Association of Hindu Society Web Presence:
Marketing for a Community Project

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ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates how three graduate students created a unified community voice and spread the ideas of a small group of Bhutanese-Nepali refugees in Utica, New York. Not only did the group meet with the client in his environment to attempt to understand the cultural concerns, they developed a user friendly, professional website dedicated to the mission and history of the Association of Hindu Society of Utica, New York. They interviewed members of the congregation to develop content and developed a comprehensive marketing plan in an effort to connect the 150 Hindu members living in the city of Utica as well as to try and encourage new members to practice the faith of this group. As a result the group reached over 150 members through social networking sites and are continuously trying to generate popularity to this cultural group within the community.

A comprehensive overview of the project is outlined within this document with specific attention given to the marketing plan. The marketing efforts were specific to the unique needs of the Hindu practicing Bhutanese-Nepali refugees living in Utica, NY and may not be generalizable to the population at large.
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INTRODUCTION

Mother Theresa once said, “I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” While mass communication and technology was not the essence of this astonishing woman her words echo the fundamental aspect of communication. Alone, the voice is merely just a sound but together voices can carry a message.

A community is more about the feeling of belonging than the proximity of those belonging to it. Some aspects of a well unified community include a common history, social interdependence, participation, and shared practices (Rovai, 2002). The key to having a quality level of community without sharing close proximity is by establishing a clear path of communication.

Utica, NY has recently been a hub of cultural activities in the last 20 years. From about 2009 to the present a wave of Bhutanese-Nepali Refugees has settled in the small upstate city. While more than 300 refugees have recently made Utica their home, the 150 Hindu practicing parishioners have found it difficult to maintain their cultural traditions because of a lack of communication and in essence a weakened sense of community.

This paper will serve to provide the information on how a group of Master’s Students at the State University of New York, Institute of Technology attempted to provide a platform to unify this group of refugees. Multiple electronic modes of communication were developed, a brand initiative was designed, the cultural voice was unified and created and a marketing strategy was put together in the hope of informing and uniting this subculture. In the end the Association of Hindu Society of Utica New York established a growing presence in the Utica community. Their campaign is more cohesive and organized than ever before. While not every aspect of their goals have been met, yet, the stones are being thrown and ripples have been created honoring and formally establishing their life in Utica, NY.

BACKGROUND

The mission of the Association of Hindu Society of Utica NY is to teach the rich spiritual heritage of Hindu philosophy and religion to devotees of all ages and nationalities. The association intends to provide the leadership and resources for the Hindu community, including:

- Provide services to devotees and children, promoting the awareness of principles and practices of Hinduism.
- Invite Hindu teachers and scholars to present topics on Hinduism, enhancing the understanding of it.
- Celebrate festivals such as Holi, Mahashivarati, Rama Navami, Dashera and Diwali, and other events.
- Bring all topics, issues and events under one roof to establish a strong Hindu community.
• Seek active participation, guidance and support from local people in our journey to be a cultural hub in our community.

Educating the youth on the principles and practices of Hinduism is one of their goals as they aim to be a diverse and peaceful group in the Utica area. Their goal is to establish an active Hindu Society so the Utica area can add another cultural and religious congregation to its already diverse list.

They hope to create a Hindu association that celebrates their religion while educating others and promoting awareness. The Association of Hindu Society of Utica NY looks forward to building bridges with anyone from the local community and beyond.

As their community continues to grow, it is becoming evident they need a unified way to communicate and share their ideas as well as a facility to accommodate their activities and religious rituals. As they become more familiar in their new home and environment, they miss the sanctity and richness of their own temple or place of worship. In addition, without a common place to worship, the Associate of Hindu Society has found some difficulties when it comes to communicating their message in an organized way to reach their community as a whole.

Currently they are practicing in their homes and would like to find a space to create their own temple in Utica. Association leaders would like to rent a house or apartment to start a Hindu temple. Once they have enough funding, their future goal is to build a Shiva Panchyan temple paying homage to Shiva and four other Gods.

In terms of communication, a rudimentary website was designed and viral, however lacked the popularity amongst its members to successfully accomplish an active exchange of information. Very little, if any, marketing was done to advertise the website and direct members of the Association to the site for news and information.

The overall vision of the Association includes celebrating religious festivals throughout the year and regular worship ceremonies among a congregation. Along with practicing Hinduism, they hope that Hindu priests and scholars from all over will perform rituals or present lectures on Hindu topics to increase awareness on their culture and who they are. Anyone interested in celebrating religious rituals and or participating in society events is encouraged to attend.

**METHOD**

The main task at hand was to create a functional website for the Association of Hindu Society of Utica, New York with the goal of making the overall population of Hindus in Utica aware of
event and news and have a network of connectivity. The project itself was a collaborative effort accomplished by three SUNYIT Information Design and Technology Master’s students; Mary Christopher, Lee Cristman and I.

Our first step was to get to know the client and truly understand the needs and goal of the Hindu Association. We were first introduced to our client, Mukti “Sagar” Rijal, through Dr. Kathryn Stam of SUNYIT. After seeing the original site for the first time and eventually meeting Sagar in person the group decided that we needed to take a “Less is More” approach in terms of client collaboration. Instead of asking qualitative, open ended questions, we conducted some informal research ourselves and provided the client with options. The purpose for providing options instead of simply asking the client for what he wanted was to eliminate the common consumer misconception that more options are better. ARH suggests that, “People often have a difficult time making decisions when they are unfamiliar with how to compare options. For this reason, it may be in your customer’s best interest to present them with fewer rather than more options” (2013).

It was also important to keep the audience in mind. Sagar was the rule, not the exception and if he was unfamiliar or overwhelmed with our design choices we assumed that the Hindu community in general would share his reaction. Reinertsen and Thomke (2012) have found that “There is a common myth about product development: the more features put into a product, the more the customers will like it. Product-development teams seem to believe that adding features creates value for customers and subtracting them destroys it. This attitude explains why products are so complicated.” In other words, we wanted to keep the design and options straightforward as to not ruin the overall ease of communication – the main objective.

Similarly, we approached Sagar with a minimalist design approach. Research suggests that, “If a page has too many elements, the viewer will be confused about where to look or misinterpret the priority of each element. A minimalist design puts the focus squarely on the content” (Knight, 2009). In addition, we found that presenting Sagar with too many options was not beneficial because of the technological gap between our culture and his. In fact, Sagar shared with us that it wasn’t until his arrival to the United States in the late 90s that he had ever seen a computer in person. This posed an additional challenge due to the fact that we had to continuously keep in mind that in order to make the site effective and purposeful it must remain user friendly and translate seamlessly between the designers and the client who would be in charge of its regular maintenance.

