

Human Capital Shared Interest Group (SIG) Meeting

May 13, 2010

“What are the human capital implications of balancing increased government transparency while safeguarding the computing environment?”

- Mark Hunker kicked off meeting, introduced moderator Bill Fischer, SRA International lead Human Capital and Learning Solutions Group
- Bill Fischer posed the question: How is the government going to be balancing the pillars of increased transparency, which is a focus of the administration, but still maintain an appropriate security posture?

We started to look at how social media is being used by the government and what the intentions are for furthering their missions.

How do you balance transparency and security? How do you use social media to support transparency yet ensure that you're maintaining the appropriate security posture?

Every day there is something being written about the pitfalls of social media.

Only 10% of companies have policies that formally address these concerns. But by the time the ink is dried on these policies, will they be obsolete?

Our panel will discuss their perspectives on how social media is being used at their respective organizations.

Panelists:

- Steve Elky, Deputy Director of Infrastructure Services – Library of Congress
- Amanda Eamich, Director of New Media, Office of Communications – U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Susan Swart, Chief Information Officer, U.S. Department of State

Steven Elky – What he does for Library of Congress:

He is also acting chief architect, and before that he was the CSO. His role is to act as the deputy for the enterprise IT shop, with focus is placed on enterprise architecture and portfolio management. He is involved in a lot of day-to-day identification of issues and proactive planning to avoid problems and recovery when you can't foresee a problem.

The Library uses social media to get its collections out to the public; that is its mission. As they've been looking at social media, including doing studies and reassessing their web site, they realize that more and more people aren't coming directly to their site to find images and documents; they are using Google as their search mechanism and Facebook and Twitter to share what they find. The Library has \$124 million items in its collection.

The Library has developed tools that make it easier to share their information on tools like Facebook and YouTube. They have also engaged the public to help share information, such as photo collections on Flickr (however, they do not make it possible to share copyrighted material). They really have no security issues. They don't have the time to get a lot of metadata around every item. Pictures are posted that have some data related. The public can even go through Flickr to help provide details about images that the Library itself may not have.

Amanda Eamich – What she does for the USDA

She oversees new media and web communications, bridging the gap between technical and communications.

Oftentimes, as a communicator, she expresses a business need and works with the technical side to develop a tool that meets that need. She is a liaison.

As one example, the USDA is helping the First Lady's office with "Let's Move" which is about community engagement reaching out to people on a human level. This means using social media tools like Facebook, video, photos, crowd sourcing to show that the USDA is not the stoic, bureaucratic body that people may not be able to relate to. We use social media to put a face on what can often be a faceless bureaucracy.

We are also using it for policy making. We are opening up "the black box" and enabling citizens to comment on a policy or rule before it goes into effect, in fact before it is even drafted, which enables us to get closer to the mark before the policy is drawn up.

Susan Swart – What she does for State

Her role is twofold: Overarching governance role over all IT in the department, which is very distributed; and running the central IT organization which has the infrastructure.

One of their big challenges has been to take the organization from focusing on infrastructure to moving to a more innovative approach to incorporating new social media tools within the operations of the department and then supporting the public diplomacy efforts. This involves public affairs as well as public diplomacy that deal with embassies overseas.

"We also own policy and social media for State. We use social media externally and internally and have always realized that it had value to the department's mission. We never blocked these sites. We are using social media to engage populations overseas who are getting more access to these tools." They developed Exchange Connect to engage exchange students with students in the U.S. The Secretary did a commencement speech at New York University that talked about a virtual student foreign service, which allows students in universities here to engage in students overseas.

Internally, State has the Sounding Board, which enables internal State employees to provide comments and suggestions that can be commented on, and can be funneled up to management. This embraces the idea of crowd sourcing so that an idea can be presented and action can be taken.

Regarding policy, State has been working on one for over a year. The big issue is getting it through legal and records retention staff and security. The intent is to be general, not technology-specific. It changes too fast. The key to doing the right things in social media is to educate the individual on how to use it and use it securely.

Question from Bill Fischer: How has the chief human capital officer/HR dept been involved in each organization?

At State, HR clears regulations but was not part of the core team [on social media initiatives]; that was more public affairs, information technology, security, and records.

At Library of Congress, the policy was written in such a way to err on the side of protecting copyrighted info – not putting info out there that should not be out there. They were not trying to operationalize parts of the mission that have sensitivity. Communications was very involved and are as strong a driver as any other group at the Library. For example, their Director of Communications directs their Twitter feed.

The policy does say that in order to change something, they have to get approval from general council, web services (CIO shop), and Office of Communications. HR is not a big player.

At Agriculture, Communications is writing their policy hand in hand with CIO shop. There are territorial issues with CIO. “It was a breakthrough in our relationship evolution,” says Amanda. “Without security, we can’t communicate. If they have the tool but we have nothing to say, what’s the point?”

