

Public Relations: The Use of Social Media as a Tool for Increasing Awareness about
College Club Sports Teams

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Abstract

Most American universities have club sports teams, which are teams not housed by the university's athletic department or sanctioned by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). This paper addresses the ways in which social media can be used as a public relations tool for increasing the awareness about college club sports teams. This particular study looks at the Men's Club Lacrosse Team of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo as an example of what social media tools can be used as a form of public relations to increase awareness about the team.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

This study focuses on the various ways in which social media websites are being used as public relations tools by the sports industry and how the development and maintenance of such social media websites is crucial for the success of college club teams in regards to increasing their awareness among college students. With today's constant technological advances, social media platforms are changing traditional sports public relations tactics, giving practitioners new ways to reach desired audiences.

“Ten years ago an athletic department might have been limited to phone calls or direct mailings...but now, athletic departments are expected to engage fans as much as they can and that often means the use of Twitter, Facebook, Foursquare or any other new social media platform out there” (Talty, 2011).

This particular study will use California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo's Men's Club Lacrosse Team as the primary source for demonstrating the following: Through the use of the Diffusion Theory applied via social media outlets, college club sports teams have the capability to increase their awareness among targeted audiences.

Background of the Problem

Connecting with fans has been an effective tactic for professional sports teams in regards to building and maintaining a consistent fan base, which goes hand in hand with the concept of awareness. With the recent development of self-promoting outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter, sports teams have the ability to establish an online connection with fans, and potential fans, while going beyond traditional marketing strategies. By

building unique fan-organization relationships and awareness through the dynamic of information flow encompassed within social media communication, social media websites create an “accessible team” that becomes “humanized” through the social media content (Ballouli, 2010, p. 396).

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo’s Men’s Lacrosse Team is one of the university’s twenty-five club teams, who receive little, if any, media coverage from on-campus entities due to the already high number of varsity sports teams at Cal Poly. Since media coverage is crucial in the process of creating awareness, there is an urge to find alternative methods to gain students attention.

Purpose of the Study

By studying the impact and development of social media websites pertaining to increasing awareness about sports teams, one can apply the information found to collegiate club teams. Establishing a solid foundation on social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, would give the Cal Poly Men’s Lacrosse Team the opportunity to spread the word about their organization and get students to engage in interaction with the team and the sport. Therefore, recognizing the importance of the use of social media in sports public relations efforts is imperative to understanding the potential success of increasing awareness, about college club sports teams.

Setting for the Study

This study will be completed with the use of data collection and interpretation at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo as a Senior Project.

Interviews will be conducted with three experts in the following fields concerning

the topic: public relations professional, social media professional, and former college club sport athlete. These experts will be asked various interview questions designed to detail the ways in which social media is impacting public relations efforts in regards to increasing awareness about college club sports teams. Each interviewee will be asked the same set of questions in order to obtain adequacy within the data representation.

Research Questions

The following research questions were created to demonstrate the role of social media in public relations, especially within the sports industry, and more specifically, within the realm of college club sports.

1. How does social media impact public relations efforts with college club sports teams?
2. Why does social media impact public relations efforts?
3. What types of social media are currently being used in promoting college club sports teams?
4. How does one develop social media for college club sports teams?
5. Who manages these social media websites?
6. How can one measure the success of college club sports teams regarding social media?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are presented to the reader to clarify common topics within the study and assist in further knowledge in understanding social media's role as a public relations tool for increasing awareness about college club sports teams.

Awareness: part of a persuasive campaign, either an educational or public awareness campaign; main goals of such campaigns attempt to educate people or advocate a behavioral change (Bobbitt & Sullivan, 2009, p. 2).

College club sport: a recognized student organization formed by individuals with a common interest in a sport activity that exists to promote, develop interest, and/or compete in that particular way. Clubs may be instructional, recreational, competitive, or any combination thereof and are not housed by the university or the NCAA (Student Life & Leadership at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo).

Diffusion Theory: a belief that the power of the mass media rests in their ability to provide information; individuals who act upon that information then influence the actions of others in their peer group or society (Guth & Marsh, 2012, p. 141).

Social Media: online technologies and practices that allow people to share information and opinions. They can take many different forms, including text, images, audio, and video. Social media include blogs, wikis, online social networks, and more (Guth & Marsh, 2012, p. 560).

Two-way communication: the method on which public relations is based. It involves sending out information to publics in addition to receiving information from publics (Bobbitt & Sullivan, 2009, p. 2).

Varsity Sport: a team housed by the university's athletic department that competes in NCAA competition (Student Life & Leadership at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes a background of the study, a purpose of the study, and a definition of terms useful to the reader. Chapter 2 will review the current literature

regarding the utilization of social media in public relations in relation to the sports industry. Chapter 3 will outline the methodology of the study. Chapter 4 will summarize the responses from the interviews in the data collection of the experts in the fields of public relations, social media and college club sports teams. Chapter 5 will conclude the project with a summary of the study and include recommendations for future professionals studying the use of social media as a public relations tool for increasing the awareness about college club sports teams.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Impact of Social Media on Sports PR Efforts

The use of social media sites have become increasingly popular in public relations practices, changing the ways in which the public relations profession operates, allowing practitioners to reach out and engage their publics in conversation (Eyrich, Padman & Sweetser, 2008). Research indicates that, of those who participated, 73 percent of public relations practitioners “believed the emergence of blogs and social media had changed the way their organizations (or their clients) communicate” (Wright & Hinson, 2009). According to Dwyer (2008), “communicators would be remiss in not at least familiarizing themselves with social media.” It’s vital for organizations to tap into this medium because the use of social media in public relations shows “no signs of slowing down anytime soon” (Dwyer, 2008).

Among those utilizing social media as part of their public relations plans are professional and college sports teams as well as the individual athletes on these teams. Social media is being strategically used as an opportunity to attract a large online following. “The teams that emphasize social media practices gain a mobilized captive audience receptive to marketing messages” (Moore, 2011). These messages can range from game scores and statistics to player interviews to athlete recruitment. According to Mario Mercurio, Director of Basketball Administration for Xavier men’s basketball program, social media is “what everyone is moving towards and you have to be where your fans are, you have to be easily accessible” (Talty, 2011).

Unfortunately, however, the literature lacks sufficient research on how social

media is impacting public relations efforts specific to college club teams, such as the Cal Poly Men's Lacrosse Team.

Why Social Media Impacts Sports PR Efforts

Public relations implements a method of two-way communication in which an organization receives information in addition to delivering information to its various publics (Bobbitt, 2009, p.2). Social media is considered the modern vehicle for that two-way communication, constantly connecting audiences, consumers, and fans to their favorite brands and celebrities (Ballouli & Hutchinson, 2010). Although, there is no specific literature pertaining to this trend in regards to college club sports teams, it is relevant to recognize why social media impacts public relations efforts within the field of professional sports.

Social media “is providing this new dialogue that is counterintuitive to the basic tenets of marketing,” said Amy Martin, marketing executive, social media consultant and former Phoenix Suns digital-media director. “Fans are beginning to expect their favorite teams and athletes to communicate via these channels” (Ballouli & Hutchinson, 2010). According to a Sports Illustrated article, the Phoenix Suns are “hailed as one of the most media-savvy teams in sports” (Wertheim, 2011). Martin noted this success to the ways in which social media creates a more “accessible” organization, where fan messages are being promptly attended to, and people are given “behind the scenes” points of view that overall “humanize” a team and a brand (Ballouli & Hutchinson, 2010).

For public relations and marketing, the Internet and social media are “creating a

world in which audiences select the information they want, rather than wait for it to be delivered,” opening the door to unlimited audiences (Failla, 2008). Social media sites allow “people [to] create links to others who are similar to them, or whose contributions they find interesting” (Lerman & Ghosh, 2010). More than that, social media sites are particularly well suited for sports, an industry built around “real-time events with undetermined outcomes.” Data recorded from Super Bowl XLV revealed as many as 4,000 tweets per second being sent out on Twitter via fans watching the game. In addition to interacting with the game, fans are able to converse with the athletes through social media. “Fans tweet athletes messages; when they get a response, it’s the modern equivalent of an autograph” (Wertheim, 2011).

Social media is enhancing the traditional public relations two-way communication method, allowing sports teams to build relationships that establish loyal fan bases (Talty, 2011).

Types of Social Media Being Used in Sports PR

The wide range of social media sites on the web provides evidence for just how popular these sites are among Internet users, but sports marketing experts point to Twitter as being the most effective tool for building a strong fan allegiance. “Twitter creates an interactive dialogue, with messages not only flowing from the team, but from everybody else who tweets about it.” Peter Stringer, interactive media director for the Boston Celtics, named Twitter “his prime source for finding and sharing sports-related content. The large appeal to Twitter may be the “strong sense of community [it] tends to create around the common interest of its sports-fan users” (Schley, 2011). “Fans love to participate- they make predictions about what will happen next or who will win,

constantly updating their opinions through “hashtags.”” When organizations converse through Twitter “hashtag threads,” there is an opportunity to reach thousands in one place at one time, while simultaneously increasing awareness (Marti, 2012). Twitter also offers a unique method for spreading information from user to user, referred to as a *retweet* (Lerman, 2010). Through *retweets*, an organization’s message can reach more than just its primary *followers*; *followers* of the primary *followers* are also reached, increasing the flow of information. Additionally, the dynamic of information flow provides users with real-time feedback and a “more personalized stream of news” (Schley, 2011).

Another social media platform playing a large role in sports public relations, boasting over 500 million active users who spend over 700 billion hours a month on the site, is Facebook (Pronschinske & Walker, 2012). Facebook enables consumers to “interact with brands as an extension of face-to-face interaction” while enhancing brand and image communication through content public relations (status updates, photographs, videos, links, etc.) Through Facebook, fans are given the opportunity to directly upload content to a team’s wall, comment on a team’s status, or use the “like” button as a means of interaction. “These types of interactions allow sports entities to establish authentic relationships with target markets while also enhancing and reinforcing a strong brand presence” (Wallace & Wilson, 2011).

