



New Study Demonstrates Importance and Impact of Digital Media In European and U.S. Policy Making

Trans-Atlantic Poll of Senior Parliamentarian and Congressional Staff Reveals Regular Use of Digital Tools to Research and Influence Policy, Reach Constituents

- *71% of UK parliamentary staff first learned about a policy issue online*
 - *18% have changed policy position based on online sources*
 - *18% use Facebook to communicate directly with constituents*

London, November 4, 2009 - A new five country study of senior staff in European Parliaments and the U.S. Congress, released today by Edelman, reveals the influential role of online resources and social media networks in setting policy and communicating with constituents in political capitals across the Atlantic.

The Capital Staffers Index – conducted by StrategyOne for Edelman and surveying nearly 400 senior parliamentarian and congressional staff in Washington, D.C., Brussels, London, Paris and Berlin – reveals that social networks are becoming an increasingly important resource for staffers.

The findings among UK parliamentary staff show that:

- 71% have first learned about a policy issue online (vs 54% globally)
- 18% have changed policy position based on online sources
- 47% of UK parliamentary staff said they use blogs for researching policy issues on a weekly basis vs 16% who are using micro-blogs such as Twitter. 18% use Facebook on a weekly basis to research policy issues.
- Facebook is the most used digital communications tool used among UK parliamentary. 18% use the platform to communicate with constituents while 34% use it to communicate with colleagues
- 87% say websites are the most effective way for MPs to communicate with constituents, followed by blogging (38%) and online videos (35%)
- 94% say emails are the most effective way for constituents to communicate with MPs. This is far higher than via MPs' blogs (18%) and Facebook pages (15%)
- UK parliamentary staff are the fourth most prolific users of digital media, one place higher than French Assembly staff and behind colleagues in the US Congress, European Parliament and the German Bundestag



Alex Bigg, Managing Director of Edelman’s UK Public Affairs practice, comments: “Our research demonstrates that Parliamentary researchers are increasingly embracing digital media resources to learn more about policy and engage with stakeholders and constituents alike. Whether they are websites, blogs, Facebook or even Twitter, such tools are playing an increasingly important role in supplementing and supporting more traditional means of political communication.”

Global Findings

The poll shows staffers regularly access digital outlets and social media to research, influence and set policy. Nearly every staffer (96%) uses online resources for public policy research, over half (54%) reported learning of policy issues for the first time online and one in five (19%) actually changed policy positions based on information and opinions they found online.

Social networks like Facebook are becoming increasingly important. Sixty percent say they access the social medium for personal reasons but in addition, nearly one-third use it for communicating with professional colleagues (28%), one in five (21%) to reach out to constituents and one in ten (9%) to research policy issues. In addition, blogs are an important resource for staffers with two in five (39%) using blogs and social media sites in the past 30 days to monitor news about issues and the same percentage (39%) to monitor constituent opinion about an issue.

“When it comes to policy development and public affairs, we’re seeing a digital about-face as staffers and elected officials move from face time to Facebook and other social media to research and communicate on critical issues,” says Jere Sullivan, Vice Chairman of Global Public Affairs, Edelman. “Traditional communications and advocacy channels remain important and effective in all countries, but the growing influence of online cannot be overlooked and needs to be included in the mix of tools for communicating about and forming consensus on important policy issues.”

The survey clearly identifies the growing importance of digital tools for both communicating with constituents and for constituents reaching their members. They note websites have become ubiquitous in terms of their usage and effectiveness in reaching constituents (82% feel they are effective) while other outlets have also demonstrated their positive impact – online videos (52%), blogging (46%) and micro blogging, such as Twitter (22%).

In terms of the effectiveness in reaching their members of Parliament and Congress through digital means, e-mail scores the highest at 87% effective with Member’s blog rated at 31%, Member’s social network 22% and microblogs such as Twitter at 7%.

The study finds that staffers are turning to social networks, blogs and microblogs more regularly for personal usage (Facebook 60%, YouTube 52%, Personal Blog, 12%, Twitter 11%) than they are for professional reasons. However, their usage patterns reflect receptivity to these tools and an opportunity to increase usage for analysis, communicating with constituents and reaching colleagues on policy issues.



“Currently, staffers are showing a willingness to embrace these digital resources on a professional level which will allow them to build on their effectiveness in communicating on policy issues”, said Mike Krempasky, Executive Vice President, Digital Public Affairs. “We were also encouraged by the fact that our survey sample was of senior, tenured staffers who dispelled the myth that digital is only used by younger entry level staff.”

The Index reveals staff regularly use online information sources for policy analysis and tend to turn to regional traditional online media outlets first to start their days. However, a number of other dedicated regional online sources emerge as an option with Google being the only outlet accessed across all five markets as an analysis resource and the first site visited each day.

Comparing the five markets, the study shows U.S. Congressional, EU and German Parliamentary staff ranked highest in terms of their perceived effectiveness and utilisation of digital communications tools. The U.S. ranked first in both categories, the EU staff second on effectiveness and third on utilisation and Germany third on effectiveness and second on utilisation.

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About Edelman

Edelman was voted UK Consultancy of the Year 2009 by PR Week Awards. Founded in 1952, Edelman is the world’s largest independent Public Relations company, with over 3,200 employees in 51 offices worldwide. The agency employs 250 people in the UK across all key industries (Consumer, Health, Technology, Financial, Corporate, Public Affairs) and includes consumer brand experts, JCPR; Digital specialists, Spook Media; research company, StrategyOne; Strategic Consultancy, First&42nd; Content innovators, Edelman Content; and a Strategic Media Unit. For more information, visit www.edelman.co.uk

About Strategy One

StrategyOne is a strategic research firm providing evidence based stakeholder insights, analysis and media measurement. StrategyOne is owned by DJ Edelman, the world’s largest independent PR company and specialises in multi-country reputation, branding and communications research with offices in New York, Washington, Paris, London, Chicago, Atlanta, and Silicon Valley.

About the Capital Staffers Index

StrategyOne surveyed nearly 400 senior congressional and parliamentarian staff in Washington D.C. (50), Brussels (60), London (136), Paris (100) and Berlin (50) between September 11 and 16 October 2009.