A Social Media Strategy for Politics in Action: The Case of CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel

Jennifer Thomlinson

McMaster University

A Social Media Strategy for Politics in Action: The Case of CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel

Jennifer Thomlinson

Abstract

Social media is changing the way business is done, and television is no exception. This case study proposes a social media strategy for CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel, as a means to transition from a one-way, television service to an all-encompassing source of political information and programming. CPAC is present in social media channels but they are under-resourced and underdeveloped. An element of trepidation exists amongst CPAC's senior management with respect to social media, although there is an acknowledgement that CPAC must be in the space. Primary fears are that using social media will infringe upon the independent and editorial-free nature of its mission, as well as detract from intelligent and meaningful dialogue, making it a challenge for getting buy-in to do more. However, as broadcasters C-SPAN and PBS have demonstrated, social media can be leveraged in a way that does not threaten public interest media's role but rather enhances it. Drawing on an extensive literature review, a focus group with CPAC's senior management and interviews with comparator organizations C-SPAN and PBS, a strategy based on the findings is recommended for implementation.

Keywords: CPAC, Cable Public Affairs Channel, C-SPAN, PBS, social media, community building, political engagement, public interest

A Social Media Strategy for Politics in Action: The Case of CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel

Jennifer Thomlinson
McMaster University

Introduction

CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel, is a national broadcaster based in Ottawa, Canada that focuses its television programming on politics, Parliament and public affairs. For 20 years, it has been a reliable source of information on the people and processes that shape national policy decisions. Along the way, it has evolved with technological shifts and digital advances. CPAC was the first broadcaster to stream its entire on-air signal online for Internet users, and in recent years the channel has expanded into social media, establishing an online presence across multiple platforms including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Despite all its efforts, CPAC remains an under-developed player in the competitive media market — a market that is increasingly being driven online. Website traffic is stagnant, online communities are slow to rally around the CPAC brand, mobile users are demanding a better experience, and resources remain primarily allocated to CPAC's traditional function — television. Television remains CPAC's backbone, but, in an age where social media can bolster both brand recognition

and engagement, the channel is remiss to the opportunities a social media strategy could offer. By looking to the experiences of exemplary and like-minded public broadcasters such as C-SPAN and PBS who have made the transition from television to an all-encompassing source of social capital through social media, this case study proposes to chart a path forward for CPAC in the social media landscape. By devising a social media strategy based on the practices and structure of comparable organizations, CPAC can re-position itself as an accessible key player in public policy awareness and dialogue in the social media sphere.

Description of Organization Studied

Created in 1992 by a consortium of cable companies, CPAC is licensed by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to provide parliamentary proceedings in both official languages, as well as public affairs and political programming. It reaches 11 million homes across the country through distribution by cable, satellite and wireless providers (CPAC, 2011a).

Case Study Problem

Despite having a communications plan in place that includes elements of social media, there is no overarching strategy around the use, execution and evaluation of social media efforts at CPAC. Individual proposals have been created in the past and approved prior to delving into several platforms including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, but no one document exists that guides the overall objectives and function of these avenues. Furthermore, there has never been a comprehensive review of social media best practices by like-minded broadcasters, or deep consideration given to trends and research in the field. In short, there has been a lot of talk around the need for social media expansion, but little action.

By assessing what comparable organizations have done in the way of social media, CPAC can acquire insight into what outreach yields the best results. Looking at organizations that have similar missions (operating in the public interest, or maintaining a neutral editorial position, for example) will ensure that CPAC can play a greater awareness role through social media channels, without compromising its integrity. Also, it is hoped that this case study can provide reassurance that the return on investment is far greater than the minimal costs involved in providing the support needed to grow this area, especially for a not-for-profit entity, such as CPAC.

Social media is often treated as a one-off undertaking, unlike standard business practices which require planning in order to achieve corporate objectives. To use social media to drive performance and results in reaching corporate objectives, a plan is essential. A proponent of all-encompassing strategies, Steve Richards (2010) puts it, "It is more realistic, and likely to provide more predictable results if you plan how to grow your online following steadily by engaging with the right people, on the right platforms, with well-considered content which adds value to your audience." By developing a social media strategy for CPAC, it will provide a map, founded in research, for achieving corporate objectives across the social media landscape.

