April 2009

Nonprofit Social Network Survey Report



COMMON KNOWLEDGE

www.nten.org www.commonknow.com www.theport.com

www.nonprofitsocialnetworksurvey.com

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Executive Summary

Between February 20 and April 15, 2009, 980 nonprofit professionals responded to a survey about their organization's use of online social networks. The survey is sponsored by NTEN, Common Knowledge and ThePort. Three groups of questions were posed to survey participants:

1) About their use of commercial social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and others.

2) About the construction and use of social networks on their own web sites, called house social networks in this report.

3) Demographic information about their organization.

house social network – Social networking community built on a nonprofit's own web site. Term derived from direct mail house lists.

commercial social network – An online community owned and operated by a corporation. Popular examples include Facebook and Myspace

Survey respondents represented small, medium and large nonprofits and all segments including Human Services, Public & Societal Benefit, Health & Healthcare, Environment & Animals, Arts & Culture, Education (K -12 & Higher Ed), International, Religious & Spiritual, Media, Labor Union, Associations, and Mutual Benefit. See Appendix A for a detailed definition of these segments and survey respondent participation rates by organization size and segment.

From the survey, we learned that commercial social networks, especially Facebook, are popular, but average community sizes remain small, and presence is relatively short. Responding nonprofits are allocating small but real resources, staff and budget to their social networks. Survey respondents prefer traditional marketing channels to promote their social networks but are experimenting with new social media channels. For now, there is very little real revenue generated on these communities via fundraising and advertising. A minority of nonprofit survey respondents, about one third, have built and manage their own house social networks, using software from a wide variety of social network software vendors, with no clear leader among these vendors. The members of house social networks are as yet, with just a few exceptions, still relatively small as well.

Following are more highlights from the survey:

· Among commercial social networks, Facebook is the most popular with 74.1% of nonprofit survey respondents maintaining a presence on this commercial site. Community sizes are still small, however, with an average size of just 5,391members. Tenure on Facebook is relatively short, with most nonprofit survey respondents (94.4%) present for 2 years or less. For Twitter, 93.9% of organizations report using this channel for one year or less.

· Staffing and budgets for nonprofit social network projects—on commercial social networks—are real but small, with four-fifths of nonprofit survey respondents committing at least one-quarter of a full-time staff person to these efforts. More than half of nonprofit survey respondents intend to increase social network project staffing over the next 12 months. External resourcing for social network projects is lower, with 4 out of 10 organizations allocating any budget, and 8.3% reserving $10,000 or more over the last 12 months for outside help.

· Nonprofit survey respondents prefer more traditional marketing tactics to promote their commercial and house social networks—prioritizing website, email list and events to get the word out about their online communities. Lower in popularity but still prevalent were the use of Twitter and other social networks.

· The communications and marketing departments are most likely to own the social network efforts, with fundraising and executive management the next most common shepherds of nonprofit's social network projects.

· Very few nonprofit survey respondents are generating real revenue on commercial or house social networks via fundraising. On Facebook, about 39.9% of respondents have raised money via fundraising, but 29.1% have raised $500 or less over the past 12 months. On house social networks, 25.2% of nonprofit survey respondents are fundraising, and 1/3 of these fundraisers accumulated $10,000 or more over the last year.

· Among nonprofit survey respondents 30.6% have built one or more house social networks, but here again the community size is relatively small, with 86.6% of house social network-owning nonprofit survey respondents hosting communities of 10,000 members or less.

