

June 2011 NASSCED Monthly Newsletter

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Tue, May 31, 2011 at 8:02 PM

To: NASSCED Membership <members@nassced.org>

*Hello everyone - below is the June newsletter written by **Michelle McGrath** of Wisconsin. Enjoy, and we look forward to seeing you in St. Louis in a few weeks!*



Dear Esteemed NASSCED Members,

“Getting started, getting finished – both ends of a journey require a demonstration of passion.” - Andy Andrews

The month of June can be quite chaotic for an Executive Director! Not only are you trying to close out the school year and prepare for summer workshops, but you are also feverishly putting together all you need to get the following school year off to a good start with marketing pieces and programming protocol. It is my hope that Andrew's words of wisdom guide your way this June. I really like this quote and find it so applicable to not only what we do as educational leaders but as participants in life. Whether it is planning for some big event at your schools/businesses, tackling a project at home, or maneuvering through some of life's challenges...all require goals, first steps! But just as important are those ending steps, and sometimes those are the most difficult. We've all seen it, people with grandiose ideas, lots of goals, however, often falling short of "getting finished". It is with passion, that we are able to overcome insurmountable obstacles and finally reach the top of that mountain we've been climbing. Passion is the product of the heart and soul. Passion breeds conviction and turns mediocrity into excellence.

I expect YOU have the passion, now it is my turn to pass along some great ideas and tools from some amazing leaders dedicated to assist you on your journey to COMPLETION! June's newsletter is dedicated to marketing and branding your state association! There are lots of great ideas out there, but none quite as applicable than what I've provided below! The first expert is Sara Kosiorek, a WASC alumni that works with WI on our marketing and branding plan! Our second expert is Todd Burlingham, Michigan Executive Director! Even though this publication is long – it is WELL WORTH IT! Great resources to share!

Sara Kosiorek: (www.sarakspeaks.com)
Professional Speaker and Digital Strategist

What's Your Digital Identity?

Does your association have an effective digital strategy? Most think this involves nothing more than simply having a website. But in reality, it's about having a larger understanding of your prospective audience and how they relate to your association. It's about leveraging your history of success in the most compelling way possible and creating original content that engages people in a purposeful way.

Where do you begin? Start by ensuring that every staff member working for your Association understands that you are running a business. If you can't maintain your membership numbers and get people to commit to your organization for the long-term you may be forced to cut programs - or possibly even go out of business. It's as simple as that. Your target audience is a highly-valued prospect – and they have options: sports, music, academics, etc. Make sure they understand why they should choose you. And if they've chosen you once, why should they choose you again?

Remember the standard business rule: it is much harder to gain a new customer than to retain a current one (yes, that 7th grader is a customer).

YOU know that your programs can have a life-changing impact on your membership; but if you can't maintain a connection with your customer – you will lose them. Just like someone can choose between Coke or Pepsi, your customer can choose basketball camp over leadership camp – simply because you haven't reached out to remind participants of your Association's benefits and why they should keep coming back.

So, what can you do right now? Consider these three ideas:

Align your digital strategy around your customer groups

The wide range of digital tools available can help you create cost-effective campaigns for each of your consumer groups. After all, the needs of your principals & teachers are vastly different than the needs of college-bound teens. Show your customers that you understand their individual needs.

Synchronize marketing efforts around your consumer's lifecycle

We all understand the academic calendar and how that impacts educators. But how do your various target audiences plan out their year? When are students planning for their summers? When do teens begin to research colleges? When do parents start budgeting for their children's co-curricular activities? Understanding your audience and their decision-making timeline is critical to effective marketing.

Make customer intelligence the backbone of your business

Effectively managing your brand requires deep knowledge of your consumer, which starts with all of the data available via both personal and digital touchpoints. Marketing leaders embrace digital because it is measurable and it can help provide intelligence. The more you know about your customer, their primary role, and how they interact with your association -- the smarter your marketing efforts will be.

Ready to start laying some basic groundwork? Here are four easy tactics:

1. Comment on other people's blog posts. Who are the other education leaders in your state? Identify them,

follow them and then start to make thoughtful, consistent comments on their posts. You will soon be recognized for your contributions and can form valuable digital alliances.

