

CATEGORY:

MEASUREMENT INNOVATION

DIVISION: MEDIA**CATEGORY: MEASUREMENT INNOVATION****ZÓCALO GROUP****PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED**

As more brands fold the various channels of social media into their online marketing efforts, marketers seek to better understand the impact their programs are achieving. Significant energy and effort is focused on this area in order to better calibrate their programs to tap into, harness and maximize online conversations, which are at the heart of social media. Unfortunately, measuring the effectiveness of social media marketing programs isn't clear-cut, and absent is a unified industry standard that looks not only at the quantity and quality of conversations, but also the degree of engagement and positive interaction consumers have with a brand.

To make better decisions about how to reach, engage, and activate online consumers in meaningful ways, marketers need better measurement approaches that go beyond existing tools that evaluate social media effectiveness across platform and holistically and multi-dimensionally.

Where marketers today are well versed in measuring paid engagement (read: advertising), the ability to measure the impact of earned online engagement:

- conversations driven by word of mouth
- are far less advanced, with most relying on one or more automated technology solutions to gauge the amount of chatter about a brand. There are a number of existing tools
- ranging from Technorati to Radian 6 to IceRocket
- that allow agencies and clients alike to set up a dashboard to track the level of conversations about a brand, trends around keywords, and even keyword-driven sentiment analysis.

The problem is that this is one-dimensional:

- it's about quantity
- and even for that one dimension, there is no industry standard to measure the impact of social media marketing. Consequently, marketers fall back on metrics with which they are familiar and comfortable
- impressions, reach, etc.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

What is really needed is a way to evaluate, measure, and track a brand's online presence multi-dimensionally; a measure that will show not only the quantity of conversation, but also quality; the level of interaction and the depth of message penetration and saturation.

Brands are increasingly looking to social media as a channel to reach and engage their audiences. This is true across all functions within an organization: PR wants to use it to raise awareness; brand marketing wants to drive action; customer service wants to mitigate negative sentiment of unhappy customers; HR wants to use it to recruit talented employees; and many other functions see it as a way to “get in the game” given low barriers to entry and seemingly ubiquitous penetration.

Regardless of the function, every manager wants an answer to the same questions: How are we doing? How are my competitors doing? And how can we improve upon our success?

Zocalo Group developed the Digital Footprint Index to track the success of online word of mouth programs utilizing earned social media marketing, and to illustrate the reach, impact and success of earned online marketing initiatives. The DFI is for marketers of small, midsize, and large companies to quantitatively measure their earned social media programs across all channels.

To drive conversation and actionable innovation in the space of social media measurement, ZoZocalo Group, with the assistance of DePaul University marketing faculty, has incorporated best of class analysis tools from across the social media spectrum to create an integrated measurement methodology that enables analysis, synthesis and evaluation of a brand's online presence. It is called the Digital Footprint Index, and goes beyond simply tracking the quantity of online conversations, but quantifies the level of engagement and interaction consumers have with brand-related content and the level of message penetration and sentiment.

As the nature of social media—from a business perspective—is to engage consumers in a meaningful, positive way and to increase engagement over time to drive conversation and recommendation, the DFI sets out to answer the central questions of a social media strategy:

Height:

How much is the brand talked about and where is conversation occurring?

Width:

How is the brand shared and interacted with online, and how active are the communities within which conversations take place?

Depth:

Is the brand understood and talked about in the way it wants?

The plan is to:

Develop a multi-dimensional, holistic measurement methodology that utilizes best of breed tools, technologies and approaches that measures earned conversation across social media channels

Establish a benchmark that enables success tracking over the life of a social media marketing campaign

Create a tracking metric that allows companies to track growth and progress over time, and against competitors

The Deployment: The Digital Footprint Index

The Digital Footprint Index is a measurement methodology that quantitatively measures, scores and tracks the progress of earned online engagement. The DFI consists of three separate but inter-related components: height, width, and depth.

Using several best in class tools, both subscription-based and free, the DFI helps pinpoint not only the quantity of conversation about a brand, but also those channels where engagement is occurring and how well people understand and share the things the brand wants them to. By analyzing these elements from month to month, an online engagement program using social media can be recalibrated to maximize impact.