Nonprofits continue to question whether it is better to build a community on, for example, Facebook, or to construct their own house social network. Following is a side-by-side comparison of survey responses for the two types of online communities:

Table 1: Nonprofit activity on commercial and house social networks

Question	Commercial Social Networks	House Social Networks
1. Does your organization have one?	86.2% replied YES	30.6% replied yes (1 or more communiites)
2. What is the primary purpose of the community?	Marketing (80.5%)	Marketing (55.9%)
3. How much staff time did you allocate to the community over the preceding year?	1/4 to 1/2 of a full time employee (64.5%)	1/4 to 1/2 of a full time employee (51.5%)
4. How much budget for external resources did you allocate over the preceding year?	None (59.3%) $1-$10,000 (32.2%)	None (34.0%) $1 - $10,000 (40.7%)
5. Number of community members?	Average: 5,391*	10,000 or less (86.6%)
6. How long have you had your community? (Among those with a community of this type)	1-24 months (93.8%)*	1-24 months (72.6%)
7. How much fundraising revenue have you raised from your community over the preceding year? (Among those with a community of this type)	Not Fundraising (61.1%) Fundraising and raised $0 - $10,000 (37.8%)*	Not Fundraising (74.7%) Fundraising and raised $0 - $10,000 (16.5%)
8. How much revenue from sponsorship, underwriting and advertising have you received from your community over the preceding year?	Not Advertising (94.8%)* Advertising and received $0-$10,000 (4.7%)	Not Advertising (85.3%) Advertising and received $0-$10,000 (8.9%)
9. For those nonprofits without a community of this type, what is the primary reason?	Do not have the expertise in-house (44.3%)	Do not have sufficient budget (47.0%)

* Facebook

The primary difference between the two types of communities, then, is "Does your organization have a community of this type?" Among respondents 86.2% of nonprofits have a presence on at least one commercial social network, and just 30.6% have a house social network. Presumably, nonprofits find it easier to get started on Facebook with a Group, Page or Cause then to build their first house network, so more of them do. To get real value from their networks, however, nonprofits will need to scale and manage a large community. The ease and efficiency of building and managing a large community is not discernible from this survey, but will be an important theme in the long term. The potential for building and integrating both platforms simultaneously looms as a valuable strategy.

- The social network software market—vendors offering software to build house social networks—is highly fragmented. Ning leads with 18.5% of nonprofit survey respondents specifying this vendor as their platform, and 15+ other vendors with 5% or less each.

- The universal ID protocols— Open Social (Google, Yahoo, MySpace) and Facebook Connect— are used by 29.7% of organizations with house social networks, where Open Social is the more popular with 17.4% of nonprofit survey respondents using this standard, compared to Facebook's standard used by 12.3% of respondents.