Unfortunately, there is not an abundance of literature outlining the types of social media platforms that are being used by college club sports, but the University of North Carolina developed one of the first online college social networking sites for club and intramural sports. Kevin Schwartz, former general manager of UNC’s The Daily Tar Heel, highlighted the difficulty university newspapers have in covering the large number

of varsity sports on campus; he noted it would be about impossible to cover club and intramural sports as well, but, he argues, that doesn't mean those teams should be ignored (Cloninger, 2009).

Developing Social Media for College Club Sports Teams

While the literature on developing social media sites only provides examples of sports teams at the professional level, the ideas presented are of importance to the sports world in general.

“In contrast to larger institutions, [smaller universities] typically garner less national media exposure even if they develop successful athletic programs” (Lee, Miloch, Kraft & Tatum, 2008). This is where social media can play a role, and teams looking to benefit within this arena “need to recognize Facebook and Twitter as assets on par with traditional outlets” (Moore, 2011).

When developing social media for a sports team, Aaron Moore, assistant professor of public relations specializing in sports media relations at Rider University, identifies three key factors for creating a successful social media presence: (1) build a base, (2) use the tools, and (3) make it fun. Building a base consists of making it simple for fans to become a follower. According to Erin Swartz, Minnesota Vikings marketing manager, helping fans get on Facebook and to the team's page through kiosks at events begins the campaign (Moore, 2011). Second, using social media as a tool means knowing what works and what doesn't work for each media site- yes, each site is used differently. Swartz says Facebook posts need to be kept to a minimum, to no more than three official posts per week, so fans maintain a sense of control without thinking teams are spamming them. Twitter, on the other hand, is “meant to be intrusive” with regular

tweets (Moore, 2011). Third, social media should serve as a form of entertainment for fans in which they can respond to posts, vote in polls, and answer trivia questions. “This freedom [to communicate with teams] attracts fans, and in turn fosters the organic communication that keeps them engaged and coming back to games” (Moore, 2011).

Social Media Management for Club Sports Teams

Findings from the literature reveal a gap in the documentation about the people in charge of managing social media sites for college club sports teams. However, literature does recognize that there is no “national governing body for all club sports” equivalent to the NCAA. “Most club teams operate largely outside the purview of the university athletic department,” functioning without an official communications department as well as taking on the task of raising their own money for uniforms, and hotel and travel arrangements (Pennington, 2008).

Measuring the Success of College Club Sports Teams Regarding Social Media

Social media consultant, Amy Martin, emphasizes “every sports team should be involved in social media in some form or another (Ballouli, 2010). But being involved also means tracking success with social media because why use it if it’s not providing benefits? According to Martin, brands should identify and track at least “two key performance indicators each in the categories of volume, engagement, and conversion,” which are variables such as number of fans or followers, and the amount of time a fan spends online with a brand.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter will discuss the methods of data collection and provide information about data sources, presentation of the data and various limitations.

Data Sources

For this study, experts in the fields of social media, public relations, and the Cal Poly Men's Club Lacrosse Team were chosen and asked a series of questions using a single questionnaire. Each interview contains questions relating to the original research questions used to convey the use of social media as a public relations tool for increasing awareness about college club sports teams.

In addition to the interviews, this study will use data from the Cal Poly Men's Lacrosse team's Facebook page and Twitter account from January 2013 to March 2013. User activity, in the forms listed below, from the team's two social media sites will be tracked and examined:

- Number of new Facebook page "likes"
- Number of new "followers" on Twitter
- "Retweets" and "Favorites" on Twitter
- Facebook "reach"
- Facebook "engaged users"

Participants

The social media expert interviewed was Andrew Baggarly, sports journalist and Insider for the San Francisco Giants. The public relations expert was Jennifer Saxon, Communications Manager at MINDBODY, a software company based out of San Luis

Obispo. The expert on the Cal Poly Men's Lacrosse Team was Matt Graupmann, former Cal Poly Men's Lacrosse attackman for four years.

Interview Design

Each of the experts were asked the following questions and probes as part of the data collection for the study:

1. How would you describe the ways in which sports teams are currently using social media? Please give an example of a sports team that has been successful in using social media.
2. What types of social media are being used to promote college sports teams?
3. What is the most important aspect of social media? How can it be used to increase the awareness of a sports team?
4. In your opinion, how and why is social media impacting the promotion of sports teams? Please provide an example.
5. How does one develop social media sites for college club sports teams? Please give examples of the tactics that can be utilized in developing such sites.
6. How does one manage a social media site for a college club sports team? What are the best practices in social media site maintenance?
7. How would you measure the success of a college club sports team in regards to social media? Please provide examples.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study was a combination of interviews with experts and statistics from the Cal Poly Men's Lacrosse Team's Facebook page and Twitter

account. The interviews were administered during February 2013 and each interviewee was asked a series of questions from the same questionnaire based off of the original research questions pertaining to the use of social media as a public relations tool for increasing awareness about college club sports teams.

Data Presentation

Due to the busy daily schedules and out of town locations of two of the experts, two of the three interviews were conducted via e-mail, in which the questions were written out and the interviewees typed out their responses. The third expert was interviewed in person using a standard audio recorded. The interview was then transcribed into written notes.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study because of the amount of time available for research and data collection. California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo operates on a quarter system, comprised of three trimesters that are each ten weeks long. This study was constrained to one quarter, limiting extensive research.

Delimitations

Due to the time constraints there were also delimitations to the study. First, since there was a limited amount of time to conduct interviews, only three interviewees were selected to participate in data collection. All respondents were selected based on their positions within certain fields pertaining to the topic of this study, and the data is reflective of their personal opinions and their stance on their personal qualifications to

answer the questions. Second, the Cal Poly Men's Lacrosse team is only currently present on two social media sites, Facebook and Twitter. Both sites were selected to be examined and analyzed.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Chapter 4 will provide a more detailed description of the experts that were interviewed in the study and summarize the main talking points each respondent gave as answers to the questionnaire. The data will be presented in the form of direct quotations or paraphrases of the responses. The answers will then be examined, analyzed, and compared to the original research questions and the existing literature on social media as a public relations tool for club sports teams as reviewed in Chapter 2.

Description of Participating Respondents

Social Media

The social media expert interviewed for this study was Andrew Baggarly, journalist and beat reporter for Comcast SportsNet Bay Area, a regional sports network owned by NBC Universal that mainly serves cable outlets throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Andrew currently works for CSN Bay Area as the “Insider” for the San Francisco Giants. He covers different aspects of the team through his blog and Twitter account as well as writes and broadcasts for CSNBayArea.com’s GiantsTalk page, *SportsNet Central*, *Chronical Live*, and *Giants Pregame and Postgame Live*. Previous to this, Andrew worked for the *Riverside Press Enterprise* and served as a beat writer for eight years with the *Oakland Tribune* and the *San Jose Mercury News*.

Public Relations

The public relations expert selected for this study was Jennifer Saxon, Communications Manager at MINDBODY, Inc., a software company based out of San Luis Obispo, California. Before working at MINDBODY, Jennifer graduated from

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo with a degree in speech communication and also studied communications for one year in Uppsala, Sweden. From there, she began her career on the east coast of the United States in media relations, working at George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate, the International Spy Museum, and the National Academies' Marian Koshland Science Museum. She later returned to San Luis Obispo to serve as an account manager for Barnett Cox & Associates, a public relations firm.

College Club Sports

The expert on college club sports, notably the Cal Poly Men's Lacrosse Team, was Matt Graupmann, recent business administration graduate of California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo. Graupmann played lacrosse at Poway High School in San Diego, California before becoming an attackman for the Cal Poly Men's Lacrosse Team during his college years. He was noted as one of the big-name players in the Men's Collegiate Lacrosse Association (MCLA) in the 2012 season, leading his team to the National Championship game. Graupmann received many honors throughout his lacrosse career, including 2012 Honorable Mention MCLA All-American player, 2012 Team Offensive MVP, and 2012 WCLL 2nd Team All-Conference player. He served as the team's vice president for two years and president his senior year, taking on duties such as team budget coordination, travel and field reservations, and on and off field leadership.

Questionnaire

Each expert was asked to respond to the following questions and probes regarding social media as a public relations tool for raising awareness about college club sports teams. Some experts were limited in their responses to certain questions because they did

not consider themselves qualified to respond properly. The questions were as follows:

1. How would you describe the ways in which sports teams are currently using social media? Please give an example of a sports team that has been successful in using social media.

Question #1 was designed to investigate how the selected experts see social media being used in the industry of sports. The question asked for an example to give readers concrete evidence for understanding that sports teams are actually using social media.

- Andrew Baggarly: “Any way to engage fans is a good thing, whether it's promotions, marketing or in-game information. A lot of it has to happen organically, though, and I'd wager Giants fans are more Twitter-active than any fan base in the country. The #RallyZito phenomenon was a sight to behold last year” (Appendix A).

- Jennifer Saxon: “Just like with any other PR tool, how you use social media really depends on your goal and who your audience is, and whether or not that channel speaks to your audience more than any other channel. For a sports team, social [media] is a really great way to have brief but ongoing contact with their target audience, and it's a great way to share fun stuff” (Appendix B).

- Matt Graupmann: “I feel that most professional sports teams have a presence in all of the major social media sites (Facebook, Twitter). I think that social media can be very powerful tool to connect with fans. Specifically, I follow the San Diego Chargers on Twitter. They do a great job of updating fans on trades and news with the team” (Appendix C).

