Create a digital communication plan

Approximated reading time: 15 minutes

The incorporation of the new technologies in our daily life has caused a change of paradigm in our communication in both the human relations and the commercial relations. The appearance of smart phones has accelerated this behavioral modification of the communication even more.

In the world of sports, we can also observe new ways of communicating with our clients, colleagues, providers etc. as well as new possibilities to commercialize and to sell our services via the internet. This new situation makes it necessary for almost every organization to be present in the internet. However, the new game rules are not only about showing presence but about being active and interacting with our community sharing values, creating a brand and establishing a bilateral, human communication in which the organization finds itself on the same level as their clients.

In order to provide a good presence in the social networks and by this, obtaining good results for our organization, it does not suffice to open a facebook account or start to tweet on twitter just sharing all the contents that come to your mind. If you want to be successful in the world of social media, you need to make up a **digital communication plan,** also known as "Social Media Marketing Plan".

Even if you do not publish anything, you are still there

This concept is the basis to understand the importance of a digital strategy. You may not have a dynamic webpage uploading pictures, neither an account on twitter, a page on facebook or Google + nor have you created a profile of your sports center at Foursquare. Nevertheless, it is possible that results of your organization appear in the web in the form of news, blogs, comments photos or videos. These postings are done by third persons, like users or ex-users, competitors, employees or providers. Thus, we are not able to control this information directly; however, we need to be aware of their existence, their source and above all, if they speak good or bad about us.

Basic concepts of our online presence

The following figure shows three key concepts that you should know before planning a strategy or opening a profile, due to the fact that they are the initial point you should start working with.

Figure 1.The digital track in the web

Why is it important to work on a good reputation and digital brand?

Elt is important to stay attentive that our online reputation goes along with our identity and the values of our brand that we want to transmit. To have people speaking about us online as we want them to, as well as to create interesting contents to attract more users to our pages and profiles is crucial for us for the following motives:

- Helps immensely your SEO (search engine optimization)
- Being able to control possible negative references about your organization
- Creation of a brand: modernity, affiliation, humanization of the brand, engagement
- Main communication channel for digital natives: "If you are not on google, you don't exist"
- Attractive marketing possibilities with value contents and chances to differentiate. Everybody searching for you online is a potential client.

The first steps to make a social media plan

The work of branding, creating an identity and reputation has to be the result of an accurate planning process. Furthermore, it has to be flexible and adjustable to the needs and interactions of the web. In the following, the first steps to design a digital communication plan are detailed:

1.Branding

The first step of designing a social media plan is to define our brand. We have to know our distinguishing characteristics that make us more valuable than the competitors. We have to know well our values that we identify us with and that we want to transmit to our community.

2. Define my web objectives

Now, it is time to ask yourself: What is the purpose of my web presence? Is my target audience in the web? Whom to I direct my online offer to? To end customers, to an intermediary, to a potential audience? The objectives have to be coherent with the general objectives of our sports organization and our general marketing strategy. We need to define some general objectives and concretize to each general objective some specific objectives that are measurable.

3. Situation analysis

This step consists of taking a picture of the current situation of our brand and our competencies in the web. It is not an easy task to do it completely, considering that it will form the base of our following steps in our evolution. Take a look at the below figure to see some of the important aspects of this analysis:

Figura 3. Analysis of the reputation and the digital presence

4. SWOT

With all the information obtained in step 3 and having in mind our objectives and values, we can create a SWOT matrix that will help us to identify and prioritize the correct strategies. In the "itik generates 16" you can find a detailed explanation of the methodology to develop a dynamic SWOT-analysis.

5. Definition of the strategy

The next task is to define our web strategy. First of all, we must select the networks and digital platforms that conform to your needs. Furthermore, you have to contemplate the editorial line and possible contents, how to manage the pages, as well as the required economic, human and material resources to put the strategy into action.

This is also the moment to create a communication, a management and especially a crisis protocol in order to respond adequately to possible negative comments that may appear. Once having prepared a strategy, it is time to create the profiles on the chosen platforms optimized for the search engines as well as for the community managers who will be in charge of handling the social media appearances of your organization.

As mentioned before, it is very crucial that your developed "online" strategy is coherent with your "offline" strategy implemented by the traditional marketing department, while being aware that those two strategies work completely different.

6. Implementation, interaction and active listening

At the end, it is time to implement your strategy and create a digital community. It is very important to actually interact with the users who follow us, leave comments or share our information about and on our profiles. You should show them that there are people behind our organization and that their opinions and references do matter for our continuous improvement process. We need to watch out that the purpose of our net presence is not to sell, but to share, converse, promote and create a community. That allows us to share a communication channel with our clients where they can give us hints for possible service improvements or new business opportunities, being a very valuable information source for our organization. In the long run, this and the valorization of our brand will increase our sales.

7.Post processing and monitoring

The last step is to continue the development of our online actions through some controlling indicators as well as monitoring our brand, our keywords and our service. By post processing, we will be able to evaluate our actions, identify the most appreciated contents and the possible impact of our virtual community on the results of our sports organization.

Those are the first steps to design a web strategy. It is a summary that picks up the main elements you have to care about; however, you should not forget to add more elements concerning functionality and web applicability, SEO- and SEM strategies or the inbound marketing that we will present you shortly in another itik generates. ■

Bibliography:
Pedro Rojas, Maria Redondo. Cómo preparar un plan de social media marketing. Gestión 2000 — 2013