

Impact Revealed

Making the Case for Progressive Media

Jessica Clark and Tracy Van Slyke

Research Assistant: Anna Schneider



Center for Social Media

the
mediaconsortium

How we collected this data:

- ▶ Interviews over the past 2 years
- ▶ Survey: November 2008
 - ▶ Joint project between The Media Consortium and the Center for Social Media
 - ▶ 20 respondents out of 50 members
- ▶ Media and trend tracking
www.buildtheecho.net





**Why measure
impact?**




To thrive, progressive media must:

- ▶ Demonstrate their national influence
- ▶ Show politicians/advocates/citizens why progressive outlets should be their first lines of information, communication and connection
- ▶ Underscore the need for a robust progressive media infrastructure
- ▶ (Last, but never least) Increase investment: money, attention, buzz and cred

Greater investment = greater impact:

- ▶ Breaking, making and moving the news
- ▶ Introducing progressive frames
- ▶ Influencing policy
- ▶ Honing and promoting diverse perspectives
- ▶ Engaging and mobilizing new audiences



**How can we
measure impact?**

Impact measurement areas include:

▶ **Metrics:**

tracking money and audience

▶ **Influence:**

tracking reach, authority and consequences

▶ **Mission:**

tracking how outcomes match vision and goals

▶ **Engagement:**

tracking audience participation

“Mixed methods” research is key:

Combine qualitative/quantitative research

Not everything that can be counted
counts, and not everything that counts
can be counted.

—Albert Einstein

Impact revealed

Metrics: What are you counting?

Metrics: tangible, familiar, quantitative

► Which revenue sources indicate impact?

business models: 14 nonprofit, 4 for-profit, 2 hybrid

- donations: 81%
- grants: 62%
- subscriptions: 52%
- ads: 43%
- memberships: 19%
- merchandise sales: 19%

Metrics: tangible, familiar, quantitative

►How are you measuring your audiences?

►Tools include:

Arbitron, circulation numbers, Nielsen, QuantCast, Alexa, surveys, ComScore, Google analytics, etc.

►Easy to get raw numbers, harder to get demographics

►Hard to get comparative data across outlets

Metrics: impact examples

▶AlterNet: revenue

- ▶Increase in revenue despite recession:
\$2 million in 2008

- ▶End-of-year fundraiser yielded double what they expected

- ▶Steady audience growth:
3 million monthly viewers

Metrics: impact examples

▶The Young Turks: audience

- ▶60 million YouTube hits as of January '09
- ▶More than 35,000 YouTube channel subscribers
- ▶XM radio show, but difficult to measure audience

Metrics takeaway:



Size matters, but it isn't everything.

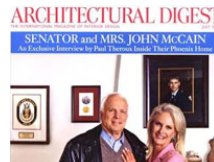
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Influence: How are you creating change?

Influence: what happened next?



Mother Jones
Unmasks a gun lobby mole

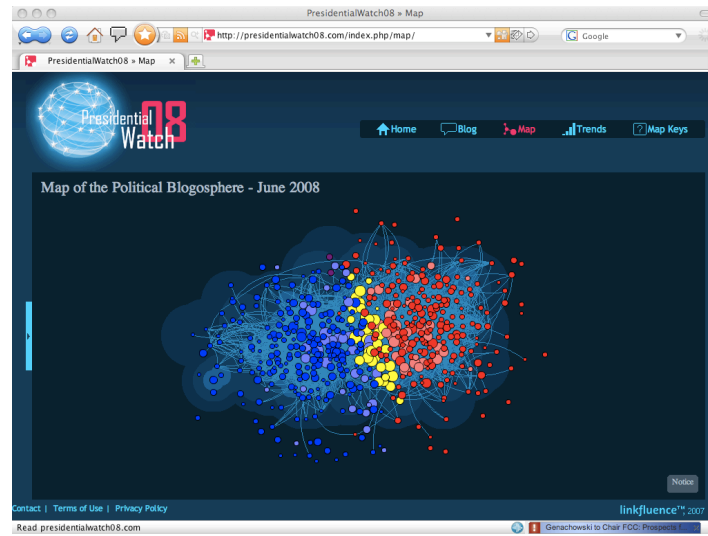


Brave New Films
Uncovers McCain's multiple mansions



Center for Independent Media
Reveals GOP foreclosure ploy

Influence: a new ecosystem



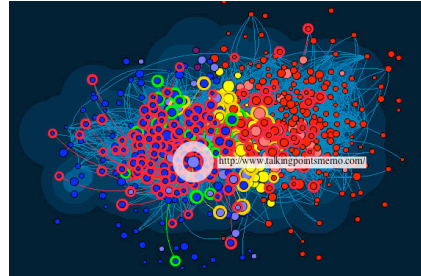
<http://presidentialwatch08.com/index.php/map/>

Influence: a new ecosystem

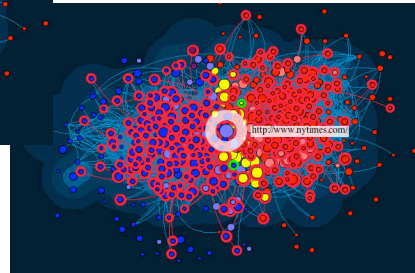
- ▶ Horizontal, networked ecosystem allows progressive outlets, bloggers and audiences to build buzz and set news agendas
- ▶ Different structure than “echo chamber”: grassroots, collaborative, opt-in
- ▶ As Jay Rosen notes:
“The authority of the press to assume consensus, define deviance and set the terms for legitimate debate is weaker when people can connect horizontally around and about the news.”

Spheres of influence

Talking Points Memo



New York Times



- Influence is contextual
Mutual links show authority within sector

But mainstream media still dominate on **inbound links**

How are you tracking influence?

