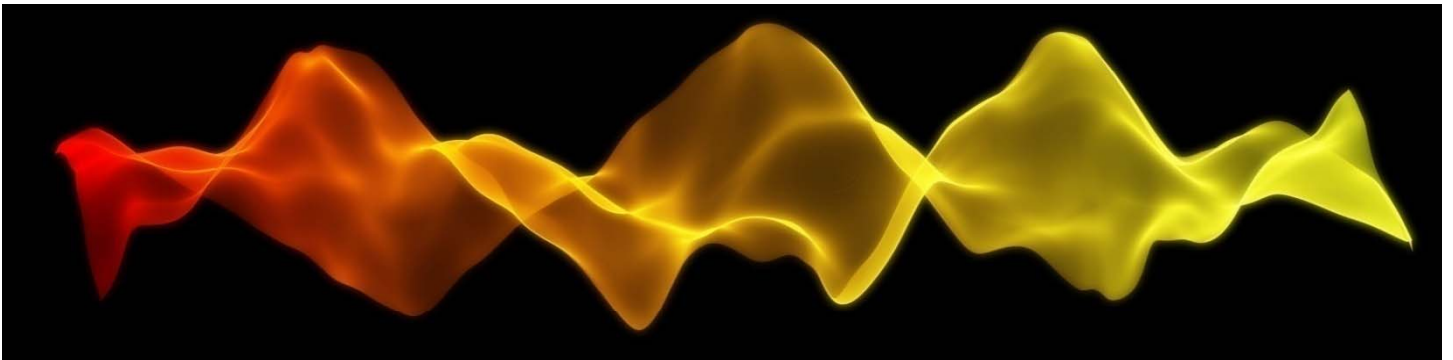


digital influence in news and politics

september 28, 2009



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About Sparxoo

Sparxoo is leading a new generation of business—one that prioritizes deeper customer engagement, harnesses the power of social media, and strives for purposeful, sustainable, social impact.

Founded in 2007 with over 20 years of digital media, strategy, and creative experience, the Sparxoo team leads strategic initiatives in branding, digital marketing, and business development. We fuse left and right brain thinking to inspire creativity, innovation, and ultimately to achieve breakthrough results.

We have led digital projects in news, sports, education, lifestyle, travel, and shopping, including our projects across ad networks, video, and mobile. Our clients include industry leaders NBC, Comcast, Newsweek, Lifetime, and Habitat for Humanity. We are proud of our collaboration with entrepreneurial teams at TOMS, Snipi, Next Step, and Clean Plates. Beyond achieving ambitious goals, we seek to build meaningful relationships and inspire a sustainable community of entrepreneurship and corporate leadership.

Please visit our blog at Sparxoo.com to learn more about our ambitious team of creatively strategic entrepreneurs.



digital influence in news and politics

Report Background

Never before have so many tools been available to analyze and clarify digital influence. The 2009 Digital Influence in News and Politics Report leverages these tools to measure the influence of those best-in-class media companies in the digital sphere.

Sparxoo evaluated over 100 news and politics media outlets (from the New York Times to the Daily Beast to NPR) in a comprehensive study of content, social and multimedia influence.

The Report crowns CNN as the #1 digital influencer, followed by The New York Times (a pleasant surprise for "The Gray Lady"). The Digital Influencer in News and Politics Report confirms and debunks many of the long-held media myths perpetuated by marketers, brand managers and other business leaders. It is through these findings that we can re-align the media compass to find tomorrow's true north.

letter of introduction



2009 has been a major struggle for old media. There have been 11 significant newspaper bankruptcy filings this year, including owners of the LA Times, Chicago Tribune, Philadelphia Inquirer, Star Tribune of Minneapolis, and the Seattle Post Intelligencer. Online upstarts are building scalable business models with free, real-time content that wreaks havoc in the print world, potentially making newspapers obsolete. Further, advertisers are tasked with being more creative in pushing their ad budgets further. Not only are total budgets smaller, but they are rapidly being transitioned into online advertising, highlighted by an exploding infatuation with social media. Print advertising revenue fell 30% in the first half of the year, and there are fears that few newspapers will go to print as early as 2011.

Our team at Sparxoo embarked on this study, "Digital Influence in News & Politics," to evaluate how drastically the landscape has shifted. We defined digital influence as having a strong content voice that users actively engage with and share across platforms. We developed a content authority index to measure strength of content voice, a social power index to measure engagement and sharing, and a multimedia success index to measure success via audio, video, and mobile. Our team scoured for data that show the breadth and depth of consumer interaction with news & politics leaders, including overall traffic, YouTube presence, podcasting, Twitter followers, and Facebook fans. We considered 100 different properties ranging from household names to US News, The Drudge Report, and Christian Science Monitor (please see methodology for more details).

