CATEGORY:

MICROBLOGGING

DIVISION: ACADEMIC
CATEGORY: MICROBLOGGING

WSU SPOKANE

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

With no additional resources or staff and in the context of declining space/time for news coverage in traditional outlets, establish an identity for WSU Spokane as a knowledgeable and credible source of information on health sciences, health policy, and health professions research, and graduate/professional education.

NOTE that in the statistics about organizational size you request on this form, we are providing information for our campus, not for Washington State University as a system. The case study profiled here is work of this campus only—Establish identity as an academic health center among media, health care thinkers, and local/regional/statewide community.

WSU Spokane, one of four campuses of Washington State University, serves as headquarters for a growing portfolio of programs in human health. While WSU has great strengths in plant and animal health, and a number of widely recognized leaders in various aspects of human health research, we are one of two major research universities for the state--and the other one is the one most people would think of first if you say “human health research” (University of Washington, recognized for having one of the top medical schools in the nation). Establishing credibility within the human health space and recognition for the fine work of our scholars is definitely a challenge in this context.

Further complicating our efforts, our campus is only 75 miles from the main campus at Pullman, in the same media market. When you say “WSU” in Spokane, many people still think first and foremost of Pullman, although for the health sciences it is far more important for WSU to be in Spokane, a regional medical center. Being part of WSU’s overall strong identity, while carving out a distinctive niche for our particular set of programs and their context in a medical center, adds to our communication challenges.

Because this campus is the headquarters for WSU Health Sciences, we lead the communications efforts on behalf of a number of colleges and programs. WSU has excellent programs in nursing, pharmacy, nutrition/exercise, health policy, and in medical education as a partner with UW in the five-state WWAMI system.

Some of the things for which we want to be better known:

> We educate more nurses than any other four-year or two-year program in the state.

Our pharmacy students are recognized with national awards for excellence in patient education, business planning, leadership, and volunteer service.

We are home to one of the nation's top four research centers focused on sleep and human performance.

We're building a brand-new campus with outstanding research facilities in a city with great quality of life—drawing cards for both star faculty and top students.

We seek to establish a graduate program and expand our research in health informatics, in partnership with national electronic medical records innovator Inland Northwest Health Services.

We also offer graduate studies in the design disciplines, with a focus on design for health and sustainability.

We are a growing campus with both intellectual opportunity for graduate students and a campus life enriched by our location on the east end of downtown, bordered by the Spokane River.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

AUDIENCE

Traditional media: It isn't dead, and having their external validation of our content is still valuable.

Local media: This is an ever-shrinking list—like so many other newspapers, the local daily *Spokesman-Review* has gone through several rounds of layoffs in the past few years, TV newsrooms are laying off staff, and a local magazine just folded.

Regional/national media: When we have something of sufficient news value.

Freelance writers who may be able to pitch stories that draw on our faculty expertise.

Online writers and thought leaders: Both for direct mention/coverage of our activities and accomplishments, and for the SEO value of links back to our site.

People in the community: To spread awareness and understanding of our work.

Prospective students: To make them aware of our existence and the strengths of graduate/professional programs they may want to consider

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Gain followers from our target audiences: media, people who focus on health care topics, people in the Spokane region, prospective students (to the extent you can identify those), and others who might pass along our content to a wider audience than we can reach directly.

Get click-throughs to our content.

Get retweets of our content, especially by accounts with health care identity and by media accounts.

Get mentions outside of Twitter to our work in health sciences (e.g., media coverage, blog posts) via contacts made within Twitter, and vice versa (gain followers on Twitter thanks to efforts in other spaces).

—Establish profile content/personality with tweets that demonstrate why someone would follow @WSUSpokane.

Use strategic following to come to the attention of target accounts.

Utilize Twitter to draw people to our news releases, content from our online Campus Bulletin, pages on our *Website*, and media coverage/online stories about us.

Use RTs of content from others to engage as a community participant and to create context for providing links to our own content relevant to the discussion.

Utilize targeted blog comments providing content appropriate to blog readership with @WSUSpokane account in signature line as a means of highlighting the Twitter account outside of Twitter itself.

Build awareness of Twitter as a tool internally so WSU communications colleagues utilizing Twitter can reinforce each other's efforts through retweets.

Track click-throughs, followers, and whatever is available through various utilities to measure effectiveness of efforts

—Practiced and learned first through my personal account, @BarbChamberlain, about culture and practices such as hashtags and RTs. Followed a number of health care people there and started establishing some relationships.

Established Twitter account for @WSUSpokane with first tweet Nov. 2, 2008. Early tweets highlighted news releases on health sciences topics and events on campus to establish content value for target audiences.

Early strategic following from @WSUSpokane:

- People in Spokane who are active on Twitter

- Individual and corporate accounts for media locally and statewide

- "Top 30 Health Care Tweeples" list on blog post I saw via my personal account.

- List of an additional 20 in a follow-up post on that blog.

- People found via searches on twitscoop and twittergrader who were posting on health care and on Spokane.

- Follow-backs of most who followed us, maintaining a ratio of more followers than accounts we follow for whatever perceived value that gives the account.

- As other WSU units established Twitter accounts, followed all those.

Engagement and Ongoing Maintenance

Early on, I spent time scanning selected blogs on health care, occasionally commenting if I could add substantive value, tweeting links to those posts, and including our Twitter account name in my signature block. I believe that effort paid off in some of our earliest results, but it wasn't sustainable in light of overall workload.

I check the account at least once a day, sometimes more, looking for good content to retweet to establish that we're not just broadcasting, we're also listening and participating. I thank people for RTs of our content.

As @BarbChamberlain, I occasionally retweet, crediting @WSUSpokane as the source. This gets the WSU Spokane tweets out to my list of followers (nearly twice as large as the campus list).

—Four factors: Two that are challenges; two that could have been but are not in our case.

Challenge/Time: Time to add this into the overall communications mix is the biggest factor. Our campus communications staff totals 5 people, with three of those working less than full-time so we have only 3.3 FTE total. As director of the unit, I have management responsibilities and a great deal of external/community relations work that takes me away from time spent on tasks such as posting tweets.

Getting good tools in place has helped. I'm able to live tweet from events with my phone, which adds real-time content, gives a flavor of campus activities, and makes use of time I would spend at the events anyway. This has also led to other accounts putting out a tweet like "Follow @WSUSpokane for live tweets from Event XYZ," which sometimes yields a small bump in followers.

Challenge/Link rot: We underwent a website redesign and reorganization launched in July 2009 that killed most of the links that had been tweeted. Over time, I will retweet links to the new locations for those items that still have current value, which also puts them in front of newer followers.

Plus/Leadership support: A critical factor in getting this and other initiatives launched has been the support of WSU Spokane Chancellor Brian Pitcher for our efforts to become a leader within the WSU system for use of new media and new communications tools. He recognizes that this is where communication will take place and encourages our work in this arena.

Plus/Access to social network sites: Fortunately. I work in higher Ed, which has a more open approach to website access than many public agencies. In many agencies, the public information officer or communications director might be working with an IT system that blocks all access to social networking sites, which would mean that they have no idea whether or not citizens are discussing their work in either positive or negative terms.

Tweet scheduling: SocialOomph, formerly tweetlater, enables me to queue up tweets to be sent out over time. I could not keep up a fairly regular stream of content without utilizing this tool for the "broadcast" side of account management.

Measurement: Initially I used twurl.cc with a login to create short URLs that fit into the 140-character limits on tweets, enabling me to track click-throughs on links I send. Recently I switched to bit.ly, which allows customization of the link where possible to provide some additional branding or a content cue. For qualitative measures, I continue to conduct research on new utilities and add new ones occasionally. Our brand as a campus is not widely discussed and the account does not currently provide student services—if those factors change, we would in particular evaluate whether we do more to assess tone of content about us.

Listening: I run searches using Google Alerts, Twitter's own search, and other tools to watch for mentions of the campus name. Twitter search itself is not 100% reliable--every so often I find @ messages in my RSS feed that did not come into the account.

Other tools being tested beginning Fall 2009 for listening and evaluation of both Twitter and its effects on website traffic include WhosTalkin.com, samepoint.com, Tynt Tracer to see what is being copied from our website, Website Grader, and Compete.com.

—Writing/posting tweets: All account management is currently handled by campus Director of Communications and Public Affairs Barb Chamberlain.

Content creation: Content of news releases, Campus Bulletin articles, events calendar and website linked to from tweets primarily created by campus communications team:

- Judith Van Dongen, Creative Services Manager: Bulletin editor, some news releases, some photography

- Becki Meehan, Communications & Events Manager: Events, some news releases, some Bulletin content

- Holly George, Web Content Writer: Updates and rewrites of content (temporary/part-time position)

- Cori Vaughan, Creative Services Coordinator: website design and coordination, photography

- Some content we tweet comes from other WSU units.

Promotion: The account is promoted through a variety of channels.

- On our home page with an icon: www.spokane.wsu.edu

- On our social media page (http://www.spokane.wsu.edu/aboutWSUSpokane/News_Events/News/social_media.html), which is periodically highlighted in the rotating "What's New" spot on the home page. The social media page will have the actual tweet stream added soon.

- On other Web pages on our site—for example, the right-hand sidebar on our Campus Alert page (http://www.spokane.wsu.edu/campusalert/)

- With a line in my personal email signature: "On Twitter? Follow @WSUSpokane!"

- On a large monitor in the lobby of our Academic Center, which houses our library along with campus administration and various programs. The monitor is directly across from the Student Services counter, so nearly every student on campus should pass by at some point.

