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Innovative communication strategies during extreme weather events

**National Symposium on Extreme Weather Event
Impacts on Transportation Infrastructure**

Washington, DC
May 22, 2013



My background: WSDOT communications (2002-2010)

- Numerous natural and man-made disasters
- In 2005, deployed FEMA Hurricane Katrina Recovery.



Gov. Gregoire's Communication's Director during 2007 statewide natural disaster.



What we'll cover

- What is social media
- Before an event
- During an event
- After an event

Goal: Grow and maintain credibility with public, business and elected officials.



Social media tools

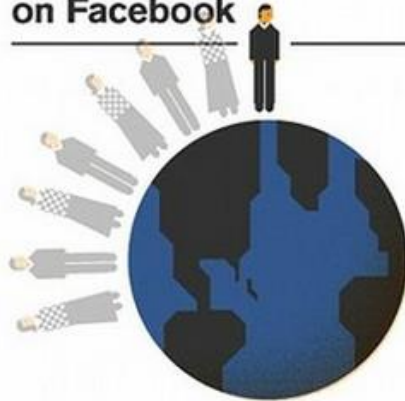
What's so social about today's media?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube

It's all about the conversation!



**1 out of every 8
people on earth are
on Facebook**

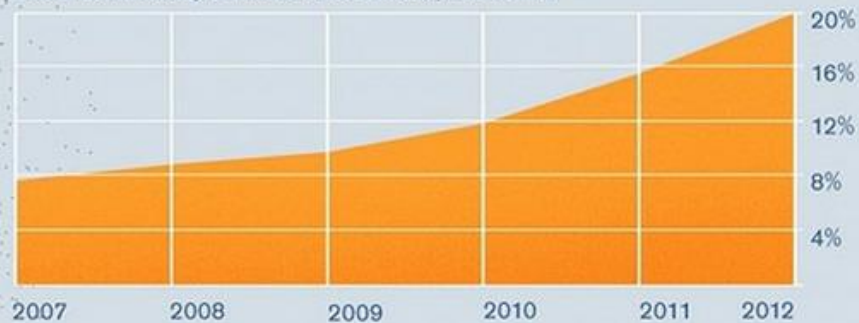


**9 out of 10 US internet
users are on a social
network**



**1 of 5 minutes spent online
is on a social network**

Social Networking: Share of Total Time Spent Online



Social media is ...

Changing the way people interact

- It gives a glimpse into an event
- It's real time, immediate
- It provides information from the field
- It's resilient when traditional media struggles
- It's mobile



