Results of the Social Media Survey for Internet Society Chapters

Authors: Christine Saegesser Baethge; Dan Graham
Date: 1 April 2011

Executive Summary

This survey was conducted in order to find out how, if at all, and for what purpose Internet Society Chapters use Social Media for their work with their members. The results of this survey will identify ways how the Internet Society (ISOC) can provide support to its Chapters for their use of Social Media tools and will also help the Internet Society (ISOC) optimize its own use of these tools.

All Chapter Officers worldwide were invited to participate in the survey. The overall response rate was excellent: forty-seven (47) responses were received from thirty-six (36) different Chapters, or 42% of all Internet Society Chapters worldwide.

Key outcomes suggest:

• a generally positive attitude from Chapters towards the use of Social Media to promote the work of the Internet Society
• concerns exist about privacy, security, accessibility, required time and resources as well as language
• Social Media represents an additional channel for communication and interaction and should not replace more traditional means of communication
• use of Social Media is popular with some groups e.g. youth and its use should be targeted according to the audience
• nevertheless, the Internet Society could do more to promote its own use of Social Media
• and encourage as well as support the use of Social Media by Chapters

The Social Media tools that are currently most used by the Chapters who participated in this survey are Facebook (51%), Twitter (46%), LinkedIn (31%) and Blogs (31%). Less used are Flickr (24%) and YouTube (7%). At the same time, 85% of all respondents indicated that their Chapter is hosting at least one mailing list.

More details regarding the outcomes can be found in the body of the report.
Response Rate and Demographics

Forty-seven (47) responses to the Social Media Survey were received from thirty-six (36) Chapters, or 42% of all Internet Society Chapters worldwide. The questionnaire was available in three different languages. The breakdown of responses per language is as follows:

* English: 33 responses  
* French: 11 responses  
* Spanish: 3 responses

The regional breakdown of survey participation was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa and the Middle East</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using Social Media to promote the Internet Society’s work

When asked about using Social Media to promote the Internet Society’s work, the general response was very positive, with only a couple of negative reactions, mainly linked to the fact that these tools can consume a lot of time and that some of the respondents are not yet familiar with using these tools.

Many of the respondents mentioned that Social Media is a very good tool to access new
groups and recruit new, particularly young, Internet Society and Chapter members. One of the advantages mentioned in this regard is that Social Media make it easy to reach a big number of people who are already on those media channels, there is no need to convince them to get used to these tools in the first place. People who use Social Media also tend to be interested in Internet issues in general.

There is nevertheless also an indication that these tools are not widely used among some segments of the Internet Society’s target audience, namely the more technical (e.g. IETF) community.

The interactive nature of these tools is another important aspect that was mentioned; while this requires a certain degree of reactivity as well as pro-active engagement, it also offers the possibility of multiplying a message in very little time. Some also mention that Social Media tools are easy to use (and access) and offer and effective form of communication, which is also inexpensive compared to other, more traditional, media types, such as newspapers, radio or TV.

It was also noted that Social Media can be a good source of traffic (visitors) to a ‘traditional’ Chapter website, but that Social Media activity should be based on a good communications plan, that is “in harmony with ISOC HQ and all other Chapters”. Some see it as “an indispensable part of the future strategy”.

Challenges faced when using Social Media tools

Many of the respondents nevertheless also experience certain challenges when using Social Media for their work with the Chapters. The challenges mentioned can be summarized as follows:

Time is a limited resource

Many of the answers mentioned that Social Media tools are potentially a very big time consumer. Some feel that they need to be responsive at all times in order to stay relevant.

Message – channel – audience

A major challenge for some respondents is to have the right message (short in order to have an impact) for the right audience and by using the right channel. Language can also be a problem in this respect, as local languages and dialects play an important role, but translations take time, which is difficult in a Social Media environment.

Finding the best channel/media tool for each type of information is also mentioned as a challenge. One respondent suggested to use ‘technical channels’, such as mailing lists and forums, for more technically oriented content, while using Social Media tools (Twitter,
blogs, etc.) for politically and socially oriented content and messages.

There was also a mention of the difficulty to ‘recruit’ followers and ‘keep them tuned’ as well as target the right audience.

**Many different tools – some of them very complex**

A major challenge also seems to be that there are so many different tools, which makes it hard to choose which one to focus on and how to make best use of them in order to maximize the effects (e.g. problem of Facebook’s complexity – unclear algorithms).

Some of those surveyed also mentioned that there is simply too much information, the source of which is not always known and/or hard to verify, which triggers a certain risk of misinformation.

