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## SECTION FOUR

# PLUGGING PEOPLE IN

## NEW MEDIA TACTICS TO ENHANCE COLLABORATION AND PARTICIPATION

NO LONGER AN ADD-ON, online strategies can be front and center in your campaign. By harnessing the power of Web 2.0—the range of interactive tools that enable participation on the Internet—you can work smarter, collaborate more easily with allies and reach new supporters. And with Web 2.0 tools, you can create your own media, broadcasting the message you want your audience to receive.

On the following pages, you'll find a primer on new media tools, with information on how media activists can use everything from blogs to YouTube, podcasts to wikis. You'll also find case studies of groundbreaking Web-based campaigns.

Lastly, because it's an unfortunate truth that with new opportunities for expression come new threats to that expression, this section also highlights campaigns to ensure that the tremendous organizing potential of the Internet is protected and its benefits shared broadly.

## THE TOOLS THEY USE: ONLINE AND OFFLINE COLLABORATION FOR MEDIA ACTIVISTS

By Dharma Dailey

**THE EASIER** it is to collaborate, the more collaboration will happen, right? Here we'll look at how one all-volunteer group used a variety of online and offline collaborative tools to pull together a very successful event. Then we'll look at some collaborative tools that are being used by another activist group that has a small staff and lots of volunteers.

Northeast Citizens for Responsible Media (ReMedia, for short) is an all-volunteer group active on media reform in the Hudson Valley of New York. When ReMedia got the news that the FCC was coming to town, they had only three short weeks to alert the community, find an event space, get local officials and experts lined up to testify and create a press campaign for pre- and post-event press coverage. Because ReMedia is all volunteer, they were constrained by having no money and no staff.

**It Started with a Meeting.** Right after the FCC called to say it had selected a date to come to the Hudson Valley, ReMedia members held a meeting. About eight people attended and set out to create an overall plan of action. The meeting was a long one, but it set the project up for success. Important strategic questions were talked through: What key groups must be represented at this hearing? What are the best ways to ensure that they are represented? What's different about media ownership here than other places, and how can we demonstrate that?

After coming to consensus on the big picture questions, people were ready to think about how the work should be broken down over the following weeks. Working groups included Press Outreach; Event Space; Outreach to Underrepresented/Marginalized Groups; Outreach to Local Officials and Pooh-bahs; and Outreach to Local Media Experts, such as professors. The meeting included working out a pre-event and post-event press strategy.

Yes, meetings are still an activist's best friend. There are a plethora of online tools that can help you manage information and stay on top of tasks, but nothing works better than a meet-

ing for strategic planning, evaluation or ironing out differences of opinion. Meeting face to face builds trust, and it also translates into a stronger feeling of connection when working together online. Rob Purdie, a longtime environmental activist and professional project manager, notes that just prior to and just after a meeting there is a burst of energy and activity. That's just what you need to kick off your project, as well as move it from one phase to another.

**First Email Blast, First Press Outreach and Personalized Emails.** The night of the meeting, the Press Outreach group drafted an announcement to blast to the ReMedia email list. This announcement doubled as a press release. Everyone in the group was encouraged to forward the email and tailor the message to each of their selected outreach groups.

The trick to using email for outreach is to always put the most important information first, starting with the subject line. A subject line like "Hudson Valley FCC Hearing Nov. 7th" lets people know that the message is time sensitive.

**Follow Up with Phone Calls.** ReMedia already had a history of good turnout for their events, but they wanted to make sure that the FCC hearing truly reflected the concerns of a wide spectrum of local residents. That meant using methods that would help quickly establish relationships with groups that they had never connected with before. The best way to do this quickly was to pick up the phone.

ReMedia used follow-up phone calls after the initial email announcement to connect with community leaders. Volunteers with relationships at local media outlets forwarded the email, and then made follow-up calls to ensure coverage of the event.

**Expand the Circle of Allies Digitally with Conference Calls, Video Chat and Plain Old Chat.** ReMedia wanted to get advice from other groups that had held FCC hearings, so they arranged conference calls with a few allies out of the area.

Cross the digital divide: Nothing beats a face-to-face meeting for planning, building trust and ironing out differences of opinion.



© Jonathan Lawson/Reclaim the Media

Youth plug in: Oregon Learning Lab for Information Education (OLLIE) van.

