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Case study – how a business school blog can build stakeholder relationships and create added value in an MBA marketing program

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ABSTRACT

Innovation, market orientation, and creative collaboration allow the smartest – not necessarily the biggest – organizations to win in the marketplace. This approach to competitive strategy is applicable in a wide variety of market contexts including business, information, and professional services. In this case study, we explain how one business school delivered enhanced value for its two primary target markets – MBA students and the business community. This was accomplished by designing a strategic communication tool (a faculty blog) to gain a competitive edge in the crowded graduate business education market in South Florida. We clearly demonstrate that organizations can create and add value by activating and implementing corporate entrepreneurial processes, programs, and activities as part of their strategic and competitive marketing efforts. This can be in the form of customer relationship management-oriented blogs or other initiatives. Engaging current and prospective customers and stakeholders is extremely important to success in today's service-driven competitive educational marketplace and marketspace.

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If you do build a great experience, customers tell each other about that. (Jeff Bezos)

Conversations among the members of your marketplace happen whether you like it or not. Good marketing encourages the right sort of conversations. (Seth Godin)

Introduction

In 2013, the H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business and Entrepreneurship (HSBE) at Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida faced mounting pressures from various fronts. These included enrollment challenges; lack of innovative programs; confused positioning/strategic direction due to a two year emphasis on sales rather than entrepreneurship (what the school was known for); a dramatic cultural shift from a teaching to a research emphasis as part of a push for AACSB accreditation; cost increases; and intense competition from dozens of local, state, and national programs.

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To respond to change, a new dean was tasked with resolving this myriad of challenges and rebuilding the image of the business school. In addition to freshening up the product line (e.g. an MBA in Marketing was added and underperforming programs were eliminated), an integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategy was a priority. The threefold objective of the IMC plan was to (1) maximize opportunities for communicating with, sharing, and interacting with stakeholders; (2) build productive and lasting business relationships; and (3) contribute to the understanding of the complex business environment that shapes organizational challenges and affects performance, productivity, and survival for business partners, graduates, and community.

A strategic task force comprised of chairs, faculty, and information technology experts suggested that a faculty-driven blog was one tool to accomplish these goals and enhance the reputation of the business school and university. It was felt that the blog could be a strong vehicle for two-way communication, a solid promotional method to reach Millennials (core student customers), and a sound way to differentiate HSBE in the digital marketplace. Using a market orientation (MO) foundation, this case study discusses the rationale for this project, the implementation plan, and metrics for the blog entitled *Huizenga School Means Business Success!* In addition, best practices are provided to assist other knowledge organizations who may be considering initiating a blog in higher education or knowledge generating organizations.

Hence, the twofold purpose of this article is to demonstrate that a faculty blog can be: (1) an excellent promotional tool to share knowledge and communicate with stakeholders (students and the business community) which in turn will increase loyalty and retention, and (2) useful as a supplemental online teaching tool in the MBA Marketing curriculum.

Bloggng can be used to share, manage, and disseminate organizational knowledge and information (Ojala, 2005). The HSBE has successfully used a business blog to increase interaction and dialog with its customers and stakeholders. According to Castronovo and Huang (2012), 'A business blog is a powerful and universal way to drive positive word-of-mouth recommendations through the content that a company publishes' (p. 123). These authors note that blogs enable companies to establish and build meaningful relationships with their target, which consequently increase customer loyalty and the number of third-party advocates for the company.

Niederhoffer, Mooth, Wiesenfeld, and Gordon (2007) state that a blog is considered a successful marketing initiative when its contents, conversations, and dialogs create some kind of desirable buzz, traffic, and relationship for the firm. Companies can use their business blog as an effective marketing tool by creating forums of information, providing product information, advice, publishing news on programs and services, answering questions, demonstrating the technical, conceptual, and social skills of their value providers and responding to stakeholder comments to maintain the dialog and openness (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Blogs can significantly help to build company and brand reputation and to attract and retain customers because they are part of the new realities of marketing and public relations for twenty-first century companies (Scott, 2013).

