

November 24, 2015

Social Media Audit

Background

Social media technology involves the creation and communication of content through social networks using the Internet. The differences between traditional and social media are defined by the level of interaction and interactivity available to the consumer. For example, a viewer can watch a news broadcast on television with no interactive feedback mechanisms, while social media tools allow consumers to comment, discuss and even distribute the news. Use of social media has created highly effective communication platforms where any user, virtually anywhere in the world, can freely create content and share this information in real time to a global audience.

There are many types of social media tools: micro blogs such as Twitter, image and video sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube, social networking sites such as Facebook, and professional networking sites such as LinkedIn. The common link among all forms of social media is that the content is supplied and managed by individual users who leverage the tools and platforms provided by social media sites.

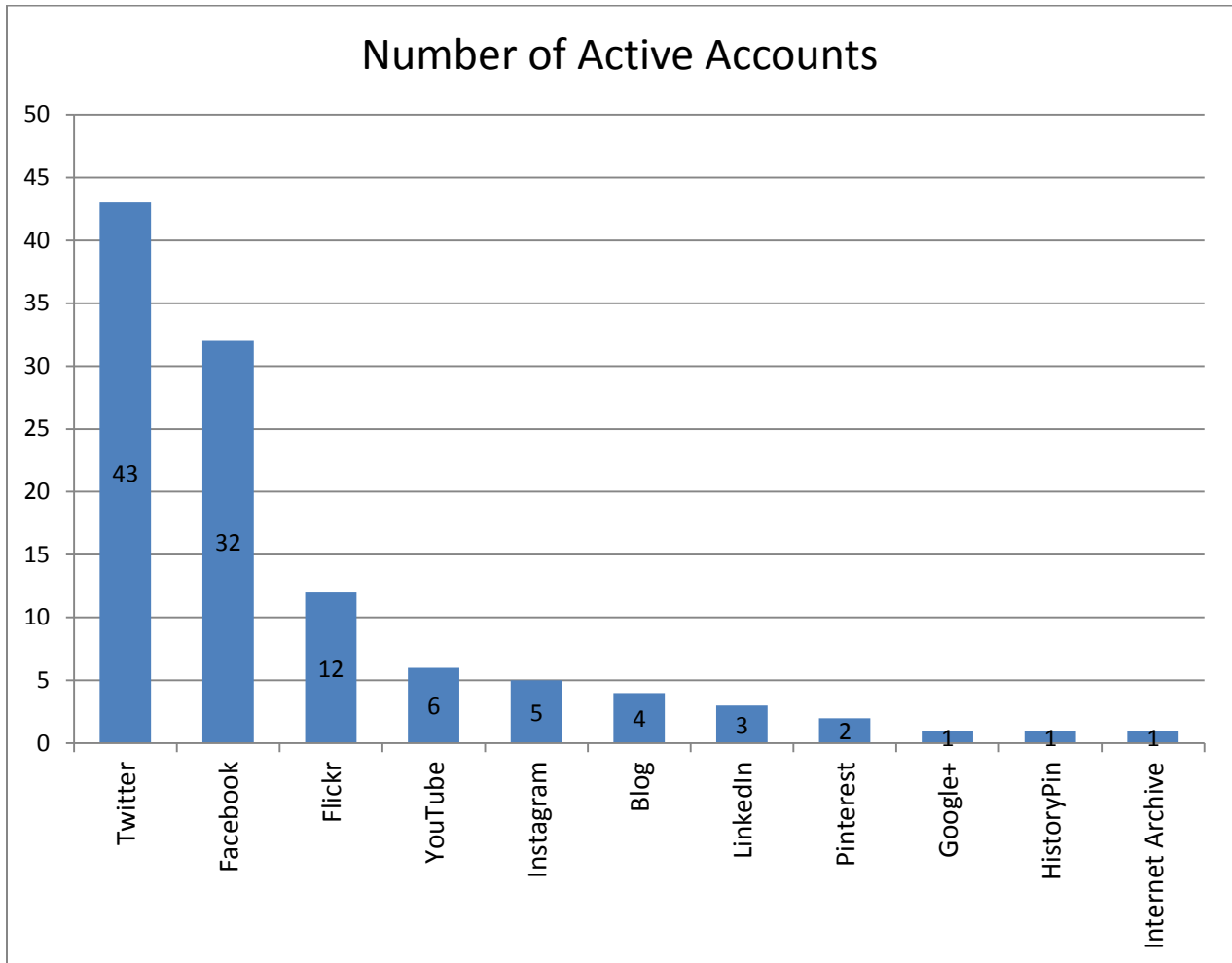
Formats for each site are different. For instance, Facebook allows user to create pages to share information via text, picture or video. Other users can respond with comments or posts that become part of the user's page. Twitter allows users to post messages known as "tweets" that are limited to 140 characters. Users can follow each other and share tweets (known as re-tweeting).

For the City of Vancouver, social media is an important communication and outreach tool. With more people using social media, the channel is becoming a critical way to reach and engage citizens. Done well, social media affords cities an enormous opportunity to increase public awareness of issues, and build a strong relationship with citizens.

The City has multiple social media accounts on various sites including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Flickr and Instagram to promote the City's programs and serve the citizens of Vancouver.

As seen in the chart below, Twitter is the most used in the City, with 43 active accounts. There are also some inactive accounts that become active during special events such as Doors Open Vancouver.

Figure 1: City of Vancouver Social Media Accounts



The City approved its social media policy in April 2014. The policy includes social media best practices and is supported by a social media handbook. Corporate Communications oversees the use of social media at the City, chiefly through the role of the social media strategist. There are over 50 social media account managers spanning various departments at the City responsible for regularly updating various accounts. Account managers use a social media management system called HootSuite to optimize collaboration and allow for emergency communications access. The social media strategist organizes regular training, communications and case studies to train and educate the account managers. A team of specially trained 3-1-1 staff monitor City of Vancouver channels through HootSuite to identify service requests that they can respond to and take immediate action.

Scope

The audit objectives were to evaluate the internal controls and business processes relating to social media. Specifically:

- Ensure the process is meeting its objectives;
- Ensure security and other risks introduced by social media are addressed;
- Ensure unauthorized disclosure or intellectual property leakage are identified; and
- Ensure social media is used effectively to inform and interact with citizens.

Conclusion

The City has an up to date social media policy and social media handbook. Continued focus is required to improve monitoring of social media accounts and employment of strong passwords that meet City policy.

Management is aware of the concerns and has committed to address the issues.

The more significant findings and recommendations are:

Improve monitoring of inappropriate posts

There were two posts by outside users out of 46 accounts that may be considered inappropriate under the participant terms of use on a Facebook page and a Google+ account. Management has agreed to update the social media handbook to include the requirement for staff to monitor for inappropriate posts on the City's social media accounts and take appropriate action on a timely and regular basis.

Improve password requirements

Current passwords used for social media accounts and through Hootsuite do not meet the City's password requirements. City Policy AG-15-07 on Account Management states that: "All passwords used within the City should comply with the requirements set out in the Computing and Telecommunications Facilities - Security and Integrity policy (AG-015-02)."

Management has agreed to ensure that passwords used for the City's social media accounts follow the City password rules stated in the related policies.