



# Turn Social Media into a Student Recruitment and Retention Powerhouse

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USING DIRECT MARKETING FUNDAMENTALS TO LEAD THE CHARGE

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*This may sound like heresy in some circles, but social media marketing might not be all that effective.*

*At least not the way most brands are going about it.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Downloaded from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/myth-social-media-scott-monty?trk=prof-post> on 2/12/2016

## Introduction

Social media is still a mystery to many colleges – but if your institution plans on recruiting Millennials and Generation Z, you need to solve the mystery and turn social media into a highly productive tool for your recruitment and retention efforts.

By 2030, Millennials will grow to 78 million in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> And Generation Z, those born in the late 1990's, are projected to grow to close to 80 million, according to the US Census.<sup>3</sup>

And their reliance on social media is going to have a significant impact on how you communicate with them.

As reported by Media Insight in “How Millennials Get News: Inside the Habits of America’s First Digital Generation”, “...social networks are exposing Millennials to more news than they were initially seeking. Overall, just 47 percent who use Facebook say that getting news is a main motivation for visiting, but it has become one of the significant activities they engage in once they are there. Fully 88 percent of Millennials get news from Facebook regularly, for instance, and more than half of them do so daily.”<sup>4</sup>

And as for Generation Z, they are “...immersed in social media, relying on it for socializing and also for school, with 52 percent using social media for typical research assignments, and around one-third working with classmates and watching lessons online, according to Sparks & Honey's data.”<sup>5</sup>

That same report goes on to state “As Generation Z's influence inevitably grows, marketers will be forced to adapt to engage this audience in new ways. For instance, those who are 19 and younger prefer social networks like Snapchat, Secret and Whisper, as a quarter of 13- to 17-year-olds have left Facebook this year, stated Sparks & Honey. Marketers who are ahead of the game are adapting already.”

The challenge you face is getting ahead of the curve – and the competition – when it comes to utilizing social media for more than ‘soft metrics’ such as ‘Likes’ and ‘Follows’ and ‘Downloads’, and shifting your activities to produce harder, more meaningful metrics such as ‘leads’, ‘lead to application started’, ‘application started to completed application submitted’ to ‘completed application submitted to new student enrollment’ to ‘new student enrollment to enrollment term 2’ and ‘enrollment term 2 to graduation’.

This report lays out a simple plan for utilizing the best practices of direct marketing and how they can turn your recruitment and retention efforts via social media into a powerhouse.

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<sup>2</sup> Downloaded from <http://www.statista.com/statistics/281697/us-population-by-generation/> on February 22, 2016

<sup>3</sup> Downloaded from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/lauraheller/2015/08/14/move-over-millennials-generation-z-is-in-charge/#6b3635ce48d7> on February 22 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Downloaded from <http://www.mediainsight.org/PDFs/Millennials/Millennials%20Report%20FINAL.pdf> on February 22, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Downloaded from <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/gen-z-infographic-can-help-marketers-get-wise-future-159642> on February 22, 2016.

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*“According to Wikipedia, there are 211 social media platforms – so participating in all of them is fairly unlikely.”<sup>6</sup>*

*“The report found that 27 percent of millennials use Facebook less than once a week, and 11 percent don’t even have an account. Additionally, 54 percent don’t have a Snapchat account, and 39 percent aren’t on Twitter.”<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> Downloaded from <https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=how%20many%20social%20media%20platforms%20are%20there> on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016

<sup>7</sup> Downloaded from <https://contently.com/strategist/2015/09/24/study-not-all-millennials-use-social-media-the-same-way/> on February 22, 2016.

## The Problem with Social Media in Today's Student Recruitment & Retention Efforts

### Social Media is a Mystery to Many

Today, most have mastered the ability to create a presence and push content through social media platforms – but they struggle with measuring the impact on key metrics such as leads, applications started, applications submitted, new student enrollments and student retention. They also struggle to effectively deliver the right message and offer to the right person at the right time through the right communication channel in order to motivate the right result.

The typical social media effort remains focused on public relations and building awareness through Likes, Followers, Retweets, Posts etc. – or pushing out enough 'content' to support someone's case for "...look at all the work we do..." as if quantity is more important than results.

### Lack of In-Depth Audience Insight

Many colleges treat potential students the same – as members of one large group of people that are only differentiated by [a] their program of interest and [b] desired start date.

But few are addressing key factors that can have a huge impact on qualifying inquiries, prioritizing them for the nurturing process, messaging and offers, communication channel mix and more. The result is virtually the same messages and offers are being sent out by colleges to all prospective students – just switching out the program of interest and a list of features for that program – along with the "Apply Now" offer that is less meaningful and effective with those closer to the 'top of the funnel'.

