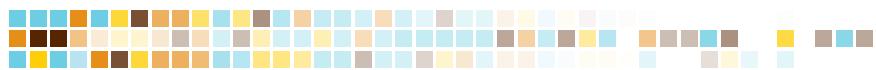


PERSPECTIVES



A monthly look at what's happening in the ever-changing digital world and beyond.



From the Editor

In this month's *Perspectives* we examine local businesses' use of digital marketing. From food trucks to local breweries, we highlight some homegrown Washington, D.C., businesses and their clever and creative use of social media. But regardless of whether you reside in the D.C. area or elsewhere, you can take advantage of the careful and insightful analysis in the following pages.

As always, we encourage your feedback.

Contribute to the conversation online, where versions of *Perspectives* are available for comment on our website's Sparkblog and on SlideShare, or send me an email letting me know what you think. If you are interested in a custom briefing on any topic in this edition, RTCRM is here for you—just contact your Project Manager or Account Manager. If you aren't a current RTCRM client and would like a custom briefing, contact me and we'll talk. If you are looking for the latest in digital trends with a healthy dose of attitude, visit *Treffpunkt*—the RTCRM Digital Integration and Innovations team blog—at <http://rtctreffpunkt.blogspot.com/>.

Thanks and enjoy.

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Photos courtesy of Flickr Creative Commons: P.1 *National Mall Washington D.C.*, by Jack Parrott, 2010. P.2 *Washington, D.C.* by Humberto Moreno, 2008



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D.C. Food Trucks: Can I Get That with a Side of Social?

Summary: The food truck craze has made its way to the nation's capital, and these restaurants on wheels thrive on social media. Social platforms serve as the method of choice to update the city on whereabouts and menus, but have also turned street eats into an interactive, engaging activity for Washingtonians. Take a look at how two trucks I've been dying to try are getting social; the first, a buttery lobster-mobile and the second a taco truck with a Korean twist.

David BenBassett, Coordinator

Digital Integration and Innovation

Marketing apprentice. Tennis player. Gadget nerd. Searching the digital world for people and ideas. Fear the Turtle. @benbassett919

Key Information:

Food trucks are all the rage in major cities these days, and their business, while delicious, is also very social. Storefront restaurants are stuck in the same place, but food trucks are always on the go. Pair that with a low marketing budget, and you get some innovative ways that these mobile chefs use social media to communicate their location to locavores on the cheap. The owners get in touch with fans via platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Foursquare and share their current location and menus. For foodies in the city, it becomes a sort of game: tracking down the truck and getting something tasty as a reward.



Most of the trucks have their own websites, but these are minimal and basically serve to direct the hungry to Facebook or Twitter, where the real interaction happens.

Owners make use of Twitter to let their followers know where they will be and what is featured on the menu. Red Hook Lobster Pound's truck has racked up over 20,000 followers who actively tweet questions, opinions, and just general lobster love. Facebook has been a successful forum for requesting locations and discussing experiences and favorite dishes. Posts from happy customers have really helped raise the image of street food. At the outset, many were skeptical of street meats and fish, but the inclusion of pictures and reviews from trusted friends have brought people *en masse* to the local vehicles. Other trucks, like Takorean, a Korean BBQ-Mexican fusion, host blogs where they update followers on everything from trends in recipes to local D.C. news.

Implications and Action Items:

Food trucks around the country have turned the traditional street vendor cart into a fun and engaging dining experience. Hungry Washingtonians can expect a high-quality meal that will leave them satisfied, but more importantly, ready to come back for seconds. Here are three strategies any brand can learn from food truck social media:

- **Location, location, location.** Location-based apps like Foursquare and Facebook Places are becoming increasingly popular. Set up a profile for your business: It's an inexpensive way to remind customers that you're close by.
- **Converse.** Create a dialogue with your customers. Food trucks have an active following because they understand that social media isn't all about selling, it's about building relationships. Encourage discussion and participation by participating yourself.
- **Act natural.** Set up a local voice for your brand via social media. Food trucks make themselves a part of the city. Show the locals that you're one of them, even if you're national.