Height — Height is the simplest method for determining how much content is out there over the course of 30 days about a brand. Height is the sum of the blog posts, forum threads, videos, photos, and social networking groups and pages. Excluded are channels such as Google that contribute redundancy as well as paid efforts. The number is absolute, and is a common metric with all social media monitoring and analysis tools. Height answers the question, How much is your brand being talked about?

For example, a brand working to promote itself through online video may have ten clips uploaded to a video sharing site such as YouTube. A simple method for calculating height in this instance would be to count the quantity of videos online — ten.

Width — Where height provides how much content has been created about a brand, Width is the metric by which consumers' engagement with that content is measured. Width is the sum of engagement metrics for each channel analyzed in height. Comments, Thread Replies, Video views, and Twitter Followers each contribute to this value. Width answers the question: How widely is your brand conversation being engaged with and shared?

For example, the brand sharing messaging through the ten videos referenced above would look to the total number of views, favorites, and comments to measure the Width of their footprint. An understanding of these metrics provides the brand with an understanding of the effectiveness of their videos. Ten videos, each with 100 views, could arguably equate to 1 video with 1,000 views.

Depth — Depth takes the analysis into an additional dimension that accounts for the semantic value of the content to the brand by looking at whether the message was on target with messaging objectives and whether the message was positive, neutral, or negative. Although several solutions for automation of sentiment analysis are available, it has been our experience that multi-coder hand sampling remains the most dependable method for evaluating conversation when it comes to correctly identifying complexities of irony, sarcasm, and context. Depth answers the question, "Are people talking about the brand in the ways it wants them to?"

For example, of the ten videos on YouTube, not all may be of a positive benefit for the brand. By reviewing each of the videos and the sentiment of the user-generated comments, it is possible to understand whether the impact of the videos with positive or negative.

The combination of these three dimensions provides a transparent process through which social media conversations can be analyzed and quantified. Further, it helps to assess how well brand-related content is working in a brand's favor, where content is having an impact, and where marketing efforts may be recalibrated to amplify impact.

--An algorithm and series of equations needed to be developed in order to evaluate conversations across different, desperate social media channels. No single tool has the ability to monitor all conversations, so the DFI represents a leap forward in evaluating holistically the earned conversation of a brand and its competitors.

In conjunction with DePaul University Graduate School of Business, Zocalo Group developed the DFI methodology to fill a critical gap in the progress of social media.

Because the process is independent of any specific tools, using either subscription or open, the data needed to calculate the height, width, and depth are widely available through any number of tools. Zocalo Group uses a combination of vendors and tools across all social media channels.

The Digital Footprint Index is meant to forward standardization and analysis around the effective influence of online conversation in a transparent, comparable manner. Further, sharing the process with the industry catalyzes the measurement conversation, removes the obstacle of proprietary measurement systems unique to each vendor, and opens the path to collaboration in the space of social media measurement.

—The Digital Footprint Index is a core part of Zocalo Group’s social media programs, and is conducted by a dedicated team within Zocalo. These include a Partner who oversees all social media and innovation, a director, associate, senior analysts, and analysts.

—There is both an art and science behind evaluating the results of a brand’s digital footprint. As a mix of both qualitative and quantitative metrics, the evaluator’s role is akin to that of a storyteller. The results for height, width, and depth each illustrate their own narrative for how a brand is being talked about online. Contrasted and juxtaposed with one another, even deeper insights may be drawn that tell the holistic story.

The result of the DFI is best understood if contextualized with competitors, and taken sequentially over time to compare past results to present. Given a Height, Width, Depth, or Aggregate Digital Footprint Index, the only way to ascertain the value of that number is to compare it to the industry in a competitive analysis and to monitor changes over time to understand the dynamics of the brand conversation.

For example, a total index of 3,000 is neither good nor bad. Interpretation of this number is entirely dependent upon the competitive context [Industry] and the historical trend of each component leading to the measurement.

For this reason, the Digital Footprint Index is always calculated with intermittent competitive benchmarks to demonstrate how the primary brand’s performance compares with the industry. Further, the value of the DFI analysis increases with each subsequent index. Clients using the Digital Footprint Index average a 20% to 25% increase monthly, which is reflective of the value the DFI has in planning.