### Millennials and Generation Z vary on their usage of social media.

"According to the data, millennial women are more likely to skip signing up for Snapchat and Twitter, while millennial men are more likely to forgo Facebook and Pinterest."<sup>8</sup>

What does this mean?

Well, beyond the cute answer offered up by the author of that article, which was that you better think about how you present the social buttons on your site and in your communications – you better start thinking about what messages and offers you use.

### College Recruitment & Retention Teams Lack Social Media Resources

We address staffing for social media later in this document but for now we feel this factoid has a significant impact on performance of social media for many colleges.

According to the findings from the 2015 Marketing Staffing Report from UPCEA, only 36% of the colleges that participated in the study had a position addressing social media and of those that had a position addressing social media, the impact translated into 0.8 positions.

There isn't a great deal of social media expertise on the team.

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<sup>8</sup> Downloaded from <https://contently.com/strategist/2015/09/24/study-not-all-millennials-use-social-media-the-same-way/> on February 22, 2016.

## Summary

Lack of in-depth audience insight leads to communication plans that treat all inquiries and students the same – serving up virtually the same messages and offers to across all communication channels including social media leads to the wrong message being sent.

And when your audience is using social media so differently, the impact of the wrong message when sent via social media is intensified.

And the lack of social media staff while ‘staffing up’ on PPC and email turns social media efforts into a secondary focus when it means so much more to the audience you are targeting. You are ignoring your audience’s preferences and attempting to communicate with them through less effective and desirable channels.



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*“Direct marketing is an interactive system of marketing which uses one or more advertising media to effect a measurable response and/or transaction at any location.”<sup>9</sup>*

*Social media is “...websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.”<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Dudley Stevenson, *Marketing Direct: Breaking Through the Clutter*, DWSA Publishing, August 20 2015, page 5.

<sup>10</sup> Downloaded from <https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=define+social+media> on February 22, 2016

## The 5 Pillars of Direct Marketing

As our founder, Dudley Stevenson, wrote in his most recent book, “Marketing Direct: Breaking Through the Clutter”, the five pillars of direct marketing are:

- Targeting
- Offer
- Format
- Creative
- Timing

**Targeting.** Of all the 5 pillars, targeting is about 7 times as important as the other factors. You need to know your audience – and you need to know them beyond basic demographics. You need to understand psychographics and geographic factors including wants, needs, expectations, perceptions, decision making process and media usage habits.

You need to create segments, so you can more effectively deliver the right message and offer to the right person at the right time via the right communication channel in order to motivate them to take the right action. And to be effective at this, you need to have clearly defined “starts” and “ends” to those stages in the decision making process so that you can shift from [ex] information checklists on ‘how to select the right college’ at the ‘inquiry’ stage to ‘schedule a meeting with financial aid’ during the ‘application started to application completed and submitted’ stage.

		STAGES IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS					
		Pre-Inquiry	Inquiry to Start Application	Start Application to Submit Completed Application	Submit Completed Application to Enroll Term 1	Enroll Term 1 to Enroll Term 2	THRU GRADUATION
<b>Prospective Student</b>							
Program A	Segment 1	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers		
	Segment 2	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers		
	Segment 3	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers		
<b>Current Student</b>							
Program A	Segment 1					Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers
	Segment 2					Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers
	Segment 3					Preferred Channels Messages/Offers	Preferred Channels Messages/Offers

Figure 1: Segmentation by Decision Stage Decision Chart

For a more detailed visual, Figure 1 offers an example of what you need to consider when targeting – the segment, the decision making stage as well as what communication channels are preferred by that segment at that point in the process and relevant messages and offers.

Segment Name	Urban Ms
Program of Interest	MBA
Demographics	25 to 35 years of age, single or married with no children under 10 in the home, owns their home valued at \$150,000 to \$200,000
Geographic	Lives and works within 20 miles of campus.
Motivations	Career advancement
Goals	Graduate without debt/pay as they go
Concerns	Cost of education; financial security/debt adverse; uncertainty in business world/professional life
Psychographics	Enjoys reading science fiction, watches SciFi channel, belongs to a gym and works out 3-5 times per week. Listens to country music on Pandora in their car and home and office
Social Media Habits	Facebook: Spends 10-15 hours per week on Facebook to 'stay in touch with friends and family' as well as 'gather news about the economy, politics, career'. "Likes" their former college's Facebook Page and has clicked on sponsored content related to their career advancement and/or graduate school.
	LinkedIn: Spends 5 to 10 hours per week and is highly active with 3 to 5 LinkedIn Groups focused on business and professional development. Is a member of their former college's alumni Group.
	Twitter: Does not have a Twitter account
Media Habits	Reads the local newspaper for current events, business news and sports at 1 to 3 times per week; reads Wall Street Journal daily; watches network news 1 to 3 times per week; watches college and professional sports (basketball and football); watches DIY shows on cable; listens to talk radio to/from work

Figure 2: Examples of Personas for 2 Segments of Prospective Students

And Figure 2 offers you an example of what the segment, also known as persona, would include so you can get a better understanding of the depth needed.

