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Case Study: How MomsRising.Org Uses Social Media To Get Its Message Out

by: Ray Schultz, Child Advocacy 360

MomsRising.org is not a child advocacy group in the pure sense—it is focused on matters ranging from child care to family leave. But it can serve as a role model when it comes to social media.

“They do a lot of lot of online stuff,” says Tony Larson, communications associate for Every Child Matters. “We’re trying to keep up with them at times.”

Founded in 2006 by Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner and Joan Blades, MomsRising.org specializes in fast reaction to breaking stories about family issues, and in staying in touch with members. It has many things in common with the political action group MoveOn.org, including a co-founder—Blades.

“Each person receives over 3,000 marketing messages per day,” Rowe-Finkbeiner explains. “The best way to break through that is to rapidly respond to issues in the news.”

When the recent swine flu story broke, for example, MomsRising.org alerted members through multiple channels. Over 130,000 people signed an online petition calling for a **minimum standard of paid sick time**. And when Washington state legislators saved funding for **early learning**, 2,123 members thanked them.

Facebook and Twitter proved useful in both of these efforts, although e-mail remains tops in getting out serious and lengthy messages to the adult audience.

“We use as many tools as possible: e-mail, blogs, Facebook, Twitter,” Rowe-Finkbeiner says. “Our job is to find the ways we can have the most impact.”

Busy parents-cum-advocates appreciate that convenience. “You can get the power of your voice across to leaders from your home,” she adds.

How does the group measure success? Through online metrics, and final results.

Case in point: Motivated in part through social media, members barraged Congress with over 200,000 calls and messages for the **Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act**. President Obama was so impressed that he invited group leaders to the bill signing, his first as president.

That said, the group isn’t sure how many of its members are connected via social networks, according to spokesperson Gretchen Wiley. And not all the channels are equal.

Twitter, despite the fact that it limits message length to a mere 140 characters, now seems to be in the lead. It drove a great deal of traffic to a custom video that allowed visitors to name their mom “the Mother of the Year.” And it was competing against YouTube, Facebook and e-mail.

But what a response: the group had around 160,000 members at the start. Now, thanks to that viral video push, it has more than 1 million.

MomsRising.org is hardly a typical nonprofit group. It has a virtual team and no brick-and-mortar facilities, Rowe-Finkbeiner says. But its success can be



replicated.

"Don't be afraid to try and fail," Rowe-Finkbeiner says. "We acknowledge that at any given moment there's a new technology none of us know a thing about. There are no stupid questions."

And if something doesn't work? Drop it, and give it "a joyful funeral," she says.

Questions, comments? Share them with us below, or by writing ca360@connectforkids.org.

Child Advocacy 360 blogger Ray Schultz has edited several marketing publications, including Direct, DM News, Promo, Chief Marketer and Circulation Management. He has also written for the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* and other publications.

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