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Analysis of NPR's Social Media Accounts

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Analysis of NPR's Social Media Accounts

My client that I chose was National Public Radio, or NPR. They are a worldwide news source that is primarily known for their national radio programs. Their flagship programs are primarily radio based, including “All Things Considered” and “Morning Edition”, which is heard by millions of people over hundreds of stations nationwide. They also have an online presence in the news sphere with their NPR.org website. NPR has international bureaus in 17 major cities including but not limited to Beijing, London, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, and Seoul. (NPR Fact Sheet, 2017) They have a monthly listener base of 37.7 million on their 994-member radio stations and receive 36.8 million monthly unique online visitors. (NPR Fact Sheet, 2017) Their podcasts are downloaded by 5.6 million unique downloaders per week. (NPR Fact Sheet, 2017)

Keywords

I chose five keywords for the National Public Radio or NPR website. These five include storytelling, national news, online radio broadcast, breaking news and news blog. For all my search engine searches I used the google search engine, because it is the most ubiquitous. I could not find NPR with the keyword “storytelling” in a google search. They are on the first page, link eight for national news. This keyword is recommended because a large portion of NPR’s news coverage revolves around national news so this remains an important keyword. They are on the second page, link 3 for online radio broadcast. Radio is a large part of what they do and this keyword allows them to direct audiences to some of their largest and most successful programs. They are on page 4, link 5 for breaking news. This keyword would not be recommended because other competitors in the market have control over the breaking news keyword. New sources such as CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC are the big names in breaking news and it is unwise for NPR to compete with them in this specific field. They are on the first page, link 3 for news blog. This keyword is ideal as well because NPR has a lot of news bloggers and programs that cover news. It would be wise of them to keep this keyword to ensure audiences of these larger programs can also find the main program as well.

Suggested Keywords

My three suggested keywords would be podcast, free news, and worldwide news. Podcasting is growing in popularity nowadays, and NPR hosts a great number of podcasts that are famous and have large listener bases, however they lack many mentions specifically of these podcasts. Utilizing this keyword would allow them to broadcast this strength to their audience. Another keyword would be free news. Many of NPR's competitors like The New York Times, the Washington Post, and many more local outlets require a subscription to access the content, particularly mobile content. NPR is in a small category of news outlets that survives off financial supporters, but does not require a subscription to view content and this is a key strength that should be utilized in the keywords of their website. The final keyword they should utilize is worldwide news. NPR has agencies and offices in 17 different countries, allowing them to be a truly worldwide news source. There are very few news networks that have offices in all corners of the world and have journalists on the ground in these areas. Utilizing this keyword would allow them to tap into the strength of their network of journalists to compete with larger news networks.

Quadrants of PR

Utilizing the Touch graphs SEO Tool, NPR has great relations with regards to the media, community in the first and second levels, but is lacking in government and business connections. With regards to media connections, NPR maintain media connections with ABC News and often receives information from them. ABC News is defined as a media relation because ABC News is a fellow news source and online news bureau. This is a second level connection. Additionally, NPR maintains great community relations through their active usage of Facebook, and dedicated staff to maintaining their Facebook profile. All of NPR's stories are also posted onto Facebook and NPR has dedicated staff to respond to comments on the stories, resulting in high levels of engagement. Due to their constant usage and engagement on their Facebook profile, Facebook is defined as a community relation and is a first level connection. NPR has no government relations in the first or second level as displayed by the TouchGraphs SEO Tool. It would be suggested for them to have them, because they receive a percentage

of their funding from public funds and maintaining government relations may ensure that they continue to receive those funds. NPR also has no business connections in the first or second level. The closest thing they have to a business connection is to the Open Society Foundation, a political advocacy group that is controlled by business magnate George Soros in the second level. Open Societies Foundation could be considered a business connection because it is ran by a prominent business person George Soros.

