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Presentation by Dr Tom Watson, Bournemouth University (By Skype), to Panel on 'Integrating social media with traditional PR/marketing, especially in nonprofit public relations'

My comments are going to be rather broad but I hope they will come together at the end. To start with, I will discuss the nature of non-profits or what we call not-for-profits or NFPs and consider their importance in Europe. I'll then discuss some examples and their use of social media. I will reflect on research that Anna-Marie White and I have undertaken on NFPs. Finally, I'd like to consider where the discussion on measurement of social media is going, as there is a trans-Atlantic divide.

In the UK, according to the Charities Commission, the not-for-profit sector was worth £46 billion in turnover last year. That's around \$75 billion in your money. So it's big business. These organisations range from local town-based charities to major national and international aid and development bodies. I'll use examples of both types a bit later. They also include NGOs, which as we all know, have great influence around the world and on the media.

In Europe, these organisations are very important politically. Robert Blood of SIGWatch who monitors Special Interest Groups has found that they can have real influence on European policy. Let me quote from my blog about his research: "NGOs are considered more influential than business in Euro policy-making but have about the same influence as national parliaments, EU agencies and industry associations. NGOs, however, yield in influence to other stakeholders such as national governments, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and the media.

"It is in their interaction with the media that NGOs demonstrate their strength. The survey respondents, mainly from large manufacturing and financial services businesses, consultancies and industry associations, admire NGOs for their ability to win media coverage although they reckon that there is latent sympathy in the media for them. The NGOs are also rated highly for political lobbying skills and willingness to take a long-term approach to campaigns. They just don't go away!"

SIGWatch found that the most effective NGOs are familiar names – WWF, Greenpeace, Medecins San Fontières and Amnesty International. In future, Climate Action Network and Transparency International are expected to join them.

So whether we call them Non-Profits, NFPs or NGOs, this sector's influence that has grown exponentially over the past 20 years. At the United Nations and its many bodies, for example, NGOs have power that is much greater than many small nations.

Turning to our research that was presented in Miami earlier this year: Charities and not-for-profit organisations have traditionally preferred direct fund-raising from supporters over commercial operations. By this, Anna-Marie and I mean the selling of products and services to raise money. Competitive pressures, however, are driving

charities to take on 'dual citizenship' through activity in both profit (commercial) and nonprofit (voluntary) sectors.

Using a case study of a UK charity, we looked at the impact that commercial trading has on relations with key stakeholders, such as supporters, and upon the reputation of the community-focused organisations. We found that donors were overwhelmingly in support of commercial activities, as long as these were aligned with the charity's values. The study also found that commercial activities should not deflect the charity from its perceived and announced mission.

The charity we looked at was in a pre-social media phase and mainly sold its products through direct mail. For example, it sent a brochure of its products to supporters and clients who bought by direct mail and phone. This could easily be changed to an e-commerce model or to an online platform. But the message is that, no matter what the platform, there are important principles of alignment to be observed.

In preparing for today's discussion, I have looked at three NFPs, two of whom could be considered to be important NGOs in the fields of aid and development support. These are Oxfam and World Vision, whilst my smaller and more local example is the Trinity Centre in Winchester, Hampshire where I live.

All three have websites; two of them have Facebook fan and groups support. Oxfam GB had 16,432 fans on its main Facebook site whilst World Vision has 24,359 fans on its main site, but here is the issue with social media. Taking World Vision as an example, Facebook lists 70 fan sites and 500 groups linked to it and, I presume, mostly out of its control. So claiming to manage communications on social media is likely to be questionable.

Both the NGOs have formidable resources to offer readers. Oxfam has photos, resources for schools, news releases, reports and over 60 methods of bookmarking and sharing information. World Vision, too, has its website, a PR Team, RSS feeds as well as staff blogs and eyewitness reports from trouble spots, feature articles and photos. Both websites are a combination of conventional resources, available to media and supporters, and social media tools.

The Trinity Centre which cares for homeless and disadvantaged people in Winchester has a website (www.trinitycentre.org.uk) with information about its services, progress of fund-raising, reports, press releases, photos, etc. On Google, there are three pages or more of search information. It's a conventional website of record because its organisational communication is very local, very personal and targeting a relatively narrow group of influencers.

So who's listening and responding to social media? With Ketchum, we produced the first UK version of the Media Myths & Realities (MMR) study which found that there is immense loyalty to major media brands like the BBC and leading national newspaper. Search engines are important but seem mainly to be in place to reach these sources of news. My comment on this was: "One of the greatest impacts of blogs and news feeds is that they've given people additional channels through which to access established and already credible sources. As a result, the importance of

traditional news gathering and journalism has been reinforced, rather than there being a swing to citizen journalism.”

The MMR study also found that those whom we call ‘influencers’ have a much higher consumption of all forms of media, especially social media than the general population.

Let take up my final point on the measurement of social media – The problem is that we all say that social media is about engagement but then use traffic data to measure it. It is like applying old measure of print output, such as measuring column inches or advertising value, and bolting it onto a dynamic ever-changing situation. We are heading in the wrong direction for the desire to squeeze everything into a quotient.

Anne Gregory and I wrote in the Journal of Marketing Communication in 2008 - “*PR is concerned with ill-defined problems. It cannot be evaluated by a single method or metric because it doesn’t deal with simple issues...*” but the desire for the ‘silver bullet’ solution still continues. In social media, it is a bigger dead-end than it was before.

I have read and heard Katie Paine and other PR evaluation folks talking about the measurement of social media in the US and in Europe. My view is that they are just applying old metrics to a new situation. The old ‘Share of Voice’ has just been morphed into ‘Share of Conversation’ with traffic metrics being falsely transformed from output indicators into outcome judgements.

The direction of research needs to look more closely at range rather than quotient. I believe that the German media analysis firm Auschnitt has a very interesting line of attack. They are using social network software, alongside content analysis, to identify the hubs and spokes of social media influence. In this manner, they can find which websites, blogs and online news sources are the creators or opinion and which are the followers and transmitters.

Although their applications have largely been to marketing communications and corporate communications situations, there is no reason why the more activist situations could not be tracked in the same manner.

In conclusion, these are exciting times for social media and for larger non-profits, but we must not forget that personal communication with key stakeholders, who are often very close to us, will create word-of-mouth influence and lead to charitable giving.

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