SUMMER 2018

ENGAGING DONORS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Institutional Advancement

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON
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Utilizing Social Media For Fundraising

Social media offers universities multiple platforms to connect and engage with prospective, current, and former students along with donors and friends of the university. With a reported two-thirds of American adults using Facebook on a daily basis, this social networking site can help the University of Texas at Arlington continue to expand their global reach.

Integrating social media with traditional forms of communication and marketing can be a quick and inexpensive method of engagement. Older communication methods, which rely on home addresses, phone numbers, and email accounts can easily change and are difficult for universities to continually update. With alumni frequently utilizing Facebook’s platform, this social media site in particular provides UTA with the opportunity to remain in contact with them long after they graduate.

Facebook’s recent prioritization of personal content, however, has negatively impacted user engagement on Facebook pages. In order to increase engagement, Facebook pages need to improve post popularity by presenting more visually engaging content and utilizing Facebook’s organic targeting tools and ad optimization features. For the @UTAAlumni page, it is necessary to first address content engagement and audience optimization prior to developing a fundraising campaign on Facebook. UTA’s new crowdfunding platform, Spark UTA, presents the @UTAAlumni page with an exciting opportunity to promote university fundraising while also learning about the donating interests and behaviors of followers prior to launching a social media fundraising campaign.
With 68% of Americans using Facebook daily, a percentage well above the reported daily usage of other social media sites, such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, Facebook has become the primary social media platform used by universities in order to engage, entertain, and inform users about their campuses.

The @UTAAAlumni page on Facebook supports communication and engagement with alumni, providing a platform for former students to remain engaged with campus news and continue to be connected with their alma mater. The popularity of social media requires universities to not only reevaluate the traditional forms of communication but also to consider new methods to seek and acquire donations.

Why Facebook?

Facebook’s popularity with students and increased usage as a fundraising platform makes the social media site ideal for promoting university fundraising.

Understanding how to utilize social media as it relates to online giving is essential in order to remain relevant to both prospective and current donors. The preference to donate online continues to grow and as overall giving in 2016 increased by 1%, online giving increased by 7.9%. Crowdfunding sites such as Kickstarter and GoFundMe have led universities to develop their own crowdfunding platforms. Starting in 2012, a primarily online global day of giving on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving, known as #GivingTuesday, has inspired organizations to participate and even develop their own giving day specifically for their cause. With a reported 80% of college students on Facebook, its popularity along with the growing usage of Facebook as a fundraising platform encourages universities to utilize Facebook to help accomplish their fundraising goals. However, the rising popularity of fundraising on Facebook does not ensure success and universities will need to consider multiple factors prior to promoting university fundraisers on the site. Understanding the current audience on the Facebook page where fundraising promotion would take place is necessary to both develop and improve a campaign. In addition, it is important to ensure that page content is tailored to Facebook’s current algorithm in order to be viewed by followers and improve the chance of fundraising success.
Although Facebook remains the most frequently used social media site by students and adults, connecting and engaging on the platform continues to be a challenge.

In early 2018, Facebook announced that personal content would be prioritized within the News Feed above public content from pages. Subsequently, organic reach - the number of users that see content without paid promotion - has experienced a significant decrease. Although Facebook does not release the specifics of their News Feed algorithm, if the content does not engage well with users (engagement being measured by the number of likes, reactions, comments, and shares), content is less likely to be seen by followers.

The prioritization of personal content requires Facebook pages to produce content that encourages engagement, leaving page managers searching for ways to remain relevant on the site. Since Facebook prioritizes content that promotes conversations, posts that receive comments are more likely to be seen on the News Feed of followers than posts that just receive likes or reactions. Given the changes, it is important that page managers analyze their previous posts in order to learn what content receives more interest and develop future content with a greater understanding of what will attract users.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg described the News Feed changes as beneficial to the well-being of users saying, “As we roll this out, you'll [Facebook User] see less public content like posts from businesses, brands, and media... the public content you see more will be held to the same standard - it should encourage meaningful interactions between people." UTA pages may be less affected by these changes than those of for-profit businesses as the purpose of the @UTAAlumni Facebook page is to strengthen alumni connections to the university which is similar to Facebook's overall goal to improve personal connections through site content.

Once page content is featured on the News Feed of followers, regardless of it is due to organic reach or paid promotion, another challenge immediately arises: social media content is typically viewed quickly by users, who typically scan content for interest in less than a couple of seconds. Maintaining the interest of Facebook users is based not only on discovering the right content to attract user interest, but also to present content through an engaging form of communication.