The CDC Knows Social Media

Summary: The CDC has been using social media effectively for some time now. The organization uses it to disseminate important and timely information as well as to keep American citizens actively involved and engaged in the nation's health topics. The strategy is effective due to the CDC's templated, surround-sound creative approach. Marketers can draw lessons from this on how to use social media.

Sara Weiner, Associate Director

Digital Integration & Innovation

Years of planning, prodding & implementing digital stuff. Philadelphia born 'n' raised. Geeky, athletic and green. Go Big Red!

Key Information:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began using social media over a year ago and is continually increasing its presence and efforts. It manages Twitter feeds, Facebook pages, YouTube channels, Flickr accounts and more, presenting consumers with information on health topics ranging from H1N1 and teen pregnancy to the CDC's famous Zombie Apocalypse preparedness guide.¹ The organization's efforts have yielded impressive results: over 1.2 million Twitter follows on the @CDCemergency emergency response feed, 150K fans on Facebook, and 2.8 million² people per month visiting the CDC website.

The CDC's social media efforts are effective for three reasons. 1) The CDC is organized—it has different feeds and profiles for different topics, manages efforts in a surround-sound approach across platforms, and utilizes the platform most relevant to the topic at hand. 2) The efforts are efficient and templated—when the CDC issues information about a new topic, it creates a "Tool Kit" of social media icons, portable assets, widgets and buttons. These items are accessible and usable by anyone wishing to spread the word about a health issue. 3) They are creative—their recent Zombie Apocalypse campaign took a serious topic, emergency preparedness, and spun it in a way that got attention and promoted the key message of "Get a kit, make a plan, be prepared," which referred to all emergency situations, not just zombie attacks.

Implications and Action Items:

The CDC's approach is applicable to other brands wishing to engage in social media. While Zombie Apocalypses might not be on-message for every brand, brands can draw key lessons from the CDC as follows:

- **Make it easy for the consumer.** Allow consumers to take the action they want, but facilitate the process through readily available and transportable formats. The CDC's Tool Kits provide consumers with easily accessible and usable content that they can distribute.
- **Let the consumer pick a platform.** Keep in mind that many consumers separate their public from private social networks (for example, Facebook for friends and family, Twitter for business), so providing consumers with options for following and engaging will give your social media efforts more legs.
- **Be everywhere.** The CDC's surround-sound approach maintains a constant voice across the Web, increases brand awareness and lets consumers engage as they prefer, and allows them to match the message to the best platform.
- **Be creative.** Social media and viral topics tend to lean toward the unusual or interesting. Putting a different spin on the everyday topic can give to limited brand messages a variety of new content areas with which consumers can interact and engage.

¹ Social Media: Preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse. <http://tiny.cc/zjmb1> (accessed 8/3/11)

² Quantcast.com profile of www.cdc.gov



@WMATA – Metro Finds Its Social Voice

Summary: Summer has been a busy season for Metro, aka the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). In an effort to increase transparency into the system's operations and improve customer communication, WMATA is rededicating its social media efforts and has made key hires devoted to managing its social presence. In addition, WMATA is actively leveraging information that is collected from rider-submitted tweets to help identify problems and find solutions in a timely manner. While there is still room for improvement, WMATA finally appears to be taking the right steps in social media.

Kara Reinsel, Senior Strategist
Digital Integration & Innovation

Digital marketer and online business strategist. DMV local. Art, food and fashion enthusiast.

Key Information:

WMATA's social media presence is almost exclusively devoted to its Twitter handle, @WMATA (formerly @MetroOpensDoors).¹ With over 13,000 followers, it is a workhorse of real-time, two-way communication between the agency and its riders. It is a critical tool in the day-to-day operations of Metro because it acts as a clearinghouse of data—riders tweet frontline reports and @WMATA shares service disruptions and updates. For example, riders can report Metro cars with broken air conditioning via Twitter by using the hashtag #hotcar; WMATA routinely monitors Twitter for these tweets and deploys maintenance crews where needed.



