Utilizing Social Media for a Nonprofit Organization:

A Fundraiser for the Spring Hill College International Service Immersion Program

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**Abstract**

This project was created to explore a possible relationship between nonprofit organizations, social media and online giving. The project focused on the Spring Hill College International Service Immersion Program (ISIP). The project planner took an administrative role on the program’s social media presence and built a donation web page. Then, the project planner aimed to utilize the social media for fundraising purposes and encourage a cross over from the social media to the donation page. The project was implemented during a seven-and-half week timeframe. Goals were established for social media development and growth, online donations and data analytics. Once the project was concluded, the planner assessed its success using quantitative research and analytical reasoning. At the conclusion of this project, it is the planner’s goal to discover several methods for expanding social media awareness and creating links between social media and online giving pages.

**Introduction**

**Rationale**

Within the last decade, social media have morphed into a dominant force that influences everyday life not only across the nation, but around the world. Social media can be utilized for a plethora of strategic tools. As the general public’s knowledge expands on this, the online social presence for businesses and organizations becomes increasingly vital. However, this shift to the digital world is not as simplistic for every business. Nonprofit organizations face financial hardship quite regularly, which effects their social media presence in several ways. For one, nonprofits typically have a small staff. This creates a larger amount of work for a smaller amount of people. Fundraising is a main component of working in the nonprofit field, but typical methods are becoming outdated and less productive (Hoefer, 2012). This problem proves that there is a need for a new wave of nonprofit organization fundraising tactics. However, due to the small number of employees at typical nonprofits, there is not much time for exploration. While social media have continually proven to be an effective tool, nonprofits normally do not have the resources to reach its fullest potential.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this project is the exploration of nonprofit fundraising through the use of social media and online giving. The Spring Hill College International Service Immersion Program (ISIP) was founded in 2004 when a group of 10 students, faculty and staff members traveled to Belize City, Belize to work with a local church. Since then, the program has grown to include five trips for students, faculty and staff to participate in. In the last 10 years, the Spring Hill ISIP program has sent participants to Belize, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Ecuador, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. Fundraising is a fundamental component of the Spring Hill ISIP program. Each trip costs roughly $1,800 per student. Every student is responsible for paying Spring Hill College Campus Ministry $900 and is expected to raise the other $900. Campus Ministry created an online giving page in 2013, in addition to their traditional fundraisers. The ISIP program used a third party source, crowdrise.com, for the donations. The development Crowdrise was somewhat unorganized. Instead of having just one Crowdrise page for the ISIP program as a whole, the Office of Campus Ministry created six, one for the program as a whole and five for each individual trip (Appendix A). In addition, the money was broken down by person. Essentially, every participant in the 2013-2014 ISIP program had a specific donation page just for themselves (Appendix B). While Crowdrise was useful, the company took roughly 10% of the profits. Even so, the online giving fundraiser proved successful, but the project planner determined possible ways for further success. In addition to creating a new online giving web page through Spring Hill College, a social media campaign using Facebook was established to improve the awareness of the Spring Hill ISIP program and urge for more donations. The project was assessed with Media Richness Theory to explore a possible relation and explanation.

**Research Question**

This rationale proves that there is a need for online donations for the Spring Hill ISIP program. In addition, the Spring Hill ISIP program has a young online presence that has potential to be developed into a rich communication medium. This leads to the research question, can a nonprofit organization effectively use social media and a direct online donation web page to increase awareness and fundraising?

**Situational Analysis**

**Nonprofit Fundraising**

 Undoubtedly, nonprofits are associated with fundraising. For the purpose of this project fundraising can be defined as “the purposive process of soliciting and accepting monetary gifts from individuals, corporations, and foundations by a charitable organization, especially as managed for the organization by fundraising specialists” (Kelly, 1991, p.79-80). With that definition in mind, the techniques organizations can utilize for fundraising are numerous. While the types of fundraisers appear to be vast, there are some commonalities. Kathleen Kelly, author of *Fund Raising and Public Relations: A Critical Analysis,* lists four steps for any fundraiser: research, cultivation, solicitation, and recognition (Kelly, 1991). Research, as the foundational background on the subject at hand, is implemented to provide the fundraiser with a framework of previous successes and failures (Kelly, 1991). Cultivation is the development of the fundraiser, including all of the work before the fundraiser actually begins (Kelly, 1991). Solicitation refers to the advertising and promotion of the fundraiser (Kelly, 1991). Recognition is included as a step to provide a formal profession of gratitude to donors or sponsors (Kelly, 1991).

