

Executive Summary

The following summarizes a formal report outlining an online comprehensive communications program that we have prepared to strengthen the online presence of Cambrian College's public relations program. Our online communications strategy consists of both on-site and off-site tactics that serve to inform, engage and grow our audiences.

Our three major audiences that we have addressed are the media, consumers and employees. Our consumers are our students since they will be the ones paying money for our services, while our employee audience consists of faculty, administration and board members.

Through our on-site tactics we will be targeting our publics by doing a complete overhaul of the public relations website. On the new website we will be creating a brand new domain for students, similar to that of a social networking site, where they can all have individual profiles and communicate amongst each other as well as have instant access to information that is important to them. To engage the media we have proposed a plan for an online newsroom where busy media professionals can go to access the most relevant information in a timely manner. To keep our employees informed we have proposed the use of an intranet to keep them up-to-date with internal information, and we have also discussed a web portal where professors can interact directly with their students.

Through our off-site tactics we will be utilizing various social media tools to engage and inform each one of our publics, including the use of Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube and Flickr to name a few. Each tactic has been carefully selected to meet the goal of growing each of our audiences.

For more detailed and comprehensive information regarding this plan please refer to our full formal report as well as our attached appendices.

On-site tactics

Media

For this section of the on-site tactics we are going to focus on media. In an effort to maximize the potential of media coverage, we are gearing this section towards all television, online and print media with an interest in both public relations and Cambrian College as a whole.

Goal

To act as a resource center for media by providing them with easy access to valuable tools and information that are both newsworthy and relevant.

Description of Tactics

In order to keep the media informed about the goings-on within Cambrian College's public relations program we will craft a separate media page within the website that will act as an online newsroom to potential media outlets. This page will be linked to off of the main page with a clearly visible link.

Everything within the online newsroom will be tailored to meet the needs of busy media professionals. This means we will provide them with the most relevant and newsworthy information in an easy to navigate format, so they can find what is important to them right away.

When they first navigate to the media page they will have in front of them a backgrounder and fact-sheet supplying them with the most important details of the public relations program in a clear and condensed format. Within the backgrounder there will be links to both corporate and executive biographies, since the media may also like to have some information on the key contacts such as Dean Joan Campbell, coordinator Nancy Griffin and professor Julianne McCaffrey.

Along the left of the page there will be a column with links providing them with further information. At the top of this column will be a link to an archive of announcements and media releases in chronological order beginning with the most recent. By providing them with these announcements and releases we are keeping them informed of newsworthy events regarding the public relations program. For our major announcements we will be sure to provide a video news release to compliment the written news release in order to ensure maximum effectiveness of our message.

We will also have a section for quotes and sound bytes, this section will be designed for busy journalists and reporters who may not have time to schedule an interview but still want to give us coverage. In this section of the website they will easily be able to pull a quote from a list of pre-approved quotes that have been designed to represent the program in a positive light. Similarly, there will be audio clips and sound bytes available for television and radio reporters to use in the same fashion.

Due to the scale of some of the events put together by the public relations program, we feel it would be appropriate to have a live feed on the website so that media can still cover the events even if they were not able to be there themselves. For example, the charity development workshop we did last week would have been a perfect opportunity to implement this feature due to the scale and nature of the event, and also because it was held within the eDome which is designed for web broadcasting.

If a live feed is not feasible for a particular event, then we propose simply recording it and uploading the recording to the web site for all to see. This will still ensure increased exposure and maximize the potential for media coverage of an event.

One tool we will be sure not to leave out is the use of an RSS feed. All content on our website will be tied to an RSS feed, so media outlets who are following us

via RSS will be instantly notified when content has been added to the online newsroom.

We will also include links to all of our off-site media-related tactics, as well as a search engine so if there's something specific they are looking for in the online newsroom they can simply type in a few key words to easily find what they are looking for.