As we compiled the results, we wondered if the much-hyped Huffington Post had surpassed the New York Times or if new entrant Daily Beast had surged ahead of Newsweek. Given how far out of favor newspapers have fallen, we wondered if newspapers have any digital influence at all. We were surprised by the results and believe there are significant learnings to be found in these rankings.

The headline: "While new entrants such as the Huffington Post (founded in 2005) have built tremendous momentum in a short period of time, traditional media still wields the largest digital influence when it comes to news & politics." Indeed, the top seven digital influencers are all old media companies that have successfully leveraged assets to build a strong presence across platforms, led by #1 CNN and #2 New York Times. Whether you like them or not, #3 Fox News continues as the dominant voice of the right. NPR surprised us, coming in at #4 with high quality content that users love. While we expected Huffington Post (#8) to be the top player among Internet companies, a small company in the Valley, Google, placed just a few spots behind at #12.

At Sparxoo, we believe that a seismic shift is afoot. We have said, "an earthquake has shaken our social foundation, shifting the power of the chosen few and giving opportunity to the many." Indeed, the opportunity is there for new entrants such as The Daily Beast, but we must respect the strength of established organizations such as the New York Times, founded in 1851, that embrace today's digital world and attempt to reinvent themselves. As we emerge into a new economy, forward thinking leaders will survive, and perhaps even prosper.

Warm regards,

David Capece
Managing Partner, Sparxoo

2009 results: top 25 digital influencers in news & politics

| | Digital Influence Rank | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|---------|--------|------------|
| | OVERALL | Content | Social | Multimedia |
| CNN | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| New York Times | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Fox News | 3 | 4 | 7 | 1 |
| NPR | 4 | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| CBS News | 5 | 6 | 13 | 2 |
| BBC News | 6 | 7 | 17 | 3 |
| MSNBC | 7 | 8 | 12 | 6 |
| Huffington Post | 8 | 11 | 3 | 18 |
| ABC News | 9 | 15 | 10 | 4 |
| LA Times | 10 | 12 | 15 | 11 |
| Time | 11 | 17 | 6 | 12 |
| Google News | 12 | 10 | 24 | 9 |
| USA Today | 13 | 9 | 16 | 14 |
| Wall Street Journal | 14 | 21 | 8 | 13 |
| Washington Post | 15 | 14 | 5 | 23 |
| Yahoo News | 16 | 3 | 23 | 24 |
| Chicago Tribune | 17 | 13 | 18 | 16 |
| PBS | 18 | 20 | 21 | 10 |
| Economist | 19 | 23 | 9 | 21 |
| Newsweek | 20 | 19 | 14 | 20 |
| Daily Kos | 21 | 18 | 11 | 25 |
| NBC News | 22 | 16 | 25 | 17 |
| Politico | 23 | 22 | 20 | 19 |
| New Yorker | 24 | 24 | 19 | 15 |
| DrudgeReport | 25 | 25 | 22 | 22 |

Please see the "Methodology" section for detailed descriptions of our overall and category rankings.

differing approaches to social influence



By, Ethan Lyon

The Internet was born in 1969 as a communication tool developed by the military to increase the flow of information between academics and researchers. At first, there were a couple of murmurs between a few computers. Then, the backbone of the operation was further developed by the private sector. As technology advanced, the Internet became faster and faster and millions of people began adopting the new technology, vast networks began to form. What started as a whisper between a few computers over two decades ago, now influences the way we communicate and receive information on a daily basis.

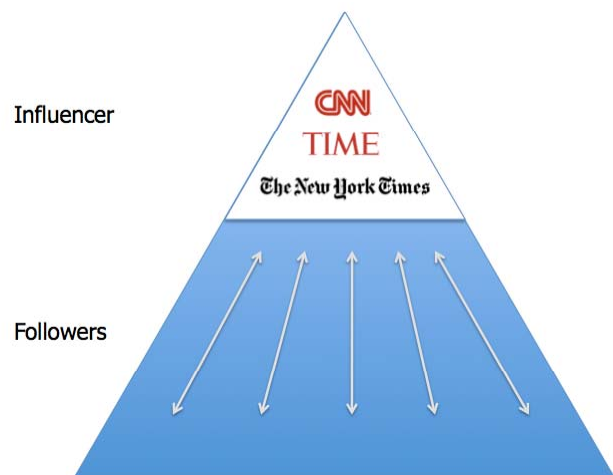
Today, social media is the number one activity on the web; Facebook alone has added 100 million users in the past nine months; and more than 1.5 million pieces of data are shared on Facebook, daily. As 24 out of 25 newspapers are experiencing record declines in circulation, answers about the future of news and politics might lie in social media. More and more, social networks are the go-to source for the freshest, up-to-date information. Accordingly, media companies are playing a much larger role on these networks. How are media companies faring amid these new waters? The Digital Influence in News & Politics Report examines several popular sites (Twitter, Facebook and Digg) to determine the most influential news and politics media outlets on the social web.

