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Improving Communication for St. John Fisher Football

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Improving Communication for St. John Fisher Football

Abstract

The reason for the study conducted relates back to working to improve the St John Fisher football teams communication with its main stakeholders .I worked for the St. John Fisher football team and noticed a communication issue between the team and its main stakeholders being the parents. It caused a lot of issues that were seen working while with team so a solution in order to help these things out was something that looked needed. The communication between the team and its stakeholders was not very good.

What was done to find the best way to improve the study was present a questionnaire survey to the main stakeholders of the program that included the parents, alumni, fans, and boosters. These participants were accessed via their emails that were found through Coach Vosburgh and his parent email list. There was a total of 51 people who participated in the study. The data that was received was all quantitative data. The main variables found were what device they used most how often they are on those devices.

The results that stuck out most was that email and text were the most obvious easiest ways to communicate with these stakeholders and that the football program needs to delegate 1 staff member to do all this communicating. This means that this member of the staff should set up a email list with the stakeholders and a mass text that helps him communicate with everyone as a whole unit.

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Executive Summary

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Introduction

Communication is key to having a successful organization. The issue, however, is that there are so many different ways an organization can communicate and sometimes it is deficient because they don't have a similar style and there can be confusion that can lead to issues. With technology advancing so rapidly there are many new ways to communicate (Haugh, & Watkins 2013). There have been many studies to test which ways of communication are most successful, but it comes down to what the best is fit for your organization and its stakeholders.

This issue is one that the St. John Fisher College Football team struggles with also. Working for the organization it was clear to me that there was a lack of communication throughout the organization with its external stakeholders such as the parents, students and boosters. Currently there are many different forms of communication that goes between ways to many different people for us as a staff. If someone misses an email or a text or fails to get back to the stakeholders there can be conflict. It's my goal to become the main source of communication for the program and to find the best ways to communicate with these stakeholders.

This research is important because it will provide an easier and more successful way of communication between the football program and its stakeholders. The research provides examples of different communication styles used and what types various parties choose that were the best for them. By the end of this research there will be a more clear direction of communication for our program.

The purpose of this study was to find the best way to communicate with the St. John Fisher Football Team and its stakeholders. Through research and testing the best way to keep these stakeholders up to date with what's going on will be identified. The research question of this study was:

How can St. John Fisher Football improve communication with its external stakeholders?

The aim of the study was to try to enhance the communication with the stakeholders of the Football Program so that there wasn't as much confusion on occasion as during the previous year, through different ways learned by applying the S-T-E-A-M method (Funk, 2014) that Old Dominion used for their study.

Background Information

Communication is one of the key components to any organizational success. The changes in technology has provided new ways to communicate in this world and organizations have to start adapting to the times in order to continue to be successful. Social media offers organizations an opportunity to communicate a specific message while analyzing effectiveness of their measure in order to ensure their communication is working and effective (Lee & Kahle, 2014). Being able to see who and how many people your message is getting to allows you to determine how you can be more clear and proactive with the stakeholders outside the organization. Being able to have a good strong effective way to get information that they need to your stakeholder in a timely fashion is key to keeping everyone informed, happy and up to date. Having an ineffective method of communication can lead to issues between an organization and its stakeholders that causes the parties to not be on the same page and conflict. So building the strong easy

communication system will only improve the relationships between the organization and its stakeholders.

There are many different ways to communicate. You can communicate by talking face to face, by phone or text messaging, email and many other electronic methods. One of the most popular ways people have started to communicate is through social media which has had a huge rise in use and popularity amongst both individuals and organizations (Hipke, & Hachtmann 2014). Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter were found to be the most popular forms of social media for news used by almost all sport fans in the United States (Haugh, & Watkins 2013). Their study proves that each of the platforms satisfied a specific gratification they are looking for. Facebook and Twitter were the most popular forms used for informational purposes. Being able to post different things on media outlets that pertain to a organization helps people outside understand and have direct access to updated information that the organization is trying to reach them about.

People will change their communication style if you introduce a new, easier way for them to be able to communicate with not just you, but a large mass of people as well. (Kick, Contacos-Sawyer, & Thomas) Identifying the easiest way can be difficult though because everybody doesn't always have the same style. The issues you can see regarding a lack of a way to communicate on social media are because they don't have accounts, lack of ability to email due to lack of an email account or computer access, and a lack of a phone with it not being a smartphone with the ability to do all the things those phones provide or don't have phones except for their home ones. (Hipke, & Hachtmann, 2014) This is why having a perfect way to communicate can be so tough and hard to find. Having a variety of ways is the best option here because it will help you reach a bigger number of people in the easiest

way for them. That being said though, making sure all the different ways are conveying the same message and information is important because different directions can lead to confusion and that leads to problems.

