Introduction

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) fulfill social, economic, and political functions (Boris, 2006). From an economic standpoint they provide services that are not feasible or economical in either the for-profit market or the government services industry (Hill & Lynn, 2009; Rosenbloom, Kravchuk, & Clerkin, 2009). Socially, NPOs bring people together from different walks of life who learn to collaborate to achieve the common good (Boris, 2006). In terms of their political function, NPOs work on behalf of clients to advocate and influence policy makers (Lipsky & Smith, 1989). They also work to mobilize constituencies to support important programs or oppose pieces of legislation that may impact the constituencies (Guo & Musso, 2007; Guo & Saxton, 2014). In other words, they provide a pathway for underserved constituents or groups to participate in civic engagement on a larger scale. Like all businesses, NPOs rely on communications as one of the essential tools to achieve their goals and missions.

Evidence shows that the advent of the Internet and social media has changed the way people and organizations communicate (e.g. Kanter & Fine, 2010a; Krumm, Davies, & Narayanswami, 2008; D. Miller, 2011; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). It is estimated that by the end of 2014 nearly three billion people or 40% of the world population will have access to the Internet, a tenfold increase since 1999 (Internet Live Stats, 2014). In the United States, as of January 2014, 86% of residents have access to the Internet (Pew Research Center, 2014a), of which, 74% use certain forms of social media (Pew Research Center, 2014b).

Before defining social media, it is important to understand key concepts associated with these technologies. Particularly salient are the concepts of Web 2.0 and User Generated Content (UGC). The term Web 2.0 was first used by Darcy DiNucci (1999) and popularized by Tim O’Reilly (2005). Web 2.0 refers to second-generation technologies in which web content is generated through a collaborative and participatory process that emphasizes social interaction and “collective intelligence” (Marugesen, 2007, p. 34). This contrasts the individual nature of Web 1.0 technologies in which content was created and manipulated by a sole individual (Marugesen, 2007). Tredinnick (2006) indicated that Web 2.0 is not as much of a change in technology as it is a change in the way people interact with information.
resources. Applications, such as wikis, blogs and Rich Site Summary (RSS), “put more power in the hands of users to select, filter, publish and edit information, and participate in the creation of information resources” whereby allowing for the questioning of who owns knowledge (p. 229). Perhaps most importantly, Web 2.0 creates knowledge and information through social interactions and user interactions with information systems rather than external creation by other entities (Tredinnick, 2006).

UGC is related to Web 2.0 in that it refers to all of the ways in which people use social media to create content. In order for content to be considered user generated, it must be created outside of one’s professional tasks, publicly accessible on a website or social networking site, and show some creativity (Kaplan & Andreas, 2010). Krumm, Davies, and Narayanswami (2008) noted that the creation of such content is rewarding for those who produce it and for those who receive it. Content producers are able to “achieve recognition for their contributions” and content consumers are not only entertained, but gain “a glimpse into real data from other people, unsanitized by regular media outlets” (Krumm et al., 2008, p. 10).

DEFINITION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are difficult to define. Obar, Zube, and Lampe (2012) identified two distinct difficulties with conceptualizing social media: (1) there are a broad array of social media tools that are constantly evolving, frequently abandoned, ignored and conceptualized differently depending on location; and (2) social media are often described as having communication benefits similar to traditional media (i.e. bringing people together, enabling information sharing, and facilitating communication and collaboration).

Despite these challenges, several scholars have attempted to define social media. For example, Boyd and Ellison (2008) provided a definition for social networking sites (SNS). They argued that a SNS allows people to create “a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system,” develop “a list of other users with whom they share a connection” and “view and transverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p. 211). This definition underlies the basic premise for many social media tools but does not fully capture the breadth of social media because SNS represent only part of social media.

Alternatively, Kanter and Fine (2010a) defined social media as an “array of digital tools” that “enable people to create their own stories, videos, and photos and to manipulate them and share them widely at almost no cost” (p. 5). These tools include conversation starters, collaboration tools, and network builders. Conversation tools include blogs, Tumbler, YouTube, Vimeo and Twitter. Collaboration
tools include Wikipedia, Huddle, Wikispaces, and Google Drive. Network builders include Facebook, Flickr, Pinterest, Foursquare, and Google+. These tools use Web 2.0 ideologies and UGC.

As a more comprehensive effort, Chun, Shulman, Sandoval, and Hovy (2010) defined social media as “Web 2.0 technologies … through which individuals are active participants in creating, organizing, editing, combining, sharing, commenting and rating” (p. 2). Web 2.0 technologies include networking hubs (e.g. Facebook), web-based communication modes (e.g. chat groups), photo-sharing (i.e. Instagram), video casting and sharing (e.g. YouTube), audio sharing (e.g. podcasts), mashups (e.g. Yelp & Pandora), widgets (e.g. countdowns added to a website), virtual worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft), microblogs (e.g. Twitter), social annotation and bookmarking of websites (e.g. RSS feeds and tags).

This book uses a working definition of social media that attempts to capture the essence of social media in a concise way. It defines social media as a group of Internet-based applications that allow individuals to create, share, and exchange information and knowledge. It also acknowledges that social media’s emphasis on high-level user interaction results in a rich, constantly evolving knowledge space.

**BRIEF HISTORY OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media are not new, nor is the concept of social networking. Humans have been creating social networks since the earliest historical records. What has changed is the way in which we communicate with one another and create those networks. In the 21st century, almost all corners of the world have the capacity to connect digitally through social media and the Internet, which are outcroppings of the very first networked computers developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In these decades, computer developers believed networked machines could help people connect to one another (Digital Trends, 2014).

In 1979, Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) were created to allow users to send data over phone lines using a modem (Tiedje, 2011). These systems were slow and could be expensive due to high rates for long distance calling. Despite these negatives, they were extremely popular and pushed developers to create faster and more developed systems. In the late 1980s, CompuServe developed a system that would quickly allow members to share files, have access to news and events and send messages to one another (Digital Trends, 2014). This was followed up in 1991 by America Online (AOL), which allowed people in member-created communities to create member profiles that could be easily searched.

As more and more people gained access to the World Wide Web (WWW), social media exploded. The 1990s saw the development of Geocities, TheGlobe.com, ICQ
(Internet Relay Chat), Classmates.com, and Six Degrees, all of which allowed users to connect with others (Tiedje, 2011). These sites allowed users to create member profiles and develop content to share with others. As users gained the capacity to instantly communicate, through programs such as ICQ and its successor AOL Instant Messenger, so did the development of an Internet slang characterized by abbreviations, acronyms and emoticons (e.g. LOL) (Tiedje, 2011).

