Sample Outcomes Framework Report

Dr Luke Dickens, October 2012

For the Storycircle Project
Goldsmiths, University of London

NB. This is a sample report produced through sustained action research with a real social enterprise. All identifying information has been removed.

About the Storycircle Project

The Storycircle project is undertaken by a multi-disciplinary research team who specialise in conducting participatory 'action research' with community groups, educational institutions and industry partners designed to explore the relationships between narrative exchange, digital technologies and citizenship.

Storycircle is a core project of the Framework for Innovation and Research in MediaCityUK (FIRM) consortium, funded under the EPSRC 'Digital Economy' programme (grant number EP/H003738/1).

The Storycircle research team is led by Prof. Nick Couldry and is currently based in the Department of Media and Communications, Goldsmiths, University of London.

For further details of our work please see: www.storycircle.co.uk

Please direct questions and comments to: storycircleuk@gmail.com

About this Sample Report

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- This report presents a sample 'Outcomes Framework Report' of potential use to a broad range of community-focused social enterprises and organisations, whether in full or parts within it.
- It is likely to be particularly relevant to those groups and organisations that work with community practitioners using digital tools and resources and/or involve some form of shared content production.
- It is based on a sustained 18-month action research collaboration with a real social enterprise. To make it useful beyond this case, all identifying information has been removed. Generic terms such as [Community Practitioner] or [Social Enterprise] are used and can be adapted or replaced for specific cases.
- This sample report is based on the 'Social Analytics' approach of on-going, monitored and reflexive practice with particular partners developed by the Storycircle research team. This involves a long-term consultation process, as referred to throughout this report, and as occurred in the specific context from which this sample was generated. This process is described in other supporting documents (see www.storycircle.co.uk).

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Executive Summary

This report introduces a sample [Community Practitioner] Outcomes Framework created through collaboration between [Social Enterprise] and the Storycircle team based in the Media and Communications Department, Goldsmiths College, University of London.

The framework responds to the overall aims of the [Community Practitioner ('CP')] programme, which are [to 'support the sharing of community perspectives' and 'build connections between communities using social media'].

The framework is based around five intended outcomes designed in order to achieve these overall aims:

1. To develop the personal and technical skills of [Community Practitioners] [CPO1]
2. To sustain local groups of [Community Practitioners] [CPO2]
3. To stimulate the production of web content by [Community Practitioners'] [CPO3]
4. To enhance public engagement with [Community Practitioners'] web content [CPO4]
5. To expand the network of [Organisational Partnerships] [CPO5]

Outcomes 1 and 2 both address the aspects of support that [Social Enterprise] currently undertake with [Community Practitioners]; the first focuses on formal training [CPO1], while the later focuses on support to local groups in the less-formal context of meet-ups and other forms of networking [CPO2].

Outcomes 3 and 4 both address the core business of maintaining the [Community Practitioner] website as the primary public source of [Community Practitioners'] content, broken down into the changes that relate to the types of content production that [Social Enterprise] seeks to support with the programme [CPO3], and the ways that [Social Enterprise] might work with such content to enhance public engagement with it [CPO4].

Outcome 5 centres on the growth of the [Community Practitioner] network through national and international [Organisational Partnerships] [CPO5].

Section One details the development of the framework, while **Section Two** details the designing of key outcome indicators within the framework. The full Community Practitioner Outcomes Framework is available in **Appendix 1**.

This report is of potential use to a broad range of community-focused social enterprises and organisations, whether in full or parts within it. It is likely to be particularly relevant to those groups and organisations that work with community practitioners using digital tools and resources and/or involve some form of shared content production.

Introduction

This sample Outcomes Framework has been created through a collaboration between a [Social Enterprise] and the Storycircle research team led by Prof Nick Couldry and based in the Media and Communications Department, Goldsmiths College, University of London (Storycircle).[1] Storycircle is a multi-disciplinary research team who specialise in conducting participatory 'action research' with community organisations, educational institutions and industry partners designed to explore the relationships between narrative exchange, digital technologies and citizenship.

This collaboration was initiated to support a number of significant developments that the [Social Enterprise] had planned to undertake with its ['Community Practitioner'] programme during spring of 2012. These focused on the re-design of its training offer and accreditation structure, and the formal expansion of its network of community-level Partner Organisations. More practically, this [Social Enterprise] also wanted the collaboration to support a review of the ways its [Community Practitioner] website was being used in the period following its launch in spring 2010, and to consider potential enhancements and improvements to be included as part of its first major upgrade.

The decision to create this framework was driven by the [Social Enterprise]'s desire to undertake evidence-led, strategic reflection on the ways the above developments might address a number of challenges that many similar organisations are facing in the current period: the need to sustain the skills and networks of local groups after their initial training experience; the need to support public engagement with [Community Practitioner]s' content in ways that align with the fast moving technologies and trends of the web; and the need to position programmed activity in a climate of reduced funding and increased competition in the wider sector.

Storycircle, for its part, was interested in conducting sustained research *with* (and not just *about*) a nationally focused community media organization as it undertook a process of reflection and adjustment in response to the development of digital infrastructures, methods and tools directed towards addressing current challenges. Storycircle' aim was to produce parallel research findings about the nature of narrative exchange, digital technologies and connected modes of citizenship in this context for public and scholarly presentations, and publication in international, peer-reviewed journals.

The implementation of the Outcomes Framework and production of parallel research findings are therefore hoped to offer key benefits for the [Social Enterprise] itself, its [Organisational Partners] in the sector and the growing body of Community Practitioners in the UK and beyond who operate under the programme. Internally, the framework will allow the [Social Enterprise] to account for the strengths and weaknesses of the [CP] programme, and crucially, reflect this information back to itself as an organisation in a way that will enable the effective targeting of future activity. Externally, it will help establish a robust evidence-base in order to demonstrate the impacts of the [Community Practitioner] programme to public audiences, funding bodies, and policy makers.

