



Tech Stories doesn't do Politics, but if we did...

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GE2015 Twitter Data (27th April 2015)

During the 2015 General Election we wanted to assess the extent to which parliamentary candidates were using social media. We curated some data during w/c 27th April 2015 and found that, compared with other candidates standing in the constituency;

- 404 of the candidates who were elected had the most followers on Twitter
- 118 candidates had the second most followers
- 32 the third most
- 17 the fourth and
- 5 with the fifth most.

74 candidates who were elected did not appear to be on Twitter.

The full dataset can be found on the following link: [GE2015 Twitter Data: 27th April 2015](#)

A large part of our interest in this area was to see if we could demonstrate the role that social media plays in Politics in the hope that this would demonstrate to policy makers the importance of ensuring that our young people had adequate education in Digital Citizenship and the kind of experience with social media that employers are looking for today. Hootsuite's Education Program [Podium](#) looks interesting.



Executive Summary

Whether we look at the success of the #VoteYes campaign in September 2014, the SNP's record swings during the 2015 General Election where 56 MPs were elected, or the more recent events with Jeremy Corbyn and his 40,000 suggestions for questions to ask at Prime Minister's Question Time, politics is changing.

During BBC Question Time on the 17th September most of the panelists said that “The People” wanted a new kind of politics, a collaborative kind of politics... one where the people are heard and have a say.

Some might see these changes for the better, others for the worse. In the US Presidential election we are seeing Donald Trump's derogatory one liners getting more column inches in the press than policy issues are.

There was a comment in a recent article regarding the SNP's popularity remaining high despite the failings of the party in some key areas. The article added that this won't be the case forever. In our opinion, the article is correct. We understand how the “network effects” and “feedback loops” mean that popularity remains high. We can also see how and why social media can be quite a draw for politicians, and some of the potential dangers with this.

Politics is a popularity sport, get more votes than the other person and you win the prize. Say the right things on social media and you'll get more followers... you might just win the next election too. But too much focus on social media may cause problems.

While there appears to be a correlation between the election and the number of followers candidates had on Twitter, what worked this time may not work the next. This document looks at ways politicians could make use of online tools to assist their constituents, get people's views on policy issues AND increase their popularity and chances of re-election. We will look towards the US West more than Westminster, and consider the achievements of Community Managers more than what Holyrood has done.

We begin by detailing how our initial interest in the Scottish independence referendum was because the cultural conditions were more like what you'd see at a Silicon Valley startup than a political election.

We go on to argue how and why political parties should look to follow the practices of startups instead of traditional political methods.

We then look at how things like Net Promoter scores could be used to assess how politicians are doing on an ongoing basis, for example, getting feedback when constituent case enquiries are closed.

We consider how the practices of community managers could help with converting proponents into advocates, and how the practices of Amazon could reduce politicians' workload while at the same time speeding up the process for replying to constituent queries.

Part 2 of this document looks at 3 tools: Declara, Intercom and Good Audience. We look at how they could help politicians engage with more constituents and in a more effective and efficient way during a parliamentary session, and then put them to use during elections.

Part 3 Looks at some ways politicians could consider “Building their reputation by helping others build theirs” and takes a very brief look at some ideas that could help engage groups who have no interest in politics, but the ideas could make their local MP memorable to these groups and individuals, thereby increasing the chances of people voting for them.



Part 1: Community Management in Politics

Background

On 9th September 2014 we started to support and write about the Scottish Independence Referendum. The reason for this was because we recognized some of the principles that Silicon Valley startups use to get traction for their products.

Over 30 posts were written between September and October 2014, many of these articles were on the importance of the culture of the post-referendum VoteYes proponents.

Like Scots have been doing, we revisited this major event 12 months later... and detailed how and why we would be less likely to vote for the SNP today (Although we would still VoteYes ;))

While reviewing all this we have been considering Tech Stories core values and found that this throws up a strange mix of providing critical feedback and the offer to help if and where we can. For more information see:

- [Labouring on with #Team56? How to Rebuild Trust When It Is Broken](#)
- [Strange Results with Core Values](#)

On 7th May we started work on a document [Ideas for 2016 & 2019 Candidates](#).

