

# ONLINE ENGAGEMENT Vs SOCIAL MEDIA

## & Their Key Differences



As we have previously documented, online community engagement is a cost effective way to reach a large cross-section of the community and stakeholders *but what types of online tools should you be using?*

Online engagement can occur in numerous shapes and forms, with purpose built engagement platforms and social media tools being among the most popular.

While social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter can add value to your project when used correctly, they tend to produce a considerably different response to purpose built engagement tools.

While both methods have their benefits, when choosing your method for online engagement it is important to consider the key differences between social media and purpose built platforms.

## CONTROLLED PROCESS



### A purpose built platform enables you to set the rules and control the process

You are able to mediate comments if required, you decide what and when information is provided to ensure that it is relevant to the project and you are able to prevent the campaign being overtaken by off-topic, abusive or nonconstructive comments. **Social media does not allow the same level of control.**

I'm sure many professionals involved in community engagement can recall a particularly nasty, uncontrolled public meeting;

*"When community engagement gets overtaken on social media, it can be akin to a public meeting gone bad."*



## USER BEHAVIOUR

Users interact differently when using a purpose-built online engagement platform; it feels more official and they know that their comments are actually going to be considered.

They will dedicate more time to giving important and deliberate feedback.

Social media users do not always give as much thought to their comments, or they are reacting spontaneously to something they have seen in their news feed without a lot of consideration of how their comments will be used.

## ON-TOPIC FEEDBACK



When engagement is undertaken using a purpose-built platform, the feedback is more likely to be on-topic; the project parameters are clearly set so that you are more likely to receive relevant responses.



Social media on the other hand can easily be overrun by off-topic feedback; people can ambush your social media campaign with their non-related agenda, triggering many off-topic threads.

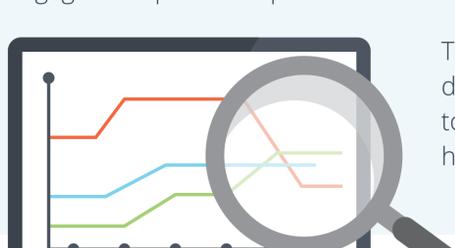
When your social media campaign is overtaken, moderation and control becomes difficult and trolling leads to comments dominated by hatred and abuse.

### FOR EXAMPLE

Projects utilising Social Pinpoint for online engagement have received thousand upon thousands of comments, with only a handful being off topic.

## USEFUL ANALYTICS

While most modern online tools provide some level of analytics, you will find that engagement platforms provide a set of metrics relevant to your engagement project.



These metrics are often provided through dashboards and reporting and can help you to quickly understand the information you have collected, not just the raw numbers.

## LOST COMMENTS

When the community comment on a social media forum, they may wrongly think that their comments are being received by the relevant project officer.

Unfortunately for the community, this is not always the case.

There are numerous 'pseudo' engagement activities on social media that are not sanctioned or part of the official campaign, but the community may not always know the difference.

A purpose built product will give the community the guarantee that they are commenting in an official capacity and that their comments will be heard and considered in the decision making process.

## HOW/ WHEN TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA?



Don't get me wrong, here at Social Pinpoint we love social media and are quite active on Twitter and Facebook.

Social media does have its place and can be used to complement other online engagement techniques.



It can be used to advertise your campaign, gain traction for your project and help an organisation build trust and relationships with the community by providing them with relevant project information.

It is important to remember that Social Media tools are not purpose built for community engagement; choosing the wrong tools can add risk to your project and result in less valuable community involvement.