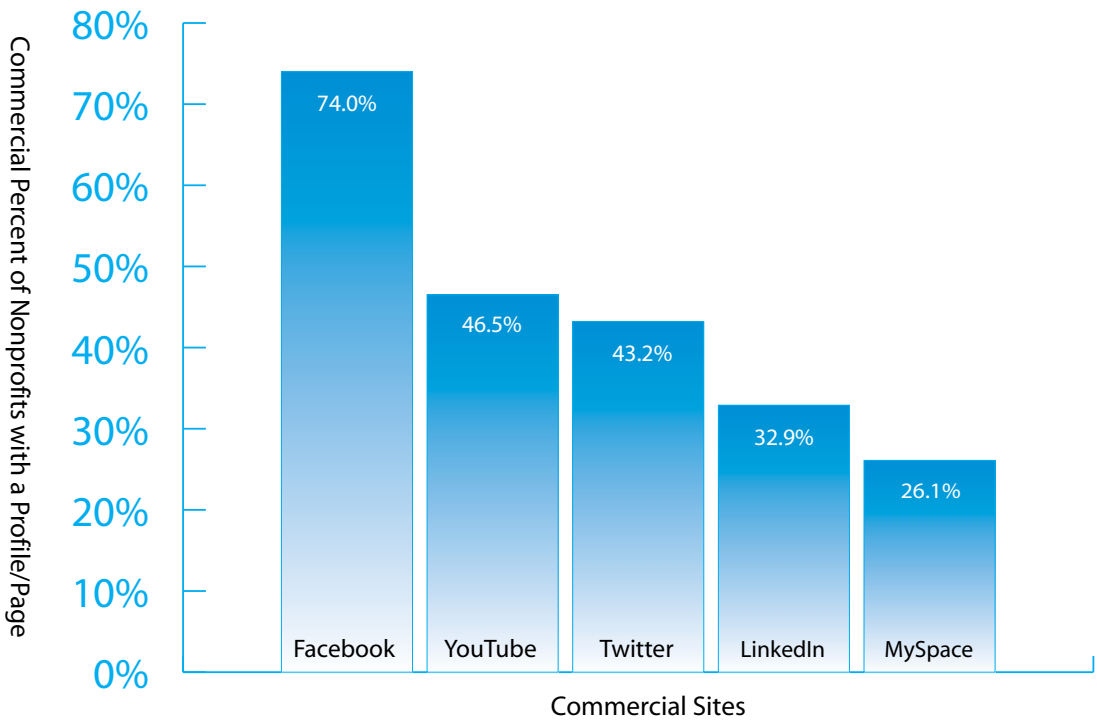
Detailed Reporting of Survey Results

Commercial Social Networks

Popularity of Commercial Social Networks

By a large margin, Facebook is the most popular of the commercial social networks with 74.0% of respondents indicating that their organization has a presence there. YouTube and Twitter are a distant second and third with 46.5% and 43.2%, respectively, of nonprofit survey respondents indicating they maintain a presence in these channels. Linked In was fourth with 32.9% , and MySpace fifth with 26.1% of respondents.

Graph 1: Popularity of Commercial Social Networks



Within individual vertical segments, professional associations were more likely to use LinkedIn than Facebook for their commercial social network efforts—51.7% of associations cited LinkedIn as their commercial social network platform versus 32.8% of survey respondents across all verticals. Likewise, just 55.2% of associations reported using Facebook versus an average of 74.1% across all verticals.

Role of Commercial Social Networks

Looking at how survey respondents use their commercial social networks, we find the most popular role is for traditional marketing—to promote the nonprofit's brand, programs, events or services, with 80.5% of survey respondents indicating this role as the purpose of their presence on commercial social networks. The second most popular role is for word-of-mouth marketing, at 72.7% of respondents. Market research and delivering programs or services via the social network are significantly less typical with 43.1% and 35.5% respectively.

Staff Time and External Resources Dedicated to Commercial Social Networks

Fully four-fifths (80.8%) of survey respondents committed at least one-quarter of a full-time staff member to maintaining—marketing, managing and cultivating—their commercial social network presence over the last 12 months. Roughly two thirds (64.5%) of survey respondents dedicated one-quarter to one-half of a full-time resource, and 16.3% committed three-quarters or more staff to their commercial social networks.

Looking ahead, over half (55.0%) of survey respondents indicate they will increase staffing over the next 12 months, 39.5%) say staffing will stay the same, and just 1 in 20 (5.6%) will decrease staffing.