2. Create a Facebook Fan Page for your Association. This is now a standard business practice, regardless of industry. (Find alumni to help you!)
3. Have you recently delivered a presentation? (of course you have!) Turn it into an e-book and offer it up on your Facebook Fan page – and request that people sign-up for your mailing list (prospects!) for future e-books or events.
4. Comment on blogs hosted by MAJOR third parties such as the *New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *People Magazine*, *USA Today* – some of the biggest news brands on the web. These have lots of Google juice... and as you know, Google juice powers online brands.

Finally, remember your primary objective – turning an attendee into a life-long customer and supporter of your Association. You've already done the hard part: creating amazing leadership opportunities. Now all you need to do is tell people about them.

Sara Kosiorek is a professional speaker and digital strategist who has spent the last two decades managing the online brands of some of the largest companies in the world. She is currently leading numerous digital strategy efforts for non-profit organizations – including a new effort for the WASC; an organization she has been devoted to for nearly three decades. A member of the National Speakers Association, Sara travels the country as a motivational speaker and educator. (www.sarakspeaks.com)

Todd Burlingham – todd@mascmahs.org

MASSP Coordinator of Student Leadership (MASC/MAHS)

As I have noticed from the first day on the job, there really isn't very many people who can understand the breadth of what we do as professionals in student leadership organizations. The sheer magnitude of operating a calendar such as ours is a task within itself--but when you add all of the other jobs, responsibilities, and nuances of the position it can be boggling! Luckily, we have each other to lean on and learn from--something that I am thankful for daily!

Like our positions themselves, marketing within our student organizations is not a cut-and-dry concept. Unlike a product, or even some of our counterparts in education--our efforts will not produce the most "fruit" unless we focus on ALL of the audiences that we can cater to. In brief, even the most seasoned of marketing professionals would be overwhelmed with the facets that we try to mold our programs and events into. The moral of the story: don't put all of your eggs in one basket, at least in my opinion.

While many of you have been doing this for quite some time, and I aspire to be as excellent of a professional as you one day, times are changing--and at least from my seat, we have more at stake than ever. Budgets are being cut, students are becoming more isolated in their "digital worlds", educators seem to be more skeptical than ever, and the future of education may seem (gulp) bleak for some of us. (I know, cue the depressing music, Todd!) BUT--what we HOLD is the MAGIC. The spark. The OOMPH. Our students, advisers, and administrators hold the key to making school FUN again--and we MUST use that to our advantage in marketing our programs. To illustrate, it's like discovering the coolest restaurant in town--you don't want to go by yourself every night. You want to spread the word, take your visitors and friends, but each person will need to be convinced in a slightly different way.

So let's just back up a bit. A quick brainstorming session on the audiences that we work with

Students - The most obvious audiences to our profession. Students are the alpha and omega of our organizations, the backbone that keeps us moving. Let's elaborate...

PRO's of marketing to students: The overwhelming willpower to convince adults, the energy that their excitement can build to an event or program, unlimited new opportunities to try new and innovative media, and to keep them engaged from step ONE!

CON's of marketing to students: Often times they aren't handling the logistics (payment, transportation, permissions), the risk that they won't relay information through the proper channels, adults may not understand your methods to madness!

Activity Advisers - Our peers, confidants, and workhorses of the association world. These individuals give, give, give, and then keep on giving. They should be catered to with specific marketing initiatives--and communicated to respectfully and often!

PRO's of marketing to advisers: They (often times) make the call on whether they will attend an event or not. These professionals understand the "magic" of student activities (in most cases) and will pick up on this through your marketing. Activity advisers will push your programs to their own students, with the result of a huge return.

CON's of marketing to advisers: Of all of the groups, they are the least "one-size-fits-all". Advisers take on all scopes and beliefs, and marketing may come off as whimsical and innovative to one, while unprofessional or sloppy to another. In my experience, your direct membership is your hardest critic--so be confident in whatever you put out.

Administrators - We each have different working relationships with the building principals and other administrators in our states--but I think EVERYONE can agree that they are a vital and important step in the marketing process. Administrators are looking for the most professional and established programs with the least amount of risk on their part. Direct quotes, qualitative data, and a fresh, clean product go a long way with these individuals.

PRO's of marketing to administrators: They make things happen. Sell a principal on a program, truly, and they will be a feeder for you for quite some time. Principals have the ability to approve (and deny) the dreams of councils and chapters. They want to feel involved, and engaged--so including them can only help your organization!

