Communications/Social Media

Introduction

As part of the Office for Sustainability (OfS) front desk team, my responsibilities during the Spring 2016 semester included assisting the Administrative Assistant with projects, using and coordinating social media platforms to further OfS programs and initiatives, creating an OfS Staff Directory, and conducting and transcribing an interview for the annual OfS Sustainability Champion.

Our social media platforms allow us to engage with the Western Michigan University community in order to spread awareness of sustainable projects or opportunities. The purpose of social media communications in our organization is to illustrate a story of what we do, with a words and an image, in order to gain and interest people in what we do for campus sustainability. The 3 main sources of social media that we use are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Social media, due to the increase in use of technology, is now one of the main ways to communicate and inform others of news. Communicating with others, especially those who do not yet have an understanding of sustainability, is imperative to the success of the OfS, and its’ projects. In order to share our ideas with others, and get others involved with what we do, we implement the use of these platforms.

Methods & Results

Due to low internal staff participation on OfS social media sites, I took data from the OfS Facebook page, in order to generate a mean average of staff internal liking on our Facebook posts. My methods included taking the number of staff members who liked each post, adding this total number together, and dividing that number by 38, which was the amount of total Facebook posts from the Spring 2016 semester, in order to generate the data below. The below data illustrates that the average amount of staff likes for Facebook posts, is 3.74. This is an extremely low number for a staff of about 30 people.
Integrating journalistic techniques with social media is necessary for an organization’s outreach. Each year the OfS gives awards to people who are demonstrating leadership in sustainability at Western Michigan University. In order to gain insight about leadership in sustainability efforts from these sustainability champions, I conducted a 45-minute interview with Dr. Tim Palmer, Professor of Management and Director of the Center for Sustainable Business Practices. By conducting this interview, I was able to gain insight from outside organizations that practice sustainability, and conduct inter-campus outreach for the OfS.

Throughout the Spring 2016 semester, I collected pictures, and had each staff member fill out a “Staff Profile” form, which consisted of a headshot, and information filled out by each individual. This gave me a baseline of information to create the OfS Staff Directory. An OfS Staff Directory template was put in place in order to welcome new hires to the OfS, give them insight as to what projects each staff member works on, and to use as a reference for staff highlights on the OfS social media accounts.

Using the below flow chart, I created the OfS Staff Directory. The process we use to create new templates involves creating an idea based off of staff need, designing the process, creating the product, and lastly, having it become part of the OfS staff culture. Now that a template has been made, each semester, as new staff come and go, the template can be updated with new information.
Commentary/Reflections/Next Steps

As a result of data collection for Facebook internal staff liking, I gathered that the amount of staff likes on our social media posts is extremely low. In order for the OfS to build a growing community, staff members must participate in outreach efforts. For future plans, internal staff participation in outreach can be increased through greater communication team efforts in gaining staff participation such as having incentives for those who participate, or having this participation included in each staff members job description.