

Public Relations: The Integration of Social Media Tools with Traditional P.R. Strategies

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Abstract

The history of public relations has followed a traditional path up until the introduction of the Internet and the world wide web. As the internet grew, so did different forms of public relations, specifically social media. Social media includes any and all public relations tactics that are user-created and shared freely. Some of these outlets include Facebook, Twitter, audio and video text, all of which are mostly shared and discussed online. Many people have little to no experience with social media, much less the internet, and because of this they are not able to utilize their public relations strategies to their fullest potential. The key idea of this project is to discuss traditional media, social media, and how the combination of the two results in the optimal strategy for large or small businesses.

Introduction

The premise of this Senior Project was to research effective public relations strategies and campaigns from the past, present and future. The focus was mainly on the changes in public relations due to the evolution of social media. In order for smaller businesses, either newly developed or “mom and pops,” to be successful they must realize the demographic they are aiming for and what tactics and tools will best appeal to those demographics. The current generation has been raised using social media, and therefore it is familiar and comfortable for them and they are knowledgeable about how to use it.

The best way to study the effects of social media was through a series of research steps. Research began by investigating the history of marketing and public relations. Since this was a large and rather broad topic, it was necessary to describe public relations beginnings and founders, then focus more so on the changes that have come about in regards to public relations strategies in the past hundred years or so. The next step was to analyze successful strategies and tactics of public relations campaigns.

This topic too was quite broad, so the decision was made to study two locally owned businesses and analyze what types of public relations strategies they’ve used (traditional or more modern models) and how effective those strategies have been. The interviews began with Hathway Technology, a local web development company. The second interview was with the CEO of MindBody, a company that was started locally about ten years ago and who had grown immensely, partially due to their use of social media.

The rationale behind choosing these two companies to compare was to emphasize what a difference using social media tactics can have on a company. MindBody was established in 1998 and began using social media just a few years ago. Hathway Technology on the other hand had just begun to realize the importance of social media, and was still struggling with what tactics would best suit their goals. The main idea was to compare and contrast the small company, the larger company, and the three larger and more well-known companies who were all using different public relations models, all of which worked in combination with social media tools.

The next step was to document, in general, the evolution of social networking due to media such as Twitter and Facebook and to create a pdf/ebook with specific suggestions and steps as to how to utilize these outlets to their full potential. After much research it became apparent that there was a huge market for social media and a ton of information from around the United States, and the world, about how these things are benefitting companies currently and how their future success depends on the start and continued use of such media.

PROBLEM/ THEORIES

The main problem in researching this topic was just how broad it was. Of course, the topic could be narrowed down, but deciding what the key factors to focus on was a bit challenging. Finding information about traditional media ended up being rather easy and while there was a plethora of information about changing social media, there was also too much of it to focus on in just one project. The end decision was to focus on the two most prominent and popular social media websites, Facebook and Twitter, for two reasons. The first reason behind choosing these to focus

on was because of the amount of detailed information about how to utilize these sites very effectively. The second was because they currently have the highest amount of users.

The best theory to frame this project around was the case study theory. Case study theory was the best suited for many reasons. The book *Case Study and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, by Andrew George and Andrew Bennet, argues that "case studies, statistical methods, and formal models are complementary rather than competitive." Case study theory is common in social science and investigates the causes for the results of a study. In order for this theory to be effective, it required limiting variables, collecting data, analyzing the information found and writing about the results. The method of research brought together information taken from a real-life point of view, as well as information collected by other investigators, and compared the findings. The samples found represent the results more effectively and accurately by not being random. The choices for the case study are explained further in detail later.

The results of a case study cannot be generalized to a population outside of the population which is studied. Again, this is all based on theory- nothing can be taken as concrete or not debatable. Case studies can also lose credibility due to the inability to prove that the results of a sample case study can be applied to the general, larger population. However, there were many benefits to using the case study theory.

One of the main benefits of case study theory was its ability to analyze the individual more accurately than larger, more general studies. It also allowed research for multiple solutions for issues in an analytical fashion. It also was extremely convenient in studying issues and events that could be rare and un-researched. The case study method definitely focused on the

psychology of the individual/ group and why they made the decisions they did, as well as how they learned from those decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When people think of public relations, there tends to be some confusion as to what exactly it encompasses. Is it advertising, marketing, a mixture of all three? The reality is public relations is an ever-evolving profession with roots of origin dating back as far as the times of Julius Caesar.

Although it is considered debatable, the earliest traceable roots of public relations are believed to have begun in America in the 18th Century. Many examples were found of publicists who promoted the circus during that time period, and the first use of the term “public relations” is thought to have been in “Yearbook of Railway Literature,” published in 1897.