As a result of the constructive dialogue with MPs and MSPs with the 3 links above, we thought we'd take a moment to highlight what we would do if we were politicians looking to be re-elected in 2016 or 2019.

We would argue that what happened during #IndyRef and #GE2015 with the SNP was as much about a process as it was about anything that the SNP did differently in a political context.

If anyone has other explanations for record 40% swings and disagree with this statement these individuals/groups may want to stop reading now. If anyone feels we have put a persuasive argument forward so far and/or are intrigued, please find below some suggestions for how to build on these Silicon Valley principles to politics.

Why Consider Trying to Do things Differently?

It might be argued that the popularity of parties like the SNP may come at a price, and may include the electorate have higher expectations than they did previously... despite the fact that not much has changed at Westminster, or that there may be an increased workload as more people than ever get in contact with their MP/MSP. Managing these expectations may be key to avoid losing support from their advocates.

Add to this the new style of politics that Jeremy Corbyn has brought with getting 40,000 questions for Prime Ministers Question Time. If one party is popular but does not listen to their supporters and/or people become disillusioned because they feel their voice is not being heard, there may be some appealing alternatives.

In addition to this, 16 year olds are now eligible to vote in Scotland. If we consider that the global financial crisis started in August 2007 with the effects being felt in earnest in Sept 2008, a 16 year old who will be voting on 5th May 2016 may have lived through any hardship that their family experienced for as long as half their life?!

If parents facing these hardships blame politicians, and their relationship with "The Old Boys Network," then candidates may want to have a pretty good argument why this particular demographic should vote for your party. One or two effective campaigns aimed at this younger, social media savvy, demographic just might change everything in the polls.



Net Promoter Score

"Sales & marketing departments must refocus away from selling products and toward creating relationships. Partnering with customers is a key component. The primary challenge here is not technical, but cultural" Geoffrey Moore, Crossing the Chasm

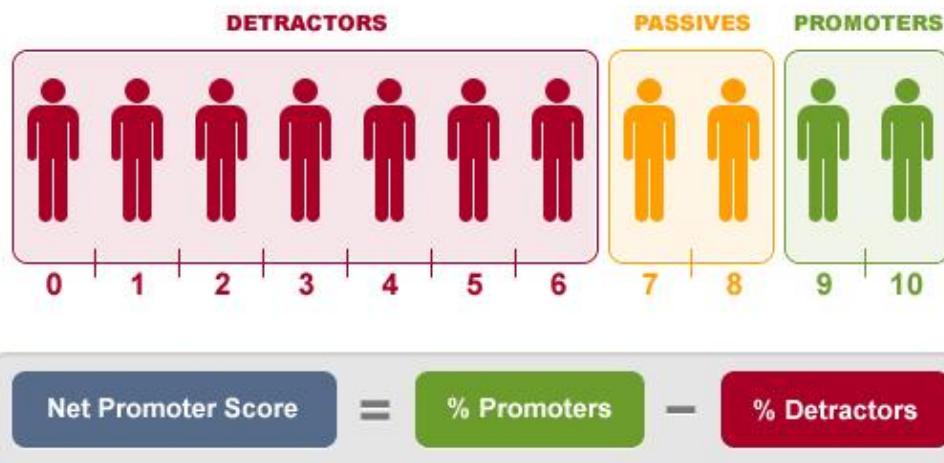
If we change sales and marketing to political parties/candidates and selling products to politics, then this statement may be as valid in politics as it is with technology.

The new found popularity of politicians, the expectations of the electorate to be heard, and a potential lack of trust in politicians due to the experiences of 16 year olds growing up and the impact of social media just might mean that results could be more unpredictable than ever.

Relying on polls from a few months out may be something of a risky strategy... it may be prudent to consider getting regular feedback and developing relationships in the way a lot of technology companies do. One of the first things to do might be to assess the organisations Net Promoter Score.

Net Promoter Score is based on the fundamental perspective that every company's customers can be divided into three categories: Promoters, Passives, and Detractors. By asking one simple question

How likely is it that you would recommend our services to a friend or colleague?



This might be an alternative method of asking who will you be voting for, and could be asked in a number of ways and at various times by MPs.

