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An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Use of Social Media by United Way of Westchester and Putnam

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AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
BY UNITED WAY OF WESTCHESTER AND
PUTNAM

BY

DIAN XI

ZIYUN GAO

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
DYSON COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
PACE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The use of social media has grown quickly in different fields, especially in the nonprofit sector. Nonprofit organizations are using social media as a new method to raise funds. In 2014, more than 50% of nonprofit organizations have invested at least six hours a week on social media. Previous research has analyzed how social media developed and is used in nonprofit organizations. There are a lot of ways to evaluate what is good social media strategy and ideas for how non-profits can use social media better.

This research concentrated on how social media brings change in nonprofit organizations. The research took United Way of Westchester and Putnam County as an example to evaluate what factors are important in social media and to what extent social media has brought change for the organization. In addition, the research also observed and analyzed five other nonprofit organizations: American Red Cross in Westchester County; White Plains YMCA; Westchester Jewish Community Services; March of Dimes and The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, in order to determine what factors would improve their use of four social media platforms--YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Based on the analysis, the research has found that social media enhanced communication between the United Way of Westchester and Putnam and its donors and supporters. The research further points to recommendations for future social media policy for United Way of Westchester and Putnam.

Chapter One: Introduction

The use of social media has grown rapidly in different fields. According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), more than 1.5 million nonprofit organizations are registered in the U.S. This number includes public charities, private foundations, and other types of nonprofit organizations, including chambers of commerce, fraternal organizations and civic leagues. At the same time, numbers of nonprofit employees grew from near zero to 1% of the U.S. labor force in 1900, to 3% in 1960, and 9% in 2000. The development of new information technology, the Internet and smartphones, has provided nonprofit organizations with a competitive advantage (Lee, Chen, and Zhang, 2001). Therefore, a new term has arisen—Non-profit Technology, which means that the deliberate use of technology by nonprofit organizations to maximize potential in many areas, primarily in supporting the organization's mission and meeting reporting requirements to funders and regulators (Kristina.J, 2012).

Nonprofit organizations use computers, Internet and other networking technology for a number of tasks, including volunteer management and support, donor management, client tracking and support, project management, human resources (paid staff) management, financial accounting, program evaluation, research, marketing, activism and collaboration.

Implemented correctly, technology stands to benefit nonprofits in a variety of ways. One obvious benefit is the dissemination of information. Technological tools (e.g., computers and cellphones) and platforms (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) allow for

the aggregation and wide-scale distribution of knowledge and information. To the extent that tools and platforms can be integrated, nonprofits may better serve themselves and their clients.

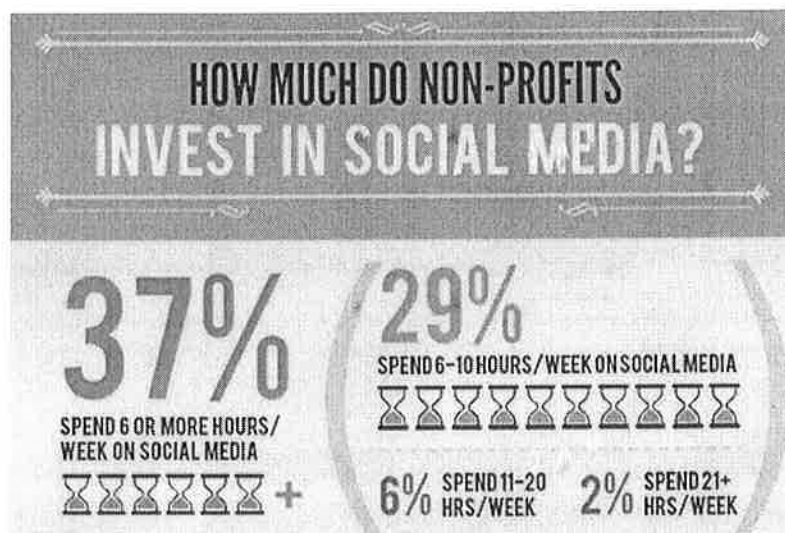
Cost reductions and efficiency improvements may also encourage nonprofits to adopt new digital information technologies. According to Luksetich et al., administrative expenses are particularly bothersome for nonprofits and their stakeholders (Luksetich, W.; M. E. Edwards; T. M. Carroll, 2000). To the extent, then, that technology can be viewed as a long-term administrative cost-saver, it becomes increasingly likely that nonprofits will become adopters of information technology. Hamann and Bezboruah advanced this premise in a recent study, noting that nonprofits may have greater incentive to deploy technology for the accomplishment of administrative tasks as opposed to provision-of-care tasks (Hamann, D. J.; Bezboruah, K. C., 2013).

The year 2014 was an exciting year for nonprofit technology. Numerous communications and fundraising trends were on the verge of going mainstream and nonprofits committed to early adoption had a number of new tools and strategies to pioneer this year. Social media remained a top priority for nonprofits in 2014, but 2013 helped solidify social media as a mandatory set of communication tools (nptechforgood.org, 2014). New trends had emerged for the nonprofit sector. Social media has become one of the most rapidly developed ones.

The use of social media by nonprofits follows a stewardship model that includes acts of reciprocity, responsibility, and accountability in an effort to nurture

nonprofit relationships and place supporters at the forefront (Waters, Richard D.; Kristen LeBlanc Feneley, 2013). The following chart indicates how many nonprofit organizations are investing time in social media.

Figure 1. How much do non-profits invest in social media?



Source: nptechforgood.org, 2014

The research will concentrate on how social media technology brings change in nonprofit organizations. The data was mainly obtained from United Way of Westchester and Putnam to research and evaluate what factors are important and to what extent social media has brought change to the organization. The following questions will be answered through the research of this project:

1. What social media tools are used by United Way of Westchester and Putnam?
2. What is the social media policy of United Way of Westchester, and how do staff engaged with the social media?
3. Has social media use improved communications with constituent

organizations and donors?

4. What social media strategy should the United Way of Westchester and Putnam consider for the future?

Chapter Two: Literature review

Social media is changing the world. In the nonprofit world, social media is appearing to be more and more important. A content analysis was conducted of three Internet platforms (website, Facebook, and Twitter) to find out about 60 U.S.-based environmental nonprofit organizations' use of these platforms. The result found that 85% of organizations use either Facebook or Twitter (Daejoong Kim, Heasun Chun, & Youngsun Kwak, 2014). Geller, Abramson, and Leon (2010) suggest that almost all nonprofit organizations have their own websites. What's more, Daejoong Kim et al. (2014) claim that the NTEN, Common Knowledge, and Blackbaud (2012) report that 93.3% of nonprofit organizations have a presence on a commercial social network.