Evidence has been found in the Middle East, specifically Samaria, by archeologists, of ancient writings promoting different agricultural techniques and practices. Caesar’s speeches to the public promoting himself and discrediting his competitors are also evidence of early public relations efforts. A specific example of this was the emergence of the popular phrase, *Vox populi; vox Dei*, "the voice of the people is the voice of God." This implied the beginnings of people realizing their opinion on public matters was important. These public relations methods were mainly focused on manipulation and coercion, whereas later, public relations became more well thought out and planned.

Beginning in the 15th century, with the creation of the printing press by Gutenberg, various printable pamphlets and papers were created supporting a variety of causes. Pope Gregory the

XV influenced religious leaders, who also recognized the importance of public relations, which instigated a campaign led by the Catholic Church known as “Society for the Propagation of Faith” later credited for the roots of the word propaganda.

Early American colonists used strategic public relations to convince Europeans to come join them in the New World in order to populate the area. In 1773 the Boston Tea Party was staged in order to convince people that they did not need to be ruled by the British government. People began to realize just how important it was to gain public favor and that strategy and implementation were necessary for this to be successful.

College’s like Harvard and King’s College (now known as Columbia University) began using the first news releases in order to gain the attention of the press in the 1600 and 1700s. Even the United States Constitution can be considered a public relations appeal in that it was created with the purpose of easing worries among the population and setting unifying standards for the people to live by. This started with the Federalist Papers in 1787, which were printed papers that supported the implementation of the United States Constitution.

The building of the first railroad in 1865 required similar public relations strategies to entice people to colonize the areas surrounding it, such as efforts like the Boston Tea Party which helped convince people they did not need to be ruled by the British. P.T. Barnum was also famous for promoting the appearances of his circus troops in the 1850’s. The first corporate public

relations department was established by Westinghouse. Their main competitor of the time was the Mutual Life Insurance Company, which implemented advertising and publicity stunts as well. Westinghouse eventually became more well-known and successful.

The turn of the twentieth Century brought about many changes in the field of public relations. In 1900, the Publicity Bureau of Boston was created and to date is considered the nation's first publicity firm. Companies like Ford, and Chicago Edison began using product reviews, films, magazines and pamphlets put into their customers bills to promote their companies. It was also during this time forerunners for public relations, such as Ivy Lee and Edward L. Bernays, emerged.

According to "A Brief History of Public Relations," provided by Rowan University Communications Institute (2000) Edward L. Bernays is considered the "father" of public relations by many. Bernays used manipulation of the psyche to target people through public relations strategies that are still used today. He based his practices on the idea that public relations require the use of ideas from psychology and sociology.

Bernays headed public relations efforts for many big name companies, including the tobacco industry. He was tasked with making cigarettes appear appealing to women, not an easy task in 1929 when cigarettes were smoked mainly by men and the resulting stigma created a masculine association with cigarettes. Bernays used this commonly shared belief to his advantage, and promoted the idea that cigarettes actually denote freedom from the male dominated world and equality of all.

Bernays also was responsible for starting a campaign celebrating the 50th anniversary of the light bulb, considered by many to be the greatest public relations stunt of the century, as well as teaching the first public relations course ever at New York University.

Ivy Lee is also considered by some to have been the founder of public relations. Lee began his career as a newspaper reporter and later went on to begin the public relations firm Parker and Lee in 1905. Although the company disassembled in just four years, Lee still had many major contributions and influences on the world of public relations.

Lee was responsible for writing “Declaration of Principles” in 1906, a document that established the responsibility of public relations practitioners not only to their client, but to the public as well. Lee was also greatly involved in efforts to end the war, which were unfortunately misinterpreted, painting him as unpatriotic and a Nazi sympathizer towards the end of his life.

The Depression Era also brought about changes in public relations. In 1927, Arthur W. Page was hired by AT&T as vice president of public relations under the stipulation that he be allowed to disclose to the public their policy making process and why they chose the policies they did. This emphasized the importance of the corporation working with the public. Franklin Roosevelt boosted his credibility and public favor through his “fireside chats,” nightly broadcasts over the radio where he spoke to the American people about the state of the nation. World War II was not far in the distance at this point.

The U.S. used press releases to alert the public of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. This time also brought about the first widespread use of television publicity and in 1948, the Public Relations Society of America was started. After the war came the Baby Boom

and it would appear that companies finally realized the importance of public relations to their success. Some of examples of this are Tylenol's public relations efforts, through Johnson and Johnson, after six people died from taking their caplets in 1982. In 1989 Exxon started an accidental oil spill, which was the largest of all time until the current BP oil spill in the Gulf which has the potential to be larger, which created huge public relations efforts to improve its image. In 1999 Anheuser-Busch began campaigns to prevent drunk driving.

