ONTARIO SPORT MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

March 19, 2014

Meeting Notes

In Attendance

Gray, Devin   OFSAA

Griffin, Meaghan   SPORT4ONTARIO

Harris, Victor   Digital Echidna

Kates, Ruth   Ophea

Mauer, Laura   CSIO

McInnes, Kate   Softball Ontario

McLaren, Stuart   CAO

Rogalsky, Kristen   ROWONTARIO

Smith, Brock   Rugby Ontario

Suave, Jessica   Ontario Ringette

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

2. **History of the Marketing & Communications COP**

   - The group was started 3-4 years ago by a group of staff in the building who began speaking informally about their shared challenges in the field
   - From there, informal meetings began to take place about once a month, eventually dwindling to every few months
   - The structure has generally been an informal gathering where best practices, tips and tricks are shared among colleagues

- Different people have organized this group in the past, and it is currently being headed up by Brock Smith (Rugby Ontario), with facilitation support from Victor Harris (Digital Echidna) and administrative support from Meaghan Griffin (SPORT4ONTARIO)
- The structure will continue to be a peer-to-peer support on topics generated from the group
- Victor Harris is available to give brief presentations on the various topics chosen by the groups

3. **About Digital Echidna – by Victor Harris, Digital Echidna**

- Digital Echidna currently works with a number of organizations in the building
- It has existed for about 15 years
- Work with sports associations, municipalities, and healthcare
- Have been working with Ophea for 6 years
- Work on pretty much anything in the online realm
- Team of 27 people, headquartered in London Ontario
- A staff member of Echidna is generally in the building at least once every other week working with clients

4. **Presentation on E-Newsletters – by Victor Harris, Digital Echidna**

There are 5 steps to email marketing

Define

- Establish goals for your activities so that you have something to measure when you send out your newsletter (e.g. increase your reach by 50%)
- Include stretch goals as well
- Define your audience: is it an internal or external audience? Is it for new or prospective clients? Is it for athletes or parents?

Develop

- Create content of value that supports your goals, and speaks to your audience
- Try to reuse/repurpose online content from your blog to populate your newsletter
- This will also help drive traffic back to your website, which is a good thing to evaluate (e.g. what stories are most popular, whether or not there has been a spike in website views, etc.)

Design

- Understand your content (do you want only text? Do you want to include pictures and videos?)
- Understanding your content will help you select your platform and create a design template
- Common platforms include Mailchimp and Campaign Monitor

Deliver

- Generate your contact list (export from existing contact lists or have a sign-up on your website)
- Watch out for the new Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (more on that later!)
- Segment or categorize your list (parents, coaches, internal teams, external audiences)
- Send out your campaign

Debrief

- Review what has happened in comparison to your goals
- Review your open rate
- Review google analytics (did it create a spike in your website views?)
- Make adjustments as needed

Case Study: Digital Echidna Blog

- Blog is very active (70-100 posts/year)
- Social media platforms tie back to blog

1. Define
    - Audience:
        - Echidna has a very good idea of who reads their blog, and has almost developed a persona for these people (e.g. men & women aged 35-50 in senior management positions)
    - Goals
        - Echidna's goals included things like doubling the number of 2012 blog items by year end, create at least one blog/week and also included some stretch goals like quadrupling the number of 2012 blog posts by 2013, and using the blog content to create an Echidna Guide for marketing
    - Results:
        - Surpassed almost all goals
        - Effectively used social media to popularize the blog

- Effectively used blog content to populate newsletter
- Clearly defining goals at the beginning of the year helped Echidna understand whether or not they were being effective in their efforts

2. Develop
   - Held a brainstorming session about some of the blog topics that could be posted
   - Developed 10 blog posts to start to compensate for weeks where writers are overloaded, and to help you understand how long it actually takes to write a blog
   - Pre-written blogs should not be time-sensitive in nature, so that they can be used easily at later dates
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3. Design & Deliver
   - Email newsletter template has a simple look to it which matches the Echidna website look
   - The design is responsive, so it requires a simple style to adapt to multiple digital platforms

4. Debrief
   - Results were good – there was a 21% open rate
   - There was a spike after it was sent out
   - In analytics, it seemed that the blogs are more popular when they first come out than in the email newsletter because it is promoted through social media
   - The audience for the newsletter is people who don't know about Echidna, or potential clients
   - Make sure you have analytics set up! They're free!