It was also mentioned that some of the Chapter members and officers are unfamiliar with these tools and/or don’t use them at all, suggesting a need for education or support.

Another respondent suggested that while it is important to diversify the communication channels to a certain extent, the Internet Society should not create too many different channels for its communication with the Chapters.

**Privacy**

Privacy issues were mentioned on various occasions throughout this survey as a major challenge. It was also brought up that it the distinction between the private and the professional sphere becomes more and more blurred.

**Accessibility and network infrastructure**

On a more general note, but nonetheless important to understand the Internet Society’s Chapters’ use of Social Media tools, some of the respondents mentioned that they would be happy to use Social Media for their work with the Chapters, but that this is difficult, if not impossible, since Internet access in their region is very limited, unstable and/or very expensive (not everyone has Internet at home or in the office and Internet connections in cyber cafés are very expensive).

**What can the Internet Society do to help support its Chapter's Social Media activities?**

When asked what the Internet Society can do to help support their Chapter’s Social Media activities the responses can be summarized as follows:
Technical aspects

Some of those surveyed mentioned that it would be helpful to have tools that help automate news distribution through Social Media.

It was also mentioned that the Internet Society might continue to develop the Chapter and Membership Portal (AMS) to offer further functionalities (in addition to the e-mail capabilities), such as shared workspaces. The inclusion of additional functionalities in the Chapter and Member Portal (AMS), such as shared working groups, is planned as part of the Internet Society’s Engagement Platform.

Use of Social Media tools

Some of the respondents suggested that the Internet Society should encourage the use of Social Media among all Chapters and their members and that the Internet Society could make better use of these tools itself. It was also mentioned that Social Media could be used for discussions (alongside the mailing lists).

For example, it was suggested that the Internet Society can help the Chapters by re-tweeting their news in order to help spread the word and by linking to the various Chapters from the main Internet Society Social Media pages and further recommend them to other people.

Share suitable content

It was noted that Chapters needed suitable content to share and that ISOC is poised to help them with this. Videos (rather than text) were suggested, as this would allow Chapters to easily share these contents with their followers and friends. There were suggestions for more videos on technical topics e.g. DNSSEC, IPv6, etc., as well as interactive multimedia resources which could easily be shared through these channels. Some respondents also mentioned that it would be helpful to receive the most important announcements in various languages.

Someone also proposed that the Chapters’ Social Media information could be added to the list of Chapters on the Internet Society’s website. This is being investigated for implementation within the Chapter Portal.

Internet Society Social Media group

While several respondents highlighted the importance of sharing good practices and resources among the Chapters and between the Chapters and Internet Society global, one respondent suggested forming an Internet Society Social Media group that could share best practices (including success stories from Chapters). It is also seen as necessary to “define a corporate and harmonized plan of communication on social networks and media”
The provision of training for Chapters is another point that came up on various occasions throughout this survey: general training on the use of Social Media to enhance the Chapter’s work creation and management of Social Media projects; but also training on the responsible handling of these tools (both individually and collectively), maybe even establish a certain ‘code of conduct’.

For some Chapters, funding for certain Social Media support/projects could be helpful.

**Survey Responses on the usage of specific Social Media tools**

**Twitter**

The responses given with regards to Twitter where almost even in terms of the Chapter’s use of Twitter: 54% of respondents indicated that they don’t use Twitter to raise awareness and communicate their Chapter’s activities, while 46% say they use Twitter for their work with the Chapters.

Most of those who do use Twitter indicate that the frequency of their tweeting depends on specific events and the Chapter’s activities and thus varies from once a day (this is more often the case from a personal account than from a Chapter account) to once a month or once in a while, depending on the occasion.

Only 28% of the respondents indicated that they use it to get information about the work of other Chapters.

50% of the respondents indicated that they knew that the Internet Society uses Twitter on a regular basis.

The Internet Society’s official Twitter channel: http://twitter.com/internetsociety.

**LinkedIn**

31% of those surveyed indicated that they use LinkedIn for their work with the Chapter and 18% said that they use LinkedIn to announce their Chapter’s events, but only 16% ever post anything to the Internet Society’s LinkedIn group. This group offers an additional discussion and information-sharing platform for Internet Society members and those using LinkedIn are welcome to join the group. Just search for “Internet Society” among the LinkedIn groups to find it.

About half of those surveyed (47%) knew that the Internet Society has a profile on
LinkedIn. See: http://www.linkedin.com/company/219986

**Facebook**

Facebook seems to be most popular among the Internet Society Chapters for their work with the Chapters, as 51% of those surveyed indicated that they use Facebook for their communications.