A Public Relations Primer, by Paula Cohen, discusses the basics of public relations. The main goal of public relations is to bring together companies and their target publics. It is not only used by larger companies and corporations, but can be used by non-profits, individuals and smaller organizations. For instance, a larger company would have the funding to support a marketing, advertising and public relations department, and would pay people to do what is best for the company. A non-profit on the other hand would depend on the help of volunteers, sponsors and donors to contribute to its overall success in the field of public relations. Although they may have a much smaller budget than a larger company, that does not take away from the ability to conduct a successful public relations campaign. though it may impede it.

Public relations is a combination of many fields, cultures and history. Its emergence however is thought to have grown and become popularized even without big companies and businesses growth. It is the use of persuasion, manipulation, coercion and influence to convince large demographics to come to an agreement. It is needed to bring mutual understanding to different groups through unifying messages. As a developing and ever-changing profession, public relations have evolved quite a bit over time. There are specific tactics and strategies for

successful implementation of public relations campaigns that have evolved and stayed true after learning through time from various public relations efforts

The book Effective Public Relations, by Scott Cutlip and Allen H. Center, discusses some methods for effective public relations campaigns. The main focus of successful public relations is the campaign. A successful campaign encompasses everything involved in creating the campaign including the brainstorming, planning, enacting and eventually the final product. But in order to run a successful campaign there are many steps that need to be considered ahead of time. Public relations requires advertising your cause, product, business or idea but it takes more than just advertising these things to make the campaign work.

The backbone of any successful public relations campaign is research. In order to be fully prepared you need to know who your target public is, what it is you're trying to promote and your ability to supply your audience with what they want. There are two types of research that can be used in public relations; primary research and secondary research.

Primary research essentially is research focused solely on the public relations client's wants and needs. This is accomplished many ways including the use of surveys, focus groups, case studies, interviews and observations. Primary research is more "specific" than secondary research. It uses statistics to give you a small, but relatively representative sample of public opinion.

Secondary research on the other hand is based on research that has already been gathered and analyzed. You can find secondary research in a multitude of sources such as the internet, books,

magazines and studies done by corporations you are modeling your public relations strategies around, or potentially competing with. The downfall to secondary research is that it is not as focused and accurate as primary research, though it is much less time-consuming and in many cases a lot less expensive than primary research.

The next step is determining your target audience and knowing what it is they want and how they will perceive the message your efforts portray. It is important to make sure your message is clear for your target audience, but also appealing to potential audiences. Another tactic for success in public relations is to know your competition and determining how to differentiate yourself from them. Knowing your competition and what you can do to set yourself apart from them helps enormously in planning and implementing a campaign. Another key tactic is to know your objectives, as well as your limitations.

A company's mission statement is a good starting ground for developing its public relations message. You must make sure that the objectives and goals you are trying to achieve are compatible with the message the client's want to convey. Your limitations include aspects such as time, money and the number of people who will be assisting in the campaign. Once you've defined your objectives, you can begin to refine your message and strategies.

To refine your message you must consider the objectives you have already determined and use them in the most beneficial manner. Some objectives will not fit in to certain campaigns and to focus on them would be a waste of time. The strategies you develop indicate how you plan to implement your message.

The tactics you choose will help you to achieve the full success of the strategies you choose. The tactics, strategy, objectives and messages must all tie together as much as possible to ensure the success of the campaign. In order to make sure you are properly using your time you should create a timeline for your campaign

A timeline is a good tool to help with organizing your campaign. It helps define when you should implement your strategies and tactics. It also can keep you alert to deadlines for you campaign.

The final steps in a successful campaign are simple: implementing and evaluating it.

Once you have taken all of the steps to create the campaign, the final step is to try to successfully implement it. Just because you have implemented the campaign doesn't mean your work is done.

It still requires careful monitoring, although if you have accomplished the preceding steps successfully before implementing the campaign it will require significantly less monitoring.

Evaluating your results consists of determining whether the campaign was successful, what went wrong or right and how to plan and implement a better campaign in the future.

The general consensus after reviewing literature in regards to this topic was that traditional media, in combination with social media, is the most effective strategy for businesses who hope to market their product/company the most effectively. An issue that came up in multiple articles was the "fear" of technology experienced by the older (45-55+) generation, which inevitably limits their public relations tactics significantly. In turn, many articles discussed the lack of public relations efforts focused specifically on the older generation.

