Chapter 6

Leveraging New Media as Social Capital for Diversity Officers: How Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Professionals Can Use Social Media to Foster Equality

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ABSTRACT

Technology has fundamentally changed our lives by bringing us closer together and connecting us in ways that make the world seem smaller. As higher education diversity professionals step into the foray of social marketing and continue to enhance their presence, it becomes even more important that they understand how to leverage important messages of equity, diversity, and inclusion in ways that promote an inclusive society and foster global equality. In order to carry out effective social media campaigns surrounding EDI issues, it is necessary to foster activity online and offline. This chapter is a guide for EDI professionals on how to use social media to foster equality. It includes a discussion on the Internet and the evolution of social media, review of new media technologies alongside emerging trends, and highlights why social marketing messages are important for diversity professionals. It also proposes a framework for understanding social media marketing, by providing tips, recommendations, and examples showcasing how to use social media to advance social justice.

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INTRODUCTION

Technology has fundamentally changed our lives; bringing us closer together and connecting us around the globe in ways that have made the world seem smaller. More than a fourth of the global population actively uses social media, and organizations everywhere are clamoring to take advantage of the chance to deliver impactful messages to people via their social networks (Kemp, 2014; Shively, 2015). As higher education diversity professionals step into the foray of social marketing and continue to enhance their presence on the social media landscape, it becomes even more important that they understand how to leverage important messages of equity, diversity, and inclusion in ways that promote an inclusive society and foster global equality.

Moving beyond promoting awareness to facilitating action through social media activity can represent one of the primary challenges faced by Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) professionals attempting to create engaged communities. In order to carry out effective social media campaigns surrounding EDI issues, it is necessary to facilitate online activity, as well as offline action. To that end, this chapter is a guide for EDI professionals and diversity officers on how to use social media to promote equality by changing hearts and minds with digital technology.

Given the collegiality and altruistic aims within the field of equity, diversity, and inclusion, this chapter seeks to further explore the use of social media for diversity professionals by highlighting how social networking technology can be used to deliver messages of equality and inclusion. Specifically, this chapter aims to benefit the following groups:

- Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs) in charge of facilitating equality and inclusion within organizations.
- Aspiring Chief Diversity Officers (i.e. Entry-to-Mid-Career Practitioners) with the long-term career goal of leading an inclusive organization.
- Current EDI Practitioners with an existing social media effort, who have started using social media to promote messages of equity, diversity, and inclusion, and would like to improve their effort.
- EDI Practitioners who are curious about how to use social media in their marketing efforts and aren’t sure how to get started.
- Non-EDI academic faculty, staff, and paraprofessional staff members interested in promoting messages of equality among enthused stakeholders in the social networking sphere.

Chapter Roadmap

The chapter begins with a discussion on the Internet and the evolution of social media in the online marketing space. This includes a review of new media technologies in social networking and an overview of emerging trends in the field to acclimate the reader to the social media landscape and some of the outlets and tools available within it. The chapter then highlights why marketing messages via social media is important for diversity professionals, and further provides a framework for understanding social media marketing, along with information on using social media to advance social justice. The chapter then moves into a discussion of how to turn social media marketing plans into actionable steps, providing suggestions and examples on how to use social media to advance social justice. The chapter ends with a series of tips and recommendations for how to get started right away, and begin seeing results from an active Social Media Marketing Plan. In addition to this format, throughout the chapter, several words are italicized for emphasis; many of these key terms are available in the Key Terms and Definitions section.
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