An Observation of the Facebook Messaging Strategies
of Nonprofit vs. For-Profit Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Over the last five years, organizations have begun to invest in non-traditional marketing communications strategies, specifically, social media marketing. While organizations, in general, are clear about the value of social media marketing, their current strategies are not engaging and uninspiring. The literature on this topic highlights critical considerations for the most significant communications impact (Foulger, 2004; Lasswell, 1948), such as the importance of human interaction, interpersonal ability, personal influence and intimacy (Lazarsfeld, 1944; Short, Williams & Christie, 1976). Additionally, a study by Boase, Horrigan, Wellman & Rainie (2006) presents research on how the Internet and Social Networking are revolutionizing decision-making. This study sought to explore the Facebook messaging strategies of ten organizations in the nonprofit sector, and ten organizations in the for-profit sector. While nonprofit and for-profit organizations have very different communications objectives (Communications Consortium Media Center, 2004), a key finding in this research revealed that their Facebook messaging strategies are not that different from each other. More specifically, neither for profit nor nonprofit organizations encouraged conversation in their Facebook messaging. In general organizations rarely posted content that would prompt discussion, engagement or action. Other findings exposed interesting relationships between the Fan Engagement Ratio and actual fan engagement, content presentation and fan reaction, nonprofit organizations and shared content, and content types and social presence.

Keywords: Facebook, Social Media, Social Marketing, Online Communications, Communications Strategies, For Profit Organizations, Nonprofit Organizations, Engagement, Accessibility
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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION: PROBLEM and TERMS

There was a point in time, not long ago, when the most practical way for organizations to reach their stakeholders was to talk to everyone at the same time. In other words, critical corporate messages had to be delivered via television, newspaper, and out of home (billboards) tactics that generalized the message being received. One-to-one messaging, two-way conversation and organizational transparency, as it related to traditional marketing practices, were impossible. Then along came social media. A term used frequently, social media can be best described as media utilized for social interaction that employs various communications technologies to encourage dialogue. With the rise of social media came the ability for organizations to have a conversation with all of their stakeholders, or just one; a strategy called social media marketing. Social media marketing utilizes the tools accessible through social media (e.g. Facebook) to delve into “people-powered communities” (Solis, 2008, para. 17) and participate in ongoing conversations. It brings the organization down to the level of its consumer, and humanizes the brand logo and annual report. As with traditional marketing strategies, Social media Marketing strategies can be approached in a variety of ways, and should be customized to appeal to the intended target.

The Problem and Purpose of this Study

In an effort to stay close to the trend, and reach their audiences where they are spending the most time, many of the top organizations in the country have made a decision to invest time and resources into Social media due to its potential, accessibility and scalability in reaching audiences globally. These investments are precipitated in the notion that by leveraging social tools, organizations will create “buzz” and “demand” for their cause, or product. While Social media creates a gateway for getting the word out among organizational audiences, “buzz” and “demand” are not automatic. Comparable to traditional marketing
communications tactics, Social media marketing requires a strategic approach. The creation of a Facebook profile alone does not lead to instant market share and likeability. A messaging strategy done well on Facebook reinforces the quality and impact of an organizational brand. It allows organizations to be part of the conversation being had about their products, services and/or causes. In other words, through Facebook, organizations are able to pose questions, solicit advice, respond to inquiries, brainstorm ideas and justify their product/service or cause directly to and with consumers. Participation in this dialogue enables endless opportunities for organizations to use the information to make improvements, continue campaigns, introduce new products, solicit support, adjust strategies, and ideally, contribute to their bottom line.

This study seeks to explore the Facebook messaging strategies of the top ten organizations in the nonprofit sector, and the top ten organizations in the for-profit sector in an effort to determine the differences, if any, in how these organizations engage in conversation with their audience. The criteria by which these organizations were selected are detailed in the Context: Assumptions and Dependencies section of Chapter 4: The Study. The goal of this study is to understand how the “power” organizations take advantage of Facebook, and the outcomes of their strategies. These findings may inform future organizational social media marketing strategies, specifically those focused in Facebook.

According to the Communications Consortium Media Center (2004) the primary objectives of nonprofit organizations are to promote change and encourage public will. In contrast, the primary objectives of for-profit organizations are to promote consumer purchasing, and to encourage profit margins. Gaillen (2006) released an article on behalf of the Advertising and Marketing Review explaining the differences in NPO and FPO marketing strategies. Marketing budgets, while perhaps the most obvious difference (Gaillen, 2006) is not the most significant difference. Nonprofits, unlike for-profits, rarely achieve financial success
by marketing to their customers. “A for-profit company markets to prospective customers, who in turn buy its products. The company’s revenues, and success, are caused by customer sales” (Gaillen, 2006, para. 2). The customers of nonprofits, on the other hand, are the people it serves. Said another way, the customers of a homeless shelter, for example, are homeless individuals that will take advantage of low-cost or free meals and lodging. “Nonprofit customer revenue typically does not cover operating expenses, much less marketing. Marketing dollars spent obtaining customers are not recouped by customer sales” (Gaillen, 2006, para. 2).

Nonetheless, nonprofits are still required to market to these customers, in order to fulfill their missions. “Nonprofit financial success comes from various funding sources, including private and corporate donors, corporate sponsorships, government funding and grants” (Gaillen, 2006, para 3). As such, marketing that supports donor relationship development is often the most important expense. With that in mind, it stands to reason that due to the varied nature of these organizational objectives and marketing conditions, NPO’s and FPO’s will have different Facebook messaging approaches and strategies. The findings from this study will provide insight into how the top nonprofit and for-profit organizations are taking advantage of Facebook as they attempt to promote their products, services or cause. As mentioned previously, these findings may serve as a resource to inform organizations (for profit and nonprofit) as they scope out their social media marketing strategies.
Definition of Terms

1) **Facebook** – a social networking service that allows users to connect with anyone in the world. What makes Facebook different from other social networks are its extensive privacy controls, its development platform, and its large and quickly growing user base. Facebook has been called the "thinking person’s" social network.

2) **Like** – a way to give positive feedback or to connect with things a user cares about on Facebook.

3) **Post** – a way to share comments, articles, videos or pictures with the rest of the users Facebook network.

4) **Social Networking** – The use of dedicated websites and applications to communicate informally.

5) **Wall** – a section in a user’s profile where others can write messages or leave gifts, which are icon-like small images. The wall is a public writing space so others who view the profile can see what has been written. This is where the majority of the conversations occur.

6) **Share** – a way to further disseminate content found on Facebook. By clicking the ‘share’ button, users are allowing Facebook to post said content on their wall.

7) **Fan Engagement Percentage** – number of average comments added to average Likes and divided by total number of fans.

8) **Recent Activity** – a list of the most recent tasks to which a user has participated. This list is posted on the user wall, and can range from recent comments, recent “likes” and recent status updates.

9) **Tagged / Tag** – gives users the ability to identify and reference people in photos, videos and notes.
10) **Facebook Applications** – furthers the functionality of the Facebook page. Apps are built by developers and free of charge (mostly) to all Facebook users. An example is the Twitter App, where your Facebook page integrates with your Twitter page – allowing your Facebook updates to also be your Twitter updates.

11) **Accessibility** – capable of being understood or appreciated

12) **Internal Articles** – articles posted on Facebook by an organization, created by the same organization posting them.

13) **External Articles** – articles posted on Facebook by an organization that were not created by the same organization posting them.

*Preview of Remaining Chapters*

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one provided a contextual background for the research. Chapter two provides a review of the literature in which this study was based upon, highlighting key points from previous studies and research. Chapter three describes the methodology and validity considerations utilized for data collection. Chapter four presents the findings from the research, and underscores critical points of discussion. Chapter five discusses the limitations of the study, recommends areas of further research, and summarizes the study.
Chapter 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To iterate that Social media is ‘popular’ is an understatement, as organizations have begun to recognize the pervasiveness of listening and engagement as it relates to marketing communications. The era of “web stickiness” and “eyeballs” and “click-throughs” has passed, and the new wave has an emphasis in “immersion, conversation, engagement, relationships, referrals, and action” (Solis, 2008, para. 2). Organizations, nonprofit (NPO) and for-profit (FPO) alike, were quick to recognize the potential of these new trends and the inevitable media to support these trends, Social media.

There are a number of theories and studies that can be used to vindicate the power of social media in communication. This review of literature will begin with Lasswell (1948) and Foulger (2004), who highlight critical considerations for the most significant communications impact. Their ideas can be used to justify the theories chosen to ground the research for this study. Theories such as Two Step Flow (Lazarsfeld, 1944), and Social Presence (Short, Williams & Christie, 1976) justify the importance and significance of human interaction, interpersonal ability, personal influence and intimacy in communication. And a study by Boase et al. (2006) presents research on how the Internet and Social Networking are revolutionizing decision-making.

Theorizing Impactful Communication

Harold Lasswell’s (1948) communication maxim is now being used, in a modern context, as a means of describing the field of Communication Theory (Solis, 2008, para. 4). According to Lasswell (1948), a “convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions: Who? Says What? In Which Channel? To Whom? With What Effect?” (p.215).
Lasswell notes that, scholars and/or communicators that study the ‘who,’ look into the factors that “initiate and guide the act of communication” (p. 216). This “subdivision” of research is called control analysis (Lasswell, 1948). Scholars and/or communicators who focus on the ‘says what,’ are focused on the content of what the communicator is saying – thusly, “engaging in content analysis” (Lasswell, 1948). Those who focus their communication efforts on the, ‘in which channel,’ look primarily at the radio, press, film, and other channels of communication. Lasswell (1948) refers to this as “media analysis” (p. 84). When the principal concern is with the individuals that are reached by the media (‘to whom’), it is called audience analysis (Lasswell, 1948). And if the analysis is regarding the impact upon audiences (‘with what effect’), “the problem is effect analysis” (Lasswell, p. 216).

According to Lasswell (1948), it is “simpler to combine audience and effect analysis, for instance, than to keep them apart” (p. 218). Likewise, a communicator and/or scholar “may want to concentrate on the analysis of content, and for this purpose subdivide the field into the study of purport and style, the first referring to the message, and the second to the arrangement of the elements of which the message is composed” (Lasswell, p. 218). In gauging the efficiency of communication in any given context, Lasswell says that it is necessary to take into account the values at stake (p. 221), and the identity of the group whose position is being examined (p. 223).


In the ecological model, the "who" are the creators of messages, the "says what" are the messages, the "in which channel" is elaborated into languages (which are the content of channels) and media (which channels are a component of), the "to whom" are the consumers of messages, and the effects
are found in various relationships between the primitives, including relationships, perspectives, attributions, interpretations, and the continuing evolution of languages and media. (p. 61)

The “Ecological Model” dictates that communication occurs at the intersection of four fundamental constructs: “communication between people (creators and consumers) is mediated by messages which are created using language within media; consumed from media and interpreted using language” (Foulger, 2004, p. 61).