 The most important aspect of a fundraiser is the donor. In her later work, Kathleen Kelly also notes that “fund raising is the management of relationships between a charitable organization and its donor publics” (Kelly, 1998, p.8). In addition to raising money and awareness, fundraisers success are also measured by the communication with their donor profiles (Kelly, 1998). In addition to making the donation experience positive, it is also imperative to attract donors. The basis for why individuals donate is based on several theories. The services-philanthropic giving theory suggests a person’s giving intent is based on three principles: service value, service quality and satisfaction (Mann, 2007). Service value refers to the tradeoffs between the donations made and benefits one might receive (Mann, 2007). Service quality is the potential donor’s perspective on the operation of which they are donating to (Mann, 2007). This can be a donor’s personal viewpoint on the organizations success or how much need the organization is in. Satisfaction is the overall experience the potential donor has with the organization (Mann, 2007).

Another theory outlining donor relations is the charitable giving theory. This theory also gives three possible motivations for an act of giving: altruism, reciprocity and direct benefits (Mann, 2007). Altruism states that a potential donor may donate due to a sense of obligation (Mann, 2007). Reciprocity is the belief that a potential donor may donate for a possibility of benefits (Mann, 2007). While the direct benefits motivation appears to coincide with reciprocity, there are differences. Direct benefits would have an assurance of something to a donor before they would donate, while reciprocity only provides the potential (Mann, 2007). It is wise to note that donors are people, and have minds of their own. Extensive research has been conducted on donor and alumni relations of higher education. This research has shown that many alumni would be willing to donate but they would want to choose exactly where their donation would be benefiting (McDearmon, 2010). Essentially, alumni may no longer want to donate to the general fund of a school but they would rather have a specific area in mind. There is a high number who reported the intention of donating to student-experience-related initiatives (McDearmon, 2010).

 A common misconception of donors is the multitude of them. Oftentimes, campaigns are portrayed as being dependent on a large donor base (Wedgeworth, 2000). In reality, a donor base normally consists of a smaller group with larger donations (Wedgeworth, 2000). While it is effective to target this audience, it should not be the only resource. Some believe that a worthiness of a campaign in the persuasion of new donors and donors becoming more generous (Wedgeworth, 2000). However, these statistics do not appear to be the most critical. The most important outcome of a fundraising campaign is the financial result. It is reported that 50% of all charitable contributions go to religious groups (Bryce, 2000). That leaves only 50% for every other type of organization. The act of fundraising for donations is truly a fight.

 A new form of fundraising has developed in recent years. Since the technological shift to online forms of communication, an increasing amount of nonprofit organizations are creating forms of online giving. This trend allows for new ways for nonprofits to reach audiences and potential donors. While fundraising in general contains four basic steps, there are specific ones when it comes to Web-based fundraising. The fundamentals include raising money, recognition and reaching out (King, 2001). While these are all characteristics of typical fundraisers, they have different meanings when translated into online fundraising. Raising money online can be performed in a couple of ways. Web events are one possibility, which occur when a fundraising event takes place wholly or partially on the Web (King, 2001). The other option is to create an online giving page. Through one of these pages, anyone can donate to the organization. An organization can utilize an online giving site through affiliate marketing. This tactic is a process by which an organization encourages the movement from their own web page to another for promotion (Hoefer, 2012). This is usually done when an organization uses a third party online giving company. These websites provide relief for organizations, particularly nonprofits with a minimal staff, because they are simple to set up. However, these websites typically take a portion of the profit raised for the organization, ranging anywhere from 3 to 10% (Hoefer, 2012). Because of this, many nonprofit organizations have a way to donate directly from their web page. This allows for the organization to receive 100% of the donation, and the specific donation web page can have more of a relation to the actual organization. While nonprofit organizations have proven to be susceptible to rough economic times, new variations of fundraisers like online giving create techniques to help overcome those challenges.

