

Cable network, meet social network: Match made in news or marketing - heaven?

Television news networks have begun to experiment with social media, incorporating viewers' input into their coverage in a variety of ways. They're also tirelessly promoting their own involvement in social networking, which raises the question: Are the networks employing sound strategy, or just executing a marketing plan?

By [Renay San Miguel](#) 29 Aug 2008

The moment may have passed way under your media radar, seeing as how it happened on a Sunday night late August, when TV viewers were just coming down from a Beijing Olympics high. On CNN, anchor Rick Sanchez was previewing the Democratic National Convention about to get under way in Denver, grilling senior political analyst Bill Schneider about the latest poll numbers showing John McCain and Barack Obama in a tight race, when Sanchez turned to his audience for a question.

No, CNN isn't resuscitating "Talk Back Live." Sanchez actually turned to his computer and showed off Facebook and Twitter pages that the network had set up on his behalf - pages that are endlessly promoted as only CNN can do these days. But in this one instance, the hype and hawking may have paid off: A viewer used one of the pages to post a valid complaint about polling methods that rely on traditional phone surveys via landline. Most of Obama's young supporters use cell phones. Sanchez passed the comment along to Schneider, who said he and the network's polling data partners were aware and factored this into their findings. (He didn't, however, explain exactly how that was accomplished.)

Nevertheless, it was all brought to you by a cable network dipping its feet into the Web 2.0 waters, and social networks that enable everyone to be a broadcaster of sorts. But was it a true Moment of Illumination and Viewer/Voter Participation, or simply one level up from a late night radio call-in show? With history about to be made in Denver, are the all-news networks making historic use of the new social media tools at their disposal?

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