Time represents a key element that through monthly indexes provides increasing detail behind the relationships between height, width, and depth.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND TEAM MEMBERS

Leah Bassett
Corporate Visibility & Business Development
Zócalo Group
225 N. Michigan Ave. Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60601 (312) 596-6304
bassett@zocalogroup.com

DIVISION: GOVERNMENT
CATEGORY: MEASUREMENT INNOVATION

TORONTO WATERFRONT

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

The revitalization of Toronto's waterfront provides the city, the province and the country with an excellent opportunity to ensure that Toronto remains among the best places in the world to live, work, and visit. Revitalization is a significant key to our future prosperity, and Canada's much-envied standard of living.

Following the release of the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Task Force's report in March 2000, the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario, and the City of Toronto jointly announced their support for the creation of Waterfront Toronto (formerly Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation) to oversee and lead waterfront renewal.

The development of successful waterfront projects in other cities such as London, New York, and Barcelona, has shown that a separate corporation with a strong mandate to coordinate and oversee an integrated strategy is crucial to making waterfront revitalization a reality. Waterfront Toronto was formally established in the fall of 2001 and was up and running in February 2002.

Mission

To put Toronto at the forefront of global cities in the 21st century by transforming the waterfront into beautiful, sustainable new communities, parks and public spaces, fostering economic growth in knowledge-based, creative industries and ultimately: re-defining how the city, province, and country are perceived by the world.

Vision

Working with the community and public and private sector partners, the Corporation will create waterfront parks, public spaces, cultural institutions and diverse and sustainable commercial and residential communities. We will strive to ensure that Toronto becomes the city where the world desires to live.

Governance

A 12-member Board of Directors, including the chair, appointed by the federal and provincial governments and the City of Toronto, governs waterfront Toronto. Corporate authorities and accountabilities are set out in Bill 151.

Overall Corporate Objectives

- Develop accessible new waterfront communities that offer a high quality of life for residents and visitors alike
- Attract innovative, knowledge-based industries to the Port Lands
- Engage the community as an active partner in revitalization
- Develop strategic partnerships to attract private sector investment

As their work will have a tremendous impact on Toronto's public spaces, Waterfront Toronto takes an active role in informing, educating, and consulting with interested members of the public through consultations, public meetings, media events, online information, and walking tours with their architects and urban planners.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

The organization's extremely visible public profile subjects them to both media and online influencer scrutiny. As Waterfront Toronto sees the online space as an extension of the public discourse and an area where they will begin to communicate more directly with stakeholders in the future, they need to know what the current online conversation environment looked like as it relates to their reputation and who the online influencers are around the topics that touch Waterfront Toronto's mandate and priorities.

Hill & Knowlton was engaged to provide an online influencer audit to provide an overview of the online conversation landscape and a detailed look at the bloggers who drive and influence that conversation.

Internal Audiences:

Waterfront Toronto Public Relations staff

Waterfront Toronto Executive leadership

While the report was for internal purposes, the audiences that Waterfront Toronto identified would be those that had online influence over the following topical areas:

Civic Space, Urbanism & Politics

Mainstream Media Online

Sustainability & Green Living

Design, Architecture & Culture

1. Uncover and understand Waterfront Toronto's online reputation over six months

- a. Volume
- b. Sentiment
- c. Topics most discussed in relation to Waterfront Toronto
 - i. Companies
 - ii. Organizations
 - iii. Cities
 - iv. Communities
 - v. People

2. Identify, analyze and provide engagement recommendations for leading online influencers in the following areas of interest:

- a. Civic Space, Urbanism, and Politics
- b. Mainstream Media Online
- c. Sustainability and Green Living
- d. Design, Architecture, and Culture

Blogging is an organic environment with new blogs starting every day and old blogs being abandoned. There are no reliable standing lists of blogs and bloggers by country or language. Discovering relevant blogs takes time, patience and considerable detective work.

Hill & Knowlton Digital has at its disposal a powerful and sophisticated online analytical tool that indexes consumer-generated content and compiles content, demographics, geographic location and text analytics to provide a detailed look at the world of online conversations.