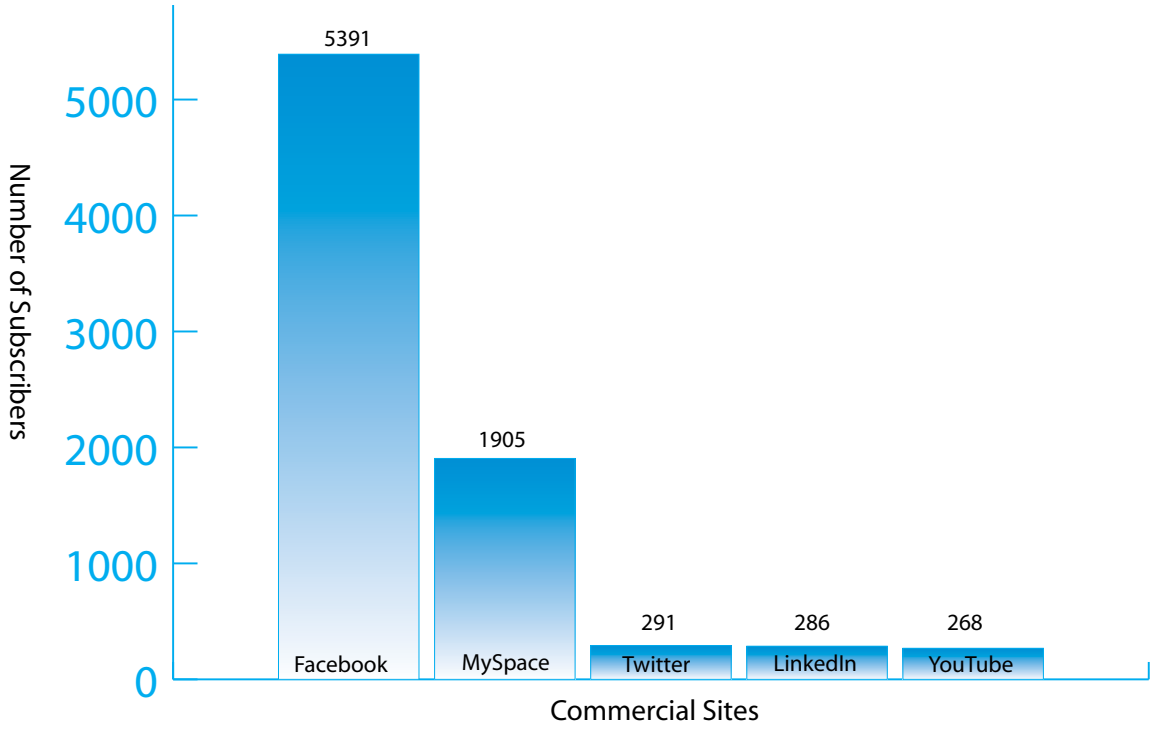
Four out of ten (40.6%) survey respondents had some budget over the last 12 months for external resources dedicated to helping with their commercial social network work, but just 8.3% set aside $10,000 or more, with only 1.4% allotting more than $100,000 to external resources to help with commercial social network efforts.

About one-quarter (24.1%) of survey respondents indicate they will increase funding for external resources dedicated to helping with commercial social network efforts in the coming 12 months, while the majority (68.0%) say they will keep external resourcing budgets the same. 7.9% of survey respondents will decrease their social network external resource budgets for the coming year.

Community Size: Commercial Social Networks

When asked about the size of their commercial social network communities, survey respondents indicated an average of 5,391 members on their Facebook presence, 1,905 on MySpace, and 291, 286, and 268 respectively on LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube.

Graph 2: Average size of respondent communities on commercial social networks



The communities on Facebook range in size from 1 to 600,000 fans, but 97% of the communities were 10,000 members or less, with three very large communities of 500,000+ members skewing the average. Discounting these three outliers, the average community size on Facebook is 1,369 members.

The nonprofit-specific social network, Change.org had an average community size of 243 members.

Promoting Commercial Social Networks

Asked about marketing their commercial social networks, survey respondents responded with a broad range of tactics, with at least one-quarter of all survey respondents specifying one or more of the following as part of their marketing mix: Offline PR, blogging, Twitter, other social networks, emails to email house list, promotion on website, advertising within organization's print publications, and at organization's events.

The traditional tactics of promotion via their organizational web site, and email marketing to the organization's email house list were by far the leading tactics, with 78.7% and 71.9% of respondents using these tactics. The next largest tactics were Twitter (44.0%), promotion at the organization's events (43.2%), and other social networks (40.0%).

Departmental Responsibility for Commercial Social Networks

The communications (25.7% of respondents) and marketing (22.2%) departments are the most likely teams to take responsibility for the organization's commercial social networks. Trailing these two leaders, the fundraising team (9.8%), executive management (9.3%), IT (5.6%) and volunteering (5.7%) were the next most likely groups to house the commercial social network efforts.

