





Going Viral: Web 2.0 In Federal Project Management Takes Shape

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Social media tools have taken hold of federal projects over the past few years. Not only are more project teams leveraging social media tools, but more project stakeholders are engaging with projects via social media. Consider that the Centers for Disease Control helped to get the message out about the H1N1 flu by posting the content on YouTube: they received more than 87,000 hits on one video alone. Continuing the trend, NASA received 350,000 hits on a video entitled "[NASA shuttle launch Atlantis high definition 1280x720.](#)"

These are excellent examples of how the U.S. government is using the power of social media to deliver real-time or near time messaging in projects. In the federal project setting, two primary uses for social media are emerging:

1. Collaborating with a project team, and
2. Reaching out to the agency leadership, the public and others.

Social media tools can be a highly effective means of communicating project details. Social media is excellent for enabling far-flung project teams to collaborate more effectively. Moreover, social media allows individual stakeholders to create and edit content; rate, comment upon and discuss content; tag and organize data; mash and layer information; and personalize and share subject matter. This user-generated perspective allows for parallel processing in ways never envisioned even a few years ago. Teams can collaborate on an idea virtually while tending to other project tasks. Ideas can percolate and mature in online forums.

In the project setting, teams should choose a limited set of social media tools, and become familiar with their function and the various guidelines that apply to their use. The table below provides some guidance on which tools fit various project needs. Project teams will benefit from a development space—a protected area where ideas, interim work products, and dissention can flow freely. Outreach to agency leaders, the public and others requires more polished communications. No matter the audience, however, social media allows for user-generated, spontaneous communication.

Project Need	Social Media	Best For
Status. Immediate notification of project status, key events, general news items, etc. Automated notifications of frequently updated content.	Really Simple Syndication , or RSS, allows users to choose to consume content where they want to, reduces duplication, and allows readers to aggregate similar content across government.	Project Manager To Team
Project Diary. Recording ideas, events, "the day-in-a-life-of" content. Brings government to new audiences. Puts a human face on the government by using informal tone. Opens public conversations, surfaces issues and solves them.	Blogs provide an efficient method for communicating with large, distributed teams, and the public at large. Blogs allow project teams to put a human face on government.	Project Manager or Sponsor To team and public
Collaboration. Team collaboration, knowledge sharing, collaborative editing, public input.	Wikis allow government project teams to share knowledge and create conversations across geographic spaces. Wikis can surface issues and solutions via collaborative authoring.	Team member To team member
Photo sharing. Multimedia sharing, such as pictures, video, animations, and more. Public education, outreach, and "how-to" information.	Video and photo sharing sites provide one-stop distribution for content.	Project team To public
Audio Messaging. Delivering project information via audio.	Podcasting builds trust with conversational voice. Can be used for important project updates, live deliberations, emergencies, messages, opinion pieces, and to correct misinformation.	Sponsor To public

Project teams that do not use social media are at a disadvantage. As more and more stakeholders become adroit in these tools, the expectation of social media will rise in the project environment. After all, the digital social environment is transforming how government engages teams, executives, the public and stakeholders of all kinds. Social media has entered the federal project space.

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