

## Social Media and Email Marketing: A Winning Combination

Wofford College was founded in 1854, as a liberal arts college in Spartanburg, SC. Wofford is still located on its original campus, and has a student body population of about 1350.

Like most institutions of higher education, Wofford is challenged with the task of multi-department communications. With goals ranging from recruiting potential students to reconnecting with alumni to increasing event participation ultimately donations, Wofford faces the hard task of actively and effectively communicating to multiple audiences.

### Challenges:

To achieve Wofford's goals related to email marketing, they explored various options. Direct marketing was effective, but costly. Email marketing was both effective and inexpensive compared to direct marketing. Prior to Bronto Software, Wofford had used another email marketing service provider (ESP) but found it did not fulfill all their needs. "We found that our provider was difficult to use and their deliverability was awful. The emails we sent out would even be blocked by our internal spam filter," said Kyle James, Wofford College Webmaster. Wofford then looked to Bronto, an established ESP in the higher education world, for their email marketing software and expertise. "With clients like Duke and American University, we knew we would be in good hands with Bronto," Kyle noted.

As Webmaster, Kyle believed that email marketing would help to achieve their marketing goals at Wofford, and could also drive traffic to Wofford's website. However, prior to beginning any full-fledged email marketing campaign, they first had to combat issues of branding, email rendering, and oversending.

### Solutions:

To maintain a consistent image in keeping with Wofford College, a template was developed that included Wofford's colors, typeface, and a section of the template that was dedicated to driving traffic back to Wofford's website and more specifically to a particular page of the site: Wofford College Sights & Sounds: <http://www.wofford.edu/sightsandsounds/>. Featured on this page are links to Wofford College's blogs, Facebook profile, a Campus Interactive Map, and more. A visitor to the page is also able to watch multiple videos of events and life on campus.

Wofford first began student blogs about three years ago, but today the blog network has expanded to also include blogs by faculty, staff, and even alumni. "Each of our main audiences: prospective students, current students, and alumni, should be able to find something of interest in that selection," says Kyle. Videos of Wofford College events are regularly filmed to promote on the site. Facebook was meant to connect current students and young alumni. The Wofford College Facebook page has over 500 "fans," and the Young Alumni Group has over 400 members. The presence on Facebook is used as another way to update users with information about upcoming events, and serves as a message board to interact with others.

However, with the foresight that not all videos, blog posts, or updates are valuable to their email list, email marketing gives Wofford the ability to select and choose the most valuable and applicable communications to promote through the body of the email. For example, to promote an upcoming alumni event, Wofford sent out an email campaign, which included a video of the previous event. In addition to a direct marketing piece promoting the event, Wofford leveraged the power of email marketing and interactive media.

For example, Wofford showcased the top 3 blog posts and promoted readers to go to the blogs to read

more. Another email would promote the top 10 videos of the year and promote readers to view more on the site. "By utilizing email marketing to 'push' social media, we are promoting users to click through, learn more, interact with our website, and ultimately get more involved with Wofford," mentioned Kyle.

To combat oversending to the various Wofford lists, Kyle manages the entire email marketing calendar to monitor sending time. "The new addition of the calendar in the Bronto application has been a real help. Since it indicates when messages have been sent and when they are scheduled, I can oversee times when we need to increase or decrease frequency of sends," said Kyle.

### Results:

Wofford uses event participation, web analytics, and email marketing metrics to gauge the success of their campaigns. By incorporating email campaigns into their overall strategy, they have seen alumni event participation grow by 15% on average. For a recent annual alumni event, the attendance tripled from 300 attendees in 2007 to over 1000 attendees in 2008, by incorporating a video and pictures of last year's event in the promotion to help people visualize the experience.

In addition to participation, Kyle has monitored website traffic after email campaigns are sent out. Kyle noticed a specific campaign which saw an 89% increase in website traffic, a 26% increase in visits, a 52% increase in average pageviews, and new visitors up 24%, which he attributes directly to the email efforts.

Email metrics are also monitored; open rates are on average 30% and their lists see very little attrition given the hygiene of the lists they use and the relevancy of the emails they send. In keeping with email relevancy, the selection of appropriate media to promote is essential. Quite simply, the more relevant the media, the more effective the campaign – more click throughs, more website visits, or more sales. However, when the media is less relevant to the campaign the less effective it becomes and the greater risk for unsubscribes and complaints.

"We've found that promoting social media in email marketing is an easy way to engage our users. With Bronto, we've been able to incorporate videos, photos, and links to other aspects of social media to really drive home the idea of interacting with the Wofford College website. Through this promotion, we've seen great results and are look forward to more great results in the future," said Kyle.

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