An overview of the literature on blogging

Blogs in higher education

Blogs are becoming more widely used by colleges and universities as part of teaching, learning, and communication processes. This paper demonstrates that a faculty blog can be: (a)

a great vehicle to share knowledge and communicate with stakeholders (students and the business community) and increase student retention and attraction, and is (b) useful as an online teaching tool in MBA Marketing curriculum. 'A blog is a type of content management system that makes it easy for anyone to publish short articles called posts' (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012, p. 4445). According to Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi (2012), blog software provides a variety of social features, such as comments, blog rolls, trackbacks, and subscriptions that make it ideal for marketing purposes.

The environment of higher education today is one that is characterized by extreme competition and diffusion of knowledge across an expansive market using innovative business models and platforms. As a result, colleges and universities must become savvier in an effort to create and add value for their current and prospective students, as well as for alumni. The creation of value requires companies to use all technology and marketing tools at their disposal to attract, grow, and retain customers (Peppers & Rogers, 2004; Weinstein, 2012). Using blogs effectively can be a strategic value-adder to customer relationship management (CRM) processes and practices that foster customer loyalty and value in terms of service, quality, image, and price (SQIP); elements of customer value (Weinstein, 2012).

Because of the intense competition in today's higher education market, increase costs of education, growth and a borderless and digital higher education marketplace, colleges, and universities need to differentiate by carving out unique and innovative value propositions, and must use new media/promotional methods to reach their current and prospective students. This is especially important when it comes to the Millennials who are technology-savvy, social media-dependent, and are fully immersed in accessing information in shorter forms rather than traditional book readings or journal articles. The reciprocity principle states that Millennials expect a two-way, mutual relationship with organizations and their offerings (Barton, Koslow, & Beauchamp, 2014). Blogs make for quick and easy accessible information and forums on which discussions and dialogs on various topics and issues can be exchanged in progressive feedback loops or threads.

CRM techniques and strategies must constantly evolve to keep up with today's smart, sophisticated, and highly demanding consumers. In today's information-based and service-led economy, greater consumer control means that companies must rely more on marketing by attraction (Armstrong & Kotler, 2014). Attracting customers requires companies to turn to new and emerging technologies and strategies including advances and directions in social media, including the use of CRM-based programs and initiatives such as blogs. Blogs are especially important as marketing tools because they facilitate the two-way dialog and interaction characteristic of today's growing trend toward customer involvement and engagement or the co-creation of value. As Wright (2006) notes, blogs help organizations engage with customers and create a real dialog. Wright views blogs as communication tools, a marketing technique, a listening device and a way to interact directly with customers one-to-one on a global scale. The use of blogs is pervasive today as colleges and universities are increasingly using blogs as a marketing and communication tool (Barnes & Lescault, 2011). 'A blog is an effective way to develop high quality, meaningful content for consumers, as well as an effective means for clearly articulating a particular message' (Castronovo & Huang, 2012, p. 126). As Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi (2012) note,

Social media is being widely used by almost all and even the companies, in spite of their size have started using social media to advertise and promote themselves. Big brands make use of the social media to convey their strong existence and friendly customer relationship. (p. 4445)

- > 34% of Fortune 500 companies now maintain active blogs.
- > Each month, 329 million people read blogs.
- > 37% of marketers say blogs are the most valuable content type for marketers.
- > 17% of marketers plan to increase blogging efforts this year.
- > Blogging increases web traffic by 55% for brands.
- > B2B companies that blog generate 67% more leads than those without blogs.

<http://webbiquity.com/business-blogging/104-fascinating-social-media-and-marketing-statistics-for-2014-and-2015/>, December 2, 2014.

Figure 1. The value of blogs in IMC campaigns.

Figure 1 summarizes important information about the importance of blogging as a part of an organization's promotional strategy.

Blogs as effective CRM-building and marketing tools

Companies are constantly seeking new and innovative ways to create value for their customers, and blogging might be the answer to change and grow businesses (Wright, 2006). Blogs are effective in activating the voice of the customer and perhaps can be regarded as the most flexible two-way communication tool between companies and their customers; they act as feedback portals from which leaders and managers can gain information, ideas, knowledge, and insights in the form of both negative and positive feedback from customers in an effort to improve processes, quality, and build and foster stronger loyalty and relationship bonds with the organization's most important strategic partners – customers. In using blogs to communicate with customers and other members of the marketing community, a company is building brand awareness and providing prospective customers with a sample of product offer in the form of organizational service, information, responsiveness, and culture. The constant follow up that characterizes blogs can become a method of gaining customers' trust and confidence in an organization's services. Furthermore, blogs are effective means through which company employees and experts can influence the beliefs, behaviors, and values of consumers (Acar & Polonsky, 2007; Castronovo & Huang, 2012).

