Applying Social Media Marketing Content Strategies from the Entertainment Field to Professional Dance

Lindsay Lambert
Western Kentucky University, lindsayelambert@gmail.com

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APPLYING SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CONTENT STRATEGIES FROM THE
ENTERTAINMENT FIELD TO PROFESSIONAL DANCE

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Science and the Degree Bachelor of Arts with
Honors College Graduate Distinction at
Western Kentucky University

By

Lindsay E. Lambert

Western Kentucky University
2017

CE/T Committee:

Professor Joanna Phillips Melancon

Professor Amanda Clark

Dr. Christopher Keller
ABSTRACT

Social media is a medium that is becoming increasingly relevant in the marketplace, especially in the arts arena. It is the marketing tool that allows for the more customized engagement between a brand and the target market, often at a lower price than traditional outlets. As a visual industry, dance has a lot of opportunities for content in digital marketing. Other industries in the entertainment realm, such as professional sports or concert music have similar goals with their intended target audiences: develop relationships with consumers to inevitably increase patronage to the organizations’ events. Social media content marketing allows organizations to achieve these goals.

Interviews were conducted with the social media expert from each of the following organizations: Nashville Predators, Nashville Symphony, and the Nashville Ballet. Common themes for best practices in social media marketing were developed across all three. By analyzing their individual practices, recommendations, and perspectives of social media use in their respective industries, a comprehensive social media marketing plan was developed for a professional dance company.

Keywords: Social media marketing, digital marketing, content marketing, professional dance, marketing strategy, performing arts marketing.
Dedicated to my parents for encouraging me to pursue a dual degree because they recognized my professional career goals would somehow incorporate my passion for dance.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my CE/T advisor, Joanna Melancon Phillips for her guidance and patience during this process, as well as the time she spent giving me supportive critique of my work. Her insight and expertise in this field was valuable to the development of the framework of this project. I would also like to thank my advisor and second reader, Amanda Clark, for instilling in me what it means to be a creating, thinking, artist. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my fellow dance majors, Jill Terry, Elise Wilham, Abbey Lutts, and Miriam Gaines for serving as models in my social media mock-ups.

Additionally, I would also like to thank the Honors College for their financial support of my CE/T project through an Honors Development Grant that enabled me to conduct in-person interviews for my research. I appreciate the university’s support in my pursuit and fulfillment of my academic goals.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their support in several years of dance classes, performances, and continued study of dance at the undergraduate level. Without their constant encouragement, I may not have pursued a degree in dance that eventually led to my dual degree in marketing.
VITA

EDUCATION

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY  December 2017
  B.S. in Marketing, B.A. in Dance, - Mahurin Honors College Graduate
  Honors Capstone:

Murray High School, Murray KY  May 2013

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Kentucky Governor’s Scholars Program  Summer 2015-2017
  Campus Budget/Sales Director

Housing & Residence Life, WKU  October 2015-
  Student Worker  Present

Dance Program, WKU  Fall 2017
  Teacher Assistant

AWARDS & HONORS

Summa Cum Laude, WKU, December 2017
Regents Scholarship, WKU, 2013-2017
National Dance Education Scholarship, Fall 2016
Student Government Association Winter Term Scholarship, January 2015

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Marketing Association (AMA)
Beta Gamma Sigma
National Dance Education Organization (NDEO)
National Honors Society for Dance Arts (NHSDA)

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Civitavecchia, Italy  May 2015
  WKU Dance Program Study Abroad
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Section I: Social Media Background and Literature Review

The Investment

Social Media Marketing in the performing arts has grown as an investment over the last five to eight years. It provides the interactive dialogue and visuals that the performing arts exhibit in concerts, events, and productions. Particularly, Performing Arts Centers (PACS) have used social media marketing to re-strategize their marketing. As e-commerce has grown and the ability to purchase tickets online became more important to consumers, social media marketing created an avenue for these organizations to reach and expand their market.¹

Capacity Interactive created a 2014 Benchmark Study that compiled market research data from over 125 performing arts organizations and their social media practices in 2014.² Key conclusions include how representative these 125+ organizations are online in social media. Capacity Interactive found that all of the organizations have the minimum of a Facebook account while 81% also have an Instagram presence. 97% of those organizations have invested in Facebook advertising. Ironically, limited budgets are the biggest obstacle for arts organizations as they are often non-profit. However, digital


marketing has several “free” components. Creating valuable content is the biggest initiative for an organization to market on a budget.

Vendini, a company focused on management and marketing solutions for performing arts organizations, names social media as “the new word of mouth.” Social media is the point of referral to websites and the chain of virtual gossip. However, it is also more than a channel to broadcast continuous sales messages. Followers “follow” in order to build relationships and make connections to brands, personalities, and organizations they have a stake in or are passionate about. The point of investing in social media is to be inventive and interactive, not detached. According to HubSpot, 31% of event attendees review their experience on social media. Consider the fact that the average person is on Facebook every month for approximately 20 hours. Specifically the millennial generation spends about 5.4 hours a day on their smartphones. If done correctly, social media sends customers to your website. Traffic ultimately equals sales. Even for non-profit organizations, there has to be some financial investment. Boosted posts or promoted tweets equal a wider reach. However, there are strategies that allow organic posts to have a large engagement rate.


Establishing Goals

The first step in any marketing plan is to establish a goal. Organizing a social media campaign requires goals in order to create cohesive, consistent messages for a brand. Goals can have both broad and specific ideas. For example, increasing awareness of a company’s brand could be a common goal for numerous campaigns. A more specific goal could be to increase online ticket sales for a particular performance.6

Tips & Tricks

A report from Musical America elaborates on specific tools and strategies that arts organizations have implemented in the past. Their “Tips and Tricks,” included complementing live events with social media posts. Discounts, backstage passes, contests, and VIP seats are all great incentives to participate in an organization’s social media.7 Liking, commenting, sharing, and reposting also enables constant conversation. Moments can also be created throughout the performances that are intended for the audience to post or interact on social media. For example, the appropriate moment during a dance company’s performance would be prior to the show starting, intermission, or once the show has finished. A trivia question could be asked about the production and audience members could answer via a hashtag to win merchandise or tickets to their next production.


Organizations, including those in the performing arts industry, must recognize their social influencers. Musical America identifies social influencers as “…a small percentage of your social media audience, meaning others read and respond to them, link to their posts, and redistribute their content.” These influencers are consumers that inspire conversation about the organization or brand. Theatres, especially non-profits, have season ticket holders (similar to a professional sports team), and donors. Social media is as much about networking as another marketing channel, perhaps more. Provide the network with shareable content. By using traceable links, one can track which influencers are giving you the best promotions.8

Because the performing arts industry is visual, it is important that the organization does not post text only content. Graphics, pictures, and videos are vital in representing the organizations’ services and products. Vendini also emphasizes the importance for theatre venues to use visuals in their content. Consumers are more likely to recognize content that contain pictures or video.9

**Finding your Audience**

Ticket Peak’s blog shares strategies for developing social media in a performing arts marketing plan. Finding the audience is a key component for any marketing plan;

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however, in social media, Ticket Peak references the importance of finding your audience to establish the appropriate social media presence.¹⁰ Vendini considers understanding the patrons of your organization’s events as an important strategy: “…listen before you jump into the conversation.”¹¹

There are always alternative platforms to Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, but other platforms should only be considered if the organization’s audience is present in that channel.¹² The basics of social media marketing also need to be understood. All social media platforms are not relevant to each organization. Musical America defines Twitter as “a direct contact with a leading personality.” This could be a conductor, director, or choreographer for the organization. Each channel also has its own voice.

**Content Curation**

Current practices by Performing Arts Companies (PACs) in social media marketing include creating valuable content, developing conversations, and telling stories. Valuable content engages followers and pushes them to share it with their own followers.¹³ Sharing relevant stories and news from the performing arts industry can also

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¹² Ibid.

¹³ Natalia V. Ryzhkova. “Social Media Marketing in Performing Arts Centers,” *A Thesis presented to the faculty of Graduate School at Rochester Institute of*
have a positive impact in timelines or newsfeeds. It also provides exposure to perhaps new or applicable artists, companies, and industry sources.\textsuperscript{14} Conversations about the brand increase awareness and provides a two-way communication between brands and their followers. Stories help brands become personable and relatable. The opportunity is more than providing information about upcoming events. There are endless opportunities to build relationships with audiences – real people.

Vendini suggests their own best practices for performing arts venues. Converse on social media just as one would in-person. Apply personality or the brand’s personality to your posts in order to engage with both loyal patrons and new audiences. Show that there is a human being interacting with consumers on each social media channel. Social media marketing can be more customized than pre-recorded messages or mail-merged emails.\textsuperscript{15} Consistent postings also ensure the conversation never ceases. For example, the Nashville Predators are an organization that posts frequently and never cease to create opportunities for engagement and interaction with followers. It always creates credibility as a source for information in that particular industry.

Vendini also emphasizes the importance to not constantly recycle content for each platform. Using the exact same post for each channel, whether Facebook, Twitter, or

\textit{Technology}: 12-23, May, 2010,  
http://scholarworks.rit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1475&context=theses.

\textsuperscript{14} Jessica Dover, “Organizing Social Media,” \textit{Musical America Special Reports}, (2012); 22.

Instagram, will not work. Each platform has its best features. Alter each post to suit the channel in order to receive the best engagement for that audience and to not appear “robotic.”

The Big Apple Circus is used as an example by Musical America to showcase the strategies used in social media marketing. Their messages are centered on four different categories: encouraging the sharing of memories or photos, circus trivia and facts, ticket sales, and information about the organization or a particular show. Anytime a fan shares a memory or photo relating to the organization, organic interactions are also created.

Musical America references the Cleveland Indians as a source for social media marketing in the entertainment industry. Behind the scenes photos, video highlights from games, quotes about particular plays, links to bigger stories, free merchandise opportunities, when and where to watch, and final scores are all content creations that can be adapted to the performing arts industry.

Ticket Peak refers to social media as not just a marketing tool, but an “educational and development tool.” The Radio City Rockettes are a stunning example for well-written industry related articles and blog posts. They have a constant stream of content


18. Ibid., 7.

that is both specific to their organization, but also pulls in dance news. Their “Dancer of the Week,” highlights a trending video, star, or topic in dance. The original content may not be their own; however, they give credit to the original source and positively remark on the post with their expert opinion. Other articles bring their dancer’s backgrounds to the forefront in a celebratory fashion.\textsuperscript{20} For example, “Rockette Melissa’s Family Camping Tradition,” or “A Day in the Life of Rockette Sarah,” gives insight to a Rockette’s life out of rehearsal. Posts such as “5 Ballet-Inspired Fashion Pieces You’ll Love,” and “6 Ways to Upcycle your Dancewear,” inspire creativity while still relaying news that is relevant to their organization. Several of their articles are modeled after a Buzzfeed post or blog: “10 Things You Didn’t Know About the Rockettes,” “9 Workouts the Rockettes Do in the Offseason,” and “How to Combat your Kids’ Audition Jitters.” This strategy has only increased their engagement and helped to spark interaction with their regularly scheduled press releases. Articles such as “Pandora Jewelry is the Official Jewelry Partner of the 2017 Christmas Spectacular,” and “Performances Announced for the 2017 Tony Awards,” flow well with their originally organized content drip. The writing style for each post blends well with the Rockettes’ brand and establishes high expectations for their online social media presence.

**Sales and Social Media**

The “social” aspect of social media is often emphasized. Interactions need to be more constant online than only sales messages. Online ticket sales and social media go

hand in hand. Dina Gerdeman elaborates on the importance of presenting performances on the stage of social media before the company takes the stage in the theatre.\textsuperscript{21} Piquing an interest can spark a ticket sale. These methods include trivia, behind the scenes moments and glimpses, and answering event or venue questions.

In May 2012, Ticketmaster’s Live Analytics research arm studied 8,000 Canadian and American Ticketmaster customers. For sporting events, 14\% of the customers were influenced by a Facebook post to attend a sporting event. 20\% used social media to invite friends to the same events. The concert attendance audience had a larger stake in the study. 30\% of the concert goers were influenced by a Facebook post and 30\% invited friends to the events through social media.\textsuperscript{22} Arts organizations have also found that content cannot be centered solely on ticket sales. Push strategies can be taken as aggressive or annoying for followers. Consumers follow brands to connect and have access to exclusive content. The occasional sales message should capitalize on those connections.\textsuperscript{23} Add value to posts. The arts is a creative industry. Show this in the messages and content. Do not overwhelm your followers with sales demands.\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{itemize}
\item[21.] Dina Gerdeman, “Social Media and Ticket Sales,” \textit{Musical America Special Reports}, (2012); 5.
\item[22.] Ibid., 5.
\item[23.] Erik Gensler, “Facebook Marketing for Arts Organizations,” \textit{Musical America Special Reports}, (2012), 17.
\end{itemize}
**Best Practices**

1. Building the profile on any social media platform is just as important as building the content. Ticket Peak highlights the importance of establishing a brief biography in the “about” section, adding social share buttons to the organizations website, providing contact info, and utilizing the company’s logo as the profile picture.  

2. Posts should not be text heavy. Grab the audience’s attention and then lead them to the call to action. On Facebook, Vendini emphasizes that less than 250 characters equals up to 60% more engagement. 80 characters or less can return about 66% more engagement. Short and Sweet is the key. Anything more can be overkill and lose the audience’s attention.

3. To build your following, post often, offer exclusive content, publish your tag name in other promotional materials, and follow other accounts that the organization has a stake in or is impactful in the same industry.

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4. Dance USA’s “In the Green Room,” blog sees headlines on photos, graphics, and videos as a way to “connect the dots” for followers. A narrative establishes context and builds a brand’s story.28

5. Your followers should be considered insiders. Behind-the-scenes moments should be backstage moments in the performing arts industry.29

6. Create buzz before the Opening Night: Tease your followers. Create cliffhangers. Share an artistic challenge.30

7. Be a resource for the industry not just content for the organization.31 Include news related articles and information to establish the organization as an authority figure or expert in the industry.

8. Be original.32 What percentage of the content was your own? Vendini suggests the 80-20 rule. 80% of the content should be to inform or entertain your followers. The remaining 20% should be about selling your brand’s mission.33


29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

9. “Fail Forward.” Experimenting is part of the game. Different content works better on different channels. Find what works for your brand on each platform. Like a critic would review a production, critique your social media presence and performance. What goals were reached and what story was told? Learn and experiment.  

Best Practices by Platform

Facebook:

- Create an Event for Every Event

This gives more opportunity to post about more than the date, time, and ticket information for an event. Linking updates to the actual Facebook event allows for content growth and creativity in sharing further information about what is coming up. It also shows followers what the organization has done or what performances are in the future. Vendini emphasizes the power of social media because it covers the heart of a live event: “Live event experiences are born, live, and die on social.” The amount of social media channels and features make it possible to highlight and capture each second of a performance, concert, and production – whatever the experience is.

- Have Followers Share their Attendance.

34. Ibid, 5.

35. Ibid., 6.
Provide the opportunity after purchasing tickets online or create an incentive when they arrive for their performance. This spreads the word about remaining performance dates and opportunities to purchase future tickets. Their Facebook friends will see what is going on in the area and hopefully, take advantage of the performance or event as well.36

- Questions Equal Comments

Getting to know your followers can be as simple as ending a post with a question. Answers can come in the form of a comment, or to be more interactive, post a poll. Polls are a newer feature on Facebook and Twitter that are being explored by organizations in their social media strategies. Followers enjoy sharing their input. Posts that culminate in a question result in a 15% higher interaction rate.37

- Contests

Tickets to performances and productions are an automatic must-have in giveaways. Ask for a like, share, or an answer to a trivia question for an entry. Customize a contest and the production with hashtags that allows the conversation to continue.38

- Ticket Peak sees 40-80 characters as efficient for Facebook headlines.39

36. Ibid., 6.

37. Ibid., 7.

38. Ibid., 7.

Twitter:

- Newsworthy content

Twitter is the platform for news and promotions. Musicals like *Hamilton* have more than 20K followers. With large followings come great opportunities to share about ticket specials, discounts, and packages.40

- Use Hashtags Sparingly

  Vendini suggests no more than 1-2 hashtags a post. The purpose of hashtags is to categorize content and continue conversations. Anything more can clutter the post and distract from the message that is intended to be conveyed.41 Hashtags may have been established on Twitter, but they are relevant in other platforms – mainly Facebook and Instagram. Ticket Peak recommends not using more than three hashtags in a post – any more can distract from the content. For events, create a specific hashtag that can be used in promotional materials and a CTA.42


41. Ibid., 8.

• Include the URL

Make links clickable for call to actions. Tweets that have the URL as the central part of the message are 34% more likely to be retweeted.43

Instagram:

• More than photos

Videos bring movement to newsfeed. If your organization, particularly a professional dance company, revolves around movement – showcase it. Real-time, recaps, or behind-the-scenes video is all relevant. Creating trailers for events is also a great way to capture your follower’s attention.44

• Highlight your Organization’s Culture

This is the platform to highlight your history, staff, and mission. Creativity on Instagram reaps engagement. Clever captions headline visual content well.45

• Height of the Hashtag

The # may have originated on Twitter, but the feature is best utilized on Instagram. According to Vendini, using more relevant hashtags – between 10 and 15, results in high engagement.46


44. Ibid., 9.

45. Ibid., 8.

46. Ibid., 8.
Strategy

Social Media Today emphasizes five steps to developing a strong social media strategy for any organization. First, be clear on the target audience. In order to connect with the audience, develop buyer personas that characterize consumers by their interests, needs, and challenges. All content curation should then be focused on meeting those specifics as outlined in the persona. Secondly, establish goals or an intent behind the posts that will be published. The next step is to share engaging content that can launch a brand as an industry leader or expert. It also builds value in content for customers. Being social on social seems like an obvious step in social media strategy; however, many organizations miss that connection that makes social media marketing a new kind of a tool. Interaction also shows appreciation for customers. The final step is to analyze the efforts in campaigns. Management tools such as Hootsuite can measure how much engagement content is creating and whether it is content that is relevant for the target audience.\textsuperscript{47} In order to create an organization’s strategic social media marketing plan, the organization must first perform a social media audit in order to establish a benchmark that the organization can use as a reference to further grow their social media strategy.