Literature Review

Why be engaged in social media, at all? As author Erik Qualman (2009) puts it, "Businesses don't have a choice on whether or not they do social media, the choice is on how well they do it" (p. xxii). Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) offer seven key functional building blocks of social media that illuminate a framework definition. These blocks are useful in making sense of the interplay of the social media phenomenon. The building blocks include identity, the degree to which users reveal themselves in the social media setting; conversations, symbolizing the commu-

nication function; sharing, which constitutes how content is exchanged, distributed and received; presence, which underscores accessibility; relationships, users' connections to one another; reputation, how users identify their status in a social media setting, and that of others; and finally groups, the degree to which users can form communities (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre, 2011).

The idea of community anchors social media and what it can offer. Jono Bacon is a pioneer of community building in the online world. In *The Art of Community* (2009), he offers readers a step-by-step guide for cultivating communities around a niche from supporting workflow and building buzz, to measuring the results of the community and its actions. At its heart is the idea of belonging, for "If there is no belonging, there is no community" (Bacon, 2009, p. 5). This word underscores the goal of all social media endeavours.

From a communications and marketing standpoint, social media magnifies the reach to the marketplace. Mangold and Faulds (2009) explore the transition of the traditional marketing promotional paradigm to that of conversation-based social media. They argue that organizations need to relinquish control and shape the discussions so that they align with organizational goals and mission. More importantly, from a strategic point of view, they contend that "the traditional communications paradigm… must give way to a new paradigm that includes all forms of social media as potential tools in designing and implementing IMC strategies," where IMC implies integrated marketing communications (p. 359). In other words, it is imperative that social media become part of a new hybrid promotion mix. In a similar vein, Philip Sheldrake (2011) makes a case for overhauling business strategy entirely, so that it is founded in the idea of influence. Taking strategy beyond just communications and marketing, he flips it so that the concept of social media's influence factor permeates all that an organization does. In essence, he is reframing business for the social media age. While his strategic framework requires complete buy-in from the C-suite in or-

der for it to be effective, he makes a compelling case for having an ambidextrous "Chief Influence Officer" in an organization who can grasp all the dynamics of influence across all silos of a company (Sheldrake, 2011).

Getting buy-in for moving into social media can be a tough sell because it is often hard to quantify from an ROI (return on investment) perspective. Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011) tackle this difficulty by recognizing "a relationship-based currency, a social currency, and a spending process that can be characterized as investing (e.g., in establishing, building, or maintaining relationships)" (p. 278). They show that allocating resources to social media is not the same as budgeting for marketing efforts because the premise is relationship-based, a key distinction from the one-way marketing approach. Their argument is that "organizations can leverage the social currency of others by devoting resources to relationship building with them" (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011, p. 281). Given the depth of social media, monitoring conversations and engagement is not an easy process. The authors cite Dell as an example of a company that is launching a social media mission control centre to monitor these behaviours. From a cost perspective, the authors note that "systems do not necessarily come cheap… [n]evertheless there are a variety of low-cost or free solutions that can be used effectively," (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011, p. 281).

Media operating in the public interest, such as CPAC, have an added reason to advance in social media realms. Clark (2009) suggests public broadcasters should pioneer the charge in investing in participatory media models to transition to public media 2.0. The underlying theme is that public media 2.0 is an "essential feature of truly democratic public life" (Clark, 2009, p. 92). This concept is rooted in the mission and ability to "support the formation of publics—that is, to link us to deep wells of reliable information and powerful stories, to bring contested perspectives into constructive dialogue, to offer access and space for minority voices, and to build both

online and offline communities" (Clark, 2009, p. 31). This is an opportunity for media companies that serve the public, to capitalize on social media and truly achieve their mandate in a way that no other medium has offered before. A challenge for public interest media in transitioning to the social media landscape is measuring the impact of their efforts. Assigning value to operations in a participatory world requires different metrics than for that of the traditional way. Simply put, "shifts in technology and user habits mean that old assumptions about what constitutes impact must be reconsidered. Simply reporting on an issue or community is no longer the final outcome in an era of multiplatform, participatory communication" (Clark & Van Slyke, 2010, p. 2). Clark and Van Slyke (2010) synthesized findings from a series of U.S. summits with public media to arrive at five new tools for assessment by public interest media: putting it all in one place, chasing the frame, telling your story of impact, asking the right questions, and identifying networks.

