

SOCIAL MEDIA IN AN INFORMAL LEARNING ORGANIZATION

A NEW WAY TO TELL A STORY



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DEDICATION

To the 442nd / 100th Regimental Combat Teams
...your story will never be forgotten.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vi
INTRODUCTION	2
Power of Social Media.....	2
Go For Broke National Education Center.....	3
ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT	5
Organizational History and Mission.....	5
Organizational Structure	6
PROBLEM OF PRACTICE.....	8
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
The Theory of Informal Learning	11
The Role of Social Media in Informal Learning Environments	12
The Stakeholder	13
Social Media Marketing to Stakeholders	14
Engaging Stakeholder Dialogue.....	16
Defining Social Media Success	17
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	19
PROJECT QUESTIONS.....	23
PROJECT DESIGN	24
Data Collection.....	24
Data Analysis.....	25
FINDINGS	30
Research Question 1.....	30
Social Media Platform Use.....	30
Organizational Generated Content.....	33
Research Question 2	36
Research Question 3.....	38
RECOMMENDATIONS	42
Recommendation 1.....	42
Recommendation 2.....	43
Recommendation 3.....	43
CONCLUSION.....	45

REFERENCES	46
APPENDIX A.....	52
Interview Protocol	52
APPENDIX B.....	54
Interviews.....	44
APPENDIX C.....	55
Cross Platform Engagement.....	55

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This capstone examines how the Go For Broke National Education Center is using social media as an education and communication tool. It analyzes the implementation of these activities and looks at how the organization is using these social media platforms to engage with audiences.

The unprecedented crisis of the 2020 pandemic forced the Go For Broke National Education Center to close its onsite operations and pivot all educational content from solely in-person experiences to delivering content on social media platforms. Responding to this challenge was vital as in the absence of in-person activities, the organization had to adapt and adjust, or it would not be able to continue to fulfill its mission. The accelerated change resulting from the global crisis pushed the Center to quickly expand their communication content in order to maintain connections with their audience. This new digital programming emerged from a combination of environmental necessity, the opportunity to experiment with new technology, and the evolving landscape of social media. The accelerated planning and production timeline left the organization without opportunities to assess the process or outcomes of this new communication initiative. This capstone fulfilled the critical to identify assessment measures.

The Go For Broke National Education Center is a nonprofit informal learning organization located in Los Angeles, California whose mission is to “educate and inspire character and equality through the virtue and valor of World War II Japanese American veterans.” The organization

accomplishes these goals through an on-site experiential exhibition, organization of public programs, maintaining a tribute memorial site, and through the collection and repository of veteran oral histories.

This quality improvement project examines the Go For Broke National Education Center's current social media activities and the stakeholder response. Despite the organization's emphasis on social media content, there continues to be strategic uncertainties about the connection between the Center's engagement and tangible organizational outcomes. It is necessary for the organization to understand the stakeholder response and use this information to strategically define goals that increase stakeholder engagement and effectively deliver key organizational messaging and mission-driven content.

This project supports the Center in developing social media marketing strategies that strengthen their online presence and enhance relationships with existing stakeholders. In addition, it also aims to expand content to a new audience base. By understanding how to best utilize social media platforms and identify effective tools, the Center will be able to determine best practices of how to engage their audience most effectively and move forward with a clear strategy around ownership and implementation.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

What social media platforms is the Go For Broke National Education Center using?
What are the characteristics of the published content?

Findings

The Center implemented an inclusive strategy of using social media platforms to relay information to platform viewers. Informal learning and marketing and communication posts made up the majority of the content from the organization's posts. A predominant theme that emerged on Facebook and Instagram was the use of social media as a mechanism for fundraising.

The Center's active social media presence brought unexpected opportunities as they were able to thoughtfully and organically use their platform to address current social and political conditions not only affecting the local community, but with a broader national resonance. By using YouTube to create and post videos with original content, the Center was able to share their organizational messaging to new audiences. Social media platforms serve as an effective tool for the Center's organizational identity and branding to a broader audience base.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

How is the organization's digital content providing opportunities for engagement with their stakeholders?
How are audiences responding to the organization's published social media content?

Findings

While the Center's primary goal of social media was to disseminate information, a secondary outcome of using social media was to strengthen connections with existing stakeholders and their supporting communities. Language analysis showed the Center did not proactively post direct questions or language that prompted discussion or interaction with their online audience. Language that called for audience action was primarily focused on fundraising.

Instead of dialogic engagement opportunities through direct language, my analysis uncovered the prolific use of another more complex method of engagement. The Center is using storytelling techniques to communicate and sell the organization's mission and vision.. This use of storytelling has been effective for the organization because it is able to transform facts and figures into a personal, emotional, and compelling organizational message.

The posts with the highest engagement rates used storytelling techniques It serves to convey the impact of the organization's work and is a way to elicit an emotional response and potential action from the viewer. The Center used storytelling elements across all social media platforms to cultivate supporter relationships, reinforce the organization's brand and mission, and as a fundraising tool.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Does social media provide the organization with a mechanism to connect with others?

Findings

One of the most significant findings from my analysis was that YouTube provided the greatest opportunity for informal learning due to the engaging nature of video media. This platform helped to facilitate the Center's ability to convey knowledge to new audiences and tell important stories through a powerful narrative. YouTube proved to be a powerful tool in connecting viewers to the Center's work through shared values and beliefs between the organization and the online audience

The organization's fundraising events were streamed on Facebook Live and YouTube Live. These two major fundraising events which historically have generated the highest revenue for the Center are the Evening of Aloha and the Annual Monument Tribute. Despite the closures, the Center took the opportunity to continue holding these significant events virtually. The use of live streaming allowed for opportunities for real time engagement with viewers through the live chat on both platforms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Creation of a communications plan that integrates social media into the larger organizational strategy.

The social media and communications plan should include the purpose, goals, and projected outcomes for the organization's social media actions. As a part of the social media plan, the needs and expectations of the audience should be clearly defined and incorporated. The organization should be asking: who is the target audience according to the specific social media platform.

Create additional opportunities for dialogic communication by increasing publishing frequency and direct language.

Create opportunities for engagement and interactivity by creating content with the stakeholder in mind. Increase emphasis on the stakeholder as an influencer of content. Inclusion of interactivity messaging and use of specific language that encourages dialogic communication.

Capitalize on content and continue to build their brand as a specialized informal learning organization. Amplify use of storytelling across platforms.

Reinforce organizational brand through an authentic storytelling narrative across all social media content. Increase usage of organizational resources such as oral histories and the integration of contemporary social issues.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN AN INFORMAL LEARNING ORGANIZATION

A New Way to Tell a Story

INTRODUCTION

The Power of Social Media

Social media has fundamentally shaped and defined how we consume information and how we engage and connect with one another in an increasingly digitized and virtual world. We've all used Facebook to keep in touch with friends and family, watched our favorite bands and celebrities on YouTube, and followed the latest news trends on Twitter. The use of social media is inextricably woven into our daily routine and repertoire of behaviors. "Designed for and centered around social interactions" (Bertot et al., 2012, p. 30), these tools "allow people to create their stories, videos, and photos and to manipulate and share them widely at almost no cost" (Kanter & Fine, 2010, p. 5).

Social media use can be particularly beneficial for nonprofit organizations as a tool to cultivate relationships with supporters. The organization's long-term sustainability depends on the ability to engage with stakeholders, so they are invested in the organization's mission and vision. For-profit entities have been utilizing this digital movement to enhance branding and increase sales and profits by transforming consumer engagement into proven revenue. (Xu & Saxton, 2019). For businesses, social media engagement is easily measured through mechanisms such as click-thru links, referral programs, and trackable discount and coupon codes. But for nonprofits, translating consumer engagement into organizational success is not a clear-cut endeavor and cannot be defined or evaluated through sales. Other metrics are necessary and must be created to measure the impact and effectiveness of a nonprofit's social media programs in reaching their target audience.

Nonprofit organizations benefit from establishing an active social media presence as it can help with building community and engaging in fundraising (Hackler & Saxton, 2007, McNutt & Menon,

2008), as well as cultivating and maintaining relationships with their stakeholders (Xu and Saxton 2019). However, nonprofit organizations are not utilizing the full potential of social media and are using these platforms as a way to disseminate information instead of creating two-way conversations between the organization and their stakeholders (Campbell, Lambright, & Wells, 2014; Waters & Feneley, 2013). Furthermore, nonprofit organizations' social media presence falls short on collaborative engagement with their stakeholders, but instead focuses on organizational promotion (Waters & Feneley, 2013; Sun & Asencio, 2019).

Social media presents a developing paradigm where an organization is able to engage collaboratively, share, co-create and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Sites such as Facebook and Twitter create a communication channel that is both interactive and decentralized and provide nonprofit organizations with the opportunity to interact and share their message with a larger audience base (Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012). The invaluable data and feedback obtained from social media interactions can then be integrated to shape a nonprofit's operational models and strategic plans to create social value for the organization (Kapoor et. al., 2018). In doing so, the audience ultimately become stakeholders in the nonprofit, shaping the future direction of the organization.

Go For Broke National Education Center

The Go For Broke National Education Center (henceforth as the Center) is an informal learning center whose mission is to “educate and inspire character and equality through the virtue and valor of World War II Japanese American veterans” (Go For Broke National Education Center, 2021). The Center is physically located in the Little Tokyo neighborhood in the heart of downtown Los Angeles and primarily features an experiential on-site exhibition and veterans memorial monument. As an informal learning center, staff use blended methods to communicate content from their collection of

oral histories through creation and presentation of public programs to diverse audiences including K-12 students.

Over the course of the last year, the Center was engulfed in an environment of uncertainty as the coronavirus global pandemic hit in the Spring of 2020. In the midst of these unprecedented circumstances, onsite operations and access to the Center were shuttered to the public. The Center was faced with the difficult task of quickly pivoting from an organization that reached its audience through in-person activities, to one that had to solely rely on digital platforms to fulfill their mission and objectives. This was a particularly challenging endeavor as the Center up until this point had maintained a very minimal social media presence due to their primary emphasis on providing in-person learning experiences. In a sudden state of constant organizational transformation, the Center responded to these tumultuous times by creating new opportunities to remain connected to their stakeholders through the use of online social media platforms to cultivate and foster audience engagement. The Center began using digital platforms as a central focus and primary communication medium by increasing mailings of e-newsletters, updating their website, and creating new content specific for social media posts on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Social media has enabled the Center to increase communication with a broader audience and create opportunities for interaction and engagement.

For this quality improvement study, I will use theoretical research to understand the landscape of social media creation and content and examine the impact social media use has on the Center's ability to engage with audiences. The aim of my capstone is to analyze how the Go For Broke National Education Center is using social media as an education and communication tool, examine the implementation of these activities, and understand how the organization is using these platforms to engage with audiences. I then use my findings to make recommendations for future best practices for the Center.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

In working on my capstone, I took an in-depth look at the Center's organizational structure and public programming to better understand how the Center had been operating prior to the effects and challenges of the global pandemic.