An article titled "The Mature Market: Consumer Trends and U.S. Retail Markets," published by Packed Fact, discusses the misassumption that once people reach older age (55+) they do not need specific marketing strategies aimed at their demographic. In many people's opinion, the older demographics are racially and culturally less diverse than younger generations, making it in fact easier to target specific groups. Their main focus was on the factors of mature market lifestyles, health and wellness, finance and home ownership, market internet and communications tactics and travel, transportation and entertainment.

Another problem discussed in multiple articles was that there is no one organization responsible for controlling social media for companies. In the article "Financial Services for Small Businesses in the U.S.," the writers focused on how there are nearly 26 million small businesses in the United States alone and how they produce over \$9 trillion dollars in revenue annually. The problem they're facing is fragmentation of markets due to size inconsistencies, ownership qualities, geography and industry. The article then focused on these aspects of small businesses in order to determine what they are doing in regards to marketing that is effective, and what they should be doing.

Another article entitled, "Who's in Charge of Social Media?" by Brian Morrissey of Adweek, discussed how different agencies and providers can give business social media aspects that they need, but there isn't one business solely focused on social media. The problem this creates is that businesses can target only so many different aspects- for instance it can be used for customer service, advertising, and finding advocates to support small businesses. This can hold some businesses back from adopting social media because it is too general and lacks focus.

Every company is expected to conduct its marketing strategies how they see fit and/or hire other marketing companies who are familiar with the use of social media to do it for them. The problem many articles discussed is that companies vary in their goals and expectations of what can come from effective public relations. Because of this, a variety of models for effective public relations strategies are necessary on a case-by-case basis.

An article entitled, "Three Marketing Models for Social Media," by Scott T. Ford, discussed three effective public relations strategies utilized by Kodak, Best Buy and Ford. All of these key players are using social media; however they are all using different business models to run their businesses. The models include a centralized system, a combination system or a distributed system of social media.

A centralized model leaves the decisions in regards to marketing up to the "big guys," i.e. the CEO, top executives etc. The problem with having a social-media head that I found was that they may be narrow in their thought process of what would be best for the company and what strategies would be most effective, therefore not utilizing outside sources that could be of benefit. Ford is a company that uses that business model.

A distributed model implements what its name implies- a distribution of marketing and public relations responsibilities across the company in a variety of departments. The main problem I found with this model, which Kodak uses, is that there is a risk of losing the essential message because of a lack of cohesion and focus.

A combination model establishes a group to be in charge of establishing public relations strategies, and then allocates responsibilities to people in different departments. The danger in this is that there is no real regulation of who is responsible for what once the tasks have been delegated, so if work does not get done it is difficult to establish who is to blame. This is the model Best Buy has implemented

Most of the articles found detailed how social media was initially aimed at the younger generation and was welcomingly embraced by them, and how it is slowly but surely infiltrated its way into small businesses as well as large businesses. For instance, the article “Why Social Media is the Next Big Thing,” published by The Business Times, Singapore encompasses the discussions of several professors employed at the University of Nanyang’s Business and Technology School and their opinions on the matter.

And in the article “Facebook, Twitter Phenomenon” written by Jirapan Boonnoon for The Nation of Thailand Newspaper, discusses how Thailand had the highest growth rate of people utilizing social media as of last year. Facebook is considered to be the most powerful medium because of its ability to be customized to what its users are looking for; example: applications. This helps with business when inviting friends and customers, creating a “personal touch” for their clients.

One article, “Niche Focus Group: Social Media is Changing the way we do Business,” published in Biotech Business Week, listed facts about the sheer size of the social media tool Facebook, such as that if Facebook were a country it would be the fourth most populated in the world. It discussed how social media is no longer simply social, but a way for businesses to better improve their interactions with clients. It also discussed the speed at which social media has “exploded” and

how nothing in previous public relations tactics has been as fast and effective as social marketing.

Another issue found in many articles was how if you are not knowledgeable in the field of social media, it can make it a lot harder to find a company that will hire you. In the article “Social Network Imperative; Twitter, Facebook are becoming essential skill sets,” by Alyse Knorr of Cix Newspapers, emphasized the importance of knowing how to utilize social media. The article essentially explained how if you don’t use social media, which has become so commonplace in this generation, that it is considered a hindrance to your ability to contribute to a company if you do not know how to use social networking tools.

It can also be a much more competitive process to get a job in marketing, advertising or public relations without these skill sets. This is because social marketing is extremely cost-effective. It was predicted in this article that the use of social media would only become more and more influential and important to all job fields as time goes on.