Presence on Commercial Social Networks

For those survey respondents with a presence on Facebook, 93.7% have been present there for a period ranging from one to 24 months, with 24.6% present for 1 to 3 months, 19.4% for 3 to 6 months, 27.1% for 6 to 12 months, 22.6% for 12 to 24 months, and just 5.6% for 2 to 3 years.

Among nonprofits with a presence on any commercial social network, a smaller percentage of survey respondents have a presence on MySpace (49.3%) versus Facebook (94.4%), but those groups on MySpace skew toward a longer tenure, with 7.6% for a presence of 1 to 3 months, 12.9% for 3 to 6 months, 24.6% for 6 to 12 months, 28.0% for 12 to 24 months, and 20.6% for 2 to 3 years.

Twitter presence among nonprofits with a presence on any social network skews significantly to more recent adoption with 93.9% of respondents using this using this channel for 12 months or less. For context, Twitter was founded in March 2006, three years before this survey was fielded.

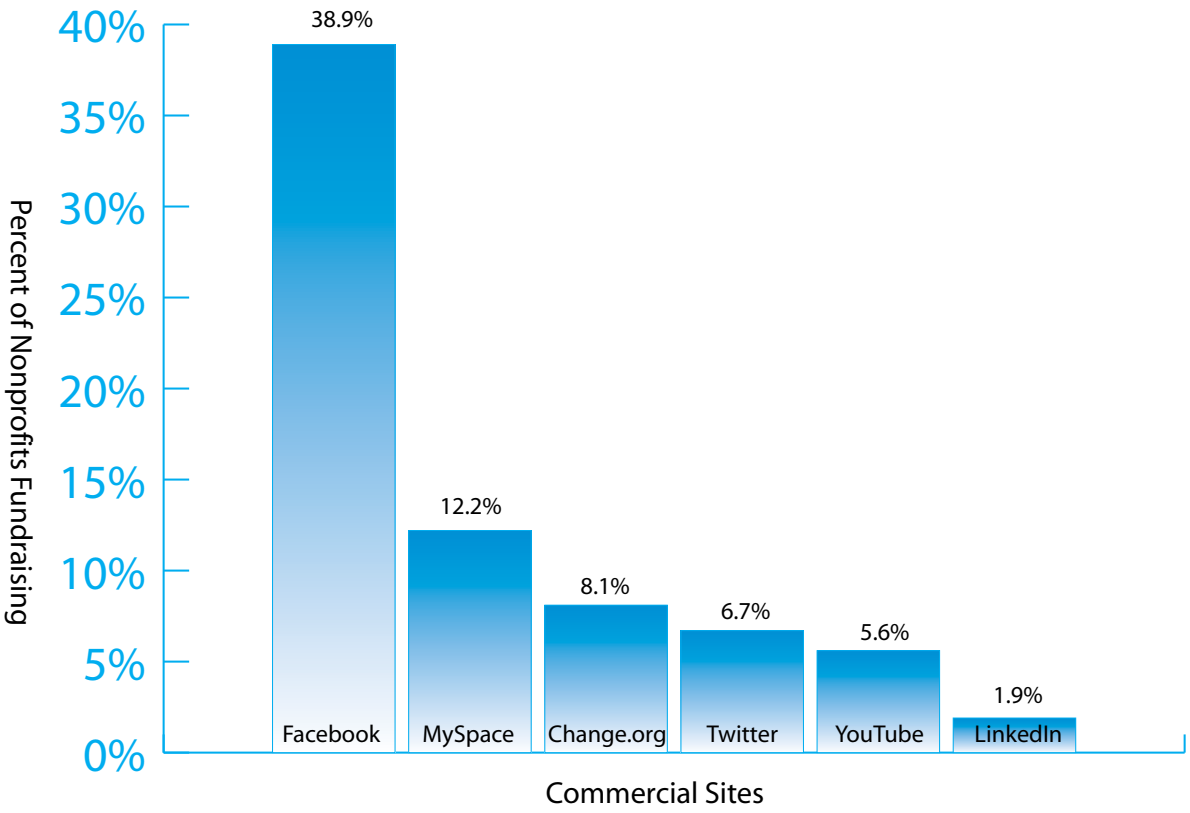
Table 2: Presence Commercial Social Networks

