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INTELLIGENT NOTIFICATION

Social Media and the BC/DR Professional

Part 2

Social Media Basics
for the BC Professional

What you should know and do about social media

The first webinar in the series explored how both social and traditional media should be of interest to the business continuity professional because of the potential risks presented to the organization. It also emphasized the importance of engaging with social media and monitoring it to fully understand those risks and to harvest any benefits. This paper and the associated webinar provide basics on what social media sites that you, as a BC professional, should be aware of, how to track when your company is mentioned online and tools you can use to help monitor the conversation.

Social media and business continuity

Business continuity and social media are rapidly converging in day-to-day operations, reminding us that we must know and understand both the benefits as well as any potential negatives that come with social media. There are three key areas where this convergence is occurring:

1. Social media as a developing/emerging risk
2. Social media as a venue for communications and outreach
3. Social media as a tool for situational awareness

The 2012 report by Gartner, *The Do's and Don'ts of Using Social Media in Business Continuity Management*, confirms the continued growth and challenges associated with social media for the BC profession. In the report, the author predicts that by 2015, 75 percent of organizations with business continuity management systems will have public social media services as part of their crisis communications strategies. They go further, advising all BC professionals to immediately begin assessing social media's opportunities and risks. This means that social media must be included in risk assessments, there must be a plan in place for monitoring it and that it should be at least considered as a tool in future business continuity programs.

BC/DR professionals cannot simply turn their backs on the developing use of social media. Nor can they defer all sense of responsibility to business partners in marketing or corporate communications.

It's time to acknowledge that social media has both risks and value and make the effort to understand the fundamentals in order to assess those risks and values. While many of us might consider ourselves properly educated in the concepts and use cases of social media, it never hurts to go back to the basics.

Which sites matter most to BC professionals?

Start by understanding the most commonly used social media sites and consider how they might be important in BC programs. While there are thousands of sites, and more emerging every day, there are several that stand out as the sites most commonly accessed.
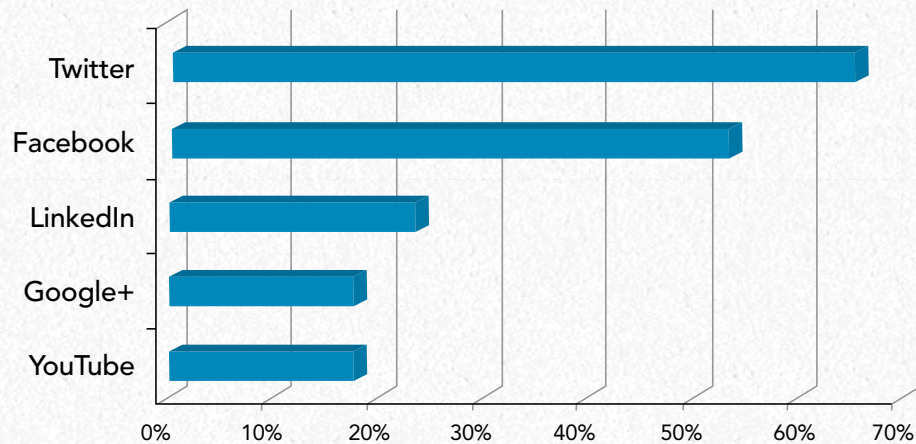
The main social media channels used within BCM systems[1]

The top five social media sites we believe are most important for the business continuity professional to focus on are:

1. Twitter
2. Facebook
3. LinkedIn
4. Google+
5. YouTube

There are many other sites that can be drawn upon in addition to these five sites, and this list changes regularly. For example, Instagram, the popular photo-sharing site, proved to be such a valuable tool in monitoring Hurricane Sandy that Time Magazine[2] hired five Instagram users during the storm to track its development.

Social media terminology

In addition to knowing and using those common sites, there's a set of terminology that is unique to social media that must be understood to engage in it properly and to its full capacity.

- **Hashtag** (#) is the term used when words or phrases are marked with the hash symbol on social media sites so users can search for all such references. For instance, if you search for #BCDR

you'll find many social media references to BC/DR. You'll find these used on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr, and in online news articles. To check the relevance of a hashtag, visit Hashtag.org. Here are some tags you may find helpful:

- #BCMP – Business continuity plan management
- #SMEM – Social media and emergency management
- #EM – Emergency management
- #HSEM – Homeland security emergency management
- #SM – Social media (also #SocialMedia)
- #WX – Weather-specific tweets (for state-specific, these will be preceded by state initials)

- **Crowdsourcing** is a way to gather information and ideas from the online community and combine them for more comprehensive intelligence.