The challenge of keeping followers engaged in page content

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The difficulty of engaging followers goes beyond Facebook’s changing News Feed algorithm. Internet users have grown accustomed to the almost instant availability of online information and the attention span of the average internet user continues to shorten. Online users are bombarded with online advertisements and can become fatigued to what has been referred to as the communication “noise.” Blocking out the “noise” can negatively impact the effectiveness of fundraising appeals and has led to organizations increasing the frequency of their appeals. Just between 2014 and 2015, the frequency of nonprofit fundraising appeals through email and direct mail rose by 12% and 8% respectively. This may be counterproductive as it increases the volume of “noise” and may cause more people to ignore their message.

Focusing instead on creating more engaging content may benefit organizations more than increasing the number of fundraising appeals through email, direct mail, and in the case of Facebook - posts. Page content will need to be engaging enough to stop followers from scrolling past and remain interested enough to view and hopefully engage through a like, reaction, share, or comment.

Videos are the most engaging format on Facebook with the average video post reaching 12.05% of total page audience in comparison to 11.63% for photo-focused posts and 4.56% for status update posts. The ideal length of a video on Facebook is between 60-90 seconds with videos below 30 seconds receiving the least amount of engagement and interaction. Research shows that up to 85% of videos are viewed without sound and therefore subtitles are important to maintain user interest in video content.

Videos do not necessarily need to be expensive or professionally produced to be effective. Video content is popular on Facebook because it is more dynamic and visually interesting than photos or text-focused posts. The @UTAAlumni Facebook page is already doing a good job of creating short videos to attract followers that do not require a significant amount of time to make. Recently, as part of a post to remind alumni to sign up for their UTA membership card, a 3-second video of the membership card going in and out of focus was included. This post received more interest and had a higher organic reach than a previous posts concerning the membership card that included just a photo.
Organic Targeting Tool

Facebook’s targeting tools can improve the organic reach of posts

Following the change in the News Feed algorithm, some social media managers referred to organic reach as "dead." They argued that pages would need to almost completely shift to using paid promotion on their posts. For some pages, heavy use of paid promotion may not be realistic and Facebook’s organic targeting tools can give pages hope that organic reach can still be effective. While creating more engaging content is necessary to increase organic reach, it can also be improved through Facebook’s organic targeting tools. These tools allow pages to narrow the visibility of their posts in order to target the followers most likely to be interested in each post and easily measure the performance of content.

While Facebook’s targeting could be beneficial for the majority of page content, the tool could be especially helpful for the promotion of giving opportunities that support a specific UTA college, department, or organization. For example, if @UTAAlumni promoted a giving opportunity to support the College of Liberal Arts, the portion of the page’s audience with an interest in liberal arts or a major within the college (such as political science, criminology, or linguistics) could be prioritized for post visibility over other @UTAAlumni followers.

Facebook recommends that pages choose 6-10 interest tags, although up to 16 can be chosen. However, other Facebook pages have found a steep decline in engagement on posts with more than 10 interest tags. Once a post has been published, pages can view its popularity with preferred audiences through the Audience Insights tool.

Continuing with the previous example, followers interested in political science could engage more with the post than followers interested in criminology. Through Audience Insights, pages could learn more about their audience and their post targeting.

Preferred Audience
Facebook pages can choose to target and prioritize specific groups from their audience based on interests that followers have included on their profile. Regarding the tool, Facebook has stated, "Interest tags help Facebook better match content with audiences, prioritizing posts on particular topics for the users who are most likely to be interested in those topics."

Audience Restrictions
Post audience can be further narrowed by using the audience restriction tool. This allows posts to be viewed only by audiences based on age, gender, location, and language.

Audience Insights
After launching a post that utilizes the organic targeting tools, page managers can analyze engagement and organic reach through the Audience Insights tool.
Facebook Pixel

Installing the Facebook Pixel on the UTA website can help optimize future Facebook fundraising campaigns

Paid promotions are sometimes necessary to gain more views and interactions on Facebook. Facebook users - even if they are not followers of a UTA affiliated page - can be targeted for Facebook ads based on their interactions on the UTA website.