According to Safko (2012) blogs are excellent ways for companies to stay in touch with clients or customers and to obtain feedback while building relationships. Blogs can indeed be a tremendous marketing tool for organizations. As Chua, Deans, and Parker (2009) note,

Blogs appear to be gaining momentum as a marketing tool which can be used by organisations for such strategies and processes as branding, managing reputation, developing customer trust and loyalty, niche marketing, gathering marketing intelligence and promoting their online presence. (p. 117)

Because of their extensive capabilities, blogs can be effective social marketing tools (Thackeray, Neiger, & Hanson, 2007) that organizations use to develop rapport and relationship with existing and future customers, as well as other stakeholders, hence becoming part of an effective promotional strategy.

Wright (2006) states that blog marketing is a revolutionary new way to increase sales, build brand, and get exceptional results in customer response and sales. Blogs help companies to gain more visibility because an informative business blog can be a great avenue for

reaching customers in a way that has never been possible with other channels (Wright, 2006). Blogs can be used as part of an effective CRM strategy, as it helps to manage two important components of effective CRM strategies: the firm's competence in knowledge management and the firm's competence in marketing relationship (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Blogs are effective as they facilitate the development and maintenance of key relationship enablers (Weinstein, 2012); they help to foster and facilitate the building of trust, dependence, commitment, cooperation, and information exchange.

Castronovo and Huang (2012) have identified three reasons why blogs work as effective marketing tools: (1) blogs drive word-of-mouth recommendations; (2) blogs build meaningful relationships; and (3) blogs increase loyalty. Companies must have ways of measuring the effectiveness of blogs, such as using a blog tracker/dashboard which tracks blog visits and other key statistics about the blog's performance. The Huizenga School has made effective use of blog metrics to increase communication with students, community members, and to build relationship with other stakeholders.

Blogs also possess value-adding functions. As Namwar and Rastgoo (2008) note, blogs can play a main role in university students' learning by providing them opportunities to engage with course materials and supplementary materials. The *Huizenga School Means Business Success!* blog has made effective use of this function of blogs, as professors often direct students to relevant blog contents that connect to course material. Students also use the blog for supplemental reading and information, and outside stakeholders including businesses find important business advice on various topics on the blog. Williams and Jacobs (2004) comment that, 'A number of universities round the world have commenced with the use of blogging tools' (p. 236) as part of the value-adding learning and communication tools for students and faculty. Blogging helps to encourage and foster critical thinking in students, as well as prospective students and community members (Richardson, 2004; Wang, Fix, & Bock, 2004).

Building stakeholder relationships via a MO model

'We must to be more customer focused, we need to create new market opportunities!' Undoubtedly, you have heard this management mantra in the corporate or academic world. University executives/administrators often use terms such as customer (or market) centric/driven/focused/oriented and so forth to motivate their faculty and staff to do a better job relating and responding to customers. While the idea is sound, too often it's just lip service rather than a major investment to improve all facets of the organization.

The marketing concept is that guiding business doctrine advocating an organizational-wide effort (*interfunctional coordination*) to satisfy both customers (*customer orientation*) and business objectives (in particular, *profitability*). The traditional marketing concept – *customer satisfaction at a profit* – has been the cornerstone of the marketing discipline for more than half a century. This philosophy worked well through the early 1990s since most companies stressed conquest marketing (getting new business) over retention marketing (keeping customers). Today, a revised marketing concept is called for. Hence, organizations must provide socially responsible business experiences that meet/exceed customer expectations while creating long-term value for all stakeholders (owners, employees, customers, collaborators, communities, etc.).