	No Presence	1-3 months	3-6 months	6-12 months	12-24 months	2-3 years	More than 3 years
Facebook	5.6%	24.6%	19.4%	27.1%	22.6%	5.6%	0.6%
MySpace	50.7%	7.6%	12.9%	24.1%	28.2%	20.6%	6.5%
Twitter	31.4%	59.1%	19.3%	15.5%	4.9%	1.1%	0.0%

Revenue Generation from Commercial Social Network Sites

Using commercial social networks to generate fundraising revenue is not prevalent but does exist on a few of the most popular sites, albeit producing only low dollar revenue amounts for now. Advertising, underwriting and sponsorship revenue is not present in any meaningful way on commercial social networks.

Graph 3: Where are respondents fundraising on commercial social networks?



Among the commercial social networks most popular for survey respondents—Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Change.org and YouTube—Facebook is the clear leader, with 29.1% of organizations indicating they are getting $500 or less in fundraising revenue over the last 12 months. MySpace is second with 9.2% of survey respondents receiving $500 or less, followed by Change.org (6.6%), Twitter (5.5%), YouTube (4.4%), and LinkedIn (1.0%)

Among all the commercial social networks, only Facebook and MySpace were used to deliver $10,000 or more in fundraising revenue over the last 12 months for any nonprofit, with just 1.2% and 0.3%, respectively of survey respondents falling into this category.

For paid placement—advertising, sponsorship and underwriting, 1% or less of survey respondents have received any revenue at all from the commercial social networks, except Facebook and MySpace, where just 5.3% and 1.6% respectively report getting revenue. Only Facebook was used to receive more than $500 in the last 12 months for paid placement.

Improved Productivity: Commercial Social Networks

When asked how they might become more productive with their commercial social network efforts, approximately one-third (32.7%) of survey respondents responded that more time to dedicate to their community sites would help. Another 30% (30.2%) of organizations indicated that additional staff would help, and 27% (27.3%) said additional training would make their community work more productive. Interestingly, just 9.8% indicated that more money (budget) dedicated to the community would make a positive difference in productivity.

Reasons for Not Having a Presence on Commercial Social Networks

Of those survey respondents with no presence on commercial social networks, 44.3% site the lack of expertise, and 20.5% specified lack of budget as the reason. Just 13.1% indicated that they did not believe that having a presence on commercial social networks was a good use of funds

House Social Networks

House Social Networks

Among survey respondents , 30.6% of stated that they have one or more house social networks. Among survey respondents with a house social network, 76.8% have just one community, while 14.4% report having two communities, and 8.8% three or more community sites.

Metrics for Success

When asked which metrics they include in their definition of success for their house social networks, the number of members, and the amount of user-generated content were the leaders, with 68.5% and 68.5%, respectively of respondents including these two variables.

Fundraising was the lowest ranked metric with just 16.1% of survey respondents indicating that this variable was important in measuring the success of their house community.

Value of House Social Networks

Over three-quarters (77.0%) of survey respondents with a house social network, indicate that their house social network has value (very or somewhat valuable). Just 4.8% indicated that their house social network is not valuable at all.

Staff Time and External Resources Dedicated to Commercial Social Networks

Exactly 87% of survey respondents dedicated one-quarter or more full-time staff resources to their house social network over the last 12 months. Just over half (51.5%) allotted one-quarter to one-half staff person, 19.0% committed three-quarters to one full-time resources, and 6.1% allocated more than two full-time resources.

Roughly half (46.6%) of survey respondents with a house social network say they will increase the staff time dedicated to their house social network over the coming year.

