

Social Media Planning for TRIUMF

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Observations

1. TRIUMF is currently well on the way to developing a good use of social media tools through their use of the Quantum Diaries blog, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
2. The senior management of TRIUMF is open and keen to participation in social media efforts by the staff of the lab.
3. The communications staff is very interested in developing its social media effort but feel that effort is currently haphazard. They wish to bring more organization to their process.
4. There is currently a pool of half a dozen people who are likely to be engaged in social media efforts but there is potential to draw on many more staff lab members in limited ways.
5. The communications staff feels it has no outlet for nuggets of information of a scale less than a front page story on their website.
6. The lab has a present opportunity to make better contact with politicians through LinkedIn and would like to explore social media as a way to reach stakeholders of interest.
7. Some members of the lab are very wary of using Facebook as they feel there are significant privacy issues associated with the site.
8. Some senior staff are concerned that encouraging the use of Facebook and other social media tools will result in time-wasting by staff.
9. Different people are currently proxy users of social media tools for the lab. They sit in different parts of the organization.
10. TRIUMF is a major sponsor of the Quantum Diaries blog as of early 2011 and has a dedicated QD blog for the lab available.

Analysis and recommendations

Readiness

TRIUMF is in an enviable position relative to most research institutions in that it has a senior management staff familiar with social media tools and supportive of their implementation as part of a strategic communications plan.

Recommendation: TRIUMF OSPC should continue to partner with senior management in the directorate, HR, and IT in the implementation of social media tools.

Strategic planning

TRIUMF recognizes that social media tools are not ends unto themselves but simply play a role in the execution of strategic planning. At this time, there is no mention of social media tools or techniques in the communications plan.

Recommendation: TRIUMF should explicitly incorporate mention of the tools and their connections to strategic and business goals in their communications plan.

Touchpoint analysis

Social media has the potential to be a useful tool in many of the public touchpoints for the lab, that is, anywhere that the lab as an entity or through its staff by proxy has contact with those outside the lab.

Recommendation: TRIUMF should conduct a thorough touchpoint analysis to determine where social media could add value for low resource cost to existing touchpoints.

Staff involvement

Effective social media implementation involves the coordinated participation of communications, HR and IT. However, social media plans are most effectively implemented by starting with a small scope and expanding over time. Current work on social media at TRIUMF is occurring primarily within the communications office and director's office and presents a sensible locus to expand from.

Recommendation: Continue to plan social media implementation from the communications office but, over time, actively encourage a select group of staff members from other parts of the lab to play a coordinated role in social media implementation.

Recommendation: Encourage staff who use social media tools to connect with TRIUMF on the platforms they use, e.g. becoming Facebook fans of TRIUMF, follow TRIUMF on Twitter, and join the TRIUMF LinkedIn group.

Diversity of storytelling tools

TRIUMF currently has limited ways of electronically distributing stories due its workflow and Web design. While these efforts are clearly successful and commendable, there is an opportunity for TRIUMF to tell stories in other forms. Social media tools can help achieve this goal, especially for information of a smaller significance than full-length Web features.

Recommendation: Develop a storytelling workflow that allows for the use of social media tools in addition to existing forms. This might include the use of Twitter, Facebook, Quantum Diaries, and a future TRIUMF blog. In implementing a workflow, the major aim should be to recognize that these social media forms of storytelling can be just as powerful as in-house Web stories, and therefore should not be considered only as an afterthought.

Twitter

TRIUMF has already begun its exploration of Twitter as a tool and is generally using it well. The tweets are currently generated by a staff member in the director's office.

Recommendation: The Twitter account should continue to be maintained by a lead individual but others should be deputized to operate it in coordinated support of the lead.

Recommendation: TRIUMF should consider making update perhaps twice per weekday to start with, best in the mid afternoon, and consider expanding the frequency but not to more than once per hour. This frequency limit should be broken if live-tweeting an event, in which case the frequency should be as often as necessary.

Recommendation: TRIUMF should change its user name from @TRIUMF_lab to @TRIUMFlab and publicize the twitter name on materials intended for the public.

Facebook

TRIUMF has had reluctance to engage in Facebook use so far due to concerns of time-wasting, the additional resource requirement of an additional platform to support, and some privacy issues. While each of these is a valid concern, they can all be mitigated and do not negate the usefulness of Facebook as a platform, if used appropriately.

In brief, studies that examine how much use people would make of Facebook at work if free to use it as often as pleased is less than 30 minutes per day and this activity would displace other "time-wasting" activities. Other studies show that small amounts of "time-wasting" actually make staff more productive overall.

With regard to resource needs, there are ways to use Facebook effectively that are mostly automated and require minimal additional resources, outlined below.

As to privacy concerns, Facebook actually has the power to lock down privacy more than essentially any other social network but the controls are sometimes confusing.