Organizational History and Mission

Founded in 1989 as a memorial foundation to honor veterans, The Go For Broke National Education Center is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Since its inception, the Center has evolved from a grassroots organization with a few volunteers, into a multi-faceted informal learning center that serves the diverse population of Los Angeles. Through unique educational programs, the Center provides an avenue for multigenerational voices, as well as sharing stories that connect historical events to social justice issues that our nation faces today. One way the Center is able to provide educational opportunities is through weekly onsite school tours for students grades 5-12. The guided tours of the exhibition are often combined with workshops on oral histories that embody values of equality, courage, and patriotism across generations and backgrounds. Thus, the Center is indeed positioned as a reflective indicator in providing a greater understanding of the educational, social, and cultural climate of its regional community and beyond.

Prior to the global pandemic, the Center relied on a model of blended methods of learning that focused on in-person visitor participation in the organization's onsite exhibition and public programs. As a repository for the largest collection of oral histories of Japanese American World War II veterans, the Center is also a dynamic place for academic research communities. Playing a role in collaborative

partnerships, the Center develops lesson plans and web-based learning projects with educational institutions. Most recently, the Center has collaborated with the State Department of Education of Hawaii on a new high school curriculum which examines the Hawaiian veterans' perspectives and the effects World War II had on the sociopolitical landscape. *Defining Courage*, the Center's permanent exhibition shares the lives of young soldiers during the war and explores the universal concept of courage in the face of great adversity. The Center's exhibition and memorial monument provide visitors with the invaluable lessons of history and serve as a symbolic remembrance to the veterans' honor and sacrifice while they braved the struggles of racism.

In 2014, the organization moved into an historic Buddhist temple building. This location emerged as an ideal backdrop in which the Center could engage with their stakeholders and visitors by connecting the past to the present. This historical building was built by Japanese immigrants in 1925 and was the first Buddhist temple in Los Angeles called Nishi Hongwanji. This site would serve as the assembly point in 1942 for Japanese Americans being interned in camps during World War II.

As the Center pursues its educational mission, their programming is pushing the definition of memory-making and advocating the first-person voice. As the organization's mission expands, their educational content continues to reflect connections between history and current social, political and community conditions. To adapt to a changing future, the organization is on a constant continuum to re-invent and implement their delivery methods in order to meet their stakeholders needs.

Organizational Structure

The Center has nine employees who provide support in the areas of administration, strategic planning, fundraising, content and community development, and public programming. As a smaller nonprofit organization, the Center understands the limitations their size has on organizational capacity.

To manage this challenge and undertake the organization's goals, the staff can be characterized as having a passion for the Center's mission and an altruistic motivation for success. Employees possess specific skills and knowledge related to their specialized position and are characterized with leadership potential.

The Center currently has a social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and manages its own organizational website. There are bi-directional channel links from each of the platforms to the website. The Center has a public relations manager who focuses on the overall communications of the organization, with specific concentration on the planning and implementation of the Center's social media efforts. It maintains a commerce section on its website for the organization's branded merchandise.

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

The unprecedented crisis of the 2020 pandemic forced the Go For Broke National Education Center to close its onsite operations and pivot all educational content from solely in-person experiences to delivering content on online platforms. Responding to this challenge was vital as in the absence of in-person activities, the organization had to adapt and adjust or it would not be able to continue to fulfill its mission. The accelerated change resulting from the global crisis pushed the Center to quickly expand their social media content in order to maintain connections with their audience. My initial communication with the staff revealed the new digital programming emerged not from a defined strategic plan, but rather from a combination of environmental necessity, the opportunity to experiment with new technology, and the evolving landscape of social media. The accelerated planning and production timeline left the organization without opportunities to assess the process or outcomes of this new communication initiative as it was occurring in real time.

As part of the Center's strategy to expand digital communication, the organization has launched a three-part digital series: *Heroes Among Us*, *Stories Around the Table*, and *Living the Nisei Dream*. The organization's goal for this social media initiative is to pivot programs away from an in-person exhibit-oriented mode to social media platforms.

My quality improvement project will examine the mechanisms and characteristics of the Go For Broke National Education Center's current social media activities, the opportunities and responses these activities are prompting, and finally how the organization is using these opportunities to make connections with their stakeholders. Despite the organization's emphasis on social media platforms, there continues to be strategic uncertainties about the connection between the Center's engagement

and tangible organizational outcomes. Understanding the response of the Center's stakeholders directly contributes to the organization's knowledge base that influences their strategic goals of increasing stakeholder engagement and effectively delivering key organizational messaging and mission driven content. The Center seeks to better understand how the use of social media has on their stakeholders with the aim of discerning whether these social media efforts are generating organizational value.

One of the problems the Center faced due to the accelerated pace at which the organization needed to adjust to online platforms was their lack of a clear strategy on using social media. This may be a common problem as Gao et al. found that nonprofit organizations often don't utilize an inclusive and integrated approach to social media, and therefore are not using these communication platforms to maximum potential (Gao, 2016; Manetti et al, 2017). In addition, the majority of nonprofit organizations are not documenting their digital communication goals (Shattuck, 2017). According to Shattuck, 58 percent of nonprofit organizations are not documenting their social media strategies and 67 percent are not documenting their goals (Shattuck, 2017). It's critical for nonprofits to develop social media best practices as it has become one of the most widespread technologies to impact nonprofit organizations today (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Informal learning centers are using these platforms for two distinct purposes: "information sharing and dialogic relationship-building" (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012, p. 339). Social media provides a mechanism for users to seek new information and connect with others who have mutual interests. It has become a powerful mode of communication which allows users to interact and engage with one another synchronously and asynchronously in ways that are not temporal or geographically specific.

My capstone project will support the Center in developing social media communication strategies that strengthen their online presence, enhance relationships with their existing stakeholders,

and expand content to a new audience base without the influence of in-person experiences. By understanding how to best utilize social media platforms and identify effective tools, I will make best practices recommendations to the Center about how to engage audiences and provide strategies that leverage the different social media platforms. In this way the Center will be well equipped to move forward with a clear implementation strategy.

The structure of my capstone paper is as follows: First, the literature review presents research from an informal learning perspective, the role of social media, and the influence of the audience on an organization's implementation strategies. Second, I provide the methodology I used to collect data for this study, data analysis, and findings. Lastly, this study provides recommendations for the Center to implement to better improve their social media strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

During the initial phase of conducting research for my capstone project, I interviewed the Center's leadership staff. Through this open dialogue I identified three primary areas of focus for my literature review: 1) informal learning; 2) the stakeholder; and 3) marketing and communication strategies. These were the three most vital and influential points that guided the Center's creation of social media content. My literature review defines the concept of informal learning and explores how a nonprofit's front-facing activities are shaped by the organization's fundamental structure. I also review research on how the connections formed on social media platforms facilitates and enhances the relationship between organizations and their stakeholders.

The Theory of Informal Learning

In its broadest sense, informal learning can be defined as learning that is beyond the classroom and that can be a lifelong process. According to Callahan, Kiker, & Cross (2003), informal learning is the opportunity for non-instructional learning through a socially collaborative or meaningful activity that is motivated by the learner and without external evaluation. The concept of informal learning assumes that the learner is self-directed to "acquire and accumulate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights" in their everyday environment (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974).

Informal learning organizations are seen as centers of knowledge with mission-based objectives to serve their constituencies with educational experiences. These organizations are characterized by voluntary activities that take place outside a formal setting where learning is unstructured, experiential and noninstitutional (Dudzinska-Przesmitski & Grenier, 2008; Marsick & Volpe, 1999). Organizations

such as museums, archives, libraries, and other historical and cultural information resources are the cornerstones of local and regional communities across the globe.

The Role of Social Media in Informal Learning Environments

Historically, informal learning organizations have primarily communicated with stakeholders through in-person activities and printed materials. However, as the technological landscape has grown, informal learning organizations have increasingly turned to social media platforms to expand their base, increase accessibility of communication, and encourage stakeholder action (Lim et al., 2019). One primary benefit of utilizing social media is that it grants the organization the ability to reach beyond time and physical distance to connect with new audiences.

Social media platforms are ideal tools for informal learning centers because they exhibit characteristics that align with the “five dimensions of informal learning: 1) nondidactic; 2) highly socially collaborative; 3) embedded in meaningful activity; 4) initiated by learner’s interest or choice; and 5) removed from external assessment” (Callahan, et al. p. 646). Enabling organizations to build relationships and develop networks, social media platforms play a key role in demonstrating a nonprofit’s relevance and visibility (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). If utilized effectively, informal learning centers can expand the scope of social media platforms from simple communication tools, to tools of learning, engagement, collaboration, and dialogue. For example, an organization’s Facebook page might serve two purposes: to deliver exhibition content and to strengthen audience interaction through dialogic communication (Bertacchini & Morando, 2013).

The Stakeholder

A stakeholder can be described as a person involved in a relationship with an organization, either internal or external that can affect the organization or be affected by the organization's actions, policies, practices or decisions (Maxwell & Carboni, 2014; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2009). The actions of an informal learning organization toward its stakeholders can be viewed through the lens of relationship management theory. This

theory can be described as the management and maintenance of relationships that are centered around mutual interests and shared goals (Ledingham, 2003). The

“

...organizations, of all sizes and operating in different sectors and societies, must find ways to successfully establish and nurture relationships with their stakeholders, upon which they are economically and socially dependent”

(Cornelissen, 2008, p. 12)

objective is to create loyalty, mutually profitable and long-term relationships (Ravald & Gronoos, 1996).

As “audience-driven learning environments,” the stakeholders' experience serves as a primary influence for how organizations create their informal learning center spaces and activities (Russell, Knutson, and Crowley, 2013). Rather than adhering to past methods of presenting one authoritative narrative, informal learning organizations are shifting the ways in which they present information to the public by moving from a one-way didactic exchange into an active two-way flow of engagement. Organizations are recognizing this transformation in paradigm and modifying their communication approaches to focus on interaction and engagement.

However as Hein and Alexander (1998) found, it still remains a challenge for organizations to transfer the “lively, vivid and interesting” in-person experience into a significant and meaningful online experience that promotes learning in a digital landscape. It is at this crossroads that many informal learning organizations find themselves and why it is necessary to continually evaluate and assess their

social media strategies for effectiveness. Understanding who your stakeholders are is essential in tailoring your social media activities to fit their specific needs. Thus establishing direct digital pathways of communication between informal learning centers and their stakeholders is a vital endeavor in ultimately marketing the organization.

Social Media Marketing to Stakeholders

Marketing for the informal learning organization involves selling their vision and mission to their stakeholders or cultivating relationships with the hopes of a financial contribution, contribution of time, or other benefit to the organization's operations. According to the American Marketing Association (2017), marketing is the "activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large for the satisfaction of the customer and serving society's needs." Kanter & Fine (2010) describe marketing in the nonprofit sector as a type of pyramid of engagement requiring assessment, strategy, and analysis (Figure 1). For example, an organization would examine its relationship with supporters or audience, develop strategies to motivate supporters to become involved and lastly measure this involvement. The goal for the informal learning center is to motivate and engage with the casual social media viewer who is simply aware of the organization and transform them into a stakeholder who is emotionally invested in the future of the organization. The overall objective is to reach actionable behavioral outcomes such as support with time or finances. The organization must be able to communicate with people before they are able to engage with them. In the context of this project, organizational reach can be defined as connecting with new and broader audience bases. Whereas the term engagement can be described as strengthening an existing relationship with their stakeholder.