Budgets for external resourcing for house social networks over the last year were zero for about one-third (34.0%) of respondents, with another four out of ten (40.7%) specifying budgets of $10,000 or less. Just 2.5% of survey respondents allocated more than $100,000 or more over the last 12 months for house social networks.

Over one-quarter (27.0%) of respondents indicated that external resourcing budgets will increase, with over half (56.6%) replying that their external budgets will stay the same in the coming 12 months.

House Community Size
When queried about the size of their house communities, three-quarters (74.4%) of survey respondents specify 2,500 or less registered members, 12.2% have 2,501 to 10,000 members, and another 13.5% have more than 10,000.

Marketing House Communities
Nonprofit survey respondents are using more traditional channels most often to promote their house social networks to prospective community members—nearly three-quarters (74.7%) of respondents say they market their house community via their web site. Seventy-two percent (72.1%) of survey respondents use email marketing to the organization's email house list to promote their house social network, and 61.7% use promotion at organizational events.

Social media channels are used less often by survey respondents to promote their house social networks with other social networks (40.9%) , blogging (38.3%), and Twitter (35.7%) [JM4] among the most commonly used in this emerging promotional category.

Departmental Ownership
Communications, marketing and executive management are the top three owning departments of an organization's house social networks with 22.2%, 14.6% and 13.3%, respectively of survey respondents citing these as the department with primary responsibility for the management and maintenance of these sites.

Community Duration
The duration—how long since you launched your house social network—skews to more recent launches but includes more than one-quarter of survey respondents that launched their communities two or more years ago.

Of the survey respondents with house social networks roughly four in ten survey respondents (41.4%) launched their house networks one to 6 months ago, 31.2%) launched their sites 6 months to 2 years ago, and 27.4% have had house social networks in place for more than two years.

Revenue Generation from House Social Networks
Very few nonprofit survey respondents are generating substantive revenue from their house social networks. Among survey respondents ,74.7% are not fundraising at all on their house social networks. Of the remaining quarter of survey respondents fundraising on their community sites, one-third (35.0%) raised $10,000 or more over the last 12 months.

Paid placement—advertising, underwriting and sponsorship—on house social networks is used by 14.8%) of respondents, with 5.8% indicating they brought in $1,000 or less over the last 12 months. The other 9% spanned the range of $1,000 to $100,000+ in paid placement over the preceding year.

Improved Productivity: House Social Networks

When asked about how they would make their house social networks more productive, survey respondents responded that additional staff, more time in their work day, and additional training would be most helpful, with 32.7%, 24.5% and 22.6% citing these items respectively. More money or budget was fourth with 20.1% of survey respondents selecting this as the best way to improve the productivity of their house community.

Social Network Software Platform

For now, the nonprofit social network software industry is highly fragmented, with no one vendor being used by even a quarter of survey respondents. In a crowded market, Ning.com leads with 18.5% of survey respondents claiming these as their social network software platform.

The next tier of vendors was indicated by 1% to 5% of respondents: Awareness, Higher Logic, KickApps, Leverage Software, LiveWorld, Telligent Systems, ThePort, open source software (Drupal, Plone), and various blog platforms.

When asked about content management system software used to construct their house community sites, 39.7% of respondents indicated that they used none, and another quarter (24.3%) use an open source (Drupal, Joomla, etc.) solution. No other CMS vendor garnered more than 5% of responses.

Four in ten organizations (39.5%) indicate they have no budget at all for their social network software; another 44.5% have an annual budget of $10,000 or less, and the final segment (16.3%) responded with an annual budget of $10,000 or more last year.

Universal ID Protocols

On a more technical front, 7 out of 10 (70.1%) respondents indicate that they incorporate no universal ID protocol in their house social network. Open Social—the open ID standard used by Google, Yahoo, and MySpace—accounts for 17.4% of respondents, and Facebook Connect (promoted exclusively by Facebook) represents 12.3% of respondents.

