How often do you read blogs?

   a. Likert Scale 1-5

      i. 1 – I never read blogs

      ii. 2 – less than once a week

      iii. 3 – once a week

      iv. 4 – three or more times a week

      v. 5 – every day

10.   How often do you access Facebook?

a. Likert 5-point Scale

    i. 1 – I never visit Facebook

    ii. 2 – less than once a week

    iii. 3 – once a week

    iv. 4 – three or more times a week

    v. 5 – every day

11.   How often do you access Twitter?

a. Likert 5-point Scale

    i. 1 – I never visit Twitter

    ii. 2 – less than once a week

    iii. 3 – once a week

    iv. 4 – three or more times a week

    v. 5 – every day

12.   How often do you access LinkedIn?

a. Likert 5-point Scale

    i. 1 – I never visit LinkedIn

    ii. 2 – less than once a week

   iii. 3 – once a week

    iv. 4 – three or more times a week

     v. 5 – every day

13. Do you access any social networking sites other than Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn?

 a. Yes – If this is answered yes, survey will continue with Number 14.

 b. No - If this is answered no, survey will skip to Number 17.

14. If yes, specify which other social networking site do you access?

15. If yes, how often do you access this specific social networking site?

 a. Likert 5-point Scale

   i. 1 – I never visit other sites

   ii. 2 – less than once a week

   iii. 3 – once a week

    iv. 4 – three or more times a week

v. 5 – every day

16.   Do you have another social network site to add?

    a. If yes, will start over with Number Fourteen.

    b. If no, survey will continue with Number

       Seventeen.

17.   How often do you access videos via online

services such as YouTube or via media websites such as

FoodTV, Comedy Central? This question does NOT include

streaming services such as Netflix.

    a. Likert 5-point Scale

       i. 1 – I never watch videos online

      ii. 2 – less than once a week

     iii. 3 – once a week

      iv. 4 – three or more times a week

       v. 5 – every day

18.   How often do you listen to podcasts on the

Internet?

    a. Likert 5-point Scale

       i. 1 – I never listen to podcasts

      ii. 2 – less than once a week

    iii. 3 – once a week

     iv. 4 – three or more times a week

      v. 5 – every day

19.   Do you own a cell phone or smart phone?

   a. Not applicable – I do not own a cell phone

   b. I own a cell phone

   c. I own a smart phone

20.   How often do you use a text message service?

   a. Likert 5-point Scale

       i. 1 – I never use text messaging.

      ii. 2 – less than once a week

    iii. 3 – once a week

     iv. 4 – three or more times a week

      v. 5 – every day

21. How often do you use your cell phone to access the web? For example, visiting websites, interacting with social networking sites, etc.

    a. Likert 5-point Scale

        i. 1 – I never use the Internet on my phone.

        ii. 2 – less than once a week

        iii. 3 – once a week

        iv. 4 – three or more times a week

        v. 5 – every day

22. Which of the following communications would you be interested in receiving from the Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment program? Check all that apply.

    a. Email newsletters about special class offerings or discounts

    b. Email newsletters personalized to my interests.

    c. Text reminders about classes for which I have registered.

d. Text messages about classes personalized to my interests.

e. Text messages about special class offerings or discounts

f. Facebook communications

g. Twitter communications

h. Blogs about topics in which I am interested

i. Podcasts about topics in which I am interested

j. Other: Please specify

23.   Optional – Please add any comments you have regarding survey or regarding communicating through social media or mobile texting.

24.   Optional – Please provided your email address so we may contact you if you the drawing. Your email address will not be saved or used for any other purpose.

Findings

I sent a total of 5,791 email surveys out to the Adult
Enrichment department's "best customers." Out of the total
number of recipients, 914 respondents completed the survey.
This is a response rate of 15.78%. The survey had two
parts; current usage level of the Adult Enrichment program
and personal social media usage habits. For the majority of
respondents, individual Internet usage encompasses anywhere
from two to ten hours per week all the way up to more than
twenty-five hours per week. Primary Internet access occurs
at home with a device owned by respondents. A majority of
respondents use email and Facebook as communication tools
versus the other social media tools in this survey. An
overwhelming majority of respondents do have a mobile phone
device.

Usage of and Current Access to Adult Enrichment Department Class Information

Figure 1 indicates the level of difficulty respondents had in accessing information regarding the Adult Enrichment department's class offerings. A majority, 72.9%, indicate it is either "very easy" or "somewhat easy" to access information on the Adult Enrichment department's class offerings. Only 6% indicate that gaining this information is difficult.

Indicate the degree of effort required to access information regarding Adult Enrichment Department's class offerings?
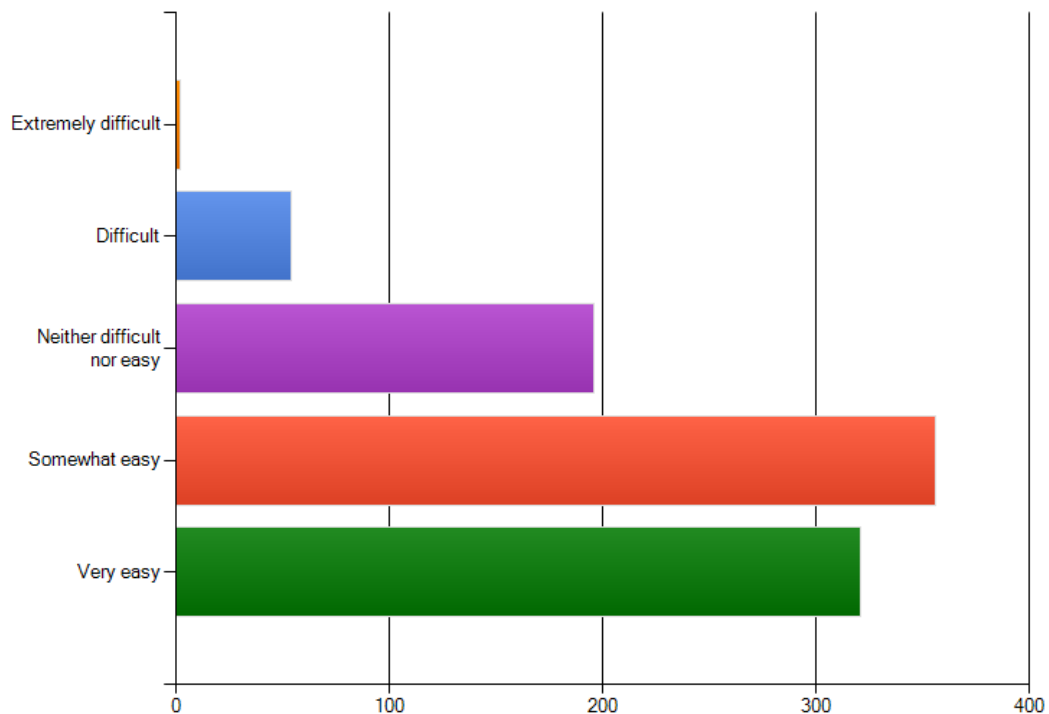
A majority of respondents (69.8%) have taken at least one class in the past year. Only 30.2% have not taken a class during this past year. In Figure 2, class participation is broken down by those who indicated they have taken a class in the last year (36.9%), those have taken two to three classes in the last year (27.1%) and those who have taken four or more classes in the last year (less than 6%).
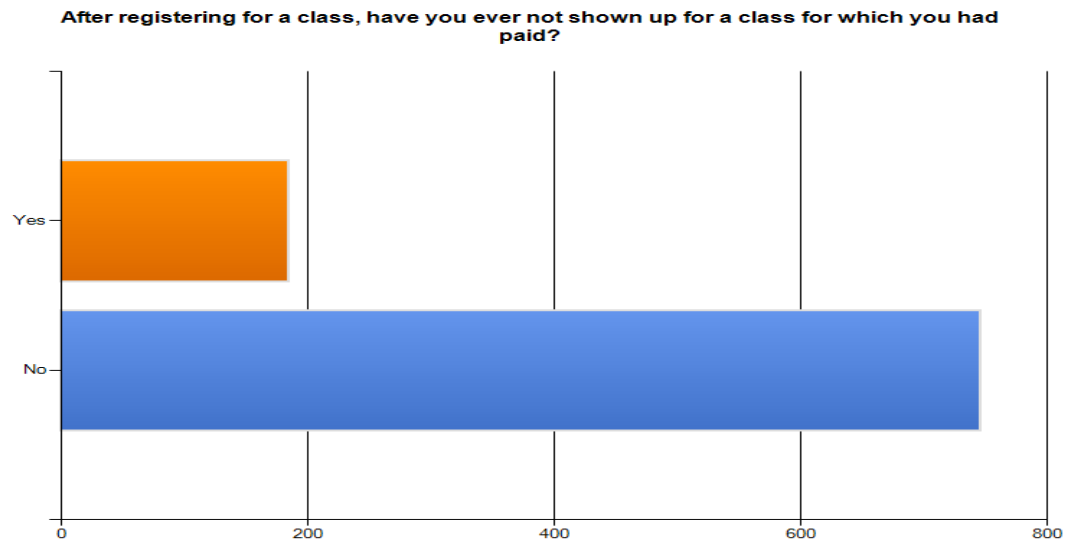
After registering for a class, have you ever not shown up for a class for which you had paid?

