

Social media case studies

Elections

The recent local elections on 2 May 2013 showed the power of social media to engage residents with local democracy.

A hashtag is used to collect together conversations on the same topic by creating a common search term. This allows a group conversation to take place between people who may not be following each other.

The hashtag #votenotts was used in the lead-up to election day to promote voter registration, to encourage voting and to advertise that we would be live tweeting the election results. Also on election day, the hashtag was used to encourage voting and when live tweeting the results the following day.

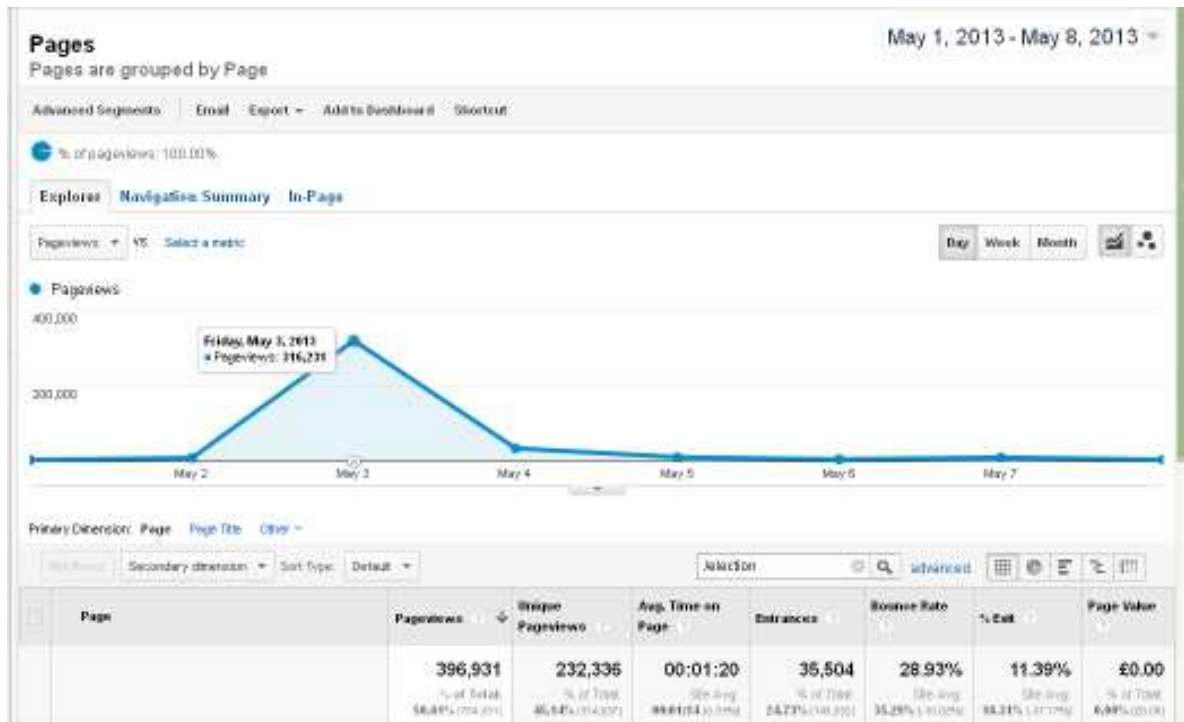
In the lead up to the elections, the media team promoted the use of the hashtag to and the Nottingham Post began using it both on the lead up and throughout election day, including creating a blog on their website which automatically listed anyone's comments using the #votenotts.

Other people also used the hashtag including journalists at other local newspapers, election candidates, district/borough councils and members of the public.

On results day, there were 122 tweets sent (by us and others) using the #votenotts. We received 505 retweets from 308 contributors and received 346 mentions. In total, this activity generated a reach (the number of unique Twitter users that tweets were delivered to) of 308,927 while impressions (tweets which were delivered to the Twitter stream of a particular account, not necessarily unique) totalled 1,883,565.

