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# Editors Use Social Media Mostly to Post Story Links

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## Abstract

A survey of senior editors of U.S. print broadcast and online news outlets found that while 98 percent of the 376 respondents say they use social media, they primarily use it to post links to stories on Facebook and Twitter. Far fewer use social media to interact with audiences by posing questions and responding to comments.

**Keywords:** social media, best practices, news sources, dissemination, engagement, training

Social networks are a rapidly growing news source. The number of U.S. adults who say they regularly get news or headlines on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter nearly tripled in two years, from 7 percent to 20 percent, according to a 2012 Pew Research Center survey. News is integral to social networks.<sup>1</sup>

Newspapers, faced with print circulation declines, are signing on to social networks. Olmstead, Mitchell and Rosenstiel, writing about a Pew Research Center study on Web news behavior said, "If searching for news was the most important development of the last decade, sharing news may be among the most important of the next."<sup>2</sup> News organizations are adapting. The rise in the number of journalists with social media editor titles indicates that news organizations are taking social media seriously.<sup>3</sup>

News outlets use social media hoping to engage or attract readers. In an Associated Press Media Editors survey, 97 percent of respondents said their top goal for social media is growing their audience, followed by 92 percent who said it is to connect with audiences.<sup>4</sup>

Little research has been done, however, to identify what practices help news outlets get the most out of social media.

This study, based on a survey of editors at print and broadcast news outlets followed by interviews with select editors, examines the best practices for using social media.

## **Literature Review**

Editors are no longer the gatekeepers of news. Thanks to the Web, audiences can find many news sources. Audiences decide what they'll read and where they'll go for news. In a *New York Times* column, Kristof explained: "The public is increasingly seeking its news not from mainstream television networks or ink-on-dead trees but from grazing online. When we go online, each of us is our own editor, our own gatekeeper. We select the kind of news and opinions that we care the most about."<sup>5</sup>

### ***How Readers Get News***

The 2013 Pew State of the Media study reported that the majority of Americans get news from friends or family. Most do so by talking to someone either in person or by phone. But growing numbers get news and information from friends or family through social networks. 15 percent of U.S. adults get most of their news from friends and family this way, and the vast majority of them (77 percent) follow links to full news stories. Among 18-to-29 year-olds, the percentage that primarily rely on social media for this kind of news already reaches nearly one-quarter.<sup>6</sup>

The Web makes it easy for audiences to react to digital news tips. A story is only a click away. Sharing the same story is only another click away. And Pew researchers suggested finding stories through shared links will grow as mobile platforms grow. Already, nearly two-thirds of U.S. adults use Facebook and about half of those adults get news from Facebook, the largest social networking site.<sup>7</sup>

Social media are increasingly a news source, and news organizations recognize the growth. The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism said 30 percent of U.S. audiences use social networks as a gateway to news, only slightly behind the 33 percent who use search engines to find news.<sup>8</sup> News outlets are trying to capitalize on social media as tools for distributing information and attracting new audiences. A study by the Reynolds Journalism Institute showed 84 percent of community newspapers use social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter to connect with audiences.<sup>9</sup> The number of news organizations with social media editors grew to 184 in 2013 from 100 in 2012.<sup>10</sup>

A study by Hermida et al details how sharing has become key in news dissemination and how new technologies simplify the process of creating or receiving news through social networks.

Users who are immersed in social media are likely to be more open to receiving news and information via their networked circles, from both peers and journalists. Editorially, the traditional gatekeeping function of the media is weakened as a significant proportion of news consumers turn to family, friends, and acquaintances to alert them to items of interest. Essentially, a person's social circle takes on the role of news editor.<sup>11</sup>

Staying on top of news is a primary reason behind social media use, the study's authors reported. More than two-thirds of social media users said they use Facebook to follow news, and the ability to share news was a key reason for social media use. Almost two-thirds of users and even higher percentages of users between the ages of 18 and 34 said sharing news was important.<sup>12</sup> And of those social networking site users who get news online, 23 percent follow news organizations or individual journalists on those sites.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Why Readers Share News***