There is a lot of research on the nonprofit use of social media. Gohar F. K., Mark C. H., & Tomasz M. (2014) studied the research of the best practices in social media at public, nonprofit, education and health care organizations. They suggest some obstacles may appear when the nonprofit organizations use social media, such as the ethical concern and the risk of open data of government information. But research by Khan, Swar, and Lee indicates that the benefits had a stronger influence than the risk on use and satisfaction; Marijn J. and Anneke Z. suggest that data can become more valuable when illuminating the relationship among those who provide the data and use the data. What's more, Chao Guo and Gregory D. Saxton (2014) research how social media is changing nonprofit advocacy. They take the example of Twitter to find out how nonprofit organizations use social media, and how tweeting

influences nonprofit advocacy. On another aspect, Gregory D. Saxton and Lili Wang (2014) use an economic model analysis to show how social networks influence the fundraising affects of the nonprofit organizations. What's more, Hilary Fussell Sisco and Tina McCorkindale (2013) analyze the relationship between social media and transparency and, credibility of the nonprofit organization. They find that organizations that tweeted more had more "likes," more followers and were seen to have higher transparency and credibility.

Previous scholarly research suggests that nonprofit organization use of social media brings opportunities as well as challenges.

Opportunities

Daejoong Kim et al,(2014) suggest that an organizational website and social media use can bring nonprofit organizations real-time feedback and help them engage in genuine conversations with their donors. Hilary F. S. and Tina M. (2013) conclude that social media as a way to communicate makes a huge difference in predicting a donor's long-term attitudes towards the organizations and influencing the donor support. At the same time, Rachel Amtzis(2014) claims that social media also allows traditional grantors and institutions to be directly connected to the individuals and institutional donors who used to be out of reach. Gregory D. Saxton and Lili Wang (2014) think that social media is a new way for nonprofits to engage donors.

Challenges

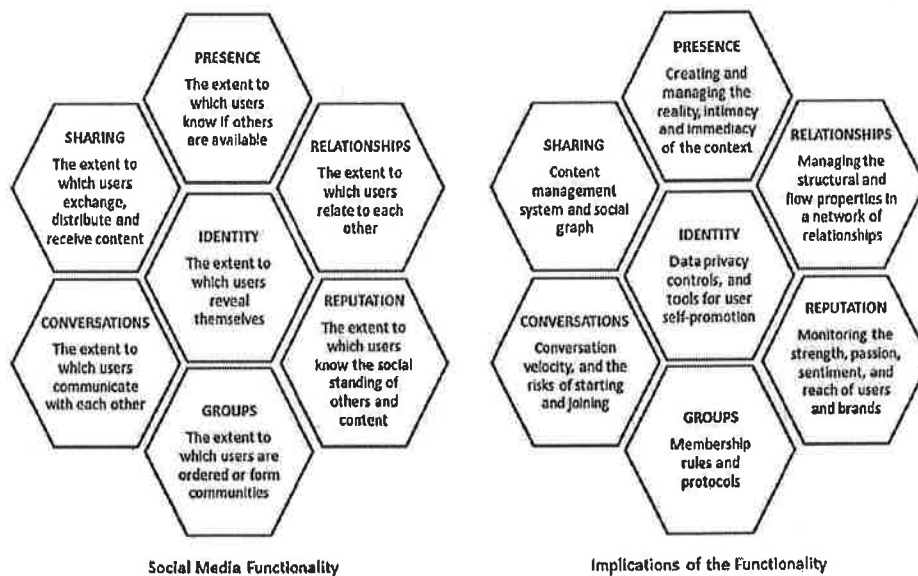
Hilary Fussell Sisco and Tina McCorkindale (2013) suggest that most

nonprofits are not taking full advantage of social media. There are usually limited budgets for nonprofit organizations to pursue social media strategy, because they cannot afford to train the staff or volunteers to regularly update the page and respond to the audience (Daejoong Kim et al., 2014). The challenge is especially huge for small nonprofit organizations. Robert Berkman (2013) reports that Beth Kanter suggests that small nonprofits often don't have enough staff to take charge of social media. For example, in the first stage to start a social media campaign, it will take about five to ten hours a week of staff time. And not all types of organization are capable of using social media. Beth Kanter thinks those organizations that are open and transparent are more likely to use social media. Agreeing with this idea, Gohar et al. (2014) claim that some nonprofit organizations have complex legal and ethical environments that bring obstacles and concerns for them to use social media.

Compared with the traditional ways, what social media can offer is creating high-interactive-frequency of communication. Social media itself includes not only the communication directly between the organization and customer, but also between the customers. According to Keitzmann's paper, social media had transferred corporate communication by democratizing it (Keitzmann, 2011). The point was suggested by Mangold in the article as well, that social media has made it possible for one person to communicate with hundreds or even thousands of other people about products and the companies that provide them and the impact of consumer-to-consumer communications has been greatly magnified in the marketplace (Mangold, 2009). Also, in the study, seven functional blocks of social

media were introduced to measure the quality and performance of one organization's use of social media. Seven key factors were included to measure the functionality of the social media usage; they are Identity; Conversations; Sharing; Presence; Relationships; Reputation and Groups (Kietzmann, 2011). Each of factors could be evaluated by different sets of priorities.

Figure 2. The Honeycomb of Social Media



In an analysis of the chart, each factor could be affected by the nearby three adjacent factors, Keitzmann believes that Identity (such as name, age, gender, profession, location, and also information that portrays users in certain ways) is the most important aspect to the functioning of social media (Keitzmann, 2011).

The point of Keitzmann was supported by Safko 2009) who believes that successful use of social media is to get their products discussed favorably by as much of the online population as possible. However, the way of rating one's social media could be different; Safko determines the social engagement rating from four aspects: Communication; Collaboration; Education; and Entertainment. (Safko, 2009).

Chapter Three: Methodology

In order to find out the effect that social media has on nonprofit organizations, this research studied the effectiveness of the use of social media by the United Way of Westchester and Putnam. The research questions to be addressed are:

1. What social media tools are used by United Way of Westchester and Putnam?
2. What is the social media policy of United Way of Westchester, and how do staff engaged with the social media?
3. Has social media use improved communications with constituent organizations and donors?
4. What social media strategy should the United Way of Westchester and Putnam consider for the future?

Study Design

The research is a case study that explores one organization in great detail with the goal of understanding some aspect of the organization. This study will take detailed research in the social media policy at the United Way of Westchester and Putnam.

Data collection and Data analysis

1. What social media tools are used by United Way of Westchester and Putnam?

The major data was collected from the Internet. The researcher looked into all social media platforms used by the United Way of Westchester and Putnam. For further analysis, the study documented the social media used by United Way of Westchester and Putnam in a week. The documenting process recorded the changes and

the update frequency of the social media used by United Way of Westchester and Putnam, as well as spotlighted how public attention increased in a week, such as how many views increased in a week and how many likes were gained in Facebook. An interview with the manager of United Way of Westchester and Putnam provided more official information of the use of their social media.