- A master list of all WSU Twitter accounts (http://university-relations.wsu.edu/internal-communications/WSU-on-Twitter.html)

- Invited presentations at social media trainings in the region (three so far, two more scheduled) by Barb Chamberlain

Caveats: Twitter measures abound, and most are more art than science, to put it mildly. We look at the various qualitative measures more as tracking tools for change over time than for any intrinsic value in the various rankings, and look for positive trend lines in measures such as retweeting and the various “influence” measures. We do not currently evaluate content or tone of any mentions of us. So far, they have all been straight RTs—not an unhappy student or campus visitor who got a parking ticket.

Total number of followers is even a “squishy” number, since you can attract lots of junky followers if you go after them. We block all accounts that appear to be porn-related, or we would have more followers.

Click-throughs to content by or about WSU:

We look at this statistic to tell us whether people find our content of sufficient value to go look at it. Drawing eyeballs to our content gives us direct access to readers.

While we are not able to characterize which of our Twitter followers are clicking through—so we don’t know which target audiences we reach most effectively--we do know that we have drawn 8,670 click-throughs 11/2/08 to 9/10/09.

For the first few months we also tracked CTR on shared items that were not our content, to see how our content stacked up against that of others in drawing clicks from our tweets. Our CTR ratio stayed higher than that on the shared items and we stopped tracking those, satisfied that we had established the value of our content.

Lessons learned:

We occasionally RT links when fresh context arises; the highest numbers are mostly on items that were tweeted more than one time.

Providing context for our link via someone else’s content—for example, a major news story link, with a link to our faculty expertise on that topic—increases CTR.

Click-throughs continue to show up long after a link was sent, indicating that they have been passed along over time.

Of note within these results:

The highest click-through counts are almost entirely on items that fit our messages; sleep research in particular is one of our key strengths.

The significant click-through on alumni event items suggests that we have WSU alumni following the account.

Top click-through items from over 400 tweeted on WSU content:

July 2009 Campus Bulletin featuring research by two of our top scholars (on fatigue in law enforcement, methamphetamine addiction/treatment): 224

Sleep & Performance Research Center web page: 180

Campus master plan web page (an update of the plan took place spring/summer 2009): 142

News release on SBDC Small Business Marketing Seminar (state headquarters of SBDC are on our campus): 140

WSU Spokane Facebook page: 140

“Coug Day” alumni event at a local theme park (ticket sign-up): 139

PhD in Nursing program Web page: 117

News release on award-winning Interior Design program: 116

News release on our nursing dean participating in the National Children’s Health Study: 115

Local newspaper piece on a company established by two faculty (who now run the business full-time, but WSU’s role in recruiting them to Spokane is part of the article): 114

Graduate program in health policy and administration: 113

Reminder to sign up for our Campus Alert message system: 105

News release on a significant finding in our sleep & performance research center: 99

Work by design students on local community design: 99

"Coug Night" alumni event at Spokane Indians: 93

Innovators series (top WSU researchers presenting around the state): 92

Washington State Magazine (WSU publication) article on how a biography of Julia child by a WSU PhD student contributed to the movie "Julia & Julie": 89

Cougar Wine Tasting alumni event: 87

Our "health care team" idea submitted to the Google Foundation idea contest: 86

Podcast by one of our sleep researchers: 84

Follower counts—Comparison to peer accounts 9/9/09:

Bearing in mind that as a campus we are much smaller than main campuses represented by many university Twitter accounts, we look at Pac-10 schools, research university accounts related to medical/healthcare news, Spokane-area colleges/universities, and other WSU accounts.

One source for quick comparison to other institutional accounts is a Twitter Fan Wiki that tracks official college/university Twitter accounts: http://twitter.pbworks.com/Universities. It is regularly updated, draws the follower count straight from Twitter, and is a fast summary spot. Data shown below are taken from this list and from a direct Twitter search conducted 9/9/09.

WSU accounts: @WSUSpokane was the first account established by a WSU unit. We lead most of the others; exceptions are @WSUCougars_com (official Athletics account), @WSUNews, and @CoachWulff (football coach); WSUPullman is close behind us. Full list: http://university-relations.wsu.edu/internal-communications/WSU-on-Twitter.html

Pac-10

Within two months of starting our account, we ranked ahead of Pac-10 schools University of Oregon and Arizona State University (the only two on the Wiki list in early January 2009). Other universities got on the Twitter-wagon and we expect these rankings to continue to move around a lot over time.

1. Arizona State University @ASU: 7,701

2. Stanford University @Stanford: 4,811

3. University of Southern California @USCedu: 3,930

4. University of Arizona @UofA: 3,674

5. UCLA @UCLAnewsroom: 2,594

6. University of California Berkeley @UCBerkeleyNews: 1,362

7. Oregon State University @oregonstateuniv: 1,348

8. UCLA @UCLA: 1,315

9. University of Washington School of Public Health @uwsph: 1,109

10. University of Oregon @UOregonNews: 794

11. University of Washington Department of Global Health @uwghrc: 742

12. Washington State University Spokane @WSUSpokane: 740

13. University of Washington @UWNews (which does put out medical news items): 478

14. University of Washington @UWTweets (they have other accounts, but so far nothing for the medical school): 385

15. UCLA Health System @UCLAHealth: 336

16. USC Health Sciences Campus: NOT FOUND. Closest account is @USChealthreform, established by Keck School of Medicine Dean: 9 followers

Comparison to institutions in the Spokane region, all of which have much larger student populations and alumni base in the area:

1. Washington State University Spokane @WSUSpokane: 740

2. Whitworth University @whitworth: 701. Account established Nov. 17, 2008

3. Eastern Washington University #EWUtweet: 152. Account established April 9, 2009

4. Gonzaga University @GonzagaU: 120. Account established Dec. 2, 2008

Medical/healthcare research university accounts: These include accounts such as Johns Hopkins @HopkinsMedNews (1755 followers as of 9/9/09) and the Pac-10 healthcare accounts listed above. Continuing to build list for comparison in future--have not yet fully evaluated this.

Other measures of influence and account value

Each ranking system has its proponents and its "mystery methodology," and several yield statistics measured only against other Twitter users who have utilized that particular tool, not against all Twitter accounts. We currently review standings every 4-6 weeks for general trends using these tools:

Twittergrader: Based on # of followers, power of this network of followers, pace of your updates (ppl more apt to follow someone who shows they're engaging), completeness of your profile

• Currently #50 in Spokane, 97.5% rating; ranking in Spokane moves up and down, percentile steadily improves

Twinfluence: Estimate of potential reach, also measures velocity (pace at which acct is adding followers), social capital (avg 1st-order network of your followers), centralization (dependent on one big follower for most of your reach=fragile)

#63,134, 61%; measures of velocity, social capital, and centralization continue to improve

Retweetrank: Are you producing interesting content that others DO echo for you?; Searches ALL of the recent Twitter stream

• #5171, 97.93%, continues to improve (probably greatly assisted by other WSU accounts—we would like to see more RTs by other individual accounts, not our own institution)

Twitalyzer: Evaluates relative reach in Twitter, measured by the number of followers; relative authority, measured by the number of times you are retweeted; relative generosity, measured by the number of times you retweet others; relative clout, measured by the number of times you are referenced by others (only via @ reference, so it doesn't count if someone uses "WSU Spokane" to refer to us); relative velocity, measured by the number of updates you publish over a seven day period

• Consistently high signal-to-noise ratio; generosity had been higher and has decreased; both velocity and clout have moved around.

> Twitterholic: Location rankings vary because some people have “Spokane, WA USA” location and others have “Spokane, WA”--those are two different comparisons. Ranked 7th in our location by followers in Spokane, WA USA--but not ranked at all if you look at the list produced when you check rankings for someone whose account location is “Spokane, WA” (I use @BarbChamberlain to compare to @WSUSpokane). They currently track 848 Twitter account in Spokane, WA USA and 829 in Spokane, WA

Other anecdotal results:

Thanks to following the lists found in two blog posts about good Twitter accounts to follow, our account was included in a third list on that blog just eight days after we established it:
http://markhawker.tumblr.com/post/58799378/theforgottenknowledgeworkertweeple.

Following @sciencebase led to the addition of the @WSUSpokane account to a list of 100 science types on Twitter: http://www.sciencebase.com/science-blog/100-scientific-twitter-friends.
@higheredu made our account the University of the Week on 1/26/09.

Our news items are periodically retweeted by local media accounts, particularly TV stations. They are also picked up by accounts with a healthcare focus.

Sample RT:
@diabeticnews 8/30/09, 600 followers: WSU Spokane starts drug research trials: The second trial will research cardiovascular outcomes of thiazolidined. http://bit.ly/4y5u6x

http://twitter.com/diabeticnews/statuses/3661258532

> Twitter has demonstrated its value as a tool in bringing us to the attention of a wider audience and reinforcing our emerging identity as a campus focused on the health sciences.

Media: RTs by media indicate that we are reaching that target audience. Since their followers are primarily local, we also reach Spokane-area citizens this way in addition to our direct following.

Health care: RTs by people whose accounts have a strong health care identity reflect the value of our content to them, and extend our name to their followers in association with health care research content.

Drawing traffic: The click-throughs to our content, and in particular the fact that the top click-throughs came to links on the content in our core priorities, demonstrate the value of Twitter for drawing people to WSU content.

Prospective students: While there is no clear way to identify prospects, we do have followers whose profiles indicate they are graduate students in health administration. We have plans for more PhD programs down the road, and these students would be prospects. We also have plans for a master's program (ultimately a doctoral degree as well) in medical informatics, and our followers who have a health IT interest will be prospects, or their followers may be.