One item the Adult Enrichment department wished to be included was accounting for participants who might register and plan for a class but do not attend. According to Figure 3, almost 20% of respondents have missed a class for which they had paid. Out of those, the most common reason was a last-minute scheduling conflict (10.5%).
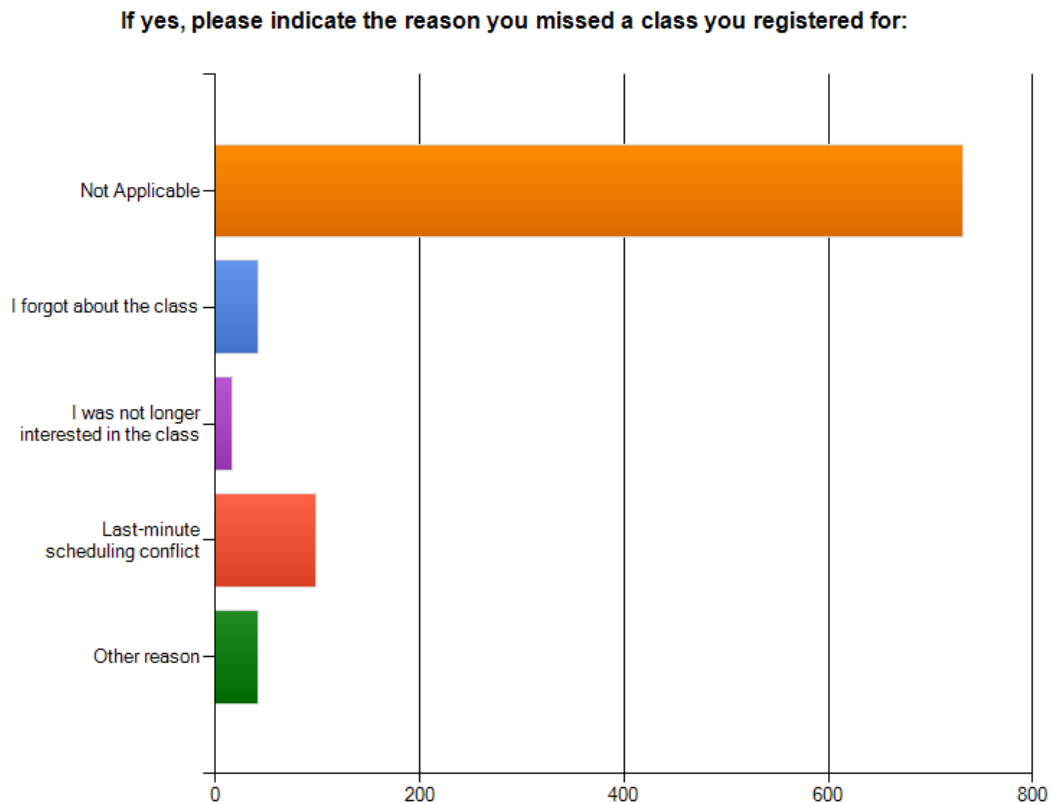
If yes, please indicate the reason you missed a class you registered for:

Figure 3

Total Internet Usage

In Figure 4, survey respondents were asked the total time they used the Internet for both recreation and work purposes.

Indicate the total time you personally spend on the internet, including times for recreation and for work, each week.
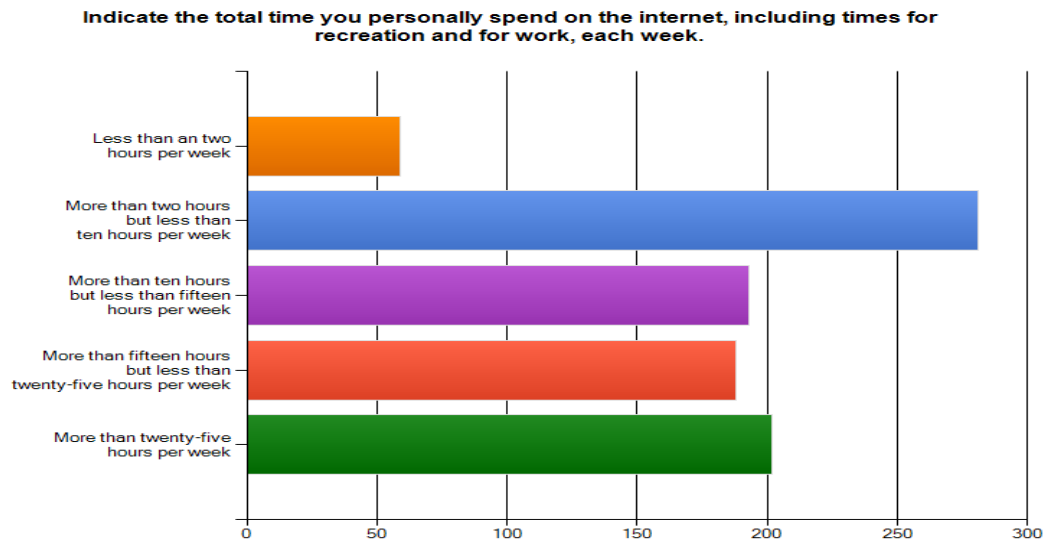
Figure 4

The highest percentage, 30.4%, indicated they are on the Internet between two to ten hours per week. The next highest group uses the Internet more than twenty-five hours per week; this group makes up 21.9% of the respondents. Other respondents are evenly divided in the middle between ten to fifteen hours per week (20.9%) and fifteen to twenty give hours per week (20.4%). The majority of respondents, 93.6%, use the Internet for times ranging from two to ten hours per week up to more than twenty five hours per

week.Very few respondents stated they are on the Internet less than two hours per week; this group consisted of only 6.4% of all respondents.

Figure 5 illustrates the primary device used by respondents to access the Internet. The most common device (74.8%) is a desktop or laptop computer device owned by the respondent. Only 21.3% access the Internet on a device owned by someone else, such as a work or library device. About 4% of respondents do use another device, such as a smart phone or iPad, to access the Internet.

