

Slacktivists Doing More than Clicking in Support of Causes

Americans who use social media to support causes are more likely to volunteer, ask others to show support for causes

Washington, D.C. (November 28, 2011) — “Slacktivists,” popularly portrayed as those individuals who passively “Like” causes on Facebook but are not truly engaged, may be more active—and valuable—than previously thought. According to new findings from the *Dynamics of Cause Engagement* study, conducted jointly by Georgetown University’s Center for Social Impact Communication and Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide, Americans who support causes most often by utilizing promotional social media (e.g., joining a cause group on Facebook, posting an icon on a social profile, blogging about a cause) participate in more than twice as many supportive activities (both online and offline) when compared to their non-social media promoter peers.

“This really redefines the way we think about slacktivists—how we motivate them, and how they really are engaging with and impacting causes right now,” said Denise Keyes, Senior Associate Dean and Executive Director of the Center for Social Impact Communication. “The presumption was that these individuals were replacing more ‘meaningful’ actions with simple clicks and shares. But what we found is that they’re actually supplementing—not replacing—actions like donating, volunteering and planning events.”

More ‘Activist’ than ‘Slacktivist’

In addition to showing their support for causes via a broader array of activities, social media promoters also are more likely than non-social media promoters to participate in a number of key activities.

- They are twice as likely to volunteer their time (30% vs. 15%) and to take part in an event or walk (25% vs. 11%).
- They are more than four times as likely to encourage others to contact political representatives (22% vs. 5%), and five times as likely to recruit others to sign petitions for a cause or social issue (20% vs. 4%).

And perhaps most surprising, given the common “slacktivist” portrayal, they are equally likely as non-social media promoters to donate their money in support of a cause (41% vs. 41%).

“The key takeaway is that many of the activities that slacktivists are more likely to undertake have this element of influence,” said Jennifer Wayman, Executive Vice President and Director of Social Marketing at Ogilvy Washington. “They are more likely to share what they’re doing with their networks, and there’s real value inherent in these relatively small actions that should not be underestimated.”

The Need for Integration

Despite the encouraging findings, practitioners and organizations are cautioned to not focus entirely on social media when asking for support for their causes. Previous releases from the study, available online at <http://bit.ly/dynamicsresearch>, highlight the continued importance of historically prominent types of engagement (e.g. donating money, volunteering), as well as point to the potential risks of digital tools as drivers of cause fatigue as their adoption rates increase. Overall study results reinforce the need for integration, combining multiple strategies to offer supporters a wide variety of engagement opportunities.

This is the final data to be released from the study, which examined trends in cause involvement among American adults age 18 and over, in addition to highlighting the roles of a variety of activities in fostering engagement with social issues.

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About the Survey

Ogilvy PR and Georgetown University's Center for Social Impact Communication developed the study with the objectives of showcasing trends in cause involvement and evaluating the role of a variety of activities in fostering engagement. An online survey was conducted by TNS Global among a nationally representative sample of 2,000 Americans ages 18 and over. The survey was fielded November 30 to December 22, 2010, and has a margin of error of +/-2.2% at the 95% confidence level.

The full ***Dynamics of Cause Engagement*** study report is available for download on November 28, 2011 at <http://bit.ly/dynamicsresearch>.

Key Findings

"Most Often" Ways of Getting Involved

	Social media cause promoters	Non- Social media cause promoters
Donating money	41%	41%
Volunteering time (i.e., help-lines, soup kitchens, mentoring, cleaning)	30%	15%
Taking part in an event or walk	25%	11%
Requesting that others contact their political representatives by email, letter or phone	22%	5%
Recruiting others to sign a petition for the cause	20%	4%
Requesting donations to support your work or involvement in a cause	11%	3%
Mean number of activities	6.7	2.9

Q: Once you are aware of a social issue or cause, in which of the following ways do you most often get involved?

(Select all that apply)

"Promotional social media activity" defined as:

- Joining a cause group on an online social networking site, like Facebook
- Inviting others to join the cause on Facebook or another online social networking site
- Sending a message to add the cause logo or icon on an online social networking page
- Posting a cause logo or icon to your page on an online social networking site
- Writing about a cause on a blog or social networking site, like Facebook

About the Center for Social Impact Communication

Georgetown University's Center for Social Impact Communication (CSIC) is the nation's leading educational resource on social impact communication. Launched in 2008 and housed in the Master of Professional Studies program in Public Relations and Corporate Communications, CSIC aims to elevate the discipline by pioneering industry standards in responsible communication practices and by educating and inspiring the professionals who lead the way in creating positive social impact through their work. For more information, visit csic.georgetown.edu.

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About Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide

Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide (Ogilvy PR) is a global, multidisciplinary communications leader operating in more than 80 markets. For more than two decades, Ogilvy PR has been at the forefront of social marketing—advancing personal and public health and safety and broader socially desirable goals via communications initiatives. We have developed numerous social marketing campaigns to successfully raise awareness, educate and prompt action regarding some of today's largest and most complex issues, ranging from cancer to cardiovascular health, substance abuse to homeland security, youth violence prevention to disaster preparedness, and much more.

Named Large Agency of the Year by The Holmes Report and PRNews, Ogilvy PR is a unit of Ogilvy & Mather, a WPP company (NASDAQ: WPPGY), one of the world's largest communications services groups. For more information, visit www.ogilvypr.com and smexchange.ogilvypr.com.

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