In the 2000s, social media moved beyond clunky, slow systems to sleek, modern and integrated networks moving at lightning fast speeds. Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Google+ have become some of the most popular social networking sites, with Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube leading the way (Digital Trends, 2014; Tiedje, 2011). As of June 2014, Facebook had 829 million daily active users with 1.32 billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2014). Social media have become ubiquitous across the world and as more individuals become connected through these tools, all organizations must seek to adopt these tools as a way to connect with their stakeholders and constituencies. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explained that social media allow organizations to “engage in timely and direct-end consumer contact at relatively low cost and at higher levels of efficiency” than traditional media tools (e.g. commercials, direct mail campaigns) (p. 67).

THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NONPROFITS

History

Very little is known about the use of social media by NPOs (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Nah & Saxton, 2013; Waters et al., 2009). The limited existing research has focused on large organizations with larger budgets and larger followings (for example, Barnes & Mattson, 2008; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Nah & Saxton, 2013). Large NPOs typically have operation budgets of at least $5 million or more (Nonprofit Technology Network, 2014) and as such may possess greater capacity to provide staffing and other resources for social media use. The information described below has been obtained from studies of such large organizations and may not be generalizable to smaller organizations, but it helps provide a base for understanding nonprofit social media use more generally. The intent of this book is to contribute to the developing scholarship on social media use, particularly in small and medium-sized NPOs with annual revenues of less than $5 million.

Regardless of organizational size, social media are fast becoming important tools for building and sustaining relationships among people and groups (Kanter & Fine, 2010a). Social media have the potential to enable nonprofits to participate
in the collective evolution of communication by providing them with a faster, more cost-effective way to provide information, generate collective action, and promote sharing of stories, and resources.

**Trends**

At least three trends can be identified in NPOs’ use of social media: (1) a limited and ineffective use of social media tools, (2) changing donor and supporter preferences (free agency), and (3) changes in organizational staffing and budgets for social media.

**Social Media Tools Used by NPOs**

Each year the Nonprofit Technology Network (NTEN) partners with Common Knowledge and Blackbaud to release a benchmark report highlighting social media usage of NPOs across the United States. The most recent report centered on social media usage from 2012. The study surveyed 3,500 representatives from small, medium and large NPOs and found that 93 percent had some type of presence on social media. Almost all used it for marketing (93%), and just over half used it for fundraising (55%) (NTEN, Common Knowledge, & Blackbaud, 2012).

The most commonly used social media tool was Facebook, with 98 percent of respondents indicating they had a presence on the site (NTEN et al., 2012). Twitter was second (72%). Reasons for using Facebook included building community awareness of the organization, generating a Facebook base (e.g. increasing the number of “Likes”) and calling people to action (e.g. volunteer recruitment, attend free events, sign petitions etc.). Over two-thirds of respondents (61%) indicated social media to be at least somewhat valuable to the work they do (NTEN et al., 2012).

Although there is a plethora of social media tools available, many NPOs continue to use only a small number of those tools in a limited way. By and large, organizations utilize Facebook and Twitter more than any other social media networking sites (NTEN et al., 2012). Nonetheless, sharing sites, such as Pinterest and YouTube, are becoming more popular.

Campbell, Lambright, and Wells (2014) argued that NPOs approach social media in “response to two competing demands: one emphasizing transparency and accountability and the other focused on dialogue and civic participation” (p. 3). But in reality they may focus more on meeting the first demand while ignoring the second (Waters et al., 2009). Regardless of platform, NPOs are not consistently using social media to their full potential. Many scholars have found that NPOs engage in one-way communication rather than two-way dialogic communication that
social media requires (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012, Waters et al., 2009). Organizations tend to use their profiles on Facebook to disseminate organizational information including organizational logo, website link, mission statement, staff information and an organizational description (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Waters et al., 2009).

Free Agency

Kanter and Fine (2010a; 2010b) identified a key trend facing NPOs engaging in social media communication. They argued that NPOs face a different world than in generations past and are being challenged to change the way they engage potential donors because younger generations are much more social media savvy and prefer to support causes rather than institutions. Moreover, the current social culture requires organizations to become more transparent and open. As a result, a NPO seeking to become more transparent must make appropriate considerations for everyone inside and outside the organization in order to achieve its goals (Kanter & Fine, 2010b). Particularly, NPOs must pay special attention to “free agents” working “outside of the organization to organize mobilize, raise funds, and communicate with constituents” (Kanter & Fine 2010a, p. 15). Free agents are active on social media and use these tools to fundraise, organize and mobilize for the causes they are passionate about (Kanter & Fine, 2010b). These agents have the potential to become allies to NPOs because they have a distinct ability to attract followers to various causes.

Organizational Staffing and Budgets for Social Media

Many of the challenges relating to social media use by NPOs stem from a lack of staff technical knowledge and a lack of funding for training and information technology positions. Yet, because nonprofits are continuing to recognize the value of social media, there has been a steady increase in the number of staff time allocated to commercial social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Findings from NTEN et al. (2012) suggest that NPOs are using social media more consistently and devoting more staff and financial resources to the practice than in the past. The study found that 69% of the respondents indicated having 1/4 to 1/2 full time equivalent employees dedicated to social media. Perhaps more encouraging is a reduction in the percentage of NPOs with no dedicated social media staff. According to NTEN et al. (2012), the number of NPOs with no dedicated staff has dropped 9% since 2009.

Budgets allocated to social media use are small. Almost half of respondents (46%) in the 2012 Nonprofit Social Network Survey reported having no budget expenditures for maintaining a presence on social media (NTEN et al., 2012). Another
28% indicated allocating between $1 and $10,000. These findings suggest that a vast majority of NPOs have little to no budget for social media. There is hope however as the number of respondents allocating some budget for social media maintenance has increased by 7% since 2010, representing a slow but consistent growth.

**BENEFITS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN NONPROFITS**

The growth in NPO staffing and budgets for social media maintenance is not surprising as organizations are looking for faster and easier ways to become “Networked Nonprofits” in order to remain competitive in a dynamic and fast paced environment. “Networked Nonprofits” are “simple and transparent organizations” that make it easy for “outsiders to get in and insiders to get out” (Kanter & Fine, 2010, p. 3). These organizations engage people to raise awareness, organize communities or advocate for legislation. Social media provide a pathway to increase an organization’s networking by building its social capital, providing channels for information dissemination, creating marketing and fundraising avenues, and providing advocacy conduits.

**Social Capital**

Social capital is a sociological term used to describe the components of a relationship that make relationships meaningful and resilient, specifically trust and reciprocity (Kanter & Fine, 2010a). Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) explained that social capital increases an individual’s commitment to their community and their capacity to mobilize others into action. Moreover, “networks, norms, and trust…facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1993, p. 2).

