

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR WATER UTILITIES BUSINESS CASE WORKSHEET

EMA is excited about the new opportunities to use Social Media to meet the business needs of our clients. According to Gartner (IMTech, 2010), social media investment occurs at three levels:

- No cost
- Low cost
- Justified business investments

EMA recognizes that many utilities and municipalities are in the no cost/low cost phase of deployment. The purpose of this worksheet is to evaluate the potential for involvement in social media to cost effectively meet existing water utility business objectives.

Water Utility Name: _____

Evaluation Date: _____

1. Does your organization have a designated individual or group responsible for communication with the public and/or the media?
 - a. If yes, that person/group should be involved in completing this worksheet.
 - b. If no, does your organization have more than 100 employees?

(Baseline Magazine, March/April 2011 says "eMarketer predicts that 88 percent of businesses with a hundred or more employees will adopt social media for marketing purposes by 2012.)

If yes, it is highly likely that your organization could realize business benefits from social media involvement. Completion of this worksheet is recommended. If the answer to both questions is no, social media may still be beneficial, but the cost benefits may be more difficult to quantify.

2. Does your organization have an emergency response plan? Does it include communication with the public and/or the media?
 - a. If so, review the plan and identify if/where social media could meet emergency communication objectives. List benefits.
 - b. Example benefit statements:
 - i. Reduce time spent interacting with media by communicating with all media contacts simultaneously via social media.
 - ii. Ensure staff and media receive the most up-to-date information simultaneously.

- c. Check out <http://simplifying.com/2010/infographic-five-steps-to-successful-crisis-management-for-airlines-in-the-age-of-social-media/>, “Five steps to successful crisis management for airlines, in the age of social media” by Shashank Nigam.
 - d. Identify a reasonable business investment to achieve these benefits. Compare this value to the cost of achieving these benefits with Social Media.
3. Does your organization interact with multiple news agencies?
- a. If so, leverage social media (typically a combination of your blog and Twitter) to communicate with all agencies real-time. Quantify time savings.
 - b. Example benefit statements:
 - i. No need to contact by phone any news agency which has already submitted a question real-time.
 - ii. No need to recontact previously contacted news agencies when additional relevant information is requested partially through the communication process.
 - c. Quantify time currently spent interacting with the media. Identify additional costs (-\$) and/or savings (+\$).
4. Does your organization conduct Public Education Campaigns?
- a. If yes, evaluate objectives to identify if/where social media could more effectively reach your intended audiences. List benefits.
 - b. Example benefit statements:
 - i. Access to high quality messages developed by other utilities supporting your organization’s communication goals, available at no cost by linking to those resources
 - ii. Ability to support public discussion related to public education campaign messages.
 - c. Learn from the electric industry as they develop program metrics suitable for funding requests to regulators. <http://www.lawofficesofcarolynelephant.com/fercfighths/?p=562>
 - d. Identify the funds expended on your most recent Public Education Campaign and/or budgeted for any current campaigns. Identify how funds would be expended if social media were added to the Public Education Campaign funding plan. Identify additional costs (-\$) and/or savings (+\$).
5. Does your organization have a conservation and/or water efficiency budget?
- a. If yes, evaluate objectives to identify if/where social media could more effectively reach your intended audiences. List benefits.
 - b. Example benefit statements:
 - i. Ability to “fit” conservation messages into availability of existing staff without requiring special funding.

- ii. Leverage public “trust” of water supply managers (www.waterworld.com results from WEF Report: Water Conservation: Customer Behavior and Effective Communication, project/order #4012).
 - c. Identify how your conservation budget would be impacted by using Social Media, including additional costs (-\$) and/or savings (+\$).
6. Does your organization have a rebate program?
- a. WEF Study (#4012) found few customers were aware of conservation rebate programs, yet their desire for such programs was high.
 - b. If yes, evaluate performance and identify if/where social media could increase program participation. List historical statistics and compare to post use of social media.
 - c. If no, consider partnering with local businesses to create rebate programs.
 - d. Check out www.watersavinghero.com.
 - e. Research costs of previous rebate programs and consider developing a proposal for a new rebate program leveraging social media and low cost/no cost methods as the primary publicity tool as a test case. Identify potential cost savings.
7. Does your organization conduct public meetings beyond meetings of your regulatory body (commission, board, etc.)?
- a. If so, could some of the objectives of those meetings be achieved through social media? List possibilities.
 - b. Example opportunities:
 - i. Solicit feedback on key issues via social media.
 - ii. Examples from other presentations today.
 - c. Compare costs for a neighborhood meeting (for example) with a focus conversation on the same topics with key individuals using Social Media, identifying additional costs (-\$) and/or savings (+\$).
8. Does your organization have Public Announcement or public education videos (current or past) that could provide value on an on-going basis?
- a. If so, list these resources and identify when they might again provide value to your organization if made available through social media.
 - b. Example benefit statement:
 - i. Add link on social media and website to PA on storm preparation each time a qualified storm alert is issued.
 - ii. Add link on social media and website to PA on seasonal water restrictions.
9. Does your organization have comment cards?
- a. “Social media is the new comment card” according to Jay Topper of Rosetta Stone.