Section II: Audit Information

Method Summary:

Items that will be assessed include reach, feedback, average response time, company posts, and sentiment analysis. Reach is the follower count on each social media site. Average response time assesses how long it takes for a company to respond to followers’ comments. The type and frequency of content is labeled company posts and the sentiment analysis assesses how the brand is viewed online. The audit will be focused on the top three platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Tools such as Followerwonk, BuzzSumo, Twitonomy, and Likealyzer will provide information to the organizations’ accounts without requiring their passwords or account information that the social media managers would have. Likealyzer is specific to Facebook while Followerwonk and Twitonomy are relevant to Twitter. BuzzSumo provides insights to an organization’s influencers and analyzes Facebook content, engagement, and timing.

Reach

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<th>Nashville Ballet</th>
<th>Nashville Symphony</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 1. Platform Reach of each Organization

As indicated by the size of their organization, the Nashville Predators have the largest following on the top three social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Their vast reach online can be related to their prominent fan base, the sport of hockey in general, their excellent performance in the 2017 Stanley Cup Final, and from
solely being a Nashville team because of the constant growth that Nashville is experiencing. Currently, Twitter has their biggest audience which can be justified from the amount of live game content posted on Twitter and the fact that their CEO is also very active on the platform (@PREDsident). The Nashville Ballet, a nonprofit performing arts organization, has their strongest reach on Facebook. As ticket sales for productions are a main source of revenue for the organization, Facebook serves as the best choice to promote posts with call to actions that allow followers to easily navigate to their website and subsequently purchase tickets. The Nashville Symphony has a similar goal in relation to ticket sales. As a result, their greatest reach is also on Facebook. However, the Symphony’s Instagram following is not far behind.

**Company Posts**

According to Likealyzer, the Nashville Predators post on average 8x/day on Facebook. This number increases substantially on game days – typically Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. During the 2017 Stanley Cup Final, this number increased to 23.53x/day because of the wealth of content and engagement opportunities that corresponded to their continued success. As of May 22nd 2017, their Facebook page had 305,112 page likes, 8,782 Reviews and a rating of 4.5 stars. A username, website link, milestones, and specified “about” information have been included on their Facebook page. Fans appreciate their post frequency as, on average, each post receives 2,894 likes, comments, and shares. The majority of their posts are links to articles and game feed (37.5%), followed by shares (20.8%), videos (25%), and photos/graphics (16.7%).

Videos often include game feed, media interviews with players and the coach, game highlights, game reports and analyses, and videos of the national anthem or fans at the games. Photos include shots from games of both fans and players, viewing parties, gifts for fans at games, and gifts from fans. Player birthdays, “WINfographics”, game updates, and sponsored posts are the most frequently posted graphics. Overall, the Nashville Predators have a cohesive look brought together by the coordinating graphics in posts, the profile picture, and the cover photo. Their headlines and captions use the same tone in order to achieve a consistent voice for their social media.

Having been on Twitter since 2009, the Preds (@PredsNHL) tweet on average 16.66 times a day. Again, the amount of content escalates on game days and their most successful timing is between 6 and 10 PM. One of their most favorited and most retweeted post of all time was from May 22, 2017 when the Predators won the Western Conference Championship against Anaheim. As of September 9th, 2017 it has 13,457 retweets and 18,561 favorites.49

The majority of their content is posted through TweetDeck. Content includes sponsored posts and contests (#NHLHatTrickchallenge by Enterprise), Pregame report links from NHL.com, photos, WINfographics, player content, and team related news.
The Predator’s Instagram usually has 5-8 published posts each day. Posts usually include the same content from Twitter such as Winographics, sponsored plugs, photos, game final scores, and player content; however, it is always been appropriately reformatted for the platform. Additional content includes fan pictures, game clips, game final scores, and other short videos.

With approximately 18,000 likes on Facebook, the Nashville Ballet posts about .85 times a day – meaning there is not a constant stream of content on a daily basis. Each post averages a total of 54 likes, comments, and shares. According to Likealyzer, each
post has appropriate timing that corresponds to their follower’s activity and is between 100 and 500 characters. Posts consist of 70.8% photos, 16.7% videos, 8.3% links, and 4.2% shares.50

Videos and photos usually feature backstage, rehearsal, or onstage productions. On both Instagram and Facebook, dancer takeovers are implemented to create content blasts leading up to performances. Each takeover begins with an introduction by the dancer. Links are posted to their websites in order to purchase tickets or share reviews. Buzzsumo also recognizes images as Nashville Ballet’s most popular post type. Additionally, posts are usually 300+ characters. Wednesday is the most common day for posts while 7:00 AM is the most frequent publishing time. Instagram has about 2-3 posts a week and also increases content on performance weekends. Additional content includes, Boomerang videos, contests to win tickets, and other posts that support philanthropies or other non-profits in the Nashville area.51


Figure 3. Nashville Ballet Buzzsumo Facebook Analysis

Monthly interactions are consistent with significant events at the Nashville Ballet. Performances from their company season and summer intensives often equal high interaction on social media.

On Twitter, @NashvilleBallet tweets about 1.34 times a day. @parentmag, @nashvillearts, @nashvillesymp, @visitmusiccity, and @tpac are the most common users they mention in tweets. Hashtags are utilized most often to tag an upcoming performance or production such as #peterpan, #swanlake, #nashvillesnutcracker, and #attitude in past seasons. Their most retweeted tweet tagged Nick Carter from the Backstreet Boys after he was spotted at one of their Nutcracker performances (31 retweets, 47 favorites). One of their most favorite tweets tagged the ABC Nashville TV
show star @clarembee foreshadowing a performance with her, John Oates, and the
Nashville Ballet (29 retweets, 106 favorites). Weekdays, specifically Tuesdays and
Fridays, between 9 am and 1 pm are the most popular posting times. Hootsuite is the
primary platform used for posting.52

The Nashville Symphony’s Facebook page has 45,440 likes and an engagement
rate of 6.33%. They post, on average, 1.48 times a day and have about 86 likes,
comments, and shares per post. The page itself includes a username
(@nashvillesymphony), a website, milestones, a “shop now” CTA for their website, and
has specified “about” information. Their average post has great timing and is between
100 and 500 characters. The majority of their posts are pictures (54.2%) followed by
videos and links at 20.8% each and shares at 4.2%.53 Most photo posts are from concerts
and events, rehearsals, downtown Nashville, the Symphony Center or other performances
by related music groups. Graphics are utilized for concert announcements, and composer
quotes. Many of their videos are organized by playlists such as, “Get to know our
musicians” which include musicians Q&As, “Why does classical music matter?,”
concerts, composers, concert soloists, and 360 degree video experiences.

The Nashville Symphony averages 3.95 tweets per day. They have been active on
Twitter since 2008. Currently, their most popular hashtags include #nsosummer,
#nashville, #nsochorus, #musiccity, #nashsfs, and #creativecity. One of their most


52. “Nashville Symphony,” Likealyzer, accessed May 22, 2017,
popular tweets was of a video link to the @PredsNHL as part of the #standwithus campaign that Nashville did for the NHL Playoffs. The tweet had 212 retweets and 707 favorites. Other popular tweets from their page include a reply to a concert goer (61 retweets and 488 favorites) and a giveaway contest (44 retweets and 61 favorites). Fridays, Tuesdays, and Thursday are the most popular days for posting. Tweets are usually published between 8 am and 11 pm. 11:00 am sees the most published tweets in order to reach the audience during the typical lunch break. TweetDeck, Twitter for Android, and Hootsuite are the most common platforms used for the Nashville Symphony to publish their posts.54

Figure 4. Nashville Symphony Twitonomy Screenshot

Feedback

Fans appreciate the Predators’ post frequency on Facebook as, on average, each post receives 2,894 likes, comments, and shares. The typical engagement rate (# of PTAT – People Talking About This divided by the number of page likes) for the Preds is 3%. During the Stanley Cup Final, their Facebook engagement rate escalated to 23.63%. Below, a bar chart represents the average engagement from a sample of posts. Each post usually has a length less than that of 100 characters. Buzzsumo created a chart of the average Facebook engagement per character range. Posts with 50-100 characters received the most shares, likes, and comments on Facebook.

![Average Facebook Engagement Per Character Range](image)

Figure 5. Nashville Predators Buzzsumo Facebook Engagement Per Character Range


According to Likealyzer, fans respond best to links posted between 18-21(GMT). Buzzsumo recognized that the most popular day to post for the Predators are Tuesdays. The Facebook engagement rate is 2.51%. Their stats during the Stanley Cup Playoffs were highly elevated with an engagement rate of 34.94 and their posts per day was 23.63. Figure 6 shows the increased interaction rate from May to the beginning of July as a result of their performance in the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

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Buzzsumo also recognizes images as Nashville Ballet’s most popular post type. Additionally, posts are usually 300+ characters. Wednesday is the most common day for posts while 7:00 AM is the most frequent publishing time. Posts with 300 or more characters on Facebook have seen the most engagement.\textsuperscript{59}

![Average Engagement Per Post Type](image)

**Figure 7.** Nashville Ballet Buzzsumo Average Engagement Per Post Type

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The type of the posts that are most well received from the Nashville Symphony are Giveaways. Giveaways typically receive the most comments as that is how followers are able to submit an entry. As seen in Figure 8, the Nashville Symphony posts with 250-300 characters receive the most engagement on Facebook.\(^6\)

**Figure 8.** Nashville Symphony Buzzsumo Average Engagement Per Character Range

**Follower Analysis:**

Many of the @PredsNHL followers have key words such as hockey, sports, fan, Nashville, or music in their Twitter biography. TN, Nashville, Knoxville as well as some Canadian cities are consistent locations on these followers’ profiles as well. This gives insight to what is important to Predator’s fans and showcases the homegrown Nashville

fan base as well. The Canadian cities represented in the location word cloud (Quebec, Montreal, etc.) are consistent with the sport of hockey – fans of the sport that likely follow several teams in the professional league.⁶¹

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Nashville Ballet’s Twitter Bio word cloud is representative of interests related to professional ballet companies.62

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two word bio cloud</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>dance company</strong> — <strong>real estate</strong> — <strong>ballet company</strong> — <strong>music city</strong> — <strong>official twitter</strong> — <strong>performing arts</strong> — <strong>ballet dancer</strong> — <strong>social media</strong> — <strong>middle tennessee</strong> — <strong>classical ballet</strong> — <strong>artistic director</strong> — <strong>professional ballet</strong> — <strong>hip hop</strong> — <strong>contemporary dance</strong> — <strong>ballet school</strong> — <strong>nashville area</strong> — <strong>contemporary ballet</strong> — <strong>country music</strong> — <strong>nashville tennessee</strong> — <strong>dance studio</strong> — <strong>check out</strong> — <strong>east nashville</strong> — <strong>full service</strong> — <strong>dancer choreographer</strong> — <strong>wife mother</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10. Followerwonk Twitter Bio Cloud for Nashville Ballet**

The Symphony’s Twitter Bio cloud highlights Nashville’s country music industry in addition to those a fan of the classical genre.\textsuperscript{63}

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Demographics

In a sample totaling 5,000 of their followers, Followerwonk segments where the Predators’ followers are from according to their Twitter biography. The majority of their followers are from the Nashville area and surrounding states. On a larger scale, followers are shown to be from international locations as well. The data is consistent with their viewing audience that includes surrounding states as well as states and Canadian provinces that also boast a professional hockey team.64

![Followerwonk Map of Predators’ Followers](image)

Figure 12. Followerwonk Map of Predators’ Followers

Besides the followers from Tennessee, the other accumulations likely represent other cities with major ballet companies; for example, Boston, Miami, and Chicago.65

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Figure 13. Followerwonk Map of Nashville Ballet’s Followers
The Nashville Symphony’s map also represents the expected amount of followers from Tennessee area.  

Figure 14. Followerwonk Map of Symphony’s Followers

**Social Authority**

Social authority is measured on a scale from 1 to 100 that determines how an organization’s audience is optimized and engaged. The calculation includes the retweet rate of the profile’s last few hundred tweets and the dates of those tweets to determine how recent they were posted. Rather than focus on the size, number, and prestige of followers, the focus is on the user’s retweet activity and the rate at which their content is retweeted. *Followerwonk* describes social authority as a tool to “…discover content and

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engagement strategies that are attuned to your audience and industry.” Of these three profiles, the Nashville Predators have the highest social authority with a score of 83. Based on the breakdown of their content, only 13.5% of their posts are retweets from other profiles.

Figure 15. Twitonomy Social Authority Nashville Predators

Figure 16. Twitonomy Social Authority Nashville Ballet


Figure 17. Twitonomy Social Authority Nashville Symphony

Followerwonk demonstrated the overlap of audiences in these three organizations based on the overlap of Twitter followers for the three profiles (Note: the follower count is dated August 26th, 2017): \(^69\)

![Figure 18. Followerwonk Analysis of all Three Organizations](image)

Sentiment Analysis

SocialMention.com provides a sentiment analysis of each organization. Sentiment analyzes the amount of positive mentions to negative mentions. The Nashville Predators have a sentiment analysis of 1:3, so for every positive comment, there are three negative remarks. It is likely that these negative remarks follow a game loss. Overall, the organization averages a mention every two hours. Strength is measured by the number of phrase mentions in the last 24 hours divided by the total possible mentions. Nashville Predator’s strength rating is 6%. This represents the likelihood that they would be mentioned in social media. This is likely to be higher during the hockey season. Passion measures the amount of those that repeatedly talk about a brand. The Predator’s passion rating is 38%.70

The Nashville Ballet’s sentiment ratio is 19:0. However the strength rating is at 0%. Those that do mention Nashville Ballet in social media do so repeatedly as their passion rating is 52%.71 The sentiment ratio for the Nashville Symphony is 17:0 while their strength ratio is 1%. Their passion rating at 55% also suggests their following on social media is loyal.72

Socialmention.com defines reach as a measure of influence.73 It is calculated by the number of unique authors referenced divided by the total number of mentions. The


Nashville Predators have a reach of 8%\textsuperscript{74}, the Nashville Ballet’s reach is 10%\textsuperscript{75} and the Nashville Symphony’s is 8%\textsuperscript{76}

\textit{Influencers}

Buzzsumo defines a “Top Author” as someone who has written content that is heavily shared.\textsuperscript{77} Each organization should consider The Tennessean as a Top Author based on Buzzsumo’s analysis. The amount of articles for each organization is consistent with their size and following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Articles Published by The Tennessean</th>
<th>Average Shares</th>
<th>Total Shares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nashville Predators</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>404.338</td>
<td>28,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville Ballet</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>330.375</td>
<td>2,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville Symphony</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>219.474</td>
<td>4,170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Top Author Tennessean Articles

An example of a Tennessean article, “A Grammys sweep for Nashville Symphony,” by Giancarlo Guerrero, accumulated over 2.2K Facebook engagements and

\begin{flushright}


76. Steve Rayson, “How to Find Your Influencers to Amplify your Content Marketing,” \textit{Buzzsumo} (blog), July 14, 2015, \url{http://buzzsumo.com/blog/how-to-find-influencers-to-amplify-your-content-marketing/}.
\end{flushright}
21 shares on Twitter.\textsuperscript{78} For the Preds, a popularly shared Tennessean article was “Predators’ Mike Fisher: Thanks, Nashville,” announcing the captain’s retirement. This post had about 26K Facebook engagements (BuzzSumo 8/7/17). The NHL (@NHL) was another Top Author for the Predators (72 published, 345.11 average shares, and 24,848 total shares), in addition to Jim Casey – managing editor at Nash Country Daily (66 published, 176.439 average shares, and 11,645 total shares), and Greg Wyshynski – editor of Puck Daddy Blog on Yahoo - (21 published, 351.952 average shares, and 7,391 total shares. Originally posted on NHL.com, “Nashville toddler sends adorable motivating message to Predators,” had 14.5K engagements on the Preds’ Facebook.\textsuperscript{79}

Additional Top Authors for the Nashville Ballet include Broadway World News Desk (8 published, 3.875 shares, and 31 total shares), and their own website’s articles (6 published, 13.5 shares, 81 total shares). Published by the Tennessean in April 2017, “Nashville Ballet takes ‘Ben Folds Project’ to prestigious Kennedy Center,” received approximately 1.1K Facebook engagements and 27 Twitter shares. A 2016 Broadway World review by Jeffrey Ellis of Nashville’s Cinderella had 1.1K 918 Facebook engagements.\textsuperscript{80} A host for the Nashville Public Radio, Nina Cardona, is also a Top


Author for the Nashville Symphony (7 published, 19.85 average shares, 139 total shares).  