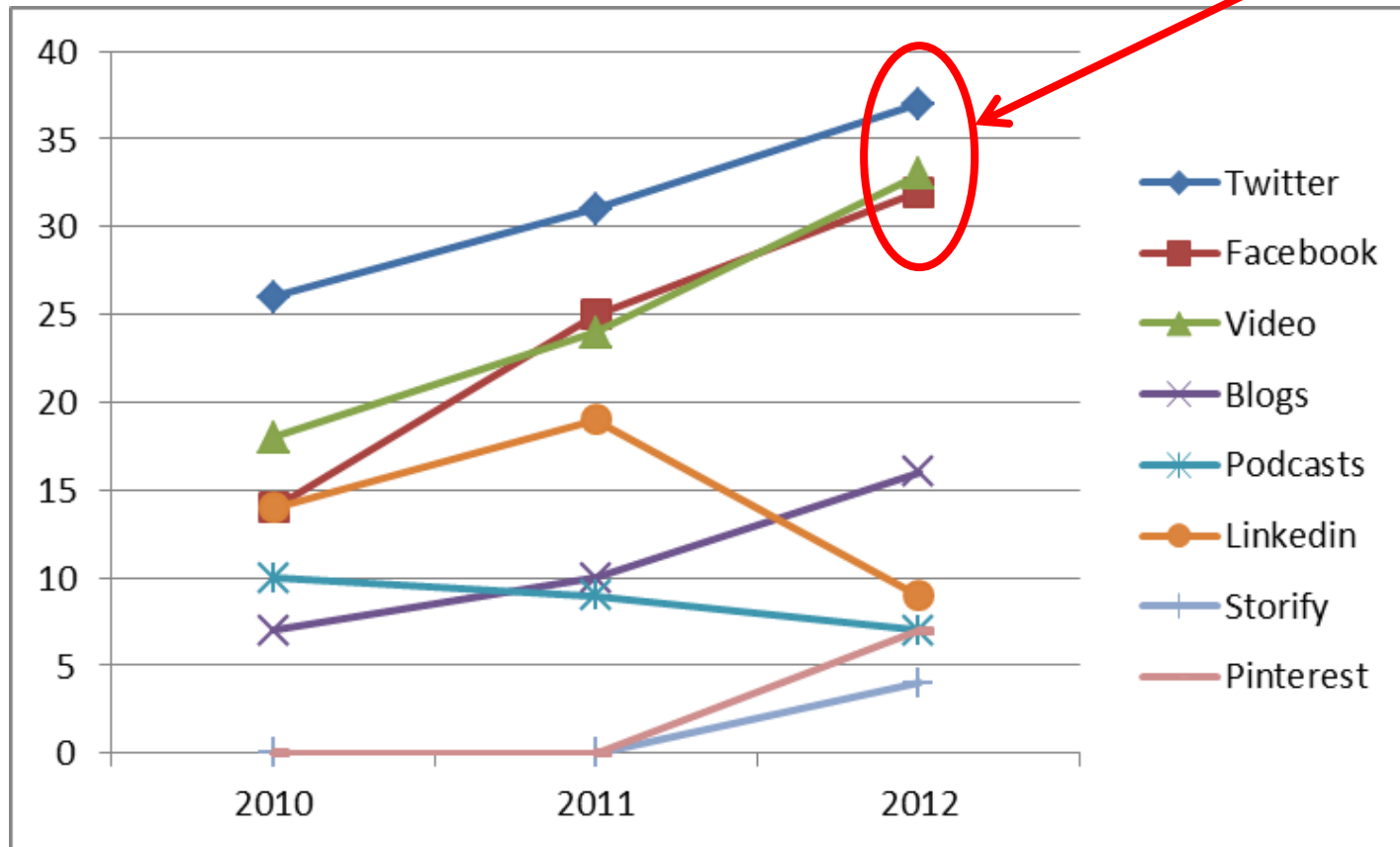
DOTs using social media

- AASHTO's first social media survey of state DOTs published in 2010.
- 26 states were using Twitter – primarily relaying road/traffic information
- 14 states used Facebook.
- 7 states had a blog
- 10 states used podcasting



Social Media Tool Usage

Most
used
social
media
tools



Social media is not ..

- A silver bullet. It can't do everything
- A stand-a-lone practice. It **MUST** be part of a complete communication effort that includes the basics:
 - Key message
 - Audience
 - Strategies and tactics



Before an event

- There is not always time before an event.
But when there is ...
 - Direct people to resources to keep in touch
 - Manage expectations (staffing, updates)
 - Share concern, but try to avoid over hyping.
- **Clearly understand audiences/needs:**
Freight, Media (& public), Governor/Legislative.



During an event

WSDOT's Standard Toolbox

Goal is to 'leverage' the media.

- Established 24-hour EOC w/ social media staffing
- Coordinated media relations across regions
- Updated press releases and media briefings to coincide with media cycles
- Constant web and 5-1-1 updates
- Listserv, Twitter, Facebook and email alerts sent directly to public and industry (freight)



During an event

Remember to
feed the news
outlets.

But also
remember power
of social media to
go around them



During an event

Take people there.
It's too dangerous
for them, but your
crews are in the
field.

What's the story?



Take them to the scene



After an event

- Close the loop.
- Chronicle the aftermath. Your folks were there.





NY State DOT trucks ready for action





West Virginia maintenance crews clearing debris





Hurricane Sandy aftermath in Rhode Island





North Carolina highway post-Sandy





Sandy delivered blow to West Virginia, too



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