The plan was structured as follows:

1. Construct a sophisticated Boolean search to identify and analyze relevant online conversations around Waterfront Toronto and related topics between December 2008 and May 2009
2. Drill down into the conversations discovered through the Boolean search to identify influencers
3. Analyze online influencers and provide recommendations on how to proceed with relationship building

Boolean Search:

Using the Sysomos MAP software, we created the following search string to provide us with an overview of relevant online conversations and provide an accurate dataset that could be analyzed in aggregate:

Waterfront Toronto AND (development OR harbor OR harbour OR harbourfront OR harbour front OR harborfront OR harbor front OR west don lands OR Don Lands OR east bayfront OR port lands OR lower don lands OR Wavedeck OR Spadina Footbridge OR Mimico Park OR Mimico waterfront park OR Port Union Park OR Port union OR Gardiner OR Gardiner expressway OR Queen's Quay OR Lake Ontario Park OR Don River OR Sustainability OR landscape architect OR urban design OR revitalize OR revitalization OR econsultation OR construction OR consultation OR John Campbell OR David Miller)

Influencer Identification:

Based on the search results and Hill & Knowlton Digital's understanding of the online influencers of relevance to Waterfront Toronto, a list of blogs was identified using the following criteria.

Identifying the appropriate online influencers takes into account several factors:

- Editorial Relevance: Mentions of relevant topics over the time period; Mentions of Waterfront Toronto and keywords associated with WT vision over the time period

- Authority: In-links (the number of links back to the blog from other websites; Blog subscribers/readers (where disclosed); an authority ranking based on in-links and authoritative language generated by Sysomos MAP
- Activity; Blog post and comment count

Each blog was then manually reviewed and analyzed and the following information was extracted to provide a blog-by-blog intelligence report:

Author: If there are more than two contributing bloggers to the site it will state “Various Authors,” otherwise, we indicate the blog writer, who would be the main contact for outreach.

Location: As indicated in location graph earlier, the vast majority of sites already writing about Waterfront Toronto are in the GTA, and it is worth noting which design blogs are from outside this area.

Most Recent Post: The blogger’s consistency in blogging usually implies their passion for the subject and engaged readership.

Frequency: Blogs with multiple authors - frequency can exceed 100 per month; for independent bloggers the highest frequency can be a couple times per day to every couple of weeks.

Comments: A blog with an engaged readership will have many comments in which readers talk to each other in addition to the author. We make note of the tone and frequency of comments here.

Authority: This unique measurement ranking on a scale of ten, is based on our proprietary Sysomos measurement tool and measures frequency, readership, in-links and comments.

Sentiment: We have gauged the content of the blog to relay the overarching tone of the conversations occurring on the site — they range from positive to neutral to negative.

Unique Blog Links: This indicates the number of individual sites on the internet that choose to link to this blog — should one site link to a blog numerous times, it is only counted once. The greater the number of unique blog links, the wider reach or appeal a blogger has achieved

Technorati Rank: This measurement ranking is based on the position this blog occupies within the context of all other blogs online. Technorati uses similar factors as Sysomos, but chooses to assign a number to indicate overall 'rank' among all blogs, which makes a very low number 'worth' more.

Delicious Bookmarks: A social bookmarking website, Delicious users 'tag' blog posts to share or save sites in their accounts. This number indicates how many online users have 'tagged' posts from the blog for their Delicious-friends or for future reference. The higher the number, the more interesting, relevant and useful the content is to readers.

Top Delicious Tags: Words listed here are the labels assigned to the posts as chosen by Delicious users.

Engagement Recommendation

Finally, Hill & Knowlton Digital reviewed the topics, tone and connections of each blogger and established a three-level protocol to provide a recommended course of action for including these influencers in future Waterfront Toronto communications programs:

1. **Monitor Activities:** span from choosing not to subscribe to a blogger's RSS feed, simply using an occasional check-in when triggered by an alert to return to the blog, to full subscription of the site so that all content can be reviewed as it is posted.
2. **Engage:** If a blogger is especially negative, recommendations may be to ignore completely, or to simply reply to negative comments. If the blogger is especially engaged in the subjects related to Waterfront Toronto and the sites themselves, frequent comments may be recommended.
3. **Relationship:** Four tiers of blogger relationships were identified: 1) 'arm's length' — those with a passive voice, low-value in blogosphere, and usually not worth pitching; 2) 'information-spreaders'— those with a passive voice, offering medium value in impact/reach, and worth the occasional pitch; 3) 'collaborators' — those that are active and on-subject, bring medium value in reach, are pitched frequently, and invited to events; and 4) 'ally' — those with an active participatory role in conversation online, are supportive of the vision, bring high value in readership impact, are always pitched and invited to events. Possible co-creation opportunities should be explored for guest posts and soliciting input.