Data analysis is presented in chart form to illustrate the increase in public attention of each social media platform used by United Way of Westchester and Putnam. Besides, the popularity of each platform is presented in a chart to analyze which platform contributes more for the United Way of Westchester and Putnam. Further analysis shows what factors influence the views and popularity of the social media used by the United Way of Westchester and Putnam, such as big event advertisement, interaction with celebrities, catchy event theme, etc.

2. What is the social media policy of United Way of Westchester, and how do staff engaged with the social media?

The staff of the United Way of Westchester and Putnam answered the question through interviews. Interview was conducted with with Mrs. Shannon Cobb, Senior Vice President, Marketing and Communications manger of United Way of Westchester and Putnam, to obtain her opinions as a higher manager towards the social media strategy. Important information gathered from the interview was whether some peer staff have trouble in engaging with the organization's social media. interview is presented in narrative form with the point underlined.

The interview questions with Mrs. Shannon Cobb are below:

Q1: How do you rate your organization's social media policy? Do you think it is successful?

Q2: What are comments from other staff about the social media policy?

Q3: Is all your staff engaged with the organization's Social Media?

Q4: Is there any staff doing the regular work of Social media, to update every day?

Q5: What challenges have you encountered during the promotion of your social media strategy? How did you overcome those challenges?

3. Has social media use improved communications with constituent organizations and donors?

The interview with Mrs. Shannon Cobb addressed the question. The interview was focused on whether social media use is effective in improving communications with constituent organizations and donors, and whether social media promotes the fundraising. The observation and data analysis further answered the question from a more objective view. The interview questions are below:

Q6: Has social media use attracted the attention that you expected? Has it been lower or higher? Will that affect your program?

Q7: Does the social media use promote fundraising?

Q8: Among the social media platforms your organization is using, which one do you value most?

Q9: Is there any future social media policy you are considering? What is your plan?

4. What social media strategy should the United Way of Westchester and Putnam consider for the future?

The interview with Mrs. Shannon Cobb also focused on the future change of social media policy of United Way of Westchester and Putnam from the view of a manager. To get comparative information, data on social media used by five other big nonprofit organizations, that use social media extensively, were collected. These organizations are: American Red Cross in Westchester County, White Plains YMCA, Westchester Jewish Community Services, March of Dimes and The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. The data was collected from major social media platforms including: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, official Websites, and Instagram used by these five well-known nonprofit branch organizations in Westchester County. The data collected from social media platforms included number of likes, comments, and frequency of shares, sorted content (i.e., articles, photos or videos).

The data was analyzed in three aspects. First, the number of comments were collected from different platforms used by different organizations and presented in the same bar chart to compare with each other. Second, the number of sharing was collected from different platforms used by different organizations and presented in the same bar chart to compare with each other. Third, the number of likes was collected from different platforms used by different organizations and presented in the same bar chart. Conclusions can be drawn from different charts. The common factors of successful use nonprofit organization of social media can help provide great advice for future social media strategy for United Way of Westchester and Putnam.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter of findings has four major parts including two data collecting sections, one interview section and one data integrity section.

The data collection and interview report were assembled in order to answer four research questions. Six nonprofit organizations are observed in this research. The social media used by United Way of Westchester and Putnam is compared with other five nonprofit organizations in Westchester County. Data collecting from six organizations are divided into two groups. The first group includes the United Way of Westchester and Putnam, American Red Cross in Westchester County, White Plains YMCA and Westchester Jewish Community Services. These four organizations are branch organizations in Westchester. Their social media audiences are local Westchester residents. The second group includes March of Dimes and The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. These two organizations were headquarters of two nationwide nonprofit organizations located in Westchester County. Their social media audiences are nationwide residents.

Data was collected from four major social media platforms: YouTube; Facebook; Twitter and Instagram, by taking observations and documenting the homepage and detail items on each social media platform. YouTube is the online video website which allows users to upload originally created video. The website helps users to communicate, inspire or inform each other through the Internet. The YouTube video contains various kinds of video such as TV shows, music videos and news broadcasts. Facebook is a social networking website through which users could

socialize with actual friends, family members, acquaintances or colleagues. By adding photos, comments, thoughts to timeline, which could share activities one has done with their friends. Twitter is a social medium that allows people to write no more than 140 characters each time and posting pictures. Unlike Facebook, unregistered or un-followed users could read the tweets without restrictions. Instagram is a social network, which is based on mobile devices to upload photos and videos to share one moment online.

Data was collected on a daily basis from April 9th to April 28th. Each social media platforms including the interaction with users, new events posting and growth of different index that can be observed was recorded. The way of observing different social media is to record each of seven categories including new user subscribers, comments, visit times, updating times and frequency, giving positive feedback and forwarding.

This chapter demonstrates which kind of social media each non-profit organization uses and how each organization distributes its social media events. The following paragraphs also present the tendency or preferences among different social media according to the different types of events.

4.1 Data Collection 1

Data collected from four organizations are included in this part: they are United Way of Westchester and Putnam, American Red Cross in Westchester County, White Plains YMCA and Westchester Jewish Community Services. All of them serve the range of Westchester Countywide and are of the comparable size.

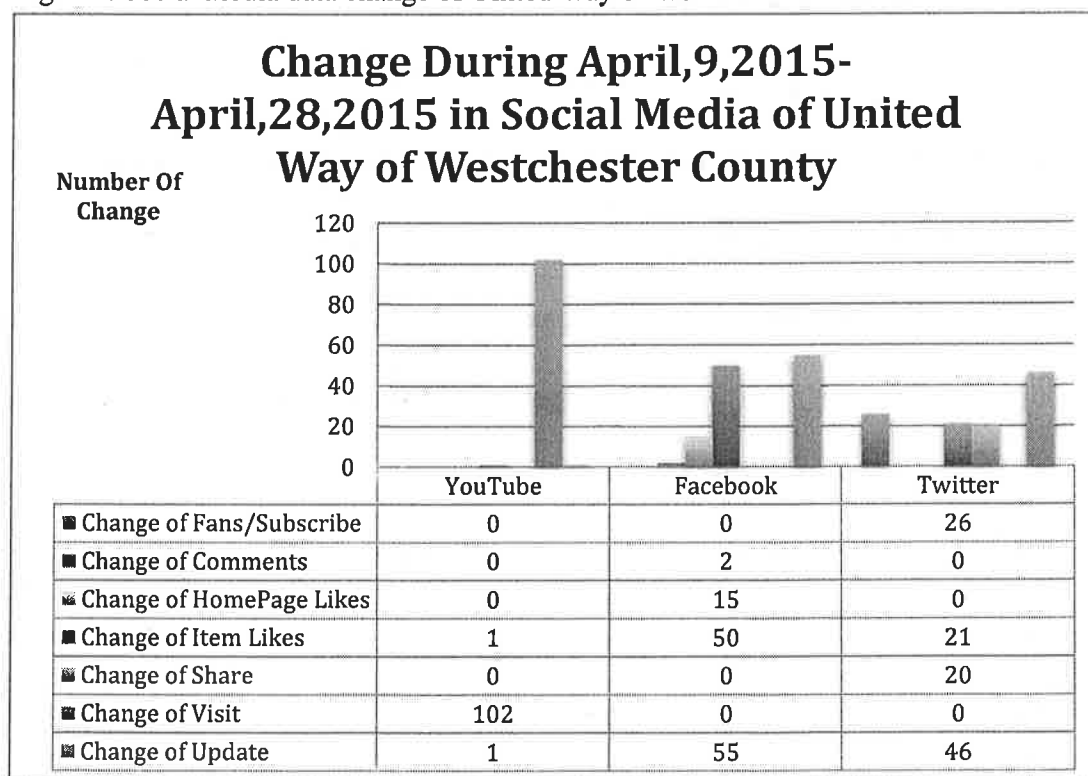
United Way of Westchester and Putnam. Between April 9th and April 28th, United Way of Westchester launched several events among different social media platforms. On YouTube, United Way of Westchester and Putnam updated their video of Give Local Westchester & Putnam's annual campaign in order to support 165 local non-profit organizations. The video introduced during the previous year event raised more than \$53 million across the country, so the YouTube channel would give audiences an introduction of the upcoming event. Figure 1 presents the YouTube use index of United Way of Westchester and Putnam during the observation period. The YouTube channel of United Way of Westchester and Putnam has a large amount of visits but less sharing, and comments.