The Facebook Pixel, a piece of code that can be installed into a website, tracks website interactions of Facebook users for advertising and data analysis purposes. As described by Facebook, "[Facebook Pixel] is an analytics tool that allows you to measure the effectiveness of your advertising by understanding the actions people take on your website."

Once the code is installed into a website, visitors of the website who are simultaneously logged on to Facebook will have their actions tracked and synced with the Facebook cookies in their browser.

From the data collected by the Facebook Pixel, page managers can create "Custom Audiences" which optimizes ad promotion to people based on their previous actions on a website with the Facebook Pixel installed.

For example, page managers can choose to create a custom audience of website visitors who added an item to their online shopping cart in the last 30 days but did not purchase the item.

This is important for fundraising purposes as the Facebook Pixel can track users who visited the "Ways to Give" page on UTA's website. By targeting ads to Facebook users who have already indicated through their actions on the UTA website that they are interested in donating opportunities, ad visibility is optimized and a greater likelihood of user interaction with the ad occurs. Page managers can also use the data from the Facebook Pixel to create "Lookalike Audiences." They are created for the purpose of widening ad visibility and the most popular characteristics (such as age, gender, and location) of users who have interacted with the UTA website are used to create new optimized audiences. The code is free and simple to install. Page managers that are considering to utilize ads in their social media strategy - particularly now in this period of decreased organic reach - should consider installing and testing the Facebook Pixel on their website.

Facebook Pixel can Track the Following Actions on Websites:

- Content Views
- Searches
- Items Added to Cart
- Items Add to Wishlist
- Checkout
- Purchase Completions
- Registrations Completions
As a significant moment during a student's career, it is not surprising that graduation ceremony posts are consistently popular with followers and receive a high number of likes.

UT Arlington Alumni

May 16

Last week, we welcomed the Class of 2018 to the Alumni family. Check out more photos from #MayGrad2018 at https://flic.kr/s/aHsmbLCgu1
Highlights of impressive and exciting accomplishments from UTA alumni receive a high number of likes and love reactions from followers.

**UT Arlington Alumni**
May 25

On Monday, Alumna and owner of sugar bee sweets bakery, Heidi Allison will make her debut on Food Network's #DallasCakes! You can read more about the Downtown Arlington Texas bakery and Heidi here: http://bit.ly/2xFzZcRC
Followers respond with great enthusiasm to @UTAAlumni posts that advertise alumni perks, especially the UTA membership card. The post that announced the alumni card received over 200 likes, 100 comments, and 80 shares.

UT Arlington Alumni
May 22, 2017

Show your pride with the all-new UTA alumni card and connect with your alma mater through mentoring opportunities, career development programs, access to the library and discounted rates for the Maverick Activities Center. The card is free and available to all UTA alumni. You can request your card today at http://bit.ly/UTAAlumniCard
The Maverick Love Stories series has been very popular with followers and receives a high number of likes, reactions, and comments as alumni and friends share stories about meeting their love ones at UTA.

UT Arlington Alumni
February 6 •

Tomorrow, we will post the #MaverickLove stories we’ve received so that you can pick your favorite couple to win an Alumni prize pack. If you want you and the love of your life in the running, share your story at bit.ly/UTALoveStory
What can be learned from popular posts?

Understanding which posts attract interest can help with future content engagement

Posts celebrating graduation are typically popular for university pages and the @UTAAlumni page is no exception. Graduation posts can bring nostalgia and happy memories for alumni and receive a high number of likes from followers. Posts that highlight and celebrate alumni accomplishments also gain significant interest and receive a high number of likes. Neither of these types of posts, however, receive a significant number of comments; since Facebook prioritizes conversations in the News Feed, posts that earn comments are more likely to have a greater organic reach. Therefore, while these posts are more popular than the majority of other page content, they may not improve engagement and organic reach.

Engagement for this content could be improved by changing how the content is presented. For example, on UTA's main Facebook page, where content regarding graduation ceremonies and alumni accomplishments are also popular, a recent photo-focused post highlighting an alumna and her bakery received over 20 likes, 2 love reactions, and 1 comment. However, a post celebrating a young mother’s graduation from UTA, which included a video of the alumna and her family, performed well above the average for UTA's main page; the post received over 200 likes, 180 love reactions, 41 comments, and 215 shares - all from organic reach.

