



# Added Value of Networking

## Success Story

Success Story title	<i>Using Social Media in the Dutch NRN</i>		
Theme	<i>Network communications; Knowledge exchange; Training; Cooperation</i>		
NRN	<i>Netherlands</i>	Coordinator	<i>Netwerk Platteland, the Dutch NRN</i>
Partners			
Period	<i>2009 - today</i>	Resources	<i>100k (indicative) and now integral part of NRN budget</i>
Geo-location	<i>Netherlands</i>		
Beneficiaries	<i>Team members, training participants, the network and the community at large</i>		

### Background

As early as 2009 the Dutch NRN started to use social media as a means of networking and knowledge exchange. After providing training, a core social media community was formed and this continues to grow today. A blog, LinkedIn and Twitter were developed in combination with dedicated support for the social media community, which has helped to nurture a broad network that is 'in touch' with rural development. The network consists of a range of people from academics to farmers and professionals. Lots of messages involving lots of information are flowing in all directions through these public media so everyone can see them and participate. Several NRN staff hold positions as nodes in this network. This period of specific online activity has enabled online and offline (real life) NRN activities to become fully integrated, strengthening both approaches.

### Main activities

In 2009 the process began by familiarising the NRN team with social media. Then in 2010 hundreds of people including rural inhabitants and professionals working in rural development were trained to use social media during 3 online 'learning trajectories' that lasted 1 month. Since 2009 one full time equivalent post has been dedicated to supporting the online community, at first this was done by 1 to 2 people but gradually has become part of the job of the whole team. The NRN blog, a LinkedIn group and Facebook page are places for discussion, but relevant discussions are not limited to 'our' places. An important 'meeting place' is also the weekly #guusnet chat on Twitter, discussing in real time an agreed topic related to rural development or agriculture. Our NRN is now developing a curriculum for 'social media in the green sectors' for open source use.

### Main results/benefits

We see that social media is effective as a tool for encouraging bottom-up communication and we purposely avoid using it as a top down communication tool. Other new areas of Dutch NRN activity continue to arise where social media is relevant and effective, such as work with a recent initiative about 'how to organise rural development in your region'. The NRN used social media to send out requests for ideas about who should be involved and in what way. Response came back almost immediately and demonstrated social media's potential as an antenna for reaching out into rural areas.

When talking about social media, we are not only referring to the tools and technological opportunities. We are also referring to the change of processes these social media have set in motion or are accelerating. The Dutch Rural Network is convinced that this process both forces and inspires us - as individuals, organisations, communities and networks - to renew our thinking on collaboration, participation, innovation, etcetera. We think we are on the brink of a period during which social media will play an increasingly important role in society. Looking at the statistics it is surprising to see the number of people using Facebook, twitter and contributing to blogs increasing. At the moment the team is working on an open source curriculum medium to answer the various request for training in the use of social media



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#### Contribution of the NSU

Our NRN pioneered the use of social media for knowledge sharing in rural development and played an important role in setting the example, connecting and providing coordination. The training curriculum was developed and as a follow-up to this training the booklet entitled 'Platteland2.0' was written. At this stage the open source curriculum is also being developed.

#### Contribution of the partners

A large range of partners, though most often individuals on a personal basis, have contributed by participating and networking online, sharing opinions and knowledge. In short, using social media for rural development purposes.

#### Success factors

The main success factor was the early pro-active role our NRN took in using social media.

#### Additional information

This is where to find us. blog : <http://www.netwerkplatteland.nl/np20/> twitter: @guusnet / #guusnet

