

What's Your Social Reach: Using Thunderclap to Increase Brand Awareness
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Finding new ways to engage technological natives in the classroom can often be a challenge. Students are continually hiding their texting behaviors under the desk in classrooms or scanning social media on their laptops. As educators, we often see ourselves as “edu-tainers” trying to balance the need to educate students with the need to keep their attention. As much as it frustrates faculty that student interest in social media is often higher than that of course content, it is our responsibility to communicate knowledge in an effective manner. Why not combine course content and social media to create a hands-on learning experience for students?

Millennials are a fascinating, if not somewhat baffling, population from a behaviors perspective. These individuals are reported as “social creatures” who utilize social media platforms twenty percent more than non-Millennials (Barton, Fromm and Egan, 2017). In addition, this population is more likely to enjoy both participating in, and encouraging other to support, cause campaigns (Barton, Fromm and Egan, 2017). This combination of behavior suggests that linking cause-related activities to social media can be a useful when connecting with Millennials.

The foundations service learning are built on the idea of combining academic knowledge, civic engagement and hands-on-activity to create meaningful learning experience for student. This paper builds on that foundation to combine service-learning and social media in the marketing classroom, and provides students a better understanding of how companies can utilize current customer behaviors trends to increase brand awareness.

What is Thunderclap?

Thunderclap is an online site (thunderclap.it) that allows individuals, or companies, to promote their cause by connecting multiple social media platforms (i.e., Twitter, Facebook and Tumbler). The Thunderclap platform promotes a four step process for campaign creation: 1. Craft a Message, 2. Choose a Deadline, 3. Recruit Participants, and 4. Be Heard. Campaigns are required to set desired outcome levels and upon successful goal completion, Thunderclap sends a synchronized message to all supporters, amplifying your message and allowing it to rise above the noise online.

Using Thunderclap in the Classroom to Help Not-for-Profits

The millennial generation, born as tech natives, are not always as tech savvy as expected. While they use digital technology non-stop, they often do not use social media or other technologies to their fullest advantage. In addition, being young students, they are not always clear on how social media, something that is part of their social life, can be incorporated into the “boring world” of work and business. One method of helping students better understand how to incorporate social media strategies into marketing practices is by allowing them to see the impact social connections can have on a business. This project allows students to do just that. By working with a not-for-profit organization, student are able to see marketing in a way that has positive impact on society and connects with their own underlying value of “doing good”. In this 3-week long project assignment, student utilize course content to understand a not-for-profits challenges and differentiating value in order to develop a message that will connect with

potential customers/supporters. Student to complete a number of in class learning tasks, including: company/brand analysis, opportunity analysis, and consumer analysis. Once completed, student brainstorm and develop a positioning strategy. Student learn about creative brief development and usage of messaging and appeal strategies. This was then translated into the Thunderclap platform in the form of a campaign landing page and final distribution message (You-Tube video) that was be sent to all supporters upon campaign success. Students are also required to utilize project management skills as set date and time requirement for project completion as Thunderclap requires approval before allowing a campaign to run on the site.

Upon completion of the initial campaign phase, student were then required to recruit supporters. This required online development of student social reach, and also involved networking and in-person sales communication as students' set-up a booth on campus and were required to ask potential supporters to share their social reach to make societal change. Finally, student were required to examine basic analytic results and present impact data as part of the final reporting process.

Conclusions

Campaign results showed a combination of 120 individual supporters had a combined social reach of 59, 646. In addition, student responses to this method of learning were positive with one comment being "This experience has definitely been enlightening and eye-opening. I would love to do more work with non-profit organizations in the future." All students reported wanting to engage in projects like this again and agreed this project improved their understanding of digital marketing and how social media can be used to help a company.

Using social media is part of a Millennials daily routine, and contrary to many beliefs, Pew Research (2017) reports that Facebook is still the number one most utilized social media platforms among 18 to 29 year olds. This was something reinforced in student findings during this project. Initial data shows this method of combining service learning strategies and social media has a positive impact on student learning behavior overall and provides an effective means of helping faculty reach millennials where they live.

References

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