Social Media Accounts

NPR has two primary social media accounts. They maintain presences on Facebook and Twitter. NPR also has an instagram account, but it is not advertised on their website and their engagement and content on their instagram is not nearly as frequent as Facebook and Twitter. They also have a YouTube account where they post videos. The posts to their YouTube account are infrequent; they usually post once or twice a week. They also have a Pinterest account, but it has a very small following, and isn't updated often. Additionally, they post once or twice to their instagram profile a day, and dozens of times per day on Facebook and Twitter. Their main social media website is Twitter. They post the majority of their content that is posted on their website onto their Twitter account. This holds true for all of their social media profiles. They primarily use them to push out their content and generate engagement and sharing of NPR journalists' work. Considering this, Twitter represents the best social media platform for a news agency to target. It allows them to get their content out quickly and to a wide audience. It encourages interaction and news tips to be sent in as well.

Analysis of Social Media Posts

NPR maintains substantial audiences on multiple social media accounts. NPR has 114,681 subscribers on YouTube. Additionally they have 930,000 followers on Instagram, 6.3 million likes on Facebook, and 7.29 million followers on Twitter. They only posted on their Facebook and Twitter accounts during the five hours of the analysis.

Facebook

At 12:00pm, NPR posted a story about the Trump controversy and only received 47 likes, 12 shares, and 24 comments. Engagement on the story was lacking likely because of news fatigue on the story. At 12:26pm, NPR posted a timely video about bats on Halloween. The post received 600,000 views, 947 likes, 364 shares, and 4,595 comments. This post was much more successful because of the timeliness of the post on Halloween. Additionally, the post was a video, and the tone was light hearted which is very easy to access and share with wider audiences. Combining the fact that it was a short video and was timely for the season, it is understandable why the post went viral. At 1pm, NPR posted a story about Halloween costumes and received 142 likes, 15 shares, and 104 comments. The engagement on this story was likely lacking because of the time and date of its posting. This post lacked any photography and videos, and it is a holiday. While it still had the light hearted tone, it lacked visual elements. Many people are not sitting at their computers on Halloween, so this post was less successful because of it. At 1pm, NPR also shared a story about Martin Luther and his effect on beer. October 31, 2017 is the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, so the story is highly popular amongst specific audiences and went a bit viral. The post received 3118 likes, 2150 shares, and 2099 comments. This post was successful because it tapped into a relevant issue and many people shared because of it. It had a news tone. At 1:03pm NPR shared a technology article about Facebook. News about Facebook is popular on the Facebook platform, so the post received 1633 likes, 403 shares and 2274 comments. At 1:54 NPR shared a story about the terrorist attack that happened that day. The post received 472 likes, 605 shares, and tapped into a developing story and the story received more shares than likes, demonstrating the viral nature of the story. This story had an informative tone. At 2:33pm, NPR shared a story from MPR News about video games and eco-terrorism. The post received high amounts of likes but not a high amount of shares. Video games are a popular topic, but this piece did not have the tone that younger audiences would read. At 3pm, NPR shared a post about foreign aid to China. The post only received 57 likes, 28 shares, and 19 comments. This post had very low levels of engagement by the public and by NPR, likely

because of the recent terrorist attack and the focus on that. The tone was appropriate but this post was likely overshadowed by recent events leading to less engagement. At 3:30pm, NPR shared a story about climate change and the post received much more engagement; 458 likes, 484 shares, 1258 comments. Climate change is a hot button issue for many, so any story about climate change is very likely to get high levels of engagement considering NPR's typically liberal audience. The tone was also appropriate for the type of piece this is. At 4pm, NPR shared a story about a developing story about some sailors that were adrift at sea. This was a human interest piece and received a lot of engagement. The post received 2339 likes, 664 shares, and 3049 comments. This story likely received a lot of engagement because of the human nature of the story, and it was a great feel-good piece about a rescue at sea. The piece had a feel-good tone because the nature of the story and the tone contributed to the success of the story. NPR's final Facebook post was at 5pm, it covered the Congressional hearing on Russian meddling in the US election with representative from technology companies like Google and Facebook. The post received 685 likes, 540 shares, and 1023 comments. The post had a very healthy like to share ratio, demonstrating this was a popular issue and many people put this post out for other viewers to see. It also maintained a critical tone which powers engagement.