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Society for New Communications Research

DIVISION: NONPROFIT
CATEGORY: MICROBLOGGING

#hcsm

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

Traditionally, there are barriers everywhere in healthcare. This is especially true in the current era of healthcare reform, where people are struggling to obtain or pay for health care. There are geographic and socioeconomic barriers to overcome. There are also communication barriers to overcome, from general public health education to basic health literacy where people are able to read and understand written directions from their health care providers. And, there is a barrier between healthcare organizations and patients and consumers who want to use new and "social" media tools to communicate in new ways with their healthcare providers.

Healthcare is surprisingly progressive in terms of using new, digital, and social media tools to communicate with their publics. However, due to the nature of the "emerging" medium, there are no standards or best practices. There is also no place to share or really learn about successes and effective communication in healthcare. Thus, it is essential to develop a community or central focal point to bring together professionals from a wide range of healthcare organizations and perspectives to discuss, build, and evolved best practices in health communications. Participants from hospitals, physician practices, government agencies, universities, PR/marketing/advertising firms, publications, consultants, non-profits, student groups, and more should be able to collaborate through candid questions and answers from leaders and those in the trenches working to improve healthcare communications.

The target audience is generally anyone interested in healthcare communications. That said, there is no "ideal" or "average" participant. The following have self-identified and engaged in discussions on healthcare communications:

Hospital employees (CEOs, financial, marketing, HR, nurses, etc.)

Physicians and those employed in physician practices

Government agencies (employees of CDC, HHS, etc.)

Universities (students, employees in healthcare)

Communication firms — general with a healthcare client and specialized (Public Relations, Marketing, Advertising, integrated communications, etc.)

Publications (magazines, newspapers, online communities, etc.)

Consultants (healthcare, healthcare communications, PR, etc.)

Nonprofit organizations (employees, volunteers, etc.)

Lawyers (legal counsel for hospitals and healthcare organizations)

Human Resources staff for healthcare organizations

Those are members and “active participants.” Due to the nature of HCSM (or #hcsm) being a conversation that is aggregated through the hashtag and searchable, anyone is able to be a “silent participant” or lurk throughout or after the scheduled conversation.

GOALS

- To break down barriers of communication about healthcare so that anyone who wants to participate can contribute to the discussions

- To create an interactive community platform to engage in a discussion focusing on healthcare communications

- To build a user-generated community and conversation with member-generated topics and guided discussions

- To develop a community model of best-practices in healthcare communications

- To aggregate all #hcsm tagged audio, video, and written resources on the web—#hcsm, also known as HCSM or healthcare communications and social media, was envisioned to break down the barriers in communication about healthcare, using Twitter's 140 character messages and a hashtag to build the discussion. Using a moderating account (@HealthSocMed), a weekly scheduled discussion is moderated with user-generated topics and current events to discuss everything under the sun related to healthcare communications and social media. The topics are not limited to social media, and indeed included all aspects of communications, but based on the audience participation and the nature of the communication channel, often trend to include some aspect of social media with most discussions.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

Anyone with a Twitter account and an interest is able to participate in the conversation. However, it is not required to have a Twitter account to watch or “lurk” in the conversation, with the help of search.twitter.com and the new search abilities on the home page of Twitter.com, so the conversation for the most part has few barriers to participation. There is no fee or credentials required to participate. Participants are asked to respect one another, to stay on topic while using the hashtag during the specific appointed hour, and not to "spam" or sell products or services to the community. Originally focusing on Sunday nights as the main conversation, the conversation has the opportunity to grow throughout the community during the week, but only session and discussions during an appointed time are moderated and guided.

The original #hcsm conversation was a conversation using GChat (the instant messaging client hosted by Google), but after the first four participants had the conversation and mentioned it on Twitter, a dozen others clamored to participate and so the first full conversation with scheduled topics and moderation took place on Twitter. There has been no promotion; only word of mouth recommendations and natural sharing of the hashtag community as the quality of content, discussion, and members grew. The original moderator was overwhelming her personal Twitter account through moderating, and moved the moderation to the @HealthSocMed account to better gather feedback and topics for the weekly conversation. This tactic also allows for guest moderation and easier guidance for new members and participants who seek to recognize the blue #hcsm logo avatar to find the FAQ, important directions, and topics for discussion each Sunday.

The #hcsm conversation consists of participants adding the "#hcsm" hashtag to their tweets. The moderator starts each week's conversation with a 5 minute time period for introductions, and then launches a topic for discussion. There are usually 3 to 5 topics for discussion. Respondents can post general responses (sometimes using T1 or T2 to designate the response is to a topic) or respond to another member's comment and adding the hashtag. At the end of the conversation, there is a chance for participants to leave a "last thought" or something for fellow participants to think about for the next week. Topics are sought throughout the week and welcomed via direct messages or @ messaging the @HealthSocMed account without the hashtag.

There were several obstacles to overcome — namely, the nature of the beast of using social media to build a discussion around a complex topic. Many participants were frustrated at the beginning because they were not able to adequately communicate their opinions within 140 characters. Healthcare is a complex topic, and talking about the communication of healthcare can also be diverse. We also had to overcome spammers and those who did not respect the hashtag. "Spam" in this instance refers to organizations who would schedule tweets to be posted during the introduction time (always the first 5 minutes of conversation) about their recruiting efforts or to promote an event that was of little relevance to the entire community. There are also natural limitations from using Twitter, such as a slow or lagging search, or if the Twitter service itself goes down at the appointed time.

The main tool is Twitter, or a Twitter client such as TweetChat, TweetDeck, etc., for participants to post their messages with the hashtag #hcsm to enter the discussion. We also used Aperial's BlokCast aggregating web service to build two websites to host the community "basics" and FAQs, on www.healthsocmed.com and hcsm.blokcast.net. On the BlokCast site, we are able to aggregate #hcsm content in an Alltop-style site, with basic information about the community, and all content tagged on Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and in selected blogs with the #hcsm tag.

Dana Lewis is the co-creator (along with Arik Hanson) who initiated the conversation and has developed the community from January 2009 to the present. She moderates most of the discussion and is in charge of strategic planning and execution for all HCSM related activities and partnerships.

Tom Stitt is a facilitator for #hcsm who guest moderates when needed and helps with partnerships and strategic planning. His company, Aperial, has also hosted the *Website* and donated their BlokCast technology to build the aggregated #hcsm site.

The entire #hcsm community has played a huge role in the development and evolving community dynamic. Everyone has the opportunity to give feedback and suggest new aspects to the community. As a result, several communities such as #hchit and #hcmktg have been added under the #hcsm "umbrella" to give additional time to marketing and HIT conversations for a smaller, more targeted audience who has a higher level of understanding for these topics.

#hcsm has become the most cited healthcare community on Twitter. It is difficult to measure based on the previous mentioned difference between "active" and "silent" participants, although the moderating account has more than 2,000 followers since it was created in March 2009. There are usually 50 to 100 regular participants during each Sunday between 8 pm and 9 pm Central. An average of 200 people contribute to the hashtag and discussion throughout the week. There are about of 750 tweets during the hour on Sundays, although the all-time high was an astonishing 1,200 tweets during an hour session. We are also the inspiration to several "offshoot" healthcare communities, including #hcmktg and #hchit. Most recently, we inspired the development of a European discussion on healthcare communications and social media, #hcsmeu (source: http://is.gd/37Y0u).

We have been able to successfully aggregate all #hcsm feeds using the hcsm.blokcast.net site and point people there to one of the first comprehensive resources of healthcare social media. We are also developing a Wiki of best practices in the community, something that is much needed and often asked for within the community.

These results point to our success in achieving our objectives because anyone and everyone (please see our Target Audience) can and has been able to participate, by posting with the hashtag or watching and searching the conversation. The community is interactive, and has a high retention rate of participants which indicates a strong community bond. The constant growth from January 2009 to present, and the success of the "offshoot" niche topic communities, indicates the success in the development of the community. By taking topics from members of the community each week, we have successfully maintained our goal of keeping this a user-generated conversation.

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DIVISION: CORPORATE
CATEGORY: MICROBLOGGING

SAP

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

In November 2008, business-software leader SAP published its first sustainability report to inform stakeholders—including investors, NGOs, partners and customers--of SAP's commitment to sustainability, what SAP had accomplished to date and what the company hoped to achieve in future sustainability efforts.

The SAP Sustainability Report 2007/2008 highlighted the key measures of SAP's corporate sustainability performance, including environmental, social and governance issues, as well as its products and services targeted at enabling more sustainable operations of its customers. SAP considered this report an important step in its ongoing dialogue with stakeholders about the most appropriate way in which SAP can best perform as a company, build software solutions that promote sustainable operations at customers and play a leading role in the public policy debate.

One of the primary goals of the report's public relations campaign was to elicit feedback from stakeholders to help shape the future Sustainability Program for SAP. The company needed a thoughtful, yet interactive way to reach the greatest audience possible, in order to ensure the success of the report and the future of its Sustainability program.

The traditional avenues to pitch media and conduct a survey, either via email or phone call, couldn't effectively establish a conversation on the subject of sustainability, as SAP envisioned. The feedback the company most desired would be honest and thoughtful and spark more debate about ongoing sustainability initiatives and means to improve upon them. As an extension of this, by submitting the report and survey to the general public via social media platforms, while targeting key groups within that audience, SAP could be assured that those responding had a genuine interest in the subject, could offer opinions of value and had no personal gain or stake in the outcome of the results.

Additionally, as social media grows in popularity, companies representing every industry possible are making efforts to use Web 2.0 tools and platforms to engage with a global audience. By reaching out in this manner, SAP could embrace new media trends and movements.

—SAP's target audience represented a distinctive cross section of the most important voices in the sustainability movement, as it relates to IT and business software development. The breakdown of the target audience was as follows:

Investors. SAP investors play perhaps the most crucial role in the company's sustainability efforts, because it is their funding that goes to the creation and development of new sustainability solutions. Moreover, the investors stand to benefit the most if SAP runs leaner operations, as it lowers the cost of doing business in the process. Welcoming their voices and earning their approval was crucial.

