Aligning the Virtual with the Physical:
Social Media, Strategy, and Arts and Gardens

Georgette E. Dumont
University of North Florida, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social media need to be understood as more than engagement tools as they also impact an organization's internal systems. This chapter analyzes how the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens (The Cummer), a medium-sized museum in Jacksonville, Florida, continues to adapt to both environmental and technical changes to successfully utilize social media, how it has overcome some obstacles, and the challenges it still faces. Using sociotechnical theory as a framework, the intersection of the museum's technical, social, and behavioral systems are brought to the fore to better understand the strategic changes the museum had to undergo to better utilize social media tools to align with its mission. A key component of effective social media use for The Cummer has been its ability to adapt its policies and procedures for online engagement through integration of its online and offline systems, so that online media align with off-line messaging and the dynamic changes in the technological platforms.

INTRODUCTION

Over 10 years ago, Bimber (2003) noted that the Internet had revolutionized communication. Where once organizations were limited in their reach, they now have multiple avenues to provide information to a diverse array of stakeholders; time and location were no longer barriers. However, organizations are still learning how best

to utilize the potential of the Internet. One set of tools that are intensifying the flow and timeliness of communication messages are social media, which allow people and organizations to be social in a virtual space and across time and distance. This engagement provides an opportunity for organizations to build trust and engage in a dialog with their stakeholders (Kent & Taylor 2002). While many nonprofits have a social media presence, the extent to which they strategically use these tools to engage stakeholders varies.

Social media are ubiquitous, making their application increasingly important for nonprofits. Social media can assist a nonprofit organization in achieving its goals, such as increasing the donor base, marketing, promoting events (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009), boosting capacity to strategically communicate with stakeholders (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012), or broadening the scope of stakeholders at the governing table (Saxton, 2005). Still, more needs to be understood about how the organization's interaction with these tools impacts its structure and processes.

Too often, social media platforms are decoupled from the individuals and organizational units that use them. As such, the focus becomes the use of the tool itself, not how it can be leveraged to continue the conversations taking place on other mediums, both online and offline. The techniques are different, but the skillset required to effectively communicate through the different mediums remains constant. Offline, organizations are careful to maintain their brand, provide a consistent message, and make sure their printed materials compliment each other to communicate the organization and its services as a single entity. However, when moving the message to social media, often the traditional rules are set aside. Social media become an avenue to push out information, too often without a plan and metrics to measure their effectiveness. All modes of communication need to enhance an organization's image and brand, regardless of whether the purpose of their use is to acquire donations, to provide information about programs or events, or even to offer a brief description of what the organization does. This includes online communication.

Like other communication mediums, nonprofits need to know how to best integrate social media into their organizations. However, social media are more than tools that exist in a silo; these platforms also impact systems within the organization. Social media are avenues for informational inputs into the organization. These inputs are then processed and organizational systems are adjusted as needed to adapt to the external environment. Organizational leaders and managers need to understand how these interactions can be synced to be able to optimize the use of these tools for mission achievement.

Museums have become adept at using new technologies to enhance a visitor's experience (Charitonos, Blake, Scanlon, & Lones, 2012). McTavish (2013) went beyond the individual visitor by writing about the relationship between the museum as an institution, and the wider world, to create a public value. She opened her book

23 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/aligning-the-virtual-with-the-physical/125008

Related Content

Multiple Hypothesis Testing for Data Mining
Sach Mukherjee (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1390-1395).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/multiple-hypothesis-testing-data-mining/11003

Fostering Participatory Literacies in English Language Arts Instruction Using Student-Authored Podcasts
Molly Buckley-Marudasand Charles Ellenbogen (2020). *Participatory Literacy Practices for P-12 Classrooms in the Digital Age (pp. 20-39).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/fostering-participatory-literacies-in-english-language-arts-instruction-using-student-authored-podcasts/237411

Modeling the KDD Process
Vasudha Bhatnagarand S. K. Gupta (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1337-1345).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/modeling-kdd-process/10995

Perspectives and Key Technologies of Semantic Web Search
Konstantinos Kotis (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1532-1537).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/perspectives-key-technologies-semantic-web/11023

Graph-Based Data Mining
Lawrence B. Holder (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 943-949).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/graph-based-data-mining/10934