United Way of Westchester also uses Facebook as an important social media tool. 55 new items were published during 19 days of observation, most of which were about the announcement of a new event or giving directions for an upcoming event such as where and how to register, timeline of the event and background information. In a way, Facebook plays the role of actual friends communicating; users could share their opinion and invite friends on Facebook to one specific event. One could invite one specific friend to an event page, sharing their thoughts and discussing it. Facebook did a good job for United Way, with people clicking the like button on the page and on articles.

Unlike Facebook, which functions the way friends might communicate, Twitter functions more like a public announcement. United Way of Westchester and Putnam used Twitter to promote the Not-For-Profit Leadership Summit, which was

held on May 4th, 2015, United Way of Westchester published summit news every one or two days and they kept running for more than three weeks to make sure that the news spread widely. What they also did was to keep counting down to several coming events, but due to the limitation of no more than 140 words, the introduction could not be relatively specific. Twitter of United Way of Westchester and Putnam had about the same level of interactions as Facebook during observation period. However, Twitter attracted more fans, subscribers and more people to share the information. Due to the limitation of the platform, the numbers visiting the Twitter website could not be calculated.

Figure3. Social media data change of United Way of Westchester and Putnam



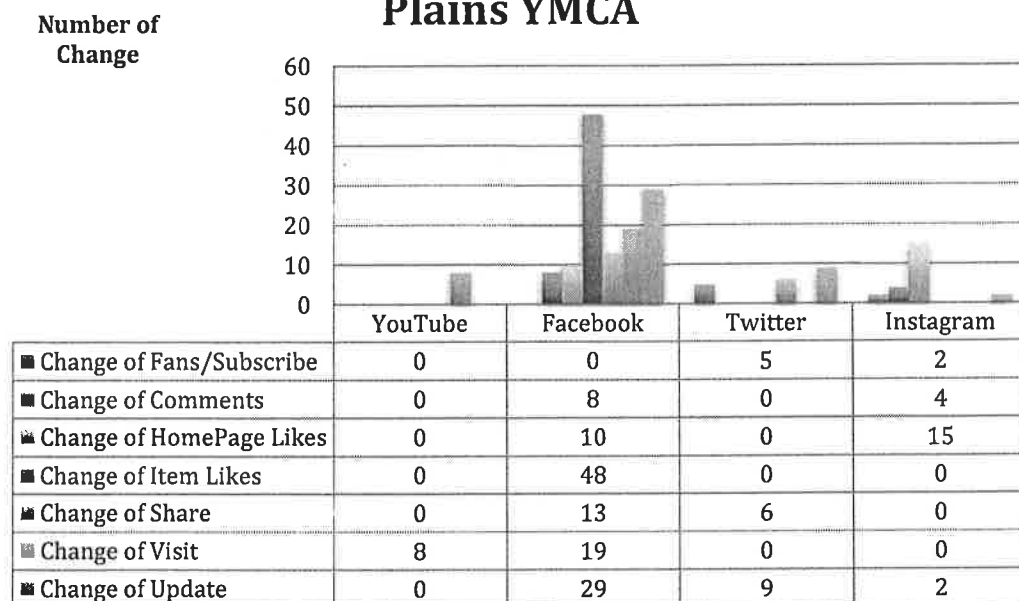
White Plains YMCA. Unlike other organizations, which use all four platforms, YMCA uses Facebook as the major platform to communicate with the public. At the same time, White Plains YMCA kept updating on Twitter and Instagram.

The YouTube channel has been suspended for a relatively long time. During the observation period between April 9th and 28th, both Facebook and Twitter of White Plains YMCA functioned well for the organization. However, YouTube was last updated three years ago. The client group that White Plains serves is mostly young or teenage people, so the strategy White Plains YMCA has applied fits quite well with their clients.

White Plains YMCA posted their major updates on Twitter to spread the Health-Food-Day celebration; four of the nine updates were created for that purpose. Five other of updates served a news function too, about the next new event to held on May 13th. Generally Twitter of White Plains YMCA functioned like United Way of Westchester for news publishing. However, White Plains YMCA varied their content to avoided repeating. As for Facebook, White Plains carried out different strategy, 13 of 29 updates were person-oriented. Almost half of the updates had a connection with specific people, which made friend-based-platform Facebook livelier. The bar chart shows that the Facebook could be the best practiced platform to the White Plains YMCA.