The overall aim is for the [Social Enterprise] to use the Outcomes Framework presented here to embed a process of organisational reflection into their working culture. Initially the framework will

[1] Storycircle is a core project of the Framework for Innovation and Research in MediaCityUK (FIRM) consortium, funded under the EPSRC 'Digital Economy' programme (grant number EP/H003738/1). The outcomes framework, indicators and data collection tools were developed by Dr Luke Dickens on behalf of the Storycircle research team and in consultation with [Social Enterprise]. Led by Prof Nick Couldry, the team also includes Dr Richard MacDonald, Dr Wilma Clark, Dr Hilde Stephansen and Dr Aristea Fotopoulou.

be used to produce an Interim Report (after six months) that will constitute a formative assessment to help guide further activity through reflection. It is hoped the Interim Report will lead towards the [Social Enterprise] completing a subsequent summative assessment, which will also serve as an externally available Annual Report (to be published after one year, marking the end of the collaboration with Storycircle). Storycircle will provide the [Social Enterprise] with back-ground support for reporting against the Outcomes Framework over this period, while undertaking parallel reflexive research designed to be complementary to this exercise rather than leading it more directly. The primary focus of this research will be following the [Social Enterprise]'s thematic developments and practical solutions for improved connectivity between user constituencies and enhanced public engagements achieved through the featuring and 'curation' of content (in CPO4) on the [Community Practitioner] website.

Section One below outlines the process of development behind the Outcomes Framework using some examples and leading towards some thoughts on how the framework might be used to measure, interpret and report on the [Social Enterprise]'s progress towards achieving its intended outcomes. Section Two then gives more detailed definitions for each of the five outcomes within it and explains the key indicators and sources of evidence for each. The Full Outcomes framework is available in Appendix 1 at the back of this report. Full copies of the raw data, data collection tools and guidance used here are available in a shared folder called [name] on the Dropbox service, for use by [Social Enterprise] staff and Board only.

Section One – Developing an Outcomes Framework

Taking an outcomes approach

An 'outcomes' approach is a method of evaluation concerned with assessing the changes or difference that programmed activity is intended to deliver on, and is commonly undertaken as a means of project self-evaluation within public, third sector and social enterprise organisations. This report draws on established and effective practice in taking an outcomes approach (using references to the documents in the box below), which will help with understanding the key terms used, and finding further guidance and tools. Full copies of the key guidance in the box below have been included in the Dropbox folder.

Key guidance for taking an outcomes approach

Arts and Humanities Research Council
http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/What-We-Do/Strengthen-research-impact/Pages/Self-evaluation.aspx

- '*Understanding Your Project: A Guide to Self-Evaluation*' (AHRC, 2011)

[A bit technical but has a useful table on p.15 to help identify what can be measured on programme activity, and a useful sample template for reporting to funders on p.22]

BIG Lottery
http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/index/evaluationandresearch-uk

- '*Explaining the Difference Your Project Makes*' (BIG, 2006)

[An excellent source of guidance that most directly informs the steps taken here.]

Charities Evaluation Service
http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/

- '*Assessing Change*' (CES, 2010)
- '*Demonstrating the Difference*' (CES, 2009)
- '*Your Project, It's Outcomes*' (CES, 2007)
- '*First Steps in Monitoring and Evaluation*' (CES, 2002)

[A range of very good guidance. CES 2010 provides detailed support on developing and using outcomes monitoring tools. CES 2002 is a little dated and uses slightly different terminology.]

Jargonbusters
http://www.jargonbusters.org.uk/

- *Jargonbuster, Issue 1* (Ashby & Nee, 2011)

[A very useful glossary of plain English definitions of the key terms used throughout this document]

An outcomes approach differs from 'outputs' focused approaches concerned with counting the outputs of a given programme of activity, such as how many people have participated on a training course or how many videos have been uploaded onto a website. In an outcomes approach, outputs are taken to be important signals of changes that might be occurring but are not viewed as numbers that can simply speak for themselves. For example, having 600 unique users visit a website in November, or even 50 more unique users in November than October is potentially good news. But these numbers presented alone say little about the changes or difference that has been brought about as a result of an organisation's activity. It might be that an increase of only 5 more users, but those who have behaved in more engaged ways with each other or remained on the website for longer than a few seconds would actually be a preferable outcome, especially if the intention of the website is to increase connections and exchange between users rather than simply to keep to generating bigger numbers of visitors. This is not to say that such numbers are unimportant, but rather that they are only really useful if they are understood as indicators of the extent to which wider outcomes are being achieved or not. In the [Community Practitioners] case, this has meant setting out the top-level intended outcomes of the programme by thinking about *why* [Social Enterprise] does what it does with the [CP] programme, and using these considerations to design of the evaluation framework as a means of making sense of such numbers.

Defining intended outcomes

The overall aims of the [Community Practitioner] programme, since its establishment over five years ago, have been [to ‘support the sharing of community perspectives’ and ‘build connections between communities using social media’]. These address what [Social Enterprise] believe to be a clear lack of funding and provision for the kinds of community development that might be achieved by the practices of those working to organise their own local communities and share their own perspectives using social media. The first step in building the outcomes framework was therefore to identify the fundamental areas of work that [Social Enterprise] undertake to achieve such clearly articulated aims, and assess the extent to which they respond to this wider need (see BIG, 2006: pp.4-6).

Through consultation it was felt that the primary element of the business was working with the [Community Practitioners] themselves, both by offering training and also by providing less formal opportunities for them to work together. A second major area of work raised was the maintenance of the [Community Practitioner] website, both as a means of hosting [CP] content but also for organising and arranging such content in ways that might encourage public engagement with it. A third core area of work for [Social Enterprise] was in their recent efforts to move away from the limitations of direct delivery and instead expand their organisational provision by rolling-out its training and delivery packages through a network of recognised [Partner Organisations].

Having identified these core aspects of [Social Enterprise]’s work the next step in this process was to redefine these as *‘intended outcomes’*; that is, identifiable outcomes that explicitly express the specific changes or difference each element was seeking to bring about (see BIG 2006: pp.7-12). Each outcome was to be stated in a single sentence that contained a clear object of change (who or what the change was directed towards) and a clear sense of the nature of such change (using words such as ‘develop’, ‘sustain’, ‘enhance’). The more clearly these could be stated, the more accurately these changes might be measured and assessed for their impact. This process of definition required a good deal of discussion, negotiation and working through several iterations of intended outcomes that related clearly to the overall aims of the [CP] programme, each time getting closer to a workable set of statements. Eventually five clear intended outcomes were agreed and defined, as outlined in the box below:

1. To develop the personal and technical skills of Community Practitioners [CPO1]
2. To sustain local groups of Community Practitioners [CPO2]
3. To stimulate the production of web content by [Community Practitioner]s’ [CPO3]
4. To enhance public engagement with [Community Practitioners’] web content [CPO4]
5. To expand the network of [Organisational Partnerships] [CPO5]