- Strategy, data analysis, report and recommendations

- Strategy—The audit uncovered the following insights that are now being used by Waterfront Toronto as part of their external communications programs:

Conversation Overview

Based on 120 blog mentions and 88 news-site mentions in the period December 2008 through May 2009 in English-language blogs, the following aggregate conversation overview statistics were revealed:

Sentiment: 60% Positive; 7% Negative; 33% Neutral

Demographics: 93% Canada; 2.7% USA; 3.9% Other

Provinces: 100% Ontario

Blogger Insights by Topic

Civic Space, Urbanism & Politics

These bloggers report on a wide range of topics, but are connected by their love of all things urban. Whether they are political hacks who enjoy the cut and thrust of municipal dealings or transit nerds eager to mash-up datasets to create streetcar route maps, these bloggers often speak to each other and congregate on the ‘main’ Toronto news communities. Quite often stories reported by these ‘big three’ news sites’ staff are re-published or re-purposed on individual blogs in this category. Few of the bloggers analyzed here are professionally involved in public policy, municipal affairs or public space work; however, their passion for the city fuels frequent updates and ongoing site upkeep.

Toronto-enthusiast bloggers exist in a fairly tight community and are primarily far left on the political spectrum. Despite this ideological leaning, they are not shy about criticizing the decisions, actions and statements made by politicians of all stripes. A diverse group by gender and race, they tend to be middle or upper-middle class by demographic breakdown, like most online media communities. However, when compared to other online communities these bloggers are relatively young, most in their mid-twenties.

Mainstream Media Online

For the past 10 years, most newspapers, magazines and ‘traditional’ media outlets have been working toward building concurrent online spaces that republish their journalists’ and photographers’ content, as well as offer a more immediate opportunity for readers to send comments that might not otherwise reach the

'Letters' page of the front section. Today, many of these online spaces sponsored by major print publications and broadcasters have evolved to occupy an even more influential, interactive and engaging space than the original medium.

In this category we have included news sites on the 'green' theme affiliated with *The Toronto Star* and *Canadian Living Magazine*. While these institutions are by no means citizen-generated 'blogs.' The line between mainstream journalism and blogging is increasingly blurred and many online users treat the space built by these institutions the way they would behave on an 'independent' blogger's site. With the extra support of a print publication, and often a wealth of content that is easily re-published online, many of these sites are eager for contesting opportunities and by approaching web editors, bloggers, and other staff related to the website, a relationship can emerge with the print publication that will prove valuable in months to come.

Sustainability & Green Living

This subset focuses on environmentally friendly and 'green' or ecological topic posts. Public policy and regulatory issues, adopting sustainable purchasing/consumer decisions in an effort to 'live green,' as well as reporting on business best practices and news related to the environment. These bloggers are different from the urbanist community in that they are not often preoccupied with a set geographic space.

Design, Architecture & Culture

Waterfront Toronto is acutely aware that the world is watching the decisions made by the design review board and the subsequent architectural and landscape sites that will emerge. From the Spadina Wavedeck to the Don Lands, the international design community looks to the vision of Waterfront Toronto for inspiration and thought leadership. While there has been a modest amount of reporting thus far on Waterfront Toronto projects, we can delve into this community for increased coverage, potential feedback and ideally a Toronto-based writer to attend events and become a Waterfront Toronto enthusiast within the online design community.