With a growing number of nonprofit organizations, the competition for resources and stakeholder attention is increasing. Establishing a unique social media identity is crucial for an organization in positioning itself for future success. The use of social media platforms is a way for organizations to communicate quickly and generate revenue, but research also demonstrates a greater potential to also shape lives and create new ideas of community (Blanchard, 2011).

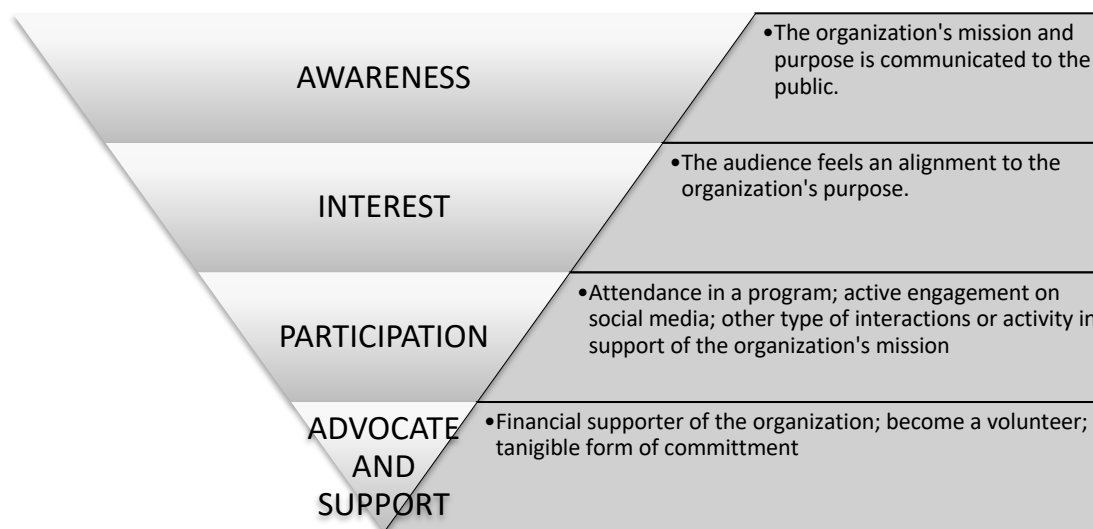


Figure 1: Stakeholder engagement adapted from Kanter & Fine(2010).

Engaging Stakeholder Dialogue

As an organization establishes a social media presence to distribute information and build and strengthen relationships with stakeholders, dialogic communication theory emerges in support of the collaborative characteristics of these platforms (Kim, Chun, Kwak, & Nam, 2014). Dialogic communication encourages response and feedback and supports the cultivation of relationships between the organization and its stakeholders (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Social media has “opened up new possibilities for organizations to connect with their stakeholders by allowing them to receive real-time feedback...and engage in conversations" (Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012, p. 313). Depending on

which social media platform is being utilized, this two-way dynamic can occur in a variety of ways. Comments, likes, shares, and direct messages are some of the most common forms of social media dialogue that allow stakeholders to share their reactions, feedback, and thoughts in response to an organization's posted content.

Kent and Taylor (2002) define dialogue as having five distinct features including: “*mutuality*, or the recognition of organization–public relationships; *propinquity*, or the temporality and spontaneity of interactions with publics; *empathy*, or the supportiveness and confirmation of public goals and interests; *risk*, or the willingness to interact with individuals and publics on their own terms; and finally, *commitment*, or the extent to which an organization gives itself over to dialogue, interpretation, and understanding in its interactions with publics” (p.24-25).

One vital outcome of dialogic communication discovered by Jiang, Luo and Kulemaka (2015) was that two-way engagement helped users to manage their emotions during a time of crisis by building a foundation of trust. It is not surprising that emotional appeals garner greater response and reaction from consumers as for-profit companies have utilized this marketing strategy for decades. Nonprofit organizations have also benefited from creating emotionally-driven appeals as according to Lwin and Phau (2013), they generate a more positive attitude than mere informational appeals alone. Furthermore, stakeholders not only retain information better when they emotionally react to a message, but they also are more likely to recommend donations to the publicized cause (Bebko, et al 2014).

According to the Nonprofit Marketing Guide (2020), Facebook has emerged as the most popular platform for nonprofit organizations. In 2012, Facebook was the first social network to surpass one billion active users. Active users can be defined as those users who have logged into the website during the previous 30 days. Today Facebook is the largest social media network in the world with approximately 2.91 billion active users as reported during the third quarter of 2021. Statistics indicate in

2019 there were nearly 3.5 billion people using social media (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Social media platforms can be categorized by their specific communication objective and level of user engagement as presented in Figure 2.

Type of Platforms	Characteristics	Examples
Messaging and communications	In this category one can find blogging services, video and photo blogging tools, podcasting, and micro-blogging	Telegram WordPress Twitter
Communities and social groups	it features essentially, all of the social, businesses, and special-interest networking services.	Facebook LinkedIn
Photo and video sharing	special services that allow users to upload pictures and videos to the internet, and to manage those images.	YouTube Instagram TikTok
Social bookmarking and tagging	these are services that allow users to identify online content with keywords, and share the links. The internet user gets the descriptions and some opinions, but not the actual content.	Pinterest Reddit
Collaboration and cooperation	a category of websites that allow users to add and update from their internet browsers.	Wikipedia
Opinion and reviews	services provide user-generated review of everything from books to restaurants	Yelp Tripadvisor

Figure 2. Summary from Walter & Lester, 2010

Defining Social Media Success

Social media platforms provide a wide range of proprietary metrics for organizations to utilize in assessing the effectiveness and success of their digital communication strategies. Analytics such as page visits, comments, and tags can provide a broad view of the organization's placement in the larger social media community. Measuring stakeholder interactions can be seen in the number of reactions to posted content such as likes or shares on Facebook and views on YouTube. For the stakeholder, the perception of the number of likes a post has can determine its popularity and assign value for the viewer. The number of likes or shares also can establish the level of trust the viewer has on the content and the organization.

While these platforms provide a wide range of metrics, it is essential for the organization to be able to interpret and utilize the data in meaningful ways specific to their needs. The abundance of analytical data that social media platforms provide does not always reflect if the organization is communicating with the right audience, nor does it assign meaning to the audiences' behavior (Boyd and Crawford, 2012). The analytical data is not always useful for the organization if these metrics are not connected to a clear objective or organizational goal.

Leaders in social media understand the need for change in order to “pursue integrated social media strategies, with a more holistic assessment of the value that social media can create across the businesses, and with efforts directly tied to strategic business objectives” (Barry, Markey, Almquist, & Brahm, 2011, p. 3). In my capstone project I analyzed the metrics from the Center's social media accounts so that I could interpret the data in meaningful ways and provide solutions for real-world application that could better improve the Center's social media strategies.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I conducted interviews with the Center's leadership staff and utilized the information and data I gathered to form the conceptual framework for my capstone. Through this dialogue I analyzed the organization's specific needs in regards to adapting their educational content to social media platforms. I identified three areas of focus for my research that would help to inform the conceptual framework for my capstone as well as my data analysis: 1) informal learning; 2) the stakeholder; and 3) marketing and communication strategies. From these early interviews with the Center, I developed a conceptual framework to illustrate the relationship between the organization (purpose), external drivers (the stakeholder), and strategic processes (communication and marketing) that are necessary for the Center to produce social media content that is in alignment with the organization's mission and vision (Figure 3).

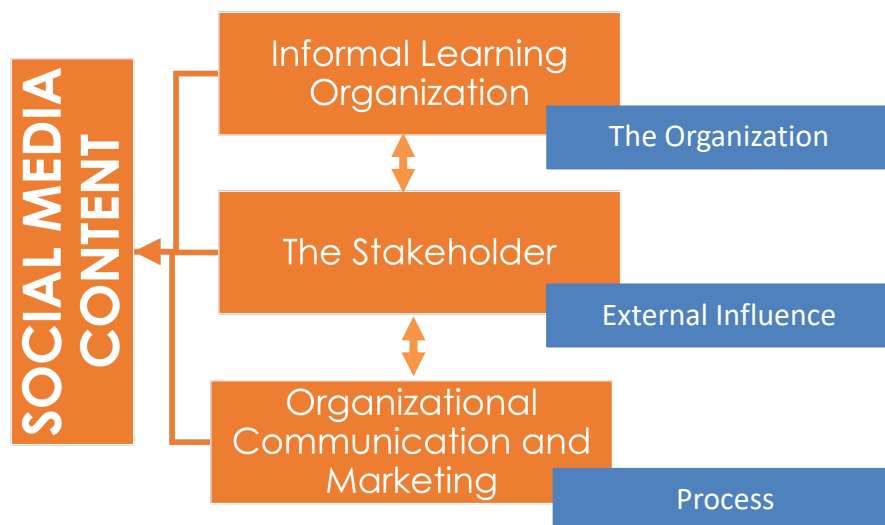


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework

To understand how the Center uses social media to engage and communicate with their stakeholders, further details were necessary to understand the published content. The study by Lotina and Lepik (2015) explores methods museums used to encourage engagement with stakeholders on social media. I adapted this study to create a coding rubric to analyze the social media content produced by the Center.

Informal learning is well-adapted to digital communication platforms, encouraging stakeholder participation and acknowledging audiences as co-producers of the educational content. Through questions, discussions, interactions, and a variety of modalities such as audio and visual imagery, organizations are able to provide stakeholders with enhanced opportunities for collaboration. The organization's operations and activities depend on how they can best engage with their communities and other stakeholders. Effective communication is essential for these organizations to build long-lasting relationships that further their organizational missions (Cornelissen, 2004).

Communication is a fundamental channel in which nonprofit organizations can engage with their stakeholders in order to increase support of the organization, cultivate and retain new donors, and build and promote their organizational brand within the community. The Center is hoping to create marketing opportunities using multiple communication platforms that provide mission-based educational material to their stakeholders. The audience is the core-driver in the Center's decision of producing its educational content. The stakeholder influences the framing of the informal learning organization because it is responsible for supporting the mission of the organization and extending the organization's reach. The literature illuminates the importance of effective organizational communication in creating a lasting relationship with stakeholders with an emphasis on the significance of building and maintaining engagement with stakeholders (Maxwell & Carboni, 2016; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

There is a defined connection between communication and marketing activities and the mission of the informal learning center. Achieving marketing objectives involves strategic planning without compromising the organization's mission and delivers their programs to as many people as possible (Kotler and Kotler, 2008). These digital communication platforms allow the informal learning center to create higher visibility for its mission, cultural values, and events by reaching a greater audience. Being able to create and communicate a participatory organizational culture with their audience that fosters reciprocal interaction is a key objective to the organization's marketing strategy. Additionally, this communication modality can create greater organizational awareness and work to foster community and increase financial support.

As Weil (1999) described of an informal learning center, "museums almost everywhere have, in essence, shifted from a 'selling' mode to a 'marketing' one...in the marketing mode, their starting point instead is the public's own needs and interests, and their efforts are concentrated on first trying to discover and then attempting to satisfy those public needs and interests" (p232-233). This idea of engagement and the sharing of experiences is an ideal environment for an organization's digital communication approach. According to Kidd (2011), "the use-value of social media for the museum is perhaps most easily (and least imaginatively) understood through the frame of marketing activity" (p.67).