CON's of marketing to administrators: Building principals (and other building administrators) are INUNDATED with email, paper, you name it--and usually have a "first line of defense" before it gets to their hand, computer, or phone. Creativity and personal appeals are an important part of any campaign aimed their way. They are often "squeezed at both ends" facing cuts from above, and breaking the news below--so the risk of being turned down or glanced over is great.

We could go on, and on: school boards, companies or organizations you partner with, PARENTS, other education groups or associations, the list seems endless.

So why all of this, you say?

At MASC/MAHS, we have approached marketing in a number of different ways. We have STOPPED looking at an event or a program with one lens, and instead took a step back and look at them with multiple perspectives. While a change in a process may seem like the most sense for students and your own staff--how will it affect the relationships that you have built with your other audiences? When you ask people to attend conferences, are you just flogging them with emails OVER and OVER--or have you used multiple mediums to try and reach one of the other groups that you usually don't correspond with. We've accepted that we won't reach EVERY group, EVERY time--but that groups will have the option to choose how they want to involve themselves in the association. In the race to digitize EVERYTHING, we weren't listening to our closest supporters, so we brought back limited mailings and paper registration forms.

Take a look at our campaign for this summer's leadership camp. It includes our association logo, camp logo, and scheme for 2011. This was mailed to our 400 member schools, over 1000 homes with students who have attended our events previously, and other associations in our state. The design was done in-house, and the cost really was not staggering: <http://mascmahs.org/files/mascmahscamps2011.pdf>

We provide a commemorative DVD for each camper. As part of a bargain--we had them take old clips and put together a "promotional video" for prospective campers. Check it out!

<http://mascmahs.org/camp> (it's in the player on the main page)

And, to make things more complicated--we've got a big calendar. Like, 35-40 events a year. How do you pull something like that off, pair it with membership and community service projects, and NOT seem like a nagging nuisance? Our answer was in BRANDING. Each event now has a "look". A specific font, color scheme, and graphical logo that matches the audience we are trying to suit. By bringing these back year after year, we hope that the recognition will drive future growth.

Take a look at some of our logos:

- Summer Camps: <http://www.mascmahs.org/files/2011camp.gif>
- Adviser training workshops (dubbed "Adviser Academy"): <http://www.mascmahs.org/files/AdviserAcademy.gif>
- Our fall new-member training conferences (we call FTI's: Fall Training Institutes): <http://www.mascmahs.org/files/fti.gif>
- Our member-school led regional conferences (we now call Regional CONNECT Conferences): <http://www.mascmahs.org/files/images/regionalconnect.gif>
- Our High School State Convention (which has an additional theme each year, but the logo stays the same): <http://www.mascmahs.org/files/images/states.gif>

I'd also like to show you how we take a few of our logo's through the rest of our webpages:

MASC/MAHS' JAM (Junior High and Middle Level Conference): <http://mascmahs.org/jamconference> This was designed to be congruent with the High School State Conference The MASC/MAHS Executive Forum (officer training): <http://www.mascmahs.org/executiveforum>

Each time a date is set, a Facebook event is setup--the students can RSVP and see who is coming! The logo is used, and it becomes recognizable. Administrators and advisers like the look, so there is no confusion to where they are at in our (at times messy) site. And the whole thing comes off as clean and professional, so that it can be printed and presented for approval rather easily.

This has gotten lengthy, but I hope that maybe I have shared at least one thing that might help you or your association grow in the coming months and years. The heart of it all is that we are PASSIONATE about student leadership, and it's vitality to the American education experience. And, as I am sure I share this sentiment with many of you--I'm willing to work as hard as I can to sell it to who makes the decisions. Feel free to let me know if you have questions on any of this, there is so much more that we could talk about. I wish you all the best at your summer workshops, and hope that you have safe travels to the STAR Conference this month!

Dates to Remember:

- NASC/NHS/NJHS Star Leaders Conference - June 25 to 27, 2011
- NASSCED Summer Board & Membership Meetings - June 25, 2011
- NASSCED Winter Board Meeting - November 30, 2011
- NASSCED Winter Membership Meeting - December 1 to 2, 2011

Thank you again for ALL you do for student leadership in our nation! I will be bringing a sign-up sheet to our NASSCED meeting to assist us in our journey together this upcoming year. We have SO much to learn from each other!

On Behalf of the NASSCED Board,

Michelle

Michelle TerMaat-McGrath, Ed. D

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"In matters of style, swim with the current; In matters of principle, stand like a rock." - Thomas Jefferson
