

Suds & Buds Party 2018 Social Media Tactic

The Suds & Buds Party is an annual, spring fundraising party at the Norfolk Botanical Garden. The party raises money for three great causes: Rotary Club of Norfolk, Norfolk Botanical Garden, and a third charitable partner that rotates every year. In 2018, the Young Audiences of Virginia (YAV). Each year, the party committee strives to throw a successful party by including great food and drink vendors, showcasing live musical performances, and promoting these party perks to our target audience, which are potential party guests over the age of 21, and supporters of the three charitable partners. The purpose of the social media tactic implemented in spring 2018 was to increase party attendance by increasing party awareness through postings on the Suds & Buds Facebook page.

Research

Quantitative research was used before planning the social media tactic. Facebook's "Insight Tool" feature was a secondary type of research, and a tracking method used to consider the amount of hits and post engagements from the previous party year. Post engagement refers to the amount of likes, clicks, or shares the post has. The content of these posts were also analyzed to question what kind of posts are our audience most engaged in (links, videos, photos, etc.) There was also some evidence to support that the time the posts would go live had a correlation to the amount of people will be engaged. Content posted on the party page around 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. had a higher amount of clicks than content posted midday. These findings shaped the planning process, particularly impacting what type of content would be posted, the time, dates, and how frequently the content will post, and whether there was opportunities to expand to other social media platforms.

Planning

After looking at the numbers, ultimately the goal of the social media plan became to increase overall engagement on the party's Facebook page and drive more users to the page. One strategy used to achieve this goal was to post content of interest to encourage clicks. More specifically, include more links and videos, since they were the most popular posts for the previous party year. Another strategy was to utilize the boost feature on Facebook, so that the post can have a larger audience reach. To reach our goal, the objective was to increase the amount of page views, post reach, and likes of the Facebook page by 50%. For example, the most amount of page views on any given day between March 2017 and the end of May 2017 was 8 views, according to Facebook's Insight Tool. Therefore, to reach our goal in the year of 2018, the most amount of page views on any given day between March 2018 and the end of May 2018 was 12 views.

Implementation

Facebook posts first started going live in January 2018, but content was posted more frequently in the middle of March 2018 and on until the end of May 2018. Tracking was implemented about two weeks after the party, as recap videos and photos were posted. Tactics like used were Facebook's boost feature, which helped reach people who may be interested in the party, but do not currently follow the Facebook page. Another tactic implemented was including videos and links. Two videos were created in 2018 for the public to watch, as opposed to last year's one recap video. There were also lots of opportunities to showcase the vendors and talk more about the charities, which would attract an audience who supports those charities.

As a college student interning for a non-profit, there was essentially no budget. Therefore, I had to utilize free resources like Animoto, a free site that allows anyone to make videos with royalty-free music. Facebook tracking tools was perhaps the most essential resource in tracking the success of posts for free. Of course, the party planning committee helped give me great insight on the vendors and participating charities, which was helpful in creating content.

Guests' were hesitant to purchase a party ticket because of the weather, which is as an external challenge. Many people were prone to purchase tickets last minute to check on the weather, and we were afraid the increase of price for last minute tickets would post a challenge. However, there were frequent social media posts on Facebook and statements on the website that stated the party was a rain or shine event, and there will be tents to keep guests dry. One internal challenge was the lack of diversity of social media platforms. There was a good Facebook presence, but platforms like Instagram and Twitter were not utilized. However, it was concluded that it's best to stay away from investing time and money on other platforms because they were not attractive to the demographic of our audience. More of our party audiences utilized Facebook.

Evaluation

According to the screenshots provided, the amount of people who liked the Suds & Buds Facebook page from the end of May 2017 to the end of May 2018 has increased slightly over 50%. The amount of page views on any given day between March and May has almost tripled for the year 2018. Paid boosting of posts has consistently proven to significantly increase the amount of audience reach compared to organic media alone. The party proved to be successful, attracting over 300 party guests and netted over \$30,000 for the Norfolk Botanical Garden, Young Audiences of Virginia, and the many charities the Rotary Club of Norfolk helps support.

There are many opportunities to expand the party's social media presence by carefully investing time and resources on platforms like Twitter. A younger audience utilizes Twitter, so perhaps the Rotarac club at Old Dominion University, the college extension of Rotary International, could spearhead that initiative. I'd also utilize more tools like Facebook Live, so those that didn't attend the party can see what they're missing and make a mental note to attend next year's party. Finally, I'd also like to implement a personalized and creative e-card to our party goers as a token of appreciation for attending. This way, guests feel appreciated and will likely continue their support for next year.

Suds & Buds Party Social Media URLs

<http://www.sudsandbuds.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/sudsandbudsparty/>

<https://animoto.com/play/vTgith7Pctz5BUKZr0yTdw>