Consumers

For this section of the on-site tactics we are going to focus on the consumers. In the instance of the public relations program the consumer would be a current, past and prospective student. The consumer might also include the family members of such students.

Goal

To provide consumers with education and tools that will serve to enhance the learning experience and help with future endeavors.

Description of Tactics

In order to keep the students as informed as possible about matters concerning the public relations program accessible.

First, we would like to have a button or tab from the homepage that will lead to a specific page for students, this will allow students to have their own domain.

On the public relations page, there will be general information such as current events, links to the public relations societies, job posts and access to resources such as templates commonly used in the public relations field. This general information will inform the students of current events going on within the program as well as providing them with the necessary tools and information to keep them up-to-date.

On the public relations homepage there will be a menu bar similar to the one currently on the Cambrian website that will have titles as follows: current student, alumni, prospective student and guest. Each button will lead to a page. The current student page will ask you to log in using your student 411 user names and password. Once you log on it will allow you to access all the resources available.

The resources you will have available to you once you log on are: updates on special events, access to your professors contact information, access to your schedule, a list of important information, social media links for the tools specifically designed for current students i.e. blogs, your classmates' contact information, professor notes, due date priority list and an ask the teacher button.

Some of these resources are straight forward and others are not, so to expand the due date priority list, this would be a list compiled on your main page after logging in that will arrange your assignments and tests in order of due date. It will allow you to check them off as you go and delete the tasks you have completed. This will allow students to become more organized. We believe this feature would engage students and encourage them to log on to the website frequently.

The other resource we would like to expand on is the "ask the teacher" button. This button would be on the page and once you click on it a text box would appear where you could insert the teachers name in the 'to' box and then ask your question. The message would be delivered to both the teacher's homepage but also to their inbox.

The resources listed above will allow students to be informed, engaged and motivated to learn. They fit into our goal because they will provide our consumers with the education and tools that will serve to enhance their learning experience and help with future endeavors.

The following features would allow the opportunity for optimum participation and engagement. It would be to have a "wall" or discussion feature as well as a chat feature, where students could discuss with their peers the criteria for

assignments, do group work, keep in touch etc. This could encourage the students to come to the web page more frequently.

Now that we have covered current students we would like to expand on the other key participants within the consumer public: prospective students and alumni.

The prospective student page would have information concerning the public relations department and communications as a whole. The prospective student would have access to photo, audio and video of special events that past students have participated in. This will allow them to get a glance at the program and possibly create interest. There will also be a menu for the prospective students that would allow them to check out the classes in the curriculum, ask questions and find out if the program is right for them. They will have the same button to ask the teacher, but instead of writing a specific teachers name it would be sent to the coordinator and they will be prompted to add their email address or preferred mode of contact to receive the response.

The alumni page would be similar to the prospective students' page, they will have the access to view current and past events, check out upcoming events, they will have the discussion board feature as well as a specific button which would indicate donate to the public relations department. This button could allow graduates to donate specifically to the public relations program or events put on by the students. It would allow them to be informed and engaged in what the program is currently doing.

Both the prospective students' page and alumni page would fit into our goal because it would link the future endeavors to the current students and could serve to motivate other individuals to get involved in the program. Both of these pages would serve as a tool to enhance past, current and future learning experiences.

Employees

Faculty, administration, board members.

Goal

To provide a resource for employees that will allow them to be informed and connected concerning the public relations program.

Description of Tactics

As stated in our goal we want the employees of the Cambrian College Public Relations program to be informed and connected in all aspects. By using the proposed intranet site they will be updated upon arrival to the page. They will be able to access the latest news related to the program by simply logging in. We have added many interactive and feedback features to encourage the staff to communicate with each other as well as with the students. There are aspects in our plan that are limited only to the creativity of those using it giving this intranet site endless opportunities to grow as time goes on.