Although much research has focused on social capital of individuals (e.g. Ellison et al., 2007) the benefits likely extend to organizations. Social media can help generate social capital because of their ability to connect organizations with current and potential constituents in several ways: (1) people are much easier to find; (2) conversations are inexpensive; (3) connections are made informally; and (4) reciprocity becomes easier (Kanter & Fine, 2010a).

**Information Dissemination**

Research finds that large NPOs predominantly use social media to disseminate a wide variety of information. For example, Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) found that 58.6% of the organizations they studied used Tweets for information dissemination. Guo and Saxton (2014) also found that two-thirds of the organizations in their study
used Twitter to provide information. Waters et al. (2009) revealed similar results in their study of Facebook use by NPOs. Almost all of their respondents listed administrators on their Facebook profile and provided a description of the organization (97% and 96%, respectively).

Dissemination of information is important to building a base for “more complex functions (e.g. dialogue and mobilization)” (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012 p. 343). It allows organizations to provide potential supporters with a description of the organization, its mission and vision, and staff information with the goal of attracting a wider audience.

**Advocacy**

Social media provide opportunities to create public pressure for policy change by allowing for immediate calls to action such as opportunities to testify at legislative hearings and upcoming city council meetings or town halls. They also allow NPOs to educate the public about current policy and what policy change means for them. Edwards and Hoefer (2010) explained that social media allow advocacy through communal conversations rather than one-way information dissemination. They not only widen the scope of knowledge sharing and information generation but also increase organizational transparency and may require less staff time than other advocacy methods.

Guo and Saxton (2014) analyzed the Twitter usage of 188 Civil Rights and Advocacy organizations in an effort to develop a descriptive model for better understanding how nonprofit advocacy occurs via social media. They developed a three stage framework that includes: (1) reaching out to people; (2) keeping the flame alive; and (3) stepping up to action. All of these steps can occur simultaneously. The model suggests that nonprofits first seek to build a constituency (reaching out to people); then they seek to sustain the constituency and keep its passion alive (keeping the flame alive); and eventually they work to mobilize supporters into action (stepping up to action).

In their study of 63 social work advocacy organizations, Edwards and Hoefer (2010) found that many of the organizations were not using social media to their full advocacy capacity. For example, only 18% of respondents indicated having links to their social media pages on their web sites, 16% had a weblog (blog) and no website included virtual chats, instant messaging or wikis.

**Marketing and Fundraising**

Marketing and fundraising are core elements for nonprofits’ sustainability. K. L. Miller (2010) noted that good nonprofit marketing has the potential to raise money,
find and mobilize volunteers, raise awareness, and encourage behavior changes. It also has the potential to persuade decision makers and change public policy. Another potential is to converse with clients, supporters, and partners in order to generate social change (p. 9). The author also suggested that organizations use social media to engage with potential donors between donations to keep them happy so they will donate again and generate connections with potential new donors.

Many NPOs seek revenue through fundraising in order to fulfill their social mission and goals. Traditionally fundraising methods include mail and telephone campaigns, professional fundraising firms, and special fundraising events (Nah & Saxton, 2013). B. Miller (2009) explained, however, that many of these channels are no longer viable in a networked world where people ultimately have more trust in their peer network than a marketing campaign. As a result it has become more important for organizations and marketers to employ the use of social networks. In a recent study of the Forbes list of 200 largest U.S. charities, Barnes and Mattson (2008) found that 45% of the nonprofits surveyed indicated that social media are “very important” to their fundraising efforts (para. 4).

Social media allow organizational supporters to easily talk about the organizations they support, which ultimately ends up on their “friends” new feeds. And donors in the networked world seem to agree. Recent research on donor engagement behavior and preferences found that donors preferred to learn about their favorite NPOs through a website (36%), by email (28%) or via Facebook (6%) (NTEN, Common Knowledge, & Blackbaud, 2012). Respondents also overwhelmingly preferred email (51%) and Facebook (15%) as ways to spread the word about their favorite organizations, which appeared to be successful. For example, NTEN and M+R (2014) showed that overall online revenue increased by 14% in 2013 with the average online gift of $104.

In a study analyzing the impact of Facebook on online giving in the United Kingdom (UK), Waddingham (2013) found that when fundraisers share Facebook posts about their events it is worth £12 (or US$19.89) and every video shared increases the value to £18 (or US$29.84). Although there might be differences in donor behavior between the UK and the United States, these findings suggest that such sharing may be similarly beneficial for U.S. nonprofits. Further, social media have the potential to increase online revenues by helping NPOs generate relationships with their constituencies and leveraging them as brand ambassadors. Waddington (2013) noted that an average Facebook user has 130 “friends” meaning that each could create a sharing chain reaction that could reach more potential donors. In fact, Saxton and Wang (2013) found that large U.S. NPOs with larger social networks in Facebook receive more donations via Facebook Causes, a Facebook application that allows its users to make donations to public charities.
CHALLENGES OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN NONPROFITS

While there are clear benefits for NPOs using social media, many organizations have experienced a number of challenges to using it effectively. Respondents in the NTEN et al. (2012) study who indicated no social media presence cited the following reasons for their lack of use: (1) no social media strategy (60%); (2) no staff or budget (52%); (3) lacked expertise (32%); (4) concerned about the control of their message (22%); (5) concerned about privacy (22%); (6) did not think it was valuable (8%); and (7) tried to use it but stopped (2%) (p. 25). These challenges can be organized into four categories: marketing challenges, staffing challenges, funding challenges, and cultural challenges.

Marketing Challenges

Marketing and branding for NPOs are generally more difficult than for for-profit companies due to the fact that they do not necessarily sell tangible products. Instead they “sell” intangible products and services such as education, advocacy, facilitation, technical assistance, and networking, which are often defined by the funders who financially support their programs (Miller, 2010). Further, many of these programs and services are provided for free and “individual participants pay for what’s offered with something other than money, such as their time, by performing a desired action, or simply by demonstrating a willingness to consider a different point of view” (p. 13). As a result, messaging becomes extremely important as the wrong message can lead to a loss of trust among consumers or constituents. Thus, social media create anxiety for nonprofit leaders who wish to have their organizations and programs seen in the best light.

Prior to the advent of social media, an organization could carefully construct media messages to project the image it wanted customers to see and could prevent negative information about the organization from becoming widespread. Today, online posting is perhaps the most public form of communication because users do not have much control over who can access the information nor can they fully remove something if they change their minds (Marinucci, 2010). Social media allow customers and constituents to speak freely leaving organizations to be nothing more than “observers, having neither the knowledge or the chance—or sometimes even the right—to alter publicly posted comments provided by their customers” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60).