Understanding which topics attract greater interest from followers is the first step to developing a social media fundraising strategy. By presenting the content through the most popular format, @UTAAlumni could improve their organic reach and engagement with alumni.
The type of posts that receive the highest level of comments on the @UTAAAlumni page are part of the UTA Love Story series. The success of these posts is likely a combination of factors. These posts specifically ask followers to engage by sharing their own stories and posts are focused on recognizing alumni rather than promoting an event or a campus news article. In addition, UTA Love Story posts are more personal and relatable than the majority of page content.

UTA Love Stories also provides an incentive for alumni to share their love story. The couple whose photo and story receives the most engagement wins an alumni prize packet. In 2017, the winning couple (pictured right) was surprised at their workplace with their prize. Recognizing alumni, not only by sharing their story on Facebook but also by offering a prize, can illustrate to followers that the university values alumni engagement and could foster goodwill towards UTA.

Posts regarding alumni perks, such as the UTA membership card, regularly receive comments as followers typically either ask questions regarding perk details or express sentiments of gratitude. Promoting alumni perks while also offering chances to win university prizes can be beneficial to the level of post engagement along with page "likes." Studies have shown that Facebook users are more likely to "like" a page if they know that the page offers discounts, giveaways, or sweepstakes. The couples featured in UTA Love Stories typically interact with the posts and their Facebook friends often also interact as well. This interaction improves post visibility and can increase the chances of UTA students on Facebook learning about UTA Love Stories and the fun prize offered to the winning couple.

Replicating the success of UTA Love Stories will not be easy. A post asking alumni to share their "Maverick-Owned Business" did not generate interest from followers. Although followers were asked to share their personal stories, similar to the UTA Love Stories, it could be that this topic is less relatable to alumni. Followers may need to be encouraged to participate by offering an entry to win an alumni prize pack. While this increases expenses, if alumni respond with their business story, alumni relations could use this information for later posts, promotions, and featured stories.
Engagement Recommendation 1: Page Video Cover

Since the average Facebook user scrolls through social media content quickly, it is important to make content as engaging as possible. In 2010, Facebook created the option to replace the standard cover page photo with a video instead. Given the popularity of videos on Facebook, a video cover may help keep users on @UTAAlumni’s page while also illustrating the varying opportunities to engage as UTA alumni.

The video cover for UT Arlington College of Nursing and Health Innovation exemplifies how a video cover can provide a quick and creative look at the type of content. This video shows professors teaching, students performing course activities, student fairs, and even fun campus events. Less than 30 seconds long, this video provides a snapshot of the opportunities that the College of Nursing and Health Innovation has to offer students.

"By making cover video available, we want to help you create more engaging interaction and drive more rich experience for your audience by letting you spotlight your creative content in one of the most prominent space: your Page cover."

-Facebook Spokesperson

Snapshots from the Facebook cover video of the College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Example Video Covers

UT Arlington College of Nursing and Health Innovation
University of Texas at Austin
University of Texas at Dallas
University of Northern Colorado Alumni Association
Wisconsin Alumni
Texas A&M University
University of Michigan
Columbia University

@UTAAAlumni Video Content Ideas

UTA Chapter Meetings
Distinguished Alumni Awards
UTA Day at the Rangers
Graduation and Homecoming Footage

Looking at other universities that utilize the video cover option, the majority of universities only have a video cover for their main page. However, they can still provide ideas of how to create an interesting video cover. The most common video covers focus on campus buildings and nature scenery (ex. UT Austin, UT Dallas, Texas A&M). The video cover for the alumni association at the University of Northern Colorado is a time-lapse of the campus with the video focused on the alumni building.

Time lapse videos are ideal for the main Facebook page of universities since they can quickly cover a wide variety of campus areas. However, a video cover for @UTAAAlumni should focus primarily on displaying the specific activities and events alumni can join. Without reading the "About" section of the @UTAAAlumni page or scanning recent posts, Facebook users can quickly gain an idea of what opportunities are available for alumni from the cover video.

Facebook recommends uploading cover videos with 820 x 462 pixels however the minimum is 820 x 312 pixels (videos uploaded with the minimum pixels will have black bars on the top and bottom). Videos must be at least 20 seconds long and cannot be longer than 90 seconds.

Engagement Recommendation 2:
Include Links to Additional Social Media Sites on Facebook

Facebook allows pages to include links to external sites on the sidebar of the page, readily accessible to users. Universities have added links to their Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, and even Flickr accounts on their Facebook pages.