With the rise of social media, there has been some concern over the vitality and relevancy of traditional media including television. With more and more people moving online to access content, there has been fear that the old ways of television, radio and newspapers will become extinct. Patel and Slutsky (2011) dispel the notion that social media will kill TV, and instead show that if anything, social media can be used to drive viewers back to television viewing, not take them away. Using examples such as the Superbowl (XLV), which registered 4,000 tweets per second in the final minutes of the game, the authors demonstrate an enhanced and engaged viewing experience that is afforded by social media (p. 4). This new phenomenon suggests multiple forms of information consumption at once. In January 2011, a Nielsen and Yahoo study showed 86% of U.S. mobile internet users watch TV with their mobile devices, and of those, 40% are using the devices for social networking, and 33% are using apps (as cited in Patel & Slutsky, 2011, p. 4).

Similarly, 60% of Nielsen panelists wired in through PCs and laptops simultaneously surfed the Internet while watching TV at least once in March 2011 (Patel & Slutsky, 2011). Television is not being threatened, but rather complemented by social media. Wohn and Na (2010) substantiate this claim in their study *Tweeting About TV*, where they contend "Twitter is an ideal venue to view how people engage in social viewing of television because people are using Twitter to post messages while they watch television and respond to others who post on the relevant topic" (p. 7).

While a channel like CPAC is restricted by its CRTC license from offering advertising on air, no such limitations exist when it comes to its online presence. Another incentive for expanding social media activities is that building a niche community online can attract advertisers and drive revenue which can then be reinvested in further online expansion. As Bill Bradford, Senior Vice President of Digital Media at Fox explained, "the audiences are too big not to figure out ways to monetize… Because these communities are very powerful and influential, our advertising partners are looking for ways to partner with us to get their messages out" (as cited in Lafayette, 2010, p. 8). Creating a politically aware community around the CPAC brand could present an established and targeted demographic to potential advertisers.

Countless case studies abound detailing the success of television networks and programs that mobilize viewers through social media. The Discovery Channel is a leading example – it boasts close to 43 million fans across 70 Facebook pages, increasing at a rate of 500,000 new fans a week, with another 2.4 million followers spanning 20 Twitter accounts (Drell, 2011). This is not by happenstance, but rather driven by strategy. Gayle Weiswasser, vice president of social media communications at Discovery explains, "It's part of everything we do, from our .com pages to our marketing plans," and outlines the four goals driving the strategy: building relationships and engaging with fans, personalizing the brand, strengthening talent-fan relations and driving tune-in (as cited in Drell,

2011). Many networks also use live events as an opportunity to tap into their audiences through social media. The Grammy Awards adopted an integrated marketing campaign titled "We're All Fans" in 2010, leveraging the social media ecosystem (Hanna & Crittenden, 2011). Through a comprehensive strategy that drew on traditional marketing including print, radio, television, and earned media, as well as web ventures such as a central website loaded with sharing features and incorporating social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr, the show saw a record 26 million viewers tuning in, with a 32% increase in the 18 to 34 demographic (Hanna & Crittenden, 2011, p. 271). One of the driving keys to success was artist support whereby Lady Gaga, Coldplay and others allowed the Grammy's to tap into their existing fan bases. The Grammies capitalized on the show's talent to draw viewers.

Moving to channels with a political focus, C-SPAN, the non-profit U.S.-based television network devoted to Congressional proceedings and politics, re-positioned itself to embrace social media prior to the beginning of the 112th Congress. New features included live streaming the first session of the new Congress via C-SPAN's Facebook page, offering an updated Twitter list of congressional members and key Washington media, and a FourSquare presence with historical facts and related videos of key locations in the nation's capital of Washington, DC (Marya, 2011). The evolution, according to C-SPAN Co-President Rob Kennedy, "will help the network continue its mission of encouraging audience participation — something it has already cultivated via viewer calls" (Marya, 2011). With social media in tandem, political coverage is changing how politicians themselves are using various platforms. Several interviews with key political players in the U.S. highlight this transition. The central finding goes back to Marshall McLuhan's concept of the medium being the message. As Matt Lira who is the director of new media for Republican Whip Eric Cantor explained, "before television, there was a dramatically different set of candidates who

could win that didn't have a chance once television emerged… Social media's effect will be no less dramatic" (as cited in Silverman, 2010). This is pertinent to CPAC because to remain relevant in its government relations efforts and to uphold its mission of serving the public by being a source of comprehensive and balanced political coverage, it is going to need to not only be in this space, but be relevant.