Non-government organizations. NGOs are playing an ever greater role in the sustainability movement, as most major governments have made substantial efforts to pass legislation and regulations mandating environmental preservation and safety. By providing a sound example to fellow NGOs and sparking a conversation with them, SAP could establish itself as a thought leader on the subject.

Partners. The vast channel of partners SAP works with on a daily basis are considered the closest allies to the company, and as such they play a vital role in the developments and initiatives SAP has to offer. By bringing partners into the conversation, SAP could ensure that these vendors would begin making similar contributions in sustainability themselves, across SAP solutions and product lines.

Customers. SAP customers must meet specific regulations and are increasingly turning to software solutions that will make this process easier. By issuing the sustainability report and inviting feedback, SAP could better fine tune its existing and future offerings for governance, risk and compliance and also offer a model for other companies looking for guidance on creating their own reports and corporate sustainability policies.

SAP's goals in publishing and publicizing the SAP Sustainability Report 2007/2008 were as follows:

—to initialize an ongoing discussion with stakeholders

—to establish a credible benchmark for reporting

—to provide stakeholders with a better understanding of SAP's activities, vision and goals

—to reaffirm SAP's commitment to running fully sustainable operations

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

In order to create a global conversation corresponding to the issues presented in its SAP Sustainability Report 2007/2008 and to better understand the top challenges of the ongoing environmental crisis, the SAP PR team began by developing a survey asking stakeholders for input on where SAP should focus its sustainability resources. This would lead to the full transparency of SAP, putting on open display its developing initiatives and efforts to embrace sustainability across operations. It would also link SAP more closely to partners who share SAP’s values and commitment to altering the international business to be better sustainable.

To optimize the reach of the survey, the team opted to appeal to respondents using various accessible social media platforms. This would help determine what key stakeholders thought of the Sustainability report and its results, and help SAP find ways in which it could improve products and services that help enable more sustainable operations of its customers. An online collaboration and discussion forum was also created for this purpose.

SAP began by creating the SAP Sustainability Collaboration Workspace, developed to provide stakeholders a secure, dynamic platform to engage in dialogue on SAP's sustainability performance both as a solutions provider and as a corporation. This was accessed via the SAP Community Network, which boasts over 1.8 million users within the SAP ecosystem of employees, partners, customers and shareholders.

An integrated communications campaign launched with the release of the report itself, announced by a multimedia press release and fact sheet distributed via the global wires in German and English. The campaign included:

Socializing SAP's sustainability engagements internally to drive employee engagement

Presenting SAP's interactive approach to stakeholder engagement at the annual Business for Social Responsibility Conference in New York during a panel discussion (presented by SAP’s former Vice President for Corporate Citizenship James Farrar) and socializing the report in invitation only discussions with CSR stakeholders.

Issuing a multimedia press release on CSRWire and Marketwire to announce the availability of SAP's first sustainability report and drive traffic to sustainability survey and the collaboration room.

Conducting media interviews with business and trade media to start the discussion on the responsibility of the software industry, and SAP specifically as a company. Other story lines included the impact of Web 2.0 tools on stakeholder engagement.

Utilizing social media tools to drive traffic to the sustainability survey and encourage stakeholder engagement.

SAP’s efforts did not stop with the large push of the release and pitch efforts the day of; rather, it can be argued they never stopped. The company watched closely as results began to pour in, including results from the survey, Tweets concerning the report, and key commentary from bloggers and experts. The PR team carefully monitored every mention, and collected it in order to analyze and apply to future reports and initiatives.

On November 11, 2008, SAP kicked off its sustainability campaign by issuing a comprehensive, multimedia press release in German and English to the global markets, extensively detailing the findings in the report, and what it meant for SAP, its customers, and stakeholders. Two charts and images of SAP co-CEOs Henning Kagermann and LÃ©o Apotheker were included in the release, for greater visibility and notice. Key media immediately began covering the news, with 11 articles/blog posts in CSR, IT, and Industry publications within the first day. The SAP media relation's team pitched the news heavily as James Farrar and fellow panelists debated the issue at the widely attended Business for Social Responsibility conference in New York.

Behind the scenes, the collaboration workspace went live and users gained access to blog posts, contributing comments on the text as they read. The online sustainability survey also went live; as participants visited www.sapvote.com to vote on the top sustainability issues they see in the world. Links to both were provided via Twitter and Facebook, providing incredible results.

The methods of outreach meant that SAP had to make a leap into unknown territory. A well-established, well-respected company like SAP risked negative backlash if it did not reach out thoughtfully and with integrity using these new formats.

Furthermore, although younger generations are embracing Web 2.0 easily, SAP had to bear in mind that not all targets engaged with social media, which is why SAP pursued a hybrid traditional and social media approach.

> The SAP Sustainability Collaboration Workspace was created and run using SAP proprietary collaboration software.
>
> A Twitter account to tweet about the report was established, and Twitter users retreated the announcement of the Sustainability report.
>
> A Facebook group was created with links to the complete SAP Sustainability Report 2007/2008 and the corresponding survey.

SAP worked closely with its public relations agency of record, Burson-Marsteller, on all media outreach. Teams were deployed in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area to monitor from the moment the release hit the wires and the survey went live, paying specific attention to the noise being generated throughout Twitter and on the blogosphere.

Within 24 hours, SAP tracked 7,344 Twitter posts about the survey and the report. Within three days, more than 200 stakeholders downloaded the report. In addition, approximately 350 people responded to the sustainability survey. Within the first four days of the report's appearance, 16 articles and blog posts appeared.

Even more valuable to SAP was the feedback the company received. The outreach surrounding the report inspired an overwhelming amount of feedback from SAP employees, who stepped forward to express their vision for SAP in terms of sustainability, including their desire to reduce the carbon footprint of SAP. Three months later, SAP responded with a new carbon footprint reduction goal of 49 percent by 2020. Today, the SAP Sustainability team continues to respond to the innovative ideas of employees as well as external stakeholders through a new platform of communication launched through PR efforts.

SAP's first sustainability report has initiated interest and feedback on what the company— as a software provider— can contribute to sustainability.

By November 14, 2008, 3 days after the initial outreach, the following results were achieved:

> More than 200 downloads of the report were logged in the SAP Collaboration Space.
>
> Approximately 350 responses were recorded for SAP's sustainability survey.
>
> More than 7,344 Twitter feeds posted (micro-blogging) within 48 hours.
>
> More than 16 articles/blogs appeared within the first four days of the publication of the report.
>
> More than 130 publication websites worldwide ran the multimedia release, all within 24 hours of hitting the wire.

Additionally, SAP has been recognized for its sustainability performance by:

> FTSE4Good
>
> Dow Jones Sustainability Index (SAP leads the software industry)
>
> Global 100 (Corporate Knights Inc. and Innovest Strategic Value Advisors ranking)

Oekom Global Challenges Index of 50 Global Leading Companies

Survey results ranked employee satisfaction, the carbon footprint and energy management of SAP's direct operations, and customer satisfaction as the top three key issues.

As a result of these concentrated efforts, what might have been an otherwise unnoticed press release became a sensation in the corporate sustainability movement, with a large audience participating in the news, the ongoing debate and the establishment of a reporting benchmark for SAP.

Even more valuable to SAP was the feedback the company received. The outreach surrounding the report inspired an overwhelming amount of feedback from SAP employees, who stepped forward to express their vision for SAP in terms of sustainability, including their desire to reduce the carbon footprint of SAP. A couple of months later, SAP responded with a new carbon footprint reduction goal of 49 percent by 2020. Today, the SAP Sustainability team continues to respond to the innovative ideas of employees as well as external stakeholders through a new platform of communication launched through PR efforts.

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ASPEN IDEAS FESTIVAL

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

The challenges for the "Tweetorial at the Aspen Ideas Festival" were:

> a) How can an engagement, a conversation, and a community be created at a world-class conference among notable speakers and attendees who may not be part of an online, social community?
>
> b) How can a conference (Aspen Ideas Festival) and an institution (Aspen Institute) that are world-renowned, but have a reputation for being remote and closed, evolve into an open forum for conversation?
>
> c) And finally, how can addressing these issues enhance the brand and accessibility of a respected and world-famous organization - the Aspen Institute?

The challenges above were our communications challenges too... The Aspen Ideas Festival convenes some of the world's greatest thinkers on its campus each year, along with attendees from communications, finance, the arts and many other walks of life. As great as this gathering is, it lacks the community intimacy and engagement of the events like the TED Conference. How (and even can) the culture evolve to rapidly drive engagement, participation and communication? The issue was especially tough, because a change in behavior and tradition was required among attendees and presenters.

Audience

Audience #1: Luminary attendees at the International Design Conference at Aspen, ranging from Alan Greenspan to Michael Eisner, Anna Devre Smith to Louis Black, and Queen Noor of Jordan to scientist Brian Green. To achieve our goals, we wanted these attendees to engage with the attending audience as well as the external audience following the conference.

Audience #2: Aspen Institute attendees. These attendees tend to be some of the smartest and most accomplished people in the world. But, they tend to attend the conference because they are Aspen locals and don't always actively engage with the speakers. We wanted to convert these attendees into active participants by inspiring them to tweet the sessions, and thereby engaging with speakers, each other and those following the conference online.

Audience #3: non-attendees who might want to follow the conference online. Our goal was to create a wide and engaging conversation stream of tweets for non-attendees to find. From here, they would be able to inject their thoughts and questions into the Aspen community, to view and experience the Aspen Ideas Festival as part of the community, not as a remote, exclusive wonkfest.

