

# Know Your Online Community

June 2010



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A service of the Corporation for National and Community Service - Special Projects and Sustainability Initiative

## Dear "Online" Colleague,

Sustainability also depends upon your ability to build strong relationships online using social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and more. Keep in mind that knowing your online community is based upon engaging supporters in a conversation. Such conversation through social media requires good listening skills. Click on the titles on the right to remind yourself to...

**Tune in and Learn**

**Track and Respond**

**Optimize Online Opportunities**

On-The-Go eTA is also interactive!


- *TOSS A THOUGHT* and hear from others
- *SEARCH* topics of interest from back issues

If you wish to receive direct assistance from our team of issue experts, you can also contact Campaign Consultation, Inc. at [OnTheGo@CampaignConsultation.com](mailto:OnTheGo@CampaignConsultation.com).

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## Tune in and Learn

Here are five tools you can use to tune in to what is being posted about your program online using search engine references alerts, Twitter, Facebook, blogs, and more.

Tune in & Listen Tool	Project
RSS	The technology behind most of these tools is RSS (Really Simple Syndication.) You will see this symbol  on many of the sights you visit, This icon,

### IN THIS ISSUE:

*click on titles below to read full articles*

[Tune in and Learn](#)

[Track and Respond](#)

[Optimize Online Opportunities](#)

### POST A COMMENT:

*click below to post a comment, ask a question, or reply to the community*

[▶ Click here to leave a comment](#)

### SEARCH BACK ISSUES:

*enter your topic in the box below*

[▶ Search Back Issues](#)

## TIPS FOR THE TIMES

While you are "listening" to conversations about your program or project, be sure to follow other social profits, also.

## Visit the VISTA Campus for more information

- [VISTA Viewfinder](#)  
See the latest issue
- **Featured eGIZMO** (Giving Information for Zoning)

	known as the "feed icon" indicates a web feed is present on a particular web page that will be useful for keeping you current.
Internet Search	One of the most basic steps you can take is to enter your organization's name in whatever search engine you use— Google, GoodSearch, Yahoo, Bing, etc. Search your own name periodically to track sources that are referencing your program/organization.
Google Alerts	Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google search results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic. Some handy uses of Google Alerts include tracking what is being said about your project, keeping current on an issue of concern, or monitoring a developing news story. <a href="#">Click here</a>
<a href="#">Google Reader</a>	As you follow blogs and websites regularly, Google Reader will bring them all together in one place, saving time from visiting individual sites. Look for mentions of your program and new ideas and trends. <a href="#">Click here</a> to go to a video from Common Craft that explains how to use the tool.
<a href="#">Technorati</a>	Tune in to what people are saying about you. Put your organization's name into the search bar. Note the little orange RSS subscription button in the upper right. Copy that link location (Right click the link and say "Copy Link" or however your browser words that). Paste that into Google Reader as one of your listening searches. You can repeat this for your competitor's name, influential individuals, and terms related to your mission (example: low-income housing.) <a href="#">Click here</a> to go to a Technorati.
<a href="#">Twitter</a>	Find out what people are saying on <a href="#">Twitter</a> about the subjects

Information for Zooming Mission Objectives) Approaching Unfamiliar Communities. [Click here](#) to view

- **Social Media Monday:** Tools for Transitioning - Plaxo, Idealist & More. VISTAs will learn how to find, be introduced to, and collaborate with thousands of professionals, hiring managers, and employment agencies via social networks. Monday, May 24, 3:00 p.m. EDT. [Click here](#) to register for this meeting. [Click here](#) to view
- **Become a fan of AmeriCorps VISTA on Face book:** [Click here](#) to register
- **VISTA Works--**a comprehensiv interactive learning tool that helps VISTAs figure out their next steps after service. [Click here](#) to view

#### Sustainability Resources:

[On-The-Go eTA](#)

[VISTA Viewfinder](#)

[Online Courses/  
Webinars](#)

[Web Wizard](#)

[The 5Cs](#)

[Workshops/ Clinics](#)

[Online support at  
Sustainability@](#)

	that concern you. Go to “search” and put in your terms.
<a href="#">SEO Pro</a>	This Australian tool provides information about who’s linking to your URLs and what the link text is.