**Social Media**

With the introduction of the Internet, Web users have developed a form of online communication. The emergence of this technology has created a shift in the way companies and organizations interact with their audiences. The evolution into Web 2.0 has allotted for Web users to fully interact with companies and organizations, creating a two-way street of communication. This rich interaction is most evident in social media. This new form of media are defined as “a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated, and used by consumers’ intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues” (Mangold, 2009, p. 1). It can encompass various sites including blogs, company-sponsored discussion boards, chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer emails, consumer product or service ratings websites and forums, Internet discussion boards and forums, and websites containing digital audio, images, movies, or photographs (Mangold, 2009). The most common use of social media are social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Mangold, 2009). While people have had personal profiles on social networking sites for almost a decade, companies and organizations have joined fairly recently. Because of this, popular business and academic literature offer minimal guidance for companies and organizations wanting to join the new media. This translates into managers lacking a full appreciation for social media’s role (Mangold, 2009).

 While there continues to be some disgruntlement over the course of the social media shift, most conclude it be positive. Not only does it prove effective for an individual to have a positive online reputation, it is also imperative for businesses and organizations to have one. While a positive reputation is a necessity, organizations on social media also must consider how to achieve that reputation. Taking the time to build and audience and reach a desired audience is a critical task when creating a presence on social media (Schlinke, 2013).

 Facebook continues to be the dominant force in social-networking sites, with 71% of all Internet users claiming to use the site (Duggan, 2013b). The statistic rose from 67% in 2012 (Duggan, 2013a). Facebook also has statistically high levels of engagement, with 63% of users claiming to visit the site at least once a day and 40% multiple times throughout the day (Duggan, 2013b). While people are beginning to create profiles on multiple social media platforms, Facebook still holds strong. Among people who claim to only use one platform of social media, 84% of them claim Facebook as their one site (Duggan, 2013b). Social media have been notorious for reveling with the younger generation, but a shift in demographics may be occurring. In 2012, the 18-29 age group dominated the demographic, claiming 83% of Internet users as Facebook users. The 65 and above age group came in at 32% (Duggan, 2013a). Only after one year, the 65 and above age group grew from 13% to 45% of Internet users claiming to have a Facebook profile.

 Facebook not only provides users the ability to have a personal profile, but companies and organizations can create pages for their product or services. There are two potential audiences for these pages: those who have liked the Facebook page and friends of those who have liked the page. The fans who have specifically liked the page are the easiest audience for a page to reach (Lipsman, 2012). However, the second tier audience, friends of those who have liked the page, is on average 34 times larger than the first tier audience (Lipsman, 2012). By understanding and focusing on these friends of fans, brands and companies can unlock benefits and potential new fans. If a page is looking to increase their audience, there are several tactics that can be employed. The most effective way is to post highly engaging content, which is content that encourages interaction (Lipsman, 2012). This content is more likely to appear on newsfeeds of the friends of fans, if a fan has interacted with the rich media. It is been statistically proven that “each incremental day of publishing content on a certain Facebook page increases the reach among fans by approximately 2.5 percent” (Lipsman, 2012, p. 44). It is clear that Facebook is the central figure in social media and that posting frequently with interactive content results in the most effective page for a brand or organization.

**Media Richness Theory**

 The Theory of Media Richness positively supports the proposal of a social media campaign for a nonprofit organization. The Media Richness Theory was created by Richard Daft and Robert Lengel in 1983 (Dennis & Kinney, 1998). At the time, Daft and Lengel argued that “managers could improve performance by matching media characteristics to the needs of organizational information processing tasks” (Dennis & Kinney, 1998, p. 257). The theory states that media consists of a richness hierarchy, on a scale of high to low degrees of richness. The highest degree of richness has the most possible interaction between an organization and an outside person (Daft & Lengel, 1984). While interacting online may not be up to the par of face-to-face communication, it still provides high levels of interaction. It can be considered a rich form of communication due to the availability of instant feedback. Because of this high level of interaction, social-networking sites, particularly Facebook, would be considered rich media. Thus, it can be concluded that the Media Richness Theory agrees with the notion that social-networking sites are an ideal form of communication.