Uses and gratifications theory suggests audiences choose how to consume media based on specific needs.<sup>14</sup> Lee, Ma, and Lian-Goh apply gratification factors to social media sharing and conclude the theory is valid in explaining users' motivations. The primary gratifications for social media users, their study concludes, are status seeking, socializing, and receiving information. News organizations need to understand why people share news if they hope to provoke participation.<sup>15</sup> They must pay more attention to engagement because it is a key predictor of readership. Although engagement has been defined in many ways, it generally refers to experiences that characterize how newspapers fit into readers' lives. News outlets must focus on understanding how to create better experiences for audiences or readers across multiple platforms.<sup>16</sup> Social interactive engagement is connected with readership, according to Mersey, Malthouse, and Calder. Experiences that create engagement are tied to readership growth, aligning with the uses and gratification framework.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Using Social Media Without Engaging***

News organizations have jumped on the social media bandwagon, creating Facebook pages and establishing Twitter feeds. A study by The Tow Center for Digital Journalism indicates news organizations do so because they understand their audiences have moved to these platforms and because they believe social media will bring them an engaged audience.<sup>18</sup>

Yet Greer and Yan conclude that news outlets haven't capitalized on either Facebook or Twitter's potential. As the newspaper industry reinvents itself, social networks could become a platform for innovation, they wrote, but "newspapers haven't figured out the key to success yet."<sup>19</sup> An obstacle to innovation on social networks is that creating digital content takes time and people. Greer and Van said publishers—particularly in small markets—often concentrate limited resources on print first, leaving untapped potential in social platforms.

Despite those pressures, news outlets ignore or use social media minimally at their own peril. Social media advocates say it is not enough to create a presence; instead, news outlets must interact with audiences. Journalists are accustomed to posting stories, hoping to attract audiences. What they do less often is engage in conversation with their audiences, which is simple to do with social media. Journalists should include engagement elements in story pitches and budget lines.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Benefits of Engagement***

Embracing social media by engaging with audiences supports critical tenets of journalism—strengthening communities and democracy.<sup>21</sup>

Some editors understand the benefits. Lavrusik said journalists are “managing and amplifying the conversations the community is having.”<sup>22</sup> They understand audiences can easily connect online and converse without them.

Kaplan and Haenlein put it this way:

Let’s face it: nobody is interested in speaking to a boring person. As such, if you would like your customers to engage with you, you need to give them a reason for doing so—one which extends beyond saying you are the best airline in town, or manufacture the most robust kitchen blender. The first step is to listen to your customers. Find out what they would like to hear; what they would like to talk about; what they might find interesting, enjoyable, and valuable. Then, develop and post content that fits those expectations.<sup>23</sup>

Engagement’s power is apparent in Facebook’s success. By June 2011, the average visit at Facebook was 11.1 minutes, up from 8.3 minutes in June 2010. That compares with an average visit of 3.5 minutes reported by the Newspaper Association of America for industry websites in 2011.

A report by the Reynolds Journalism Institute said news outlets should make turning Web traffic into conversation their priority.

Mayer and Stern, the report’s authors, said:

Being in conversation with our community means listening as well as talking, and adjusting what we do and cover based on what we hear. It involves: Hosting discussions in person and online on topics that matter to the community. Participating in conversations we’re not hosting, both in person and online. Valuing how a continuing dialogue can make us better journalists and improves the journalism.<sup>24</sup>

### ***The Current Study***

Social media as news delivery platforms are in their infancy. Although Mitchell, Rosenstiel, and Christian stated that the role of Facebook and Twitter is relatively small in disseminating news, use of both platforms as a news source is growing.<sup>25</sup> Today’s journalists must adapt to a world where readers have many choices for how they will get their

news. Audiences can tell editors what they want to talk about; however, editors no longer are sole decision-makers.

This study attempts to provide news leaders with a blueprint of best practices for using social media. It looks at how editors most satisfied with social media efforts build audiences. The information is critical for newsroom leaders and for journalism educators and students. As Skoler said, "Social media are the route back to a connection with the audience ... the new journalism must be a journalism of partnership."<sup>26</sup> This study aims to help editors capitalize on social media as a way to connect with their audiences.

### Research Questions

- RQ1:** What do editors identify as the positive impact of using social media?
- RQ2:** How are news organizations engaging with audiences/readers on social media?
- RQ3:** How do print and broadcast outlets differ in their use of social media?
- RQ4:** What are the best practices for using social media?

### Method

This study examines best practices for using social media based on an online survey of editors and follow-up interviews with editors from print and broadcast news outlets of varying sizes.