To evaluate social influence, we explore the social structure of Twitter, Facebook and Digg, including best practices by the top digital media influencers. At the top of the social influencer list is CNN, followed by The New York Times and Huffington Post. Each of the top social influencers owns a particular quality: CNN is about facts and churning news in a 24-hr cycle; The New York Times has quality, quantity and an insider perspective; The Huffington Post leverages the talents of its audience and digital newsroom to find the juiciest, freshest news and politics stories. In fact, The New York Times makes the top three list across many of the largest social media platforms (i.e. Twitter, Facebook and Digg).

Though the Huffington Post might outwardly build social capital (i.e. through a community of supporters), CNN and the New York Times indirectly harness the power of the crowds. As we'll discuss, The Huffington Post takes a circular approach to build social capital, while the New York Times and CNN take a pyramid approach. We have discovered, based on the company's social capital building approach, certain social networks are more conducive to specific fan-building strategies than others.

The Social Twyramid

Twitter is a pyramid-shaped community-- or a triangle-shaped social capital structure. At the top, there are the key influencers, such as CNN, the New York Times, and TIME--with millions of followers tuning into the most recent celebrity flub or crisis. These Twitter influencers are the capstone; they are the go-to source of information. It is not a one-way relationship, however. The capstone has to be supported by the rest of the pyramid below it-- otherwise it would be nothing more than a speed bump. In essence, the number of Twitter followers is a gauge of influence; the more followers you have, the higher your pyramid stands; the greater your social capital.



differing approaches to social influence



Rally 'Round the Fans

Would you be fans of 300 brands on Facebook? For most people, the answer is no. Would you, however, follow hundreds of brands on Twitter? Our relationships are different based on the community structure we operate in. What is the difference? From its inception, Facebook has been about cultivating personal communities. Friend recommendations is an important initiative that illustrates how relevance and personal investment are involved in Facebook—not the case with Twitter. Instead of the pyramid structure, Facebook is more like Ring Around the Rosie--every person is holding hands and can see the faces of all of those within their ring. When a Facebook user wants to invite The New York Times or The Huffington Post, NPR or Google into their circle, it carries much more weight than if they followed them on Twitter. It would dilute the quality of your circle to invite 300 brands to join. For those few brands that are a part of our personal community, there is a higher level of engagement and interaction that cannot be matched on Twitter.

Ring Around the Pyramid

If there were a mashup between Twitter and Facebook, it would be Digg. There are smaller pyramids in the middle of a community circle. Those playing Ring Around the Rosie have a relationship built on reciprocity (you digg this submission, I will digg your submissions) and those pyramids in the middle are the collectively preferred sources. The tallest of those pyramids is the Huffington Post, with 1.1 million diggs in the past year; the New York Times stands beside it with 617k diggs; and CNN with 464k diggs.

Each digital community has a particular dynamic that makes it unique and differentiates it from its peers. Based on our findings, the social community structure--a pyramid, ring or a blend--you wish to enter will inform your strategy and reflect differing levels of user engagement. Before setting out to collect hundreds of thousands of Twitter followers, Digg and Facebook fans, answer a simple, basic question: what is the best way I can build influence?

the value shift in digital



By, Katherine Parsons

If the 80-90s were marked by overt capitalism and indiscreet pursuit of wealth, the recession of 2008-09 marks a millennial shift to a new, more humble and deliberate form of business. While “owning it” used to be about Wall Street bonuses and “bigger is better” greed, today “owning it” has taken on a different tone. People’s priorities have come into focus and they recognize that business is about more than just flashy material accumulation, entitlement and narrowly defined success. We see this new era marked by passion, trust and authenticity.

Trust and authenticity may not be the first qualities that come to mind, when you think of news and politics, but perhaps they should be. Many of the top political and news sites in the Digital Influence in News and Politics Report have succeeded in part because of their understanding of this value shift and the way in which they address it: by becoming trusted leaders in an area they carve out for themselves, be it a certain audience/demographic, multimedia, methodology, or tone of voice. The new digital age has furthered the ability of these sites to affect influence, rapidly and deeply.