Question & Answer:

Q (Ophea): Do you prefer Mailchimp or campaign monitor?

A (Victor):
   - Started using Campaign Monitor because it was initially easier to develop HTML templates (making it easier to customize than Mailchimp)
   - Now Mailchimp has a really good integration platform with their development platform, Drupal

- Part of the integration is that the email newsletter captcha box, which signs people up for the newsletter through Mailchimp does not require any custom coding like the Campaign Monitor one did
- There is still a bit of a design/customization challenge with Mailchimp
- Having said this, Echidna is still not set on either, and is still open to exploring all of their options
- Constant Contact is also very popular, but it also has difficulty with the customization aspect

Q (Ophea): When asking someone to sign up for our newsletter, we do not ask for a lot of information, but are now finding that there needs to be more segmentation in our lists

A (Victor):

- It's best to have a drop-down box where you can select your sector, which will then populate your contact database and segment it
- It also might be collecting it, but not bringing it over to where you can use it

Q (Ophea): Is this feature different between Campaign Monitor and Mailchimp?

A (Victor): It is likely that they both have the same functionality in that regard

A (CSIO):

- I walked into an in-between newsletter situation , so here's what we did:
  - Had a 3rd party marketing company build us a customized template for Mailchimp that looks like it matches the website
  - We also use our Microsoft dynamic CRM database system. We build the campaign in Mailchimp and send it out through our database, which segments athletes, coaches, etc. and updates automatically
  - There are some challenges, but it works for the most part

Q (Ophea): Does it automatically update when you get bounce backs?

A (CSIO):

- It's a bit of manual updating and automatic updating, it doesn't catch everything and sometimes the main lists update, but the sub-lists don't
- All the analytics go through Mailchimp, so it shows the bounce-backs there
- Mailchimp doesn't communicate with the database, so we need to figure out how to get it to stop pulling the addresses if someone unsubscribes

A (Victor):

- It will depend on how your integration is set up
- You might have to set some new rules up in the programs, but it's difficult to know exactly without seeing it

Q (CSIO): If there is a way to pull the list into Mailchimp and then edit the list there and send it out so that it's not sent out from the database at all it might stop the unsubcribes

A (Victor): The only problem is that the list wouldn't be up to date in real time, and you would have to export the list every time

Q (Rugby): What is okay to send out via a newsletter, and what isn't with CASL coming into place? What is the most effective way to communicate with CASL coming into place to get information out to club membership? I have access to 30,000 addresses, but am I allowed to take that list, and email those 30,000 members once or twice a year with the key information that they must receive?

A (S4O): You should add a check box to your registration form where they can opt-in to receive critical information from Rugby Ontario.

A (OVA): At OVA, members are required to sign a waiver which says that the OVA can take their photo to use for promotional purposes and that they have the right to email them. If they choose to opt out, they must contact a designated individual.

A (CSIO): CSIO has an athlete intake form where they have now added a similar box with all the legal jargon.

A (Victor): Echidna has noticed that organizations have to be a lot more proactive in documenting consent as well. They must also make sure their members are aware that they can be contacted by the provincial organizations.

Comment (Rugby): This is the first year Rugby Ontario has mandated online registration. A third party system called Ivrnet to collect membership information. Rugby will have to ensure that they add a checkbox to

Comment (S4O): We will send the sample Anti-Spam opt-in language from our lawyer to everyone at this meeting.

Q (Ringette): A club administrator inputs all the parent's forms into our online systems. Do we still have to do this? What if we don't ever email the membership?

A (S4O): You will have to ask the associations to include the check box on their forms. You should still get their consent in case you ever decide to email them in the future.

A (CSIO): The clause that they include in their registration should include themselves, the provincial organization, and the national body.

Q (ROW): After the fact, how do you identify the person that opted out of having their photo used on a photo waiver?