Online Influencers:

Twenty-five blogs were identified as online influencers and detailed analysis and recommendations for each are included in the attached confidential report.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND TEAM MEMBERS

Waterfront Toronto: Michelle Noble, Director of Communications & Marketing

Hill & Knowlton: David Jones, Meghan Warby

David Jones

VP, Digital Communications – Toronto

Hill & Knowlton Canada

160 Bloor Street East

Toronto, ON Canada

(416) 413-4604

david.jones@hillandknowlton.ca

DIVISION: CORPORATE
CATEGORY: MEASUREMENT INNOVATION

HUBSPOT, INC.

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

Ever since the launch of the Social Media News Release (created by Todd Defren of SHIFT Communications), there has been controversy about its worth and whether it is a more beneficial form of news release than the tried and true traditional press release. HubSpot wanted to conduct an experiment comparing social media and traditional releases to determine which had the better ROI and to also clarify best practices when crafting press releases.

Utilizing press releases is one of the most traditional forms of marketing. However, with the changing nature of marketing due to the impact of the Web, press releases are evolving as well.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

Todd Defren of SHIFT Communications created the Social Media News Release in 2006 to take advantage of this change. Based on the idea that because of the Web, journalists aren't the only ones reading news releases, the Social Media Release utilizes multimedia elements such as audio and video, optimizes the release from an SEO and social media standpoint, and makes it more easily sharable by journalists and average Web users alike.

However, with the advent of the Social Media News Release, marketers, public relations professionals, and small business owners find themselves questioning whether using it (as opposed to traditional releases) offers a better ROI. The question becomes: Does the Social Media News Release have a greater ROI than the traditional release?

HubSpot therefore performed an experiment to answer this question: Determine which type of release was more effective and highlight some best practices when writing news releases. HubSpot released the results of the experiment in the form of a webinar (<http://www.hubspot.com/archive/news-releases>) and a blog post summary (<http://hub.tn/?SUbaO>).

HubSpot's target audience included marketing/PR professionals and small business owners who are the targets for HubSpot's paid product, the HubSpot Inbound Marketing System.

HubSpot is the first fully integrated Internet marketing system combining SEO, blogs, social media, landing pages, lead intelligence, and marketing analytics into one system that helps small-to-mid-sized companies maximize their websites and/or blogs to help them get found online by prospective customers. The HubSpot software analyzes a company's website/blog, makes it easier to update content, facilitates search engine optimization, and provides marketing analytics.

The goals of HubSpot's press release experiment were to determine which press release type (traditional or social media) had better ROI by determining which type of release gets syndicated more often, which type builds more links to your website, and determining best practices when crafting press releases.

Ultimately, the objective of the experiment was to "compare traditional and social media news releases to discover the best format to build links into one's website."

"HubSpot wanted to investigate the best possible press release format to increase the number of release syndications on portal websites, thus increasing the number of inbound links to the linked-to websites within the press release. By comparing traditional press releases to Social Media News Releases and analyzing how often each were syndicated, it could analyze which features within each press release format increase its likelihood of being syndicated. By discovering the optimal format, businesses could then follow this format to increase the amount of inbound links to the websites of their choice."

"HubSpot picked five major wire services (Marketwire, Businesswire, PRnewswire, PRWeb, and free services, PRLog and Pitch Engine). On every Thursday at 9 a.m. and 9:15 a.m. for five weeks, HubSpot released both a:

Social Media Release and a traditional release over one of the wire services in the order listed above. HubSpot composed 10 equally newsworthy product press releases to be distributed.

Format for Traditional Releases:

- Two fully written URLs (one in release, one in boiler plate)
- No anchor text (only URLs) i.e. <http://www.hubspot.com>
- Traditional Paragraph formatting
- Quote within the body of the release
- Includes logo
- No multimedia
- No sharing options

Format for Social Media News Releases:

- Two fully written URLs (one in release, one in boiler plate)
- 3-4 links with anchor text
- News bullets
- Attributable quote at end of the release
- Includes logo
- Embedded video
- Sometimes includes tags and sharing options (when available)

After the press releases were sent over the wire, HubSpot searched Google for the headline of the press release in quotes. HubSpot then counted each press release that was published in-full as a syndication. HubSpot then analyzed the links within the press release as active URL, inactive URL, or inactive anchor text. By comparing the number of syndications by the types of link syndication, HubSpot was then able to determine which press release format worked best.