In a time of savvy and distrustful consumers, having a sincere personality and stance on a specialized area will be a competitive brand differentiator and will in turn yield both attention and profits. Outlined below are three tips for helping your company “own” a strategic category, as evident in the top digital news/political influencers we have identified:

1. Stay true to core.

Staying true to core is about offering a digital experience-- be it visually provocative, innovative multimedia or other-- that authentically represents the brand’s essence.

When consumers go to npr.com, for example, they know they can expect news closely integrated with multimedia audio applications. A menu bar across the top of the npr.com site prominently features “listen”, “hourly news” (with audio symbol) and “podcast” tabs (see below). A quick look at the “most popular” site of the day is aptly titled “Exclusive First Listen: The Avett Brothers” and the second most popular article is entitled “Growing up the iPod way”, also featuring music/listening content (9/22/09). The NPR site allows users to “own it” through customized playlists which allow users to have a personal connection with the brand, important when we are upholding the principles of authenticity and trust. True to its radio heritage, auditory news is central to NPR’s mission and what drives passionate consumers to its digital site and scores it 10 of the top 100 podcasts.



2. Listen to the people.

Sometimes being a leader, is simply knowing when to listen to and promote others. Google’s news approach embodies this principle. Google’s area of differentiation is being an aggregator: “Aggregated headlines and a search engine of many of the world’s news sources.” Google news is a one stop shop that works because it provides the most relevant content across the web, not just daftly offering up their personal opinion on every topic.

the value shift in digital

Google has access to countless news articles, blogs and stories and offers value by filtering them and prioritizing them based on content volume and pagerank. People trust Google's algorithmic approach to choose and aggregate the news that is most relevant to them-- be it a mainstream press release or more niche topic served up off the "longtail." This trust, simplicity and consumer-friendly attitude is central to Google's brand. Google news is a leader and influencer because it listens to what people are asking for and knows how to answer to it.

3. Membership has its value.

The digital influencers have learned that standing out from a crowd really helps you stand out to the crowd. What this means is that rather than boiling the ocean and trying to blindly appeal to everyone, successful news and political sites are serving up distinct opinions aimed at discrete target audiences. The hope is to really capture that particular market and then become the go to source for those outside of the group to also learn about the respective "other" opinion and widen their horizons.

Take Fox News – it is well known for eliciting strong reactions, be it in favor or opposition to a popular stance.

Despite its tagline "fair and balanced," Fox news is often called elitist or Republican right-wing for political commentary such as "Obama wimps out" and "Why my time with the radical left makes me wonder about Obama" (9/22/09). Still, Fox News stands strong to its audience for talking in a distinct tone. Attention is the name of the digital game and is what helps make this site another top influencer. With about 1 million RSS subscribers, you can't help but think that members of more than just the alleged right-wing Republicans are coming to Fox for their daily dose of news.

"Owning it" is about knowing what you are good at and pursuing it wholeheartedly—with authenticity, trust and passion. A strong brand, therefore, continues to be central to exerting digital influence. Consumers need to know what area is the point of differentiation and what the special promise is that your digital site offers over another. So, go forth and be the king of your turf, and in turn you too might display digital influence like those news/politics sites on our Digital Influence in News and Politics Report. Just remember to define your kingdom first.



innovate, innovate, innovate



By, Tara Lane

Recently, we have seen magazines run out of business due to low readership and a failing economy. While some industries and media outlets have yet to fully adapt to digital media, there are many more who are getting ahead of the curve. To do so, they're reinventing their brands and adapting to the digital trend through social media and digital tools. They are developing new ways to host and produce content that is not only accessible, but also appealing to viewers and users of all ages.

Typically, we think mainstream media is clunky and not digitally savvy – and for a while, this was true. Major news outlets were late adopters to the digital trend, and it has shown for many of them. Still, The New York Times is a top social influencer. It's now clear how they quickly adapted to new technologies to innovate and reinvent the art of journalism and reporting. We've studied the top media outlets from our social media influencer report – CNN, The New York Times, and NPR – to see what they're doing to stay ahead of the curve.

CNN

CNN was the first major broadcast network to start using Twitter, and they've leveraged this lead to their advantage. The network has been praised for their ability to adapt to social media, encouraging viewers to give feedback on news reports through Twitter. CNN's heavy use of the popular microblogging site has drawn more than 2 million Twitter followers to the main channel, with additional followers on more specialized channels and personalities such as Anderson Cooper. They promote Twitter on news broadcasts, through user commentary flashing on the bottom of the screen, and live video streams and commentary from reporters on through the service as well.

Their popular iReport platform allows users to send in their own content for publication, including videos and photos featuring local perspectives. Some of this content helps to spark national coverage, and is linked from CNN's main web site. They've allowed

users to help make the news, something that other networks haven't quite grasped.

