

The SMI-Wizness Social Media Sustainability Index

UPDATE:
The New Social Tools and
Platforms That are Transforming
Sustainability Communication

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Social media innovation waits for no man or woman. Just when you think you've got your head around Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, up pop a host of cool new tools and platforms to tantalise and befuddle (often at the same time) sustainability communicators.

Consider Pinterest. In just 12 months the photo and video sharing has skyrocketed in terms of users and popularity, while mobile photo app Instagram recently was snapped by Facebook for a cool \$730 million. Yet, away from the headlines, dozens of other smart, creative apps and platforms – startups such as Present.me along with not youngish pretenders such as Slideshare, Tumblr and Storify – are creating new opportunities for collaborative, authentic and transparent storytelling – the bread and butter of sustainability communication.

In this increasingly disruptive media landscape it would be very easy to put your fingers in your ears, wait until everything calms down and some new social media behemoth emerges. But that isn't going to happen. So where should sustainability communicators be looking to establish a social media voice?

We believe that a key way of determining where your social media voice should be is first to work out what you have to say and how it can be of value, useful even, to the social media communities you want to connect to.

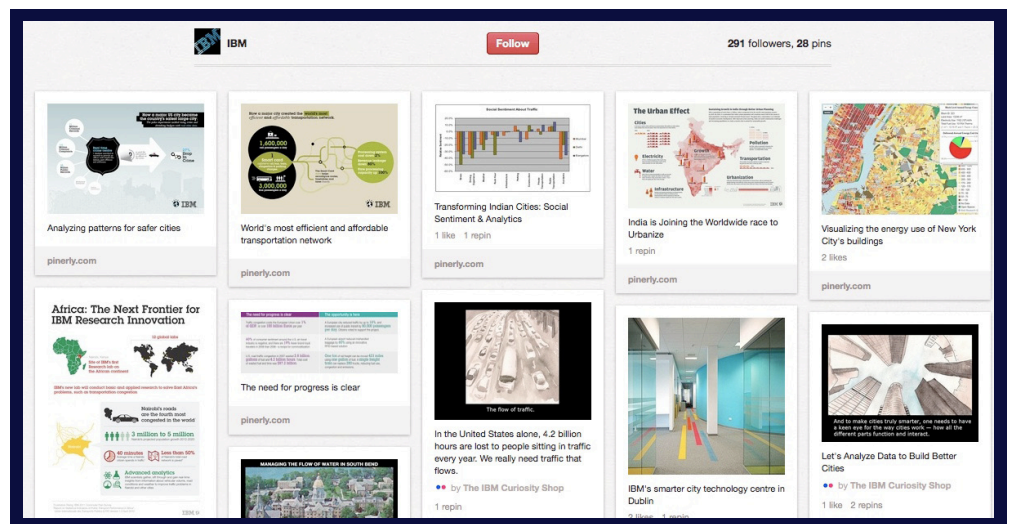
Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, even Facebook may have trendy techie and sometimes befuddling names. When you strip them down to their fundamentals though, they are just publishing platforms, albeit ones that specialise in video, words and images. Once you know the story you want to tell and understand the interests of your target community, then you can start packaging your story to work across relevant social media.

To help on that journey we've taken a look at some of the new social media innovation being used by companies across a range of up and coming social media platforms. Here's our guide to the latest in social media sustainability communication using social platforms, infographics, mobile apps and gamification.