When it isn't possible to get all of your collaborators in the same room, many activists turn to conference calls and video chat. Conference calls can be arranged through conference call services or through Internet-based programs like Skype, which works on any computer for text, video or audio chats.

Video chat can also help expand opportunities for collaboration. For example, a youth media project can arrange to have their youth talk directly to peers working in other communities.

Video chat has an advantage over conference calls because seeing someone adds more depth to the communication experience. Also, people are less tempted to “multitask” (which is just another way of saying “not paying attention”).

A simple text chat program is another tool that can keep remote collaboration running smoothly. I work with a group that represents Internet users in Internet governance forums. We have had a single text chat going for over six months using Skype. With just one tool, our group has been able to effectively share information in this informal “back channel” among folks spread out from Hawaii to Moldova.

With a text chat, you can involve as many people as you like, and save chats that are useful. Skype tells you when anyone has added a comment. You can have the same chat active on multiple computers. You can also use Skype to send files or make phone calls to land lines. Other popular chat services include AOL Instant Messenger and Yahoo Messenger. On my Mac, I use a free open source program called Adium to access these other services.

**Collaborating on Documents and Messaging.** ReMedia had a lot of written material to pull together in a hurry, including email announcements, text for the Web site, messages for particular audiences and press outreach materials. The press kit had all the usual organizational information about ReMedia, but also contained issue briefs that gave substantive information about how media consolidation affects the Hudson Valley, including professional research and expert testimony. The work on these documents was divvied up among a number of volunteers. Some sympathetic local reporters were even recruited to help create the press kit. Collaboration involved a lot of back and forth in email and telephone calls.

When using email for outreach, put the most important information first, and always follow up with a phone call.

Your Web 2.0 tools will only work if people use them. Pick a few, experiment, and make sure to train folks on how they work.

Keep in mind that pre-event press helps create the excitement and interest that your project needs to be successful. Post-event press can document that success to future allies, collaborators and funders. By recruiting people with media skills to be part of the project, ReMedia had more credibility to get coverage from media outlets.

The way that ReMedia collaborated on creating the necessary documents worked, and that's what counts. But there are other ways to facilitate this kind of collaboration. Online services that let you edit and store a document in one place that is accessible to all collaborators have several advantages over passing things back and forth in email. You don't have to worry if your text editing program is compatible with your collaborator's. You always know that you are looking at the latest version. It's easy to see what changes have been made by different collaborators. And all documents are always available to everyone with an Internet connection—no chasing down someone to get that precious document at the last minute.

Easy-to-use online project management services like Basecamp (BasecampHQ.com) let you and your collaborators write and edit together on “writeboards.” Google Docs is another popular way to collaborate, though many activists are uncomfortable with Google's privacy policies. Services like Basecamp also let you have online calendars, project milestones, to-do lists and document storage. Basecamp will even send people “to-do” reminders. You can set up most of these services so that you receive an email or an RSS announcement when changes are made by your collaborators.

To make chats, teleconferences and email more effective, Marc LaPorte, a coordinator for an all-volunteer open source project, suggests that someone in your group take responsibility to copy and paste any decisions that are made and questions that may come up again into an online archive such as a wiki. Wiki, which means “fast” in Hawaiian, is an online tool that lets people quickly and collaboratively document information. LaPorte also recommends pointing people to a link instead of answering each question directly. “Here is the Web address (URL) that has all the information about the event...” is more helpful than re-posting or re-typing all the info.

**Use RSS, Google Alerts, Tags and Bookmarks to Track Information that Affects Your Project.** ReMedia carefully scanned all local news outlets, from the time of their first email blast to the days after the FCC hearing, to monitor the coverage of the event. This involved maintaining a comprehensive list of local media outlets. Blogs were less popular at the time (2004), but if the event were today, ReMedia would also be looking at Hudson Valley blogs and blogs about media consolidation.

To make it easier to keep on top of relevant coverage, there are a few stand-out tools that your group should consider. First, you can set up a Google Alert that will email you anytime your group gets mentioned in the mainstream press. You can use blog search engines, such as Technorati, to identify bloggers who may be covering your project, or may want to. You can use RSS feeds to keep on top of important sources of information—such as the Web sites of key allies and stake-holders. And, finally, you can use a tag service such as Del.ici.ous to help you bookmark important information sources for later use, as well as to share that info with your collaborators.