As the focus for these learning centers prioritize engagement with their audiences, organizations are increasing the development of participatory programming and events. Nonprofit organizations are recognizing how the traditional strategies on print media have been extended and are now incorporating digital media (Livingstone, 2002). As described by Russo, Watkins, and Groundwater-Smith's *The impact of social media on informal learning in museums* (2009) "social media can enable informal ways of drawing together this knowledge by providing tools for participatory engagement which have the potential to distribute new forms of learning" (p. 161). In her blog post *Five Benefits*

Nonprofit Organizations Gain from Social Media Marketing, Lake describes that digital media allows for direct contact between followers and organizations. Nonprofits can increase their influence through their followers. Video platforms such as YouTube have the ability to exponentially leverage the organization and provide a platform to engage with their audience (Lake, 2019).

Existing research emphasizes the significance of digital communication on the organization's ability to reach their audiences. In *Information Community, and Action: How Nonprofit Organizations Use Social Media*, Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) found digital media platforms are used in three primary ways: sharing information, creating community, and urging action. Nonprofits share common ways in how they are utilizing each digital communication platform. For example, organizations most frequently use Facebook to describe their organization and to link or direct traffic to the organization's website (Waters, Burnett, Lamm & Lucas, 2009). However, this study also reported that only 43% of nonprofit organizations shared information about their mission statement and only 22% discussed any historical information. This data suggests that although organizations may have a presence on social media platforms, they are not fully utilizing their power or potential in communicating or engaging with their audience.

Informal learning organizations are augmenting traditional marketing and communication strategies on digital communication platforms to produce resources and deliver rich content rooted in their missions. According to Simon (2010), interaction and social participation in informal learning environments are centered on the idea that 1) an individual views content; 2) the individual interacts with that content; 3) their interactions are part of a network or collective; and 4) the individuals engage socially with one another.

PROJECT QUESTIONS

The aim of my capstone is to examine how the Go For Broke National Education Center is using social media platforms to communicate with their stakeholders, with a specific focus on the mechanism of engagement, intentional opportunities for engagement, and the results of these efforts.

The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: What social media platforms are the Go For Broke National Education Center using?

A) What are the characteristics of the published content?

RQ2: How is the organization's social media content providing opportunities for engagement with their stakeholders?

A) How are audiences responding to the organization's social media content?

RQ3: Does social media provide the organization with a mechanism to connect with others?

PROJECT DESIGN

Data Collection

For my quality improvement capstone project, I examined two sets of data. The first were 468 YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook social media posts published by the Go For Broke National Education Center. The data consisted of the Center's social media entries across these platforms between December 1, 2019 and September 30, 2021. I chose this time period in order to capture baseline data from the Center's pre-pandemic social media activity through the present time in order to analyze any changes in the organization and/or stakeholder behavior. I collected social media metrics using ExportComments and FanPageKarma to isolate information on each of the Center's posts. I then used these data-gathering tools to download the text from social media posts and metrics on the interactions/reactions of each post.

Secondly, I interviewed six current organizational leadership and project staff to better understand how the organization is using social media and to identify the value in these communication efforts. The semi-structured interviews helped to triangulate the scholarly literature with Center-specific contextual information, strategic processes, and perceived value. I focused my interview questions on social media function, strategies, and perceived opportunities as shown in my interview protocol in Appendix A. The frequency and elements that made up social media posts were examined and analyzed for content characteristics, media usages, intent, media type, and opportunities for engagement. The interviews took place between July 2021 and September 2021.

The six semi-structured open interviews with The Center's board leadership and project staff lasted approximately 1.25 hours per interview. The participants were selected because of their direct role in the digital communications initiative and would have unique opinions, rationale, motivations, and other insights into the organization's communication strategies and actions. The participants were interviewed over Zoom and the interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otterai for analysis by hand. The interviews were designed to decipher a better understanding of why the Center is using social media, how they are using the different platforms, why decisions were made, and to examine the organization's social media choices. The interview protocol included questions designed to understand the impact of the current environmental landscape, as well as the challenges of major events and outcomes. Appendix B provides a complete list of the interviews.

Data Analysis

The six in-depth interviews I conducted provided answers to my three research questions and were focused on determining individual and collective motivations, approaches, and alignment of the Center's social media use with their mission-driven objectives. I utilized thematic analysis to code the semi-structured interviews. Through this process distinct themes materialized from the collected data. What emerged can best be described as a "story" in which connections and themes were created from the stakeholders' statements. As Hollweck & Yin (2014) claim, empirical findings can be produced from examining, categorizing, and tabulating evidence.

According to Cho and Lee (2014), qualitative research demands a systematic coding process. I aligned my data analyzation process with Patton's (2015) philosophy that researchers dealing in qualitative data must employ their own deductive skills in deciphering themes and patterns. When reviewing my field notes and interview transcripts, I placed special emphasis on recording fundamental

issues and patterns and noted there were two primary areas that could be distinguished, organizational opportunities and challenges.

Organizational Opportunities

- Reaching younger audiences, wider range not traditional supporters
Relatively low-cost tool
- Uses existing resources, ability to promote organization through archival content
- Have become prominent authoritative voice on the subject matter
- Ability to share information to wider audiences, not traditional supporters
- Relatively low-cost tool

Organizational Challenges

- Gap in reaching existing support base
- Organizational capacity challenges

To understand how stakeholders responded to the Center's digital initiatives, I downloaded and evaluated the content of the social media posts within the timeframe of my study (December 1, 2019 through September 30, 2021). This included comments, likes, shares, and view counts, which I sorted by engagement number. I then took the 10 posts with the highest level of interaction across Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube and conducted a more in-depth content analysis. I used my conceptual framework as a basis for coding the content of the social media posts. I discovered that I needed a greater level of detail and decided to adapt Lotina and Lepik's (2015) mode of engagement rubric to create a coding rubric for the Center's social media platforms (Figure 4). For example, for the stakeholder posts, the subcategories are connection with stakeholders and constituents, and connecting with community. If a social media post had multiple subcategories, I determined the code by the content's primary intent. This provided me with the structural capability to include further subcategories to my conceptual framework.

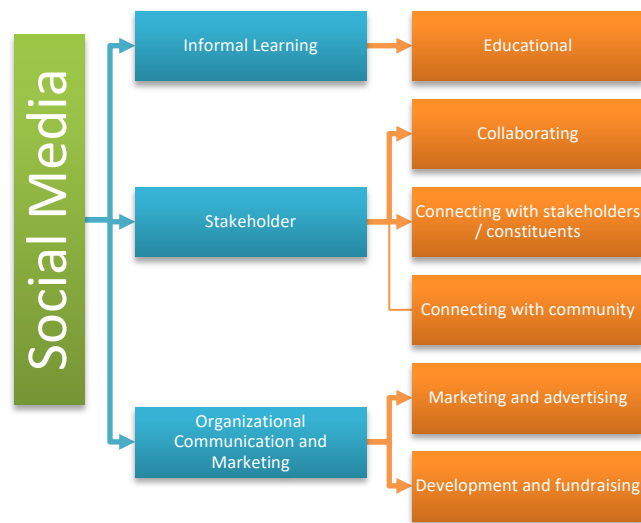


Figure 4: Coding scheme from conceptual framework and Lotina and Lepik (2015).

I closely examined the specific data dimensions of each social media post according to its purpose and intent, as well as the assets used, such as videos or photographs. Another important point I was able to look at was whether a particular post was made with the aim of fundraising. In conducting this evaluation my objective was to determine if stakeholder attention, response, and engagement had been achieved. Appendix C shows the Center’s ten most engaged posts across the three social media platforms.

I adapted and applied the coding research from Lotina and Lepik’s (2015) study to create a coding rubric specific to the Center’s social media activities (Figure 5). This resulted in the following coding scheme presented in Table 1. It is based on two areas: 1) a list of audience modes that include online museum activities, and 2) an “adaptation of the model of sign functions” (p.124). The coding scheme classifies social media post elements (texts, photos, video), as well as the content of the message using a “semiotic approach” to understanding the modes of engagement. While the scheme I developed was used to analyze Facebook content, it also had broader applicability to other social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube.

INFORMAL LEARNING		ORGANIZATIONAL MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS		STAKEHOLDERS		
				Collaborating	Connecting with stakeholders and constituents	Connecting with community
Educational		Marketing and Advertising	Development and Fundraising			
Content	Educational; informative descriptions of the objects/activities; informative descriptions of the contexts; interesting facts and stories; highlights from the collection	Promotional information about the organization and events; playful activities; notifications about appearances in media; news board for functional information; retail promotion	Direct solicitation for financial support	Invitation to participate in research; volunteers' work invitation and reflections; gratitude for donations; collaboration possibilities	Informing about stakeholder media appearances; behind the scenes of the organization; sharing memories and other emotional content; informing about cooperation activities; greetings and gratitude to stakeholders	Information related to scientific and/or professional matters and other professional events outside the museum; job or stakeholder announcement; professional achievements; planned purchases
Code	Stories, pictures, recipes and other learning/ educative material; reflections to create atmosphere	Promotional information; functional information; provoking interest and emotion; invitation; educational promotional information; repetitive promotional messages; mediatized advertising and public relationships	Specific fundraising campaigns; special events with fundraising goals	Invitation to collaborate – donate, volunteer, etc.; encouragement of ongoing processes; examples and gratitude for recent collaboration	Shared memories and reflection; greetings and gratitude; acknowledgement of partners; representation of museum as part of network; representing museum as developing organization	Functional information; provoking professional interest and specifically discussing the museum's activities; reminder
Context	Traditions related to seasons, festivals; topicalities in the field; interesting object from the collection	Traditional festivals; museum topicalities; upcoming events; interesting objects from the collection	Direct messaging about membership; donations;	Supporting research; work with volunteers and donors	Events at partner organization	New colleagues are needed; a professional event outside the museum

Table 1: Adaptation of engagement modes rubric derived from (Lotina & Lepik, 2015)

I reviewed each of the Center's top 10 social media posts across Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram using the engagement mode rubric. I incorporated the information for the 10 posts across platforms into an Excel document so that each of the individual parts of the rubric could be looked at in terms of platform, content, context, and post architecture. Examples of coding for Facebook and YouTube are shown in Figure 5.

Facebook	Description	Notes	Literature
Post analytic summary Post elements Content Code Context	Date: November 11, 2020 Comments: 18 Reactions: 456 Shares: 116		
	Text Images	No use of hashtags	
	Informing and educational	Includes statistics on Japanese American veterans	Informal learning
	Connecting with stakeholders	Emotional response Paying tribute Gratitude	Stakeholder Emotional
	Marketing and advertising	Images serve for organization promotion Images of The Center's memorial site bring viewer back to the organization mission	Brand identity
		Use of statistics create story narrative to elicit emotional response	
		Posted on Memorial Day to commemorate veteran service; national holiday	

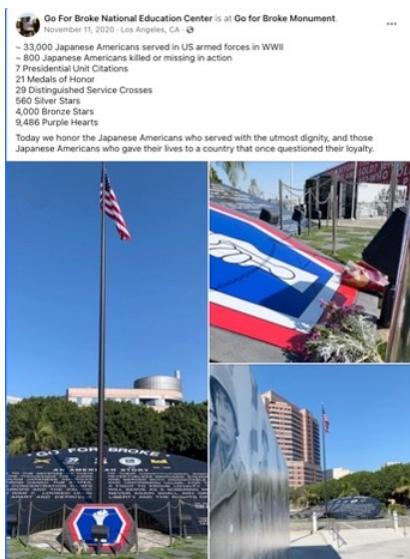


Figure 5: Coding example for Facebook post, November 11, 2020.

