

The Risks and Rewards of Using Social Media

Chris Deffenbaugh (Burns & McDonnell)

Background/Objectives. Over the past 15 years, social media has established a near-constant presence in Americans' lives and redefined the way we share and receive information. According to the Pew Research Center, 70 percent of American adults subscribe and share information on at least one social media platform. For businesses, the number is even higher; nearly 90 percent of public and private organizations use social media to reach their target audiences. Despite this high level of usage, little consideration is given to the effects of social media. Only recently has the general public become aware of the influential impact social media can have.

For organizations developing projects in the public sphere, social media can be a powerful tool, or an aggravating hindrance. Though it adds another level of consideration to public activities and communication, understanding the effects of social media can provide project managers a significant advantage as they seek to maintain their brand's reputation while communicating with the public.

Approach/Activities. This presentation will examine social media usage and behaviors, and psychological responses to online stimuli. It will look at the many ways that organizations can evaluate their online presence and prepare for the risks posed by social media. It will also present innovative strategies for social media usage that conform to communication best practices while simultaneously engaging with public stakeholders.

Results/Lessons Learned.

1. Identify social media effects and understand how users respond to dissonance.
2. Outline the methodologies organizations can use to identify and minimize the risks posed by social media.
3. Provide a planning approach for the development of a social media playbook.