**Goals**

 The overall goal of this project was to increase awareness and raise donations for the Spring Hill ISIP program. The project objective was broken into three parts. The first objective was to obtain 100 new Facebook likes from the initial takeover of the Spring Hill ISIP Facebook page on September 24, 2014 to November 15, 2014. Secondly, the project planner wanted to double the average amount of people reached by each post on the Spring Hill ISIP Facebook page. The third objective was to increase online donations by 10% in the same one month span in comparison to the year before, October 15 to November 15, 2013.

**Target Audiences**

 When the project planner took over the Facebook page, most of who liked the page were current students and alumni of Spring Hill College who participated in the ISIP program during their collegiate career. Previous donation records from the Spring Hill ISIP program showed that most of the donations came from family and friends of students, faculty and staff members. The project planner decided that the target audience for new Facebook likes and online donations would be this demographic. This group would be targeted by tagging individuals participating in the program. By doing this, the posts on the Spring Hill ISIP Facebook page would appear on the newsfeed of the connected network of the individual tagged.

**Methodology**

The project planner allotted seven-and-a-half weeks for the project to be constructed and implemented. The first phase was receiving access to the Spring Hill College International Service Immersion Program (ISIP) Facebook page, previous online donation records and pictures from the Office of Campus Ministry. Permission was needed for this access from Colleen Lee, Campus Minister for Service and Retreats, William “Billy” Kavula, Campus Minister for Liturgy & Music, and Maureen Bergan, Director of Campus Ministry (Appendix C). Permission was also needed for login information for badgernet.shc.edu from the Office of Development. Permission was needed from Caroline Smith, Director of Engagement (Appendix D). Permission was also needed from participants in the 2014-2015 Spring Hill ISIP program in order to post pictures on Facebook (Appendix E). The project planner held preliminary meetings with the Office of Campus Ministry and concluded that the exploration of a Twitter and Instagram page was not necessary; research proved that the target audience the project was aiming at was predominately on Facebook. While the numbers converting to Twitter and Instagram have proven to be increasing, the project planner believed that the allotted time for the project was not long enough to target this smaller demographic.

 Then, the Spring Hill ISIP web page was constructed on badgernet.shc.edu (Appendix F). The web page includes Spring Hill ISIP history, details on the 2015 trips, pictures and a donation form. The donation form was linked directly to the Spring Hill ISIP fund in the Office of Development. The link to the Spring Hill ISIP Facebook page was linked on the Badgernet page, and the Badgernet page was linked on the Spring Hill ISIP Facebook page. Once the site was live, The Office of Development issued a donation report weekly to the Office of Campus Ministry and the project planner. The project planner also developed an email through Badgernet that automatically sent to every donor after they donated through the page. The email was both a thank you note on behalf of the Spring Hill College Office of Campus Ministry and an electronic receipt from the donation (Appendix G).

 The Facebook page was first used for revealing 2014-2015 Spring Hill ISIP details, the promotion of the Badgernet page once the web page went live, and introducing the 2014-2015 ISIP groups once the retreat was concluded and group pictures were available. There was a Facebook post almost daily, excluding weekends. Recurring posts included “Throw Back Thursdays” and “Feature Fridays” highlighting students, faculty and staff members who are participating in the 2014-2015 ISIP program or who previously participated in the program (Appendix H). The individuals selected for “Feature Fridays” were either student leaders in the ISIP program, or a faculty or staff member with substantial influence in the program (Appendix I). Every post encouraged donations to the Badgernet page and included the link to the page. Every post that featured a student, faculty or staff member, they were both tagged in the post and picture in order to reach as many friends of that users network as possible. Additionally, students, faculty or staff members who appeared on the organizations Spring Hill College partners with for ISIP Facebook pages were shared on the Facebook page. For instance, Lauren Luckie ’14 was featured on the Hand in Hand Ministries Facebook page, the organization the Belize City, Belize and Managua, Nicaragua ISIP trips partner with, and the post was shared on the Spring Hill ISIP Facebook page (Appendix H).