- Syndicated releases are often removed after a certain amount of time, so it was very important to count the syndicated releases in the same period of time per release to ensure numbers were accurate.
- Newswire Services: Marketwire, Business Wire, PR Newswire, PRWeb and free services (PRLog and PitchEngine)—The HubSpot Marketing Team, managed by Rebecca Corliss (Inbound Marketing Manager and PR Specialist).
- To determine which type of press release performed better, HubSpot counted the number of each release's syndications and number of its link syndications on portal sites, compared these results between each type of release (social media vs. traditional) and compared the results to determine which factors increased a releases' (and their links') likelihood of being syndicated.
- The results of HubSpot's experiment showed that despite the added functionality of the Social Media Release, the traditional release generally performed much better.

In terms of syndications, traditional releases tended to syndicate 20% more often than Social Media Releases.

In terms of links, links in Social Media Releases syndicated less frequently than in traditional releases. Links in traditional releases syndicated 14% more often.

The experiment also revealed that not all link types (full URL vs. anchor text links) are syndicated the same. Not all anchor text links are syndicated.

Finally, the experiment revealed what happens behind the scenes at newswires to influence syndications, and offered tips based on the experiment's results to craft the most successful news release. Some tips include:

- Don't use formatting (most portal sites don't accept it)
- Don't use multimedia (many portal sites can't handle it well)
- Use anchor text and full URLs (not all portal sites are compatible with anchor text, so it often gets lost)
- Use basic language (straight-forward text gets picked up more easily by portals' crawlers)

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND TEAM MEMBERS

Pamela Seiple, PR Manager
HubSpot, Inc.
One Broadway, 5th Floor
Cambridge, MA 02142
(908) 347-2963
pseiple@hubspot.com

DIVISION: CORPORATE
CATEGORY: MEASUREMENT INNOVATION

PHILADELPHIA FORD DEALERS

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

With the economic downturn at the end of Q3 2008, the Philadelphia Ford Dealers Association was looking for new ways to stimulate engagement with prospective buyers in order to stimulate auto-shopping behaviors and better educate the public on their product offering.

Prior campaigns focused on targeting in-market auto buyers through advertising on automotive vertical sites and behavioral targeting on ad networks. However, despite utilizing Rich Media across over 80% of total ad placements for all of 2008, banner interaction rates had been stagnating, or in some cases decreasing as the year wore on. Revised creative did not appear to be addressing the issue, and with the looming financial crisis, the client requested that alternative strategies be considered. To solve this problem, Harmelin was tasked with creating a new strategy specifically geared at messaging users when they were most apt to engage with the brand.

The target audience for the Ford campaign, on a macro level, consists of adults over 18 years old. While the primary focus of the campaign had been in-market auto shoppers, research had indicated that number of internet users who are defined as in-market declining due to the economic crisis. As a result, Harmelin expanded the target to reach prospect that prior to there automotive research in an effort to move them into the purchase funnel

The goal was to develop a strategy that would identify users outside of the standard in-market sites who may not be in the purchasing mindset. In this way, Ford and their products would become a part of the user's everyday experience. In order to engage them effectively in this environment, there had to be a unique messaging platform that would cater to their specific mindset at the time of exposure

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

In order to effectively capture users' interest in a new way, social media was leveraged. This has enabled Ford to connect with users who have shown interest in automotive content and have displayed in-market behavior, but are in the process of leisurely engaging with their social community. Targeting users in social media has allowed Ford to become a part of their daily lives on a personal level.

The digital marketing landscape as a whole has long declared the ineffectiveness of banners within social networks. Because users are so engrossed with the content, the conclusion has been drawn that they are all but blind to banner advertising. However, Harmelin posited that they might be more apt to engage with a rich media unit after being exposed to the Ford message in their first few page views. The key to the strategy was to set up a test with very tight controls and detailed engagement metrics. To this end, a strategy was developed to follow each individual user throughout their social networking session. The first two-page views would display Flash-based Ford ads to keep the brand top of mind while users checked messages and engaged in other first-order-of-business activities. The next two-page views would deliver rich media banners with the premise that users, after completing their intended activities, would stay within the social media environment to engage with the ad. The ratio of 2-2 was altered over the course of the campaign, and the order of flash and rich media were alternated to determine at what point users would become engaged with the ad. There was also a control group serving 100% rich media throughout the session.