Steam

There are many different theories of how to change a communication style into a more of a social media style. Old Dominion University introduced a theory called S-T-E-A-M (Funk 2014). This approach includes stealing, team, engagement, analytics, and mavens. This theory was introduced in order to help Old Dominion compete against other teams in their division in every venue by upgrade their social media efforts. (Talty, 2011)

The “steal” part of the theory means learning the ways other people do it. (Wang & Zhou 2014). This means use what has been working at other places and try to implement them into your style. For ODU they could study what other university at their level were doing and find what worked for them and try to see how they might be able to apply those methods in their athletic department. A new study for St. John Fisher could follow this by looking at social media sites being used at other E8 schools, and also how other organizations communicate to their consumers in order to get the information they need to out their stakeholders.

The next part is “team”. A social media serves as a way to promote the games being played and helps with the engagement between these fans and a team with the focus of getting more people to come to the games. (Hipke & Hatchtmann 2014) Having that team feeling between the parties can enhance the relationship between them. That is why having a strong easy way to communicate is so important.

Engagement is the next step to improving relationships. This means getting people more and more involved with the program. Showing fans appreciation with things such as retweets of their post is one way that is an easy way to engage with the school's social media followers (Moorehead, O'Hallarn, & Pribesh). Fan engagement helps strengthen a relationship between a team and their consumers. Having a way to communicate back and forth and engage your closest fans can help strengthen your brand.

The analytics part is next and is important. This is when organizations have a better sense of who their fans are (Abeza, 2013). It also includes looking at your numbers and seeing the increases that can occur. You might find that as the season goes on your sites will get more and more popular. Keeping track of all the people will give you a good sense of whether your organization is growing or not.

The final one is Mavens. These are the most passionate of fans. For ODU it was their alumni and the people who put the most into the program. Having strong communication with these people through social media can let you have more success when you need to ask them for help in some way (Chinn 2010). These people are a big part of your athletic funding.

How Often Things are Communicated

A parent's relationship with their child when this child moves away from home the first time and goes to college changes immensely. A parent of a student athlete will have progressed from a leader to a supporter making contact and engagement with their child and the team they represent less salient role as the athlete grows older and gets closer to mastery of their performance (Dorsch, Lowe, Dotterer, & Lyons). The meaning of this is that as a student progresses in their athletic careers the parent of that child will become

less and less involved with the sport they participate in. Parents will try to stay involved in their child's life as much as the child will allow them to. This requires the child communicating with their parents though. Mostly all students will communicate with their parent via six main devices (Hofer, 2008; Wolf, Sax, & Harper 2009). These six devices include in person, email, phone, texting, social media, and video chat. With this you can understand what type of communication systems some parents might already be accustomed to and what ways would be the easiest in order to reach them

The St. John Fisher College football team makes up a large chunk of its campus population. With over a one hundred players on its roster they are by far the biggest sport teams and have players that are in all the different majors the school offers. So many of the students being able to communicate with other students on the campus because it is so small it allows for a relationship to be built between them. Since the students attend the school they have a psychological attachment towards the team, its coaches, and the athletic department at the school (Trail, Anderson & Fink, 2000; Wann & Pierce 2005). At St. John Fisher College everyone knows everyone. Some of the coaches on the team teach different classes at the school. Others run the intramural department. This allows them to build relationship with students outside the football team. The school being so small and everyone knowing everyone allows the students to find identity through the team and be able to participate in with the teams events. Finding more ways to communicate with the students at school is one way to try to keep the largest number of the team's consumers informed on all the information that potentially brings them to the game. Student will be involved when the game comes around on weekend potentially with festivities before and after the game so having a strong way to create awareness in the campus environment and

media could create more motivation for students (Mittal & Lee, 1989). St. John Fisher has approximately 700 student athletes on campus which around 25 percent of its student body. Since the campus is so small it allows the student athlete and non-student athletes to develop relationships with each other. These students will want to know things about games such as the courage bowl and different ways to get involved in that.

Methods

Purpose of Research

The purpose of the research was to gather data in order to make conclusions and offer logical suggestions to improve the St John Fisher football team's communication with its outside stakeholders. Through these recommendations there's hope that the team makes adjustments to improve its communication.

The desired sample of the research was the stakeholders of the St. John Fisher Football Team. External stakeholders of the St. John Fisher football program included players, the parents of the players, boosters involved with the program, and sponsors of the athletics department. Finding easier ways to communicate with these people can create more awareness in needed areas of the program.

Design

The research was designed around a non-probability type of participants. This research approach allowed questions to be asked and includes recording of people's feelings, emotions and frustrations in the study. Working through the study it was easy to determine what types of communication styles that various people use. Since the study was directly focused on the St. John Fisher College football teams stakeholders, so they were the only ones with a chance to be selected out of the population.