Foulger (2004) articulates communications media as being a product of a “set of complex interactions between its primary constituents: messages, people, languages, and media. Messages can be regarded as complex entities, but its complexities can be described entirely within the scope of languages, media, and the people who use them” (Foulger, 2004). This model is essentially grounded in communications messages and the “systems that enable them.” Foulger (2004) states, “Messages are the central feature of the model and the most fundamental product of the interaction of people, language, and media.”

Lasswell (1948) and Foulger (2004) both consider the impact of the most effective messaging methodologies and the context in which these messages are being delivered. The Two Step Flow Theory will speak to whom the communication is being directed (Laswell, 1944); the study conducted by Boase et al. (2004) will speak to what is being communicated (Laswell, 1944); and The Social Presence Theory will speak to how the information is being communicated (Laswell, 1944). This study will observe how organizations choose to deliver their information and how Facebook, the “system” (Foulger, 2004), enables the effect of the information.

Two Step Flow Theory

In previous information seeking studies, findings have indicated that the “accessibility
of information is the key factor involved in what sources people select” and that obtaining information from familiar relationships, or “interpersonal sources,” are preferred (Johnson, 1997). Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, & Hazel Gaudet (1944) debuted the Two-Step Flow of communication hypothesis in *The People’s Choice: How the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign*. Their study proposed “that influences stemming from the mass media first reach *opinion leaders* who, in turn, pass on what they read and hear to those of their everyday associates for whom they are influential” (as cited in Katz, 1957, p. 61). Case et al. (2003) describe these opinion leaders as knowledgeable individuals that “influence those around them by passing on information and opinions that may result in learning, decisions, choices, and opinion changes among those they are in contact with” (Case et al., 2003, p. 91).

Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet’s formulation redirected the field of mass communications research (Robinson, 1976). According to DeFleur (1970), its emphasis on “*gemeinschaft*-like ties as an alternative to theories of mass society which viewed an atomized population as politically manipulated by the mass media” was a pivotal notion for researchers globally (Robinson, 1976, p. 7). In the Two-Step Flow study, there were three distinct findings involved in the formulation of their hypothesis. The first had to do with the *impact of personal influence*. “It is reported that people who made up their minds late in the campaign, and those who changed their minds during the course of the campaign, were more likely than other people to mention personal influence as having figured in their decisions” (as cited by Katz, 1957, p. 63). Additionally, more people reported having discussed the campaign as opposed to obtaining pertinent campaign information via more traditional outlets such as newspaper or television. With that in mind, it was concluded that “personal contacts” were more effective than mass media in influencing voting decisions.

The second finding concerned the *flow of personal influence*. “Given the apparent
importance of interpersonal influence, the obvious next step was to ask whether some people were more important than others in the transmission of influence” (as cited by Katz, 1957, p.63). The study identified the opinion leaders with two questions: “Have you recently tried to convince anyone of your political ideas?” and ”Has anyone recently asked you for your advice on a political question” (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944, p. 37)? Comparing the answers of the opinion leaders with answers of everyone else, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet (1944) found the opinion leaders more interested in the election. Additionally, based on the “even distribution of opinion leaders throughout every class and occupation,” as well as the frequent mention by decision-makers of the influence of friends, co-workers and relatives, it was concluded that “opinion leaders can be found on every level of society and presumably, are very much like the people whom they influence” (as cited by Katz, 1957, p. 64).

“A further comparison of leaders and others with respect to mass media habits provides the third ingredient: the opinion leaders and the mass media” (Katz, 1957, p. 65). When compared to the rest of the population, the individuals singled out as opinion leaders had better access to media channels (newspaper, radio and magazines), and in turn, were more exposed than the mass majority.

Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet’s (1944) position is that the combination of word-of-mouth marketing and highly exposed, influential “opinion leaders” will create a progressive flow of information. They conclude that, “ideas often flow from radio and print to opinion leaders and from these to the less active sections of the population” (1944, p. 32).

The Digital Two Step Flow

As communications channels evolve, “opinion leadership” is being investigated not only in traditional forms of community, but in social, digital communities as well. The traditional view is indicative of individuals sharing “geographical space to engage in predominantly face-
to-face communication” (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009, p. 339). The more modern view, however, as articulated by Boase, et. al, (2006) is that “shared physical proximity, relatively strong ties, and face-to-face conversation no longer dominate personal interaction. Rather, this interaction is dominated by geography-spanning digital conversations that involve many loose ties” (as cited in Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009, p. 339). Under these conditions, the influence of opinion leaders may “either be diminished or potentially enhanced, depending on the context and nature of a campaign” (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009, p. 339).

When individuals opt to make recommendations, or state an opinion via email or social network, versus having the same discussion face-to-face, one possibility is that “opinion-leader influence may be impaired by fewer trust-building and persuasion-enhancing social cues” (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009, p. 341). Another possibility is that this digital communication would have the extreme opposite effect, and “serve as a way to enhance such influence, with real-world encounters facilitated and strengthened by electronic interactions” (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009, p. 342). For example, social networking sites, such as Facebook, have millions of users globally, participating in conversations. Within those users are a vast number of opinion leaders “sharing and posting pictures and videos that offer important climate change-related visual information and cues” (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009, p. 340). Rosebblatt (2007) denotes that digital networks are not just for the “channeling and forwarding of messages, but they can also be used to directly deliver products, money, volunteer action, and staff coordination across geographic and time boundaries” (as cited by Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009, p. 340).

A contemporary example of a strategic two-step flow can be seen in the 2007 Barack Obama Presidential Campaign. His campaign staff created a platform that “not only helped the campaign communicate with supporters and raise money, but it was also designed to help supporters connect with one another, organizing events in their local community” (Nisbet &
Kotcher, 2009, p. 340). In this instance, the election committee designated a representative for each state (and often times, additional representatives for major cities within a state). These representatives were the “opinion leaders.” As such, they were the voice of the campaign – updating local blogs, sponsoring events, collecting contact information, and maintaining a strong social presence on twitter and Facebook. The campaign “opinion leaders” reinforced the messages and topics being articulated by Barack Obama over the course of the electoral campaign. As they were much more accessible, and “closer” to the common public, audiences found it simple to obtain information in a non-intimidating, and digestible way – keeping them informed and empowered to make an educated decision when it came time to cast their vote.

As noted, Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet’s (1944) theory suggests that, in general, human interaction has greater influence on spreading the word, than traditional media. However, some theorists would maintain otherwise. The idea that “non-media influences are supreme,” according to Bandura (1986), “is not fully supported by empirical studies” (p. 121). Bandura argues that the notion that face-to-face communication has a more powerful impact has yet to be fully proven. Bandura (1986) states, “Neither informativeness, credibility, or persuasiveness are uniquely tied to interpersonal or to mediated sources. How extensively different sources are used depends, in large part, on their accessibility and the likelihood that they will provide the kinds of information sought” (p. 121). In other words, the impact of a communication medium is grounded in what is being said, and whether a communicator targeted the right audience. Chaffee (1982) opines, “interpersonal sources of information are no more persuasive than mass media sources” (as cited by Case et. al, 2003, p.91).

In 1991, Chatman performed a study among the working poor, where she observed the “flow, expression and use of information among janitors” (Chatman, 1991, p. 41). Her findings concluded a high regard for traditional mass media (TV, newspaper, etc.) among this
population, and a low regard for interpersonal sources. In other words, Chatman's population was disinterested in the “interpersonal-ability” involved in receiving information. The aforementioned speaks to Johnson’s (1970) idea (as cited by Case et. al, 2003) that “preference for sources is also influenced by culture as well as circumstance” (p. 91).

The idea of a Two-Step flow, when thinking about Facebook messaging, for example, is highly relevant. First, there is an organizational message in need of dissemination (step one). The organization has an “opinion leader,” or a brand champion (marketing staff), that speaks on behalf of the organization, sending opinions and ideas out to everyone else, or the less informed (step two). In this case, “everyone else” would be the Facebook followers. While the Two-Step flow substantiates the need for an intermediary (between the organization and the consumer) to evangelize a brand message, it does not speak to the types of messaging that will have the largest impact.

**Social Presence Theory**

The effects of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) became a popular topic of study among researchers in the late 80s and early 90s. Some concluded, according to Lowenthal (2009), that CMC “was inherently antisocial and impersonal,” while others acknowledged that CMC “was better at task-oriented communication” (p. 4). To justify, rationalize and articulate these findings, early CMC researchers referenced the Social Presence Theory (Short, Williams & Christie, 1976), which emphasizes the importance of message types (e.g. audio, video, etc.). Early researchers did so to better understand why CMC can, in some cases, cheapen the communications experience, and in other cases, heighten the experience, when delivering via digital channels.

“To some scholars, primarily those who study communication in organizations, presence is the extent to which a medium is perceived as sociable, warm, sensitive, personal or
intimate when it is used to interact with other people” (Lombard & Ditton, 1997, p. 16). Short, Williams, & Christie (1976) defined social presence as the "degree of salience of the other person in a mediated communication and the consequent salience of their interpersonal interactions" (p. 65). Said another way, Social Presence measures the quality of communication, between two communicators, on a particular communications medium. Measuring social presence is vital because “communication media are said to differ in the extent to which they (a) can overcome various communication constraints of time, location permanence, distribution, and distance, (b) transmit the social, symbolic, and nonverbal cues of human communication; and (c) convey equivocal information” (Rice, 1992, p. 442).

Short, et. al, (1976) measured social presence by having their research subjects perform a number of tasks, using different media. Each medium was evaluated using “a factor analysis of semantic differential scales” (Menzie & Keyton, 2007, p. 4), and the following four factors emerged: *impersonal-personal, unsociable-sociable, insensitive-sensitive, and cold-warm* (Short, Williams & Christie, 1976). “The social presence ranking thus depends on the interaction of the medium and the task at hand and is based on the subjective judgment of the user” (Lombard & Ditton, 1997, p. 16).

Short, Williams and Christie (1976) further posit that “some media have a higher degree of social presence (e.g., video) and other media have a lower degree of social presence (e.g., audio)” (as cited by Lowenthal, 2009, p. 6). With that in mind, media with a high degree of social presence is equated to being “sociable, warm and personal” and media with a low degree is seen as less personal (Short et. al, 1976, p. 65). “In general, our visual and aural senses dominate our perception and have been most often identified with presence” (Lombard & Ditton, 1997, p.16).
Short et al., (1976) also suggest that Social Presence can be connected to the ideas of immediacy and intimacy. Weiner & Mehrabian (1968, as cited by Rettie, 2003) refer to immediacy behaviors such as “nodding and smiling” (Rettie, 2003, p. 11). They dictate that behaviors such as these provide for a better nonverbal interaction versus an interaction that does not involve an immediacy behavior. When thinking about this idea of nodding and smiling (Rettie, 2003), a comparable action on Facebook would be to “like” a post. This is when a user posts a comment, and their friends are able to click the “like” button, to make public that they agree with/or appreciate what is being said. Argyle & Dean (1965, as cited by Rettie, 2003) insist that “the level of intimacy is expressed by verbal and non-verbal behavior (e.g. eye contact) and is sub-consciously maintained in equilibrium at an appropriate level by the interactors” (Rettie, 2003, p. 11). Intimacy (Argyle & Dean, 1965) behaviors can be seen on Facebook, when a user responds to a post, be leaving a comment, “liking” a comment, or even sharing the content that was posted. This allows the individual who created the original post to be aware of who is interacting with their messages.

