The Use of Video Outreach to Increase

Incoming Students' View of the Higher Education Institution as a Whole:

A Case Study at California Polytechnic State University

A Senior Project

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

As of now, Cal Poly is using an outdated video series to welcome and inform incoming students to the Cal Poly community. Not only are the videos disengaging, but they lack professional level shooting and editing skills. We hope to revamp this series to enhance the overall level of interest and respect toward the university.

Background of the Problem

Our video series will be a remake of the original P-Series, which was done several years ago. The goal of the series was similar to ours, as it was aimed at welcoming and informing incoming students to the Mustang Way and surrounding San Luis Obispo community. That video series did not effectively capture the attention of the intended audience. There is great need for a high quality, informational video series about Cal Poly.

Purpose of the Study

The overarching goal is to represent the university in a way that conveys quality and diversity. The resulting video content aims at providing incoming students with useful and compelling information.

Setting for the Study

This study will be done as part of the data collection for a Senior Project at California Polytechnic State University located in San Luis Obispo, California. Interviews will be conducted with real students exemplifying the Cal Poly way of life, with focus on highlighting the Learn By Doing principle. We will seek out students in terms of who will provide engaging

interviews and who can share their story as an accurate representation of the Mustang Way. We will also use hosts to present information and guide the videos for a natural progression.

Research Questions

1. What are the ways Cal Poly admissions has done outreach and spread information in the past?

2. What makes San Luis Obispo so unique and desirable?

3. Why did current students choose Cal Poly?

4. What are the different and most popular platforms on which today's youth are consuming information?

5. Why is video the best way to engage with today's prospective students?

6. What are the most popular video techniques used to capture the attention of audiences? i.e. raw footage, user generated, scripted, etc.

7. What is our goal of creating these videos? i.e. information sharing, emotional connection, etc.

8. What is the main point of each separate video we want our viewers to retain?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to clarify several of the terms on the topic, assist the reader and provide context to the remainder of the study.

B-roll: Footage used to illustrate what is being explained or conveyed in a video. It is typically layered on top of interviews or audible narration.

C100: The main type of camera used to shoot the P-Series.

Diversity: In the P-Series, it is imperative that we highlight students from all colleges and skillsets at Cal Poly. This means we must include many different student perspectives and offer a range of outlooks on Learn By Doing.

Organization of Study

Chapter 1 included the background of the problem, purpose of the study, and a definition of terms. Chapter 2 will identify the trends regarding video styles and uses, in addition to information about college students' expectations and values. Chapter 3 will present the methodology of the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The review of literature outlines key factors in what students look for when determining which college to attend and why video is the best form of communication to use when reaching out to prospective students.

Video is a Dominating Force in the Media Today

Published media has been evolving over the past couple hundred years, as Richard Tiland argues. In the past century alone, the public has seen communication go from the telegraph to television and movies. Tiland discusses how almost every family owned a television and relied on it in the 50's but now, that reliance on video is greater than ever. He says "the use of video is so ubiquitous in our everyday lives, it has become part of our subconscious. We don't even realize how much we know and learn from video—news, commercials, documentaries, even YouTube" (Tiland, 2014). Anyone from any demographic can understand video, which is why it is so successful. It's to-the-point and involves no prior knowledge to understand. He also argues that because it is so straightforward and unique, it helps viewers take in information. "Since video appeals to both sight and sound in a quick burst of stimulation, it captures the attention of the viewer immediately and makes a lasting impression" (Tiland, 2014). For advertising, making a last impression is the ultimate goal.

Another goal of marketing is to remain current with the popular trends. When people moved to their phones and social media, marketers had to do the same. "And as we're all now seeing first-hand, video has emerged as the medium of choice, not only for peer-to-peer content sharing and broadcast media, but also for brand-to-customer communications in both B2C and B2B markets," (Afshar, 2016). This means marketing is being forced to move to video. Vala

Afshar writes that the top five more successful tools to use in public relations videos are customer testimonials, on-demand product demonstration videos, explainer and tutorial videos, thought leader interviews, project reviews and case studies. These are the five best ways to communicate with an audience and ensure a product is publicized.