FINDINGS

I analyzed the Go For Broke National Education Center's use of social media and looked specifically at the mechanisms and content, stakeholder engagement, and their ability to connect with the user. This section presents the findings of my data analysis.

Research Question 1

What digital platforms are the Go For Broke National Education Center using? What content is covered and what are their characteristics?

Social Media Platform Use

The Center maintains active social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Their Twitter account remains open, but the organization has not posted since July 2020. An analytical report generated the Center using Sprout Social indicates that there are user age tendencies across platforms with 28% of the Center's Instagram followers between the ages of 25-34, and 24% between the ages of 35-44.

Platform	Date Created	Number of Subscribers	Number of Posts (n)
Facebook	November 3, 2008	7,267	226
Instagram	October 10, 2016	2,892	186
YouTube	October 15, 2015	1,100	88

Table 2: Summary of The Center's social media platforms during research period

The primary engagement users had with the Center was to react to the organization's posts. The least common engagement across all three platforms were comments responding to the Center's posts,

shown in Table 3. The median views on YouTube reflected a higher level of user engagement. Although the Center posted more content with greater frequency on Instagram and Facebook, they received a higher engagement rate on YouTube. During the period of analysis, descriptive inquiry shows that on average the Center posted 8.5 times per month on Instagram, 10.27 times per month on Facebook, and 4 times per month on YouTube.

Engagement: Instagram			Range	Median	Engagement: YouTube		
Engagement (like)			0-1,411	171	Views	0-18,993	330
Comments			0-137	3	Comments	0-137	38
Original posts with hash-tagging			0-33		Engagement with the post (like)	0-668	122
Engagement: Facebook			Range	Median			
Engagement (likes, love, anger, sad, wow)			0-456	103			
Shares			0-122	11.5			
Comments			0-79	5			

Table 3: User engagement across platforms

The descriptive data revealed a rise in user engagement when the Center posted content that mirrored activities traditionally held in person, as shown in Figure 6. The peaks were in March, June, and November, which corresponded to the pandemic lockdown in Los Angeles, the Annual Monument Tribute, and the Evening of Aloha Gala respectively. My findings indicated that a rise in publishing frequency was met with a rise in engagement (likes) by users on Instagram, as shown in Figure 7.

The Center implemented an inclusive strategy of using social media platforms for informal learning, marketing, and communications purposes. The number of posts that occurred on Facebook was more than double than that on Instagram, and four times as many as YouTube during the month of June. During this month, the Center’s number of posts had increased significantly across all platforms, demonstrating that the organization was making vast improvements in their targeted communication strategies.

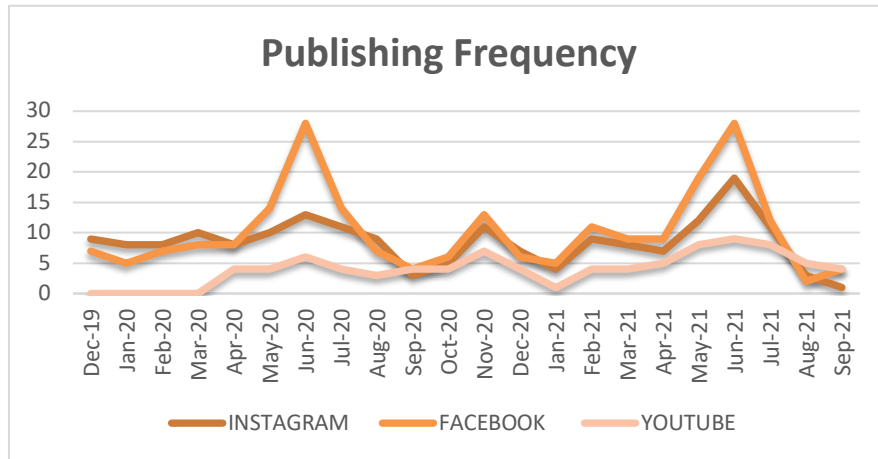


Figure 6: Social media publishing frequency

My analysis of Facebook and Instagram content indicated that the Center frequently used social media as a mechanism for fundraising. The serialized fundraising campaign “Honor a Veteran” appeared 49 separate times on the platforms. This tribute campaign was specifically created as a result of migrating in-person content to digital platforms. The campaign ads were promoted from May 2020 through August 2020. The Center’s Vice President of Communications stated: “making a tribute in honor of those who have performed really well for us...I see this now as a viable revenue stream for us with potential growth.” This was a component of the Center’s strategy for raising money prior to their annual gala event which was held virtually as a result of the pandemic closure.

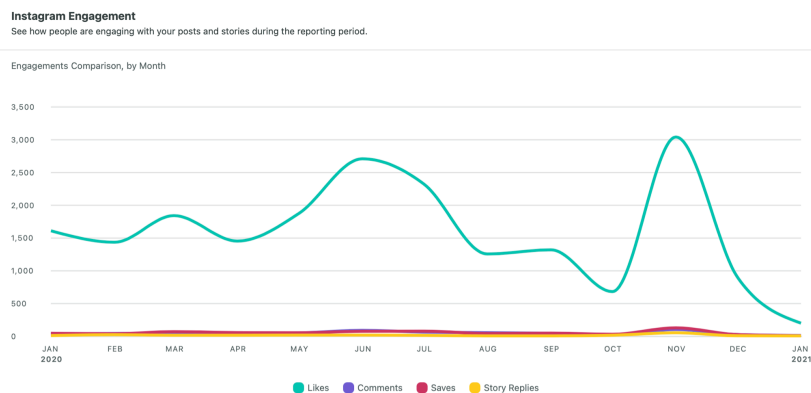


Figure 7: Instagram engagement

The two major fundraising events which typically generate the highest revenue for the Center are the Evening of Aloha and the Annual Monument Tribute. Despite the pandemic closure, the Center took the opportunity to continue holding these significant events virtually on Facebook Live and YouTube Live. Streaming live created opportunities for real-time engagement with viewers through the live chat on both platforms as they were able to communicate directly with the CEO as well as with each other. Rather than have 800 people sitting in a hotel ballroom, the Center had people logged in and watching from across the country. A scan of the live chat revealed viewers were not only from Southern California, but from as far away as Hawaii, Colorado, Illinois, Utah, Georgia, and New York. Additionally, because the video remains on YouTube it continues to generate views and is up to 1,800 views to date. Streaming live events such as these vital fundraising events provided the Center with invaluable opportunities to transform casual viewers into organizational stakeholders.

Organization-Generated Content

My data analysis of the Center's social media posts revealed that the most common-occurring function of the digital content was informal learning. This included educational material mostly derived from the Center's archival oral history and photo collections. The published posts often had multiple engagement modes such as marketing and communication. Informal learning posts represented 62% of the Center's social media content on YouTube. This conclusion was further confirmed by Lotina and Lepik (2015) who found that informal learning was the leading method that organizations employed to engage with their audiences. The posts with the second highest rate of engagement were about connecting with community at 27% of the total posts, as shown in Figure 8.

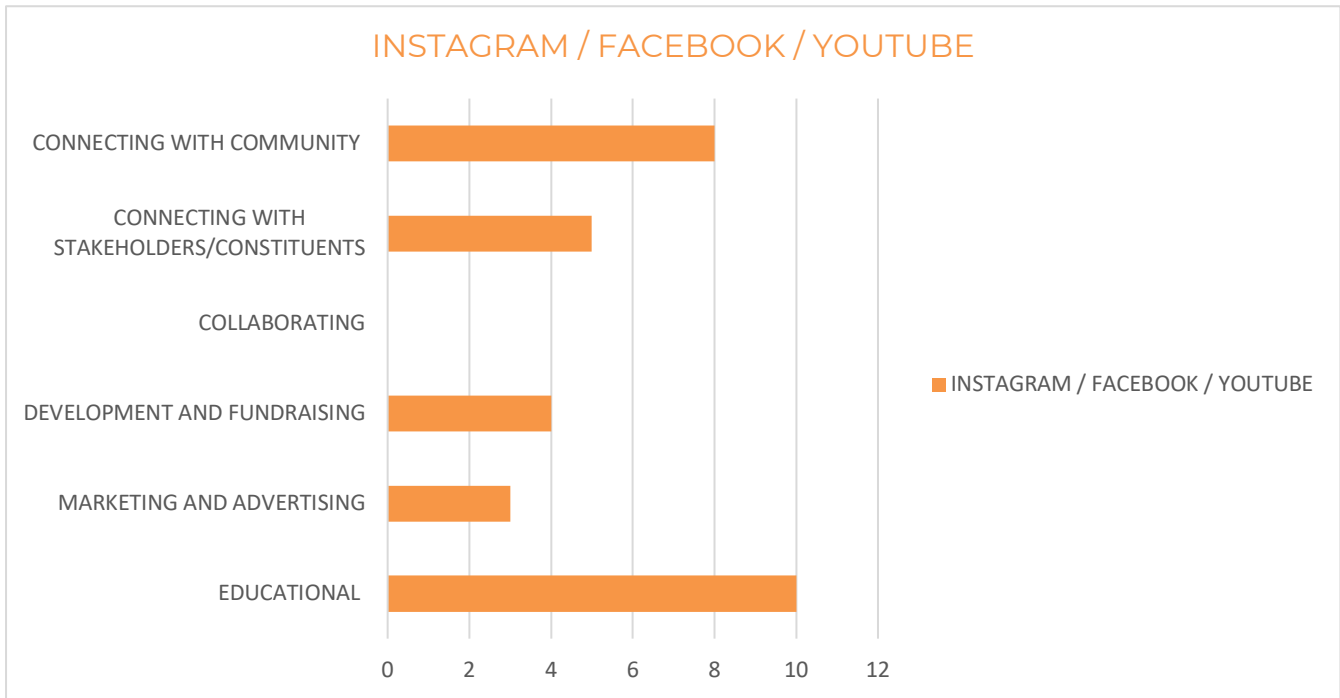


Figure 8: Top engagement across all platforms

Another finding my analysis revealed was that the characteristics of the published posts were not consistent across social media platforms, as shown in Figure 9. While in most cases the posts were made across all platforms, they were often tailored to the expectations and norms of each specific platform. In regards to marketing and communication, these areas comprised the second largest total social media posts. One major unexpected finding from my analysis was that the stakeholders' response had the least influential impact on the Center's content creation.