Customer value is created at three trigger points: company/customers (marketing mix/program), employees/customers (service providers), and technology/customers (e-marketing mix). Traditionally, external marketing (the marketing mix or program) was the focus for customer-directed activities. In our services economy, this view is limiting; a fifth P – people – becomes paramount. Consider the importance of a manager's social network of business relationships whether it's via LinkedIn or the Rolodex. Internal marketing is used to develop customer-focused employees. Once the people are adequately prepared for their respective business challenges, interactive marketing (face-to-face and other customer contacts) takes over. Exceptional customer service differentiates market leaders from average companies. *E-marketing* is a powerful twenty-first century marketing weapon that should be added to an organization's arsenal (Kalyanam & McIntyre, 2002). Since customers want to do business with organizations when and how it is convenient for them to do so (24/7/365), an ever-increasing amount of promotional resources must be invested in online and mobile media including social networking. The Internet can be used as a sales channel, promotional vehicle, customer service center, market research tool, and community builder.

Managers intuitively know that becoming market oriented favorably impacts business success. Although there has been much academic research conducted on this subject in the past quarter century, the empirical evidence of the consequences of a MO on business performance (BP) is still evolving. MO consists of three major components: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination (Narver & Slater, 1990). Their research showed a strong link between MO and BP.

Kohli and Jaworski (1990) argued that the MO construct is comprised of intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination, and responsiveness. Therefore, MO involves learning about customers and competitors. In a research study conducted in cooperation with the Tennessee Association of Business, Barrett and Weinstein (1998) found a highly significant correlation between MO and BP. Liao and his research team (2011) examined more than 500 scholarly articles on MO from 1995 through 2008. Based on their mega-analysis, they presented an integrated three-level (strategy, capability, and survival/growth), eight variable conceptual model incorporating environment, learning, MO, quality, culture, innovation, marketing, and performance.

Great organizations such as FedEx, Nordstroms, and Zappo's are truly obsessed about their customers. They are masterful at creating and delivering superior value to their highly satisfied, loyal client base. Firms operating in competitive industries such as higher education can benefit from a MO and customer value perspective, too. MO inputs are valuable for formulating an initial definition of the market as well as staying 'in touch' with the customer base. University administrators can assess their current level of market commitment as well as think about how their organization can improve in their customer focus. As the MO model illustrates (Figure 2), universities can co-create value with their students to improve the overall educational experience. As a part of the overall communications strategy, a carefully conceived and well managed faculty blog can be a value enhancing tool for improving the educational experience delivered to the dual stakeholders: students and the business community.

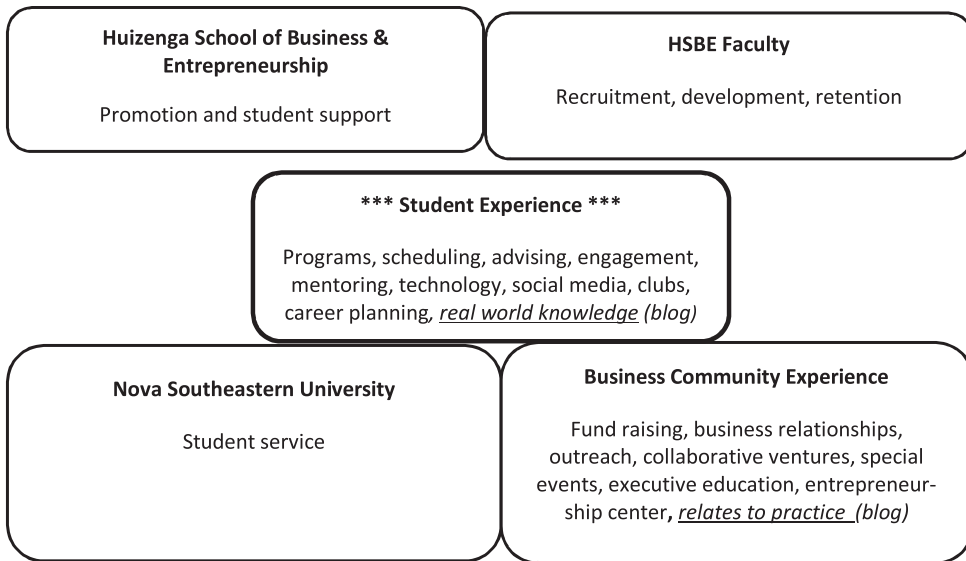


Figure 2. MO model. How a blog can enhance the student and business community experience.