Outcomes 1 and 2 both address the aspects of support that [Social Enterprise] currently undertake with their [Community Practitioners]; the first focuses on formal training [CPO1], while the later focuses on support to local groups in the less-formal context of meet-ups and other forms of networking [CPO2]. Given that these areas were felt to be quite different in terms of the intended outcomes sought, where the first focuses on individual skill development and the later on sustaining group interactions and networking, it was felt important to have these as separate outcomes. Similarly, Outcomes 3 and 4 both address the core business of maintaining the [Community Practitioner] website as the primary public source of [Community Practitioner]s' content, but they too were broken down into the changes that relate to the types of content production that [Social Enterprise] seeks to support with the programme [CPO3], and the ways that [Social Enterprise] might work with such content to enhance various forms of public engagement with it [CPO4]. Outcome 5 centres on the growth of a formal network of national and international [Organisational Partnerships], who purchase a franchise licence to deliver the [Community Practitioner] programme on behalf of [Social Enterprise] [CPO5].

Activities designed to achieve intended outcomes

Implicit in these core areas of [Social Enterprise]'s work on their [Community Practitioner] programme are a number of more everyday '*activities*' that they undertake. While it is tempting to begin to plan improvements to the [CP] programme by focusing on its activities, the purpose of defining broader areas of intended outcomes first is to reframe them in ways that most effectively meet the *needs* of provision. It is therefore important that intended outcomes do not change once established, since these will remain the core areas of identifiable difference the programme is seeking to make for this reporting period. By contrast, the activities undertaken in order to achieve these intended outcomes can be seen in more flexible ways. For example, work-plans might be redesigned to focus resources and capacity towards activities that most readily lead to the achievement of these outcomes. It is also important to recognise that activities can achieve more than one outcome. For example, undertaking training sessions will be likely to raise the personal and technical skills of participants [CPO1], but it might also be a useful opportunity to encourage participants to see the value of the opportunities for networking that the meet-ups might offer [CPO2], or begin to stimulate the production of certain kinds of content [CPO3].

The initial development of the Outcomes Framework required a basic audit of what types of activity were currently being undertaken to support to [CP] programme. Since [Social Enterprise] staff used a shared Google Calendar to manage their working week, this audit used a simple and freely available online tool to directly export relevant activity data. This enabled a system of *'activity logging'* to be established, where colour coded calendar entries for a number of key *'activity types'* began to be collected (such as training, [CP] group meet ups, networking events, website maintenance and so on). As a result it became possible to cross-reference the core activities that [Social Enterprise] undertook with the five main organisational outcomes that had been identified, and therefore begin to make more explicit the connections between the activities used to deliver the [CP] programme with the difference that such activities might be making.

Setting outcome indicators and sources of evidence

With the top-level outcomes defined and a sense of the main areas of activity currently undertaken to deliver them, the next step was to identify a range of potential *'indicators'* that might suggest the extent to which these 'intended outcomes' were being achieved (see Section Two for details; see BIG 2006: pp.13-19). This required thinking carefully about the kinds of things that could be measured most effectively, initially by drawing up lists for each outcome, and then choosing those indicators that would give the strongest sense of change being achieved. In reality these were subjected to a number of minor revisions over several subsequent months. To keep this task manageable, the aim was to define no more than five key indicators for any given outcome, and to focus on the kinds of measurements that [Social Enterprise] were undertaking in some capacity already wherever possible. Following guidance on effective evaluation practice, the aim was also for a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures, objective and subjective measures, and regular and more specific measures (see CES 2007: pp.14-17).

So for example, five indicators were eventually defined and numbered for [CPO1]: 'To develop the personal and technical skills of [Community Practitioners]' (see 'Outcome Indicators' in the first column Fig. 1 below). [CPO1-1] is simply the number of training sessions held in any given month, while [CPO1-2] is the number of [Community Practitioners] receiving accreditation in any given month (but given by each accreditation level to show progression). Both such figures are simple counts of 'activity types', as identified by activity logging discussed above, that became useful outcome indicators.

Given that the main focus of [CPO1] is the [Community Practitioners] themselves, [CPO1-3] is a self-assessed, subjective measure of their skills, taken as a 'base line' at the start of training and a 'follow up' measure at the end in order to assess how they felt their personal and technical skills might have changed over the course of training. [CPO1-4] is a more objective measurement of the skill development within each group of trainees, since it is the observations of the trainer leading the session. This was hoped to give some context as to the aims of the session, and to account for some of the limitations of relying on self-assessments.

CP OUTCOME ONE [CPO1]: *"To develop the personal and technical skills of [Community Practitioners]"*			
Outcome Indicators:		**Sources of Evidence:**	**Information Needed:**
CPO1-1	Number of [CP] training sessions at all membership levels	Activity Log	Training sessions recorded in Google Calendar and exported to spread sheet using GTimeReport.[i] To collect the number of sessions, the number of participants, training location, trainer, and the level of the training. Enter data using the Storycircle 'Activity Log' system for details.[ii]
CPO1-2	Number of [CP] at all membership levels	[CP]database	Currently on MS Excel spread sheet but to be included in Drupal's Views module (will need online input form/page). Numbers given for each membership level. By recording this by the date (Month/Year) that an individual [CP] achieves an accreditation it is also possible to identify where Community Practitioners move levels and by how much (i.e. progression).
CPO1-3	[CP's] self-assessment of skills	Skills Audit form	Participants complete an 'Initial Skills Audit' form prior to training (BASELINE) and a 'Final Skills Audit' form at accreditation (FOLLOW UP). Enter data into the Storycircle 'Skills Assessment Tool' for the specific training session.[iii] Use the tool to cross reference scores for Initial and Final Skills assessments, and calculate extent of skill development achieved through the training offer, and the drop-off rate (Starters vs. Completers). Personal data and matrix scores (Personal Skills, Specific Skills) could eventually be logged on the [CP] database and reported on using Drupal's Views module.
CPO1-4	Instructor's assessment of [CPs'] group progression and achievement	Instructor's Group Observation form	Instructors to take observation notes of group as both BASELINE & FOLLOW UP. Completed forms to be scanned as .pdf and stored in a folder (but could eventually be logged on training or [CP] database if functionality is developed). To include form and additional guidance in updated 'Guidance to Instructors'.