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

**Nashville Predators**

- Strong variety and quality of content that is catered to the appropriate audience on each platform.
- Engages with followers consistently.
- Posts on a timeline that matches followers’ activity online.

**Nashville Ballet**

- Photos/Images are a strong source of engagement.
- Provides exclusive content through dancer takeovers on Instagram.
- Supports other organizations in the community through social media posts.

**Nashville Symphony**

- Video content looks professional and has adequate lengths to capture audience engagement.
- Understands the demographic of followers.
- Utilizes giveaways well to engage current followers and capture new audiences.

Weaknesses

**Nashville Predators**

- Cohesiveness of sponsored posts with normally scheduled content.

- Frequency of posts are sometimes highly concentrated because of a platform’s algorithms.

  **Nashville Ballet**

- Timing and frequency of posts on each platform.
- Excluding takeovers, writing short and concise copy and captions.
- Engagement with followers on posts.

  **Nashville Symphony**

- Content on Instagram is often more pictures than videos.
- Post frequency is inconsistent.
- Sentiment analysis?

**Opportunities**

  **Nashville Predators**

- Constant technological advancements will continue to create new social media platforms, features, tools, and analytics.
- The evolving legislation that concerns safety in professional sports, particularly those that concern head injuries.
- The buzz surrounding the upcoming 2018 Winter Olympics.

  **Nashville Ballet**

- Constant technological advancements will continue to create new social media platforms, features, tools, and analytics.
- Responding to legislation that concerns funding in the arts or arts education.
- The growth in the commercialization or media coverage of professional dance.

  **Nashville Symphony**
- Constant technological advancements will continue to create new social media platforms, features, tools, and analytics.
- Responding to legislations that concerns funding in the arts or arts education.
- Networking with other arts-related organizations.

**Threats**

**Nashville Predators**
- Competition from other professional sports leagues such as the NBA, NFL and MLB.
- Potential professional soccer league starting up in Nashville.
- Lack of TV coverage on sports networks.

**Nashville Ballet**
- Entertainment substitutions such as concerts, movies, circuses, festivals or other events.
- Competition from other dance related productions.
- The constant threat of funding in the arts limits the dedication of resources available to social media.

**Nashville Symphony**
- The constant threat of funding in the arts limits the dedication of resources available to social media.
- Competition from other music/concert related events or organizations.
The hashtag gained momentum during the Stanley Cup finals when organizations, companies, and fans all over Nashville showed their support for the team on social media.

Special discounts and promotions were posted with corresponding holiday themed content throughout the month of July in order to promote Nashville’s Nutcracker performance in December.

Often require followers to tag a friend in the comments section which brings new audience viewership on posts. Giveaways are tickets to a concert.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Campaign</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nashville Predators</td>
<td>#StandWithUS</td>
<td>The hashtag gained momentum during the Stanley Cup finals when organizations, companies, and fans all over Nashville showed their support for the team on social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville Ballet</td>
<td>#ChristmasinJuly</td>
<td>Special discounts and promotions were posted with corresponding holiday themed content throughout the month of July in order to promote Nashville’s Nutcracker performance in December.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville Symphony</td>
<td>Concert Giveaways</td>
<td>Often require followers to tag a friend in the comments section which brings new audience viewership on posts. Giveaways are tickets to a concert.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section III: Interview Analysis

Method

Ideas and strategies were collected by interviewing experts in the marketing-social media field. Each interviewee acts as a producer, coordinator, or manager for social media in three Nashville based Organizations: Nashville Predators, Nashville Symphony, and Nashville Ballet. Questions were asked about each person’s background in social media, the organization’s experience and strategies, and the overall structure for producing and publishing content on the associated social media platforms. For example: How many different people handle the social media for each organization? What strategies are implemented to produce content? How long the organization has been on social media? The interviews with Megan Garrett, Nashville Predators Social Media Coordinator, and Justin Bradford – Nashville Symphony Digital Producer/Manager, were conducted in-person. The interview with Lauren McKirgan, Nashville Ballet’s Public Relations Manager, was done through email. After recording each interview, each transcript was analyzed in order to interpret several prominent themes that were consistent with each organization.

Respondent Biographies

Justin Bradford – Nashville Symphony

Justin Bradford, Digital Media Manager/Producer for the Nashville Symphony, has been the main contributor to the Nashville Symphony’s social media presence for about two years. He considers himself an early adopter of social media. His first position
out of undergrad was the Alumni Relations Coordinator at Cumberland University. At this point, Facebook and Twitter were still growing and so for his this position, he created profiles on both. He began working on the PR and communications perspective for the university through their website and social media.

**Bradford:** “Businesses were just starting to realize back in 2008 that hey, we can use this for advertising.”

Having a Bachelor’s Degree in Theatre, Bradford describes himself as a “self-taught social media marketer.” He developed his own strategies by analyzing what was working in his own content and gaining engagement from followers. Later on, Bradford worked as a social media and marketing analyst for an auto-glass company. When he started working for the Nashville Symphony, his position was titled “Website and Social Community Manager.” Recently this year, his title was updated to Digital Media Manager/Producer in order to capture the true spectrum of his job.

Megan Garrett – *Nashville Predators*

While working on her Masters at the University of Tennessee, Garrett also worked as a marketing intern in their Athletics Department. Knowing she wanted to move back to Nashville after graduation, Garrett began to apply for several jobs with the Predators. Her first position with the Nashville hockey league was in the Sales Department for the Predators. After working in this position for five months, a social media coordinator job opened in the Predators’ Marketing Department. In the interview process, Megan had to create a social media night marketing plan for a possible social media night with the Preds. Megan was hired in October of 2016 and has since
implemented her Social Media Night in April 2017 that she planned for the Predators during her interview.

Lauren McKirgan – *Nashville Ballet*

After graduating from University of Tennessee Knoxville with a degree in Public Relations, Lauren McKirgan began working for the Nashville Ballet in December 2014. Her interests in the arts and nonprofit organizations in addition to her education allowed her to have the skills necessary for the position. As the Public Relations Manager, McKirgan’s responsibilities include organizing media relations, email marketing and social media for the Nashville Ballet. Specifically for social media, McKirgan creates schedules, writes content, organizes photos and videos, posts content, and interacts with fans and followers online.

**Organizational Buy-In of Social Media**

The Predators began their investment in social media in 2012. As the most recognized platform, Facebook was an obvious part of their first initiatives. As other platforms, especially Twitter, grew in its popularity, the organization branched out. Garrett sees the several different contributors in the Predator’s social media as a strength for their organization.

*Garrett*: “If it was just one person having to do Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, all by themselves, there’s no way that we would be able to post the amount of content that we do. The amount of good content that we do.”
She also sees the opportunity to improve in their “sassiness.” Any opportunity to make a playful jab at another team on social media sparks engagement from fans on both teams. The Predator’s CEO also appreciates these moments.

**Garrett:** “When Sandy tweeted the Canucks on Tuesday, he screen shotted it and sent it to her and said it was the best tweet of the year.”

The Tweet occurred during overtime when a goal made by the Predators (which would have ended the game and named the Predators as the winners) was waved. Sandy made her sassy response after the goal was reviewed in favor of the Predators. There is a balance of when the playfulness online is appropriate or not - a tasteful way to be sassy.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 19. Nashville Predators Twitter Conversation with Vancouver Canucks**
The Nashville Ballet joined Facebook in its early stages in 2008. Twitter became an investment in 2009 and Instagram, their newest channel, in 2013. Each platform was chosen on the basis of targeting or further reaching specific demographics because each channel has unique methods of structuring content output.

McKirgan: “We also chose these platforms according to their specific advantages that they offered to us as marketers. Social media marketing is a critical tactic for building our brand, increasing visibility, communicating our messages and connecting with our constituents every day.”

Overall, McKirgan recognizes several strengths for the Nashville Ballet’s social media:

“I consider one of our greatest strengths on social media to be showing and not telling.”

Limiting the number of sales driven messages and instead focusing on more creative content allows ticket sales to develop in an alternative, more organic way. In the future, Nashville Ballet hopes to designate someone’s role specifically for content creation. Because McKirgan’s responsibilities also include media relations and e-marketing, this change would allow for more frequent posts and behind the scenes moments.

McKirgan: “We have a unique opportunity as an organization because we have access to endless opportunities for content each day (because our studios are always full of activity), but it’s just a matter of having someone designated to collecting and posting that content more frequently.”
Nashville Ballet’s overall goal with social media is to offer a source of information that can grow their audience and brand through content.

Each organization recognized the value in social media to develop a brand’s awareness online which will further position a brand in the eyes of consumers. Content on social media allows for organizations to further reach their audience and engage with followers, thus allowing for potential customer relationships to perform. Additionally, it provides a channel to direct traffic to their websites.

**Structuring an Organization’s Social Media**

Each organization manages their social media in a different way. Size of the overall brand, department structure, market share, and industry type factored in to how each organization internally structured the management of their online presence.

The Nashville Symphony, as a non-profit organization, has different funding than the Nashville Predators – a hockey team in the National Hockey League. Justin Bradford’s position as the Digital Producer/Manager is part of the Symphony’s Communications Department while Megan Garrett’s job as the Social Media Coordinator is part of the Predator’s Marketing Department. Additionally, the Predator’s fan base, and as such their market share of the professional hockey team industry, calls for several people to handle the increasing amount of interaction they receive. Bradford serves as the sole manager for the Nashville Symphony, though his boss is able to assist when needed.

Each social media expert emphasizes that the importance of communication as well as the utilization of other departments within each organization, does not change by industry. Because social media is a voice for the organization, other departments have
influence on content in their own way whether it be assisting in the creating of content (Graphic Designers), organizing sponsorships, brainstorming campaign ideas (Marketing), or redirecting ticket questions (Ticket Services). At the Nashville Symphony, the Digital Media Manager/Producer is a part of the Communications Department.

**Bradford:** “For a non-profit arts organization, like, us, we serve basically as the in-house media company for the entire organization.”

Bradford finds himself working with the Development department for fundraising and charitable giving, Artistic to determine how to brand concerts and obtain permissions for video and pictures, Events Department to organize content about the sites, and Marketing to of course, coordinate advertisements and posts to sell tickets. He meets with the other departments at least once a week touch base. It is important for each department to communicate in order for each aspect of the organization to get covered content-wise. All videos and photos from his phone are Justin’s creation. Live content from concerts or other events is Justin’s as well. Edited photos or graphics are created by one of the two graphic designers in the Communications Department.

At the Nashville Predators, four to five people have access to the Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram accounts in order to keep the content constant. As a result, responsibilities are organized slightly differently. Garrett finds herself posting stories to both Instagram and Snapchat during games. She also works closely with Sponsorship to publish guaranteed posts each week and throughout the season. Anyone is able to reply to comments or questions on social media. It mostly depends on who is online at that time.
**Garrett:** “I think each one of us has TweetDeck open on our computer at any time – any one of us can reply.”

Sometimes Garrett will reach out to someone in the Community Relations department. For example, someone once requested some signed merchandise for someone who was sick. If the question online is related to ticket sales, they usually give a standard response with the phone number for that department in order to be efficient in answering other questions.

The Nashville Ballet’s structure for social media has some similarities to the Nashville Symphony. Their Marketing Department also serves as a sort of in-house PR or marketing agency for the entire organization. Artistic, Development, Community Engagement and the School of Nashville Ballet all utilize the marketing department’s resources and are included in the overall campaign goals when planning marketing as a whole, but also specific to social media. The marketing department includes McKirgan, a marketing manager, and two other individuals.

**McKirgan:** “We have regular meetings with each department (Artistic, School of Nashville Ballet, Development and Community Engagement) to go through what each has coming up and assess how marketing can assist, which can include social media. We typically don’t outline specific social media plans with each department, rather these meetings help me stay aware of everything that’s going on in our building so I can make sure to pull important messages from each department to share on social media when appropriate.”
Most frequently, McKirgan works with the Marketing Manager especially leading up to a performance. The manager’s experience with video production enables the Nashville Ballet to post consistent, polished videos on social media. This includes behind-the-scenes footage, rehearsal clips, and other content that can educate or boost knowledge of an upcoming production.

Inevitably, the structure of each organization’s social media responsibilities is dependent on the organization’s size and resources. However, each organization has found the support to establish their brand on social media and continues to look further to develop resources in order to strengthen their current reach and increase the depth of content.

Choosing Platforms

Twitter is the go-to platform for the Nashville Predators to post live game tweets. As Garrett said, “Twitter has kind of taken over [from Facebook] as the instant update platform.” Twitter’s biggest aspect right now is its stake in sports. Twitter is also their CEO’s (@PREDSident) favorite platform to use. The organization does capitalize on both Instagram and Snapchat stories because they are the current trend in social media right now. Overall, Twitter serves as their main platform because of the easy interaction between fans. Whether through direct messages, retweets, or replies, it is a fast way to respond to engagements. Everything they have is posted to Twitter because their CEO is on Twitter. The format is changed to be appropriate for the platform. Most of their content is also posted to Facebook, especially heartfelt stories.
According to Garrett, the organization would explore a new platform if there was a need for that extended audience.

**Garrett:** “Right now, it seems like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat are really the prime social platforms and that’s where we can reach the most people.”

Nashville Ballet chose their platforms based on audience. Facebook and Twitter allow them to engage with an older audience while Instagram targets a younger group. Additionally, the organization chose channels based on their features. Facebook and Twitter also allow for shares and retweets which can reach a larger audience than the initial post may be targeted toward.

**McKirgan:** “Dance is obviously an extremely visual art form, so Instagram makes perfect sense for us since it’s visually driven.”

Each organization is conscience of where their audience is online. It was also natural for them to utilize Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram because of the large reach each platform offers as well as the distinct features and content options for each platform.

**Prior to Content Creation**

**Know Your Audience:**

One of the first rules in marketing: know your audience. This rule undoubtedly applies to social media marketing as well. Justin Bradford mentions that marketing for each concert is different because the audience differs based on musical genre, composer, and guest artists. They each have different fans. The same can be said for social media.
platforms. Instagram is often recognized as a younger user profile while Facebook users have a wider age span that does include parents and their kids. Each organization was asked to describe the average user for each of their platforms.

Nashville Symphony:

Facebook: 30+, 75% Middle TN residents. Education varies.

Twitter: 25+, 60% Middle TN residents.

Instagram: 20-45. 55-60% local residents.

For @nashsymph, Twitter is used by fans, companies, bands and musicians that aren’t necessarily local, to keep up with the Nashville Symphony.

Nashville Predators:

The average follower are Nashville residents or a part of their “viewing area,” which includes Kentucky, Alabama, and Georgia – states without their own hockey team. Garrett recognizes that the majority of the Predators followers are male:

Facebook: 55% male, 44% female.

Twitter: 63% male, 37% female.

Instagram: 60% male, 40% female.

Nashville Ballet:

Their average followers are also either Nashville residents or from the surrounding area. McKirgan defined their average follower based on the different platform analytics that are available:
Facebook: 84% female, 48% ages 25-44

Twitter: 78% female

Instagram: 83% women; ages: 21% 18-24, 36% 25-34, and 21% 35-44

Nashville Ballet’s goal is to have a professional, yet relatable tone so that the audience will want to communicate despite their level of knowledge with ballet. It’s important for them to pull in newcomers - to both the Nashville Ballet and the art form as a whole – into their audience.

Understanding your audience allows an organization to cater their content in order to receive engagement. Several questions can create a general assessment of the typical customer: What’s the age of the average consumer? What other brands do they patronize? What are their habits? Where and how does the product or service fit? Altering the questions can assess the organization’s following on social media: What is the age of the average follower on each platform? What other brands/organizations do they follow online? What are their social media habits? How does the organizations social media presence fit?