While this fear is certainly valid, K. L. Miller (2010) explained that organizations have already lost control over messaging because whether organizations participate in social media or not, information about their company, both good and bad, is readily available to the general public. Organizations are better served by
responding and initiating positive conversations about their work in order to “build a fortress of good will” that can potentially insulate organizations from more negative conversations (p. 9).

**Staffing Challenges**

NPOs often face difficulties with dedicating staff time to social media and information technology. Findings by Hackler and Saxton (2007) suggested that managing websites and social media might not be a priority for NPOs as “mission related resources” (p. 479). For example, in 32% of organizations they studied, volunteers played a key role in development and management of the organizational website rather than a dedicated information technology department or outside vendor. Despite the slow growth in the allocation of staff mentioned earlier, many nonprofits continue to allocate little or no staff time for social media. For example, two-thirds of respondents to the NTEN et al. (2012) study reported allocating 0-1/4 full time equivalent staff to maintaining social media.

If staff are working on social media they are likely doing so at a lower priority due to the multiple roles employees often play within a NPO (regardless of its size). For example, it is common for program staff to simultaneously work with clients, manage social media and provide janitorial support. While this arrangement has economic benefits for the organization (i.e. no additional cost for janitorial), it can create role confusion and conflict for the worker to meet competing expectations (Netting, O’Connor, Thomas, & Yancey, 2005). Social media maintenance often becomes a lower priority to more program-based objectives.

**Funding Challenges**

Light (2004) explained that employees in NPOs face constant pressure to do more with less and do it well. They experience consistent shortages in information, technology and training than their for-profit counterparts. He suggested that nonprofit employees are “members of a first-rate workforce often employed in second-rate organizations with third-rate equipment” (Light, 2004, p. 7). Information technology has been thought to increase an organization’s capacity to compete with other organizations. In other words, technology levels the playing field (Hackler & Saxton, 2007).

Blau (2001) noted that information technology is resource intensive and requires significant purchase costs, training and upkeep. But perhaps more challenging is the fact that most technology becomes obsolete fairly quickly. While most organizations have the necessary technology infrastructure, such as computers, printers, and basic networking, many do not have the financial capacity or allocate enough to a technology budget for hardware and software upgrades, information technol-
ogy support, or technology training. According to a 2014 report by the Nonprofit Technology Network small nonprofits (annual budget <$1 million) had a median total technology budget of $5,743 compared to very large nonprofits (annual budget >$10 million), which had a median budget of $131,000.

Moreover, many do not have sufficient financial resources to provide information technology support when something goes awry. Barnard and Barnard (2011) found that 12% of small nonprofits had no dedicated information technology personnel. An organization is hampered in its use of social media if it lacks technology sufficient enough to access the Internet and social media sites. Computers that do not possess enough software to process complex images, video or other media files are at a serious disadvantage in the social media world.

**Cultural Challenges**

**Advocacy**

A key societal role for NPOs is to advocate for causes on behalf of their constituents. Guo and Musso (2007) noted that NPOs “represent the interests of constituencies in mediating between citizens and ‘megastructures’” (p. 309). According to the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest (CLPI) (2014), advocacy and lobbying are often used interchangeably, but there is a distinct difference. Lobbying involves attempts in directly influence legislation through direct or grassroots communication with legislators and their staff. In contrast, advocacy can include lobbying but also includes public engagement, education campaigns, and nonpartisan voter engagement, among other things. CLPI (2014) explained that “lobbying always includes advocacy but advocacy does not necessarily involve lobbying” (para. 4).

Advocacy allows for increases in democratic governance by providing those who are underserved with representation (Guo & Musso, 2007). The key for nonprofits is to ensure that their advocacy work does not result in excessive lobbying or otherwise they can lose their tax-exempt status (IRS, 2014). While the IRS permits some lobbying by NPOs, government contracts prohibit any lobbying with government funds (Suárez, 2009). This “regulatory environment” can impact the degree to which an organization engages its constituents because they limit even the perception of lobbying activities (p. 270).

Beyond the regulatory challenges, Obar, Zube, and Lampe (2012) identified four additional challenges with using social media for advocacy. First, many organizations will likely face generational and digital gaps between senior staff and younger staff. Senior staff may disagree with using social media for advocacy because they are not as much a part of the social media fabric as are their younger counterparts.
Second, organizations may find it difficult to speak with a unified voice, as too many staff members are involved with representing the organization online. This can dilute the message and confuse those targeted for civic engagement (Obar et al., 2012). A consistent message can deliver a stable brand identity to external constituents, thereby increasing their confidence to work on behalf of the organization (Yan, 2011).

The third challenge relates to social media use by employees in both personal and professional contexts. Frequently, social media platforms require users to have official accounts before they can create organization groups and/or pages. Facebook is a common place where this occurs. To create an organization page, a staff member must do so through a personal Facebook account. This means that every time an employee wishes to make a work-related post he or she must indicate to Facebook he or she would like to make the post as the organization. If the employee forgets, he or she ends up posting to his or her personal page. As a result, employees may not wish to use their personal social media accounts and networks for work purposes (Obar et al., 2012).

The final challenge is effective mobilization. Face to face interactions are important components to mobilization. Social media can often create weaker ties between NPOs and their constituents unless organizational employees nurture relationships and create social capital (Obar et al., 2012). This can be a time-consuming process.

Organizational Culture

Social media use requires an organizational cultural shift to a social environment focused on building relationships through openness, candidness, and listening (Kanter & Fine, 2010a). In such a social environment organization’s communication on social media is dialogical, mistakes are embraced, and calculated risks are permitted. These organizations are less punitive, embrace a level of informality, and trust staff to make decisions (Kanter & Fine, 2010a). This is a challenging shift for NPOs with deeply embedded cultural structures that affect how staff and the organization work in the world. Organizational leaders and staff may become resistant to change due to a variety of psychological and emotional reasons, and thus may seek to hold on to the status quo (Denhardt, Denhardt, & Aristigueta, 2013).

Leaders are key to initiating and sustaining organizational changes. Without leadership support for using social media and creating a more relationship-based organizational culture, many NPOs miss opportunities to participate in “the robust, roiling conversations happening out there” about their organizations and the issues they care about (Kanter & Fine, 2010a, p. 48). This argument has been supported by research on large nonprofits (for example, see Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).
THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

Up until now, this introduction has hopefully provided readers an opportunity to learn about social media, their usage in NPOs, benefits of using social media for NPOs and challenges many face in using social media. What follows is a brief introduction to the 11 case studies included in this book. These case studies highlight much of the information that has been presented as well as potential solutions to the challenges that have been described. The studies have been grouped according to different themes and presented in five sections: (1) Social Media Utilization and Fundraising; (2) Social Media Utilization and Advocacy; (3) Social Media Utilization and Marketing; (4) Social Media Utilization and Organizational Learning; and (5) Social Media Utilization and Organizational Capacity.

