

Project name: Social media

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Partnerships: N/A

Key Findings

A photo for every post – On most social media platforms, a photo takes up more real estate and often gets more attention. Whenever possible, we include an image with a post.

More posts about the nature of ACA – It has become apparent that some of our followers aren't aware of the nature of our organization (particularly that we use hunting and fishing dollars for conservation and wildlife management projects). It is the duty of social media to inform our audience about the nature of ACA's core vision and mission.

Wider variety, wider audience – By expanding the variety of topics that we post on social media (including occasional posts that are outside Alberta), we have to the potential to reach a wider audience and increase our overall reach.

Introduction

One of ACA's key goals in the 10-year Strategic Business Plan is to raise awareness about ACA and the work we do. Social media is a way for ACA to connect with, inform, and grow our audience. By having a medium where we can share our work and interests with people on a daily basis, we can generate interest and conversation that would otherwise not exist. In 2014/2015, we did this through our four primary social media mediums: Facebook, Twitter, our e-newsletter and YouTube. Two new social media platforms added consist of a reddit account and an Instagram account, which are both still in their infancy in terms of audience and methods.

Social media gives ACA a boost in approachability, and we do our best to foster this element. Between the countless online messages and questions, volunteers asking about work, people sending us videos or pictures of possible illegal activities involving wildlife, etc., social media makes it much easier for someone to instantly contact us in an informal setting.

Ultimately, the goal of our social media efforts is fostering an interested and compassionate audience so that we are connected with a larger scope of people when the time comes for an important message or request regarding conservation in Alberta.

Methods

Make less than 10% of our posts self-serving. This is not a new method, but having a large majority of our social media posts aimed at simply having a high entertainment or interest value (which is often easy as much of our work is interesting), when we actually request something of our audience, they are much more likely to engage with us. Whether that takes the form of asking for a donation, attending an event, volunteering, filling out a survey or simply answering a question, our audience is much more likely to have a positive, or at least an informed, response.

Stay away from a strict paradigm of once-a-day posts. Although we strive to produce or share interesting and fun content every day, our research is showing that it's better to have 3 great posts in a week versus 3 great posts with 2 filler posts in the same week. Filler posts reduce our audience, so we only post when we have something valuable to say.

There are Facebook pages with hundreds of thousands of followers, but when you scrutinize the actual level of engagement they have with that apparent audience, something is missing. For example, the page "Give a S#@% about Nature" has 550,000 followers, which is over 100 times more than ACA's audience. However, the average of their daily engagement is only about five to ten times of ACA's, and occasionally we even match or exceed their number of engagement actions.

Why the huge gap? Pages that post multiple times a day often have fans grow tired of seeing so many posts from the same voice, and fans stop following the updates by hiding posts from their newsfeed.

Expanding the scope of our posts. In the past we have stuck to posts that are strictly Alberta-related. By expanding the scope of our content to occasionally include things outside Alberta, we can post articles that may be related to our work or conservation in general. This can generate more audience and more reach for us, as people in Alberta are still interested in what is going on in the greater world of conservation.

An example of this was a moose domestication post. While the project was in Russia and done many years ago, it was news to our Facebook fans. The post organically generated a 12,100 reach, which is roughly double an average post, including nine Shares on Shares (viral metric), where we rarely receive any.

Changing the personality of our voice. This is a difficult change to make because we still want to be viewed as professionals, but at the same time, we want our audience to know that we are human. We like jokes, memes, and informal conversation. Basically, we want our audience to have fun when they interact with us. We want people to feel like they are talking to a group of fun, outdoorsy and informed people (which we are), instead of an impersonal organization (which we are not).

Our April fool's joke about Bigfoot was a great example of the change in this direction.

Results

Facebook

+1,867 new followers

Daily average of engagement actions increased from 198 (April 2014) to 394 (March 2015). Engagement actions is any action taken (link click, like, comment or share).

Best Performing Posts:

- Greatest Reach: Antelope Poaching Case (~83,200 reached, 194 comments)
- Most likes: Coyotes and Badgers Hunt Together (925 likes, 411 shares)

Twitter

+751 new followers

Best Performing Tweet: Golden Eagle Taking Fawn – 98 retweets, 62 favourites

Constant Contact

Approximately 83,000 subscribers

297,107 total opens (average of 27,009 per core newsletter)

36,922 total clicks (average of 3,356 clicks per core newsletter [times people clicked on a link in the newsletter])

32.3% average open rate (average newsletter open rate for non-profits is 29%, according to Constant Contact reports)

Highest open rate of the fiscal year was 81% (Kids Can Catch event—note this was a specific audience)

YouTube

Posted 5 videos for a total of 3345 views

Best performing video: On the wolverine trail: Chapter 6 – 926 views, 9 thumbs up

reddit

181 total upvotes (front page of Edmonton and Alberta sub-reddit multiple times)

67 total comments

Conclusions

The gradual change in our social media approach over the past year has seen us making strides in the right direction and reaching more people.

In the coming fiscal year, we plan to start generating an audience on Instagram. The purpose of Instagram is to reach people through the network of mobile devices. While this is generally possible with our other media platforms, Instagram is a social medium that solely focuses on the mobile world and on images.

Another change for next year is removing the e-newsletter from the social media project. Since the e-newsletters are for people who are already aware of our organisation, we think that it differs fundamentally from social media and deserves its own project.

Between all social media activity this past fiscal year, nearly \$10,000 was raised for the piping plover project, volunteers were found, many were informed of and attended ACA's events, and tens of thousands have seen the wide variety of our projects.