

# Overcoming Boundaries: Using Online Media Tools to Effectively Engage the Public

EPA Community Involvement Conference  
Seattle, WA

August 2009

 **EnviroIssues**

# Our goals of this session

- Broaden your definition of online media
- Help you approach online media on your projects
- Identify public involvement boundaries and potential online solutions
- Identify boundaries inherent to online media tools
- Discuss tools for your day-to-day online media expertise – regardless of project type
- Provide insight toward integrating online and in-person public involvement

# What is online media?

TWITTER SMART PHONE BLOGS BING  
Up-to-the-minute Picasa database  
information **WEB SITE** instant  
FACEBOOK FLASH feedback  
YouTube interactive Skype Google Flickr  
Wikipedia MAPS iTunes LinkedIn  
SURVEY *"There's an app for that..."* COMMENT  
MONKEY shopping FORMS

# Online Media Defined...

A broad term encompassing the ever growing suite of **electronic tools available** to reach your audience.

Online media offer a wide variety of methods for viewing, gathering, cataloguing and interacting with information **using the Web**.

# Most importantly...it should meet the needs of your “project” and audience

Online media expand your traditional public involvement tool kit and should be planned for and used strategically.

- *Would you ask for feedback from the public if you don't plan to use the comments?*
- *Would you establish a citizen advisory group with nothing for them to advise?*
- *Would you send weekly letters to homeowners with no new news?*

# Case study: Audiences and Media

Given the audience you have been assigned:

1. How do you think this person or group gets its “news” – about any activity, cultural event, policy change, etc. in their community?
2. How do you think this person or group accesses the internet?
3. What “boundaries” or “barriers” do you think this person or group would have for accessing information via the internet to learn about your projects?

# Case Study Recap

- What are similarities between audiences?
- What holes to internet access have we identified?
- What boundaries or barriers have been identified?

# Nationally: Internet Use

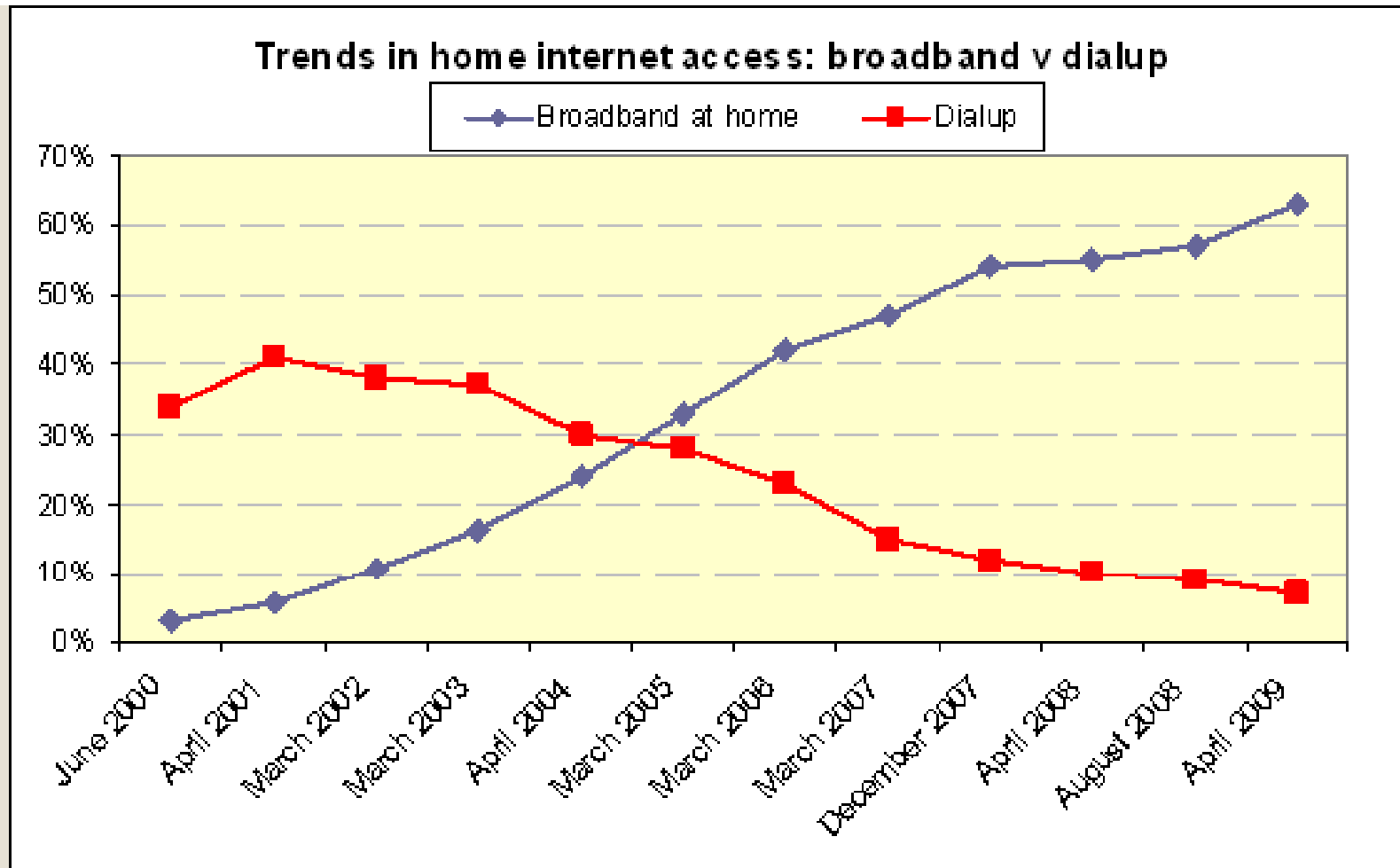
Three-quarters of U.S. residents used the Internet to access information, education, and services in 2007.