*For more on these tools, see “Ramping It Up Online,” p.50.*

**Results.** The hard work paid off, with 350–400 Hudson Valley residents coming out to voice their opinions at the FCC hearing. “It made it so much more valid to hear the sentiments coming out of the citizenry,” says Joanne Lukacher, a ReMedia volunteer. The event received print, radio and television coverage from both major and smaller outlets in the area. Several small local outlets specifically came because of ReMedia's pre-event outreach, and, says Lukacher, “I thought the local papers covered our event better than the larger outlets.”

**It Ends with a Meeting.** About a week after the FCC hearing, ReMedia got together to celebrate their hard work and also to evaluate the event's impact. It was a good time for writing thank-you letters to people and groups who showed support. Several conversations were started at the hearing about possible new collaborations, and during the initial evaluation meeting, ReMedia found that there were too many threads to follow. All of this needed to be

sorted out by the group in a next-step strategy meeting. So they scheduled a facilitated day-long meeting about a month after the hearing to help them sort out opportunities.

A week after the end of a project or campaign is about the right amount of time to set up an initial in-person evaluation meeting. Just as it's important to meet in person for strategy, it's also important to do evaluations in person. This kind of review will often lead you back to the beginning—a new round of strategic planning.

### Contact Management Software and a Wiki Help a Small Staff and Volunteers Make Big Waves for Big Media.

A few other tools worth mentioning are more helpful for bigger projects or ongoing group operations. Prometheus Radio Project was an early adopter of CRM software (Constituent Relationship Management software). With CRM software they are able to keep track of the interests and needs of thousands of media activists around the country: who wants a radio station, who has technical skills that they are willing to donate, allies, engineers, lawyers—you name it. This makes it very easy for Prometheus to turn people-power into a smooth-running campaign action engine. Currently, Prometheus uses an open source CRM called Sugar.

Another tool that helps Prometheus run projects, campaigns and day-to-day operations is their internal wiki, which includes everything from the phone numbers of nearby lunch places to complex technical and legal information for community radio applicants to to-do lists for upcoming events. Corey Mark of Prometheus

explains the advantage of the wiki over traditional ways of storing documents. “The wiki combines narrative language with a place to quickly add or look up important information. If I am just looking at a directory of documents on a file server, I have to open each document to see what it is. With the wiki I can add language that describes what is here and why.”

**Final Thoughts.** Keep in mind that any “tool” only works if people use it. That means that they have to have access to it and be comfortable with it. A new tool will usually require a bit of training in both “how this can help us accomplish our mission” and “how to use it.”

Also consider that different people in your group may have different preferences for communicating. That has led some groups to use so many collaborative tools that group members can't keep track. Be selective. Pick a few that you think will work best for your group. And remember—the important thing is not what tools you use but that you kick Big Media butt!

### For More Information:

For up to date information and unbiased reviews of software and Web 2.0 services that are useful to nonprofits, check out [www.IdealWare.org](http://www.IdealWare.org).

For a case study on People's Production House efforts to overcome digital segregation, visit [www.spinproject.org/whosemedia](http://www.spinproject.org/whosemedia).

*Dharma Dailey is the Director of Research for the Ethos Group, a consulting firm focusing on the social impact of information and communications technologies. She is a longtime advocate for community media—especially community radio. She lives in the Catskill Mountains of New York state.*

## RAMPING IT UP ONLINE: A GUIDE TO WEB 2.0 FOR MEDIA REFORM ACTIVISTS

By Rebecca Farmer

Whole communities are ready and waiting for alternative news sources. You just need to find them and get the word out. In this chapter we'll show you how to spread your message using YouTube, podcasts, social networking, social bookmarking, RSS feeds, blogs, photo sharing, email blasts and your good old Web site.

**ONE OF THE REALITIES** for media reform activists is that getting publicity for your organizations and campaigns has an added layer of obstacles. When you're challenging news media or the entertainment world, it's more difficult to garner a place in their coverage. At the same time, the fact that more and more people get their news online—via the blogosphere or traditional news media Web sites like nytimes.com—has changed the media landscape and offers multiple entry points for activists looking to get the word out.

