messages

social media

blogging

video

strategy

facebook

news

networking

reports

FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

policy

twitter

budget

target

communities

colleagues

media

youtube

**Findings from the
2011 Survey of Foundation
Communications Professionals**

THE COMMUNICATIONS
NETWORK))
strengthening the voice of philanthropy

Commissioned by
The Communications Network

Findings from the
2011 Survey of Foundation
Communications Professionals

Survey design and analysis by

HAMILL REMALEY **breakthrough communications**

FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

FOREWORD

This report presents findings from the Communications Network 2011 Survey of Foundation Communications Professionals, a comprehensive exploration of the field of foundation communications practice. This is our second survey – our first was in 2008 – and we are very proud that we were able to substantively cover more ground in fewer questions this time around. We also are immensely grateful to all of our survey participants, who provided not only their answers to dozens of qualitative questions but also quite a few open-ended questions that proved to be tremendously enlightening.

As you'll see in reading this report, the way foundations communicate is changing. Much of that is driven by the fact that how society overall communicates is changing too, with just about everyone making social media tools a part of their daily lives. Back in 2008, there was interest, perhaps more on the order of curiosity, about Facebook and Twitter, but it was hardly a mainstay of foundation communications practice. Similarly, in the years since, the traditional news media landscape has been upended and the "news hole" has shrunk considerably. That, combined with the ability not just to communicate directly with audiences, but also to interact with them, has led more and more foundations to make considerable investments in a range of online platforms to distribute

content, in ways unimaginable just a few years ago. Simply put, foundation communications professionals are both helping lead and trying to figure out the immense, exciting and sometimes confusing transformations in how we share and use information, and at the same time, how that affects their daily jobs.

We hope you find the survey findings illuminating. We look forward to your comments, as well as suggestions for future surveys or trends you'd like us to track and report back on later. Please feel free to email me with comments and suggestions at brucet@comnetwork.org.

I also want to thank Michael Remaley, a frequent contributor to the Communications Network, for his superb oversight of this project – from designing and testing the survey questionnaire, to managing the intake of the responses to painstakingly analyzing the data, to preparing both the executive summary and the full report. We are grateful for all that work.

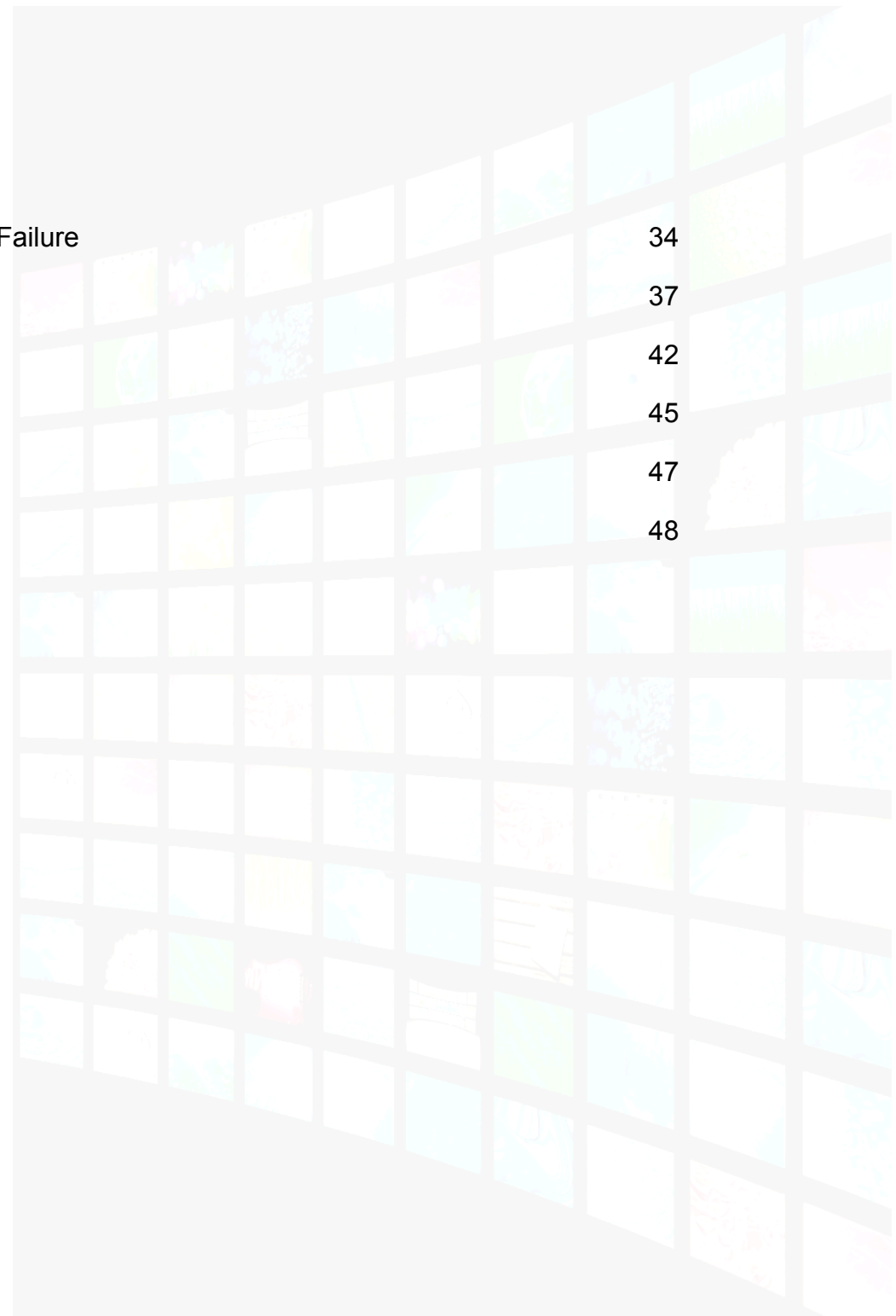Bruce Trachtenberg
Executive Director
June 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Who are foundation communications professionals, and what do they do? How do they spend their time? What priorities drive their work? Who comprise their foundations' target audiences? What are their most significant accomplishments…biggest challenges? The answers to these questions and more are the subject of this report, which features findings from the Communications Network's 2011 Survey of Foundation Communications Professionals. The findings in the survey are based on responses from about 155 people out of 390 who were invited to participate. That 40% response rate is at the high end of what is generally considered by social science researchers to be typical for surveys of this kind.

What follows is a summary of the key findings, all of which are discussed in detail in the full report.

Most are doing a lot with very little.

A large majority of foundation communicators are working with budgets of less than $250,000. While communications department staff sizes in our survey ranged from a single half-time position to as many as 41, the majority of respondents work in organizations with a staff of two or less.

The economic turndown that started in 2008 and deeply affected many foundations across the United States apparently did not result in major cuts to communications

FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

budgets. Almost half of those surveyed said that their organization's communications budget has stayed about the same since the recession started, and almost a fifth said it has increased in the years since.

Increasing understanding of issues is priority #1.

Foundation communicators said "increasing public understanding of the issues our foundation concentrates on" is their top objective. Publicizing the results/impact of grantmaking and increasing general awareness of the foundation by enhancing its image, brand and reputation are also top priorities for most communicators. Close to half say that influencing public policymakers is a high-priority objective, which is a big increase from when we asked the same basic question in 2008. Another apparent shift in communications priorities is that many organizations do not consider securing high-profile press coverage an important accomplishment. For most, that activity isn't a high priority.

> **Whom do foundation communications aim to reach? Top targets are policymakers, community leaders and current grantees.**

Whom do foundation communications aim to reach? The majority of respondents say that their top targets are policymakers, community leaders and current grantees. Websites/blogs and direct communications are considered to be their most effective tools for reaching most audiences, followed by group email/e-newsletters, media relations and social media. It is fairly logical, then, that website/electronic communications are the largest expenditures in their communications budgets. Allocations for print publications, events and other expenses, including consultants, follow behind. On average, foundations are making relatively small allocations for multimedia production, even though our data indicates that social media are among the more popular modes of reaching important target audiences and more and more websites rely on multimedia content to attract key constituencies.

Foundation communications professionals told us that their greatest disappointments were centered on social media. When asked to be more specific, they cited their organizations' lack of progress in developing substantial efforts/strategy, internal reticence, lack of resources dedicated to social media campaigns and too few staff involved in social media. Those frustrations provide a helpful benchmark for tracking changes in foundation communications expenditures in future years.

Despite the wish for more money for social media, we saw no evidence that foundations are willing to underwrite these new activities at the expense of their annual reports. We asked those producing annual reports if they planned to make changes to their production process in the coming years. The majority said "no."

Despite budget constraints, foundations are making big advancements in new media.

Almost half of communicators' organizations now have a blog. The vast majority of respondents work in organizations that support an online distribution platform that allows non-IT staff to upload and edit content and that features video. A majority also feature links to their organizations' social media pages (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) on the home pages of their websites. Similarly, a large number present slide shows on their websites and are using tools that enable them to present their editorial content in a "magazine" format on their websites with revolving story features, pictures, and so on. They'd like to do even more. Asked, "What kind of communications tools do you wish you had the budget and/or senior management support to do?" by far the most frequently named wish was the ability to do more multimedia production and/or hire staff to do more with social media.

> **Almost all of our respondents spend some of their work time on new media. Only a tiny fraction said their organization doesn't use social media tools at all.**

Almost all of our respondents spend some of their work time on new media. Only a tiny fraction said their organization doesn't use social media tools at all. The greatest portion of respondents said that their communications department spends up to 10% of its time on social media. And as we detail later in this report, many are spending much more than 10% of their time on social media activities.

These findings show how much things have changed for communicators since our 2008 survey. Back then, improvements to online communications centered mostly on adding content to sites – reports, project descriptions and the like, but with little emphasis on two-way communications or "Web 2.0" interactivity to better engage audiences. Static content was in greater use than video and other multimedia presentations. And less than a quarter had waded into blogging or social networking. A sizable majority now says increasing new media and related digital communications capacity it is a high priority. In fact, that's a higher priority than "upgrading the efficiency and effectiveness of my team," and it far outdistances other potential goals like helping grantees build their communications capacity, building internal relationships and increasing the department's budget.

Communications plans may deepen relationships with program staff.

Almost three-quarters of respondents say they produce written communications plans. But of those, almost half say they don't refer to it on a daily basis. Only about a third say that their communications plan guides their daily work. The data also suggests that those who have written plans seem to differ little in their objectives, practices and perspectives from those who do not. Thus, the question is: Does having a written communications plan make any difference?

One crucial difference: Those with plans were more likely to say, "Program staff frequently asks us to weigh in on many communications components of new initiatives and major grants as they are taking shape." Respondents from organizations that don't produce written plans said they were less engaged with their program colleagues.

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

Perhaps having a written communications plan leads to deeper integration of communications and program work.

Nearly three-quarters use at least some form of quantitative measurement to assess the effectiveness of their communications. Website traffic, volume of news media coverage and number of social media followers are common metrics. But fewer than half conduct surveys or measure awareness of the foundation and its work, tally requests for print publications or track numbers downloaded, use the Center for Effective Philanthropy Grantee Perception Report process, assess communications-related outcomes their grantees' work or do polling or other kinds of assessment to determine the public's awareness of the issues that their foundations support. For the most part, measurement remains at the surface level of communications execution rather on the end result of change in audience knowledge or action.

> **A strong and productive relationship with program departments is described as one in which staff members consistently seek the counsel of their communications colleagues on the communications elements of substantial grantmaking initiatives.**

Communications departments are becoming more central to foundation functioning.

Almost half of our professionals said that leadership has already helped make communications central to strategic decision-making on most program-related activity. Most of the other half of respondents said their leadership is somewhere else on the continuum toward a more central role for communications. Only a tiny fraction said their leadership continues to see communications as just something that gets tacked on at the end of larger projects.

The list of supports that communications departments provide to program departments and their larger organizations is long. Vast majorities provide support for program-related events, which could mean anything from organizing a panel discussion in Washington to a movie screening showcasing a grantee's work. Large majorities also consult with program teams on communications components of specific grants, provide assistance to program teams on website maintenance and content management, and consult with program teams on communications strategy for whole issue areas.

Open-ended comments on this topic revealed a common thread: A strong and productive relationship with program departments is described as one in which staff members consistently seek the counsel of their communications colleagues on the communications elements of substantial grantmaking initiatives.

In a sweet spot.

Despite wishing for greater resources so they can do more of what they do, our respondents seem to deeply enjoy their work and are energized by the challenges.

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

Foundation communications professionals say the things that bring them the greatest amount of satisfaction are:

- The sense of doing good through the work.
- The variety and diversity of projects and skill sets employed.
  - The ability to use their creativity.
  - The relationships with co-workers and grantees.

There are frustrations, too. Most express a strong desire for more TIME to do more. But unless foundation communicators add bending the space/time continuum to their skill sets, they may have to settle for their second choice: more resources and/or staff.

As philanthropic organizations continue to play prominent roles in social change, communications professionals are taking on greater responsibility within foundations to support those activities. While the rapid pace of change in how the world communicates necessarily causes anxiety for most of us, the great opportunities and exciting challenges seem to be energizing our profession.

The Communications Network 2011 Survey of Foundation Communications Professionals provides ample proof of just how much our field is doing with limited resources, and considerable evidence of just how much we can learn from each others' efforts.