Prior to meeting the client for the first time a web sphere analysis was conducted to determine a list of possible characteristics to be included on the web site.
We initially approached the client with 24 main options that were gathered from other not for profit websites. This list includes the following choices. A full detailed list including some of the preliminary questions can be found in the appendix section, item 1, at the end of the paper.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Donations</th>
<th>Mission Statement</th>
<th>Social Networking</th>
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<td>Enlist Partners</td>
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<td>Blogs</td>
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<td>Contact Information</td>
<td>Place of Worship</td>
<td>“Who We Are”</td>
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<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td>Volunteer Opportunities</td>
<td>Services/Programs</td>
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<td>About</td>
<td>Involvement in the Community</td>
<td>Links to Holy Material</td>
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<td>General Education Section</td>
<td>Local Stores</td>
<td>Gallery Section</td>
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The wants and needs of the client by choosing from the pre-established list of features helped the group create the initial design layout. We decided collectively on a main heading at the top of the page which was to include the logo for branding purposes, a list of no more than five featured options and a sidebar on the right side to include social networking information along with option to donate. The main content area would be the left center of the page. Appendix item 2 fully shows the original design layout.

While the group works simultaneously to create an organized web presence, each person was charged with a unique and individual problem. It was at this point, after establishing the main focus and feel of the Hindu Association that we concentrated specifically on our own contributing factors.

Mary’s focus was writing content for the website and to help the Hindu congregation find their voice in order to achieve their vision and goals.

While we are covering all of the topics and points the Hindu Association creator wants covered, we are using the less is more concept of writing that web design often requires. When you practice a user-centered design process “you focus on people, their goals, their needs, their way of working and their environments” (Redish 2007). According to Redish, when people visit websites they want concise and fresh content that: “answers a question or helps them complete a task, is easy to find and easy to understand, and is accurate, up to date, and credible” (2007).

Another important content element to keep in mind is trying to reach a cross-cultural audience because HAUNY want Hindus to join their congregation **and** create a cultural/religious space to raise awareness among non-Hindus.

Cultural differences, language barriers and technological disparities made some of the work challenging for the Hindu group.
Technology is helping spread a message that otherwise would be hard for the group to do on its own. According to Marshall McLuhan, “any medium … of any extension of ourselves – result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology” (1994). Our group project is an extension of the HAUNY’s voice and it making it alive to other diverse cultures.

While Mary focused specifically on making the sites content authentic, accurate, and with the Hindu Association’s mission in mind, Lee Cristman focused on the more technical specifications. His task was to establish a primary web presence for the Bhutanese-Nepali refugees located in Utica, New York that will promote awareness, educate the public and build the visual and cultural identity of a growing community. His aim was also to include opportunities via the website to become involved in the community and to create an easy infrastructure to solicit donations.

The website needed to have search engine optimization and a strong social networking capability. A logo was created for the association to use in their branding. The website was submitted to both Google and Bing Webmaster Tools upon completion. The organization will use one social network starting out (Facebook).

The website was designed as if it were a functioning non-profit organization – which eventually it hopes to be. Tenets of success include, making the website donor-friendly. Design the site to be media-friendly, provided information about the organization. Provide information to users on how to become involved in the organization by offering membership and volunteer information. Emphasize the social media community centered on the website (via Facebook). A blog will be present on the site which will be used to promote events and provide news to the community.

If the Hindu Association is to have a successful social media strategy, it needs to have at least a small traditional marketing strategy that I was in charge of. In addition to the website, business cards, bumper stickers, magnets and post cards were made all branded with the logo (Appendix 3-7). These were distributed via the refugee center and other public venues – local store – Spend Smart Indian Grocery – New Hartford, NY; Community Education at Mohawk Valley Community College, SUNYIT, as we are limited in our resources and concentrate primarily on word of mouth marketing.

Similarly, a Facebook page (appendix 8) was created for the Association of Hindu Society that links to the website and promotes upcoming events, provides pictures, and again advertises the logo and brand. Research was done looking at the best practices for advertising a group.
HISTORY

The Bhutanese-Nepali refugees living in Utica were forced out of their homeland because of their Hindu beliefs and Nepali culture. Now as they start over in a new country trying to adjust to foreign customs, they have the freedom to practice their religion. To do so they will need to build something from scratch. Keeping their faith and persevering is the essence of who they are as this is a group has dealt with hardships and persecution for several decades.

In the early 1990s, after several years of repressive policies and human rights violations against Bhutanese citizens of Nepali origin, the Bhutanese government expelled approximately 100,000 Bhutanese-Nepali people. One-sixth of its population was gone, creating a new wave of refugees without a country to call home.

Bhutan, hailed as “the last Shangri-La,” is a kingdom in South Asia that is bordered by Tibetan China, India and Nepal. It is predominantly a Buddhist state with cultural traditions similar to Tibet.

As the culturally ethnic Nepali population steadily grew in Southern Bhutan, the Bhutanese government feared that its Buddhist culture was being overtaken by Hindu traditions and cultural practices of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese. Also, the Bhutanese elite became fearful when a growing number of the Nepalese received high-level government positions and began organizing demonstrations that called for democracy in Bhutan. The Bhutanese monarchy has always maintained that most of those expelled from Bhutan were illegal immigrants.

These Bhutanese-Nepalese were forced to renounce their homes and homeland and fled Bhutan due to violence. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 107,000 Bhutanese refugees living in seven camps in Nepal were documented in 2008. Since then a resettlement process has moved several thousands of these refugees to Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees has helped resettle over 300 Bhutanese-Nepali refugees in Utica. They are working and attending schools and colleges in their new community and know it may be a long road before all of their hopes are fulfilled. Transitioning from a third-world country to a first-world one was not easy, yet they are optimistic about building a meaningful life in the Mohawk Valley.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A good marketing strategy is imperative for the success of any new idea. Viral marketing is the lip service afforded to internet ideas. Specifically, viral marketing is defined as, “Any strategy
that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message’s exposure and influence” (Wilson, 2005). Just like most ideas that generate popularity through “word of mouth” or recommendation, viral marketing strategies gain recognition through use and reputation.

Dr. Ralph F. Wilson (2005) identified six marketing strategies that can lead to a successful web idea. He believes that while not all six strategies need to be met, the more that are present in a web idea the higher the likelihood that that idea will catch on. First he discusses the idea of giving something away for free. Free always seems to generate buzz. An investment in your idea is a catalyst for response but your investment does not have to be monetary. Even giving away information or services can be regarded as giving something away free.

The second characteristic he identified was the idea of transferability. Ideas that are the simplest to pass on are often the most rapid to catch on. Wilson states, “The medium that carries your marketing message must be easy to transfer and replicate”. In other words, the message must be able to translate easily and effectively across disciplines and sometimes cultures. The message being marketed is better left simple and to the point. Marketing is the hook – the message should leave the consumer wanting more. Provide higher levels of transferability by establishing a clear, concise message.

The third element warns against biting off more than you can chew. More formally put, Wilson (2005) suggests that you must be ready to transform your idea from small scale to large scale if the need arises. Whatever type of production or services you are providing must be able to translate from small scale to larger scale within a small time frame if necessary.

The fourth element looks into the extrinsic motivations of people and why they spend their free time doing what they are doing. Our society is driven by our own personal selfishness. To promote and market an idea, one must exploit these characteristics. If you understand your audience you may be more likely to take advantage of their motivations.