Can you think of an instance when you discovered something was being said online that you could use to your organization’s advantage? Toss a thought ! [Click here](#)

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## Track and Respond

With all of the conversations floating about in cyberspace, how do you know what to track and respond to? Here is a list of social media conversations to track and some suggested responses:

- **The compliment**  
If you receive a congratulatory message or a positive media review in an online conversation, save it for testimonial use. Post it on your website, or “retweet” it. *Should you thank the message poster? Why or why not? Toss a thought!* [Click here](#)
- **The complaint**  
Respond immediately to posts complaining about your products or services, organization or staff. Catching something early gives you a chance to show good will, demonstrate your problem solving abilities, and reach out to the community.
- **The expressed need**  
People who make their needs known using social media often want both information and interaction; otherwise they’d go to the website. This situation provides an opportunity to support with helpful personality. *In addition to information, how else can you demonstrate helpful personality? Toss a thought!* [Click here](#)
- **Other social profits**  
Knowing what other organizations with similar missions are doing can give you clues to trends, unmet needs, funding opportunities or new projects.

[Click here](#) to continue reading about important online conversations.

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[Campaign Consultation.com](#)

[The Chronicle of Philanthropy](#)

*“ Science and technology multiply around us. To an increasing extent they dictate the languages in which we speak and think. Either we use those languages, or we can remain mute .”*

– J. G. Ballard (1913-2009) English novelist, short story and science fiction writer.

## Optimize Online Opportunities

On-line communication and social media tools are being introduced at a dizzying rate of speed that requires consistent mining for the newest and latest! Recently, members of Campaign Consultation attended the [SXSW Interactive conference](#)) to optimize cutting-edge technologies and translate their application for social good. More than 40,000 of the world's most creative web developers, designers, bloggers, wireless innovators, content producers, programmers, widget inventors and new media entrepreneurs shared their insights resulting in these "takeaways:"

*"Unified communication is the key."*

*"Everyone has a voice. Organizations and businesses need to be aware of what is being said. Listening is absolutely essential. Set Google Alerts and be aware of your brand and what others are saying. Be prepared to make changes if and when needed."*

*"Many people can't purchase a laptop or computer but will have a mobile phone. Globally mobile devices are the fastest growing market. You can tell your own story and become your own iReporter with the mobile devices."*

*"Online video is an excellent way to be searched and gain traffic. [YouTube](#) is the #2 search engine. Create short, bite sized video clips. Funny and cute videos are popular as well."*

*"A few words, a few pictures, a transformative experience. Good stories are three-way - they include the storyteller and the audience both in the experience and transport to a third place, a shared experience, together."*

*"If you're not actively responding to negative feedback with action, your social media may be doing more harm than good. You can't just respond—you need to act."*

*"Don't' forget email as a form of communication."*

***"Do everything you can to get people back to your website.** Include your URL in the title. Place it in the description. Everywhere."*

To help you attract more attention, donors and volunteers to your website and organization, take the [Website Wizard eAssessment for Sustainability](#). This GIZMO is designed to maximize your site's influence so website visitors can easily support your cause.

## Track and Respond to Conversations (cont.)

- **The crowd**  
Some topics draw huge crowds and have a sustained

discussion period. These discussions are especially relevant when they pertain to your mission. Continue to follow the topic to understand the current sentiment and its relative importance. Weave the conversation into your next appeal.