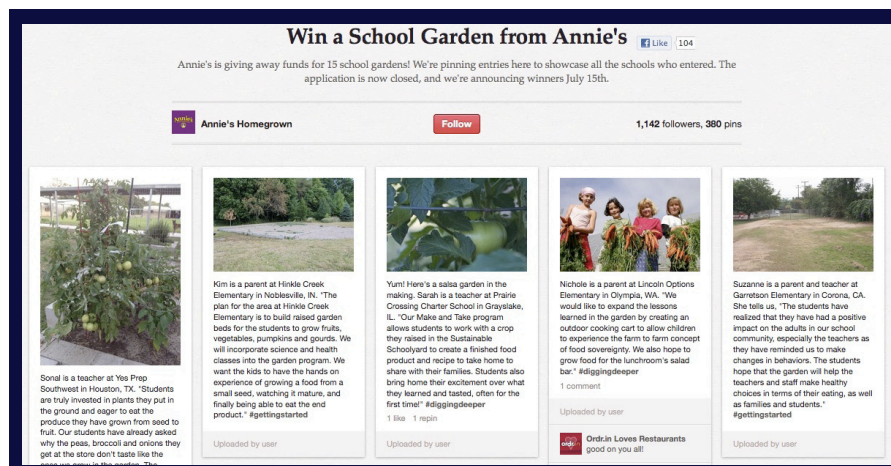
Pinterest

The shiny new toy for brand marketers and communicators. Dozens of brands now have a presence on this visually dynamic social network though only a few are using Pinterest for sustainability communications.

Not surprising, IBM - the number 2 rated company on our 2011 Sustainability Index - boasts an active Pinterest profile with sections devoted to “Building a Smarter Planet” and “Smarter Cities”.



Another company that uses Pinterest to play to the strengths of its brand is Annie's Homegrown. The Mac 'n Cheese powerhouse has dedicated “boards” for recipes, gardening, kid’s activities and tips on recycling. Unlike some brands that choose just to highlight their own content, Annie's Homegrown pins interesting content that fits its interests from all over the web - demonstrating its interest and commitment to its core social media communities.



McDonald's used Pinterest to tell its Olympics 2012 story and, by extension, its CSR commitment to sport and activity at the games. It also has boards devoted to its global menu and the evolution of its nutrition information as well as a board devoted to its Ronald McDonald House charity.

Storytelling Tip: Think of Pinterest as an alternative “shop window” for your best content and for third party content that also speaks to your brand values. In many cases Pinterest's layout and display will be far more visually pleasing than your own sustainability home page and it allows you to provide a central navigation to different topics and initiatives. It also allows you to build community around the topics you care about.

Tumblr

Is Tumblr a blogging platform or a social network? Actually it's a combination of both, offering a hosted blogging environment connected to 64 million other blogs. The platform allows you to follow other blogs on Tumblr and searchable content is organized through Tumblr's tagging system so it's easy to be found and to connect to other blogs devoted to sustainability.

Danone's Down to Earth is one of the best executed social media sustainability initiatives. It features a main blog/hub site (Down to Earth actually uses Tumblr as its main publishing tool) and what we think of as “satellite” communities on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Its content seems well weighted for Tumblr's community and aesthetic - short, informative posts always illustrated with a strong visual element (an important component given that images really grab reader's attention when they flow through Tumblr's tagged content stream.

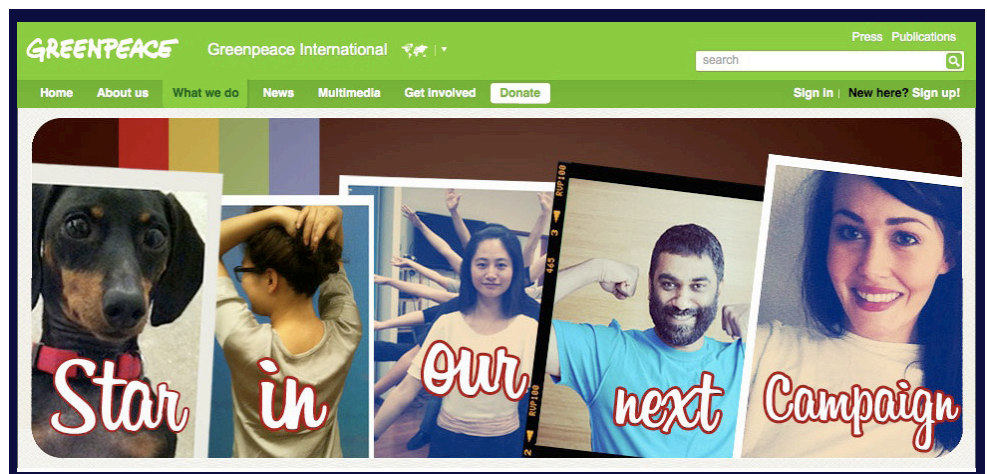
Adidas was the first major brand to create a paid-for Tumblr campaign when it created an official blog for the Euro 2012 soccer competition. The sportswear brand has built on that experience with its Adidas Originals Tumblr blog, highlighting its global creative community White Space Project. The Adidas Originals Tumblr homepage has a Pinterest-like visual accessibility and - reaching out to the Tumblr community - Adidas invites other arts and fashion bloggers to submit examples of the best work they've found, which Adidas sometimes then runs through the Originals blog.

