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4 TOOLS TO ENHANCE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PLATFORM

By Andrew Talevich, Lambda Chi Alpha

For many of us, it's hard to describe our job when we get asked what we do. Communications is such a broad term, and our jobs often entail multiple responsibilities. Because we have so many things going on, there are several tools that can help us maintain our communications platforms. Here are four tools that can assist in your daily duties:

1. TWEETDECK.COM

As Twitter gains popularity, many organizations are using multiple Twitter accounts to connect with different segments of their market. For example, an organization may have its overarching Twitter account but also one for its CEO and consultant staff. TweetDeck allows you to maintain multiple Twitter accounts on one site. Not only can you publish tweets, you can see what people are saying about your organization by tracking hashtags, handles and keywords.

2. ISSUU.COM

Does your organization publish a magazine or newsletter? The majority of fraternity and sorority organizations would say yes. If you mail your magazine, you should also consider displaying it on your website or other digital medium. Issuu is a slick magazine reader that's easy to use. Simply create an account, upload the magazine's PDF, and then get the document's HTML embed code. From there you can copy and paste the embed code to your website so readers can easily access the magazine online.

3. GOOGLE.COM/ALERTS

In an industry where positive and negative publicity can be generated quickly and widely, Google Alerts is a must. Google Alerts tracks keywords over their news site. Typically, you would want to select your keywords as the name of your organization. If there is a story about your organization, you will get an automatic email with the link to that story. You can also set up how often you would like to be notified about news stories that mention your organization.

4. STORYTOOLZ.COM

Sadly, as communicators our stories don't always have the best sentence fluency and are sometimes difficult to read. Storytoolz will track reading levels, sentence information, word usage, and sentence beginnings of your stories. By examining the syntax of your story, you can make your content more dynamic and your stories more engaging.



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BRIEFINGS

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OUR MISSION:

To enhance fraternity communications through the exchange of ideas, experiences and information.

Why We Do, What We Do

By Andrew Talevich, Lambda Chi Alpha

Every once in a while it's important to step back and assess your job. You should ask the question "why am I working where I work, and what benefit am I providing my constituents?" This process of reflection can often strengthen your resolve and refill your passion as you continue to communicate with the masses.

Often, the budget and resources for a comprehensive communication platform can take a backseat to other initiatives within an organization. However, communication specialists play a central role in the fraternity and sorority experience. When you start to reflect on your work, think about the following impact you have on your organization.

Chronicle of History

Many of our organizations house libraries (or at least bookshelves) of chronicled magazines from years past. Some of these publications date back over a century. We often rely on these publications to develop an idea of our fraternity or sorority's history. Without these preserved publications, many of the ideas, concepts and events of the past would be completely lost. Now imagine communication specialists in your respective organizations 100 years from now. Perhaps they'll be reading your work to find out what fraternity and sorority life was like in the year 2013.

Overall Engagement

For many alumni (or alumnae), a newsletter, Facebook post, tweet or magazine arriving in their mailbox may be the only interaction they have with their fraternity or sorority. Not everyone is going to be a dedicated alumni volunteer, staff member or chapter advisor. Without these forms of communication, this lifeline between alumni and organization would be cut. It's so crucial to continue to communicate with alumni through a multimedia effort in order to maintain your organization's relevance in their life.

Splash of Color

Every year at the FCA Annual Conference, the top storytellers are awarded at the final banquet. News articles, human interest articles and persuasive pieces highlight the diversity of what the Greek community has to offer. Stories such as these add substance and quality to any organization. There are also creative campaigns, video clips, interactive web elements and vibrant websites that transform the look and feel of a fraternity and sorority. This splash of color helps create a brand identity that can form a bond with the constituents with whom you communicate.

Promotion of a Culture of Excellence

Our organizations are providing young men and women with experiences that will benefit them for the rest of their lives. Without communicating our organization's history, individual and group achievements, special events, and in-depth personal profiles, our organizations lack an output of culture. It's up to the communication specialist to ensure that people know about the excellence that occurs daily within their organization.

So pat yourself on the back for upholding the benefits listed above. Be sure to go the extra mile and continue to be the voice that your organization needs.

Letter *from the* PRESIDENT



By Ashley Martin
Zeta Tau Alpha

"I didn't come here
to be ordinary."

A friend of mine—another fraternity/sorority professional—said these words to me a few weeks ago as we were talking about our jobs. We were discussing how, when working for organizations as steeped in tradition as fraternities and sororities, it can sometimes be challenging to stray from the familiar and do things in a different way. It is easy to take an "if it's not broke, don't fix it" attitude. Making changes to something with so much history and symbolism can be scary.

Thankfully, in the field of communications, ever-changing technologies and social mediums keep us on our toes. When the world changes around us, we are forced to change with it. This is a good thing. But at the same time, everyone else—every other person or entity vying for our members' attention—is changing too. Is what we are doing to present our message ordinary or are our organizations standing out in the crowd?

In our last issue of *Briefings*, we discussed how to get in touch with our creative energy—get out of the office, collaborate with others, keep a record of our ideas and more. But creativity is just part of the process of taking our communications efforts from ordinary to extraordinary. We can brainstorm great ideas until we are blue in the face, but we must analytically look at each idea to determine if it is a change worth making or if it is simply changing for the sake of changing.

This summer, during Zeta Tau Alpha's leadership conference, I was introduced to the SCARE method for determining which of your ideas are the best solutions to your challenges. (As a side note, if you are looking for great professional development

activities to do with your staff, you don't have to look much farther than the leadership programming you offer your own chapters.) Not at all scary like the acronym may suggest, SCARE offers five simple steps.

- Substitute:** Look at your list of ideas. Which pieces and parts can be substituted with a different idea to make it even better?
- Combine:** Can you combine any of your ideas to create an even more extraordinary idea?
- Align:** Which ideas best align with your goal? Which will best help you achieve those goals?
- Rearrange:** Can parts of your idea be rearranged in a way that better fits priorities or a timeline?
- Eliminate:** Which ideas can you take off the table?

For me, the Align step in SCARE is the most important. As communicators, we need to make our efforts not only align with our organizations' revered values and missions, but with what each of our audiences want and need. Determining those wants and needs may be tricky and should involve further research about communications vehicles, generational communications preferences, and more, but I am positive we are all up to that challenge.

Take a look at your communications strategy. If you are on social media, are you really being present and relevant to your members? Does your latest video have both flash and substance? Don't just communicate for the sake of doing it. Your message has to make a connection. It has to give them something to remember.

What are you doing to be extraordinary?

SAVE *the* DATES

FUN THINGS ARE HAPPENING

September
FCA Brown Bag
Wednesday, September 18

Zeta Tau Alpha
3450 Founders Rd.
Indianapolis, IN 46268

2013 FCA
Midyear Conference
Friday, November 15

Renaissance Indianapolis
North Hotel
11925 N. Meridian St.
Carmel, IN 46032

October
FCA Brown Bag
Wednesday, October 23

Alpha Sigma Phi
710 Adams St.
Carmel, IN 46032



As always, follow along using the hashtags #FCABrownBag and #FCAMidyear.

For more information about FCA educational events and minutes from past Brown Bag lunches, visit our website, www.fraternitycommunications.com.

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