While alumni are likely to use Facebook, they could follow sites like Instagram or Twitter to conveniently view more content. With the links to other @UTAAAlumni social media pages accessible on the sidebar of the Facebook page, users may be more likely to view and follow these other social media pages than if they had to look up these pages independently.

@utdallasalumni has included links to their Instagram and Twitter pages on Facebook (as seen on the right) which @UTAAAlumni could easily do.
UTA’s newly established crowdfunding site, Spark UTA, provides university-based projects and initiatives with a platform to promote their fundraising campaigns.

Similar to other crowdfunding platforms, such as GoFundMe and Kickstarter, a link to Spark UTA can easily allow potential donors to view the variety of fundraising campaigns and discover how their giving can make a difference to student causes.

Digital fundraising provides prospective donors with the convenience and independence during the donating process that people have come to expect in the internet age. It also attracts a younger demographic, with the average age range of a crowdfunding donor between 24-35 years old. This modern method of giving could improve the current level of alumni giving, especially in younger generations. Within the past 30 years, the number of public charities has increased from 360,000 charities to 1,097,680 charities and the rise in public charities increases competition between organizations - including universities - to earn financial support.

Although women on average donate more than men, female millennial alumni are less likely than their male counterparts to donate to their alma mater (44% versus 56% respectively). This is particularly concerning since college enrollment trends favor women, with female enrollment at 57% for first-time students in comparison to 43% for men. Their preference is instead to donate to a typically non-profit cause. Spark UTA has already launched campaigns that are more aligned with non-profit causes, such as the UTA Comm Attire campaign. These campaigns allow UTA female alumni to give to a cause-focused campaign while donating to the university.
Promoting Crowdfunding Campaigns on Facebook

Certain Spark UTA campaigns may benefit from Facebook promotion more than other campaigns

In March of 2017, Facebook launched its own fundraising tool, offering users the ability to raise money for causes falling under one of eight different categories: education (including tuition), medical, pet medical, sports, community, crisis relief, personal emergencies, and funerals or loss. Although originally Facebook charged a 6.9% platform fee, it has since been eliminated.

The fundraising tool has been popular with users and in August of 2017, Facebook launched the birthday fundraiser tool which allows users to create a fundraiser for one of 750,000 nonprofits, asking for donations rather than personal gifts for their birthday.

In June of 2018, a fundraiser for RAICES (Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services) which was just created by a Californian couple raised $20 million in less than one week. With an original goal of $1,500, the fundraiser has become the largest fundraiser in Facebook's history. Facebook's fundraising tools exemplify how social media can make a positive difference to the lives of users and communities around the world. Although UTA cannot utilize the fundraising tools, their popularity benefits future promotion of university fundraising on the site since Facebook users are already used to seeing opportunities to give on the site.

However, it is important to keep in mind that like any other Facebook content, posts that promote fundraisers need to be immediately engaging or risk a low organic reach. Spark UTA campaigns that can quickly attract user interest could benefit from being promoted on Facebook. Campaigns that may require more explanation in order to communicate their purpose, such as crowdfunding campaigns for academic research, can be difficult to promote on Facebook given the average attention span of users.

Promotion of Spark UTA campaigns on the @UTAAAlumni Facebook page would likely perform best when the campaigns can quickly resonate with alumni. For example, a campaign that benefits a scholarship for a UTA class ring, which is a well-established college tradition for students, may attract and interest alumni and could benefit from promotion on the @UTAAAlumni Facebook page.
Cause-Focused Fundraising Opportunities

The following examples demonstrate how donors can contribute to the university while also giving to cause-focused student opportunities.

You impress, We'll Help You Dress

UTA Comm Attire provides professional attire rentals for students in the communications department. By helping students dress their best for job or internship interviews, UTA Comm Attire helps students make a great first impression.

UTA Food Pantry, supported by the Follett Student Leadership Center, is an on-campus facility available to UTA students, faculty, and staff where non-perishable foods are provided. Various student organizations work together to collect and distribute food for the pantry while increasing awareness of food insecurity.

As part of the Multicultural Affairs office. The LGBTQA Program provides scholarship opportunities and a Lavender Graduation to recognize LGBTQ+ graduates and allies. The program also offers events and services for students.