What is your primary device for accessing the Internet?
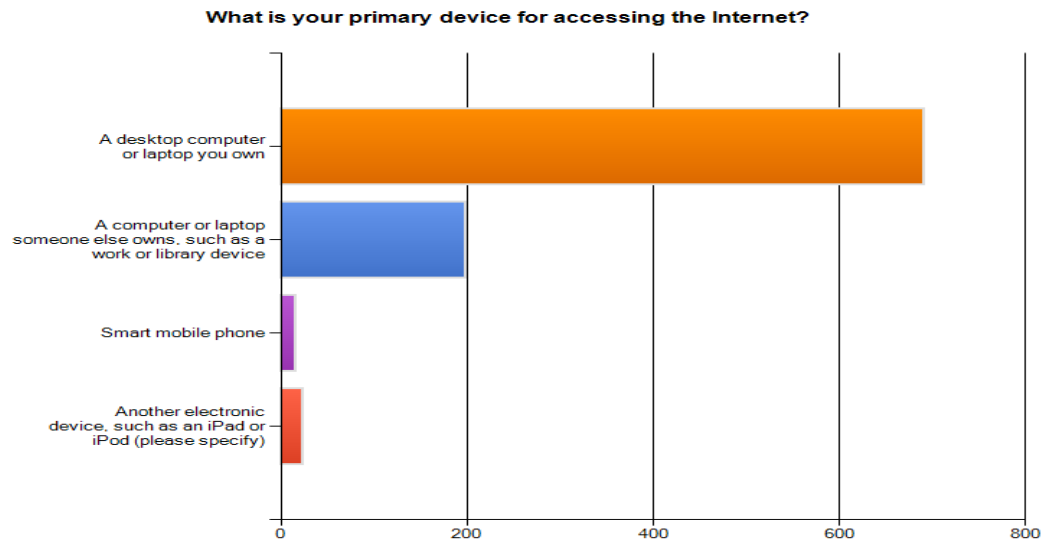
Figure 5

Figure 6 indicates the location from where most people access the Internet. For a majority of the respondents, they primarily access the Internet from their home location (67.5%) versus work (30.2%) or other locations (2.3%).
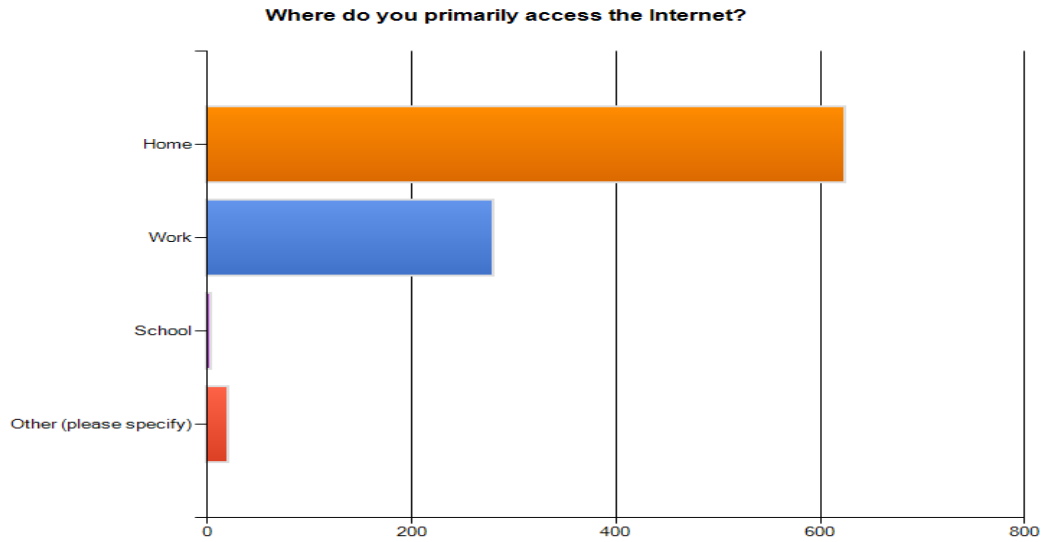

Where do you primarily access the Internet?

Figure 6

Communication Tools Accessed on the Internet

Email and Facebook are the most frequently used tools

according to this survey. In Figure 7, 78.8% of respondents

indicate they access their email one or more times a day.

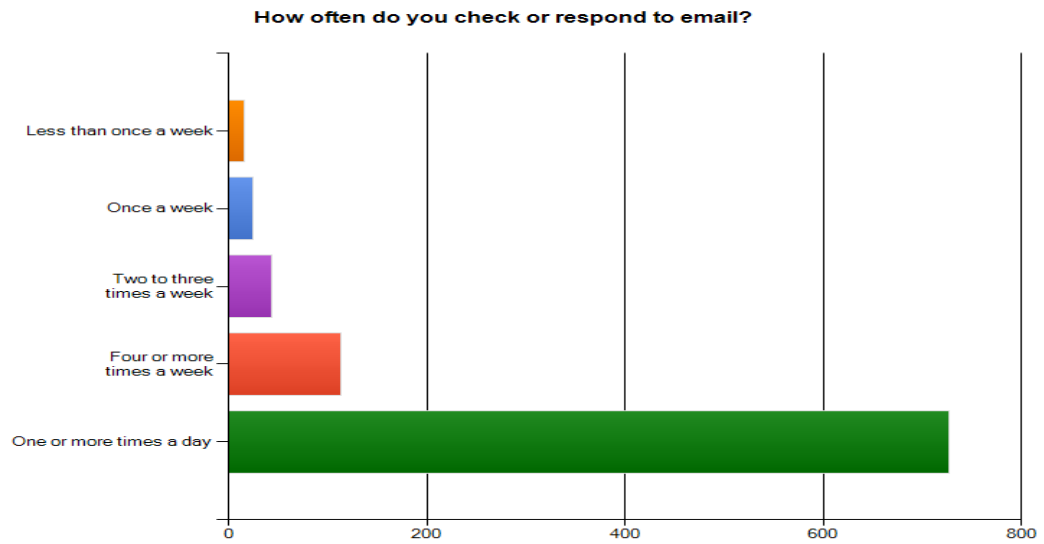**How often do you check or respond to email?**

Figure 7

In Figure 8, the largest number of respondents (33.6%) in a single response area state they do not use Facebook at all. However, in combining all of the respondents who use Facebook regardless of the frequency of use, a total 66.5% of respondents use Facebook with varying levels of frequency compared to the 33.6% who state they never access Facebook.
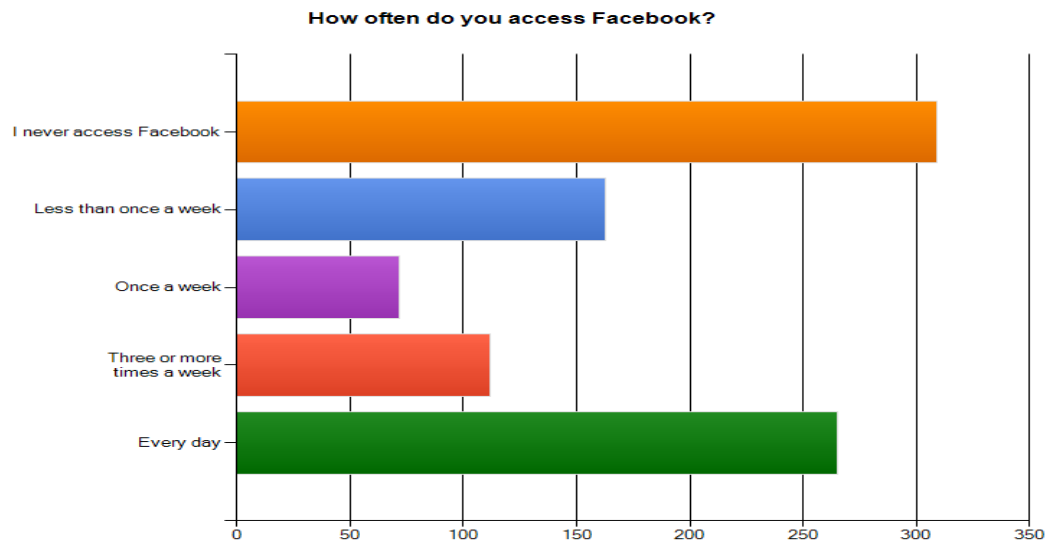

