

Social Media

(An introductory course)

Southern
New Hampshire
University 

Project Description for Clients

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Thank you for your interest in our Fall 2017 social media project. I am teaching an introductory Social Media course at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) in Manchester, NH.

As a final project (25% of the course grade), small teams of students will be developing a social media plan for smaller nonprofit organizations or startups in southern New Hampshire or in Massachusetts towns near the NH border. I am looking for potential “clients” for us to help.

The students serve as external consultants to the client. They're not interns or volunteers for staffing events, passing out fliers, or making phone calls. If you need that type of help, I'll be happy to put you in touch with SNHU's Center for Community Engaged Learning.

Project Overview

The project will provide our clients with early-stage social media planning that the organization itself can then implement/deploy. It is hoped that the organization will have enough of a favorable experience to serve as references for the students, and perhaps consider hiring a team member as an intern to implement the program during the Spring or Summer 2018 semester.

For students, this project should be an enjoyable and practical lab (*Experiential/Service Learning*) of what they'll learn in class. It gives them tangible real world work that they can show a perspective employer.

They're 18-21 year old undergrad students, so I do ask for your patience with any “growing pains.” You're helping us as we're helping you.

Our Selection/Audition Process – You Need To Be Proactive:

The first step in the selection process is being proactive and contacting me once you've finished reading this document. The organizations that are proactive tend to be the best fits and are most responsive to students. Responding in close to real time is imperative on social media. Don't let your competition beat you to it! *Pick up the phone and call me today.*

If you're offered a chance to be considered for this project, the demands on your time will be minimal. There are likely to be four teams of students created, each with five people. Prospective clients will be invited to attend the **Thursday October 5** class session (2 - 3:15 PM) where they'll serve as panelists to talk about how their org uses (or needs) social media.

In a sense, this is also an “audition” to attract student interest in helping the organization. There will be more organizations than teams, so *there's no promise that each “candidate” will be selected* by the students. Each company/organization will have 8-10 minutes to speak/present.

By serving on the panel, the organization will also be able to network with other companies/nonprofits it does not compete against, but may have synergies with. The interaction with students may also provide food for thought and new perspectives.

The person attending the October 5 meeting should be the representative who would work with the students if your organization is selected by a student team. If selected, that same representative must commit to attending the final presentations on either **Monday December 11 or Thursday December 14 from 2-3:15 PM**. Presentations will be divided over these two dates (we'll try to accommodate your schedule).

If Selected – What Happens Next?

You're required to meet in person with the student team prior to the close of business on **Friday October 20**. Ideally this first meeting would take place at your offices, but an on campus meeting is acceptable too.

At this meeting, the students will try to learn about your organization and social media efforts to date. The more detail you can give them, the more likely they are to develop a social media plan that fits.

Please tell them your goals and objectives, and what you hope social media can help you do. Explain who you believe your target audience is. Be honest with them about your limited resources, especially time and money. Share any concerns you may have about the project.

This may be your only face-to-face meeting with the students before the final presentation. After the first meeting, most other contact can be by phone, Skype/FaceTime, or even email, but the organization must agree to respond to all student communication with 24 hours.

Please understand that students don't tend to keep "business hours," often doing their school work on weekends. This holds especially true for group projects where several students' schedules must be juggled to find time to work together.

Expectations for Students and Clients:

The project will include speaking with (preferably meeting with) organization management to review their needs, objectives/goals, and social media successes or shortfalls to date.

Students will then communicate with the client as needed (likely via email or phone), but no less than once every three weeks to report on progress. Sometimes this makes the client feel that the students have "disappeared." Rest assured that they're working on your project. Feel free to reach out to them if you need additional communication.

The client must also be willing to make a commitment to fast response time to student/team calls or emails (within 24 hours *including weekends and holidays*). This is also good practice for today's social media environment, where customers, volunteers, and donors expect instant gratification.

Clients are unlikely to see any parts of the actual project until the final presentation on December 11 or 14.

The students will help the chosen client develop a social media strategy. The recommendations would include an overview of the basics, such as clearly defining target audiences, key messages, and social media platform selection.

The students may also include limited research looking at comparable/competitive organizations to see what they are presently doing on social media. This will help determine what your organization needs to do to better compete.

The Social Media Plan:

The ultimate goal of this project is for students to have a real world test of what they've learned in class. They will create a social media plan supporting a strategic direction. If actually implemented, it could help your organization create awareness and build community outreach.

Another goal of this project is for the students to collect facts, develop messages points, and "sell" management" on a strategy as if they are employed by that organization.

The students will work with each organization to help decide and explain what its position is, and who their target audience is or should be (in as much detail as possible). What are the key message points for that target audience? Why are these messages the right ones?

The students may even recommend that the client target more than one audience and develop more than one set of message points - one size does not fit all.

They will also select and describe the social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) they feel reaches the client's key audience(s).

Social Media Topics Included (as appropriate/prudent):

When completed, the project may include any (or all) of the following:

- Social media objectives defined and clarified
- Social media audit – what is the client doing for social media now? What's working, and what isn't, and why?
- Target audiences identified
- Messages developed
- Social media platforms recommended and justified
- Estimate of hours needed to implement plan
- Tutorial on how to use the tools needed
- Recommended benchmarks and measurements

Some topics on the list might not be applicable/appropriate for every client. As part of your initial meeting with the student team, this should be discussed to make sure that your needs and expectations are conveyed clearly to the students.

Students will not build a website or develop any graphics, as those are not part of this course.

Please do not ask the students to develop or do anything not specifically spelled out in this document. Any modifications or "substitutions" desired must be approved by me before you mention it to the student team.

Final Presentation:

The presentation will be on **Monday December 11 or Thursday December 14 from 2-3:15 PM.** You must be able to attend one of these sessions in order to be eligible for the project. Please do not schedule any other meetings or travel for this time slot. Sending someone else in your place is a letdown to the students' efforts. ***This is part of your commitment to the project.***

Each team will make a formal presentation. This is likely to be the first time you'll see the work the students have performed. You will receive a hard copy and electronic version of the recommendations at the presentation. If you fail to attend, you may not receive the materials.

The teams are trying to convince management that they have the right social media strategy for the organization. They will be expected to present the program/findings/solution to the "Board" using a PowerPoint presentation, and submit an electronic report/executive summary.

Each team's presentation should last about 15-20 minutes, and participating clients are expected to stay for their entire session to watch each presentation. As part of your participation in this project, you will be asked to offer candid feedback/observations during this session.

Is Your Organization a Good Fit for this Project?

Here are a few guidelines and qualifications for interested nonprofit organizations:

- Legal U.S. nonprofit (501C3 is preferred – no 501C4 organizations please). ***This semester, we will also consider "for-profit" start-ups.***
- Benefits delivered/felt on a local level are a big plus, but *not* an absolute requirement.
- Grass roots/small organizations are preferred. The client must already have a website up and running. Nonprofits already working with a social media firm or doing extensive social media outreach on their own may be too far advanced.
- No religious/faith-based or political affiliation.
- The organization should be located near SNHU, ideally with an actual office or willing to meet on campus. Some students don't have their own transportation, and work part-time. Organizations located within 25 minutes of Manchester are preferred.
- **The client must also be willing to make a commitment to fast response time to student/team emails (within 24 hours including weekends and holidays).**

Thanks for your consideration!

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