Staff will first be able to go to the main page where updates will be available. Updates will be displayed as a list with the newest information on top. By having this information on the main page it will be easily accessible to staff. Also on the main page there will be an upcoming events feature to allow for staff to stay aware of events within the school as well as post their own. Upcoming meetings will be posted for staff who are interested to know when meetings are being held to make decisions pertaining to the program.

There will be a log in button placed prominently on the page which will allow them to access more specific information. By having a log in feature employees can direct themselves to their main page, which will contain their personal information and inbox. Here they can review messages and their individual schedules as well as interact with students in their classes.

On the side there will be a link to relevant resources that could be helpful to the staff as teaching tools for their students as well as new and developing sources. This will allow staff to have easy access to teaching materials as well as emerging tools in the public relations field. Internal job postings will also be available for those who may be looking to move to a new position. There will be an inbox available from the 'ask the teacher' feature which will allow staff to communicate with past, present and prospective students. There will be a messenger function, which will allow for staff and students to interact and discuss class and assignment questions. A wall/discussion board feature will be added which will allow employees to have group discussions and share new ideas. There will also be a function to link to numerous public relations societies to allow for staff to keep up-to-date on trends within the industry.

Off-site tactics

Media

For this section of the on-site tactics we are going to focus on media. In an effort to maximize the potential of media coverage, we are gearing this section towards all television, online and print media with an interest in both public relations and Cambrian College as a whole.

Goal

To act as a resource center for media by providing them with easy access to valuable tools and information that are both newsworthy and relevant.

Description of Tactics

The off-site tactics that we intend to use to engage the media, in addition to those located in our appendices, include a blog aimed at media, a YouTube channel and the use of Twitter.

Our blog aimed at media will be quite different than the blogs aimed at consumers and employees. One major difference is the type of content included in it, as the type of content that the consumers and employees may find relevant may not be relevant at all to the media. Only content that serves to engage and grow our media audience will be found in the blog. The type of content media will find in the blog will be akin to what they will find in announcements and releases section of our website. Additionally, the writing style will be more professional and not as conversational as the blogs aimed at consumers and employees.

When implementing Twitter we decided not to separate our audiences as we did with the blogs, but rather update all audiences using the same account. Most organizations on Twitter typically cater to a variety of audiences with their updates so we felt it was not necessary to have separate accounts for each audience. We will post updates to media-related news and announcements in addition to the updates geared towards consumers, and the media will decide what is relevant to them. Within these 140 character updates we will include a shortened URL to a more complete version of the update that may either be located on the web site or within one of our off-site tactics.

We also felt it necessary to include a YouTube channel as part of our off-site tactics. Our YouTube channel will feature a compilation of all the video-related content on our web site, such as video news releases, recordings of events and so forth. Additionally, we will also turn some of our more important blog entries into video blogs since it will be more convenient to those who are pressed for time. We will also include any and all positive media coverage we receive in video format, for example if the public relations program was mentioned in any capacity on the evening news then a clip of it will be uploaded to our YouTube channel.

As is the nature of social media, each one of these tactics brings forth the opportunity for feedback and/or criticism from our audience since we will allow them to comment on all of our updates. However, this is a good thing because it engages our audience and allows the opportunity for us to grow our audience by more effectively catering to their needs.

Consumers

For this section of the on-site tactics we are going to focus on the consumers. In the instance of the public relations program the consumer would be a current, past and prospective student. The consumer might also include the family members of such students.

Goal

To provide consumers with education and tools that will serve to enhance their learning experience and help with future endeavors.

Description of tactics

The off-site tactics that we hope to use for the public relations program would be the use of social media outlets such as Blogger, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube.

The first tactic would be the use of Blogger. Blogger is a website that allows you to create a blog of your choice, for free. In this case, we would be developing a public relations blog for Cambrian College students. This blog would be updated on a regular basis to include information such as upcoming events, successes of past events, policy changes and announcements. This blog would allow the students in the program to be interactive with their comments and remain informed using a tool that is modern and innovative. The blog could also be used to create discussions, collect feedback and get a feel for what the students think about current issues. This would be a valuable resource to the department so they could tailor the program to best suit the needs of the students.