Figure 8

Looking at Figures 9 and 10, most respondents indicate they do not access blogs (54.3%) or podcasts (68.9%). Within the rest of the respondents, a small minority accesses blogs and/or podcasts. In this group, blog usage (47.5%) outweighed the number who utilized podcasts (31.1%).
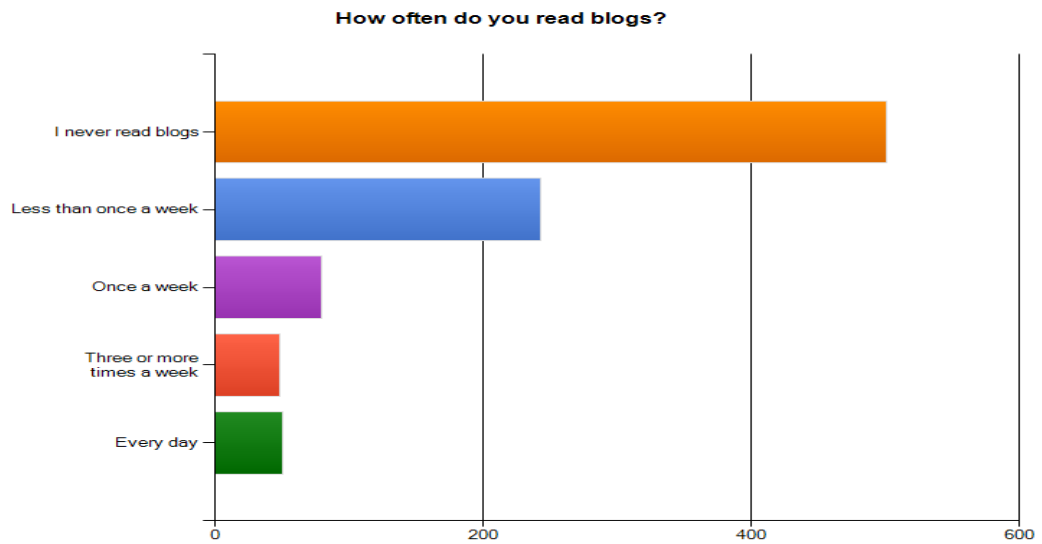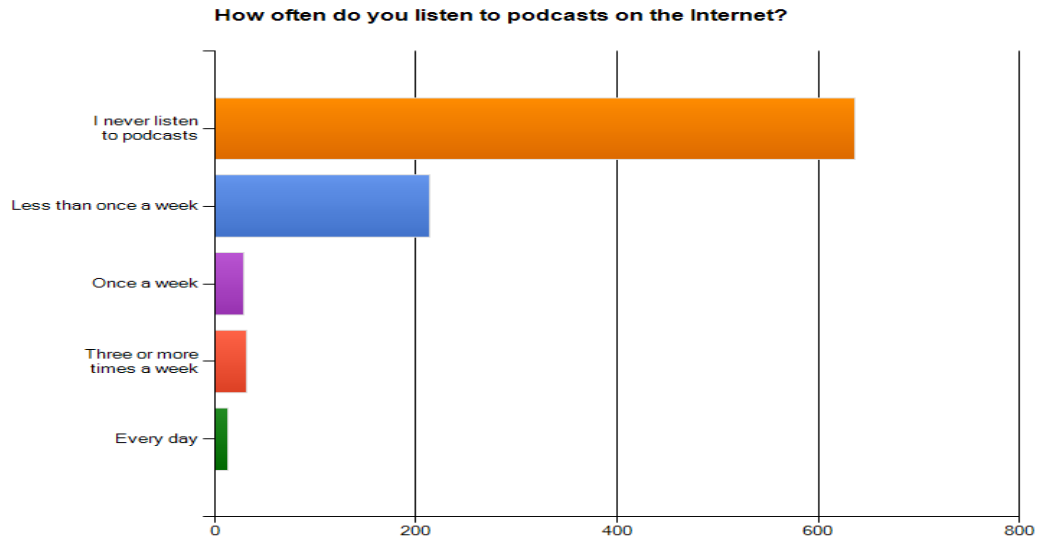

Figure 9

How often do you listen to podcasts on the Internet?

Figure 10

While respondents indicate they do access video online, as indicated in Figure 11, the frequency of video usage is not high. The majority of respondents (43.3%) access videos online less than once a week. 19% access videos online at least once a week. 12.7% access videos online three or more times a week. Only 3.1% indicate they access videos online every day.

How often do you access videos via online services such as YouTube or via media websites such as FoodTV, Comedy Central? This does NOT include streaming services such as Netflix.
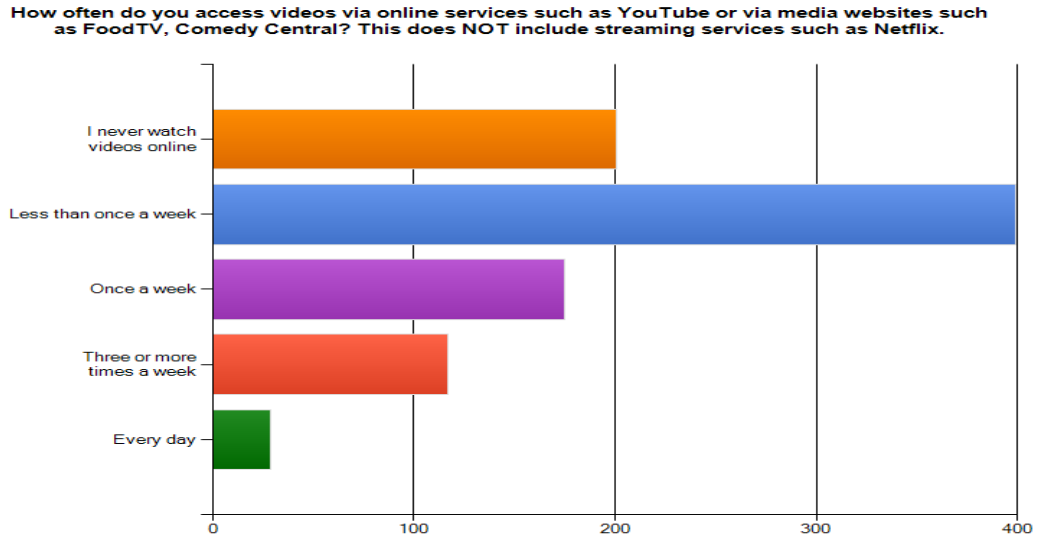
Figure 11