Buzzfeed is a company dominating the online world. In a twelve month span, the company had an average of 2.2 million views per video on Facebook autoplay uploads (Marshall, 2015). A majority of these videos are food-related. In fact, food is the most popular topic for successful Buzzfeed videos. Jonathan Perelman was BuzzFeed's GM of Video & VP of Agency Strategy. He spoke at the 2014 ReelSummit, revealing the brand's strategy for video content marketing, and confirming that consumers have five main reasons they share videos. They are to be social, to express how they are feeling about a particular topic, to show off, or humble-brag, to prove they were the first ones to find something, or to make friends and colleagues laugh (Marshall, 2015). The goal of creating videos should be to help people connect, because people like to feel like they're a part of something. By creating so many videos, the chances of the public being able to connect on any level are increased. One major reason Buzzfeed is able to know what people are talking about is through their use of an algorithm called "ViralRank," which shows them real-time data on what's trending. (Marshall, 2015).

Factors of Happiness for College Students

The determinants of happiness and self-contentment are similar for college students and the rest of the populations. There are however, a few factors that apply specifically to this young adult population. The determinants and insight generated from one study "may be highly useful for the refinement of life satisfaction measures for the college age population" (Schoenecker, 2010). In terms of what university information and experiences must be highlighted for incoming

students, it is imperative to understand this hierarchy. During a social study consisting of "a series of audio-recorded focus group sessions, students generated 440 determinants of life satisfaction forming 15 thematic clusters" (Schoenecker, 2010).

In order of ranked importance, determinants "include: 1) Financial Security/Stability; 2) Achievement; 3) Family (of Origin); 4) Spirituality; 5) Self-Image/Values/Doing/Being; 6) Friends & Social Life; 7) Leisure Time; 8) Health; 9) Helping Others; 10) Independence/Ownership; 11) Acceptance/Belonging; 12) Rest; 13) Living Environment/Civics; 14) Romance/Special Relationships; and 15) Parenting" (Schoenecker, 2010). Furthermore, spirituality and family were the most consistently mentioned by those surveyed. Before students join their college community, it is important that those concerns are addressed. Incoming students should feel like those values are held in high regard by the community they are to join.

Methods to Best Capture the Attention and Trust of Millennials

Understanding online consumer habits and social media expectations of millennials is crucial when deciding how to capture their attention and trust. User-generated content, or media created by peers, is used by millennials for about five hours per day (Knoblauch 2014). This content is largely present on social media, ranging from status updates to restaurant reviews.

At the same time, "fewer than 3% of millennials rank TV news, magazines, and books as influencing their purchases, and only 1% said that a compelling advertisement would make them trust a brand more" (Hyder 2015). User generated content, or UGC, provides reviews and recommendations to consumers, from consumers like them. It is a familiar type of content, and therefore more trustworthy.

The young adult population is so comfortable with UGC because of the continuous contact they have with it. In terms of which type of content they deem trustworthy, "millennials

almost always choose their peers over professionals" (Knoblauch 2014). It turns out that this type of content is also more attention-grabbing than its more traditional counterparts. In fact, "UGC is also 20% more influential when it comes to purchasing and 35% more memorable than other types of media" (Knoblauch 2014).

Marketing to millennials may prove difficult, but "armed with an understanding of millennial demographics, psychology, and buying habits, brands can be well positioned to get the attention of this coveted cohort" (Hyder 2015). It is important to note that "45% percent of millennial adults identify as Hispanic and/or non-white, compared to 39% of Generation X (born 1961 – 1979), 27% of Baby Boomers (born 1946 – 1964), and just 17% of the Silent Generation (born 1925 – 1945)" (Hyder 2015).

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter presents the methods used to collect data for the study including the data sources, collection and presentation of the data, and delimitations.

Data Sources

For the purpose of this research paper, multiple people need to be interviewed to get a wide variety of people and opinions. This is to ensure as many people are represented as possible because the purpose of the video is to represent the student body. Similar questions will be asked to each person, like "what does Learn by Doing mean to you?"

Participants

Alumnus Weird Al Yankovic was interviewed to show how his experiences at Cal Poly helped shape his professional career as a musician. He began as a DJ at KCPR, the on-campus radio station, then eventually became an award winning singer. Four different interviews with engineers were conducted. Three of the four people are current students, one is an alumni. They all are students who are or were involved with various engineering related clubs as students, giving them an upper hand in their education.