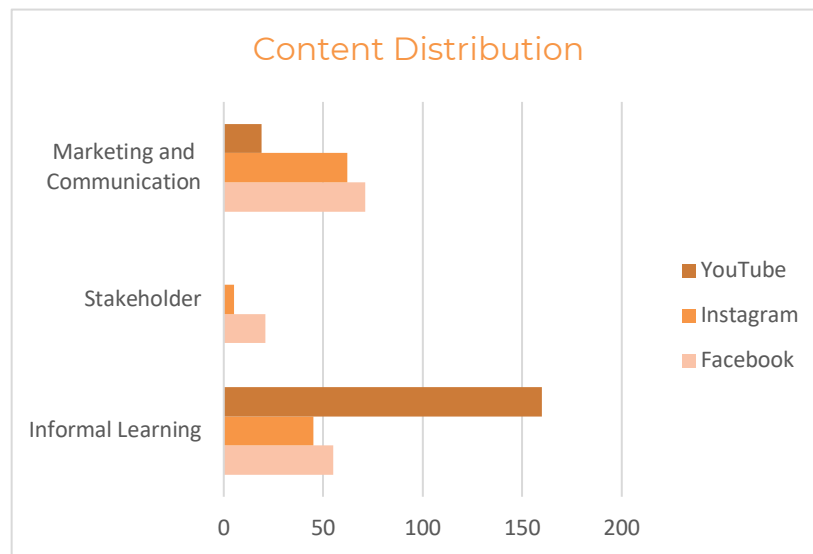


Figure 9: Social media content distribution

My content analysis of the Center’s social media activities indicated that their posts served the primary purpose of relaying information. This included providing stakeholders with organizational and website updates, links to educational resources, and other multifaceted content such as photos and videos. To reach their engagement goals, the Center utilized the different social media sites in conjunction with one another. This was accomplished by cross-posting information across all sites and providing external links to further content posted on another social media site. Despite having an increase in social media activity, it is important to note that the Center has not diverted its focus from traditional methods of direct-marketing and still relies on direct mailing appeals and personalized notes to current donors.

The Center’s active social media presence brought unexpected opportunities as they were able to thoughtfully and organically use their platform to address current social and political conditions not only affecting the local community, but with a broader national resonance. Maintaining relevance to current events, the Center launched a series of videos called “Heroes Among Us.” Through this content the Center was able to connect the story of Japanese Americans with the story of African American veterans, drawing connections and parallels to the struggles of discrimination that each group faced.

My findings suggest that there is definitive evidence that the creation of engaging video content provides new audiences with an easy entry point into learning more about the Center and its mission. By using YouTube to create and post videos with original content, the Center was able to share their organizational messaging to new audiences. Social media platforms serve as an effective tool for the Center's organizational identity and branding to a broader audience base.

Research Question 2

How is the organization using digital content to provide opportunities for engagement with their stakeholders?

How are audiences responding to the organization's social media content?

My research findings indicated that the Center's 186 Instagram posts received a total of 35,890 likes and 880 comments. The Center's YouTube channel received a total of 55,869 views on its 88 postings. The Center's Facebook page received 17,243 reactions, 2,749 shares, and 1,029 comments over the 226 total posts. While the Center's primary goal of social media was to disseminate information, a secondary outcome of using social media was to strengthen connections with existing stakeholders and their supporting communities. Language analysis showed the Center did not proactively post direct questions or language that prompted discussion or interaction with their online audience. Rather, content that called for action or interaction was primarily focused on solicitation for donations. A specific tool the Center used on Instagram was hashtags on posts to categorize a phrase or abbreviation such as #442nd or #gfbnec to help make keywords more searchable. Unfortunately, the use of hashtags did not result in higher levels of engagement.

Instead of dialogic engagement opportunities through direct language, my analysis uncovered the prolific use of another more complex method of engagement. The Center is using storytelling

techniques to communicate and sell the organization's mission and vision. By using this method, the organization is effectively transforming historical facts and figures



I want to tap into the emotional historical side of the story that people would really resonate with so they could find meaning in terms of their own family, history, or community background...So if we are trying to fundraise, these reminders of the deep, meaningful historical significance are enough to keep people engaged and to have the stories remain relatable.

Communications Manager

into personal stories that are an emotionally compelling way to communicate the organization's message. Through this technique, the Center's online audience can view these stories and feel emotionally connected to the organization. This emotional connection can activate the online viewer into an engaged stakeholder who is invested in the Center through time or money. By using storytelling as a method to communicate on social media, the Center can share and connect with their audience. It serves to convey the impact of the organization's work and is a way to elicit an emotional response and potential action from the viewer. The Center used storytelling elements across all social media platforms to cultivate supporter relationships, reinforce the organization's brand and mission, and as a fundraising tool.

YouTube allowed for the greatest opportunity for informal learning due to the engaging nature of the media. The platform facilitated the Center’s ability to convey new knowledge and tell stories through narrative and imagery. The videos produced for the Center’s digital initiative were a structured production including casting for a host, script writing, and edits. The videos were newly produced original content for the

Center. An interview with a board member revealed that while the organization’s oral history collection is invaluable, it is material that is not accessible to the everyday supporter.



...our supporters need to feel it in their heart, enough to want to support us.... It's about how this message is going to get through to a larger audience? The more emotional and more relatable the main subject is, the easier it is to create that story...

Videographer and Editorial Consultant

According to the Vice-President of Development and Communications, the new videos are a way to “take this source material and package it in a way that is new and exciting to the audience.”

Research Question 3

Does social media provide the organization with a mechanism to connect with others?

My last research question examined how the Center’s social media activities have acted as a mechanism with which to connect to others. This area of inquiry was of special interest to the Center as these opportunities for stakeholder engagement presented themselves in real time. One of the most significant findings from my analysis was that YouTube provided the greatest opportunity for informal learning due to the engaging nature of video media. This particular platform helped to facilitate the Center’s ability to convey knowledge to new audiences and tell important stories through a powerful narrative

combined with imagery. YouTube proved to be a powerful tool in connecting viewers to the Center’s work through shared values and beliefs between the organization and the online audience. Although the Center’s three-part digital initiative (*Heroes Among Us* video series) was an organizational priority, it resulted in only 3.23% of total Instagram posts, 7% of total Facebook posts, and 9% of YouTube content. In contrast, the fundraising serialized campaign “Honor a Vet” comprised 26.3% of Instagram content, 22% of Facebook posts, and 0% of YouTube content (Figure 10).

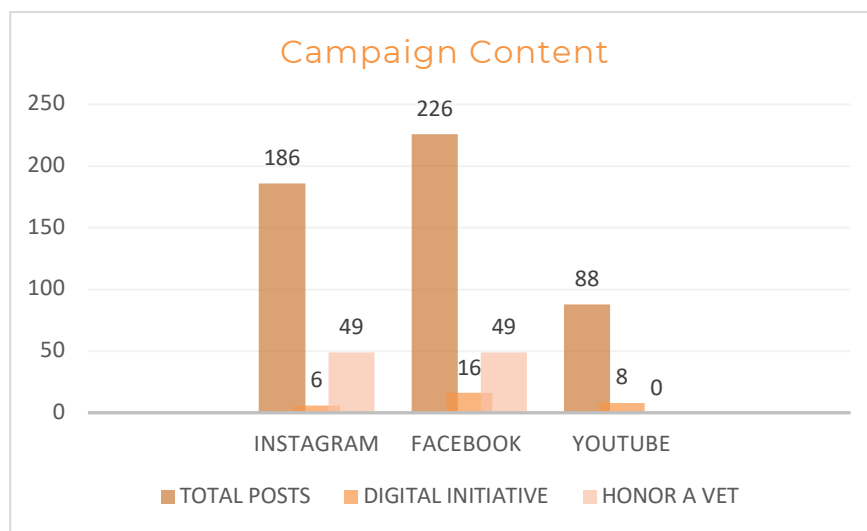


Figure 10: Platform campaign content

The characteristics of YouTube itself are conducive to storytelling and create an environment of learning and participation. The Center’s educational content has contributed to the participatory culture of the platform. Ultimately the Center’s YouTube presence has provided new audiences with a variety of opportunities to emotionally invest in these vital historical perspectives, thereby transforming casual audiences into organizational stakeholders.

An outcome that was particularly exciting for the Center was that one of their videos in the *Heroes Among Us* series went viral and was featured in the reaction videos of several social media influencers. Further analysis of the YouTube descriptive data revealed that new viewers of the viral video were

outside of the Center’s characteristic audience. Through content integration into other YouTube channels, the Center was able to create organizational awareness and garner greater exposure to significantly larger subscriber bases. This video had the highest rate of interaction on the Center’s channel and resulted in 120,000 views to date. This was a significant leap in engagement numbers as the Center’s videos typically receive between 250-800 views.

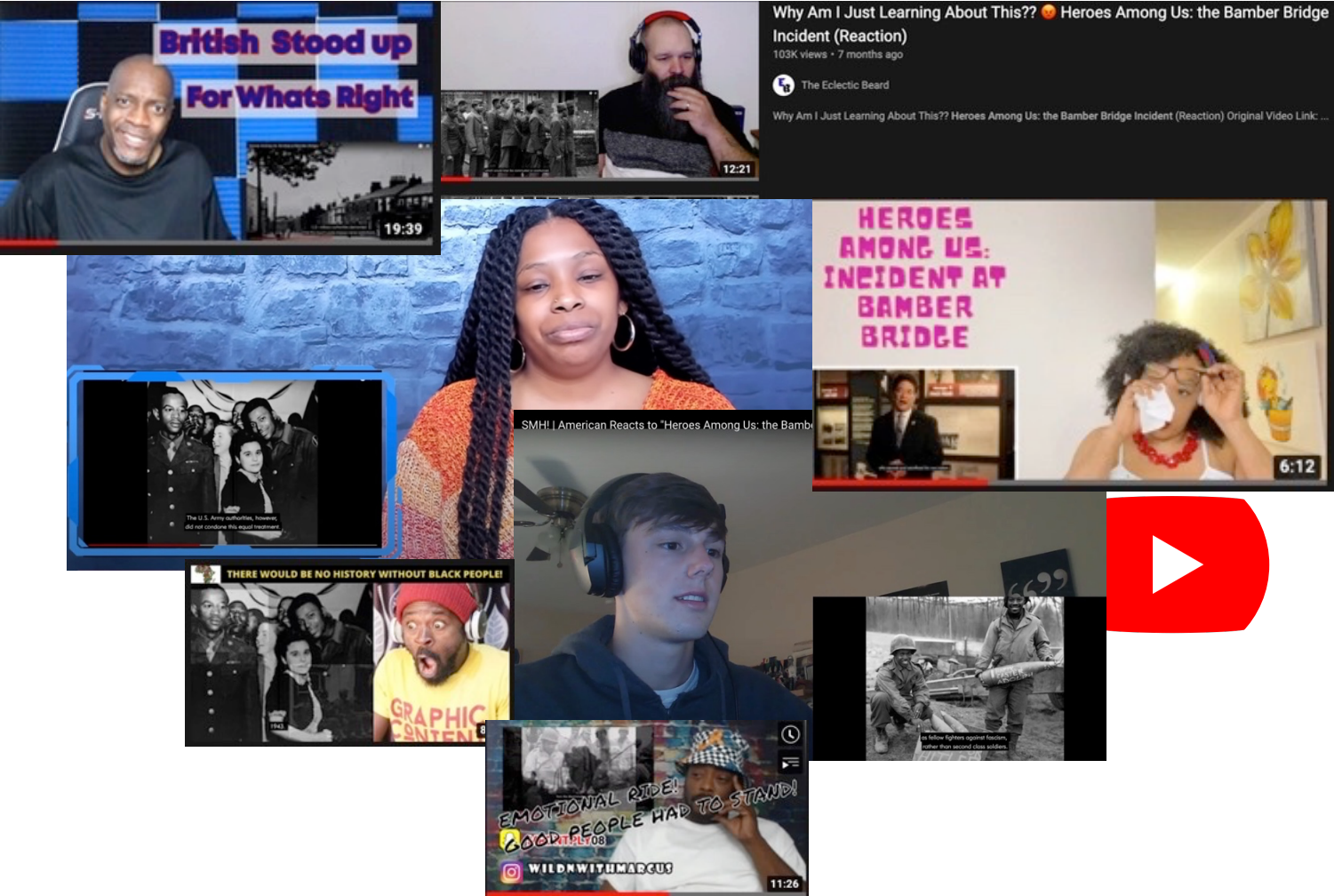


Figure 11: Screenshots of multiple YouTube channels of reaction videos.

