SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ADVOCACY

Ernesto Sonido, Jr.

The internet wields tremendous power to reach different groups of people in a short period of time and with minimal resources—presenting an important opportunity for strengthening our advocacy. While internet access is still a real challenge in some places, the fact remains that social media's reach has grown significantly.

This article aims to familiarize readers with social media and social technology, sharing some key ideas and insights to consider in using social media for campaigns.

SOCIAL MEDIA: SOME IDEAS

Social technology refers to any app—short for "application"—that we use now to communicate, which includes both hardware and software. **Social media** refers to a suite of internet-based applications and tools to communicate content that is created by random internet users rather than by a central person or group. This includes social networking sites and blogs. Social technology supports social media.

Let's quickly discuss several key ideas in social media.

Clay Shirky—a "cyber-utopian" or someone who believes in the revolutionary power of the internet—claims the web is the greatest revolution since the printing press. The internet makes it easy to duplicate information and spread it quickly.

Evgeny Mozorov reminds us that social media is not only used by laymen or advocates, but also by government. It is wrong to think that government does not know anything about the internet or social media. In fact, they probably know more. Countries with oppressive regimes have been able to monitor people's movements, by monitoring Facebook and Twitter and other social media platforms.[1]

Malcolm Gladwell, known for his book *The Tipping Point,* opined that *social media alone* wouldn't work. You have to have solid ties.

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[1] It also raises an important point—be careful about security. Do not give away your location and plans all too quickly—when necessary, be cryptic.

Studying the nature of revolutions, he asserts that for most revolutions, there had to be a strong link for people to join the cause.

These three gentlemen have valid points. But there is another view, according to which, the internet or cyberspace, is a great medium to create, duplicate, and share. The internet can and is used by those who can afford it—to anyone who has access to a computer. It is not the single domain of a single class or group.

This fourth view also maintains that the internet is about *conversation*—meaning you still need action. Oftentimes, what happens is the phenomenon of "click advocacy"—whereas people click "like" on Facebook, and join followers. While this is good, it is certainly not enough. You must convince people beyond the digital wall or cyberspace to actually make a real commitment to your cause.

SOCIAL MEDIA: STRENGTHS AND LIMITS

Strength of weak links by Mark Granovetter

Certain kinds of information get to be spread faster through a weak network, such as gossip, scandal, pop news—things we may call "chit chat". Twitter's trending topics, for example, demonstrate this. The idea of the strength of weak links is quite important—when you package information in a "sexy" or broadly appealing way like chit chat or humor, you will disseminate information more quickly.

Rich Dunbar's number

Rich Dunbar's theory is that a person can only maintain an average of *150 personal reciprocated relationships.* Basically, these are the strong relationships you have. Offline, strong ties are what matter.

For all its strengths, social media cannot replace on-the-ground advocacy.

The digital divide: Internet penetration rate and the social network penetration rate

What is the digital divide? It refers to the internet "haves" and "have-nots"—those who have **access** versus those who do not to information and communication technologies.

The **internet penetration rate** is the number of users connected to the internet as a proportion of the population. A smaller subset of this is the **social network penetration rate,** which is the number of users connected to the internet who are actually using social networks. Similarly, the **social media penetration rate** refers to the number of users with internet access using social media.

See the table below for the internet penetration and social media penetration estimated rates in your countries.

In the Philippines, some 29% of Filipinos are connected to the internet (internet penetration rate). Of this 29.1% of the population, an estimated 70% to 80% are on social networks (social network penetration rate). This means that a large percentage of the people who are connected online in the Philippines are connected to social networks.

The penetration rates may be low, but if you consider the sheer size of the population in those countries, then the absolute numbers may be considerable. For instance, India has a population of about 1.237 billion— 12.6% of which means more than 155 million users do have internet

INTERNET PENETRATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA PENETRATION IN SELECTED COUNTRIES IN ASIA

Country	Internet penetration rate (2012)	Social media penetration rate (2013)
Bangladesh	6.3%	2%
Cambodia	4.9%	5%
India	12.6%	5%
Indonesia	15.4%	19%
Nepal	11.1%	7%
Pakistan	10.0%	4%
Philippines	36.2%	29%

Sources: *(For internet penetration rate)* ***http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_Internet_users#cite_note-ITU-IndividualsUsingTheInternet-3*** *(For social network penetration rate). The State of Social in Asia (March 2013).* ***http://wearesocial.net/blog/2013/03/state-social-asia-march-2013/***

access—and more than seven million of these use social media. Therefore the question is—are these internet and social media users among those you want to reach?