Goals & objective(s):

a) To change the culture of the conference from speakers and attendees who do not actively engage with each other and the external community, to one of active, on-going engagement and conversation.

b) To give attendees an active role in the conference. In this participatory age, audiences and customers worldwide are finding an online voice and participating on blogs and news sites, with brands and TV shows. But, how do 1,000+ attendees engage and participate in the audience of a conference – in the real life? We found that by promoting the use of Twitter, and then actively aggregating and syndicating the audience's opinions and comments they more actively engage, pay attention, and increasingly comment to become part of the conversation. The change is palpable.

c) To get at least 140 attendees tweeting. (At least 500+ attendees and speakers tweeted).

d) To engage with communities outside of Aspen, and enable interested, online communities to find our conversation and participate. (Given the breadth of the Ideas Festival there were many communities -- the environmental community, arts community, Middle East policy community, future of journalism community, etc.).

f) Although our main goal was awareness (a classic PR goal), but brand development was also a driver - to spread the Aspen Ideas Festival brand by making the "conference in the mountains" more accessible. Brand development directly supported Aspen Institute CEO, Walter Isaacson's (former editor of Time and CNN) goal of making conversations broader and more relevant.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

a) Develop a general session as part of the "Media Crack-up track " to present a "Tweetorial" to attendees. Use the session to demystify Twitter and make it relevant to an audience that was largely older and not new-media savvy, but who had heard of the service. Design the session as both informative and educational with the first half as a discussion on use cases (Twitter in the news, branding, social activism and conferences), and then a hands-on tutorial to get vast numbers of attendees on line and tweeting.

b) Create a cadre of experts around campus who could help teach the Tweetorial class – which mobile and desktop applications to download, answer questions, and demonstrate how and what to tweet. Enroll approximately 100 fellows, scholars, and social media-savvy members of the Aspen community as resources for the rest. These experts included thought leaders like Jeff Jarvis and Jason Calcanis, and the Bezos scholars from the Aspen Institute.

c) Widely disseminate a hash tag (#aif09) allowing for easy aggregation, syndication and distribution of the related posts and tweets. Build this "tweet mantra" into communication around the conference campus, display on signage and in sessions to remind attendees to participate.

The deployment:

1) More than 500 people attended the sessions given by Peter Hirshberg and Jeff Jarvis, including luminaries and cultural leaders of the Aspen community. Interest in getting “Twitter trained” was so intense that Twitter thought the flood of service registration coming from Aspen as a denial of service attack, and we had to modify how we connected online to continue.

2) Privately briefed the Bezos scholars – a group of scholars tasked with assisting production of the festival and build online awareness – on the features and functions of Twitter and associated services.

3) Built a real time aggregation system using TuneIn that displayed all of the tweets of content, including video interview, emanating from Aspen, and automatically sorted them by topic, speaker or time/date. Key point: the tweets pointed to hundreds of sites and content management systems around the web, making it very difficult for attended to follow the conversation. The use of TuneIn resolved all the tweets with content back to one place for attendees to easily follow the conversation.

4) Reinforce the new behavior with influencers by throwing a special event for key attendees including editors, blogger, and business and technology leaders.

The main challenge to overcome was the belief of the Institute leadership that this community would not participate, or that resulting tweets would be banal. In many ways it was an act of trust of by the Institute leadership that we could convert so many attendees into active tweeters, while not confusing or annoying them. Initial thoughts were that the attendees would not be willing to be open online, that they might not care about engaging, and that the results wouldn’t be interesting and honor the richness of the event. The results proved all of the trust was well placed and that the initial thoughts were not correct.

The tools and materials included:

- Twitter – www.twitter.com
- Tune-in – www.tunein.com
- Various Twitter Clients for iPhone, Blackberry, and Desktop
- “How to Tweet” handout (attached)

A collaborated group of social media experts, thought leaders, and high-profile figures acted as our go-to "Twitter" experts throughout the week of the festival. These experts helped everyone from local attendees to high profile figures like former CIA director Jim Woolsey and former Disney CEO Michael Eisner to create and effectively use a Twitter account. Some our “Twitter tutors” included well-known entrepreneur Sam Perry, tech-blogger and thought leaders Jeff Jarvis, Jason Calacanis and Tim O'Reilly, as well as the Bezos scholars. Two members of The Conversation Group – Peter Hirshberg and Cassie Kovacevich – designed and led the overall program.

Aside from the flood of on-site interest in Twitter causing what was thought to be a DDoS attack, the main goal was exceeded with over 500 session attendees (more than half of the total conference) and over 3,000 tweets over 7 days.

In addition to the participation success, the story of the Aspen Tweetorial was covered by traditional media, the blogosphers and, of course, the Twitterspere, further demonstrating the power of the location, medium, and the unique solution.

Specific results include:

- 3,000+ tweets and retweets from Aspen tweeters
- 495 total unique hashtag users
- 226 media items linked to Aspen tweeters
  - 145 articles/posts
  - 63 photos/images
  - 18 videos

Twitter really started to build momentum during SxSW 2008, but the usual early adopters became the first power users. 2009 has shown Twitter to become much more mainstream, but the question remained whether a high level of engagement could be achieved in a community that is not social-media tool savvy. Our hypothesis was that we could turn interest and participation with Twitter into a compelling case for engagement and community, because people naturally want to engage. We were right, and it had a huge impact on the conference.

Aspen Ideas Festival Garnered Press

The New York Times
"The Fight Over Free"
By Eric Etheridge
July 1, 2009
http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/07/01/the-fight-over-free/

Advertising Age
"It's Back: 25 MORE Media People You Should Follow on Twitter"
By Nat Ives
July 6, 2009
http://adage.com/mediaworks/article?article_id=137721

Chicago Business
"Wonks Tweeting about Aspen Ideas Festival"
By Shia K
July 2, 2009
http://bit.ly/ty0XJ

Aspen.com
"Aspen Ideas Festival: A Guide to Who Said What at the 2009 Aspen Ideas Festival"
By Brandon Wenerd
July 7, 2009

http://aspen.com/aspen/colorado/articles/aspen-ideas-festival-guide-who-said-what-2009-aspen-ideas-festival

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THE MACALLAN SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

The challenge was to create an online conversation among food/wine/spirits and social media industry influencers around The Macallan Single Malt Scotch Whisky. While there is conversation online about The Macallan, it is not that deep or centralized.

Our challenge was to centralize a conversation around the brand's key messages.

Premium spirits drinkers 25 to 55 years old."

GOALS

Create a digital footprint for The Macallan in the U.S.

Drive conversation and recommendation around the brand's core expressions
Reach the brand's younger legal drinking age + recruitment target of curious, premium spirits drinkers

Create an--M Booth worked with Chef Ed Brown, a Macallan fan and owner of Michelin-starred eightyone restaurant in NYC to host a Macallan pairing tasting. With the goal of amplifying the in-person tasting throughout the social web, we invited NYC-based influencers with a substantial following on Twitter in addition to a strong presence across other social media channels to attend and share their experience with their followers through tweets, photo sharing and blog postings. M Booth worked with Graeme Russel (@livingthedram), one of The Macallan's brand ambassadors to host The Macallan pairing dinner. Additionally, we sent kits to five key bloggers to participate from home and share their thoughts. During the event, Chef Ed prepared tasting courses to pair with 6 Macallan expressions, each of which provided fodder for the conversation along with the whisky. —
Create a cross-platform tasting environment, leveraging the in-person tasting event to drive curiosity and conversation online

Identify guests based on premium spirits category interest, social media dexterity and ability to amplify through large twi —The lack of a central brand handle/profile on Twitter (conversation about The Macallan was scattered throughout)

Creating relationships with influencers on twitter so they would come to trust us enough to attend the event and attach their names to it--Twitter

Became the central channel for the virtual event dialogue to take place

Eighty-one: Provided the location and food for the physical event

M Booth:

--Creation of unique tasting concept
--Complete event planning and promotion
--Relationship building with influencer participants
--Online monitoring/reporting during and after event

Eighty-one

--Creation and execution of tasting menu
--Hosting location for event
-- Drive Conversation:

RESULTS

We secured 28 active and engaging twitterers to attend the in-person tasting at eightyone on June 10th. The guests were food, spirits, lifestyle and luxury bloggers with large followings on Twitter and all of whom were in the brand's target demographic.

We secured 5 prolific Twitter users and lifestyle/luxury bloggers to participate with us from their homes; we sent them samples of all 6 expressions Graeme would be tasting, and asked them to follow along with us on Twitter. In this way, we galvanized consumers nationwide through local participation.

The event received an overwhelming response on Twitter. Initially, we generated more than 800 tweets. The tasting resulted in several high-profile blog posts (all were also promoted and heavily circulated on Twitter), which we've attached for your reference. Total blog reach was 150,031.

Attendees alone had a combined following of 46,391 followers. Our total reach, however, is much larger, taking into account how often people repeated comments about The Macallan, responded to them, or broadcasted them to their own followers.

The tweets themselves were extremely insightful and enthusiastic, responding directly to Graeme's demonstrations and instructions.

The Macallan has received particular attention for setting a new standard for engaging consumers through social media. The above format had never been done before, and has attracted the attention of several PR/Marketing trend watchers and bloggers. Their comments are also attached.

Create digital footprint for the brand: Many bloggers at our event posted and shared photographs of the tasting (see attached).

Drive purchase/recommendation: We've noticed several tweets that indicated a direct increase in sales as a result of the event.

@JerseyTodd wrote on June 11th: "Had a really nice time at the #macallan event yesterday. Have to hit the store on the way home. (They give you that little dram taste€_)"

@intoxicologist wrote on June 26th: "The #Macallan twitter tasting made me do it! Brought home a bottle of #Macallan Fine Oak 17 today. Exquisite delight!"