This survey found that LinkedIn and Twitter are not popular tools with this population. In Figures 12, 82.6% indicated they do not access LinkedIn.
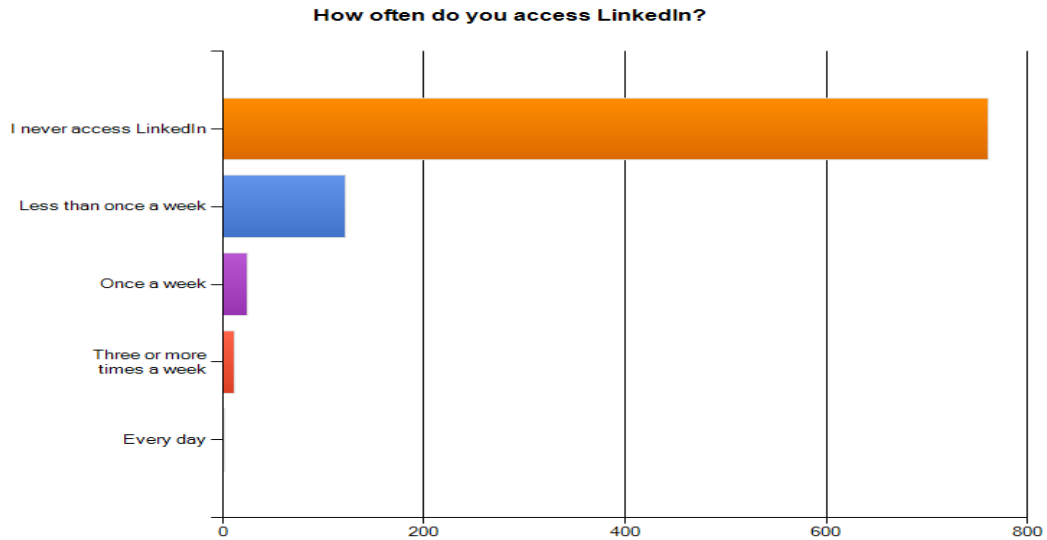

How often do you access LinkedIn?

Figure 12

As shown in Figure 13, non-participation is even greater with Twitter with 92.8% of respondents indicating they do not utilize this service.
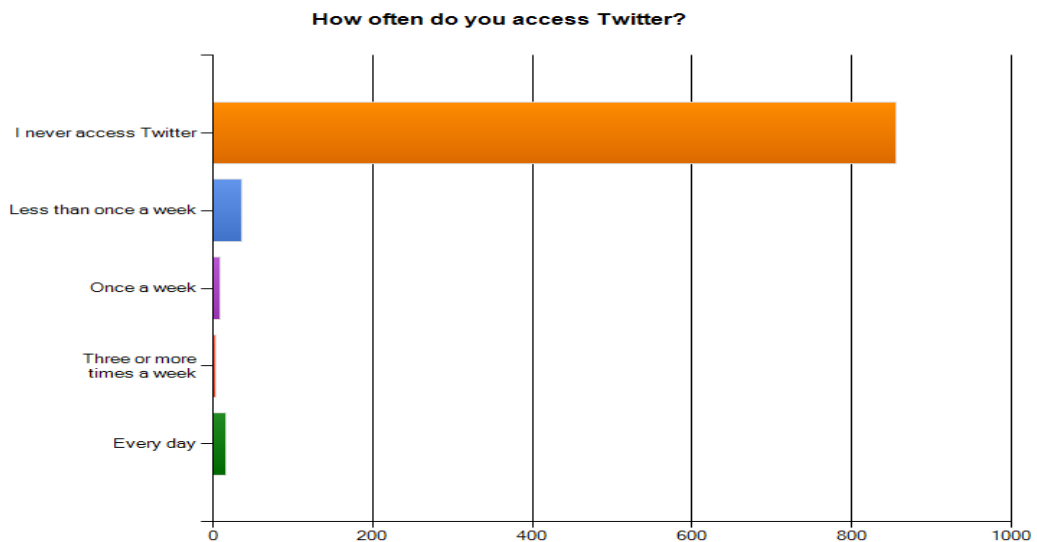

How often do you access Twitter?

Do you access any social networking sites other than Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn?
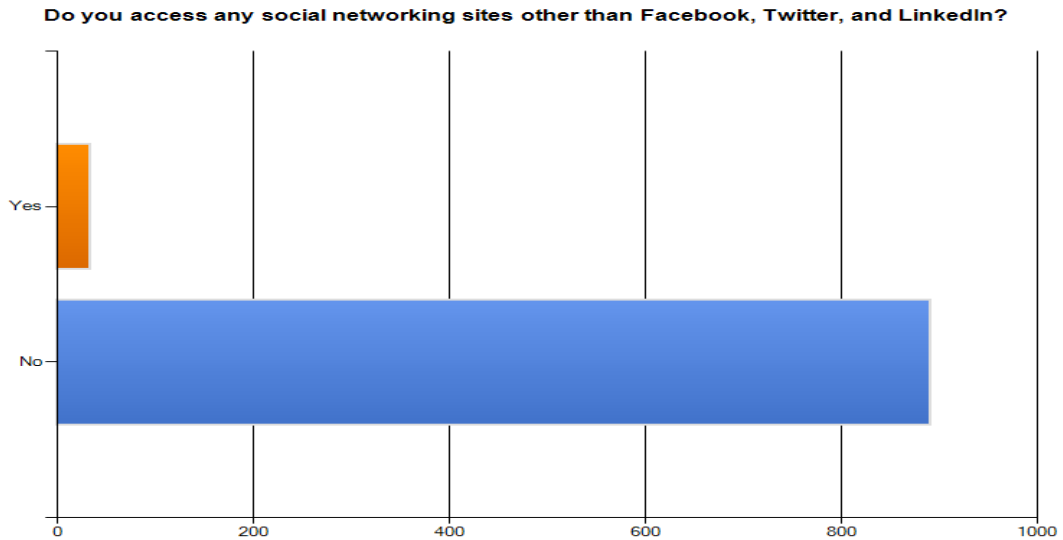
Figure 14 illustrates there are no other social networking sites popular with the survey respondents. Over 96% of participants reported they did not access any other social networking sites.

Mobile Phone Usage

In Figure 15, a majority of respondents (93.9%) indicate
they have a mobile phone with 26% stating they have a smart
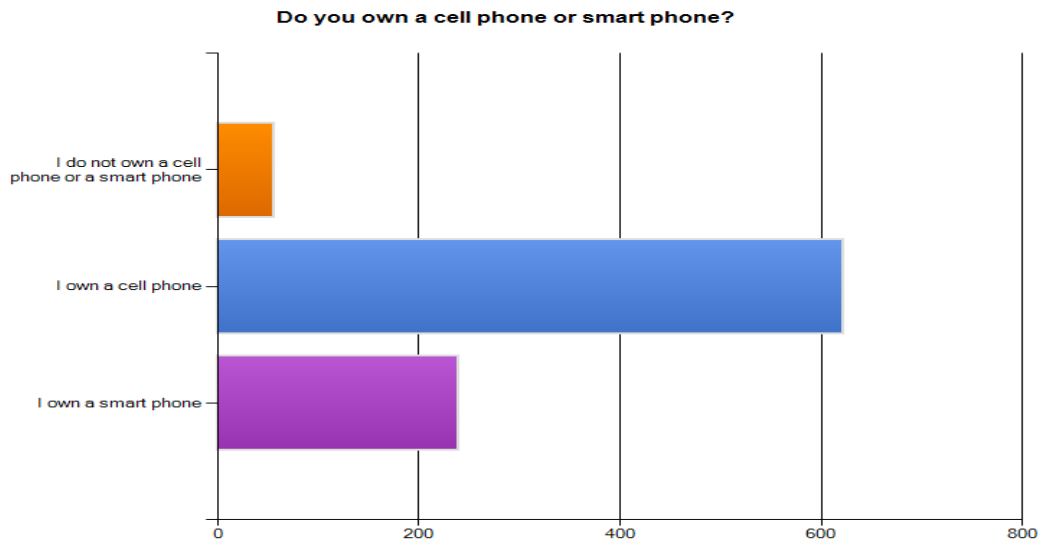phone.

Do you own a cell phone or smart phone?

Figure 15

In Figure 16, respondents are divided between those who never use text messaging (38.8%) and those who use texting services daily (29.5%). The other 31.6% of respondents use texting in some fashion but with differing levels of frequency.