Section 1: Social Media Utilization and Fundraising

Fundraising is imperative for the long-term stability of any NPO. Traditional methods of fundraising have included mail or phone appeals, special events, staff fundraising efforts, and the hiring of fundraising firms (Hager, Rooney, & Pollak, 2002). The Internet, and by extension social media, provide new avenues for generating revenues. Initially, it was believed that these new pathways would generate a revolution in American philanthropy because they provided easier and more streamlined ways to give (see, for example, Hart, 2001). In recent years however, the revenue landscape has drastically changed. The unprecedented growth of the nonprofit sector (McLeish, 2010) combined with reductions in funding from all sources (government, private foundations, private giving) has created extensive competition for a scarce amount of resources. For example, Fogle (2010) found that between 2007 and 2009 private giving declined by 5.7%. Moreover, younger donors are much more media savvy and prefer to lend their support to causes rather than institutions (Kanter & Fine, 2010a). NPOs must adapt to this new environment. One way they can do so is through social media.

Some organizations have used social media to expand their fundraising efforts by employing rapid diffusion of their campaigns and causes. Rogers’ (1962/1995) Diffusion of Innovations helps to explain how technologies and ideas are communicated throughout the social system. Rogers defines diffusion as “the process by which an innovation is communicated over time among members of a social system” (p. 11, emphasis original). The differences in adoption of an innovation are related to an individual’s perception of newness and as a result they adopt new ideas at different times. Rogers (1962/1995) identified five adopter categories: (1) Innovators—those who are “very eager to try new ideas” regardless of risk and uncertainty; (2) Early Adopters—those who have much referent power and have influence over innovation
adoption in others; (3) Early Majority—those who adopt before the average person but only after evidence shows the innovation works; (4) Late Majority—those who are skeptical of change and will only adopt an innovation after it has been adopted by the majority; and (5) Laggards—those who are last to adopt an innovation due to extreme skepticism and fear of change, and a devotion to tradition (pp. 248-250).

Particularly important to diffusion of an innovation are the roles that change agents and opinion leaders play in a social system. Change agents bring new innovations into the social system and seek support from opinion leaders who possess the capacity to influence the attitudes and behaviors (Rogers, 1962/1995). Opinion leaders serve as a model for others in the adoption of new innovations. Because donors support organizations based on whether they believe the organization produces a community or human need (Fogel, 2010, p. 506), opinion leaders are key to establishing the legitimacy of any new NPO. This was the case for Tees for a Cause (TFAC), an organization that virtually sprung up overnight to raise money for wildfire victims.

In Chapter 1, Lauren Bacon Brengarth, Edin Mujkic and Meg Millar describe the TFAC, a joint effort of four concerned companies who collectively decided to raise money for fire victims through the sale of t-shirts. Its success can be attributed to the connections these change agents had to the larger community and community opinion leaders, which allowed them to quickly establish the legitimacy of their cause and assure potential donors that their donations were being utilized in the appropriate manner. This legitimacy helped TFAC use the instantaneous action of social media to reach a wide range of potential donors. As diffusion took place, the organization was flooded with an unanticipated amount of t-shirt orders and cemented the organization as a legitimate entity to raise funds for wildfire victims in the long run.

Legitimacy is important for any organization. For an NPO with an already established relationship with a community, diffusion by way of opinion leaders is still needed but not required for fundraising efforts. Rather, these organizations may seek to develop a strategic plan for social media adoption in order to continue the diffusion of their cause. In Chapter 2, Samantha Adler and Heather Carpenter explain how Paws with a Cause (PWAC) used a social media plan and a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign to generate revenue. PWAC developed a one-year social media strategic plan complete with benchmarks, assessments of the organization’s technology capacity and a plan for improved organizational branding. It set specific goals for each part of the plan for how PWAC would successfully integrate social media.

Upon completing several initial goals of the social media plan, including a technology inventory and staff assessment, PWAC embarked on developing a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign involving volunteers and clients. This plan combined the effectiveness of social media with the effectiveness of peer fundraising to generate
funds to support the training of assistance dogs. Key stakeholders were invited to use their personal stories to generate donations of $100 to $2,500 in an effort to raise a total of $30,000. Thirty-three individuals agreed to develop individual campaigns.

Despite having a social media plan, PWAC staff experienced challenges related to management of volunteer fundraisers and social media management. The organization did not anticipate how much time it would take to provide technical assistance to so many projects. Staff also faced resistance from volunteers who were eager to participate but uncomfortable with telling their personal stories. As a result they developed volunteer education materials to help train and answer volunteer and donor questions. Moreover, they did not anticipate the time their Development Administrator would have to spend on maintaining the organization’s social media accounts. To address this social media challenge, the organization distributed social media responsibilities among staff members and installed a software program to coordinate all efforts.

Ultimately these staff activities and organizational changes resulted in a cultural shift for PWAC. This shift required staff members to share a lot of organizational information and communicate frequently with people outside of their organization, which was difficult to do. PWAC leaders led the culture change by supporting the adoption of social media and online fundraising. They also outlined in social media policy on what information could and could not be shared with the public. Much of PWAC’s success is attributed to its social media strategic planning, which allowed the organization to adapt to challenges as they occurred.

**Section 2: Social Media Utilization and Advocacy**

Advocacy is an important mission of many NPOs. Organizations that can effectively mobilize their constituencies are more successful at getting their messages across. Social media provide new ways for NPOs to engage with their constituencies. As D. Miller (2011) explains, social media create a capacity for free flowing ideas and connectivity on an equal level. Essentially, social media enables constituents to connect with organizations they may not otherwise have known about. Such digital civic engagement provides a framework for Chapter 3, in which David Chapman, Katrina Miller-Stevens, John Morris, and Brendan O’Hallarn examine the case of Blue Star Families (BSF).

BSF is an NPO dedicated to providing support to military families across the United States and the World and uses social media connect to families and advocate on their behalf, thus, making military life more sustainable. Such civic engagement is defined by Cooper (2005) as the act of people participating together with deliberation and collective action within “an array of interests, institutions, and networks,
developing a civic identity, and involving people in the governance process” (p. 534). For BSF, social media provide a way to attract, inform, retain and interact with its worldwide membership.