Of those who use Facebook for their work with the Chapter, 74% mentioned that they use their personal Facebook accounts, while 26% said that they are using a separate account for this purpose.

Some Facebook URLs that have been listed are:

| Internet Society United States Colorado Chapter: | http://www.facebook.com/COISOC |
| Internet Society Taipei Chapter: | http://www.facebook.com/isoc.tw |
| Internet Society Spain Catalonia Chapter: | http://www.facebook.com/pages/Isoc-Cat/152003254818342 |

48% of the respondents also answered that their Chapter has a dedicated Facebook page.

The links to pages mentioned are:

| Internet Society Belgium Chapter: | http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=10034872521 |
| Internet Society Taiwan Chapter: | http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=218493187579 |
| Internet Society Spain Catalonia Chapter: | http://www.facebook.com/fbsitegovernance?v=app_4949752878#!/pages/Chapitre-Mauritanien-de-lInternet-Society/173098296061212 |
Asked if they used Facebook to get information about other Chapter’s activities, 36% of the respondents answered positively. At the same time 53% of those surveyed indicated that they use Facebook to get information about Internet issues in general.

When asked if they knew that the Internet Society is on Facebook, 64% of the respondents said yes and 81% would join a private Facebook group for Chapters if such a group was created.

The main points as to what they would use an Internet Society Chapter group on Facebook for can be summarized as follows:

- **Meeting likeminded people** and networking
- **Sharing of information**, multimedia products, best practices (someone specified that it would be internal information, similar to the Chapter delegates list)
- **Communicating** Chapter events and programmes and awareness raising
- **Collaborating** on a Social Media strategy and tactics together with other members
- **Reaching out** to potential new members

The Internet Society on Facebook: www.facebook.com/internetsociety

**YouTube**

When questioned about their use of YouTube for their work with the Chapters, only 7% indicated that they make use of YouTube and only one Chapter, the Internet Society Malaysia Chapter, added a link to their YouTube channel: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ej_eHwC44x4

On the other hand, 53% of the respondents indicated that they knew that the Internet Society has a series of videos that the Chapters are welcome to use for their works with the Chapters. See: http://www.youtube.com/InternetSocietyVideo

**Flickr**

24% of those surveyed responded that they both have a Flickr account and that they were aware of the fact that the Internet Society has a series of photos that are available on Flickr. See: http://www.flickr.com/photos/internetsociety

Among those who mentioned that they use Flickr, most of them nevertheless use their
own personal account rather than a Chapter specific account for their work.

**E-mail based discussion lists**

84% of the persons who responded to the question as to how many e-mail based discussion their Chapter hosts answered that their Chapter hosts at least one discussion list, more than half of the respondents nevertheless indicated that they host more than one.

It was also estimated that 74% of all these lists are active and 26% are currently dormant.

**Blogs**

31% of the respondents answered that their Chapter is hosting a blog. The links to these blogs that were received are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internet Society Germany Chapter:</th>
<th><a href="http://www.isoc.de">www.isoc.de</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet Society Taipei Chapter:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.isoc.org.tw/">http://www.isoc.org.tw/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Society Bulgaria Chapter:</td>
<td><a href="http://isoc.bg.wordpress.com">http://isoc.bg.wordpress.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Society United States Colorado Chapter:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.coisoc.org">http://www.coisoc.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Society United States Washington DC Chapter:</td>
<td><a href="http://networkedblogs.com/blog/isoc_dc/?ahash=cfbd65f0160af44e37dfa12a03a81db9">http://networkedblogs.com/blog/isoc_dc/?ahash=cfbd65f0160af44e37dfa12a03a81db9</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Society Spain Catalonia Chapter:</td>
<td><a href="http://isoc-cat.blogspot.com/">http://isoc-cat.blogspot.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Society South Africa Chapter:</td>
<td><a href="http://isoc.org.za">http://isoc.org.za</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Society Luxembourg Chapter:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.isoc.lu">http://www.isoc.lu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Society Costa Rica Chapter:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.isoc-cr.org">www.isoc-cr.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asked how often these blogs are updated, 12% answered once a week, 12%

1 The terms ‘Active’ and ‘Dormant’ were self-evaluated by the respondents.
once a month and 76% answered that the frequency of updating their blogs varies depending on current events and Chapter activities.