Having staff dedicated to managing social media properties and driving the strategy is often a weak spot for many organizations. WMATA has addressed this problem by bringing onboard two key hires. The first is Dan Stessel, chief spokesperson for the agency, who regularly responds to the tweets on @WMATA (his tweets are signed ^DS). Brian Anderson, Metro's new social media manager, joined Metro this month and has been tweeting on @WMATA since almost day one (all of his tweets are signed ^BA). Having staff behind @WMATA regularly sign its tweets helps to demonstrate to @WMATA's followers that real people monitor the handle and the information is reliable and accurate. Signing tweets also humanizes Metro employees—they are not anonymous bureaucrats tucked away in a government building. Given the challenges Metro has experienced with broken escalators, hot cars, and most sadly the fatal accident in June 2009,² replying to riders' tweets is the first step in demonstrating that the agency cares about what happens to its riders—@WMATA isn't a magic bullet, but it's a start.

One area for improvement on @WMATA is to be more selective about who the handle follows. Some of the accounts make perfect sense—the *Washington Post*'s Dr. Gridlock column, DC Department of Transportation—but others are perplexing choices. Consider @SassyMarmalade, who describes herself as having “a passion for whimsy, sass, shoes and old-fashioned romance. I like to flaunt my cleavage and read books checked out from the library. And eat cake.” Her connection to WMATA is unclear. Unfortunately there are dozens of similar Twitter accounts that are being followed by @WMATA—it doesn't look professional and none of these handles has any identifiable reason to be linked to the agency.

Implications and Action Items:

@WMATA serves as an example of how Twitter can be an integral part of an organization's operations by:

- **Communicating directly with customers.** @WMATA responds to questions, identifies problems, and provides updates in real time. And it puts a human face on Metro by making it possible for its employees to engage one-to-one with its riders.
- **Use of dedicated staff.** Dedicated staff ensures the account is monitored and engages with its followers.

¹ *Washington Post*, “@WMATA: Metro changing Twitter handle,” Dana Hedgpeth, July 30, 2011. <http://tinyurl.com/3uc8vhx>

² <http://tiny.cc/9wha4>



Three Lessons from the Launch of D.C.'s New Beer Industry

Summary: When people hear “Washington, D.C.” the first thing that usually comes to mind is the federal government. But there’s a lot more to the nation’s capital than three-letter agencies. We’re brewing up a homegrown beer industry, and social media is powering its marketing campaign. Learn lessons in how to build brand commitment even before you launch, from D.C.’s first distribution brewery in 50+ years.

Carlen Lea Lesser, VP/Director

Digital Integration & Innovation

Connector of people, ideas and info. Marketer, geek, blogger, baker, tea drinker, craft beer fan, NPR junkie and artist. @carlenlea

Key Information:

There's a lot more to D.C. than just the federal government, even though you wouldn't know it from the nightly news. D.C. has actually been brewing up a native beer industry. In April 2011, DC Brau became the first distribution brewery to open in the District of Columbia in more than 50 years.¹ To get the local beer geeks excited, the company began social media engagement almost six months earlier. DC Brau has utilized both Twitter and Facebook heavily, along with smaller experiments with Instagram and Foursquare.

Currently it has 3,935 followers on Facebook and 2,369 followers on Twitter. Notably, on Twitter DC Brau is only following 121 people, which indicates it is not just receiving reciprocal follows from people who may or may not be really interested in the brewery. A quick scan of who is following DC Brau also indicates that they are real people and not spam-bots. Beyond the “follow,” DC Brau has also seen nice engagement with its fans. Nearly every post on the Facebook wall has comments and “Likes.” They also regularly engage in conversation with fans and supporters on Twitter. Many people wonder if engaging fans and the community around your business or product will actually lead to success. Clearly the answer for DC Brau is yes. When DC Brau officially poured its first beer at a launch party at a local bar, it had lines around the block and sold 15 kegs, or 1,800 servings, of beer in 6.5 hours. As someone commented on Facebook, that works out to five pints of beer a minute.²

Implications and Action Items:

DC Brau did everything right if it was trying to build brand commitment from the start. With the launch of Three Stars Brewery and Chocolate City Beer in the works, we'll see if social media can again help to launch and sustain a true brewing industry in the nation's capital. There's a lot of lessons that can be learned from DC Brau and the D.C. brewing industry's use of social media. Here are the top three:

- **“We the people.”** Making people part of something is the fastest way to build brand commitment. DC Brau made its fans feel like they were part of something really big, and built desire for its products even before people could taste them.
- **Be part of the culture.** DC Brau became an instant part of the local D.C. culture. Its beers are appropriately named to make locals feel like insiders, the brewery is involved online and off with the D.C. food and craft beer scene, and it even takes positions on controversial issues like D.C. statehood.
- **Show your passion.** Just a quick look at DC Brau's Twitter feed and you know the people behind this brewery are really, really into this. Why should someone care about your product more than you do? Be sure to show some real passion for your products, industry, and customers.

¹ “Beer: DC's impending brewery boom”: <http://tiny.cc/8xj3s>

² Meridian Pint Fanpage Status about DC Brau launch: <http://tiny.cc/vs1td>





Social Media and the Phillips Collection

Summary: The Phillips Collection is a private museum in Washington, D.C., that makes expert use of social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr to draw millions of visitors each year. Other organizations can learn both from the museum's established social media presence and the risks it can now afford to take to bring its marketing strategy to the next level.

Michelle Fares, Associate

Digital Integration and Innovation

Floridian Hoya. Enhancing communication btwn companies and people thru social media, online communities, and cupcakes. Lots of cupcakes. @michellefares

Key Information:

The Phillips Collection has been a mainstay of the D.C. arts scene since it opened in the early 20th century. In the 1920s, the museum was ahead of its time, breaking ground as one of America's first modern art museums. Today, it is using a well-formed and integrated social media strategy to promote its events and exhibitions to visitors and position itself carefully in the city's cultural scene. When considering a social media strategy, other cultural institutions can learn from the Phillips Collection's actions:

- **Cross-channel integration.** The Phillips Collection has a presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr, in addition to a blog and apps for the iPhone, iPad, and Android. It uses these platforms to post information specific to the museum itself, as well as more general articles about the wider art world and the D.C. cultural scene.
- **Coordinating with other citywide cultural events.** The museum uses its social media properties to publicize its partnerships with other D.C. events. For example, D.C. Eats is a food festival celebrating local cuisine. The Phillips Collection has a series of blog posts where local chefs discuss their favorite food-related artwork, and it reposts these on Facebook and Twitter.
- **Working within an ecosystem.** The museum follows other D.C. cultural institutions, such as the Shakespeare Theater Company or the Hillyer Art Space, on Facebook and Twitter; this helps to position it in the context of a larger arts scene.
- **Timeliness.** Content on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, the blog, and Flickr is updated frequently, and is timely and relevant to current events in the area. For example, a particularly hot day in D.C. inspired a blog post called "It won't always be this hot..." about the painting "New York in Snow" by Augustus Vincent Tack.



Overall, the Phillips Collection is doing a great job of maintaining a solid social media presence. However, now that it has mastered the basics, it can afford to take risks, be creative, and experiment with trends and new technologies.

Implications and Action Items:

Like the Phillips Collection, many organizations have established presences on social media sites. For these organizations, however, it may be time to take it to the next level. Cultural institutions and businesses can take advantage of the full potential of social media in the following ways:

- **Inspire user participation.** Although the museum posts frequently on Twitter and Facebook, it doesn't use these platforms to engage with users. The Phillips Collection can encourage users to participate by posting user-generated content, asking thought-provoking questions, and soliciting fan feedback.
- **Personalize the organization.** The focus of the Phillips Collection's social media strategy appears to be the art collection and museum events. Fans might enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at the people who actually run the organization or a Q&A session with a museum professional.
- **Encourage viral sharing.** Creating digital videos that are quirky or have more personality could inspire users to share them with each other, allowing them to spread virally and garnering even more fans and visitors to the museum.
- **Be on the cutting edge.** Since its audience is already primed by the museum's basic use of social media, the Phillips Collection can experiment with technologies or trends like QR codes, hyper-personalization, or location-based marketing.