Other considerations important to the development of social media strategy are trends. Forrester researcher Thomas Husson (2011) suggests tips for anticipating strategy as consumers move to smartphones as a conduit for information consumption: understanding the user and his or her device, monitoring usage, and providing basic features for emerging markets as adopters take hold). With a limited-at-best mobile website, CPAC needs to consider how its viewers are accessing content across platforms. These tips can help to streamline the process so viewers get the most out of their mobile viewing experience. A recent ComScore study showed that one in three mobile devices in Canada is now a smartphone (Segal, 2011, p. 5). Almost 45% of smartphone users use their device for social networking, and over 20% use a photo or video-sharing service on their phones (p. 11). A second 2011 ComScore study looked at trends in online video consumption, showing that Canada is the leading country in active video viewing at over 180 hours per month per viewer (Piech, 2011, p. 25). Across the globe, long-form TV viewing doubled year-over-year from 2009 to 2010, and of all those watching television, 24% are cross-platform viewers, and 6% only watch television content online (Piech, 2011, p. 35-37). With over 10,000 hours of video-on-demand content on the CPAC website, this inventory can be leveraged across mobile and social media platforms to provide viewers with greater access to sharable content. These statistics support the rationale for proposing such a move instead of limiting content to the CPAC website.

This literature review concludes with three key steps – strategy, enablement and content – taken from three compa-

nies that have had tremendous success in social media: Bloomberg, Thomson Reuters and Fizz, respectively (Wilms, 2011). Strategy means listening to your customers and marrying business strategy to social media; enablement infers making social media part of the company's DNA, across all levels so that each staff person has an understanding of (and training in) what social media can do for business; and content means that the story has to pass the WGAF test (who gives a f***) implying the content has to be made relevant (Wilms, 2011). These steps formed the basis of the proposed social media strategy for CPAC.

Research Questions

Using the experiences of CPAC and comparator organizations, this case study examines the following core research questions for the development of a social media strategy:

RQ1: How are comparator organizations structuring and exercising social media from a resource, management and communications perspective?

This question establishes best practices and learning in social media by exemplary, like-minded television networks as a guide for CPAC to expand.

RQ2: What attitudes are held by CPAC management towards the role of social media?

This question explores how management perceives social media, and provides insight into their understanding of it from a personal and professional standpoint.

RQ3: What are the challenges to and opportunities of implementing a social media strategy at CPAC that enhances its television experience?

Drawing on literature and management's attitudes, this question assesses how social media can be used to strengthen the viewer experience, while recognizing limitations and weighing how best to address any challenges.

RQ4: What evaluation and measurement structure can CPAC implement to benchmark results and progress around social media activities?

This question will be used to explore how a social media strategy can best chart a measurable path forward for social media as an outreach function. It will evaluate all platforms and establish a tracking process for activities that can provide a return on investment calculator.

Methodology

Information obtained through executive interviews with comparator organizations and a focus group of senior management at CPAC has informed the development of a social media strategy for implementation at CPAC. The strategy also draws on social media research relating to engagement, brand recognition and political awareness.

Instruments used include:
- Literature review (social media, broadcasting in the digital age, public broadcasting)
- Audit of existing social media practices at CPAC
- Focus group of CPAC senior management (completed August 31, 2011):
    - Jeremy Clark, Director of Programming
    - Patricia Hutton, Director of Human Resources & Administration
    - Natalie LeMay-Calcutt, Director of Business & Governmental Affairs
    - Juline Ranger, Director of Communications
    - Peter Van Dusen, Executive Producer
    - Colette Watson, President & General Manager
- Executive interviews with communications directors at comparator organizations:
    - Howard Mortman, Director of Communications at C-SPAN (completed August 29, 2011)

239

o Jayme Swain, Senior Director of Strategic Growth
at PBS Interactive (completed September 1, 2011)

These research tools have provided insight for the digital footprint required to have CPAC step into a more robust social media strategy.