**Cohesiveness and Consistency across Platforms**

**Bradford:** “Consistency is with every department working together.”

For the Nashville Symphony, Bradford is able to produce consistent messages because he is the most substantial contributor to their online presence. As a result, from platform to platform, he is able to differentiate the copy for either the same content across platforms or create content for specific platforms in order to meet the needs of each
audience. Tone is also an integral part of branding each message. Every published post helps to establish a cohesive voice for the organization.

**Bradford:** “Consistency is with every department working together…a lot of the time we’ll get help from other people, especially if it’s a branded message or something that we need to sound not more professional but in the right tone for what we’re producing.”

Garrett speaks of the constant communication between departments as the key to having a consistent and cohesive voice across the different media channels:

**Garrett:** “Our building is right next to the Community Relations. They’re in a separate building. But everyone is everywhere all the time. We are all talking to each other. Everybody chips in when they’re walking by. We are all the time talking [about ideas].”

McKirgan also speaks of the idea that only person creating content keeps the overall voice cohesive:

**McKirgan:** “…the voice needs to remain consistent across all channels to avoid confusion and allow people can to connect with your brand no matter what platform they’re using.”

Cohesive messages help an organization achieve their goals on social media. It is also helpful for followers to be able to recognize a brand’s content in their newsfeed or timeline without having to look at the profile picture or tag because the content is consistent with the brands usual messages. This is also necessary to establish the brand’s voice online in order to build their voice in the industry.
Find your Brand’s Voice in the Industry:

Fast food chains such as Wendy’s and Taco Bell are known for their wittiness online. Consumers become followers online because they see an investment in a brand’s content and they can relate or enjoy the personality they see in posts. Content has to be more than sales, headlines, and news. Personality requires an organization to interact with their followers and essentially establish an online “voice” for their organization. Justin Bradford stated, “if someone can tell that someone different is replying to them, that’s a bad thing.” Social media is an opportunity to directly interact with customers. Customers do not want social media to be a hotline with pre-recorded messages. Followers want to know it is real people replying to their tweets or comments, not an outside company that manages their media for the company. The voice may slightly vary by platform because the audience is likely to vary as well.

Garrett finds that sassy posts receive great interaction from fans. Below is an example of a post from the Predators after their first game against Stanley Cup winners, the Pittsburgh Penguins. The caption exemplifies a tone consistent with the Predators other posts. It showcases their personality even after losing an important game:
Figure 20. Nashville Predators Facebook Post

Understanding how your brand stands out from the industry is a factor to how visible you are online. Do followers perceive any value from the content? Are there any differences from one brand’s profile to another or is it just another typical sales message or advertisement? There needs to be a distinct purpose behind each piece of content in order for it to be published and have success.

Know your Competition:

Social media measures market share by follower count and engagement rate. By understanding the competition’s goals and strategies, an organization can differentiate what is working in the industry in terms of content, timing, and interaction.
The Nashville Predators have a unique tool that allows them to assess their competition’s social media presence. Crowd Tangle is a website that includes every hockey team’s Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. It breaks down posts by timeline and rates them by the amount of fan interaction. Perhaps a graphic for another team is doing well to publicize a new ticket plan. One of the Predator’s tweets was featured on the website as “over-performing” and ranked number one during a game against the Vancouver Canucks.

Additionally, the Predators make the effort to follow all the other teams in the NHL for each platform. They also follow the Tennessee Titans and the Sounds since they are also professional sports teams in Nashville.

**Garrett:** “We follow the local teams and then every other team in the NHL. We really stay on top of their Twitters as well so we can see what works for them and what doesn’t work for them.”

By studying their competition as well as their “allies” in Nashville, the Predators social media marketing team is able to see what gets a lot of likes, what may be ill-received, and what gets positive engagements. From there, their own social media content strategies can grow.

Lauren McKirgan strategically follows other professional ballet companies with her personal accounts. This allows her to keep up with what is going on in the industry. She considers the Boston Ballet as a great example of stunningly produced content with a relatable tone.
McKirgan: “Not only is their content beautifully produced, but their tone is really light-hearted, fun and feels relatable (whether you’re a die-hard ballet fan or newcomer).”

This helps her create goals for her own organization’s social media.

By allowing personality to be perceivable in copy for content, followers are able to connect with an organization because they recognize the brand to be relatable to their interests and needs. There is a clear direction in their posts instead of just posting content that clutters a newsfeed.

Generating Ideas

The creative process does differentiate by organization. Each has their own process in order to best meet their individual goals.

Bradford works closely with his boss to plan a campaign. Each Monday afternoon they have a meeting to plan out the week. Usually, they have planned weeks ahead for specific posts by using a Google Calendar. Concert announcements, event dates, and anything that was requested by other departments is usually worked into the schedule a month ahead of time. They also plan content based on articles that will or have been published, items to share from other pages, and focusing on what their artists have been working on. Furthermore, they keep a running list of video content ideas that have been brainstormed but not yet put into production. As the main manger and contributor of the social media, Bradford makes sure to consistently communicate with other departments for content that they need published. A post on each platform once a day is their quota.
During the summer, Sundays are usually kept as “quiet days” because the classical radio station will broadcast their performances from the previous season.

**Bradford:** “Once a week we strategize but throughout every day we are always looking for something to add to the calendar because it is very important that we don’t miss anything. And sometimes we do but it happens.”

For the Nashville Predators, Garrett meets with the rest of her team, the Marketing Staff and Communications department, once a week to establish their goals and brainstorm ideas. Anyone is able to share an idea and the group will decide whether to run with it or take the time to develop the idea into something more. They also reach out to the other departments, in the case that the campaign is distributed further than social media, in order to produce a clear message.

**Garrett:** “We make sure Ticket Sales is on board, Graphics is on board, Community Relations… [we] make sure everybody is on the same page. So when we post, we make it all look uniform… So someone isn’t getting information from one place and it’s not matching the information from somewhere else.”

The next step is to create the necessary graphics, photos, and video and then plan each headline and caption. Several different people work on creating content; however the Graphics Department has the most contribution. In order to avoid miscommunications, it’s important for them to have a uniform look across all platforms because the Nashville Predators are such a large organization.

Nashville Ballet has a specific process to set up social media campaigns for performances:
McKirgan: “The social media campaign for performances begins with a planning session with the marketing department that covers our entire strategy for selling that particular show, with social media being a tactic of the strategy. Once we’ve identified the angles we want to highlight, that helps drive the direction of our focus for social media content to promote the performance.”

A content mix made of company dancers/artistic staff interviews, behind-the-scenes videos, Instagram takeovers, news articles, professional photos and more sets the stage online before each opening night performance. McKirgan plans for approximately 4-6 posts in preparation for the week of the production’s premiere.

Each organization takes the time to brainstorm ideas whether it is as a group or individually. From there, it is a team effort to create content and copy that is cohesive not only across each platform, but for all marketing and communication efforts of the organization.

Creating Content that Engages

Player content is often the most successful type of post for the Nashville Predators.

Garrett: “They see them play hockey, but that don’t get to know them as a person. Anytime you can get player content out there, they love it.”

Birthdays, warming up before a game, photos from traveling – these all provide behind the scenes content for followers. Exclusive content that fans would not consistently see unless they are followers.
Posts that have an interactive aspect are also helpful to build engagement in followers. Tweets with gifs are also likely to produce retweets online. Posts that ask questions, request comments, or contests that require participations all allow for interaction between followers and the organizations in social media.

McKirgan’s take on engaging content stems from the “real-time” characteristic:

“I think the key for us in posting engaging content is that we’re showing what’s happening in the studio or theater *that day* so our followers can see in real-time where we are in the rehearsal process. That means I often don’t receive content until the day I post it, but I think that’s more authentic and genuine to the process and gives our followers much-desired access behind the curtain.”

Overall, short video clips, about 10-30 seconds long, of dancers rehearsing in the studio have proven to be the most engaging. McKirgan remarks that because the clips are usually taken on an iPhone, it makes the content more genuine. These short clips usually have more engagement than the sleeker, professionally polished trailers or interview videos they post. It also gives the followers an opportunity to see exclusive content – what goes in to producing a production of their caliber.

**McKirgan:** “The rawness of the video clip mixed with its short length has proven to be a great formula for engaging content on social media.”

Bradford finds that posts with gifs or funny videos are often the most engaging with the Symphony’s followers.

**Bradford:** “When we show our personality, people really appreciate it and like it because with most arts there’s that negative connotation of well the symphony is
just for old, rich, stuck-up, white people. We understand that. So by doing different videos and different projects and showing off our personality, we show that we’re not just that. We show we have variety.”

Replying with gifs also adds the additional interaction of acknowledging follower’s response to a post. Bradford has seen success with replying to comments on advertisements as well.

**Bradford:** “So, for instance here, this [ad] is for Pokémon in concert at the amphitheater. Someone replied, ‘You really want to make my wallet cry, don’t you?’ So I replied with a Joey from Friends [gif]: ‘I’m not even sorry.’ On an ad that has 15 interactions right there. And someone replies, ‘what you talkin’ about, Willis?’”

Bradford also makes an effort to reply with gifs that someone how relate to the person he is engaging with.

**Bradford:** “So if I look at a person’s profile and they ask us something and I see that, hey they’re a Batman fan, I’m going to try with something Batman related.”

Engaging content is able to reach followers through interactive posts, relatable moments, or exclusive content that is not available on any other usual marketing channel.

**Content Creation**

**The Big Three: Videos, Photos, and Graphics**

Video, per Bradford’s perspective, is the most interactive content for the Nashville Symphony. Bradford usually creates the photos or videos on his own time.
Photos consist of moments from events, concerts, and of their venue – the Schermerhorn. Graphics specific to concerts are done by the Graphics Department.

**Bradford:** “If [the photos] need a type treatment or anything like that Graphics will help take care of that.”

The Nashville Predators often feature video interviews with their players. Playing Ellen Degeneres’ Heads Up game or having them guess movies from emojis are both video ideas that are short, engaging, and fun for the viewers. A fan favorite are episodes of “Whose Sign is it Anyway?” These are video interviews that have the players guess whose autograph is whose.

**Garrett:** “They see them play hockey, but they don’t get to know them as a person. Anytime you can get player content out there, they love it.”

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Figure 21. Nashville Predators Video Content Example on Facebook
Clips from games are also a popular type of content for the Predators. Graphics for the Predators usually include game stats such as the Instagram posts in between periods during a game that show the current score.

For the Nashville Ballet, photos and videos are usually behind the scenes moments from rehearsals or classes, professional performance pictures, and interviews with artistic staff/company dancers.

**McKirdgan:** “Additionally, Nashville Ballet staff and faculty members and company dancers know that they can always reach out to me specifically with photos, videos or important messages at any time to make sure I’m always in the loop. I make the determination from there if this is a message we should share on social media, or if it is more suitable for another avenue.”

It’s also important to resize photos to the appropriate dimensions for each platform. Twitter currently shows only a part of the photo until a followers selects the visual and it zooms out.

**Headlines and Captions:**

Bradford’s main goal in posting headlines for content is to have no typos. Furthermore, being clear and concise in order to introduce the post is a key component. Headlines should have a least one of the following characteristics: conversational, irresistible, curiosity, or honesty. Bradford also emphasizes the importance of including a call to action which for the Symphony, is usually a link to purchase tickets.
Bradford: “Plus, the buy tickets link because we have to drive people to buy tickets. That’s the goal of that post right there even though it’s there to learn more about the [concert] as well.”

McKirgan’s objective is to provide a description with succinct and comprehensive language. What section of choreography, who’s being featured, what is being rehearsed; these questions are often answered when captioning a video or photo.

McKirgan: “Creating these captions allow people to connect more deeply with the work and remember those clips and why they’re significant when in the audience at the performance.”

This Twitter screenshot demonstrates the Nashville Ballet’s use of concise language and a CTA to purchase tickets for an upcoming performance:

Figure 22. Nashville Ballet Tweet with Call to Action (CTA)
The Predators often set a humorous tone in their captions, but they also recognize a necessary balance and when humor may not be appropriate.

**Garrett:** “If you have a clever caption, it seems to get more interaction from the fans, but we understand when something can be funny and when the post needs to be more serious. You have to pick your moments.”

**Hashtags:**

In general, McKirgan recommends only using 1 to 2 hashtags per post. Creating a specific hashtag for a performance or community occasion also allows the conversation to continue around that event. Using too many hashtags can result in a cluttered post which will lose the audience’s attention

**McKirgan:** “I use hashtags when it makes sense.”

A standard practice for hashtags is to celebrate a trending holiday and relate it to their organization through a social media post. The less recognized celebrations of National Donut Day, National Brother’s Day or World Emoji Day, are opportunities to weigh in on the trending hashtag. However, it is even more important for an organization to recognize holidays that have a direct relation to their industry. Followers will look to media for experts in the field. Nashville Ballet used #ChristmasinJuly in order to promote a special ticket package for their Nutcracker production that would open in December.

**McKirgan:** “The other time I typically use hashtags is when we’re posting about a larger community event, national holiday, etc. that allows us to become a part of a larger conversation.”
The Preds utilize hashtags in almost all their posts. Garrett sees hashtags as a tool for tracking contests for not only their use, but for the followers to use as well. There is also a new feature for the #Preds that makes it even more utilized by followers:

**Garrett:** “Twitter and the NHL just this week released Twitter Emojis for all 31 teams. Ours is our logo when you use #Preds.”

Bradford recognizes that social media is constantly evolving and so has the use of hashtag has changed over the last few years. One of his goals with hashtags is to use them in a way that do not clutter up a news feed.

**Bradford:** “I try to find a happy medium to target legitimate hashtags that will help our content be discoverable.”

Another application for hashtags is to structure contest entries, particularly on Twitter or Instagram.

**Contests:**

The Nashville Symphony does Facebook contests by having followers tag a friend in the comments. Many of their contests are not done on Twitter because the audience is not mostly local. Tagging a friend means another person will see it. It also boosts organic reach which means no extra cost to the organization.

**Bradford:** “Tag a friend. Because then it gets seen by another person. It’s what can we do the most to make this be seen my more people. We always look at those numbers…It’s always great to see when an organic post breaks the 10,000 mark. You didn’t have to boost it.”
Because it’s their most popular platform, Twitter contests are more common for the Nashville Predators. Both hashtags and RTs have been used for contests. Retweets enable non-followers to see the content in their timeline as well. For example, share your favorite #goldenmoment for a chance to win. Contests are a more frequent type of content for the Preds because of the size of their organization – there’s more money to budget for giveaways.

Garrett: “I posted something on Twitter and we had a winner every minute for an hour. It was a lot of DM-ing and a lot of mailing out prizes. We do as much as we can because that really does increase your followers. People think if they follow this account that they can probably win a Predator’s hat or tickets or a t-shirt. Anything that you can do like that to engage your fans helps.”

Nashville Ballet does a “Trivia Tuesday,” that quizzes their followers on their knowledge of the latest performance. It is usually implemented about four weeks prior to the production’s premiere. Followers enter to win tickets to a performance by commenting on the post.

McKirgan: “Oftentimes we make the questions relatively easy, but we mostly just use the giveaway as another way to provide perks to our followers and engage with them.”

Articles and Links:

For the Preds, articles and links are at the core of what they share on social media. Their social accounts are the channel they use anytime they have a new article published on their websites that they want to showcase.
**Garrett:** “We use Bitly to shorten the link to make it more aesthetically pleasing on Twitter when you are scrolling through your timeline. We often add a picture to the post to catch the eyes of the readers. When it’s just a bunch of text, it’s easier to pass over.”

Bradford will post articles and links that are relevant to the Symphony and their musicians because that is what will interest their followers.

**Bradford:** “Links to concerts, concert announcements, pictures from events, feature stories on our musicians or our guest artists, stories about accomplishments – win Grammys or get a grant – then it’s pretty neat to see that.”

Bradford encourages posting more than just the link or title of the content:

**Bradford:** “Take a quote from it, develop a call to action. Include something that will make a person WANT to click it. And pictures. Use pictures. A picture will stand out on Twitter and bring more attention to the tweet/link.”

McKirgan follows the same practice as **Bradford**:

**McKirgan:** “I like to pull out the most compelling quote and use that as the caption to entice folds to click on the article and read it.”

Additionally, she utilizes Bitly.com as well to not only shorten the URLs, but to also measure how many clicks different links receive in order to measure the content’s success.
Social Media Takeovers:

One content idea that is a consistent promotion for the latest Nashville Ballet production is their Instagram takeovers. These were first introduced during their 2015-2016 season. Company dancers shared their interest in social media and thus shared their interest in posting individualized content for the Nashville Ballet. McKirgan begins each season by inviting dancers to take over the organization’s Instagram account. From there, she assigns a couple dancers to each performance with a list of possible post ideas. The dancer is then given a week leading up to opening night to post moments from rehearsal, backstage, and also other creative ideas they may have themselves.

McKirgan: “I want them to use the week to allow our followers to get to know them better by inserting their own opinions and using their own voice to let their personalities come through.”