**Offer.** Once you have this in-depth understanding of who, why, what etc., you can focus in on the appropriate offers to extend across the decision making process. Let's be honest – "Apply Now" is the ultimate goal but you might have more luck with [ex] "Download this checklist that will help you select the most appropriate program for your needs" or "Register for the free online financial aid webinar" in those earlier stages when they are still gathering information.

And when it comes to retention, "Enroll Now for Next Term" is ideal, but you may need to address other issues before the student considers enrolling in the next term.

When it comes to how this works within social media, imagine you have a prospect in the "Application Started but not completed/submitted" stage – your message on Facebook might be "Reminder: Application Deadline is in 5 days!"

For a student in their final semester prior to graduating and is participating in a LinkedIn Group sponsored by the program chair, the message might be a direct message from the program chair via the LinkedIn Group with “Click here to order your cap and gown”.

**Format.** Is a tweet with an image appropriate and effective at this time – or is a personal in-mail sent by the LinkedIn Group admin to individual group members the better route. Is text best or video or audio?

**Creative.** The presentation of the message- the design, colors, fonts, images and actual content or presentation of the message. The copy – be it in print or audio – is key, whereas the presentation is more of a secondary element. However both should be tested in order to improve performance.

**Timing.** Should you rely on Facebook during the holiday season when your target audience/segment is spending less time on Facebook and more time out and about with the family? Do you post between midnight and 6 am, Monday through Friday or during traditional work hours (8 am to 5 pm)? Are your tweets more impactful evenings or weekends?

There will be some audiences and messages that are best shared across the right social media platform at certain times and days – and others that aren’t. This is another critical factor to constantly test, measure and analyze in order to improve performance.

## The Importance of Research



Based on what we covered in the previous section, especially under “Targeting”, you understand the importance of research.

What you want to know is does your audience use social media and if so, how and why. What information are they

searching for, what problems/challenges are they trying to solve, what opportunities they are seeking to turn into a reality, etc. And you need to include a strong offer that motivates them to take the next step with you – be it attend an open house or schedule a call with the financial aid adviser or start the online application.

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*Again, as we mentioned earlier, what you will most likely discover is what our research has uncovered – some don't use social media at all. Some use it strictly for personal reasons such as staying in contact with family and friends – and they would not at all welcome any intrusion by your college. And some that use it for anything and everything and would welcome information about your college if it's relevant to them at that time.*

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## The Importance of Data for Segmentation & Personas

The first step is to begin identifying your segments and personas – and that requires some data, data appending and data analysis.

As we wrote in “Targeting and Segmentation”, “If Direct Marketing is the focusing of resources on the superior opportunity then targeting is the activity which identifies the superior opportunity. In other words, targeting is the technique used to locate the prospects that are most likely to want to buy from you.”<sup>11</sup>

Starting with your current student data, identify those that are ‘most successful’ in a specific time frame, for example, the past 24 months. You control the definition of “most successful’ but we would suggest you include data points such as:

- Grade Point Average
- Total Credits Earned
- Number of semesters/terms enrolled
- Most recent semester/term enrolled

Rank the students based on these factors/data points, so that your ‘most successful’ students are those that score in the top 20-25%.

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<sup>11</sup> Dudley Stevenson, Targeting and Segmentation, self-published, 2016, p.2.

Then work with a firm such as Claritas (PRIZM) or Neustar (ElementOne). They can append data to your student records in order to help you identify segments which will provide you with a tremendous amount of insight including:

- Total size of universe
- Location (household level)
- Psychographic data including media preferences and usage

This information is just the first step to understanding who your 'successful student' is, how many are there, where they are and how you can attract more of them to your institution.

### The Importance of Interviews & Surveys for Messages, Offers, Media and More

The next step in your research is in-depth interviews, focus groups and/or surveys in order to dig deeper into their:

- Needs
- Wants
- Expectations
- Perceptions
- Decision Making Process
- More

This research should be broad enough to address your overall marketing communications plan because your recruitment and retention efforts are going to be broader than just social media. But the research should also be in-depth enough for you to understand [ex] "Cul de sac Families" listen to country radio (WKBB in our primary geographic market) and use Facebook and LinkedIn to gather information about their personal and professional interests (responding to sponsored content, white paper offers etc.) but use Instagram solely for storing photographs and do not have a Twitter account."

Once you've gathered that data and spent some time analyzing it, sit back. Listen. Watch. Verify what you've been told.