For example, when a constituents enquiry is coming to a close politicians could present this question in a number of ways i.e. A link at the bottom of the last email regarding the case, a separate follow up email "You recently contacted your MP, how likely would you be to recommend others with a similar issue get in touch with their MP?"

Those who are passives or detractors politicians could go back to the constituent and see what they feel could be be done (Or ask what could have been done differently). Please also see the section on "Data: The Best Service is No Service"



Community Management

With promoters, you can ask if they would be interested in helping out. The community conversion funnel details the process from awareness to advocacy.

[“What about finding best practice by looking at what the others in your line of business are doing? The chances are that they’re doing exactly the same – looking at you too. The end result is that every business in your industry will probably end up providing an identical service. And what may have set out to be “best practice” soon becomes just average or, even worse, mediocre...Cemex looked way beyond its own industry for inspiration”](#)

[What a Mexican cement company can teach you about innovation](#)



It could be argued that the SNP have experienced some challenges with their popularity over the last 12 months. For example, there are plenty of articles about “Cybernats,” whether trolling people on social media or disrupting Scottish Labour’s rallies during the General Election.

With all the buzz and energy with Jeremy Corbyn winning the labour leadership, what can Labour learn from the SNP’s experiences? Some might argue that the answer might be... not a great deal.

Equally, how will popular parties continue to manage their new found celebrity status? Whether as a result of increased workload or adequately managing constituent’s expectations... Politicians from these parties need to ensure that people know that their voices are being heard and are valued?

Should MPs look outside the realm of politics? If so where? Is there value in looking at what high growth startups are doing?

Any time we see a startup enjoying rapid growth, we check to see if they have a Community Manager. You won’t find many of these in Scotland, neither will you find many jobs or training courses here... But it’s one of the [first positions that some startups look to hire](#).

We mention Declara in the context of politics later in this document, with regard to personal and professional development, one of the reasons we like Declara is because of the knowledge transfer.

If anyone took the time to look through all the links on these two Declara Collections, they would know just about as much as we do on the topic;

- [Community Management Resources](#)
- [Buzzing Communities](#)

There are 98 articles, videos and presentations in these collections. A good place to start would be with 1) [Yammer’s Community Playbook](#) 2) [The Community Life Cycle](#) 3) [Scaling Personal Connections](#)



Skills, Attributes & Tasks of Community Management



Data: The Best Service is No Service

If a politician is getting too many emails what are some potential solutions? Work longer hours? Hire more office staff? What about finding the root of the problem and eradicating it so people don't need to get in touch? What about automating topics that are taking up a lot of time to deal with?

Amazon are renowned for their exceptional customer service, "[The Best Service is No Service](#)" details how

"Most customer service operations have it wrong. They gauge their effectiveness and productivity based on the number of customer calls or contacts they handle. But do your customers really want a "relationship" with your company's customer service department, or do they simply want to purchase your products or services so they can put them to use?

[Organisations should] adopt a "no service" mindset and any manager who tries to ferret out dysfunctional contacts between customers and companies can create far better, self-correcting systems.

Indispensable to both managers and leaders of organizations, *The Best Service Is No Service* redefines traditional notions of service and success.

This book is full of all kinds of data and details how the company identified recurring problems that people get in touch with Amazon about, the company then eradicated the issue so that people don't need to get in touch again.

What if political parties noted all constituent enquiries and if they found that 10% of all MP enquiries were about, say council tax, instead of having 56 case workers dealing with this issue at 56 constituencies, what if there were 1-2 case workers who managed a fit for purpose trouble shooting site?

Would this mean that the constituents' enquiries were dealt with sooner AND saw a reduction in the workload for 56 MPs by up to 10%? A win-win situation?

This isn't the only way that MPs could get more feedback from constituents using innovative online platforms.



#VoteYes/The45/The45Plus

A network that the Yes Alliance established which was good spirited in nature but has since been turned into something else by others. It is our opinion that this could be turned around with a number of reasons to make a return to #The45 and clean it up.