Social Presence, immediacy and intimacy are all related in that “immediacy behaviors are used to create and maintain intimacy; and immediacy behaviors also enhance social presence” (Rettie, 2003, p. 11). Danchak, Walther & Swan’s (2001) Equilibrium Model of Social Presence further support the tie in of ‘immediacy’ and ‘intimacy’ as it relates to Social Presence. Danchak et al. (2001) suggested that social presence “derives from both the affective communication channels available in a medium and the immediacy behaviors of the participating communicators” (Swan, 2002, p. 44). Danchak et al. (2001) formed an integrated model where the intimacy levels are a function of “bandwidth and immediacy behaviors” (Rettie, 2003, p. 11).
Social Presence Critique

“Despite numerous alternative definitions, the concept of 'social presence' is unclear” (Rettie, 2003). Biocca et al. (2001), as cited by Rettie (2003) adamantly emphasized the criticality of clarifying the actual definition of Social Presence. He distilled what he understood into three themes:

- Co-presence, co-location and mutual awareness, which all express elements of being together; the experience of psychological involvement, which includes the concepts of saliency, immediacy, intimacy, and making oneself known; and
- behavioral engagement, which refers to the behavioral interaction, like immediacy behaviors, through which social presence is realized (Rettie, 2003, p.12).

Adding to the confusion is the fact that the term, Social Presence, is used differently in context. According to Gunawardena (1995), via Rettie (2003), not only is Social Presence seen as referring to “a property of a medium in mediated communication” but it is also seen as referring to “the perceptions, behavior or attitudes of the participants in a mediated interaction” (Rettie, 2003, p. 12).

The theory of Social Presence was derived nearly 30 years prior to the birth of Facebook, yet its key points are extremely relevant in understanding the Facebook messaging strategies for the twenty audited organizations. The fact that audience interaction can be correlated to an organization’s social presence will play a large role in the types of content organizations use to broadcast their messages on Facebook. It’s important to note that even in the case of organizations, versus an individual not associated with an organization, Social Presence is still relevant, as there is a human being (opinion leader) communicating on behalf of the organization. As mentioned previously, “Social Presence measures the quality of
communication, between two communicators, on a particular communications medium” (Rice, 1992, p. 442). In this study, the messages examined are dictated by the organization, via a human representative, to personify the notion interpersonal-ability.

While this recognition and understanding is critical to a successful messaging campaign, it is also essential to understand if these individuals are in fact, even using social networks (such as Facebook) to make decisions.

Social Ties and Decision-Making

Boase, Horrigan, Wellman & Rainie (2006) conducted the “Social Ties” survey in 2004 in an effort to uncover the depth of people’s social networks, and how they (social networks) are used to make decisions. “The Social Ties survey asked about two types of connections people have with their social networks: Core Ties and Significant Ties” (Boase et al., 2006, p. 3). Core Ties refers to “the people in Americans’ social networks with whom they have very close relationships” (Boase et al., 2006, p. 3). These are the people that are considered confidants, and/or frequent contacts. The Core Ties approach has an emphasis on “emotional intimacy, contact, and the availability of social network capital” (Boase et al., 2006, p. 3). Significant Ties, on the other hand, refers to the individuals “outside the ring of ‘core ties’ in Americans’ social networks, who are somewhat closely connected” (Boase et al., 2006, p. 3). People considered a Significant Tie have less frequent contact and are less likely to be a confidant. Nonetheless, they can become vital “as people access their networks to get help or advice” (Boase et al., p. 3). The way in which individuals connect with their social ties vary. While Boase et al. did not address which communications media may be more prominent for either tie classification (core or significant), they did note that face-to-face contact and landline telephones are generally relevant, and new communication technologies (e.g. email, cell phones, and instant messaging) also play important roles in connecting people. “The Internet does not stand alone
but as part of an overall communication system in which people use many means to communicate” (Boase et al., 2006, p. 4).

The “Social Ties” survey asked individuals if they had ever asked for assistance in making a decision, as it related to eight key issues: “caring from someone with an illness, looking for information about an illness, making a major investment, finding a place to live, changing jobs, buying a computer, putting up drywall and deciding who to vote for” (Boase et al., 2006). Results showed that most of the respondents (81%) have asked for help with one of the aforementioned from at least one of their core ties, while nearly half (46%) have asked for help from at least one of their significant ties. Internet users, the survey found, “are more likely than non-Internet users to receive help from core network members” – eighty-five percent (85%) of online users have received help with at least one of the eight issues as compared with seventy-two percent (72%) of non-users (Boase et al., 2006). The Internet user received help on three of the eight issues (on average) from people in their core networks, compared with non-Internet users getting help for two topics (Boase et al., 2006). This shows that individuals are more likely to have a decision-making conversation in an online forum than they are in an offline forum.

A follow-up survey (2005) conducted by Boase et al., called the “Major Moments” survey further emphasized the scope of this phenomenon. The survey, similar to the Social Ties survey, asked a number of questions surrounding the idea of common decision-making considerations. Some of the same questions, in fact, from the 2004 Social Ties survey re-appeared in the Major Moments survey. Specifically, “making a big financial decision, changing jobs, helping someone deal with a major illness or medical condition, dealing oneself with a major illness or medical condition, and finding a new place to live.” Additional questions, such as “buying a car or choosing a school or college for oneself or a child” were asked in the Major
Moments survey as well. Results indicated “the internet’s reach in playing a role in Americans’ decision making as striking” (Boase et al., 2004). Approximately 60 million Internet users (45%), agreed that the Internet played an a crucial role in “at least one of the eight decision points surveyed.” For the five topics common to both the February 2004 Social Ties survey and the March 2005 survey, “Twenty-nine (29%) of internet users, or approximately 39 million Americans, said the internet played a crucial or important role in at least one of those decisions” (Boase et al., 2004).

The results from both the 2004 Social Ties study and the 2005 Major Moments study facilitated the conclusion, that in addition to socializing online, people utilize the Internet to “exchange advice” and “make decisions.” While this study does not suggest that all Internet users are making decisions online, the trend is pervasive, and validates the need for organizations to be thoughtful in their messaging techniques online, specifically, Facebook. As organizations identify a brand evangelist to articulate their message (Two Step Flow, Lazarsfeld et al., 1944) and recognize the types of messaging content that will make the most impact (Social Presence, Short et al., 1976) they can be confident that individuals are willing to make important (and in turn, not so important) decisions (Social Ties, Boase et al., 2004) in an online forum, provided the communication is presented appropriately.

**Nonprofit Communication**

The Communications Consortium Media Center (CCMC) published a paper in 2004 outlining how to evaluate a nonprofit communications plan. They identified what nonprofits should do, as they get the word out about their cause, and what efforts are less effective. According to the Communications Consortium Media Center (CCMC), “Nonprofit groups and foundations are making unprecedented investments in public communications, seeking to educate Americans and mobilize the public in support of social or behavioral change” (2004, p.
1). The challenge with nonprofit communications is that the end result isn’t always instant. In other words, when you put a payment down on a new car, you can walk off the lot with the keys. In the nonprofit world, donating money and time doesn’t always appeal to the same instant gratification “senses” as is prevalent in the for-profit world. With that in mind, the CCMC asserts “nonprofit campaigns are often unique, because they have to convince society to be a part of a change that may never happen” (2004, p.3).

A review of literature as it relates to nonprofit organizations’ communication strategies revealed that there is little previous research conducted on this topic. Henley and Guidry (2008) compiled a list of the few, important and existing studies for the nonprofit sector. One study, according to Henley and Guidry (2008) “surveyed 900 nonprofits in order to find out how many of the organizations surveyed had email addresses, how many of the organizations collected email addresses and how many of the organizations surveyed had an email strategy” (p. 7). Another study, conducted by The Benton Foundation (2001) focused on the importance in creating an online community. They hypothesized that online communities enable constituents to “focus on the organizations mission” (Henley & Guidry, 2008, p. 7). “The study looked at common assumptions about online communities and explained to nonprofits the positives of creating marketing strategies and plans when developing an online base” (Henley & Guidry, 2008). The Benton Foundation identified the top four reasons, as found in their research, as to why organizations either don’t have an online strategy, or have failed at their existing strategy. The first reason nonprofits fail or don’t have a strategy is because they feel as though there is no need to set goals and accomplishments. The second reason is that they have unrealistic expectations about audience involvement. The third reason is because they have unreasonable time management. And the fourth reason is because of their lack of promotional strategy (Henly & Guidry, 2008). Finally, “The Nonprofits’ Guide to Internet Communications
Law” discusses the fundamentals about “online fund raising, lobbying, political campaigning and other efforts toward making donations through the internet” from a legal standpoint (Henly & Guidry, 2008).

While there are not many notable empirical or conceptual studies surrounding nonprofits and their online and offline communications strategies, this does not mean nonprofits aren’t communicating.

While this study seeks to analyze organizational Facebook messaging, a trend that has only evolved in the last 3-5 years, it can be grounded in previous theories and studies, dating back to the 1940’s. It is critical, according to both Lasswell (1948) and Foulger (2003) to understand what is being communicated, how the information is being communicated and to whom the communication is directed. So often, organizations fail to put emphasis on these details, and in turn, fail in their efforts to reach their target. Looking at what is being communicated, the study conducted by Boase et al. (2004) re-iterates the value that individuals place on making decisions and exchanging information online. The Social Ties study is indicative of a growing trend: individuals are becoming more open to receiving and discussing information, on any topic, digitally. Looking at how the information is being communicated, Short et al. (1976) theorized that the ‘presence’ of information will inevitably dictate audience interaction. In other words, the type of content (e.g. video, audio, text) and the medium (newspaper, online, etc.) used has a large impact on how information is received. And in looking at to whom the communication is directed, Lazarsfeld (1944) highlights the fact that there are people with influence (opinion leaders) that the rest of the world will listen to. Once an organization has gotten the attention of the opinion leaders, information dissemination will happen much more gracefully.
Research Questions

1) How are conversations being encouraged by organizations on Facebook?

2) How “accessible” (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944) was the messaging; what was the general audience’s reaction to the organizations’ Facebook messaging?

