MISSION AGENCIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA 1: STRATEGIES

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Broadly speaking, there are two strategies that mission agencies can adopt with regard to social-media. These are introduced here.
Category: Observations

This is the first in a series of posts based on my analysis of the social media profiles of five mission agencies. You can download the full paper here (sorry, it will cost you a couple of quid, unless you are a Patreon of this site).

Broadly speaking, the five agencies in my study have adopted two strategies for the use of social media platforms. Two of them opted for what might be called a minimum-broadcast strategy, one which seeks, with the minimum of input, to use social media to amplify the effects of their other communication media. The other strategy could be termed maximum-social media. In this case, the organisations seek to make full use of each social media platform, leveraging them to communicate a variety of messages. Rather than distinct points, these strategies are points on a scale and each agency is at a different point with regard to each of the social media platforms. However, for convenience, we will address each one in turn.Â

Minimum-Broadcast.Â This is the simplest way to use social media and is a good option for smaller organisations, those who want to keep tight control of their media profile or those who simply donâ€™t see social media as being an appropriate forum for their work. This approach recognises that people will expect to find organisations on social media platforms and may search, Facebook, say, before they search the web as a whole. Recognising this, the agencies create profiles on each of the platforms, which include basic information and contact details, but they do not seek to populate the page with regular new contact. Automatic links can be used so that email newsletters are posted to Twitter and even Instagram and Facebook. Equally, photographs can be posted to Instagram and automatically cross-posted to Twitter and Facebook. Beyond setting up the original systems, this sort of approach does not involve a significant investment in time and energy, but it can serve to broadcast the agencies materials to a wider audience than might otherwise be achieved. The aim is essentially for one-way communication from the agency to the rest of the world. Given the investment needed to create YouTube videos, it is harder to adopt a minimum approach on this medium.Â

For agencies with a minimum-broadcast approach, who are not particularly concerned about brand image and who do not face significant security issues, the @FarmersOfTheUK Twitter account might present an interesting model. Each week, a different farmer takes over the account and posts photographs, text and short videos about their life and work, over the weeks this adds up to an engrossing picture of the diversity of British agriculture. Allowing missionaries (especially young ones) and local people to take over the agency Twitter or Instagram feed for a week would be risky, but it could be an excellent way to expand the agencyâ€™s social media profile at a limited cost to the agency as a whole.Â

Maximum-Social Media.Â This model involves much more organisational input and raises a number of problems which donâ€™t arise when a minimum approach is adopted. In this model the aim is to harness the power of social media and to encourage two-way interaction with the wider public. In this approach, issues which would be dealt with in the wider organisational communications strategy will need to be specifically addressed with reference to social media.Â Some of these issues will be addressed in subsequent posts.