From this campaign, McKirgan has seen a growth in their Instagram engagement and following over the years. Followers are able to see the dancer’s perspective on a performance, but also the life of a professional dancer. Instagram takeovers have become McKirgan’s favorite social media content because of connection it builds between the dancers and the organization’s followers.

Although the Symphony has not yet utilized social media takeovers, it is something that is in their plans.

Bradford: “I want to have a musician take over our account. It’ll take a few steps to make it happen, but it’s in the works this season for us.”
Live and Real-time Posts:

While Instagram takeovers are usually the most real-time content for the Nashville Ballet, live content is important to the Nashville Symphony when there is a great performance to capture. Bradford includes “live picture” or “live videos” in their content calendar on Google.

Bradford: “When we say live shot it means in the moment.”

A favorite of the organization is to capture moments at the Harry Potter Concerts because so much of the audience dresses up for the event. It’s also a great pop culture component to publish in order to go slightly beyond the usual audience. It’s shareable content. When people see their photos online, they are likely to share the post or tag themselves and others as well.

Live tweets are one of the main focuses for the Nashville Predators during games. Multiple people are trained for this objective; however, usually only one person controls game tweets. Sandy, Garrett’s supervisor, is usually in the press box during a game ready to post about the puck drop, starting line-up, fights, penalties, or goals.

Garrett: “We get a lot of people who will reply to us and say that this is great, they don’t even have to watch the game to know what’s going on. So people that aren’t even around a TV, will follow us through our Snapchat or Instagram stories or on our Twitter account.

As a result, Snapchat and Instagram stories also contribute to the real-time content for game nights.
**Instagram/Snapchat Stories**

For the Predators, Instagram and Snapchat stories are most utilized during game days as additional live content. An adorable fan, the national anthem singer, or a humorous sign are likely to be captured and added to the story.

**Garrett:** “Snapchat and Instagram stories – with those in their prime and becoming big, we like to capitalize on that as well. Instagram gets more views just because we have more followers.”

The Symphony incorporates stories during big events and concerts because it is an opportunity for a behind the scenes look. Content such as this makes it exclusive for followers.

McKirgan sees Instagram stories as a great, new feature. She realizes that the stories enable users to post more frequently which makes it harder to have excess content; however, since the Nashville Ballet has a small staff and limited resources, posting too often is not an issue for them. Instead, McKirgan views the stories as a different opportunity:

**McKirgan:** “I’d love for us to start utilizing this feature more, and I think the best way for us to do this in the immediate future is to ask our company dancers to begin incorporating the use of stories into their Instagram takeovers.”

**Sponsors/Partnerships:**

To organized sponsored posts, Garrett is in a meeting every other week for the Predators and the sponsor. A copy and corresponding graphic or photo is created,
approved, and promised a specific number of posts. Garrett posts sponsored content on
days that are less chaotic for the Predators (non-game days) to ensure followers see the
posts and not get lost in the stream of content.

**Garrett:** “We will ‘Predify’ it a little bit.”

Analytics are then used at the end of a campaign to create a report. This shows the
sponsor their investment was worth the time, money, and effort.

Nashville Ballet does not actively search for sponsored social media posts. In the
event that a brand would like to use their platforms to promote their own message, they
must have a creative idea relevant to Nashville Ballet’s followers to present. For
example, a local physical therapist company approached McKirgan with an idea to post
content through a company member’s Instagram takeover.

**McKirgan:** “One of our dancers created a time lapse video of one of the
therapists working on a few dancers and provided meaningful insight into how it
relates to dancers’ daily lives. Our followers understood more of the additional
aspects of a dancer’s training and career well-being, and our sponsor received
additional exposure about the important work they do.”

**Creating a Community – Interacting with Local Organizations Online:**

Connecting with other organizations that have similar audiences allow for an
organization to capitalize on audiences that already have invested interest in a particular
industry or demographic. Nashville is unique in this idea because it has a strong local
community that supports local success. Because the Nashville Symphony, Nashville
Predators, and the Nashville Ballet (their performances at the Tennessee Performing Arts
Center) all have a presence in downtown Nashville, it is easy for each organization to unite audiences. For example, both the Symphony and the Ballet Company participated in the Nashville Predator’s #StandWithUS campaign during the Stanley Cup Playoffs as did other local businesses and professional sports team such as the Tennessee Titans. The #StandWithUS campaign created a sort of rallying cry on social media. All three organizations have stake in Nashville as that is the center of their audiences. The Symphony has worked with the Nashville Ballet as well. As a result, they have made efforts to connect on social media.

**Bradford:** “Back in February we actually had the ballet here at the Schermerhorn. It was the first time the [Nashville] Ballet performed here with the Symphony…they tagged us in everything as well and we tag them. That’s one of the big things too, to make sure we’re always tagging organizations especially if the Opera is doing something as well – we’ll tag them. So we’ll have different shout-outs especially other performing arts organizations.”

The Symphony also works closely with the Nashville Philharmonic because of the overlap in the musicians from both organizations.

**Bradford:** “…they’ll reach out to us sometimes and say hey – can you post this to help promote the concert. Yeah, sure! Because they know we have a large audience.

The Nashville Symphony was also one of the numerous organizations that participated in the Nashville Predators #StandWithUs campaign. Bradford sees it as an
opportunity to show pride for a Nashville Team while simultaneously promoting the organization.

**Bradford:** “We wanted to show a sense of community pride to our neighbors a block away. We have a lot of musicians and employees that are also big Predators fans, too…It was a win-win opportunity for us to get involved, show off our musicians and our hall.”

![Facebook Post](image)

Figure 23. Nashville Symphony #StandwithUs Facebook Post

The Nashville Ballet also works with other organizations to make posts as sort of a trade. At the Tennessee Performing Arts Center (TPAC), the Nashville Ballet is one of many resident companies. In addition to the Nashville Repertory Theatre and the Nashville Opera, the Nashville Ballet works to help promote their productions as well. The content is relevant to followers across the board because all three organizations are
local arts companies. For organizations outside of TPAC, McKirgan’s team will make a list of possible community partners before each production. These organizations have a clear link or audience crossover for both organizations to benefit from mutual social media posts. If an organization reaches out to them first, McKirgan will determine whether or not their goals and brand message align with Nashville Ballet’s. The final “trade” will follow a certain procedure:

**McKirgan:** “I’ll write and send content for the social media posts I’d like them to post for us, and vice-versa.”

McKirgan saw the #StandWithUs campaign as an opportunity for the Nashville Ballet to creatively support the Predators:

**McKirgan:** “Since we also have a relationship with them that was just another reason why we wanted to find creative ways to get involved. The objective for the campaign was really as simple as showing one of our community partners our support and being a part of the excitement that was taking over the city.”
Creative Tools:

Every video that Bradford has created was done through iMovie. However, according to Justin, most followers do not realize that iMovie is behind his videos.

**Bradford:** “iMovie is one of the simplest things to use, but I try to make it look not so simple.”

He plans to continue to use iMovie until he receives updated equipment in the next fiscal year. Photoshop is occasionally used for quick edits, but usually the Graphic Design Department covers that.
The social media experts at the Nashville Predators also do not create any of their graphics. Their Graphics Departments creates templates for Garrett and her coworkers to fill in as needed. For example, the “Game Day in Smashville” graphic is set so Garrett can add the opposing team’s name.

Garrett: “Our graphics is all in charge of pictures. I don’t create anything myself. At UT, I created a little bit in Photoshop but here since we have such an awesome Graphics Department, I don’t have to worry about it, thankfully.”

The Marketing Manager for the Nashville Ballet utilizes both Photoshop and Adobe Premiere. This content is then forwarded to McKirgan who plans when to share it on social media.

**Their Individual Content Creation Strategy:**

Each respondent had their own idea of what a content creation strategy was unique to their respective organization.

Garrett: “Gifs. Everybody loves a funny Gif.”

Playfulness in both tone and voice serve as a strong strategy for the Predators online. In an industry that has a naturally competitive characteristic, sassing opposing teams on social media is a fun alternative to trash talk. In some ways, it promotes fan interaction and community building. By integrating gifs into these more playful posts, a visual is established for the caption or headline. Visuals guarantee more interaction than using only text.
Garrett shared an online fan interaction that demonstrated the Predator’s playfulness on Twitter:

**Garrett:** “One girl tweeted at us and said, ‘I don’t know if you noticed but, every game I’ve been at you’ve won.’ That kind of thing. So I replied, ‘What are your plans Thursday night?’ She tweeted back at us and said it made her night.”

Bradford believes the strategy can stem from ideas that are well thought out:

**Bradford:** “…One that quickly portrays the right message. That reaches a wide variety of people and has a call to action. That is what I would say would be a successful piece of content. Because when it addresses all four of those things, it’s taking them down the right funnel to eventually purchase or have a call to action (CTA).”

If the posts eventually enable a ticket sale, or a new follower, the goal has been met and a new social media interaction has been shaped. Without a CTA, content has no end product as a result from interaction or engagement.

McKirgan reiterates the importance of establishing both broad objectives for measuring success and individual objects for large campaigns.

**McKirgan:** “Understand your audience’s interests/needs and keep those in mind at all times.”

From there, McKirgan’s next step in her strategy is to constantly align your objectives with the audience’s needs. Once a campaign is implemented, constantly monitor analytics and engagement.
McKirgan: “…evaluate what’s working and what’s not, and adjust plans as necessary.”

Execution

Schedulers:

Each organization has found different tools to help reach their corresponding goals and schedule the wealth of content they have created.

The Nashville Symphony primarily utilizes TweetDeck. If Bradford knows he will be out of the office, he adds content and posts to HootSuite. His supervisor is able to see what Bradford has scheduled on Hootsuite to be posted in his absence. The weekends are usually scheduled ahead of time. Evening posts are sometimes scheduled proactively in the event that Bradford is unsure of how long his commute home will take. This is true for all Nashville Symphony platforms except Instagram which is always live.

Furthermore, Bradford and his supervisor use a social calendar on Google Sheets.

Bradford: “We use a calendar there to make sure. So color coding to see if something has been scheduled or posted, or if it’s tentative or live.”

TweetDeck is his go-to tool when he knows he will be in the office the next day because he will be able to see the content on his personal account through this method.

The Nashville Predator’s social media team also utilizes TweetDeck for scheduling posts. Game Night posts are always in the moment; however, posts leading up to a game day or sponsored posts are usually scheduled in advance. Garrett keeps a large desk calendar in order to track pre-scheduled posts for sponsors by month.
Garrett: “During the morning, I’ll sit down and figure out what I’ve got to post during the day and use TweetDeck to schedule this post at 10 am, schedule this one at 12…”

This allows Garrett to have time for meetings, creating content, and attending other events during the work day. As a result, the scheduler drips content to be featured. She also utilizes Facebook’s scheduler as well. These tools keep the content constant – especially during holidays – so that the Predators are never silent on social media.

McKirgan takes advantage of both Facebook scheduler and Hootsuite for Twitter in order to plan ahead for Nashville Ballet’s content. On a week to week basis, McKirgan will create a social media schedule with her targeted messages she plans to post. From there, she will write content and determine the appropriate timing.

McKirgan: “I’ll either post in real-time if it’s a popular time of day for posting, or schedule for a time that day that has proven to yield good engagement for us.”

For the Nashville Ballet, prime posting times for optimal engagement include 9 am, noon, and 5 pm – basically commute times and lunch when people are on their phones. During the weekends, McKirgan relies on the schedulers because they are high engagement days of the week.

These different tools allow the content creators to create a consistent presence and social media and post during times that are relevant to the target audience.

Finding the Right Timing
If you truly know your audience, you know when your audience is online. Posting content at times when the audience is less active will result in minimally engaged content. On Twitter, early morning – about 8 or 9 am, lunch time, and after 6 pm, when people are getting home for work, are the best times for the Nashville Predators to receive the most engagements. Facebook also does well with content that is posted around the time people are getting home from work. Garrett does not have a preference for a specific time for Instagram or Snapchat posts.

**Garrett:** “Even though we know these time are generally the best time to post, when we have so much content to get out, we can’t always follow those guidelines. It also depends on what content you are sharing. We can post things with player content at any time and it gets a ton of interaction because that’s what people want to see most.”

The Nashville Ballet also receives the best engagement from posts around 9 a.m., noon and 5 p.m. for weekdays, 11 a.m. on the weekends. The focus is on commute and meal times.

**McKirgan:** “…we’re always open to experimenting with different post times and days of the week, so you may see us post outside of those windows listed above. You never know how something will work unless you try it.”

**Going Viral:**

One of Bradford’s favorite post for the Nashville Symphony that he created was a time-lapse video of the seats changing to a flat floor in the Schermerhorn. The video has over 759,000 views on Facebook, 9,000 shares, over 5,000 interactions and a reach of
almost 3.1 million (as of 5/14/17). Every continent, except Antarctica, has either seen or commented on the post.

Figure 25. Nashville Symphony Viral Facebook Post

**Bradford:** “We created something so simple that has reached so many people from different walks of life, literally, all over the world…When something so simple can go so big you know you’re doing something right.”

This past summer the Predators had content go viral as well. A fan had won Stanley Cup Final tickets as part of a promotion with Twice Daily. The winner, Andrew Fudge, did not check his DMs until after the playoffs were over. He reached out to the
Predators on Twitter when he realized what he had missed and so the Predators gave him tickets for Opening Night.

Figure 26. Nashville Predators Viral Story

**Garrett:** “To me, viral content is something that you can’t plan, but something that just happens on its own…The reason this went ‘viral’ was because news outlets, sports accounts and the NHL saw it and picked up the story. You can’t go into something and ‘make it viral,’ it just kind of happens.”

McKirgan defines “viral,” content as the following:

**McKirgan:** “I consider viral content to be any piece of online media that spreads to the masses in a short amount of time, oftentimes reaching new audiences who may have never come in contact with your brand.”
She doesn’t consider there to be an exact formula to predict viral posts because it can also depend on what the usual engagement is for a brand on social media. Overall, McKirgan sees viral content as something that “…essentially takes on a life of its own.”

**The Future of Social Media:**

Whether for the organization, or the practice of social media marketing as a whole, each respondent shared their own opinion of where they see social media in the next 5-10 years.

In keeping with the Nashville Predator’s social media goals, Garrett sees the Predators pursing a new platform should one capture the audience as well as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter currently does for them. Of course, this would only prove to be an investment if the possible platform is not a trend, but rather a growing media channel.

Bradford’s answers stems from the growth he has seen in the social media marketing industry so far:

**Bradford:** “Instagram has copied what Snapchat has done. Facebook has copied what Snapchat has done because Instagram is part of Facebook as well. So you’re starting to see everyone steal different strategies. Now in that place it’s not stealing. It’s seeing what works and trying it out.”

Each platform attempts new features that either further develop its identity as a media channel or “copies” a successful idea already demonstrated elsewhere. Overall, Bradford sees the future of social media as even more interactive than it is now. Something as customized as letting a follower choose their own experience in an advertisement or video content.
In the future, McKirgan hopes to see a full-time position at the Nashville Ballet within the next five years that is dedicated to the social media and digital content process. For social media in general, McKirgan believes that video and live streams will become even more prominent:

**McKirgan:** “I see the future of social media being dominated by visuals, and the use of copy will become less important. As marketers we’ll have to find creative ways to get our messages across without words and let our visuals do the talking.

Each organization develops content with the forethought of who their audience is. Posts are often behind the scenes looks at parts of the organization that followers would otherwise be unable to see. The content becomes exclusive to those who follow the brand online and on each platform. The organization needs to have an individualized tone and look in order for followers to automatically recognize the source of the post in their newsfeeds. Copy should be concise because the visual is what is going to capture an individual’s attention when they are scrolling. Overall, the top five strategies that have proved successful in engagement in sports or music are as follows:

1. Know your Audience
2. Give your Brand a Voice
3. Keep it Simple
4. Make it Exclusive
5. Post content that is constant, consistent, and cohesive.
Application to Professional Dance

The goal of this project is to determine the versatility of social media content strategies for different target markets of the entertainment industry within the same geographic location. Social Media is unique from traditional media because it can be customized for specific audiences. If done correctly, social media is interactive with the intended audience in order to receive engagements between the users and the brand. The dance industry is versatile based on genre, style, and audience. Professional dance companies produce productions that entertain. However, dance is also a visual art form. Because of the training and rigorous rehearsal process, professional company members are athletes. These ideas culminate in the base of this project. Why can’t a professional dance company utilize marketing strategies from a professional sports team or another nonprofit arts organization? The field of digital marketing is still developing and technology will always be evolving. By researching these particular ideas – cross referencing industry-specific marketing strategies and applying them to dance, strategies for social media marketing are furthered as a whole, but particularly for dance related organizations. The final marketing plan will be used as a tool for marketers in the dance industry.

