



ACET, Inc.

Action Consulting and Evaluation Team

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ACET's First Community Workshop a Success!

The ACET team would like to send a big THANK YOU to all of our colleagues who braved the rain and tornado warnings on August 19th to attend our first community workshop: Surveys 101. We appreciated their enthusiasm, questions, and willingness to share their passion for evaluation. The workshop, facilitated by Kirsten Rewey, ACET's Senior Research and Evaluation Associate, assisted attendees in survey planning, provided them with several principles of good survey design, and helped them identify and avoid common survey item pitfalls. As a follow-up, ACET offered a complimentary review of one of each attending organizations' surveys.

This workshop was one of a series of workshops ACET plans to facilitate as a means of helping programs build their evaluation and research capacity. Stay tuned to ACET's webpage (www.acetinc.com) for details on upcoming workshops! Also, please feel free to email Heather Scholz (heather@acetinc.com) if you are interested in attending or have topic suggestions for future workshops.

Thank you so much for the feedback. I wasn't getting the information I was looking for from the old survey so I am looking forward to reformatting the survey and trying it out ... This workshop was very timely and helpful, thanks again.

ACET News:

It has been a busy summer at ACET. Here is a quick update on how the team spent their time when they were not in the office.

Stella and her husband, Jason, purchased a new house! Even though the new house has kept them busy with yard work, moving, and redecorating they are excited that it is closer to both of their businesses. Stella and Jason also enjoyed spending time with friends and family barbequing and relaxing on several Minnesota lakes this summer.



Kirsten and her extended family held a mini-family reunion this year. More than 30 Reweys came from Minnesota, Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey, and Florida to watch an amazing fireworks show in Rewey, Wisconsin (Yes, she's related to the town's founder, Jefferson Rewey, but distantly!). Although the weather was cool and rainy, the 30-minute fireworks show was amazing and the company was wonderful. Kirsten's husband, Zack, even designed t-shirts to mark the occasion!

Heather, her husband Aaron, and their chocolate Lab, Bocephus (a.k.a. Captain Naughty Paws), spent several weekends camping and hiking in Minnesota State Parks this summer. They, too, enjoyed a week-long family reunion. Over 30 family members on Aaron's side gathered together on the white, sandy beaches of Gulf Shores, Alabama. They swam in the ocean, walked on the beach, collected shells, went salt water fishing, and played lots of games.

Joseph and his canine sidekick, Zelda (a.k.a. Crazy Face), explored several Minnesota hiking trails, and also went on several rafting trips with Zelda in tow. Joseph moved to Minnesota from Texas last summer (before that he lived in California) and is adjusting well to having four different seasons. This summer, Joseph also moved into a new apartment only 7/10th of a mile from the ACET office; he's been thoroughly enjoying staying out of traffic as he walks to work.

Bob, ACET's summer intern, had a busy summer commuting to ACET from Menomonie, Wisconsin three days a week. During the warm months, he is actively involved in softball and disc golf. Bob and a friend spent a long weekend kayaking the Apostle Island sea caves (on the northern tip of Wisconsin). Bob also visited California, where he plans to relocate after graduation.

Social Media

By Heather (Wolfgang) Scholz, MSW

Social media is a means of connecting individuals and organizations online. The most common social media tools are networking sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. Users network on these sites by creating personal identities, sometimes entire webpages, and then selecting other users to interact with or to simply share updates and information. For example, on the professional networking site LinkedIn, users create a page that contains information outlined in a résumé and build a network of contacts based on friends and colleagues that can be useful for career opportunities, client promotion, and other professional growth. Social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook also allow users to create networks and share real-time updates (“Tweets” in Twitter and “Status” in Facebook); some tools also offer opportunities to share pictures, videos, and other content; invite others to events; and even play games.

Businesses and organizations can take advantage of both professional and social networking sites to market products, build professional knowledge, recruit clients, donors, or volunteers, and engage the public in causes. For example, the American Evaluation Association (AEA) has pages on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook where researchers and evaluators can ask one another questions and share information on topics related to evaluation in addition to networking with other colleagues about careers and professional development opportunities in evaluation.



As social media becomes more popular, agencies and organizations are beginning to converse about the relationship between social media and evaluation—either incorporating social media as an element in their evaluation plan or measuring the impact/effectiveness of an existing social media strategy. The following are examples of how social media activities and tools can be used for evaluation purposes:

- ◆ Measuring reaction to your message: Social media provides organizations with the opportunity to share their message, and allows users to participate in the creation of that message through a feedback system. Various tools (e.g., Tweets, status updates) can be used to assess, quantitatively and qualitatively, how a message is being received. Such information will help agencies adjust their social media strategy and improve future communication by altering the speed, frequency, level of controversy, or topics for discussion of future communications.
- ◆ Measuring your audience: Social media tools track supporter/subscriber information and can often provide users with a wealth of information about the demographics, interests, and activities of their supporters, all of which are key to enhancing engagement. There are also several social media evaluation tools that provide organizations with the means to measure traffic (electronic visits to websites and blogs), visit duration, visit frequency, and the content users accessed on organizational or social media sites. This information can be used to assess the extent and means through which the audience is being reached and is engaged in the dissemination process.
- ◆ Measuring achievement of program goals: Similar to traditional program evaluations, programs can use social media to determine whether or not they have achieved programmatic or social media goals. For example, if an organization is using social media primarily as a fundraising tool or as a means of volunteer recruitment, the social media tools utilized can be evaluated for successes and challenges related to the achievement of those process goals (i.e. how many volunteers were recruited?).

The popularity, versatility, affordability, and ease of access of social media challenges individuals, organizations, and businesses to discover smart online solutions in an increasingly digital world. There are many benefits to incorporating social media, including participation in the creation of media content and relationship or community building around similar interests and ideologies. By doing this, social media has increased the diversity of information and opinions available to the general public, while creating a space for users to learn from and challenge one another. Social media also connects society through virtual communities. Organizations and businesses can reach new and recent customers, donors, and volunteers. Social media allows individuals to converse about common interests and passions, problem solve, organize, and advocate for causes.