They did have to reach back to HR mandates. They hope that people have common sense and use technology tools appropriately. You have to go back to organizational ethics – these already exist. Whatever you would do when using email and the phone should be applied to using social media tools.

At Library, this isn’t all about technology; it’s doing business with a new technology. In order to roll out any of these services, they have to follow set security policies; that hasn’t changed. It’s just helping to give guidance that expands on HR policies that says ‘don’t do bad things or make the agency look bad.’

Question from Bill Fischer: To what extent at your agency are the appropriate rules of behavior being enforced today in terms of the appropriate way to use social media?

Agriculture: We can be liable for a lot of things we do not want to open the door to, such as the impression of endorsing certain products or services (such as the ads along the margin of a Facebook page, which are automatically generated based on details of the profile – but without control from the profile owner).

Similarly, you have to have control over who is behind a Twitter account? It can open the door to problems. For USDA, we have point people at each agency.

You don’t want to put anything on a Facebook page or blog that is going to create problems.

State: Regarding their initiative called Sounding Board: Will people be polite and follow standards of protocol? We have found that people are following guidelines. They get it. You have to educate your people about what they can and can't do and what the impact is of any action. The churn rate of technology is faster than paper message delivery, which is by nature more controlled. Technology is "a thousand points of light" and there's no real way to be constantly policing it. You have to instill in the organizational culture and training activities the way employees should conduct themselves.

Question from Bill Fischer: As HR professionals, we are interested in learning and training. To what extent are you seeing formal training for the appropriate use of social media?

State: I know we have in our cyber security we touch on social media. We have in some of our offices a "tip of the day" security tip related to social media. As people are briefed, we incorporate the formal education. Dos and Don'ts.

Fischer: So any new employee is being taught as they enter the organization?

Library: We control who is allowed to post externally pretty tightly. They have to abide by terms of service. We are very cognizant of the image of the Library. We have an iTunes University, Facebook page, YouTube page – but they are formal official channels. There are agreements to keep ads off the pages you would normally see. They look like formal government pages in a lot of ways, maybe more exciting than most. Likewise, we teach what is appropriate in our security training.

As an example of potential conflict between the perceived value of social media and the reality of security issues: We had refusal from our communications office to print an article about the dangers of social media in our newsletter. They said, "You can't put an article in the newsletter about the negative aspects of Facebook; we had to change that to the more neutral "social media."

Agriculture: I don't want to be the person telling employees what they can and can't do; I work with our agencies to flesh out a core training program and basic tenets and then figure out the mission and how social media can be best applied in their situation. That has had the greatest success. Brown bag lunches help share best practices. We have a Facebook chat shared around the communicators and tech folks that says social media is working and worth it.

Audience question: Related to security; you have concerns about what employees put out there. Are there any issues concerning the fact that using Facebook might breach a firewall and allow viruses or phishing?

Library: The Internet is dangerous, believe it. It doesn't matter whether you're hitting Facebook or a legitimate web site – the bad guys know what they're after – peoples' computing resources. They will go to the most used sites and compromise as many of those sites as they can. They can do this automatically not to compromise web sites and put the malicious payloads on those sites. They are getting smarter and smarter about it. They are going underground developing and testing exploits so that it doesn't crash your machine, but does get the computing resources that they really want.

Facebook is a great platform for spreading malicious code. It has a lot of apps and people agree to do things. Clicking “yes” is just something I’m not comfortable doing after all I’ve learned about security.

Are we going to try to clamp down? The Library is very open; we like to share info. I have to tell people all the time that the info you share must be the info you really want to share.

We looked at Facebook and said that it’s not different from the Internet or using web mail or doing things we have already been doing. You look at the observed risk and the controls you put in place.

Things like anti-virus are basically useless. The bad guys are always thinking of creative ways to use the operating system to do things it wasn’t designed to do, but can do. We have protection systems and people on guard to look out for risk. You weigh the potential risk against the morale value of these things. We aren’t going to shut it down any more than we would disconnect from the Internet. Machines get compromised and we have to be able to recover from it. We have to plan to occasionally “get sick.” It’s part of planning for something we know is going to happen eventually. We can do a lot to help prevent against it, but you can’t completely avoid it.

Social engineering is an issue to contend with; it is basically tricking people into giving information – Facebook is the master of this because it is a huge collection of information and a lot of applications that elicit information.

Agriculture: We don’t have Facebook or MySpace completely open. We have networks on smaller server systems. When you look at Facebook and YouTube, it can be a huge bandwidth suck that can mitigate the ability to run your regular sites and systems effectively.

We allow two people per agency that I verify that have a static IP address freed up so they can contribute to the page and police the traffic. We might open it further later on, but for now that’s our approach.

State: We have it open but one thing we faced is that people coming into the foreign service are used to sharing everything about their private life – where they live, where they go, who they’re seeing. We send them to places like Pakistan, Iraq, etc. We have to tell them not to share so much. They are in a different culture and telling too much can compromise their safety. You can’t show the entire world where you live. They need to think about the fact that the limits to what they provide in terms of their job should be the same as the limits to what they provide about their personal lives.