### Social Listening: Why?

For many, "sit back and listen" is unacceptable. They want to get out there and make things happen. Some might even want to 'test the waters' but most just want to make things happen.

I get that.

But I recommend listening, learning, confirming and adjusting before you take the next step for two reasons. And since this is an on-going activity so you can stay on top of changes in behavior as well as changes in technology, you will be constantly listening, learning and analyzing, conforming and adjusting with your testing processes.

First, the volume of data is overwhelming – and you need to figure out how to figure out how to manage it so it can drive your actions. And you also don't need to jump in and make a very public mistake based on inexperience so make the time to listen and learn.

Make sense?

Oh and most importantly, this part of the ongoing research you need to continuously perform in order to succeed over the long-term because things change and you need to pay constant attention to what's happening so you can identify changes and be able to respond faster and more appropriately.

### Social Media Listening: How?

First, let's make sure we're talking the same talk – because there is a difference between social monitoring and social listening, and what we want to do is social listening.

“Monitoring takes a scrape and dump approach, which can be helpful for collecting any and every mention. Listening takes a reflect-and-analyze approach, helping to notice patterns and insights, things like sentiment (how do people feel when they talk about me?) and channels (where are the conversations happening?).”<sup>12</sup>

So why listening?

Because listening will “...spark new conversations, gain valuable audience insight, identify advocates or influencers, build affinity for your brand, or find customer support and sales opportunities in real-time.”<sup>13</sup>

You need that level of detail to be effective.

### What to listen for?

Use branded and non-branded keywords and then sift through the data in order to get an understanding of what people are using those terms for in their social media posts/conversations.

- Your University/College Name
- Program (ex) MBA or Master of Arts Teaching
- Topics that relate to your institution/programs
  - Sports teams names (ex) Buckeyes, Bruins, Sun Devils
  - Accounting, nursing, teaching etc.
- Competition (more on that in a bit)

You also want to listen to key influencers – for example, people that work for or with your competitors or cover your industry. So as you listen to what you capture with your keywords, look at who is most active in those areas and has the most active followers – then add those individuals to your list to follow and listen.

You want to hear the good, the bad and the ugly so you get a clear (as clear as possible) understanding of what is going on in social media, as it applies to your institution and programs as well as your audiences.

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<sup>12</sup> Downloaded from <https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-listening> on February 17, 2016

<sup>13</sup> Downloaded from <https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-listening> on February 17, 2016

Why? Because this helps you identify opportunities, set realistic objectives and devise the strategies and tactics you need to be successful.

### Identifying and Understanding Your Competition

As I mentioned earlier, while you are watching, listening and learning about your audiences, do that for your competition as well. Watch them. Listen to them. Learn from them.

Also get a feel for their operations – personnel and other resources such as the technology they use is key. How many people? What experience do they have? Strengths and weaknesses? Habits?

Here's why this is important.

Beyond helping you plan ways to be uniquely valuable in social media for your audiences, this insight will help you internally when [ex] someone makes the comment that "...I saw what they did, how come we don't do that.."

### Tools for Listening

Here are a list of social media listening tools that you might wish to use. Obviously you will want to use the best tool for your specific needs – and remember that technology is changing at an incredible rate so some of what follows may be dated.

[Google Alerts](#) is a content change detection and notification service, offered by the search engine company Google. The service sends emails to the user when it finds new results—such as web pages, newspaper articles, blogs, or scientific research—that match the user's search term(s).

[TweetDeck](#) is a social media dashboard application for management of Twitter accounts. You can monitor keywords, [hashtags](#) and set up lists to monitor influential people.

Twitter will also email you regarding whenever someone likes your Tweet, if you're mentioned in a Tweet you liked, whenever your Tweets are retweeted and more. To see all the options, click [here](#).

[Hootsuite](#) is a social media management system for brand management and the system's user interface takes the form of a dashboard, and supports social network integrations for Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Foursquare, MySpace, WordPress, TrendSpottr and Mixi

[Mention](#) is a social media tool that monitors the web, including the major social media channels, to keep you informed every time somebody mentions your name, brand or target keywords

[Sysomos](#) mines and analyzes content from social media or user-generated content to create a picture of media coverage.

[Visible Technologies](#) - The Visible Intelligence (VI) enterprise social media intelligence platform provides three core capabilities: social media monitoring, enriched data analytics and insights, and customer engagement. (Note: Visible Technologies was acquired by Cision and Vocus in September 2014.)

[Salesforce Radian6](#) is a social listening tool that is dedicated to listen, analyze and engage information being shared publicly online. Radian6 is an online tool under the Salesforce brand



## Some Real Social Media Examples

### Facebook for Recruitment & Retention Efforts

Facebook offers you several ways to leverage the “social” platform in addition to all the wonderful advertising options – so let’s focus on the social aspects.