By increasing their posting frequency across social media platforms, the Center was able to expand their reach as others outside of the organization's sphere of influence became aware of the Center's mission and current work. After seeing one of the Center's community connection posts on Instagram, an internationally known journalist contacted the organization. As a result of this connection the Center will be featured on an episode of a forthcoming HBO series on food and travel. By creating content and releasing it into the greater digital landscape of social media, the Center has been able to serve as an integral link in establishing connections in both online and real-world communities, as well as benefitting from those connections by expanding their exposure through new media projects. The Center's increased efforts to brand themselves has created social capital for the organization by elevating their public profile.

“

We filmed a video at Evergreen Cemetery, there are a lot of veterans buried there. The torchbearers every so often, we go and clean all of the graves.

Lisa Ling saw it on social media and asked us about the story...what Go For Broke's role is in saving and promoting the veterans' story. A lot of the torchbearers continue to share our own personal perspectives of what World War II meant to us and our families and how Go For Broke carries on this legacy.

The show itself is about how different cultures utilize food to tell their stories. We collaborated with the owner of East Los Musubi. She was inspired to create her restaurant because of her grandfather, who was in the 442nd. This was a great segue into 'Well, what is 442?'...it's a way of using food to tell this important story.

Board Member,
Go For Broke National Education Center

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Creation of a communications plan that integrates social media into the larger organizational strategy.

My first recommendation addresses integrating social media communication strategies into the organization's larger strategic plan as an indispensable element. This will guide the Center's long and short-term communication approaches and help to identify how social media can shift and transform new online audiences into organizational stakeholders. The aim is to first cultivate an awareness of the Center and then build a relationship with the audience that is vested in the future of the organization. My recommendation is for the Center to define their target audience according to the specific social media platform they are developing content for.

Another recommendation is for the Center's communication plans to include the purpose, goals, and projected outcomes for their social media actions. Analyzing proprietary metrics such as subscribers or followers, likes, and shares will aid in developing and evaluating social media outcomes and in determining whether objectives were met. These standards of measurement help the Center to gather information regarding the size of their audience and can also provide a gauge of how much engagement occurred on the platform. Ultimately this will help the Center to understand the behavioral patterns of their social media audience. By outlining the purpose and goals of their social media activities, the Center will be able to assign meaning to their data metrics. My recommendation is

beneficial to the Center in establishing a baseline for their communications objectives and assists the organization in tracking their growth and progress.

Recommendation 2

Create additional opportunities for dialogic communication by increasing publishing frequency and direct language.

It is essential for the Center to increase engagement opportunities and interactivity through the creation of new content with the stakeholder at the core as the key driver. While social media success depends on user-generated content, it is essential to establish two-way dialogue with the viewer. Social media behavior indicates that viewers tend to follow and engage with organizations that create valued and purposeful content that is posted frequently and regularly. My recommendation is for inclusion of direct and specific dialogic language that encourages response and reaction as a way to foster viewer participation across platforms.

My findings indicate that social media content allows for greater flexibility in the Center's organizational messaging to include relevant and related issues that may be outside of the Center's primary mission but are still vital to public dialogue. My recommendation for the Center is to continue to expand on including contemporary social justice issues into their content posts. Not only does this provide the organization with a way to sustain a relevant voice, but it has also proven to be an effective method in reaching a broader audience.

Recommendation 3:

Capitalize on content and continue to build their brand as a specialized informal learning organization. Amplify use of storytelling across platforms.

As a specialized learning organization, the Center is uniquely positioned as the voice of authority on the World War II experiences of Japanese American veterans. It is a scholarly place of learning, but also provides new audiences with an approachable point of entry. The use of first-person archival

resources in social media posts contributes to building the organization's brand and image as an authentic and truthful storytelling voice.

Through the Center's initial two-year social media communication initiative, the organization has utilized digital platforms to build their brand awareness. The content being developed should inform and educate new audiences about the Center's mission, purpose, and programs. My recommendation is for the Center to capitalize on the strength of their ability to present educational programming through engaging storytelling narrative. By expanding this identity, the Center continues to create social capital which can be leveraged to establish potential partnerships and collaborations.

CONCLUSION

This capstone examines how the Go For Broke National Education Center is using social media as an education and communication tool to engage with new and existing audiences. It analyzes the implementation of these activities and looks at how the organization is using social media platforms to engage with stakeholders. My research revealed that there is not one formulaic way for an informal learning organization to approach social media that will ensure success and impact. Each organization must examine a variety of factors when creating a strategic plan for their social media efforts. Factors such as audience demographics, specific platform being utilized, and objective goals, all must be taken into consideration. The landscape of social media is one that is in constant flux and requires repeated assessment and adjustment as the Center moves forward in building their social media identity and presence.

The Center's physical site is still closed to the public at the time of this study. The organization faces an unknown future as California state pandemic regulations are still being determined. Moving forward the organization must assess a number of factors in their operations such as organizational capacity and communication priorities. Creation of a model for hybrid learning will help the Center to continue to fulfill their mission amidst these difficult times. It is vital for the organization to remain flexible, adaptable, and receptive to emerging technologies. An integrated approach to connecting online audiences with previously traditional in-person experiences is necessary to sustain the organization.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Introduction and Consent

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today.

This interview is part of a capstone study that I am conducting in partial fulfilment for my graduate degree at Vanderbilt University.

The purpose of this study is to understand the influences of using digital platforms to improve communication strategies and to expand engagement with audiences in the informal learning center.

Through my research, I am hoping to answer these questions:

- a. How is the Go For Broke National Education Center using digital platforms to expand and engage with their audience base?
- b. To what extent are the organizations digital communication strategies reaching their intended goals?
- c. What data collection and analysis structures are in place that the organization can use to assess effectiveness?

Again, I appreciate the time you are taking to speak with me today.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may stop the interview at any time.

I will be recording audio of this interview, but I will be the sole person accessing the recordings.

2. Organizational Context

RQ1: How is the Go For Broke National Education Center using digital platforms to expand and engage with their audience base

What is your current role?

How do you currently see the organization? Long term / short term vision?

What is your involvement with the communications strategic planning?

What has been GFBNEC's primary marketing strategies to engage with its audiences?

What modalities or tools have you used or engaged in?

Who is your audience?

How do you see GFBNEC's relationship with their audiences?
Do you have general guidelines or procedures for posting on digital platforms?
What types of content are you posting? Why?

3. *RQ 2: To what extent are the organization's digital communication strategies reaching their intended goal?*

What value do you think digital communication can have on GFBNECs more traditional marketing or communication strategies?

Do you feel your efforts have been successful?

How does the leadership view the organization's communication strategies? New approaches?

Has digital communication increased GFBNECs potential to reach new audiences?

What does audience engagement mean? To digital communication and marketing for GFBNEC?

In what ways do you see digital communication as a tool for marketing? Content?

1. *RQ 3: What data collection and analysis structures are in place that the organization can use to assess effectiveness?*

How often do you monitor these sites?

What is being measured?

Who is responsible?

Are you using existing embedded data analytics provided by the media platforms?

APPENDIX B

Interviews:

Mitch Maki, Ph.D., CEO and President

Craig Ishii, Board Member

Emiko Kranz, Torchbearer

Janis Tanaka, Consultant, Editor and Videographer

Janis Tanji-Wong, Vice President Development and Strategic Initiatives

Staci Toji, ESQ, Board Member

Diana Tsuchida, Communications Manager

APPENDIX C

PLATFORM	DATE	CAPTION	LIKES / VIEWS	COMMENTS
Instagram	Saturday, February 27, 2021	We are saddened and angered by this recent display of ignorance and hate. This action, however, demonstrates that material items may be damaged or destroyed. The spirit, however, of the Japanese American community is forever resilient. To our family and friends at Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple, Go For Broke National Education Center stands with you. @higashihonganjila 💙💙💙	1411	68
	Sunday, September 20, 2020	A beautiful, proud portrait of a young family — William (442nd RCT) and Kathleen Higashiyama. This photo was sent to us by Bill and Kathleen's granddaughter, @pastaragazza. #goforbroke	836	21
	Thursday, November 19, 2020	<p>The US Postal Service has announced a Forever stamp commemorating the soldiers of the 100th/442nd! This is an exciting honor for our brave Nisei veterans and a fitting American tribute that helps share the story of these exceptional heroes. Here's an excerpt from their official announcement:</p> <p>"With this commemorative stamp, the Postal Service recognizes the contributions of Japanese American soldiers, some 33,000 altogether, who served in the U.S. Army during World War II. The stamp, printed in the intaglio method, is based on a photograph. "Go for Broke" was the motto of the all-Japanese American 100th Infantry Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team and came to represent all Japanese American units formed during World War II. The stamp was designed by art director Antonio Alcalá."</p> <p>Be sure to support your post office and purchase these special stamps in 2021! 🇺🇸💙 #goforbroke @antoniostudioa</p>	519	27
	Monday, April 5, 2021	<p>Today, we commemorate the valiant service of our Nisei veterans. April 5 marks National Go For Broke Day, honoring the contributions of the American soldiers of Japanese ancestry who bravely fought for equality on the war front overseas and at home during WWII.</p> <p>On this day in 1945, Sadao Munemori, a Private First Class with the 442nd RCT, made a frontal, one-man attack through heavy fire and took out two machine gun nests on the Gothic Line. As Munemori returned to take cover with two of his comrades, a live grenade thrown by the enemy bounced off his helmet and rolled towards his fellow soldiers. Without hesitation, he dove on the grenade and smothered the blast with his own body. By his swift and heroic action, he saved the lives of two men at the cost of his own, only four months away from his 23rd birthday. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Now, #GoforBroke Day is our national moment to honor the service of our Nisei veterans.</p>	451	9

