

Case Study : Stanford University Social Media Measurement

Or : How I set up and nurture Stanford University's Social Media Presence

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Part 1. Our initial experiment on Facebook.

We set up a Facebook page for Stanford University two years ago in 2009. As of today, we have 155,000 Likes for the page, 63,000 Likes on posts to the page, and 11,000 comments. We estimate we've had over 17.2 million social impressions since our launch. This Facebook page cost us zero dollars to set up and no more than 5 hours of personnel time per week to sustain. See Figure 1.

Part 2. What we learned.

- 1. Look for outcomes that matter.** The mission of the Office of Public Affairs is to enhance and protect Stanford's reputation. Consequently, our key outcomes are tied to reputational measures. In order to measure the effectiveness of our social media efforts against our core objectives, we administer annual surveys to our Twitter and Facebook followers. In these surveys, we ask the same questions that we use in our offline reputational research. For example, our Facebook postings have done 'a great deal' or a 'fair bit' to enhance and reaffirm beliefs that Stanford is producing innovative research and important discoveries (80% respondents).
- 2. Look for segments that matter.** Another key component to our social media measurement is audience and segment analysis. Are we reaching audiences we care about, what are we learning about different segments, and are we accomplishing specific objectives within those segments? We discovered in the survey work that our Facebook fans and Twitter followers include significant proportions of prospective students, current students, and alumni; we are reaching audiences we care about. Within specific audience segments, we found that we are "moving the needle" on audience objectives. For example, over 80% of current Stanford students indicated that our Facebook postings have significantly "enhanced or reaffirmed a sense that Stanford values its students and alumni". Some of our findings deepened our understanding of segments. Social media did nothing to increase "remote" alumni to attend reunion homecoming; but it did drive 26% of remote alumni to get in touch with Stanford professors.
- 3. Look for deltas.** Reach and engagement metrics have limited utility without context, so we are especially mindful of measures that show change (e.g. before and after). For example, we turned over authorship of the university's Facebook posts to a student team in September 2010. We found that the number of "new Likes" each day doubled as a result; similarly, clickthroughs on tweets also doubled as a result of the change. BEST teams may find it helpful to begin baseline measurement *before* they launch their campaign.
- 4. If branding is holistic, measurement should be, too.** Because branding is a holistic process, we seek to evaluate our social media efforts in the context of the university's brand, taken as a whole. For example, we created a series of "Open Office Hours" on Facebook, in which anyone can ask questions to and receive video responses from faculty. The most obvious metrics are video views, comments, and likes. However, the most significant result of the project may be the impact that we're having on the Stanford academic experience. Interviews published by *The Stanford Daily* indicate that undergraduates feel more likely to attend in-person actual office hours after having participated in Open Office Hours. One of the foundations of the Stanford brand is that the university educates future leaders through deep engagement with world-class faculty. As a result, cultural change is a key brand outcome of Stanford Open Office Hours on Facebook.

Part 3. Free Tools I use

Native Social Media Platform Tools

Facebook Insights
Youtube Insights
Twitter + Bit.ly or Twitter + Hootsuite

Website Tools

Google Analytics
Mixpanel
Postrank

Survey Tools

Qualtrics (survey.stanford.edu)
Surveymonkey
KissInsights

Content Analysis (e.g. key message, quality of conversation, prominence/dominance in conversation, etc.)

Excel
Wordle
Crowdboost

Figure 1. Stanford's Facebook Page

The screenshot displays the Facebook page for Stanford University. The top navigation bar includes the Facebook logo, a search bar, and links for Home, Profile, and Account. The page header features the Stanford University logo and name, along with the location 'Education · Stanford, California'. A row of five small images shows various campus scenes. Below this is a 'Wall' section with a 'Share:' button and a text input field for posting. The main content area shows three posts: 1) A post from Stanford University about celebratory flags and the Knight Management Center, including a photo of the building and a link to the website. 2) A post from Paco Garcia and 130 others, featuring a photo of Magnus Ho and a comment from Linda P Anderson. 3) A post from Stanford University about Thomas Friedman's visit, including a photo of Friedman and a link to his New York Times article. The right sidebar contains sections for 'You and Stanford University' (172 friends like this), 'People You May Know' (listing Jared Weinstein, Sky Kurtz, Steve Hazy, Kevin Diestel, and Ann Scott), and 'Add as friend' buttons. The left sidebar shows navigation options like 'Wall', 'Info', 'Your Stories', 'Photos', 'Video', 'Commenting', and 'Notes', along with 'About' information and a 'Likes' section listing various Stanford-related groups.