Digital Brand Strategy- Project for an ITM Course

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

This presentation describes an innovative capstone project in an Information Technology and Management course. The course, Managing Information Technology and Systems is a sophomore level foundational course mandatory for all students in Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts. In Babson, the Managing Information Technology and Systems course is paired with Marketing. This pairing allows us to integrate a variety of key ITM topics with Marketing starting with how data are generated through business processes, the use of data (analysis) to examine business performance, the use of software tools to facilitate analysis and visualization, and the distinct roles of social platforms. This gave us, the designers of this course, a unique opportunity to innovate on integrating our content with Marketing.

A design challenge for was to build a capstone project that integrated ITM with Marketing. This challenge resulted in the design of the “Digital Brand Strategy” project. The project covers a number of relevant and important Information Systems concepts such as Web Design and Development, Search Engine Optimization, Social Media Platforms, and Google Analytics. The implementation of the project, besides promoting experiential learning for the students, allows students to experience first-hand, the role of data and analytics in decision-making. The project, which runs for about 7 weeks, begins with the students identifying a “cause” or “objective” for building a website. The topics range from strongly political causes such as “Equal Pay for Men and Women”, “Support Syrian Refugees” to more esoteric causes closer to the Babson community, but, easily extendable to colleges/universities in general.

The students, working in teams, build a web site using tools such as Weebly, Wix, or Squarespace. The pages are built to conform to web design principles taught in the course and the students are expected to include in their final presentations, a brief description of this conformance. The student teams then add the Google Analytics code to this site and begin tracking the visibility. The student teams promote their cause and the site through word-of-mouth advertising to their friends and family and attempt to determine the impact of this effort on their site using analytics. The team then optimize their site for search engines by adding <meta> tags and keywords. Using analytics, the teams track the effect of the optimization and performance of keywords and, throughout the project, redesign the content and layout of the site based on what the analytics informs them. Further, over the next 3-4 weeks, each team designs and executes a social media campaign using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and any other social media platforms that each team may feel relevant to their target audience, determined using the POST framework. Each week, the teams use analytics to identify what is working well (or not), and continuously switch platforms as well as the content distributed through each. The final presentation at the end of the semester focuses on the actions performed, impact on analytics, lessons learned, and redesigns/changes required. This project also allows students to use social media management tools such as Tweetdeck and Hootsuite. This project invokes synergies, consistent with the current marketing efforts that heavily leverage technology and rely on the latest advances in data management and analysis, social media, mobile applications, localization, and online presence.