Almost half of our professionals said that leadership has already helped make communications central to strategic decision-making on most program-related activity.

SECTION ONE
The Basics

What role do communications professionals play in philanthropic organizations, and how is it changing over time? How do they spend their time? What priorities drive their work? What are their foundations' target audiences? What are their most significant accomplishments…their biggest challenges? The answers to these questions and more are the subject of this report, which features findings from the Communications Network's 2011 Survey of Foundation Communications Professionals.

Before jumping into the data, here are some things to know about the report and the people who participated in our study.

This is *not* a Communications Network member survey, even though a survey of our nearly 400 members representing all aspects of foundation communications would yield great insights. Instead, it is a survey of as many individuals – members and non-members – as we could identify who hold communications positions within private, community and corporate foundations; public charity funds; nonprofit philanthropy funds; and philanthropic associations. In order to focus exclusively on people who work as communicators inside these organizations, we chose not to include communications consultants who have foundation or other nonprofit clients.

In total, we sent invitations to about 390 people, and some 155 responded.

FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

Because the survey was open to anyone on the communications staff at participating organizations, the reader should keep in mind that the unit of analysis used throughout the report is individual communications professionals. That means that when you read a statement such as "X% of respondents work in foundations with a staff of more than two" it should not be taken to mean that X% of *foundations* have a staff of more than two.

> **If you are a foundation communicator and you are working in a department with more than two people, you may be surprised to learn that your team is larger than most.**

Our survey sample allows us to provide an excellent picture of the varied environments in which foundation communicators operate, but our sample and the full population of foundations across the United States diverge just a little bit. Of our respondents, 55% work in private foundations and 33% work in community foundations. A smaller group works in other organizations like philanthropic associations (5%), public charitable funds (3%), nonprofit philanthropic funds (3%) and corporate foundations (1%). According to Foundation Center data community foundations actually represent a smaller portion of the foundation world than they do in our sample – about 1% of the total number of foundations and a little less than 10% of overall giving.[1] We did not set out to oversample community foundations,

---

[1] FC Stats: The Foundation Center's Statistical Information Service, Aggregate Fiscal Data by Foundation Type, 2008. http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/statistics/pdf/ 01_found_fin_data/2008/02_08.pdf

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

What kind of organization do you work for?

- Private Foundation 55%
- Community Foundation 33%
- Philanthropy Association 5%
- Public Charity 3%
- NP Philanthropy Fund 3%
- Corporate Foundation 1%

What is the geographic focus of your organization's grantmaking?

- Local 44%
- Regional 52%
- National 33%
- International 26%
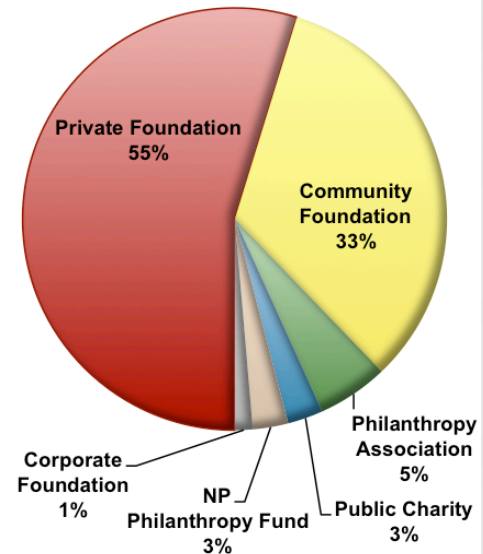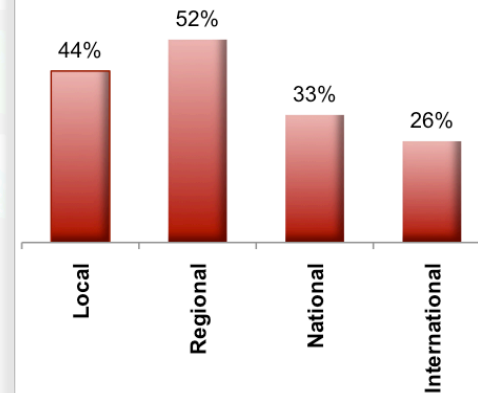
but from a social research perspective, it does help better substantiate the perspectives of this key subgroup of American foundations.

About one-third (34%) of our sample works in cities that are among the 20 largest urban areas in the United States, while two-thirds (66%) work in smaller cities or non-urban areas. The respondents provide a good spread of geographic representation: 33% are in the Northeast, 27% Midwest, 22% West, 7% Southeast and 5% Southwest. This is, however, different from the geographic spread of our nation's population. The South and West are the biggest now, and the Northeast is the smallest. But our sample distribution is relatively close to how foundations are distributed throughout the nation.[2]

More than a quarter (26%) of respondents work for organizations that do some international grantmaking. This is close to the Foundation Center set of statistics showing that almost a quarter of U.S. grantmaking is dedicated to international work.[3]

A large majority (71%) of respondents are working with communications budgets of less than $250,000. That includes 13% who are working with communications

---

[2] FC Stats: The Foundation Center's Statistical Information Service, Geographic Distribution of Grants Awarded and Grants Received by State, circa 2009.
http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/statistics/pdf/03_fund_geo/2009/08_09.pdf
[3] FC Stats: The Foundation Center's Statistical Information Service, Summary of Domestic and International Grant Dollars, circa 2009.
http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/statistics/pdf/03_fund_geo/2009/09_09.pdf

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

What is the communications department's total budget, excluding staff costs, in 2011?

- > $1M 10%
- < $25K 13%
- $250K-$1M 19%
- $25K-$100K 34%
- $100K-$250K 24%
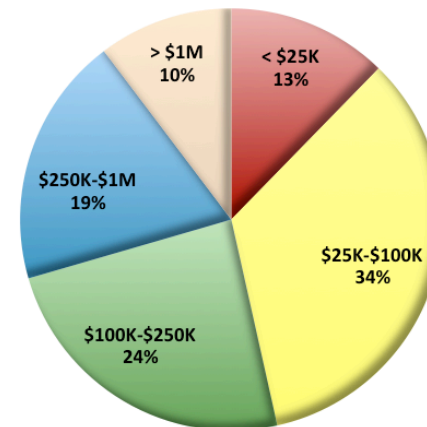
How many people, including yourself, currently make up your communications team?
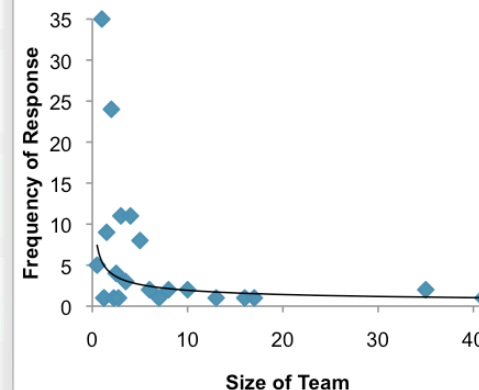
budgets of less than $25,000, 34% with budgets of $25,000–$100,000 and 24% with budgets of $100,001–$250,000. Of those with larger communications budgets, 19% have budgets of $250,001–$1 million and 10% have budgets over $1 million.

If you are a foundation communicator and you are working in a department with more than two people, you may be surprised to learn that your team is larger than most. While communications department staff sizes in our survey ranged from a single half-time position to as many as 41 at one foundation, the majority of respondents (59%) work in organizations with a communications staff of two or less. The most common situation is for the department to consist of just a single full-time person. About 30% work in organizations with three to six communications staff members, and less than 10% have seven or more communications staff.

Our respondents also represent a range of positions. Vice presidents made up 14% of our sample, while 43% have director titles. In addition, communications officers, managers, associates and specialists comprise 40% of our respondents, while program directors, executive directors and special internal communications consultants made up 4% of our survey participants.

The economic turndown that started in 2008 and deeply affected many foundations across the United States apparently did not result in vast slashing of communications budgets. Almost half of those surveyed (49%) said that their organization's communications

budget has stayed about the same since the recession started and 17% said it has increased since then. (A fortunate 8% saw their communications budgets increase by more than 25% over the past three years.) Still, not everyone was untouched: About a third (34%) of survey respondents have had to cope with cuts. While 26% of the entire sample said their communications budget had shrunk by less than a quarter since the recession began, an unfortunate 10% reported that their budgets had declined by more than 25%.

SECTION TWO
Who Are Foundations Really Trying to Reach and How?

Increasing public understanding of issues is the highest priority.

The communications objectives of foundations are as diverse as the organizations doing the communicating. But looking across all types of organizations where our respondents work, there is a clear distinction between "high" and "low" priority activities. Topping the list is "increasing public understanding of the issues our foundation concentrates on." Sixty-five percent rank this as a high priority for their communications work this year, more than any other communications objective. Also described as a high priority by a majority of respondents are "publicizing the results/impact of grantmaking" (52%) and "increasing general awareness of the foundation, enhancing the foundation's image, brand and reputation" (51%).

Notably, close to half (47%) say that "influencing public policymakers" is a high priority communications objective. When a similar 2008 Communications Network survey asked another version of this question, only 21% rated this objective "extremely important,"[4] suggesting that the emphasis on influencing public policy makers is growing in importance to the foundation field.

---

[4] The Network's 2008 survey report, http://www.comnetwork.org/news1/State_of_Practice.pdf, didn't include this finding. It was calculated later using the 2008 data.

FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

Looking at the flipside, what activities are considered less important? The only objective that the plurality of respondents (44%) rated as a low priority was "helping grantees better execute their communications." This is somewhat surprising based on anecdotal evidence suggesting that many of the larger, more experienced foundations seem to be moving in this direction[5]. Still, providing more communications assistance to grantees may be a trend for some. In this survey 17% described this objective as a high priority, whereas in 2008 only 8% said it was "extremely important."

Another shift in communications priorities shows that many organizations no longer consider high-profile press coverage an end unto itself. For the majority of our respondents that activity doesn't rise to the level of a high priority. In fact, most rank it as a medium (36%) or low priority (28%). But for a third of respondents (33%) high-profile coverage still matters and they consider it a high priority. Other communications objectives identified as being of "medium" importance include "building collaborations with philanthropic peers," "soliciting

---

[5] Some of the largest and most sophisticated philanthropic organizations are dedicating considerable resources to increasing grantee communications capacity. Some of those efforts are detailed in the report "Creating a Foursquare Communications Platform: Easy Steps to Build the Communications Capacity of Your Grantees" by Spitfire Communications, which is online at http://www.spitfirestrategies.com/images/pdf/Foursquarecommunications.pdf. The trend of supporting grantee communications and what research has uncovered about its impact is here: http://whatnonprofitssay.org/; and also discussed in an online webinar here: http://comnetwork.org/node/690

How high a priority does your organization place on each objective:

Increasing public understanding of the foundation's issues — High Priority 65%, Medium Priority 23%, 88%

Publicizing results/impact of grantmaking — High Priority 52%, Medium Priority 34%, 86%

Increasing general awareness of the foundation — High Priority 51%, Medium Priority 34%, 85%

Influencing public policymakers — High Priority 46%, Medium Priority 30%, 77%

Building collaborations with philanthropic peers — High Priority 34%, Medium Priority 43%, 78%

Gaining high-profile coverage in traditional media — High Priority 33%, Medium Priority 36%, 70%

Bolstering relations with donors — High Priority 32%, Medium Priority 13%, 45%

Providing research to professionals in the field — High Priority 30%, Medium Priority 36%, 67%

Raising funds — High Priority 30%, Medium Priority 12%, 42%

Soliciting feedback from grantees and the community — High Priority 23%, Medium Priority 36%, 60%

Helping grantees better execute their communications — High Priority 16%, Medium Priority 32%, 48%

■ High Priority   ■ Medium Priority

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

feedback from grantees and the community" and "providing research and other new information to professionals in the field."

While communications professionals at private and community foundations share many of the same priorities, there are a few differences. For instance, 80% of community foundation communicators say that bolstering relations with donors is a high priority – something private foundations generally don't need to do – and virtually the same number (79%) say that supporting their foundation's fund-raising activities is "very important."

Communicators at private and community foundations share an almost equal desire to "increase public understanding of the issues our foundation concentrates on." But perhaps because of the greater imperative for community foundations to show living donors that their money is being used effectively, "publicizing the results/impact of grantmaking" is a much higher priority for communicators at these organizations (76%) than for their private foundation peers (40%).

Similarly, "increasing general awareness of the foundation (i.e., enhancing the foundation's image, brand and reputation)" is a high priority for 89% of community foundations, but for only 31% of private foundations. The only objective besides increasing public understanding of the issues that the majority of private foundations (55%) rate as a high priority is "influencing public policymakers," which is a high priority for only about a third of community foundations (32%).

How high a priority are the following audiences when it comes to your communications efforts in 2011?

Audience	High Priority	Medium Priority	Total
Policymakers	55%	24%	79%
Community leaders	53%	33%	86%
Current grantees	52%	30%	82%
Donors	38%	9%	47%
Journalists in traditional media	36%	49%	86%
Peer organizations	35%	46%	82%
National opinion leaders and other "influentials"	35%	30%	66%
Local public	26%	37%	64%
Potential grantees	25%	38%	64%
Professional advisers	22%	27%	49%
"New" media influencers/ bloggers	16%	51%	67%
General public	14%	37%	52%
Past grantees	7%	30%	37%
Volunteers	6%	12%	18%

■ High Priority ■ Medium Priority

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

"Increasing public understanding" is the top objective, but the general public is a low-priority target.