Week 3: Discussion Board – Blog Critique (10 points)

Go to the *Huizenga School Means Business Success!* blog and choose a marketing post that has implications for a service organization. <http://www.huizenga.nova.edu/faculty-blog/index.cfm/Marketing>

> A. Answer 2 of these 3 questions:

1. What is the author's main point?
2. How can a service firm (offer a specific corporate example) use an idea(s) in the blog post to improve marketing operations and performance?
3. Provide an extension to this work – e.g., offer a new research direction that the author can consider for a follow-up post

> B. Respond to a minimum of 2 classmates' posts

Figure 3. Sample online blog assignment from a Services Marketing course.

Case application – the *Huizenga School Means Business Success!* blog

Background

Blogging has become an important tool for organizations in all sectors to communicate, distribute information, and discuss relevant business ideas and best practices. The relationship marketing paradigm has elevated blogging from a minor promotional tactic to a key strategic communication tool in value-creating information and service organizations such as business schools.

The HSBE is part of Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. In line with its namesake (Mr. Huizenga founded three Fortune 500 companies), the Huizenga School stresses an entrepreneurial, real-world orientation and has the largest MBA program in the state with more than 3000 students (graduate programs in business account for about 80% of the students). Its newest offering, the MBA in Marketing has grown to 188 students in just

Table 1. Huizenga School blog contributions by subject category and posts (March 2013–December 2014).

Business subject	Number of posts/% total (March 2013–December 2014)
Management	22 (22.9%)
Marketing	20 (20.8%)
Business law	9 (9.4%)
Entrepreneurship	9 (9.4%)
Business ethics	7 (7.3%)
Finance	5 (5.2%)
International business	5 (5.2%)
Accounting	4 (4.2%)
Economics	4 (4.2%)
Process improvement	4 (4.2%)
Public administration	4 (4.2%)
Communications	2 (2.1%)
Other	1 (1.0%)
Totals	96 (100.1% – due to rounding)

two and one-half years. The School is currently under review for its initial AACSB application.

The *Huizenga School Means Business Success!* blog offers theory and insight that appeal to a wide and diverse audience of students, alumni, business partners, and the broader business community, largely in southeastern Florida (<http://www.huizenga.nova.edu/faculty-blog/>).

Sharing knowledge and interacting with stakeholders facilitates productive and long lasting business relationships. As a free value-added offering, the blog contributes to the understanding of the complex business environment that organizations face with respect to market challenges and performance.

HSBE faculty members engage in weekly discussions and provide timely responses to comments and inquiries from viewers. The faculty blog was launched in March 2013, with the first week's entries being a 'Welcome Message from the Dean' followed by posts entitled 'Intrapreneurs: Innovators and Risk Takers of the Corporate World' and 'Co-Creation of Value – Collaborating with Customers'. A true school-wide initiative, the blog has had contributions from 49 full-time and part-time faculty members.

Diverse business blog posts

During the period from 11 March 2013 to 10 December 2014 (20 months), the *Huizenga School Means Business Success!* blog published 96 blog submissions from full-time and adjunct faculty in 12 key business disciplines. Among these categories, management and marketing both had 20 or more posts accounting for 44% of all content. Business law, entrepreneurship, and business ethics each had 7–9 posts accounting for an additional 26% of posts. The remaining 8 business topics had between 1 and 5 faculty posts representing 30% of content (see Table 1).

Blog metrics (March 2013–December 2014)

The HSBE blog has strongly resonated with the business community as well as student audiences (undergraduate and graduate). The blog has become an important component

Table 2. Huizenga School Means Business Success! blog: viewing source/views (March 2013–December 2014).

Viewing source	Number of views
Direct	15,488
Google	7360
Facebook	446
Yahoo	201
Bing	186
LinkedIn	155
Twitter	12
Other ^a	5169
Total external views (31.3%)	29,017
Internal views – Huizenga School (68.7%) ^b	63,597
Total views	92,614

^aSearch engines, social networking sites, professional associations, other colleges, and media.