The “Network Effects” are still intact i.e. the people who followed others on social media because of #VoteYes will still be following each other. However, they may not post on whatever hashtag people are using at the moment because the “positive feedback loops” are not there. It appears to have become a forum for people who want to be angry while as they discuss some political issues.

We probably spent 2 hours a day scrolling through #VoteYes because it was fun. We didn’t check in because of politics, it wasn’t because of independence, it was because of the humour. If there was a #VoteYes Tweetup for a few hours, perhaps by asking people to post their most memorable #VoteYes tweets/photos/videos etc, the results might be quite surprising.

If at the end of the Tweetup the party announced a campaign that people could get behind, and given them a reason to stay on the hashtag this could be a chance to ensure that the social norms chased the trolls away. Parties could also instill some community guidance for people posting on the hashtag to abide by. There are more rational people out there than there are nutters... we think, erm, well sometimes there are, maybe.

Trolls

Another reason for trying to return some sanity to #The45Plus/ #YesAlliance is because the people who Voted Yes seem to think that trolling members of the party they support is the best route to independence. The SNP could use Nicola Sturgeon’s recent abuse with The Queen’s visit to say “Enough is enough” this is how we’ll be rolling from now on.

Community Managers deal with Trolls as an occupational hazard and they handle them in a slightly different way to other groups. Politicians approach seems to be “Ignore them,” when there is often a reason for the abuse (i.e. they feel they have not been heard and ignored). Here are some examples of how these groups handle online abuse:

- [How to Deal with a Troll in Your Community](#)
- [Handling Trolls: Tales from Under the Bridge](#)
- [Trolls and Trouble Makers.](#)

If MPs felt particularly brave they could go down the O2 and James Blunt route of giving as good as you get. Risky for sure, but could pay big dividends.

A “curation nation” account like Sweden could also work well <http://curatorsofsweden.com/about/>.

Again this may be risky but given the #VoteYes humour and #HurricaneBawbag the Scottish humour could work wonders from a viral perspective for a party... and could work wonders for Scottish tourism too.

Other Parties

Parties who don’t have a hashtag that was a water cooler for the party faithful, what about organizing a regular Twitter chat to discuss topical issues with party members and constituents.



Part 2: Tools

Declaral

We pulled together a few articles into Declaral for [Ian Blackford SNP](#). The source of these articles were from 1) Ian's website 2) Ian's SNP & Westminster pages 3) His Twitter feed 4) News articles

We pulled this into a single collection, but politicians would be able to put this into a number of different collections (i.e. Parliament, National Press, local/constituency issues, causes, party achievements etc).

Politicians would be able to include articles in more than one collection. For example, Ian's speech on delivery could be in a "Parliamentary Collection" as well as a "Delivery Charges Collection," which could contain all media types around this issue (Speeches, press articles, videos etc)

From a national perspective, if a lot of politicians did this then it would be quite a collection and if you were to change the title of this [Dreamforce 2015 Collection](#) to XYZ Party Westminster Politicians, and the event speakers to MPs you can perhaps see the kind of impact that this could have during election time.

Archive of Achievements Vs Broken Links

We went through our favourited links on Twitter recently, we highlighted these to the link out "later" but when later came the link was broken. How many news articles will be archived and/or taken down between 2015 and 2019 by the website or news provider? Declaral could help to make sure that these links are still accessible in 2019 for any re-election campaign.

Insights

After a quick search and only 4 months after the election, we found 67 articles about Ian. As someone who has 1) Little interest in politics, so 2) Rarely goes on the Parliament web pages, and 3) Have the opinion that MPs rarely turn up to Westminster, it was a surprise to see 29 discussions in Parliament in the first 4 months.

Again, politicians can criticize us for having this view, but we wouldn't be surprised if this was the consensus. In our opinion, collections like this could help to play a role in addressing some of these misperceptions.

A younger constituent may have little interest in Ian's "Pensions advice" so may be unlikely to read this particular parliamentary transcript. If however, Ian's contribution to this session was marked as an "Insight," constituents could click on their MPs insights and could quickly get an overview of how active their MP has been, as well as get a succinct summary of causes and campaigns that you've worked on.

Social Proof

Where this platform really comes into play, in the context of politics, is with helping to assess what's important to people throughout the parliamentary term... as well as the way it will put social proof to work during the election period.