The fifth identified characteristic suggests using existing networks to promote a new idea. While Wilson discusses the idea of the social circles that each individual brings to a new idea, it could also be scaled to bigger social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. He states, “Learn to place your message into existing communications between people, and you rapidly multiply its dispersion” (Wilson, 2005). While individual interaction will surely support this claim, larger social networks will do it in a much faster and large scale way.

Finally, the last element that Wilson (2005), identified as a key principle in viral marketing is not reinventing the wheel. He believes it is important to use preexisting resources to get your message across. There is nothing wrong with piggybacking your ideas with others that are
similar. It is a great way to network and effectively get your ideas expressed without it being labor intensive. Especially when the product is information it is important to see similar ideas as collaborative as opposed to competitive. By following Wilson’s (2005), guidelines, new ideas will not only be shared but spread effectively, efficiently and successfully.

Calder and Malthouse have done research that expands Wilson’s idea of understanding client motivation to exploit time and energy spent on a website or product. Calder and Malthouse (2006) focused particularly on how marketing should be integrated where the consumer is at the focal point. Specifically, Calder and Malthouse (2006) believe that “The focus [of advertising] is on the consumer’s life and the experiences of how things fit into that life” (p. 1). Marketing is all about branding an idea. Marketing should manipulate how a consumer interprets a product or idea. By knowing the audience, you can direct the marketing in a way to alter the consumer’s experience, therefore “the brand concept is derived from [the] consumer” (Calder and Malthouse, 2006, p. 2). It is important to know what the consumer expectation is. What is motivating them to look for new ideas and information? Understanding why people need your product is just as important as understanding your product itself. When you wholly understand an idea and why consumers may need your idea you can develop a more comprehensive plan to have your ideas catch on and spread. The spread of ideas is important in the longevity of the idea itself. Without consumer popularity ideas and products become extinct.

Contacts can help to generate popularity and influence the consumer. A contact is considered anything that impacts how the consumer encounters the exchange. A marketing plan, in essence, is a series of contacts that influence how the consumer interprets the product. Contacts affect consumers. Contacts should be developed in a way that the consumer is integrated – trying to establish a personal connection to the product. The level to which the consumer is engaged is an important component with regards to contacts and marketing. If a consumer fails to feel affected the likelihood of engagement deters. In much the same way, Lars Hallnas discusses how it is not the product but rather the use of the product that is the driving force behind success. He claims that, “Usability resides in the expressions of acts that define use” (p. 15). In other words, both Hallnas and Calder and Malthouse believe that consumers will use the product more if that product is in some way catered to them. While Calder and Malthouse label these as contacts, Hallnas believes that it is the design of the product and necessity of interaction that makes the product successful. Both sets of researchers agree that the marketing plan or series of contacts needs to be developed with a consumer centered approach. The goal of the marketing strategy is not to necessarily to flaunt the product, but rather, display the product in a way that affect consumers personally. A good marketing plan will touch the consumer on an individual level.

The goal of a marketing plan should be to provide an experience for the consumer, according to Calder and Malthouse (2006). While creating the platform to allow for a specific affect – marketers need to focus on two main objectives – (1) did the marketing provide a strong level of
connection between the product and consumer and (2) was that experience a genuine reflection of the product. In other words, does the marketing plan accurately describe the product and is the marketing plan effective with regards to reaching the consumer on a personal level? A well thought out marketing plan looks at where the advertising will be done in order to provide for a strong product consumer connection. For instance, if your product is one that is offering a cultural or educational experience it should be advertised in a setting in which the consumer is in a cultural or educational mindset. By matching mindset with environment the marketer is better able to match the product objective with the appropriate consumer. Look at magazines for instance. Advertisements found in magazines generally appeal to their audience – AARP magazine has drastically different advertisements than Seventeen, thus showing that the marketing team understands the audience and creates a platform in which the mindset matches the environment.

In addition to the experience a consumer has in relationship to the product itself, Calder and Malthouse (2006) have found that the experience a consumer has had with the environment in which the product is being advertised can influence the overall effect of the product as well. For instance, if a consumer has had a particularly good experience at an event and that event has an advertisement they will use their previous experience as a kind of recommendation. The high-quality encounter they previously had provides a positive reputation for further encounters, thus, increasing the likelihood of trusting the advertisement and therefore increases the likelihood of actually engaging in whatever is being advertised. Therefore, it is important to know not only the consumer themselves, but have some type of familiarity with the environment in which you are advertising as well.

Because the consumer is such an integral part of the integrated marketing plan, marketing can sometimes be complex and have several layers – including both mass marketing as well as a more individualized approach. While the overall marketing plan incorporates the same theme across all of its advertisements it is often the case that slight variations of the plan be made for designated audiences (Calder and Malthouse, 2006). This technique allows marketers to manipulate the message to reach a more specific group of consumers. This practice is known as creating relationship brands. It make sense to do this given that advertising happens in many different environments and products may be suitable to vast audiences – just tweaked in a way to affect the consumer slightly differently. Some products are used across barriers but still needs to be advertised in a way that make the consumer feel a personal connection. Therefore, it is imperative that the advertisement be manipulated to reach all facets of the audience.

The biggest challenge with relationship brands is not compromising the overall quality and delivery of service to the brand itself. While it is important to hone in on certain audiences by highlighting certain features specifically it is especially important not to pollute the overall promise of the product. Calder and Malthouse (2006) use ESPN as an example. They discuss
how ESPN offers sports information on an extensive variety of sports and while some ESPN consumers may have certain preferences as to what sports they want on information on and how they receive their information, the overall brand concept for ESPN does not change – it provides unique experiences for the consumer without compromise its overall promise of delivering sports information. Customizing the marketing plan for the audience at hand allows for relationship branding. In terms of a marketing strategy it is important to remember that the larger the audience the less specific the plan, and therefore, the smaller the audience the more individualized the campaign can be.

The marketing plan can be altered based on the subsegmentation of the larger group. The subsegments can be characterized by a series of factors including “demographics, psychographically, attitudinally, behaviorally,” etc. (Calder and Malthouse, 2006). Individual affect is strengthened by addressing these groups on a more unique level. The goal for brand marketing to a subsegment is to provide an experience for this small cohort that highlights the uniqueness of the group and in essence how they interpret the product. By creating a personalized marketing plan for smaller followers marketers in essence develop a relationship between consumer and product. The strength of this relationship then can predict consumer loyalties and consumer satisfaction. By making the marketing plan more individualized you reach the consumer on a more personal level and therefore create a stronger bond. In sum, it is important to advertise your product in a way that touches the consumer in a meaningful way.

While Calder and Malthouse discuss some important factors to do with general marketing techniques, Pope, Isely & Asamoah-Tutu (2009), look specifically at the marketing strategies for nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and how they differ from regular marketing plans. Research states that NPOs did not use marketing strategies until the “late 1960s and early 1970s” and because of this delays they are often highly misunderstood although commonly accepted today (Pope, Isely & Asamoah-Tutu, 2009, p. 185).