But aside from access, **age** can also cause a digital divide. The term "digital native" was coined by Marc Prensky to mean a "person who was born during or after the general introduction of digital technologies and through interacting with digital technology from an early age, has a greater understanding of its concepts" (Wikipeda, n.d.). Many young people are considered **digital natives.** In contrast, Wikipedia (n.d.) defines digital immigrants as those "who [were] born before the existence of digital technology and adopted it to some extent later in life". These tend to be older people, who are often reluctant to adapt to change. They are overwhelmed by the advances in technology. But for those who are intimidated or afraid to get on and into the internet—it becomes easy once you overcome your initial reluctance!

Wealth can also contribute to the digital divide. There are now the so-called "digital poor" and the "digital rich"—and it is all about access and speed. Can you afford to access the internet? Can you afford high-speed internet?

Ultimately, social media is a great force, but you have to pass through a gate. That gate is the device (e.g. phone or computer), which may be costly. But after you get that device, the cost of getting information radically goes down. You still have to buy a computer or a smart phone, and you still need internet access.

SOCIAL TECHNOLOGY ABCs

Before you begin, you must answer two important questions:

1. What do you want to achieve? Examine your objectives and goals.

2. Who are you talking to? For each particular country, know the profile of internet and social media users. In the Philippines for example, these are mostly young people, aged 18 to 24.

Then, remember the ABCs of technology:

- ➲ Attract
- ➲ Build
- ➲ Communicate

You must attract people—through contests, stories, promotions, for example. But getting them interested is not enough. You must *build communities online* by talking to them; if possible, even meeting them offline at one point.

Social technology is relatively easy to use but requires some time to learn and master. Moreover, it is *participative.* It allows you to interact with your reader/viewer/visitor. Never before has there been a medium that allows you to communicate almost instantaneously. However, this is the good side; the bad side is that you cannot screen the people coming in.

TYPES OF SOCIAL TECHNOLOGY

- ➲ Receive and collect e.g. RSS feeds
- ➲ Create and recreate content e.g. blog post, you can get the same blog post and recreate it using another medium
- ➲ React and interact

CEREAL SYNDROME AND APPS

Cereal syndrome is exhibited by an overwhelming array of choices, that you don't know which one to get.

Have you heard of the story of the fox and the cat? The fox had a thousand tricks, while the cat only knew one. When a pack of dogs came, the cat simply climbed up the tree. The fox was eaten by the dogs. **Moral of the story:** you can have as much software as you want, but you must choose what you need based on practicality and you must know how to use it. Save time and space. Choose the "best" application for the situation and device; do not duplicate apps.

SURVIVAL KIT

- ➲ Gadget/devices
- ➲ Internet connection
- ➲ Power
- ➲ Load/credits (top up!) for mobile phones

EXERCISE

Create a social media plan

- ➲ Goal and objectives. What do you want to achieve? Whom do you want to reach?
- ➲ Limitations. What formats will you be using? Will you be using videos? Or just text?
- ➲ Timeframe. When do you want to achieve this? What are the deadlines for your targets?

What other platforms can be used?

- ➲ YouTube
- ➲ Foursquare
- ➲ Flickr
- ➲ Linkedin
- ➲ Ustream
- ➲ Instagram
- ➲ Google Products e.g. Google Hangout, Google +, Google Drive

Explore these platforms, see which ones are useful to you!

DEALING AND INTERACTING IN CYBERSPACE

Persons who want your attention in social media

- ➲ Family and friends
- ➲ Advocates and opinion-makers
- ➲ Marketers/spammers/identity thieves
- ➲ Politicians
- ➲ Trolls (see description below) and other predators

People in social media

We can classify people in terms of the content they post on social media sites.