This campaign created a digital footprint for The Macallan drove conversation online among our target consumer and ultimately led to recommendation/purchase. The combination of both online and off-line interaction created a very cutting edge atmosphere. Doubly engaging, the tasting garnered a very strong sense of community and exclusivity, both for those in the tasting room and those following along at home. All participants were able to speak to each other directly and instantaneously, thus succeeding in building conversation around the brand to the target consumer.

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MYRTLEBEACHHOTELS.COM

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

Our client, MyrtleBeachHotels.com, wanted to increase awareness amongst Twitter users about its resorts prior to their busy summer season to encourage bookings.

MyrtleBeachHotels.com was relatively new to the Twittersphere and was looking to increase awareness of its resorts amongst its target audience during spring, prime-booking time for the summer season. The resort hoped to become top of mind with individuals considering a vacation to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina during the summer of 2009.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

We aimed to reach the people who make the decisions about vacation plans within individual households with adults aged 25 to 50. This also tends to skew female.

1) Increase Twitter followers.

2) Increase brand awareness amongst target audience.

3) Increase traffic to their *Website*.

4) Increase Facebook fans.

5) Increase goodwill toward MyrtleBeachHotels.com

We planned a Twitter Beach Bash for the evening of March 23, right in the middle of spring to get people excited about Myrtle Beach as a destination and about the company's resorts. The Beach Bash consisted of a two-hour Twitter party where the moderators asked participants a series of trivia questions, the answers to which could be found on one of the company's resort *Website*s. Randomly drawn winners of correct respondents won small prizes, like restaurant and attraction gift certificates, beach towels and beach balls. All correct respondents, along with those who blogged or Twittered about the bash, recruited fans on Facebook or who uploaded a video to YouTube about why they needed a vacation were entered to win a week's vacation at one of the resorts.

We began promoting the event via their Twitter page, Facebook page, email newsletters, a news release and their website about three weeks ahead of the event. Every time someone blogged about the event or Twittered about I, they received another entry for the grand prize. We set up a hashtag for the event for anyone to use when Twittering about the event both before it and during it so it would be easier to follow. We pitched area media outlets about the event and received print, online and television coverage of the bash.

The evening of the event we had about six employees running the event: some asking the questions, some determining the winner to each question, some answering questions by participants about the event and offering up Myrtle Beach trivia. The event ran for two hours incredibly smoothly. After it was complete, we spent the next several hours ensuring we had all entrants registered and then randomly drew the winner of the week's vacation, which we announced via Twitter and Facebook the following day.

One of the obstacles was successfully educating individuals about how the event would work and how they could most easily participate. We did have a set of instructions to refer people to and had employees dedicated to answering those kinds of questions. There was also a lot of conversation to monitor and react to, but with six of us working the bash and good planning, we caught most interaction and were able to respond if needed. —Our company, Step Ahead Inc., ran the event.

We also used TweetGrid.com to execute the event and encouraged participants to use it to filter tweets and fully participate, as well.

Roles:

1) Promote the event through social media - Step Ahead Project Manager

2) Promote the event via the *Website* and email newsletters - MyrtleBeachHotels.com Communications Manager

3) Promote the event to local media - Step Ahead PR Manager

4) Overall strategy - Step Ahead owners

5) Event execution - Multiple Step Ahead employees

6) Event follow up/announcement of winner - Step Ahead Project Manager

Results

1) Increased Web traffic – 2,015 unique visitors to the Beach Bash page of their website.

2) Four quality media hits - *Myrtle Beach Sun News* paper, *Charleston Post & Courier* paper, WMBF (Myrtle Beach NBC TV affiliate), TwitterMoms.com

3) Trended on Twitter - Our hashtag #beachbash was one of the most popular topics on the evening of March 23 and that was noted on the Twitter homepage.

4) Twitter followers quadrupled from 343 to 1,277

5) Facebook fans increased from 39 to 100 on one resort page and from 42 to 120 on another resort page (only two resorts that have Facebook pages)

6) Great comments from participants about how fun the event was, asking when we would do it again, etc.

7) Lots of talk on both Facebook and Twitter

8) 293 entries for the grand prize

The quadrupling of Twitter followers and increase in Facebook fans clearly met those two objectives. Additionally, those items, along with the traditional media coverage and trending on Twitter, indicate increased brand awareness amongst new individuals. We clearly increased their Web traffic from new visitors and also improved goodwill demonstrated through all the amazing comments we got from participants and all the talk on both Facebook and Twitter.

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PROJECT ON GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

Our organization was founded on the principle of increasing discipline in military procurement spending. One of the programs our organization has worked on for over for nearly a decade is the F-22 fighter jet: http://www.pogo.org/investigations/national-security/fa-22.html.

After Defense Secretary Gates announced that he wanted to end production of the F-22 at 187 planes, several Senators protested the decision based on how it would affect their parochial interests. Representative Barney Frank (D-MA), and Senators Carl Levin (D-MI), and John McCain (R-AZ) identified the end of this program as a litmus test for whether Congress could rise above their parochial interests in order to serve the best interest of the Department of Defense and our troops.

In order to support that effort, our organization wanted to make sure that the Levin-McCain amendment to strip funding for additional F-22s from the National Defense Authorization Act passed. Towards this end, we needed to provide real -time tracking of the public debate and the Senate vote. Ultimately, our challenge was to make responsible and disciplined defense procurement spending exciting and appealing by providing up-to-the-minute coverage.

Goals

> Making the issues at stake for additional procurement of the F-22 accessible and understandable to citizens. One message we particularly wanted to get across was that while F-22 procurement decisions impacted jobs, they also impacted the ability for the Department of Defense to accomplish more important missions. Additionally, we wanted to provide more transparency in how the Senate was making this decision.
>
> Members of Congress, congressional staff, reporters, nonprofits, and constituents.
>
> Our goal was to exert political pressure through reporters and constituents in order to get a majority vote for the Levin-McCain amendment to strip funding for additional F-22s from the Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act.
>
> Utilize Twitter and the blog to transmit information about the debate and the lobbying campaign. This included listing how Senators were anticipated to vote.

We also used our e-mail updates and action alerts to urge people to contact their Senators to support the amendment.

Posting content and urging support through twitter primarily, but also through e-mail updates, e-mail alerts, our blog, and website, and following up and informing these actions through conversations with Senate staff.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

1. Making the issue exciting and accessible to the public.

2. We discovered that while our list of how Senators were expected to vote could help to excite constituents as to which Senators to target, it could also be utilized as a target list for industry lobbyists who may have assumed that they had the support of a Senator, only to discover that they likely did not. After learning this, we took down our list, though we did maintain one internally.

3. Parochial interests: There were significantly more financial pressures externally on the side of opposing this amendment than supporting it. The contractors and sub-contractors that built the F-22 had plants across the country, which meant that many Senators were opposing the amendment simply to protect jobs in their state—Twitter for microblogging (primarily using three accounts: http://www.twitter.com/pogoblog, twitter.com/daniellebrian and twitter.com/kwrutter), typepad for our blog, and Convio for press releases, e-mail alerts, and updates on the campaign.

The effort on the blog and in microblogging was primarily the work of our Executive Director and National Security Investigator, with essential support from our blog editor and Director of Operations.

The Levin-McCain amendment passed on a vote of 58-40 in the Senate. We believe that the work of our organization, in coordination with several others, helped to turn around several of these votes. #F22 also became a trending topic on Twitter. For an article describing the value of web 2.0 technology in this effort, see Noah Shachtman, F-22 Soars on Twitter After Senate Vote, http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/07/f-22-soars-on-twitter-after-senate-vote/

These results demonstrate that not only was political pressure exerted upon Senators, but that enough people were energized by the vote that it became one of the top issues being discussed on Twitter.

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CISCO

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

As a very large, global corporation, Cisco recognized the need to be actively engaged on Twitter. Before January 2009, there was no plan or official structure in place leading to a logistics nightmare.

Cisco's various business units collectively had more than 20 Twitter accounts, but there was no centralized or organized way of tracking or utilizing these various accounts. On January 1, 2009, Cisco's primary Twitter account had only 211 followers.

Twitter is a useful and powerful communications tool. With that said, it is also a new communication tool and many companies and corporations are still learning how best to use it as part of a communications strategy.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

On day one, Cisco’s primary Twitter account had a small follower base. Although this base was strong, in order to have an impact, the Twitter base needed to continue growing by attracting Cisco enthusiasts from across the web. With a new tool like Twitter, there is no set formula for growing that base so the challenge is to develop and plan to reach those enthusiasts and get them excited about Cisco on Twitter.

The target audience consisted of all parties interested in news from Cisco: customers, partners, journalists, investors, students, employees, and more. The primary focus was existing Twitter users (early adopters) as well as preparing for future Twitter users as that community continues to grow.

The goal was to effectively leverage Twitter to listen and communicate with Cisco's various constituents. Cisco has been an innovator in the social media space, and microblogging is a curve that the team wanted to get ahead of and be defined as a leader in the corporate microblogging space.

Objectives included increasing Twitter followers for the @CiscoSystems account, and improve visibility for the other Cisco-branded accounts. Twitter is such a valuable tool to drive people to the main Cisco site as well as the various blogs hosted by Cisco so a secondary objective is to drive traffic to the other Cisco sites and have another place to host and promote Cisco news.

Twitter was still a new tool to the corporate environment. With very little in place as a reference for best practices, Cisco lead blogger John Earnhardt took the helm of Cisco's primary Twitter account @CiscoSystems. With the goal of creating a primary account to address general inquiries, answer basic questions, share Cisco news, and provide the overall corporate message, the @CiscoSystems Twitter account was used to engage with the small base of followers already in existence.