Given that the most highly rated communications objectives are increasing public understanding of the issues, publicizing the results of grantmaking and increasing general awareness of the foundation, it is interesting – and meriting greater discussion among professionals in the field – that the general public is not a top target for the vast majority of foundations. The general public was most commonly described as a low-priority target (by 43% of respondents). Only 14% said the general public was a high-priority target, and 38% said the general public was a medium priority. Local public audiences aren't a top target either. Only 27% say the local public is a high-priority target. A plurality (38%) describes the local public as a medium priority, and 29% say it is a low priority.

> **The majority said that they "work to promote the foundation, but that much of our time is also spent developing communications strategies to advance programmatic objectives."**

So where are foundations aiming their communications? The majority of respondents say that their top targets are policymakers (56%), community leaders (54%) and current grantees (53%). National opinion leaders/other "influentials" also rank as a high priority (37%) for a plurality of communicators. One might presume that foundation communicators aim to reach the general public through news outlets, so targeting traditional

journalists and new media bloggers would rank high on their target list. Instead, 50% say traditional journalists are a "medium priority" target and 53% say new media influencers are a "medium priority."

Most foundations do not see motivating volunteers to action as part of their role, and volunteers were most commonly described by our respondents as "not applicable" as a potential target audience. However, for a small percentage of foundation communicators (6%), this is a high-priority target group. Of the respondents who said volunteers were a high priority, most were working in community foundations, a small number were public charity funds and none were private foundations. It is possible that any foundation could be enlisting volunteers to help advance its mission or support the work of grantees. But few are.

When asked to describe the overriding objective of their communications efforts, only a fifth (20%) said they are "focused almost entirely on promoting the foundation and the impact it is having." The majority (61%) said that they "work to promote the foundation, but that much of our time is also spent developing communications strategies to advance programmatic objectives." The remainder (18%) said that "in addition to promoting the foundation and advising on communications strategy for programs, we spend a great deal of time on grantee-level work."

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

Direct contact and websites are the most popular tools for reaching most audiences.

The survey asked respondents to identify the ways that work best for reaching their target audiences. To connect with policymakers – the highest-priority audience for a majority of respondents – most (71%) take a direct approach, relying on phone or email, almost to the exclusion of everything else, although slightly fewer than half said that media relations, events, website/blog and print publications were also effective in reaching policymakers.

Respondents also say that community leaders, which were rated the second-highest-priority target audience, can also be reached most effectively directly by phone or email (57%), followed closely by website/blog (55%) and invitations to events (54%). By contrast, the most effective way to reach current grantees, according to our respondents, is via group email/e-newsletters (78%), website/blog (77%), individualized direct email/phone (59%) and social media (53%). Communicators believe that national opinion leaders and other influentials are reached most effectively through media placements (57%), website/blog (56%) and individualized direct email/phone (51%).

Moving into the audiences that foundation communicators most commonly describe as being a "medium priority," respondents say that journalists in traditional media are best reached through media relations activities – most likely issuing press releases and making story pitches (80%), website/blog (62%),

Which communications tools do you think are most effective for reaching each of the following audiences?

Policy makers
- Individualized direct email/phone — 71%
- Media relations — 50%
- Events — 46%

Community leaders
- Individualized direct — 57%
- Website/blog — 55%
- Events — 54%

Current grantees
- Group email/e-newsletter — 78%
- Website/blog — 77%
- Individualized direct — 59%

Donors
- Individualized direct — 41%
- Events — 34%
- Website/blog — 29%

Journalists in traditional media
- Media relations — 80%
- Website/blog — 62%
- Individualized direct — 60%

Peer organizations
- Website/blog — 66%
- Individualized direct — 63%
- Group email/e-newsletter — 60%

National opinion leaders and other "influentials"
- Media relations — 57%
- Website/blog — 56%
- Individualized direct — 51%

Local public
- Website/blog — 59%
- Media relations — 55%
- Social media — 40%

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

individualized direct email/phone (60%), and social media (53%). New media writers/bloggers, on the other hand, are best reached by website/blog (79%) and social media (74%), respondents said.

For reaching peer organizations, communicators say that a website/blog (66%) and individualized direct email/phone (63%) work best, while the preferred way to reach potential grantees are to use a website/blog (79%) and group email/e-newsletters (51%).

To reach local audiences, communicators say their websites/blogs (59%) and media relations (55%) work best. Similarly, to reach the general public, 69% say websites/blogs and 57% say media relations tactics and strategies are effective methods.

> **The small allocations for multimedia production may strike some as surprising given that social media are a popular mode of reaching important target audiences and because more and more websites rely on multimedia content to draw visitors.**

It is clear that websites and blogs and direct communications are most effective for reaching most audiences, followed by group email/e-newsletters, media relations and social media. But what about other tools for connecting with audiences? Are there certain more specialized audiences for which other tools and methods might be effective? Print publications are most used to reach peer organizations (43%) and policymakers (42%). Advertising is good for messages aimed at the general public, according to 42% of respondents, while 32% say it works when targeting the local public. Events are preferred for reaching community leaders (54%) peer organizations (47%), policymakers (46%) and current grantees (42%).

Do communications budgets reflect priorities?

Considering how foundation communicators rate their target audiences in order to advance the objectives of their organizations using the tools discussed above, the next question is: How do they allocate their budgets to support those goals?

On average, foundation communicators say that website/electronic communications are the largest expenditures in their communications budgets. The next biggest expense category is "other," which most respondents said covered external consultants to develop strategy, branding, miscellaneous written products and design. The third-largest budget area is print publications, followed by spending on events. After that were media relations, annual report production and "miscellaneous" items that included travel, professional development, conferences, memberships, sponsorships, media databases, clipping services and market research. Communications departments are, on average, directing the smallest portions of their budgets to advertising, multi-media production and support for grantee communications. The small allocations for multimedia production may strike some as surprising given that our data indicates that social media are one of the more popular modes of reaching important target audiences

and because more and more websites rely on multimedia content to draw visitors.

At first glance, there seems to be change afoot in how foundations are spending on communications. The data from the 2008 Communications Network survey indicates that the average top expense then was for print publications. But this change in ranking may result from the fact that in the 2011 survey we have separated out print publications from annual report production. In 2008, "website" was second on the list, followed in order of descending amount by advertising, events, media relations and, last, support for grantee communications.

There are notable differences in spending by private and community foundations. Average private foundation expenditures closely reflect the overall survey findings (which are, in descending order: website/electronic communications, print publications, "other"/consultants, media relations, miscellaneous, events, support for grantee communications, multimedia production, annual reports and, last, advertising). Community foundation average budget allocations are quite different. Their single largest expense is advertising, followed closely by website/electronic communications and annual report production. Next come print publications and events. Among community foundations, the least is spent for media relations, multimedia production, support for grantee communications, and consultants.
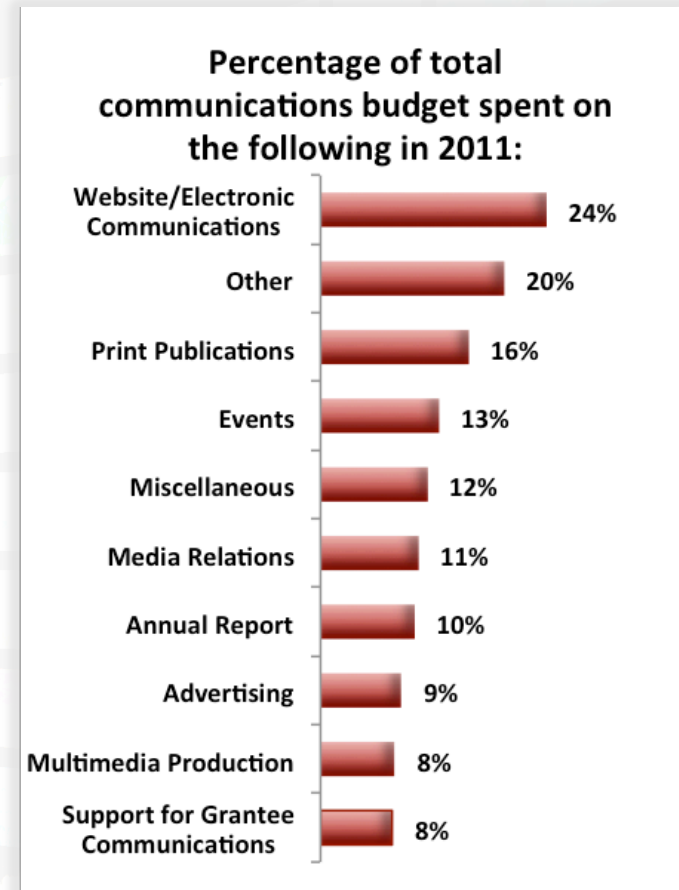
Percentage of total communications budget spent on the following in 2011:

Category	Percentage
Website/Electronic Communications	24%
Other	20%
Print Publications	16%
Events	13%
Miscellaneous	12%
Media Relations	11%
Annual Report	10%
Advertising	9%
Multimedia Production	8%
Support for Grantee Communications	8%

Percentage averages do not add to 100% because each figure above is the average of the numbers respondents provided in the category set.

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

Evolving priorities: experimentation and change.

To better understand how satisfied communications professionals are with their expenditures of time and money, the survey also asked, "What was your biggest communications-related accomplishment in the past 12 months?" The most commonly cited success was the launch of a new foundation website or major improvements to an existing site, such as adding a blog (the element of website improvement named most often). That was followed by the debut of a stand-alone or companion website devoted to a campaign or special project. Press coverage and key media relations efforts also scored high as successful communications accomplishments. Organizational adoption or advancement on social media, development of new strategic/communications plans and new organizational branding were also mentioned numerous times and in nearly equal numbers as successes. A few respondents said their successes included such things as having influenced policy/public dialogue, having influenced the field's state of practice, having increased their publication output, production of annual reports in new formats, and achieving more with fewer resources. Some also said they'd had success working with program departments and grantees either on communications projects or development efforts.

The survey then probed for examples of what didn't work, specifically by asking "What was your biggest communications-related disappointment in the past 12 months?" The most common disappointments were centered on social media, specifically on their

organizations' lack of progress in developing substantial efforts/strategy, organizational recalcitrance (usually the CEO of the foundation), lack of resources dedicated to social media campaigns and lack of staff involvement in social media. Only one respondent mentioned disappointment in the lack of audience response to social media efforts. Another very common disappointment was lack of news coverage, and, somewhat less common, bad news coverage. The next most common disappointment centered on budget constraints and budget cuts. Respondents made several mentions of frustrations at general delays. Several mentioned frustrations with planning, either that planning processes had been delayed or that they took up too much time. There were also numerous complaints about annual reports, whether they were delayed, had low readership or had not been presented in an electronic format.

"Bring out your dead!" Is the annual report still the Holy Grail of philanthropic communications?

If you are under the impression that the annual report is in its last stages of life, think again. The reports of this philanthropic mainstay's death are, according to our respondents, greatly exaggerated.

Almost three-quarters (72%) work for organizations that still produce an annual report, but more than a quarter do not (28%). Of those producing annual reports, 70% are still printing them (49% produce them in both print and pdf format, 19% produce them in print and as interactive content and 3% produce them in print only). Of the remainder doing an annual review, 21% are producing

them as a pdf only, and 9% are doing them as interactive content only.

We asked those who are producing annual reports if they planned on making any changes to their production process in the coming years. The greatest number said they had no plans to change at all. A plurality, 44% of annual report producers, said that it is their intent to continue producing them and spend the same amount. Over a quarter (29%) said that they would continue producing them but spend less. Close to the same number (27%) said that they planned to produce their annual report in the future as interactive content online. Only 2% that are currently producing annual reports said that they intend to not produce any kind of annual review in the near future.

Percent who say their organization's annual report is available:

Category	Percent
In print and online as a PDF	35%
Does not produce an annual report	28%
Online as a PDF only	15%
In print and online in the form of interactive content	13%
As interactive content online only	6%
In print format only	2%

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

SECTION THREE
Websites, Online Capacity and New Media

Almost half are blogging.

As the previous section indicates, foundations are making greater use of websites, new media and online communications to reach target audiences. These new tools and the communications opportunities they offer are in many ways changing the very nature of our profession. Because websites/blogs and social media are considered effective tools for reaching certain audiences, like community leaders, current grantees, national opinion leaders, journalists, peer organizations and local and general audiences, it is also important to understand what kind of technical capacity foundation communicators have to take advantage of these new ways of communicating.

The vast majority of respondents work in organizations that support a platform that allows non-IT staff to upload and edit content (80%) and features video (76%). Majorities also say they have placed highly visible links to their organizations' social media pages on their homepage (61%), that they have placed slide shows on their sites (52%) and they have adopted a technology platform that allows them to present a "magazine" format on their sites, with revolving story features, pictures, etc. (51%).

FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

Almost half now have a blog (47%), comment functions (46%) and automated event registration (44%).

Toward the low end of current technology adoption are automated grant applications (37%), podcasts (27%), integrated "Customer Relations Management" (CRM) systems (27%), automated publications ordering (25%), and recordings of webinars (23%). Only a few have taken the leap into mobile device applications (5%) and social games (2%).