Few people may be interested in reading an entire manifesto or policy document, they may be more likely to scan through what others have highlighted via these insights. All politicians and their staff could highlight key comments as well as party members and the general public. (NB Declaral can pull content in from RSS feeds automatically).

At the moment if a new document comes out people may Tweet out "Check out our new policy" and the link takes people to the start of the document each time, so many people may think "Erm no thanks."



If, however, the document had insights that were shared on social media, the tweet would still link to the same document each time but the tweets would take people to different sentences from the document. This would add variety as different insights were shared i.e.

Manifesto [Insight/Tweet #1](#): 'The land of milk and honey' www....

Manifesto [Insight/Tweet #2](#): 'Free money tomorrow' www....

Manifesto [Insight/Tweet #3](#): 'Free beer the day after' www....

Not only does this vary the messages on social media, but more people will engage with the document, and read more of it.

At the moment people can copy and paste different sentences and include the link on social media but 1) How many people do this and 2) When you click on the link it will still take people to the start of the document, as opposed to straight to the text mentioned in the Tweet.

Groups

It would be great to have the general UK population see and highlight comments from this document. But we imagine that politicians would be particularly interested in their constituents' views. Politicians could have a closed group for constituents, where they could highlight insights within the group discussion and ask you questions about the MPs activity. Likewise MPs could get constituents feedback on various documents and insights too.

There could be several groups i.e. All Constituents, constituent business group, constituent education group, constituent young people group etc, all closed and invite only to ensure that it is only constituents that have access.

Communities of Practice & Social Proof

Politicians could also have groups with colleagues, party members and other proponents to discuss what information to send and when. This is 100% in line with the advice [in this #Cmgr post](#)

"Choose a small group of people and hold a focus group with them through email with a targeted topic and ask people to send a post or contribution about it her way. After she's gotten a decent amount, she reaches out to them again and asks them to post it in a specific time frame. From outside appearances, there's an instant party happening on the forum and the burst of activity prompts more activity"

These are just a few examples of how this platform could be used to assist with GE2019.

Tech Stories interest in Declara is that we feel this platform could greatly assist educators at all levels. The company has been dubbed as "The Google of Learning" and are already in talks with [President Obama](#).

Policy makers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland are also looking to roll Declara out in their schools and colleges, to add to their existing early pilots in [Australia](#) and Mexico.



President Obama Praises Declara and CEO Ramona Pierson

Intercom

In education technology there is a disconnect with EdTech companies and educators. This can be seen in the Gates Foundation Teachers Know Best report, which highlights that only half of the technology that teachers use is viewed as effective.

In our opinion, the reason for this is because there is not enough collaboration with educators before the product is launched. A platform that looks really promising and is getting rave reviews is Intercom.