In an effort to catalog Cisco's Twitter accounts into a single location, John Earnhardt put up a blog post containing 28 of Cisco's accounts, including business units, executives(http://blogs.cisco.com/news/comments/all_the_news_thats_fit_to_tweet_cisco/). He also encouraged employees and anyone else to share their Twitter usernames in the blog posts. The blog post has received 79 comments and is now a great resource for anyone interested in Cisco.

- Best practices for Twitter were developed, and placed on an internal Cisco site. These guidelines helped advise the existing official accounts, as well as Cisco employees who have personal accounts.

- With no pre-existing best practices, guidelines had to be built based on trial and error. New technologies such as Twitter require that the user be open minded and not afraid of a little risk. Those qualities are not necessarily inherent in a corporate mindset but John Earnhardt was able to take the lead and other business units to engage with their community with the sole reminder that it's important to remember that this Twitter account is a representation of the company.

- Twitter was the primary tool. In addition, the Cisco community was leveraged on a regular basis. This included representatives who managed the accounts and their teams who helped them be engaged with the community on a frequent and consistent basis. People and time invested were the keys to success with this program.

- A majority of Cisco's business units has it's own dedicated Twitter account, managed by an employee from the respective unit. In addition, some of Cisco's executive team now provide a face to the company with their own accounts.

- The number of followers for the @CiscoSystems account increased from 200 in January, to over 14,700 today, an increase of 7,250%. Today, an average of 99 people start following @CiscoSystems each day. With the growth rate continuing to be strong, the engagement continues. It is clearly seen as a resource for Cisco news, and an avenue for discussion with the brand.

Cisco provided a direct link to the company with a transparent and open communication with its followers. There are no walls or barriers limiting the access an average person has to answer their questions or listen to their comments. Twitter is a listening and engagement tool, which is how Cisco has used it. In addition to the @CiscoSystems Twitter account, other accounts have seen great increases as well with executives and feeds have strong follower bases as well.

One particularly successful use of Twitter was done by Cisco CTO Padmasree Warrior. While developing a keynote for Voicecon, the leading enterprise communications event, she was looking for a way to be most relevant to her community. She crowdsourced a question to her Twitter followers with the tweet, Thinking about my keynote at Voicecon If you had to make one big prediction for the Future of Collaboration what would it be?

The hundreds of responses that flooded in over the following hours helped to steer the direction of her speech. She even mentioned this collaborative effort from her Twitter community during her speech, and displayed a word cloud of the responses.

The objective was to build the number of followers, but more importantly, to develop a strong Cisco community leveraging social media tools such as Twitter. That goal was reached but is still a priority on a day-to-day basis. The @CiscoSystems Twitter handle continues to gain new followers everyday and has become a huge component for recent launches, news and simply promoting the overall Cisco message. Continued success requires continued engagement and listening and that is what Cisco strives to do each day.

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SPRINT

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

The micro-blogging service Twitter is one of the fastest growing social media platforms today, and it is used increasingly by customers to communicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a company and it products and services. At Sprint, it became obvious that a significant amount of discussion about the company was taking place on Twitter. Customers were praising or voicing discontent with Sprint's product and service offerings in addition to asking questions about their own wireless service. It was clear that there was a need to engage this very vocal population or let others tell Sprint's story.

The popularity of Twitter, Facebook, and other social media *website*s is at an all time high. The share of adult Internet users who have a profile on an online social network site has more than quadrupled in the past four years — from 8% in 2005 to 35% at the end of 2008, according to the Pew Internet & American Life Project's December 2008 tracking survey. Social media websites are no longer the destinations of techies and early adopters; non-technical people now use them and ordinary citizens, to the point where reporters and other members of the media post about stories they're working on and investigate these mediums for stories.

The ease and speed at which individuals can share customer experiences with a large population gives Sprint's existing and potential consumers the power to affect its public perception and reputation. It also means that social media increasingly is becoming a key vehicle for customers to contact a company for support or assistance.

> —Sprint needed to establish a strong presence on Twitter to 1) meet its customers where they are online, 2) be part of the conversation about the company that is already occurring, and 3) manage its reputation by engaging in authentic, transparent, two-way dialogue with customers.

Over the last several years, Sprint Corporate Communications has taken an active role in social media monitoring and engagement - on blog sites, discussion forums, and especially Twitter. A core group of Corporate Communications managers use Twitter to watch for mentions about the company, as well as follow and interact with key members of the media and other influencers.

It didn't take long for customers to notice that Sprint spokespeople were active on Twitter, and as a result the core group began to receive frequent customer inquiries. However, the Communications managers who participated on Twitter were not the best group to respond to specific customer issues, as they weren't equipped to access customer billing records and private account information. Instead, they played the middleman by relaying the customer questions and concerns to the appropriate customer care channels, which created a layer of inefficiency. It quickly became apparent that there was a need to have members from Sprint's Care organization to engage customers on Twitter directly.

—The target audience that Sprint was trying to reach comprised the following groups:

Current customers with questions about Sprint's products or service issues.

Prospective customers who were considering Sprint.

Members of the tech/wireless media interested in news about Sprint.

Anyone else in the Twitter population that talked about Sprint.

—Using Twitter, Sprint set out to accomplish the following:

Participate in conversational, two-way dialogue with the public;

Prevent unhappy customers from leaving the company for competitor services;

Position the company as a forward-thinking company that understands the power of social media and micro-blogging services like Twitter.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

Sprint Corporate Communications established a cross-functional partnership with its Executive Escalations Care group to reach out and directly engage customers who were reporting questions and account/service issues. This arrangement was designed to help remove the Communications organization as a middle layer of inefficiency and allowed direct contact between Twitter users and Sprint's Care organization. Corporate Communications remained active to help triage customer issues and provide counsel to the Care organization on how to respond to particular customer complaints.

In a program that launched in June 2009, a team of six Executive Escalations personnel combined with a team of three Corporate Communications managers was formally established to offer assistance to customers. The program soft-launched by establishing a customer care branded account on Twitter (@sprintcare), which was separate from the company's main Twitter feed (@sprint) and news-oriented Twitter feeds (@sprintnews, @sprintgreennews).

Through the use of Sprint's Twitter Care account, the Executive Escalations department works with Corporate Communications to identify customers in need of assistance or experiencing some pain point with a handset or wireless service. The team contacts the individual through Twitter to identify the source of the problem or question and remove the pain point. If the issue is specific to the customer's private account or requires a more involved answer, it is taken offline and handled through the existing Escalations channels to protect the customer's privacy.

The primary obstacle to the Twitter Care program was gaining manpower support from Sprint's Care organizations that were social media savvy and could interact with the public on the company's behalf. Corporate Communications managers delivered a presentation to the Care organization's management to highlight the need for this type customer interaction, the benefits it would bring to the company, and an estimate on the amount of manpower needed for the program to be successful. The trial program that launched in early June 2009 provided solid results, and is now an important part of the way Sprint interacts with its customers via social media.—Sprint uses a tool and platform called CoTweet, a Twitter client provided by the company of the same name, to search for mentions about Sprint on Twitter as well as to manage customer interactions on Twitter.

CoTweet allows multiple people to post from the same Twitter account, which makes it possible for more than one person to staff the @sprintcare Twitter account as rotating schedules are needed. In addition, CoTweet offers several compelling workflow features, which allow a member of the Sprint Twitter team to search for mentions of Sprint on Twitter, view historical interactions with a particular Twitter user, and delegate the appropriate person on the Care team to respond to the user's question or complaint.

The Sprint Twitter Care team is made up of six Executive Escalations Care analysts and three Corporate Communications managers. All have responsibility for searching for mentions of Sprint and responding to the best of their ability. The Care analysts are responsible for handling account-specific customer issues, and the Corporate Communications managers are responsible for initial triage of customer issues and counsel on how to respond to customers.

Weekly reporting is delivered back to the business to track the number of engagements, unique customer interactions, and cases created in Sprint's Care system.--In the first three months after soft-launch, over 650 interactions with over 350 individuals were engaged via this program. Of those, approximately 80 Care cases were opened and resolved. As the @sprintcare account gains higher public visibility, it is expected that the volume will only continue to increase. Reporting measures are in place to evaluate total volume compared to the number of cases opened, with the goal of evaluating resource need.

Example of customer tweets and mentions to @sprintcare account:
drnormal: @sprintcare @svinge That did the trick, thanks! (this tweet brought to you by Sprint 4G WiMax) :) (http://twitter.com/drnormal/statuses/3462508837)

KyleRhode: @thismaycy The @sprintcare guys help you out? They seem to be responding pretty quickly on here...I give them credit for that (http://twitter.com/KyleRohde/statuses/3219311995)

The results of the Sprint Twitter Care program have been positive. Word has begun to spread about the program, and followers to the @sprint and @sprintcare Twitter feeds are taking off, generating over 7,000 total followers in a few months. Sprint is one of the few large companies today with active Care personnel conversing directly with the public. Working in collaboration with the Corporate Communications organization, the Care team engages customers daily, bringing a human touch to what is typically a one-way interaction with a brand.

In addition, the program has had a direct impact on customer saves. Many individuals who contact the Sprint Twitter have already been through normal Care channels and are about to end their service with Sprint. The Sprint Twitter program helps to eliminate their frustration and bring them back into the fold, one customer at a time.

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TIM'S BLOG

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

The marketing staff at ASI conducted demographic research, market studies and surveys, to determine that a need existed to educate our members about how to increase their sales and how to improve operations of their advertising specialty business. Specifically, members were hungry for knowledge that addressed how to apply best practices for marketing, how to identify business strategies and how to improve their marketing campaigns. The majority of ASI members are owners of small- to medium-size businesses.