- Urban: 77%
- Rural: 71%

# Nationally: Broadband Access

- April 2009, broadband access at home was up across all classes of people to 63% of all adult American households (up from 55% in 2008).
- A majority of home broadband users see a home high-speed connection as "very important" to at least one dimension of their lives and community, such as *sharing their views with others about key issues*, or *finding out what is going on in their community*.

# Nationally: Broadband v. Dialup



# Nationally: Wireless Internet

- More than half of Americans - 56% - have accessed the internet wirelessly on some device.
- 46% of these people said that **easy access to information online was very important** when on the go.

# Boundary: Few site visitors

## Community Involvement Objective:

Get people to our Web site

## Solution Pointers and Example:

Branding

Search engines

## Other potential solutions/online tools:

Leverage existing distribution lists, blogs, Web sites

Social media tools

# Boundary: Short Attention Span (of participants)

## Community Involvement Objective:

Keep people on the site so that they learn more than just the (sometimes inaccurate) sound bites about a project.

## Solution Pointers and Example:

### [Clean design](#)

Help “eye movement” to drive people to the most important information 

Use analytics to create the best user experience

## Other potential solutions/online tools:

Grassroots techniques still apply: people will take note of news “from their friends”--get the word out about your topic through existing interest groups, distribution lists, etc.

# Boundary: Distributing and *Understanding complex information*

## Community Involvement Objective:

Make technical information accessible to the public, for better understanding and eventual input.

## Solution Pointers and Example:

Map key information - Sound Transit 2 Web site

Provide “click through” option for easy online viewing of report

## Other potential solutions/online tools:

PDF document

Online document hosting

# Boundary: Project scale and complexity

## Community Involvement Objective:

- Provide accurate and coordinate information, even across the miles
- Relay cohesive message from multiple project partners

## Solution Pointers and Example:

Independent, coordinated Web site - Gateway West Transmission Line Project

Interactive maps - Gateway West Transmission Line Project

## Other potential solutions/online tools:

Electronic newsletters

Online public meetings

# Boundary: High interest, participation, *plus* regulatory requirements

## Community Involvement Objective:

- Adequately archive, categorize and synthesize a broad range of input.
- Capitalize on previous engagement by continually engaging the same audience.

## Solution Pointers and Example:

Employ online databases

## Other potential solutions/online tools:

Public data sharing

# Boundary: Dense population, controversial issue

## Community Involvement Objective:

Gather input from as many members of the public as possible, given they all have a stake or will be affected by the outcome.

## Solution Pointers and Example:

Web survey - 520 Tolling Implementation Committee

## Other potential solutions/online tools:

Offer telephone and/or printed versions of survey for those who may not have access to internet.

Provide kiosks at designated locations (e.g., public meetings) for input directly into survey.