D.C. Small Businesses: Expand Your Social Horizons

Summary: Facebook and Twitter are so ubiquitous that for small D.C. businesses and organizations, having a presence on both has become a cost of entry. However, those sites should not be small businesses' only social media marketing forums. There are other social media platforms that offer businesses the opportunity to engage with large consumer audiences before they've entered the shop, reinforce their brand after an in-person interaction, and keep their brand in the consumer's conversation.

Rebecca Johnson, Strategist
Digital Integration and Innovation

Tradigital marketer. Social media junkie. DC Locavore. Native NYCer. Soccer enthusiast. Aspiring urban homesteader. NPR fiend. @digibec

Key Information:

For small businesses and organizations, social media is both a necessary marketing tool to drive new business and a critical touchpoint in the lifecycle of a customer's engagement. Yet while Twitter and Facebook are great for awareness, there are other social media vehicles that offer more targeted, engaging, and retention-focused opportunities.

One often-overlooked platform is Yelp, founded in 2004 to "help people find great local businesses like dentists, hair stylists, mechanic, etc." Since then the site has blossomed, with more than 53 million people visiting the site in the past 30 days and over 20 million local, user-generated reviews. D.C. bookstore and coffee shop Politics & Prose features its Yelp page alongside its other social media assets (Facebook and Twitter) on its homepage, allowing visitors to quickly access reviews of the store's books, ambience, food, and neighborhood details.

TripAdvisor, a pioneer of user-generated content, features user reviews and advice on hotels, shops, sites, etc., and offers D.C. museums, monuments, attractions, and even neighborhoods the chance to strut their stuff for tourists and visitors. The site uses submitted ratings to create ranked lists, such as Things To Do, Places To Stay, and Sites To Visit, which over 50 million unique monthly visitors use to determine their travel plans.

Urbanspoon and OpenTable should be on all D.C. restaurants' social media radar, as these sites are hotspots for both local and visiting diners. Site users can add reviews and ratings, check out menus, see what critics and bloggers reviews, get other dining recommendations based on their profile or browsing history and make online reservations. Restaurant owners can control their restaurant's page, keeping important information and specials up-to-date and creating a restaurant microsite on a search-friendly, highly trafficked website.

Implications and Action Items:

- **Choose wisely.** Small businesses have limited time and funds, so they should be selective and strategic with which social platforms they spend their time on. Pick a platform that's best for your industry, customers, and bottom line.
- **Prepare for feedback.** Unfortunately, not every review is going to be 5 stars. When that negative comment appears, use it as an opportunity to reach out, find out specifically what happened and use this event as a learning and business improvement experience.
- **Look for efficient solutions.** With so many websites and social media platforms out there, small businesses do not have enough time and resources to manage this ever-changing landscape. To save time, look for resources like SinglePlatform, which manages different social media accounts, and post information to those accounts in one place.





About RTCRM

RTC Relationship Marketing (RTCRM) is a full-service direct marketing and relationship marketing agency based in Washington, D.C., in the heart of Georgetown, with an additional office in New York. RTCRM boasts more than 40 years' worth of innovative, targeted solutions that grow its clients' brands and help them forge lasting, valuable relationships with their customers. What distinguishes RTCRM is its unique ability to analyze data and research on both a rational and emotional level. RTCRM's clients include major brands in the telecom, technology, pharmaceutical, and other business sectors such as AARP, Procter & Gamble, Eli Lilly, and Novo Nordisk.

To learn more about RTCRM, please visit www.rtcrm.com or follow the Twitter feed @rtcrm.

About the Digital Integration and Innovation Team

The RTCRM Digital Integration and Innovation team is tasked with keeping track and making sense of the ever-changing digital world. It's our job to understand the nuances of how and why different types of people use technology and what that tells us about them. More importantly, it's our job to help our clients apply this knowledge to better communicate with their customers. We help clients translate business goals into marketing campaigns that build relationships with customers. In the 21st century, understanding how and why someone uses technology is as important as understanding where they live, what gender they are, and how old they are. That's where we come in. From ensuring that technographics are considered in the research phase, to tactical plans that align digital, print and broadcast tactics, we work with clients and internal partners to make sure it all works.

It's not about what's cool. It's about what's smart.

Treffpunkt, Digital Integration and Innovation Team Blog: <http://rtctreffpunkt.blogspot.com>

