

Three Elements for Successful Marketing

Seth Ressler, Order of Omega | @sethressl

As fraternity and sorority professionals we wear many hats. This should come as no surprise to anyone reading this article. One of the hats we wear often is that of a marketing, public relations and communications professional – a skill many of us have developed along the way or figured out from trial and error.

As the Assistant Executive Director for Order of Omega, I interact with members of fraternal organizations at various levels. I often use these interactions as opportunities to reinforce the messages of their organizations, whether it is current trends, values, or recent news. Through these interactions I've learned a few lessons about how to best ensure your message is heard. I've learned in order to effectively convey the purpose of a message, communications should be **educational, engaging and experiential**.

Educational. We work in a higher education environment. Order of Omega has over 500 chapters at colleges and universities across the country. We initiate almost 12,000 undergraduate students annually. Whether you are at a campus or an organization's headquarters, you create an impact on the educational experience of thousands of students. Last year, Order of Omega launched an educational campaign to help influence and connect with our chapters. Our "Be the One" campaign challenged students to *be the one* to influence change, take a stand, and speak up about issues and concerns in their community. In addition to the campaign's purpose, the message has been used as a way to educate students about the oftentimes overlooked tenets of an organization. Our Headquarters staff has had interactions with campuses in years prior, but they have never been as engaging as they are now. This is a result of a strong campaign reaching across multiple chapters and universities.

Engaging. When marketing your fraternal community to new students, there are usually several objectives to achieve: promoting the organizations, strengthening the understanding of shared values, or helping students get connected to your campus community. Instead of students passively receiving a message, extend an invitation to them to participate in the evolution of your brand. Get them actively involved in the production and co-creation of the marketing programs you develop. For example, ask your students to create a hashtag for the event instead of deciding what it is yourself. This helps make the message more relevant to other students and reach them more effectively through social media and other channels in the way they look for information. Encouraging interaction allows students to create a connection to an event and the organization and ultimately grow the brand.

Experiential. In mid-July, many students spent their entire weekend walking miles and miles on campus and around town to find virtual Pokémon through an augmented reality experience on

their phones. Our students are expecting messages and marketing that are interactive and creates an experience. Encourage your students to do teaser campaigns or Snapchat stories capturing the event. Future iterations of our “Be the One” campaign will include student testimonials, a vlog or blog from a student’s perspective, and website polls. Seeing other students participate not only helps with promotion, but also encourages the same level of participation. Remember the Ice Bucket Challenge which hit social media a few summers ago? The experience resulted in mass marketing and great results for the ALS Association.

Ultimately, creating a marketing campaign to promote and share your message can become redundant, time-consuming and one more thing to check off the list. However, a well delivered message can save you time and help you achieve above average results. A message that supports the educational foundation of our organizations, engages the recipient, and crafts an experience that is memorable will gain results. As we compete for the limited attention span of our audience, incorporating these three tactics can help ensure success in your messaging.