3) What was the “social presence” (Short et al., 1976) of the organizational messaging?
Chapter 3: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Scope of Study

For the first time in history, the traditional tools and mediums for disseminating information have been disrupted by media technology, and “open for true global collaboration, while also effectively changing how people interact with each other” (Solis, 2008, para. 2). Social media, specifically Facebook, has revolutionized the way organizations communicate with their stakeholders. For this study, said organizational communications will be observed and analyzed for ten nonprofit organizations, and ten for-profit organizations.

Because messaging styles and techniques vary among industries, as do audiences and anticipated outcomes – two very distinct messaging approaches were chosen for this study; messaging approaches, that regardless of the audience, or industry, will presumably be very different: nonprofit messaging and for-profit messaging. As mentioned earlier, Lasswell (1948) notes that when analyzing communication, it is necessary to “take into account the values at stake and the identity of the group whose position is being examined” (as cited in Solis, 2008, para. 14). There is a very clear line between the outcomes and objectives of the two messaging techniques. In general, nonprofit messaging has an intended outcome of “change” and an objective of “public will” (Communications Consortium Media Center, 2004). Meanwhile, the majority of for-profit messaging has an intended outcome of “purchasing” and an objective of “profit margin” (Communications Consortium Media Center, 2004). Examining organizations with two very different outcomes and objectives create ideal subjects for study. Analyzing two organization that are both For Profit, for example, would have required a deeper level of study – as demographics, business size, product offerings, and a number of other factors would need to be taken into consideration.
As this study examines the Facebook messaging strategies of 20 organizations, it is important to articulate why Facebook, versus a different social platform, was chosen. In 2010, Public Relations firm Burson-Marsteller examined the 100 largest companies (based on the Fortune 500 list), and found that 79% of them “use Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or corporate blogs to communicate with customers and other stakeholders” (Burson-Marsteller, 2010). Fifty-four percent of the companies observed have at least one Facebook fan page, and 20% percent of the companies use all four social media platforms as aforementioned (Burson-Marsteller, 2010). Outsell’s Annual Advertising and Marketing Study (2010) asked their respondents (marketing executives) to rate the effectiveness of specific social media sites in their marketing efforts, more than one-half of respondents said that Facebook was “extremely” or “somewhat” effective. Somewhat fewer said the same of LinkedIn, and just 35% considered Twitter effective.

In addition to looking at the messaging strategies of the 20 organizations, this study also observes the reactions of their fans to these strategies. With that in mind, it’s critical to understand “who” these fans are. As of January 2011, 53.5% of Facebook users were between the ages of 18 and 34, and 55% of Facebook users are women (iStrategy Labs, 2011). Individuals in this age range, Generation Y, are commonly referred to as a “millennial.” A study conducted by Pop Sugar Media suggests that Gen Y women (or millennial women) are “ethnically diverse, extremely independent, and adept at navigating new technologies and media platforms” (Pop Sugar Media, 2009). They are also thought to be more socially conscious (than their older cohorts in Generation X) and highly influential in terms of spending (Pop Sugar Media, 2009). The Pop Sugar Media report also referenced Harris Interactive, who estimated that Gen Y spent more than $120 billion in 2007 (2009). “According to a May 2008 Nielsen report, US households with at least one member of Gen Y account for 37 percent of...
total dollars spent and 31 percent of total trips, and spend 15 percent more than the average household” (Pop Sugar Media, 2009, para. 5). The millennial adult woman is using Facebook, and she is influential in spend and decision making, which makes her the ideal target for organizations using social media as a way to distribute their message. According to Pop Sugar (2009), social media, over traditional media, has become the trusted source for the Millennial generation, to identify with brands.

Facebook is being used by a significant number of organizations to market their messages, and most organizations consider this method relatively effective, at minimum. This understanding makes Facebook a noteworthy channel for communicators to reach the Facebook community, which is dominated by millennial women.

**Methodology of Study**

This study consisted of a content analysis of the Facebook messaging of ten NPOs and ten FPOs. According to Rubin, Haridakis & Piele (2010), “those who perform a content analysis look at the characteristics of communication messages (p. 215). Content analysis enables researchers to identify “themes and relevant issues” found within messaging (Rubin et al., 2010, p. 215). Those who conduct a content analysis, according to Rubin et al. (2010), have a purpose of learning “something about message content... their eventual interest might lie with the effect the content has on those who receive the message, that is, on the audience” (p. 217). Holsti (1969) defines content analysis as "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (p. 14).

This study will conduct a content analysis of 20 organizations, to determine any organizational trends in the nonprofit space, versus the for-profit space, in addition to observing the types of content used to communicate the organizations messages, and the effect of the messaging on the Facebook fans.
Qualitative Research Design: Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA)

Glaser & Strauss (1967) state that “the generation of theory, rather than theory testing, or mere description,” is the most important goal of qualitative research (p. 32). This viewpoint suggests that, theory is not a "perfected product" rather, an "ever-developing entity" (p. 32). The research conducted in this study is primarily qualitative in nature, yet there are some areas of observation that are more quantitative. As such, a type of qualitative content analysis called ethnographic content analysis (ECA) was used. ECA examines “how a researcher interacts with documentary materials so that specific statements can be placed in proper context for analysis” (Altheide, 1987, p. 67). Altheide noted that a “document is defined as any symbolic representation and meaning that can be recorded and/or retrieved for analysis” (1987, p. 69). ECA emphasizes, “discovery and description, including search for contexts, underlying meanings, patterns, and processes, rather than mere quantity or numerical relationships between two or more variables” (Altheide, 1987, p. 68). ECA is used to “document and understand the communication of meaning, as well as to verify theoretical relationships” (Altheide, 1987, p. 68). Altheide (1987) further asserts, “its distinctive characteristic is the reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection and analysis” (p. 68). By “reflexive,” Altheide is referring to the systematic, but non-rigid approach to concept development, sampling, data collection, data coding, data analysis, and interpretation. While “categories and variables initially guide the study, others are allowed and expected to emerge throughout the study” (Altheide, 1987, p. 68). As a result, ECA is grounded in the notion of “constant discovery and constant comparison of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances” (Altheide, 1987, p. 68). Rather than forcing data into predefined categories like qualitative content analysis (QCA), “ECA draws on and collects numerical and narrative data” over the course of the entire data collection process (Altheide, 1987, p. 69).

Using ECA, this study observed and documented organizational posts, comments, and content types on Facebook. Data will be collected multiple times over the observation period (discussed
further in the next section), and re-analyzed each time. From the documentation, relationships and correlations will be made regarding the accessibility of the content (as defined in key terms), social presence of the content (Short et al., 1976) and whether conversations are being encouraged by organizations. The following section will provide contextual details around the study, including how the organizations were chosen, how the organizations were observed, and how the findings were documented.

Context for the Study

Fortune Magazine releases a list, every year, of the top companies in the USA. This list, of industrial corporate earnings, began over 50 years ago. Essentially, the Fortune 500 is a tally of U.S. corporations with the highest revenues for the previous year, as reported to the Securities and Exchange Commission on annual earnings reports (10-Ks). “Revenue from the first 10 companies alone added up to $1.14 trillion, 10 years ago. That's roughly one-eighth the value of all the goods and services produced in the entire U.S. every year” (Bankrate.com, 2010). The financial influence and societal impact that the Fortune companies have on this country make them ideal subjects for study, as their success and failures essentially dictate the state of the economy. The for-profits audited in this study were the top 10 organizations from Fortune’s 2010 list.

The top 10 nonprofits, on the other hand, were taken from the Cone Power Brand 100 list. Cone Inc., a national leader in sustainable communications and research debuted the first public ranking in the United States to value nonprofit organizations by more than financial standing alone. In addition to revenue, their ranking was based on “brand image” and “propensity for growth.” Of the top 10 organizations on Cone’s list, six of the organizations were social needs organizations such as the YMCA. The YMCA alone, according to Cone, Inc., has a brand image worth over $6.4 billion. The top 10 “power brands,” according to Cone, Inc.,
were also the top revenue producers. As a result, all of the organizations audited were the top in class as it related to revenue, in their perspective sectors.

One final factor to note is the duration of the observation. The observation for this study was over the course of 30 days. In this 30-day period, the information collected included fan engagement ratio, example posts, number of times content was shared, content types, messaging effects, and noteworthy points. The aforementioned data was collected once a week, and averaged (where applicable) over the course of four weeks.

As mentioned previously, ECA “draws on and collects numerical [quantitative] and narrative [qualitative] data” (Altheide, 1987, p.68). As such, the research questions for this study pose both qualitative and quantitative inquiries. RQ1 determines whether interactivity (conversation) is being encouraged by the organization, or if content is posted as an “FYI.” This observation will be qualitative in nature. The encouragement of conversation is theoretical, as it looks at the nature of questions being asked (open ended, versus absolute), as a result, the nature of the organizational post, in addition to the reaction of the audience as it relates to open-endedness, will be considered in data analysis. The frequency with which fans left comments is also examined in this question, a quantitative observation. RQ2 is also a quantitative and qualitative observation. In observing the reaction of Facebook fans as it relates to the organizational presence as a whole (versus just open-endedness), RQ2 will look at the frequency with which content is shared (quantitative), in addition to the accessibility of information (qualitative). Accessibility can be further broken down to mean the ease in which information can be received and understood by its consumers. RQ3 takes a closer look into the types of content being used by organizations to reach Facebook fans. As there are only seven types of content allowable on Facebook, this question essentially tallies the frequency with which each content type was posted. This question also establishes relationships with the type
of content posted, to the Facebook activity immediately following the post.

Measuring Effectiveness

The ideal method of measuring effectiveness would be to gain access to each organization’s Fan Page statistics. The statistics page would show how many visitors and page hits the Fan Page has had over a specified period of time. This would follow suit with a quantitative analysis. Because this is private data, only accessible to the owner of the Fan Page, measuring effectiveness will have to be analyzed another way.

For this study, organizational messaging effectiveness will be measured by the reception of the messages. In other words, how many comments does each Fan Page post receive on average? Are the comments positive, negative, or neutral? What types of posts/messaging seem to yield the highest reception? The frequency with which organizational posts were shared, is also measured in an effort to indicate effectiveness. For this study, two posts per week were chosen at random, and the number of times the content in the post was shared, was calculated. Over the course of four weeks, this process was repeated. At the conclusion of the observation, there were eight numbers representing the number of times content was shared; these numbers were averaged, as seen in the table below. Finally, fan engagement percentage (FEP) will be examined. This percentage calculated the sum of comments and 'likes' and divided the total by the number of Facebook fans; this number was multiplied by 1000. While the FEP tells us the level of fan engagement based on the number fans, it is not synonymous with the notion of “conversational” versus “static” content. As such, this analysis will be more qualitative in nature.
Analyzing the Data

As mentioned previously, this study will conduct both qualitative and quantitative observations using content analysis. Bogdan & Biklen (1982) define qualitative content analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145). According to Patton (1990), a researcher conducting a qualitative study will likely use an "inductive analysis of data," rather than a deductive analysis, in an effort to birth pivotal themes from the information collected. Patton (1990) further tells us that, "qualitative analysis requires some creativity, for the challenge is to place the raw data into logical, meaningful categories; to examine them in a holistic fashion; and to find a way to communicate this interpretation to others" (p. 145).