Both #votenotts and @nottssc were trending on Twitter in Nottingham during the course of the afternoon. Trending is a term given to the most popular conversations in social media.

This activity helped to draw 316,231 page views (165,410 unique) to the election web pages on Friday 3 May 2013, the day on which results were announced.



The graph shows the huge increase in pageviews of the dedicated election webpages on Friday 3 May 2013, the day on which results were announced. A large number of these visits were driven from direct links given in NCC-generated social media content, both on Twitter and Facebook.

Public feedback

Members of the public clearly found the live tweeting of results useful and interesting. Some of the feedback we received about our Twitter usage included:

[hollies42](#) [May 03, 9:56pm via Twitter for iPhone](#) [@NottsCC](#) great job keeping us informed of the result

[mattrooney](#) [May 03, 8:43pm via Twitter for iPhone](#) Big thumbs up to [@NottsCC](#). Brilliant tweeting all day long! [#thankyou!](#) Hope you're enjoying a beer

[carolinewson](#) [May 03, 4:19pm via Twitter for iPhone](#) Sterling work from [@NottsCC](#) keeping us up to date with the latest [#votenotts](#) news. Thanks for the swift updates!

[lizdales](#) [May 03, 4:15pm via Twitter for iPad](#) [@NottsCC](#) great tweeting today! Thanks

[beksta_w](#) [May 03, 1:41pm via Twitter for iPhone](#) Loving the voting updates from [@NottsCC](#)

Flooding

Between December 20 to December 31, 2012, Nottinghamshire experienced flooding of the River Trent along with other smaller bodies of water.

During this spate of flooding we were able to use social media, particularly Twitter, as a way to share information and updates with residents and motorists about the latest flooding situation.

We created a new Twitter list for flooding, which displayed flooding information from local organisations including Nottinghamshire Police, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, Environment Agency Midlands, Highways Agency and district/borough councils. This brought all local information together in one place to make it easier for members of the public and local media to get the latest flooding updates quickly and easily.

The hashtag #floodaware was also used on our tweets, as suggested by the Environment Agency, to help form a national picture of flooding issues.

Working closely with the Highways division, the team were able to provide timely and accurate information to members of the public. This included publicising any school closures, road closures, flood alerts and photographs showing localised flooding.

The 12 days of flooding showed a 450% rise in retweets of tweets we sent from our @NottsCC Twitter account, compared to the previous 12 days. It also showed a 65% increase in 'mentions' and a 180% increase in the total reach (the total number of people who have potentially seen mentions/retweets about NCC).

The Digital Team also provided out of hours cover during the worst days of the flooding, continuing to update Twitter with the latest information.

An example of the power of social media to immediately inform residents is demonstrated by a single tweet which was sent out by the duty officer via the @nottscs Twitter account on the evening of Sunday 25 November 2012 at 10.17pm.

"We'll list main roads that are closed, but we can't list every road that is #flooded. Take care not risks <http://notts.cc/nccclosures>"

This message went out to our 7000 (at the time) followers. At 10.22pm, we received a retweet to 100 more, at 10.31pm 210 more, and so on until by just after 11pm more than 131,000 people had seen the original tweet in less than an hour. Signposting the website within the tweet also meant over 4000 people visited it for the flooding information.

Robin Hood Festival on Facebook

At a planning meeting for this year's Robin Hood Festival an idea was generated to promote the colourful characters that each year provide the entertainment at the Festival. The characters are well known and liked by festival goers and it was seen as a way to attract more people to our Facebook page and promote conversation.

It was decided to call the characters the 'Festival Folk' and to add a profile of each character to the Robin Hood Festival Facebook (www.facebook.com/robinhoodfestival) page on the lead up to the festival.

A member of the media team contacted each of the people behind the characters and composed a profile of their character, along with interesting facts, advice and questions that could be used on the Facebook page in the weeks prior to the festival.

The first profile – Sir Ralph of Epperstone – went live on the Robin Hood Festival Facebook page on 5 June 2013. There were 22 new 'likes' of the Facebook page on the day, along with a further 25 'likes' of the posts about Sir Ralph and the Festival Folk.