2. What types of social media are being used to promote college sports teams?

Question #2 was asked in order to obtain a brief list of the different types of social

media sites that are being used most often by sports teams as well as what each of those sites provide for a sports team.

- Andrew Baggarly: Andrew didn't feel qualified to specifically answer questions about college club teams since his only work has been to cover teams associated with Major League Baseball (Appendix A).
- Jennifer Saxon: "I'm definitely thinking Facebook and Twitter. It will depend on the team's audience...I'd also put YouTube in there for sports teams because you want to be able to show videos of games, behind the scenes with player reactions or players getting ready for a game...I'd say Pinterest and Instagram are more visual, and I'm sure there are visuals for lacrosse, but it's whether or not there is enough content and consistent content that will determine using that channel" (Appendix B).
- Matt Graupmann: "Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the major social media outlets I personally use. I follow athletic teams and players on each of those platforms" (Appendix C).

3. What is the most important aspect of social media? How can it be used to increase the awareness of a sports team?

Question #3 was created to get an idea of what is special about social media, meaning why it is different from traditional forms of public relations and marketing tactics. This question was also included to help readers understand one of the possible functions of social media: generating awareness for a sports team.

- Andrew Baggarly: "The authenticity of interactions. To me getting a question answered by Sergio Romo or even a retweet should mean more than just getting an autograph. Anything that helps fans connect with players helps them

connect with the team and its brand” (Appendix A).

- Jennifer Saxon: It’s public. You have to remember that it is a much more immediate, public interaction that you have with your audience, um, and it’s a very two-way street. So people will use social media as a customer service tool in addition to a story-telling tool” (Appendix B).

- Matt Graupmann: “I would say user retention and interaction. Having fan giveaways and question and answer sessions with players let fans and followers feel like they are connected with the team” (Appendix C).

4. In your opinion, how and why is social media impacting the promotion of sports teams? Please provide an example.

Question #4 was designed to discover what the experts think about social media’s impact on the promotion of sports teams, including insights about the specifics of how these sites are making a difference and why.

- Andrew Baggarly: “People want to be engaged and feel like they are part of a community, which is why, even though it's so much more enjoyable in many ways to watch games on TV (replays, no line for the restroom, etc.), fans still pay increasingly large sums to be there in person. Social media is just another way to reinforce that community” (Appendix A).

- Jennifer Saxon: “I think, not personally knowing anything about the promotion of sports teams, that sports teams have always have been very much about the team and you’re affiliation with the team...I think social media is a more individual loyalty based thing that can be built if you use it in less of a bullhorn, announcement kind of way” (Appendix B).

- Matt Graupmann: “Basically, these websites have become inseparable

from people of our generation. So of course any sports promotion on social media could only be helpful, just because of the mass amounts of eye traffic that is available to them. For example, many of my high school friends had no idea as to how my lacrosse seasons at Cal Poly were going until they began following the new Twitter account. After that, I would receive many text messages of congratulations, or, sadly, condolences, after various games during my senior season...The power of social media promotion cannot be underestimated” (Appendix C).

5. How does one develop social media sites for college club sports teams? Please give examples of the tactics that can be utilized in developing such sites.

Question #5 was created to get an understanding about the steps one should take when developing social media sites for a college club sports team. The probe following the question aimed to narrow the answers to specific tactics that can be implemented in the development of social media sites.

- Andrew Baggarly: Andrew didn’t feel qualified to specifically answer questions about college club teams since his only work has been to cover teams associated with Major League Baseball (Appendix A).
- Jennifer Saxon: “Your goal is to get more people involved and get more people to “like” your page. If that happens, more people find out about your events, and thus, more people have the opportunity to come...What would be fun would be to mention people on Twitter or Facebook for “liking” you; just getting people engaged to feel like they’re superstars would be a great tactic” (Appendix B).
- Matt Graupmann: “If you create a professional look on the page I think

users will take the page more seriously. With Sports teams, its great to have pictures, schedules, and other outlets to engage users. Having regular status updates allows followers to track the teams progress with ease” (Appendix C).

6. How does one manage a social media site for a college club sports team? What are the best practices in social media site maintenance?

Question #6 was asked to gain insight on the ways in which experts in their respective fields would manage a social media site for a college club team once it has been established. The question also focused on highlighting management practices that experts deemed useful when operating social media sites.

- Andrew Baggarly: Andrew didn’t feel qualified to specifically answer questions about college club teams since his only work has been to cover teams associated with Major League Baseball (Appendix A).
- Jennifer Saxon: “Aside from creating content, you have to know how you’re going to respond to the posts you don’t ever want to get... You have to be aware of that, and in the event of the bad posts, you need to have some sort of crisis communications plan set in place just in case. Really identify what you want to get out of social media and what you’re comfortable doing on it” (Appendix B).
- Matt Graupmann: “I think keeping a well-updated site is important. All up-to-date news should be on the site along with updated rosters, pictures, and schedules” (Appendix C).

7. How would you measure the success of a college club sports team in regards to social media? Please provide examples.

Question #7 was designed to investigate how experts in the fields of social media, public relations, and college club sports would measure the success of a team in terms of its use of social media.

- Andrew Baggarly: Andrew didn't feel qualified to specifically answer questions about college club teams since his only work has been to cover teams associated with Major League Baseball (Appendix A).
- Jennifer Saxon: Your goal, I'd imagine for a sports team, is to get people to attend the games or the events or get more people trying out for the team, or things like that... You can always track that by, you know, asking people, "how did you find out about us?," or maybe just having events you only promote on social media. That way, you can say, the number of people who came can be tied to that. Establishing activities like meet and greet with players or trivia contests where winners get to be the equivalent of a bat boy for the next game or something allows for responses. The response you get from those types of contests will give you measurements and metrics that you can look at" (Appendix B).
- Matt Graupmann: "Using social media analytics could be a good measure of metrics. Facebook allows users to track views and interactions with fans. On Twitter when people 'tweet' at the page, the admin should try and interact with them when possible" (Appendix C).

Research Questions

For this project, the following six research questions were formulated in order to

determine the impact of social media on public relations in the sports industry, how to develop and manage a social media site for a team, and how to measure success via these sites. The questions were used to collect expert and professional opinion from recent literature.

Research question 1: How does social media impact public relations efforts with college club sports teams?

- According to Mario Mercurio, Director of Basketball Administration for Xavier men's basketball program, social media is "what everyone is moving towards and you have to be where your fans are, you have to be easily accessible" (Talty, 2011).

Research question 2: Why does social media impact public relations efforts?

- Social media is considered the modern vehicle for that two-way communication, constantly connecting audiences, consumers, and fans to their favorite brands and celebrities (Ballouli & Hutchinson, 2010).
- "Fans are beginning to expect their favorite teams and athletes to communicate via these channels," said Amy Martin, marketing executive, social media consultant and former Phoenix Suns digital-media director. (Ballouli & Hutchinson, 2010).
- Social media sites are particularly well suited for sports, an industry built around "real-time events with undetermined outcomes" (Wertheim, 2011).

Research question 3: What types of social media are currently being used in promoting college club sports teams?

- Sports marketing experts point to Twitter as being the most effective tool for building a strong fan allegiance (Schley, 2011).

- When organizations converse through Twitter “hashtag threads,” there is an opportunity to reach thousands in one place at one time, while simultaneously increasing awareness (Marti, 2012).
- Through Facebook, fans are given the opportunity to directly upload content to a team’s wall, comment on a team’s status, or use the “like” button as a means of interaction. “These types of interactions allow sports entities to establish authentic relationships with target markets while also enhancing and reinforcing a strong brand presence” (Wallace & Hinson, 2009).

Research question 4: How does one develop social media for college club sports teams?

- Aaron Moore, assistant professor of public relations specializing in sports media relations at Rider University, identifies three key factors for creating a successful social media presence: (1) build a base, (2) use the tools, and (3) make it fun.

Research question 5: Who manages these social media websites?

- There is a gap in the literature regarding the documentation about the people in charge of managing social media websites for college club teams. However, “most club teams operate largely outside the purview of the university athletic department,” functioning without an official communications department as well as taking on the task of raising their own money for uniforms, and hotel and travel arrangements (Pennington, 2008).

Research question 6: How can one measure the success of college club sports teams regarding social media?

- According to Martin, brands should identify and track at least “two key performance indicators each in the categories of volume, engagement, and conversion,” which are variables such as number of fans or followers, and the

amount of time a fan spends online with a brand (Ballouli, 2010).

Research Data

For this study, it was important to consider the opinion of experts as well as the tactics professional sports teams are using in regards to social media due to the relatively small amount of literature that currently exists on the topic of how social media is being used as public relations tool to increase the awareness of college club sports teams. In order to obtain this data, Andrew Baggarly, a social media expert, Jennifer Saxon, a public relations expert, and Matt Graupmann, a college club sports expert, were interviewed and asked identical questions designed to answer the original research questions presented in the study. In addition to the expert interviews and sparse literature, the Facebook page for the Cal Poly Men's Lacrosse Team was vastly and continuously updated over a period of time, and a Twitter account for the team was created. The following tables and brief discussion of figures display data from both expert interviews and statistics from the Cal Poly Men's Lacrosse Team's Facebook and Twitter accounts, respectively.

Research question 1: How does social media impact public relations efforts with college club sports teams?

This research question was studied more broadly due to the trends in current literature focusing on the use of social media within professional sports teams and organizations. The amount of literature concerning college club sports teams was extremely limited, but according to Mario Mercurio, Director of Basketball Administration for Xavier men's basketball program, social media is "what everyone is moving towards and you have to be where your fans are, you have to be easily

accessible” (Talty, 2011). Social media shows no signs of slowing down in the near future, so communicators would be “remiss” in at least becoming familiar with social media (Dwyer, 2008).