A (OVA): Nobody ever said that in our experience. If they had, we would have had to have made a note and informed the photographer we hire for championships.

A (Victor): With younger children they might tell you that you are not allowed to post their photos at all

A (Ophea): The school boards generally block all images with no option to download them.

Q (Softball): Do you have to be over 18 to consent to receiving emails under CASL?

A (S4O): Not sure – will send this question along to Steve Indig

A (OVA): Generally, you have to be over 18 to consent, but we're not sure about email addresses. It's often unclear who the email addresses on registration forms actually belongs to.

A (S4O): There is a lack of clarity regarding this legislation in general, and it is untested, so even lawyers are unsure of exactly how it will be enforced

Q (Ophea): How often should we send out newsletters? Is more better? Is less better?

A (Victor): We are under the belief that repurposing content is the best way to do it, so we think a good rule of thumb is 1 blog post a week, with 1 newsletter a month (containing your 4 blog posts). One monthly e-blast helps you recap what you have done in the past month, and also keeps your subscribers from being inundated with information. It's also important to remember that things are always changing, so you might need to re-evaluate every once and a while.

Comment (Ophea): I agree. If there are additional emails, we try to keep it about something specific and targeted, but we are trying to find research on how many of those additional emails we should be sending out, especially when other companies are sending out daily emails.

A (Victor): Yes, that does just become spam. People delete it, so you have to be cautious of how many emails you send without overwhelming your audience.

A (CAO): You also have other ways of contacting people, like social media, where you can put out information every day. Maybe during certain times of year, related to your sport or organization people want to hear from you more frequently (for example, during the Olympics) and other times that you can retract a little.

Q (OFSAA): Whose perspective is your newsletter written from? Ours is called "A word from our Executive Director" so it's from their perspective.

A (CSIO): Generally, it's from the association, using our name or using "we". But there might be messages from certain people at different times.

A (Victor): It depends who the audience is. If it is going to people who should or do know him, it makes sense to include a personality, but it might not make sense to a broader audience. It could also add a personal touch. Remember also, a newsletter normally acts as more of a recap.

Comment (Softball): Our newsletter has original content written by our head umpire. This information is not always online in other places.

Comment (Rugby): It's important to remember to link everything back to your website, because by tracking click rates with analytics you can get a better picture of what information is actually of value to your audience. This is also important to show the value of your role as a communications staff, and show whether or not you are hitting your targets and driving views to your website.

Q (S4O): Do any organizations write blogs? What do you write about?

A (CAO): We did more when Rory was around. We wrote interviews with coaches, relevant book reviews, etc.

A (ROW): Human interest pieces. We have written about a rower that was diagnosed with leukemia – we update on fundraisers for her, and do Q & As

A (CSIO): We started a section called "The Locker Room" where we send athletes questionnaires with fun questions – what was the last book you read, what is your least favourite exercise, etc.

A (S4O): Our jobs section is always the most read

Q (Ophea): Does anyone do A B testing? This is when you send out a subset of your newsletter in 2 different versions, and your program sees what newsletter is performing better, and then sends out the rest of your newsletter in the format that is performing better.

Q (S4O): Where can you find information about what time of day you should send out your newsletter, what headings you should use, etc.

A (Victor): There are tons of resources online.

A (Ophea): You can find this out by doing you're tracking online month after month, and by doing some testing, and getting to know your audience.

A (OFSAA): You can also check your google analytics to see what time people are viewing your website

A (CSIO): It's also important to be consistent in when you are sending out your newsletters

Q (CSIO): How do you track your tweets at a low cost. The basic version of <u>Hootsuite</u> doesn't give very much data, and the pro version is very expensive, but still doesn't seem to be very accurate.

A (Ophea): <u>Sprout Social</u> is what we use both to schedule tweets and get analytics, but they are still not very accurate. It is also now very expensive. Tweriad also gives analytics to understand what time of day you should be sending out your tweets.

A (OFSAA): Twitter can also send you reports about how your tweets are doing, what ones are getting the most clicks, etc. But it is a mystery about how you can sign up to get these reports.

5. Adjournment

For any other inquires, contact Meaghan Griffin at mgriffin@sport4ontario.ca