Figure 1 - example of Outcome 1 as it appears in the Outcomes Framework

The next step in developing the framework involved looking at the potential *'sources of evidence'* – the data collection methods such as forms, surveys or registers - for each 'outcome indicator' (see 'Sources of Evidence' in the second column in Fig. 1; see CES 2010: pp13-23). In thinking through what would be most appropriate for collecting these measurements, it was important to look initially at the things [Social Enterprise] were already doing (see AHRC 2011: p.15). So for example, [CPO1-1] counted the number of training sessions using the Google Calendar entries that [Social Enterprise] used to book the courses, while the self-assessed measurements on skill development in [CPO1-3] were based on existing training evaluation templates available in the [Community Practitioner] resource pack, and the observed measure of group progress in [CPO1-4] was based on a simplified version of a form that [Social Enterprise] had used in delivering group training with a local college. Even where there appeared to be no explicit means of collecting data on a given indicator, all of the indicators eventually chosen had the potential to be measured using existing administrative systems to produce viable outcomes data (see CES 2010: pp.24-44).

Data collection procedures: testing the framework

With a suitable range of indicators defined for each outcome, and a clear sense of where and how information for each indicator might be collected in principle, the next step was to be specific about what information was actually needed (CES 2010: pp.6-12) and to work through the procedures for how such information might be collected in practice (CES 2010: pp.45-50). This involved several months of testing existing procedures within [Social Enterprise], and then refining these with a focus on what was practical and achievable within current organisational capacity, so as to ensure there was little additional burden on staff in collecting outcomes data. So for example, data for [CPO1-1] and [CPO1-2] could be collected on a monthly basis using a custom report from existing [Social Enterprise] databases, while data for [CPO1-3] and [CPO1-4] were handwritten forms completed during each training course that had to be entered into a spread sheet (Using the Storycircle 'Skills Assessment' tool) as well as being systematically filed in the office.

Working through this process led to a lot of simplification of the overall framework, with some indicators being abandoned, and some sources of evidence being merged to account for several indicators simultaneously. The result was to include a column that stated in clear terms the steps required to collect the data, completing the framework and allowing it to serve as a step-by-step guide for all staff to follow its implementation (see 'Information Needed' in the third column in Fig. 1).

From this point it also became necessary to adapt and repurpose some of the administrative systems in place at the time to ensure they could work as viable sources of evidence. So for example, when testing the tool for exporting Google Calendar data it became clear that including some additional details about the course accreditation level and location in the calendar system at the point of entry would add a useful level of detail to the indicator for [CPO1-1], so some additional guidance was written for to help staff undertake this process. This was the case for other sources of evidence, where slight adjustments in working practices became necessary to ensure data was collected regularly and systematically.

Measuring, interpreting and reporting outcomes data

The final step was to begin to consider what to do with the data being collected. At a basic level, this process required establishing a system for organising data in a shared folder on Dropbox to allow [Social Enterprise] and the Storycircle research team to work collaboratively. Within this folder, a subfolder for each outcome was created. The raw data was collected for each outcome in a month-by-month snapshot, either in tables (using a non-proprietary .csv format) or, where paper copies of forms were used, these were scanned as .pdf copies and put into the relevant sub-folders. These files were systematically named using a reverse date format to enable them to be organised chronologically within each subfolder.

However, at a deeper level the task was to work analytically with the data to have a clearer sense about the achievement of the intended outcomes (see BIG 2006: pp.21-23; CES 2007: pp.14-17). Clearly, the processes outlined above are likely to generate a significant amount of data, presenting a challenge for interpreting what it might suggest about the changes being measured. A useful starting point was to focus on the possibilities for simple ways of representing and visualising key data using tables, charts and maps. From this it was possible to work backwards, identifying some of the key fields that would be necessary to include in the data collection in order to do this, such as including a location field in capturing training sessions in the Google Calendar as discussed above. Part of this thinking also involved designing ways of performing simple calculations with key data. So for example, a 'Skills Audit' tool was built by the Storycircle team using MS Excel, which enabled [Social Enterprise] to compare baseline and follow up data on skills assessment, and which allowed for percentage measures of reported changes in skills by individual, by group and by individual questions within the assessment questionnaire. In order to assess change over time, it was also decided to work with a monthly data collection frequency. While taking a month-by-month perspective is useful for giving fine grained tracking, assessments of top-level organisational outcomes would be more reliable if they are made over a longer period (year-by-year) to allow for fluctuations and adjustments in how they are met overall.

In recognition of the complexity of forming nuanced interpretations of the kinds of data drawn together within the framework, a first pass through all available data was undertaken as a means of initiating a preliminary, working analysis of the headline findings. This was intended to stimulate some sense of what is being captured, but also to identify where further work is required to refine the representing, interpreting and acting on available findings. This process led to the production of an Interim Report for the six-month period since [Social Enterprise] launched its major restructuring of the [CP] programme and parallel website upgrade. This was an internal document that followed a clear structure for considering the extent to which each outcome was being achieved, and presenting basic findings in a way that could be usefully discussed within the organisation (for a sample template see also AHRC 2011: 22).

This kind of approach to reporting offers a useful way of drawing together what an organisation might learn about the impacts of its activity over time, and can be especially useful for identifying potential next steps to better target future activity and resources. Within the [CP] Interim Report, the Storycircle team have made a number of broad recommendations for potential next steps on the [CP] programme, and proposed a series of specific exercises and experiments to help address particular challenges identified within [CPO4] as a focus for the final phase of collaboration with [Social Enterprise]. Thus the Interim Report will subsequently serve both as a working base-line to assess the impact of future changes to the [CP] programme, and as a template for producing further periodic reports such as a planned Annual Report.

Ultimately, the rationale behind the outcomes approach outlined above has been to support [Social Enterprise] to develop interpretations of their intended outcomes for the [Community Practitioner] programme in order to reflect on the effectiveness of their organisational activity and to guide further strategic direction. Overall it is hoped that the Outcomes Framework will serve as a guide to help [Social Enterprise] find and present relevant evidence in flexible ways, becoming a core part of [Social Enterprise]'s regular annual reporting, but also supporting a range of more responsive reflections for a range of internal and external uses. While the examples given above focus on the basic aspects of designing [CPO1] (see Fig. 1), the next section gives further details as these steps apply to all five outcomes within the framework.