Results and Analysis

The results and analysis of the above data collection instruments have been divided by the overarching research questions detailed earlier in this paper.

RQ1: How are comparator organizations structuring and exercising social media from a resource, management and communications perspective?

To reiterate, the two comparator organizations that were analyzed for this case study were C-SPAN and PBS, both American networks. They both underscored how social media ties into their public interest mission, with Howard Mortman, C-SPAN's Director of Communications explaining, "social media helps us and so very much supports that mission by giving us another avenue to… connect with our audience." Similarly, Jayme Swain, Senior Director of Strategic Growth at PBS Interactive said, "he great thing about social media for public media is that traditionally there was a one-way broadcaster over the air… social media has really allowed us to be in touch and have a two-way conversation with our audience."

Both broadcasters are primarily active across Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, the former two which are branched into different corporate accounts for programs and initiatives. In addition, in 2011 C-SPAN launched a FourSquare presence, and PBS also hosts blogs. PBS experiments in social media such as Flickr, Reddit, and StumbleUpon, with Jayme Swain justifying, "You never know what's going to hit, so a

lot of times we just try to diversify our portfolio so if some-thing were to hit that we're also there in the forefront." Video sharing is a huge part of how C-SPAN interacts in social me-dia, and facilitates the scheduling challenges of on-air TV when their channel is tied to Congress' volatile schedule. By advising fans and followers of live events through social me-dia, C-SPAN is not tied to the normal constraints of tradi-tional promotional efforts such as media relations, which re-quires extra lead time to make the paper or newscast. Fur-thermore, they can offer up live video streams through Face-book for example, or video clips after-the-fact directly through their social media channels. As Howard Mortman explains: "as people use TV less for appointment and more for pulling… down off the shelf like a library… what kinds of programs you want to see when you want to see it … social media is wonderful for that."

Maximizing opportunities to interact with their audiences is another way that C-SPAN and PBS use social media. C-SPAN invites its viewers to post questions about its pro-gramming through Twitter, they monitor and engage in con-versations "[jumping] in [to] answer a question or point peo-ple towards the information they're looking for," and will post poll questions on Facebook such as 'Who do you think will get the Republican nomination for President?' to drive conversation. PBS taps into social media by giving fans or followers access to producers to ask questions, offering ex-clusive, pre-broadcast video content, and for garnering feed-back which they tie into strategic or programming decisions. For example, they took to their blog to ask readers what they wanted to see in upcoming PBS programming and were overwhelmed with "thousands and thousands of comments." PBS, more so than C-SPAN, encourages, but does not force, their on-air talent to engage in social media. Personalities such as Hari Sreenivasan, Gwen Ifill, Tavis Smiley and Judy Woodruff are all active on Twitter and Facebook with mas-sive fan bases. In sum, Howard Mortman sees social media as

"the opportunity to give people richer experiences," and Jayme Swain deems it "an absolute cornerstone to everything that we do here now at PBS."

In terms of structure, C-SPAN has a social media specialist who populates all content across all platforms. They collaborate with the web developers and graphics artists, who are removed from the communications division and strictly provide technical support to enable the process. PBS has a different matrix model. In 2007, the network received grant funding from the Knight Foundation to develop and streamline social media through PBS Engage, which had a staff of five, but "when that grant funding ran out we had to evolve such that social media had to become part of people's jobs." They now have one person in communications and marketing responsible for the corporate Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts, but each show or PBS station has a producer and developer working in tandem for promoting that show through social media channels. Both broadcasters spoke to the importance of not seeing that one employee as the only one responsible for social media, however. Jayme Swain explained, "it doesn't really work like that. I think that if you want to be successful in social media it's going to have to be part of the fabric in what you do, in everything that you do… all of us are brand advocates." Howard Mortman drove home this point by saying: "The risk is always that in an organization, if you have one person… 'that's the guy that does all that,' is that the rest of the company could basically wash their hands of it and say well that's not us, we don't get, we don't have to get involved in that. And you know we've been working very hard on getting the rest of C-SPAN to at least be aware of what we're doing and hopefully to be engaged as well."