Tim's Blog (www.timandrewsblog.com) provides an opportunity for the chief executive officer to interact directly with customers, industry peers, ASI staff and business colleagues in real-time, creating an appropriate social media avenue to connect.

Tim shares industry knowledge, features helpful products and services, shares ideas that contribute to successfully operating an advertising specialty business, and helps the industry raise funds for disaster relief for the American Red Cross and other organizations.

Tim's blog successfully educates our members about business issues, reinforces the personal nature of Tim's approach to business, and executes an interactive channel that provides a real-time gateway to the executive suite.

The Advertising Specialty Institute has over 26,000 member firms across North America and is the largest media and marketing organization serving the advertising specialty industry. It provides catalogs, magazines, directories, websites, e-commerce tools, and marketing resources.

The target audience consists of:

1) Primary: All 26,000 owners of the companies that are ASI members, and all of the 130,000 salespeople representing those firms. Research from ASI determined that 95% of ASI members have access to the Internet and therefore could visit Tim's Blog.

2) Secondary: The 100 editors at trade publications, 12 industry bloggers, and reporters from local and global business press. Qualitative research shows that

more than 75% of the trade outlets regularly inquire about news from ASI and would likely be interested in information available on Tim's Blog.
3) Tertiary: Staff of the Advertising Specialty Institute. The company Intranet provides a complementary outlet for cross promoting content on Tim's Blog internally that would also be of interest to employees. For example, blog postings with videos and photos of new industry products from around the globe. A new permanent section of the Intranet is being developed to spotlight the blog as well.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

Tim's Blog is among a category of newer social media vehicles that provide corporate communications solutions that contribute to achieving the branding and financial goals of an organization. Knowing that this vehicle remains somewhat experimental in nature, four categories of goals were developed for 2009 that would provide a direct impact on the company's image and financial performance.

Branding Goals:

1) Provide engaging content that strengthens and reflects Tim's brand, image and personal approach to business for all audiences.

2) Provide engaging content that strengthens the brand image of the Advertising Specialty Institute for all audiences.

Revenue Goal:

1) Achieve $10,000 in new sales, or leads for potential revenue.

Traffic Goal:

1) Reach 10,000 unique visitors.

Interactivity Goal:

1) Receive 50 comments from readers.

Due to an overhaul of the public website for ASI, blogging software was made available and added on to the site.

After brainstorming among ideas for the title of the blog, "Tim's Blog" was strategically selected as a simple title that could be easily recalled by readers and potential visitors and that also provided credit to the name of the host and his brand.

The key messages identified that we wanted our audiences to understand after visiting the blog were:

1) The president and CEO of ASI is an expert in the advertising specialty industry.

2) ASI has an open-door policy with its customers.

3) ASI is here to help its members become more successful, by providing this interactive blog.

Our Internet team maintains the blog among its daily workflow. That team spends about one hour each week processing the postings and addressing any technical issues.

In adhering to principles generally accepted within the blogging community, Tim Andrews drafts all posts and provides input on all concepts before the postings are moved live, to insure that authenticity of the author is protected.

I play an active part of the blog's evolution today, continuing to coordinate with our CEO and all internal departments to identify timely topics for readers, to monitor the competitive landscape and make adjustments accordingly, and to recommend enhancements. When a new industry blog surfaces, I reach out proactively to partner with the author and to determine if there are ways we can share content, promote each other's blogs on our blog rolls, or share design opinions.

Initial planning for the blog began in the fourth quarter of 2006, leading to a launch in January 2007. Resources for blogging software at ASI at that time were limited, delaying the original launch by four weeks. Nevertheless, the communications team, in cooperation with our Internet team, found a solution that included software from a sister company, ASI Computer Systems.

In collaboration with that unit, the first version of the blog was launched using this software. One year later, in January 2008, the blog's existence came into question as ASI was considering an overhaul of its public website. All teams worked together to add a blogging module to the new website design system, that not only allowed the blog to prosper, but provided a graphical facelift and navigation upgrades as well.

The blog was re-launched once again in 2009, with an upgrade to the software and advertising added. It continues to evolve today.

A WordPress blog hosted and maintained by a sister company, ASI Computer Systems, Inc.

1) Timothy M. Andrews, president and CEO: blog contributor.

2) Susanne Curry, senior vice president of marketing: idea and concept development, editor.

3) Scott Fuhr, director of corporate communications: blog editor, idea and concept development.

4) Vince Driscoll, online editor: appearance editor and graphics changes.

5) Dawn Shurmaitis, senior marketing writer: technical edits, online updating, concept development.

6) Kate Malone, marketing communications manager: content development, online updating.

The blog has been successful overall, performing well against its goals, but of course it has not been without its challenges.

Branding Goals:

1) Through feedback in emails to Tim or comments from readers, customers are turning to Tim and to ASI for its educational resources, business advice and news and information about the industry. The blog is contributing to achieving the overall goal of positioning ASI as an industry leader and as a resource.

Revenue Goal:

1) One lead from a blog reader who sent Tim an email about the availability of one of our products resulted in a $7,500 sale, with the potential to recur on an annual basis. In addition, an advertising banner was added in 2009 in coordination with a marketing manager. Sponsors have invested $7,000 to advertise there. By including both of these figures, the revenue goal was exceeded by $4,500, or by 45%. Alternatively, whether or not to offer paid advertising on a blog is currently being debated among the blogging community. If one measures revenue that excludes the paid advertising portion, then revenue results fell short of the goal by $2,500, or by 25%, but generated a $7,500 profit.

Traffic Goal:

1) In 2009, more than 16,000 unique readers have visited Tim's Blog, exceeding the goal of 10,000 by 6,000 visitors, or by 60%.

Interactivity Goal:

1) In 2009 to-date, 75 comments have been posted. This number exceeds the goal by 50%.

In addition, Tim's Blog has served as a case study for the marketing team and other departments around ASI and its success has been considered when developing and adjusting annual strategic plans. In 2009, one of the magazine editors and the executive director of e-media both launched professional blogs targeting their respective customers and readers. The executive director of marketing decided to launch an online community for our industry, named the "ASI Social Network," and more than 3,000 members are now active in that space.

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IKEA NORTH AMERICA

PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

To drive down turnover and drive up engagement, IKEA North America reexamined their entire employee value proposition. They needed a steady workforce that understood their business strategy, products, and culture. Their largely hourly workforce wanted affordable benefits, career opportunities, and flexibility to balance work/life obligations. Being a true innovator, they designed a benefits program that delivered it all. In 2009, they introduced a new medical plan with great coverage and low premiums, particularly for families, and a new service-based plan that rewarded employees with better benefits every year.

> • With minimal time and resources, IKEA needed to introduce a new benefits plan and involve associates and family members in greater overall partnering on health care issues. And as with many other organizations, they were taking the enrollment process online for the first time.
> • The target audience consisted of 12,000 IKEA co-workers plus dependents (an audience who drives a large portion of the company's health care costs and is critical for supporting behavior change). They have a young workforce; more than 40% of co-workers are under age 40. Benefits are offered to part-time and full-time employees
> • To establish Twitter as a viable channel for reaching IKEA associates and family members

To supplement other IKEA-planned annual enrollment communications with a more constant, less overwhelming, more playful and interactive information drip feed.

To continue to do less with more, an IKEA philosophy:

> —Working with external partners, IKEA developed a Twitter strategy for annual enrollment and for ongoing, broader use. Twitter allows for regular, mini-bursts of information, which made it perfect for sharing important deadlines, highlights, and plan specifics in a way that feels much less overwhelming than your typical enrollment guide. Because the entire Twitter stream is visible at any time, associates and family members could get a quick overview of information and dive in for more detail as they needed or were ready.

SOLUTION/TOOLS USED/RESULTS

Initially, Twitter was used to deliver annual enrollment information, such as: deadlines, information about benefits changes, and links to important information. Twitter was also used to connect associates with valuable, trustworthy resources, both on Twitter and elsewhere.

—IKEA also developed a benefits enrollment extranet that hosted information and decision-support tools and resources. The extranet made use of social media with video and a blog staffed by the company's HR service center. The extranet was also the primary vehicle for advertising the Twitter account, @icoworker.

To better manage the workload, IKEA and the external partners developed an initial batch of 50 tweets that could be automatically published on a regular schedule.

Technology issues turned out to be the easiest to solve. Instead the big obstacle was defining, developing and sharing a new philosophy for to start sharing benefit information more openly. Some of the resistor issues included:

- Concern for co-worker information overload;

- Worry about expanding our audiences and reach;

- Facing trust issues across multiple functions (especially HR, Communications, and IT);

- Addressing different levels of comfort with social media and online technology.

--- IKEA partnered with context communication consulting llc, a consulting firm that specializes in wellness and health care consumerism and Benz Communications.

Tweets were timed using Tweetdeck.

--Beth Gleba, Internal Information Manager, IKEA North America, LLC led a cross-functional team that included the US Benefits Manager, Organizational Design and input from Training and Development. Melissa Whitney, internal Information Specialist, setup the Twitter account and loaded the tweets.

• One-third of U.S. employees made changes to their benefits

• 75% of respondents rated annual enrollment a positive experience

•89% of respondents rated materials instrumental in helping them choose their benefits

• Co-workers said: “Much more interactive than in previous years... this is the way it should be.” “Easy process, nice to see IKEA enter the technological age.” “This was the easiest and most convenient time I've ever had when doing an open enrollment. This goes for both IKEA as well as other companies I've worked for.”

•Over 100 employees were following the retailer’s tweets within a month (the organization feels this is a good start).

• Work has been recognized as an innovative use of Twitter *in Employee Benefits News* and *Workforce Magazine*.

The results above reflect the company’s interest in supporting associate-driven benefits decision-making and in delivering highly valued benefits options.

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