Like quantitative analyses, qualitative analyses can have a system of coding as well. Strauss and Corbin (1990) call this "open coding." Open coding begins with the "identification of the themes emerging from the raw data" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Hoepfl (1997) elaborates on the idea of open coding by stating: “During open coding, the researcher must identify and tentatively name the conceptual categories into which the phenomena observed will be grouped. The goal is to create descriptive, multi-dimensional categories, which form a preliminary framework for analysis” (p. 73). Information fragments that appear to be the same can be grouped into categories, which can be adjusted over the course of the current research, or future analysis (Hoepfl, 1997, p. 73). The table below illustrates the preliminary categories chosen for this study.
Table 1: Open Coding Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Type</th>
<th>Messaging Effect</th>
<th>Popularity</th>
<th>Conversation Evolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Described the type of content found on the organizations Facebook page. Content could be text posts, video, internal articles, external articles images and/or surveys.</td>
<td>Described the reaction of the Facebook fans. Observed whether fans were commenting, &quot;liking,&quot; content sharing, etc. Popularity also played a role in this.</td>
<td>Described how likeable the organizations were. Observed the number of fans, the number of comments and looked at the fan engagement percentage.</td>
<td>Described how organizations encouraged conversation, and observed if conversation was actually occurring (e.g. is content being shared?).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the open coding phase is “axial coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Axial coding “involves re-examination of the categories identified to determine how they are linked” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 6). “The categories identified in open coding are compared and combined in new ways” as the researcher pieces together the "big picture" (Hoepfl, 1997, p. 73). Qualitative coding is used “not only to describe but, more importantly, acquire new understanding of a phenomenon of interest” (Hoepfl, 1997, p.74). With that in mind, instances that may contribute to the “phenomenon,” explicit information or details pertaining to the “phenomenon,” and the “ramifications of the phenomenon under study,” must all be identified and explored (Hoepfl, 1997, p.75). During the research, the open coding categories evolved, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 2: Axial Coding Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fans</th>
<th>Conversation Encouraged?</th>
<th>How?</th>
<th>Fan Engagement Ratio</th>
<th>Shared Content Average</th>
<th>Content Type</th>
<th>Effect of Messaging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Described how many fans each org had.</td>
<td>Yes/No question to see if orgs were even encouraging conversation.</td>
<td>If yes, documented examples of how convos were being encouraged.</td>
<td>Calculated the comments and &quot;likes&quot; and divided by fans.</td>
<td>Calculated frequency with which content was shared using &quot;Graph.&quot;</td>
<td>See “Content Type” in Table 1.</td>
<td>See “Messaging Effect” in Table 1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trustworthiness

Validity

According to Hunter & Schmidt (1990), the notion of validity is a quantitative question “rather than a qualitative distinction such as "valid" or "invalid"; it is a matter of degree” (p. 8). Lincoln & Guba (1985) propositioned four measures for determining the “soundness of qualitative research” as an alternative to the traditional quantitative measures. “The basic question regarding trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry is: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 301). In an effort to substantiate further, qualitative findings, Lincoln & Guba (1985) offer the following measures for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

“Credibility depends less on sample size than on the richness of the information gathered and on the analytical abilities of the researcher” (Patton, 1990, p. 62). Triangulation, Patton continues, can contribute to credibility. Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) identify four types of triangulation. Methods Triangulation (Patton, 1999) involves the verification of data, across the various data collection methods. Triangulation of Sources (Denzin (1978), unlike Methods Triangulation, involves the verification of varying information sources from within the same method (e.g. at different points in time or comparing people with different viewpoints). Analyst Triangulation (Denzin, 1978) involves using third party analysts, likely multiple, to verify the findings. And Theory/Perspective Triangulation (Patton, 1999), finally, involves “using multiple theoretical perspectives to examine and interpret the data” (p. 63). For this study, a combination of Sources, Analyst and Theory Triangulation will be implemented.
Transferability

Transferability refers to the “degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 303). In other words, the level of transferability is indicative on how easy it is for a future researcher to pick up, where the study ends. Patton (1990) notes that transferability can be improved by documenting contextual details, and assumptions that were critical to the overall research. This is described as a presentation of "solid descriptive data," or "thick description" (p. 63). To enable future researchers in applying the findings of this study to their own research, context surrounding how the study subjects were chosen, how the observation was managed, and how the information was documented. The person who wishes to "transfer" the results to a different context is then responsible for making the judgment of how sensible the transfer.

Dependability and Confirmability

“The traditional quantitative view of reliability is based on the assumption of replicability or repeatability” (Vacha, 2007, p.11). Replicability is essentially grounded in the idea that, if the study was conducted a second time, the results would be similar, if not the same. Lincoln & Guba (1985) assert however, that we can’t actually measure the same thing twice, “by definition if we are measuring twice, we are measuring two different things” (p. 303). The idea of dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), on the other hand, “emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context in which research occurs” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 303). They posit that the research/researcher is ultimately liable for noting the variances that occur in context, and how said variances affected the overall approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.227). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), both dependability and confirmability can be determined through one "properly managed" audit. This means providing an “audit trail consisting of 1) raw data; 2) analysis notes; 3) reconstruction and
synthesis products; 4) process notes; 5) personal notes; and 6) preliminary developmental information” (pgs. 320-321). To establish dependability, the auditor will examine the method in which the research was conducted. “The auditor determines whether this process was applicable to the research undertaken and whether it was applied consistently” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 322). To illustrate confirmability, a record of the data collection process, as well as copies of all notes will be maintained and made available upon request from the researcher. Kristie Fleming, a doctoral candidate in Psychology at the University of Memphis, will serve as the auditor for this study. As such, she will review the data, methodology and analysis processes for consistency and applicability, and report suggestions. Suggested reconsiderations will be negotiated until mutually agreeable to the consistency and applicability of the processes.
Chapter 4: THE STUDY

The comparison of Facebook messaging between nonprofit organizations and for-profit organizations had a number of interesting outcomes. To re-iterate, the analysis of nonprofit vs. for-profit messaging was chosen due to the distinct difference in intended objectives and outcomes for each segment. Nonprofits seek change and public will (Communications Consortium Media Center, 2004), while for-profits seek purchase and profit margin (Communications Consortium Media Center, 2004). Comparing organizations within the same segment would have required a deeper level of study. The nonprofit organizations examined in this study were the top 10 of Cone Inc.’s “Nonprofit Power Brand 100” list. The for-profit organizations in this study were the top 10 from Fortune Magazines “Fortune 500” list.

Results

The results of this study are organized by research question. The results pertaining to each research question are identified, and categorized by nonprofit organizations and for-profit organizations.

Research Question #1

The first research question asks how conversations are being encouraged by the organizations on Facebook. Put in another way, are organizations being sociable? Short et. al (1976) reminds us that being seen as “sociable, warm, and personal” indicate a high social presence. Interpreting the organizations’ Facebook content as “sociable” or “un-sociable” indicated an organization’s position with their messaging. Sociable posts were conversational and engaging. They were generally thought-provoking and took the form of an open ended question (versus a yes/no question). Un-sociable posts were un-engaging, and generally took the form of informational statements and yes/no questions. With this in mind, the sociability of an organization was determined based on the Facebook posts’ ability to evoke conversation, or
return responses. Altheide (1987) reminds us that, Ethnographic Content Analysis focuses on “how a researcher interacts with documentary materials so that specific statements can be placed in proper context for analysis” (Altheide, 1987, p. 67). For RQ1, the organizational posts were placed into two contextual categories, social and un-sociable. Underlying meanings and patterns were observed rather than just numerical relationships. Another measurement observed in this research question was the fan engagement ratio (FER), as discussed previously in the Measuring Effectiveness section of Chapter 3: Scope and Methodology. The table below illustrates the findings for RQ1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Profit Organization</th>
<th>Sociable?</th>
<th>Example Post</th>
<th>FER (multiplied by 1000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YMCA of the USA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>YMCA’s Healthy Kids Day asks parents to “Make a Play Date” with their kids, and reminds them that being physically active can be as simple as a game of tag, an after-dinner walk or a impromptu dance contest in your living room. How does your family ensure physical activity every day?</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>(15 Comments, 65 Likes)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Salvation Army</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Nearly 15 months after the January earthquake, The Salvation Army dedicated its new headquarters in Haiti with a spirited program and ribbon cutting on Saturday. The new building in the Santo neighborhood will allow the Army to maximize the space for providing direct services.</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>(4 Comments, 46 Likes)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Way of America</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Polo Ralph Lauren &amp; United Way present The Japan Hope Polo Shirt. 100% of All Proceeds will be donated to the humanitarian effort in Japan through the Central Community Chest of Japan, a part of the United Way worldwide network.</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>(1 Comment, 22 Likes)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Red Cross</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>What should you do if you're in bed when an earthquake strikes?</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>(78 Comments, 302 Likes)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodwill Industries International</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>We're excited to announce that our new Donate Movement partner Planet Green will debut its new television series “Dresscue Me” starting April 19. Learn more about the series and Shareen Mitchell, who turns second-hand clothes into vintage fashions!</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>(5 Comments, 20 Likes)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities USA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Are you getting the Lenten Reflections? &quot;that this often referred to as the day that we &quot;GIVE up&quot; candy or soda, let us instead &quot;TAKE up&quot; our skills in order to dust off the hopelessness, our hands to wipe off the sadness, and our hearts to shed light</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>(35 Comments, 42 Likes)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Post Description</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat for Humanity International</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>This week in the Habitat World blog, volunteering side-by-side with active duty military, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members on a Habitat build site in March. Read about the inspiring day and view a full slideshow.</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Cancer Society</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>As someone touched by cancer, you know – every minute counts. Please contact your U.S. Representative right now and urge them to oppose cuts to Medicare for cancer patients (links to article)</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arc of the United States</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>An editorial by John Dickerson of The Arc of Indiana: It's only right that big business pays its fair share. (Links to article)</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Club of America</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Did you know that nearly 8 million American youth don’t have regular access to a computer? This statistic is extremely important when you consider that these kids hold the future of our country in their hands. Boys &amp; Girls Clubs, through programs like Club Tech, aim to turn the stats around. And you can help, too. Find out more at <a href="http://www.FacesoftheFuture.org">www.FacesoftheFuture.org</a>.</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YMCA of the USA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>YMCA’s Healthy Kids Day asks parents to “Make a Play Date” with their kids, and reminds them that being physically active can be as simple as a game of tag, an after-dinner walk or a impromptu dance contest in your living room. How does your family ensure physical activity every day?</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surprisingly, the number of nonprofits with conversational posts was significantly lower than expected. In an effort to promote public will, and change, the assumption was that the first step to
doing so was to create an engaging messaging strategy. Of the ten NPOs examined, only three, or 30%, regularly posted engaging content: YMCA, American Red Cross, and American Cancer Society. Of those three, the American Cancer Society had the most engaging content, with a fan engagement ratio of 5.3. Posts such as, “Taking care of someone who has cancer is one of the most important roles a person will ever have. It could also be the most difficult one. But caregivers can’t afford to neglect themselves. Director of Survivor Programs Greta Greer, MSW, LCSW, has three self-care rules for caregivers (links to article),” promoted thought-provoking responses, and conversation amongst their more than 8000 Facebook fans. One thought provoking response that prompted 41 likes alone was: “Thank you for crediting those of us caregivers! Some days are better than others. Sometimes I feel like the only people who understand are cancer patients and their caregivers. It’s easy for outsiders to say "I’m sorry" and "I can’t imagine". Walk a mile in our skin and shoes. Listen to our scary thoughts, try to sleep at night, watch our loved ones suffer, picture the images in our heads, organize and pay the bills when you have no money. Hats off to all caregivers and cancer patients fighting, surviving, and dying. You’re all an inspiration.” This particular post yielded 47 comments from fans, and 450 likes (as of 4/1/2011). As for the other two NPO’s encouraging conversation, the YMCA had an engagement ratio of 4.0, and while the American Red Cross had the highest number of Facebook fans (278,643) of the ten NPO’s studied, their engagement ratio of 1.4 was particularly low. With regards to number of fans, in 2nd, 3rd and 4th place respectively (behind American Red Cross), were Habitat for Humanity (80,899), The Salvation Army (33,319) and Goodwill (29,031). While they clearly promote their Facebook presence in their overall messaging strategy, they do not encourage conversation amongst their fans. An example of a non-engaging, though informative post was: “Nearly 15 months after the January earthquake, The Salvation Army dedicated its new headquarters in Haiti with a spirited program and ribbon cutting on Saturday. The new building in the Santo neighborhood will allow the Army to maximize the space for providing direct services (Salvation Army).” This post, while factual and admirable does not pose a
question, or offer enough open-endedness to inspire a conversation around the ribbon cutting. This post yielded 4 comments, and 46 likes. To make this post more conversational, the Salvation Army could have asked their fans, “What have you done in your local community to support Haiti?” On average, the Salvation Army’s fan engagement ratio was 1.5, just slightly higher than the very conversational American Red Cross.