Culturally speaking, both C-SPAN and PBS are trying to make the shift so that the whole organization knows this function is something that permeates all positions. Explains Howard Mortman, "for C-SPAN to survive, and I don't mean run out of business but just to continue to innovate and

pioneer, everybody [has to] be aware of what's happening on the social media side."

Both organizations have management that support social media activities, although each noted having to win their support initially. Neither C-SPAN nor PBS force their talent to engage in social media, because as Jayme Swain puts it "I don't think they're going to be authentic if you do that. I think that if you again show them the value, I think that they'll do it." The role both interviewees take is to educate, advise, and encourage others in their use of social media. The standard rules exist for staff – that they use common sense and do not embarrass the company they work for, no different than how they conduct themselves in other areas of their lives. But their participation in social media is encouraged, as "our employees are our best brand ambassadors… we want [them] to talk about PBS, we want PBS to be part of who [they] are and what [they] do" (Jayme Swain).

RQ2: What attitudes are held by CPAC management towards the role of social media?

The general attitude of CPAC management towards social media is one of apprehension. There is an acknowledgment that CPAC should be in the space, and in previous years Communications has been given approval to move forward with establishing Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts. Really pushing the envelope to expand social media further and deepen the experience may be a challenge, as evidenced by the focus group conducted. The adjectives used to describe social media in the opening question of the focus group included "vacuous" (Colette Watson), "young people" (Natalie LeMay-Calcutt), "intrusive" (Patty Hutton), "intimidating" (Peter Van Dusen), and "time consuming" (Juline Ranger). When asked to provide examples of companies they felt executed social media well, participants provided TripAdvisor, Amazon, Rotten Tomatoes, The Voice (NBC reality

series), Rogers, and The Globe and Mail. There was confusion over the difference between stand-alone websites and social media, with Colette Watson explaining that although she does everything online now, "To be perfectly honest, I actually avoid looking at social media."

When participants were asked to explain how they had informed their knowledge of social media, answers ranged from being a "lurker on Facebook" (Jeremy Clark), and "through my kids" (Patty Hutton), to "reluctantly" and "incidental to my world" (Peter Van Dusen). Some have dabbled in it more so than others (Juline Ranger and Jeremy Clark), but on the whole, there was a sense of privacy concern: "everyone does most of their business online… there's a lot of stuff I get online, I just don't want to be identifiable" (Patty Hutton). There was also strong agreement that generally speaking, social media represents meaningless personal interaction that is a waste of time. Peter Van Dusen captured the mood when he said, "I don't think it's intimidating to any of us, I think it's disinteresting. [That's] a big difference, if I want to learn something I will learn it, and I'm not interested in learning it. I don't see what great advantage it provides to us."

RQ3: What are the challenges to and opportunities of implementinga social media strategy at CPAC that enhances its television experience?

When asked to comment on CPAC's progress to date in social media, the response was generally positive but all noted an appetite for moving video forward. "We've made great strides… we're everywhere just as all the other broadcasters are," explained Natalie LeMay Calcutt. Jeremy Clark added "I think we're early days… it's a promotional opportunity," while Peter Van Dusen emphasized "one of the best things we've done is tie advances in our social media program to the mission of the channel" meaning social media is being used strictly as an information provider and stripped of any unre-

lated editorial and host commentary. Colette Watson saw value in having others tweet about CPAC programming, highlighting coverage received during the 2011 federal election via Twitter: "If we can find a way to get other people tweeting about our programming, then I would find it useful."

Patty Hutton noted broader changes that businesses are dealing with: "I think CPAC like any other organization has to manage the generational shift that's going to happen… how media's going to be consumed by people, I think it's going to be consumed in a different way and maybe social media and all that stuff is going to be that."

In terms of what value social media can offer to building CPAC's brand further, Jeremy Clark said "It's a way of getting the brand in places that it currently isn't" meaning offering video-sharing experiences and streaming programming live to Facebook. He also explained that, "we're building the process for that, we're just not there yet" as there are a lot of technical infrastructure changes that need to be made to enable moving video across multiple platforms. Added Peter Van Dusen, "we can't ignore it from a news gathering point of view but I guess in terms of the growth of the channel, I think Jeremy's right." Looking ahead, Colette Watson shared her vision for CPAC 10 years down the road by having a website where all archival video material would be made available to anyone in search of it, along with a transcript and the opportunity to converse about it: "How we get there, I don't really know but I don't think it involves tweeting… it could involve a more robust Facebook page, it could involve a better understanding of YouTube, it definitely involves millions of dollars."