- **The influencer**

Influencers usually have a high number of people who link to their posts. Also, the number of people gathering to comment and how engaged visitors to their posts become help create a powerful voice by which to spread opinions. Use influencers to improve your understanding of audience opinions and as advocates for your program. Can you identify the influencers in your online discussions? *What steps can you take to engage influencers for your cause? Toss a thought!* [Click here](#)

- **The ROI (Return on Investment)**

There are a number of effective ways to measure engagement of your audience before, during and after online marketing and outreach campaigns. Track the mentions of your organization in user-generated content. Isolate positive words associated with a particular campaign and gauge the number of times they were used over a period of time.

- **The crisis**

Discussions happening in social media can serve as an early warning system of potential community crises. This gives you the opportunity to create intervention campaigns to address the crises and track the effectiveness of you organization. *What signals might help you to identify an approaching crisis? Toss a thought!* [Click here](#)

- **The audit**

By analyzing social media, an organization can rate overall user sentiment, determine which words are commonly associated with your organization or project, uncover advocates, and rank which social media channels contain the most active discussion. By pin-pointing which sites are discussing you, an audit can also help you determine possible message placement opportunities for reaching the most valuable and engaged audiences.

- **The thread**

With so many social media channels, conversations often become splintered. A discussion can start on one site and quickly leap into another, making it rather difficult to follow. Following discussions using associated keywords can help bridge the thread across all types of social media, connecting the conversation for easy analysis.

Adapted from material prepared by social media expert, David Alston.

**NEXT MONTH:** Our July issue of On-The-Go eTA will focus on re-branding communities.

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## Sustainability Resources

### VISTA Campus

VISTA Campus VISTA Campus is an online learning environment for the VISTA community. The aim is to support you in your development throughout and beyond your VISTA service. The Campus includes self-paced tutorials and courses, reference materials, discussions boards, a campus bookstore and more to help improve your skills and connect with other VISTAs. To access the site, go to <http://vistacampus.org> and select the “VISTAs” option. You can enter the site as a guest or create an account to access the content and discussion boards.

### Online Capacity Building Tools

Interactive online capacity building products on a myriad of topics are provided for your use at your desk or in the field. Featured below is Briefcase for Success. Access these and other products at <http://nationalserviceresources.org/cci/5cs>

- **Briefcase for Success: Tools and Resources for Financial Asset Initiatives** will help low-income individuals and poor communities better understand our financial system and build economic security. <http://nationalserviceresources.org/files/cci/briefcase-for-success/BFS-1/briefcase.html>
- **Website Wizard:** This self assessment tool assists programs and projects to maximize their websites for sustainability. Simply [click here](#).
- **Briefcase for Success: Tools and Resources for Financial Asset Initiatives:** Web courses on topics pertinent to Sustainability such as — Build Fundraising Volunteer Champions, Cause Related Marketing and Corporate Partnerships are available through the CNCS Resource Center at <http://nationalserviceresources.org/online-courses>

### Onsite Capacity Building Events

Institutes, workshops, webshops and individual consultation can be made available to help you build sustainability for your organization or project.

- **National Sustainability Institutes:**  
The National ASK (Awareness, Skills, Knowledge) to Sustain Institute, sponsored by Corporation for National and Community Service, provided by Campaign Consultation, Inc. 1998-2002.  
<http://www.campaignconsultation.com/index.php/publications-products>

The Resources Now! National Institute, sponsored by Corporation for National and Community Service, provided by Campaign Consultation, Inc.

<http://www.campaignconsultation.com/index.php/publications-products>

- **Workshops/Clinics:** The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), through its T/TA service provider Campaign Consultation, Inc., offers ninety-minute and three-hour workshops and clinics on such topics as Developing Major Donors, Building Strategic Partnerships, Working with Boards & Advisory Councils, and more. [Click here](#) to inquire.

### **The Chronicle of Philanthropy:**

You are encouraged to subscribe to The Chronicle for the latest news in the social profit industry. [Click here](#) for more information.

### **Sustainability Assistance:**

Sustainability@CampaignConsultation.com is designed to give information fast on building capacity. Use this online support for advice from a fundraising professional.

Contact [Sustainability@CampaignConsultation.com](mailto:Sustainability@CampaignConsultation.com)

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