

UniverCity Year

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2020-2021

Public Relations and Marketing Strategy for Wisconsin Rapids Recreation Center

Journalism 454: PR Campaigns
University of Oregon

To: Emily and Wisconsin Rapids Recreation Complex

Over the course of this term, our team has been working to address local community members in the city of Wisconsin Rapids. Our plan for doing this involved creating a survey that can gauge interest in the WRRRC, take feedback about how it's operating, and determine what the audience finds most important about the facility.

In the short term, we suggest consistently updating surveys to see what things need to be changed or altered. Release the surveys and collect the response from the audience. Issue a news release to announce the website of WRRRC. Collect new photos that we can use to update the website. Create and continue updating WRRRC's website and social media.

For the long term, we suggest standardizing the WRRRC's brand across social media accounts and on its personal website. This means having a consistent look and tone to all messaging and media shared online, and keeping a regular schedule of posts to keep people engaged. We think social media is a good way to get people involved with promotions or events, and it can let users interact with your brand, even when they can't visit in-person.

This project has been a great learning experience, and we'd like to thank you for giving us the chance to work with a client in the real world!

WISCONSIN RAPIDS RECREATION COMPLEX: PR PLAN

COMMUNICATION AUDIT:

Facebook:

The WRRC's only presence on social media, at this time, is on Facebook. Over the last few months, the account has been posting updates about the construction of the new aquatic center and doing some light promotion and user interaction. The account has about 2,800 followers, and the number of impressions per post ranges from single digits to upwards of 100 likes or comments for particularly popular content. Commenters seem generally excited about the aquatic center, while some voice discontent over the limited admissions policies.

Website:

The other online resource the WRRC has is its webpage on the city of Wisconsin Rapids website. This page consolidates many of the logistics of the project, like where funding comes from and what kind of rules the park follows. No impression analytics are available.

Other:

The city of Wisconsin Rapids itself has a Twitter account, but is frequently inactive and seems to only share things like weather updates and street closures. The account has 91 followers and has posted once in the last 30 days. Impressions over the last two years never exceed two likes or retweets.

SITUATION ANALYSIS:

Issue Background:

WRRC works with the community of Wisconsin Rapids by providing recreational resources; these resources include a multi-faceted complex with unique features. Among these features is a state-of-the-art aquatics center that was set to open in June 2020. This aquatics center has been a grassroots request from the community for over 20 years with most of the plans being made within the last couple of years. While funding still needs to be done, the aquatics center has received nearly \$9 million of its fundraising goal. They communicate this, as well as other information about WRRC, on their page on the City of Wisconsin Rapids website, as well as on their Facebook page.

Issue Consequence:

WRRC has a webpage on the Wisconsin Rapids website, but does not have a catch-all resource for all of their information. Additionally, outside of the webpage and Facebook presence, WRRC does not have a social media presence. In order to understand the audiences in which WRRC is serving, information regarding different social media platforms and how each audience uses each platform should be collected.

Direction:

The direction that we recommend WRRRC to take is to create a website mock-up for potential integration, and a comprehensive survey for understanding the audience of Wisconsin Rapids and their relationship with social media.

Resources:

The Legacy Foundation has provided substantial funding for the aquatics center and could be a great connection starter for building rapport for social media. Additionally, community support is already strong and does not need to be elicited, rather communicated. Creating strong branding and regular content will boost the ability to connect with the audiences of the rec center.

SWOT ANALYSIS:

STRENGTHS: Because this is a community-grown project that is 20 years in the making, the WRRRC has many strengths that make the organization valuable to the community.	WEAKNESSES: The whole place has restrictions for safety. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people would prefer to avoid direct contact with others. The organization doesn't have enough resources for PR and Marketing.
OPPORTUNITIES: The WRRRC has community support from cities, towns and villages in the surrounding area; these communities want to use the rec center and all of the amenities as much as the citizens of Wisconsin Rapids. Additionally, having no social media presence means there is freedom in content creativity and implementation.	THREATS: Due to COVID-19, opening the aquatic center may be controversial. The public may criticize it in the midst of the pandemic.

GOAL:

Increase online presence and awareness of WRRRC among audiences by creating a website and expanding the use of social media platforms.

AUDIENCES:

Parents (with young dependants)

Demographics:

Age: 25-55

Life cycle: Middle age -- may have children, need for insurance, housing, car, etc.

Avg. income: \$38,322/yr¹

Other info:

- 8,131 households of which 81% had children under the age of 18.²
- 39.1% are married couples living together.
- 6.2% under the age of 5.

Profile: As a target audience, parents are more likely to spend more time using commonly used search engines to get more information on the WRRC and the aquatics center. Parents have busy schedules and don't have time to scroll through social media so a website is a perfect channel to promote the WRRC aquatic center to a primary audience of parents. It is important to reach parents in this way so they have a better idea of what the WRRC aquatics park is like and if they want to take their children there. It would also be a good opportunity and format to promote the family season passes for the aquatic center. Parents are often busy, so giving options for parents to buy passes online will be more efficient for them and the WRRC. Parents may also want more information on WRRC's action plans for COVID-19 risks and precautions. This can be done on a specifically dedicated section of the website.

OBJECTIVE: Create a website for the WRRC.

- **Strategy:** Use the website to communicate key WRRC attractions and time-sensitive information, such as events and operating hours.
 - **Tactic:** Create a page that breaks down the main attractions at the WRRC and includes at least one photo of each attraction (EX: Lap pool, concession stand, water slide, reservable cabanas)

Teenagers/College Students

Demographics:

Age: 15-24

Life cycle: young adult--early adult life, just becoming independent.

