The inaugural One Young World summit that concluded on Wednesday in London wasn’t just a gathering of hundreds of tomorrow’s world leaders. Don’t get me wrong: The energy of the more than 600 delegates from 100-plus countries, the passion of their debates and the progress that their resolutions made toward finding solutions to problems such as economic injustice, climate change and excessive corporate power were all substantial and meaningful.

But the leadership summit wasn’t just about the delegates exchanging ideas at Old Billingsgate in London. In fact, the physical meeting was only a small part of it. From the beginning, One Young World was designed to be virtual as well as in the flesh. Candidates submitted their applications via Facebook. The online community started growing on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and WAYN months before the event kicked off. Dedicated bloggers around the world got the conversation started long before anyone landed at Heathrow.

It’s not a surprise, really. As I’ve written here, this is the Real-Time Generation: Young adults born after 1980 never knew a world without the Internet, without instant communications with people all over the world, without a seamlessness between their online friends and their “real-life” friends.

The social Web has empowered today’s young adults like no generation before them. They can exchange ideas, learn about news from any corner of the globe and make themselves heard when they want to advocate for change.

As One Young World co-founder and Havas Worldwide Global CEO David Jones put it during the summit’s opening ceremonies: “The world is getting younger while the issues facing us grow more critical each day. But the power of social media to find young voices and gather innovative ideas means that—for the first time—world youth can play an important role in shaping the future of their world.”

They’ve found a voice, all right. The organizers of the summit (my company among them) were surprised and impressed by the social media stats that came out of it. During the first two days of the event, they counted 4,014 online conversations about the event: 87 percent of them on Twitter, 5.5 percent images, 3.7 percent blogs, 1.8 percent videos and 2 percent other formats.

The social Web really lit up those first two days—when such luminaries as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Sir Bob Geldof and Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus addressed the delegates and guided them through the complex workings of an international forum. In fact, social media mentions of One Young World during those days were up 908 percent from the two days preceding the summit. On Twitter, One Young World reached No. 4 on trending topics in the U.K. and No. 2 on trending topics in London.

So that’s quantity. What about quality? Here are a few tweets from the sessions of the first two days.

By Marian Salzman
Feb. 10, 2010
From a counselor:  

Oscarmoralesg: A very emotional “Interfaith dialogue” session at #OYW. Now speaking Swiss representative. All the delegates I’ve met are brilliant.

From the delegates:  

DaisydaVeiga: #oyw Showing Benjamin from Switzerland Twitterland:) Power of connecting and education is put to use RIGHT NOW. The best time to act is now.

benmoreira: Archbishop Tutu is incredible at speaking to young adults. He is even funny. If homilies where like that... #oyw

crvfanatic: The Global Poverty Project: same numbers, but great presentation. Hugh made shout out to @HansRosling one of my heroes #OYW

irisand: Very, very compelling presentation from Hugh Evans at the global poverty project. Hes pretty amazing, + so young #oyw


mIsForMaddie: A standing ovation for Archbishop Desmond Tutu. And rightly so. #OYW

michellemarie: Women perform 2/3 of the world’s working hours yet earn 10% of the world’s income. #OYW


michellemarie: I didn’t set out to change the idea of disability sport. -Baronness Tanni Grey Thompson. But she did. #OYW

WilliamByrne: Businesses are accountable to us, the customers. - #oyw delegate

LizMather: @jonwelsh #OYW was so amazing and unique, to share a room with such a diverse mix of talented youths from all over the world.

Ethna_elizondo: End of one young world... The beginning of everything else!! #OYW

Promofix: Well done #oyw One Young World -if our first out come was to raise awareness then we have definatly achieved it! Xxxx

dbaliszewski: #oyw the conference is over. The work has just begun. Exciting.

ahousley: Caught up on some inspirational tweets from @OneYoungWorld - stellar work @LucianT & co. & future leaders! #OYW

From the media:  

darenBBC: #Logical #Progression http://bit.ly/cxldrz - Music for #OYW delegates, hope you like it as your chilling out, reflecting your day in #London

bristwestival RT @socialbusiness 1 in 7 of world’s population goes to bed hungry every nite but world has enuf food to feed everyone 1 and half times #OYW

gallate RT @Aiah_Fwares: Hussain, the Iraqi delegate talked about how winning a football game stopped a civilian war! #OYW :) 

gallate #oneyoungworld Inspirational words from counsellors “dream go on dreaming and create a better world than the one we’re leaving you in” #OYW

Social media is glue that holds community together. One Young World was not limited to London and is not over now. That fact came home to me after I read this tweet:  
azapatel @OneYoungWorld hey guys please keep me updated about the upcoming application process for the 2011 summit! #OYW

In the meantime, the tools of social media are keeping people linked. The One Young World
YouTube channel is letting participants post their videos of the summit. The channel has garnered more than 15,000 views and more than 22,000 total upload views. A lively conversation is still going on, with comments like this one popping up:

It is so painful that I could not make The one Young World..But Still It_ is an Epoch-making, Mindblowing, Life-changing Summit that will Catapult this Generation of Youths into another level of Global and Sustainable Impact.

I couldn’t have said it better myself.