How often do you use a text message service?

Communication Preferences
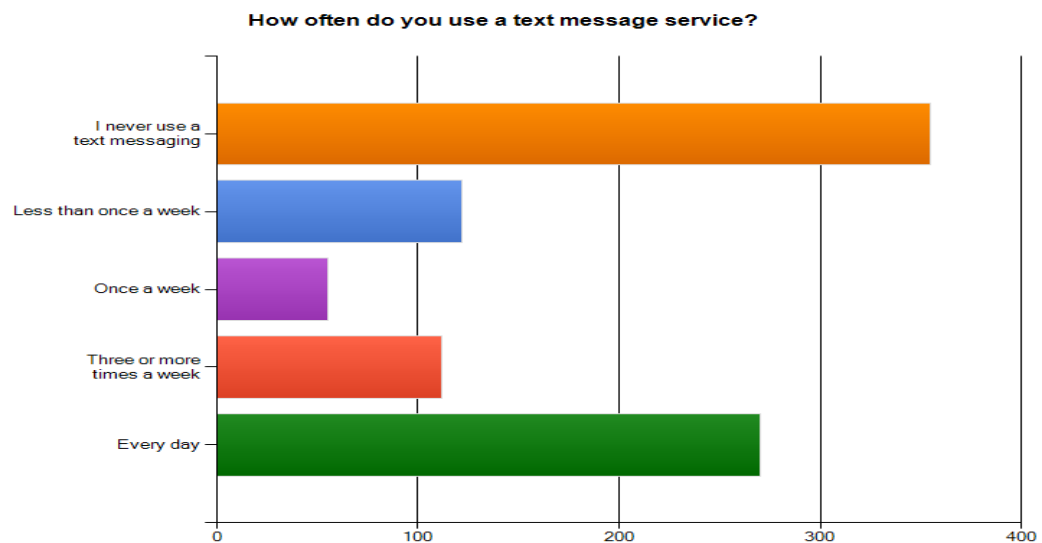
Survey respondents indicate a preference for email communications. According to Figure 17, 78.1% would be interested in receiving email newsletters about special class offerings or discounts. 43% would be interested in emails newsletters specialized to their interests. In regards to text messaging, there is an interesting divide. While 26.% of respondents would be interested in reminders

about classes for which they have registered, there is minimal interest in marketing text messages such as messages about special class offerings, discounts, or communications personalized to their interest. There is also minimal interest in social media communications, with Facebook only garnering the interest of 12.7% of the respondents. Less than 5% were interested in other social media communications.
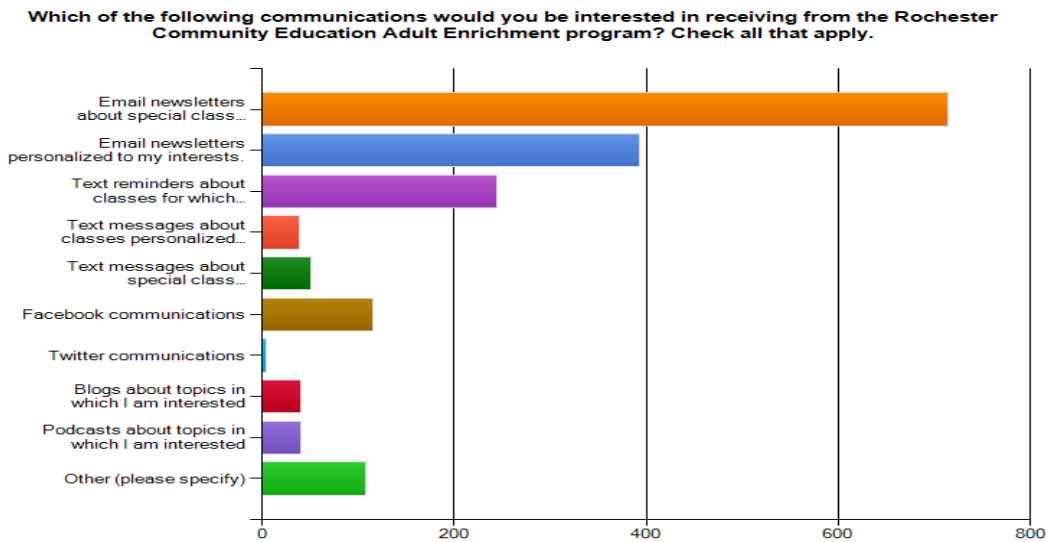

Figure 17

Discussion

The bulk of the survey participants frequently use the Internet from home and email is the preferred communication for this target audience. While there is some interest in texting communications, the interest is for a limited scope of communication activities. Social media tools, such as social networking sites, blogs, and podcasts, have very minimal interest. The most common device used to access the Internet was a desktop or laptop computer. Only about 4% of respondents indicated using another device, such as a smart phone or iPad, to use the Internet.

One draw-back is this study did not collect demographics for survey participants. While the survey respondents mostly use the Internet regularly and have access to mobile phone devices and utilize text messaging, a majority of those surveyed do not use social media tools such as blogs, podcasts, and social networking sites. While 66.5% of respondents indicated using Facebook in some fashion, the respondents who used Facebook everyday (28.8%) were outnumbered by those who never access Facebook (33.6%). And Facebook was the *only* social networking or social media tool utilized by a majority of participants.

One conclusion from this information could be that, at this point in time, the current "best customers" for the Adult Enrichment department's classes are of a demographic that currently are not heavily utilizing social media. In this limited survey, few people indicated using the newer devices such as smartphones and iPads to access the Internet and few utilize the new social media tools. All of this information could hint to the age of the population of the survey. But without demographic information, we can not say this conclusively. In addition, as social media becomes more popular and new tools become available, these numbers could change quickly.

In comparing mobile phone device use, the majority of respondents (67.9%) indicated they have have a mobile phone device. A small group of respondents (26%) indicated they have a smart phone, which is somewhat consistent with the responses from participants regarding whether or not they use their mobile phone to access the Internet. A majority of respondents(68.5%) indicate they do not use their phones to access the Internet and 31.5% of respondents access the Internet in some fashion with their mobile phone device. Making a further comparison between responses for mobile

phone devices, Internet usage on mobile phone devices, and text messaging shows a total of 61.1% of respondents use some form of texting, 67.9% have a mobile phone, and 68.5% do not access the Internet on their phones. These results could indicate most survey respondents have a mobile phone with texting ability but either do not have a phone with Internet capabilities or have a phone with the capability but do not pay for the services needed to have the access. Given the growing prevelance of mobile phone usages for communications such as texting and Internet communications, further surveys should expand upon mobile phone habits in target audiences.

Conclusion

For the current target audience of the Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment department, a combination of email newsletters and text messaging would be the best approach for using social media communication tools. Email newsletters can include general messages as well as separate email newsletters containing more specialized messages based on each individual's interest. The email software needed would require the ability for individuals to choose the specific area of interest and would likely require creating multiple email contact lists for each of the specific interest areas. More time would be required creating email messages and for list maintenance.

Texting would be acceptable to this group on a limited basis, such as receiving reminders about class registrations. Cell phone numbers could be collected during the registration process and, just like email, texting should be allowed on an opt-in basis and individuals should be asked what kinds of communications they are willing to receive.

As found in the research, the methods of communications used should follow what the audience is

willing to accept at this point in time. The research also indicates overt advertising communications are not welcome in the social media sphere. Based on this research and the results of the survey, the current preference of email newsletters and limited text messaging as acceptable communications methods should be respected. However, the Adult Enrichment department may want to devise communication content that the audience would welcome and content that would not be seen as advertising. Some options could include a video or podcast with local authors, which could serve as a medium for the writing classes, or similar idea with the teachers of the cooking classes. Short videos which give previews of classes would be another option.