Although more acceptable today, there is little agreement in the field as to the appropriate way to market NPOs because of the vast difference they have with their for-profit counterparts whose main objectives are improving their product’s bottom line. While most for-profit companies are looking to either generate revenue or decrease expenses in an effort to increase income, NPOs typically aspire to create a presence within the community for an economic, social, and or cultural objective. Research suggests that the difference in purpose between NPOs and for-profit organizations results in a vast difference between how these two separate entities should be advertised. Compared to the bottom line, NPOs need to satisfy the needs of “clients or customers, volunteers, and donors or funders” (Pope et al., 2009, p. 186) and therefore need to address each audience specifically.
Pope et al., argue that it is not extremely difficult to generate buzz about most NPOs because they are providing a service that is not provided by private or governmental industry. Typically NPOs are created and cultivated by passionate people who often lack business sense. The lack of business and marketing within NPOs translates into a weak customer focus which then generates into a poor marketing strategy – like Calder and Malthouse suggest.

When focusing on their second constituent, volunteers, it is important that NPO marketing strategies take into consideration how to recruit and retain quality volunteers. While the fundamental principle behind good volunteers is someone passionate for the cause, providing some type of benefit to volunteers, similar to what Dr. Ralph F. Wilson (2005) describes as the first of his six elements for successful viral marketing – giving away something for free. A successful marketing campaign for NPOs addresses not only the needs of the consumer, donor or funder but also must address the concerns of how to generate volunteers. Analogous to the principles that Calder and Malthouse (2006) explain when dealing with the consumer experience in terms of environment and how it can influence the overall effectiveness of the product the volunteers can be used as an extension of the marketing campaign. The volunteers provide an interactive experience that directly relates to the product. Using quality volunteers that reinforce the product affect only strengthens the marketing campaign. The motivation behind a volunteer is almost just as important as the motivation behind the consumer. Marketers want to be able to target what is the driving force behind consuming – wether it be the product or the act of volunteering – in order to manipulate the marketing campaign and take advantage of the motivational factors. Volunteers must be clearly communicated with and expectations should be laid out so that the marketing strategy remains organized amongst the whole campaign.

The final identified group to look at when marketing an NPO is the donors and funders. Charitable donations are key to most NPOs and therefore it is extremely important to identify the motivating factors that contribute to getting an individual to donate. A large portion of a good marketing strategy needs to address this concern. Just as Calder and Malthouse, 2006, found that a series of factors should be examined when tailoring a campaign to a smaller subsegmented portion of a larger audience the same is true for donors and funders – by looking at the demographics and tailoring the marketing strategies towards a specific cohort the higher the likelihood that you yield a donation. J.A. Pope et al., found that demographic factors were a large indicator of charitable support. He also found that stronger bonds and longer relationship durations between a donor/funder and an effort were indicative of donations. This can be thought similar again to Calder and Malthouse’s ideas behind relationship brands. Making connections on a deeper, more meaningful level that will yield longer relationships not only increases the likelihood of donations but also strengthens the overall effect of the product being marketed.
While it is important to address and identify what creates good marketing strategies it is equally as important to understand some of the hurdles associated with marketing – specifically when dealing with NPOs. J.A. Pope et al., identified money, time and or resources as the biggest setback with marketing. While the goal of the NPO is to generate funds through donations most donors and funders would rather their contribution go towards the effort itself rather than the marketing campaign. Similarly, if the NPO has a board it is often difficult to pass and approve monetary gifts towards advertisements. When looking specifically at smaller NPOs a barrier that was met in one specific case had to deal with the “difficulty in reaching other groups likely due to differing perceptions and cultural attitudes toward the services offered. Smaller NPOs continue to have trouble getting their name out there, whether it is from lack of funding or lack of knowledge about how to reach their target markets” (J.A. Pope et al., 2009). To provide a complete marketing strategy it is not only important to understand the audience and to manipulate the media in a way to appeal to them but also it must actually reach the audience. Cultural barriers are often overlooked in NPOs because of the perceived idea that everyone is afforded the same opportunities to access information. It takes a collaborative, creative effort to reach the masses across cultures. Perhaps that is where Dr. Wilson’s (2005), ideas of exploiting preexisting modes of advertising can come in useful. Instead of trying to create a new way of reaching the masses simply replicate or associate with an existing, successful NPO or cause. How is this group of individuals already being effected by advertisements – how can that be reproduced for your own use?

Utilizing web based media strategies has proven an effective way to market smaller scale NPOs as long as the website is used to its fullest potential. Site management is a must especially when online donations are involved. Also, while one way communication is useful in the marketing strategy using online facilitators it is often beneficial to have a more meaning transfer of information. Allowing the consumer to be part of the overall project through the exchange of ideas creates the meaningful types of connections that Calder and Malthouse (2005) and J.A. Pope et al. (2009) discussed.

Overall, J.A. Pope et al. (2009) found that one of the biggest differences between marketing strategies between for profit and NPOs was a lack of focus – specifically because NPOs did not possess the same amount of resource, in terms of monetary, experience, and manpower. They identified that the best thing NPOs can do is they have a clear plan, communicate well, and get to know the motivations behind donors in order to persuade prospective contributors by alluring to their needs and wants. While the audience for NPOs is vast both J.A. Pope et al (2009) and Wilson (2005) discuss the importance of keeping the message simple and concise – making it easier to travel across cultures. Marketing is not fundraising but a good marketing strategy generates popularity and when successful can lead to an increase of funds.
Past research would suggest that providing an individualized, integrative experience for consumers can create a fair amount of brand loyalty (Calder and Malthouse, 2006; Hallnas; J.A. Pope et al., 2009). Bolotaeva and Cata (2011) discuss how using social networks with marketing campaigns can provide such experiences. Bolotaeva and Cata define a social networking site as, “Instruments for building virtual communities, or social networks, for individuals with similar education, lifestyles, interests or activities…with the main motivation being communication and maintaining relationships.” In other words in terms of marketing a social network can act as a catalyst in terms of building report with potential consumers because of its structure --- it brings like people together and allows them to exchange ideas freely and easily.

These social networking websites generate popularity by following the general principle of the 4Ps – personal relevance, allowing for participation, possibility of meeting physically, and plausibility in terms of functionality. The ability to share information with a “friend” online easily transfers the overall mission of whatever it is one is advertising. The medium itself allows and encourages the transfer of information in a way that is neither aggressive nor intimidating. This “sharing feature” allows the suggestion of a product without the backlash of rejection. It is simply passing the information along to people you may think are interested in such a way that one is not putting themselves in a vulnerable position. An online social network becomes a gateway of information transfer between businesses and customers that is centered on trust (Bolotaeva and Cata, 2011).

While online marketing means have proven highly successful in the past specifically because of the ease to which the information is transferred – a fundamental principle that Wilson (2005) describes as a key factor in any good marketing strategy – Bolotaeva and Cata (2011) warn that social networks should not replace traditional marking schemes. Having a large repertoire of media is a key to reaching a vast audience. By broadening the marketing scope you expand the voice of the marketing campaign to a much larger audience. While it is important to implement a variety of approaches in terms of marketing keep in mind the fundamental principles of keeping the message simply and to the point and also allowing the message to be scaled larger without difficulty (Wilson, 2005).