Figure 4. Social media data change of White Plains YMCA

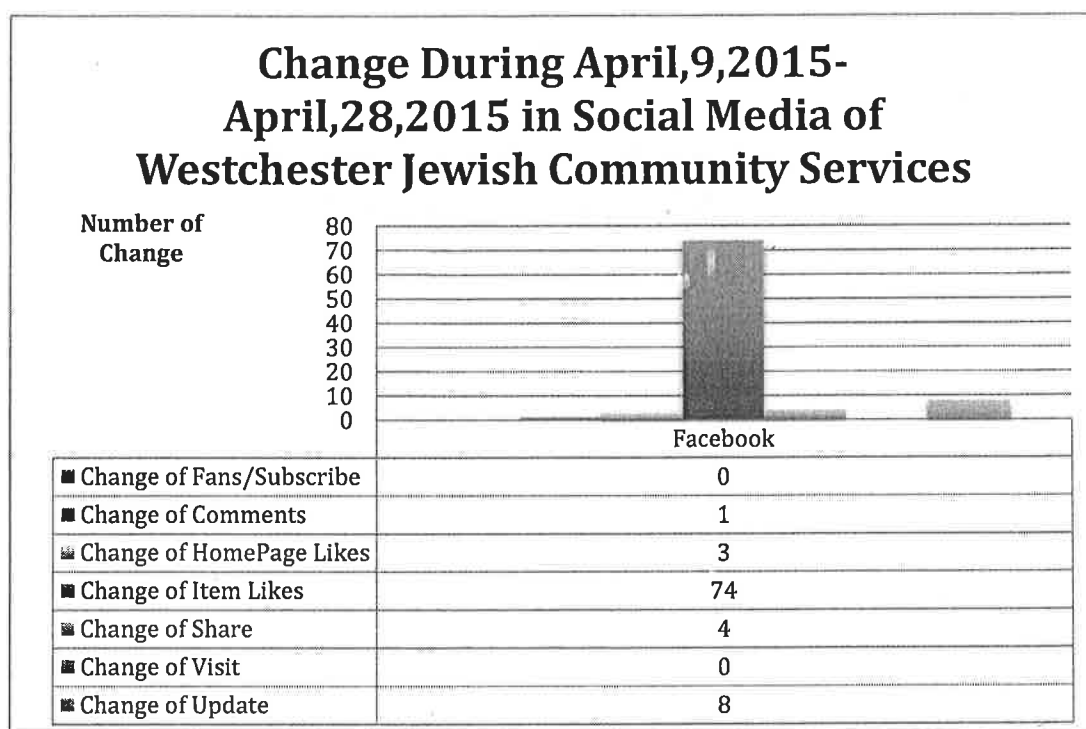
Change During April,9,2015- April,28,2015 in Social Media of White Plains YMCA



Westchester Jewish Community Services. Westchester Jewish Community Services has Facebook as its only social media account. Although it did not attract people to visit their physical location, but it did make a huge contribution of attracting people to the Facebook site and leaving positive feedback. Single social media platform on Facebook of this organization brings fewer fans, comments or sharing growth in total than other organizations.

Westchester Jewish Community Services follows a simple social media strategy. Running a single social media platform is a good match to the community-based services organization. Like White Plains YMCA, 7 of 8 updates were person-oriented. There were also program introductions including people they helped and overcame the predicament. Only one update introduced the first annual event of a Golf Outing.

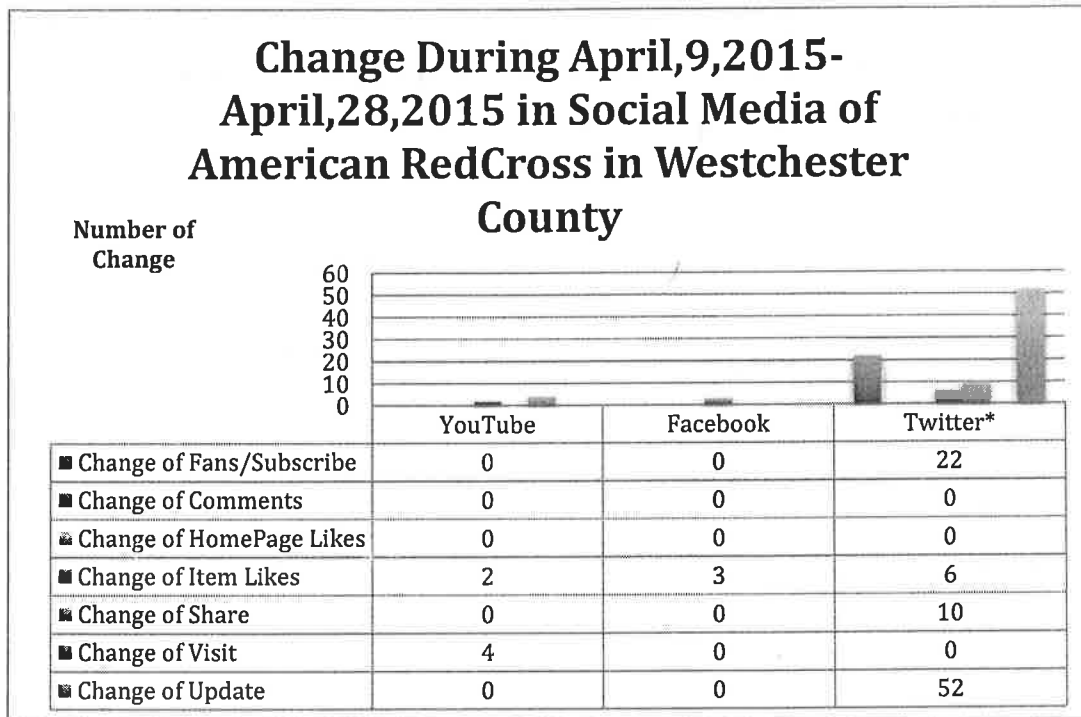
Figure 5. Social media data change of Westchester Jewish Community Services



American Red Cross in Westchester County. The data collected for American Red Cross in Westchester County had its own circumstance. At first, two organizations--Westchester Red Cross and American Red Cross in Westchester County--existed in Facebook so when someone searching for Red Cross, they came across two organizations on the site. The homepage that Facebook American Red Cross in Westchester County linked to was not a valid website which may confuse the user when trying to find the local Red Cross. On Twitter, Red Cross integrated the different districts to share the same platform. The American Red Cross Metro New York North assists victims of disaster in Westchester, Orange, Putnam, Rockland and Sullivan Counties, and Greenwich, CT. MetroNYNRedCross Twitter gathers varieties of information, from blood drives from town to town to the New York City events even Nepal earthquake. It became less interactive with local affairs but it could attract

more people's attention from a larger geographic range.

Figure 6. Social media data change of American Red Cross in Westchester County



4.2 Data Collection 2

Two organizations are included in this part; they are March of Dimes and The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. Those two nationwide organizations use all four platforms that this research measures and they could provide experience and guidance for relatively small-sized organizations.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society has been successfully running its social media campaigns. In total, it had more than 65,000 responses recorded on social media platforms during 19 days. On YouTube, it had 41,159 visits for 18 videos updated. Facebook had 21,081 likes and 3,832 times sharing. Due to the regulation from Facebook, non-profit organizations