The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press reports that roughly a quarter of people in the US get their news online, and that Internet news audiences are more likely to be critical of mainstream news. What this means for media reform activists is that whole communities are ready and waiting for alternative forms of news and analysis—these audiences won't need to be convinced of the importance of your work so much as they'll need innovative ways to plug in.

Where the 2008 US presidential race is concerned, according to the Pew Research Center, close to half (42%) of people aged 18–29 learned about the campaign online—more than any other news source. This is more than double the number of young people who got campaign news online during the 2004 election.

The rise in Internet news audiences is rapidly changing the industry and has increasingly created opportunities for democratizing the media. By the same token, as the handful of big companies that own our major media outlets gain power, the need for independent news sources expands. These trends make it all the more crucial to ensure that the Internet remains free and open to everyone.

### Why Web 2.0?

New media, as a term, can also be thought of as digital or online communications. You've probably heard about Web 2.0, which refers to the range of online applications, Web sites and

tools—including blogs, podcasts, wikis and social networking sites—that promote interactivity, collaboration and user-generated content.

Web 2.0 applications are perfectly matched for activism because they encourage participation. And part of the beauty of new media tools is that many of them are completely free or low-cost, making them accessible for organizations at any budget.

As with all communications efforts, an effective new media strategy should build from your campaign or broader organizational goals, and be in tune with your capacity. Consider your target audiences and which Web 2.0 tools will best reach them. Web 2.0 is a constantly evolving field, so don't be afraid to experiment to figure out which tools will best work for your purposes.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF NEW MEDIA TOOLS

#### YouTube and Online Videos

Chances are that someone has sent you a link to an online video of a baby panda sneezing or otters holding hands. This is how many of us became familiar with YouTube, a Web site where you can upload, watch and share short video clips. YouTube rose to new popularity in 2007 as a tool for activist organizations when it launched a nonprofit program ([www.youtube.com/nonprofits](http://www.youtube.com/nonprofits)). The program allows 501c3 organizations to create a customized page showcasing their videos, and provides other enhanced features.

Creating short videos and posting them online is a way to tell your organization's story and reveal the human interest angle behind a complex issue. Online videos can deliver a narrative, creative story, featuring interviews with leaders and activists or highlighting key moments from rallies. Online video aficionados recommend that a video posted on YouTube be no longer than five minutes—but the punchier the better.

In the communications world, we refer to the videos that catch on and spread quickly via email and online posts as “going viral” (a take-off on viral marketing), and this is definitely one of the benefits of delivering your messages in a multimedia format that is easily shared.

Keep in mind that you don’t need professional, high-budget tech assistance to create online videos. Both Mac and PC computers come equipped with basic video editing software. Once you’ve got a video, uploading is easy and instantaneous. After it’s uploaded, you’re provided with the HTML code to embed the video on any Web site, social networking page or blog.

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

[www.youtube.com/nonprofits](http://www.youtube.com/nonprofits)

[youtube.com/savetheinternet](http://youtube.com/savetheinternet)

### Listen Up: Podcasting

The answer to the first question many people ask about podcasting is “No, you don’t have to have an iPod.” Podcasts are a series of audio files hosted online. The “pod” bit comes in because many people download favorite podcasts to an MP3 player for convenient listening. Podcasts are also available for listening online

and can be easily distributed through iTunes and sites like PodcastAlley.com and Podcast.net.

Sometimes a story is best narrated by a compelling storyteller, rather than written. This is one way podcasting can supplement your other communications tactics. Groups can also provide a newscast-style analysis around campaigns and issues, or feature interviews with key leaders and members.

Audio recording equipment and editing software can be purchased relatively inexpensively. Gcast ([www.gcast.com](http://www.gcast.com)), is a free podcasting tool used by musicians, comedians and non-profit groups to promote their work. Promoting a podcast through Gcast is similar to embedding a YouTube video on your site. With Gcast, you can either upload an audio file that you’ve recorded and edited, or you can record a message or conversation via phone which will post directly to your podcast stream.

For more on podcasting:

[Gcast.com](http://Gcast.com)

[Podcastalley.com](http://Podcastalley.com)

[Techsoup.org](http://Techsoup.org) (for resources on the more technical parts of creating a podcast)

Use a short online video to tell a story, create human interest or showcase work your organization has done.