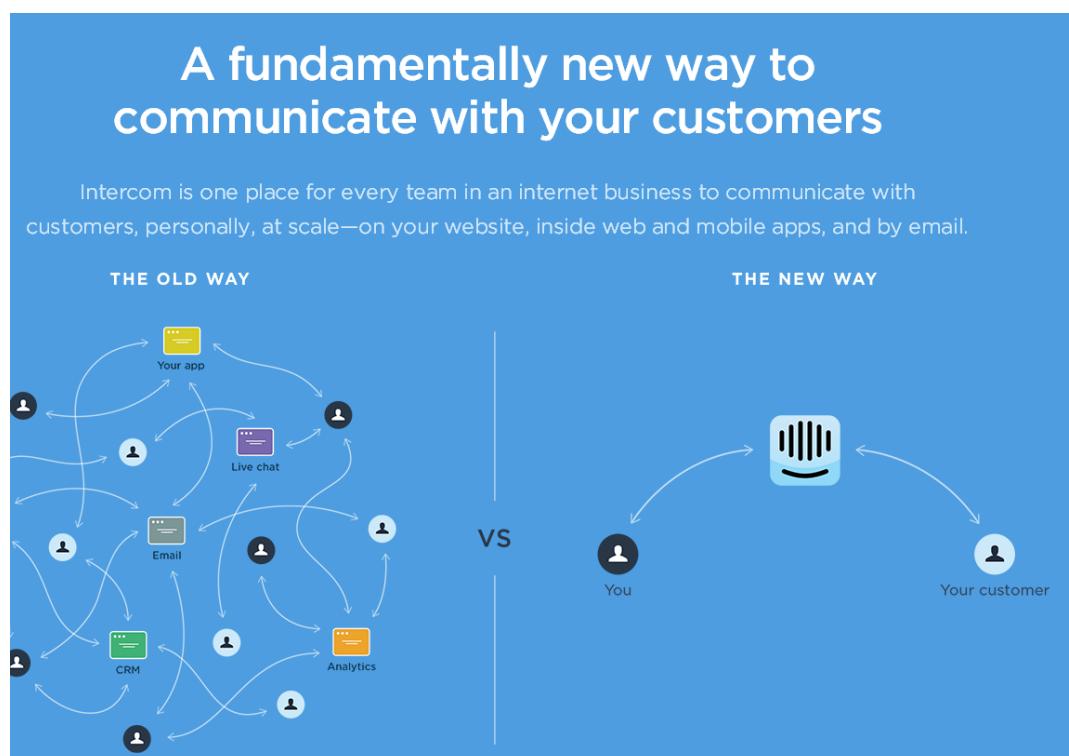
As a pre-revenue startup we don't use this platform yet, but they have lots of fans and we can see how and why they could help improve how education technology companies engage with educators to improve their products.

If politicians were to watch the videos on Intercom's website they would see how this could also help engage with constituents and reduce the number of emails.

- [Observe](#)
- [Acquire](#)
- [Engage](#)
- [Learn](#)
- [Support](#)

TEACHERS KNOW BEST

Only 54% of teachers perceive the digital products their students use frequently to be effective.





Good Audience

Donald Trump's US Presidential campaign has seen some commentators observe "[How Social Media is Ruining Politics](#)" The vote yes campaign obviously won the vote on social media, but is there a tendency to get hung up on the number of follower and ReTweets etc.

This may be catnip to a group whose job depends on popularity and the #VoteYes movement on Twitter probably helped the GE2015 result, the correlation between Twitter followers and those elected in GE2015 would support this

However, are politicians social media experts? If not how expensive would a social media expert be for each constituency? How bespoke would a national teams social media be for the work MPs are doing in their constituency?

\$ 850 / month
Running Like a Boss
SMALL BUSINESS
Dedicated marketing assistant
4 social media accounts
Deep targeting and audience research
120 personalized posts
Replies to fan comments
Profile optimization

Social Media Marketing Assistants

Work with a team of experienced marketers. We spend many hours a week hand curating content, sharing it across all platforms and growing your social communities!

14 "Running like a Boss" Accounts with Good Audience would provide 56 Twitter accounts, 30 posts for each MP per month (1,680 Posts in total) and replies to fans.

Any profile optimization in a political context might be to identify who constituents are and focus any replies and develop more engagement with this group.

 <p>A professional to do your work Get back 2 hours of your life every day. You get a highly trained marketing assistant to do the job for you. Focus on your business.</p>	 <p>Audience Growth Increase your followers, fans and supporters. We engage with your target market and build a community that loves you.</p>	 <p>Storytelling We develop a content strategy that will resonate with your audience. Your story and message must hook them in.</p>
 <p>Brand Equity Expand your reach. Get more exposure. Instill trust. Build a brand that people recognize and love. Credibility on social media goes a long way.</p>	 <p>Traffic to Site Drive traffic to your website. Get your audience to go from your various social media profiles to your desired destination.</p>	 <p>Users, Leads and Sales A special gift from Good Audience to you. Distribution and user acquisition is toughest part of any business. We already solved that for you.</p>



Part 3: Build Your Reputation by Helping Others

This section includes some non-political ideas that they might want to consider to win over people in these groups.

William Jenkins
@EdTech_Stories

"Build your reputation around helping others to build there's" Fantastic advice from [@Historian](#) in #CMGRHangout

This is one of our favourite comments (Minus the typo in the Tweet) and one way to win elections is surely to help people in the constituency with what's important to them. Whether business, educators, campaigns & causes, jobs for young people or social media.

