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| Saint Mary’s College School of Economics and Business administration DEPARTMENT of Business administration  |
| Utilization of Social Media to Enhance Enrollment In the Department of Business Administration  |
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| **Internship – Department of Business Administration** |
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| **Spring 2010** |

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# Executive Summary

 The use of social media will significantly assist Saint Mary’s College Department of Business Administration reach its enrollment goals into the future. There are many forms of social media which if effectively used, will successfully deliver the desired message to prospective business majors. Through research from leading sources in the field on branding and social media, I have compiled multiple approaches that the Department can utilize to improve its social media techniques. With an increased presence on the web and through the tools of social media, the Business AdministrationDepartment will increase the traffic of potential students looking to apply as majors.

# Introduction

The major academic goal for my internship is to learn more about social media and how it can help and/or effect Departmental recruitment on the Saint Mary’s College campus to both current and prospective students. After research into the different forms of social media, an effective marketing plan using new media for recruitment will be proposed.

 The Department Business Administration wants to expand and enhance recruiting efforts as well as showcase previous students. But how can the Department be brought up to speed in the latest generation of tools for marketing their programs to prospective students? An in depth look at 21st century recruiting methods will help determine what type of media is most appropriate for the Department to use and how to implement it.

# Research

 To evaluate the social media for the Business Administration Department, I read numerous books and conducted interviews with various College administrators to determine the needs of the Business Department. I also accessed research databases to retrieve relevant data on the enrollment numbers. In addition, I had weekly meetings with my faculty sponsor to assess my progress.

One text, Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success by Dan Schawbel, focuses on the effectiveness of personal branding. The objective to consider is what personal branding is and how it is helpful within society. For the Department of Business Administration, creating a brand is essential to differentiating itself from its competition. After the Department discovers its brand, it should develop the message of the brand and send that message to prospective students, drawing on them as potential enrollees. For the Department, this means deciding on what benefits students receive (the message) and how those benefits should be communicated to prospective students.

Actually communicating the brand is the next goal. Finding potential student target markets are essential, but the Department must be able to send them the message through a student-used media, like the popular Facebook and YouTube. After doing so, maintaining the brand will help continue to draw students in, as well as making the message more relevant, new and current through various uses of social media.

 To make use of personal branding tools, the Department should become aware of the multiple types of social media that can be used. Lon Safko and David Brake, in their The Social Media Bible, compile of all of the current means through which social media can be utilized. Social media refers to activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media. “Social media is about enabling conversation among your audience or market,” the authors write. To be able to use social media, you must have a niche, or target market where you send your message. For the Department, finding a niche and being able to exploit it will bring in potential students who are interested in business as a degree. To do so, the Department must experiment with different types of social media, explore the options, and assess the immediate draw that results. A self assessment within the organization is essential to focusing the social media strategy. Doing so, will ultimately target the ideal student the Business Adminstration Department is looking for and the best practices of attracting that type of student.

 Once the appropriate social media is discovered and evaluated, it can correctly be used to target prospective students. In Marketing to the Campus Crowd, David Morrison elaborates how to sell to college students or to potential college students. Once creating a personal brand, you have to generate brand awareness, and this can be achieved in many different ways. Handing out “freebies” is one of the easiest ways to get college student’s attention. For example, a small USB “thumb drive” filled with business department information would be a technological and innovative “give away” to prospective students. Correlating with the message that the Department is “hip and trendy” and utilizes current technology, showcasing this message through visuals on a website would further accentuate the message. Showing a consistent message is also essential to the success of the Saint Mary’s Business Department brand.

 Students seeking a Saint Mary’s degree have many competitors to pick from, for example Santa Clara and UC Davis. Differentiation of the business department will motivate not only potential students but also their parents and the high school counselors who direct and influence student’s decisions. Having a clear and concise message and brand will help achieve this goal.

 Gina Meneni, the Saint Mary’s College Associate Director of Admissions, provided some statistics of interest to the Business Administration Department.

Number of students who indicated Business Administration as a potential major:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | FA/08 | FA/09 | FA/10 |
| AP (Applied) | 1030 | 980 | 978 |
| AC (Accepted) | 845 | 824 | 705 |
| EC (Deposited) | 177 | 205 | - |

As indicated in the chart above, the applied business majors have been declining, thus indicating a decline in interest. This can be assumed to be due to a weak brand and/or brand management. An even more rapidly declining is the amount of potential business majors being accepted into Saint Mary’s. Also though this might not be directly correlated to the Business Administration Department, it can be assumed that the caliber of students indicated interest in a business degree might not be comparable to other students of different majors. Again, this refers back to the brand reputitation and message; if the Department’s message is centered around the excellent quality of students, it will eventually be reflected in the student body of business majors.