## USING THE INTERNET TO SAVE THE INTERNET

The SavetheInternet.com Coalition has been wildly successful in keeping the Web free and open for everyone. Nearly two million people and thousands of organizations and businesses are united on the principle of Net Neutrality—the idea that the Web is an equal ground for people to access the information of their choosing.

Net neutrality has been a core principle since the beginning of the Web, but cable and phone companies, like Comcast, AT&T, Verizon and Time Warner, are trying to capitalize on the information flow. These business giants are working political channels to position themselves as gatekeepers who could decide, as Internet providers, which sites to speed up, which to slow down and which might not load at all.

SavetheInternet.com has rallied supporters using a number of Web 2.0 tools—using the Internet to save the Internet. With a vast email network, regular updates and action alerts, blog posts, a YouTube channel and a social networking site presence, the coalition has generated over two million petitions, emails and phone calls to Congress and the FCC.

SavetheInternet.com Coalition’s bloggers post several times per week with updates on the status of legislative and regulatory battles, as well as on the latest infuriating moves by Comcast and other companies. As a core part of the coalition’s effort, snippets from the blog are featured prominently on the homepage. Its YouTube videos, also highlighted on the homepage, pack

hip, punchy and engaging messages into an informative few minutes.

Victories for the coalition and, ultimately, net neutrality have stacked up quickly and include Web protections in the AT&T/Bell South merger, stopping the flawed 2006 Telecommunications Act and getting the FCC to launch an investigation into Comcast’s blocking of Web traffic.

Check out:

[www.SavetheInternet.com](http://www.SavetheInternet.com)

[www.YouTube.com/SavetheInternet](http://www.YouTube.com/SavetheInternet)

[www.SavetheInternet.com/blog](http://www.SavetheInternet.com/blog)

—Rebecca Farmer

In 2007, Maine became the first state in the nation to pass a legislative resolution in support of net neutrality.

Common Cause Maine teamed with the Maine Civil Liberties Union to create a coalition of supportive organizations that worked to pass this resolution.

The bill that was passed instructs the state to investigate whether or not a state can mandate net neutrality rules, and emphasizes that net neutrality is critically important for the proper functioning of our democracy and for Maine's local economy.

For more information, visit [www.maineinternet-freedom.com](http://www.maineinternet-freedom.com).

—Jon Bartholomew, Media Reform Campaign Coordinator for Common Cause

## Make Friends: Social Networking Sites

Two of the most well-known social networking sites are Facebook and MySpace. The key emphasis of these Web sites is networking online. Users set up personal profiles as a way to connect with friends and other users with similar interests.

Most social networking sites also enable an organization to set up its own profile to share information, keep in touch with current online members and recruit new folks. Overall, they're a great way to capture and cultivate new audiences for your organization. A key thing to remember, though, is to convert these new online relationships into action.

Facebook's Causes application was developed specifically for nonprofits. Groups in the media reform and media watchdog worlds that use Facebook include Free Press, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and Media Matters for America. The Facebook Causes application allows you to send alerts, action items and fundraising requests to users who have joined your cause page as members. It also allows users to donate directly through Facebook.

A relative newcomer to social networking sites is MyBLOC.net (BLOC stands for Building Leadership, Organizing Communities), which was created for social justice organizations and activists, particularly those working with young people and communities of color. Other sites created for networking around social change include Care2.org and Change.org.

As for-profit social networking sites grow, it's likely that media justice groups will need to serve as watchdogs around ownership and accessibility. In 2005, MySpace was purchased by the News Corporation conglomerate, and Facebook was the target of a MoveOn.org petition in 2007 over privacy issues.

Social networking sites:

- Facebook.com
- MySpace.com
- MyBloc.net
- Change.org
- Care2.org
- Tribe.net
- Gather.com
- MeetUp.com

## Save It: Social Bookmarking Sites

You've probably used your Web browser's bookmark function to keep track of key sites you visit often. But what happens when you want to share a bunch of sites with a colleague or to find them again on another computer? With a service like Del.ici.ous you can access your bookmarks from any computer and share them publicly if you choose. A media justice activist could create a sort of public primer on organizations in the field, categorized by tags for policy groups, community-based groups and issue-related blogs, for instance.

Social bookmarking expanded for news sites and blogs with applications like Digg, Reddit and Newsvine, which allow users to submit and vote for a story or blog post. The more clicks, or "diggs," the higher it's ranked and the more other users are able to see it. The activist-oriented site Care2.org also has a news-ranking function.