About 10% said they had "other" functionality, and those respondents most commonly cited private sections of the website for certain groups of their audience. Others cited things like discussion forums, online donations, interactive maps, searchable grants databases, community calendars and foundation-hosted subsites where grantees have their own blogs, video, photos, etc.

Given that many foundations are still operating with flat or decreased communications budgets resulting from the prolonged national economic slump, it is not entirely surprising that respondents indicated a rather low level of intent to add some of the new tools and technical upgrades that many say would improve foundation communications.

The functions respondents most commonly said their organizations intend to add in the next two years are: Automated Grantee Reporting (48%) and Automated Grant Applications (45%). If these foundations follow through on those intentions, combined with those that already have those abilities, a large majority of our

Which of the following functions does your foundation's online capacity currently support?

Function	Percentage
Platform that Allows Staff to Edit Content	80%
Video	76%
Links to Your Social Media Pages	61%
Slide Shows	52%
Platform that Presents a "Magazine" Format	51%
Blog	47%
Comment Functions for Site Visitors	46%
Automated Event Registration	44%
Automated Grant Applications	37%
Integrated CRM System	27%
Podcasts	27%
Automated Publications Ordering	25%
Recordings of Webinars	23%
Automated Grantee Reporting	18%
Other	10%
Mobile Device/Phone Applications	5%
Social Games	2%

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

surveyed foundations will have automated applications and grantee reporting in 2013.

A third or more also intend to begin adopting technology that allows them to present their online content in a "magazine" format with revolving story features, pictures, etc. (40%). Many also intend to add capacity to post recordings of webinars (34%) and blogging functionality (34%).

> **These new tools and the communications opportunities they offer are in many ways changing the very nature of our profession.**

There were almost no discernible differences between private and community foundations on technology adoption. One of the few differences is that about a quarter of private foundations respondents said they currently place recordings of webinars on their sites, while none of the community foundation respondents said they did this. And community foundations are a bit more likely to be planning to add automated event registration to their online capacity.

There are also fewer differences in technology adoption than one might assume between those with smaller and larger communications budgets. Those with larger budgets are more likely to have capacity for video, podcasts, slide shows and webinars. Organizations with smaller budgets are much more likely to say they intend to add some of these features in the next two years, including a "magazine" format to their homepage, video, slide shows and webinars.

Later in the survey, an open-ended question asked: "What kind of communications tools do you wish you had the budget and/or senior management support to do?" In response, the items most commonly named, by far, dealt with being able to do more multimedia production and/or hire staff to do more with social media.

Social media are becoming a bigger priority for more foundations.

Social media are a major topic of conversation whenever foundation communicators get together. As discussed in Section Two regarding audiences and tools, our respondents feel that social media are particularly effective in reaching certain key audiences. More in-depth probing through a series of questions on social media produced another important revelation: Only a tiny fraction of foundation communicators are staying out of the social media game altogether.

In fact, almost all of our respondents spend some time on new media. Only 7% said they do nothing in this area. The greatest portion of respondents (44%) say their communications department is spending up to 10% of its time on social media. More than a third (35% of respondents) are spending 11%-25% of their department's time on social media. A few foundations are really throwing a great deal of human resources into social media, with 10% of respondents saying that the communications department spends 26-50% of its time on social media, and another 3% saying the department spends more than half of its time on social media efforts.

These findings show how much things have changed for communicators in the last three years since our 2008 survey. Then, activity had centered mostly on adding content – reports, project descriptions and the like aimed at existing and hoped-for new audiences. Roughly two-thirds of private foundations and just over 40% of community foundations had recently redesigned their sites, and the focus of those redesigns had been on traditional web applications. There hadn't been much activity on the Web 2.0 front. Development of video and other multimedia content still ranked far below the emphasis on static content development. And only 25% of private foundations and 16% of community foundations had waded into interactive media, like blogs and social networks.

> **These findings show how much things have changed for communicators in the last three years since our 2008 survey.**

There does appear to be a correlation between communications budget size and time spent on social media efforts. Those at the low end of social media activity are disproportionately those with the tiniest budgets. The larger the budget the greater proportion of time the communications department generally seems to devote to social media efforts.

For a while it seemed as if a new social media tool was being launched every few minutes and many wondered which ones would eventually become the most useful for communications professionals. Currently there is a tight race between Twitter (29% said this is their most useful social media tool) and Facebook (27%). The next most

Which of the following functions does your foundation plan to add within two years?

Function	Percentage
Automated Grantee Reporting	48%
Automated Grant Applications	45%
Platform that Presents a "Magazine" Format	40%
Recordings of Webinars	34%
Blog	34%
Links to Your Social Media Pages	33%
Video	30%
Podcasts	29%
Slide Shows	26%
Comment Functions for Site Visitors	26%
Integrated CRM System	23%
Mobile Device/Phone Applications	23%
Platform that Allows Staff to Edit Content	20%
Automated Event Registration	14%
Automated Publications Ordering	13%
Social Games	10%
Other	3%

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

useful to foundation communicators is YouTube (10%), followed closely by the organization's own blog (9%). Flickr was cited as being most useful by only a few (3%), as were "other" social media tools (those named included Ning, Spotlight and embedded social functions on foundations' own sites).

Community foundation communicators are a bit more likely to say that Facebook is their most useful social media tool, whereas private foundation communicators seem to prefer Twitter a bit more. Also, communicators working in organizations with smaller communications budgets seem to find Facebook most useful, and those with larger budgets are bigger Twitter users, which may well be linked to larger staff size and the investment of human resources associated with building a strong Twitter presence.

The greatest number of wishes centered on a desire to do more with video and multimedia production, with several respondents wishing for better video production software/equipment and better training or in-house expertise.

Relatively few (18%) have taken the plunge into advertising on social media or paid ad words on search engines. Of the two, experience with paid ad words is more common.

Increasing new media and related digital communications capacity was the highest-rated priority for professionals' internal goals for their communications department (see more details on this question in Section Five: Relationships). A sizable majority (60%) say increasing new media and related

digital communications capacity is a high priority, rated even more highly than "upgrading the efficiency and effectiveness of my team" (54%) and far outdistancing goals like helping grantees build their communications capacity, building a closer relationship with other internal groups and increasing the department's budget.

The blogs we read.

The list of information resources foundation communications professionals draw upon is long and varied, a fact that is certainly exemplified in the answers respondents provided to our question asking them to name the blogs or other informational websites they find most relevant to their work and/or read most frequently. The list is so long and varied that few of the sources named were mentioned more than once. In the foundation communications field, there does not seem to be a coalescence around a single set of most important information resources. As a whole, the field should feel confident that it is not locked into the kind of "group think" that sometimes results from undivided attention to uniform information sources.

But there are some blogs and news sources that clearly have a strong following in the field of philanthropic communications. The most frequently named is our own Communications Network blog, which makes sense given the survey sample. The next most commonly named information sources are The Chronicle of Philanthropy and Philanthropy News Digest/Foundation Center. Also frequently named were Beth Kanter's Beth's Blog and Sean Stannard Stockton's Tactical Philanthropy

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

blog. National/international news sites such as The New York Times and The Huffington Post were named almost as frequently, as were numerous local general news sources. The Stanford Social Innovation Review, Council on Foundations and Politico were also named numerous times. Other sites that were named more than once include the Minnesota Council on Foundations' Philanthropy Potluck blog, the Center for Effective Philanthropy, Andy Goodman's blog, Nancy Schwartz's Getting Attention blog and Education Week.

The Technology Wish List.

In a separate segment of our survey dealing with the communications professional in the work context (see Section Seven: The Professional in Context), we asked respondents in an open-ended question to tell us what kind of communications tools they wished they had the budget and/or senior management support to use. While more staff for general communications efforts was mentioned more frequently than any other single item, the many technology and "Web 2.0"-related wishes combined far out numbered the mentions of wanting to hire more people. The greatest number of wishes centered on a desire to do more with video and multimedia production, with several respondents wishing for better video production software/equipment and better training or in-house expertise. The next largest set of wishes centered on social media, with equal numbers wanting to be able to do more on social media in general and specifically desiring more staff to be able to better execute social media objectives. A smaller but still sizable proportion of respondents said they wished for a

website redesign or major new functionality for their sites, with several mentions of wanting to add a blog function. Very few non-Web 2.0-related wishes received more than a few mentions (see more on this in Section Seven).

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

SECTION FOUR
Strategy, Planning and Evaluation

If you attend philanthropic conferences, you may have come away with the impression that for foundations – and for communications departments within them in particular – strategic planning has become a universally accepted necessity. A community foundation president recently said in an interview for a separate piece of research:

> "How could anyone run an organization without having a strategy? I mean, could General Motors operate without a strategy? Any strategy, any course of direction, means you're doing some things and not doing other things. Sure, there are opportunity costs to any sort of a strategy. And perhaps you don't know until you look back and assess whether or not, ultimately, it did prove to be a good strategy. But what's the alternative to having a strategy? Having no strategy? What would that look like? Being a sort of aimless…being a completely reactive organization? I mean, I'm having trouble grappling with how that would even work."[6]

Having a thoughtful strategy does seem to be a necessity for any effective organization. In keeping with that belief, a great many of our survey respondents indicate that

_____

[6] Quote is from an anonymous CEO in the Center for Effective Philanthropy's soon-to-be released research study on strategy at community foundations.

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

strategy, planning and evaluation are important to their work, but the value of these various activities are not seen universally and they are unevenly applied by those who do engage in these activities.

Almost three-quarters (74%) of respondents say they go through a process that produces a written communications plan. But of those, almost half (49%) say they don't refer to it on a daily basis. Only about a third (36%) say that their communications plan really guides their daily work.

The majority of foundation communicators (56%) are not using any kind of audience research to develop strategy, although a sizable minority says they are (44%). The most commonly cited forms of audience research include the Center for Effective Philanthropy's grantee perception report, general public surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews and website analytics.

Measurement and assessment.

Nearly three-quarters use at least some form of quantitative metrics to assess effectiveness (12% use only quantitative metrics, while 62% say they use a combination of quantitative metrics and anecdotal information). Of those collecting quantitative information, almost all (98%) do an accounting of website traffic. Most also take account of press coverage (75%) and their number of social media followers and level and types of interaction (67%). But fewer than half are collecting survey data or measuring awareness of the foundation and its work (49%), tallying requests for publications

Does your organization regularly engage in a communications planning process that produces a written plan?

We have a communications plan but isn't referred to on a daily basis	36%
No, our organization doesn't produce a written communications plan	27%
We have a communications plan and it really guides our daily work	27%
We don't have a separate communications plan, but communications is a major aspect of our organization's strategic plan	6%
We have done a communications plan in the past, but don't have a working plan now	5%

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

either in print or downloaded (47%), utilizing Grantee Perception Reports (43%), assessing communications-related outcomes work of their grantees (24%) or doing polling or other kinds of assessment to determine the public's awareness of the issues that their foundations support (23%). Only about a quarter of respondents said they use only anecdotal information (19%) or do no assessments at all (8%).

Only one of those measures, website traffic, factored in performance evaluations of the majority of respondents (60%). Comments from respondents made clear that most foundation communicators are judged by the degree to which they complete the activities outlined in their annual plans, but not by the actual outcomes of that work. One respondent said, "[My evaluation is based on] delivery on elements of work plan and goals for the year and signs of internal collaboration. It is not much at all related to our [outcome] assessments." Another said, "Unfortunately, there's not a high level of accountability here, so while these measures should be part of performance evaluations, they rarely are."

There was a wide range of responses on what role communications plans play in assessing the success of communications efforts. Large majorities (74%) of those surveyed said that they have a communications plan, but, of those, a plurality (46%) said that "we don't systematically evaluate communications success." Only 23% said that their communications plan "clearly delineates the measures we use to evaluate our communications effectiveness," and just 30% said their "evaluation of communications effectiveness is not

directly linked to it." Another 15% said they didn't produce a communications plan "and we don't formally evaluate communications," while 11% said that even though they don't produce a communications plan, "we do systematically evaluate communications success." "Against what?" would be the next logical question.

What difference does a written plan really make?

As to the value of having a communications plan, our data indicated no discernible differences between those who have one and those who don't on the vast majority of factors we looked at, including how communications budgets are apportioned, the objectives they set for their communications, the priorities they set for reaching certain target audiences or the best mechanisms for reaching those audiences. The two groups also show no differences on whether or not they are still producing an annual report (see also the final subsection of Section Two, which is focused on annual reports). There is also no difference between those with written plans and those without in terms of how they say their foundations' senior executives perceive the importance of communications to achieving the organizational mission. These findings raise questions about what benefits there are, if any, in going through the process of creating a written communications plan and what effect such plans have on the operations of a communications department.

One area of difference that did stand out, in terms of operations, is that those with plans were most likely to say, "Program staff frequently asks us to weigh in on many communications components of new initiatives and

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

major grants as they are taking shape." Those without plans were most likely to say, "Program staff occasionally asks our advice on communications elements of grants/ initiatives." Those with written communications plans were also more proportionally represented among those who said, "Program and communications staff work completely in tandem in the planning of any initiative or major grant that has any communications element." It appears that having a written communications plan may be associated with greater advancement in deepening integration of communications into program work.

> **Our data indicated no discernible differences between those who have a communications plan and those who don't on the vast majority of factors...One area of difference that did stand out is that those with plans were most likely to say, "Program staff frequently asks us to weigh in on many communications components of new initiatives and major grants as they are taking shape."**

Those with communications plans were also significantly more likely to acknowledge foundation failures (see more in Section Five: Transparency and Communicating About Failure). The large majority (73%) of those with written plans said that they were aware of foundation failures, whereas those without written plans were split nearly in half between those who acknowledged foundation failures (57%) and those who did not.