Online social networking provides an inexpensive, easily facilitated, wide range medium for marketing. Most social networking sites also allow a platform to showcase community involvement and public awareness. Some of the downfalls of social networking in terms of marketing include invasion of user privacy and limited brand control. With limited ability to police user’s comments immediately, promoting a product on a social networking site runs the risk of potential backlash from public users and what they say about your brand. In general, the benefits of using a social networking site to promote a product seems to outweigh any of the risks associated with it and it’s becoming a more common trend if not an obvious outlet to reach a more vast consumer base.
Not only is it imperative to have a solid understanding of what makes a marketing plan affect the consumer in a way that entices them to engage in the project, it’s also important to create a comprehensive, organized plan. As Bolotaeva and Cata (2011) suggestion it is important to develop a comprehensive plan that incorporates traditional marketing materials with an online component. When preparing a comprehensive marketing strategy in terms of e-marketing – utilizing the internet for marketing activities – Sandeep Krishnamurthy (2006) identified some key factors in developing a solid plan. Just like Wilson (2006) Krishnamurthy believes that five basics can be followed in order to provide opportunity for a successful plan.

When developing a new marketing plan goal, both long and short term, must be established. Because there should be the ability to assess these goals it is important that the goals be clearly stated and something that is quantifiable. The second consideration for successful marketing is the actors – who is doing the marketing and what is the make-up of the audience. Similarly to what has already been developed in past research it is important to know the clientele that you are aiming at in order to better market your product. Thirdly, the appropriate space in which to market your campaign needs to be addressed. By better knowing your audience and understanding your goals you will knowledgeably be able to assess which outlet is most appropriate for what and who you desire to reach. Fourth concerns actions and which specific e-actions should be taken. For instance, are you receiving good responses from your current campaign or should you change something. Are you keeping your blogging and twitter feed up to date and relative? Actions are important in assessing what is working and what is not in order to maintain a successful plan over time. Finally the last basic rule to follow in developing a good marketing strategy according to Krishnamurthy is outcomes and expectations. What is it that we are expecting to obtain through our e-marketing efforts? By assessing our outcomes against our goals we remain honest and focused on our marketing strategies. We hold ourselves accountable in this way. It is a very important part of the marketing process because it prevents the marketing team and the marketing campaign in general from becoming stagnant or complacent.

Marketing a product or idea can be a very difficult task. There are many different avenues a marketer can take in order to best promote their concept and research shows that there is no set way to guarantee success. The best practice to take when marketing a new idea or item is to understand what the goal of marketing is

RESULTS

Based on the research a marketing plan was organized in order to spread the idea of Hinduism not only among the 150 identified Hindu’s living in the Utica area but to those who were interested in learning about new culture as well. In addition to advertising the Association of Hindu Society of Utica, New York, a document was created highlighting some of the best
practices used when becoming involved in a community project. That document can be seen in the appendix – number 9.

The Association of Hindu Society of Utica, New York posed a unique situation in terms of marketing. While the literature makes many suggestions for what to do on a much larger scale and when dealing with a more established group, it did not highlight a best course of action for a small population with restricted accessibility in a small upstate city. I filtered through the research and created a marketing plan that I determined would be the best and most effective way to create a buzz about the Association of Hindu Society. Calder and Malthouse (2006) suggest that this personalized marketing plan established for a smaller group of followers develops a stronger relationship between the consumer and the product and connecting on this personal level will in essence establish a stronger bond.

As suggested by Bolotaeva and Cata (2011) as well as fellow graduate student Katie Reilly (2013), a comprehensive approach to marketing will expand your audience. In this particular situation we not only used viral marketing which was suggested by Wilson (2005) but we also used more traditional methods as well.

In terms of viral marketing we created a functioning, well organized website to deliver the information that the client Mukti “Sagar” Rijal found appropriate and necessary (Appendix 3). The web address for this website is hauny001.wordpress.com. In addition we created a Facebook page with over 150 fans of the page (Appendix 8). Other viral marketing tools such as twitter were offered to the client; however, he felt that they were not suitable or practical for his needs.

In terms of the more traditional terms of marketing, a logo was created in order to brand the association in a more unified way. Please refer to appendix 10 to see the final logo. This logo was strategically imperative as it was used on all the marketing material. Eventually, it is the hope that this logo will be the symbol an entire community feeling – not just a mere design. Referring to the appendix 4-7 you will see that the logo was incorporated on business cards, magnets, stickers and post cards. The goal of branding a product or service is to provide recognition that is associated with an overall quality or feeling. Branding a product should not only advertise but it should generate a sense of emotion as well.

Our marketing materials were placed strategically throughout the community to generate popularity. As stated in the best practices document, “Collaboration and creating partnerships with other community groups provides a catalyst for advertisement. Community alliances benefit individual groups as well as the community at large”(Christopher and DelMedico, 2013). Strategically placing your literature or marketing material in high traffic areas is smart business practice.

The most beneficial piece of advertising that we could have done, however, is the connection we made to the group at large. Multiple sources of pre-existing literature suggest that the level of connectedness between the product and the consumer and whether or not this experience was genuine are important indicators as to whether your message will be successful. It is my opinion that creating a genuine level of connectedness can really only be established through quality
time. With this in mind, an effort to get to know the culture and the Association of Hindu Society was made by the members of the group. Not only were we welcomed into the Rijal household on several occasions but we also studied the culture in a very ethnographic way. We participated in the Holi festival celebrated at SUNYIT, we attended Culture Fest at the Stanley and we tried to immerse ourselves in the Hindu culture as much as possible. By spending the time to get to know the group, it is believed that the connections between the product (website, promotional materials, and blogs) are more authentic and therefore much more effective.

In addition to the results listed above, please refer to appendix 11–14 to see some of the interesting findings on Facebook. Interestingly enough Facebook has tracked the demographics and location of those who “Like” the Association of Hindu Society which spans 14 countries; 20 cities and across 3 languages (Appendix 11). In addition, the Association has “reached” 15 countries and 20 cities covering 4 languages (Appendix 12). Appendix 13 highlights the number of visits per day and appendix 14 shows how the member learned of us – recommendations through others, timeline, referrals, etc.

While the results seemed to work in this particular case there are a couple of things that need to be noted. Firstly, the Association of Hindu Society needs to remember to be patient. The network of followers will continue to group with time and a strong commitment to community outreach. As the presence in Utica becomes stronger so will the following. Also, keep in mind the size of the community when assessing the web traffic. The Hindu population in Utica is roughly 150, with 152 likes currently on the Facebook page the assumption could be made that a majority of the Hindu’s in Utica have access to the Association’s information.

Some of the limitations of this study include the lack of generalizability. Although a best practices document was created from this experience providing tips on how to successfully perform a community outreach project, each group and project is sure to have unique problems. In addition, it is difficult if not impossible to measure the exact number of people within the Utica area that have successfully accessed the Association of Hindu Society website or Facebook account. While popularity has grown throughout this process it is difficult to determine exactly how many families have been reached within the Utica area.

CONCLUSION

In society we’re all trying to find like members with which we belong. Having to go about organizing this effort is a difficult task. Through the spread of information, especially with the ease that technology provides, it is much easier to tackle this project.