The type of non-probability sampling used in the study was the convenience study because the subjects that were reached out to would be the stakeholders for the St. John Fisher Football Program. This means that the population that would be reached out to, held a tie to the program some way or another and there is nothing random about it. This type of sampling made more sense for getting information from individuals because of the position As a Student Manager access to communicate with the various stakeholders of the program such as the parents, and boosters was easy to get access to. The objective is to get as many parents as possible to respond to the study because in my opinion they are the most important stakeholders in the program.

Procedure

The survey was made for the main stakeholders to take. In the survey there were multiple questions pertaining to the communication that the St John Fisher team uses and also asking them about their different communication including cell phone, social media accounts, and emails. The survey included a majority of quantitative question that were multiple choice and rating on a scale of 1-100 and finally a few questions using a scale to obtain the amount of times people went on media accounts. There was also a couple extended answers which allowed them to expand out on their answers so there is a better understanding of their feelings.

There will be a survey out via email containing a questions surrounding the communication of the SJFC football team and the stakeholders communication styles. The data was collect using quadratics which then broke it down to descriptive statistic with statistics including mean, median, percentages, and statistics such as that. Then they were

categorized. After looking the different percentages and numbers, the results were ready to be analyzed.

After that the plan for analysis was to go through and break it down common trends for each question. Looking for common things that the participants answered such as their social media account. After finding these things breaking down what ways the team could communicate with the stakeholders became clearer. Being able to make logical suggestions based on these results became clearer.

Results

The people that data was collected from were the primary stakeholders in a Division III football program. The stakeholders include parents of the players of the team, boosters, fans, and alumni. These people were identified by observing who is ordinarily at every game each week.

All participants had a stake in the program by having a child in the football program with a couple also being three boosters and one alumni.

The only people who were targeted were the main consumers of the SJFC football team. The sixty percent of people who did complete the survey can be a good representation. This sixty percent comes from the 148 people the survey was distributed. Out of that 86 at least opened the survey with 51 people completing it.

With the 51 survey answers that were received asking about the affiliation of with the team 48 which was 94% of the participants said they were parents of players on the team. There were 3 people or 5.9% who said they were also boosters, 2 which was 3.9% that said they were fans and 1 or 1.9% said they were alumni. Three people didn't answer

the question. Through this you can see that being a parents of the program was the most often response.

There was 39 participants choose to do a question relating towards the effectiveness of the team's communication. The average rating of the effectiveness of the team's communication was 67.28. The minimum was a 5 out of 100 with the maximum being 100. The median of this number was 75 with a mode of 90 showing that the 5% and low numbers like that may of skewed the mean of this answer.

Eight out of the 41 participants that answered how often they miss a message from the team said they miss messages often. Twenty five out of the 41 or 61% said they don't miss that much information. This shows that 61% of the population are getting most the messages that they want to receive.

The next question touched on what the participants would want to see communicated more with them. This again was an all that apply. There was a total of 34 people responded to this question. Out of the people who responded 35% (n=12) said they wanted more information about games. The responses in for this question were 20.6% (n=7) said they wanted more clothing information, 65% (n=22) said they were more interested in obtaining information when the team is on the road, and 76.5 (n=26) wanted other information. This was the most often response.

After a question was asked asking the participants to give a text answer indicating what they wanted to be communicated more from the team. For this it was broken down to 4 different categories. Out of the 23 responses 17.4% (n=4) gave a answer that regards to a text, 28% (n=9) talked about something that would go along with a online posting or social media, 39.1% (n=9), and 35% (n=8) gave a answer that resulted of 4 which means they

were comments rather than a suggestion. The information was put into the categories that suggested what type of communication they are looking for. Through these states it was seen that text and Email would be the two most preferred ways people were looking to communicate with.

Knowing how often a participant had their phone on them throughout a day was asked to. There was a total of 42 people total took this question. Out of this 7.1% (n=3) said they check it every once and awhile, 9.5% (n=4) stated that they weren't on their phones very often, 4.8% (n=2) said they don't check it while at work and finally 78.6 (n=33) which was the most often response by far said they always have their phone on them. From this I would say 36 of the 42 said they a usually checking their phone frequently and then the remaining 6 isn't as often.

Finding which social media sites were most popular among the participants was something that was asked also. The four different options they could answer from included Facebook, twitter, Instagram, and other media connections. They could check all that applied. There were 37 responses. The highest amounts all the results with 89.2% (n=33) said they had Facebook. The next highest was Instagram that had 43.2% (n=16) and twitter with 40.5% (n=15). People with other social media accounts was 13.5% (n=5). So Facebook by far was the most popular social media amongst the participants.