Focus group participants felt that incorporating social media into programs is welcome provided it adds intelligent conversation and does not distract visually from the program like news tickers and crawls featured in other news-related programs. Again, this is something that would require technical support, and presents some other challenges that would

have to be addressed including vetting comments, determining whether or not to translate content (as CPAC is currently fully bilingual on air all text and audio is offered in both English and French) and ensuring that content adds and does not subtract from the quality of the coverage provided. As Peter Van Dusen explained, "I think there's room to do more and incorporate [social media] into the editorial process, but I think we would take the position that we want smart, social interaction with social media, we don't want to have that interaction for the sake of having it."

From an employee perspective, there was unanimous agreement that the same business conduct principles apply to social media as they do in any other situation. Employees should use common sense, however, there was some level of discomfort with the idea of granting all employees access to social media at work. On the other hand, senior management saw no disadvantage to having employees speak positively about CPAC or its programming.

The concluding thoughts that received round-table agreement were that CPAC needs to be in social media because that is where people are, but it needs to be used in an intelligent and meaningful manner that is relevant. It was also felt that social media requires constant maintenance and that CPAC should evolve it in a way that keeps its inherent credibility. This reflects C-SPAN's outlook on social media, explained by Howard Mortman, "Our efforts in social media need to support what's on TV and not supplant it, and not take too many resources away from the main mission."

RQ4: What evaluation and measurement structure can CPAC implement to benchmark results and progress around social media activities?

Presently, CPAC tracks its web statistics through Google Analytics, and for social media, benchmarks fan numbers on Facebook, and followers on Twitter. CPAC's web team also uses ShareThis to track website pages shared, clicked and

traffic generated through clicks. There is currently no evaluation metric used for YouTube, and at present, there is no cohesive measurement system in place for all social media activities.

PBS has "become very data driven in trying to make all of our strategic decisions. Social is a little bit tricky sometimes" (Jayme Swain). They use Facebook's insight tool but have more difficulty with Twitter because it is so dispersed and tracking bit.ly links can be complex. For both Facebook and Twitter, along with YouTube, audience and interaction is measured, including referral traffic. PBS employs an analytics person who is responsible for tracking all of this data.

C-SPAN on the other hand "[follows] anecdotally what people are saying online," but does not track it (Howard Mortman). They benchmark follower numbers on a regular basis using their own metrics such as growth rate. Monitoring this activity, along with watching to see when something spikes, "helps inform us what we should be doing more of" (Howard Mortman).

CPAC can take a page from PBS by using more metric tools around Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to track its audience numbers and interaction across those platforms. The key will be having a system in place that incorporates all individual platforms in one place.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Overall, this case study has shown an appetite at CPAC to move forward in social media in an effort to expand its reach, albeit with some trepidation. There is acknowledgement on the part of senior management that a shift towards online consumption is happening, and that CPAC must be active in the social media landscape. However, the level of comfort with social media by senior management is underdeveloped. At present, they view it as vacuous and for the most part replete with meaningless content and purpose. Senior management has a desire to maintain CPAC's intelligent discourse

and conversation regardless of the medium, and is not convinced that social media will achieve this. The positive news is that two other comparable organizations, C-SPAN and PBS, have succeeded in demonstrating the merits social media can afford a public interest broadcaster. Their insight, learnings and best practices can be a guide for CPAC to transition through a robust social media strategy, while appeasing senior management that its mission and integrity can be maintained.

Some of the key conclusions drawn from the interviews with C-SPAN and PBS include the importance of delivering value through social media efforts, aligning corporate objectives with social media strategy, and the positive two-way dialogue that can emerge through social media channels. Having communications play an advisory and educational role to others throughout the company is also important in establishing a culture that is receptive to social media activities while fostering brand extension. Both C-SPAN and PBS showed that employees can be leveraged to play a role as well, regardless of their position, and that the result of this is a two-pronged effect: appreciation for what is being done in the social media realm by the company, and added exposure of corporate information that both empowers employees and reinforces the brand. Giving CPAC employees this ability will be difficult from an access perspective, as most social media sites are blocked in the workplace, except for those who require it for their jobs. The focus group also illustrated that there is no desire for on-air talent to actively use social media to promote CPAC programming, although it can be incorporated into interactive programs such as call-in shows and live town hall broadcasts.

