Online Engagement: Leveraging the Internet + Social Media to Increase Visibility, Raise Money, and Create Change

Instructors:
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Time & Location:
Thursdays 6 - 7:50 pm, January 27 - May 12, 2011
6 East 16th Street, Room 913, New York, NY

Learning Objectives:
After completing this course students will have a broad understanding of online communications, fundraising, advocacy and social networking in the nonprofit sector, and in-depth knowledge of one specific topic in the field. Working with the instructors, each student will analyze how a specific nonprofit organization executes a form of online engagement to support its mission.

Course Summary:
Nonprofit organizations use a number of online communications strategies to support efforts to increase visibility, shift attitudes, generate revenue, and create policy change. These strategies help organizations engage donors, activists and program participants. This course places online communications within the broader social/historical context of the media, and provides an overview of the different tools and techniques nonprofit managers develop and execute to support missions and build relationships with constituents. We will examine case studies and examples from local, national and international organizations throughout the course to deepen understanding and offer practical application.

Who Should Take This Course:
We developed this course with a range of students in mind. Some may not plan to work in communications, marketing, advocacy, or fund raising, but all will need to understand these areas to work well in their organization. Nonprofit managers will learn how to work effectively with their marketing, advocacy/policy and development colleagues to meet departmental and organizational goals. Students who plan to work in development, advocacy or communications will have the opportunity to delve deeply into a topic of interest in their professional area.

Assignments + Grading:
This course is highly participative. Students are expected to attend class, complete assigned readings before each class, and periodically participate in online discussions. Students should be prepared to discuss concepts explored in the readings and their own reactions. Each student will do a semester-long project for a specific organization, cause or problem and develop an online engagement approach to it. This project will be concrete and something that an organization could apply. Students will select a topic early in the semester, in consultation with the instructors. A project proposal will be due by class #6. A full draft of your paper will be due by class #11. The final paper will be due on the final class. The paper should include a 1-2 page executive summary that describes the project goals and recommendations in terms that a key decision-maker could understand. Students will present their research and strategic suggestions for the organization during the last two classes.

Grading Formula:
Class participation: 30%
Project topic proposal: 10%
Project paper draft: 15%
Presentation: 15%
Project paper final version: 30%

Required Books:
Groundswell 2008
ISBN 978-1-4221-2500-7 (hardcover)
by Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff

Internet Management for Nonprofits: Strategies, Tools, and Trade Secrets 2010
ISBN 0470539569
By Ted Hart, James M. Greenfield, Steve McLaughlin, and Philip H. Geier Jr.

The Networked Nonprofit: Connecting with Social Media to Drive Change 2010
ISBN 978-0470547977
By Beth Kanter and Allison Fine

Cognitive Surplus 2010
ISBN 978-1-59420-253-7
By Clay Shirky

Other Required Reading:
For certain classes, we've selected articles to supplement the readings from textbooks. We will also post/share current articles from publications and blogs. We may even recommend a video or podcast. We'll post these materials online.

Suggested Reading:
Mashable/Social Good Channel
http://www.mashable.com/socialgood

Pew Internet & American Life Project
http://www.pewinternet.org

We Are Media - The Social Media Starter Kit for Nonprofits
http://www.wearemedia.org/

The Dragonfly Effect: Quick, Effective, and Powerful Ways to Use Social Media to Drive Social Change 2010
ISBN 978-0-470-61415-0
By Jennifer Aaker and Andy Smith

Open Leadership 2010
ISBN 978-0-470-59726-2
By Charlene Li

Managing Technology to Meet Your Mission: A Strategic Guide for Nonprofit Leaders 2009
ISBN 978-0-470-34365-4
By Holly Ross, Katrin Verclas, and Alison Levine

The Mercifully Brief, Real World Guide to Raising Thousands (If Not Tens of Thousands) of Dollars With Email 2006
ISBN 1-889102-05-9 (paperback)
by Madeline Stanionis

Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations 2008
ISBN 1594201536
By Clay Shirky

Share This!: How You Will Change the World with Social Networking 2010
ISBN 978-1605094168
By Deanna Zandt

Schedule: (15 class sessions)

We will provide a final syllabus with specific readings/class by December 1, 2010. If you have any questions, feel free to email the professors.

January 27: 1) Course overview, expectations, introduction. The nature of online communications and presentation of a conceptual model to understand opportunities. What field are you in? What is your professional and personal experience online? What do you hope to learn in the course?

February 3: 2) Social/historical context, understanding online communications as a new chapter in the history of human society.

February 10: 3) Traditional media vs. new media. Becoming a networked nonprofit. Social technographics.

February 17: 4) Managing member and constituent relationships online. Data collection and management practices, the CAN-SPAM act, privacy policy and ethics.

February 24: 5) Online brand building and reputation management. Creating a social culture. Developing social media guidelines. Personal/professional brand in social media.

March 3: 6) Advocacy, politics and building new relationships. Slacktivism.

Assignment: Schedule conversation with Farra or Leah to begin exploring project topic.

March 10: 7) Online fund raising

Assignment: Project proposal due.

March 24: 8) How to reach your audiences online and build relationships with alumni, volunteers, senior donors, and other special interest communities.

March 31: 9) Developing an online marketing and integrated fundraising strategy.

April 7: 10) Research topic discussion class.

April 14: 11) Mobile platforms, location-based networks and emerging technologies

Assignment: Draft paper due.

April 21: 12) Measuring effectiveness. Staffing.
April 28: 13) Current developments in online engagement for nonprofits.
Guest speakers from area nonprofit organizations share case studies and answer questions

May 5: 14) 10 minute presentations by students of topics.

May 12: 15) 10 minute presentations by students of topics. Course feedback and suggestions for course development.

Assignment: Final paper due.