Knowing how often people go on these accounts was important to me also. The mean of the result which 38 people took was (M= 7.32). This means the average person went on some kind of social media around 7 times a day. The maximum amount some did was 20 which was the highest range they could go to. This also had a median of 5.5. So the

participants check their social media things a decent amount a day but not a ton throughout the day.

Again the same question was ask only relating to emails this time. This had a much better result. Out of the 42 people who took this final question, the mean was set to 11.36. The most often answer here was also 20 which may of skewed the answer but the median was set to 10 showing it was pretty accurate. This shows that the email was more common than the social media.

Conclusions

At the start of the research the objective was to find the best way to improve the St. John Fisher Football team communication with its main stakeholders. After looking at the results of the survey and the best way to do this was having a person within the staff that handles the main source of communication that works through a mass text site, and emails. This person needs to be in charge of communication with the main stakeholders of the team. These people mainly include the parents of the team. This main source would help these stakeholders be able to direct.

Ideas on how to fix the communication problem came clear after the survey process that I went through. Through relating back to O'Hallarn, Morehead, and Pribesh (2016) STEAM method I was able to do this assessment. The steal process which usually comes from looking at what competitors of yours are doing, didn't come from the team's competitors but from our stakeholders themselves. During the survey I asked ways they thought the communication could be better. They clearly were stating that things like a group and a primary email between the staff and them would be best. Having a single person handling these email and text accounts would make it better because going through

a single person trying to communicate with the stakeholders is better than tons of people trying to relay all the messages they get throughout the staff. The next part of STEAM is team. Both the staff and the stakeholders need to work as a team. Unfortunately there isn't a lot of time during everyone's days to do be worrying about communicating with a random person for a event that is only about 3 hours on 1 day a week. That being said there needs to be 5 minutes found where a stakeholder can send a email saying "Hey the schedule for the JV's is wrong I'm wondering if you could change that" and the staff member making sure it gets change would be helpful also. This brings us to the next step of engagement. Building this solid relationship with these stakeholders by having a solid communication line would make everything a lot smoother. The analytics part goes back to all the statistics we took from the survey. Through this we can see that a majority of people always are carrying their phone on them. You will also see that a good fraction of people check their emails over 10 times a day. This shows that these two forms of communication would be best for people seeing the message the staff might want to get out. The final part is Mavens. The passionate people about subject. These are the people that are targeted in my study. I really only targeted these main stakeholders because they are the ones who care about the program the most.

Looking into a social media solution might be a good way to improve things also in case someone miss a text. The post would be there to stay right up top. A study talking about social media proved that Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter were the most popular apps for people to use for their participants (Haugh & Watkins 2013). Their study took into account the average college student and how often they are on different social media accounts.

This also proved true with the participants in the SJFC football team study. Almost 90% of people in the survey responded they had a facebook and then over 40% of the people said they had a instagram and twitter. Having a team page on social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter would provide people another way to get their messages out. These accounts would also provide the stakeholders somewhere they can put their questions to be publicized so everyone can see in case there is the same question. This would help build (Funk 2013) team concept

A limitation within this study was finding out all the information that a kid relays to their parents. Since the parents are considered the main source of people who need to get information. Obtaining the actual amount that kids talk to their parents would be nearly impossible. From the information from the background talked about how students might not communicate with their parents as often once college begins. So knowing exactly what information they receive and don't receive is unattainable. So that's the other big limitation that I had in my study (Dorsch, Lowe, Dotterer, and Lyons 2007).

The one big delimitation that only main stakeholders of the football team were chosen. This was because these people have the most to do with the team. If people were outside the program these people they might not care enough to do anything pertaining to the study. This is why the thought was using the convenient method of knowing what people are already involved within the football the importance of targeting them and making it a smaller population compared to a larger one was important because the study pertained to them more directly.

A future recommendation for a future study like this is to maybe make a correlation between what methods the the team uses to communicate and the preferred method of

communication with the parents. This would help you understand which forms of communication would be most effective in targeting these certain parents. This would enhance the study especially when it comes to the SJFC football team specially and help you understand what exact communication style these parents would be interested in.

A implementation of strategies to the study that could've been looked into more was perhaps looking into social media more. If someone is a better tech person then developing a app for the team would be a cool neat design. This could be a main source of all types of communication. The issue is you would have to make on for both computer and phones could download because not everyone is carrying smart phones around with them.

The study that was conducted points out that the team just needs to make an effort to keep its stakeholders involved. The team needs a main communication person that checks everything and makes sure it is right. A example of where it was done poorly was where some of the tailgates were after JV games and also the Morrisville JV game situation where things were found out last minute. There needs to be a text group for both varsity and maybe junior varsity that gives details that are needed. You could also send out emails and this would work also. But there needs to be a day to day effort to keep the stakeholders involved because they are a large part of what the team does.

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