Relatedly, those with written plans were somewhat more likely to place their organizations farther toward the highly transparent end of the scale we presented, and those without were more likely to describe their organization as having only an "average degree of transparency."

Two more of the few areas where those with written communications plans and those without differed were that those with plans are somewhat more likely to have a website with comment functions (50% vs. 36%) and are much more likely to use audience research to drive strategy (53% vs. 20%).

There is another finding that seems to demand more research: Those with written communications plans most frequently said that before joining the foundation they had previously worked in a nonprofit organization, whereas those without written communications plans most frequently said they had worked in a for-profit company.

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

SECTION FIVE
Transparency and Communicating About Failure

Nearly a third (32%) of foundation communicators told us that neither evaluations nor anecdotal evidence had ever given any indication that their organization's work had been anything less than successful. But the majority of foundation communicators (69%) were able to admit that their organizations had had some less than successful outcomes.

Of those that admitted foundation failures, the greatest number, but not the majority at 44%, said that their organization had spoken publicly and forthrightly about failures. But most had not. Nearly a third (30%) of those who acknowledged foundation failure said that they had publicly discussed what they considered failures, but talked about them in other terms. Another 15% percent said they had debated internally whether or not to publicly discuss failures but decided it might be harmful to others, and 12% said their foundation had never even considered talking about failures publicly.

In an open-ended question, we asked respondents to share any thoughts they had on foundations talking about failures. Respondents most commonly laid the blame for not being more open about unmet expectations at the feet of their trustees. Said one, "Board members want to know, most of the time, about failures and encourage risk taking. But many don't see the wisdom in discussing it publicly." Another said, "There is a transparency issue

FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

and power dynamic issues with foundations. Many simply will not discuss their internal workings good or bad. Many are not embracing social media and new tech within the foundation themselves, but they expect their grantees to be using it. In general, one foundation will not comment on the work of another. In general, few will admit failure outside of affinity group meetings. It is also rare there."

But others spoke of how little risk there may actually be in talking publicly about failure. One said, "I think there is a fear of discussing failure, but that fear isn't warranted by our experience. When we publicly discussed our failure, we received nothing but praise. It enhanced our brand, rather than damaging it." And another said, "Once you share a failure it gets easier."

This last sentiment was, however, not shared by the respondent who said, "With two concrete examples, we can check the box saying we've publicly acknowledged our failures...but with many others, we have debated internally how/if to discuss these publicly and most often decide against doing so." Clearly, even those who have experimented with communicating about unmet expectations and failures continue to struggle with how and when to make the best use of valuable information that doesn't necessarily shed the best light on people and organizations working with good intentions. These organizational ambivalences toward openness are also on display in the responses to our questions about transparency.

The responses to the question on perceptions of transparency were fairly evenly distributed across the

When your organization's work did not produce expected results, how did you address the failure publicly?

- Evidence has not shown that the organization's work did not produce expected results — 31%
- Has publicly discussed our failures as such and how our organization has learned from them — 30%
- Has publicly discussed what we considered failure, but talked about them in other terms — 20%
- Has debated internally whether or not to publicly discuss failures but decided it might be harmful to others — 10%
- Has never considered talking about failures publicly — 8%

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

spectrum we presented to respondents, which may indicate that self-reports are a fairly accurately gauge of reality. Given that our sample is drawn from foundations with communications staff, it is not surprising that only 2% said their organization was less transparent than most. Next along the spectrum of transparency, 16% said their organization is moderately transparent, 37% said it has an average degree of transparency, 35% said it is more transparent than most, and 10% said their foundation is fully transparent. (For more details on how the survey defined the five levels of transparency for respondents, see this report's addendum, which presents the entire questionnaire and top line data.)

SECTION SIX
Relationships

Tight with foundation leadership, becoming more integral to program

There was a time when foundation communicators primarily were charged with producing annual reports, writing press releases, pitching stories, responding to queries from reporters and organizing special events. Now many foundation communications departments are playing a much more aggressive role in helping key audiences understand complex issues while also taking on the tasks of advising program staff on how to integrate communications into their grantmaking and helping grantees become more effective communicators. While the data seem to indicate a general trend toward greater responsibilities for communications departments and deeper involvement in program planning, the trend is far from universal and also differs in intensity and range of activities from foundation to foundation.

In the vast majority of philanthropic organizations, the head of communications reports directly to the president of the organization (85% said this was the case at their organization). Just a few report to a VP of Programs, a Chief of Administration or other job function.

We asked our foundation communicators to reflect on how their organizations' senior executive leadership perceives the importance of communications to achieving organizational mission and what is being done to support their role. Almost half (48%) said that leadership has

FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

already helped make communications central to strategic decision-making on most program-related activity. But the other half (52%) of respondents said they are somewhere else on the continuum. Over a third (36%) said leadership is in the process of integrating communications into all aspects of the organization's work, but change is happening slowly. Of the rest, 12% said leadership talks about integrating communications into all aspects of organizational mission, but it still tends to just get tacked on at the end, and 4% say leadership tends to see communications as just something that gets tacked on at the end of larger projects.

While about half (52%) said that improving the perceived value of communications at the foundation is a high priority, only 38% said "Strengthening my team's relationship with senior management and/or the board" is a high priority. And other internal goals are more pressing for respondents. The greatest number of respondents (60%) actually say that "increasing new media and related digital communications capacity" is a high priority, at the same level as more immediate goals like "upgrading the efficiency and effectiveness of my team" (59%). A large minority does rate "building a closer relationship with other internal groups" (44%) as a high priority. Infrequently rated as a high priority were "helping grantees build their communications capacity" (21%), and "increasing the communications budget" (17%).

But if communications professionals are generally moving toward a more central role in foundations, what are communications departments really doing to support program departments? We presented a list of possible

How high of a priority are the following internal goals for your communications department over the next 12 months?

Goal	High Priority	Medium Priority	Total
Increasing new media and related digital communications capacity	60%	32%	92%
Upgrading the efficiency and effectiveness of my team	59%	36%	95%
Improving the perceived value of communications at the foundation	52%	31%	82%
Building a closer relationship with other internal groups	43%	34%	77%
Strengthening my team's relationship with senior management and/or the board	38%	38%	76%
Helping grantees build their communications capacity	21%	28%	49%
Increasing the communications budget	17%	45%	62%

■ High Priority ■ Medium Priority

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

activities in which they might be engaged. Providing support for program-related events (79% do this), which could mean anything from organizing a Washington, DC, panel discussion to a movie screening showcasing a grantee's work, is the most common form of supporting program departments, according to our respondents. Other important roles for the majority of communications professionals, and not far behind events, are: consulting to program teams on communications components of specific grants (71%), assistance to the program team on website maintenance and content management (70%), and consulting to program teams on communications strategy for whole issue areas (67%).

Fewer than half are consulting to individual grantees on how to execute communications components of their work (48%), providing support for grantee interactions (42%), providing direct assistance to individual grantees in executing communications components of their work (39%), supporting efforts to monitor and evaluate communications aspects of grant portfolios (30%), and conducting communications audits (23%).

A little over a quarter (26%) say that their interactions with program and evaluation teams are already "completely collaborative and cooperative." The largest number of respondents (31%) said that their relationships with program and evaluation teams are "well on the way to being collaborative and cooperative." Meanwhile, 26% say that those relationships are "only somewhat collaborative, but the organization is actively working on it" and 15% say it "varies from one program/evaluation staff member to the next." Only 2% say "program and

Which statement best characterizes the interaction between the communications and the program and evaluation teams at your organization?

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey
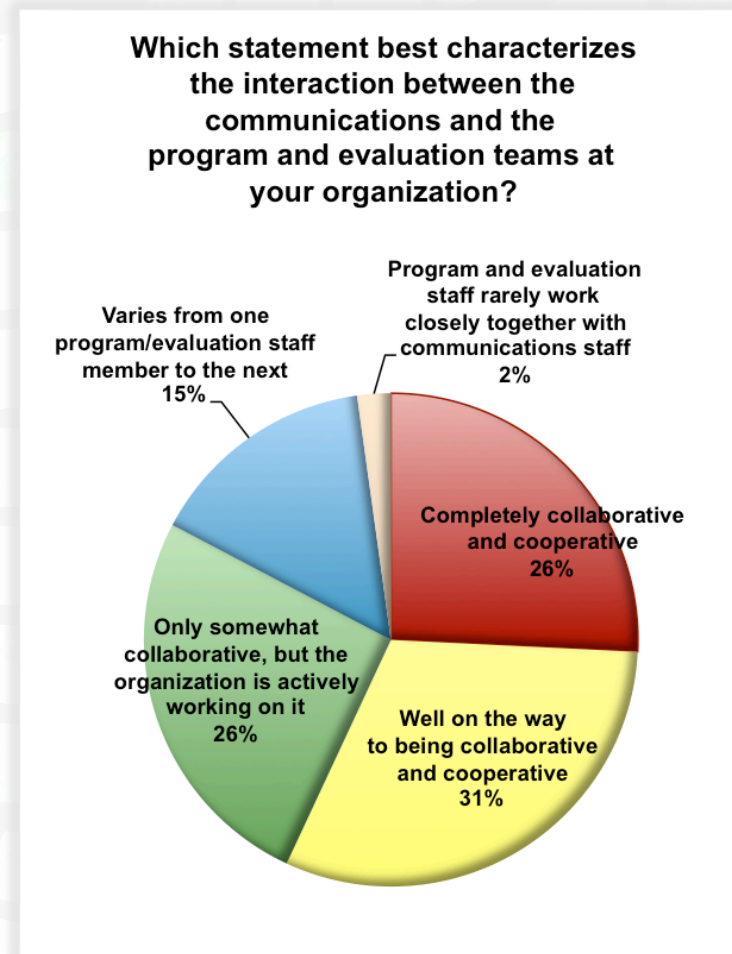
evaluation staff rarely work closely together with communications staff.

The diversity of relationships is similarly expressed in the spread of responses to the question we asked about the degree to which communications staff get involved in grantmaking initiatives that have significant communications components. While almost a quarter (24%) said that "program and communications staff work completely in tandem in the planning of any initiative or major grant that has any communications element," more said that either "program staff frequently asks us to weigh in on many communications components of new initiatives and major grants as they are taking shape" (32%) or that "program staff occasionally asks our advice on communications elements of grants/initiatives" (32%). Only 12% said "We don't really get involved in grantmaking."

When asked in an open-ended question to share any thoughts they had about their communications department's role in relation to organizational mission, leadership, program and/or grantees, and especially how that role might be changing over time, respondents provided many immensely insightful comments. Most talked about it as an "ongoing process" with some "struggle" but made clear that things are moving in a positive direction.

> **"It is always a challenge to have grants staff thinking about communications and how it fits in the picture overall. We are constantly working on this."**

Some talked about successes: "We have endeavored to be a much more well-integrated organization. Complete integration will take time, but our efforts have already paid dividends in that program officers think about communications at the start of the grant process rather than at the end of it." Another said, "There is a growing awareness that communications are central to our work as an organization. There's been a paradigm shift in the past two years." And another focused on the progress to date, saying, "As we are doing more and more advocacy, it seems communications is taking on a greater importance and our board has allowed our budget to reflect this, despite having much less money since the market collapse."

But others talked more intensely about the ongoing struggle to create deeper collaboration. One said, "It is always a challenge to have grants staff thinking about communications and how it fits in the picture overall. We are constantly working on this." Another said, "CEO commitment is crucial for communications integration into program work, but communications must always be proving its worth to program staff." Two others talked about the frustrations, saying, "Program staff seem to be making decisions without thought to the importance of properly messaging our work. Initiatives are designed without any communications goals – or input asked for – and later the communications department is asked to cobble something together," and "Program staff is slowly understanding the importance of communications in grantmaking but is still hesitant to ask for involvement from the start."

There was an important common thread through the comments: What seems to be the defining factor in what constitutes a strong and productive relationship with program departments is that program staff seek out communications counsel on the communications elements of substantial grantmaking initiatives.

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

SECTION SEVEN
The Professional in Context

In addition to learning more about the objectives foundation communicators set for their work and the tactics they use to achieve them, we also wanted to get a better sense of how these professionals came to their perspectives and what aspects of their daily work inspire them.

While more than a quarter (26%) say "foundation communications peers are my most important source of new information about how to do my work," the majority (59%) say "foundation communications peers are an important source, but I draw more information and inspiration from other sources." Only a handful (15%) say "foundation communications peers have not been significant sources of information and inspiration in how I do my work."

The things that foundation communications professionals most often told us bring them the greatest amount of satisfaction are: the sense of doing good through the work, the variety and diversity of projects and skill sets employed, the ability to use creativity, and the relationships with coworkers and grantees. On frustrations, far and away people just want more time to do more, and secondarily more resources and/or staff. Other frustrations cited often include internal politics and excruciatingly long internal processes, and having to justify the worth of communications to some internal audiences.

FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

The skills/knowledge most commonly mentioned by respondents as being most valuable in foundation communications are good writing and strategic thinking. Others very commonly discussed were specific technical skills, personal attributes like patience and being a programmatic generalist. The skills they seek in hiring others are first and foremost being able to write clearly and concisely, followed by creativity and being able to work well within the team context. But many are also looking for new team members with higher levels of knowledge in new media.