The organization uses a variety of social media tools including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, YouTube, Instagram and Flickr. Yet, BSF found it challenging to use social media. Like many other organizations, it discovered that maintaining social media was time consuming and often was relegated to a lower priority. As a result, BSF had difficulties with creating direct interaction between its constituents, monitoring social media content, and ensuring political neutrality. Moreover, it had little capacity to measure the effectiveness of its social media use. To address these challenges BSF created a nonpartisan social space by carefully monitoring social media spaces and began to prioritize social media metrics.

The BSF case highlights the intrinsic value of social connection as an incentive to advocate. Clark and Wilson (1961) argued that organizations can successfully induce people to participate if they can provide both tangible and intangible incentives from one of the categories of incentives: material, solidarity, and purposive. NPO advocacy can result in intangible solidarity incentives that are obtained from the acts of associating, socializing, congeniality, group membership and the status associated with group membership, as well as intangible purposive incentives that come as a result of coming together to change the status quo.

This is the case for the Friends of Nature Wuhan Member Group in China (Wuhan FON). In Chapter 4, Liang Ma and Zhibin Zhang find that through efficient information dissemination to the public, Wuhan FON was able to mobilize residents to press the Chinese government to change its ways of measuring air pollution. The organization used social media to generate financial donations to purchase portable air pollution measuring devices to assess the level of PM$_{2.5}$, a key source of air pollution in China. Members of Wuhan FON derived purposive incentives from changing the status quo.

Wuhan FON achieved solidarity incentives from working through the challenges it faced during its civic engagement and fundraising campaigns. The organization was particularly hampered in its efforts to raise funds because the Chinese government has consistently required NPOs to participate in a dual management system and restricted their fundraising capabilities. Although these rules have been relaxed in recent years some NPOs still face legitimacy challenges. Wuhan FON’s efforts were further complicated by very specific cultural challenge with civic engagement in China, where there is a lack of cultural tradition for volunteering. And the public, as well as the government, criticized Wuhan FON for allowing civilians, with little to no training, to gather its data.

Together the members of Wuhan FON met these challenges head on. They trained volunteers to detect air quality and report it online using infographics comparing...
their data with data from official sources. They purchased software to make their
social media posts more immediate, expanded their leadership and management ca-
pacity, and supported replications of their efforts throughout other regions of China.

Section 3: Social Media Utilization and Marketing

Over the last decade, NPO marketing has faced external challenges forcing organiza-
tions to alter their marketing strategies. These challenges include the development
of a global donor base, media fragmentation, increased competition for scarce re-
sources, the necessity for customized nonprofit experiences, and an unprecedented
growth in the number of NPOs (McLeish, 2010). As a result, NPOs are beginning
to rethink their marketing strategies and making more use of social media.

Social media allow NPOs to engage a large number of potential volunteers, do-
nors, and supporters in a dialogical manner and provide NPOs with opportunities
to respond to the needs and values of their supporters (K. L. Miller, 2010). Success-
fual social media marketing plans use the information gained from dialogical
communication to inform the way organizations and their marketing strategies are
managed. In this currently competitive market, the goal is to create a good social
media marketing plan that allows organizations to “find those people who are enthu-
siastic about the cause and who also have large networks of their own”…who can
then “fundraise for you, but just as important, they also ‘riendraise’ for you” (K.
L. Miller, 2010, p. 7). The three cases in this section identify the impact of social
media on the marketing strategies of NPOs.

In Chapter 5, Gayla Schaefer and Leigh Nanney Hersey, using the Central Brevard
Humane Society (CBHS), examine the cultural shift NPOs must make in order to
adopt social media as an effective marketing tool. At first, CBHS used social media
somewhat haphazardly. In other words, initially it did not implement any formal
strategy for social media use. As the public expectation of an online presence grew,
CBHS began to fully integrate social media into its overall marketing strategy.
Despite a tough economic climate, CBHS continues to grow largely because it has
been able to integrate social media into its overall marketing plan.

CBHS uses social media to achieve a variety of purposes. These purposes include
generating enthusiasm from donors and educating county residents on responsible
pet ownership. In addition CBHS advertises the care it provides to abandon animals
and advocates for humane treatment. The organization also uses social media to
courage pet owners to spay and neuter their animals to help reduce homeless pet
population.

In order to manage all of its marketing and media efforts, CBHS created the
position of Media Relations Manager (MRM). Initially, the MRM was responsible
for social media integration, press releases, marketing and media sponsorship col-
laborations, website development, e-commerce, and special event promotion. CBHS’ use of social media grew rapidly requiring more attention from the MRM, which slowed down other marketing projects. To address this problem, CBHS restructured its communications staff by providing additional staff support to the MRM and transferring some duties of the MRM to other units.

The above changes challenged CBHS’ organizational culture. Like most organizations, CBHS, who had traditionally utilized one-way communications, was forced by the social media environment to adopt more dialogical methods, be more transparent, and experiment and develop new organizational norms. Such changes can be difficult for an organization and its human capital as both are often resistant to change due to powerful psychological and emotional forces (Denhardt et al., 2013). Yet, for CBHS it was necessary in order to fulfill their marketing goals in the social media age.

The importance of social media to a nonprofit is underscored further by Erin Nemenoff and Julia Schenk’s study of the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) in Chapter 6. NPC is a national membership organization dedicated to providing support to college campus sororities and create space for collective action. It has expanded over the years to include national and international sororities, which has resulted in having 26 chapters and a total membership of over four million women. With such a large and geographically diverse membership NPC has sought to integrate social media into all of its marketing efforts. Additionally, much of its target audience is college-aged women who are likely to be using social media.

Nemenoff and Schenk use Guo and Saxton’s (2014) ladder of engagement framework to describe the set of steps NPC took to engage sorority members via social media to support and participate in International Badge Day. Guo and Saxton have argued that organizational outreach basically involves reaching out to people, keeping the flame alive and stepping up to action. For NPC this involved reaching out to constituents by providing relevant information about the event, engaging in further dialogue with members to sustain interest, and then mobilizing people to take action to support the organization, its mission, and the event.

NPC specifically used Twitter and Facebook for its engagement, dialogue and action messaging to stakeholders. The organization increased awareness about International Badge Day Event by posting information about the event, photos of national representatives and board members wearing their badges, and videos of key stakeholders talking about their badges. To keep supporters engaged and to generate additional participants, NPC created more interactive posts, such as trivia games, to deepen engagement. Once member engagement was sustained, NPC asked supporters to step up to action by creating their own International Badge Day posts, tweets and hashtags (for Twitter). By doing so they created brand ambassadors who could amplify NPC’s message to a wider audience.
This process was not without its challenges. NPC experienced a dilution of its messages, engaged with stakeholders who had little social media experience, and found that it did not have enough organizational resources to maintain an online presence, as there was a continuous need to migrate to new social media/online platforms. These challenges are fairly common to other NPO social media marketing campaigns. Rather than yielding to these challenges, NPC saw opportunities to further engage constituents, educate key stakeholders on social media use, discover new cost effective ways to manage social media, and create additional strategies to adapt to new technologies. These solutions helped NPC to create an effective social media marketing campaign.