We also decided to incorporate Michelle Logan as an interviewee. We initially intended for her to be a host, however we changed our mind. Part of the reason is because we watched the older versions of the P Series and the hosts were typically awkward and detracted from the message of the video. So we switched gears and transitioned Michelle to be more of a staged interview subject and less of a host. We decided her voice would be better guiding the story through her natural responses rather than a written out script.

Interview Design

The following questions are examples of types of questions that were asked during the various interviews.

1. What does Learn By Doing mean to you?

2. How has Learn By Doing affected your career?

3. What advice do you have for students who want to get involved?

4. Why do you/did you want to pursue the career path you chose?

Data Collection

Each interview subject participated in a sit-down interview. The engineers' and Michelle's interviews each lasted between 10 and 15 minutes. Weird Al's interview was less than ten minutes. Every interview was done in October of 2016. A single person asked the questions to the subjects. There were two cameras set up for each interview to give multiple angles. The questions were geared toward evoking personalized and emotional responses.

Data Presentation

The data used in this research was collected through video cameras. The video clips will be edited together and condensed to ensure a smooth, engaging video for viewers. It will be easy to go back later and check information given because it is all captured in a clear, comprehensible way.

Delimitations

There are a few limitations that have prevented this study from being executed fully. One major issue is the timeline. This paper will be completed by the end of 2016. However, the actual video series will not be completed until June of 2017. The video gathering process takes time,

then the editing process takes even more time. For the purpose of this paper, the interviews

already conducted will be the focal point and basis of research.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Chapter 4 will provide descriptions of the students interviewed in the production process and summarize the respondents' answers to our information gathering about student life. We also collected personal anecdotes from a Cal Poly alumnus, Weird Al Yankovic. Data regarding the "learn by doing" education philosophy was gathered from new interviews as well as video archives of Cal Poly marketing.

Interview Takeaways

A common theme we found among interviewee responses was that the facilities on the university campus allow for students to cultivate their skills through trial and error. Engineering students use a variety of tools in the Student Projects Shop in the R&D Hangar. The engineering students we interviewed could recall the first project they completed, and could see how much they have improved. The resulting video must convey the sense of production freedom students are allowed until the learn by doing principle.

The architecture student interview, previously existing in the Cal Poly marketing video archives, explains "Design Village," an architecture and design competition in which students build structures based on a theme that they live in for a night.

We are trying to discuss and analyze how video outreach can be used to increase incoming students view of the university as a whole, so we wanted to show how students can get an interdisciplinary education here at Cal Poly. Students can be involved cross-college organizations, and use the on-campus resources to develop a personal, creative confidence. Alfred Yankovic, more commonly known as "Weird Al" Yankovic, used the equipment in the student-run radio station, KCPR, for his own hands-on learning.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

Summary

There is need for a revamped informational video series for Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. The series, which will be sent to incoming freshman and available to a larger audience, must convey the key elements of student life on campus, as well as the surrounding community. It must be emotionally compelling, and be shared based on its entertainment value, as well as its informational purposes.

Discussion

We connected student responses about learn by doing with the sentiments of the reviewed. Since millennials and generations to follow respond best to marketing using user generated content, or UGC. In this particular case, students respond best to other students. Incoming freshman will better absorb information in the form of personal anecdotes and recommendations from college students than they would a faceless information provider. Video is arguably the most moving and engaging form of media, and it is important that the P-Series capture the main reasons that people share videos via social media. Reasons includes to be social, to express how they are feeling about a particular topic, to show off, or humble-brag, to prove they were the first ones to find something, or to make friends and colleagues laugh (Marshall, 2015).

Top determinants of happiness for college-age students are financial security, achievement, family, and spirituality. The P-Series will explore how these factors are incorporated into life as a Cal Poly student (Schoenecker, 2010).

Recommendations for Practice

Video is an incredibly effective means of communication for millennials and for the generations following. User generated content, or video material that closely mimics the format of user generated content, is most likely to be remembered by the viewer. Personal anecdotes of reputable and/or sources engender the greatest sense of trust and interest among viewers. For college age students, it is important to tackle information dissemination from a personal angle.

Conclusion

The interviews conducted in conjunction with research performed has resulted in a seven-part video series addressing major concerns of incoming Cal Poly students. The following outlines the series, which is to be completed spring 2017.

