The Power of Purposeful Social Media Communication

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Introduction

The 21st century information era keeps bringing up new tools in order to facilitate communication, interaction and engagement.

The high bandwidth available turns moving-images into an ever more attractive and therefore - from a marketing perspective - more important communication channel.

Moving-image communication such as video-telephony being once a future vision, has become a standard feature of any smartphone. With a continuously growing amount of information and communication, channels that provide constant actuality, e.g. snapchat, are more and more in demand.

Today’s coexisting social media tools and platforms are being used in juxtaposition with each other: In function of content and topicality, users select the respectively most convenient channels in order to keep their community up-to-date – using text, voice, photo or moving-image.

Based on those developments and technologies, we founded the production company Filmemacher Deutschland in February of 2016 in order to develop and realize a new type of documentary production. The young team has made it its business to use innovative technologies and direct social media communication as well as data-driven online marketing in the production of extravagant outdoor documentaries.

Filmemacher Deutschland started its online presence as a small Facebook Community which has meantime grown to the biggest community of filmmakers in Germany. In cooperation with its Facebook community, Filmemacher Deutschland organizes documentary shooting trips to remote areas abroad in order to capture special outdoor experiences which often have a charity aspect as well.

One of our most successful projects, our road trips to Nepal and Tanzania, impressively demonstrate the power of purposeful social media communication. In the following, we will explain the project and its success factors.
Outline of the Project

The road trip documentary projects in Nepal and Tanzania are a great example of how the Filmemacher Deutschland concept ideally works out. The project was staffed with the core Filmemacher team and members of the online community, as well as two “social media stars”, that is, social influencers well-known from YouTube.

For this project, we aimed at reaching and engaging the widest possible social community during the shooting already, so a lot of background information, inside impressions and interviews were distributed that gave users the chance to participate in the journey from day one. Through this early interaction with followers, we were able to respond to viewers’ demands or ideas in the course of production. This way, a broad audience got engaged in the project within only few weeks:

Within three weeks of shooting for the Nepal project, 1.2 million people were reached, 278,000 views and 68,000 likes were generated.

The Projects’ Performance Factors

The online marketing strategy for distribution and performance measurement of content on various online channels was designed and implemented together with Frankfurt-based online performance-marketing agency Klickkonzept GmbH. The projects’ success was not a lucky break – on the contrary, the project was purposefully designed, carefully set up and professionally implemented and supervised, employing a specific methodology and following defined performance objectives. Here are the main performance factors:

A Passionate Team with Intuitive Know-How

Each of the team members who planned and realized the documentary travels grew up knowing and using the functions and potentials of social media. The intuitive use of those media together with passion and enthusiasm evoked by the project itself is essential in order to create and distribute authentic contents effectively. The production of social media content as an end in itself where protagonists only re-enact certain scenes
leads to an inherent lack of authenticity, which is often fatal in social networks.

Technologies that Open up New Perspectives

Social platforms are under constant innovation pressure: Each platform aims to be the first to provide new formats or ways of interaction to its users. The upcoming developments in the area of virtual reality, for example, will take user experience to a new level. Generally speaking, applying the newest technological options in social marketing campaigns leads to a higher chance of viral distribution, regardless of the respective contents.

In this project, the latest live-streaming functions on Facebook were combined with the newest camera technology, the use of 360°-videos and impressive aerial photography through the use of drones, in order to make the user experience as attractive as possible from a technological perspective as well.

Knowledge about the Target Group

Profound knowledge about the target audience is essential for any successful online campaign. In the first project stage, the team gave a lot of thought to the target group we were aiming to reach and engage. These considerations were necessary in order to match the content of the film to the audience, but also to select the right online channels: Different channels can have a very different user structure. Furthermore, the specific targeting through the use of demographic data was indispensable for the initial addressing of the target group.