The Big Three: Photos, Videos, and Graphics:

Because dance is a visual art form, it is no surprise that Nashville Ballet finds the most success in posting photos and videos. Ideally, the social media should capture the part of a production that an audience does not have the opportunity to see: the audition process, rehearsals, classes, the creation of the set, lighting, and costumes, the make-up
design, or any other part that is essential to the staging of a performance. By capturing the backstage or behind the scenes moments, the content becomes exclusive for followers because it is content that the general public does not have access to without having to search for it. Photos could also incorporate moments that highlight individual dancers. For example, the Rockettes often share old dance photos of their dancers in their youth. There is also a chance to include the audience in photos by setting up a backdrop at the performance for guests to take their own photos. The backdrop could simply be covered in the company’s logo – similar to something one might see at a carpet event. By encouraging the audience to share the photos on social media, perhaps with a specific hashtag (i.e. #AttheBallet), shareable content is created.

Video content could also utilize the same key moments. Short clips are the most effective unless the video includes content that is engaging enough to draw in followers to the last second. Rehearsal clips or sneak peeks of upcoming performances could be considered relevant content as game clips are for the Predators. The Nashville Predators often included interviews or fun games with their players in short videos. For example, they have a game where players attempt to guess whose signature is whose. This could be applied to a professional dance company as well. Opportunities could be interviews with company members about an upcoming performance, the rehearsal process, or their experience with the company in general. Company members could share their training experiences and how they came to audition for the company as well. They could also make a game out of guessing whose pointe shoes are whose based on the shoe’s brand, shank, and size. Anything that allows followers to get to know the dancer apart from the
characters they perform as on stage is helpful in building a brand’s personality because it shows the passion and dedication behind each person that is a part of the organization.

The Nashville Symphony most often used videos as educational opportunities, particularly to introduce the relevance of classical music today. It would be relevant for professional dance companies to educate on dance as an art form as well. This could be as simple as explaining the differences in dance genres or, in order to promote an upcoming production, a make-up tutorial for a particular character could be showcased. Dance companies also have stake on the importance of funding for the arts and arts education so any content in that aspect would be relevant as well.

Go-to graphics for a dance company are promotional materials for upcoming productions, intensives, and other events. However, there is opportunity to post graphics that feature different elements for company occasions. The Nashville Predators often utilize “WINfographics” to showcase game statistics and scores for each period. Companies could also apply this idea as well. Fun facts relating to costume, choreography, lighting, or set design could be incorporated into a visual graphic that is able to educate and engage a follower.

Headlines and Captions:

Written copy is just as important as visual content. A good caption for a promotional graphic about an upcoming performance would include a CTA to purchase tickets on the company’s website. Asking questions in a headline can also be successful because it automatically encourages engagement from followers. The Nashville Predators have asked followers about their favorite memories during the hockey season. An
example question relevant for a dance company could be, “What was the first ballet you attended?” The caption could also just encourage responses such as, “Tell us about your first Nutcracker experience.” Overall, the caption needs to be relevant to either the accompanying content or to the dance company’s social media mission statement. Using dance related vocabulary or buzzwords also offers opportunities when captioning pictures.

Hashtags:

McKirgan often uses hashtags to continue a conversation about an upcoming performance. A simple hashtag option for a company is to combine the company’s name with the performance. Hashtags can also be used to celebrate holidays important to the dance community. Below are just few of important dates in the dance world.82

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important Dance Holidays</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Dance Day</td>
<td>July 25th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Tap Dance Day</td>
<td>May 25th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Lindy Hop Day</td>
<td>May 26th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Tutu Day</td>
<td>February 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Arts Advocacy Day</td>
<td>March 23-24th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International/World Dance Day</td>
<td>April 29th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Dance Teacher Appreciation Day</td>
<td>May 5th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Important Dance Holidays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Icon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 5 (1931)</td>
<td>Alvin Ailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15 (1862)</td>
<td>Loie Fuller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 12 (1908)</td>
<td>Jose Limon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 22 (1904)</td>
<td>George Balanchine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 23 (1906)</td>
<td>Lester Horton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 24 (1925)</td>
<td>Maria Tallchief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 27 (1879)</td>
<td>Ruth St. Denis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12 (1881)</td>
<td>Anna Pavlova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 14 (1946)</td>
<td>Gregory Hines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12 (1889)</td>
<td>Vaslav Nijinsky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31 (1872)</td>
<td>Sergei Diaghilev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4 (1908)</td>
<td>Antony Tudor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16 (1919)</td>
<td>Merce Cunningham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23 (1804)</td>
<td>Marie Taglioni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 27 (1911)</td>
<td>Jack Cole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7 (1840)</td>
<td>Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10 (1899)</td>
<td>Fred Astaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 11 (1894)</td>
<td>Martha Graham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25 (1878)</td>
<td>Bill “Bojangles” Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 26 (1914)</td>
<td>Frankie Manning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 27 (1877)</td>
<td>Isadora Duncan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 14 (1937)</td>
<td>David Howard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 21 (1850)</td>
<td>Enrico Cecchetti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 22 (1909)</td>
<td>Katherine Dunham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 23 (1927)</td>
<td>Bob Fosse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 6 (1879)</td>
<td>Agrrippina Vaganova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 10 (1923)</td>
<td>Gus Giordano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 22 (1901)</td>
<td>Charles Weidman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 23 (1912)</td>
<td>Gene Kelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 18 (1905)</td>
<td>Agnes DeMille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 11 (1918)</td>
<td>Jerome Robbins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 17 (1895)</td>
<td>Doris Humphrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 21 (1891)</td>
<td>Ted Shawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 15 (1879)</td>
<td>Rudolf Laban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 24 (1930)</td>
<td>Robert Joffrey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Birthdays of Icons in Dance History

Special days can also be created for particular brands or by an industries’ followers. #TutuTuesday and #TiltTuesday are popular posts for dancers everywhere. An anniversary of the organization’s establishment is also a chance to share the company’s
history and growth, and offer a special promotion for season tickets. #BackstagePass would be a great hashtag to highlight behind the scenes moments.

Contests:

Contest entries can be as simple as a retweet or a share of an organization’s post in order for additional people outside of a brand’s following to see their content. This is a strategy both the Nashville Symphony and the Nashville Predators utilize. The Symphony also utilizes the “tag a friend,” method by asking followers to tag someone they would like to share the concert experience with.

Intermission is an opportunity to engage with audience members as they are likely to be on their phones at some point in the break. A trivia question could be posted about a specific moment in the performance and audience members could have the moment to comment their answer until the next morning. Giveaways could be performance tickets, signed pointe shoes, posters, other merchandise, or an opportunity to meet some of the company dancers.

A contest idea that would provide shareable content is a “re-logo” contest. If a company’s logo is an outline or silhouette of dancers, followers could attempt to recreate the pose. In order to involve a specific segment of the audience, the organization could address dancers or studios as participants:

Articles and Links:

Relevant articles for a professional dance company can include performance announcements, reviews, dancer biographies, ticket sales, and any important announcements. Depending on a brand’s personality, articles that lean more towards a
blog post could be supportive towards an organization’s social media mission statement. It is important to include a quote or picture from the article in the post as well. If the article is about what productions a company is performing in the upcoming season, the quote could be the reaction from one of the principal dancers.

**Takeovers:**

A takeover should be a glimpse into a dancer’s life. The ideal timing would be in preparation for a performance in order to showcase the rehearsal and tech week leading up to a production. The dancer should start by introducing him or herself with a selfie or professional photo. Ideally a dancer would send the photos to the social media coordinator or someone in the equivalent position in order for the photos to go through an approval process. Guidelines should also be in place in order to help a dancer brainstorm appropriate moments to share on social media.

**Live and Real-Time:**

Fun moments to include in real-time could be from backstage right as the curtain drops, during a photoshoot to create the promotional material for a production, dancers warming up before performing, a sneak peek into rehearsal, or the highlights from the audition process. Any moment that showcases the organization’s dancers, choreographers, and staff allows followers to engage. Content can hint at what to expect from the company’s performances. Another opportunity could be coverage of the audition process for either the company in general or for a specific production – similar to how the Nashville Predators covered the NHL Draft with live tweets and Instagram stories.
Sponsors/Partnerships:

A professional dance company could easily connect to any other nonprofit arts organization in the area in order to collaborate on social media. If the company were to perform with a live orchestra, the social media coordinators could connect and create content that benefits both organizations by highlighting educational aspects and the overall performance. Both organizations would gain a new reach to audiences they did not have prior to the partnership. The company could also designate a day each week to publicize another arts event or local dance studio in the area.

The athleticism of dance enables sports specific marketing strategies to be relevant to the performing art. Dancers have similar rigorous schedules in rehearsal, training and performances that can be comparable to professional athletes. Music is an important aspect in performance for dancers. As arts organizations often have stake in the success of each other, it is relevant for the organizations to pull different ideas and concepts in order to strategically grow marketing opportunities. All three industries have a service that aims to entertain audiences and fans which allow different content strategies and ideas to be compatible.
Section IV: Sample Marketing Plan

Executive Summary

Professional dance companies seek to improve their social media presence and utilize the different marketing resources it offers. This sample social media marketing plan serves as a model for a professional dance company to strengthen their content creation in order to give insight to the organization’s history, mission, and people. The goals of the plan include:

- Increase following on all platforms.
- Increase traffic to the website, particularly the box office page.
- Strengthen brand awareness on both a regional and national scale.
- Promote advocacy for the arts.
- Create conversations and educate audiences on dance as an athletic and innovative art form.
- Increase engagement with followers in order to recognize brand loyalty and customer satisfaction.

In order to achieve these goals, strategies are included in addition to different platform-specific tools, suggested practices for content development, and sample campaign ideas and social media post mock-ups. These different strategies, goals, and ideas are a culmination of the research found through the investigation of social media practices in the sports and music industry. Following implementation, there are recommended monitoring tools and tuning instructions in order to achieve the envisioned return on investment.
Company Profile

Below is a broad profile of the professional dance company for which this sample social media marketing plan is applicable:

City:

A metropolitan area that is continuing to grow in size. The city has its own performing arts center or theatre. It is also home to a minimum of one professional sports team, and several other arts related organizations in music, theatre, and visual arts. There is a healthy tourism industry in the area and a minimum of one university is also established in the city.

Company:

- **Size**
  
  Approximately 25 – 30 company members and 5 apprentices.

- **Genres**

  Ballet, Contemporary

- **Marketing Department**

  Ideally on staff, there is a Director of Marketing, Marketing Manager, Public Relations Manager, Social Media Coordinator, Graphic Designer, and Box Office Manager.

- **Funding and affiliates**

  The company is a nonprofit organization and does own its own building. There is also a school of dance that is associated with the company.

- **Performance:**

  The company performs approximately six shows each season.
**Brief Overview**

Dance, as a visual art form, has a lot of potential to be used as content on social media. Professional dance companies have invested in social media in the last five to ten years in order to publicize the performances and efforts of their nonprofits and utilize a new channel to encourage online ticket sales, donations, and publicity.

**Social Media Presence**

This company has been established on Facebook and Twitter since about the same time that other organizations began to utilize the new marketing channel: around 2009. Instagram was an investment a few years later when its popularity began to grow. More than half of the Company’s mentions online are positive and the overall opinion of the company is strong. The organization’s activity on social media is moderate, and there is room for growth in content and engagement.

**Goals**

- Increase following on all platforms.
- Increase traffic to website, particularly the box office page.
- Strengthen brand awareness on both a regional and national scale.
- Promote advocacy for the arts.
- Create conversations and educate audiences on dance as an athletic and inventive art form.
- Increase engagement with followers in order to recognize brand loyalty and customer satisfaction.
Strategies

- Define a clear target audience by acknowledging when followers are online to post accordingly and understand what their interests and needs are. Influence the market by publishing constant content about the organization’s services and offerings.
- Create innovative content with a clear purpose to engage and interact with followers. Embrace replies, questions, and comments from the audience in order to build brand awareness and strengthen relationships with potential and current customers/patrons.
- Establish the brand’s voice as a leader in the industry by contributing content that discusses current events and ideas in the dance industry, recognizes the passion and dedication of the company dancers, and advocates for the arts.
- Be cohesive and consistent with content messages across platforms to allow for followers to connect to the brand. Adapt content for each channel with visuals and copy.
- Acknowledge partnerships with other arts organizations or brands in the area that have common goals in order to strengthen community support and patronage.
- Organize social media campaigns that align with the organization’s marketing goals and mission statement.
Target Market

The audience of the company has a wide range of market segments due to the variety of the productions. Online followers are usually residents of the area or from cities with other prominent professional dance companies. Age ranges from 13-50, with the average follower falling in the 20-25 year old range. A majority of followers have some sort of training or experience with dance or the arts in general.

Tools

This marketing plan will focus on the three platforms with the highest activity: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Metropolis Ballet has already established a presence with these channels and can further develop reach with strategy.

Implementation

Platform Specific Tactics and Tools

By analyzing the organization’s goals, target market, and strategies, platform practices have been mapped in order to achieve the company’s overall goals:

Facebook

- Post 3 times a day.
- Share dance industry related articles through links with appropriate comments or a pulled quote.
- Upload both professional and informal, but suitable photos and videos that highlight auditions, classes, rehearsals, creation of lighting and set design, costumes, make-up, backstage moments, and other promotional items - occasionally with a CTA for the tickets page in order to incent followers to purchase performance tickets.
- Create giveaways that require followers to share, tag a friend, comment, or answer a question,
- Respond to questions in a timely manner. Like positive comments and address negative feedback – do not ignore it.

**Instagram**
- Post approximately 2 times a day.
- Upload professional photos and videos that highlight auditions, classes, rehearsals, creation of lighting and set design, costumes, make-up, backstage moments, and other promotional items
- Plan social media takeovers by a company dancer leading up to each new production.
- Utilize Instagram stories to post live content and capture moments that are exclusive for social media.

**Twitter**
- Tweet 10-15 times a day, not including replies to other tweets.
- Create giveaways by having followers RT the link to purchase tickets, reply a favorite memory, or require some other type of engagement.
- Retweet content from industry related profiles that is relevant to the organizations goals and mission.
- Utilize polls in order to encourage follower interactions.
- Address trending topics or hashtags when relevant to the brand.
- Include photos and graphics in the correct format.
- Post links to industry and organization related articles in order to build on the brand’s leadership.

- Answer questions, replies, and other feedback in a timely manner.

**Relevant to all Platforms:**

- Include links or tags to each platform in all marketing and promotional materials.

- Create a hashtag for each production in order to start a conversation.

- Ask questions in order to entice responses and feedback from followers.

- Tag other profiles/pages/individuals for credit or to draw from their following when relevant.

- Offer discounts and special packages for following the brand’s profile.

**Potential Campaigns and Social Media Mock-Ups**

*Note: For the purpose of this marketing plan, the fictional company is named Metropolis Ballet.*

- #TeaserTuesdays

  Clips from rehearsals, of choreography, pictures of sets, costumes, lighting, or make-up. Anything to give a hint of the upcoming production.
#AttheBallet

Create a space in the theatre for audience members to capture photos of their #attheballet experience. A backdrop could include the company’s logo, social media tag, and the hashtag #attheballet. Share a few of these moments on the organization’s social media platforms.

- The Stretch Selfie
Caption: Calling all dancers! Share a #stretchselfie for a chance to win a new *Metropolis Ballet Flexistretcher.*

- Meet the Company Monday

Introduce company dancers through pictures and short biographies.

Figure #. Meet the Company Mock-Up Post

- Curtain Call/Performance Infographics

Share fun facts about the next production or event.
Caption: Before the final bow, take a look at the different fun facts about #MetropolisBallet. It’s not too late to purchase tickets to the final performance.

Social Media Takeovers

Organize a company member’s participation in a social media takeover on Instagram leading up to a new performance. Have the dancers incorporate Instagram stories to showcase #ADayintheLife of a professional dancer.
Spotlight old dance photos

Share throwback photos from company dancers’ training, or performances as children.

Figure 30. Spotlight Mock-up for Instagram
• Video Interviews – Straight to the Pointe

Interview company dancers, staff, and choreographers and have them describe a famous ballet scenes in 7 words or less.

Figure 31. Video Interview Mock-Up Post

• Celebrate industry related holidays or organization anniversaries.
Trivia: The Intermission Mission:

Could be listed in the program or projected onto a screen before the production resumes, posted on social media on Opening night (to entice those that haven’t purchased tickets yet); and answered through a social media post or comment.
Content Development:

- Developing content will be the main responsibility of the social media coordinator; however, he or she will utilize the talents of the graphic designer as well. Followers can also be utilized as content creators through reposts, retweets, and shares. It is important to acknowledge the original producer by name and/or
through a mention/tag. Existing content will be assessed from other promotional aspects of the organization in order to be repurposed for social media and online.