Each Facebook post was analyzed with Facebook Analytics to assess the success of each post. Facebook Analytics provided the user with useful data, such as amount of people reached, number of likes, comments and shares, post clicks, photo view and other clicks (Appendices H & J). The amount of people reached was tallied and divided by the number of total posts to determine an average number of people reached. The Badgernet page was assessed through Google Analytics in three ways. The project planner compared the number of page views, unique views, time spent on page and bounce rate to the averages of Badgernet as a whole. Then, the project planner used In-Page Google Analytics to observe the page viewers click behavior. Last, the project planner determined several cross over percentages. To determine these statistics, the project planner compared the Google Analytics statistics to the Facebook Analytics. The total number of people reached using Facebook Analytics was compared to the amount of page views on the Badgernet donation page to determine a cross over percentage. The total number of page views on the Badgernet donation page and the total number of people reached on Facebook was also compared to the number of actual donations reported from the Office of Development to issue a donation percentage.

 During the project implementation, the project planner weekly compared the donation numbers to the donations in 2013. If donations were higher than the previous year, the campaign continued as it was. If the donations were lower, the project planner increased the social media activity, and changed the tone of the posts in hopes of increasing donations; for instance, the project planner created several posts with more humor than previous posts. At the conclusion of the semester, the project planner conducted a final comparison of the donation reports and the donation record of the previous year.

During the course of implementation the project planner related the project to Kathleen Kelly’s four steps of a fundraiser, research, cultivation, solicitation, and recognition (Kelly, 1991). The research was crafted in the situational analysis, the cultivation was the creation of the Badgernet page, the solicitation was the Spring Hill ISIP Facebook page, and the recognition was the email sent to every donor.

**Measurements and Evaluation**

**Facebook Likes**

 The project planner was granted access to the Spring Hill ISIP page on September 24, 2014. On that date, the page had 179 likes. The overall goal for Facebook during the seven-and-a-half week project was to increase the page by 100 likes. The project was concluded on November 15, 2014. During that period, the Facebook page had increase to 304 likes, 125 new likes total (Appendices J & K). During preliminary meetings with the Office of Campus Ministry, it was concluded that paid Facebook advertising was not necessary because there was no money in the office’s budget for a paid campaign. Thus, each of the 125 new likes were organic likes. This means that every one of the 125 likes were either invited to the page, searched for the page, the page appeared on their newsfeed or a combination of these factors. Once the project planner took over the Facebook page, there were three spikes in activity (Appendix K). The initial surge in likes occurred when the project planner took over the Facebook page. At that time, the 2014-2015 Spring Hill ISIP groups had just been announced and the number of likes could have been attributed to the posts referring to the news, or the students, faculty and staff members who had never participated in the program before liking the page. The second spike in Facebook likes occurred around October 15. This was the exact date that the online giving page went live and the Facebook post announcing the web page was the highest reaching post created during the project, with 1,788 people reached, which can be concluded as a reason for the rapid increase. The third rise in likes occurred around November 13 and 14, 2014. That same week, the participants in the ISIP program came back from their retreat which is the location for all the group pictures. Once the participants returned from the trip, the project planner spent the week creating posts that introduced every ISIP trip. Every post tagged each of the groups participants, resulting in about 10-12 tags of people per post. This may have been a contributing factor in the sudden increase in Facebook likes.