Blogger fits well in our goal to provide students with the information and tools necessary to learn and be successful with their future endeavors. By utilizing blogs students are getting used to one of the components of social media, they are remaining informed and educated on current issues as well as having a specific tool to utilize to voice their opinions.

The second tactic would be the use Twitter. Twitter could be used to update students on new events that are happening within all three years of the program, to post job postings, to re-tweet information that pertains to the public relations field and to generate interest. The twitter updates would allow students to be informed again using a social media tool that they could use later on in their career. The tools are easy, convenient and free. Students will be well up to date on current affairs that are affecting them.

Twitter fits into our goal because it will provide students with yet another tool that will assist them to familiarize themselves with what the industry is doing to inform their publics as well as it will allow them to be engaged and informed about matters arising specifically to the public relations program.

The third off-site tactic that we would like to discuss for this public is the use of Flickr. Flickr is a free internet site that allows you to share your photos with the public. We believe with the amount of events and fundraisers that the public relations students do each year it would be beneficial for the students to have a location where they could share their photos and store them. This would be an excellent tool when it comes time to build their portfolio they will have pictures from past events that they participated in. Flickr would also allow the students to be informed about other events and fundraisers put on between the other two years of the program.

The final off-site tactic for the consumer public that we would like to address is the creation of a YouTube channel. Youtube is where you can share your videos with the public and they are given the opportunity to provide feedback. This tool would be an excellent way to showcase student projects as well as events. It

could be used to highlight the creativity and diverse knowledge that the public relations students are exposed to throughout their curriculum. YouTube would be a great way to show the public and other students what the public relations students are up to. It would enhance the educational experience as well as possibly expose the works of the students to future endeavors.

All of these social media tactics allow the audience to remain informed on what is happening in the public relations field and department as well as allow them the opportunity to become engaged and participate in what is going on.

Recommendations

By having social media outlets and tactics to compliment our public relations website, we believe that it will serve to enhance the learning experience for all students and encourage past and future students to get involved. Not only do these social media outlets serve as tools to compliment their learning experiences, but it could also connect them with future employers.

The use of social media would allow students from all three years as well as the post-graduate certificate program to have the opportunity to converse and share ideas between each other. It would allow for students in higher years to give advice to the newer students. It could also be used to fill the gap between years and make a bonding experience, something we believe the public relations program is lacking at this time. As you can see these tools are important aspects to the public relations field and should not be overlooked.

However, all the social media outlets are free of charge but it would be necessary to hire a faculty member who would be designated to the constant updates to their outlets, for they require some serious dedication and time commitments. This would be money and time well spent.

Employees

Faculty, administration, board members.

Goal

To provide a resource for employees that will allow them to be informed and connected concerning the public relations program.

Description of Tactics

Expanding on our goal we want our employees to be connected in their everyday lives no necessarily just when they log in at the public relations site. By using off-site tactics we will easily be able to engage our staff in their everyday life. Links to all these off-site tactics will be displayed as icons on the public relations site.

We would like to implement a blog. By using a blog site such as blogger.com it will be easy to send a message and encourage staff to discuss new ideas as well as share information with them. Also we feel that a Youtube channel would be an asset. Here staff could upload videos of events their student have put on as well as interviews or video projects done in class. There could also be a team to do regular vlogs on news within the college. A podcast channel could be used the same way however the upside is that this method is portable and could be listened to on the go.

A wiki is a tool that would benefit the employees of the public relations program, here they could post and update information about the program. By having a Flickr account employees could add photos of events or classroom activities to share amongst themselves.

As part of the off-site tactics we want the employees to have access to information regarding the public relations program in their everyday life. By having a Facebook and/or Twitter account we could do this. Most public relations staff already will have accounts with one or both of these social networking site so by having a page for the program we can keep them updated at all times.