The table below illustrates the results of RQ1 for the for-profit organizations observed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Profit Organization</th>
<th>Sociable?</th>
<th>Example Post</th>
<th>FER (multiplied by 1000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wal-Mart Stores</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>“Who is your American hero? Learn more about how we are helping military personnel and their spouses through our Military Family Promise. (127 Comments, 375 Likes)</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevron</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>“What’s taller than the Eiffel Tower and surrounded by water? Chevron’s Tombua Landana project offshore Angola uses a platform moored in 1,200 feet (366 m) of water. It’s one of the world’s tallest man-made structures, 534 feet taller than the Eiffel Tower. (45 Comments, 233 Likes)</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ConocoPhillips</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>ConocoPhillips announced that it will contribute $1 million to the American Red Cross to assist in disaster relief efforts arising from the recent earthquake in Japan. This assistance is in addition to contributions and volunteer efforts already being made by various employee groups at the company. (0 Comments, 73 Likes)</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Calling all fans of THE VAMPIRE DIARIES, AT&amp;T brings you another exclusive look at last week’s episode. Watch the video clip below, and click like if you plan to tune in tonight. (19 Comments, 41 Likes)</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hewlett-Packard</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Earlier this week, HP CEO Leo Apotheker sat down with Fortune’s Adam Lashinsky to talk tech. Topics included: HP’s differentiated</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the ten for-profit organizations examined, only 50% even had a Facebook presence. Of that 50%, only one organization engaged in conversational messaging on Facebook, Wal-Mart. With its 4 million+ fans, Wal-Mart had the most impressive Facebook presence of all of the organizations examined (FPOs and NPOs). Between multiple daily posts, and over 100 comments per post, it was evident that Wal-Mart had a sizeable investment (time and resources) into their Facebook messaging strategy. Posts such as “Who is your American hero? Learn more about how we are helping military personnel and their spouses through our Military Family Promise” sparked a global conversation among its fans. This post yielded 127 comments and 375 likes. Consistently, posts by Wal-Mart were engaging and open ended in nature; however, their fan engagement ratio was low at .10. Chevron’s non-conversational, yet informative posting strategy saw posts such as: “What’s taller than the Eiffel Tower and surrounded by water? Chevron’s Tombua Landana project offshore Angola uses a platform moored in 1,200 feet (366 m) of water. It’s one of the world’s tallest man-made structures, 534 feet taller than the Eiffel Tower.” This post yielded 45 comments and 233 likes. Overall, Chevron had the highest fan engagement ratio of 4.9. Surprisingly, Chevron’s competitor, Exxon, does not have a Facebook page. There is, however, an interest page for Exxon, with approximately 1700 fans. As an interest page can be created by anyone, these pages were not considered as part of the study. Other findings of interest in the for-profit space were the embarrassingly low fan engagement ratio of AT&T and the lack of participation of Ford Motor Company. With over 1 million fans, AT&T was 2nd to Wal-Mart in number in Facebook fans. However, posts such as “Calling all fans of THE VAMPIRE DIARIES, AT&T brings you another exclusive look at last week’s episode. Watch the video clip below, and click like if you plan to tune in tonight” yielded the low engagement ratio of .004. Ford, on the other hand, with its 600K+ fans,
rarely posted to their wall. There appeared to be numerous videos tagged by Ford, and sporadic responses to other posts (as seen in Recent Activity), but there was only one comment posted by Ford within the last 30 days. Most of the comments on Ford’s page were from its fans, complaining about or praising their vehicle, or asking questions to Ford. ConocoPhillips (4,581 fans), while unconversational, had a high fan engagement ratio of 1.5. For example, ConocoPhillips posted, “ConocoPhillips announced that it will contribute $1 million to the American Red Cross to assist in disaster relief efforts arising from the recent earthquake in Japan. This assistance is in addition to contributions and volunteer efforts already being made by various employee groups at the company.” This post received zero comments, and 73 likes. While they rarely received comments on their posts, many of their fans “liked” their content, increasing their ratio. One additional and pleasantly surprising finding was that ConocoPhillips was highly responsive to their fans. Approximately 90% of the questions asked by fans were answered within 24 hours. For example, someone posted the following question: “I want to ask about opportunities to perform the final task for students majoring in petroleum engineering in ConocoPhillips Indonesia, because I want to do a final task in ConocoPhillips Indonesia.” Within 10 hours, ConocoPhillips responded with a name and contact number for the Jakarta office.

While the ConocoPhillips Facebook community may be smaller compared to most of its Fortune 500 cohorts, its fans are clearly being acknowledged.

Research Question #2

The second research question examines the audience’s reaction to the Facebook messaging of NPOs and FPOs. To understand what might effect an audience’s reaction, we look to the findings of the Two-Step Flow (Lazarsfeld, et. al, 1944) that showed us that the “accessibility of information is the key factor involved in what sources people select” (Case, et. al, 2003). Further, the Two-Step Flow categorizes “opinion leaders” as being critical in the dispersing of information, since the “less active” rely on these individuals as they form an
opinion or make a decision (Lazarsfeld, et. al, 1944). That in mind, research question #2 explored how accessible organizational information was on Facebook, and how this may have influenced audience interaction. It is important to note that for this study, accessibility is defined as “capable of being understood or appreciated” (Merriam-Webster); and to gauge accessibility, the content presentation and post frequency was observed. This research question also looks at the frequency with which content was “shared” among audiences, as every time content is shared, a new “opinion leader” has been formed.

Across all of the organizations, three primary themes around how content was presented were identified through the analysis of organizational Facebook posts, in addition to their overall method for presenting content. The first approach was *highly stylized*. In this presentation, organizations would set the default page to be a beautifully designed, graphic-rich presentation of a big idea versus the standard “wall”. Sometimes the default page was a campaign promotion, other times, it was a brand anthem. Users would then have to click on “wall” to view the conversation (if any) being had amongst the organization and its fans. In some instances, the *highly stylized* default page would possess some interactivity like surveys or Facebook apps. The second theme was *content consistency*. In this approach, organizations were very consistent about the content of their post. When the term consistency is used, it is often times complimentary description. In the case of Facebook content presentation, to be consistent is to be lazy and uninspiring. If an organization’s Facebook posts were content consistent, posts always took the same form and there was little to no variation in what types of content was posted. For example, if an organization only posted 3rd party articles, and never posted video, images, internal articles, or simple text posts – this is being content consistent. The third theme was *fan-driven*. In this approach, the organization did not take an active role presenting content and the majority of the content was populated by their followers (or fans).
Fans would post content, other fans would comment, and the conversation would pursue in the absence of any organizational involvement. Because the way in which content is presented can be correlated to its acceptance and understanding (Case et al., 2003), all three content presentation themes - *highly stylized*, *content consistency* and *fan-driven* – play a role in the accessibility of an organization's Facebook messaging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Highly Stylized</th>
<th>Content Consistency</th>
<th>Fan-Driven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YMCA of the USA</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Salvation Army</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Way of America</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Red Cross</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodwill Industries International</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities USA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat for Humanity International</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Cancer Society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arc of the United States</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Club of America</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YMCA of the USA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Salvation Army</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wal-Mart Stores</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exxon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevron</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Electric</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank of America Corp.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ConocoPhillips</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford Motor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP Morgan Chase &amp; Co.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hewlett-Packard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Falling into the *highly stylized* approach were three NPO's and two FPO's. In the NPO space, American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity and Boys and Girls Club of America had very well designed default pages that promoted ongoing campaigns. All of them were styled in the look and feel of the overall brand, and offered additional resources for getting more information surrounding these campaigns. Once you clicked on the “wall,” all three of the
Facebook Messaging Strategies

organizations took advantage of the limited customizable space offered in the left and right sidebars of the page, by including additional graphics. Of the ten nonprofits observed, the American Red Cross and Habitat for Humanity have the most fans, upwards of 250K and 80K respectively. The Boys and Girls Club of America is in 7th place as it relates to fans. AT&T (2nd in fans – behind Wal-Mart) and Chevron (5th in fans) both have highly stylized pages as their default. AT&T has an interestingly clever approach where they actually designed a graphic on their default page that says “Like us to get access to all things AT&T.” The user then feels obligated to “Like” them if they want to get to the “wall” where discussions are being had, and promotional offers are being posted. Three of the five organizations (NPO’s and FPO’s) falling into the highly stylized category also led the way in their sector (in the top two), in number of fans. That said there seems to be a connection between the visual appeal of a Facebook page, and whether or not someone chooses to “like” them. This apparent correlation speaks to the accessibility of an organizational Facebook page, as the likeability increases, and people are able to relate more to a page with aesthetic appeal.