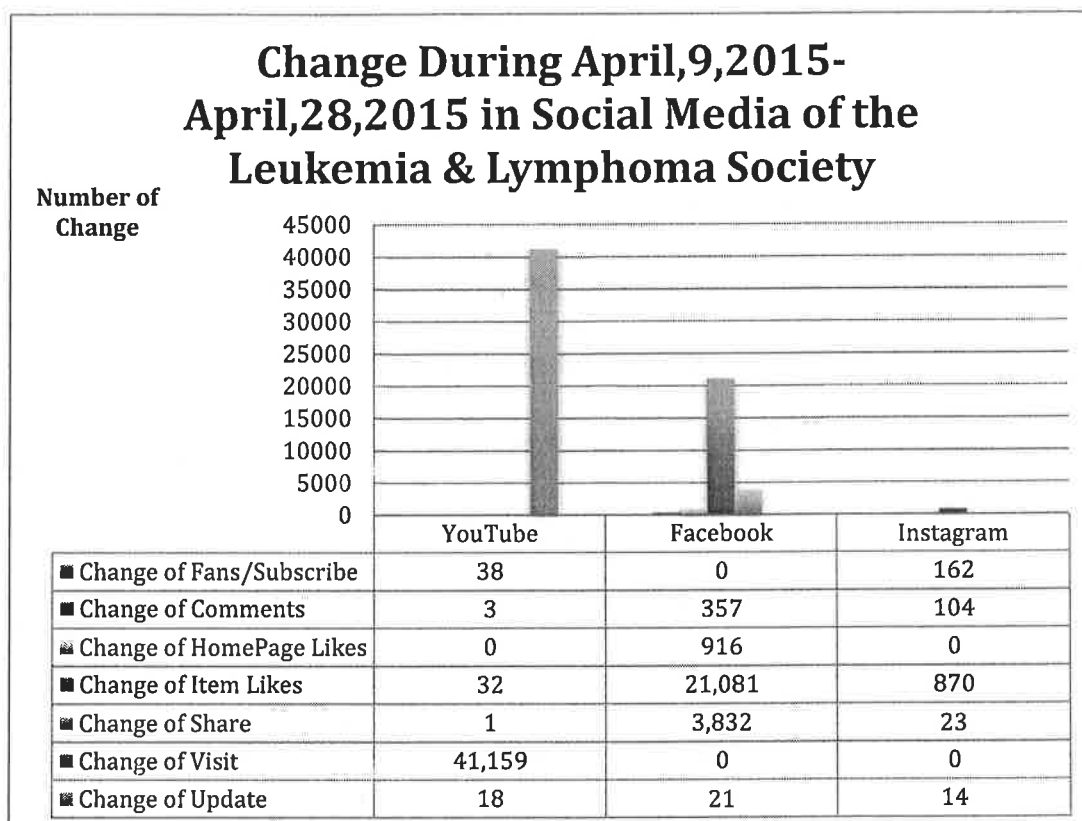
could no longer hold Fans/Subscribers, so that the bar chart is no longer available. For Instagram, due to the limitation of the platforms, homepage Likes and visit time were not available. With 14 updates, it gained a response in every aspect such as sharing, fans or comments. Detailed data is presented below:

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society had a tremendous social media record during 19 days observation period. 21 update posts on Facebook could be divided into three kinds of activities--slogan/posters, coming events, and survival story sharing. According to the goal of Leukemia & Lymphoma Society to help people overcome blood cancer, the organization shared 8 of 21 updates about cancer survival stories. The organization encouraged people to tell their own story and experience about blood cancer on the discussion board. The discussion and sharing board has been extremely successful; each update attracted hundreds of people writing their own story. Such methods allow people who are suffering or suffered blood cancer to communicate with each other, share their own experience and cheer each other up. It does function as a massive online mutual benefit association. It allows people across the country to join the discussion regardless of the time limitation and geographic limitation.

The YouTube video channel functioned almost the same way. Half of the videos posted were personal narratives that shared personal blood cancer fighting experiences and another half of the videos were event summaries or professional lectures. Leukemia & Lymphoma Society focuses on survivors; many blood cancer survivors use these social media platforms to publish their special efforts, and

encourage people who are suffering with the illness. This activity is becoming more and more popular and widely accepted in the social media platforms of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

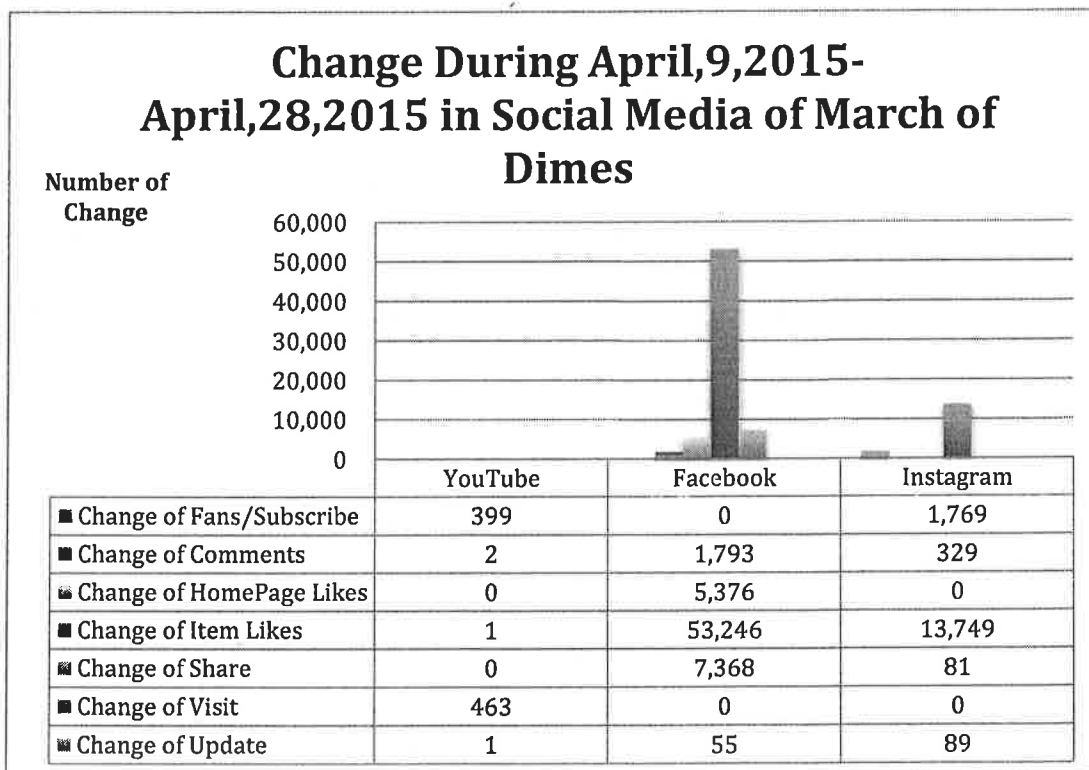
Figure 7. Social media data change of the Leukemia& Lymphoma Society



March of Dimes. The March of Dimes Facebook page gathered thousands of interactions. 55 items were updated and March of Dimes kept updating daily. Due to the same reason as the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, no fans/subscribers were allowed during the period of time. However, other items grew enormously. 53,246 likes came not only from just the people browsing the website, it also gained 1,793 comments, 7,368 times of sharing and 5,376 homepage likes. The update items could be divided into three categories--event reports, event forecasting and health tips reminders. On Facebook, they kept updating the March of Dimes event nationwide.