One of the biggest opportunities for CPAC in social media is to strengthen its video-sharing capabilities. Technical upgrades are currently underway to enable this function, and, as expressed in the focus group, it is a pillar of the President's vision for the channel that 10 years from now, all archival video material will be available to anyone seeking it out online. The proposed strategy will reflect this direction, not

just for the CPAC website but for sharing more video content across social media platforms.

As a result of all the data and findings uncovered in this case study, a social media strategy was proposed for developing a more robust online and social media footprint. By incorporating some of the examples of C-SPAN and PBS, and building on the existing social media activities at CPAC, the strategy presented a measurable path for building an online community of CPAC fans and followers that strengthens and enriches the television experience, while maintaining a high level of discourse that keeps CPAC in line with its public service mission and mandate.

References

Bacon, J. (2009). *The Art of Community: Building the New Age of Participation.* Sebastapol, CA: O'Reilly Media Inc.

Clark, J. (2009). *Public media 2.0: Dynamic, engaged publics.* Retrieved from http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/future-public-media/documents/white-papers/public-media-20-dynamic-engaged-publics

Clark, J. & Van Slyke, T. (2010). *Investing in impact: Media summits reveal pressing needs, tools for evaluating public interest media.* Retrieved from http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/future-public-media/documents/articles/investing-impact-media-summits-reveal-pressing-needs-tools-e-0

CPAC. (2010a). *About CPAC.* Retrieved from http://www.cpac.ca/forms/index.asp?dsp=template&act=view3&section_id=21&template_id=21&hl=e

CPAC. (2010b). *Organizational Chart.*

Drell, L. (2011, September 15). How the Discovery Channel uses social media to connect with superfans [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://mashable.com/2011/09/15/discovery-channel-social-strategy/

Hanna, R., Rohm, A. & Crittenden, V .L. (2011). We're all connected: The power of the social media ecosystem. *Business Horizons, 54*(3), 265-273.

Husson, T. (2011, September 16). The global mainstreaming of smartphones [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://blogs.forrester.com/thomas_husson/11-09-16-the_global_mainstreaming_of_smartphones

Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P. & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons, 54*(3), 241-251.

Lafayette, J. (2010). Friends with benefits. *Broadcasting & Cable, 140*(38), 8-9.

Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons, 52*(4), 357-365.

Marya, R. (2011, January 5). C-SPAN expands social media outreach in time for 112th Congress. Retrieved from http://mashable.com/2011/01/05/c-span-expands-social-media-outreach-in-time-for-112th-congress/

Patel, K., & Slutsky, I. (2011). Is social media killing TV? *Advertising Age, 82*(16), 4.

Piech, D. (2011). *Online video by the numbers.* Retrieved from http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Presentations_Whitepapers/2011/Online_Video_by_the_Numbers

Qualman, E. (2009). *Socialnomics.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Richards, S. (2010, August 10). Why you need a social media strategy, not a Facebook strategy. Retrieved from http://econsultancy.com/us/blog/6406-why-you-need-a-social-media-strategy-not-a-facebook-strategy

Segal, B. (2011). *The mobile nation in Canada: A first look.* Retrieved from http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Presentations_Whitepapers/2011/The_Mobile_Nation_in_Canada_A_First_Look

Sheldrake, P. (2011). *The Business of Influence.* West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Silverman, M. (2010, November 11). The future of social media and politics. Retrieved from http://mashable.com/2010/11/01/future-social-media-politics/

Weinberg, B. & Pehlivan, E. (2011). Social spending: Managing the social media mix. *Business Horizons, 54*(3), 275-282.

Wilms, T. (2011, September 15). Social media: 3 steps from 3 great companies. *Forbes.* Retrieved from http://www.forbes.com/sites/sap/2011/09/15/social-media-3-steps-from-3-great-companies

Wohn, D., & Na, E. (2010, June). Tweeting about TV: An AEIOU model of sociable television behavior. *International Communication Association Conference. Singapore.* Retrieved from EBSCO*host*.