Table 1 summarizes the answers to this question as given by the experts interviewed. The experts talked about social media being used to engage and connect fans to a particular team. Baggarly used the San Francisco Giants’ Twitter hashtag “#RallyZito” as an example of a social media campaign, if you will, to engage fans during the 2012 Major League Baseball Post-Season, while Saxon took a different approach by tying the impact of social media to the broader goals of a sports team.

Table 1

The Impact of Social Media on Sports PR Efforts

Respondent	Social media impacts sports PR because...	Example of a professional sports team successful in social media
Andrew Baggarly	Engages fans	San Francisco Giants
Jennifer Saxon	Brief, but ongoing contact with fans	*None given
Matt Graupmann	Connects fans to team	San Diego Chargers

Research question 2: Why does social media impact public relations efforts?

This question was studied again more broadly because most of the literature only spoke to professional sports teams. The question was designed to obtain information according to the literature and experts on why social media is impacting public relations efforts. The literature points out that fans are beginning to *expect* teams and athletes to be conversing on social media (Ballouli & Hutchinson, 2010), and this new accessibility is allowing people to form unlimited links and connections (Lerman & Gosh, 2010).

Table 2 summarizes the expert’s responses. All responses were focused on

different aspects of why social media is impacting sports public relations. Graupmann focused on generational differences and how social media is creating easy access to information while Baggarly spoke about social media being an alternative tool for reinforcing the idea of a community between a sports organization and its fans.

Table 2

Why Social Media is Impacting Sports PR

Respondent	Why social media impacts sports PR efforts	Example
Andrew Baggarly	Reinforces the sense of community	People pay to physically be part of a community when they can watch on TV for free
Jennifer Saxon	It's building loyalty	Useful if it's used as more than just a bullhorn for announcements
Matt Graupmann	This generation is inseparable from the Internet	Friends could easily follow college lacrosse career

Research question 3: What types of social media are currently being used in promoting college club sports teams?

While the majority of the literature didn't speak straight to the topic of college club sports, it was found that the University of North Carolina created an online social networking site for its club and intramural sports (Cloninger, 2009). Among that example, experts named Twitter and Facebook as being most popularly used by sports teams for promotion. Facebook enables consumers to "interact with brands as an extension of face-to-face interaction" while enhancing brand and image communication through content public relations (status updates, photographs, videos, links, etc.) (Wallace & Hinson, 2009). In addition, Twitter is another tool for creating interactive dialogue. When organizations converse through Twitter "hashtag threads," there is an opportunity to reach thousands in one place at one time, while simultaneously increasing

awareness (Marti, 2012).

Table 3 summarizes the responses to the question given by each interviewed expert. While Baggarly didn't find himself familiar enough with promotion of college club sports teams, Saxon and Graupmann both gave similar answers.

Table 3

Types of Social Media Being Used to Promote College Club Teams

Respondent	Types of Social Media being used
Andrew Baggarly	*None given
Jennifer Saxon	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
Matt Graupmann	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

Research question 4: How does one develop social media for college club sports teams?

The literature covering this question was limited not only in regards to college club sports teams, but just in general. Aaron Moore, assistant professor of public relations specializing in sports media relations at Rider University, though, identifies three key factors for creating a successful social media presence: (1) build a base, (2) use the tools, and (3) make it fun.

Expert responses on this questioned varied. Table 4 summarizes the responses. Baggarly felt confined to Major League Baseball knowledge, so declined to give an answer, while Saxon focused on the idea of needing to have firm grasp on the goals behind using social media. Graupmann mentioned visual aspects as being of importance.

Table 4

Developing Social Media for College Club Sports Teams

Respondent	Keys to developing social media sites for college club teams	Provided examples
Andrew Baggarly	*None given	*None given
Jennifer Saxon	Know your goals	Contests/mentions to make the fans feel like superstars
Matt Graupmann	Professional look, regular updates	Provide season schedules, pictures, and video

Research question 5: Who manages these social media websites?

Literature reviews revealed very little information about the people behind managing social media sites, in professional and college club sports. One article, though, pointed out that college club teams typically lack communications departments, an entity that would normally be in charge of handling such tasks, because most club teams do not operate under the purview of the university's athletic department (Pennington, 2008).

Table 5 summarizes the responses given by the experts. Both Graupmann and Saxon identified key tactics for managing social media sites rather than answering the specific question of who is actually behind managing social media sites for college club teams.

Table 5

Social Media Site Management for College Club Teams

Respondent	How to manage a social media site for a college club sports team
Andrew Baggarly	*None given
Jennifer Saxon	Create content, have a crisis communications plan, and know what your end goals are
Matt Graupmann	Keep the page as up-to-date as possible with rosters, news, and scores

Research question 6: How can one measure the success of college club sports teams regarding social media?

Literature pertaining to question 6 was again limited to mostly professional organizations, but college club teams can function under the same assumptions in this case. According to Martin, brands should identify and track at least “two key performance indicators each in the categories of volume, engagement, and conversion,” which are variables such as number of fans or followers, and the amount of time a fan spends online with a brand (Ballouli, 2010).

Table 6 summarizes what the experts thought about measuring the success of college club teams in regards to social media.

Table 6

Measuring the Success of College Club Teams in Regards to Social Media

Respondent	Ways to measure success regarding social media
Andrew Baggarly	*None given
Jennifer Saxon	Create surveys, campaigns where info is only promoted via social media, feedback from fan contests
Matt Graupmann	Social Media analytics provided by sites

Cal Poly Men's Club Lacrosse Social Media Sites

This project was centered around raising awareness about the Cal Poly Men's Club Lacrosse Team through social media, namely Facebook and Twitter. The main work done to both social media sites took place at the beginning of the Men's Collegiate Lacrosse Association's (MCLA) 2012 regular season and has continued to the present.

Facebook Page (See Figure 1)

The team's existing Facebook page was revamped at the beginning of the 2012 season, which included adding an updated profile picture of the 2012 senior lacrosse

players on the team and a cover photo. The “about” page was updated with a new description, awards and contact information. See Figure 2 for a screen shot of the “about” page. The Facebook page serves as the main point of contact between the team and its fans/supporters. All information about games, including dates, times, locations, broadcasts, and final scores will be posted on the Facebook page. Other sources of content, such as “Meet the Players,” photographs, news, and events will be posted as well.

For the beginning of the 2013 season, a Facebook event was created to raise awareness about the first home game of the season against the University of California, Santa Barbara on February 9, 2013. See Figures 3 and 4 for screen shots of the Facebook event.

Twitter (See Figure 5)

The Cal Poly Men’s Club Lacrosse Team did not have a Twitter account prior to this project. The account was created for the team as part of the project, and serves as a second place of contact between the team and its fans/supporters. The Twitter account also posts about game information, but goes a step beyond the Facebook page. The main purpose of the Twitter account is to keep fans updated during the game by posting in-game score updates, which includes sending out tweets every time a team scores a goal (Cal Poly and opponent goals), which player scored the goal, and how much time remains in the game. See Figure 6 for an example of a stream of in-game tweets from the 2013 season opener versus UC Santa Barbara.

Secondly, the Twitter account reposts stories from outside lacrosse sources useful to followers, such as a blog run by one of the players. See Figure 7 for an example of one of the more popular posts from an outside post.

Lastly, the Twitter account serves as a two-way communication tool between the team and its fans, supporters, and the rest of the lacrosse community throughout the United States. See Figure 8 for a screen shot of the “@connect” page, which houses all “follower” interactions, from within the Cal Poly Men’s Club Lacrosse Twitter account.

These two social media sites for the Cal Poly Men’s Club Lacrosse Team will continue to grow and be used after the conclusion of this study.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

Summary

This study was performed to demonstrate the impact social media has on sports public relations efforts and the ways in which social media can be used as a public relations tool for increasing the awareness about college club teams. With the limited amount of literature on the subject, it was essential to collect data from experts in the fields of social media, public relations, and college club sports teams regarding their opinions on the matter. Each interviewee was asked the following series of questions in the form of a single questionnaire:

1. How would you describe the ways in which sports teams are currently using social media? Please give an example of a sports team that has been successful in using social media.
2. What types of social media are being used to promote college sports teams?
3. What is the most important aspect of social media? How can it be used to increase the awareness of a sports team?
4. In your opinion, how and why is social media impacting the promotion of sports teams? Please provide an example.
5. How does one develop social media sites for college club sports teams? Please give examples of the tactics that can be utilized in developing such sites.
6. How does one manage a social media site for a college club sports team? What are the best practices in social media site maintenance?
7. How would you measure the success of a college club sports team in regards to social media? Please provide examples.

In addition to the interviews, user activity from the Cal Poly Men's Club Lacrosse Team's Facebook and Twitter accounts were tracked from February 2013 to March 2013.

User activity included statistics regarding: new “likes” on the Facebook page and followers on Twitter, Twitter “retweets/favorites,” Facebook reach, and Facebook “engaged users.”

Discussion

Expert Interviews and Literature Review Conclusions

By analyzing the data from chapter 4 and the existing literature in chapter 2, it’s possible to make conclusions regarding the original research questions.

Research question 1: How does social media impact public relations efforts with college club sports teams?

All three experts touched on the idea that social media engages and connects fans to a sports team. Saxon elaborated on this idea by saying that social media creates a brief, yet ongoing type of contact. The literature mentions another idea in addition to the connection built by social media; the idea that everyone is moving towards social media and that teams must be where their fans are because a team needs to be “easily accessible” (Talty, 2011).

Overall, it’s possible to conclude that social media is impacting sports PR efforts because social media is where today’s sports fans are spending time, and as a result, social media is acting as a new form of engagement between fans and sports teams.

Research question 2: Why does social media impact public relations efforts?