While NPC used social media to market events and keep current members connected, The Cummer Museum of Arts and Gardens (The Cummer) in Jacksonville, Florida, utilized tools to increase the interactivity of the museum and diversify its audience. In Chapter 7, Georgette Dumont analyzes how The Cummer continues to adapt to both environmental and technical changes in order to successfully utilize social media. From a sociotechnical lens (e.g. Rogers, 1962/1995 and reinforcement theory, The Cummer can be viewed as an early adopter of social media that was able to be flexible in its adaptation to new sociotechnical environments in order to achieve its marketing goals.

In 2008, The Cummer began using smartphone applications, podcasts and quick response (QR) codes to enhance visitor experience but recognized these could not necessarily bring new visitors to the museum. Thus the museum began using Facebook (in 2008), Twitter (in 2009), Flicker (in 2010), and a blog (in 2011) to attract diverse and younger visitors, to raise awareness and provide a visitor feedback mechanism. Using these tools the museum was able to regularly provide information to key stakeholders and spread its organizational message. It was also able to use social media to engage stakeholders in dialogue about their recommendations for improving the museum, address their complaints and concerns, and engage them on a deeper level.

The use of social media required the museum to become more transparent and address issues much more publicly. This was not something The Cummer was accustomed to doing. In the past, complaints were addressed using offline methods, such as writing letters, but with social media, responses to criticism had to become more immediate. This prompted the organization to adapt its technical processes to account for the social changes created by social media. Another technical challenge The Cummer experienced was an oversaturation of posting by museum staff diluting the core messaging of the museum. Thus, the museum decided to implement a new policy limiting the number of authorized employees working on social media posts.

Perhaps the most challenging issue for the museum was keeping its traditional members and its online fans and followers fully informed. Social media allowed for
more instantaneous information dissemination and as a result online constituents initially received more information than offline members. Thus museum staff devised a plan to keep offline members more informed through their preferred methods (e.g. newsletter) and began sending them emails about weekly happenings.

Section 4: Social Media Utilization and Organizational Learning

Organizational learning is imperative to the organizational change and culture shifts presented by the integration of social media into any organization. Open systems theory posits that organizations (and individuals) engage in single loop and double-loop learning (Denhardt et al., 2013). Single-loop learning is the most common and involves learning new strategies to achieve goals. In contrast, double-loop learning involves learning to change our goals. Both are needed for organizational change.

Team learning is one way that organizations can generate knowledge and innovation. It is a process that brings individuals together to combine their individual talents toward a shared goal (Senge, 1990). When a team shares a vision it is much more able to ensure that individual learning translates into group and organizational learning. Social media create external pressures that can be addressed through team learning.

In Chapter 8, Jennifer Jones uses a case study of the Vista Community Clinic (VCC) to highlight the benefits of using a team learning approach to develop social media policies. As a nonprofit health clinic social media provided an immediate challenge relating to the protection of patient/client privacy in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), which places federal regulations on what can be shared about a patient’s medical history. Additionally, experienced other challenges including concern over the blurring of boundaries between employees’ professional and personal lives, especially with regard to employee relationships with one another and their personal safety, and concern over brand identity and online reputation. VCC used a team learning process to address these challenges and oversee it overall social media adoption process through the creation of a Technology Outreach Committee (TOC).

The TOC is comprised of 10 core members, 10 adjunct members, and others who attended as their schedules permitted. Its intent is to provide a space for team learning and to develop organization-wide social media policies. The TOC has sought to have a diverse membership in order to provide a wealth of knowledge and skills to address social media issues in an uncertain and risky environment. Through collaboration, the committee has been able to set policies for handling after-hours contact with clients on social media, and developed social media standards and terms of use guidelines. They also created a policy requiring staff using social media to create work-based social media profiles to protect their privacy and set
policies around preserving patient/client confidentiality. Non-TOC staff accepted these policies more readily because they were derived from a committee of staff members rather than handed down by management.

VCC highlights the wealth of change possible for NPOs choosing to integrate social media into the work they do. These organizations must learn how to best manage and adapt their organizations to address the opportunities and challenges presented by social media in an effort to integrate it into organizational culture. As constituencies become more digitally based organizations will have to determine whether their governance structures are still effective. Stone and Ostrower (2007) contended that much of the scholarship on nonprofit governance structures focus on the role and responsibilities of the board of the directors. They argued that nonprofit governance is much more complex and multilayered as it is influenced by other actors within the organization (i.e. executive director, managers, staff etc.) as well as external actors, such as the government entities who outsource government services to NPOs. At the same time, formally established hierarchies are being challenged by the decentralized nature of social media.

In Chapter 9, Kari Steen-Johnson and Bernard Enjolras examine how social media impacted NPO governance using an analysis of Amnesty International Norway (AIN). AIN is legitimized through its affiliation with the larger Amnesty International (AI), which has a centralized governance structure flowing from its International Council, and an International Executive Committee to provide leadership to AI worldwide (Amnesty International, 2014). Beyond this there are sections, international networks, affiliated groups, and individual members. AIN has a similar structure, coordinating information dissemination through vast networks of people and other organizations.

In 2010, AIN developed a new communication strategy to address the increasing gap in communication threshold occurring between the organization and its supporters. It needed to find ways to connect with constituents at their level. To address this issue AIN adopted the use of social media and developed a new website. The intent was to engage constituents in greater debates about human rights in Norway and to provide them with up to date information about human rights campaigns. These changes in communication presented AIN with decisions about whether it would break from tradition or adopt a new way of doing things.

Social media provided AIN with the capacity to engage people on a wider level. Thus the organization was required to step outside of its traditionally insular activism model and focus more broadly. AIN also had to fully integrate communication with members and campaign marketing. To do so, traditional top down thinking had to be relaxed for staff to develop meaningful connections and trust with Norwegian constituents. In order to relax control, however, AIN had to consider whether to
allow others outside the organization discretion to interacting with social media users, which could potentially result in a complete loss of control of reputation and messaging.

In the end, AIN chose to take a less relaxed path allowing people to comment on their social media posts but not to generate new threads. As a result the sites have become more streamlined and professional, preserving AINs overall branding, identity and values. At the core, AIN staff felt it could not risk losing its image as a trustworthy organization by engaging in open debates with its followers on social media. This is ultimately a question all NPOs will have to face at some point. Even when the environment demands cultural change it is still challenging for organizations to do. Through organizational learning however, organizations can find the answer for themselves.

