

# Not going anywhere soon: Social media for state and local government

Posted At : July 18, 2012 2:26 PM | Posted By : Chris Cotner

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This guest blog is the first in a series by analysts at [Market Connections Inc.](#), Cynthia Poole, Director of Research Services, and Melissa Burgess, Research Analyst. In an effort to bring our customers the best current market intelligence available, Deltek and Market Connections Inc. collaborated on data sharing and analysis for our recent social media in state and local government [report](#). Be sure to check out Market Connections Inc. for more information on their services and their own social media report.

According to Malcolm Gladwell, key trends in society reach a “tipping point” when ideas, behaviors, messages and products behave just like outbreaks of infectious diseases. When these societal epidemics take hold, these concepts can reach a level of near ubiquity.

The use of social media by government agencies has reached a similar tipping point, and unlike examples cited in Gladwell’s “The Tipping Point” (i.e. the rise and fall of Airwalk shoes), social media is here to stay.

From a state and local perspective, social media use has reached astronomical proportions. In addition, social media is being used in new and innovative ways – beyond citizen communications -- for obtaining crowdsourced data to inform smarter decision making.

According to a recent [GovWin study](#) called “Social Media in State & Local Government, a New Paradigm for Engagement and Innovation, 2012,” the increase of social media use allows state and local governments to:

- Add value to existing vendor solutions through IT integration
- Add social media integration to existing state and local government IT systems, including at the enterprise level
- Aggregate the big data of social media for government innovation
- Create purpose-built mobile solutions that integrate social media to improve government service delivery

Last year, Market Connections launched its “Social Media in the Public Sector 2011” [study](#) and many of the findings underscore what was uncovered by the GovWin study. In fact, GovWin included many of Market Connections’ data points in the new state and local social media report, including:

- Social media in general saw noteworthy increases in both public sector and contractor use.
- State and local governments used social media for both informed decision making (100%) and to communicate externally with citizens and other agencies/organizations (96%).
- State and local governments used social media for research (86% compared to the federal government at 64%). In addition, they were more apt to use social media for promotional purposes (80%).

Social media will continue to increase by both state and local governments and federal agencies. In fact, the Market Connections study found that 84 percent of state and local agencies and 81 percent of federal agencies expected to increase their use of social media in the next 12-18 months.

As the Market Connections study was released November 2011, we can already see this prediction coming to life based on the findings of the new GovWin study. While having social media reach near ubiquity is certainly notable, it is more important to note how social media can transform citizen engagement and data mining.

Federal agencies like FEMA are [leading the charge](#) on the federal side when it comes to data crowdsourcing – especially during natural disasters like Hurricane Irene last year. However, FEMA may be the exception, as opposed to the rule, when it comes to agencies effectively obtaining, and acting upon, crowdsourced data. The state and local government sector is clearly [ahead of the curve](#) when it comes to this next-generation approach.

Please stay tuned for future posts, where we will be discussing how federal agencies could benefit from using this crowdsourced social media approach, as well as highlighting some key state and local government social media case studies.

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