A link to the Web-based survey was emailed to 3,374 senior editors on a mailing list of a major professional journalism association. The senior editors represented U.S. print, broadcast and online news outlets. The list owner did not allow the researcher access to other demographic profile information of the professional association's membership. The results are based on 376 responses to the survey, which was conducted in February 2013. Follow-up telephone interviews in March to May 2013 were conducted with eight editors, who completed the survey or were suggested for follow-up interviews by senior editors surveyed. The editors selected for telephone interviews had indicated that they were satisfied with their news outlets' social media use. They represented broadcast and newspaper outlets of different sizes. In interviews, editors were asked about best practices for using social media and were asked to provide specific examples of ways they use social media effectively. They also were asked how they measure impact. They discussed both positive impact and any concerns raised by social media use.

**Table 1.** Top 5 Reasons for Using Social Media

Reason	Percentage
Promote stories or work	69
Report news in real time	59
Engage or interact with audiences	58
Grow readership	56
Build brand	53

Percentages reflect reasons editors gave for “very frequently” using social media.  
*N* = 376

## Findings and Discussion

Nearly every news outlet (98 percent of survey respondents) is using social media in some way. Facebook (nearly 100 percent of those who said they use social media) and Twitter (94 percent of those who said they use social media) are the platforms most widely used, with YouTube a distant third (60 percent of those who use social media). Less than half of the news outlets are using two of the fastest-growing social media sites—Pinterest (34 percent of those who use social media) and Instagram (25 percent of those who use social media).

### ***RQ1 Examines Positive Impact of Using Social Media***

The majority of editors (69 percent) who answered the survey said social media are most frequently used to promote content. [See Table 1] But more than 50 percent also indicated they very frequently used social media for other reasons.

About 90 percent of respondents said social media allow them to reach readers or audiences in multiple ways, and social media increase engagement with audiences. These responses confirm that editors use social media, in part, because they believe it can connect them with their audiences.

Although 58 percent of editors said social media are very frequently used to engage with audiences and 91 percent cited engagement as a positive impact of using social media, far fewer said their staffs very frequently interact with audiences when asked about specific behaviors.

### ***RQ2 Probes How News Organizations Engage with Audiences on Social Media***

Only 30 percent of editors said their staffs very frequently pose questions to readers via social media.

The majority of editors—print and broadcast combined—said their staffs very frequently post links to coverage on Facebook (56 percent) or on Twitter (53 percent). But editors said journalists on their staffs respond to Facebook comments or tweet from their readers or audiences far less often. Only 29 percent said their staffs very frequently respond to Facebook comments, and only 22 percent said they very frequently respond to tweets.

*Only 29 percent said their staffs very frequently respond to Facebook comments, and only 22 percent said they very frequently respond to tweets.*

### ***R03 Examines Differences Between Print and Broadcast Outlets' Use of Social Media***

Editors at print publications were less likely than those at broadcast outlets to say their staffs very frequently engage or interact with readers in those ways. Only 19 percent of print editors said their staffs very frequently pose questions to readers on social media, compared to 50 percent of broadcast outlet editors. ( $p = .00$ ). [See Table 2] Only 21 percent of print editors said their staffs very frequently respond to Facebook comments, compared to 49 percent of broadcast outlets. ( $p = .00$ )

Editors at broadcast outlets also are more satisfied than are editors at print news outlets with the level of reader engagement they see from social media, according to the survey. Of the broadcast editors who responded, 34 percent said they are very satisfied with the level of reader engagement compared to only 13 percent of print editors who said they were very satisfied. ( $p = .00$ )

### ***R04 Examines Best Practices for Using Social Media***

In interviews, both print and broadcast editors said interaction is critical to getting the most out of social media. Social media audiences will go elsewhere if journalists don't respond to their posts, answer their questions or show that they're listening. Ignoring audiences is considered rude, similar to ignoring a person who is talking to you face-to-face.<sup>27</sup>

Larger circulation papers engage with readers more frequently than do small circulation papers. Only 15 percent of papers under 40,000 circulation very frequently pose questions to readers, for instance, compared with 32 percent of papers over 40,000 circulation ( $p = .00$ ). That probably reflects time concerns and staff sizes.