Storytelling Tip: Remember the built-in network effect of Tumblr. If you create memorable and easily shareable content the community will oblige and share.

Instagram

Now part of the Facebook empire Instagram has radically improved social media photo sharing by bringing style and sophistication to your shared images combined with an easy mobile experience. And, with its own built-in community, Instagram is perfect for curating thematic content. Many brands already are making use of Instagram, including the likes of Red Bull and Starbucks but few so far have embraced its potential for sustainability storytelling.

That is about to change now that Greenpeace have got their heads around Instagramming. The social media savvy NGO has created a new Instagram action programme called “Star In Our Next Campaign” to support its Detox campaign. Greenpeace is asking the Instagram community to submit photos of themselves wearing plain T-Shirts tagged #detox #peoplepower and the name of a retail brand they’d like to see eliminate the release of toxic chemicals in their supply chain.



Then there’s the work of Earth Hour Global.

Last year, the organization invited Instagrammers in Sydney to take a walking tour of a local organic market and use their camera phones “to re-imagine the modern sustainable city and share these visualisations with the global community”.

Meanwhile, non-profits like Charity Water, the UN Foundation, the Robin Hood Foundation and Oceana all have active, awareness-raising images that aim to inspire their communities.

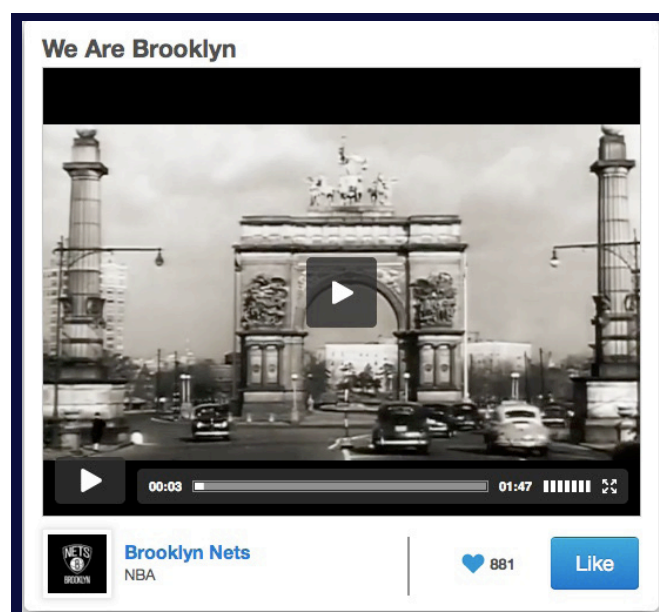
Storytelling Tip: An image is worth a 20 blog posts or something like that. Whatever the cliché, photos are easy to share and encourage discussion in a way that even the best written blog posts sometime struggle to achieve.

Viddy & Socialcam

Hot on the heels of Instagram in terms of social media coolness are Viddy and Socialcam, both mobile video apps that also integrate with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Tumblr. Recently, Autodesk (an up and coming member of the Sustainability Index) acquired Socialcam and its 54.7 million users.

As befits a company that ranked top of the 2011 Social Media Sustainability Index, GE has a presence on both Viddy and Socialcam. The global giant puts its short video focus on its engineering prowess as you might expect. There's no overt talk of sustainability but the message is implicit in some of the content. An ecomagination channel can't be far away we suspect.

The newly formed Brooklyn Nets haven't tipped off yet but the franchise is wasting no time in trying to bed down in its new home and win over the local community. The Nets use Socialcam to demonstrate the shared and cherished gritty underdog values of both Brooklynites and the new pro basketball team.

