

4 Steps to Creating a Marketing Movement on Social Media

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140 characters, 6 seconds, a cute caption, live video... that is all we have to grab the attention of our consumer; and no matter how much you don't think we are selling, we are. Having been in this field for 3 years, I have learned a bit about how we market to our constituents. I also see myself getting older before the very eyes of the students I serve. As much as I don't (fully) understand the mindset of the millennial or Generation Z, it is vital we understand these students in order for us to be able to progress our cause. It can be one of the most important parts of my job – and provides a useful, transferable skill. I find that marketing comes down to 4 core areas. If you miss one, you may fall short. Here is what I have learned:

1. Brand

Above all else, you must carefully design your brand. Providing a logo, motto, hashtag, image, whatever you wish, can show your audience your why. Your brand is why you exist and it is the foundation for your department. The institution I serve does it by a hashtag: #WeMakeLeaders. It is on everything we do... publications, social media posts, swag we give out at orientation, etc. Our students know this is our mission and our goal is to create a sea of Greek leaders. It is simple, easy to follow, and clearly states what we are about: it is our brand.

After you determine your brand, you then have to allow others to use it. So send it out! Create consistent messaging. Ensure people have the correct image, font, and logo. When Zeta Tau Alpha rebranded two years ago, all volunteers received an email with guidelines to create an email signature. They also provided the logo, a downloadable font, and PMS color swatch for all members to be brand compliant. We have no choice but to set our students and constituents up for success by providing them step-by-step guides and educating them on how to be brand compliant.

No matter the letter, we're all Greek together, right? If that is the case we must ensure the success of all our organizations' brands by approving brand images that come out of our office, student organizations, or councils, and holding those groups accountable should they fall flat of the standard. Your why, buy in, and consistency is where your brand (and thus, all of our brands) can thrive.

2. Awareness

This area comes down to the simple questions we were all asked in elementary school English class: who, what, and where. Let's break them down:

Who: this is your audience. You have to know whom you are speaking to. For our office's social media accounts, we know we need to speak their language. Using language students identify with is vital to them believing in your brand. So get out there! Meet some new students. Eat lunch in the dining hall and listen to conversation, hot topics, and new lingo. Make sure you are investing in the student experience. If all else fails, ask a student you trust to review things before you post or publish.

What: We have to know what we are selling in order to market it correctly (Sinek, 2009). Are you working on #WeMakeLeaders or #GreeksAreSmart? Either way, whatever we market must align with a common theme. Focus your topic, your what, and be aware that your posts and publications must follow suit.

Where: In higher education, there is a time and a place for everything. But we have to get the word out there. For the last few years, my office has not had an Instagram account simply because we had “too many social media accounts to handle.” We now have one. Why? Because it is where students are. And we want to get our brand across to them. Sometimes we have to step out of our comfort zone to create a following around our brand.

3. Desire

In the words of the wise poet Beyonce, “I see it. I work hard. I grind ‘til I own it” (Knowles, 2016). You have to build desire! YOU WANT THIS! That belief starts with us. We have to believe the fraternity and sorority experience is the best thing since sliced bread and we have to put that energy into our focused and targeted posts. Not a day goes by that I do not say #WeMakeLeaders (I even do the hashtag sign with my hands). As crazy as I may look, it builds desire from students I interact with; especially if they want to be a leader. When speaking during the summer to parents and students about joining a fraternity or sorority, I say, “over half of the orientation counselors are fraternity and sorority members. The other half will want to be by the end of the summer.” This is a planted desire that in order to truly be a leader, you need to be Greek. Desire falls into the basic necessities of human life: safety and belonging. If this emotion and feeling is a part of your marketing plan and branding movement, you will be successful in gaining a following. Our marketing and branding must invoke desire by using interesting headlines, continuing the conversation, and addressing the needs of our students.

4. Action

Actions speak louder than ideas. The best place to start action is with education. We can never assume our organizations understand what an appropriate flyer looks like or even how to make a flyer. Therefore, we have to train. Marketing 101 should be taught at a retreat or workshop annually. Ensure all your leaders and advisors understand that what they put out in the world reflects on the larger organization but also on the university. Finally, create a call to action. A marketing movement is an active affair and pushing others to engage with your post is the best way to gain momentum.

When it’s all said and done, we have to realize our online persona may not be our actual persona, but it better be the persona of our office. The advice, real talk, and images you post online need to match your brand. When students walk in my office, they know they will be greeted with the same voice that is heard in our marketing movement. We really do make leaders, and our leaders know it! The members of our community spread the word that if they want to be a leader in their chapter or in the fraternal community, they better know our staff. That following takes time. But it all started with us understanding our brand, developing an awareness of self and others, creating desire, and putting it all into action. Now, get to work!

References

Knowles, B. (2016). *Formation*. Parkwood entertainment.

Sinek, S. (2009). *Start with why*. New York: Portfolio