#### Pages versus Groups

“Pages allow real organizations, businesses, celebrities and brands to communicate broadly with people who like them. Pages may only be created and managed by official representatives.

Groups provide a space for people to communicate about shared interests. Groups can be created by anyone.”<sup>14</sup>

The most common course of action is to set up a Page. Pages, for awareness and lead generation (aka the ‘top of the funnel’) seem to make the most sense. You would want to consider creating Pages for the university, college and/or program pages along with key special interests such as sports, arts and entertainment. The content shared here would best be focused on building awareness in order to get your institution and programs into the consideration set of potential students – and into the top of mind for key influencers.

Obviously a concern with Pages is organic reach – the average reach for posts from Facebook Pages. Facebook is, after all, in business to generate a profit and it is their playground so they have set the rules – and the set them up to encourage you to spend money on advertising versus getting everything you ever wanted for free.

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*“In March was 2.6 percent, slipping to 2.27 percent for pages with more than 1 million likes, according to the latest research from social analytics and reporting firm Locowise.”<sup>15</sup>*

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You should check out “[Business Manager](#)” which will allow you to “... securely share and control access to their ad accounts, Pages, and other assets on Facebook. “

Also check out “[Audience Optimization](#)” which “...is an organic targeting tool to help publishers reach and engage their audience on Facebook and better understand the interests of people clicking on their posts.”

Both will help you better manage your Facebook Page(s) and see improved results.

So, what about Groups?

Due to the size constraints, you might want to consider [Groups for Schools](#) over Groups because they offer you the opportunity to focus topics of interest for potential students closer to enrolling and students. This setting is more conducive to conversations – so you could recommend a prospective

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<sup>14</sup> Downloaded from <https://www.facebook.com/help/162866443847527/> on 2/17/2016.

<sup>15</sup> Downloaded from <http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/locowise-march-2015/619104> on February 17, 2016

student to join a Group focused on “Time Management and Organization Tips for College” that helps address their concerns while allowing them to engage with other potential students, actual students and faculty.

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*“Only students and faculty of a college or university can join groups for schools. When you join a group within the school community, you can share files, create events, message other members and stay up-to-date on what's happening around campus.”<sup>16</sup>*

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Groups for Schools could also be built around courses – and you could invite potential students to join the group in order to engage with students and faculty.

The key here is to have a very clear understanding of what the Group is there to accomplish and how it will accomplish those goals – don’t get excited and start creating them because you can, only to discover that no one cares.

#### *Recommendations for Facebook*

*Create Pages and Groups based on the varied interests of your audiences.* The basics would be official Pages for the University, the Colleges and programs as well as arts/entertainment and athletics.

For Groups, you might wish to test topics around academic programs – for example a Graphic Design Group that includes prospective that have expressed an interest in your Graphic Design program, and current students of that program along with faculty.

*Promote the Pages and Groups in all communications to the appropriate audiences.* To get your Page Followers and Group membership going – make sure you include your efforts and invite the right people through [ex] emails to prospects, students, faculty etc. Create Facebook Page Updates that mention your LinkedIn presence – and vice versa.

*Consistent Flow of Relevant Information to the Audience(s) through Pages, Groups and Updates.* This is all about the content marketing plan within your overall marketing plan. What content will you create for what audience and how will you distribute it across all relevant channels including the social media platforms?

*Include relevant offers that require them to share contact information that feeds into your CRM.* Invite your Facebook Page followers and Group members to go to a landing page, submit of form and download a white paper or view a video. And make sure it’s trackable so the contact information and the offer/campaign is captured as the individual’s initial source or campaign code.

*Manage and Monitor Your Presences.* Assign a person to each Facebook Page and Group for Schools so that Posts/Responses can be monitored and conversations can move forward at an acceptable pace. And prepare them for getting conversations moving – for example, if the schedule calls for content on

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<sup>16</sup> Downloaded from <https://www.facebook.com/help/334851196593673/> on February 18, 2016.

Subject A next week in the Facebook Sports Page, sit down with the person responsible for the Page and discuss how they can stimulate and facilitate dialogue.

### LinkedIn for Recruitment and Retention Efforts

With LinkedIn, your options include the [Education Channel](#), which is part of Pulse and allows you to publish articles/posts, [LinkedIn Groups](#) and creating your own "[Company Page](#)".

The Education Channel/Pulse would be an effective way for faculty and staff to show their expertise and build awareness for your university, college and programs as well as services. For example, "How to Afford College and Avoid Debt" written by a subject matter expert from your institution would most likely be a popular topic with potential students of any age.