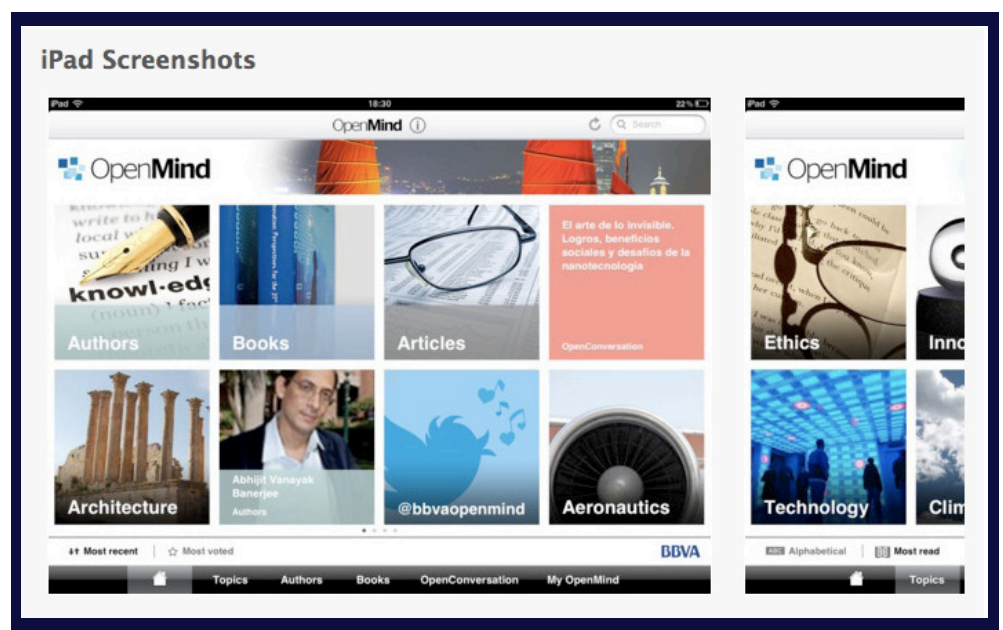


Storytelling Tip: Keep it short. Both Viddy and Socialcam favour concise, attention grabbing video clips.

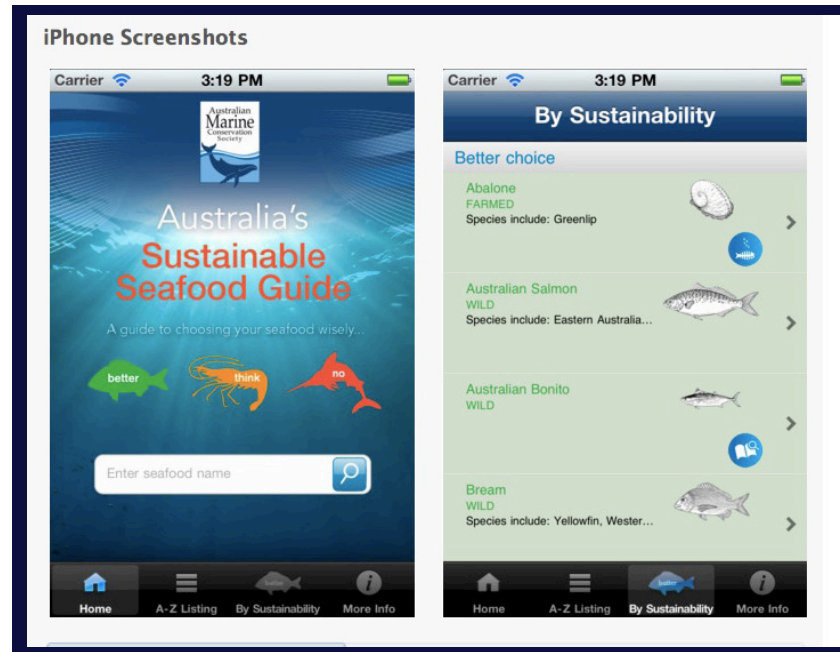
Branded Apps

The barriers to creating social media now is so low that many companies look to create their own bespoke apps rather than relying purely on the established social media platforms. The advantage is that they can fully brand their online vision and also target specific communities and audiences.