- Managing content will be edited and proofread carefully before published. Tone and personality will be regularly assessed in order to ensure the brand’s voice is cohesive across all platforms. A seasonal intern may be given responsibility to edit content for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- Cross-utilizing content will be done in order to reach audiences that are not active on the chosen platforms. Messages will be altered in order to fit the platform’s format and to establish variety in posts. Breaking apart content serves to allow for multiple posts with content that is too large for some platforms. For example, cutting a video into shorter clips that can be posted in a series rather than in one post.

**Monitoring**

The organization will utilize tools such as SocialMention.com to assess how and when the brand is mentioned online. The number of likes, comments/replies, shares/retweets, and clicks will be measured to track the growth in the organization’s reach. The following qualitative metrics have been matched to the corresponding goals of Company X:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Social Media Goals</strong></th>
<th><strong>Key Performance Indicators</strong></th>
<th><strong>KPI Formula</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase following on all platforms.</td>
<td>Reach Analytics by each platform</td>
<td># Followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase traffic to website, particularly the box office page.</td>
<td>New Users (Visiting Site for the first time)</td>
<td>Compare # of New Users to Old Users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of Sessions</td>
<td>Use platforms analytics to measure # of clicked links</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen brand awareness</td>
<td>Sentiment Ratio (Increased Positive Mentions)</td>
<td>Positive to Negative comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote advocacy for the arts</td>
<td>Advocacy Impact</td>
<td># of Advocacy Driven Conversations / Total Number of Advocacy Traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create conversations on posts/platforms</td>
<td>Conversation Reach</td>
<td>Total People Participating / Total Audience Exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase engagement with followers in order to recognize brand loyalty and customer satisfaction.</td>
<td>Audience Engagement</td>
<td># of Comments, Shares, Likes / Total Views</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Qualitative KPIs for Sample Marketing Plan
**Tuning**

The social media coordinator will lead an analysis of the data received in the monitoring stage. Adjustments will be made to future campaigns and tactics in order to constantly reevaluate the followers’ needs and interests as they evolve. Strategies will be adapted in the event that social media features have evolved, consumer tastes have changed, or the organization has introduced a new promotion, event, or other idea.

**Return on Investment**

Goals not directly tied to sales are difficult to measure. However, website traffic will be tracked in correspondence with posts that include a CTA, particularly those inviting followers to purchase tickets. This will determine the impact social media had on ticket sales.
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Lauren McKirgan, e-mail message to respondent, October 16, 2017.


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Megan Garrett, e-mail message to respondent, October 5, 2017.


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Appendices:

Interview Transcripts:

Interview #1: Nashville Predators

Megan Garrett – Social Media Coordinator,

Friday, January 10th 1 PM

Background:

Lindsay: How did you begin working for [organization]?

Garrett: I was a marketing a marketing intern at the University of Tennessee in their athletic department. I was graduating with my masters in May and I was freaking out because I didn’t have a job yet. So I starting applying and I knew I wanted to move back to Nashville because this is where I grew up. This was home. I applied for any job really that I could find with the Preds and I ended up getting a job in sales. I didn’t really enjoy that very much. I knew it wasn’t for me. I knew I wanted to get back to marketing because of how much I liked it when I was at UT. And so I was in sales for about five months when this job opened up and I applied for it. I told my supervisor in sales - “Hey, I just wanted to let you know I applied for a job in the marketing department,” – that kind of thing. And he was like – “we’ll send over an email and make sure they got your resume” – that kind of stuff. In the interview, I actually had to create a social media night marketing plan for how I would promote a social media night with the Preds which we are actually going to do so I’m pretty excited. I got hired in October and started on the third. And I love it. It’s so much fun. I love my job.

Lindsay: When did the Nashville Predators become seriously present on social media and what sparked this need for social media marketing?

Garrett: I had the numbers the other day because our boss asked for them. It was 2012 when we got Twitter. I know we’ve had Facebook for a while. I’m not sure of the exact date. I actually got him the numbers of how much our Twitter followers have increased over the years. It’s been a lot and I think that with Twitter being so popular now – if you like the team, you’re going to follow them to get the content and so with how popular Twitter is. It’s pretty easy to increase the followers if you’re putting out good stuff.

Lindsay: Do you know how long they’ve been on Instagram or a general idea?

Garrett: I don’t. I wonder if this will tell me (checks phone). I’m not sure how long they’ve been on Instagram. There’s about four or five people who all have access to our social media accounts just because we do post so much. It’s really hard to leave on one person. So, Sandy – which is my direct supervisor – she would probably now that date. She’s been here I think for seven years from being an intern then being moved into her current position. So she would probably have a better answer for that. She’s not here right now or I would ask.
Lindsay: That’s okay. How have you seen the organization’s presence on social media grow?

Garrett: We like to be sassy when we can because that usually tends to get more people to retweet and like your stuff. They [followers] interact with you a lot more if you’re kind of sassy and stuff. We use a lot more gifs – everybody likes gifs. That has been what I’ve tried to do the most. To be funnier. People tend to appreciate humor more. Any kind of funny gifs, or if we can poke fun at another team that’s always fun. I really enjoy that. On Tuesday we had a game. Sandy does all the in-game tweeting. I do like during the week, but she does game day to post stats and everything. She was actually going back and forth with the Vancouver Canucks with some sassiness and we got about 1,000 likes and about 800 retweets. We know people enjoy the sassiness. I posted on thing and I got a call immediately after I hit “tweet.” And I was thinking, oh my gosh I’m going to get fired. I picked up the phone, and he [her boss], was like “good job, that’s what we want.”

Structure

Lindsay: So you mentioned four to five people have access to the Twitter accounts. How many people are involved in the social media aspect of the organization?

Garrett: Yes, four to five people have access to the Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram accounts. Those are the four that we really use. I am a huge fan of Snapchat. So I use Snapchat. During the games I’m posting stories and Instagram stories. Then I occasionally post on Instagram and Twitter if I’ve got like a really good fan photo or can help out if they’re busy. But yeah, Snapchat is my favorite. But we all have access to it to keep up the content.

Lindsay: What other positions/departments do you find yourself working with on a daily basis to post on social media?

Garrett: Everyone. Everyone. Most of what I do during the week is posting for any kind of sponsor that we have. That we have guaranteed them a certain amount of posts a week or throughout the season. We work with Sponsorship a lot. We work with Ticket Sales a lot to post – “Hey, we’ve got this new ticket plan,” or “This game just went on sale – buy it.” If we need to push tickets more towards one game or the other – we’ll make up something funny. Our graphics department makes up all of the stuff that we post. So we bug them a lot too. I sit right next to the graphics department so I can just say “hey I need this.” And they’re all great so they chip in. Thanksgiving we did a “Oh, are you kids home for Thanksgiving break? Are they already annoying you? Get out to a Preds game.” So yeah, Ticket Sales, Sponsorship, Graphics, - pretty much everybody. All hands on deck.

Lindsay: I know you mentioned Twitter was your main platform for games. How was it decided to choose other platforms? Was it by audience?

Garrett: I think – and you probably think the same – Facebook used to be huge and that’s where everybody would post on their every move was on Facebook. Like, “going out to get dinner,” – all this random stuff. I feel like it’s gotten away from that. Every time I get on Facebook now it’s food, videos, or cute stories. So Twitter has kind of taken over as the instant update platform. So that’s we use it for with games. And our CEO is on Twitter all the time and that’s his favorite. So that’s what we use. Snapchat and
Instagram stories – with those in their prime and becoming big, we like to capitalize on that as well. Instagram gets more views just because we have more followers. And Snapchat – I wish they would give you a follower count. That would be really helpful. They give you a view count, but it’s hard to see how many people are actually being reached out of your followers. Twitter is our main platform. It’s easy to get interaction with fans too or they can send you something back and you can respond quicker.

**Lindsay:** Do you use a scheduler when posting or is it usually in the moment?

**Garrett:** Game Nights – that’s all in the moment. But during the week, like on a day leading up to a game, I use TweetDeck. I have a massive calendar at my desk. Like if we do have any sponsorship things to fill, I go ahead a write everything down for the month and make sure I’ve got everything planned out. During the morning I’ll sit down and figure out what I’ve got to post during the day and use TweetDeck to schedule this post at 10 am, schedule this one at 12 – that kind of stuff. That way you don’t have to sit at your computer all day and get everything posted that’s supposed to go and be able to go to meetings and all the other stuff during. And then the same thing with Facebook since they do the scheduling posts too. Without scheduling tweets I wouldn’t have a life. Because over Christmas and Thanksgiving break I wouldn’t be able to spend time with my family. Because obviously we don’t want to go silent on social media. It’s easier to just schedule that and know that everything you need to get out is still there but you can spend time with family.

**Lindsay:** How do you handle replying to comments/questions on social media? Is it one person or does it depend on whose currently online?

**Garrett:** It depends on who is checking it at the time. So like during the week when we’re all in the office, since there about four of us all on Twitter at the same time - I think each one of us has TweetDeck open on our computer at any time - any one of us can reply. Sometimes someone will reply and everyone is like, “Wait, who was that?” During the games, it’s pretty much all Sandy since she’s the one already doing the game day tweets during the game anyway. She’s already on Twitter so she just takes care of that. We answer the ones that we can. We don’t necessarily pick and choose. A lot of times it’s a ridiculous question that we don’t know the answer to. And of course I would help [them] if I knew how to answer their question. We try to do what we can. It’s a lot. We get a lot of Tweets every day.

**Lindsay:** Do you ever find yourself trying to contact someone else who might have the answer? Someone in another department maybe?

**Garrett:** Oh yeah. All the time. We get request for, oh I’m trying to think of an example. We had one the other day. It was a request to get a jersey signed for someone who was in need or someone who was sick. I can’t remember what it was. We reached out to our Community Relations Department. And said, “Hey, is this something we could do?” They said, “Let’s get it done.” We’ll get them a signed puck and a Preds Pride pack with like a shirt and a hat and all that kind of stuff. We do reach out to different departments to figure out the answer. Most of the time if it’s a ticket question – we get those a lot – we’ll
just respond and say, “hey, please give our ticket sales a call for more information.” So that way we can try and get it answered when we can.

Content

Lindsay: What is the Predators’ main goal when using social media for marketing?

Garrett: To reach as many people as we can and have them interact with us. That’s big. Whenever we post things, most of the time… Right now we are doing a Top 100 moments of Predators History. So whenever we post those we say, “Here’s our top 100 moments. What are yours? What are your memories?” So we can get more people to respond to us. That’s big. Anything we post really, we’re asking for fan interaction back with us.

Lindsay: What would you consider the social media mission statement to be for each platform?

Garrett: Kind of the same thing. We want to get the word out about our team. We are one of the newer teams in the League. We’re still trying to grow our fan base. Nashville has turned into a “Hockey town,” – we say that and I think it has for sure. Some people hate on us. They say, “oh you’re not a hockey town. Music City – You don’t know anything about hockey.” All that kind of stuff. So we are working on growing our fan base. I think reaching as many people as possible. If we post good content, more and more people are likely to see it. If people retweet, more people are likely to see it than otherwise would have. So growing our fan base, reaching as many people as possible, getting them to interact with us, - I think that’s what our mission statement is.

Lindsay: Who is the average follower that you speak to on social media for any of the platforms?

Garrett: Definitely people that live in Nashville. We have our “viewing area,” which is Nashville, Kentucky, Alabama, Georgia – I think that’s the bulk of it. Most of the time its fans in those areas because they don’t have their own hockey team. We’re the closest professional hockey team in that area. So we have fans in those states mainly. And then of course, anyone that lives in Nashville because you’re so close to it. I know for me and a lot of my friends, once you go to one hockey game, you’re hooked. I think that’s the case a lot of the time. We do such a good job hear of having the live entertainment, and having the response to fans’ questions, our staff is just incredible on game nights to help anybody when they’ve got a question or problem – we actually just got voted #1 in fan experience, service and affordability. I like what we are doing here. Having all those things does increase your fan base.

Lindsay: When you’re organizing a new campaign what steps do you take to do that?

Garrett: First we reach out to all the departments to figure out a clear message. Make sure we’re all communicating the same thing. If it’s getting posted on our accounts, our Nashville Predators Foundation has an account, Sean Henry, which is our President/CEO – he has an account. We make sure Ticket Sales is on board, Graphics is on board, Community Relations – make sure everybody is on the same page. Then we’ll work on getting a graphic made or whatever it might be. Getting a ticket package in place – that kind of thing. So when we post, we make it all look uniform. So someone isn’t getting information from one place and it’s not matching the information from somewhere else. We just talk to everybody and make sure we’re all good.
Lindsay: How many different people work on creating content for social media?

Garrett: A lot. Anybody just has an idea and they mention it to someone else, and we’ll decide to run with it. And that’s when we get all the other parties involved. “This is what we’re thinking, we want to do it, let’s go for it.” We have a meeting on Monday – every Monday – with just the marketing staff and communications. And we all just sit around and toss around ideas. How can we create awareness of this game? What do you think about this? We just toss around ideas. It’s everyone hands on.

Lindsay: You mentioned that you really have to work with other departments to create consistency. Is there other ways you try to keep that clear, uniform message?

Garrett: Not really. Our building is right next to the Community Relations. They’re in a separate building. But everyone is everywhere all the time. We are all talking to each other. Everybody chips in when they’re walking by. We are all the time talking [about ideas].

Lindsay: What type of content – pictures/videos/articles/links/etc. – do you consider to be most successful and on which platforms?

Garrett: We post everything to Twitter. Everything. Because, like I said, our CEO is on Twitter. So that’s where we want to make sure we post. Most things also get posted to Facebook. The heartfelt stories usually get the most love. For example, we honored a police officer who was shot, yesterday at the game. We posted that today on Twitter and Facebook. That’s getting a lot of attention. Any kind of stuff from the players – people love, love to get any kind of view of what they players are doing. So we do fun things, like the heads up game from Ellen Degeneres with the players. We’ll have them guess movies just from emojis. So anything about the players fans just eat up. They see them play hockey, but they don’t get to know them as a person. Anytime you can get player content out there, they love it. Instagram, we would post more articles, but you can’t post a link so there’s no effective way to do that. Same thing with Snapchat. We are very Twitter heavy.

Lindsay: So when it’s Snapchat and Instagram stories, is it usually just on game days?

Garrett: It’s usually on game days. Instagram – we do post some photos during the week. Most of the time I’m walking around the concourse pregame. So if I see a cute family photo opp or a sign, I’ll take a picture of it and post it. Game action is Snapchat story, Instagram story. Any kind of cute pictures that we find, or in-between periods we post a graphic of the score – that stuff gets posted to Instagram. During the week – very Twitter and Facebook.

Lindsay: What types of tools – Photoshop/etc. – do you use when creating content?

Garrett: Our graphics is all in charge of pictures. I don’t create anything myself. At UT, I created a little bit in Photoshop but here since we have such an awesome Graphics Department, I don’t have to worry about it, thankfully. They come in for us all the time. When we are in a hurry to get something done, I know they’re busy, they’re always willing to get it. If we need it right then they are always willing to do it. For the content that I post: The Game Day in Smashville with the team that we are playing – all I have to
do is go in there and click and then type in the correct words. They created a template. They are amazing. Thankfully, we have one of the best Graphics Departments.

**Lindsay:** How often do you use contests on social media to engage followers?

**Garrett:** A lot. I think it was September. My boss just came over and said, “Megan, I’ve got an idea.” We are just gonna run with it and see how it goes. I posted something on Twitter and we had a winner every minute for an hour. It was a lot of DM-ing and a lot of mailing out prizes. We do as much as we can because that really does increase your followers. People think if they follow this account that they can probably win a Predator’s hat or tickets or a t-shirt. Anything that you can do like that to engage your fans helps. If you ask them to RT a picture for a chance to win, you’re going to reach more people that probably wouldn’t have seen that in the first place – someone that doesn’t follow you. We do a lot of contests where it’s retweet this to enter or tell us you’re your favorite Smashville memory was – your Golden moment memory (#goldenmoment).

**Lindsay:** Do you usually use a specific hashtag for the contest?

**Garrett:** We do unless we do a retweet. One time we posted a graphic of the upcoming game, that we needed a little more push for ticket sales. So we said RT this photo for a chance to win. That way people were seeing there was a game coming up even if they didn’t follow us. Sometimes we will do a Gold Friday. Share your favorite #goldenmoment for a chance to win. We don’t ask for a RT every time because some people don’t enjoy that. We use the hashtag so if they’re not replying to our tweet, they can still find it with the hashtag. It does keep everything in line.