# Boundary: My project is “far flung”

## Community Involvement Objective:

Help interested parties who may not be able to “see” the progress of a project or decision process.

## Solution Pointers and Example:

“Photo blogs” – [Puget Sound Partnership](#)

## Other potential solutions/online tools:

[Whrrl.com](#)

YouTube.com

# Boundary: Fast changing project – especially construction

## Community Involvement Objective:

On a continual basis, keep interested and affected people informed and engaged on the project.

## Solution Pointers and Example:

“Blog style” reporting – SR 522 Improvement Project

## Other potential solutions/online tools:

RSS

[Twitter](#)

Facebook

Email distribution lists

# Boundary: Printed words can't tell the story

## Community Involvement Objective:

Make project accessible, relevant, and relatable for community.

## Solution Pointers and Example:

Professional Video Incorporation – Sound Transit 2

Recorded PowerPoint – Aurora Bridge

Recap Public Meeting – Puget Sound Partnership

## Other potential solutions/online tools:

YouTube.com

# Pointers: Working within your agency template

- Energize the “what’s new” box, keep the content short and fresh.
- Keep all content concise, fresh and remember the “F” pattern.
- Don’t hide important content, short attention spans might not find it.
- Branded URLs.
- Consider project specific sites or sub-domains for large projects.

# And then there is implementation...

Think about the basics first:

- What is our message or “problem statement?”
- Who is the target audience?
- Assume the average person will only spend a minute on your site: what do we want people to take away from their online experience?
- What feedback are we really seeking...and can we use it?

*Will the “extras” distract from those core elements?*

# Keep in mind...

- The web is not the same as print media – the first two paragraphs should have all of the important information
- On design: provide a clear starting point for the eye
- “Over designing” means that people may perceive your content as an advertisement, and disregard it.
- Provide tools for high-priority tasks – this is where “clicking” and interactivity come in!
- Multiple “rolls” of the mouse to get to end content – is all of this content needed?

# In summary

- Boundaries can be overcome through online media ...but some remain, or are created
- Consult your public involvement plan for your program goals and objectives before jumping into new tools and tactics
- Plan for online media, include it in your public involvement plan
- Keep Web, blog, Twitter, etc. consistent. All media sources should be connected

# Questions?

## *Contact us*

**Chris Morse**

[cmorse@enviroissues.com](mailto:cmorse@enviroissues.com)

**Erin Taylor**

[etaylor@enviroissues.com](mailto:etaylor@enviroissues.com)

 **EnviroIssues**

101 Stewart Street, Suite 1200

Seattle, WA 98101

P: 206-269-5041

SEATTLE

TACOMA

PORTLAND

BOISE

RICHLAND

**INSE**  
 Mission & Values

• **Leadership:** Leadership is a critical success factor for INSE. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

• **Academics:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

• **Research:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

• **Community:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

• **Environment:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

• **Global:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

• **International:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

• **World:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

**HEADSTORM**

• **About Us:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

• **Services:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

• **Partners:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

• **News:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

• **Contact:** We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty. We are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience for our students and faculty.

Web Search

• **Groundhog Job Shadow Day:** Groundhog Job Shadow Day is a program that allows students to gain hands-on experience in a variety of careers. This program is designed to help students explore different career options and gain valuable work experience.

• **Groundhog Day - The Official Site of the Pennsylvania Groundhog Club:** The Pennsylvania Groundhog Club is a non-profit organization that promotes the tradition of Groundhog Day. We provide information about the event, including the location, time, and activities.

• **A State Groundhog Day Jubilee Festival 2008:** The State Groundhog Day Jubilee Festival is a celebration of the tradition of Groundhog Day. It features a variety of activities, including a parade, a contest, and a festival.

• **Groundhog Day Jubilee Festival 2008:** The Groundhog Day Jubilee Festival is a celebration of the tradition of Groundhog Day. It features a variety of activities, including a parade, a contest, and a festival.

• **Groundhog Day Jubilee Festival 2008:** The Groundhog Day Jubilee Festival is a celebration of the tradition of Groundhog Day. It features a variety of activities, including a parade, a contest, and a festival.

• **Groundhog Day Jubilee Festival 2008:** The Groundhog Day Jubilee Festival is a celebration of the tradition of Groundhog Day. It features a variety of activities, including a parade, a contest, and a festival.