The Follett Leadership Center helps students become effective and ethical leaders through programs, events, and activities to improve their leadership skills. The center offers students the opportunity to engage in conferences, retreats, field trips, and leadership courses. Students can also participate in the Leadership Honors Program and earn a minor in leadership. “The most important thing I learned from being involved in The Leadership Center is learning more about who I am as a leader” - Maggie Garza, Leadership Honors Program Student.
The Emergency Assistance Fund provides students with financial assistance for basic needs during emergency circumstances. Unlike the Nursing Pin Scholarship campaign - which benefits from an exact cost to fund a nursing pin - prospective donors of the Emergency Assistance Fund may be hesitant to donate money towards the campaign if they do not know how their contribution will impact the students and the overall campaign.

Ignite Ole Miss, the crowdfunding platform for the University of Mississippi, surpassed a $10,000 goal for their campaign to support the Ole Miss Family Emergency Fund, ultimately raising $32,000. The successful campaign customized its giving levels to specifically detail how donations would be utilized based on the gift amount; a donation of $25 could replace basic school supplies while a donation of $100 could purchase two weeks of groceries and a donation of $250 could replace textbooks lost during an emergency. Contribution perks were included for a donation above $250.

Even if the Emergency Assistance Fund campaign at UTA could not provide contribution perks, specifically highlighting how each level of giving can make a difference to students provides more information to prospective donors and can increase trust in the campaign.

HURRICANE HARVEY

At the beginning of the fall semester in 2017, Hurricane Harvey hit the Houston metropolitan area, forcing thousands of families out of their homes and causing over $125 billion of damage.

UTA students, faculty, and staff worked together to assist families in need, including their fellow classmates. The impact of Hurricane Harvey reached UTA students as approximately 3,000 online UTA students were affected by the storm.

Various nonprofits on Facebook raised money for victims of Hurricane Harvey, totaling over $20 million. While @UTAAAlumni would not utilize the specific charitable giving tools provided by Facebook, the Student Emergency Assistance Fund is relevant to popular discussion on Facebook; national disasters and tragedies make up some of the most frequent discussions on the site with Facebook's 2017 Year in Review showing that Hurricane Harvey and the earthquake in Mexico were among the top discussions on Facebook for the year.
Promotion of Spark UTA's upcoming campaign stands to benefit from its high impact at a low donation cost

The journey to graduate from UTA’s esteemed nursing program is challenging and senior students can celebrate their approaching graduation by participating in the nursing pin ceremony. At the ceremony, students accept their UTA nursing pin, recite the nursing pledge and celebrate with friends and family.

Donors can support nursing students by participating in the Nursing Pin Scholarship to help provide the necessary funds for students to receive their nursing pin.

This type of crowdfunding campaign could benefit from being promoted on Facebook. The cost to fund a pin less than $50, below the average crowdfunding donation of $88. Therefore, the impact of a relatively small contribution is high since donors could purchase an entire pin without committing to a large donation. In addition, the campaign can be quickly communicated through a photo of video of the nursing ceremony while a short explanation could sufficiently explain the nursing pin’s purpose and meaning.

AUDIENCE OPTIMIZATION TOOL
Using Facebook’s audience optimization tool - which allows pages to target their posts to followers based on specific interests - a post promoting the Nursing Pin Scholarship can be targeted to audiences that would be most likely interest in donating or sharing the post with their Facebook friends.

For example, the preferred audience to view a post promoting the Nursing Pin Scholarship could be created based on the interest of followers such as:

- Nursing
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing
- Philanthropy
- Crowdfunding
Nursing Pin Scholarship Campaign Promotion

Understanding content for Facebook campaign promotion

PRE-CAMPAIGN: Asking for donations can be tricky for Facebook pages that are not solely philanthropic. Prior to announcing a fundraising campaign on the @UTAAlumni page, content regarding forms of university giving that do not require a financial donation - such as volunteer opportunities - should be promoted. During the promotion of a fundraising campaign on Facebook, non-related posts should continue to be uploaded. Audiences will become less interested in campaign information if it is the only type of content that the page releases for an extended period of time.

Therefore, during a fundraising campaign, a mixture between campaign content, non-related content and content regarding non-monetary giving opportunities should be maintained. The example above demonstrates one way to promote a campaign, however, @UTAAlumni should explore multiple options and measure their success through Facebook's Audience Insights.