In an open-ended question exploring the significant changes in how the work is done and the skills needed to adapt, respondents almost universally talked about new media, technology and multimedia production.

It is most common for foundation communications professionals to have previously worked in communications for a nonprofit (40% of respondents have). Next most common, almost a third (30%) have worked in for-profit organizations in a communications capacity. Relatively few (18%) have ever worked for a traditional media organization.

When hiring others, the most common source is also nonprofit communications. None of the other sectors were chosen by sizable numbers of respondents. Many said that their department was so small that they hadn't really had any opportunity to hire new staff, so they weren't really sure where they would turn to find the best new hires if presented with the opportunity.

Which of the following best describes your learning from other foundation communications professionals?

They have not been significant sources of information and inspiration in how I do my work 15%

They are an important source, but I draw more information and inspiration from other sources 59%

They are my most important source of new information about how to do my work 26%
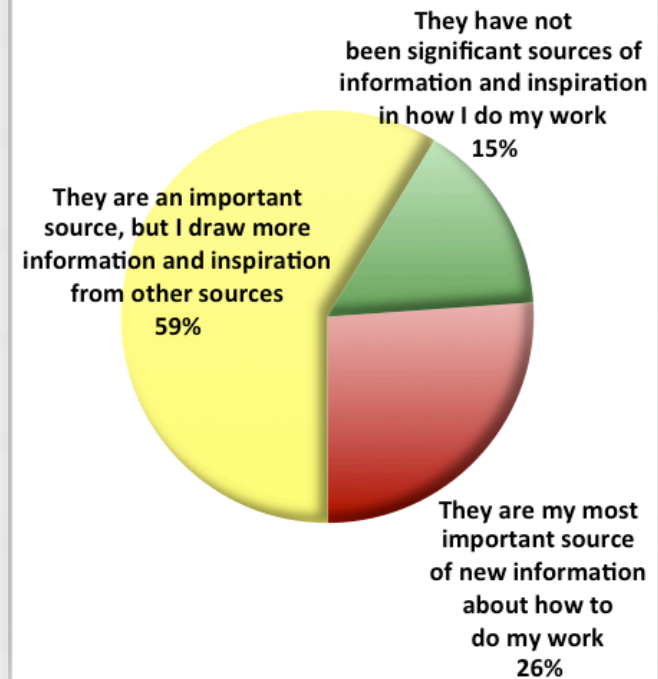
In Section Three of this report, we discussed some of the items on communicators' wish lists that dealt with websites, online capacity and social media. As we mentioned in that section, the very most popular non-technology related wish was for more staff to do all sorts of communications work. Few other non-technology/new media-related items got more than a single nod, but those that did included: more resources for collecting and telling stories (especially on the work of grantees), advertising, design assistance, strategic planning process, more communications training/tools for grantees, professional development for their own staff, branding/messaging development and access to the services of outside PR firms. A few even said that they had all the resources they needed to do anything they wanted.

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey
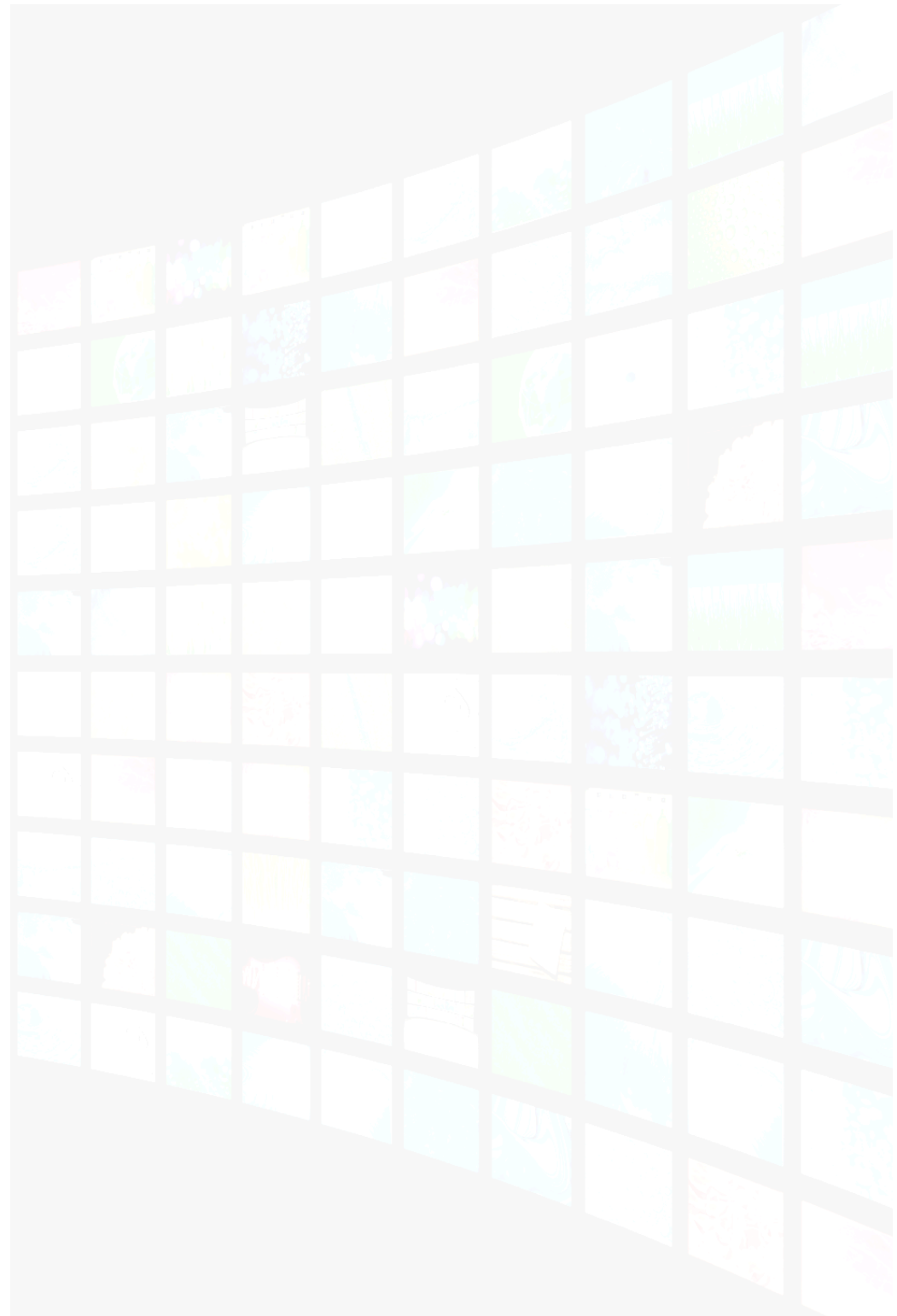
SECTION EIGHT
Implications for Communications Network Peer Learning

As we developed this report, we began to contemplate what it was telling us about the issues foundation communicators are still struggling with and how we could develop educational programming that helps answer our outstanding questions. Here are a few that are on our minds:

- If increasing awareness of issues is the most common high priority for foundations and public policymakers are the most important target audience, what are foundations really doing in this regard? What is the state of the art? Is a DC office in the future for many?

- How important, really, are general and local audiences? Does your organization need to gain clarity on target audiences and how it directs resources?

- Why are we spending so little of our budgets on multimedia production when so many of us want to do more in this area?

- For those whose communications plans sit on the shelf throughout the year, what can be learned from those whose communications plans are used on a daily basis to guide and assess their work?

FOUNDATION COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

- For those who want to move their foundation toward making communications more central to strategic decision-making on program-related activity, what are the best ways to go about it?

- For those who want to make communications more integrated into program work, can creating a substantial communications plan help deepen the relationship with program staff?

- What can we learn from those who have moved from less collaborative to more collaborative relationships with program staff? What did they do to get there?

Those are just a few of the questions that occurred to us along the way. We hope that as you read this report, many additional questions entered your mind. We'd like to hear your thoughts.

Tell us what you think. Email Bruce Trachtenberg at brucet@comnetwork.org.

METHODOLOGY

This report presents findings from the Communications Network 2011 Survey of Foundation Communications Professionals, a comprehensive exploration of the field of foundation communications practice.

We used the online survey tool Survey Monkey to field the survey. In total, we sent invitations to about 390 people beginning February 8, 2011. The invitations were sent to Communications Network members and other foundation communications professionals for whom we were able to obtain email addresses. We sent out two additional reminders over the following three weeks and eventually some 155 responded. The survey closed on February 28, 2011. The 40% response rate is at the high end of what is generally considered by social science researchers to be typical for surveys of this kind.

It should be noted that while 155 responded and provided some information, only 94 proceeded all the way to the end and completed all the questions in the survey. Some social scientists would say that the response rate based on *completion* was actually 24%, but that rate is still well within what is generally considered acceptable in

membership surveys. It is important that 155 participated in the survey and provided useful information, even if some of them dropped out along the way.

Even a 24% response rate is about average for an Internet survey and does not provide any indication that the sample is not representative. Recent research shows that reliance on response rates is overemphasized in terms of representation.

As we noted in Section One, because the survey was open to anyone on the communications staff at participating organizations, the reader should keep in mind that the unit of analysis used throughout the report is individual communications professionals. That means when you read a statement such as "X% of respondents work in foundations with a staff of more than two" it should not be taken to mean that X% of *foundations* have a staff of more than two.

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

ADDENDUM

Complete Survey Results

The findings in "Foundation Communications Today: Findings from the 2011 Survey of Foundation Communications Professionals" are based on an online survey of 155 foundation communications professionals. The survey was conducted between February 8 and February 28, 2011. Percentages of less than 0.5 are indicated by a dash (-). Responses may not always total 100 percent due to rounding. Combining answer categories may produce slight discrepancies between the numbers in these survey results and the numbers in the report. Answers that respondents provided with open-ended text are signified by an asterisk (*).

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Q01 What kind of organization do you work for?			
Private Foundation	**55**	100	-
Community Foundation	**33**	-	100
Corporate Foundation	**1**	-	-
Public Charity	**3**	-	-
Nonprofit Philanthropy Fund	**3**	-	-
Philanthropy Association (e.g. RAG, Affinity Group)	**5**	-	-

		Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Q02	**Where is your organization located?**			
	City [text responses]	*	*	*
	State [text responses]	*	*	*
Q03	**What is the geographic focus of your organization's grantmaking? (check all that apply)**			
	Local	**44**	35	65
	Regional	**52**	47	57
	National	**33**	44	12
	International	**26**	35	10
Q04	**What was the total dollar value of your organization's grantmaking in 2010?**			
	Made NO grants in 2010	**5**	-	-
	Less than $5 million	**27**	16	45
	$5-25 million	**27**	25	30
	$25-99 million	**23**	33	15
	$100-199 million	**7**	6	9
	$200-299 million	**3**	5	-
	$300+ million	**9**	15	2

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q05 **What is the communications department's total budget, excluding staff costs, in 2011?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Less than $25,000	**12**	9	15
$25,000-$100,000	**34**	22	48
$100,001-$250,000	**24**	27	22
$250,001-$1 million	**19**	23	15
More than $1 million	**10**	19	-

Q06 **How many people, including yourself, currently make up your communications team?**

[text responses]	*	*	*

Q07 **Compared with your budget before the economic downturn of 2008, is your 2011 communications budget larger, smaller or has it stayed about the same?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Larger	**17**	21	13
Smaller	**34**	35	36
Stayed about the same	**49**	44	51

Q07a **You said your current communications budget is larger than it was in 2008. Was it an...?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Increase by less than 25%	→**61**	→74	→50
Increase by more than 25%	→**39**	→26	→50

→% of those answering "Larger" to Q07, not sample total

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q07b **You said your current communications budget is smaller than in 2008. Was it a...?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Decrease by less than 25%	→**72**	→83	→56
Decrease by more than 25%	→**28**	→17	→44

→% of those answering "Smaller" to Q07, not sample total

Q08 **Please estimate the percentage of the total communications budget the organization will spend on each of the following activities/tools in 2011? (THE PERCENTAGES YOU SUPPLY SHOULD ADD UP TO 100)**

	Total	Private Fnd	Community Fnd
Website/electronic communications	**24**	26	18
Multimedia production	**8**	9	5
Media relations	**11**	13	6
Print publications	**16**	16	17
Advertising	**9**	4	21
Support for grantee communications	**8**	10	4
Events	**13**	12	17
Annual report	**10**	8	18
Miscellaneous (including travel, professional development, conferences, memberships, sponsorships, media databases, clipping services, market research, etc.)	**12**	12	5
Other (note % here, then describe below)	**20**	16	3

Percentage averages do not add to 100% because each figure above is the average of the numbers respondents provided in the category set.