As for tips reminders, many were especially for pregnant women. The YouTube channel of the March of Dimes, even though it only had one update, still attracted 399 Fans/Subscribers and 463 visits. The YouTube channel functioned specially and it was quite different than others. What March of Dimes did is that they posted advise for pregnant women in a series of videos. The videos used five different languages, which could serve people from different language background. As for Instagram, which does not provide function of homepage likes and figure of homepage visits, the Instagram of Leukemia & Lymphoma Society page earned 13,749 likes and 1,769 new fans.

Figure 8. Social media data change of March of Dimes



4.3 Interview Report

The interview with Mrs. Shannon Cobb, Senior Vice President, Marketing and Communications of United Way of Westchester and Putnam, is presented below:

Q1: How do you rate your organization's social media policy? Do you

think it is successful?

- It is Okay, but it could be much better, and we are getting better.
- We are struggling in engagement. There are not enough people to respond to our posts or share the posts.
- One of the struggles we are facing is that in Facebook, they are changing the policy. Agencies or business will not be seen very much, and nonprofits are treated as for-profit business. If we want to be seen on Facebook, we need to do advertising, which costs money. And we don't have money. One of the ways we work around that in Facebook is by having our staff more engaged in Facebook and staff posting themselves. People will see these posts. Much better seen by person instead of business posting.

Q2: What are the comments from other staff about the social media policy?

- We don't have a strict policy here. We want staff to post.
- People want to know more about things going on in our community, not just about United Way. Maybe some interesting things about them or things happened around them are helpful with information about United Way.
- People do not always want to get promotions about the company, but they do want more information about the people. So, when we are talking to the newspapers that is what we talk about. It is important to see the staff presence online, they post things about their work and their life.

Q3: Is all your staff engaged with the organization's Social Media?

- Not all of them, but as many as I can get to.

- We have some staff work on our help line, and they cannot identify themselves, because they work with people who sometimes have mental illness. So they have social media that are separate from our organization.

- For our fundraising staff, it is important for them to get to our donors, and supporters. If they find the donors in social media, they use social media to get to know them, build the relationship. And they use their personal social media.

- Some Staff create two accounts, one is for work connected with donors and supports, and one is personal.

Q4: Is there any staff doing the regular work of Social media, or update every day?

- We try to share the responsibility. I do most of it. When I have some article I really want to share, I would email the staff to get help to reshare it.

Q5: Is there any challenge you have met during the promotion of your social media strategy? How did you overcome those challenges?

- The Facebook policy change is a big challenge. We want more people to like us so they can see our post. And now they don't see our post, even if they do like us. I spent so much time building the audience on our Facebook page. Hope that Facebook may change the policy for the non-profit and allow people to see us again.

- We handle this problem by having our staff repost what United Way posted. Having them to go through our page and share what they can share.

- We are helping staff to build their networking so that there's more people they can connect to. When they repost what United Way is posting, those people can see it. The rule is to have people share it and it can be seen. Just posting on the page is not working.

- The other challenge for social media is time. There's just never enough time to do everything in social media. I try to find at least 15 minutes in the morning to quickly look at everything. And once a week, we try to spend an hour gathering information from social media.

Q6: Has the social media use attracted the attention that you expected? Has it been lower or higher? Will that affect your program?

- I would always want to have higher attention in social media. The hardest part is getting engagement and listening to what our donors and supporters want. Even though I had some feedback from them, it's not as good as I would hope in social media.

Q7: Does the social media use promote fundraising?

- Most nonprofit do not do a lot fundraising online. More traditional nonprofits have more difficulty getting donations through social media.

- However, there are international non-profits who have a younger demographic, younger audience who grew up with making donations online or on the phone. They have a much better chance to use social media to make fundraising campaigns successful.

- But we are finding the new ways. We may want to tie in a strong

message for requesting funds or donations at the end of the video we post on social media. Especially, when social media is linked to an event like a “giving day,” it will help.

- In another time, we would use the mail and other methods with social media to get funds. There’s never one way to get donations. You keep finding information and use in different places.

Q8: Among the social media platforms your organization is using, which one do you value most?

- Different situations call for various methods. If you want to post some pictures that are emotional, you may send these things on Facebook. But instead, some academic research about how to improve health, I would share in a more professional platform like blog or LinkedIn. They are used differently. Use the different methods to engage different people. Facebook is more casual, more personal, LinkedIn is much more professional and you show you’re professional in your field or industry.

Q9: Is there any future social media policy you are considering? What is your plan?

- I think a lot of social media change frequently. If you stay where you are, you’re going to fail. You have to change with the social media. The things we did in the last five years do not work anymore. So you have to have a plan that is flexible that you can change with the times.

- Even two years ago I would make more posts on the United Way

page. Now I still do that, but I want to make sure more people are sharing it. That's the major shift in how we use social media. And social media changed because their users changed how they use the social media. Facebook is one example. They found people are more linked with people, not agencies and Twitter found the same thing. The rules are changing.

4.4 Data Integrity

The research aimed to collect and observe the social media platforms used by six non-profit organization in Westchester County. However, there were some difficulties and unexpected situations during the research. The first one was the quantity of data of official website of each organization. Visits to the page or the Like from the audience are not available online. Website updates are not as frequent as other social media. Therefore, when presenting the data of each platform, the official website was not considered as a measurable factor. Secondly, the data of likes, share and comments before the observation period was too big to calculate. For example, the March of Dimes posted around 17,300 tweets on their Twitter page. The likes, share and comments of all these tweets was uncountable. The research presents the data during the period of observation as a reference of how these organizations use their social media platforms, and the effects of each social media.

Chapter Five: Analysis of Findings

The purpose of the research is to take a detailed observation of social media used by United Way of Westchester and analyze how social media can bring change for the organization. The observation and analysis of the other five nonprofit organizations is aimed to compare experiences and offer suggestions for United Way to make better use of their social media policy. The data and interviews were used to answer the research questions and further analyze the factors that could bring more effective social media strategy.

Q1. What social media tools are used by United Way of Westchester and Putnam?

The social media tools used by United Way of Westchester and Putnam are: YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Official Website. The research focused on detailed observation of YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook used by United Way of Westchester and Putnam. The organization is mainly using Twitter and Facebook as their official social media platforms. The YouTube page posted 61 videos in total during three years. Compared with the other three organization branches in Westchester, the United Way is doing quite outstanding communications in YouTube. Although there was only one new video in the last six months, the video has gained 102 more views than the videos in the previous six months, which suggests that the video is a great promotion tool. According to the observation data, the Facebook page is updated around the same as Twitter. However, Facebook updates gained more likes of the article, Twitter gained more shared instead. Different platform are used to post different activities of

the organization but there is still a lot similar content between Facebook and Twitter, which may make the audience overwhelmed by the same photos and articles on different platforms. Compared with the other three organizations, United Way did a great job of interaction with the audience on social media. However, the Westchester Jewish Community Services posted more and White Plains YMCA obtained more attention through fewer updates.