- ➲ **Lurkers.** These are the people who don't do anything— they are "just there".
- ➲ **Sharers.** We all know who these are! They are the people who share everything about their lives—from the moment they wake up to the time they sleep. This includes what they ate, the problem with the bus, etc.
- ➲ **Entrepreneurs.** These are the marketers or people selling products
- ➲ **Pundits.** These are the people who have an opinion on everything and want to speak their minds, especially about current events.
- ➲ **Mentors.** Anyone who helps you is a mentor. Mentors are those who answer when you a post a question.
- ➲ **Trolls.** Trolls are those who harass or malign you online. They want to provoke and bait you. For example, if you posted something on land reform, a troll will keep on questioning your motives and disagree with you without saying anything constructive. Be careful of trolls!

People's responses on social media

Often times, people do one of six things:

Praise	Question
Criticize	Condemn
Challenge	Give Attention
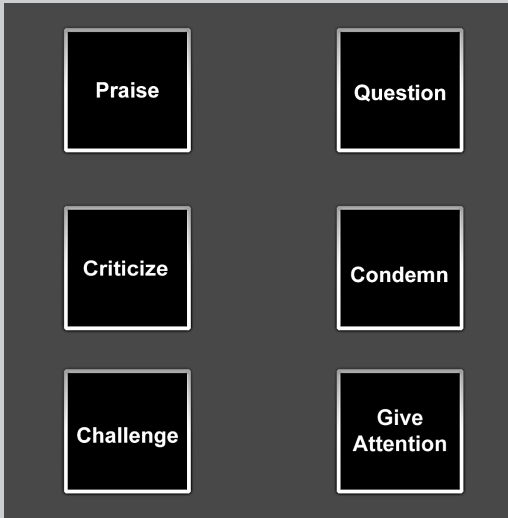
➲ **praise** (retweet, "that's a nice post/comment");

➲ **question** ("is your info correct/valid?");

➲ **criticize** ("this might be wrong", "you're not doing it correctly");

➲ **condemn** ("that's wrong"; "you're not supposed to do that");

➲ **challenge** ("prove it"); and

➲ [give] **attention** ("hi").

You have to temper your answer, depending on what was said, how it was said, and the implication of what was said.

For example, there are things you don't need to react to. A "thank you" is an appropriate response to praise. If it's a troll who wants to challenge you for no known reason, you can just ignore it. If it's criticism that's leveled at you, and it is constructive, then you can engage. *But at all times, you must keep your cool. Don't get personal even if the other side does.*

If you don't know the answer, here are several suggestions:

➲ "Sorry, I'll get back to you on that."

➲ "Thank you for your comment, can I talk to you offline about this?"

Many people are sensitive about how you answer—and you must skillfully handle questions. It's not always *what* you say, but *how* you say it that matters!

PLANNING, GOAL SETTING AND ASSESSING SOCIAL MEDIA EFFORT

Before you get started with social media, you must have a plan, with goals and assessment of social media effort.

Goals and objectives

The following are the usual goals of people with social media presence; these goals may vary depending on your purpose.

- ➲ Sales
- ➲ Awareness
- ➲ Conversion and Community Building
- ➲ Conversation
- ➲ Reputation Building
- ➲ Issue Resolution

For NGOs, "sales" can perhaps mean getting people to donate money to our cause. NGOs normally seek to build awareness on their issues—such as land rights. In addition, NGOs want to change the way people think about certain issues—to convert people to our advocacy, get conversations rolling, and build community. We would also like to build our reputation and credibility—gaining recognition for the work we do. Finally, if there are problems, note that issues often have a lifespan of two weeks, after which the tension tends to go to another issue. Sometimes, evaluate if it's worth responding to the issue and whether to do this online.

Who are you talking to?

Your goals and your messages will depend on *who* you are talking to. Your targets can be categorized as:

- ➲ Primary Targets
- ➲ Secondary Targets
- ➲ Tertiary Targets

As in your stakeholder analysis, where there are primary, secondary, and tertiary stakeholders—you have primary, secondary, and tertiary targets. Primary targets are those you want to directly affect or reach; secondary targets are those whom you want to indirectly reach. Tertiary targets are generally institutional targets, such as the media, public persons, donors, and governments.