This paper highlights the unique experience of three Master’s Student as they work their way through working with a cross cultural client, obtaining information that is both sufficient, important and useful to create content for a website, creating a user friendly web platform to spread the ideas, and then market the campaign in a way to generate buzz and popularity among the Utica community with little to no budget. Some of the challenges were not only the logistics of creating the website and gathering content but also the need to create a sense of community, to make a connection with the Hindu group and accurately depict their culture in a respectful way.
Overall, the experience of working with a community group was culturally beneficial and rewarding. Not only was a service provided to a group trying to find a unified voice, but the experience allowed for a cultural education beyond my personal expectations.
References


Hallnas, L. Interaction design aesthetics – A position paper. P. 14-16.


Appendix: 1

The original layout design of the website.
Appendix: 2

List of preliminary features and questions first deliver to the client.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web Features</th>
<th>Hindu Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
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<td>How?</td>
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<td>Paypal</td>
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<td>Mailing</td>
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<td>Who should check be made payable to? -- Not one person specifically?</td>
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<td>What do donations go towards</td>
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<td>Mission Statement</td>
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<td>Social Networking</td>
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<td>New Letter</td>
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<td>Snail Mail?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enlist Partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have people that have already helped?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often will you update this? What type of time do you have to spend on this?</td>
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<td>Events</td>
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<td>Local Calendar</td>
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<td>Hindi Calendar</td>
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<td>Membership</td>
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<td>Form?</td>
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<td>Consequences of personal information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you going to have fundraising events?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Where do the funds go?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Translator</td>
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<tr>
<td>News Link</td>
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<tr>
<td>Articles about similar Hindi experiences in other cities</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Articles about Home Country
Articles about Hindu in general

Contact Us
Phone?
Address?
Web Address

Place of Worship
If members do want to observe holidays where would they go?
Are they open to the public?

“Who We Are”

Board of Directors/Others Involved
Brief Bio
Photograph

Volunteer
How can you get involved?

Services/Programs
Kids programs
Adult Night
Community Mixers

About – History in Utica

Involvement in the Community
In the Neighborhood
Things you’ve already done
With the refugee center
In Utica City School

Links to holy material – ex Quaran

General education section about Hinduism
Stores where you can find food if there are any dietary restrictions

Gallery Section
Pictures
Video

Additional Questions:

1. How would you like members to donate – paypal account? How have they donated in the past?
2. What is your mission?
3. We need a brief history of the Hindu refugees in the Utica area
4. Do you want to have a Board of Directors? Who else, besides you (Sagar) has a hand in the website and or Hindu organization in Utica? Anyone that you would like to introduce?

5. What is the contact info you would like us to use? Is there a physical address that people generally meet to workshop or celebrate?

6. Are there any upcoming events that you would like us to publicize and do you have a calendar of events that you would normally observe?

7. What is your social networking strategy as far as “getting the word out” especially if you want this to grow? Should we design a poster campaign to advertise?

8. Do you have high quality pictures that we could use to scan, etc. Lee can explain the specific specifications/requirements needed.
**Appendix: 3**

*The Website:*

![Website Image]

**Mission**

The mission of the Association of Hindu Society of Utica NY is to teach the rich spiritual heritage of Hindu philosophy and religion to devotees of all ages and nationalities. The association intends to provide the leadership and resources for the Hindu community, including:

- Provide services to devotees and children, promoting the awareness of principles and practices of Hinduism.
- Invite Hindu teachers and scholars to present topics on Hinduism, enhancing the understanding of it.
- Celebrate festivals such as Diwali, Mahashivratri, Rama Navami, Dassera and Diwali, and other events.
- Bring all topics, issues and events under one roof to establish a strong Hindu community.
- Seek active participation, guidance and support from local people in our journey to be a cultural hub in our community.

We strive to provide leadership and promote awareness of the Hindu community. Educating the youth on the principles and
Appendix: 4

Business Card

Mukti “Sagar” Rijal
(315)507-2129

HAUNY001.WORDPRESS.COM
Appendix: 5

Bumper Sticker
Appendix: 6

*Magnet*

Muktि "Sagar" Rijal
(315)507-2129

HAUNY001.WORDPRESS.COM
Appendix: 7

Post Card

Post Card Created to Advertise at the Holi Festival at SUNYIT on March 23rd
Appendix: 8

Screenshot of the Association of Hindu Society Facebook page
BEST PRACTICES FOR WORKING ON COMMUNITY PROJECTS

By Mary Christopher and Julie DelMedico

Summary:

This document was created to outline and identify the best practice or course of action to consider when working with groups on a community project. Articles and professional opinions from the sources used in this document address how to handle meetings, set priorities, present options, and compromise on different issues and devise effective marketing and social media campaigns.

Two areas of community projects are addressed: projects that are business structured and require general planning and projects that include cross-cultural considerations for working with diverse groups.

Language barriers and cultural differences must also be taken into account when working with cross-cultural groups. We found that as a group we needed to demonstrate intercultural communication competencies in order to accommodate the needs of a community that is still grappling with how to adjust in their new environment. Some of intercultural communication competencies we exercised were: effectiveness, changing perspectives, empathy, open-mindedness, communication ability, tolerance, sensitivity and flexibility (Penbek, Yurdakul and Cerit, 2009).

It is important to note that all projects are different and while this document offers solid suggestions that have generated proven results, those suggestions may not work for every community project. Sometimes the advice of others can be a starting point for someone else, who then creates (from experience or through trial and error) their own system and process to accomplish a project successfully.

Introduction:

Issues and topics covered in this paper were addressed by SUNYIT graduate students, who worked with the Association of Hindu Society of Utica, New York, and make good business practices for anyone planning and strategizing a project. Mary Christopher, Julie DelMedico and Lee Crisman worked with Bhutanese-Nepali refugees to design the website, develop content and create a marketing campaign to help the Hindu Society gain attention. While assessing and compiling information for this Best Practices document, we often asked, “What was the best way we provided services for this project?” and then asked others in similar situations and researched similar projects.

Findings and Best Practices to consider when working on community projects:

1.) Organize tasks and delegate responsibilities to the appropriate parties.
One of the first steps to take that almost always ensures project organization early on is splitting up work based on who is experienced in certain backgrounds or who has an interest in specific topics (Reilly 2013). A painter would not want to do plumbing work so “it won’t be effective – or make for a happy team member – if a technical person is put out on display to do marketing or for an illustrator to generate code for a website” (DeLore 2013). Traci DeLore is a media and public relations strategist who recently worked on planning and promoting a Hurricane Sandy Relief charity event last fall in Albany. It involved working with several local agencies, businesses and families to get the job done. According to DeLore, if she hadn’t tasked her team correctly the project probably would not have run as smoothly, which then would have created more stress and work for others involved.

Katie Reilly, a marketing professional and SUNYIT graduate student who worked on two significant community projects: Refugees Starting Over in Utica and created a website for a Buddhist temple in Utica, suggested using project management tools, computer applications designed for managing projects and can include task, team and goal-management features some even offer time tracking and invoicing. Reilly recommended Google Docs/Google Drive because it allows users to create and edit documents while collaborating in real-time with other users.