"Company Page" allows you to create a Page for [ex] the University, specific colleges/schools within the University and even Programs. The benefits of having a "Company Page" include

- Showcases your institution
- Shows visitors how their network/connections are associated with your institution
- Highlight successful alumni
- Alumni information that includes how many are on LinkedIn and the industries that they work in and their employers.
- Targeted status updates\*

\* Targeted status updates allow you to select who is notified of your latest post. You are able to select based on a number of factors and the update will appear on their homepage. Best of all, after 24-hours you can review impression and engagement metrics in order to gauge your impact and effectiveness. To learn more, [click here](#).

Hint: Make sure your prospective, current and former students (alumni) along with faculty and staff know about the Page and have them connect with it. This allows you to tap into their networks.

Followers can post to the University Page so be sure to have someone reading those posts and responding in a timely and appropriate manner because that has an impact on recruitment and retention and referrals.

Here are some interesting example of Universities using this feature

[Arizona State University](#)

[Arizona State University – W.P. Carey School of Business](#)

[Arizona State University Online](#)

[The Johns Hopkins University](#)

[The Johns Hopkins University – Carey Business School](#)

For more information, [click here](#).

**LinkedIn Groups** offers you the opportunity to address prospective student, current students and alumni as well as faculty, staff, subject matter experts...well, the list goes on. More importantly,

LinkedIn Groups provide you with the opportunity to create an online community around a topic of shared interest.

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*“LinkedIn Groups provide a place for professionals in the same industry or with similar interests to share content, find answers, post and view jobs, make business contacts, and establish themselves as industry experts.”<sup>17</sup>*

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Imagine, if you would, a LinkedIn Group entitled “Financial Services Experts sponsored by College Name MBA Program”. And the Group is focused on providing “...members of the financial services sector a place to learn, develop, network and build a more successful professional career.”

The Group happens to be managed by members of your MBA faculty – the program director and a few well-chosen faculty members. They have reached out and invited leaders in the financial services industry (subject matter experts and people that hire graduates from the MBA program), industry analysts (subject matter experts), members of professional associations serving the financial services sector, graduates of the MBA program, students of the MBA program and maybe even headhunters that specialize in the financial services sector.

If you decide to start a LinkedIn Group, be sure to check out the [Group Moderator Community](#) which focuses on helping Group leaders effectively manage, engage and nurture your own LinkedIn Group(s).

And, working with the marketing/content marketing team, they have come up with a calendar of topics that will be addressed for the next 12 months. Some of it might even be tied to the MBA curriculum so that students and other members of the group can explore the topic together and students can come back to the classroom with unique perspectives and a deeper understanding of the topic.

Oh, and prospective students would join the Group one of two ways – by searching for the topic because it interests them or by invitation when they first contact the institution and express interest in the MBA program.

The team that is administering the Group would be able to reach out to individual members and address their questions about your institution and the program. They would be able to reach out to students and help with service and support. The Group is a perfect environment for networking and job hunting. Plus there are opportunities here to leverage the expertise and build something unique into your degree program! (Imagine a course project that allows students to work with a Group member that’s involved in running a financial services firm in Hong Kong or that is involved in some new, developing offering in the European market.)

### Twitter for Student Recruitment & Retention

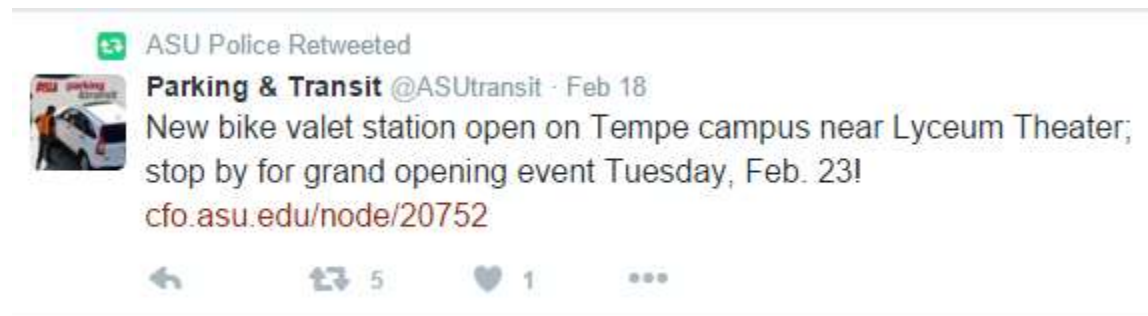
Twitter is strong at reaching a large audience interested in a specific topic, and it’s strong at 1:1 conversations. Both are invaluable to recruitment (reach) and retention (personal).

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<sup>17</sup> Downloaded from [https://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/1164/~/groups---getting-started](https://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1164/~/groups---getting-started) on February 17th, 2016..

