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Contributed Columns

The Pulse



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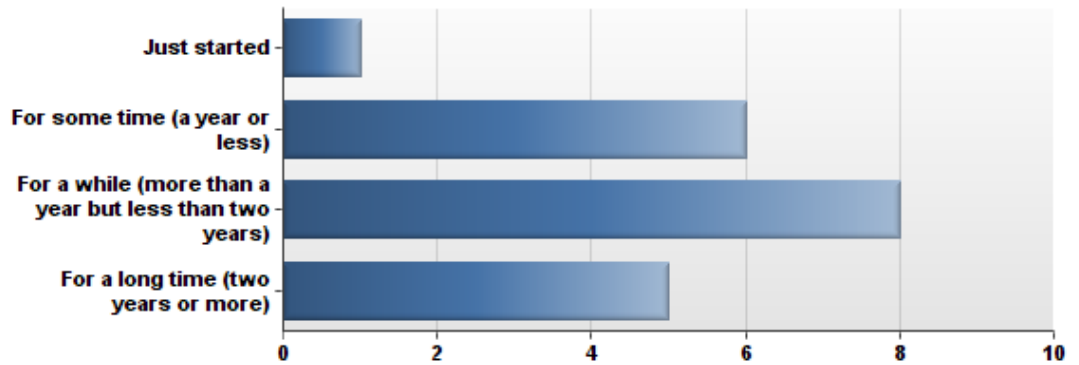
Use of Social Media by Research Administration Offices

We posed a series of questions concerning the use of social media by offices of research administration to the subscribers of the RESADM-L. A total of 147 research administrators responded to our survey between January 6th and January 20th, 2015. The majority of participants (109 or 74%) reported that their research administration offices do not use social media. The remaining 38 people (26%) shared that their offices use both Facebook and Twitter equally (48% each), while 2% reported using LinkedIn and Google groups. Given social media's stronghold on personal interactions, and increased use by higher education institutions, we were surprised by this result. We welcome thoughts from our readers on why social media has not yet gained traction among the majority of research administration offices. Below we address the trends found among those offices that do use social media.

Most (40%) of the research administration offices that are using social media have been active for more than a year but less than two years; fewer (30%) have been using social media for a year or less, and fewer still (25%) reported that their offices are established users who adopted social

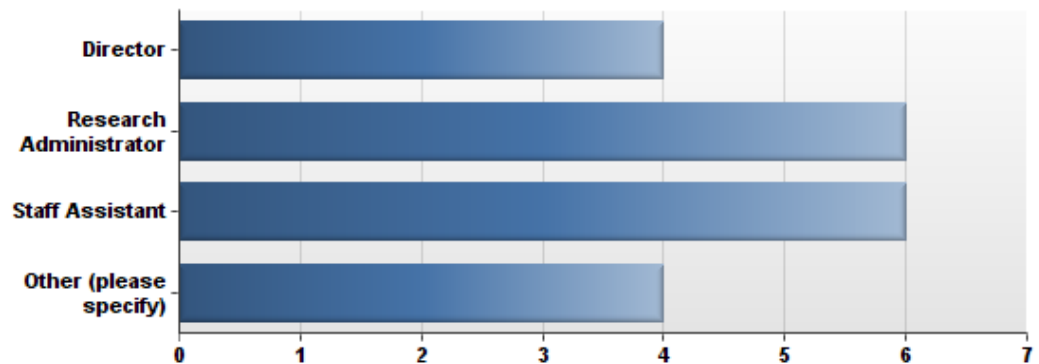
media two years ago or more. An additional 5% of participants reported that their offices just started taking advantage of social media capabilities. While drawn from a small sample size, this result indicates that while social media use in offices of research administration is in its early stages among our respondents, its use is growing.

How long have you been using social media as an office?



We also learned that social media accounts of our respondents' research administration offices are controlled by research administrators (30%), staff assistants (30%), directors (20%), or others (20%). Others included Associate Vice Provost for Research, accountant, research communication officer (fittingly and enviably), and somewhat disturbingly, "unknown." This wide variety in the type and level of those controlling social media accounts for research administration offices is an interesting finding, pointing to different levels of importance assigned to this type of contact by different offices.

Control of social media account:




Finally, we asked what type of material research administration offices post on their social media accounts. Based on the responses, internal updates are posted most often (55%), followed by funding opportunities (30%) and federal compliance notifications (20%). In addition, 55% of those

who responded indicated that their offices post other information, such as award announcements and “accolades,” press releases and “college news items,” information regarding new services, proposal writing advice and help, “news that may be of interest to general public,” and “fun stuff such as research administration memes.” This mix of the serious work of research administration with more personal, humanizing touches highlights the potential of social media to help offices of research administration connect with their constituents in a new way.

SRA will continue to check the “pulse” of research administrators on various topics throughout the year. These results will be published in the SRA Catalyst on a bi-monthly basis so look for the next column in April of 2015.

If you have any topics or questions that you want to see addressed in Pulse in the future, please let us know. Send feedback, ideas, questions and inquiries to Zoya Davis-Hamilton at zoya.hamilton@tufts.edu.

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