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- (ii) Improving outreach using Web 2.0, social media and multimedia

**A WIN-WIN COLLABORATION...
WHEN IT AND COMMUNICATIONS PARTNERED
TO PROMOTE THE 2010 CENSUS**

Submitted by U.S. Census Bureau, United States¹

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Can Information Technology (IT) and Communications (COMM) effectively work together to distribute innovative and meaningful products and information? **Yes**, this has been the experience at the United States Census Bureau. In fact, the IT and COMM staffs have been collaborating successfully for fifteen years on Census.gov and other Web-based projects. However, never before have the fruits of this partnership been more effective and visible than in the recent development and launch of the 2010 Census web properties and social media implementations as part of the 2010 Census Integrated Communications Campaign. This paper describes the process that led to that success and outlines key elements that are required for successful IT/COMM collaboration based upon our experiences.

2. As organizational structures can differ from agency-to-agency, let's first take a look at the internal organization of the United States Census Bureau to put its structure and culture into context. The agency has eight separate program areas, or "individual teams" known as directorates. The Web site management staff reports to the Census Bureau's Director for Information Technology, aka IT, and supports all online initiatives of the other directorates. The Web site group manages the agency's primary infrastructure, provides design and development services, monitors for regulatory compliance, and coordinates decentralized and online publishing of information and data from across these program areas.

3. Customer Research, Marketing, Public and Congressional Affairs staffs report to the Census Bureau's Director of Communications, aka COMM. These staffs are responsible for customer research, outreach, media, stakeholder, and partner relations, and for the past several years, the 2010 Census promotional activities.

4. All Census Bureau directorates have the same mandate: to honor privacy, protect confidentiality, share their expertise globally, and to conduct their work openly with a willingness and readiness to innovate while serving as the country's leading source of quality data about the United States' people and economy. IT and COMM, two non-data collecting entities within this statistics-based organization, worked together to affect cultural acceptance and change within the larger bureaucracy and with the public and media.

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II. A HISTORY OF COLLABORATION

5. The Census Bureau's IT and COMM staffs had previously had long and strong working relationships based upon smaller Census Bureau online efforts.
6. COMM fully understood that the 2010 Census Integrated Communications Campaign--one of the most massive peace-time efforts ever--required strong communications, partnerships and teamwork, with solid information technology planning, testing, and acceptance at its base. COMM had been keeping abreast of how public information and relationships were changing post Census 2000 as a result of Web 2.0 and Gov 2.0 emerging technologies. Meanwhile, IT was studying and introducing new technologies to support modern web services that could expand and strengthen the agency's communications and program relationships.
7. Both COMM and IT were noticing that Federal government agencies in the United States were increasingly interested in social media for citizen engagement. COMM reached out to IT to analyze these potential assets and to increase joint discussions and awareness within the agency. Therefore in 2008, COMM established a 2010 Census Web Site Team (2CWST) to identify the digital properties (Web sites, social media, digital outreach) to be included in the campaign. The team was able to leverage and successfully build upon their former relationships in carrying out the 2010 Census mission; i.e., to promote agency programs and products, communicate with customers, and provide access to data.
8. IT and COMM, within its cross-agency team, had members with complementary skills and talents, and developed sound strategies and prioritized tactical decision making. Easier access to and use of new technologies made it possible for 2CWST to easily decide what it would and would not do within the scope of the project.
9. 2CWST also noted that other programs had planned for short-term wins that had actually given off the illusion of long-term progress. However, the 2CWST knew that if it failed to align its plans along a strategic path that included both corporate and program missions, clearly defined communication objectives, web governance, and exploitation of technological resources short and long-term, that its winning collaboration might end up looking more like a sprint race win vs. winning a marathon race.
10. The nationwide communications strategy included a complete digital experience that brought together social media, multimedia, interactive web tools and applications, news feeds, and email integration. To achieve this, the Census Bureau's cross-directorate Web site team planned early and defined requirements, desired features, and functionality for the 2010 Census Web presence, its online advertising, and its extensive multi- and rich-media assets.
11. With IT staff members directly embedded in COMM's Web site team from the beginning of the creative and technical design discussions, the team was able to effectively manage the tasks of developing and implementing the online properties with contract-based Web developers. Embedding IT staff on Communications teams mitigated the risk of surprises. With IT participation, all of the projects had clear technical specifications to ensure successful deployment within the Census Bureau's infrastructure. As part of the planning, IT could prepare the infrastructure for expected Web site traffic resulting in the success of the communications campaign. Moreover, full involvement from creative to delivery meant that IT staff knew everything about the deliverables and could adapt and maintain them with an agile process we would not have had as contracted services ended.
12. The 2010 Census Web site included a kids' component, partner materials, a Spanish language mirror site, and about 60 language pages containing in-language documents and videos. Multi and rich media content were designed to maximize participation in the 2010 Census. The site included multiple real-time mapping applications to engage faces and voices of real people in the discussions, to allow them to take part in live nationwide Road Tour events and messaging from them, to help them find answers to their questions, to identify fact from fiction, to find sources for help, materials to partner, and to challenge them to track their rates of participation in the Census to those of their families, friends, and neighbors.