CAMPAIGN: Announcing a fundraising campaign on Facebook should be communicated through the site's most engaging format - video. Crowdfunding campaigns that include a video have been shown to perform better with audiences than campaigns that only feature a photo. Videos are more likely to translate campaign purpose and trust than just a photo included within the description. The video should be approximately 2 minutes long; videos longer than 4 minutes experience a high decrease in engagement so keeping the video within the recommended time-length is important. The time span of the campaign will determine how much content should be posted regarding the campaign on the Facebook page. For a giving day, fundraising content is heavily promoted for usually just one day. However, a campaign that lasts 30-40 days will have to promote much more sparingly. The amount of campaign content should relate to how well audiences respond to the initial campaign announcement. Recommendations for campaign post frequency is difficult to provide given the unique factors and characteristics of every Facebook page and campaign.
POST-CAMPAIGN: Offering a word of thanks to Facebook followers recognizes donors and reminds other users of university giving opportunities.

Again, given the popularity of videos on Facebook, a video should be used to communicate gratitude. The video can be short (less than 30 seconds) and still receive more engagement than a photo-focused post.

Expense and time-constraints can complicate video creation. However, even creating a GIF instead of a photo would improve engagement. Sites such as GIPHY make the process of creating a GIF quick and simple.

For the example on the left, the multi-colored triangles could move and flicker, hopefully catching the interests of followers.

A GIF or quickly produced video can be effective for a short or small campaign. However, for a large fundraising campaign, a video with more details is ideal. Creating stop-motion videos has been a popular way of improving interest and engagement in Facebook content. While some stop-motion videos can be highly time intensive, the time to create a stop-motion video an be shortened if the concept is not overly complicated. For example, a stop-motion video of a jar filling with coins can illustrate the purpose of crowdfunding while also representing the completion of a campaign.

Regardless of format or style, a post offering thanks to followers can remind donors that their contribution is appreciated. This type of post would benefit from including specific details about the campaign’s impact. Example: “45 pins were raised this month thanks to our generous donors.”
The benefit of promoting Spark UTA campaigns on Facebook extends beyond the possibility of raising funds for the individual campaigns. By utilizing Facebook’s audience targeting tools and ad optimization options (discussed on page 8-9) for posts promoting Spark UTA, @UTAAlumni can learn the demographics and interests of followers most likely to engage in university giving opportunities. This data can be utilized for future fundraising campaigns as targeted audiences for posts and ads can be optimized in order to increase the chances of fundraising success. A future fundraising opportunity for UTA that could benefit from being promoted on social media is #GivingTuesday.

Since its creation in 2012, #GivingTuesday has become a staple within the online giving community. Taking place the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, #GivingTuesday is a global giving day which ignites the season of giving as it celebrates the hard work of thousands of participating organizations. During #GivingTuesday, people engage with and donate to participating individuals, families, nonprofits, civic organizations, and businesses. In 2017, $300 million was raised online from 2.5 million gifts throughout 150 countries.

UT System universities that have participated in @GivingTuesday include UT Austin, UT El Paso, UT San Antonio, UT Dallas, and UT Permian Basin.

#WHYGIVE

For public universities, a misconception exists within the general public that universities receive the majority of their funding from government support. Although this is not the case, prospective donors may be less likely to donate to an institution if they believe that their contribution is not significant to the institution’s operation.

UT Austin provides a clear explanation that explains the importance of university fundraising. On UT Austin’s main giving page, the “Why Give to UT” page highlights that less than 12% of university funds are from state general grants - a percentage which has decreased from almost 50% forty years ago.

This is not the only way to communicate the necessity of university fundraising. Statistics that highlight the percentage of scholarships or number of student opportunities that were funded entirely by donors can illustrate donor impact while also communicating the importance of donor contributions to the university.

It is important that @UTAAlumni expresses the importance of giving in order to inspire followers to remain interested in fundraising appeals on Facebook.
The diverse approaches to #GivingTuesday are illustrated in case studies of campaigns in higher education.

**Rutgers**

Prior to 2017, Rutgers University held their own university-focused giving day on #GivingTuesday. However, Rutgers has since moved their university-focused giving day to the spring of each year and continues to participate and promote #GivingTuesday through their social media. Within the case study, Rutgers advised universities interested in participating in #GivingTuesday to personalize their marketing campaign and segment communication based on audiences most likely to be interested in the content.

**Tufts University**

Tufts University approached #GivingTuesday as a way to increase engagement within their donor base. The entire university participated in #GivingTuesday with each school creating their own social media posts to promote the day. Donor participation during the 2016 campaign was twice Tufts’ original goal and the university stopped their future plans to create a university-focused giving day and concentrate their fundraising efforts in #GivingTuesday. The university believes that as an already established day of giving, #GivingTuesday would be easier to promote than a new university-focused giving day.