The Robin Hood Festival of Sherwood, Oregon 'liked' the posts and commented, asking Sir Ralph how Robin Hood died. Our media team contacted Sir Ralph, who provided an answer, which the digital team posted on the Facebook page. The media team also circulated this with the local media and information about Robin's death and the Festival Folk was subsequently published in some of the local papers, and even featuring in the Times of Malta.

Subsequent Festival Folk posts have drawn more likes and comments and less than two weeks on from the first Festival Folk profile being published, the Facebook page had gained over 600 new 'likes', with a page total as at 2 September of 1,752.

During the week of the Festival, the 'reach' (the number of people who view an individual post) averaged around 4,000 a day, with a peak of 8,881 on Wednesday 7 August, while 'total reach' (the number of people who view any activity on the page) peaked at 34,081 on the 4 August, the day before the Festival opened.

Comments on the page averaged around 50 a day during the Festival with contributors from as far afield as Australia, Brazil, America and India.

The Festival photo gallery on Flickr was linked to from the Facebook page and has received over 2,200 visitors since its publication on 16 August.

Social media usage within the UK and Nottinghamshire

The UK picture

Facebook

- There are around 33 million Facebook accounts (not necessarily active* accounts) in the UK, which is just over 52% of the UK population#
- This figure is up by 3 million on last year (1)
- 65% of the UK online population are active Facebook users (2), which equates to 28.2 million active* accounts.

Twitter

- Figures for Twitter usage and accounts vary but the most realistic figure is that 28% of the 43.5 million^ UK adult internet users are active* on Twitter (3).
- This equates to just over 12 million users, compared to 10 million last year.

Pinterest

- There are around 2 million Pinterest accounts in the UK (4), equating to just over 3% of the UK population, or 4.6% of the UK adult online population.
- This figure is up by 1.8 million on the previous year's figure of 200,000 accounts.(5)

LinkedIn

- There are around 12 million LinkedIn accounts in the UK (6), which is just under 19% of the UK's population, or 27.5% of the UK adult online population.
- This is up from 10 million last year.(7)

The Nottinghamshire picture

539,000 people used the internet in Nottinghamshire (excl. Nottingham) during the first quarter of 2013 - nearly 84% of the population of Nottinghamshire (8). Specific Nottinghamshire-based figures for social media channels are not available so the UK figures given above are used as a guideline.

Facebook

- 65% of the Nottinghamshire online population using Facebook would equate to 350,350 accounts.

Twitter

- 28% of the Nottinghamshire online population using Twitter would equate to 150,920 accounts.

Pinterest

- 4.6% of the Nottinghamshire online population using Pinterest would equate to 24,794 accounts.

LinkedIn

- 27.5% of the Nottinghamshire online population using LinkedIn would equate to 148,225 accounts.

Sources:

(1) Rose McGrory, Social Media Management:

<http://www.rosemcgrory.co.uk/2013/01/08/uk-social-media-statistics-for-2013/>

(2) YouGov: <http://yougov.co.uk/news/2012/02/17/social-media-growing-uk/>

(3) Emarketer/Kinetic Worldwide: <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Twitter-Use-Drives-Up-LinkedIn-Stalls-UK/1009796>

(4) SemioCast: http://semioCast.com/en/publications/2013_07_10_Pinterest_has_70_million_users

(5) Visual.ly: <http://visual.ly/pinterest-usa-vs-uk>

(6) LinkedIn: <http://press.linkedin.com/about>

(7) LinkedIn: <http://blog.linkedin.com/2012/09/16/uk-10million/>

(8) Office for National Statistics:

- <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Population>
- <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access-quarterlyupdate/2013-q1/stb-ia-q1-2013.html>
- <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-referencetables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-303599>

Notes:

* An 'active' user is one who has used their account in the last month.

The UK population, according to the 2011 census, was 63.2 million.

^ According to the Office for National Statistics, in Q1 2013, 43.5 million adults in the UK had used the internet.