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New Survey Illustrates Education Industry's Use of Social Media

One hundred eighty-two education executives report on the benefits and challenges of social media

Washington, D.C. (June 7, 2011) – According to a survey issued by the Education Division of the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA), edWeb.net and MCH Strategic Data, nearly half of education industry executives surveyed agree that social media helps their company or organization build brand awareness. The new survey and white paper, *Social Media Marketing in Education*, offers insight into the social media tactics valued most by education executives.

Social media is growing rapidly in the education sphere. In edWeb's *Survey of K-12 Educators on Social Networking and Content-Sharing Tools (2009)*, 61 percent of educators reported they had joined a social network. The education industry also is joining a worldwide boom in social media spending – Forrester Research's *U.S. Interactive Marketing Forecast 2009 - 2014* report projects that social media spending will increase from $700 million to $3 billion by 2014. Due to social media's heightened role in education, SIIA's Education Division initiated this survey to understand more about how the industry is benefitting from its use.

The survey reveals that executives consider social media most effective for building brand awareness, followed by increasing customer loyalty, market knowledge and insight, and providing customer support. Although marketing budgets are often heavily focused on lead generation and high ROI efforts, respondents deemed social media use less effective for generating leads.

Though many organizations are seeing gains, the survey also raises awareness about the challenges of using social media in the industry. The biggest challenge, according to executives surveyed, is tasking staff with social media management. Demonstrating social media's more indirect benefits and generating activity are other challenges faced by education industry organizations. “Rather than generate new leads, it is proving very effective at turning our existing customers into a community that educates us as a company, and in turn, markets us to their personal networks," said one of the respondents.

Karen Billings, vice president for the Education Division of SIIA, commented, “The adoption of social media is growing rapidly in education. We wanted to provide our members, and the education industry at large, with some measurement of where companies are at in terms of developing social media strategies, and some insights into what is working most effectively for them.”

The survey was conducted in February 2011 via an online survey to SIIA Education Division members, edWeb.net industry contacts, MCH education industry clients, and C. Blohm & Associates clients. Completed surveys were received from more than 180 education industry companies.

A free copy of the report, *Social Media Marketing in Education*, can be downloaded at www.siia.net/estore/10browse.asp,or www.edweb.net.

For more information, contact Karen Billings, vice president for the Education Division of SIIA, at 202-789-4487, or by email at kbillings@siia.net; or Lisa Schmucki, founder and CEO of edWeb.net, at 800-575-6015 ext 100, or by email at lisa@edweb.net.

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edWeb.net is a professional social network for the education community that makes it easy to connect with peers, share information and best practices, spread innovative ideas, and create professional learning communities. The user-friendly interface includes a wide range of Web 2.0 tools that support online collaboration and professional development. edWeb members are developing new models and best practices for integrating social networking into education. edWeb.net is free for all individuals and educational institutions. Sponsorship opportunities are available for other organizations involved in education. edWeb.net was founded in 2008 by Lisa Schmucki, CEO, and is located in Princeton, NJ. For more information, call 800-575-6015 ext 100 or email info@edweb.net.

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