- ▶ **Measuring your outlet's reputation:**
 - ▶ Most important: reprints/syndication
 - ▶ Least important: awards
- ▶ **Tracking of external coverage includes:**
 - ▶ excerpts, reprints, Facebook/Twitter followers, YouTube viewings, inbound links, media appearances, syndication, RSS feeds

What's hard to track?

- ▶ You told us:
 - ▶ site demographics
 - ▶ how audiences are using stories/information
 - ▶ measurement across multiple platforms
(i.e. video, TV, streaming, distributed embeds)
 - ▶ story pickup without attribution
 - ▶ reputation among reporting community
 - ▶ word of mouth

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Influence takeaway:



Progressive media outlets can break news, advance powerful frames, and influence elections—but still lack key tools to measure and describe impact.

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Mission: What are your end goals?

Mission shapes measurement

- ▶ National political change isn't the only measure of impact
- ▶ Targeted media projects can attract different audiences, funders, advocates, allies—strong assets for building campaigns and buzz
- ▶ One size doesn't fit all: metrics should be tailored to mission

Different missions...

▶ **ColorLines** is focused on social justice:

"Our goal is to popularize the need for racial justice and prepare people to fight for it."

▶ **GRITtv** stresses involvement and voice:

"GRITtv's mission is to create participatory media and a forum for progressive voices"

▶ **Air America** targets the progressive masses:

"Our mission is to take a leadership role and become the most relevant, provocative, entertaining and independent voice that people listen, read and view through multiple distribution systems."

▶ **Brave New Films** sums it up in one word:

"Activism."

but shared goals:

► Goals ranked as “very important” by survey respondents:

- reach/influence/build progressive audiences: 86%
- create new models for distribution: 76%
- reach/influence/build general audiences: 71%
- reach/influence/build targeted audiences: 71%
(i.e., youth, women, people of color)
- affect policy: 71%
- counter conservative media: 57%
- create new models for reporting: 45%
- create/catalyze activists: 43%

Mission: big questions

- ▶ How can progressive outlets create synergies and partnerships around shared goals?
- ▶ Can we develop a set of parallel benchmarks that validate different sorts of mission-driven impact?

Mission takeaway:



Recognizing and valuing varied missions can change our definitions of impact and fuel powerful partnerships.

Impact revealed

Engagement: How are you mobilizing audiences?

Engagement: habits shifting fast

- ▶ **Users are taking on new, proactive roles:**

- ▶ choice
- ▶ creation
- ▶ curation
- ▶ conversation
- ▶ collaboration

- ▶ **Media makers are trying new platforms:**

Twitter, live video, games, maps, “charticles,” etc.

- ▶ **Benefits of greater engagement:**

More democracy, activism, dollars, influence, relevance...even fun

Audiences as activists

ColorLines:

On a recent post on post-racialism: "This is an absolutely crucial educational moment about how very UNpostrace this country is, and I hope everyone who reads this and other ARC online pieces will email them to as many contacts as possible... Say it loud and say it proud: We are racial justice activists whose time has COME, not gone."

The Nation:

50,000 readers signed an open letter to Obama asking him to stand strong on progressive commitments.

Democracy Now!:

"I wanted to say how thankful and grateful I am that I was able to have the opportunity to hear Amy speak. ... Never before have I been so inspired to participate. Already I have begun to become a lot more active in speaking out against the war."

Audiences as brand ambassadors

LinkTV:

A viewer writes: "I just wanted to express my gratitude to you for all the rich information that you provide me everyday. Because of you I have learned a lot about the world, I have opened my mind, and I have met many incredible people who have inspired me to read more, listen more and judge less. I have become a Link TV addict and I promise to keep watching, spread the word and keep my donations up too."

The Young Turks

A member of the armed forces called us on election night in 2006 and told us he and his wife drove all the way from their base in San Diego back to their home state of Kentucky to vote because he had been listening to our show online in Iraq and thought it was so important to get the Republicans out of office (he said he used to be a Republican until a friend of his in the military got him to start listening to our show)

Audiences as collaborators

The UpTake

"[Our] coverage of the Republican National Convention proved our model of collaborative journalism. During the 5 days of the RNC, our team of many dozens of citizen journalists produced more than 160 videos"—and their videos were viewed by over 1 million people.

Berrett-Koehler

"We are currently working on the publication of a Digital Primary Product titled *The Little Book of Big Ideas* by the Progressive Ideas Network. This brings together many members of the progressive community who are working towards policy change, spearheaded by Barry Kenall of the Commonweal Institute. This meets many of our goals: creating a new model for media distribution; reaching/building/influencing progressive audiences; alliance-building; new, collaborative model."

Engagement: still in a broadcast mode

- ▶ Most common way that you engage users?

- ▶ Requests for financial contributions

- ▶ Other common tactics: *still at arms-length*

commenting, letters to the editor, polls, prompts to take action (send letters, sign petitions), contests, email subscriptions, distribution via social networking, recommendation sites (Digg/Reddit)

- ▶ Rising trends: *more participatory*

live on-air chats, user blogs and diaries, prompting user-generated content creation, training users to make media

Engagement takeaway:



Progressive media outlets need to meaningfully engage current users, and strategically leverage social media to reach and involve new ones.



What next?



Over the next two days:

►Metrics:

We'll be talking about how to increase the size and revenue of the progressive media sector

►Influence:

We'll be talking to experts about how increase the reach, authority and impact of the progressive media sector

►Mission:

By defining the goals of individual projects more clearly, we'll see how partnerships and collaborations might develop

►Engagement:

We'll be discussing what this looks like and how to do it better