Monitoring tools

Here are some online tools you can use to monitor your users' behavior, your brand, etc.

- ⊃ Mention—basically monitors your brand name or reputation online, anytime anywhere.
- ⊃ Tweriod—for Twitter, put in your Twitter profile, and within 5 minutes gives you the time when most of your users/ followers are online. You will know when to be online, and when to post.
- ⊃ Google analytics—allows you to check how many people visit your site; this can be embedded in your blog although it needs to be activated in some sites.

The Cs of social media

- ⊃ Consumption
- ⊃ Content
- ⊃ Connection
- ⊃ Conversation
- ⊃ Conversion
- ⊃ Community

People use social media to consume information. They are also interested in content and connections. In that sense, it is not enough you write a good story—you must get connected. People use Facebook and Twitter a lot to connect with many people. You must start a *conversation,* and especially for campaigners—we aim for *conversion.*

You must find a purpose and identify your community. Otherwise, social technology does not mean anything. The sweet spot would be to put it all together, using even the simplest of social technologies to communicate to a community.

One fashion company in the UK has almost zero advertising. Instead, it invested in social media—particularly in building an online community. It did not use that online community to advertise to, but rather it interacted with that community, and in the process developed a loyal following.

Note that connecting is not only done online, but *offline* as well. We have to transcend the digital sphere and move to the offline sphere and connect to the community. For ultimately, social media is about building *community.* **#**

FACEBOOK

Facebook is the world's most popular social networking website. Since its launch in 2004, it has grown to be one of the most recognized information channels on the internet today. Almost everybody, if not everybody, has heard of it. On Facebook, registered users can add people as friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves.

Signing up for an account

It is quite easy! Go to **www.facebook.com**, click on the "sign up" button, which will take you to the sign-up form. Enter your name, birthday, gender, and email address, and then pick a password. After you complete the sign up form and submit it, you will receive an email to the address you provided. Just click the confirmation link to complete the sign-up process.

Remember to:

➲ Select a password that cannot be easily be deduced. Don't use your birthday, the number set 000000 or 12345, or your wife's or girlfriend's name!

➲ Customize your account. You can make it private. You can set it so that you receive notifications when you are tagged in posts. You also have the means to approve or disapprove any related information you were tagged in. You can also classify, organize, and even block contacts.

Facebook has many applications that may be useful to advocates, such as Pages, Groups, Events, and Causes.

Facebook Pages and Groups

What is the difference between a Page and a Group in Facebook?

Facebook **Pages** were essentially designed to be the official profiles for entities such as celebrities, brands or businesses, while Facebook **Groups** are for small group communication and for people to share their common interests and express their opinions. Groups allow people to come together around a common cause, issue or activity to organize, express objectives, discuss issues, post photos, and share related content.

Pages by default are open to the public, while Groups can be public, by-invitation only, or secret/private.

A Page could be any of the following:

➲ Local business or place

➲ Company, organization or institution

➲ Brand or product

➲ Artist, band or public figure

➲ Entertainment

➲ Cause or community

Just think of an FB Page as a website/webpage and the FB Group as a forum or group chats.

Create your Page

1. Go to facebook.com/pages and click "Create Page" on the upper right hand corner.
2. Fill out required information.
3. Add a photo.
4. Suggest your page to friends.
5. Import contacts.
6. Start writing content.
7. Get a vanity URL (personalized address on Facebook)
8. Use tools that are available.
9. Assign other users to act as administrators of the page.

Create a Group

1. From your home page, go to the Groups section on the left side menu and click Create Group.
2. A pop-up box will appear, where you'll be able to add a group name. Add members and select the privacy settings for your group. Click "Create" when you're done.
3. Once the group is created, you'll be taken to the group's page. To get started, click at the top right of the page and select Edit Group Settings. From here you can add a group description, set a group email address, add a group picture and manage members.

Facebook Events

Another useful tool in Facebook is Events. You can use this to announce and invite people to your activities.