Q2.What is the social media policy of United Way of Westchester, and how do staff engage with the social media?

According to the interview with the Senior Vice President who is in charge of Marketing and Communications of United Way of Westchester and Putnam, they do not have a very strict social media policy. There are no staff who take charge of social media particularly. The responsibility is shared by most staff and most of it is done by the manager, Mrs. Shannon Cobb. On the one hand, the organization encourages and helps staff to use their personal social media for work, especially fundraising staff, and encourages the staff to share the articles or photos for the organization to gain more attention for the organization. On the other hand, the social media of the organization may share some interesting stories of the staff and the community of Westchester, which would engage the staff of United Way and attract more audience of the community. The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society has set up a great example for United Way of Westchester and Putnam. The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society made a lot of effort to share the story of people instead of just promoting the organization. The Facebook of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

encouraged its audience to share their impressive survivor stories and post every story on the page. The social media plays a great role of gathering people who have the same situation and encouraging them to help each other fight the disease. During the interaction on the social media platform, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society built a reputation among its audience.

Q3. Has social media use improved communications with constituent organizations and donors for United Way of Westchester and Putnam?

According to the interview, the answer would be positive. Social media is helping the fundraising staff to build more networking with the donors and supporters of the organization. The social media platforms are also helping the organization to gain attention from the public. However, the influence is quite limited. According to the analysis of observation of social media platforms used by United Way of Westchester, the interactions on YouTube, Twitter and Facebook are only in the hundreds. Social media is engaging a more personal audience other than organizations. The interview also points out the ongoing behavior change and policy change of social media platforms. People are more interested in personal pages than an organization's page. What's more, Facebook changed their policy to charge a nonprofit origination's public page same as a for-profit organization, which makes it hard for nonprofit organizations to gain publicity. Although there would be some difficulty for nonprofit organizations to run their social media, United Way has done quite effective communications with their audience. For example, United Way of Westchester and Putnam uses Twitter to promote the Not-For-Profit Leadership

Summit, posted news every one or two days, and kept running for more than three weeks to make sure that the news spread widely. They got more feedback than the other three branch organizations.

Q4. What social media strategy should the United Way of Westchester and Putnam consider for the future?

According to the interview, the United Way of Westchester and Putnam is planning a very flexible social media strategy. However, there is still a lot of good advice that can be drawn from other nonprofit organizations.

Based on the literature review, social media had transferred to corporate communication into a more democratized way (Kietzmann, 2011). Unlike traditional letter campaigns or brochure distribution which is one-way communication, social media offers two-way communication such as feedback, and connection and discussion among users. Every organization varies its social media strategy differently so that each platform presents different result statistically. For non-profit organizations, reputation is one key value that every organization hopes to build up; social media could allow users to leave comments on all these four platforms and hopeful build up their reputations. Also, according to Kietzmann's theory that some organizations have already applied, United Way of Westchester, White Plains YMCA, Leukemia & lymphoma Society and March of Dimes are all using social media platforms as a tool to communicate to clients in advance. Launching the plan or schedule ahead of time could make a time period for people to discuss which may offer the chance for organizations to prepare their plans. During the observation of

each organization, users of social media could raise questions and be informed about one event. Such strategy could give the organization a chance to self-improving ahead of the event and reinforce the quality of service.

Social media has made it possible for one person to communicate with hundreds or even thousands of other people about products (Mangold, 2009). During the observation from April 9th to April 28th, such communication happened every day among four different social media platform. March of Dimes posted updates for previous events and had someone especially taking care of the comments and responding. Those comments and evaluation could offer feedback for organizations to review their work and improve.

According to the research data and observations, Facebook is the most interactive platform that provides direct conversation between clients and non-profit organizations. The unique feature of Facebook is that it is a friend to friend communication platform; people using their real identity. With that kind of character, people are more interactive by asking questions, inviting friends to join the conversation on Facebook towards one event. Each non-profit organization could directly answer someone on some specific question, which in the meantime increases the interaction quality and also offers an organization the opportunity for helpful feedback. The way they communicate can be viewed by other people, it also may answer the questions from others so that the pattern of Facebook could eventually contribute to a growth of the organization. In addition, Facebook puts each organization's history of events on a timeline which may enable someone to check the

overall previous activities. Although the Official website's core function may not be replaced, the Facebook page shares several functions from the homepage.

YouTube functions as the video website and from the observation of six organizations, neither comments nor responding are as frequent as in other platforms. However, if any other platform needs to show footage of video, it usually reproduces from YouTube. So YouTube functions as the origin video backlog of other social media platforms. White Plains YMCA, United Way of Westchester, March of Dimes and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society haven't been operating in that way.

Twitter is a more open social media platform, which offers free access to an organization page with no user regulation. Twitter users could follow any Twitter page and are free to read and share their tweets. However, the character limitation makes Twitter more like a new a broadcast platform. Detail is difficult to include in 140 characters. So the organizations use Twitter as a preview or short introduction of their upcoming events or activities. The short read tweets also make it much easier to edit and manage. It is time-consuming to post a detailed Facebook article or a YouTube video compared to a short tweet, which makes Twitter more attractive for users who spend little time in browsing social media platforms.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

The study did detailed research of social media platforms used by United Way of Westchester and Putnam and five other nonprofit organizations served in Westchester County. The study used data and interview to take analyze how United Way of Westchester and Putnam uses social media platforms to improve communication with its constituent organizations and donors. The observation and analysis of how five other organizations use social media provided recommendations for future media policy of United Way of Westchester and Putnam.

Over all, the research concludes with some suggestions for future social media policy for United Way of Westchester and Putnam.

First of all, interaction could raise more attention in social media. Both March of Dimes and the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society valued their received comments. They answered all the questions they received. And they provided a lot of detailed photos in their activity and acknowledged people who attended the activity or were in the photos to encourage more shares and comments. All this time-consuming work should be done regularly by some particular staff who are experienced in using social media platforms.

Secondly, the official webpage of the organization in different platforms should be well built and run as a business card for the organization. American Red Cross in Westchester County is a bad example. The YouTube page last updated three years ago and Facebook page stop being updated seven years ago. Audiences of the American Red Cross in Westchester County may be confused and disappointed when

they first search for these pages. If there are some platforms hard to run, they should be closed instead of laid aside. Westchester Jewish Community Services use only Facebook as their official social media and manage the social media well. The United Way encourage personal social media use. However, the organization should more concentrate on maintain the official page so audiences can find the information more easily.

Finally, United Way of Westchester and Putnam should post some information of previous events to get feedback from participants. The feedback would help the organization to review their activity. Knowing what audiences needs may help the organization to improve and attract more audiences.

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