- **Gamification** includes tools for making learning fun by engaging users' natural tendency towards achievement, competition and completion, and rewards them for completing various tasks.

- **Edgerank** helps users determine Facebook's illusive newsfeed algorithm in order to more effectively use the site, often for marketing purposes.

- **SoLoMo** (Social Local Mobile) ties into the current practice of BYOD (bring your own device) and, drawing on the user's location, offers localized search results.

Developing a social media policy

After acknowledging that there might be some way to actually use social media to benefit the enterprise and thus allow its use, the next step is to establish guidelines for the access and use of social media for employees.

How does a company develop usage policies for these sites? There are lots of resources to help you get started and it's wise to look up current legislation as it changes often with changeable new media. Here's what your policy should answer these questions:

- What is appropriate access for users at work?
- What is acceptable use as far as posting information from work?
- What is acceptable in posts that use or reflect on the corporate brand?
- What is okay in the use of embedded or third-party applications?

A note about third-party applications – These are programs written to work within operating systems, but are written by individuals or companies other than the provider of the system. They must be authorized to integrate with your system, and employees sometimes authorize them for social accounts without knowing if the publisher is trusted. Even trusted publishers

may be compromised, so be prepared to act swiftly by:

- Revoking access immediately
- Changing the social account password
- Restoring access only after issue is addressed, and with caution

Policies should always consider and plan for the inherent risks of social media and provide a mitigation assessment for each risk.

Monitoring

Simply developing a policy does not properly protect your company from risk and exposures. Following the adage that "people do not respect what you don't inspect," it's important to establish a means to monitor what employees are posting, and for that matter, not just what employees are saying but what the outside world might be saying as well.

Why monitoring is important

Almost all corporate disasters and crises are impacted by social as well as traditional media. By acknowledging these exposures and then developing plans and messages to manage the events that follow, there's a better chance to improve the outcome for all stakeholders. The earlier you can identify common threads of relevant information and take appropriate action, the stronger the chance to minimize or totally mitigate developing risks.

What information should we monitor?

The simple answer to this is—any information that comes in about your company and any information that goes out. Not very specific? Obviously each company is different and requires its own monitoring approach, but it's wise to start by looking at everything out there and then tailoring your search for what is relevant.

What or who should you follow? Twitter lists are wonderful tools for discovery; start by looking at the Twitter account of people in the BC field you admire and respect and see what you can learn from them. Through them you can develop your own list of professionals to follow and create your own lists. You may create up to 1,000 lists and those lists can contain as many as 5,000 accounts, so don't be shy about gathering information. For more information, Mashable has a good tutorial.[3]

Selecting a monitoring tool/platform

Monitoring tools have been available for quite some time and new tools continue to be introduced into the market regularly. Since the tools range in capabilities and price, selecting one that fits your specific needs can seem daunting. Here are a few important features to look for in monitoring tools:

- Ability to monitor and secure your brand in a single view
- Access to immediate engagement and alerts
- Logical workflow

- Customization of applications, sites, keywords
- Simplicity of design
- Engagement/publishing
- Roles, record-keeping, reporting
- Multilingual capabilities
- Ability to set triggers and gather responses

Important caveats for using social media in a crisis

- **Use caution in directing people to your website**. If your site is not equipped to deal with a sudden, unprecedented surge of traffic, you could be sorry. In almost every major crisis where people—including employees, customers and community—were instructed to visit a business's corporate website for more information on a breaking crisis, situation or disaster, the website crashed within minutes.

- **Use hashtags**. In many critical situations when information is released on Twitter, simply because the sender neglected to use hashtags, the information is not correctly entered into the Twitter stream or even searchable. In almost every situation, while the Twitter communications were good, without the use of a hashtag, correct or corrected information could not be inserted into the Twitter stream.

Summary

Remember: A social media conflagration can start with a simple tweet, which quickly becomes a conversation, and before you know it, others join in and begin spreading unverified information, making it difficult to contain. If your business suffers an incident or is publically maligned in any way, there's a conversation going on in cyberspace. Do what you can to enter that conversation to correct erroneous information and to offer direction, advice and clarity.

Learn more about social media and the business continuity professional by watching the full webinar series at at www.mir3.com/social-media-webinars.

[1] So Opinionated, Business Continuity and Social Media
http://sopinion8ed.wordpress.com/2013/02/08/business-continuity-and-social-media/

[2] Forbes, Why Time Magazine Used Instagram To Cover Hurricane Sandy
http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffbercovici/2012/11/01/why-time-magazine-used-instagram-to-cover-hurricane-sandy/

[3] Mashable, How to Get Started With New Twitter Lists
http://mashable.com/2013/05/31/new-twitter-lists/

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