	Thursday, July 9, 2020	HONOR A VETERAN ❤️ Minoru Toyota, 442nd RCT, (7/25/1918-7/24/2009). Today's tribute was submitted by Minoru's children: Wayne Toyota, Lisa Shaw, and Marilyn Yutani. "We would like to honor our father who served from March 11, 1942 to November 26, 1945. He was a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, 3rd infantry Battalion, Company K. Battles and Campaigns included Rome-Arno, Northern Apennines, PO Valley, Rhineland. Wounded in action in October 1944. Recipient of the Purple Heart and Bronze Star medals. We miss him and are proud of his service." Minoru's name is engraved on our Monument on panel 9B, row 44. #goforbroke #honoraveteran	445	3
	Saturday, March 7, 2020	A morning of cleaning headstones and paying respects to some of our country's bravest, as Medal of Honor recipient Sadao Munemori watches over us. Thank you to our Torchbearers @superphuntime @ehmeeko @alan_t_hino and the @ucla_nsu for spearheading this initiative to care for the grounds where our veterans are resting. ❤️💙💜#goforbroke #dayofservice	432	13
	Wednesday, November 11, 2020	~ 33,000 Japanese Americans served in the US armed forces in WWII ~ 800 Japanese Americans killed or missing in action 7 Presidential Unit Citations 21 Medals of Honor 29 Distinguished Service Crosses 560 Silver Stars 4,000 Bronze Stars 9,486 Purple Hearts Today we honor the Japanese Americans who served with the utmost dignity, and those Japanese Americans who gave their lives to a country that once questioned their loyalty. #VeteransDay #GoforBroke	382	7
	Saturday, August 22, 2020	Yesterday we made a series of meal and mask drop-offs across LA to our treasured veterans and GFBNEC volunteers.❤️💙💜 Thank you to Carrie Lew and Team Mask-cots for making aloha and patriotic masks to keep our GFBNEC family safe through this pandemic. #goforbroke	363	14
	Tuesday, March 23, 2021	One of our best selling @Japangeles designs, Reflect and Respect, is now available as a hoodie! This comfy sweatshirt bears the iconic torch emblem of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which has now come to represent the courageous legacy of the Nisei soldiers. Shop at the link in bio! ⚡️#goforbroke @roy_japangeles	357	12
	Wednesday, January 1, 2020	What an honor to see our very own American heroes in this year's #RoseParade! Thank you to the Chinese American Heritage Foundation for inviting Secretary Mineta and 442nd RCT veteran Lawson Sakai to join their veterans float. #goforbroke	334	3
Facebook	Wednesday, November 11, 2020	~ 33,000 Japanese Americans served in US armed forces in WWII ~ 800 Japanese Americans killed or missing in action 7 Presidential Unit Citations 21 Medals of Honor 29 Distinguished Service Crosses 560 Silver Stars 4,000 Bronze Stars 9,486 Purple Hearts Today we honor the Japanese Americans who served	456	18

	with the utmost dignity, and those Japanese Americans who gave their lives to a country that once questioned their loyalty.		
Tuesday, September 29, 2020	GFBNEC extends its deepest sympathies and prayers to the family of Vincent H. Okamoto, who passed away yesterday at age 76. A decorated Vietnam War veteran and Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge, Okamoto was born in Poston in 1943 and followed in the Okamoto family footsteps of military service - all six of Okamoto's older brothers served in the military (two with the 442nd RCT). For his service during the Vietnam War, Okamoto was awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, the Silver Star and the Distinguished Service Cross, the military's second-highest decoration. By the end of the Vietnam War, he was the most highly decorated Japanese American veteran. His remarkable legacy will continue to serve as inspiration to us all. Photos courtesy of Rafu Shimpo	327	28
Monday, April 26, 2021	It's that time of the year to Honor a Veteran! ❤️💙 Help us reach our crucial mid-year goals and celebrate the 22nd Go For Broke Monument anniversary with a special dedication to our veterans. All donations include the opportunity to honor your veteran with a photo and personal reflection which will air live at the Go For Broke Monument Tribute on June 5. Every donation goes directly to sustaining GFBNEC's work to preserve the legacy of the Nisei veterans and the upkeep of the Monument. We thank you for your continued generous support of our mission. Please share, and click below to donate!	324	7
Tuesday, June 15, 2021		306	4
Saturday, February 27, 2021	*UPDATE: Support Higashi Honganji's Go Fund Me campaign: https://www.gofundme.com/f/higashi We are saddened and angered by this recent display of ignorance and hate. This action, however, demonstrates that material items may be damaged or destroyed. The spirit, however, of the Japanese American community is forever resilient. To our family and friends at Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple, Go For Broke National Education Center stands with you.	298	7
Thursday, July 1, 2021 Monday, July 20, 2020	HONOR A VETERAN ❤️ Today's tribute was submitted by Rocky Woo, in honor of Don Seki. "Noboru "Don" Seki was born December 16, 1923 in Honolulu, HI. He grew up in Manoa Valley, the youngest son of farmers. He volunteered for the U.S. Army on March 13, 1943 and was sent to Camp Shelby with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. He was assigned to Company L and fought in Italy and France during WWII. During the Rescue of the Lost Battalion in the Vosges Mountains in France, he was struck in the left arm by German machine gun fire. His arm was amputated in the field hospital, and he spent the next two years moving westward from hospital to hospital as he recovered from his injuries." #goforbroke #honoraveteran	282	22
Thursday, July 30, 2020	HONOR A VETERAN 💙 Chris Kishio Ishii, Military Intelligence Service. Today's tribute was submitted by his children and grandchildren."Chris Kishio Ishii grew up on farms near Fresno, CA, and went at 16 to Los Angeles for art school. After graduating from	270	17

		<p>Chouinard Art Institute in 1940, he became an assistant animator at Disney Studios. At the start of World War II, he was interned at Santa Anita and then Granada Relocation Center in Amache, Colorado. In both places, he worked on the camp newspapers as a cartoonist, creating Li'l Neebo, (little Nisei boy). Volunteering to join the U.S. Army from Amache in 1943, he served in the Military Intelligence Service as an illustrator of propaganda leaflets and other projects for the Office of War Information, assigned to the India/China/Burma theater of war. He said, 'One wonders how effective this psychological warfare program was. I like to think that it did help the effort and perhaps helped to shorten the war and save some civilian lives.' He met his future wife, Ada Suffiad, in Chungking. They married in Shanghai, just before demobilization, and returned together on a troop ship with 4000 other returning GIs. After the war he briefly studied art in Paris, France. In 1952, he settled with his family in New York, raised three children, and became a successful artist, known best for work in commercials, animated and live action. He lived in Dobbs Ferry, New York from 1955 until his death in 2001.'Chris' name is engraved on our Monument on panel 15A, row 1.</p>		
Monday, July 6, 2020	<p>When he told his veteran stories, We listened – our hearts full of pride. When he shared his fishing exploits, We laughed – our hearts full of joy. When he spoke of a nation with no racism, We took notes – our hearts full of inspiration. Now, as he leaves us, We mourn – our hearts full of gratitude. Mahalo, Noboru "Don" Seki. Okage sama de. 1923-2020</p>	268	22	
Tuesday, July 6, 2021	<p>The Japanese American and Nisei veteran community recently lost a special soul. Lawson Sakai, veteran of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, passed away peacefully with his family by his side at 97 years old last month. A passionate advocate for the preservation of the Nisei veteran story and founder of Friends and Family of Nisei Veterans, he became a close friend of GFBNEC and to President Mitch Maki over the past few years. He will be missed dearly, but his far-reaching impacts and influence will be felt for generations. Here is Mitch's personal tribute to Lawson, recently published in our bi-weekly eTorch: "I met Lawson Sakai four years ago. He was handsome, smart, opinionated, but most of all warm and engaging. I liked him right away. Over the four years, I would jump at each chance to spend time with him. Whether it was attending one of his tours on the USS Hornet in Alameda, or having dinner in Little Tokyo, or seeing him at Friends and Family of Nisei Veterans in Las Vegas, I cherished the time I could spend with him. We didn't always agree on things. We were from two different generations. But, when we laughed together it was real and his smile would warm my heart. Last summer, my daughter, Lane, and I had the privilege to travel to the Vosges Mountains of France, the home of Bruyeres and Biffontaine. Lawson and his family were on that trip. I was eager to introduce Lane to Lawson. They initially met for a few minutes after which Lane was beaming and emphatically said, "That's one cool dude, Dad!" Like father, like daughter...she liked him instantly, too. At one point, I found myself standing halfway around the world in the middle of the dense forest. On one side of me was Lawson sharing his stories of the tree bursts, the rough terrain, and</p>	255	26	

		ultimately of being seriously wounded by hot, searing shrapnel. On my other side, was my Yonsei daughter who has never had to question her place or opportunities in America. Okage sama de. Because of Lawson and his generation of young men who served so valiantly, my daughter lives a life full of opportunity and promise. Lawson did not shy away from the truth. He talked not only of his physical scars, but of the psychological scars which followed him home. He had nightmares which led him to drink to forget. Regardless of his tormenting memories, he greeted the present with his smile that lit up the room. Lawson was a giant in our community. Not only did he represent the heralded sacrifices of our Nisei veterans of World War II, he matched that legacy with humility, kindness, and warmth. I knew him for only four years, but all my life, I knew of what he and his fellow Nisei represented and did. As with my daughter, my life has been better because of the Nisei veterans; simultaneously, my life has personally been enriched for four years by this man. Lawson gave so much to the Nisei Veteran community and his home in Morgan Hill is filled with mementos, awards, and other articles of tribute to him. His greatest accomplishments, however, are not reflected in these accolades. His greatest accomplishments are found in the vision of those who stand on his shoulders, in the hearts of all the people he has touched, and in the voice of the next generation who say, "That's one cool dude."		
	7/6/2021 7:40:02 PM	HONOR A VETERAN ❤️ Today's tribute was submitted by Megan Malia Sasaki, in honor of her grandfather, Takayuki "Chilly" Sasaki. "My grandpa Takayuki "Chilly" Sasaki was part of the 442nd, Antitank Company, and is still alive and living in Hawaii today. The 442nd memorabilia decorating my grandparents' home serves as a reminder of how important his service to our country was to him, and to the world. I am honored to be the granddaughter of a Japanese American 442nd veteran." #goforbroke #honoraveteran	250	8
YouTube	Thursday, August 6, 2020	Heroes Among Us: Incident at Bamber Bridge	18993`	146
	Wednesday, October 21, 2020	World War II veteran of the 141st recalls being rescued by 442nd RCT	5429	15
	Saturday, June 6, 2020	Go For Broke Monument 21st Anniversary Tribute Live Stream - Saturday, June 6, 2020	4599	0
	Wednesday, September 9, 2020	Heroes Among Us: The Black Panthers of the 761st Tank Battalion	3422	26
	Saturday, November 14, 2020	GFBNEC Evening Of Aloha - Saturday, November 14 (3:45 PM - Pre-Show 4:00 PM - Show)	3218	0
	Thursday, August 6, 2020	Civil Liberties Act of 1988: Keeping America's Promise	2993	10

	Thursday, January 28, 2021	How the Japanese American soldiers broke the Gothic Line during WWII	1734	0
	Saturday, March 27, 2021	I Feel With My Heart: The Story of Fernando Sosa Masuda	1727	7
	Sunday, June 6, 2021	22nd Go For Broke Monument Anniversary	1298	2
	Thursday, June 24, 2021	The legacy of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team	1151	2