The New York Times

The NYT utilizes social media unlike any other major newspaper. From Twitter to Facebook to YouTube, they are present in every corner of social media. They receive little credit for their efforts, however. This may be in part to their nickname, "The Gray Lady." In May, the paper created a new position for a Social Media Editor in a move to consolidate and study social media efforts--a move that was criticized by a number of major blogs. Why are people so critical, and why isn't the NYT being recognized? It may be because they've been cited as not tech-savvy enough in the past, or that they've been such an institution for so long, it's difficult to embrace such a modern change.

Still, much of their appeal from other social media users is their content: well-written blogs, interesting videos, and stories that apply to people all around the world. The blogs offer perspective and peel back the many layers of a news story. Twitter updates from various topics: books, arts, global, photo and more allow users to pick and choose their content without being overwhelmed. Best of all, their content is still provided free of charge, despite the major move to digital.

The Huffington Post

Dubbed "The Internet Newspaper," the Huffington Post aligns their organization with the same guiding principles that accelerated the growth of the web: crowdsourcing. This innovative approach to content development has catapulted the four-year-old web service to number three on our social influencer list. Though the Huffington Post has a core of approximately 60 journalists on staff, they rely on their vast network of influencers and fans to keep the online news site ahead of the curve. With over three thousand bloggers on hand, including icons such as Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton to Neil Young and Kenneth Cole, The Huffington Post leverages their

innovate, innovate, innovate



network to gain credibility and authority in the online news and politics community.

Recently, the Huffington Post has been pushing to engage with their community through Facebook Connect. The Huffington Post has already cultivated a sizable community, however. Besides being the darling of the Digg front page, The Huffington Post has an estimated one million comments every month. Though there may be stories of

how mainstream media isn't adopting social media, we've found that it's quite the opposite. Though it has taken them longer, it's easy to forget that it's always a much longer process for large media outlets to innovate and adapt to anything new. If we allow them the time to find their footing, we'll be able to reap the benefits in the future.

the value of reciprocity in social influence

By, Ethan Lyon

In the digital age, reciprocity has never been more essential and evident than in the development of communities. Whether it's digging a friend's story, introducing a colleague on LinkedIn or adding a link to a fellow blogger on your blogroll, reciprocity is an integral part of online community development. In our Digital Influence in News and Politics Report, we found those with the greatest social influence heavily relied upon reciprocity.

The Digital Influence in News and Politics Report illustrates benefits of reciprocity and its impact on social influence in the blogosphere. The main contributor to a blog's influence is the number of links pointing to the blog. Often times, bloggers use link exchanges as a way to drive traffic to their blog and network with their peers. Link exchanges tie together large communities of bloggers and symbolize affiliation. There is an etiquette involved between link exchanges that is based on reciprocity: if a fellow blogger adds your website to their blog, it's common courtesy to do the same. As your blog is added to more blogrolls, the greater your influence within the community.

The Digital Influence in News

and Politics Report shows of the handful of blogs on the top 25 influencer list, half of the most backlinked sites are blogs. The Huffington Post (2), Daily Kos (3), The Drudge Report (5), Real Clear Politics (6) and Politico (10) are those that made the top 10 most backlinked sites. To illustrate the impact of reciprocity on backlinks and social influence, consider The Huffington Post. The internet news site places number two on our social influence list and features over a hundred links to blogs, news and columnists ranging topics such as politics, media, business, living and the list goes on.

As media transition to more digital formats, reciprocity will continue to increase in value. In essence, even simple link exchanges build social capital between community members. The web has enabled and empowered those without a voice to get up and make their opinion heard. The Huffington Post, Daily Kos, The Drudge Report are all soap boxes constructed from the nails and wood of the web. Other media could take a lesson from bloggers and find new and innovative ways to engage and activate new audiences through reciprocity.



Dear Daily Beast Editor, Tina Brown,

By, David Capece

We believe The Daily Beast is tomorrow's digital leader: a smart, edgy, fearless site that appeals to a young, tech savvy audience. At Sparxoo, we are big fans of the Daily Beast's fresh approach to news. We love your use of cheat sheets, highlight hot topics, and go deep on the "Big Fat Story." Tina, you have said: "The Daily Beast doesn't aggregate. It sifts, sorts, and curates. It's a speedy, smart edit of the web from the merciless point of view of what interests the editors." We think this is the right approach.