1. Alumni Success
    a. Weird Al interview
    b. Showcase how on-campus facilities give students the power to create
    c. Illustrate that student education is not limited to a singular college or discipline; rather, the university offers the opportunity for a comprehensive, cross-college experience
    d. College days allowed them to hone in on skills necessary for future
2. Academic Reputation
    a. Employers know that students with a degree from Cal Poly are equipped with critical thinking skills and the ability to solve problems
3. Finding Your Place on Campus
    a. Greek life
    b. Arts community
    c. Club and intermural sports
    d. Diversity and Inclusivity
4. Agriculture and role in the community/school
    a. Cal Poly organic farm
    b. Farm to table practices
    c. Vineyard
    d. Food production classes: chocolate making, wine and viticulture, cow milking
    e. Farmers markets
5. Surrounding Landscapes
    a. 360 video of each place so you can click around and see
    b. Discuss proximity and accessibility
    c. Montana de Oro

6. Learn by Doing
   a. Engineering Student Projects Center
   b. Design Village
   c. Student access to industry leaders

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Appendix A

Interview Transcript: Alfred Yankovic

The following interview was conducted to get a personal anecdote about how using campus

facilities and a hands-on educational approach at Cal Poly produces successful graduates.

Interviewer: Michelle Logan

Respondent: Alfred Yankovic

Date of Interview: 10/2016

Interview Transcription:

Michelle Logan: "Your work is kind of a combination of parodies, satires, original content. What

were you mainly focusing on as KCPR dj?"

Alfred Yankovic: "Well I mean, as a dj I was just spinning records and back announcing at first

at least, and then I started adding more comedy to the show. I would bring in friends to do

characters and started doing bits on the phone, and it became more of a comedy show than just a

straight spinning the record show. So it was kind of a gradual thing. Things definitely got

weirder as time went on.

Michelle Logan: "So definitely not the most traditional dj."

Alfred Yankovic: "No, no I was not warmly welcomed by the program director. back then it was

kind of an odd time because KCPR was trying to figure out if it should be preparing students for

the real world by showing them what a real commercial radio station was like, or being a more

conventional campus radio station, which was more freeform and experimental. and of course, I

was way into the freeform/experimental side and the program director was the opposite. so it was

a little bit of a force of the wills. I spent a lot of hours on the air, I spent a lot of time in the

production room learning how to use the equipment and doing little commercials and PSAs for

the station. it allowed me to record songs and record material and basically indulge a lot of creative whims. Learn by doing is a big part of that— I wasn't taught how to do what I do, per say, but I kind of just got tin there and used the facilities and got some encouragement and did what I did."

Michelle Logan: "You recorded my bologna in the second floor of the men's bathroom in the journalism building. What was your rationale behind that decision?"

Alfred Yankovic: "Well that was the famous bathroom. they called it studio 229 because for some reason the number 229 was above the door. and it was being used a lot by the KCPR staff anytime they need to do a "remote from the basement" or something where they needed a nice reverb of sound. And I thought, well you know I can't afford to go into a real recording studio. But you know, studio 229 has this great wall of bathroom sound effect, so we just ran cables from the production room at KCPR across the hall into the bathroom, setup the microphone and I recorded my bologna there, just because it had a nice vibe to it."

Appendix B

Video URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvwVsZAp4ac&feature=youtu.be

Video Transcript: "Learn By Doing" Teaser

The following script was written based on interviews from students. It was intended to present

diversity of the student experience at Cal Poly.

Interview subject: "Learn by Doing means you're not just reading about something

you're not just watching someone else do something it means you the student are working

getting your hands dirty getting hands on learning by doing."

At Cal Poly, there are so many opportunities to use our motto, learn by doing.

Interview subject: "From day one from your first week of classes you're working toward

what you want to do and that gives you years of experience. When you graduate with a degree

you have experience under your belt. You've been working toward your future job for years

already."

Take PolySat, where students work on real world projects with industry leaders like

NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab.

Interview subject: "What PolySat really stands for is being able to bring a bunch of

people from all walks of life for this common purpose of building a really awesome project a

really cool satellite launching it into space and being able to say as a team we did that."

Or design village, where first year architecture students figure out how to use machines

and tools they've never used before to bring their designs to life.

Interview subject: "When I tell my friends I built this structure and slept in it for the night

they're like wow that's so crazy and I'm like yeah it's just a regular day at Cal Poly you know

we're getting our hands into our projects."

These are just a few of the programs students can get involved with. This is learn by doing.