**Colorado State University**

Rather than focusing on a certain fundraising or donor goal, Colorado State University narrowed their #GivingTuesday campaign to benefit one university cause. Their campaign focused on assisting the campus food bank although donors could donate to other university causes. Colorado State promoted #GivingDay by creating a visual tracking thermometer which measured the number of meals donated and provided live updated throughout the day.

**Penn**

Like Tufts University, the University of Pennsylvania has decided to focus on donor participation rather than a specific fundraising goal. Their 2016 donor participation goal of 500 donors was surpassed and 1,800 donors participated in their campaign. The university promoted #GivingTuesday prior to the day and provided donors with the opportunity to contribute early to the campaign. University alumni that volunteered during the campaign were given free admission to Homecoming. They used perks to increase student and alumni engagement and during the 2017 campaign, they offered university apparel that was distributed only to #GivingTuesday donors.
The main #GivingTuesday site provides resources and recommendations to assist social media fundraising campaigns

The case studies of #GivingTuesday at universities demonstrate how participation does not necessarily need to be as large as a university-focused giving day. #GivingTuesday represents all forms of giving and therefore university participation in #GivingTuesday can be focused on a non-monetary goal, such as increasing student volunteerism or alumni participation. A popular focus - particularly for universities participating in #GivingTuesday for the first time - is focusing on the number of donors engaged in the campaign. This emphasizes and supports the popular philanthropic approach to fundraising in which every donation matters, regardless of its size.

Fortunately, the main website for @GivingTuesday provides detailed resources to help organizations participate in the day of giving. The #GivingTuesday Complete Toolkit provides campaign ideas, timelines, sample press releases, and even tips for a mayoral proclamation. The site also offers resources specific to #GivingTuesday at universities.

Since #GivingTuesday is a primarily online day of giving, the site provides plenty of social media recommendations for universities engaging in #GivingTuesday. The email and social media timeline recommendations (found in the Communications Planning Workbook) provide exact dates and examples posts for the entire promotion of #GivingTuesday. Of course, universities can be creative and choose to use their own timelines. However, the provided resources are especially helpful for universities that have never participated in a day of giving on campus.

The links below are resources kindly provided by the #GivingTuesday site and will be helpful for any future online fundraising campaigns, even if it is not affiliated with #GivingTuesday.

**General #GivingTuesday Resources**

- The Complete Toolkit
- 2018 Campaign Timeline
- Communications Toolkit
- Social Media Toolkit
- Mayoral Proclamation Toolkit

**Higher Education #GivingTuesday Resources**

- Top 10 Checklist for #Giving Tuesday
- Communications Planning Workbook
- High Ed Kickoff Meeting Workbook
- Higher Education Social Media Toolkit
- 13 Higher Ed Branding Example
Social media has changed how universities can engage and communicate their fundraising efforts and in recent years, universities have launched online fundraising campaigns that have significantly relied on social media platforms.

The changes made to Facebook's News Feed will undoubtedly continue and its recent changes have made it more difficult for universities to engage with followers on the platform. However, some of the site's recent changes, such as improving the Facebook Pixel and providing pages with more organic audience targeting tools, can improve communication and offer important data that will be crucial to the future development of effective online fundraising campaigns.

Through trial and error, @UTAAlumni will be able to discover which groups of followers are most interested in university content and promote accordingly. Utilizing Facebook's audience optimizing tools is not only helpful to the university but also considerate to the page's followers. Rather than blasting all followers with frequent fundraising content, segmenting communication can keep Facebook audiences engaged in content that specifically matches their interests.

Fundraising success on social media requires universities to know their online audience and communicate fundraising appeals in a way that engages and inspires followers to get involved. This challenge is often understated and online fundraising expectations should reflect an understanding of its difficulty.

Despite the challenges, the popularity of online fundraising does not appear to be slowing down and online fundraising initiatives - such as #GivingTuesday - highlight its popularity. While the road to successful fundraising through social media will not be easy, continuing efforts to understand how to effectively engage with online donors is a worthy and necessary university endeavor.
Research Sources


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Report Writer and Designer: Rebecca Reyes, Summer Internship Program in Philanthropy Program Intern
Supervisor: Tommy White, Director of Communications

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Melody Tolleson, Graphic Designer

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