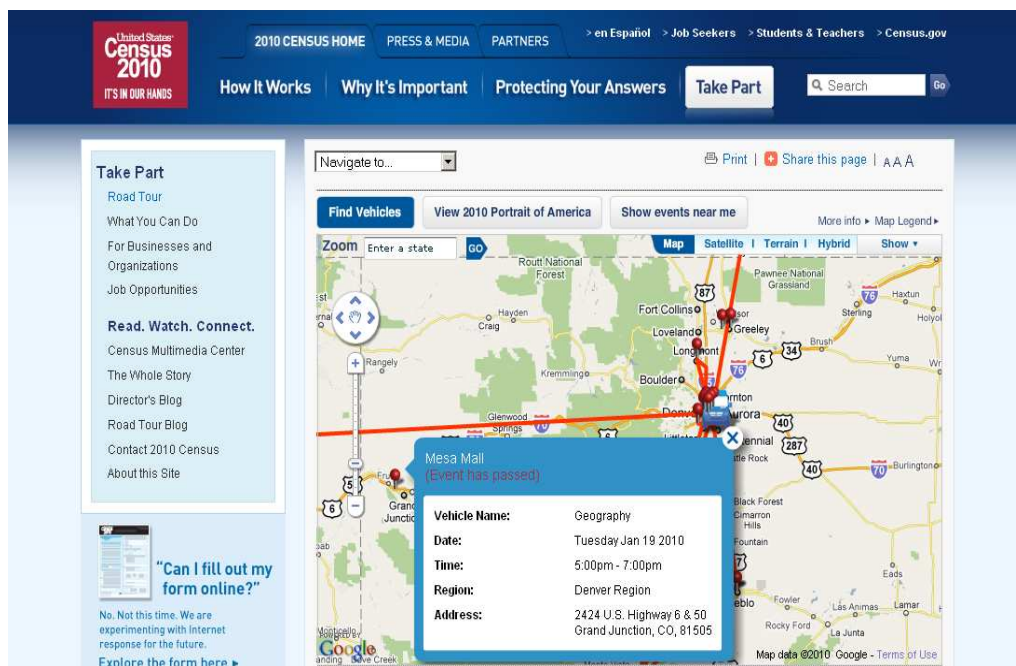
III. WORKING AS PARTNERS

13. Were our IT managers and senior executives the stereotypical ‘**NO WAY**’ guys, who typically might have hindered progress and stifled Web-based projects and communications with their; “**NO** you can’t do this,” and “**NO**, you can’t do that?” No. In fact, they provided sound and just reasons for seeking better approaches and solutions to accomplish specific tasks and project milestones.