The second theme, content consistency, was the most common among the twenty organizations analyzed. The most content consistent NPO’s were The Arc of the United States, YMCA and Habitat for Humanity. Over 90% of the The Arc’s posts were external articles. The only time an original post was seen was in response to a question by a fan. YMCA is content consistent in its style of post, consistently posing family-oriented tips and ideas. (Content style will be discussed in more depth in the next research question.) Of their 40+ posts within a 30-day window, over 30 posts were advice oriented, for family betterment. Habitat is seen again, in this theme, as the majority of its posts are strictly informational. Rarely does Habitat stray from the statistical or fact-based text post. The most consistent For Profit organization in the content consistent category is Hewlett-Packard. Of the 26 posts seen over a 30-day period, 25
of them were solely about Hewlett-Packard. Sometimes HP posted articles about the CEO, other times they posted product announcements or images. Their content was highly static, and very inward focused. Generally speaking, in most cases, consistency is praise worthy. In the case of Facebook messaging, content consistency is just the opposite. When an organizations’ Facebook page lacks variety in content, the audience tends to get bored, they are not incited to interact, and the likelihood of a return visit is decreased. Of the four organizations in this category, three of them, in turn, have very low interactivity (low number of comments and “likes”). The exception, in this case is YMCA. Presumably, the family-oriented advice resonates well among their 17K fans as their fan engagement percentage is among the highest of all of the organizations at 4.5%. As content consistency, in general, can be correlated to low interactivity, this presentation style decreases the accessibility of the organizational Facebook messaging. Fans are not able to connect with static, un-changing content varieties, and in turn, choose not to be an active participant on the Facebook page.

The fan-driven approach is popular among the nonprofit Organization GoodWill Industries International and among the For Profit Organizations ConocoPhillips and Ford Motor Company. All three of the organizations’ Facebook content is primarily dictated by the content posted by their fans. GoodWill, unlike all but one other organization, posts regular surveys. These surveys drive a high response rate, and discussion by their fans. Outside of the surveys, however, GoodWill does not do much posting, rather, they allow their fans to post at will. ConocoPhillips uses most of their Facebook real estate to reply to posts. Over 50% of ConocoPhillips’ posts are in response to a question asked by their audience. Unlike with GoodWill and ConocoPhillips, Ford doesn’t post at all. In 30 days, there were zero posts by Ford. All 229 posts were fans having a conversation about a complaint. Some posts on Ford’s Facebook page were even other car companies (e.g. used car companies) soliciting potential
customers. The *fan-driven* approach isn’t always a negative thing. In many cases, it can inspire conversation, and empower the fans to take control of the brand. This promotes a reciprocal relationship of trust. For example, 50% of the posts on The Arc of the United States Facebook page, were created by its fans. In other words, The Arcs fan-base have been empowered to create their own conversations amongst each other. Said conversations are relevant, and grounded in religious and charity-based subject matter. But there is a balance that should be observed, as with the case of Ford – no engagement at all lacks reciprocity and engagement. As a result, most of the conversations being had by Ford fans are negative in nature. That in mind, the fan-driven approach, unlike the other two content presentation styles, can both increase or decrease accessibility, depending on the messaging strategy of the organization.

When a post is “shared” among organizational networks, the dissemination of information someone deems critical is promoted. The table below illustrates the average content being shared among organizational Facebook fans. Generally speaking, the higher the number, the better, as conversations are being passed along, beyond the organization’s Facebook page. Very much like Lazarsfeld’s (1948) notion of the opinion leader, when content is “shared” on Facebook, a fan will take information from an Organization’s Facebook page, and re-post the link on their page. When this happens, it can be assumed that the information being “shared” may be valuable or beneficial to someone. When content is shared frequently, it can be assumed that the organization’s information is not only accessible, but also highly engaging. Said another way, as content is passed from one Facebook user to the next, it becomes more and more relatable and appreciated; in turn, making the content more accessible. To determine the frequency with which content was being shared, a tool called “Graph API” was used. Facebook created this tool so users could understand the effectiveness of their Facebook real estate. One function of the tool allows anyone to copy and paste a link into a script, to generate
the number of times that link was shared on Facebook. As discussed in the Measuring Effectiveness section of Chapter 3: Methodology, two posts per week were chosen at random, and the number of times the content in the post was shared, was calculated. Over the course of four weeks, this process was repeated. At the conclusion of the observation, there were eight numbers representing the number of times content was shared; these numbers were averaged, as seen in the table below.

Table 6: RQ2 Results: Shared Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Average # of Times Content is Shared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YMCA of the USA</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Salvation Army</td>
<td>3,957.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Way of America</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Red Cross</td>
<td>41,319.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodwill Industries International</td>
<td>416.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities USA</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat for Humanity International</td>
<td>921.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Cancer Society</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arc of the United States</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Club of America</td>
<td>12.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YMCA of the USA</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wal-Mart Stores</td>
<td>34,314.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exxon</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevron</td>
<td>72.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Electric</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank of America Corp.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ConocoPhillips</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford Motor</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP Morgan Chase &amp; Co.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hewlett-Packard</td>
<td>31.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a distinct difference in the amount of content shared between nonprofits and for-profits. On average, posts generated by Habitat for Humanity were shared 921.2 times. In other words, Habitat posted a link to a blog post (on their company website) on their Facebook page, for example. That link was then re-posted in Facebook 921 times. The Salvation Army
has an impressive “shared” average of 3,957.3 and Catholic Charities USA’s average is 535. Surprisingly, posts generated by For Profit organizations weren’t shared nearly as much. Wal-Mart, with its 4 million fans, has an extremely high “shared” average of 34,314.33. However, the 2nd highest, Chevron, only has a “shared” average of 72.33.

Lazarsfeld’s et al. (1944) notion of an opinion leader is prevalent as the frequency with which content is shared is analyzed. As a reminder, their study proposed “that influences stemming from the mass media first reach opinion leaders who, in turn, pass on what they read and hear to those of their everyday associates for whom they are influential” (as cited in Katz, 1957, p. 61). Case et al. (2003) describe these opinion leaders as knowledgeable individuals that “influence those around them by passing on information and opinions that may result in learning, decisions, choices, and opinion changes among those they are in contact with” (Case et al., 2003, p. 91). That in mind, it stands to reason that as the frequency with which content is shared amongst organizational networks increases (e.g. the passing on of information), the number of opinion leaders increases subsequently. The overall “shared” average of the 10 nonprofit organizations was 4,276.09; compared to the 10 for-profit’s average of 3,447.05. That said, over the 30-day audit, content created by nonprofits was more shareable than the content created by for-profits, making nonprofit Facebook content more accessible to the masses.

Research Question #3

A critical idea presented in the Social Presence Theory (Short, et. al, 1976) is that “communication media differ in their degree of social presence and that these differences play an important role in how people interact” (Short, et. al, 1976). In other words, it is the quality of a communications medium, that ultimately dictates the way in which individuals interact with each other. With this in mind, and in an effort to further the exploration into the nuances
of NPO vs. FPO Facebook messaging, research question #3 examines the content style of
organizational posts. This portion of the study identified types of content (e.g., images, video,
audio) used by organizations to communicate with their fans. Generally speaking, there were
seven types of content identified across the 20 organizations: Text Posts, Notes, Internal
Articles, External Articles, Images, Video, and Surveys.

Collin Duoma writes about a “sweet spot” in his 2008 article titled, “Best Practices for
Facebook Pages: Lessons from the Top Ten.” The sweet spot, according to Duoma, is the
perfect balance between posting content that drives your organizational objective, and posting
content that drives peoples interest. He references two Facebook pages that found their “sweet
spot” and, in turn, have earned a top ten ranking in popularity. Apple Students, for instance, is
a forum for Apple/Mac users. Their sweet spot is “streaming from iTunes and keeping the page
updated with the latest in Movies, TV and Music downloads” (Duoma, 2008, para. 3). Fans
keeps coming back, and in turn, have engaged in over 115,000 (as of 2008) forum discussions
that propel new product development, and encourage constructive feedback (Duoma, 2008,
para. 3). Coldplay, another fan favorite, found their sweet spot by posting “149 fan videos,
1700 fan photos and nearly 9000 wall posts” in one year (Duoma, 2008, para. 4). Their
Facebook fans were consistently being fed tons of information and content daily; content that
they could not only read, but also hear and see as well.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Types of Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YMCA of the USA</td>
<td>Text Posts, External Articles, Images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Salvation Army</td>
<td>Text Posts, Company Created Articles, External Articles, Images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Way of America</td>
<td>Text Post, Company Created Articles, External Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Red Cross</td>
<td>Text Posts, Company Created Articles, External Articles, Images, Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodwill Industries International</td>
<td>External Articles, Text Posts, Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities USA</td>
<td>Text Post, External Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat for Humanity International</td>
<td>Text Posts, External Articles, Company Created Articles, Images Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Cancer Society</td>
<td>Text Posts, External Articles, Company Created Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arc of the United States</td>
<td>Text Posts, External Articles, Company Created Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Club of America</td>
<td>Text Posts, External Articles, Company Created Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YMCA of the USA</td>
<td>Text Posts, External Articles, Images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Salvation Army</td>
<td>Text Posts, Company Created Articles, External Articles, Images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wal-Mart Stores</td>
<td>Text Posts, External Articles, Company Created Articles, Images, Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exxon</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevron</td>
<td>Text Posts, Company Created Articles, Images, Video (sporadically)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Electric</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank of America Corp.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ConocoPhillips</td>
<td>Text Posts, Internal Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>Notes, Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford Motor</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP Morgan Chase &amp; Co.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hewlett-Packard</td>
<td>Internal Articles, Text Posts, Surveys, Video, Images</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the ten nonprofits audited, the two organizations that posted the widest array of content were American Red Cross, and Habitat for Humanity. Unlike the other eight nonprofit organizations, both American Red Cross and Habitat for Humanity consistently posted images and video. In doing so, they essentially engaged their fans’ auditory senses, and heightened their visual senses. When video and/images were part of the organizational post, the response rate was higher than when the post was text only, or an article. For example, Habitat posted a
“Winds of Change” video earlier in the year. In 4 months, this video has been shared over 81,000 times. Meanwhile, the average number of times Habitat content is typically shared is only 921 times. While GoodWill does a very poor job of posting a variety of content, they are the only nonprofit to post surveys. The surveys yield approximately 400 votes per post, a large jump in engagement from their 15-20 comments per post average.

In the for-profit space, Wal-Mart and Hewlett-Packard took the prize for content types. Both organizations used video and images, in addition to text-only posts and articles. In addition to the variety of content types posted by Wal-Mart, frequent post, upwards in 4-5 times per day, contributed to Wal-Mart’s Facebook success. Hewlett-Packard, like GoodWill, used surveys, regularly, to engage their fans. On average, HP had twelve comments per post, but their survey yielded over 1500 votes. Despite minimal content types, AT&T was the only organization to post “notes.” In this case, they used notes as an alternative to posts, presumably due the fact that notes allow more characters (unlimited), and fans can be “tagged” in notes – making the information more accessible. While this approach was thoughtfully unique, AT&T did not post any other content types outside of the occasional instructional video.