### Bookmark it:

- Del.ici.ous.com
- Diigo.com
- StumbleUpon.com
- Furl.com
- Digg.com
- Reddit.com
- Newsvine.com

## Share It, Read It: RSS feeds

RSS stands for "real simple syndication," and it's a way of tracking information and distributing important updates. With an RSS reader, instead of checking each blog or Web site you're interested in to see if there is new content, you can see all the updates in one place. Adding an RSS feed on your own Web site or blog lets your audience track updates to your information as well.

Resources for RSS feeds and readers:

- Google.com/reader
- Bloglines.com
- NewsGator.com
- MyYahoo.com
- Addthis.com

## Navigate the Blogosphere

Blogs—short for Web logs—have changed the media landscape immeasurably. While blogs were originally a way for individuals to self-publish thoughts, perspectives, news and pop culture analysis with frequent updates, today most mainstream news organizations also have their own blogs—often written by seasoned reporters. Blogs have gained increasing respect in the news world, as they break their own news, provide analyses and report on topics that are otherwise ignored by the mainstream media.

For groups looking to launch a blog, the technology is simple, but capacity and commitment are factors to consider. Successful nonprofit blogs feature several posts per week. If you can't manage that much, another option is to post with regularity, such as every Wednesday. Consider sharing blog responsibilities by offering posting rights to different staff, board members and key activists. The bonus of having several bloggers is that your blog will feature diverse voices and perspectives, though one staff person might want to oversee blogging activities.

Blog posts can be as short as 150 words, with an ideal maximum length around 600 words. If writing short and sweet is a challenge, remember that you can always link to additional background information instead of including everything in one post. Once you have a blog, don't forget to promote it.

Whether your group has its own blog or not, pitching stories to bloggers is a great way to spread your messages without going through the filter of corporate-owned media. Pitching bloggers is similar to pitching traditional media in certain ways—build relationships and trust, make sure you know what they're interested in, don't waste their time and give them a good story. A notable difference is that bloggers don't need to be unbiased in the same way that mainstream press is supposed to be. This means that you're often better off sending along a personal note with a brief introduction instead of copying and pasting a press release.

In order to pitch blogs, you've got to read blogs. Find out who is blogging on your issues by using a blog search tool like Google (blogsearch.google.com) or Technorati (www.technorati.com). When you find a blog you like, click through the blog roll—links to

other blogs—to find more like-minded bloggers to pitch and network with.

### Blogging tools:

Blogger.com  
WordPress.com  
Typepad.com

### Blog searches:

Google blog search: [blogs.google.com](http://blogs.google.com)  
Technorati blog search: [technorati.com](http://technorati.com)

### Media reform blogs:

[SavetheInternet.com/blog](http://SavetheInternet.com/blog)  
[PRWatch.org/blog](http://PRWatch.org/blog)  
Women In Media and News:  
[wimnonline.org/WIMNsVoicesBlog/](http://wimnonline.org/WIMNsVoicesBlog/)  
Center for Media Justice:  
[cmj.centerformediajustice.org/blogs](http://cmj.centerformediajustice.org/blogs)

### Other progressive blogs:

[Dailykos.org](http://Dailykos.org)  
[Huffingtonpost.com](http://Huffingtonpost.com)  
[Feministing.com](http://Feministing.com)  
[Pandagon.blogspot.com](http://Pandagon.blogspot.com)  
[Atrios.blogspot.com](http://Atrios.blogspot.com)

### See It: Online Photo Sharing

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then spread those words! Sharing photos of your organization, members, signage and events is a great way to connect with people in a visual medium. Flickr is a free tool for posting and sharing your photos online. The site offers a number of ways to integrate your photostream into your Web site, blog or Facebook page. Media justice activists have posted pictures from Media Action Grassroots Network trainings, FCC hearings and protests, Texas Media Empowerment Project meetings and images of event fliers, for instance.

[Flickr.com](http://Flickr.com)

### Send It: Email Blasts

In the world of online organizing, don't forget the power of a good email blast. Often a standard e-alert list is a way to publicize your foray into social networking sites, blogging, podcasting and YouTube.

A blog puts you in charge of the message: You can use your own language, prove your case and keep your audience coming back for more.