Section Two – Introducing the [Community Practitioner programme] Outcomes

This section presents some further detail for each of the [Community Practitioner] outcomes in the framework, giving some context about what it is measuring and why.

CPO1 – "To develop the personal and technical skills of [Community Practitioners]"

This outcome has been used as an example in the previous section, so much of its development has been outlined already. Given that the training of [Community Practitioners] is perhaps the core element of the [Social Enterprise] business, this outcome was the natural starting point for designing the overall framework. By taking a broad approach to 'community development', rather than emphasising specific technical skills or forms of social media, [Social Enterprise] are clear that developing both personal and technical skills are important. Thus while it has been useful to count overall growth in numbers of training sessions [CPO1-1] and those successfully completing training [CPO1-2] to gain an indication of the ways this outcome is being met, it is at least as important to be able to account for the *qualitative* improvements in skill development, whereby participants report feeling more confident in initiating conversations with others, or feeling more competent in using digital media to produce their own stories [hence CPO1-3 and 4]. While the Storycircle 'Skills Assessment' tool provides percentage measures of skill development, it is essential that these are interpreted alongside the trainer's observations of these developments, the rationale for undertaking training with a particular group and the nature of the kinds of questions being asked of them over the course of training.

Nonetheless, [CPO1-1] and [CPO1-2] are simple measures capable of accounting for achievements towards this outcome at a national (and potentially international) scale, since most training and all accreditations are made by [Social Enterprise] directly, making this aspect of data collection relatively straight forward. However, there needs to be some consideration of how best to collect training sessions undertaken by third-party [Organisational Partners], which make it much more difficult to apply [CPO1-3] and [CPO1-4] across all training delivered in the initial period. Instead, two small samples of training sessions where such data was collected have been used to begin to examine skill development more directly and explicitly. While it is impossible to make comprehensive claims about the nature of skill development that [Community Practitioner] training has achieved at a national level, it is still valuable to explore some preliminary findings from these cases as suggestive of the kinds of developments that might be taking place.

All indicators used here have taken account of the implementation of the new [Community Practitioners] accreditation system (using designated criteria for four distinct levels). This is particularly the case for [CP01-2], which draws on a significantly improved and revised [Community Practitioner] database with new fields for 'accreditation level' and 'date of award' now included as a result of designing the Outcomes Framework. This is currently held as a spread sheet with limited ability to run advanced queries, but is being included as part of the upgrading of [Social Enterprise]'s Drupal platform and will include an online form for entering new practitioners. As a result of this work, it will not only possible to account for skill development at different accreditation levels, but by cross referencing each individual practitioner (using a unique reference number), it will be possible to measure individual progression across the accreditation levels, which would be a particularly strong measure of skill development. Moreover, such cross-referencing of the database in Drupal is hoped to link a given individual's skill development and accreditation level with their participation in local networking activity (in CPO2), their production and posting of content (in CPO3), and the ways various interested publics might interact with their content (in CPO4).

CPO2 – “To sustain local groups of [Community Practitioners]”

This outcome is an attempt to capture the activities of [Community Practitioners] beyond their formal training experiences, and particularly for the ways they might work together at a range of scales in the formation of a distinct ‘community of practice’ (after the work of Jean Lave and Etiene Wenger). The decision to look specifically at this outcome is the result of [Social Enterprise] seeking to address the challenge they have experienced in sustaining contact with these groups, deemed important both because building a national body of [Community Practitioners] appears dependent on facilitating regular, on-going access to resources and support, but relatedly, the need to maintain the [Community Practitioner] website as the go-to source of their content is dependent on [Social Enterprise] maintaining links with its production base. On this later point, this Outcome relates to [CPO3], in that the continued production of content by trained Practitioners would in many ways signal that groups of Community Practitioners are indeed being sustained, but it is not sufficient to account more fully for the ways that group dynamics are maintained in this way.

This outcome also might include those groups not trained directly by [Social Enterprise] but by [Organisational Partners]. However, since the necessary data has yet to be collected by these third party organisations, data for this outcome is limited to those [Community Practitioners] that [Social Enterprise] has supported directly through [a local Community Practitioners] group in this reporting period. This is in part because meetings are often ad-hoc, but also because there is not yet a system in place for supporting such practices built in to the guidance nor any agreed means for systematically gathering and sharing data across these organisations. Nonetheless, it is important for [Social Enterprise] to consider the possibilities for replicating this outcome at a national/international level, possibly by establishing a database of all meet-ups including those undertaken by partner organisations.

It was necessary to devise some means of capturing data for this outcome. The result was the design of a simple, double-sided paper ‘Meet-up’ form that could be completed by hand during a session by the person leading it. This was structured as the primary source of evidence for indicators [CPO2-1], [CPO2-2] and [CPO2-3]. These indicators were adjusted over several increments, but the general approach was that alongside counting the number of sessions (and attendees) in [CPO2-1], capturing instances where individual group members took the opportunity to lead a session, give a talk or share skills with the group [CPO2-2], and where [CPs] had undertaken additional local networking activities outside of the sessions [CPO2-3] were solid indicators of groups being sustained.

The designing of the measures was undertaken in parallel with the re-design of the meet-ups themselves, where the overall hope was that these groups would become more self-directing than they had been in the past. Thus [Social Enterprise] took a number of steps in refining the model for delivery of these sessions, including encouraging an experienced [Community Practitioner] in the group to chair the sessions, starting each session with a ‘news round’ where each member reported to the group about what they had been doing over the past month, structuring the sessions themselves to include opportunities for group members to lead on sharing their skills and experiences, and concluding each session by soliciting ideas for the next session from the participants. In this regard, there were clear signs of a feedback-loop being generated between this intended outcome and the delivery of activity to help achieve it being established.

Similarly, CPO2-4 was added to try to capture interactions within [local Community Practitioner group]. At present [Social Enterprise] send regular email shots and newsletters to the group but this is a top-down interaction rather than one made between members themselves, and therefore not a useful indication of the ways these groups might be self-sustaining at this stage. Ways of supporting [CP] groups to connect online and accounting for this activity within the [CP] site or alternatively using a third-party social network will be considered.

Low levels of attendance in the meet-up sessions in the early part of this reporting period was taken as an opportunity to discuss ideas for shape and style of future sessions and to boost attendance. Those that did attended were encouraged to discuss issues they had with sessions and their ideas for improving them, including boosting attendance. [Social Enterprise] followed up this direct feedback by conducting a basic survey with group mailing list, received some useful and interesting responses which lead to the decision to conduct a similar feedback survey on a more regular basis and forming [CP02-5].