	Total	Private	Community

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	%	Fnd %	Fnd %

Q08a **If you plan to spend a percentage of your communications budget in 2011 on an activity not listed above, please be sure you've estimated a percentage in the "other box" above and tell us about that activity here.**

[text responses]

	*	*	*

Q09 **Please think about what your organization expects communications to achieve in 2011. How high a priority does your organization place on each of the following OBJECTIVES:** (presented in randomized order)

Increasing general awareness of the foundation (i.e, enhancing the foundation's image, brand and reputation)

	%	Fnd %	Fnd %
High Priority	**51**	31	89
Medium Priority	**34**	47	12
Low Priority	**13**	22	-
Not Applicable	**2**	-	-

Increasing public understanding of the issues our foundation concentrates on

	%	Fnd %	Fnd %
High Priority	**65**	64	76
Medium Priority	**24**	27	12
Low Priority	**10**	9	12
Not Applicable	**1**	-	-

Gaining high-profile coverage in traditional media

	%	Fnd %	Fnd %
High Priority	**33**	24	50
Medium Priority	**36**	44	31
Low Priority	**28**	33	19
Not Applicable	**2**	-	-

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Helping grantees better execute their communications			
High Priority	**17**	20	8
Medium Priority	**33**	35	24
Low Priority	**44**	39	68
Not Applicable	**6**	6	-
Influencing public policymakers			
High Priority	**47**	55	32
Medium Priority	**31**	32	28
Low Priority	**14**	9	32
Not Applicable	**8**	4	8
Providing research and other new information to professionals in the field			
High Priority	**31**	38	4
Medium Priority	**37**	38	52
Low Priority	**27**	18	32
Not Applicable	**6**	6	12
Soliciting feedback from grantees and the community			
High Priority	24	22	29
Medium Priority	38	43	25
Low Priority	31	30	38
Not Applicable	7	6	8

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Publicizing results/impact of grantmaking			
High Priority	**52**	40	76
Medium Priority	**35**	40	20
Low Priority	**13**	20	4
Not Applicable	**-**	-	-
Building collaborations with philanthropic peers			
High Priority	**35**	32	28
Medium Priority	**44**	48	52
Low Priority	**21**	20	20
Not Applicable	**-**	-	-
Bolstering relations with donors			
High Priority	**33**	6	80
Medium Priority	**13**	11	20
Low Priority	**10**	15	-
Not Applicable	**44**	69	-
Raising funds			
High Priority	**31**	7	79
Medium Priority	**12**	6	13
Low Priority	**6**	9	4
Not Applicable	**51**	78	4

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q10 **How high a priority are the following AUDIENCES when it comes to your communications efforts in 2011?** (presented in randomized order)

Journalists in traditional media

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
High Priority	37	38	36
Medium Priority	50	51	60
Low Priority	11	11	4
Not Applicable	2	-	-

"New" media influencers/bloggers

High Priority	17	21	8
Medium Priority	53	57	33
Low Priority	30	23	58
Not Applicable	1	-	-

National opinion leaders and other "influentials"

High Priority	37	43	12
Medium Priority	31	36	24
Low Priority	29	19	60
Not Applicable	3	2	4

Community leaders

High Priority	54	46	80
Medium Priority	34	43	20
Low Priority	11	11	-
Not Applicable	1	-	-

	Total	Private	Community

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	%	Fnd %	Fnd %
Donors			
High Priority	40	9	96
Medium Priority	10	9	4
Low Priority	4	8	0
Not Applicable	46	74	-
Policymakers			
High Priority	56	69	32
Medium Priority	25	20	32
Low Priority	14	7	36
Not Applicable	5	4	-
Peer organizations			
High Priority	36	38	24
Medium Priority	47	51	40
Low Priority	17	11	36
Not Applicable	-	-	-
Volunteers			
High Priority	6	-	15
Medium Priority	12	2	23
Low Priority	27	19	39
Not Applicable	55	80	23

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Professional advisers			
High Priority	**23**	2	80
Medium Priority	**28**	32	12
Low Priority	**37**	48	8
Not Applicable	**12**	19	-
Potential grantees			
High Priority	**26**	31	8
Medium Priority	**39**	40	40
Low Priority	**31**	27	52
Not Applicable	**5**	2	-
Current grantees			
High Priority	**53**	67	25
Medium Priority	**31**	27	42
Low Priority	**12**	6	33
Not Applicable	**4**	-	-
Past grantees			
High Priority	**7**	6	8
Medium Priority	**31**	30	32
Low Priority	**55**	60	60
Not Applicable	**6**	4	-

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
General public			
High Priority	**14**	15	16
Medium Priority	**38**	32	44
Low Priority	**43**	50	36
Not Applicable	**4**	4	4
Local public			
High Priority	**27**	24	28
Medium Priority	**38**	31	52
Low Priority	**29**	38	16
Not Applicable	**7**	7	4

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q11 **Which communications tools do you think are MOST EFFECTIVE for reaching each of the following audiences? (check all that apply)**
(presented in randomized order)

Journalists in traditional media

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Website/blog	**62**	≠	≠
Social Media	**53**	≠	≠
Media Relations	**80**	≠	≠
Print Publications	**21**	≠	≠
Advertising	**3**	≠	≠
Events	**17**	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	**20**	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	**60**	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	**16**	≠	≠
Not Applicable	**3**	≠	≠

"New" media influencers/bloggers

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Website/blog	**79**	≠	≠
Social Media	**74**	≠	≠
Media Relations	**38**	≠	≠
Print Publications	**5**	≠	≠
Advertising	**3**	≠	≠
Events	**15**	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	**30**	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	**29**	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	**11**	≠	≠
Not Applicable	**8**	≠	≠

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

National opinion leaders and other "influentials"

Website/blog	**56**	≠	≠
Social Media	**37**	≠	≠
Media Relations	**57**	≠	≠
Print Publications	**34**	≠	≠
Advertising	**6**	≠	≠
Events	**31**	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	**23**	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	**51**	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	**14**	≠	≠
Not Applicable	**9**	≠	≠

Community leaders

Website/blog	**55**	≠	≠
Social Media	**33**	≠	≠
Media Relations	**47**	≠	≠
Print Publications	**36**	≠	≠
Advertising	**17**	≠	≠
Events	**54**	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	**35**	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	**57**	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	**36**	≠	≠
Not Applicable	**9**	≠	≠

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Donors			
Website/blog	**29**	≠	≠
Social Media	**11**	≠	≠
Media Relations	**14**	≠	≠
Print Publications	**29**	≠	≠
Advertising	**11**	≠	≠
Events	**34**	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	**27**	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	**41**	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	**5**	≠	≠
Not Applicable	**51**	≠	≠
Policy makers			
Website/blog	**43**	≠	≠
Social Media	**22**	≠	≠
Media Relations	**50**	≠	≠
Print Publications	**42**	≠	≠
Advertising	**11**	≠	≠
Events	**46**	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	**26**	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	**71**	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	**24**	≠	≠
Not Applicable	**5**	≠	≠

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Peer organizations			
Website/blog	66	≠	≠
Social Media	45	≠	≠
Media Relations	26	≠	≠
Print Publications	43	≠	≠
Advertising	3	≠	≠
Events	47	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	60	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	63	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	20	≠	≠
Not Applicable	2	≠	≠
Volunteers			
Website/blog	25	≠	≠
Social Media	19	≠	≠
Media Relations	9	≠	≠
Print Publications	17	≠	≠
Advertising	8	≠	≠
Events	14	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	24	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	24	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	4	≠	≠
Not Applicable	64	≠	≠

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Professional advisers			
Website/blog	43	≠	≠
Social Media	9	≠	≠
Media Relations	15	≠	≠
Print Publications	30	≠	≠
Advertising	15	≠	≠
Events	34	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	33	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	55	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	8	≠	≠
Not Applicable	28	≠	≠
Potential grantees			
Website/blog	79	≠	≠
Social Media	41	≠	≠
Media Relations	29	≠	≠
Print Publications	23	≠	≠
Advertising	16	≠	≠
Events	28	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	51	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	28	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	21	≠	≠
Not Applicable	13	≠	≠

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Current grantees			
Website/blog	**77**	≠	≠
Social Media	**53**	≠	≠
Media Relations	**19**	≠	≠
Print Publications	**36**	≠	≠
Advertising	**9**	≠	≠
Events	**42**	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	**78**	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	**59**	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	**20**	≠	≠
Not Applicable	**8**	≠	≠
Past grantees			
Website/blog	**60**	≠	≠
Social Media	**31**	≠	≠
Media Relations	**17**	≠	≠
Print Publications	**19**	≠	≠
Advertising	**7**	≠	≠
Events	**18**	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	**68**	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	**25**	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	**22**	≠	≠
Not Applicable	**11**	≠	≠

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
General public			
Website/blog	**69**	≠	≠
Social Media	**47**	≠	≠
Media Relations	**57**	≠	≠
Print Publications	**29**	≠	≠
Advertising	**42**	≠	≠
Events	**21**	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	**22**	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	**2**	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	**31**	≠	≠
Not Applicable	**14**	≠	≠
Local public			
Website/blog	**58**	≠	≠
Social Media	**40**	≠	≠
Media Relations	**55**	≠	≠
Print Publications	**21**	≠	≠
Advertising	**32**	≠	≠
Events	**33**	≠	≠
Group Email/E-Newsletters	**20**	≠	≠
Individualized Direct Email/Phone	**5**	≠	≠
Indirectly through Grantees' Communication	**34**	≠	≠
Not Applicable	**17**	≠	≠

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q12 **How high a priority are the following INTERNAL GOALS for your communications department over the next 12 months?** (presented in randomized order)

Strengthening my team's relationship with senior management and/or the board

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
High Priority	**38**	39	41
Medium Priority	**38**	41	36
Low Priority	**14**	11	18
Not Applicable	**10**	9	5

Upgrading the efficiency and effectiveness of my team

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
High Priority	**59**	54	61
Medium Priority	**36**	43	30
Low Priority	**3**	4	4
Not Applicable	**2**	-	4

Improving the perceived value of communications at the foundation

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
High Priority	**52**	57	48
Medium Priority	**31**	24	35
Low Priority	**12**	13	13
Not Applicable	**6**	6	4

Increasing the communications budget

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
High Priority	**17**	11	26
Medium Priority	**45**	48	44
Low Priority	**35**	35	30
Not Applicable	**3**	6	-

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Helping grantees build their communications capacity			
High Priority	**21**	20	13
Medium Priority	**28**	35	22
Low Priority	**41**	41	57
Not Applicable	**10**	4	9
Building a closer relationship with other internal groups			
High Priority	**44**	50	36
Medium Priority	**34**	26	50
Low Priority	**13**	11	9
Not Applicable	**10**	13	5
Increasing new media and related digital communications capacity			
High Priority	**60**	59	57
Medium Priority	**32**	32	39
Low Priority	**7**	9	4
Not Applicable	**1**	-	-

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Q13 Please think about the communications department's work in total. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view even if none is exactly right. Would you say…?			
Our work is focused almost entirely on promoting the foundation and the impact it is having.	**20**	9	50
We work to promote the foundation, but much of our time is also spent developing communications strategies to advance programmatic objectives.	**61**	66	46
In addition to promoting the foundation and advising on communications strategy for program, we also spend a great deal of time on grantee-level work.	**18**	25	4

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q14 **Which of the following functions does your foundation's online capacity currently support? (check all that apply)**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
A platform that allows non-IT staff to upload and edit content	**80**	79	83
A platform that presents a "magazine" format with revolving story features, pictures, etc.	**51**	51	52
A blog	**47**	43	48
Comment functions that allow site visitors to submit thoughts/content/questions	**46**	49	44
Highly visible links to your social media pages from your home page	**61**	57	70
Video	**76**	79	74
Slide Shows	**52**	49	52
Podcasts	**27**	25	26
Recordings of Webinars	**23**	26	-
Social Games	**2**	2	-
Mobile Device/Phone Applications (Apps)	**5**	8	4
Automated Grant Applications (not a printable PDF)	**37**	38	39
Automated Grantee Reporting	**18**	23	17
Automated Publications Ordering	**25**	23	22
Automated Event Registration	**44**	32	61
An integrated CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system to manage user/contact information	**27**	26	17
Other (please use the box below to tell us about it)	**10**	8	13

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q15 **Which of the following functions does your foundation NOT CURRENTLY SUPPORT, BUT PLANS TO ADD within two years? (check all that apply)**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
A platform that allows non-IT staff to upload and edit content	**20**	20	19
A platform that presents a "magazine" format with revolving story features, pictures, etc.	**40**	38	48
A blog	**34**	36	33
Comment functions that allow site visitors to submit thoughts/content/questions	**26**	24	38
Highly visible links to your social media pages from your home page	**33**	36	33
Video	**30**	24	43
Slide Shows	**26**	27	33
Podcasts	**29**	31	38
Recordings of Webinars	**34**	31	52
Social Games	**10**	7	19
Mobile Device/Phone Applications (Apps)	**23**	20	29
Automated Grant Applications (not a printable PDF)	**45**	44	57
Automated Grantee Reporting	**48**	49	52
Automated Publications Ordering	**13**	11	14
Automated Event Registration	**14**	9	30
An integrated CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system to manage user/contact information	**23**	20	33
Other (please use the box below to tell us about it)	**3**	4	-

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q16 **What percentage of the communications department's time would you estimate is currently spent on "new media," doing things such as posting content, interacting with audiences through interactive media, adapting content, producing media and developing new media campaigns?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
0%	**7**	13	-
1-10%	**44**	46	50
11-25%	**35**	36	29
26-50%	**10**	4	17
51+%	**3**	2	4

Q17 **Which social media tool has been most useful for your organization?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Facebook	**27**	20	48
Twitter	**29**	36	17
YouTube	**10**	6	13
LinkedIn	**1**	-	-
Flickr	**3**	4	4
Our own blog	**9**	8	-
Other (please note in box below)	**3**	4	-
None	**18**	22	17