In the article “How to get the Word Out; Public relations –Small Business Solutions” by Maria Nguyen she reviewed how public relations must be concise, clever and conservative all at once. With the correct strategies implemented, all small businesses can benefit from public relations. Goals must be clear, such as finding and receiving sales or winning new customers. Even though the economy is in shambles, people are still motivated in better times to spend money so applying public relations strategies now is key to influencing people in the future. The key to this success is a mixture of traditional media and new media.

RESULTS

The majority of the articles read were found on scholarly websites, such as Nexis-Lexis, and through the Kennedy Library research facility. Many portions of books discussed this subject as well, although books published in the past ten years or so did not document the importance of social media as thoroughly as more recent articles. This can be attributed to the fact that social media still can be considered relatively new in the world of public relations and marketing.

Analyzing efforts focused mainly on whether the articles had positive feedback, negative feedback or neutral feedback on the topic. As previously stated, the majority of articles found supported the idea of social media being essential to companies in this day and age. The keywords that were focused on in this project included: public relations; public relations history; social networking; social marketing; strategies in public relations; start-up business; start-up business marketing; start-up business public relations; new business; small business; non-profit; social media; effective public relations strategies.

The reason these terms were particularly focused on were because they covered all aspects of public relations, from its beginnings to more recent times. However, after reading and researching all of the information, the next best step was to interview a local company who had achieved success through the use of social marketing, as well as a start-up company that had not yet begun to realize the importance of the use of social media.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A set of questions were chosen to help achieve the answers this project sought to find. The questions were based, generally, on marketing tactics and how they have adapted since the founding of the companies interviewed. They also focused on how important the companies viewed social media tactics. Finally, the questions asked tried to determine whether the companies interviewed were using social media tactics to

their full potential or if the companies were satisfied with their traditional methods of public relations.

The questions were as follows:

- How would you say your marketing tactics have changed since beginning your business?
- Do you believe social marketing has improved the success of your company and do you think it is necessary, why or why not?"
- How would you say your marketing and public relations tactics set you apart from you competition?
- What do you see changing as far as marketing and public relations efforts go for the future of your company?"

METHODOLOGY

The study began with intense research of the history of public relations, its founders and effective tactics of traditional media. It then went on to research social media tactics being utilized today and why they are important in combination with traditional tactics to effectively conduct a public relations campaign. After doing the initial research, it was important to outline steps for public relations campaigns.

There was no specific set of "rules" for public relations campaigns, however there were many steps that were important to consider before beginning campaigns. The next step in the methodology was carried out through a series of interviews where people of importance within the company were asked the developed research questions. The first company interviewing efforts were focused on was MindBody online, a business management software provider for the health and wellness industry. The best people to speak with about the topic of marketing and the evolution of social media were the head of marketing, Danielle Murphy, as well as the founder and CEO of the company, Rick Stollmeyer.

The second company focused on was Hathway Technology, a web-development company founded by Jesse Dundon, CEO, and Kevin Rice, Sales Director. The final decision was to ask all of the people being interviewed the same questions that were clear, focused, unbiased and were not leading. These methods were consistent with good scientific practices for many reasons. The first principle followed was to ensure that the information gathered was reliable and effective. It was important also to be open to the idea that the research found may not be accepted by everyone who read the study.

Another important step was to interview who would be considered leaders of the organization's chosen. As leaders of said organizations, their status and reliability within the company made them the most important people to interview. This is also contributed to the ability to reproduce the study, as the answers to similar questions would result in similar results.

RESULTS

The interview began by asking the first research question, "How would you say your marketing tactics have changed since beginning your business?" Danielle, Marketing Director for MindBodyOnline, stated that MindBody, did not even begin utilizing social media until 1998-before that their main platform was through the use of LinkedIn and webinars, or a synched web site "walk-through" where clients could have demonstrations of the software from the convenience of their home while having any questions answered. They also used things such as press releases and websites like PRNewswire.

It was Murphy's opinion, when asked the second research question "do you believe social marketing has improved the success of your company and do you think it is necessary, why or why not?" that social media has vastly improved the company's overall success. She attributed this to the fact that the ROI, or return on interest, is hard to track simply through webinar's. When asked the third research question, "how would you say your marketing and public relations tactics set you apart from you competition?" Danielle explained that through the use of social media, the company was able to create what she referred

to as a “nurturing process” taking the potential client from a lead, to a client, and focusing on building more of a community for the client-not just selling a product. It was because of things like social media efforts that she believed MindBody was set apart from competitors. She believed MindBody had established personality and values similar to competition, but that the company culture, conveyed through things like Facebook and Twitter, “trickles down to the client” setting MindBody apart from similar software providers. Rick Stollmeyer conveyed similar sentiments.