Broadcasting is ideal for top of the funnel activities – building awareness and generating initial inquiries. For this, use Twitter to share/distribute specific content relevant to specific, identifiable groups – for example, for those following #marketing, share with the information about marketing (industry news, trends, degree program information, student and alumni news etc.) Test to see what works but based on experience you would want to tweet several times a day, and your tweets should feature a good mix of self-promotion, topics that are relevant to your audience, and photos/video.

For example, someone might be drawn to your institution because of athletics or interests outside the classroom – but the Twitter feed build awareness, trust and engagement that can shift over to academics at a more appropriate time.



And if the individual doesn't enroll but continues to follow [ex] the football team as well as the creative writing group via Twitter because the experiences are positive – they may become a “raving fan” that shares the information from your Tweets online and offline, leading others to enroll!

Once you motivate someone to Follow you, incorporate into the messaging, information that will motivate them to explore other channels of information – be it other social media platforms or on your web site or even in person!

Twitter for retention is based on listening and being there (with an account) to quickly, accurately, appropriately respond to complaints. This, of course, can be a ‘hot seat’ where training and expertise in crisis management and communications comes in extremely handy – as does a clear process for responding and escalation.

From a proactive communication perspective, Twitter could be used as an emergency broadcast system – weather updates, event and parking updates, police and fire updates etc. For those in the recruitment stage, it's a way to be involved and part of the community, for those in the retention stage it's can be an important factor in those outside the classroom reasons some students refer to as the reason they left school.

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*In fact, a Go-Gulf infographic showed the majority of social media teams are fewer than four people.*

*According to a survey conducted by Altimeter, corporate social media teams have on average 11 members. This includes businesses with more than 1,000 employees.<sup>18</sup>*

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<sup>18</sup> Downloaded from <http://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-team/> on February 17, 2016.

## Staffing, Training and Social Media Policy

Earlier in this document, we briefly addressed staffing with a promise to come back to the topic in more detail – well, we’re back for a deeper dive into this important topic.

There seems to be two rules of thumb when it comes to staffing for social media. The first, popular with those with social media in their title, prefers dedicated personnel in specific titles and roles such as:

- Social Media Manager who owns the social media initiative, sets goals and reports to senior leadership
- Community Managers who are the face and voice of your brand, out there on the front lines engaging with influencers, answering questions and dealing with service issues.
- Social Strategists who measure and analyze the work, making suggestions for improving performance.
- Editors are responsible for production schedules and deadlines, style guides and ensuring the content is high quality.
- Content Creators write the blog posts, white papers, ebooks, Facebook updates and maybe even Tweets. They record audio and shoot video.
- Content Producers handle the technical side of producing content such as editing photos, videos so that they can be uploaded/installed and function properly on the various platforms.

And then there is this piece of research regarding marketing staff size and roles that comes from UPCEA’s 2015 Marketing Staffing Report which stated that the “... average (college) marketing department employs a marketing staff of 6.1” and that only 36% had a position addressing “social media” and of those that had a position addressing “social media” that translated to 0.8 positions.

Based on these pieces of information, the challenge is that [a] your chances of hiring this many people dedicated to just social media are slim at best, and [b] the dedicated social media staff approach can create silos within marketing/enrollment management/retention that weaken the overall performance.

And as I wrote earlier, social media is part of the integrated marketing communication effort so it must be part of not a stand-alone.

What do I recommend? As you layout your integrated marketing communications plan, you are most likely going to need to have positions that must address offline and online, including social media. The challenge will be finding people with the expertise in all these areas – so you might be better off investing in the training and development of your staff so they can become more knowledgeable in social media.

## Leveraging Internal Resources

The marketing/enrollment management team or the retention team might not get the staff it needs – so they can go out to the appropriate departments and recruit the people with the expertise needed from across the institution.

For example, look to faculty, staff and possibly even students to play the role of “community manager” on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Make them the face and voice of the brand, engaging with influencers and answering questions.

The challenge will be finding those that want to become involved and have the skills needed but the reality is that no marketing/enrollment management/retention team is going to be able to do all of this on their own. So it's either an institution initiative or something the institution can pass on due to the lack of perceived value.

### [Training, Management, Development](#)

You will need to develop and execute a process for identifying talent, cultivating it and overseeing it. How to develop a successful process for training and developing internal talent over time varies but here are some recommendations for your consideration.

The social media policy is defines what faculty, staff and any employee of the institution is allowed to do on Social Media, with respect to the institution. It's a code of conduct and they are necessary because they protect the university in the event that an employee posts something damaging. Social media policies also protect the employees by providing guidance about what is allowed and considered proper and acceptable behavior.

You want your social media policy to empower your employees to post content and interact on behalf of the institution because having that many advocates is incredibly important to your success in social media.