CPO3 – "To stimulate the production of web content by [Community Practitioners]"

This outcome is concerned with the role that [Social Enterprise] might play in supporting the production of [CP] content. In part this is about quantitatively increasing levels of content production, and measured simply by counting the number of posts to the website [CPO3-1]. Further detail might also be achieved by cross-referencing data for this indicator with that collected on [Community Practitioners] themselves (such as their accreditation level, location and/or group affiliation), which would enable [Social Enterprise] to identify more precisely who is actively contributing their content to the site (Location, Accreditation Level, Gender, Age Bracket). This would give a stronger signal of the ways [Social Enterprise] might be stimulating content to be produced, such as correlations between training and the frequency of posts received for a given region, or how types of content might vary by the level of accreditation that Community Practitioners have achieved (ie. where those with a higher accreditation level might produce more advanced types of content).

However, this outcome is also intended to account for the qualitative nature of this content as it produced by [Community Practitioners]. As the [Social Enterprise] editorial policy makes clear, content should be focused on positive, community level perspectives that avoid overtly political or religious expressions, but it also explicitly encourages wide ranging perspectives. It is therefore likely to be interpreted in different ways by [Community Practitioners]. As such, [CPO3-2] is included to gather valuable insights into what sort of content is being uploaded, especially by following the specific themes and issues that are of interest to [Community Practitioners] themselves and that form the basis for the stories they choose to tell. This draws primarily on the definitions users give to their content in the required fields at the point of uploading to the [Community Practitioner] website, such as the title, categories and tags they place, and for which [Social Enterprise] offer specific guidance on. Breaking this count down by content type is also proposed in order to give some sense of the mix of media being produced, particularly since [Social Enterprise] offer guidance and training explicitly on these different modes. There is also scope within this indicator for more detailed examination of content samples where [Social Enterprise] might unpack the substance of the stories told and use this to refine the categories used and guidance offered.

While the other indicators here all relate to activity undertaken through the [Community Practitioner] website, [CPO3-3] seeks to capture examples of where [CPs] produce content for other outlets. At present this is an ad hoc system, but it is important that [Social Enterprise] has begun to reflect on value of such activity more systematically.

CPO4 – "To enhance public engagement [Community Practitioners'] web content"

While Outcome Three was about the differences [Social Enterprise] might bring about in the production of [Community Practitioners'] content, this outcome is intended to gain a sense of the changes [Social Enterprise] might bring about in the ways such content is engaged with. The central object here is the public, or various publics or constituencies, which make up the audience for [Community Practitioner] online content. However, as with the other outcomes, the emphasis is not simply on increasing the audience numbers, but to understand the nature of this audience and therefore to enhance their levels of active engagement with site content. The indicators for this outcome are concerned with the size of this audience, but broken down to consider where they are located and when they visit the site within any given month [CPO4-1], and also how they find their way to the [CP] site [CPO4-2], what sorts of content they are interested in and how they interact with content and each other once on the site itself [CPO4-3] and [CPO4-4].

The key data collection tool used here is Google Analytics (GA), a web analytics service on the Google platform that allows for the flexible measurement of website usage and generation of reports, tables and charts to visualise such data. While GA was designed primarily for marketing purposes it is flexible enough to be used in a wider self-evaluation framework, as well as being freely available and fairly user-friendly. The customisable reporting function has been used to capture and organise relevant data for each of the indicators in this outcome area. However, there are a number of alternative options for web analytics that may be of use here, and there is not necessarily a need to be dependent on GA, especially since it is free to users on the basis that Google has access to this data too via user IP addresses. Both the current Drupal 7 platform used to build the [Community Practitioner] site and other third-party tools, such as Disqus, HootSuite, Mail Chimp, Topsy, Tweetdeck and so on, offer further possibilities for the kinds of 'social analytics' approaches that underpin this outcome. There is also scope for some re-purposing such third-party tools (becoming 'critical evaluation data' and 'reflexive' tools rather than 'marketing' tools), or for combining these tools, sometimes described as 'auto content circulation', using tools such as 'IFTTT' (If this then that).

The customised GA 'Audience' report for [CPO4-1] gathers data on 'unique visitors' to give an accurate figure for audience numbers in any given period, but it can also determine 'new visitors' from 'return visitors' to give a sense of the sustainability as well as growth of the [CP] audience over time (in this case, with data captured on a monthly basis). This functionality also allows for site visitors to be geographically located, presenting this information in ranked tables by location and on a basic map. This feature is of value because it will reflect the geographically differentiated extent of national audience coverage for the [CP] site. While users located by top UK city (top 10 or 25) is perhaps the most useful scale given the current focus of the [CP] programme delivery, taking an international perspective is also possible. This data can also be imported into a Drupal mapping module and/or an open-source GIS software package to enable this audience engagement to be mapped but also compared with [CP] activity, such as the locations of training sessions, or the places discussed in particular content pages, to see if there is any correlation.

[CPO4-2] is concerned with the ways visitors arrive at the [Community Practitioner] site. Primarily this is from different sources (as either 'direct', 'organic' search or 'referral') and by different medium (eg. Google, Facebook, or the [Social Enterprise] blog), but visitors from mobile platforms is also captured. Further details are also captured on the different search terms used in finding the site, and the 'landing page' they arrive at the site on (since this isn't always the home page). Data relating to this indicator will help to discern between those visitors looking for the site (and thus are likely to already have some relationship with [Social Enterprise]/[CP]s) or find the site by searching for something else (thus a potentially more public kind of audience). It will also help situate these various audience constituencies within the wider internet, looking at how other platforms such as

Facebook or the [Social Enterprise] blog might be referring people to various parts of the site, and what this might signal about the kinds of engagement with [CP] content that this offers.

[CPO4-3] is custom designed to measure passive engagement with site content, which can be inferred through the ways GA captures basic data on visitor behaviour, such as the time spent on different parts of the site, the average numbers of pages they view and the bounce rate (the percentage of visits that leave the site again after the first page), linked to the most visited site content. It therefore gives a basic indication of the interests of the [CP] audience when they just view content rather than do anything more active with it. Such interactions are still valuable, and knowing which pages are being viewed most frequently or for the longest periods of time is likely to help identify patterns in the interests of site users. Google also has a visualisation tool in their new analytics suite which produces a graphical representation of movement or 'flow' pathways through a website. This tool is interactive making it possible to look more deeply into the dynamics of site traffic through a particular page or 'nodes' on a website, which would allow [Social Enterprise] to explore how users navigate through the [CP] site, and how they connect individual pages and content items as they move.