Our California State University main competitor is Sonoma State. The University of California at Davis is our competition at the UC level, and our main competitor among private universities is Santa Clara University. Knowing this basic information can help us evaluate our competitor’s strengths and weakness and focus on differentiating ourselves from them. Based on our competitor’s SWOT analysis, the Department can focus on possible solutions to fit other students who are interested in the competitor’s schools.

A few other articles were used to use as support evidence for the Department to move toward new means for social media. Attached pages will display some of these documents.

# Discussion

## The Rise of Personal Branding

Differentiation or “standing out” is the key to creating the Department’s personal brand. Creating a unique value proposition for students interested in majoring in business will help the deciding factor for many students, parents, high school counselors, etc. In addition, the Department must demonstrate marketability, the providing of something that people want – assumed to be a high quality education. This could come in the form of a robust professional network or endorsements from respected colleagues. Previous accomplishments and a diversified and unique skill set could be potential factors to attract prospective students. There are many different ways the Business Department can differentiate itself from their competition. Many students and parents are looking for what they can get out of their degree, or more or less, what can the Business Department at Saint Mary’s do for them. “…many of today’s applicants are no longer relying on information spoon-fed to them in glossy brochures or upbeat campus tours to choose their ideal campus[[1]](#endnote-1),” Jean Moore writes in her “College Applicants Connect Through Social Networking”. One example of a possible hidden gem of the Business Department is its access to numerous internships and job opportunities in numerous industries. Showcasing these resources would be a big draw to perspective students as well as students currently on campus but unsure of a major.

If we think of the Business Department as a brand, then there is a lot it can do to improve its message. The first is expanding the Public Relations of the Department. From my own experience, no one, internally or externally, really knows what students or alumni are doing with their majors, what resources are available to them, or how the Department is benefitting them. Expanding public relations can be anything from releasing news pieces to the local papers to interviewing students.

Along with PR is the expanding genre of blogs. If the Business Department can get blogged about, the search results or web search “hits” for the Department increases, increasing outside awareness of the Department. Awareness is essential for generating traffic to the site. If seekers don’t know the Department is there, they can’t research it. Many influencers of students are turning to blogs, another form of social media, to make their decisions. It is rarely seen that people rely on traditional marketing from the colleges.

Another way to contribute to personal branding is to control the Google search results. Most of the research done by students is online, thus increasing the Business Department’s web presence is essential. Setting up keywords and metatags are just one of a few ways to direct traffic to the site. Search engine optimization can help with increasing the web presence. The key, however, is to keep “eyeball time” of searchers on the site. Monitoring which web pages get the highest hits will be essential to focus efforts to continually improve the pages. Awareness is essential for a brand. However, you need to know what to brand before it happens. To effectively use social media tools, a central message must be created. To students, it is, “What can a business degree do for me.” The message is all about “me”. Saint Mary’s College stresses its personal attention to students; I believe the Business Department should do likewise.

If the focus of the department is the student, there are many ways to define the SMC BUSAD brand for the students. Having an effective website is a necessity. The website must hold valuable information, whether it is workshops students can attend, graduation requirements, general interest about majors, or showing the benefits of a business degree. To some extent, the website needs to be interactive between the school and the student. Having interactions continues the personal relationships for which students attend Saint Mary’s in the first place.

The main way for students to see the Department brand is through various media outlets, like YouTube. Videos of students doing presentations can show prospective students what life at Saint Mary’s is truly about. Offering videos of lectures would be beneficial; many students want to see value in their professors. Seeing professors in action could help attract students to the Department, as well as help current students to decide which professors would best suit their learning style.

Maintaining the Business Department brand is also essential for success. Whether it be updating a Facebook page every week or keeping in contact with alumni, continuing to develop and renew social media is necessary. The Business Department needs to be seen as “new and trendy.” One of the best ways to do that is to keep up with the student used social media and to keep the message updated. According to the article, “Social Media Extend Search for Prospective Students,” “…some schools use Facebook and other tools to build relationships with alumni, and some instructors use social media to supplement their teaching…” [[2]](#endnote-2) Expanding presence to where students spend most of their time is essential to the social media message of the Department.