When asked the first research question, Mr. Stollmeyer explained that he began his companies “marketing” through the use of traditional public relations efforts including mailers and tradeshow. After the addition of Facebook as a marketing tool, he stated, “people were ready for what we had to offer they just didn’t know it yet.” After being asked the second research question, it was his opinion that social media had also vastly increased the popularity of his company. The example he used was a yoga instructor who hasn’t started a company yet, but simply has the words “yoga” and/or “instructor” on their Facebook. Advertisements are then tailored to fit that person’s interest, and MindBody happened to be a company that utilized those advertisements. This was great for their company because the advertisements appealed to people who had not started a business yet, and it is always better to find clients early rather than to risk them going with another companies software.

When asked the third research questions regarding how MindBody sets itself apart from its competitors, Stollmeyer explained the main marketing tactic they used to utilize social media was the use of sales associates within the company. The use of sales associates, whose job is to research online and generate new leads, was modeled after his partner and CEO Bob Murphy’s previous experience with a real estate company. Mathematically they had determined that for every 100 leads generated, eight of those leads would turn in to demonstrations, and four of them would become hard sales. This resulted in a 4%

conversion rate- all due to the utilization of social media tools like Facebook, Twitter, websites, webinar's and email blasts.

As far as what Mr. Stollmeyer saw changing for MindBody in the future in regards to social media tactics, he definitely wanted to increase their efforts to utilize as many of those outlets as possible. He is still hoping to implement more "viral techniques" accessing previously inaccessible clientele, and to blur the line between consumers and the business. He believes that Facebook had a " huge wave of adoption, which then receded," he believes the reason for its popularity for the younger generation is the lack of worry about privacy issues. As a generation who " lives out loud" as he stated, he believes the success of social media and the adoption of it by the older generation lays mostly in the younger generations hands.

The CEO and Sales Manager of Hathway Technology, a web-development company started in 2008, had their own opinions when asked the same questions MindBody CEO Rick Stollmeyer and Marketing Director Danielle Murphy had been asked.

The sales manager and co-CEO of Hathway Technology, Kevin Rice responded in regards to the first research question that in the beginning of Hathway Technology, 100% of their marketing tactics were centered on the use of Craigslist. They would use paid advertising and online directories to establish all of their leads. The main website they used was Joomla.org, an open-source code website that gave them access to traffic from different search engines. Although Kevin admitted the importance of social media to the company's success, he did not think that it had helped Hathway Technology generate many leads after being asked the second research question about the impact of social media thus far on their company. The example he used was the use of Facebook by company employees. Although Facebook can target people's friends, it is limited in that it only reaches out to people you are already friends with.

His response was that their company does not especially stand apart from other companies at this point due to a lack of funding, revenue and an unorganized budget when he was asked the third research questions. As far as their marketing and public relations tactics go in the future, he hopes to balance sales and social media better. He does think that social media has been very important for brand awareness of the websites they have built and hopes to emphasize cold-calling techniques and pay for billboards when their time and budget allow it. Mr. Jesse Dundon, another CEO, agreed with some Mr. Rice's points.

According to Mr. Dundon when asked the first research question, "We started marketing an entirely different business model, then progressed to using Craigslist and rss keywords to follow up with people." After they began to realize this wasn't a very broad market, they then started "community based marketing" which involved them in developer communities within Joomla, the open-source platform they use to develop their websites, and utilizing their discussion forums. Essentially, this online marketing (where they would help other developers as well as the software developers) helped build their reputations with developers. This resulted in them sending business to Hathway Technology when it didn't fit their ideal business or customer customization requests.

In Dundon's opinion, after being asked the second research question, was that social media is more of an "image tool" for the company- more of a Public Relations effort, used to sell social services to some of their clients. This is why it is important to them "to establish presence in our particular market since we have more of a niche within business to business expertise, while social media has more of a long term effect and allows us to saturate other outlets." The main problem they faced with social media was that most of the people being exposed to the social media tactics they used to promote themselves were already their friends and family. "If we had

a product that applied to a larger market segment, then our social media would be more effective i.e. a widget or an iphone application.”

According to Dundon, “It really comes down to branding- a lot of competitors in the same niche aren’t very well branded with a recognizable logo and icon.” To have that as your corporate identity which is then translated across your marketing collateral, website, Facebook fan page and Twitter is the ultimate goal of social media, in Dundon’s opinion.