These universal ID protocols allow individuals to share their profile information and personal network across various social networks.

Reasons for Not Building a House Social Network

For those survey respondents that have not built a house social network, the primary reasons for not having done so are as follows: no budget (47.0% of respondents), no expertise (42.6%), not valuable to build a house community site (32.8%) and we didn't know it was possible (17.7%). Respondents were allowed to choose multiple reasons.

Appendix A – Participating Organizations

Organizations

Survey participants described their organizations as follows:

# Employees	% of Respondents
None	5.3%
1 to 20	46.9%
21 to 50	18.2%
51 to 250	19.4%
>250	10.2%

Annual Budget	% of Respondents
<$1M	34.6%
$1M to $5M	34.0%
$6M to $50M	24.9%
$51M+	6.5%

Organization Type	% of Respondents
Human Services	20.2%
Public & Societal Benefit	21.2%
Health & Healthcare	13.4%
Environment & Animals	9.1%
Arts & Culture	6.5%
Higher Education	3.3%
Education K-12	4.6%
International	4.5%
Religious & Spiritual	2.4%
Media	2.2%
Labor Union	0.3%
Association	9.9%
Mutual Benefit	1.0%
For Profit Business	1.4%

Segment Definitions

Segment	Includes
Human Services	Crime and legal, employment, agriculture and nutrition, housing, public safety, youth, and recreation
Public & Societal Benefit	Civil rights and advocacy, community organizing, philanthropy, science & technology, social sciences, and government
Health & Healthcare	
Environment & Animals	
Arts & Culture	
Education	Higher education, K-12
International	Foreign affairs, international human rights, national security, and diplomacy
Religious	Religious, spiritual development
Media	
Labor Union	
Association	
Mutual Benefit	Insurance and retirement services, fraternal societies, and burial services

Appendix B – Survey Methodology

A 50-question online survey was fielded from February 20, 2009 to April 15, 2009, drawing a sample size of 980 respondents and producing a margin of error of +/- 3.13% with 95% confidence.

About

NTEN aspires to a world where all nonprofit organizations skillfully and confidently use technology to meet community needs and fulfill their missions.

We are the membership organization of nonprofit technology professionals. Our members share the common goal of helping nonprofits use all aspects of technology more effectively.

We believe that technology allows nonprofits to work with greater social impact. We enable our members to strategically use technology to make the world a better, just, and equitable place.

NTEN facilitates the exchange of knowledge and information within our community. We connect our members to each other, provide professional development opportunities, educate our constituency on issues of technology use in nonprofits, and spearhead groundbreaking research, advocacy, and education on technology issues affecting our entire community.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Common Knowledge, an online agency founded in 2002 and based in San Francisco provides comprehensive services for online fundraising, advocacy, marketing, communications, and social networking to nonprofit organizations that need to leverage the Internet more effectively to further their mission.

Broadly, Common Knowledge offers assistance to our clients in four service areas:

- Online Strategy (including interactive media),
- Web Site Design and Development,
- Social Networking and Online Community Development,
- Online Campaigns (including email fundraising and acquisition).

Our current base of 30+ nonprofit clients includes Arthritis Foundation, Sierra Club, Operation Smile, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Partnership for a Drug Free America, Seva Foundation, Community Gatepath, Disabled Americans Veterans, Equality California and others.

ThePort™ Network, Inc. is dedicated to delivering compelling and complete software as a service (SaaS) solutions that enable customers to create, operate and monetize socially enabled online communities. Through its integrated suite of proven social media solutions, ThePort enables its customers to enhance their existing web presence with branded online communities, creating engagement between the brand and their constituents, stimulating interaction between community members, and driving new revenue opportunities. With a focus on the nonprofit, trade association and media industries, ThePort customers include such world-renowned organizations as BizJournals, CARE, Arthritis Foundation, Sierra Club, Reserve Officers Association, Restaurant and Facility Management Association, and Lee Enterprises. For more information, visit www.theport.com.