Having a shared workspace for a team creates a home base so sharing and updating can be easily accessed.

As a group we used both drop box and Google+ as our collaborative spaces. We also shared documents back and forth using email. Every week, however, we would “meet” on Google+ to be sure we were staying on tasks and each of us clearly understood our personal responsibilities to the project.

2.) Meetings should be flexible so the client feels comfortable with the location and setting and visualizations should be presented

Meeting with a client is a two-fold process because there are priorities and needs of the client and priorities and needs of the professionals performing the job for them. Meetings (in most cases) should always revolve around the client and make them feel more at ease. If a situation occurs where the client needs to brought somewhere outside of their own surroundings or choice of location, then transportation should be offered or arranged in order to get them there. Meetings or gatherings that are community-based often require a more personalized touch because “you are dealing with real sometimes grassroots people, not corporate CEOs” (DeLore 2013).

Information presented at meetings should be clear and as visual as possible. Prototypes, maps, diagrams, slide presentations and short videos are all good examples of visualizations someone could use to depict what is being proposed or conceptualized (Abudi 2010). “This allows question asking, clarification and overall better understanding for everyone involved in the project in the event something needs to be enhanced or edited” (Abudi 2010).
With our particular project we met at the clients home – which was not always the most convenient thing for us as a group. We suggested meeting in a public space with internet – Panera Bread in New Hartford – and while we did have one meeting there the clients were completely out of their element. From that point on, whenever we met with the client it was always on his terms in his environment.

3.) **Set priorities and needs**

It is important to do a needs assessment to “design an effective program, product or service that addresses a group’s needs and wants” (Redish, 2007). A needs assessment sets the stage for the project and allows the organization process to start because ideas, goals, priorities and needs are made clear. Reilly said it is important to know what a client absolutely will not budge on and what you have to work with right from the project’s infancy.

Principles and goals outlined by a client generally align with their overall business model and industry ideals (Gerson 2007). What someone wants or does not want in a project can give a lot of insight on client/company culture and overall visions and ideals.

Other ways to ensure that client’s needs are adequately being taken care of is establishing communication links and providing contact information for the person designated to each task.

Open communication and dialog -- especially in community projects -- is key in building trust and establishing good business relationships (Gerson 2007).

Prior to meeting our client about this website project a websphere analysis was completed on similar not for profit websites. By conducting the websphere it allowed us to present the client with a “menu” of options. Due to the difference in knowledge about web development and design we approached the client with a “Less is More” method. By giving options we were able to establish the client’s needs and wants without opening the flood gates for all the options out there.

4.) **Compromise is essential**

Almost inevitably compromises will have to be made somewhere. Both sides might have an issue they are adamant on and an understanding must be reached to achieve a successful outcome.

A professional looks at a project much more critically and based on good business practices that are related to their profession. The client usually is concerned with image and the message it will send to customers, followers, etc. When a decision conflict comes up more often than not the client has the upper hand, unless there is a truly unethical issue the professional cannot bend from (DeLore 2013).

“Ultimately, it’s (the client’s) image and message that they must maintain. If they know the draws their following then their wishes should be honored” (DeLore 2013).
When working with the Cambodian group on their temple website, Reilly and her team members swayed the group from using a graphic they did not feel was a good choice for the site. It was replaced with something that everyone was happy with, but then another site option issue arose that she was forced to compromise with to be balanced (Reilly 2013).

This was a particular challenge in some regards because of the cultural differences. For instance, the web developer of the project – Lee Cristman – felt pretty strongly about using a paid site for web development. The client’s, however, have limited resources in terms of funding, therefore; we needed to compromise on the quality and options allowed on a site to keep costs down.

Similarly, as a group of English speaking American’s we all had a slight issue with the name Association of Hindu Society of Utica, New York. We collectively suggested the Hindu Association of Utica, New York. The clients, however, would not bend and therefore it was our responsibility to compromise in order to maintain the client’s wants, needs, and mission.

5.) **Present options with ample information on differentiating features, costs and knowledge requirements**

Knowing the budget you have to work with sets the course for what projects will entail. Different services may provide different features that affect the price. When cost is a factor for your client, have all options clearly labeled so different features are outlined. If training or specialized knowledge is needed, then point that out as well so the client is aware.

Working in public relations for over two decades has provided DeLore the chance to work with a plethora of clients that range from small community projects to larger corporate accounts. She said one rule that applies to any client is a vital one: do not present too many options because it creates confusion.

Being selective with what is on the table to work with is one way to alleviate confusion. Reilly said when her group was working on the temple website they did not provide options for layouts but did modify designs based on specific requests such as integrating cultural elements.

According to Rivera (2011), too many choices can:

- Paralyze your customers and prevent them from choosing anything.
- Indefinitely lengthen the decision-making process and cost you time and money.
- Confuse your customer and send them off to do a lot of research, price shopping and service comparisons, perhaps driving them to a competitor.
- Show your lack of confidence in a solution by forcing the customer to decide.
- Foster a sense of regret and uncertainty as your customers consider whether they’ve made the right decision.
- Provoke a sense of dissatisfaction because it creates the illusion of an unobtainable perfect combination of options.
- Create the unrealistic expectation that a “perfect” solution actually exists, if only the proper combination of options could be discerned.
Again, by conducting the websphere and providing a list of applicable web options and characteristics, we provided the client with features that are currently working for some not for profits. From this list, the client then customized his site on what he believed would be most beneficial for his individual needs.

6.) **Provide training or supplemental materials to support client learning**

When additional support is needed – especially with technology related projects or products– providing supplemental materials that help train or prepare a client can be helpful. After working with Cambodian refugees on developing a website for their temple, Reilly wrote a step-by-step guide for maintaining the website through Wordpress and then met with the group in-person to review.

At the conclusion of our work with the client we provided him a step by step instruction guide on how to update the blog and website.

7.) **Working with different cultures requires extra handling and more one-on-one connections**

Reilly and DeLore shared similar advice to think about when working with diverse cultures.

Demonstrating sensitivity is imperative to gain trust and bridging a gap between ethnic and religious differences. “In working with diverse groups, you have to be careful not to offend or misinterpret what a person means” (Reilly 2013). When she met with Cambodian refugees, it was often on weekday mornings to accommodate their schedule and everyone sat on the temple floor per their culture.

According to Hernandez, Brown and Tien (2007) consider these actions when working with immigrant or refugee groups:

- Coordinate with other agencies that provide services to diverse and immigrant or refugee communities to get better insight on how a group might like to handled, how business is usually done and if specific modifications should be made based on cultural or religious differences.
- Meetings may need to be more neighborhood based. Start with casual meetings to establish trust.
- “Breaking bread” together by providing food or snacks at meetings often helps warm the atmosphere and foster bonding.
- Provide childcare if necessary.
- Hire or develop a system for translation services.

The group at large attended several cultural events in order to truly get to know the culture we were working with. Similarly, we met with the client on multiple occasions and did not move forward until we had his approval.
8.) **Know your audience**

It is important to know the community you are investing in. Some important things to know include the how the community prefers to consume their information, how they want to participate and the main purpose of your outreach (Hibbets, 2010). Also, by knowing your audience you can understand your purpose and what your message will mean to them (Calder and Malthouse, 2006).