But smaller papers can make social media a priority by incorporating it into every staffer's job. At the *Log Cabin Democrat* in Conway, Arkansas, Courtney Spradlin said engaging with people on social media is part of customer service. More people use social media to get news, so news outlets, regardless of size, must use social media to remain relevant.<sup>28</sup>

**Table 2.** Comparison of Print and Broadcast Activity

Activity	Very frequently %	Frequently %	Occasionally %	Rarely %	Never %
	Print   Broadcast	Print   Broadcast	Print   Broadcast	Print   Broadcast	Print   Broadcast
Post links to Twitter* <sup>1</sup>	52.4   53.6	22.2   34.5	15.1   9.5	6.1   0	4.2   2.4
Respond to Facebook comments* <sup>2</sup>	21.1   49.4	29.2   28.2	36.4   18.8	9.5   2.4	3.8   1.2
Pose questions to readers* <sup>3</sup>	18.7   50	39.7   34.1	28.7   11	6.7   1.2	6.2   3.7
Promote social media coverage* <sup>4</sup>	19.9   32.5	35.3   5	24.9   18.8	13.4   0	6.5   1.2
Seek news from readers* <sup>5</sup>	18.2   33.8	33   42.9	35   15.6	9.9   3.8	3.9   3.9
Seek sources* <sup>6</sup>	10.2   27.2	34   49.4	39.8   19.8	11.6   1.1	4.4   2.5
React to comments about news outlet* <sup>7</sup>	8.9   28	18.8   17.1	32.7   31.7	25.7   14.7	13.9   8.5
Post Facebook links**	54.5   64.7	31.5   27.1	11.7   8.2	1.8   0	0.5   0
Respond to Tweets**	20.7   26.2	25   26.2	31.7   39.3	15.4   4.7	7.2   3.6

*N* = 220 print, 86 broadcast

\* Statistically significant; \*\* (n.s.)

1. *Chi-squared* = 10.668 ; *df* = 4 ; *p* < .030

2. *Chi-squared* = 28.166 ; *df* = 4 ; *p* < .000

3. *Chi-squared* = 33.462 ; *df* = 4 ; *p* < .000

4. *Chi-squared* = 20.856 ; *df* = 4 ; *p* < .000

5. *Chi-squared* = 17.001 ; *df* = 4 ; *p* < .002

6. *Chi-squared* = 29.404 ; *df* = 4 ; *p* < .000

7. *Chi-squared* = 19.445 ; *df* = 4 ; *p* < .001

Editors at papers with less than 150,000-circulation ranked their No.1 concern with the use of social media as “an increase in demand on an already stretched-thin staff.”<sup>29</sup> However, editors at newspapers with more than 150,000-circulation ranked the demand on their staffs secondary to “blur the line between professional and personal.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite those concerns, almost 91 percent of editors responding to the survey question said the benefits of using social media outweigh concerns.

For Tena Tyler, senior editor at the *Albany Times Union*, any concerns about staffing must be overcome because readers have migrated to social media.

“It’s pretty simple,” she wrote. “Evolve or die. Maintaining the quality/credibility of the journalism is what’s important. The rest (concerns) can be managed.”<sup>31</sup>

If even only 15 percent of Internet users are getting news from social media, she wrote, it can’t be ignored.

“Our Sunday circulation is 100,000,” Tyler wrote. “If we lose 15 percent of that, it’s a big hit. We’ll lose bodies. That’s a pretty easy math equation to do.”<sup>32</sup>

Interacting with readers on social media means seizing an opportunity. Fewer people get news from traditional platforms—newspapers or network news. Using social media

platforms as forums for information is simply being responsive to reader expectations.<sup>33</sup> And despite its time-consuming nature, interaction with readers can lead to better content.

Daniel Schneider, an online news producer at *The Denver Post*, points to the *Post's* coverage of the Aurora, Colorado, theater shooting, which won, the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news reporting. The Pulitzer judges noted how use of Twitter and Facebook as journalistic tools added to the *Post's* coverage. Schneider said coverage was a prime example of how reader interaction via social networks supplemented the *Post* staff's reporting. The *Post* gathered information from social media that wasn't available anywhere else, and *Post* journalists connected with sources directly on Facebook and Twitter.<sup>34</sup>

For many editors, gauging social media's impact is anecdotal: only half of those who responded to the survey said they quantify the impact of social media efforts. Of those who try to quantify impact, the primary ways are examining fans and followers on Facebook and Twitter (93 percent), counting traffic channeled to websites from social media referrals (92 percent), examining the number of links shared on social media sites (79 percent) and examining the number of re-tweets on Twitter (53 percent). Of those who try to quantify impact, 24 percent were very satisfied and 57 percent were somewhat satisfied with the effect of social media efforts on audience or readership.