**Facebook Analytics**

The Office of Campus Ministry created the Spring Hill College ISIP Facebook page on July 17, 2014. From that date until when the project planner took over the page on September 24, 2014, there were 19 posts with a total of 3,200 people reached (Appendix L). That created an average of 168 people reached per post. One goal of Facebook in this project was to double the reach of people, which estimates to a 336 target reach. Between when the project planner took over the page on September 24 and when the project concluded on November 15, 2014 there were 25 posts with a total of 11,508 people reached (Appendix H). Included in these statistics were four posts that reached over 1,000 people, two of which reached over 1,500 people. This data results in an average reach of 460 people reached, well over the goal of a 336 target reach. The project planner also noticed that the time of day the post was issued affected the number of people reached. If the post was created in the early morning or late at night, it did not reach as many people. Also, if people shared the Facebook post, the number of people reached rose considerably. Prior to the project planner taking an administrative role on the Facebook page, the administrators in charge of the page were not tagging any individual in the posts they created. By the project planner tagging those individuals in every post the amount of people reached increased dramatically. Additionally, most of the interactions with the Facebook page were people who have some connection to the ISIP program. This is substantial because this interaction expanded the reach of the Facebook page of those individual’s networks, who were the intended target audience.

**Online Donations**

The projects objective for online donations was to increase the total 10% in comparison to the previous year. Both donation pages were launched on the same day: October 15. The 2014 Spring Hill ISIP donation page, which was analyzed from October 15 to November 15, 2014, was compared to 2013’s campaign during the same time frame, October 15 thru November 15, 2013. During this timeframe of the 2013 campaign, the Spring Hill ISIP program received 45 donations, totaling $2,850 (Appendix M). However, the platform the Office of Campus Ministry utilized in 2013, crowdrise.com, took roughly 10% from each donation. Therefore, the net total of donations from October 15 to November 15, 2013 was $2,611.31 (Appendix M). From the total of 45 donations, the average amount given was $63.33. During the implementation of this project, there were a total of 24 donations, with a total amount of $2,105 (Appendix N). Because the project planner built the web page on Badgernet, the website of the Spring Hill College Office of Development, 100% of each donation was allotted to the program’s fund. From the 24 donation, the average donation was $87.71. There are a number of factors that may have resulted in the total amount raised in this project being less than that raised in 2013. Perhaps the biggest contributing factor is the timeline of the 2014 Spring Hill ISIP program. The whole 2014-2015 calendar for the ISIP program was delayed a few weeks in comparison to the previous year. For instance, when the Crowdrise campaign went live in 2013 on October 15, the participants in the program had already been on the ISIP retreat and had taken their group pictures. However, during the 2014-2015 program, the participants did not attend the retreat or take any group pictures until the weekend of November 7, 2014. Since there was no Facebook page during the 2013 campaign, the ISIP program relied on participants sharing the link and encouraging donations. While this tactic was still utilized, participants could not share any pictures of themselves with their group until a week before the project was set to conclude.

**Donation Page Analytics**

 During the project implementation period the donation web page on Badgernet received 408 page views (Appendix O). Of those 405, 77.78% were new visitors and 22.22% were returning. The launch date, October 15, 2014, had the largest number of views in one day, with 122 views. Google Analytics assessed the page for 32 total days, showing an average of 12.75 views per day. Since views are correlated with people, the number was rounded to an average of 13 views per day. The comparison of Facebook and Google Analytics proved that when a Facebook post reached over 100 people, there was an increase in viewers on the donation page.

When the In-Page Google Analytics were analyzed some intriguing statistics were illuminated. For the most part, the click behavior of the web page visitors was quite normal. Most users who visited the page did not click on any other aspect of the page. The bounce rate of the page was 79.61%. This illustrates that about 80% of the web pages visitors looked at the page and exited out without clicking on anything, including the donation form. In comparison, the overall bounce rate of Badgernet as a whole was reported as 59.74%. While the statistic on the ISIP page is higher than the overall average, it was theorized that it was the result of the ISIP page being targeted as a specific group of people. Badgernet is a multiplatform website with many alumni stories, donation forms, and information for alumni. It makes sense that someone entering the home page of Badgernet would click through the website, while someone who would enter Badgernet through the ISIP page would be there for a specific purpose, the ISIP page itself. The average time on the ISIP page was reported at 4 minutes and 28 seconds, this is substantially longer than the average time spent on the Badgernet as a whole, which was listed as 1 minute and 11 seconds (Appendices O & P). It proves that users read the details on the ISIP program, a detail that was lacking on the Crowdrise pages.