Section 5: Social Media Utilization and Organizational Capacity

Other chapters of this book highlight several potential challenges NPOs may encounter when using social media. How organizations address these challenges ultimately depends on their organizational capacity to do so. Organizational capacity refers to an organization’s set of attributes that allow it to effectively complete its mission (Eisinger, 2002). These attributes include institutionalization, competence, adaptability, and durability, which are especially imperative in environments where “resources are uncertain and scarce, administrative and technical expertise are at a premium, labor is overwhelmingly of the volunteer sort, and demands are high” (p.115). Small and medium NPOs frequently face capacity challenges because they have fewer resources than their larger counterparts but still must do just as much. When an NPO does not possess the necessary capacities to carry out its mission and meet its goals, the result is a disservice to those communities it serves.

In Chapter 10, Rui Sun, Hugo Asencio and Julie Reid explore how social media can help improve organizational capacity in terms of leadership, management, finance, and operation. In today’s technologically focused environment, leaders and managers must strategically determine the role that social media will play in their organizations. They must discern how, or if, social media can help fulfill the organization’s mission, goals, and program requirements. The case study reveals that the American Lung Association in Arizona (ALAA) has consistently relied on government and other grant to fund its programs. Traditionally, neither strategic planning nor social media use has greatly factored into its program administration. That was until a grant from the Arizona Department of Health (ADH) required the ALAA to collaborate with a public relations firm to generate a strategic plan and implement a branding and messaging strategy for the grant initiatives.
The grant, unlike many government and foundation grants, provided specific funding for marketing. As a result the ALAA was able to dedicate staff time and other resources to social media in effort to communicate strategically and build awareness. With a formal strategic plan in place outlining the use of social media, ALAA began to use its previously adopted social media accounts (i.e., Facebook and Twitter) more consistently. With help from the public relations firm, the organization adopted software allowing it to schedule posts to all of its social media accounts and analyze the frequency with which its posts were viewed. The ALAA augmented its scheduled posts with additional informational posts about upcoming events, news conferences, and other calls to action. The overall communication strategy of the ALAA for posting was to keep the information short and simple.

With a new strategy in hand, ALAA began its social media campaign centered on generating awareness of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). The campaign, called My COPD Life, asked a COPD patient (also a volunteer) to use Twitter to talk about the day-to-day life of someone living with COPD. In addition it also created a YouTube video of an interview with the patient/volunteer. The volunteer’s story spread through social media and generated awareness of COPD.

ALAA’s biggest challenge with using social media was that it did not know which social media tools would be most effective or how to use them. Yet, in order to stay true to the grant requirements and the subsequent strategic plan, ALAA worked diligently to increase its technical capacity around using the tools. Staff did so by taking advantage of free trainings and guides on social media use, and engaging in experiential learning about what did and did not work on each social media site. To manage its sites the ALAA involved a young staff member to take the lead on social media maintenance.

Kanter and Fine (2010a) suggested that the success of social media is more about embracing the principles and strategies that make it effective rather than the social media tool being used. But many organizations fear opening up in world that demands such openness and transparency and may prefer a more incremental adoption of social media. This is the case for the United Way of Chester County, Pennsylvania (UWCC) described in Chapter 11. In this chapter, Allison Turner and Kelsey Mattson report that the UWCC has taken a cautious approach to incorporating social media into its marketing mix. Key decision makers have consistently doubted the effectiveness of using social media for their organizations but at the same time recognized its necessity for attracting younger generations. As a result social media have only been used to fundraise and generate limited community engagement.

UWCC has also set up a very stringent protocol for employee use of social media. Only two staff members, the Director of Operations and the Marketing and Communications Intern, are allowed to post content to any of the organization’s social media sites. All other staff must send their contributions to these authorized
staff for posting. To ensure consistency of tone and content of social media posts, UWCC provides basic guidelines for ensuring civility, confidentially, and brand management. It also requires that authorized staff use “the rule of one third” which specifies that one third of all posts deliver original content, one third deliver recycled content, and one third is responsive to comments or likes from “friends.” In addition, all staff were requested to refrain from using their personal social media accounts to express sentiment about the organization’s values or that would harm the organization’s reputation.

In a sense these policies seem strict in the light of the fluidity and freedom associated with social media. But they also represent an organization that is attempting to address the inherent challenges with using social media at the same time it seeks to adopt such strategies. Additionally, the incremental approach has allowed less supportive members of the organization to achieve a level of understanding about how social media can be useful and to know that members of the organization are committed to addressing potential pitfalls. Although these policies may restrict the capacity of most organizational members, social media still have helped UWCC expand its social network and develop relationships with its key stakeholders. Social media have also allowed the organization to collaborate with neighboring United Way chapters to expand its reach and impact.

**CONCLUSION**

NPOs provide much needed pathways for service provision, advocacy, and community engagement, especially for constituencies that normally are underrepresented in democratic systems. Social media can help nonprofits expand their constituent networks, fundraise, initiate calls to action, market their programs, and advocate on behalf of those they serve. As publics continue to adopt new social media technologies it is imperative that NPOs do the same in order to establish a dialogical communication stream with their constituents.

Social media are not a new phenomenon, nor is social networking. Yet, many NPOs have been reticent to adopt such technologies because they are skeptical of their benefits, fear the change they will bring and remain firmly rooted in traditional modes of communication (i.e. draconian control over messaging). Using Rogers’ (1962/1995) innovation adopter categories, organizations can either be thought of as late adopters or laggards. Their skepticism and fear is understandable because social media require a radical departure from traditional organization strategies for marketing, advocacy, and fundraising. Social media use also requires an organizational culture change that can be uncomfortable and unpredictable.
Many scholars (e.g. Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Waters et al., 2009) as well as those in this book argue that in order to be successful in the current technological environment, NPOs must be able to adapt to the quickly changing environment, become more willing to be open and transparent, provide staff with more discretion, and engage in dialogue with clients. Essentially they must become social organizations that develop relationships with those who support them (Kanter & Fine, 2010b). This involves prioritizing meaningful two-way communication with constituents over one-way communication (i.e. information dissemination).

The following chapters build upon the existing data on social media use by nonprofits by expanding the knowledge base to include small and medium-sized nonprofits. The 11 chapters contained herein identify each organization’s use of social media, the challenges that ensued and how these organizations worked to address them. Each case also highlights opportunities derived from using social media and makes recommendations on how other organizations can go about adopting and using social media.

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REFERENCES


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