In addition, even though some communication methods such as Facebook and other social sites were not met with approval during this survey, this could change as social media becomes more accepted. Additional surveys, perhaps more brief in nature, should be done in the future to continue to keep up with the communication methods preferred by this "best customer" audience.

Prior to implementing any new communication method, the Adult Enrichment department should benchmark where

registrations and class cancellations stand. After implementing these new communications methods, periodic measurements of registrations and class cancellations should be taken. Although it is difficult to measure the success of social media (as indicated in the research) an increase in class registrations and decrease in classes requiring cancellation could indicate some impact from the new communication methods. The survey used for this thesis project set out to find which social media communication tools are best for the existing "best customers" serviced by the Adult Enrichment department. If the Adult Enrichment department wishes to expand its customer base outside of this group, further research would be required on those new target audiences. Additional research should include demographic information and seek to survey individuals who have not taken any classes in addition to those who have taken classes.

This research shows that, while email and texting are a preferred communication method, many aspects of social media are not yet part of the dominating communication tools for this "best customer" audience. However, a minority of the survey participants do consume content such

as Facebook, blogs, and podcasting. For a small segment, smart phones are also being used to consume online content. While all of these numbers are still in the minority, these numbers could change quickly.

I feel this thesis project illustrates that social media holds promise as a better communication method for the Adult Enrichment department's "best customers" and this area of communication is worth revisiting with future research and surveys. In addition, this thesis project research adds to scholarship in the realm of local Community Education organizations. As the literature review shows, no literature was found that impacted local Community Education organizations specifically with research on social media. But local Community Education organizations could benefit from more knowledge in this sphere.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Report provided to Rochester Community Education

Adult Enrichment Department

Rochester Community
Education
Adult Enrichment Department
"Best Customer" Survey
Report

By
Anna Matetic
Minnesota State University:
Mankato

Table of Contents

Introduction

In June 2011, a survey was conducted using the email contacts for Rochester Community Education's "best customer" list or customers who have taken at least one class in the past year. Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment department has a total of 12,000 households who qualify but only has email addresses for about 5,791. A 22-question email survey was sent out using the online website survey monkey.

The goal of the survey was to answer the following two research questions:

3. Which social media applications does the target audience of the Adult Enrichment department's initiatives use?
4. How does the target audience use social media?

Results

Out of 5,971 emails sent out, the survey received 914 responses that completed the entire survey, equaling a response rate of 15.78%.

Findings

For the majority of respondents, individual internet usage encompasses anywhere from two to ten hours per week all the way up to more than twenty-five hours per week. Primary Internet access occurs at home with a device owned by respondents. A majority of respondents use email and Facebook versus the other social media tools in this survey. An overwhelming majority of respondents do have a mobile phone device.

Usage of and Current Access to Adult Enrichment Department Class Information

This section of the survey found out how respondents currently access information regarding Adult Enrichment department offerings. The majority found it is either "very easy" or "somewhat easy" to access information on the Adult Enrichment department's class offerings. Only 6% indicate that gaining this information is difficult.

Almost 70% of participants have taken a class in the last year. Survey participants are split into thirds with just over one-third (36.9%) of participants have taken a class in the last year. The other third is split between those who have taken two to three classes (27.1%) and thos who have taken four or more classes (6%) in the past year.

The final third (30.2%) have not taken classes in the last year.

Some participants indicated they have missed a class for which they had paid. 20% of participants have had this occur. Out of those, the most common reason was a last-minute scheduling conflict (10.5%).

Total Internet Usage

The highest percentage of survey respondents (30.4%) indicated they are on the Internet between two to ten hours per week. The next highest group (21.95%) uses the Internet more than twenty-five hours per week. Other respondents are evenly divided in the middle between ten to fifteen hours per week (20.9%) and fifteen to twenty give hours per week (20.4%). Very few respondents (6.4%) state they are on the Internet less than two hours per week.

The most common device used to access the Internet is a desktop or laptop computer device owned by the respondent (74.8%). The most common location where they access the Internet is their home (67.5%) followed by work (30.2%). approximately 4% of respondents do use another device, such as a smart phone or iPad, to access the Internet.

Communication Tools Accessed on the Internet

Email and Facebook are the most frequently used tools according to this survey. 78.8% of respondents indicate they access their email one or more times a day. While the largest number of respondents in one area state they do not use Facebook at all, combining all respondents who use Facebook in some fashion generates a total 66.5% of respondents use Facebook with varying levels of frequency compared to the 33.6% who never access Facebook.

Most respondents indicate they do not access blogs (54.3%) or podcasts (68.9%). Within the rest of the respondents, there are a minority or access blogs and/or podcast. In this group, blog usage (47.5%) outweighed the number who utilized podcasts (31.1%).

While respondents indicate they do access video online, the frequency of video usage is not high. The majority of respondents (43.3%) access videos online less than once a week. 19% access videos online at least once a week. 12.7% access videos online three or more times a week. Only 3.1% indicate they access videos online every day.

This survey found that LinkedIn and Twitter are not popular tools with this population. 82.6% indicated they do not access LinkedIn. Non-participation is even greater with Twitter with 92.8% of respondents indicating they do not utilize this service.

Mobile Phone Usage

The majority of respondents (93.9%) indicate they have a mobile phone and 26% indicate their mobile device is a smart phone. A total of 61.1% of respondents use text messaging with differing levels of frequency. Those who use text messaging daily equal 29.6% of survey participants. Those who use text messaging less frequently equal 31.6% of the survey respondents. The remaining 38.8% those who never use text messaging.

Communication Preferences

Survey respondents indicate a preference for email communications. 78.1% would be interested in receiving email newsletters about special class offerings or discounts. 43% would be interested in emails newsletters specialized to their interests.

Text messaging is the next preferred method depending on the reason behind the message. 26% would be interested in reminders about classes for which they have registered. But there is minimal interest in marketing text messages such as messages about special class offerings, discounts, or communications personalized to their interest.

There is also minimal interest in social media communications, with Facebook only garnering the interest of 12.7% of the respondents. Less than 5% were interested in other social media communications.

Conclusion

The bulk of the survey participants do use the Internet with some frequency with the primary access being at home. The majority also have a mobile phone device. Email newsletters are the preferred communication tool by this group. There is some interest in texting communications if these communications are very limited in scope. Social media tools, such as social networking sites, blogs, and podcasts, have minimal interest.

67.9% of respondents indicated they have a mobile phone and 26% stated they have a smart phone. These numbers

are consistent with the responses from participants regarding whether or not they use their mobile phones to access the Internet; 68.5% of respondents indicate they do not use their phones to access the Internet and 31.5% of respondents access the Internet in some fashion with their mobile phone device.

Making a further comparison between responses for mobile phone devices, Internet usage on mobile phone devices, and text messaging shows a total of 61.1% of respondents use some form of texting, 93.9% have a mobile phone, and 68.5% do not access the Internet on their phones. These results could indicate most survey respondents have a mobile phone with texting ability but the phone does not have the ability to access the Internet.

This survey did not collect demographic information. The results of this survey, especially regarding social media, could reflect a different population demographic than the demographic which utilizes social media more frequently.

Recommendations

In servicing the existing "best customer" database, marketing communications would be best served by email communications. In addition to general emails, special interest email groups would be beneficial to this group. Boosting attendance might encourage more participation with classes and this could be helped with text message and email reminders about classes for which participants registered.

These recommendations just reflect the existing customer database. Should the Adult Enrichment department want to expand and gain a larger customer database, it is recommended they initiate a second survey to non-participants. This second survey could be based on the survey used for this study. You will find all the survey questions and email text in the appendices of this report.