Avg. income: most likely no income, still financially dependent on parents.

Other info:

- 23.4% of residents under the age of 18.³

¹ Pederson, R. (2020). Wisconsin Rapids, WI. Data USA.

<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/wisconsin-rapids-wi>

² U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Wisconsin Rapids city, Wisconsin; United States. (2020). Census Bureau QuickFacts.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/wisconsinrapidscitywisconsin.US/PST045219>

³ Wisconsin Rapids School District (2020) | Wisconsin Rapids, WI. (2020, July 10). Public School Review. <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/wisconsin/wisconsin-rapids-school-district/5517070-school-district/high>

- 5,101 students in the Wisconsin Rapids School District.
- 1,920 of them are in high school, 3 high schools in the district.
- 6,130 college students within reach of the Wisconsin Rapids community.⁴

Profile: As a target audience, from the ages of 15-24, young adults and early-life adults will have more agency/be more independent from their parents. This means they will have the option to visit the WRRRC aquatic center on their own. Since they are in the community, it helps that ticket prices for them will be at a reduced price since they are less likely to have a source of income. High school and college-age students will be an important group to reach out to on social media. The website is less likely to attract attention from this group because it offers no opportunity for brand-consumer interaction and relationship building. Instagram allows for interaction between the WRRRC and this audience because of options to comment, like and tag on their personal profiles as well as include WRRRC in their online lives. It is highly recommended and would be beneficial to the WRRRC to post visual content and respond to consumer comments and posts on channels like Instagram and Facebook to gain their interest.

OBJECTIVE: Expand online presence using a survey.

- **Strategy:** Create an online survey, posing questions that will help WRRRC better understand the audience demographics and psychographics, as well as other important information.
 - Collect the information and audience feedback by posting the survey on the WRRRC Facebook page.

EVALUATION:

The team planned to evaluate our work by implementing a survey and measuring the number of responses, but this didn't ultimately work out. Instead, the team came up with a list of takeaways - challenges we faced and what we learned from them - that we used to evaluate our work over the course of the term. The most important lessons we learned are:

- **Learn about your client**
Our client is in a different state with a different type of community environment, so research is necessary when targeting audiences in that community.
- **Communicate your needs**
We have responsibilities as students, and our client has responsibilities to their stakeholders. Finding a way to meet both of our needs was a critical challenge for this project, and this could've been improved through better communication earlier in the process.
- **Be flexible**
Working with this client was challenging because of our condensed timeline, and the team had to change directions multiple times of the course of the term. Creative problem solving was important when adapting the first draft of our plan to new goals.
- **Go through the appropriate channels**

⁴ Mid-State Technical College Profile (2020) | Wisconsin Rapids, WI. (2020, July 9). Community College Review. <https://www.communitycollegereview.com/mid-state-technical-college-profile>

Working with a government body means your work needs approval from multiple people, which takes time and planning.

- **Stay in touch**

Working remotely is tough! Without the luxury of meeting face to face or visiting the WRRRC, the team relied on regularly scheduled class meetings, as well as meetings on our own time, to keep everyone on the same page and to meet our deadlines. Keeping that stream of communication open was key to the success of this project.

NEXT STEPS

1. Short-Term: Consistently updating surveys to see what things need to be changed or altered. Release the surveys and collect the response from the audience. And issue a news release to announce the website of WRRRC. Collect new photos that we can use to update the website. Create and continue updating WRRRC's website and social media.
2. Long-Term: Create an image for WRRRC on social media and the new website. Get people engaged on the website and social media by pushing promotions and deals on there. Generally, WRRRC needs to improve their online presence to gain the attention of potential customers. WRRRC needs to upgrade their official website and start to manage their official social media account. After the outbreak of the COVID-19, they may need to cooperate with local businesses to start some offline activities.

TIMELINE:

Timeline Goal#1: To increase online presence, prepare a series of materials for online promotion including creating a website for WRRRC.

Summer 2020

- August 1: Start creating mockups for the WRRRC website
- August 5: Issue a news release for the new rec center website. Craft an email to send to the families of the Wisconsin Rapids community about the new website.
- August 10-15: Prepare a slide show for the website. Use images of the aquatic center that are already on the webpage, Facebook and provided by Emily.

Timeline Goal#2: Create a response survey about customer satisfaction. Try to collect the basic public opinions of the WRRRC.

Summer 2020

- August 1-5: Come up with 10 survey questions, create the survey in the Qualtrics and send it to Emily for review.
- August 10-15: Post the survey on the WRRRC website and Facebook page.

Timeline Goal#3: Review the survey responses from the audience to implement any other online resources of the program.

Winter 2020

- Collect the online survey to evaluate the audience's favorability with the program from our website.
- Use the whole month to implement the resources of our website and social media for the center depending on the audience's response.

BUDGET:

- Website Maintenance fee. (Average is \$35-\$5,000 per month)
- Cost for rental camera and photo shoot.
- Advertising: Average cost-per-thousand-impressions on Facebook or Instagram: \$7.19 each.

About UniverCity Year



UniverCity Year is a three-phase partnership between UW-Madison and one community in Wisconsin. The concept is simple. The community partner identifies projects that would benefit from UW-Madison expertise. Faculty from across the university incorporate these projects into their courses, and UniverCity Year staff provide administrative support to ensure the collaboration's success. The results are powerful. Partners receive big ideas and feasible recommendations that spark momentum towards a more sustainable, livable, and resilient future. Join us as we create **better places together.**