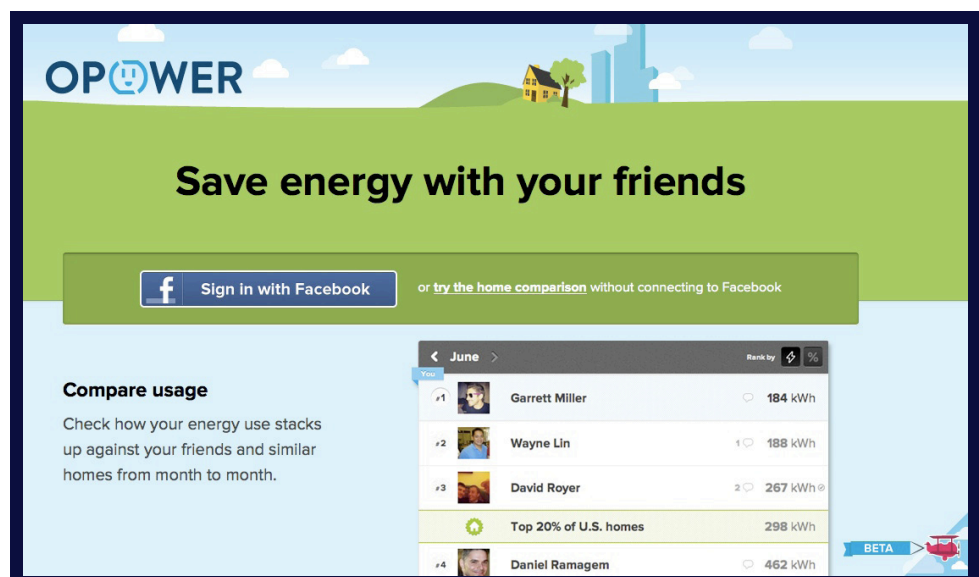
In the last year we've seen a number of companies such as GE creating iPad apps to let stakeholders dig deeper into corporate and sustainability reports. BBVA has created an iPad app to expand its fledgling Open Mind knowledge community, which brings together academics and experts to explore new ideas in global innovation.



Apps to help inform about the environmental impact of consumer behaviour have been popular for some time but they often only provide general or global information. Australia's Sustainable Seafood Guide, created by that country's Marine Conservation Society, is different because the app does exactly what it says; it provides a detailed guide to 100 different types of seafood, including those from wild-caught fisheries, fish farms and imported species - all specific to Australia.



Opower is an energy company with a difference - it seeks to create a better, more energy efficient and more social customer engagement platform for the utility industry. That's a low bar to leap, admittedly, but Opower is providing a benchmark of success for other industries by using technology, information and social sharing tools that bridge the gap between utilities and their customers. One recent initiative is a Facebook app, developed with the social network and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) that encourages users to share and compare with friends and neighbors their home energy usage.



A form of gamification, the app aims to help users adapt and more effectively manage their energy usage through the influence of neighbourhood peer pressure they respect. It builds on the gamification thinking pioneered by Recyclebank's innovative Ecosystem that is also being applied to sustainability behavior-changing initiatives from Practically Green and Simple Energy.

Get set for a flurry of brand gamification over the next 12 months as major companies look to show sustainability leadership, influence sustainability behavior and create an engaged customers experience.

Storytelling Tip: Gamification and brand apps might appear intimidating but they both depend on clarity of narrative and organization of information.

Infographics

It's difficult not to feel somewhat overwhelmed by the explosion of visual online storytelling in recent months. Sustainability communications has proved no exception to this glut of graphic designer muscle flexing.

Infographics can be very smart ways of social media storytelling and curation. The ones that get shared and retweeted are the ones that are notable, remarkable or useful ie or the ones that tell a "story" you want to know about. But just because it's easy to create infographics doesn't mean people want to read them.

The best infographics - the ones that rise above the Tower of Babel noise generated by so much social media content - have certain things in common.