The Right Online Channels

The selection of the best online channel(s) for each piece of content is another important step. Not all channels are suitable for all types of content. There is a need to distinguish between visually-complex and non-visually-complex content. The latter can be communicated via microblogging platforms such as Twitter. Since our project is about film documentary and therefore visually-complex content, wide-ranging channels such as Insta-
gram and Facebook were chosen. The live-streams were also spread over Youtube. Very recent interviews, pictures and personal content were filmed and published via Snapchat.

Next to the consideration of the user characteristics in each social channel, it is important to consider also the absolute reach within the target groups. These data may vary greatly from country to country. For example: In 2015 there were 13.08 million Twitter users in the UK. In Germany, Twitter only had 5.08 million users.

A Functional Distribution Strategy

In order to generate large ranges in social networks, the distribution strategy is crucial. With today's abundance of online content, there is hardly a chance to land a viral hit exclusively through user sharing. Therefore, the content must be disseminated through a large community or through paid distribution in the networks for initial spreading. Once a relevant distribution within the target group has been achieved, the effects of viral spreading come into play and additional large reach can be achieved.

The main success factor in the project was the collaboration with influencers, that is with popular social media broadcasters who have large audiences and interact with their communities on a daily basis. Filmemacher Deutschland also maintains an online network of influential filmmakers on Facebook. These Facebook community members and well-known YouTubers were invited to participate in this and upcoming projects. Due to the attractiveness of the projects’ travel destinations and the professional team at Filmemacher, who also produced content for the influencers to use on their own channels, we were able to engage many influencers from each relevant online channel. Furthermore, the content was advertised with a small budget in order to support the initial spark for the viral spread.

Through the described strategy, the project achieved a very strong engagement within the social networks.

Gather Specific Goals and KPIs for all Channels

Still, user engagement is not everything. The consistent recording, evaluation and use of the online data was equally important for this project’s and the following projects’ success. By defining key performance indicators
(KPI’s) and analyzing the user handling of different content on different channels, we were able to identify the relevant content and formulate specific goals. The extensive statistics that social networks provide, clearly indicated which videos were most clicked, how long users watched which video and whether users had further interactions with our campaign. Thus, during the course of the project, the best-performing pieces of content were selected, used and further elaborated. In addition, the most attractive documentary content could be identified on the basis of user comments and was deepened in the further production process.

Look at the Entire Customer Journey

When looking at and analyzing a project’s key figures, the entire customer journey is important. The customer journey refers to the different contact points a user has with a campaign from the first encounter to the final conversion. Looking at the whole customer journey allows to see whether users are coming back to view the next posts and news of the project. It also shows whether the users have viewed and followed the content on a daily basis or rather during longer time intervals. A profound analysis of the customer journey also revealed whether the content generated real fans or merely entertained different people for a short time.

No Content without a Call-to-Action

Another main success factor is the activation of viewers. In the social media world it is important to tell the user exactly what you expect from him through well-placed call-to-actions. Since most social media strategies are about generating fans or subscribers, this is one of the most important hints that should be given to viewers or readers. Also, the announcement of new content or the reference to alternative channels with other or complementary content is a sensible activation in order to increase the reach and the engagement of the community.
The development of this project illustrates very well the positive power of social media communication. The project, launched as a documentary film project, became a very influential social media charity project. It was the power of social networks with their direct communication and the numerous possibilities of interaction that made it possible to reach so many people in a very short time. We made sure that there were a lot of influencers among them who would contribute to the further distribution and increase engagement. Also, they registered with Filmemacher Deutschland to participate in the next documentary projects.

The biggest success was the strong response from the community. As the documentary content revolves around poor or disadvantaged regions and people, thousands of comments were posted about how to support the aid projects presented in the documentary. The response was so great that the project team decided to carry over the charity impulse of this project into a non-profit organization called LifeAllstars.

At www.lifeallstars.com, there are now a number of charity projects in which the social community has participated through personal engagement as well as donations. The development of those projects is continuously documented on the social platforms.

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