14. Our IT folks didn’t have it easy. Their job was to establish smart technology frameworks to enable the agency’s business. Working behind the scenes and facing budget cuts, the IT department fended off cyber threats, adhered to a constant barrage of regulations, and planned online phases in an ever-changing environment where the next great thing was always around the corner. IT also had many programs and internal customers vying for it’s time and resources even though in the center of the Olympic theatre at the moment was the 2010 Census—the returning celebrity and Gold Medalist athlete. IT was not the nay-saying Olympic committee that disqualified the game or the individual matches based upon technicalities, rather the IT was the Olympian torch carrier that "helped effective communicators participate online and win the public games" by deploying the safest and best platforms, procedures, and practices. And, in return, Census COMM staff nurtured and openly acknowledged the attributes they brought with them.

15. COMM folks didn’t have easy jobs, either. They needed to brand a bureaucracy through language and imagery, stay on message, and positively represent the agency and its programs to the public. Since the 2000 Census, the Census Bureau has noted a dramatic shift from one-to-many communications to a many-to-many paradigm for 2010. It could no longer be the agency just sending out its messages. Rather, its data users, advocates, partners, and individuals within communities, from all walks of life and businesses (trusted voices, if you will) needed to independently and collectively within the larger team framework share information and spread the word about the value of participating in this massive census undertaking that was larger than any Olympic-sized event. And, the Census Bureau's Director of Communications' was in the center of the game play changing the communications paradigm. He was demanding non-techies to learn about the latest social media security risks and regulatory requirements, to develop policies, guidelines, and procedures to make social media a reality and to prove social media tools as valued assets within a highly visible and public communications and relations arena.

16. Working together, IT and COMM were able to make innovative and dynamic communications a reality for the 2010 Census by bringing in new trends and tools like social media collaboration tools, automated mapping applications and techniques to carry the messages of the campaign.



Interactive event mapping - The Census Road Tour

17. The traditional 2010 Census communications component included three phases: awareness, motivation, participation, with several specific calls to action within each phase. The Census Bureau launched several new sections within its 2010census.gov Web site continually in 2009 and 2010. As the traditional messages and phases changed, so did the online applications, discussions and content in them. The traditional messaging of the campaign included the use of TV, radio, print, and billboards. People accessed the digital Web components 24/7.

18. The use of current online tools and techniques, including social media for citizen engagement, was a logical and necessary component of the full 2010 Census communications campaign. The resulting 2010 Census social media effort became one of the broadest, targeted social media efforts by any U.S. Federal government agency as of this writing. Again, the success of this depended on IT/COMM collaboration.

The screenshot shows the 2010 Census Home Page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for '2010 CENSUS HOME', 'PRESS & MEDIA', 'PARTNERS', and language options like 'en Español'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with 'How It Works', 'Why It's Important', 'Protecting Your Answers', and 'Take Part'. A search bar is also present. The main content area features a large banner with a video player and the headline 'We Can't Move Forward Until You Give Your Answers Back'. To the left of the banner is a language selection dropdown with the text '使用中文 (简体)? 那么请点击以下链接.' and 'Select a Language'. To the right is a 'Need Help?' section with a link to a telephone assistance center. Below the banner is a 'Read! Watch! Connect!' section. This section contains three featured articles in a carousel: 'King Family Supports the 2010 Census', 'Welcome your Census Taker', and 'The Director's Blog'. The footer includes the U.S. Census Bureau logo and links for 'Home', 'Contact Us', 'Product Catalog', 'Information Quality', 'Data Tools', and 'Privacy Policy'.

The 2010 Census Home Page

IV. FOLLOWERS AND FANS

19. The agency fully leveraged social media channels to engage the public in an open dialog about the 2010 Census. As the first step towards planned use of social media, 2CWST established governance rules for social media usage with the support of senior executives who had concerns about venturing into this new realm, particularly so close to the 2010 Census. In accordance with those governance rules, IT established user agreements and accounts across all major properties, including Facebook, Flickr, MySpace, YouTube, and Twitter. 2CWST contracted for blogging, page sharing, and email delivery services to fully leverage opportunities for citizen engagement. Through email delivery, COMM sent campaign messages to thousands of partners, data users, and advocates. Messages often promoted other social media outlets to provide users with many options for learning about Census-related activities.