^bStudents, faculty, staff, university community.

of the business school's IMC strategy and has had an overwhelming (98%) positive impact with the various stakeholders.

Metrics report a total of 29,017 views from outside the Huizenga School; among the most significant being 15,488 direct views (most directly from the HSBE web page) and 7360 views from the Google search engine. In addition, there were 446 views or visits from Facebook, 201 visits from Yahoo!, and 186 visits from Bing. Table 2 shows the visits to the *Huizenga School Means Business Success!* blog by viewing source and number of views. Realize that these numbers do not include the 63,597 views from within the Huizenga School (Many of these are from students participating in discussion boards in online courses or working on class projects). Collectively, the total number of views by readers was 92,614 during this 20-month period.

This powerful, yet very low-cost, promotional medium has enhanced the reputation of the business school in the local and extended community. For example, faculty blog posts have been cited in textbooks, led to interviews/trade publications from the media, and generated interest in the university from potential students domestically and internationally.

The blog and online MBA learning

Over time, the blog has become an important academic enhancement to the Huizenga School learning experience. This is evident from the active engagement and participation by faculty, students, and external business partners and other stakeholders (to date, more than 1660 comments have been posted to the blog by readers). As a value-creating learning initiative, it has been used in the form of supplemental reference by students and a go-to source of practical real-world information and insights by the business community.

Many faculty members (particularly in marketing) now use blog posts as part of in-class exercises and instructional activities. This is especially important for online students as it gives them access and the opportunity to engage a diversity of business subjects as well as contacts and interactive discussions with faculty, other students, practitioners, and business executives. This is significant since 62% of MBA Marketing students take their coursework via the online format.

The MBA in Marketing at the HSBE consists of 21 credits (7 courses) of general graduate business courses and 18 specialized credits (6 courses in marketing). The two required courses are Marketing Decisions for Managers and Cases in Strategic Marketing (capstone). Students choose four other courses from the following eight options – Customer Value, Global Marketing, Managing Marketing Communications, Marketing Research, Product and Brand Management, Sales Management, Services Marketing, and Social Media Marketing to complete their MBA concentration in Marketing. The Customer Value course has used blog material extensively while the Global Marketing, Marketing Research, and Services Marketing courses have used some blog examples in the coursework. See Figure 3 for an example of how the blog is used as an online teaching tool.

Blogging strategically – some lessons learned

Colleges and universities functioning in today's highly competitive educational market and environment must seek to differentiate themselves and the value that they offer their student-customers. This includes consideration of differentiation on all elements of customer value using the SQIP approach to value creation and value-adding: SQIP (Weinstein, 2012). With the cost of education escalating, student-customers will demand more for every dollar they spend and will constantly seek higher service and quality. Therefore, institutions must build strong images in terms of brand recognition by creating innovative programs and opportunities that enhance and promote learning, especially participative learning that yields high results in terms of technical, interpersonal, and conceptual skills needed to perform well in the labor market.

Marketing programs are ideal platforms for invigorating college and university curriculums with those value drivers that make a difference in terms of educational experience and outcome. Innovating and differentiating through unique service offerings and value propositions will help colleges and universities to build and sustain competitive advantage in a changing educational market where students must now become co-creators of value through dialog and cooperation with leaders and managers who plan and implement programs and program policies, processes, and procedures. Customers want to get actively involved in the business activities. They are key in setting the value agenda, and two-way dialogs becomes indispensable in the process as the co-creation of value allows organizations to lower costs, increase benefits, and improve the overall experience for both the service provider and users. Customers are the most important strategic business partners with whom companies can work to create and deliver superior value or experience (McFarlane, 2013). Thus, it becomes imperative for market leaders to focus on creating exceptional customer experiences that separate their companies from the competitors. This cannot be achieved through complacency and being a market follower or a market-driven company, but companies must endeavor to become market leaders or market drivers that shape set and shape industry trends and standards (Mujtaba & McFarlane, 2007). Higher educational institutions need to think more like cutting edge businesses and especially in the field of marketing, must apply the principles of customer value and satisfaction that they teach in building relationships with students. They must take a relationship marketing approach, and a tool such as the blog demonstrates that institutions value their student-customers and are focused on customer retention.