Responses to this question varied among all three experts. Baggarly talked about social media’s impact on reinforcing the sense of community formed by physically attending sporting events, whereas Saxon spoke about the loyalty that is built via social media, and Graupmann mentioned how today’s society is inseparable from the Internet.

The literature says social media is impacting PR efforts because it is considered the modern vehicle for the traditional two-way PR communication. Fans are beginning to expect their teams to be communicating via social media (Ballouli & Hutchinson, 2010).

Overall, it can be said that the reason social media is impacting sports PR efforts has to do with the evolution of communication channels and the additional access social media provides to fans regarding sports teams.

Research question 3: What types of social media are currently being used in promoting college club sports teams?

The experts and literature gave similar responses to the types of social media being used in promotion of sports teams, even though the literature wasn't specifically speaking towards college club teams. The literature points to Twitter as being the most "effective tool for building a strong fan allegiance" (Schley, 2011), yet Facebook is also named as a top site being used. Graupmann and Saxon both considered Facebook and Twitter to be among the most common sites used, but added in other sites like YouTube and Instagram as well.

From observation, it can be concluded that Twitter and Facebook are the most popular social media sites sports teams are currently using as a means of promotion and fan engagement.

Research question 4: How does one develop social media for college club sports teams?

The experts, again, focused on different aspects of social media development. Saxon emphasized the importance of knowing the goals associated with using social media while creating contests to engage fans. On the other hand, Graupmann said keeping sites updated and professionally visual was of importance. Meanwhile, even though the literature doesn't speak specifically to college club sports teams, the findings

can be generalized. Aaron Moore, assistant professor of sports media relations named three key factors for the successful development of social media for a sports team: 1) build a base, 2) use the tools, and 3) make it fun.

Overall, the development of social media for a sports team should include several elements: content to build a base and appeals to fans, a professional look, and an up-to-date profile.

Research question 5: Who manages these social media websites?

This question yielded a wide variety of answers. Interviewees focused more on how to manage a social media site rather than who is in charge of management. Saxon suggested that no matter who is in charge, having a handle on how to respond to fan comments is crucial, and having a crisis communications plan is essential in social media management. Graupmann emphasized the importance of running a well-kept site, one that is up-to-date with rosters, scores, and news. The literature was again limited, but one article noted “most club teams operate largely outside the purview of the university athletic department,” functioning without an official communications department as well as taking on the task of raising their own money for uniforms, and hotel and travel arrangements (Pennington, 2008).

Overall, it can be concluded that most club teams’ social media sites are not operated under the university’s athletic department, so probably have players, coaches or volunteers involved in running them. Management of these sites should include regular updates, a crisis communications plan, and an understanding of the team’s goals for using social media.

Research question 6: How can one measure the success of college club sports teams regarding social media?

Lastly, interviewees considered social media analytics (statistics provided by the sites themselves), fan surveys, and social media specific campaigns (only promoting certain events, contests, etc. on social media) the best ways to measure success. Similarly, the literature suggested identifying at least “two key performance indicators each in the categories of volume, engagement, and conversion” (Ballouli, 2010). These indicators include number of fans/followers and the amount of time a fan spends online with a brand.

In conclusion, the statistics that social media sites provide through the “insights” tool within an organization’s Facebook page seems to be helpful for determining a team’s success in regards to social media. Also, it’d be useful to assign key indicators to measure user volume and user engagement.

Cal Poly Men’s Club Lacrosse Team Social Media Conclusions

Second to the literature review and expert interviews, it’s possible to make conclusions regarding college club sports teams’ use of social media to increase awareness by interpreting the Facebook and Twitter data from the Cal Poly Men’s Club Lacrosse Team from the months of January 2013 through March 2013.

Facebook

As mentioned in chapter 4, the team’s Facebook page serves as the main point of contact between the team and its fans. It was revamped, and the following statistics were collected. Based on the insights provided by Facebook, the total amount of “likes” has increased since January 2013, currently sitting at 864 “likes” (See Figure 9). In addition, the posts by the Cal Poly Lacrosse page during the span of this study reached over 3,000 Facebook users (See Figure 10). See Figures 11 and 12 for numbers regarding individual posts. The overview from the insights application suggests an increase in all categories,

including number of “likes,” people talking about the page, and weekly total reach (See Figure 13). The data infers that Facebook is getting people to talk about Cal Poly Men’s Club Lacrosse, thus spreading the word to other Facebook users. The continuously increasing numbers help identify why Facebook is among the top social media sites being used by sports teams to increase awareness and generate a following.

Twitter

The lacrosse team’s Twitter account was the second social media site analyzed for this study. The account was created in January 2012 and since then has compiled a total 388 followers, 124 of those coming during the time allotted for this study. Also during the time of this study, 90 of the account’s tweets were “retweeted” by followers, and 53 tweets were “favorited” by followers. See Figures 14 and 15 for examples of such. The large following that has accumulated on the team’s Twitter account serves as an example of how quickly a social media site can grow, and helps explain why Twitter is the most popular social media site for building a strong fan allegiance, according to sports marketing experts (Schley, 2011).

Recommendations for Practice

After completion of the study, substantial data has been collected in the forms of literature reviews, expert interviews, and social media site statistics pertaining to the topic of social media as a public relations tool to increase the awareness of college club sports teams. Given the information found from this study, it’s important to highlight the most revealing content and present it for future endeavors relating to public relations, social media, and college club sports teams. Some recommendations for practice include:

- Using Facebook and Twitter to build a base following

- Keep social media sites updated and professional
- Engage fans through content marketing/public relations

Study Conclusion

In conclusion, given the findings of the study, there should be a greater amount of research done on the topic of social media regarding specifics to college club sports teams since most of the literature pertained to only professional sports teams. Overall, the study presented the opinions of experts in related fields, a literature review, and an analysis of the Facebook page and Twitter account of the Cal Poly Men's Club Lacrosse Team. This study serves as an educational tool for public relations, social media, and college club team professionals who are interested in studying or physically using social media as a public relations tool for increasing the awareness about college club sports teams.

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Appendix A

Interview Transcripts: Andrew Baggarly

The following interview was conducted to get expert opinions from a social media perspective based on a questionnaire about social media as a public relations tool for increasing the awareness about college club sports teams.

Interviewer: Alexandra Bakalar

Respondent: Sports Journalist and Insider for the San Francisco Giants
(Andrew Baggarly)

Date of Interview: 3/8/13

Interview:

Allie Bakalar: How would you describe the ways in which sports teams are currently using social media? Please give an example of a sports team that has been successful in using social media.

Andrew Baggarly: Any way to engage fans is a good thing, whether it's promotions, marketing or in-game information. A lot of it has to happen organically, though, and I'd wager Giants fans are more Twitter-active than any fan base in the country. The #RallyZito phenomenon was a sight to behold last year.

ABakalar: What types of social media are being used to promote college sports teams?

ABaggarly: Not qualified to answer this one, since I only cover MLB.

ABakalar: What is the most important aspect of social media? How can it be used to increase the awareness of a sports team?

ABaggarly: The authenticity of interactions. To me getting a question answered by Sergio Romo or even a retweet should mean more than just getting an autograph. Anything that helps fans connect with players helps them connect with the team and its brand.

ABakalar: In your opinion, how and why is social media impacting the promotion of sports teams? Please provide an example.

ABaggarly: People want to be engaged and feel like they are part of a community, which is why, even though it's so much more enjoyable in many ways to watch games on TV (replays, no line for the restroom, etc.), fans still pay increasingly large sums to be there in person. Social media is just another way to reinforce that community.

ABakalar: How does one develop social media sites for college club sports teams? Please give examples of the tactics that can be utilized in developing such sites.

ABaggarly: NA

ABakalar: How does one manage a social media site for a college club sports team? What are the best practices in social media site maintenance?

ABaggarly: NA

ABakalar: How would you measure the success of a college club sports team in regards to social media? Please provide examples.

ABaggarly: NA

Appendix B

Interview Transcripts: Jennifer Saxon

The following interview was conducted to get expert opinions from a public relations perspective based on a questionnaire about social media as a public relations tool for increasing the awareness about college club sports teams.

Interviewer: Alexandra Bakalar
Respondent: Communications Manager at MINDBODY, Inc.
(Jennifer Saxon)
Date of Interview: 2/26/13

Interview:

Allie Bakalar: How would you describe the ways in which sports teams are currently using social media? If you are able, give an example of a sports team that has been successful in using social media.

Jennifer Saxon: Just like with any other PR tool, how you use social media really depends on your goal and who your audience is, and whether or not that channel speaks to your audience more than any other channel. For a sports team, social [media] is a really great way to have brief but ongoing contact with their target audience, and it's a great way to share fun stuff. People aren't on social media to be preached to, They aren't on it to necessarily to be educated in a broad, in-depth kind of way. They want to be entertained first and foremost, and whatever that entertainment is needs to have lasting value. So for sports teams, teams are already a form of entertainment for their fans and a lot of fans really like to get to know the people playing the sport. So social media would be a great way to have like each person on the team take responsibility for posting certain things, and creating some sort of schedule where each person is responsible for say, this day's posting where they can share a little bit about themselves or something. You know, people want to know things like what their tips are for getting ready for a game or how do you prevent injuries. You have to think of all the different audiences: people who just go for fun, people who are interested in lacrosse, parents of kids who play or are interested in learning how to get their kids involved in lacrosse, people concerned with the future of the sport.

AB: What types of social media are being used to promote college sports teams?