- b. Identify the costs and time currently required to support your comment card program. Identify the benefits received through your current comment card program. Evaluate whether these benefits might be achieved through Social Media. Would this be a replacement for your current comment card program, or an addition to it? Identify additional costs (-\$) and/or savings (+\$) associated with this change.
10. Does your customer service staff know everything the media knows? Would it help if they did?
 - a. Talk with your customer service supervisor to determine the benefit of copying that department on appropriate out-going news releases via social media.
 - b. What hardware/software/network connectivity might be required to support this option? Alternatives range from copying the customer service supervisor on social media posts to displaying a Twitter feed on a monitor visible to all customer service representatives.
 - c. Quantify the cost of your preferred solution, if any, as well as the potential time savings possible based on faster, consistent handling of communication regarding major events.
11. Has the media ever learned about leaks and/or main breaks before the utility? How often? How many leaks and/or main breaks have you had in the past year? How many were reported by more than ten individuals?
 - a. Evaluate using social media to passively or actively gather information about leaks and main breaks.
 - b. Passive: Monitor Twitter (all posts within X miles) and your specific pages.
 - c. Active: SeeClickFix (www.seeclickfix.com) or custom apps. Check out Open311
 - d. This business benefit requires on-going commitment of resources. Passive monitoring for leaks, for example, requires on-going real-time monitoring. Active monitoring through SeeClickFix and/or a custom application requires development of business processes to support handling the service requests submitted through this new communications channel.
12. Does your organization conduct reputation monitoring and response?
 - a. If yes, spend some time using the tools listed on the Tools worksheet developing queries based on your current reputation monitoring goals. Use your findings to support continued monitoring.
 - b. NOTE: The more information you find, the more time you will be likely to justify in monitoring on an on-going basis.
 - c. Estimate a recommended monitoring time investment (time per session and frequency).
 - d. Compare the cost and results of your current approach with the time investment and results of your initial research. Develop a recommended path forward, including costs and savings.
13. Does your organization hire professional staff? Are you already using LinkedIn?

- a. If yes, ask the HR department for examples of how LinkedIn has helped meet HR objectives.
 - b. If not, evaluate using LinkedIn to identify and interact with potential employees.
14. Are other utilities serving your customer base already leveraging social media?
- a. If so, what benefits are they realizing?

If your organization decides to leverage Social Media, be sure to include the following elements in your plan:

1. Does your organization have a social media policy?
 - a. If so, ensure it supports your social media plan.
 - b. Is your network already positioned to support social media access through a demilitarized zone? If not, what is the cost to provide such access? Social media access directly from the utility network is strongly discouraged from a malware risk perspective.
 - c. How will social media comply with your records retention policy? Options include: 1) print all posts and responses, 2) pdf all posts and reports, 3) submit and receive notifications via e-mail and leverage e-mail archival as system of record.
2. Does your organization have Terms of Use for your website? Does it support Social Media?
 - a. If not, consider leveraging policies created by other organizations. Central Basin Municipal Water District (CBMWD) based their Terms of Use on Portland Water Bureau terms. CBMWD invites other utilities to use their terms and conditions as a starting point (<http://www.centralbasin.org/terms.php>).
3. Does your organization already have social media URLs?
 - a. If not, please go through http to access user agreements approved by the US Government. These may or may not be appropriate for your organization (especially for private organizations).

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Latest version of this worksheet: http://www.ema-inc.com/e_business.html#SocialMedia



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