In regards to the third research questions, Dundon believed that a lot of their competitors aren’t really involved in design and that is what sets Hathway Technology apart from competitors, especially in an industry dealing with assembling open source software that already exists. The main problem was that anyone with a moderate amount of skill could do that part of it fairly well. Dundon considered it an advantage to have coders as well, as he believes it differentiates their brand and allowing them to effectively offer branding services to their clients. The main benefit of social media for Dundon was,” it helps your brand reach out among multiple channels whereas if u didn’t utilize it you could never hope to reach those people.”

Overall, the experts agreed that the success of public relations campaigns rests on the ability to integrate new social media tactics with traditional public relations tactics. After having detailed the key steps and tactics to ensuring a successful traditional public relations campaign, it was important to discuss some of the more popular and well known social media outlets and to explain how they are most commonly used. Facebook is considered by some to be the “mother” of social media.

Facebook can be used from a social marketing standpoint in one of two ways or both-through the creation of groups and fan pages. A fan page typically encompasses something that many people like,

such as a musical artist or group. You can become a fan of one of these pages, which will show up on your Facebook profile, providing marketing for the group that has asked you to be their fan. Simply stated, it uses your network to influence friends you already have on Facebook who can influence people outside of your direct network- impacting huge numbers of people. Facebook groups however are used for smaller interactions (5,000 or less email blasts can be sent out to Facebook friends.)

In order to establish a “group” on Facebook you must assign an” administrator,” or the person who initiated the group. This makes groups a bit more personal, as opposed to fan pages where there is no specific administrator. Facebook also uses “status updates” though it is not the main focus of the website, like Twitter.

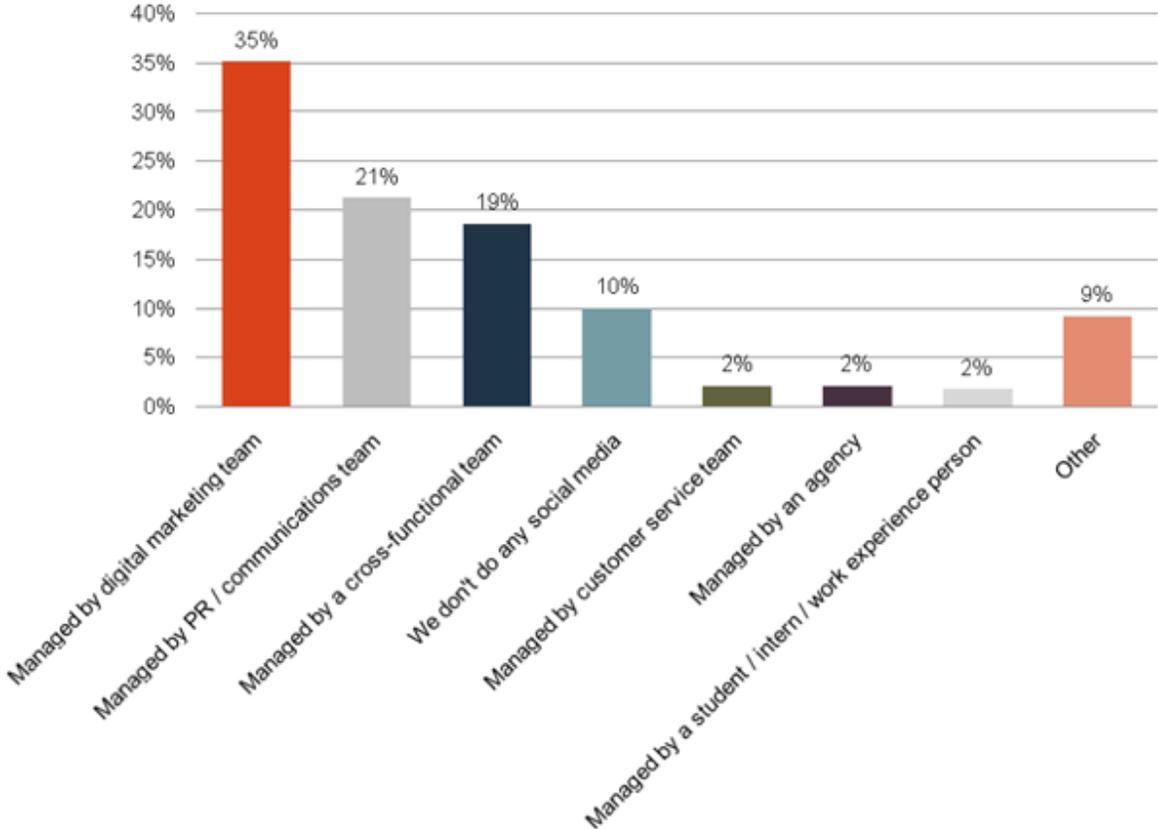
Twitter is a huge social media source being utilized by over 2.6 million people worldwide. Twitter essentially is a combination of various online communication efforts including email, chats such as Skype or AIM. However, “tweets” are limited to 140 characters per tweet. Tweets are status updates, which can involve links, discussions about controversial topics, or back and forth conversation between “tweeters.” The obvious benefits to using Twitter as a public relations tool includes the huge number of people present on Twitter-allowing you to access people outside of your easily accessible demographics- increasing your networking abilities vastly.