JS: I'm definitely thinking Facebook and Twitter. It will depend on the team's audience. In my experience, the difference between Facebook and Twitter is a very fine line. A lot of times, Twitter is just used as a way to repost what you posted on Facebook in a smaller post. So try to find a way to make the two channels unique somehow because, even though I have a feeling people who follow you on Twitter aren't necessarily going to follow you on Facebook, there's still going to be some overlap, and you don't want it to be exactly the same. So are there posts that are more appropriate for Twitter? Things that

are last minute would be good. Maybe you have a lacrosse game or you're selling tickets to a fundraiser, and it's the day before or a few hours before and you've got X number of tickets left and you'll give them away to the first ten people. Something like that needs immediate attention and is much more of a Twitter worthy posting. In-game tweets are perfect to use, like score updates and maybe incorporate a quote from the player that just scored the goal, if that's even possible, it may not be. I don't know how much that would get them out of their game focus. Facebook is great, though, for pictures. I'd also put YouTube in there for sports teams because you want to be able to show videos of games, behind the scenes with player reactions or players getting ready for a game. It'd be really interesting being a fly on the wall for the recap of the end of the game and for people to see and hear the discussions about what went right and what went wrong. Maybe there's a player who got injured, and seeing what he did to get back to playing shape by following him in a video would be interesting. That can pull out a lot of content for social media: tips, video footage, journal type things. It's really about finding the stories within the team that you think will resonate with the audience, and telling those stories in a segmented way rather than saying everything in just one big post. How can you tell segments? Think of the old days of yellow journalism with Hearst and Pulitzer where they'd do serial stories where you'd get one chapter every day or week. Think of it that way. You have to talk to players, coaches, find out what inspired them, and so on. It takes research. People jump on the Facebook, Twitter and YouTube wagon and just think "we've got to post it now." There's got to be substance to your posts.

I'd say Pinterest and Instagram are more visual, and I'm sure there are visuals for lacrosse, but it's whether or not there is enough content and consistent content that will determine using that channel. Pinterest is great for inspirational stuff, so if you can create something that would appeal to that realm, that'd be interesting. Instagram would be great for pictures, but YouTube would be better. Pinterest is tricky for sports teams.

AB: What is the most important aspect of social media? How can it be used to increase the awareness of a sports team?

JS: It's public. You have to remember that it is a much more immediate, public interaction that you have with your audience, um, and it's a very two-way street. So people will use social media as a customer service tool in addition to a story-telling tool. It's also a way to tell you when something is not right; that customers, or whoever, are not happy and you have to be prepared for that. You have to be ok with that. A lot of people are using social media as a newsletter type thing, and are very uncomfortable with public response to posts that are negative. But that's the nature of the channel, so if you're not comfortable with interacting in a public setting with your audience or fans, then you need to reconsider using the channel. You either have to buy in or stay out.

AB: In your opinion, how and why is social media impacting the promotion of sports teams? Please provide an example.

JS: I think, not personally knowing anything about the promotion of sports teams, that

sports teams have always have been very much about the team and you're affiliation with the team. So even if your favorite player moved to another team, I'm thinking of national teams but I suppose it could filter down, you're probably still going to stay a loyal fan to that team. I think social media really gives you the opportunity to become more loyal to specific players rather than just the teams because it has that interpersonal, social component as compared to, say, advertising, which is about the team and maybe they key player or the "quarterback" or lacrosse; you know, the players who are in the limelight more frequently than other team members. I think social let's you get to know the others better and have you be more loyal to them, but I think in you doing that, it still strengthens your tie to the entire team. I think social media is a more individual loyalty based thing that can be built if you use it in less of a bullhorn, announcement kind of way.

AB: How does one develop social media sites for college club sports teams? Please give examples of the tactics that can be utilized in developing such sites.

JS: It's necessary to know that social media will never really work exactly how you plan it, but if you plan ahead and know all of your options, then it'll be less stressful. You can get people at the games to become aware of social media pages by saying, "Hey have you checked us out on Facebook?" Maybe then create opportunities for people to win things or get free items by "liking" your page at games. Your goal is to get more people involved and get more people to "like" your page. If that happens, more people find out about your events, and thus, more people have the opportunity to come. The only way to do that is to get people who aren't already connected to your social media, connected. People in that group are already fans, obviously, if they're at your event; it's getting those people more engaged because they're you're recurring clients. I'd focus on the "people-part" of it and how to get people more involved through these channels. What would be fun would be to mention people on Twitter or Facebook for "liking" you; just getting people engaged to feel like they're superstars would be a great tactic.

AB: How does one manage a social media site for a college club sports team? What are the best practices in social media site maintenance?

JS: Aside from creating content, you have to know how you're going to respond to the posts you don't ever want to get. You need to respond relatively quickly because if it takes you a couple hours, or God forbid a day, to respond to someone who's upset, you'll end up having twenty more people to respond to. You have to be aware of that, and in the event of the bad posts, you need to have some sort of crisis communications plan set in place just in case. Really identify what you want to get out of social media and what you're comfortable doing on it. It's important to make sure whoever is posting on that social media site knows all of the policies and all of those rules; even if it's a guest poster, everyone needs to know what to do if there's a bad post and how to respond. You need to be open and transparent about those policies and implementing them in the case

of a bad situation. If someone comments about this, don't respond with anything other than "I'm happy to talk with you in person about this or via email." There's a way to address all of the sticky stuff. You need to think about it before it happens, otherwise it catches you off guard, and takes forever to respond and causes anxiety and people get nervous.

AB: How would you measure the success of a college club sports team in regards to social media? Please provide examples.

JS: Good question. A lot of people just say, "Oh I've got X number of likes more than I had at this time last year, and so that means we were successful." But, your goal for social media isn't usually to get "likes." Your goal, I'd imagine for a sports team, is to get people to attend the games or the events or get more people trying out for the team, or things like that. I would imagine those are the main types of things. How do you reach those goals? You need to plan your campaign around that end goal. You can always track that by, you know, asking people, "how did you find out about us?," or maybe just having events you only promote on social media. That way, you can say, the number of people who came can be tied to that. Establishing activities like meet and greet with players or trivia contests where winners get to be the equivalent of a bat boy for the next game or something allows for responses. The response you get from those types of contests will give you measurements and metrics that you can look at. Always try to get your tactics to drive towards your end goal; create different campaigns: ones for driving people to games and ones for getting people to try out for the team and so on. If you need to segment out who's coming from what channel, then figure out ways to monitor that like through a survey or something. Some people are going to see promotions in multiple places so you hope that maybe those channels feed off of each other, but that's really all just centered around having the end goal in mind that you can measure. Sometimes you can combine surveys with the fan experience and get them to tell you why they keep coming back. That feedback can be incorporated into your plan.

Appendix C

Interview Transcripts: Matt Graupmann

The following interview was conducted to get expert opinions from a college club sports perspective based on a questionnaire about social media as a public relations tool for increasing the awareness about college club sports teams.

Interviewer: Alexandra Bakalar

Respondent: Former Cal Poly Men's Club Lacrosse Team Attackman/President
(Matt Graupmann)

Date of Interview: 2/23/13

Allie Bakalar: How would you describe the ways in which sports teams are currently using social media? Please give an example of a sports team that has been successful in using social media.

Matt Graupmann: I feel that most professional sports teams have a presence in all of the major social media sites (Facebook, Twitter). I think that social media can be very powerful tool to connect with fans. Specifically, I follow the San Diego Chargers on Twitter. They do a great job of updating fans on trades and news with the team.

AB: What types of social media are being used to promote college sports teams?

MG: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the major social media outlets I personally use. I follow athletic teams and players on each of those platforms.

AB: What is the most important aspect of social media? How can it be used to increase the awareness of a sports team?

MG: I would say user retention and interaction. Having fan giveaways and question and answer sessions with players let fans and followers feel like they are connected with the team.

AB: In your opinion, how and why is social media impacting the promotion of sports teams? Please provide an example.

MG: People are always on social media. During lulls in conversations, moments of boredom, or simply out of habit, people are constantly taking out their phones and checking their Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc. Basically, these websites have become inseparable from people of our generation. So of course any sports promotion on social media could only be helpful, just because of the mass amounts of eye traffic that is available to them. For example, many of my high school friends had no idea as to how my lacrosse seasons at Cal Poly were going until they began following the new

Twitter account. After that, I would receive many text messages of congratulations, or, sadly, condolences, after various games during my senior season. They always could have gone out of their way to find scores, and I know that they were curious, but it wasn't until the ease of seeing updates on their own Twitter feeds that they truly got this information. The power of social media promotion cannot be underestimated.

AB: How does one develop social media sites for college club sports teams? Please give examples of the tactics that can be utilized in developing such sites.

MG: When I first made the Cal Poly Lacrosse Facebook page, I wanted to raise as much awareness for the team that I could. I sent out the invitation to everyone on the team, and my personal friends list on Facebook. If you create a professional look on the page, I think users will take the page more seriously. With Sports teams, its great to have pictures, schedules, and other outlets to engage users. Having regular status updates allows followers to track the team's progress with ease.

AB: How does one manage a social media site for a college club sports team? What are the best practices in social media site maintenance?

MG: I think keeping a well-updated site is important. All up-to-date news should be on the site along with updated rosters, pictures, and schedules.

AB: How would you measure the success of a college club sports team in regards to social media? Please provide examples.

MG: Using social media analytics could be a good measure of metrics. Facebook allows users to track views and interactions with fans. On Twitter when people 'tweet' at the page, the admin should try and interact with them when possible.

