

Social media metrics are still in their infancy, and creative social media projects may not result in easy-to-see increases in membership or dollars. MPR sets individual goals for each social media effort at the outset of a project or launch and also uses such metrics as page impressions, online group membership, joining the Public Insight Network, and volunteering by participating. KQED's goal is always to increase reach and engagement with the audience. KQED uses a metric called "people hours" that measures the time people are engaging with KQED. This could include listening, consuming content via page views, downloading podcasts, or other efforts. KQED staff keeps monthly statistics and turn in those statistics quarterly or annually in order to calculate the total number of hours that the audiences access station resources.

Success may be different within different contexts, as well. For instance, MPR's Gather, "a leading social networking and media site for adults, with some of the highest-quality user-generated content on the Internet," has been highly successful at involving, as of this printing, 350,000 people in a social networking platform. It has also been a valuable site of experimentation and a platform for MPR partnerships with both nonprofits and for-profit businesses. At the same time, the site's numbers are tiny for a social networking site, and such sites must grow or die.

It is easier to measure offline efforts, in terms of volunteers. KUT is able to measure the effectiveness of its Get Involved project by the number of volunteers who contact the organizations after it publicizes the need on its Web site and on the air.

It is difficult to budget for projects that are so closely interwoven with others and the core mission and almost impossible for researchers to get access to actual budget figures. Conclusions here are drawn from both surveys and interviews. It seems that stations allocate relatively few financial and human resources to the social media challenge and are very reluctant to allocate dollars for open-ended experiments. Although survey respondents had estimated that less than an hour a week is going into social media work, KUT's Dean believes that KUT's social media work is drawing at least half of a full-time employee's time, precisely because social media is interactive and when listeners become cocreators of content, they want a response from the station. The stations most committed to social media, such as MPR, do not separately allocate resources to social media, since all media share this interactive engagement mission for them. Chicago Public Radio's Vocolo project is a significant time and financial investment involving several budget line items. Vocolo will exist as a stand-alone unit within Chicago Public Radio with a projected staff of 19 and a current staff of 7 hosts-producers. It is run by a separate general manager. While Chicago Public Radio has not disclosed Vocolo's budget details, management expects the full-power annual operating costs to exceed \$1 million per year. The revenue strategy is very different from traditional public radio. In lieu of on-air pledge drives, Vocolo will rely on sponsorships and Web-based revenue.

There is also a skill set and knowledge gap in public radio when it comes to Web technology and social media tools. Broadcasters, and especially broadcasting executives, typically do not have sophisticated Internet skills. "Expecting a 40-year radio veteran to embrace blogging isn't realistic. We have a huge technology-cultural gap within the stations—many of our employees are technophobes!" Dean notes.

## TOOLS AND PROJECTS

The early-adopter stations featured in the case studies use commonly used, off-the-shelf social media platforms and are beginning to build their own as well. They use these tools to build new relationships with their users, to reinforce brand identity, and to emphasize their distinctively local role.

### *Flickr*

KQED, KUT, and WBEZ use Flickr, an online photo management and sharing tool, on their Web sites. After rejecting professional photographs of Austin, which featured images from the commercial town center, station staff searched Flickr for Austin themes then e-mailed the owners for permission to use the pictures on the KUT site; permission was granted in almost every case. The photos change throughout the day and make up the site's banner, complete with photo credits in the lower corner of the image. Visitors can click on the linked name to access the photographer's Flickr page.

WBEZ prominently features daily photos of Chicago scenes on its home page. Some photos come from Flickr; others are submitted directly to the station staff. Hovering over a photograph reveals the photographer's name. Even this simple social media effort was initially resisted. The news reporters were concerned that since Chicago Public Radio is primarily a news organization, users may mistake featured photos as journalistic. Daniel Ash commented, "If you frame it properly and frame it appropriately, [the site users and consumers] will understand. They're smarter than we give them credit for" (personal communication, April 5, 2007). Ash told the news operation that the Web's unique characteristics address their concern. When visitors come to the Web site, they can choose; they cannot in the broadcast environment. The station's responsibility is to label things appropriately, so that visitors could easily navigate to the content they want. The Photo of the Day functioned, for Ash, as a powerful tool of localism, countering what he sees as a public radio weakness. "NPR is one, albeit important, piece of public radio. Public radio is about stations producing for their local audience."

KQED keeps a Community Gallery: Photo of the Day on Flickr where users can submit their photos of people or images from Northern California and beyond. KQED.org's photo editor then selects from the group's images what to feature in the online KQED gallery. The gallery on the KQED Web site is housed under the Local Focus topic page with other social media tools.



*KUT relies on submissions like this one from Flickr user CarlosRuis to keep its site looking local.*