Media Consortium Metrics Project

Brief Overview October 29, 2015

Starting on May 1, 2015, the Media Consortium committed to producing 30-40 instances of editorial collaboration by December 31, 2015. The immediate goal of these collaborations is to enable Prof. Gary King and his team to measure whether there is a quantifiable change of sentiment over Twitter for these collaborations.

The Media Consortium is a North American network of 76 independent progressive news organizations. Our mission is to support and grow the independent news sector.

Our theory of change for this project is that editorial collaborations by niche outlets will not only provide greater reach to audience than any one outlet could do, but that the collaboration itself, by providing a number of different takes on the same subject coming out simultaneously acts like a content resonator, changing sentiment more than a single piece would do.

We leave the actual measurement and testing of this theory of change to the researchers. However, in the course of this experiment, we have made some interesting qualitative observations.

1. **Independent progressive outlets welcome the opportunity to work together.**

Researchers had asked us to ensure that at least 20 outlets participate in the experiment. To date, 27 have participated with another 4-5 interested. This, out of a pool of 75 outlets and for the most part without financial incentive.

**2. There are marketing benefits to collaboration.**

One reason outlets are excited to work together is because they see an immediate impact around marketing. Co-promotion on social media is quickly becoming the digital equivalent of swapping mailing lists.

**3. There are editorial benefits to collaboration.**

Many editors are finding that their reporters enjoy collaborations because the reporters can expand their sources by working with a reporter from a different outlet. Editors also learn new techniques—for example around data visualization—from seeing how another outlet deals with similar material.

4. **Challenges to collaborations center on human resources.**

Identifying potential collaborations requires staff time within organizations and often the outside eye of someone whose focus is on collaborations themselves. Similarly, to actually get collaborations off the ground requires human “glue”—a person to keep in touch with all the parties and make the collaborations happen.