[CPO4-4] is concerned with measuring more active forms of visitor engagement with site content, which is significant given the overall outcome here is to enhance social connections and exchanges across a growing body of [Community Practitioners'] content. The custom GA 'Visitor Behaviour' report captures basic data on pages where social action occurs (such as 'liking' or 'sharing') and on the social medium that such actions relate to (such as Facebook or Twitter). As discussed above, there is also scope for using other platforms to both support further social actions while also gathering data on them, such as using the Disqus comments function already on the [Community Practitioner] site or Drupal's Flags module to include the capability for users to interact with the content they view in a range of ways. These will be refined in parallel with the on-going site development work.

Instances of featured or 'curated' content [CPO4-5] are an important indication that the [CP] website is receiving and supporting a critical mass of engagement with its content drawn together to foreground community perspectives around distinct themes. The important distinction here is the difference between 'top-down' and 'bottom up' modes of curation, the former as a means of stimulating engagement with local community content in response to national topics or themes, while the later starts with locally reported content in order to engage wider public audiences. A range of web analytic systems identified in the above indicators can be used to follow the curating of content where this might occur online. However, at present, the most effective means of collecting data from this process as it occurs 'off-line' is yet to be defined (though a number of possibilities have been raised and included in the framework). Discussions to date have also focused on having a solid understanding of data relating to [CPO3-2] as a vital preliminary step for [Social Enterprise] in achieving – and *knowing* that it is achieving – effective content curation. A central focus of the next stage of collaboration between [Social Enterprise] and the Storycircle research team will be to undertake specific content curation experiments intended to stimulate narrative exchanges both within and across particular themes that are most clearly identifiable from existing content. The framework will then be updated to include appropriate methods that best account for the ways this process unfolds.

CPO5 – "To expand the network of [Organisational Partnerships]"

This is an organisational outcome intended to trace the expansion of the [Community Practitioner] programme regionally, nationally and internationally through the uptake of franchise licences by [Organisational Partners]. In tracing the routes through which partnerships emerge, [CPO5-1] captures activity types likely to lead to interest in sales interests, [CPO5-2] captures instances of expressed interest in purchasing a licence, and [CPO5-3] captures actual sales. Data for each contains quantitative measures of sales value, size and scope of [Organisational Partners] but also their industry sector and areas of interest. Crucially all of these indicators can be located spatially, so that a dynamic picture of network development can be established, and the extent to which this outcome secures the overall aim of connecting communities at a range of scales is being achieved.

[CPO5-4] is currently in development but is an attempt to understand the qualitative difference that an expanded network of [Organisational Partners] makes to those involved. Broadly this is an assessment of the value and impact that the circulation of goods/ services/information/ideas might be making within an expanded network of partners. At this stage, [Social Enterprise] is experimenting with capturing data for this indicator using a monthly telephone update with each partner, and recording any significant developments with a free digital tool (Catch). The effectiveness of this approach will be assessed in the Interim Report.

Appendix 1 – The Community Practitioner Outcomes Framework

CP OUTCOME ONE [CPO1]:
"To develop the personal and technical skills of [Community Practitioners]"

Outcome Indicators:		Sources of Evidence:	Information Needed:
CPO1-1	Number of [CP] training sessions at all membership levels	Activity Log	Training sessions recorded in Google Calendar and exported to spread sheet using GTimeReport.[1] To collect the number of sessions, the number of participants, training location, trainer, and the level of the training. Enter data using the Storycircle 'Activity Log' system.[2]
CPO1-2	Number of [CP] at all membership levels	[CP]database	Currently on MS Excel spread sheet but to be included in Drupal's Views module[3] (will need online input form/page). Numbers given for each membership level. By recording this by the date (Month/Year) that an individual [CP] achieves an accreditation it is also possible to identify where Community Practitioners move levels and by how much (i.e. progression).
CPO1-3	[CP's] self-assessment of skills	Skills Audit form	Participants complete an 'Initial Skills Audit' form prior to training (BASELINE) and a 'Final Skills Audit' form at accreditation (FOLLOW UP). Enter data into the Storycircle 'Skills Assessment Tool' for the specific training session.[4] Use the tool to cross reference scores for Initial and Final Skills assessments, and calculate extent of skill development achieved through the training offer, and the drop-off rate (Starters vs. Completers). Personal data and matrix scores (Personal Skills, Specific Skills) could eventually be logged on the [CP] database and reported on using Drupal's Views module.
CPO1-4	Instructor's assessment of [CPs'] group progression and achievement	Instructor's Group Observation form	Instructors to take observation notes of group as both BASELINE & FOLLOW UP. Completed forms to be scanned as .pdf and stored in a folder (but could eventually be logged on training or [CP] database if functionality is developed). To include form and additional guidance in updated 'Guidance to Instructors'.

CP OUTCOME TWO [CPO2]:
"To sustain local groups of [Community Practitioners]"

Outcome Indicators:		Sources of Evidence:	Information Needed:
CPO2-1	Number of monthly CP meet-ups held	Meet-up form	This should include attendance numbers of CPs for each meet-up event. All national partners could eventually report meet-ups to [Social Enterprise] to compile these in a spread sheet of national data. This could eventually take the form of some sort of log/diary/calendar, or even a 'Meet up' page using Drupal's Views module for groups to upload information from their 'Meet-up' forms.
CPO2-2	CPs take a lead at a local meet-up event	Meet-up form	Group chair to complete meet-up form to count the number of times CPs [to include additional details]: • chair a session [CP name] • lead a 'skill share' session [CP name, topic, outline] • lead a 'guest speaker' session [CP name, guest name, organisation, topic]
CPO2-3	CPs participate in additional local networking	Meet-up form	Group chair to undertake 'news round'/ feedback from past month with group and add summary to the meet-up form. Also to include progression opportunities or work experience/employment.
CPO2-4	CP group interactions on-line	**TBC.** HootSuite, Mail Chimp, Disqus, Drupal Forum and Comments modules?[5]	**Procedure TBC.** At present top-down mail shot from content manager to group is sent periodically. [Social Enterprise] to look for ways that more cross-group, bottom-up interactions might be achieved, but needs mechanism to be agreed first.
CPO2-5	CPs' assessment of meet-up group provision	Email/online survey	Undertaken annually or bi-annually. Request for feedback to include: • aspects of the sessions they find useful/valuable from the sessions • aspects of the sessions they think need improving (and how they think this could be done) • ideas and suggestions for content/projects for forthcoming meet-ups