If you already have an email list, consider the ways you might cross-purpose information into other Web 2.0 tools. Do you have a take action item that you could post on Facebook? Are you emailing pictures from a event that you could also post on Flickr? Are you announcing a new campaign that you could talk about in a podcast?

There are several options if you're looking to upgrade your email blast system, with a wide range of price and features:

- Democracy in Action
- Emma
- Kintera
- Get Active
- Groundspring
- Constant Contact
- Jangomail
- Campaign Monitor

### Back Home: Your Web Site

With all the new media options, don't forget the value of your organization's Web site. Having an online presence in a variety of ways will drive more traffic to your site, so you'll want to make sure that the site is frequently updated and easy to navigate. Be sure to prominently feature a general "about us" page, ways to subscribe to your email list, Web 2.0 tools that you're using, recent issue or organizational news and a press room where reporters and bloggers can easily access both press releases and links to coverage you've received.

Don't miss these all-around stellar resources for nonprofit organizations on Web 2.0 and other tech topics:

- NetSquared.org
- TechSoup.org
- Nonprofit Technology Network: Nten.org
- New Organizing Institute:  
[www.neworganizing.com](http://www.neworganizing.com)

*Rebecca Farmer has worked in communications at social justice and feminist nonprofits for nine years. After stints at the SPIN Project, Breast Cancer Action and the National Organization for Women, she's currently an independent consultant in San Francisco. And yes, she's on Facebook.*

## CASE STUDY

## CLEARING THE AIR

By Casey Rae-Hunter

*New media tools are a stellar supplement to any campaign, and if your target audience is particularly tech-savvy, new media tools can be a centerpiece of your efforts. A campaign by the Future of Music Coalition (FMC), a Washington, D.C.-based group dedicated to preserving musicians' rights in a consolidated media environment, shows the power of the well-planned blog campaign to draw attention to corporate wrongs—and force the corporation to right them. —ed.*

**IN APRIL 2007**, the FCC reached a settlement with Clear Channel and other broadcasters to end an investigation into payola allegations at some radio stations. Payola, the practice of offering bribes for airplay consideration without disclosing such exchanges on-air, is a detriment both to musicians and to listeners who assume the songs they hear have been chosen on artistic merit. In the settlement, Clear Channel, and the three other large broadcasters, agreed to pay a \$12.5 million fine. They also agreed to air 4,200 hours of local and independent music, and abide by “Rules of Engagement” aimed at ending the widespread practice of payola.

To fulfill its airplay mandate, Clear Channel solicited independent artists to submit their music for consideration. This could have been a good thing for indie acts, but the fine print

proved otherwise. As a term of submitting music via an online submission form, Clear Channel required artists to check a licensing agreement that, among other things, explicitly waived their rights to royalties for the online broadcast of their music.

In June 2007, FMC launched a campaign to expose Clear Channel’s attempt to take away artists’ rights in exchange for airplay consideration. Our main means of drawing attention to Clear Channel’s wrongdoing: the FMC blog. We created a weeklong blog series called “The Best of Clear Channel,” outlining the problem and linking Clear Channel’s actions back to the payola settlement.

In addition, FMC and Media Access Project filed a formal complaint with the FCC requesting clarification of Clear Channel’s practices.

While the campaign was partially set up to educate artists about the dangers of waiving their royalties, its core goal was to embarrass Clear Channel by exposing its practices and linking this new behavior with some of the company’s prior negatives, including payola and media consolidation. The audience for the series was not only musicians, but also the media and Clear Channel itself.

We chose a blog campaign as our main communications tactic because it gave us the opportunity to:

- post scheduled, regular updates that would encourage our audience to come back for more.
- roll out complex information in plain language.
- link to evidence on Clear Channel’s own Web sites.
- define the weeklong series as a “campaign,” with news hooks and an end point.
- create a compelling finale through our FCC filing.

The campaign also gave us the opportunity to build support for FMC and educate our audience about the wider problem of media consolidation. We asked musicians and their supporters to sign up for our newsletter and to support low-power and non-commercial radio and net neutrality initiatives.

Pressure from other music organizations and FMC’s work succeeded. Clear Channel agreed within two weeks to modify its contract language to remove this waiver. The campaign netted considerable press coverage for FMC, and helped artists understand the risks of doing business in a consolidated media environment.

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