As Daily Beast fans, we were disappointed that you didn't make our top 25. The truth is that having been around for just 1 year, you haven't had enough time to build traction to compete with the big guns... yet. While you are building momentum, Daily Beast still has a Google page rank of 7, just under 25,000 Twitter followers and 15,000 Facebook fans, and less than 10,000 RSS subs. These stats pale in comparison to the market leaders. We want to help you, our friends at The Daily Beast, so we are sharing a roadmap to success:

Go for Obsessively Excited Users: In today's cluttered market, you need to rise above the crowd and make a real connection with your users. NPR is best-in-class at developing deep relationships with their fans as evidenced by tremendous number of Twitter Followers and Facebook Fans. Get your users to share and recommend The Daily Beast.

Build a Multimedia Presence: We know that video and podcasts can be more expensive than writing a blog, but you've got to do it. The written word has dominated the Internet for the last 15 years, but we're moving beyond to a multi-dimensional experience. We see you have videos, but it's not enough. And how about launching a podcast?

Push for More Quantity: Yes, we'll take quality over quantity any day. However, as the beast, size should matter to you. Huffington Post has done an amazing job with a content creating machine that makes it #2 on links into site and #1 in Diggs. We did a Google search on "Obama" for the last 30 days, and Huffington Post showed up more than anyone else except USA Today and Yahoo News. If you don't have the manpower in-house, you can partner with others, and empower your users to create content on your behalf.

Aggregating Isn't So Bad: You specifically say that you don't want to aggregate. We understand that aggregating seems so cheap. But in truth, it does have some value. Google has made it to #12 on our list even though they don't create any content. Think about how you can aggregate in a way that is true to your mission.

Thanks for listening Tina. Keep up the good work, incorporate some of our tips, and we hope to see you surge up the list next year.

Sincerely,

Ana the Analyst



I am Ana the Analyst, and I am here to help you manage your business to achieve its potential. When I think about analytics, it's more than just finance and accounting. Yes those are the basics, but it's also about understanding your customer, making pricing decisions, analyzing new business opportunities, and long-term strategic planning. While I do love numbers, I also consider business problems from your perspective. I try to think like you do to inform decisions.

Methodology



Sparxoo considered many factors that contribute to digital influence by gathering hundreds of statistical data points. After many debates, we honed in our focus to content, social, and multimedia influence as key measures of today's influential leaders. We considered the overall reach of high quality, frequent information, as well as the depth of engagement and interaction across platforms. As we aggregated data, we considered several model fits and ultimately chose a hybrid model that took into account extreme performances. Our category analysis was based on the following statistical components.

Content Influence. Content influence is a measure of the reach of content to a significant audience as measured by unique users, combined with the quantity and quality of information presented as measured by search results, Google page rank, and RSS subscribers.

Social Influence. Social influence is a measure of user and blog recognition that expands influence across a greater community. We considered Twitter followers, Facebook fans, links into site, and number of Diggs.

Multimedia Influence. Multimedia influence is a measure of ability to engage users in new media forms beyond the "written word." We focused on YouTube channel subscribers and video views, top ranked podcasts, and top ranked mobile apps.

top 25 digital influencers in news and politics

1

Firestarter of the 24-hour news cycle, CNN has translated their energy to the web. CNN has high marks across the board--ranking number one in content influence, social influence and overall. The only news outlet to have a pagerank of 10/10, CNN draws much strength from search and backlinks. CNN uses the digital trickle down effect--where pagerank leads to search referrals, which leads to backlinks and sharing and the cycle continues.

2.7 million Twitter followers love Anderson Cooper and CNN

2

Thought of as an aging titan, The New York Times is a leading digital influencer in news and politics. Fusing quality and quantity, The New York Times' content spreads like wildfire across social media and content aggregators. Though The Times' Twitter following surpasses 1.8 million, they are still thought of as behind the curve, when in actuality, they are 141 miles ahead of it. Truth be told: don't believe everything you hear.

Twitter (1.8 million), Digg (0.6 million), and Facebook (0.5 million) give a thumbs up to New York Times

3

Where is Fox most competitive? The right-leaning news network leans towards audio--weighing in at number three. Personality, Bill O'Reilly, makes the iTunes top 25 news and politics podcast list with his show, Talking Points. Fox adds a curve ball to the ratings by scoring number one in Apple apps. Though the right-wing outlet doesn't have a break-away app, they do have many local affiliates that dominate the top iTunes 100 apps. To crack the top 2, Fox will have to improve on Twitter and YouTube.

Fox is #1 in Apple Apps

4

For NPR, community-supported means both on-air and online. The nonprofit is not only supported by donations, it's fueled by fans... Facebook fans that is. NPR outpaces even the New York Times on Facebook, with the most fans of any major media outlet. Why is the nonprofit profiting from social media buzz? It might have to do with their unique, content rich site, coupled with customized playlists and actively listening to its community. NPR is the intersection of quality and digital savvy.