Library: The degree of security is about motive. The motive for something that might affect State isn’t the same as that which might affect the Library. We have to make people aware of these things. We handle that mostly through security briefings through newsletter articles, brown bags, and annual training to increase awareness.

Question from Mark Hunker: Most of us are HR professionals from the government. When I was in the government in the ‘90s at OPM, the Internet was just coming out.

People would spend hours on it and work productivity would go down. What is your policy on use and what are the union implications?

State: It's about behavior. You shouldn't be sitting there reading Sports Illustrated beyond your lunch hour, so you shouldn't be doing the things that aren't work-related on the Internet either. We have had a long-standing policy of personal use of work resources. The existing regulations cover social media. Where we have had problems include things like people watching the Final Four, which brought down our networks. We have had a couple of those types of instances but other than that we deal with these things with normal "do's and don'ts" expectations of behavior. The employee union would have been involved in the guidelines, but there hasn't been a specific conversation about technology and union employees.

Library: We have a strong union too; generally, our policy is covered in appropriate use of Library resources. It's not technology-specific. Like good HR policy should be, it's as broad as possible. It is written about IT systems, but it covers the use of Facebook and other social media.

One time our director of communications posted on a blog that we were going to be receiving all the old Tweets and archiving them; what happened was it went viral and got re-Tweeting and our blog crashed. Because there was a lot of excitement around that.

Question: How do social media support innovation?

Agriculture: We are using social media to reach out to student groups and veterinary colleges and using Linked In. We are bringing all out opportunities under one roof. We are trying to help job seekers to know how to find a job, without having to navigate an arcane web site and differentiate between agencies within the site. We want to make it less scary and more accessible to draw people in.

State: We're using Facebook for recruitment and using it to help people understand what State employees do, particularly from the foreign service.

Library: If you're a librarian, then the Library is the pinnacle of library jobs. From an IT perspective, it's not as big a deal to work there. In our Enterprise IT, we have about 300 people; 215 are government employees. We haven't taken lot of advantage of social media for recruitment. I can't see us expanding out on Social media as a recruitment tool.

Question: When you were getting your social media strategy put together and launch it, what did you have to do research-wise to get yourselves there? Did you get teenagers in the background or hire new IT types?

Agriculture: I am an army of one in new media. It's an education process, we've had a lot of success reaching out to agency resources. The person who is excited about social media probably isn't in your communication shop. But whoever is excited about it, let them do it. Let them write the blog. That way, you don't have to force someone to do it who might not really be engaged. Otherwise, it may seem forced and awkward.

Library: We've had a board around for years that handles our web presence. Our web services group has a lot of younger people in it. We recognize that and draw on their experiences because they viscerally understand some of the stuff that the rest of us have to learn. I try to imitate a

digital native, but I realize that that is a pale imitation of the real thing. So this group has been around, it has people from across the library in it – we already had a group that was ready to roll with social media. Our director of communications is very tech-savvy and tech-forward.

State: The change in the administration and how they ran the campaign has had a huge influence on how fast social media tools are becoming mainstream.

Question: Will the iPad take the place of having to go to the Library to do research? Are you looking into new technology that will allow that kind of research for going virtual?

Library: We have digitized tremendous amounts of materials, not just books but film and video, audio, and put it out on the web site. We're constantly looking at how we can do more. Next we need to ask ourselves, how do we deal with things that are copyrighted that we can't just share on the internet without violating laws? There are lots of challenges and with 124 million items, there is a lot of information – and a lot of copyrighted information. We publish items too quickly and acquire material too fast to publish all of it and go completely digital with it all. We'll never be able to digitize all of the resources that we have. You will always have to come to the Library to do at least some portion of your research. It won't ever be completely virtual.

Question; Are you tracking any metrics around effectiveness of social media like employee engagement? How do you measure ROI?

State: That's a great question. It's difficult to do. The agencies that are heavy users of social media are trying to figure out the best way to find out how many visitors, how many posts, length of conversation, etc. There is an attempt to do that, but I can't give a specific example of how we're doing that well. There is more of a focus on how social media is impacting your goal given what your message is.

Agriculture: It depends on your particular objective or the initiative. You can't just look at the initiative at face value, you have to see what your mission it. Tweeting about something or blogging about it, we get an increase in applicants for a grant or a job – these are the ROI for us. We do collect the comments we get from various social media initiatives and use them in reports – these are the “soft and squishies” – sometimes hard facts and numbers just don't exist.

Library: We do a tremendous amount of metrics collection. We measure whether people looked at a certain resource, how long were they spent on the site, where they came from? We tune the metrics to find out what people are looking for. We are putting emphasis on pushing information out to where people already are (e.g., MySpace page or YouTube) and enable them to share our information with others through their personal profile.

Bill Fischer closes

Mark Hunker then picks up the regular meeting.

Key quote: “Social media is about being where people already are.” – Amanda Eamich