## Options for Expansion of Social Media

To build its presence, the BUSAD Department must take several steps. The first is to develop awareness. The target market needs to be aware that the Department is out there and has something relevant to offer. Key to awareness is the second step, searchability. The Department needs to be searchable via the web. The next step requires research about the needs and wants of the targeted students. What will follow is “buying.” The prospective students must be persuaded to declare business as their major, or “buy” it. The last of the steps is determining techniques and tactics. What will make the Department be searchable (and thus creating awareness) is having a strong web presence. To do that, there needs to be keyword placement, flash-on web pages, pleasing eye friendly format, and page titles which capture.

Many prospective students won’t take the time to read long eye- tiring paragraphs. But they do look at pictures. The first page that prospective student see on the Department’s existing site, however is a page full of easy-to-ignore text. Transforming the Department’s site to one which is interactive with click-on pictures will engage potential students and encourage them to select business as their major. Although there is audio up on the BUSAD pages, it needs to be updated with current faculty/pictures and students and fresh messages. Appealing audio is an effective way to involve students with the desired message.

But the current audio should be enhanced with video. There should be video interviews of the faculty or students, or perhaps an excerpt from an actual class. This allows prospective students and their parents to evaluate the department for themselves. Taping classes is a significant trend among “with it” universities. Having a sample class video could draw students to the website but also allow them to see that the Department is tech-savvy… something today’s students demand. The Business Department’s current site contains but for audio-only pieces. Many universities have turned to iTunes to place class lectures and speakers for student accessibility.

****An additional asset for the BUSAD Department would be blogging. This would be a tedious process, but having bloggers blog about either Saint Mary’s or the BUSAD program will create more search possibilities but also give more research tools for prospective majors. Many students find most of their information online, so seeing other people’s comments (hopefully positive) about the business program would help them to form their perceptions.

RSS is a way to feed your web pages, blogs, audio, video, and photographs automatically to people who subscribe to your feeds. Many people like to access information easily, which RSS allows them to do. Quick feeds like Twitter’s Tweet Me link button allow users to easily share information of interest to them.

Keywords are the words that you have told the search engine are the best possible words to describe the content on your web page. Meta tags are the first thing you will see when you look at the code for the webpage. Meta tags help direct search engines to the web pages with the specific keywords.

Google’s AdSense is a great way to earn extra revenue while creating more awareness for the business department. Putting keywords into the code will direct students when they are doing college searches to the Saint Mary’s Business Department’s web pages. Having ads on the page can also help track what is being effective. Offering ad space to potential student recruiters might have some benefits. Conversely, it might turn some students away if they view the Business Department as more of a business instead of a place of education – a message that we might not want to send across.

Since the internet is becoming very interactive, an online chat during advising weeks might be a helpful tool on campus. This could be coordinated with the existing Peer Mentor efforts. Offering this benefit would also differentiate the Business Department from others on campus, as well as be a distinctive quality when compared against other business schools. An online chat makes a webpage much more personal and encourages interaction on behalf of the student. However, it does require a time commitment on the Business Department’s side. Regardless, online chat does help facilitate people-to-people communication, a goal that is attractive to Saint Mary’s students.

# Extend Social Media Presence

There are many other tools that the BUSAD Department can use to extend their social media presence.

## Social Networks

Through the use of social networks, many people can come together at one place. Already commonly used applications are Facebook and MySpace. Facebook, for the BUSAD Department should be utilized. Many students are doing their research online, specifically on Facebook, so having a page would be helpful. Besides having a page, events can be posted and circulated among Saint Mary’s business students so that they are aware of events such as Business Club programs that are related to the business department.

KickApps is a web-based platform that enables user to grow and engage their audiences and to create new revenue opportunities by adding social features, user-generated content, video players, and widgets to their website. This platform might be a great way to connect students at one place where the business department can feature news, internships, job opportunities, information on classes, etc. Ning.com is also another web-based platform that can be used. Creating a Ning.com website for solely BUSAD students would make for a more inclusive Business Department professor and student community.

## Publishing

There are numerous methods to publish articles and news for the Business Department. Blog sites such as blogger.com or wordpress.com are just a few. In addition to having individuals publish on their own, the Business Department can make use of email campaigns. Constant contact is a platform for organizations to connect with their audience through surveys and email tools. The email tracking and reporting features offer the functionality to track and manage email campaigns and guide organizations in determining future subject matter based on the popularity or interest generated by specific content. Professors can also blog about their academic interests, which many could be interests of students as well.

Twitter can also be used as a social media tool. Current updates of Department events could be enhanced by using Twitter.

RSS, Rich Site Summary, is a format which delivers dynamic web content without the need to visit each site individually. Having this on the Business Department’s web pages might result in more page hits and thus spur interest in the Department’s web presence.