20. The Census Bureau's Facebook presence proved extremely valuable in proactively sharing information about the 2010 Census, and in providing 2CWST with public feedback. This feedback provided the team with opportunities for addressing the public's concerns with quickly-turned-around videos and other materials developed as the campaign needed them. For example, the issue of the constitutionality of the 2010 Census was a hot topic of discussion on our social media channels. In response, the Census Bureau recorded videos that featured the director and historical scholars (trusted voices) who spoke to the issue. In his almost-daily blog, the Census Bureau's Director, Robert Groves, often wrote addressed emerging issues and leveraged every opportunity to be open and transparent about the program's operations. COMM's video team quickly produced a series of videos addressing controversial topics, as well, for inclusion in the agency's Multimedia Center and on YouTube. The video series 'The Whole Story' included videos such as 'Second Mailing' and 'Foreclosure'.

21. Rather than remain just content to use default channel features, the Census Bureau customized all social media properties and added features to the extent allowed to fully engage visitors. The Census Bureau's Facebook page included an interactive 'My Community' application to localize the 2010 Census experience. This application provided local statistics to users and applied animation to show how these statistics changed over time. The agency also leveraged Facebook advertising to bring fans to its page. This effort doubled the page fans to 75,000 in a 24 hour period.

22. When nearly 600,000 enumerators came on board for door-to-door follow-up operations, 2CWST found that these census takers quickly involved themselves and experiences in conversations about the agency on Facebook pages, showing their enthusiasm for their new jobs.

23. Below are some examples of public feedback on our Facebook page:

"when are these forms due???"

"Where's my census? I still haven't gotten it in the mail yet. I know I sound like a total nerd saying this but I *really want to* fill it out!"

"It is amazing that with technology, our wonderful government has not created a website for the census forms to eliminate all the wasteful spending on postage!"

"Where in the law does it say that we have to give our race and age on the census?"

"I have not received my form. Can I print it from the website and send it back by mail? Or what do I have to do???"

"Thanks for sending me two Census forms and a warning letter and WASTING my tax dollars. Really appreciate it, U.S. Census!"

"Do any of you realize what an invasion of privacy the Census is? The Constitution allows for a Census every 10 years for a "head-count" so we know where our House Reps. should be and what districts represent whom--NOT so they can dig into our everyday business."

"Am I the only person that sees the "African Am." abbreviation and the inclusion of the term "Negro" to refer to people of African/Black descent as an insult?"

24. The Census Bureau's Twitter account provided numerous ways the public could engage with and participate in the communications campaign. Government officials, community leaders, and other advocates would frequently retweet 2010 Census-related messaging. The United States' rap star Ludacris helped promote participation through his tweets. Like on Facebook, Twitter users would send direct questions to the Census Bureau account and receive answers. Below are some examples of user engagement via Twitter.

"I sent in my census 3 weeks ago & now another one showed up in mail to the same address. Trash it? Respond? What should I do [@uscensusbureau](#)"

"[@uscensusbureau](#) Kudos to y'all for being everywhere-! FB, twitter, YouTube, billboards, the radio-- seriously, you're unavoidable! :) A++"

"[@USCensusbureau](#) please join us in the new millennium & go paperless."

"[@uscensusbureau](#): I have completed & returned my form. What's up with the duplicate form? Should I complete again?"

"[@uscensusbureau](#) Made a mistake on our census form, realized after envelope was sealed. Should we request a new form? How would we do that?"