Create an Event

1. Click Events in the left menu of your homepage.

2. Click "Create Event" on the top right.

3. Fill in the event name, details, location, time and then choose your privacy settings. Please note that you must include an event name and time.

4. Click "Invite Friends" to add friends to the guest list. Check the names of the people you want to invite and then click "Save".

5. Click "Create".

You'll be taken to your event's page where you can share posts, upload photos, invite more guests and edit event details.

Facebook Causes

Facebook's Causes helps people mobilize their networks to expand their selected cause, such as a foot march or a particular organization. Causes have enormous potential to help in fundraising, awareness-raising, and recruiting supporters. **#**

TWITTER

Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read messages known as **tweets.** Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the author's profile page and delivered to subscribers who are known as **followers.**

Senders can restrict delivery to those in their circle of friends or, by default, allow open access.

Similar to Facebook you just have to sign up for Twitter. Just go to **Twitter.com** to register. Caveats and reminders regarding signing up for Facebook are similar to those for Twitter. Remember that when signing up for Twitter, you have the option to keep your Twitter account public (default mode) or protected.

What does this mean?

Protected Twitter accounts require the approval of each person who would want to view that Twitter account.

What is the difference between public and protected tweets?

When you sign up for Twitter, you have the option to keep your tweets public (the default account setting) or protect your tweets. Accounts with protected tweets require manual approval of each and every person who may view that account's tweets.

Also when you protect your tweets, the following happens:

- ➲ People will have to request to follow you; each follow request will need approval.
- ➲ Your tweets will only be visible to users you've approved.
- ➲ Other users will not be able to retweet your tweets. Learn more.
- ➲ Protected tweets will not appear on Twitter search or Google search.
- ➲ Replies you send to people who aren't following you will not be seen by those users (because you have not given them permission to see your tweets).

You cannot share permanent links to your tweets with anyone other than your approved followers.

> **Note:** links, even those shared via DM, are neither protected nor public. Anyone with the link will be able to view the content.

You can change your Twitter feed from public to protected. Any tweets posted in private or protected mode will remain as is even if you change your feed to public.

Start tweeting!

BLOGGING

What is a blog?

Blogs are websites that contain posts—usually arranged from most recent to oldest, that can be a combination of text, images, sounds, and/or video. A blog can be public or private. It can be hosted on a blog farm for free, or it can be self-hosted.

There is almost no limit to what can be done on a blog, and so, blogs have a great potential to be a news/information source and quick response tool.

How to set up a blog and become a blogger

Setting up a blog is easy and normally takes less than 10 minutes.

1. Sit down and decide why you are setting up a blog. What are your goals and objectives? What is your mission? How do you want to deliver it?

2. Go to **www.wordpress.com** or to **www.blogger.com** to set up an account—these are two of the easiest-to-use blog sites.

3. Think of a name for your blog. Make sure the name reflects your intentions. Also avoid using a long title for your blog.

4. Make sure you check the account and privacy settings in order to customize who can read or even comment on your blog.

⊙ If your blog is a closed blog—meaning only a select number people can access it—make sure that in the settings, only members can read the posts. You can also opt to make the blog unsearchable on the internet. Next, invite the members of your blog to register. You will need their emails for this.

⊙ If your blog is open to the public, it is recommended that all comments be *moderated* and all commenters should register, to ensure you have control over what happens on your blog.

5. You can further customize the look of your blog by selecting a theme and/ or other apps.

6. Now you can start creating content for your blog. Always remember *that you are responsible for whatever appears on your blog.*

Some options

You can also get a domain name for your blog. This will allow you to create a name for your blog without the WordPress or Blogger name, similar to self-hosted blogs. You can buy the domain name and redirect it to your WordPress or Blogger blog. The domain name would cost around $10 to $35 per year, depending on whether you get a **.**com, **.**ph or **.**net domain name. Also you can get as many domain names as you can and redirect them to your blog.

Or you can opt to self-host your blog. This means renting server space. If you do this, then a domain name is essential. This will be the address and name of your blog. People can go to your blog with this domain name. **#**