FIGURES

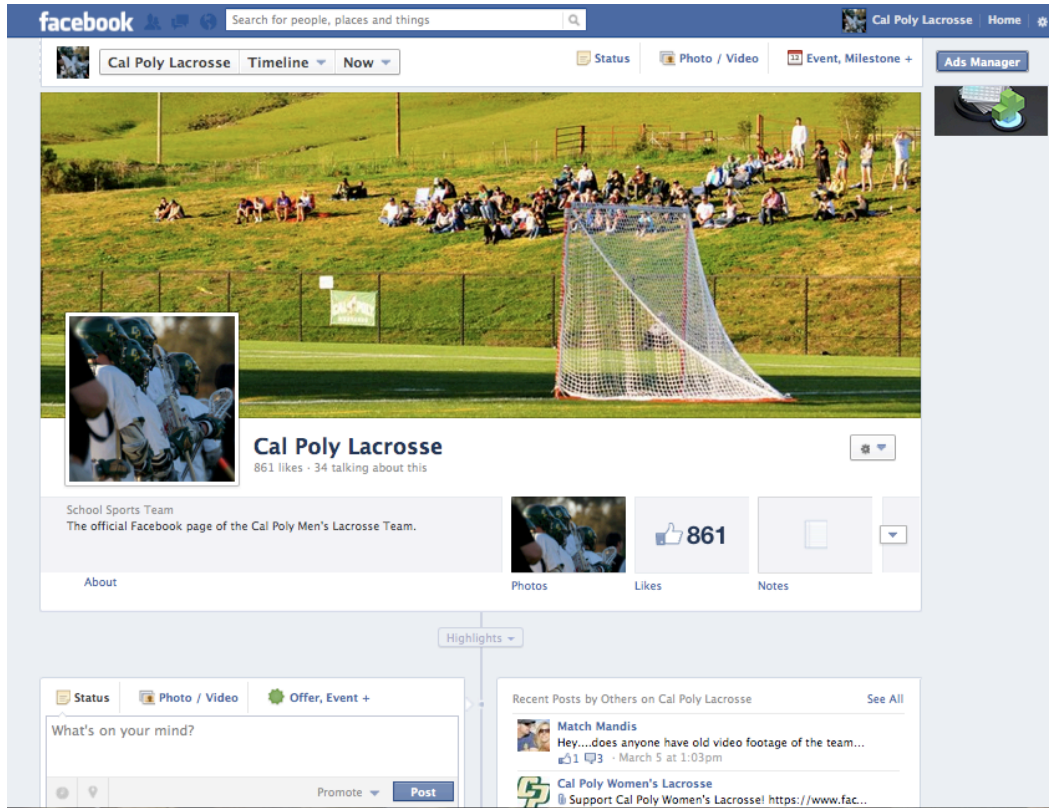


Figure 1: Cal Poly Men's Club Lacrosse Team Facebook Page

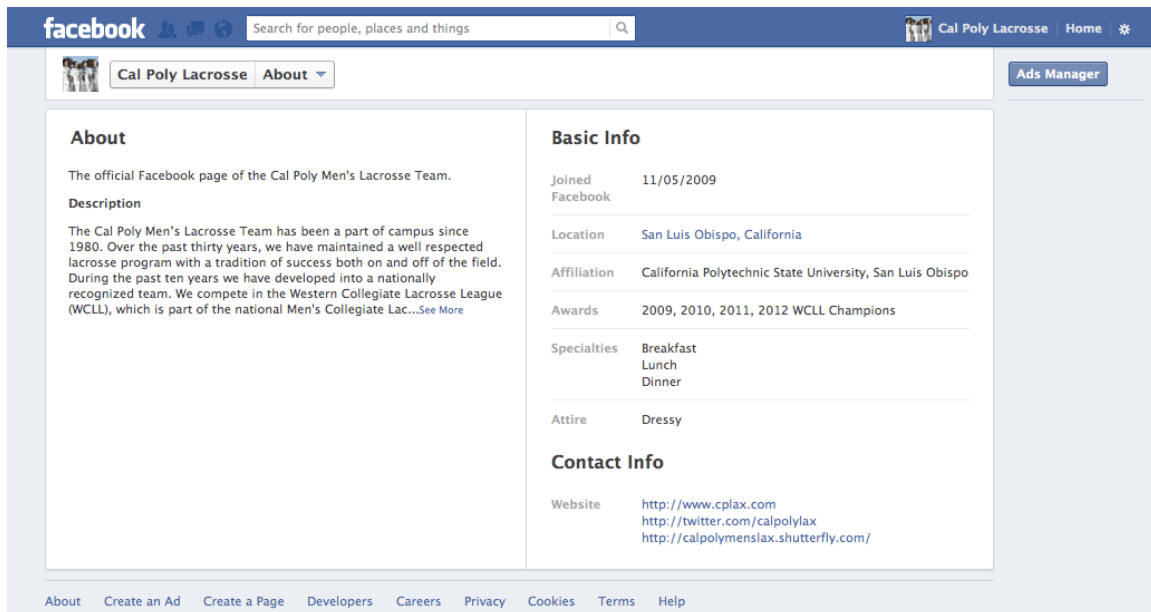


Figure 2: Facebook "About" Page



Figure 3: Facebook Event Screen Shot

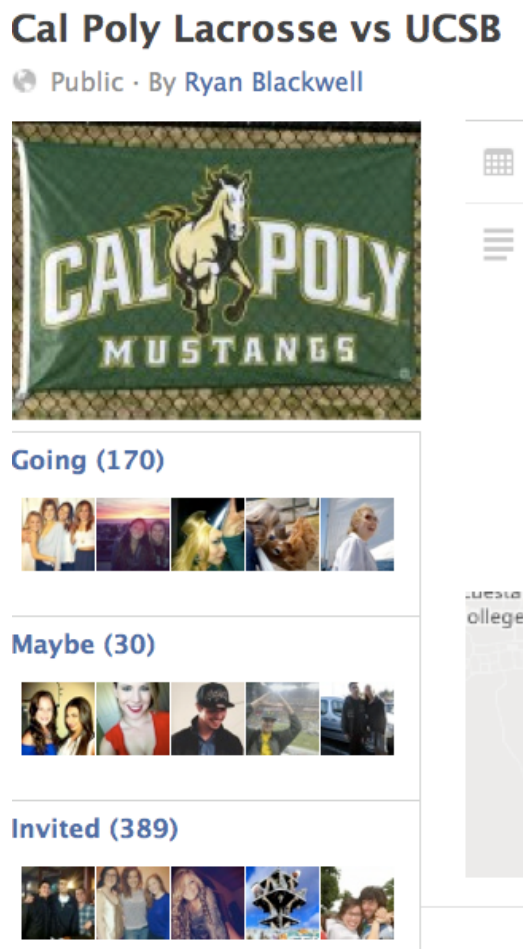


Figure 4: Facebook Event Attendees

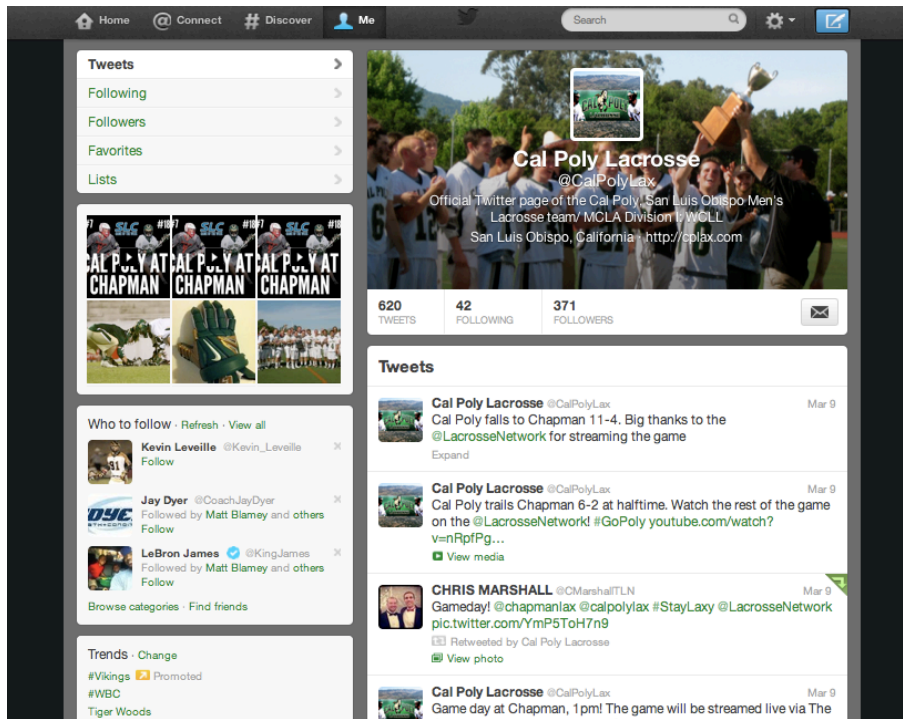


Figure 5: Cal Poly Men's Club Lacrosse Twitter Page

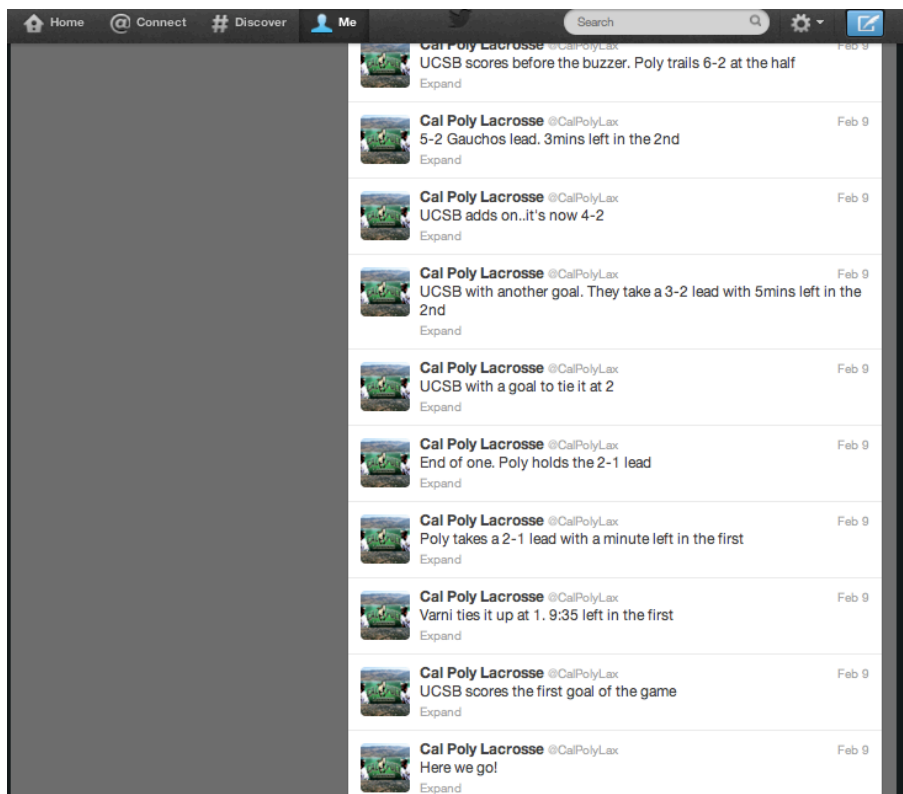


Figure 6: Live In-Game Twitter Stream



Figure 7: Twitter Post Example

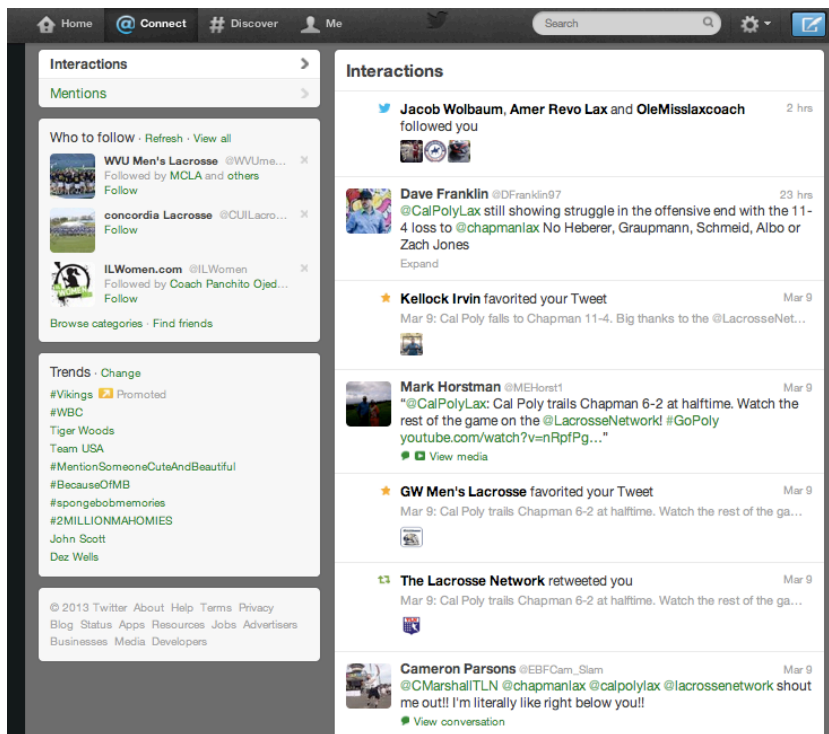


Figure 8: Twitter “Connect” Page Screen Shot



Figure 9: Facebook Page “Likes”

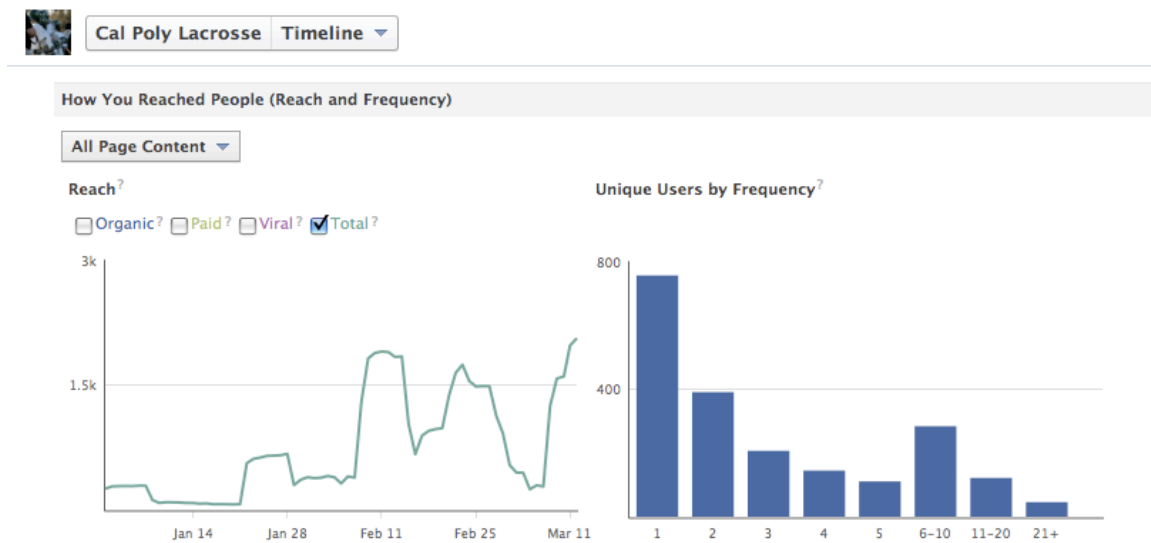


Figure 10: Facebook Posts “Reach”

Cal Poly Lacrosse Timeline			
Date ?	Post ?	Reach ?	Engaged Users ?
3/16/13	The Mustangs come out victorious in...	623	44
3/16/13	Hey fans, put the books down for a li...	534	29
3/15/13	The Mustangs have another game to...	222	20
3/14/13	Cal Poly fights their way back into th...	506	18
3/14/13	Great day for some lacrosse! Come o...	762	33
3/12/13	We'll be back out on the turf fields th...	252	17
3/11/13	The Mustangs look to get back on tr...	896	38
3/9/13	Cal Poly falls to Chapman by a final o...	496	13