There has been a great deal of discussion concerning employees' personal use of social media – which it is wise to address the subject in your policy. [This article](#) shares some examples of how companies such as Adidas, Best Buy, HP, Gap and The Los Angeles Times are addressing this issue.

Links to Social Media Policies

[Colorado State University](#)

[Arizona State University](#)

[University of Houston](#)

[University of Wisconsin – Madison](#)



## Measuring Performance and Reporting on Success

Beyond the typical social media metrics such as Followers, Likes, Posts, Shares, Retweets etc., it is important to tie specific actions back to specific key metrics such as leads, applications started, applications submitted, enrollments and retention.

So how should you accomplish this?

The key is going to be a process that allows you to capture the right data into your technology such as your CRM or SIS. For example, when it comes to recruitment on any of the three social media platforms mentioned earlier, you will have communications that offer potential students something of value and require them to click a link, land on our landing page, submit a form with contact information in order to receive the offer.

That campaign would be properly coded so that all submitted forms were captured into your CRM as a new lead from the appropriate social media platform

As for retention, you may need to create process that includes capturing information into your CRM or SIS. For example, while monitoring Twitter, you identify a student that is in need of assistance. Following your process, the appropriate member of your Twitter team reaches out to the individual (Direct Tweet) and gathers data in order to offer the right solutions – part of that would be name, student ID etc. At that point your Twitter team member identifies the individual in the CRM or SIS, opens an incident and enters the proper information.

Once the issue has been solved and closed, you can Direct Tweet them a link to a survey so you can get their input regarding the experience.

## CONCLUSION

Social media offers you a great many opportunities – but if you don't go about it the right way, you can invest a great many resources without seeing any positive return on your effort.

Remember to incorporate social media into the overall marketing/recruitment/retention effort rather than leave it as a stand-alone entity – you will be able to leverage resources more effectively and deliver an experience for your audience(s) that is much more unique and valuable. And that leads to more enrollments, graduates, referrals and happier faculty and staff!

Social media is more than the marketing/enrollment/retention team – you need to leverage expertise from across the institution. That means you may encounter a great deal of "...I have enough on my plate as it is..." but over time, as positive results pile up, you will see greater interest and support.

## About DWS Associates

Founded in 1982, DWS Associates is a full-service marketing firm that develops and implements multi-channel marketing programs for organizations targeting business-to-consumer and business-to-business audiences in global markets. Our focus is on data-driven, innovative lead generation, lead nurturing, retention, and referral programs that attract, engage and retain profitable customers. Our staff is highly experienced in market research, competitive intelligence, business intelligence and analytics, strategic planning and campaign management - so we help you increase sales and marketing performance while building strong, unique, differentiated brands.

## About the Authors:

### Dudley Stevenson



Dudley Stevenson, founder and CEO of DWS Associates, has over thirty-five years' experience in consumer marketing, business-to-business marketing, and direct marketing, including developing, planning, and implementing go-to-market strategies. He's also the author of "Marketing Direct: Breaking Through The Clutter." Working with organizations ranging from start-ups to Fortune 100 companies, he and his team have helped clients such as IBM, SAS Institute, Sony, Neiman Marcus, Arizona Highways, Marshall Field & Co., Mrs. Field's, UNICEF, SSA Global Technologies, Hartmarx, and Patagonia implement successful direct marketing programs. A longtime member of the Direct Marketing Association and the American Marketing Association, Stevenson is also a sought-after speaker. He's given hundreds of presentations and workshops on marketing and direct marketing. His "Marketing Planning 101" workshop alone has reached more than sixty thousand marketing and sales professionals.

### Pat McGraw

For more than 25-years, Pat has been developing and leading integrated multi-channel direct marketing campaigns targeting B2B and B2C audiences for non-profit and for-profit organizations in education, technology, retail and other industries.



Drawing upon his experience in market research, competitive intelligence, data analytics and strategic planning, Pat identifies opportunities for success - new audiences to pursue, new markets to enter, new programs, products and services to develop and launch, pricing strategies, etc. And with his operational experience, Pat launches and manages integrated campaigns (recruitment and enrollment campaigns that attract, enroll and retain students more effectively for colleges, and lead generation and retention campaigns for tech firms, retailers and service firms). The results include lowering the cost to enroll a new student/attract a new customer, increasing retention rates and more.

Within the education sector, Pat has worked with leading service firms including Noel Levitz, Hobsons, Aslanian Market Research, as well as a wide variety of institutions including Greenville College and Alvernia University to University of Maryland University College, Walden University, University of Chicago, Tulane University and others.

Outside of education, Pat has worked with leading corporations and service firms including Microsoft, IBM, Sears, Kmart, Insight, Barry Blau & Partners (currently Havas Worldwide) and more.

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