Still, social media can give editors a sense of tapping into community interest. In an interview, Richard Schneider, executive editor of the *Pensacola News Journal*, recalled the days when editors reacted to story ideas based on an editor who had heard his friends talking about something. That, he said, might mean that five people in the community were talking about it, and, yet, editors often pursued a story based on that limited encounter. Social media give editors a more complete picture of community buzz. And it gives editors a better sense of the reach from social media platforms.

After the Boston Marathon bombing, for instance, the Pensacola newspaper posted a photo of a local bridge—known for its graffiti messages and love letters—painted with “Pray for Boston.” More than 100,000 people saw the photo on the newspaper's Facebook page, according to the paper's analytics. It was “shared” and “liked” more than 1,000 times. Spredfast, a service Schneider uses to monitor and measure social media impact, said the photo had close to 200,000 impressions (impressions measure the number of times a post from your Facebook page is displayed on Facebook). That's more than triple the newspaper's Sunday circulation.

Schneider doesn't discount time concerns in an era when journalists are pulled in many directions. Using social media effectively, he said, means setting priorities. And in Pensacola, a priority is social media.<sup>35</sup>

Efficiency also means recognizing social media platforms are not alike. In the survey, 50 percent of editors recognize that different social media outlets should be used differently. [See Table 3] Editors responded differently to open-ended questions asking for best practices on Facebook and Twitter. Of those editors who responded, 46 percent said Twitter is best for covering breaking news. Facebook, however, is best for having a conversation with readers, according to 45 percent of editors who responded.

**Table 3.** Ranking of Top Best Practices for Using Social Media

Best practice	Percentage
Verify information before posting	69
Use a conversational tone on Facebook, Twitter	69
Pose questions to provoke discussion on Facebook, Twitter	69
Change the newsroom culture to embrace social media	59
Train everyone on staff to use social media	54
Develop a personality on Facebook/Twitter	52
Avoid reliance on automatic posts	51
Use different social media channels for different kinds of content	50

The percentages reflect answers from both print and broadcast editors surveyed.  $N = 376$

Editors must recognize that Twitter and Facebook audiences want two different things. Editors who were interviewed said brands should avoid posting the same thing in the same way on both platforms because it turns off readers. Even if the audience is interested in the same topic—say, the Chicago Blackhawks during a winning streak—editors should find ways to feed them news differently. That might mean posting a link to a column on Twitter and a link to a story on Facebook, using different pictures for each site.<sup>36</sup>

Editors suggested Facebook interaction centers on conversation. Many of the editors interviewed said they pose questions on Facebook from light-hearted to news-related. Posting questions helps engage audiences in both large and small towns. Graham Kislingbury is the online editor at Mid-Valley Media Group, which is made up of two small dailies and a weekly newspaper in Oregon. He routinely posts a picture on Facebook, along with a link to a story and a question or as he puts it “a call to action.”<sup>37</sup> As an example, when the local sheriff said he wouldn’t abide by changes in federal gun laws that he believes violate the Second Amendment, Kislingbury posted a picture of the sheriff with a letter the sheriff had written to Vice President Joe Biden. Kislingbury linked to the story and asked Facebook readers: Do you agree or disagree with the sheriff? The post went viral, garnering more than 600,000 views, shares or likes, boosting the paper’s traffic substantially. Kislingbury said promoting links to stories alone isn’t effective on Facebook. Editors need to ask readers questions. The idea is to get people talking.<sup>38</sup>

Although social media allow for more interaction and conversation with audiences, editors agreed that traditional journalism values must remain at the heart of social media use. Sixty-nine percent of editors ranked verification before posting or sharing information as a best practice. Being credible is critical for journalists, editors said, whether they are using traditional platforms such as printed newspapers or newer delivery methods like Twitter. New platforms shouldn’t translate into lesser values.<sup>39</sup>

Trust and credibility in news media have dropped to all-time lows. In a 2012 Gallup survey of U.S. adults, only 8 percent of respondents said they had a great deal of trust in mass media.<sup>40</sup> Skoler said social media could help news organizations rebuild trust by

connecting with readers. He said “only the savviest of journalists are using the networks for the real value they provide in today’s culture—as ways to establish relationships and listen to others.”<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusions

This study builds on Skoler’s conclusion.