Perhaps the most important statistic is the click percentage on the security message. Google Analytics reported 78% of the page clicks, 76 clicks, were on the “get a new challenge” tab on the security clearance portion of the donation form, which is used to prevent fraud (Appendix P). This is substantial because the Office of Development only reported 24 donations. It can be inferred that either those 24 donators clicked “get a new challenge” multiple times or that a user may have filled out the donation form, clicked “get a new challenge” and canceled the donation. Unfortunately, Google Analytics cannot answer this question. The project planner met with the Office of Development to discuss the reasoning behind this statistic, but both parties were unable to conclude on a concrete reason.

**Cross Over Percentages**

The total number of people reached on Facebook during the project was reported at 11,508 and the total number of page views were recorded as 408. This created a Facebook to Badgernet page cross over percentage of 0.035%. The total number of donations, 24, was also compared to both of these statistics. This created a Badgernet page to donation cross over percentage of 0.059%, and a Facebook to donation cross over percentage of .0021%. It is crucial to note that the substantial number of people reached by Facebook has an influence on these small percentages.

**Limitations**

If any individual were interested in duplicating or utilizing this project in the future, the most substantial change to make would be allotting a longer period of time. The Spring Hill ISIP program fundraises all year long, and the Badgernet page will continue to run through the 2014-2015 academic year. Thus, at the end of May 2015 the determination of the fundraiser’s success may be different than the conclusion of this project.

**Facebook Limitations**

While the Facebook goal of gaining 100 new Facebook likes was reached, some of the data may not have been the most effective. A large portion of the 125 likes were current students of Spring Hill College. Even though those students are part of a larger network, getting them to interact with the Facebook page was challenging unless they had a connection to the ISIP program. Also, it can be assumed that not many current students would donate to the program. In addition, the Office of Campus Ministry kept their administrative role on the Facebook page during the project planner’s course of action. The Office is not the most familiar with social media etiquette, and would occasionally comment and like posts that the project planner posted on the page. Because these individuals were administrators on the Facebook page, their likes and comments displayed as the Spring Hill College ISIP program liking and commenting its own posts. Another limitation for the project was the lack of a budget. Also, if the Office of Campus Ministry had a minute budget to allot for this project, a paid Facebook campaign could have been utilized.

**Donation Page Limitations**

The goal of increasing donations by 10% was not met over this course of this project. A number of small factors of limitations may have affected this outcome. The overall web page on Badgernet appeared to be less engaging than those on Crowdrise. When comparing both sites, Crowdrise enveloped a sense of style that Badgernet lacked. On a specific page, an amount raised would appear, along with a running list of donators. None of these details were available to incorporate in Badgernet. Perhaps this encourages more people to donate. In contrast, Badgernet offered a visible connection to Spring Hill. Working with two different offices to build the web page also proved to be a limitation. Both offices had continual edits to the page which delayed taking the web page live considerably. Additionally, a number of donations may not have come from the Facebook page. Every participant in the program is encouraged to make a status about the program and add the link to the Badgernet page. The amount of these people reached in these cases could not be recorded by the project planner, as they were posted on an individual accounts.

**Other Limitations**

 The largest fundraiser for the Spring Hill ISIP program is the participants begging letters. Each participant is provided letters to send to family, friends, businesses, etc., detailing their specific trip and politely asking for a donation to the program; each participant must also supply the Office of Campus Ministry with a minimum of 10 addresses. With the implementation of online giving in 2013, the Office of Campus Ministry added a small paragraph listing the link to the donation page on these begging letters as an alternative to sending a cash or check. During this project, the Office of Campus Ministry had already created the new begging letter before the project planner had the opportunity to. Included in the letter was a mistake. The address listed was badgernet.com/isip, while the actual web page is badgernet.shc.edu/isip. The project planner caught the mistake before the letters were processed in the U.S. Postal Service, and inserted a small sheet of paper detailing the issue and listing the actual address in each letter with the help of the ISIP student leaders. Also, while every participant is required to submit 10 addresses, there is no requirement for the online giving fundraiser.

