

Chapter 3

Overcoming Organizational Obstacles and Driving Change: The Implementation of Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Social media channels are tools for communication, not new communication in and of themselves. Like any form of external communication, social media is ineffective without a strategy and plan. In 2009, the College of Professional Education (CPE) at State University North began an arduous process to gain support and resources for the organizational use of social media. The case history highlights the various mechanisms, projects, and models CPE experienced during the evolution of the Social Media Team and the “Year of Social Media” initiative. Using Kotter’s 8-Step Change Model, the activities are discussed across 4 stages. This approach resulted in 32 segments of evaluation – 4 stages of development and 8 steps of change. The case history and analysis specifically focus on the organizational changes that occurred in order to enable organizational usage of social media for student engagement, advocacy, and marketing. The study does not focus on the actual use of social media tools or the impact on student engagement, advocacy, and marketing. The analysis sheds light on the experiences of change with a process model applied retroactively and provides a synopsis of lessons learned.

INTRODUCTION

In 2008, the policy and implementation activities for student engagement, advocacy, and marketing at the College of Professional Education (CPE) was determined and directed by managers and directors. The planning required numerous meetings, project plan drafts, and subsequent briefings

to the organization and to college administration. Fast forward five years to 2013 and there’s a very different model in place. Today, the policy and implementation is a collaborative process with integrated implementation from the Social Media Team (SMT) and the marketing department with sponsorship and oversight provided by a college executive.

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Clearly there are numerous contemporary examples of integrated marketing and communication as well as technologically mediated communication. Social media is one example of how technology tools used for social interaction and communication have made incredible changes to the ways in which many individuals interact with one another and the world. Today, it is common for individuals receive their news updates via Twitter, receive marketing promotions when they surf the internet, keep up to date with friends and family by scanning their Facebook newsfeed, and monitor their child's social activities by following the photos posted on an Instagram account. Social media is just one example that highlights how technological advancements can tangibly impact and change the ways in which individuals interact.

Despite the large and exponentially increasing numbers of diverse social media users, the College of Professional Education (CPE) at State University North was hesitant to jump on the social media bandwagon. The concerns were grounded in risk. For example, there was significant concern that opening the organization up to online global scrutiny could result in negative press and communication. The extreme variety of opinions regarding online social interaction within the both professional world and sociological scientific inquiry, namely the quality of interaction and potential risks this type of communication can carry, added to the overwhelming concern and confusion surrounding the decision to enter the social media world. Despite internal resistance, CPE did eventually explore and commit to the use of social media for activities related to student engagement, advocacy, and marketing.

The staff group, currently known as the Social Media Team (SMT), went through the following four distinct stages of development: Marketing Silo, Forced Volunteers, Unstructured Grassroots, and Structured Volunteers. Each developmental stage faced challenges which, as the SMT overcame them, helped to strengthen the team. With each transformation the result was not only a

stronger social media presence but also stronger organizational buy-in.

As a framework for analysis, the activities are discussed across four phases with Kotter's 8-Step Change Model (1996). The approach resulted in 32 segments of evaluation- four stages of development and eight steps of change which are presented in a completed table near the end of the chapter. Table 1 represents the grid to be completed. The case history and analysis specifically focus on the organizational changes that occurred in order to enable the organizational usage of social media for student engagement, advocacy, and marketing. The chapter ends with recommendations for utilizing the implementation of social media to influence organizational change.

FRAMING THE CASE HISTORY: ONLINE INTERACTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

Social media as a recognized phenomenon or discipline is in its infancy; thus, scholarly work tying social media tools or practices to organizational culture or change remains scarce. In determining the framework for case analysis we reviewed salient and current literature and seminal works of leading scholars in the areas of online interaction, organizational culture, and organizational development.

Studying the Uses and Effects of Online Interaction

Technology, and the changes it brings, is often viewed with a critical eye. Communication and interaction which take place within a fully online environment have been seen by many as inferior to real-world interaction for a variety of reasons. A large concern has been based around questions of the quality of interaction and the depth of communication within an online environment as compared to a face to face interaction. Essentially,

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