CP OUTCOME THREE [CPO3]:
"To stimulate the production of web content by [Community Practitioners']"

Outcome Indicators:		Sources of Evidence:	Information Needed:
CPO3-1	Number of times CPs post content to CP site	Drupal Views content report	This indicator is concerned with WHO is producing content. Use Drupal Views to generate monthly content report in .csv format. To give a breakdown by: • User meta-data [cross-reference with CP database]: Location; Accreditation level; Age; Gender
CPO3-2	User definitions of community reported content	Drupal Views content report, needs Drupal Community Tags module[6]	This indicator is concerned with WHAT SORT of content is being produced. Use Drupal Views to generate monthly content report in .csv format. Use report to identify trends and themes from (but also to consider refining categories used to reflect content being posted): • Use of admin-defined meta-data attached to content: Content 'Type' [e.g. video, photo, audio, and text]; UK regions; thematic 'Categories'. • Use of user-defined 'title', 'description', and 'tags' of content • Crowd-sourced definitions by other site users: tags added using Community Tags module • Samples of content might also be taken for more detailed reflection
CPO3-3	CPs produce content for third-party outlets	**TBC.** Ad-hoc, requires CPs to inform [SOCIAL ENTERPRISE]. Catch?[7]	**Procedure TBC.** [SOCIAL ENTERPRISE] to keep a record and consider how best to collect this – possibly as part of the 'News round' at the CP meet-up, and/or part of the monthly call-around to National Partners.

CP OUTCOME FOUR [CPO4]:
"To enhance public engagement with [Community Practitioners'] web content"

Outcome Indicators:		Sources of Evidence:	Information Needed:
CPO4-1	Number of unique visits to CP site	Google Analytics custom report[8]	Use GA custom report on 'Audience' (visits, unique visitors, new visitors) to download monthly report in .csv format. NB. Audience data can also be broken down by top 10 or 25 cities to begin to locate audience.
CPO4-2	Sources of visitor traffic	Google Analytics custom report	Use GA custom report on 'Visitor Traffic' (direct, referred, search) to download monthly report in .csv format. Also to include visitors by search terms used, landing pages and mobile sources.
CPO4-3	Passive engagement with site content	Google Analytics custom report and 'Flow Visualisation'[9]	• Google Analytics - Use GA custom report on 'Engagement with content' (visitor behaviour metrics) to download monthly report in .csv format. NB. to include page views, downloads and responses to [SOCIAL ENTERPRISE]'s blog content, discussion papers etc. • Could also use 'user journeys' and 'visitor flow' functionality in Google Analytics to consider number of steps [inc. drop-off rates] to content pages, 'About' page and any specific content that appears to be trending. Could also use a 'conversion' to count the number of unique visitors who view content pages within a set number of steps (can give as a % of all unique visitors).
CPO4-4	Active engagement with site content	Google Analytics custom report, Disqus Stats report, Drupal Views report - needs Drupal Flags module.[10]	• Use GA custom report on 'Content Circulation' to download monthly report in .csv format. • Drupal - User interactions with content using Flags, Forum and Community Tags modules. [needs stats report in .csv using Views] • Disqus - Number and nature of comments on CP Site content [needs stats report in .csv]. • **[TBC]** Storify - Number and nature of comments on CP Site content [needs stats report in .csv].[11] • **[TBC]** Possibly use additional web analytics to better follow circulation through social networks and wider web (HootSuite? Tweetdeck?) [needs stats report in .csv].[12]
CPO4-5	As above but for instances of 'curated' or featured content	As above	Procedure as above, but to use custom GA report and others from CPO4-4 to report specifically on engagements in instances of 'curated' or featured content. Cross-reference to Activity Log record of curation activities undertaken.

CP OUTCOME FIVE [CPO5]:
"To expand the network of licenced [Organisational Partnerships]"

Outcome Indicators:		Sources of Evidence:	Information Needed:
CPO5-1	Number of [SOCIAL ENTERPRISE]'s public engagements and marketing campaigns	Activity Log, CRM database	• Activity Log entries for 'Public Engagements' and 'Campaigns' on Google Calendar exported to GTimeReport. • Include staff member, locations of talks, titles of presentations and campaigns, descriptions etc. Download monthly report in .csv format
CPO5-2	Number of enquiries for Organisational Partnership status	'Sales Lead' on CRM database	To capture submitted expressions of interest. To confirm 'source' for each. Broken down by: potential value of sale, location of organisation, sector of organisation, size of organisation, extent of [Community Practitioner] training and support offer. Download monthly report in .csv format
CPO5-3	Number of Organisational Partnerships agreed	'Sales' on CRM database	Broken down by: value of sale, location of organisation, sector of organisation, size of organisation, extent of [Community Practitioner] training and support offer. Also by 'Sales Type' [new or repeat] and 'stage' [potentials, actuals etc.]. Download monthly report in .csv format
CP05-4	Exchange of goods/ services/information between network of Organisational Partners	Catch	[SOCIAL ENTERPRISE] to include this as part of monthly updating calls/contact with partners. Could also automate a basic level of reporting back to [Social Enterprise] for Organisational Partners, to agglomerate data for regional/national/international level **[TBC]**.

Web references and tools:

[1] http://www.gtimereport.com/
[2] See the guidance document for the Storycircle 'Activity Log' system.
[3] http://drupal.org/project/views
[4] See the Storycircle 'Skills Assessment' tool and related guidance document.
[5] http://hootsuite.com/; http://mailchimp.com/; http://disqus.com/; and http://drupal.org/project/advanced_forum
[6] http://drupal.org/project/community_tags
[7] https://catch.com/
[8] http://www.google.com/analytics/features/custom-reports.html
[9] http://analytics.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/introducing-flow-visualization.html
[10] http://drupal.org/project/flag
[11] http://storify.com/
[12] http://www.tweetdeck.com/