



## **A SNCR Executive Summary**

# **Key Findings From the 2009 Middleberg / SNCR Survey of Media in the Wired World**

*By Jen McClure and Don Middleberg*

## **Introduction**

There is no doubt that the advent of social media and citizen journalism are affecting journalists, journalism, and the state of the media industry. Through the use of social media and new communications tools and technologies, news and information can be communicated more widely and quickly and by more people than ever before. Meanwhile, old media and communications business models are breaking down.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Middleberg/SNCR Survey of Media in the Wired World examined the effect of new communications and social media tools and technologies and the impact of citizen journalism on journalists and journalism.

The Society for New Communications Research and Middleberg Communications designed the research to examine how journalists are adopting these new tools and technologies and their attitudes about how social media and citizen journalism are affecting their profession.

## **Research Goals**

The research included an examination of:

- The impact of new media and communications tools on the way journalists work
- Which online resources and social media are considered the most valuable tools and how they are being used by journalists
- The frequency of use and preferences for a variety new media and communications tools and technologies

- Attitudes of journalists toward the impact and value of these new tools and trends on journalism

Another goal of the study was to provide insights as to how the public relations profession can understand these changes in order to work more effectively with journalists, and provide more value to the journalistic community.

### **Research Methodology**

The study was conducted via a Web-based survey created by SNCR/ Middleberg research team in conjunction with the assistance of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

The survey instrument included 4-point ordinal scales to capture data on journalists' use of and opinions about their use of new communications and social media tools and technologies and citizen journalism in order to gain insight into how journalism is evolving. The survey was conducted between July 2009 and October 2009, and received responses from 341 journalists, resulting in a 95 percent confidence ratio. In addition, the researchers spoke with dozens of journalists about their perceptions and use of social media and the future of journalism.

### **Survey Sample**

The survey sample included nearly 341 journalists from around the world. The largest percentage of respondents – 54 percent – work in the United States. More than 30 percent stated their role as editor (including “online editor”); 38 percent were reporters (including freelance reporters); others were producers and publishers. Nearly half of all respondents, 49 percent, work within newspaper or magazine organizations; more than 20 percent work for online media-only organizations; and 13 percent work for broadcasters (*i.e.*, radio and television).

### **Key Research Findings**

While the 2008 study brought to light a striking disparity in adoption rates and attitudes about the value of new communications and social media technologies and citizen journalism between the youngest versus the older journalists, the 2009 data shows explosive growth in the adoption of social media tools and technologies across all data sets. According to the survey responses:

- Nearly 70 percent of journalists are using social networking sites, a 28% increase since the 2008 study

- 48 percent are using Twitter or other microblogging sites and tools, a 25% increase since 2008
- 66 percent are using blogs
- 48 percent are using online video
- 25 percent are using podcasts
- More than 90 percent of journalists agree that new media and communications tools and technologies are enhancing journalism to some extent

Journalists responding to the survey also indicated that they are beginning to embrace social media tools and citizen journalism as part of their journalistic process. When asked to share their thoughts about how social media is changing the profession of journalism, participating journalists provided a wide range of responses.

One respondent answered, “Social media is changing the profession. It has enhanced the dialog between audience and writer and expanded the scope of those who can participate in disseminating news.” Hundreds of other responses and interviews with journalists echoed this sentiment, But another commented, “It is full of peril and promise,” and some research participants indicated that they still viewed the rise of social media and citizen journalism as a potential threat to traditional journalism, especially print journalism.

However, despite this ambivalence, 91 percent of respondents agreed that new media and communications tools and technologies are enhancing journalism. Journalists that participated in the study reported that they are increasingly using social media to disseminate news, find story ideas and sources, monitor sentiments and discussions, research individuals and organizations, keep up on issues and topics of interest and participate in conversations.

Additionally, journalists’ perception of the credibility of most social media channels is increasing. Nearly 80 percent of respondents agreed that new media and communications technologies allow them to report with greater accuracy, and 80 percent of journalists believe that bloggers have become important opinion shapers in the 21st century and many are increasingly incorporating citizen-generated media into their reporting.

This study indicates that there is now a large and growing percentage of journalists who view social media and the participation by the public in the journalistic process to be a necessary, and in most cases, positive step in the evolution of journalism, and they

understand the future of journalism to be a highly participatory, collaborative and dynamic process.

### **About the Research Team**

*Jen McClure is the founder and president of the Society for New Communications Research and CMO and director of community development for Redwood Collaborative Media. Ms. McClure is a renowned expert in new media and communications. Her career spans 25 years, and includes experience in all facets of professional communications, including journalism, market and media research, media relations, public relations, strategic communications, print and online publishing and broadcast media. She is a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, holds a graduate certificate in History, Politics and Society from Oxford University, and earned her masters degree at Stanford University.*

*Don Middleberg is a Senior Fellow of the Society for New Communications Research. He has more than 30 years in the communications business, and agency became Euro RSCG Middleberg when it was acquired by Euro RSCG, technology practice gave Don an early window to the Internet and led him web's long-range impact on public relations and corporate communications. With Professor Steven Ross, formerly of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Don initiated "The Middleberg/ Ross Media Survey." Don's book, *Winning PR in the Wired World*, was published by McGraw Hill in 2001 and remains required reading for communications majors at major universities and professionals at Fortune 500 companies. Don has lectured on PR for the American Advertising Federation, the Arthur Page Society, the Financial Communications Society, the PRSA, Boston University, Cornell, NYU and the Newhouse School. Don holds a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's of business administration in marketing.*

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