Social media use is not a fad. Social platforms may change or be surpassed by newly developed ones, but it’s clear that audiences use social media to get news. Facebook has grown from 1 million active users at the end of 2004 to 1.1 billion active users in March of 2013.<sup>42</sup>

Fifteen percent of online adults use Twitter. The proportion of online adults who use Twitter has quadrupled since 2010.<sup>43</sup> And Pinterest, launched in 2010, is the fastest-growing site on the Internet with more than 104.4 million monthly visits.<sup>44</sup>

News outlets recognize that social media platforms offer a new tool for disseminating news and marketing their work. They’ve largely embraced Facebook and Twitter, although use of other platforms is less apparent. For instance, only 34 percent of editors surveyed said their news organizations use Pinterest. This study shows editors most frequently use social media platforms to promote work by posting links on Facebook and Twitter. Although 91 percent of editors surveyed believe social media provide a way for news organizations to interact with or engage audiences, few take full advantage of that opportunity.

Yet editors who quantify readership or audience growth most frequently cite increases in engagement with readers as a positive impact of social media use. To take full advantage of social media’s potential, news outlets must interact with audiences beyond simply posting links to stories.

One metropolitan newspaper cited hard evidence to demonstrate social media interaction pays off with increased readership and referrals to its website. Before naming a social media editor, whose role is largely to interact with readers, the newspaper had a consistent referral rate (readers coming to its website) of 13.4 percent to 14.8 percent from social media platforms. In the initial seven months with a social media editor, who also trained the entire newsroom on social media, social referrals ranged from 16.2 percent to 18.6 percent of its traffic. After adding a second social media editor and expanding its social media coverage hours, the paper’s social media referrals ranged from 19.5 percent to 23.5 percent.

Yet many newspapers do not use social media as aggressively. A study by Boyle and Zuegner demonstrated that although newspapers use Twitter, many use it ineffectively. Too many newspapers rely on automated Twitter feeds to provide links to published stories.<sup>45</sup> This study confirms that a majority of editors believe avoiding reliance on automatic feeds is a best practice.

This study shows that best practices vary somewhat between print and broadcast news outlets, [See Table 4] perhaps reflecting broadcast’s tendency to interact and engage its

**Table 4.** Comparison of Best Practices Identified by Print/Broadcast Editors

Percentage who identified activity as a best practice	Print	Broadcast
Verify information before posting	68	67
Use conversational tone	65	72
Pose question to provoke discussion	61	84
Train everyone on staff	46	70
Change culture to embrace social media	53	70
Develop a personality	50	54
Avoid reliance on automatic posts	47	51
Have top editors use it to demonstrate priority	47	43
Use different social media platforms for different content	45	57
Require a certain frequency of posts	38	51
Avoid creating too many accounts	33	54

*N* = 220 print, 86 broadcast

audiences in conversation more frequently by responding to comments and asking questions. Yet, overall, editors in this study agreed on these key best practices for social media use:

- Verifying information or upholding traditional journalism values. Credibility is what separates journalism from bad information on the Internet.
- Using a conversational tone when posting to social media. This is central to the idea that readers and journalists can talk to each other using social media; it's no longer a one-way delivery method.
- Posing questions is essential to sparking conversation or interaction with audiences.
- Changing the newsroom culture to get everyone on board with social media. For the greatest effectiveness, social media need to be pervasive in a newsroom and become part of everyone's job.
- Training journalists to use social media effectively. Editors at news outlets that provided training for their staffs were more satisfied with the effectiveness of social media use. Social media, in its many forms, provide new tools for journalists. But getting the most out of various social media platforms requires understanding how each platform works. Social media platforms should not be treated the same.

This study provides a starting point for editors who want to increase social media effectiveness by adopting best practices identified by other editors. News organizations are not capitalizing on the power to engage across all forms of social media. Even relatively small steps—posing questions, reacting to comments posted on Facebook or Twitter, treating social media platforms differently—may aid editors who want to benefit from the growing potential of social media. More research should be done on ways to overcome barriers to engagement.

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