It is important for companies to not only implement new and innovative tools and programs to build relationships and add value, but they must evaluate these programs and learn from their mistakes while adapting to the changing wants of their customers in order to improve and strengthen their value and quality creating competitive strategies. The *Huizenga School Means Business Success!* blog is constantly evaluated for its ability to reach customers and improve in terms of customer-connect/relationship building and involvement and engagement.

According to Ahuja and Medury (2010), there are four types of content typologies relevant for business blogging – organizational, promotional, general, and relational. Their research found that relational content maximizes reader engagement (measured in terms of consumer comments). Relational content relates to topics that solicit feedback, controversies, media reports, consumer issues, and topics that generate emotions. It should be noted that a majority of the weekly posts on the *Huizenga School Means Business Success!* blog are characterized as relational content.

Programs that are aimed at adding value in a business school or program must have leadership and management support in order to be successful. This means starting from the top by seeking the endorsement and support of key organizational leaders and managers. For example, in the initiative with the Huizenga School's blog, the support of the University community, the dean, and important services such as technical support became critical in making the positive impact sought through program mission and goals. The University provost, president, and media relations department are also regularly apprised as to the performance of the blog as part of the Huizenga School IMC campaign.

In using the blog to build stakeholder relationships and create added value in the MBA marketing program, several other factors were critical to success. One of these important factors was faculty support as the need to educate faculty about the new initiative and its goals became part of fostering cooperation and participation on a school-wide level. This support in relation to university, technical support, and support of school leaders, was essential in delivering a superior product to stakeholders including students, employees, the community which includes business owners and business partners. Another important factor in success was encouraging usage as the developers and promoters of the blog encouraged faculty to make effective use of the blog in class lessons, online lectures, and as a source for additional readings on relevant and timely topics. Department chairs in marketing, management, and entrepreneurship also explained the strategic role of the blog as part of the business school's overall marketing strategy to their respective faculty.

Furthermore, the blog was shared with the external community and stakeholders through social media marketing. This includes creating links on Facebook, LinkedIn, web pages, and the like. Any important value-creating and relationship-building initiative needs to be a part of an IMC strategy that effectively reflects organizational mission and goals as part of its customer-value endeavor.

The 'blog marketing approach' which represents value creation, attraction, and retention strategies, is part of a carefully considered business model and value proposition consistent with the Huizenga School brand building initiatives. Barnds (2014) states that a worth claim is a compelling idea for higher education since it goes beyond a basic value proposition. He explains, 'what is offered is worth more than something similar offered elsewhere.' Barnds adds that a worth claim is an excellent framework for telling the story about new academic programs (e.g. MBA Marketing) or value-added initiatives (e.g. a faculty-driven blog).

In conclusion, higher educational institutions need to operationalize and implement the principles and practices they teach students. This case study illustrates a successful example of how this can be achieved – both as an image building strategy and a teaching tool – as universities and business schools seek to differentiate themselves in a rapidly changing and mature education and knowledge market.

Postscript

In an effort to continually re-energize HSBE's value-added services and communications initiatives, the *Huizenga School Means Business Success! blog* was suspended on 31 March 2015. A *Real-World Marketing Ideas and Strategies* blog was launched on 1 September 2015 as a more focused replacement. The new marketing blog has been well received by marketing students and the business community (to date, there have been 16 posts, more than 8200 views, and over 420 comments). Interested readers may visit the blog at <https://secure.business.nova.edu/marketing-blog/>

End-of-case questions

- (1) How can your university (or organization) use a faculty-driven blog to: (a) improve the image of your organization, and (b) as a teaching or knowledge tool to add value to key target markets?
- (2) List five marketing ideas/topics (i.e. good content) that your stakeholders may benefit from and can be delivered effectively via a blog.
- (3) The design and execution of a successful blog presents challenges in the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. Identify three potential concerns in each of these areas and how they can be resolved.
- (4) In addition to blogging, other new media initiatives are called for to compete effectively in the marketplace. What other social media marketing tools can be employed to connect with your existing and potential customers?
- (5) Explain why blogging may be a beneficial promotional vehicle for your organization with respect to: MO, value enhancement, knowledge management, relationship marketing, and customer retention.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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