Q18 **What blogs or other informational websites do you find most relevant to your work and/or read most frequently? Please name them.**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
[text responses]	*	*	*

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q19 **Has your organization had any experience utilizing targeted advertising on social media or paid ad words on a search engine?**

	Total	Private Fnd	Community Fnd
Yes	**18**	18	17
No	**83**	82	83

Q19a **You said your organization has had some experience utilizing targeted advertising on social media or paid ad words on a search engine. Which best describes your experience?**

	Total	Private Fnd	Community Fnd
Our organization has only used targeted advertising on social media.	→**18**	→30	→-
Our organization has only used ad words on a search engine.	→**47**	→40	→75
Our organization has used both.	→**35**	→30	→25
Our organization has not used either, but supported a grantee to use one or both of these tools.	→**-**	→-	→-

→% of those answering "Yes" to Q19, not sample total

Q20 **Does your organization regularly engage in a communications planning process that produces a written plan?**

	Total	Private Fnd	Community Fnd
Yes	**74**	68	75
No	**27**	32	25

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q20a **You said you produce a written communications plan. Which statement best describes your organization?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
We have a communications plan and it really guides our daily work.	→**36**	→44	→28
We have a communications plan but it isn't referred to on a daily basis.	→**49**	→44	→56
We have done a communications plan in the past, but don't have a working plan now.	→**7**	→5	→6
We don't have a separate communications plan, but communications is a major aspect of our organization's strategic plan.	→**8**	→8	→11

→% of those answering "Yes" to Q20, not sample total

Q21 **Do you use audience research to drive your communications strategy? If yes, give examples.**

	Total	Private Fnd	Community Fnd
Yes	**44**	46	50
No	**56**	54	50

Q22 **What was your biggest communications-related accomplishment in the past 12 months?**

	Total	Private Fnd	Community Fnd
[text responses]	*	*	*

Q23 **What was your biggest communications-related disappointment in the past 12 months?**

	Total	Private Fnd	Community Fnd
[text responses]	*	*	*

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Q24 **What kind of communications tools do you wish you had the budget and/or senior management support to do?**			
[text responses]	*	*	*
Q25 **Does your organization produce an annual report?**			
Yes	**72**	68	100
No	**28**	32	-
Q25a **You said your organization produces an annual report. Is your annual report available…?**			
In print format only	→**3**	→3	→4
Online as a PDF only	→**21**	→29	→8
As interactive content online only	→**9**	→13	→-
In print and online as a PDF	→**49**	→42	→58
In print and online in the form of interactive content	→**19**	→13	→29

→% of those answering "Yes" to Q25, not sample total

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q25b **What kind of changes do you expect to make to your annual report over the next two years? (check all that apply)**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Will not produce any kind of annual review	→2	→-	→-
Will produce an AR and spend the same	→44	→34	→61
Will produce an AR but spend less	→29	→28	→30
Produce online only as a PDF	→19	→22	→9
Produce online as interactive content	→27	→38	→13

→% of those answering "Yes" to Q25, not sample total

Q26 **To whom does the senior communications executive in your organization report?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
President, Executive Director or CEO	85	82	91
Chief of Administration	1	2	-
Chief of Operations	1	2	-
Chief Information Officer	-	-	-
VP of Donor Relations/Development	2	-	4
Program Director	2	4	-
Other	9	11	4

Q27 **What is your title?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
[text responses]	*	*	*

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Q28 **Thinking about how your senior executive(s) perceives the importance of communications to achieving organizational mission, which of the following statements most closely describes your situation?**			
Leadership tends to see communications as just something that gets tacked on at the end of larger projects.	**4**	8	-
Leadership talks about integrating communications into all aspects of organizational mission, but it still tends to just get tacked on at the end.	**12**	4	21
Leadership is in the process of integrating communications into all aspects of the organization's work, but change is happening slowly.	**36**	40	29
Leadership has already helped make communications central to strategic decision-making on most program-related activity.	**48**	48	50

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Q29 **What kinds of assistance does the communications department provide to your program and evaluation teams? (check all that apply)**			
Consulting to program teams on communications strategy for whole issue areas.	**67**	70	63
Consulting to program teams on communications components of specific grants.	**71**	76	71
Consulting to individual grantees on how to execute communications components of their work.	**48**	56	38
Direct assistance to individual grantees in executing communications components of their work.	**39**	43	38
Assistance to the program team on website maintenance and content management	**70**	69	75
Supporting efforts to monitor and evaluate communications aspects of grant portfolios	**30**	32	17
Support for events	**79**	74	83
Support for grantee interactions	**42**	48	38
Communications audits	**23**	20	29
Not Applicable	**3**	4	-

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q30 **Which statement best characterizes the interaction between the communications and the program and evaluation teams at your organization?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Completely collaborative and cooperative	**26**	28	22
Well on the way to being collaborative and cooperative	**31**	30	30
Only somewhat collaborative, but the organization is actively working on it	**26**	28	22
Varies from one program/evaluation staff member to the next	**15**	13	22
Program and evaluation staff rarely work closely together with communications staff	**2**	1	4

Q31 **Grantmaking initiatives often have communications components. Which of the following statements best describes the communications department's role in shaping those components?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
We don't really get involved in grantmaking.	**12**	7	-
Program staff occasionally asks our advice on communications elements of grants/initiatives.	**32**	33	41
Program staff frequently asks us to weigh in on many communications components of new initiatives and major grants as they are taking shape.	**32**	33	41
Program and communications staff work completely in tandem in the planning of any initiative or major grant that has any communications element.	**24**	26	18

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q32 **Please share with us any thoughts you have about your communications department's role in relation to organizational mission, leadership, program and/or grantees, especially how it is changing over time.**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
[text responses]	*	*	*

Q33 **Does your organization collect data supporting quantitative metrics or does it rely on anecdotal information to assess communications success?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Quantitative metrics	**12**	14	13
Anecdotal information	**19**	19	21
Both	**62**	58	63
Neither	**8**	10	4

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q34 **What specific communications methods does your organization use? (check all that apply)**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Survey data or other methods tracking awareness of the foundation and its work	**49**	47	55
Data measuring public understanding of the issues that the foundation supports	**23**	29	18
Accounting of press coverage	**75**	78	91
Accounting of website traffic	**98**	100	96
Accounting of social media followers/level of interaction	**67**	61	73
Accounting of requests for publications (either print or download)	**47**	51	36
Analysis of feedback from readership of publications	**28**	26	36
Analysis of the foundation's Grantee Perception Report	**43**	67	14
An accounting of communications-related outcomes from the work of grantees foundation has supported	**24**	31	18

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Q35 Is part of your performance evaluation based on any of these metrics? (check all that apply)			
Survey data or other methods tracking awareness of the foundation and its work	**29**	33	21
Data measuring public understanding of the issues that the foundation supports	**19**	27	14
Accounting of press coverage	**46**	43	57
Accounting of website traffic	**60**	60	64
Accounting of social media followers/level of interaction	**37**	37	43
Accounting of requests for publications (either print or download)	**21**	23	21
Analysis of feedback from readership of publications	**19**	10	29
Analysis of the foundation's Grantee Perception Report	**17**	30	-
An accounting of communications-related outcomes from the work of grantees foundation has supported	**21**	27	7
Other	**29**	30	21

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q36 **Regarding written communications plans and evaluating success, which statement best describes your organization?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
We don't produce a communications plan, and we don't formally evaluate communications.	**15**	21	13
We don't produce a communications plan, but we do systematically evaluate communications success.	**11**	15	4
We have a communications plan, but we don't systematically evaluate communications success.	**34**	25	33
We have a communications plan, but our evaluation of communications effectiveness is not directly linked to it.	**23**	26	21
We have a communications plan, and it clearly delineates the measures we use to evaluate our communications effectiveness.	**17**	13	29

Q37 **Have evaluations and/or anecdotal evidence ever shown that aspects of your organization's work did not produce the expected results (either partial or complete failure)?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Yes	**69**	65	86
No	**32**	35	14

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q37a You said evidence has at least once indicated that aspects of your organization's work did not produce expected results. Which statement best describes your organization's experience with addressing failure publicly? Our organization…

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Has never considered talking about failures publicly.	→12	9	17
Has debated internally whether or not to publicly discuss failures but decided it might be harmful to others.	→15	12	28
Has publicly discussed what we considered failures, but talked about them in other terms.	→30	18	39
Has publicly discussed our failures as such and how our organization has learned from them.	→44	62	17

→% of those answering "Yes" to Q37, not sample total

Q38 Please share any additional thoughts you have about the barriers facing foundations publicly discussing less successful results.

[text responses]   *   *   *

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q39 **Many communications professionals are talking about transparency and accountability as they relate to foundations. How would you describe your organization?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Less transparent than most: We provide little public access to financials, grantmaking priorities, staffing info, and have limited channels for public interaction.	**2**	4	-
Moderately transparent: We have a staff list and guidelines online, but don't actively encourage public interaction and don't talk a lot about our role, our process or outcomes.	**16**	13	21
Average degree of transparency: We have a site that includes lots of information about our grants, grantmaking priorities and strategy for change, along with ways to interact with us through social media.	**37**	38	33
More transparent than most: Not only does our site provide full contact info with individual staff emails and a searchable database of grants, grantmaking is strategy is outlined, we have social media channels for interaction, we conduct evaluations of grants and we talk about how our strategies change as a result.	**35**	34	38
Fully transparent: Our site provides full financial disclosure, individual staff emails, full database of grants, discussion of grantmaking strategy, maximum public access through multiple social media platforms, evaluations are discussed publicly, there is open discussion of failure, and open consideration of the organization's overall progress.	**10**	11	8

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Q40	**Before this job, did you work for…? (check all that apply)**		
Another foundation, in a communications capacity	**8**	10	8
Another foundation, in a programmatic capacity	**8**	10	4
A nonprofit, in a communications capacity	**40**	25	50
A nonprofit, in a programmatic capacity	**19**	20	8
Local, state or federal government	**12**	16	4
A traditional media organization	**18**	27	13
A new media organization	**3**	4	-
A for-profit company in a communications capacity	**30**	27	42
A for-profit, in a non-communications capacity	**7**	8	8
Other (please describe below)	**8**	10	8

Q41 **What were the skills/knowledge you brought with you that turned out to be most valuable in foundation communications?**

[text responses]   *   *   *

Q42 **Over the past two years, what have been the most significant changes in how you've done your work, and what new skills have you needed to develop as a result?**

[text responses]   *   *   *

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Q43			

Q43 **When your organization has hired new communications staff, which type of background has generally proven best suited overall?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Another foundation, in a communications capacity	**7**	10	-
Another foundation, in a programmatic capacity	**-**	-	-
A nonprofit, in a communications capacity	**35**	26	42
A nonprofit, in a programmatic capacity	**-**	-	-
Local, state or federal government	**-**	-	-
A traditional media organization	**12**	18	5
A new media organization	**4**	5	-
A for-profit company in a communications capacity	**12**	13	16
A for-profit, in a non-communications capacity	**-**	-	-
Other (please describe below)	**29**	28	37

Q44 **Currently, what skills, knowledge or qualities do you consider most crucial when hiring communications staff for your organization?**

[text responses]	*	*	*

Q45 **Thinking about the changes you expect in how you do your job over the next two years, what new skills/knowledge/areas of practice do you want to learn/develop?**

[text responses]	*	*	*

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q46 **Which of the following best describes your learning from other foundation communications professionals?**

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %
Foundation communications peers are my most important source of new information about how to do my work.	**26**	33	28
Foundation communications peers are an important source, but I draw more information and inspiration from other sources.	**59**	52	63
Foundation communications peers have not been significant sources of information and inspiration in how I do my work.	**15**	15	8

Q47 **What are the most satisfying aspects of your job?**

[text responses]	*	*	*

Q48 **What element(s) of your job would you most like to change?**

[text responses]	*	*	*

Q49 **How many years have you worked in foundation communications?**

[text responses]	*	*	*

Q50 **In the past year, what was your compensation (salary + bonus, not including benefits)?**

[text responses]	*	*	*

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

	Total %	Private Fnd %	Community Fnd %

Q51 **Before you sign out, is there anything else you'd like to tell us?**

[text responses] * * *

Foundation Communications Today
2011 Communications Network Survey

The Communications Network

Formed nearly 20 years ago as a membership association, the Communications Network today is a stand-alone nonprofit organization that promotes the use of consistent, strategic communications as an integral part of effective philanthropy. The Network connects communications professionals working in philanthropy and the nonprofit sector to each other for guidance and mentoring and regularly sponsors learning and networking opportunities through webinars and the annual conference. Today, the Network's membership represents a wide range of foundation communications leaders and consultants who work to advance communications strategies and practices in all mediums.

For more information: **comnetwork.org**

HAMILL REMALEY breakthrough communications

HRbc works hand in hand with nonprofits, foundations and other social purpose organizations to build awareness and advance organizational objectives. The firm provides an array of services that includes strategic planning, media relations, fundraising, message development, branding, website content production, social media campaigns and program evaluation.

For more information: **hamillremaley.com**

Contact:
Bruce Trachtenberg
Executive Director
The Communications Network
1365 York Avenue, 28H
New York, NY 10021
212-731-2268 phone
917-677-4769 fax

Business Office Mailing Address
The Communications Network
1755 Park Street, Suite 260
Naperville, IL 60563