Discussion

During the thirty days with which the study was conducted, there were some key findings that proved to be unexpected and significant. The first key finding is related to the idea of conversations being encouraged. Very few NPOs encouraged conversation. Of the ten NPO’s observed, only two asked open-ended questions, or posted thought-provoking comments that prompted more than a “like” or a “yes or no” answer. Similarly, FPOs rarely encouraged conversation, primarily posting product or company related informational content. Wal-Mart was the exception, posting motivational and/or conversational content that appealed
to their fans emotions, thereby encouraging conversation. The overall lack of encouragement in conversation by both nonprofit and for-profit organizations equates to an overall lack of sociability. As previously discussed, Lombard & Ditton (1997) remind us that presence is the extent to which something is perceived as “sociable, warm, sensitive, personal or intimate when it is used to interact with other people” (p.16). Therefore, low sociability implies a low social presence.

Another interesting finding, as it related to the encouragement of conversation by organizations, was the relationship between the fan engagement ratio, and the question “are conversations being encouraged?” In many cases, an organization that posted non-conversational content had a high fan engagement ratio. The opposite was true as well – organizations posting conversational content, sometimes had a low fan engagement ratio. In the case of non-conversational content and high FER, typically, the organization had posted a video, or an article; content that may not warrant extensive conversation, but easy to simply “like” or share with friends. Likewise, in the case of highly conversational content, and low FER, organizations had posted open-ended, thought provoking text posts that were not “shareable.” This led to the second key finding – fan engagement and organizational encouragement of conversation do not have a direct relationship. This is likely due the fact that “likes” are taken into consideration when calculating the fan engagement ratio. While “likes” can be linked to engagement, they cannot be linked to conversation. Interestingly enough, both scenarios are regarded as having a high social presence. Short, Williams & Christie (1976) remind us that “some media have a higher degree of social presence (e.g., video) and other media have a lower degree of social presence (e.g., audio)” (as cited by Lowenthal, 2009, p. 6). With that in mind, media with a high degree of social presence is equated to being “sociable,
warm and personal” and media with a low degree is seen as lesspersonal (Short et. al, 1976, p. 65).

The third key finding, discovered while observing audience reaction to Facebook messaging, was that there is a correlation between content presentation (or, how content is presented) and Facebook fan reaction. Facebook pages that were highly stylized, had varied types of content, and participated in the conversation (versus letting fans drive content creation) had more success (e.g. fans and participation). Of the 20 organizations, there were three NPOs and two FPOs that emphasized content presentation. Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) showed us that the “accessibility of information is the key factor involved in what sources people select” (Case, et. al, 2003). As a reminder, Merriam-Webster’s definition of “accessibility” was used for this study - capable of being understood or appreciated. That said, the more accessible an organizational Facebook page was, the higher the participation and fans. The expectation, going into this study, that NPOs and FPOs would be on level playing ground as it related to content presentation, was found to be partially true. However, the fact that only 25% of our nation’s top organizations invested in a thoughtful content presentation strategy was shocking.

The fourth key finding, related to “shared” content, revealed that NPO Facebook fans were more inclined to “share” content amongst their network. On average, the difference between the number of times NPO content was shared, and the number of times FPO content was shared was 829. Said another way, when the total number of instances in which content was shared for each organization was added together, nonprofit content was shared 829 more times than for-profit content. The assumption is that the nature of NPO content - provoking change and human will - is what inspired the dissemination of information. Due to the difference in the number of times content was shared amongst NPOs and FPOs, it can further
stand to reason that NPOs, incidentally, have more opinion leaders (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944) – influential individuals who pass on information to their peers.

The fifth, and final key finding was related to the types of content posted by organizations. Both NPOs and FPOs had only two organizations apiece posting a variety of content types, appealing to multiple senses. These organizations posted video and images, in addition the typical text-only post, or articles. Surveys, while not popular among the organizations, proved to be the most engaging content type, as seen in the case of GoodWill and HP. Nonetheless, when an organization included images or video in their post, the level of interaction and engagement increased significantly. This idea speaks directly to the Social Presence Theory (Short et al., 1976) that emphasizes “some media have a higher degree of social presence (e.g., video) and other media have a lower degree of social presence (e.g., audio)” (as cited by Lowenthal, 2009, p. 6). The NPOs and FPOs that posted multiple content types have a higher social presence than the organizations that did not post multiple types of content.
Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

Limitations of The Study

One of the most critical limitations of this study was timing. Organizational Facebook activity, or lack thereof, could have been affected by the timing of the 30-day observation (March-April, 2011). For example, if there were a tornado in the 30-day period in which the organizations were observed, the American Red Cross may have seen an extreme spike in activity. Likewise, had the The Deepwater Horizon oil spill (also referred to as the BP oil spill) happened within the 30-day window, oil companies like Chevron may have seen a spike in activity. If organizations were experiencing a downtime in their campaign marketing, or they were gearing up for the next campaign, Facebook posts may have been significantly lower, than had an organization been in the midst of a campaign launch, etc.

Another limitation to this study was the random selection procedure use to collect averages. There is a huge number of content that is created, daily, on Facebook. In 2010, Search Engine Land reported that Facebook receives over 700 posts per second. With that in mind, time did not permit to capture every post by all twenty organizations, and their fans, for 30 days. As a result, to capture the FEP and shared content information, organizational posts were chosen at random, and calculated as such. This is a limitation because some posts have extremely low numbers, while other posts have extremely high numbers. If the posts randomly selected all had extremely high numbers coincidentally, this would not be the most accurate illustration of the data. The opposite is true as well.

One final limitation can be the nature upon which the organizations were chosen. The organizations’ “Top Twenty” status was primarily due to their yearly revenue. All of the organizations observed were the leading revenue makers in their sector. It is clear, based on the study, that the highest revenue makers may not be the communications trendsetters. Discussed in more detail in the next section: Recommendations for Future Research, perhaps it is the smaller
organizations (nonprofit and for-profit) that have more motivation for being active, thought leaders in the social media marketing space.

Recommendations for Future Research

As this study only scratched the surface of information to be collected, there are a number of studies that can evolve from this one. One recommendation would be to observe organizations in the same industry (e.g. automobile), and observe how messaging strategies compare to one another. Another approach, as mentioned earlier, would be to observe smaller organizations (small or medium). These organizations may have more incentive to thrive on Facebook, and connect with their audiences more than the large organizations.

As indicated in the literature review, nonprofit organization’s communications strategies haven’t been discussed in great depth. As such, an additional recommendation for future research would be to dive into the various levels of NPO messaging (e.g. social change, policy change, etc.), and compare and contrast the messaging tactics on Facebook.

Conclusion

As previously discussed, nonprofit organizations and for profit organizations have very different organizational objectives. The objectives of nonprofits are grounded in promoting change, and encouraging public will, while for profit objectives are focused on promoting consumer purchase, and increasing profit margin (Communications Consortium Media Center, 2004). As such, it stands to reason that the communications and messaging objectives would vary as well. In general, this was not the case for this study. Neither nonprofit nor for profit organization encouraged conversations amongst their Facebook fans. The majority of the organizations posted content that neglected to yield more than a “like” from their fans. Also, on the topic of conversation encouragement, this study found that fan engagement and organizational encouragement of conversation do not have a direct relationship. While fans
may be “engaged” in the content, this does not mean that organizations are encouraging conversation. Of the 20 organizations observed, no organization both encouraged conversation, and had a high engagement ratio. Another finding in this study found that highly stylized Facebook pages had the highest fan participation. A very small percentage of the organizations (both for profit and nonprofit) invested in a highly stylized Facebook presence. In other words, the majority of the organizations placed little emphasis on content presentation and their Facebook pages, in turn, were incapable of being understood or appreciated – inaccessible. Finally, the last of the findings revealed that neither nonprofit or for profit posted a variety of content types. Said another way, the content type (e.g. external article) posted, rarely changed. For the few organizations that did vary the content, appealing to multiple senses, the response and participation amongst their fans was great.

As consumers evolve, culture evolves. Modern culture is grounded in the spirit of connections and relationships. Social networks are powering culture, as they personify the ideas of listening, sharing and learning. Skoler (2009) advances the idea of modern culture when he refers to it as a “collective wisdom of diverse voices passing along direct experience.” Skoler uses Wikipedia (encyclopedia-like platform with only user generated content) as an example, to make the point that collective wisdom “carries as much or more weight than scholarship or deference to titles.” Collective wisdom is what drives Social networking. Facebook, specifically, not only charts paths for consumers to become more informed, but it creates a platform that enables organizations to reach their consumer in a more human way; If done right, the popularity of an organizational brand can multiply overnight. Duoma (2008) states, “Successful communities on Facebook offer an attitude of openness, transparency and enthusiasm - not a technology platform for advertising.” This success, according to Solis (2008), is partially dependent on the “existing infrastructure and social-savvy of the
Above the ability to listen, engage and create profiles across the social landscape, success is also dependent on an organization's ability to "identify meaningful conversations, comprehend them, determine those valuable enough to participate, and then feed that collective insight back into the organization for positive change" (Solis, 2008, para. 7). Social technology, and its communication methodologies will continue to evolve, and become more dynamic over time. As organizations begin to recognize its value, along with its impact on their audience, audiences will begin to recognize the value, and impact of the organizations targeting them.
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Appendix I: The Facebook Fan

Best Practices for Facebook Fan Pages: User Types
Posted September 25, 2008 by Collin Douma

#1 The Enthusiast: Representing the greatest number (85-90%) of participants, the Brand Enthusiast is simply a person who wants the Facebook equivalent of a “bumper sticker” on their profile. Since they make up the bulk of the community, attracting them to join is a very important objective. They are enthusiasts of a brand and they want the world to know it. It's wise to encourage this consumer to participate more in the group, but be careful not to over “spam” them because it’s just as easy to leave a page as it is to join. A bulky enthusiast population promotes community vitality.

#2 The Advocate: The next largest group (5-10%) of participants represents the people who will continually update content on the page by simple “acknowledgements”. These people consume the content and post messages on the wall, provide feedback on message boards and comment on content. It's important that you give as many places for the Advocate to participate as possible. The reason this is so important is twofold:

- The more participation you initiate from a Brand Advocate, the more vibrant the community becomes. They feed the “ego” of the person who provided the original content (Brand Influencer), and often encourages them to produce more content.

- Every time a person participates in any way on the Page, their personal “news feed” broadcasts their action, thereby promoting the brand to their entire network.

#3 The Influencer: Representing the smallest group is the Brand Influencer at about 1%. This active community member provides all the advocacy and enthusiasm of the other group members, but is also active in original content creation. These “uploaders” are very important in the long-term health of the community.