DISCUSSION

After conducting the interviews, I had to tie these results back to the models used by larger, hugely successful companies Kodak, Best Buy and Ford. According to an article by Christina Warren posted on Mashable.com, the social media guide, social media is a natural extension of both marketing and public relations. In a study of social media marketing and public relations

conducted in 2009 by EConsultancy, 35% of companies managed their social media resources under the digital marketing team. PR/communications departments managed 21% of respondents, with 19% saying that social media was managed by a cross-functional team.

Figure 11: Do you have resources dedicated to your social media activity?



So why does this matter? How should we know which model to use, when three huge companies are all using different models and tactics and are all experiencing success? What was determined was that what department/model social media falls under is not what is the most important, but rather ensuring that all departments are working cohesively and each department knowing what their role in social media implementation is what leads to the highest amount of success in any social media campaign.

CONCLUSION

This project was significant for many reasons. The first reason would be the importance of identifying the differences public relations has gone through in recent years and throughout the entire duration of its existence. Even before the term public relations was “coined” people were utilizing the efforts of manipulation, strategy, coercion and convincing people and groups of the importance of a cause. While traditional public relations today has much more structure and specific methods of implementation, it was apparent the use of public relations has been essential to the success of companies and people for many years.

The second reason this project was significant is because it proved that while public relations has changed so much, some people and companies are still “in the dark” about the capabilities of social media. Even a web development firm (Hathway Technology) who one might assume would be very well-versed on the use of social media is not utilizing it to its full potential. Larger companies however have, in general, realized the importance of social media efforts and because of such they have experienced great success. A third reason this project was significant was because it also proved that there is not one, set model to follow in regards to a company or individual’s public relations strategy.

Of the three larger companies researched, none were using the exact same model, yet all three experienced success. This is a confusing issue for smaller businesses and individuals hoping to promote themselves or their product because it is difficult to determine which strategy would best suit them. The overall consensus however was that regardless of the model chosen, social media is imperative to moving forward with the future of public relations and not being “left in the dust” by competitors.

From here, there are certain steps that should be taken. In terms of the Public Relations profession, it is Public Relations, Marketing and sales people's responsibility to stay up to date with the constantly changing internet and social media tactics and tools available. It is also those people, and company departments that employ those peoples, responsibility to keep their bosses, CEO'S and executives informed as well. There are many factors necessary to keep a business running and successful and the fact of the matter is that higher ups in companies may not have the time to learn these things on their own.

Another crucial step is bringing awareness to smaller "mom and pops" and making information and instructions on how to use social media readily available and accessible to the less technologically savvy generation. Technology obviously has a fear factor for those who are unfamiliar with it, so the most logical step is to make using social media as simple and effective as possible to reduce those fears.

To further the understanding of the issues discussed within this paper, people must accept and embrace change and realize social media is going nowhere but up, so they might as well enjoy the ride.

This Senior Project was valuable to me for multiple reasons. It gave me the opportunity to learn the history of public relations in detail, something that maybe I should have known but did not realize was so extensive until this project. It was significant as well because the rise of social media has occurred during my lifetime, particularly becoming popular as I entered college. This is significant because it gave me a "one-up" on the competition, i.e. other less tech-savvy individuals competing in the current job market. It was also valuable because it gave me the

opportunity to analyze the methods of successful businesses and to compare their tactics and similarities.

This project was valid because the information found coincided with the information I obtained during my research. It is generally agreed upon, in the articles I read and analyzed, that the combination of traditional media and social media results in the optimal results in a public relations campaign. Although there is a significant amount of literature about the subject, it was important to speak with people one on one to confirm that it is not just author's opinions but actual fact. I gained valuable knowledge about the marketing tactics of big, and small, businesses and I also gained experience writing an extensive research paper.

I believe I also gained an appreciation for the field of public relations. It is not easy to plan a successful campaign, much less to keep up to date with the changing social media tactics.

However, after conducting this research I do agree that it is necessary to any companies' success to embrace the changes within public relations and utilize them to their full effectiveness.

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Senior Project 2010

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