3/9/13	Happy Game Day! #18 Cal Poly visits ...	439	37
3/8/13	The Mustangs are getting ready to tr...	1,020	53
2/26/13	No games this week, but the Mustan...	318	20
2/23/13	The game has gone final in Minnesot...	618	44

Figure 11: Individual Facebook Posts “Reach”

2/23/13	Big game today in Minnesota vs. #2 ...	342	24
2/22/13	The Mustangs fight hard against Min...	622	34
2/22/13	It's game day! #15 Cal Poly vs. #18 M...	429	42
2/21/13	The Mustangs fly to Minnesota today...	319	63
2/17/13	The Mustangs are victorious! Cal Poly...	407	51
2/17/13	Coming off of a victory yesterday, th...	354	29
2/16/13	Despite Grand Canyon's 4th quarter ...	370	47
2/16/13	Happy Game Day! Cal Poly vs. Grand ...	309	24
2/14/13	Alright fans, great turn out last week...	190	21
2/9/13	This one wasn't in the cards for Cal P...	310	38
2/9/13	Welcome to the 2013 season! The M...	352	40
2/8/13	One. More. Day. Who's ready? #5 Cal ...	347	129
2/6/13	Is it Saturday yet?! 2013 season open...	276	36

Figure 12: Individual Facebook Posts “Reach” (Continued)

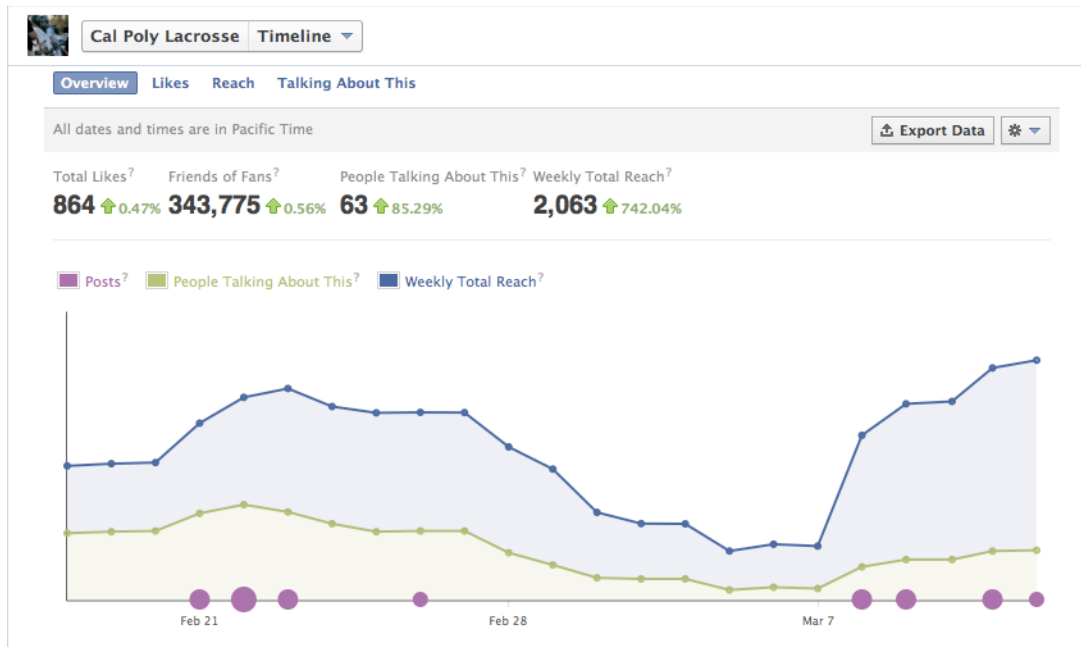


Figure 13: Facebook Insight Overview



Figure 14: Twitter “Retweet” Notification Example



Figure 15: Twitter “Favorite” Notification Example