**Other Social Media tools**

There are of course a variety of Social Media tools that have not explicitly been mentioned in this questionnaire. 24% of those surveyed thus indicated that they also use other tools. Among those tools listed are:

- Plurk
- BBS
- emails
- Skype
- MSN
- Sina Weibo (a micro blog in Chinese)
- Livebroadcasting
- Yahoo groups
- Radio, written press

**Measuring Social Media activities**

A majority of the respondents indicated that they do not currently have any formal measure of their Social Media activities. This is mainly due to a lack of time and resources.

There are nevertheless some indicators that have been mentioned in relation to the measurement of their activities’ impact:

- number of e-mail responses received
- existence of daily communication from and with the Chapter members
- number of followers/friends/etc. and number of replies/retweets/etc.
- number of people who participate in the Chapter’s events
- number of new Chapter members
- traffic generated on the main page

Among the formal metrics tools that some of the respondents use are Google Analytics, Awstats and Alexa.
Disadvantages of using Social Media to promote the Internet Society’s work

Asking if they see any disadvantages in using Social Media to promote the Internet Society’s work, the answers were divided; while about half of the respondents indicated that they don’t see any problem with using these tools, the other half also saw certain disadvantages.

Among the disadvantages mentioned are:

- Privacy issues (among these the division between professional and private spheres)
- Security issues
- Problem of accessibility in some regions (due to lack of bandwidth, costs)
- Feeding into many channels makes it hard to follow and track
- Some of e.g. Facebook’s business practices can be seen as conflicting with the Internet Society’s core values (openness, standard compliance, privacy, awareness)
- Certain internal matters might reach a wider audience than foreseen
- Too much advertisements (e.g. on Facebook)
- Only a subset of the community can be reached through Social Media
- Human resources, time and money are needed for proper Social Media activities

Conclusions and impact on 2011/12 Chapter planning

While the general attitude expressed is quite positive towards the use of Social Media, as they facilitate the potential outreach to a very large new (often less technical) audience, there were some concerns expressed: namely issues of privacy, security, accessibility, required time and resources and language.

Among the suggestions received is the potential use of other, more “distributed and more open Social Media platforms, such as Diaspora”, the fact that the Internet Society should do more to make its resources and online presences known to the Chapters and that a Social Media workshop would be helpful for some of the Chapters.

It nevertheless also became clear that the use of Social Media can only offer an additional channel for communication and interaction. It should not replace some of the more traditional means of communication, as not everybody had the possibility or the wish to get involved with Social Media.

Tactical Impacts for Social Media support to Chapters in 2011/2012

Based on the feedback received from the survey participants, we’ve identified three
tactics/initiatives that will allow the Internet Society increase its support of Chapter Social Media activities.

**Workshops**

We will leverage select Chapter workshops and include a session on Social Media. The purpose of the session would be to discuss best practices, highlight best-in-class examples and allow Chapters to highlight challenges and concerns they are facing with Social Media. Furthermore, these sessions would allow Chapters to share examples of how Social Media is helping them achieve their targets.

**Webinars**

The webinars will be an extension of the Social Media sessions offered during the above-mentioned workshops. Each webinar will focus on a specific topic such as “How to promote events using Social Media”, “How to measure the impact of your Social Media activities”…etc. We will ask Chapters to suggest topics that they’d like to see discussed to ensure that these sessions are based on their specific needs. We will start with quarterly webinars, and increase the frequency if needed. We aim to hold the first webinar in May 2011.

**Chapter Social Media Guidelines**

The Internet Society will produce a ‘Social Media Guidelines’ document. The aim of the document will be to help provide Chapters with ideas and suggestions as to how to best use Social Media on behalf of the Internet Society. These guidelines will address topics such as:

- Using personal Social Media accounts for Internet Society business
- Twitter hashtag use
- Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIN, blogs…etc best practices
- How to react to negative comments

The guide will also contain a list of recommended tools for cross-network posting, how to measure Social Media impact…etc. The guidelines will be treated as a “living” document that will be continuously updated with input and feedback from chapters and their members.

The Social Media guidelines will be ready for Chapters by mid 2011.
Acknowledgements

We would like to use this occasion to thank everybody who participated in this survey. The answers given provide a very helpful overview of how your Chapters use Social Media and how the Internet Society’s own activities are perceived and in what ways they might be improved.

The Internet Society on Social Media:

Twitter: http://twitter.com/internetsociety
LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com/company/219986
Facebook: www.facebook.com/internetsociety
YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/InternetSocietyVideo
Flickr: http://www.flickr.com/photos/internetsociety

A detailed report of all the answers given to this survey is available on the Chapter Wiki at http://wiki.chapters.isoc.org/tiki-list_file_gallery.php?galleryId=2 (login required).