25. COMM staff manages the 2010 Census-related social media content. IT staff monitors all social media accounts looking for unauthorized access and fraudulent channels or activities. Twitter offers an account verification service that establishes authenticity of all accounts. In fact, the Census Bureau discovered an account that was impersonating the Census Bureau. IT moved quickly to work with Twitter to have the fraudulent account suspended, and to verify the [@uscensusbureau](#) account as the official Census Bureau channel.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the 2010 Census website with links for '2010 CENSUS HOME', 'PRESS & MEDIA', 'PARTNERS', 'Job Seekers', 'Students & Teachers', and 'Census.gov'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with 'How It Works', 'Why It's Important', 'Privacy & Confidentiality', and 'Take Part', along with a search box. The main content area features a sidebar titled 'Voices of the Census' with links to 'Dr. Groves' Biography', 'Comment Policy', and '2010 Census Blog Home'. The main article is 'The Director's Blog' with the title 'Computer-Assisted Data Collection'. It includes social sharing buttons for 'SHARE', 'GET EMAIL UPDATES', and 'SUBSCRIBE TO THIS BLOG'S FEED'. The article text discusses software systems used in the 2010 Census, mentioning a payroll system, an optical scanning system, and a 'shaky system' that caused concerns during the nonresponse follow-up stage. The date of the post is 'May 14, 2010 5:54 AM'.

The Director's Blog

26. The insight of our program champions brought about weekly and sometimes daily targeted strike teams based upon audiences, program activities, sub-team assignments, and the need to keep everyone on the same page as we moved forward through to deliver integrated and consistent messages and public information-sharing.

27. In fact, we dedicated an entire room to up-to-the minute metrics using video monitors that in nearly real time tracked and displayed audience segmentations; results of daily polls and ongoing research findings about the public's behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions; tracked and monitored the buzz within the media, on social networks, in our call centers, and mapped out audiences and impact of activities within those communities, and much more. We met daily to review and discuss the findings, and when appropriate to alter plans based upon new and emerging feedback.

V. LESSONS LEARNED

28. Integrating the 2010 Census Communications Campaign across media, channels of communication, and Census Bureau operating units with different specialties and expertise was critical to the success of the campaign. This tactical plan was successfully carried out because it was based upon strong mutual trust and respect--key components for any successful collaboration. The 2CWST really was one of America's Olympic teams who prepared together, worked together, and enjoyed the fruits of our labors together.

29. By using social media tools, the press and media relations staff quickly moved to proactively generating and maintaining consistent messages for live and digital information sharing.

30. Senior executives inside and outside the agency used their public faces to raise and extend messages based upon targeted communities and activities, helping to increase rates of response in the census.

31. The video production team proactively created exciting varieties of targeted and multimedia messages, while the IT team established the required video streaming capabilities to deliver them.

32. The Partnership staff organized nationwide events and targeted online calendars and calendar widgets; e.g., the Portrait of America Road Tour where digital and social media staff tweeted and posted comments, blogs, photos, videos, and publicized interviews at scheduled events.

33. Everyone supported and collaborated together to establish and maintain timely and meaningful blogs to engage audiences through topical stories on a daily basis. In fact, the Director's blog moved proactively to debunk myths and to correct any misinformation out in the public discussions

34. The 13-Vehicle Road Tour traveled the nation and enlisted local trusted voices at about 800 events to speak to their constituents in their local communities.

35. The mission, scope and complexity of the 2010 Census Communications Campaign could only have worked with strong partnering between Communications and IT for successful implementation. These groups could not have acted as separate units handing tasks back and forth. To be fully successful, IT had to understand the campaign timeline, strategy and goals, and Communications had to better understand Web site policies, guidelines, interactions, publishing processes, and software limitations.

36. The high levels of trust, respect, and expertise resulted in:

- a) Increasing the mail out/mail back participation rates that topped those of Census 2000;
- b) Minimizing the expense of follow up operations; i.e., mail/out mail back costs each taxpaying household \$.42 to mail back the form vs. \$57 per household to collect the information by having census takers visit households that did not return their forms; and,
- c) Mediaweek, a leading advertising industry trade publication, awarding the Census Bureau's 2010 Census Advertising Campaign—for the "Best Multicultural Campaign" and "Best Branded Content" campaign in the publication's Media Plan of the Year competition.