Harmelin worked with Lotame to build out a series of exposure modules with which to target users of social networks. Lotame provided the platform for building and addressing customizable consumer audiences across more than 40 social networks. These audiences were aggregates and targeted based on social activity in addition to implied or stated interests through their patented Crowd Control platform. The platform uses the unique attributes of social data, using participation and user generated content as a foundation for improved campaign performance.

Based on the user behaviors that we tracked, it was generally observed that users participate in two “sessions” within the social media space per day. The first “session” typically occurred at the beginning of the day and was highlighted by rapid consumption of multiple pages as the user catches up on what’s “happening” in their social sphere. The second “session” occurs in the latter part of the day when behavior shifts to more of a “browsing” function as users look to entertain themselves during the day’s doldrums. Since a user’s attention would most likely be on the content during the consumption phase, Harmelin looked to investigate if placing a simple, flash call to action could raise awareness to the point where users would be more likely to engage the ad during the secondary, browsing session.

In the beginning of the test, it was decided that 7 ad exposures would enable Ford to achieve placement during both sessions. Rotation of ads was positioned accordingly. Some users would view 2 flash ads followed by 5 rich media ads. Some would view 5 flash ads followed by 2 rich media ads, and so on. Ultimately, it was hoped that response rates would indicate how many exposures needed to be “burned” during the consumption phase before an engagement was generated during the browsing phase. It soon became apparent, however, that most users were not in session long

enough to see all seven exposures, and so the results were incomplete. The number of ad exposures per session was gradually reduced to four in order to capture the most accurate data per user.

The metrics used to analyze results of the campaign were primarily brand engagement as defined by the Banner Interaction Rate and Click Through rate. Secondary metrics included Click Yield (clicks from interaction), Action Yield (additional in-banner actions from interaction), and Time Spent In Banner.

Early on in the test, the results showed that users who were exposed to flash prior to rich media were 5 times more likely to engage with the brand by clicking through to the Quality Plus Ford Dealers site via the rich media banners. They were also 20% more likely to click through via rich media than those who were exposed to rich media alone. However, throughout the course of the test the results leveled out, until eventually the control group serving 100% rich media became more effective at engaging users and driving traffic to the Ford site.

At that point in the test, the focus turned to total number of exposures, ad positioning and size. Through data analysis it was determined that users dropped off after 4 exposures, at which point delivery was altered so that each user would only be served the ad 4 times during their session. It also became apparent that users responded far more favorably to 728x90 banners at the top of the page than any other size or positioning.

-The campaign was an effective way to target Ford's audience outside the typical automotive realm. Not only did it engage them on a personal and community level, but it also employed a unique way of messaging them to cater to their specific environment and mindset. Targeting users who were starting or responding to questions relevant to Ford and its offerings became a way for Ford to become a part of the conversation rather than simply standing on the sidelines.

After 8 months of a year-long campaign, the results have shown that users who interact with Ford ads within the social media landscape are 15% more likely to click through to the Ford site, 88% more likely to click after interacting, and 216% more likely to take additional in-banner actions after engaging with the ad than the campaign average. In addition, a study done by Lotame and Vizu shows that users who have been exposed to the campaign within the social networking space are 20% more likely to purchase a Ford vehicle in the next 6 months than users who had not seen the ads. The campaign has successfully captured an audience in an environment where they are not only more likely to engage, but also more likely to make Ford a part of their daily lives.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND TEAM MEMBERS

Harmelin and Ford employed Lotame to conduct this test. Lotame is a network of social media sites, which targeted consumers by mining social data as opposed to behavioral, contextual or search data.

Greg Ebbecke, Media Buyer/Planner, Harmelin Media — Initial campaign development, analysis

Catherine Collis, Online Media Strategist, Harmelin Media — Campaign optimization and 2009 ad strategy

Brad Bernard, Director of Online Media, Harmelin Media -- General oversight of campaign management

Murelle Hammant, Joe Ponzio, Marshall Massey, Lotame Account Team — Oversaw implementation and execution of media plan

Harmelin Media
525 Righters Ferry Road
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004