They:

Have a hook

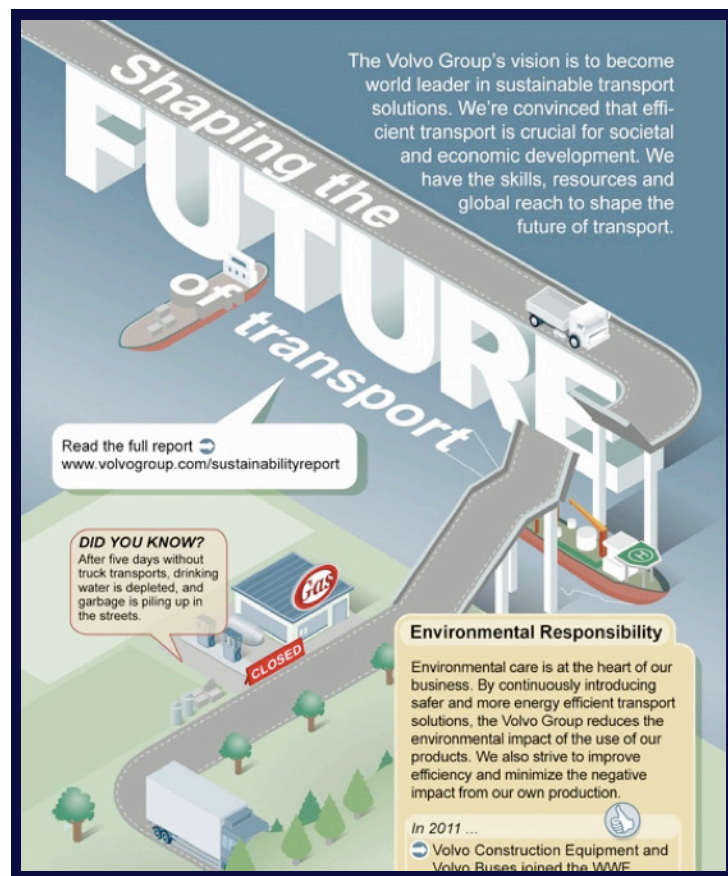
Your community needs a reason to explore your infographic. Take a leaf out of every journalist's book and find a topical, newsy angle to "hang" your content on.

Keep the concept and execution simple

The theme is everything in a good infographic. It's like the glue that holds the entire work together. The best examples frame the information in a clever but easy to digest visual framework.

Have a compelling narrative

Just because you have a lot of information and cool stats to convey doesn't make them interesting to the reader. What's the context of those stats and how can you use them to tell a story the reader will find useful and interesting?



Whether it's Facebook's animated graphic of its own sustainability footprint, Volvo's use of an infographic to precis its 2011 sustainability report or Coca-Cola's London 2012 Olympic Games sustainability "fun facts", sustainability communicators are putting a lot of creative thinking into infographic storytelling that is intended to be digested quickly, concisely and be eminently shareable.

And, as new social, mobile and location platforms and services continue to spring up, so communicators will continue to experiment with and embrace this innovation in order to tell their own company's sustainability stories.

Storytelling Tip: You are using an infographic to illustrate key points in an easily digestible manner, not writing Moby Dick. Be ruthless with your editing.

Wizness

THE SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK

The screenshot displays the Wizness website interface. At the top, the logo 'Wizness BETA' is on the left, and a user profile for 'Marion Dupont' is on the right. Below the logo is a navigation bar with 'HOME', 'CONTACTS', 'ORGANIZATIONS', and 'DISCOVER'. A search bar is also present. The main content area is titled 'Home' and features a 'Get started on Wizness' button. On the left sidebar, there are sections for 'Organizations' (listing 'My Enablon', 'Sedex', 'Fair Labor Association', etc.) and 'Latest Best Practices' (listing 'BP TESTING - Tips and Tricks', 'BP SOFTWARE- 2012#2- How do I...', etc.). The main feed shows a post from 'Enablon Sustainability User Focus Group' about Earth Overshoot Day, with comments from 'Marion Dupont' and 'Nicolas Boisnic'. A post from '3BL Media' is also visible at the bottom.

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