NPR takes radio seriously: 10 of the top 100 podcasts

5

CBS excels in multimedia while barely making the cut in other categories. CBS takes the golden cup when it comes to YouTube. CBS is a leader on YouTube, with 143k channel subscriptions and far outpaces everyone in video views. Such an asset might prove valuable as online video advertising increases in popularity.

How did CBS become a leader on YouTube?

6

BBC is a hit or miss in the several categories of influence. The British news and entertainment company is hot on CBS' trail in YouTube influence--with only 10k less subscribers. BBC is perched at number one in RSS subscriptions with 2.8 million subscriptions--400k more than CNN or almost three times the total number of TIME subscribers. The BBC, with global influence, is not surprisingly the go-to source for news via RSS.

BBC is just 10,000 YouTubers behind CBS

top 25 digital influencers in news and politics

7



Look out NPR, MSNBC is hot on your trail. MSNBC appears four times on the iTunes top 25 podcast list, with Rachel Maddow in fourth and 12th. Curiously, MSNBC outpaces the New York Times in unique visits. MSNBC is awarded a bronze with nearly 40 million unique users, nearly double the New York Times.

Rachel Maddow (#4) leads a rock star podcasting strategy

8

THE HUFFINGTON POST

Though the New York Times might be the prince of Digg, the Huffington Post is its reigning king. Overall, The Huffington Post--a completely digital news company--places number three in social influence. The company takes a rapid-fire approach to reporting. For die-hard news junkies, The Huffington Post is the source for the juiciest news and political digs.

Arianna and her super bloggers are dug over 1 million times

9



How many different podcast channels would you expect from a television giant like ABC? Maybe 30 or 40 max? Try 57 different podcast channels. Overall, ABC does well on multimedia--striking in the high range. ABC makes it into the top 10 list for YouTube subscriptions and views and podcasts. Surprisingly, ABC does better on Digg and Twitter than Facebook. We'd imagine the entertainment company could leverage Facebook to deepen existing relationships and acquire new viewers.

ABC World News anchors have a solid podcasting strategy

10

Los Angeles Times

When you think of the LA Times, does app come to mind? Surprisingly, The LA Times places four in the Apple app store. Other than apps, The LA Times does well on content influence, just missing the top 10 RSS subscribers and backlinks. The LA Times social influence is all over the place, however--excelling on Digg (number 10) while missing the ball completely with Facebook (number 32). LA Times may owe Michael Jackson for its presence in the top 10.

The LA Times has way less Facebook fans than the LA Dodgers

11

TIME

When you think of TIME, do you think Twitter or Digg? Social influence is a large contributor to TIME Inc.'s position as the most influential magazine. TIME excels in social media, placing number three in Twitter with 1.5 million followers and comes in at number five on our Digg charts, with 378k diggs in the past year. TIME is by far a leader in the magazine category.

Approaching 1.5 million Twitter followers

12

Google news

Despite not having a stable of news reporters and journalists, Google News manages to score well through its aggregation strategy. Google's sizable cult following of users are eager for the next innovation. With the Google OS revving up, expect it to further harness YouTube within the next year.

Is it a surprise that Google gave itself a page rank of 9?

top 25 digital influencers in news and politics

13



USA Today brings into question the correlation between pagerank and backlinks. It's curious--the media heavy weight has a pagerank of five but places seventh in backlinks with 31k. USA Today performs even better in the RSS subscription category--placing sixth with 763k subscribers. It is surprising how the major media player doesn't perform better on Twitter. USA Today is in 20th place with 27k Twitter followers.

USA Today page rank of 5 is where the challenges begin

14



Thinking of the WSJ, extensive, in-depth coverage of global business markets comes to mind, but usually in the written word. That image will likely change if the WSJ keeps a steady course towards video. The WSJ breaks into the top 10 YouTube views, closely followed by ABC News and Fox News. Interviews with high-profile industry leaders, such as Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Martha Stewart, the WSJ will continue its influence in the multimedia category.

WSJ, we can't hear you...give us a top 100 podcasts

15



If you added the links going to The New York Times, ABC News and CBS News, it would still not be enough to beat The Washington Post. In total, the Washington Post has 40k backlinks, making it to number four on our list. Overall, The Washington Post does slightly above average in content and social influence, but has a weak multimedia arm. Surprisingly, The Washington Post just breaks in the top ten most frequently "dugg" sources.

