Chapter 10

Good Practices for Universities on Twitter

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ABSTRACT

According to Klamm (2011), some of the best practices for universities seeking to build effective social media engagement are: 1) to develop a strategy and set goals; 2) to pick and choose the platforms; 3) to empower and support individual departments; 4) to put guidelines in place; 5) to develop a consistent voice across platforms; and 6) to communicate across campus. In the following pages, we will delve more deeply into Twitter for universities. After checking 10 reasons why universities should take Twitter seriously, we will offer some good practices for universities willing to use Twitter in a way that optimizes the tool; that is, not only for disseminating information, but also for talking with the community and taking advantage of its multimedia potential. We will illustrate these good practices with screenshots to better show what we mean and also to reinforce their utility with contributions from some of the early theorists on what the proper use of social media should be.

INTRODUCTION

According to Klamm (2011), some of the best practices for universities seeking to build effective social media engagement are the following:

1. To develop a strategy and set goals
2. To pick and choose the platforms
3. To empower and support individual departments
4. To put guidelines in place
5. To develop a consistent voice across platforms
6. To communicate across campus

Similarly, Ahlquist (2013) provides these 10 best social media practices in higher education:

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1. To implement a social media strategy
2. To produce quality and accurate content
3. To manage platforms with social media managers and student leaders
4. To use an authentic and transparent voice
5. To represent the university/department brand and university resources
6. To collaborate and support other university social media pages
7. To respect the community
8. To dive into data
9. To empower influencers and engage audience
10. To get internal buy-in

In the following pages, we will delve more deeply into Twitter for universities.

Why Universities Should Take Twitter Seriously

1. **It is a Free Service:** Anyone can access this space; the only requirement is opening an account in the service. In addition, the free access allows users to connect with the rest of the world. For universities, which often face financial problems, it is an affordable new channel for promoting its brand and strengthening contact with their community.

2. **It is Where People Live:** Until 2012, Twitter had 500 million users registered worldwide. Over 340 million tweets are posted daily. Along with Facebook, Google+ and Instagram, Twitter is one of the most popular platforms. Since its launch, it has won a large number of users. In the case of universities, it is also interesting to note that Twitter attracts many young people:

   *For universities, deciding to use social media is a no-brainer. The 18- to 24-year-old college student demographic is all over the social web, and its younger counterpart (the high school crowd) is equally immersed. Alumni, recent and far-removed, use social networks to engage and stay connected with the world. Community members, parents of students, potential donors, faculty and staff and other constituents are just a tweet or ‘like’ away. With so many key populations embracing social media, universities almost have no choice but to integrate these platforms into their marketing and communications plans (Klamm, 2011).*

3. **It is Easier to Cross Borders:** Twitter is accessible from different platforms and through a variety of mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, etc. Specifically, mobile phones facilitate users to interact freely, regardless of where they are.

4. **It Helps in Getting Feedback:** The immediacy of this tool allows messages to be spread instantly. Through Twitter, universities can get feedback from their teachers or students without time or space limits.

5. **It Modernizes the Image and the Skills of the University:** With the arrival of technology, the world has changed a lot, especially the way we communicate. The use of Twitter allows universities to modernize their image and skills. This might not be their top priority but it is an unavoidable consequence that brings indisputable advantages for the brand.