Twitter

Company engagement on Twitter tends to be higher than on Facebook, however engagement by the public with regards to comments tends to be far lower on Twitter than it is on Facebook. On Twitter, NPR tweeted a link to the previously mentioned Martin Luther beer article and received 128 retweets and 236 likes. They don't receive the levels engagement that they do on Facebook, and Twitter is primarily used for getting more eyes on their main posts. The next tweet NPR did was a tweet about the 95 Thesis. It received 44 comments, 30 retweets, and 109 likes and this post was highly specific to certain audiences like religious people. Religious people don't make up the highest demographics on Twitter. The next post was a tweet involving the same eco-terrorism video game as previously mentioned. The post received 6 comments, 36 retweets, and 62 likes. This was a simple link to an article that was also posted other

places. The next article was the same formula, a link to the same article that was posted to Facebook about the tech giants congressional hearing. It received 149 retweets and 187 likes. The highest level of engagement on twitter came from a post about a fake security breach on NPR's profile. It received 130 comments and 99 retweets and 590 likes. Because it was a gaffe, many people shared it because it was a humorous moment that many people retweeted. They tweeted 3 times retweeting NYPD coverage of the New York terror attack, and each post received 80 comments, 2.4k retweets and 1.7k likes. These tweets were going viral and NPR also retweeted them out to their audiences because they were timely. There was a tweet about the lost sailor's article that was also posted on Facebook and it received 44 comments, 35 retweets, and 70 likes. Many of the tweets cover recycled content from the Facebook profile and the levels of engagement tend to be on the lower end

Criticism of Social Media Posts and Recommendations

While NPR utilizes the proper social media channel for reaching its audience, it provides little incentive to follow them on more than one source due to repeating and reposting content. Most users would follow NPR's social media profiles for link to their journalism, and social media allows them to share this information with their friends and followers. There is little incentive to follow NPR on more than one platform because there is little original content exclusive to a single social media platform. While this is understandable for news agency, it limits the amount of followers you would likely have on these platforms because they lack a reason to follow you in more than one place.

The primary purpose of NPR on social media is to spread information, with a secondary objective being engagement on their posts especially on Twitter. Many of NPR's posts tend to appeal to a very specific audience. A good example of this would be the Martin Luther beer article shared on October 31. Many people are religious, but this content does not have quite the mass appeal that other stories do. Additionally many of NPR's posts likely suffer from news fatigue. There are many stories that are covered so much that people stop engaging with the content. One example of this would be the Trump

and Russia collusion investigation. This has been discussed so much that any posts nowadays on it likely will be read less, and shared less widely due to news fatigue. NPR would be wise to keep this in mind on social media. There is nothing wrong with writing these stories, and they are important to cover, but if you want to maximize sharing of stories, these stories do not do as well as human intrigue stories or breaking news coverage like the New York Terror attack on Halloween.

The levels of engagement on posts tends to be fairly superficial. NPR retweets a lot of people at the local station level, but the main NPR profile does not have much engagement with it's audience beyond a retweet and liking of a tweet level. The amount of engagement on an average Facebook post is one to two replies to comments left on the video, despite the video oftentimes receiving hundreds if not thousands of comments. Most engagement beyond the posts also represents clarifications to the stories, not meaningful engagement with consumers.

Suggestions and Recommendations

It would be recommended that NPR produces and puts specific content onto Twitter and Facebook. Providing the two platforms with their own content would inspire viewer to follow NPR on both platforms. Additionally, recognizing news fatigue would allow them to choose which stories are most likely to be shared. Beyond this, increasing the main profiles meaningful engagement with the audience likely will lead to a greater sense of uniformity across the company and create the appearance of importance towards meaningful interaction. The main account lags behind the affiliates in customer interaction and fixing this would likely aid NPR's standing in social media moving forward

Conclusion

While NPR tends to put out very similar posts they have demonstrated a talent at creating content that gathers a large amount of sharing on social media. NPR typically takes more of a quantity

approach with their postings but have gathered a large amount of success on the online platforms. There are a few keywords that NPR should utilize to more effectively call upon their strengths and engage their audience further.

Appendix A