Over 40,000 in-bound links to site, or triple those to New York Times

16



Watch out CNN, Yahoo is hot on your trail. Yahoo News places fourth, while CNN takes third place in the Digg category with almost 400k diggs. As for a loyal following, Yahoo is struggling to gain Twitter followers and Facebook fans for its Yahoo News property. It's surprising for such a large news organization to fall so far behind the pack on Twitter.

400,000 Yahoo diggs are shocking

17



In the past year, there have been a couple blockbuster stories sourced from Chicago. First there was President Barack Obama, then disgraced governor, Rod Blagojevich, tried to sell his senate seat. Both news sensations might have contributed to the Chicago Tribune's website traffic. The Chicago Tribune placed seventh in web traffic--surpassing NPR, ABC News, CBS News and BBC News. The question is: can their success be replicated next year?

Obama love hits Chicago with over 200,000 diggs

18



One of the few successful non-profits in the mainstream media, PBS wields tremendous influence. While NPR does podcasting well, PBS emphasizes video and audio--particularly on YouTube. PBS comes in number four in YouTube subscriptions and views with 29k and 927k respectively.

1 million views on YouTube might be better than their TV ratings

top 25 digital influencers in news and politics

19 

Just ahead of Newsweek, The Economist is surprisingly competitive in the social category. The Economist does very well on Facebook (placing sixth) and breaks into the top 10 most backlinked sites. In fact, the Economist more fans than CNN, MSNBC, the BBC and the Huffington Post combined, with 158k.

27,000 in-bound links to site and their content is growing

20 

Newsweek is vying with the Economist to be the 2nd most influential magazine, with TIME taking the number one spot. Newsweek's strong suit is social media. The magazine has a prominent position among Twitter heavy weights, such as CNN, The New York Times and NPR. Newsweek ranks number six with 761k followers.

Has 10 times as many Twitter followers as the Economist

21 

Not only does the Daily Kos place 10th in RSS subscription category, they also take third in backlinks. The Daily Kos draws much of their social influence from Digg--placing seventh among all other digital media. Incredible for a blog started only seven years ago.

More links point to the Daily Kos than the Wall Street Journal

22 
nbc.com

Coming in a distant last place among TV peers, NBC does audio very well. NBC pushes past ABC News, The New York Times, CBS News and even the BBC--ranking number five. NBC Nightly News and Meet the Press are the top-rated podcast channels on iTunes top 25 news & politics list.

NBC News has more Twitter followers than MSNBC

23 

Only two years out of the gate and Politico has over twice the backlinks of the New York Times. Though Politico performs poorly in social influence, it's to be expected--as they cater to a specific demographic. Digg is the exception, however. Politico places 15th, "out-digging" USA Today, BBC News and CBS news. Unlike many blog-start-ups, Politico was born with running shoes.

Politico (founded in 2007), has more in-bound links than BBC News (founded in 1922)

24 

As we've seen with nearly every media outlet, Twitter followers typically outnumber Facebook fans. Why? It takes little effort to collect 400 Twitter followers versus Facebook fans. Facebook fans have a core passion for the brand--as there are only a few businesses fans let into their inner circle. We were surprised when we discovered the New Yorker had nearly twice as many Facebook fans as Twitter followers. The New Yorker has 55k Facebook fans.

New Yorker has twice as many Facebook fans as Twitter followers

top 25 digital influencers in news and politics

25 **DRUDGE REPORT**

The Drudge Report is the epitome of bare bones blogging. The good: 38k links back to its site. The bad: minimal dabbling with YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Podcasts, and Apps, leaves us waiting for a runaway success. It's time for the 13 year old Drudge Report to increase its social and multimedia bets.

Drudge Report's 282 followers are less than Sparxoo's 361 followers



about the authors



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David has 13 years of diverse management experience in strategy, corporate finance, venture capital, branding and marketing. David has worked with leading organizations such as ESPN, NBC, Comcast, Lifetime, USAA, and Habitat for Humanity, as well as many entrepreneurs. Prior to founding Sparxoo, David was a senior strategist at Interbrand, the world's largest branding agency. Previously, David was Senior Director of Marketing for ESPN.com. He also served as senior strategist and "acting CFO" for ESPN's Publishing and New Media business units. David graduated with an MBA from Wharton Business School and a BA from Johns Hopkins University.



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Ethan is a creative writer whose talents stretch to brand development and even business strategy. Ethan has written Internet business plans, developed consumer product brand platforms, and has provided creative leadership to advertising campaign. Previously, Ethan was a creative writing intern at the advertising firm, Partners and Napier. He also contributed to the Democrat & Chronicle newspaper college publication, [The Loop](#) as a News and Politics Editor. He holds a BA in Communications and Journalism from St. John Fisher College.



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