In terms of marketing be sure you ask specific questions that would be relative to your community group. Provide value to your message by making it relative to your audience and their needs. Don’t send or exhaust your energies on topics and methods that won’t be useful to your specific community (Hibbets, 2010).

In addition to attending several larger cultural events as well as individual events with the client in a more one on one setting we spent quality time with our client. Often, which is custom with the Bhutanese Nepali culture, we shared a meal. In addition we gave a lot of weight to our clients voice, even if it went against our better professional judgment. It is by compromise and learning who your client is and who they serve that an effective product is developed.

9.) **Keep it simple**

Not only should your message be simple and easily understandable but your marketing strategy should be relatively straightforward in order to scale it up if need be. If you are promising to deliver something – whether it be information or a tangible good/service – you need to be ready to deliver that promise to a large scale population if the need arises. Be sure to keep the consumer expectations in mind when you are developing your strategies. Similarly, when dealing with community projects you may encounter a variety of people and you want your idea and strategy to encompass everyone (Wilson, 2005).

It’s always a good idea to brand your idea. By branding your group, purpose, and/or mission you gain connectivity between marketing sources (Calder and Malthouse, 2006). Branding allows for a way to focus the audience back to your main idea – especially when you grow your campaign.

We developed our marketing campaign and the website so that the transfer from us to the client was easy. Similarly, because of the difference in age and ability of our audience we created both traditional and viral forms of marketing.

10.) **Be patient**

Although they say news travels fast, people within communities are busy with other aspects of their lives. Community involvement takes time. Be sure that your message is not time sensitive.

Day by day, person by person, your network will continue to grow (Hibbets, 2010). Network growth and popularity comes with marketing, time and a commitment to your community outreach program. Also, keep in mind community size when assessing web traffic.
If the community needs the information you are spreading it will happen – time may just factor in.

Over the course of this product we were fruitful in the span that we reached but it’s not always that simple. We’ve created a package plan that can continue over time with very little effort. Our marketing – both viral and traditional – will be able to reach an audience far after our work as a group of SUNYIT students is done.

11.) *Don’t reinvent the wheel*

Utilize pre-existing resources to get your message across. There is nothing wrong with piggybacking your ideas with others that are similar. Use existing organizations as a platform to advertise your message. For instance, if there is a venue that promotes a similar message or attracts high traffic from your community have information available for them to pick up and read more about.

Collaboration and creating partnerships with other community groups provides a catalyst for advertisement. Community alliances benefit individual groups as well as the community at large (National Harbor Community Outreach Grand Fund, 2007).

Specifically, we dispersed marketing material in specific areas that attract refugees and like cultures. In addition, we piggybacked some of our “news” on the Starting Over Facebook page which again appeals to a similar audience.

12.) *Be diverse*

While it is important to know how your community prefers to receive its information it is also important to be diverse with your delivery. Having a multi-media approach to reaching your community will help reach a variety of audiences – even if a preferred method is stated. For instance, posters and flyers may work best for traditional members of the community but social networking sites like Facebook can capture a wider, perhaps younger demographic. By expanding your efforts you in essence expand your audience and make the material more meaningful (Bolotaeva and Cata, 2011).

Katie Reilly concurs, “I would recommend a comprehensive approach in integrating as many tools as possible, this way you will get the largest reach.”

It is cautioned, however, not to spread yourself too thin. If you don’t have the resources to keep all of your marketing efforts up to date, you may actually deter popularity. Keep your information relative otherwise you compromise the validity and authenticity of your community project (Eppler and Muenzenmayer).

Our approach to this project was very diverse. We created an avenue for traditional Hindus and more modern Hindus’ alike to access information regarding upcoming events. By establishing a
paper campaign along with the social media and web development we intended to encompass both the technologically inclined as well as a more traditional audience.

Conclusion

The best practices outlined in this document highlight a suggested course of action when starting to work on a community project. While this compilation of tips has proven effective in the past on very specific projects, it is merely a starting point for your efforts with community outreach. These results have not been formally tested.

That being said, the above tips offer a wealth of information when thinking about or beginning to work with a community group. There are many particular details that need to be addressed when working with community groups – especially in terms of culture. When working with groups of people sensitivity weighs heavier than it might in the corporate world. While all projects are different, keeping in mind the tips highlighted in this document, one would be on the right track for establishing a successful community project.

References


Appendix: 10

Finalized Association of Hindu Society of Utica, New York logo
Appendix: 11

Facebook Chart: Demographics and Location of the Facebook “Likers”.

[Chart showing gender and age distribution, countries, cities, and languages]
Appendix: 12

Facebook Chart: Demographics and Location of who we’ve Reached

Who You Reached (Demographics and Location)

Gender and Age:
- Female: 35.6% 13-17, 6.8% 18-24, 7.6% 25-34, 1.7% 35-44, 1.7% 45-54, 1.7% 55-64, 0.8% 65+
- Male: 62.7% 13-17, 8.9% 18-24, 21.2% 25-34, 8.5% 35-44, 1.7% 45-54, 1.7% 55-64, 0.8% 65+

Countries:
- United States of America: 51
- India: 43
- Pakistan: 2
- Bangladesh: 2
- Bhutan: 2
- Australia: 2
- United Arab Emirates: 1
- Denmark: 1
- Egypt: 1
- Canada: 1
- Japan: 1
- Nigeria: 1
- South Korea: 1
- Indonesia: 1

Cities:
- Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India: 19
- Ulka, NY: 19
- Syracuse, NY: 7
- Kathmandu, Nepal: 5
- Jhapa, Nepal: 3
- Mumbai, Maharashtra, India: 2
- Bangalore, Karnataka, India: 2
- New Hartford, NY: 2
- Sioux Falls, SD: 2
- Lancaster, PA: 2
- Thimphu, Bhutan: 1
- Elizabethtown, PA: 1
- Delhi, India: 1
- New Delhi, Delhi, India: 1
- Virginia Beach, VA: 1
- Enugu, Nigeria: 1
- Silchar, Assam, India: 1
- Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan: 1
- Jakarta, Jakarta Raya, Indonesia: 1
- Columbus, OH: 1

Languages:
- English (US): 105
- English (UK): 9
- Indonesian: 1
- Japanese: 1
- Arabic: 1
- English (India): 1
Appendix: 13

Facebook Chart: Visits to the page

![Facebook Chart: Visits to the page](image-url)
Appendix: 14

Facebook Chart: Where our ‘Likes’ came from
Appendix: 15

URL: http://hauny001.wordpress.com/

Facebook: Search – Association of Hindu Society of Utica, NY

E-mail/Username: hauny001@gmail.com

Password: SUNYIT123
### Appendix: 16

*Cataloging Worksheet*

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  o Psychology
  o Physical Education
» Head Men’s and Women’s Cross Country Coach
» Assistant Men’s and Women’s Track Coach
» Coordinator of Men’s and Women’s Basketball Operations
» Academic Coach
» Honor’s Program Mentor

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NYCLSA – New York College Learning Skills Association Member
NJCAA – Coaches Association Member