## Social Media Strategy

There are four Pillars to the Social Media Strategy: communication, collaboration, education and entertainment according to Safko and Brake. Communication is the key to establishing good connections with prospective students. After determining what the prospective students look for, collaboration can happen on how to effectively target them. Educating them on how the Business Department can best work for them is the key to, especially, the parents of the students. Lastly, entertainment is the key to capturing both student and parent interest.

## Social Media SWOT Analysis

In addition to our faculty, one of the Business Department’s most significant strengths is its location near major businesses in the bay area. However, this is not seen in our current web presence. An interactive map of the bay area of what companies hold internships or job opportunities or who have previously hired Saint Mary’s students might be an attractive feature for the website. There is a lot of information given to the students, which could be a decision beaker for students. There is not that much diversity offered in classes or concentrations, which can be seen as a weakness. To make up for this, the website offers students a lot of text but not a lot of visual images. There are a lot of opportunities to add pictures, web urls to blogs or publications, and there is much the Department can do to flush out the faculty’s biographies. Many of Saint Mary’s competitors already have these social media tools in place to capture the interest of prospective students.

Determining the audience is essential to properly focus the message of the Business Department. Internal audience is an intercompany audience. An external audience consists of your customers and prospects and their significant relationships. Demonstrated behaviors are an action that can be verified and measured. Self-reported behaviors are what people say they do and what they actually do. This can be learned by use of surveys, interviews, or focus groups. The target market will have attitudes, values, and beliefs. An attitude is a tendency to respond or react to something based upon a learned set of values and beliefs. Beliefs are a subjective perception of the degree to which a product or service functions based on key attributes. In addition, students will have needs and preferences. A need is a validated requirement necessary to function in a particular environment.

Within every group, you will find a small number of individuals who have a knack or influencing what the other members of the group say, believe, and do. For the potential student applicants, their influencers would be their parents.

Highlighting a few comparative advantages of the Saint Mary’s business department is necessary so that the social media can be used to enhance those points. This will help get a head over the competition.

Currently, there are is one recently designed Department promotional material for prospective students, however the brochure is not being distributed to students through the admissions office. On the website, there are a lot of words, not many pictures, and the text doesn’t really tell students what they will be getting if they have a business degree.

# Conclusion

 There are many significant ways by which the Saint Mary’s Business Department can improve its message delivery to increase its enrollment by using new social media tools. The Department needs an interactive site which is attractive to students, especially since most of their research is done online. In her “By Their Own Admission: Colleges Pair Technology and Human Connection to Attract Students,” Jaclyn Stevenson tells us, “There has been an increase in visitation of college Web sites, and we find that when students initiate a search, they’re starting with the Web, so we don’t rely on traditional guidebooks anymore.”[[3]](#endnote-3). Simple things like posting a class syllabus could be beneficial for the students searching for classes to take.

 Many parents want to see accomplished alumni featured, so they know what a business degree from Saint Mary’s can do for their son or daughter. Along with this, graduated student interviews telling of personal career paths will make the website more interesting to prospective student visitors. Simple tracking of the web page hits will show which pages are most visited, and thus where the most important information should go.

 Our website should be more accessible through the implementation of keywords and meta tags within the code of the web pages. Having these specific words will help target search engines and direct the traffic to our website. A few keywords like “undergraduate B-school,” “Marketing,” “International Business,” “Finance Concentration,” or “business careers” can help define searches for prospective students and increase the traffic flow of the Saint Mary’s Business Department’s site.

 With today’s sometimes hyperactive lifestyle, customers are drawn to exciting visuals, an essential to keep visitors focused on the Department website. Visually representing just a few benefits of the Business Department – location, faculty, job placement, etc. will deliver more students as they choose majors. Featuring business scholarships or financial aid can also encourage enrollment. Highlighting students who have received specific business awards at graduation or otherwise can also draw interest to the Department.

 Making the Business Administration website more interactive is the key to its success. Having a “request info” button can allow the Business Department to track students who are interested in the program and allow sending of follow-up materials. Having key facts and statistics on the business page, like how many students go to graduate school, will making finding the important information easier for prospective students.

 In addition to web social media, giving away “freebies” will also capture students. The Business Department should consistently demonstrate to students that the Department is current with new technology and trends. Promotional “give-aways” like thumb USB drives containing significant Business Department information will make it easy for prospective students to say “yes” when selecting their major. Even downloadable syllabuses or promotional PDFs is something that parents and students would be interested in.

The Saint Mary’s College Business Department will likely find that the more it utilizes social media tools; recruiting prospective students will be more productive. More and more students and parents are doing their research online. Being more accessible with these new media tools will help the Business Department reach its enrollment goals.

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# Appendix



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