**Conclusion**

**Discussion**

It has been continually proven that social media are a dominant force when it comes to online communications and promotions. In congruence with Media Richness Theory, social media are rich forms of communication due to the instantaneous feedback. Additionally, the project planner’s research supported the idea of a nonprofit organization creating a donation form on their own website instead of an outside company. At the conclusion of the project the Media Richness Theory was accredited to still be effective because the Facebook page and Badgernet page raised awareness for the ISIP program.

While not all the specific objectives listed in this project were fulfilled, the research question “can a nonprofit organization effectively use social media and a direct online donation Web page to increase awareness and fundraising?” was answered. The large increase in Facebook statistics and the correlation between the increase in Facebook reach and Badgernet page views supports the notion in the research question that social media can increase awareness. Even though the online donation objective to increase by 10% in comparison to 2013 was not fulfilled, it still can support the notion of utilizing social media and a direct online donation web page to increase fundraising. This is supported by the large increase in average donations.

There are also several factors on the national economic level that possibly affected this project. According to an article in the *New York Times,* the United States’ economy is rising but fragile. Around October 2014, gas prices dropped below $3 a gallon for the first time in four years (Schwartz, Krauss & Searcey, 2014). It appears that Americans have more money to spend in 2014 for the first time in years. In addition, in a July 25, 2014 article in *The Nonprofit Times* it was predicted that charitable giving would increase 5.7% in 2014 (Halper, 2014). This number is based on “tax data, government estimates for economic indicators, and information from other research institutions,” (Halper, 2014, p.1). While the concluding financial result of this project does not support these notions, the increase in average donation size does. Not as many people participated in the charitable giving, but those who did donated considerably more than the average of the previous year.

It is important to note that this project is quite minor in comparison to the broad aspect of the research question. Also, this fundraiser will continue through the end of the 2014-2015 academic year. Subsequently, the project may prove to be successful at that time if there are more total donations and increased analytics. Hypothetically, this could note that a project of this caliber would need a longer timeframe to determine an overall success.

A main successful outcome of this project was the evidence that the project’s efforts proved to be possible for one person to maintain. The Office of Campus Ministry now has a framework of how to handle a social media platform for fundraising activities. While the overall donations are slightly below the comparison of the previous year, the analytics, quantitative data and Media Richness Theory support the results of utilizing social for a nonprofit organizations fundraising.

**Reflection**

 My decision to creation this project was based on a couple of factors. For one, I have a strong interest in social media analytics and paring that with my experience with nonprofit education seemed ideal. In addition, I have a close personal tie with the ISIP program. In March 2013, I traveled to El Cercado, Dominican Republic and worked with International Partners in Mission, a nonprofit organization, and in February 2015 I will be traveling to Punta Gorda, Belize to work with the local Jesuit Parish, St. Peter Claver. It was this relationship with the ISIP program where I noticed a need for their social media growth.

 At the beginning of the 2014 Fall Semester, I felt I was taking on a risky project. I knew what I wanted to accomplish and believed I had the correct avenue to create those successes, but I was constantly nervous that the overall donations would not add up to those of last year. I learned that, in my opinion, the ideal way to fundraise is to speak highly of the organization, speak frequently about it, personalize it and the numbers should work for themselves.

 If I were to undertake a project similar to this, the biggest change I would make would be allowing myself more time. Creating the Badgernet page took several weeks longer than I had anticipated. While the page was still available to run and provide data for exactly one month, I believe that the most successful timeframe to analyze a project of this capacity would be one year. This way, donor behavior could be analyzed drastically more and there would be a concrete answer to whether or not this campaign raised more money than the previous year.

At the conclusion of this project I found myself to be quite proud. While I have had some experience with nonprofits, I have never taken on a fundraising project let alone tackling it individually. Even though I may have had a lack of experience, I knew I could handle it because it was an organization I had a strong passion for. Additionally, I felt it was quite fitting to incorporate a program that has a central focus on service and social justice into my senior capstone project; it proved to be a satisfying conclusion to a rich Jesuit education.

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