Appendix II – Survey Cover Letter Email Text

Complete survey and be entered in drawing for **$10 Kwik Trip Gas Card**!

Rochester Community Education needs YOUR input to better communicate our class offerings.

The Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment department is taking a survey to find out how participants use the Internet and social media. All information collected will be kept confidential.

For everyone participating, you will receive one entry into a drawing for one of three $10 Kwik Trip Gas Cards. We will request your email address for the drawing but the information will be used only to contact you if you are the winner.

The survey takes approximately 15 minutes.

Thank you in advance for taking the survey. Good luck with the drawing.

Appendix III - Proposed Survey Questions for Best Customers of in Adult Enrichment Program

1. Indicate the degree of effort required to access information regarding Adult Enrichment Department's class offerings?

   a. Likert Scale 1-5

      i. 1 – Extremely difficult

      ii. 2 – Difficult

      iii. 3 – Neither difficult nor easy

      iv. 4 – Somewhat easy

      v. 5 – Very easy

2. Indicate how often you have participated in an Adult Enrichment Class in the last year?

   a. Likert Scale 1-5

      i. 1 – no classes in the last year

      ii. 2 – one to two classes in the last year

      iii. 3 – three to four classes in the last year

      iv. 4 – four to five classes in the last year

      v. 5 – five or more classes in the last year

3. After registering for a class, have you ever not shown up for a class for which you had paid?

    a. Yes

    b. No

4. If yes, please indicate the reason you missed a class you registered for:

    a. Not Applicable

    b. I forgot about the class

    c. I was not longer interested in the class

    d. Last-minute scheduling conflict

    e. Other reason

5. Indicate the total time you personally spend on the Internet, including times for recreation and for work, each week?

    a. Likert Scale 1-5

      i. 1 – less than an two hours per week

ii. 2 – more than two hours but less than ten hours per week

iii. 3 – more than ten hours but less than fifteen hours per week

iv. 4 – more than fifteen hours but less than twenty-five hours per week

v. 5 – more than twenty-five hours per week

6. Where do you primarily access the Internet?

a. Home

b. Work

c. School

d. Other location: please specify

7. What is your primary device for accessing the Internet?

a. A desktop computer or laptop you own

b. A computer or laptop someone else owns, such as a work or library device

c. Smart mobile phone

d. Another electronic device, such as an iPad or iPod : please specify

8. How often do you check or respond to email?

   a. Likert Scale 1-5

      i. 1 – less than once a week

      ii. 2 – once a week

      iii. 3 – two to three times a week

      iv. 4 – four or more times a week

      v. 5 – one or more times a day

9. How often do you read blogs?

   a. Likert Scale 1-5

      i. 1 – I never read blogs

      ii. 2 – less than once a week

      iii. 3 – once a week

      iv. 4 – three or more times a week

      v. 5 – every day

10.   How often do you access Facebook?

a. Likert 5-point Scale

    i. 1 – I never visit Facebook

    ii. 2 – less than once a week

    iii. 3 – once a week

    iv. 4 – three or more times a week

    v. 5 – every day

11.   How often do you access Twitter?

a. Likert 5-point Scale

    i. 1 – I never visit Twitter

    ii. 2 – less than once a week

    iii. 3 – once a week

    iv. 4 – three or more times a week

    v. 5 – every day

12.   How often do you access LinkedIn?

a. Likert 5-point Scale

    i. 1 – I never visit LinkedIn

    ii. 2 – less than once a week

iii. 3 – once a week

iv. 4 – three or more times a week

v. 5 – every day

13. Do you access any social networking sites other than Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn?

   a. Yes – If this is answered yes, survey will continue with Number 14.

   b. No - If this is answered no, survey will skip to Number 17.

14. If yes, specify which other social networking site do you access?

15. If yes, how often do you access this specific social networking site?

   a. Likert 5-point Scale

      i. 1 – I never visit other sites

      ii. 2 – less than once a week

      iii. 3 – once a week

      iv. 4 – three or more times a week

v. 5 – every day

16.   Do you have another social network site to add?

    a. If yes, will start over with Number Fourteen.

    b. If no, survey will continue with Number

       Seventeen.

17.   How often do you access videos via online

services such as YouTube or via media websites such as

FoodTV, Comedy Central? This question does NOT include

streaming services such as Netflix.

    a. Likert 5-point Scale

       i. 1 – I never watch videos online

      ii. 2 – less than once a week

    iii. 3 – once a week

     iv. 4 – three or more times a week

      v. 5 – every day

18.   How often do you listen to podcasts on the

Internet?

    a. Likert 5-point Scale

      i. 1 – I never listen to podcasts

      ii. 2 – less than once a week

     iii. 3 – once a week

      iv. 4 – three or more times a week

      v. 5 – every day

19. Do you own a cell phone or smart phone?

   a. Not applicable – I do not own a cell phone

   b. I own a cell phone

   c. I own a smart phone

20. How often do you use a text message service?

   a. Likert 5-point Scale

      i. 1 – I never use text messaging.

      ii. 2 – less than once a week

     iii. 3 – once a week

      iv. 4 – three or more times a week

      v. 5 – every day

21. How often do you use your cell phone to access the web? For example, visiting websites, interacting with social networking sites, etc.

    a. Likert 5-point Scale

        i. 1 – I never use the Internet on my phone.

        ii. 2 – less than once a week

        iii. 3 – once a week

        iv. 4 – three or more times a week

        v. 5 – every day

22. Which of the following communications would you be interested in receiving from the Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment program? Check all that apply.

    a. Email newsletters about special class offerings or discounts

    b. Email newsletters personalized to my interests.

    c. Text reminders about classes for which I have registered.

    d. Text messages about classes personalized to my interests.

    e. Text messages about special class offerings or discounts

    f. Facebook communications

    g. Twitter communications

    h. Blogs about topics in which I am interested

    i. Podcasts about topics in which I am interested

    j. Other: Please specify

23.   Optional – Please add any comments you have regarding survey or regarding communicating through social media or mobile texting.

24.   Optional – Please provide your email address so we may contact you if you win the drawing. Your email address will not be saved or used for any other purpose.

Appendix IV – Follow-Up Letter Email Text

Complete survey and be entered in drawing for **$10 Kwik Trip Gas Card**!

If you have already completed the survey, thank you and please ignore this email.

If you have not yet completed our survey - Rochester Community Education needs YOUR input to better communicate our class offerings. Your opinions are important to use. All information collected will be kept confidential.

For everyone participating, you will receive one entry into a drawing for one of three $10 Kwik Trip Gas Cards. We will request your email address for the drawing, but the information will only be used to contact you if you are the winner.

The survey takes approximately 15 minutes.

Thank you in advance for taking the survey. Good luck with the drawing.

Appendix V - Informed Consent Form

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Anna Matetic. The purpose of this research is to determine how past participants of Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment classes access the Internet and use communication tools such as social media and text messaging. Your involvement in this project extends to completing this short email survey.

Risks and discomforts

There are less than minimal risks associated with this research.

Potential benefits

For all completed surveys, participants will be entered in a drawing for three $10 Kwik Trip Gas Cards.

Protection of confidentiality

Your participation in this study will be confidential. The Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment program is only sending out this email to past participants who have shared that email with the program. Your personal information will not be stored in anyway. Your responses will be confidential and not linked to any personal information. Any presented or published results of the study will not include your name or any personally identifiable information.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study. However, any incomplete surveys will be discarded and are not eligible for the drawing.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Anna Matetic at anna.matetic@mnsu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the MSU Institutional Review Board at (507) 389-2321 or the IRB Administrator, Anne Blackhurst, at anne.blackhurst@mnsu.edu.

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.