Recommendation: Facebook should be used as an aggregator-type platform, automatically drawing on blog updates via an RSS feed and a Facebook application such as NetworkedBlogs. Twitter updates can also be fed to Facebook status updates. TRIUMF should also consider posting the top quality photos it generates and any videos it creates.

Recommendation: TRIUMF should consider some brief training sessions for staff or at least distributing some tutorial information to help staff understand how to use Facebook privacy settings appropriately.

LinkedIn

Some TRIUMF staff use LinkedIn but it does not see widespread adoption at this time. Communications staff have a direct line to some political staffers via LinkedIn and that is a connection worth sustaining. It is possible for LinkedIn to be used more broadly for internal communications but that requires all staff to obtain an account on a third-party service, which is generally impossible and not recommended.

Recommendation: Use LinkedIn as an automatic aggregator for some content, visible to those who choose to use LinkedIn.

Recommendation: As HR becomes more comfortable with social media, LinkedIn should become a useful resource for posting job availability information as LinkedIn is still used primarily for networking and job seeking.

Quantum Diaries

TRIUMF has the potential to be a stand-out leader in the Quantum Diaries project. It should become a major tool for communicating the stories of the lab in a less formal way than typical Web features and covering a broader scope.

Recommendation: TRIUMF's aim for using Quantum Diaries should be to present a picture of the laboratory in all its facets, not just the science. This should be done in the style of brief, informal pieces with an emphasis on storytelling.

Recommendation: TRIUMF should develop a stable of good writers to produce content for Quantum Diaries, internally moderated by the communications office prior to posting. Some of these writers might retell stories from others. Each story should be bylined near the top of the story.

Recommendation: Quantum Diaries posts should appear between three and five times per week to best develop a following of interested readers without overwhelming them and to maintain a strong presence among the other Quantum Diarists.

Blogging

TRIUMF's main blogging platform is Quantum Diaries at this time. While it is a useful and important vehicle, TRIUMF should also consider the possibility of having an in-house TRIUMF blog, which could potentially share some content with Quantum Diaries.

Recommendation: TRIUMF should consider posting to the Quantum Diaries blog two to three times per week at the outset, potentially expanding to five times per week if needed to retain visibility among the other posts on the site.

Recommendation: TRIUMF should explore the integration of a blog into their Web page. This should not necessarily be implemented immediately, but investigated in terms of how it will fit into the strategic plan and implemented following more familiarity with using the Quantum Diaries platform. Any such in-house blog should have a different character to Quantum Diaries, including more emphasis on content relevant to the local community and information relevant to those who have an inherent interest in TRIUMF.

YouTube

TRIUMF has a YouTube channel which should be used for posting short videos of relevance to broad audiences.

Recommendation: YouTube should not be used for posting public lectures or long videos. Instead, iTunesU should be considered as a possible option.

Recommendation: Consistent with the communications plan, YouTube should be used for hosting short videos produced by TRIUMF, especially due to the availability of detailed analytics. Those analytics should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Presentations

TRIUMF has a wealth of presentation material from its scientific presentation. If those could be collected, they would be a valuable resource for the science-interested public as well as scientists from other institutions.

Recommendation: TRIUMF should consider using a service such as SlideShare.net to post the slides of its scientific presentations.

Additions to draft communications plan

TRIUMF recently commissioned a draft Strategic Communications Plan. At this time it has no mention of social media integration and we recommend that items involving social media be incorporated into this plan.

In particular, the following additions to the plan are **recommended**:

1.7 Implement social media tools including Facebook, Twitter, and Quantum Diaries to reach new audience segments and provide new mechanisms for reaching existing audiences.

2.1.1 Provide social media training for a select group of staff who will contribute to the lab's blogs and Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn accounts.

2.10 Implement social media as a tool for demonstrating expertise in key content areas.

3.8 Use social media tools to reach key audiences where they are already active. This includes LinkedIn for government representatives, and Twitter and Facebook for science enthusiasts, especially with a few to forming connections with key influencers in the social media world.

4.9 Develop a Facebook fan page for TRIUMF. Promote this page internally as well as externally so that staff who use Facebook are able to feel more informed about lab activities and have an easy mechanism for sharing information about what they do with family and friends.

5.7 Use contact with local community members, including students, as an opportunity to mention social media tools that TRIUMF is using as a means for continuing to build a relationship with those visitors.

6.4.15 Build use of social media into education and outreach workflows to provide information relevant to the next generation of scientists.

Reference materials

1. How to deal with negative comments online

Chapter 10—"Social media: Responding to Customer Complaints" in *The Social Media Management Handbook* by Nick Smith and Robert Wollan.

2. Social media guidelines examples

a. IBM Social Computing Guidelines: <http://www.ibm.com/blogs/zz/en/guidelines.html>

b. Intel Social Media Guidelines: http://www.intel.com/sites/sitewide/en_us/social-media.htm