For example, one of the hyperlocal groups below has a cat sitting category. If a politician was credited with the creation and success of these communities and the cat sitting group meant that someone could go on holiday or have a regular night out, would they be more likely to vote for that politician? We're not sure either, but maybe.

Hyperlocal Communities

Richard Millington's book "Buzzing Communities – How to Build Bigger Better and More Active Online Communities" he includes a few examples of successful hyperlocal communities. Below are links to and Richard's comments about three successful ones.

MPs could look to establish communities like this to help build a sense of community, get people's views

www.eastdulwichforum.co.uk

The East Dulwich Forum
Would you recommend your East Dulwich doctor, dentist or butcher?

You are here: [Jump to ...](#)

Forum Local info

General ED issues / gossip...
Discuss life in London's East Dulwich. Talk about local restaurants, pubs, shops, services, transport, planning, it's up to you » [RSS](#)

For Sale & Items Offered in ED...
Sell and give away your articles locally (except family items, see below) » [RSS](#)

Items wanted in East Dulwich...
If you want items locally ask for them here. [RSS](#)

A rare breed of phenomenally successful hyperlocal community. At the moment most hyperlocal communities fail because they don't properly follow the online community development lifecycle

www.harringayonline.com

Harringay Online has been growing in importance as a hyperlocal community for some time now. Hugh and the team have done a wonderful job in creating this community and growing many other hyperlocal communities.

<http://w14london.ning.com>

W14 is another thriving hyperlocal community. It's a pity it doesn't have a better name, but it's another good example of a successful community based on a simple platform

NB A few of the groups in this community are on issues that MPs may be interested in getting constituents views on

Harringayonline COMMUNITY Creating the future of Harringay

Location of Harringay Online Members

The map below shows the streets where Harringay Online currently has members. Once the website has grown so large, we cease updating this map.

Map updated 10th November 2010

Navigate around and zoom in and out by using the controls in the top left hand corner of the map.

Members Your Page Add Forum Blogs What's On Local Info Public Services Gallery Groups Members

Map data ©2010 Google. Terms of Use



Business

In “Switch – Change when Change is Hard” authors Dan and Chip Heath detail how a High School Basketball coach was concerned about how run down the town’s high street was and the team started a campaign to encourage parents to spend an extra \$10 a month in local businesses to keep the money in the local economy, instead of spending at out of town shopping centers.

The results exceeded all expectations (Think the amount generated was \$10 million in a relatively short space of time) and allowed the business community to regenerate the downtown area.

Grow Sumo

GrowSumo is a startup that launched a few weeks ago and is designed to encourage customers who are proponents of a product to make referrals (Which saves the supplier on cost per customer acquisition), and the person/organization who makes the recommendation gets paid for the referral.

Education

We’ve noticed that politicians use crowd funding for their election campaigns, but how many have recommended crowd funding for schools and colleges?

We are exploring a project that would save local businesses and educators money through crowd funding 3D Printers. Please see this post for more information: [3D Hubs and Collaboration in Education](#).

Social Media

Can you remember who it was that encouraged you to get signed up to social media? Up until 2011 we had no digital presence at all, we were extremely skeptical of the medium.

That changed when one of the young techies that we worked with highlighted that there was a business case for social media.

In eight months time 16 year olds will vote for the first time, they may not be on social media yet and/or they may be struggling with issues around digital citizenship (#digicit).

If MPs/MSPs were to give a talk on Social Media and/or some workshops the young people may be like us and remember who it was that highlighted the value of this platform to them.

Collaborative Economy

If we’re not politically motivated and/or, as things stand today, are unlikely to vote for any party... why go to the trouble of reaching out and producing this document?

To ingratiate ourselves with politicians for any education based projects? Might be nice, but nope. We’ll be developing our plans regardless of whether politicians are involved or not... whether we work with US educators or UK ones.

Traditional sales and marketing is on the way out and social selling and community management is in vogue. Soon the collaborative economy will be more developed. We’re exploring these areas just now so our skills are relevant.

We’re unlikely to contact politicians for a while after sending this document out, but we would welcome any inbound enquiries.