**Lindsay:** How do you plan content for posts that are paid for by sponsors? How is this organized? (Ex: Predators posted about Nashville’s Nutcracker in December, Dunkin Donuts Posts)

**Garrett:** We have a meeting. Always in meetings. Once every other week. This is what we’ve got going on for this month. These are what sponsor activations are in this month and we’ve promised them this many posts. I’ll just look at my calendar and figure out a day that we don’t have a whole lot scheduled to go out just to make sure it gets the most attention that we can. If it’s a game day we usually don’t just because there’s so much content going out all at the same time. We try to avoid that. But one of the accounts that we have, the girl down in sponsorship who sold them the partnership creates a Google calendar [for me] of when to post for them. That’s the easiest – is when someone tells me we want to post on this day, this day, and this day. And I just go ahead and schedule them so I don’t have to worry about it. We just figure out what days we have a bit lighter on the schedule and we want to be sure people actually see it and it doesn’t get lost in the mix of everything else.

**Lindsay:** How many different sponsors do you find yourself handling in a given month?

**Garrett:** Probably around 6 or 7. There is one that’s all year. We post for them probably three times a month. We’ve got a couple that go out every single Friday. We have another that’s going to start going out every single Wednesday. So it’s just learning what day everything goes. When I first started I didn’t think I was going to be able to do this.
There’s no way I’m going to be able to remember all this. That calendar is a lifesaver. I can just write everything down and remember, oh I’ve got to do this.

**Lindsay:** How are the sponsorships organized?

**Garrett:** The sponsorship staff downstairs asks the sponsor what they want the tweet to say and what images – if any – do you want to go with the tweet. We ask for a direct copy of what they want us to post. We will “Predify” it a little bit. If it’s a simple, hey enter this contest. We’ll do a “Hey, Smashville! Enter this contest for a chance to win Preds gear.” We’ll try to put “Smashville” or “Preds” or anything we can do to get people to realize this is for the Preds. Even if it’s coming from our account I feel like sometimes that can get lost. So if I hashtag Preds at the end and make it our own, we can still get the message across.

**Lindsay:** How do you organize live tweets during games?

**Garrett:** Only one person does live tweets during games. There’s multiple people that can do it. She’s just always here. Any home game, Sandy is in the press box tweeting the game: Puck drop, who is the starting line-up… And then from there it will be any kind of penalty or goals. We do posts about fights sometimes cause people love that. We split away games a little bit. Since I just started in October, I’ve only done about three. But that was because I was kind of getting the feel of it. Seeing how much to tweet, what kind of stuff to tweet about. If she’s busy or is going out of town, she can text me to do the away game and I’ll do it. It’s nice to have multiple people who can do it because you know there’s 82 games in a season, so you know you’re not tied up in that many games.

**Lindsay:** Even though it can be a lot of constant content, do you find that it’s well received because Twitter is the appropriate platform for live game content?

**Garrett:** Yes. We get a lot of people who will reply to us and say that this is great, they don’t even have to watch the game to know what’s going on. So people that aren’t even around a TV, will follow us through our Snapchat or Instagram stories or on our Twitter account. They can follow along and keep up with it and know when all the big stuff happens.

**Lindsay:** What do you consider to be the organization’s strengths when it comes to social media?

**Garrett:** I think it’s how many people we have working on it. If it was just one person having to do Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, all by themselves, there’s no way that we would be able to post the amount of content that we do, the amount of good content that we do. They’d be so overwhelmed that they wouldn’t be able to do anything else.

**Lindsay:** What do you consider to be a weakness in the organization’s social media?

**Garrett:** I think we can be more sassy. We are working on it and do it when we can. I don’t want this to come across bad, a lot of people are sensitive right now. So we don’t want to make anyone angry with what we post. So it’s kind of finding that balance of what we post. When is it okay to be a little sassy without hurting someone’s feelings. We never do it at fans. Only other teams. Like when we can get a little jab in at another team.
And our CEO loves it. When Sandy tweeted the Canucks on Tuesday, he screenshotted it and sent it to her and said it was the best tweet of the year. We do try to be sassy when we can, but it is finding that balance of when is it okay and when is it not. I think that is something that we can definitely work on. Doing that more but in a tasteful way.

Lindsay: Do you see the organization exploring a new platform anytime soon?

Garrett: Possibly. I think whenever Periscope came out, they thought about it. Of course now Twitter owns Periscope. So if a new platform came up that got a lot of attention from fans and we thought that it’s a good opportunity to reach a ton of people, then we would definitely be open to doing that. Right now it seems like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat are really the prime social platforms and that’s where we can reach the most people. So that’s where we are. If something else comes out that’s like the new craze of 2017, we are all willing to do as much as we can on there [the potential platform] as well.

Lindsay: What do you consider a strategy for content creation in social media?

Garrett: Gifs. Everybody loves a funny Gifs. And just being playful I think. One girl tweeted at us and said, “I don’t know if you noticed but every game I’ve been at you’ve won.” That kind of thing. So I replied, “What are your plans Thursday night?” She tweeted back at us and said it made her night. Being playful like that with fans – I think we are pretty good at that. And then yeah, the gifs. I can’t tell you how many times I log on to giphy.com and just search. And it takes me a really long time to find a gif because you want it to be the perfect one. So sometimes my boss will come over and ask for a tweet to be out in the next 5 minutes. I’m thinking I need at least ten to find the perfect gift.

Other:

Lindsay: What social media experts/influencers do you personally follow?

Garrett: We follow all the other teams in the NHL. And then we follow the Titans since they’re here, the Sounds. We follow the local teams and then every other team in the NHL. We really stay on top of their twitters as well so we can see what works for them and what doesn’t work for them. What did they get a lot of likes on? What did they get a lot of backlash from? We do that and then we actually have a league link that shows what’s doing the best for each team. It’s called Crowd Tangle. They’ve got every team on there with their Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. You can go on there and it actually does a breakdown of the last two hours, four hours, and so on. You can see what posts were at the top of getting a lot of fan interaction – like likes, retweets, replies. So that’s kind of cool. You can go on there and see well this graphic that they did for their ticket plan or whatever it was did really well, maybe we should look at doing something like that. It’s very helpful. I get on there a lot. That tweet that Sandy did at the Vancouver Canucks. I went on there to see how it was being received in comparison to what other teams were doing at that time. It was the number one [post] on there because it was over performing – is what they call it on the website. It’s getting more likes and retweets than your normal tweet would have. You can see that fans really are responding to sassy and playful content. And taking jabs at other teams – they really like it.
We use Facebook analytics, Twitter analytics, and we really wish Instagram would step up their game on analytics. I actually put together a report for my boss. We did a thing for a sponsor. It was Bass Pro Shops. We were giving away this massive UTV – is what they call it – but it’s like a really supped up ATV like a doom-buggy almost. We had to schedule six posts and I did way more to make sure we covered all of our bases. He said to put together a report of how many times we tweeted about, what day, and all the impressions that it got on twitter. I put together a huge document and sent it over to him. He said it was great and this is what he needed. They’ll show it to Bass Pro to say this is what you got from us, let’s talk about doing something like this again next year. Proving to them it was worth their time to partner with us. We use that a lot. Mainly for sponsors I think. Your content really did get a lot of love from our fans so come back and do it with us again next year. We use it a lot.

Lindsay: So you find yourself doing reports mostly for sponsorships to show them their investment was worth it?

Garrett: Yes. Exactly.

Lindsay: What do you consider to be your favorite part about this job?

Garrett: My favorite job duty is being playful on Twitter. And then on Snapchat, responded to someone’s snap with just an emoji – they eat it up. They’re like - oh my gosh - the Predators just responded to me. That’s my favorite part. Making other people for good. Before this job, if I were to tweet at a verified account and they would respond, it was great. Being able to do that for other people. Like the girl we tweeted to with her plans for Thursday and when she responded with our reply making her night. Knowing how that makes me feel and being able to do it for other people is cool. And then of course the people I work around are incredible. When I was downstairs [in sales], I didn’t like what I was doing just because I wasn’t good at it. I am not a sales person. Even the people down there made it better. Even though I didn’t like what I was doing, the people were incredible. And now being in a place doing what I love and still around all the good people – it’s the perfect job. I love it. Love it. My parents always tell me – they work for the state – so they get more days off than I do. I think for New Year’s they got Monday and Tuesday, we just got Monday. My dad tried to make fun of it and I was like I don’t care. I love my job.

Lindsay: What do you consider to be a valuable skill that you learned in school for social media?

Garrett: Definitely the communication side of it. Between different departments. At UT, we did the same thing. Anything that we wanted to do marketing wise we had to run it by the team if it involved at all. We had to run it by the operations people and make sure that they’re okay with it. Learning how to talk to different groups of people and making sure you’re all focused on one thing. I think that helped me a lot here because that’s all we do here. Talk to different departments and make sure everyone’s on the same page and then go with it. So definitely the communication part helped me a lot.

Additional Questions

Note: These questions were answered through email on October 5th.

How do you plan when to post content (time of day and what day(s) of the week)?
We’ve noticed that posts on Twitter are best early in the morning (i.e. 8-9am), around lunch time, and then again at night when people are home from work (i.e. 6-8pm). Our Facebook posts get the most attention around those after work hours as well. We don’t really have a preference on Instagram/Snapchat. Even though we know these time are generally the best time to post, when we have so much content to get out, we can’t always follow those guidelines. It also depends on what content you are sharing. We can post things with player content at any time and it gets a ton of interaction because that’s what people want to see most.

**Describe the demographic of your average follower (this can be by platform or overall)?**

- Mostly male followers
- Twitter followers: 63% male, 37% female
- Facebook: 55% male, 44% female
- Instagram followers: 60% male, 40% female

**What do you consider viral content to be? Have you seen this type of success with the Predators' content?**

To me, viral content is something that you can’t plan, but something that just happens on its own. We have had people in the office that have said to me “make this go viral” and that’s something that’s out of my control. It just depends on how it’s received and if other big accounts start picking it up and spreading it. We did have something go viral earlier this summer. We gave away Stanley Cup Final tickets as a promotion working with Twice Daily. We picked Andrew Fudge as a winner and DM’d him on Twitter to let him know he won tickets to Game 6 of the Stanley Cup Final. He didn’t check his DM’s until after the playoffs were over. He tweeted at us saying that he just now found it, so we reached out to let him know we would give him Opening Night tickets to make up for it. The reason this went “viral” was because news outlets, sports accounts and the NHL saw it and picked up the story. You can’t go into something and “make it viral”, it just kind of happens.

**What tips do you have about posting articles and links on Facebook and Twitter?**

Articles and links make up a lot of what we share on social. We post new articles to our website and use our social accounts to get them out into the world. We use Bitly to shorten the link to make it more aesthetically pleasing on twitter when you are scrolling through your timeline. We often add a picture to the post to catch the eyes of the readers. When it’s just a bunch of text, it’s easier to pass over.

**What are your thoughts on the use of hashtags?**

We love hashtags. We use them in almost all of our posts. It makes it easier for your contest to be found when someone searches by the hashtag. Twitter and the NHL just this
week released Twitter Emojis for all 31 teams. Ours is our logo when you use #Preds. Our fans love the new emoji and we encourage everyone to include it when posting.

**What are your tips in regards to writing headlines and captions?**

If you can be funny, do it. If you have a clever caption, it seems to get more interaction from the fans. But we understand when something can be funny and when the post needs to be more serious. You have to pick your moments, but most of the time we lean towards being funny or “punny” if we can.

**Have you incorporated social media takeovers before into your content? Why or Why not?**

Since I’ve been here, we have not done a social media takeover. Not sure that there’s a specific reason we haven’t done one, just haven’t.

**My other question is about an example you shared in the interview. You mentioned a post that either you or your supervisor had tweeted in a response to the Vancouver Canucks during a game and the President really appreciated the content. Could you send me a screenshot of this post or give me an idea of what the content was so I can find the post and include it as an example in my thesis? I believe the game was around January 17th.**

The post was during overtime of the game against the Canucks on January 10th. We scored during overtime (which would have ended the game with us winning) but they waved the goal off on the ice. My boss, Sandy, tweeted while they were reviewing the goal: “GOAL! We think…”. Then the Canucks quote tweeted our tweet after they ruled that there was goaltender interference so it didn’t count: “Think again. No goal!”. Then a little later in overtime, we scored the game winning goal so Sandy quote tweeted their tweet and said “How about now?”. This blew up a lot more than we expected (which goes back to my post about viral stuff not being planned) and our CEO loved it! (Pictures of the tweets attached to this email.) Link to view game to see what happened: https://www.nhl.com/predators/video/recap-van-1-nsh-2-fot/t-277518926/c-48264403
Interview #2: Nashville Symphony

Justin Bradford – Digital Media Manager/Producer

Background

Lindsay: How did you begin working in marketing and for the Nashville Symphony?

Justin: Given my age, I was actually an early adopter of social media. My first job was at Cumberland University over in Lebanon, Tennessee, and I was starting out as the Alumni Relations Coordinator. Well, social media was still Facebook and Twitter was really getting going then. Facebook was already around, but it was more of a social tool and businesses were just starting to realize back in 2008 that hey, we can use this for advertising. Use social media to reach people to sell our products to keep people informed. It’s not just about sharing pictures, updating your status or having a diary kind of thing. So I started having pages there [in first career position] for social media. And then when other people left positions at the university, I took over kind of the PR perspective of it and the communications including website, social media for the university and everything for that sort. And so, I taught myself a lot. Especially given my degree being in theatre. I was two credits away from getting a business minor. So I had a lot of business courses – just didn’t get the minor and I wanted to get the piece of paper and get out. I just needed a job. I got lucky enough to work at my alma mater upon graduation. So, I taught myself a lot about strategy and starting learning more by going to conferences and everything like that. The way I would describe myself is a self-taught social media marketer which I think a lot of people were back in the mid to late 2000s because there weren’t degrees for it. There weren’t classes even on it and even conferences were still trying to figure out what’s the best way to tell the story. It was so fresh to everyone. So I kind of developed my own strategies there by seeing what was working. So moving on from there, I went to work for an auto glass company where I managed social media and was also a marketing analyst for them. That was a little different on the corporate side of social media because it was a lot of customer service involved in the social media perspective there. From that went on to a different job in publishing. It was mostly email marketing so I didn’t get to do much social there but I still had to stay up with the trends because I have a second job – aside from the job with the symphony – where I manage my own website and blog and radio show and everything of that sort dealing with hockey. Social media perspective in terms of marketing is always with my website and blog and radio show has always been going and that’s how we built from the ground up. So the strategies that I use day-to-day overlap a lot. Especially music and sports. They’re all entertainment. They’re just different forms of entertainment.

That’s been, the great thing there is teaching myself different strategies and utilizing what I learn in each one – I know this is a long-winded answer – I’m
trying to build how I established myself with this. When I came to the Nashville Symphony and saw the position – at that time it was called “Website and Social Community Manager,” kind of a dated title. You could tell this was built like five years ago. We changed my title just about three or four months ago to Digital Media Manager/Producer because one my buddies that works at the Nashville Predators does basically the same thing I do – maybe a little more in depth – but that’s his title. And I went, well, that’s his title so I want that here. And it works because we work closely with the Predators a lot too and obviously I’m over there a lot covering hockey too. So it kind of worked out that way. The reason we changed that title is because if it’s more to what I do which is management and production whether it’s content or video or website content – everything of that sort, fits more than community manager or website. Cause yeah I do website, but digital media covers the entire spectrum of what I do. So it’s social media which involves all of our Facebook accounts, our marketing on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, even the ones people don’t like that much like Google Plus.

Our Instagram actually is pretty large now. It’s grown a lot. It’s up to 15,000 followers. When I started here two years ago we were at maybe 7,000. So it has grown a lot in two years. LinkedIn still works for us as well. YouTube has become a very popular destination especially since we had a viral video go out last year that we didn’t mean to go viral but it did. It got picked up internationally everywhere. It was our floor flip video which on Reddit has over 3 million hits. Facebook it has 1.1 million views. YouTube, it’s over 200,000 cause we just upload it to every place. And it was awesome. It was just how we change our floor - and I’ll show you – from the theatre style setting to ballroom floor. That’s it because it’s all mechanical. The way that it works and it just took off by storm. But that kind of goes into strategy too because you never know what’s going to become viral. You just have to produce this content and not necessarily hope, but know that eventually the right people will see stuff and you might hit it big.

Building on to that too, when I started here I wasn’t actually in charge of all the Facebook advertising but they knew that I had the background in it. So they handed it over to me because it fit with me working on Facebook as well and knowing the demographics, knowing how to target people, knowing how to build that strategy for each concert because we have a variety of concerts here. We have over a 150 different performances a year. It ranges from classical to pops to jazz to children’s concerts to matinee concerts, movies in concert, free concerts, non-classical, non-orchestral concerts – like rock stars, pop stars, country stars, - everything. And so, having that vast background it makes it – I won’t say difficult, but it’s a good challenge to build a strategy for that because every single show is different. Even every classical show is different. So we have to develop a strategy for each show in terms of how we’re going to target specific audiences and knowing that well we know a younger crowd is not going to like this classical piece and then on the other hand there might be one that we target more college
students. So that’s kind of the brief overview of what I do. A lot of the marketing that I work with is in Facebook, YouTube, and Adroll. Adroll being retargeting which I’m sure you’re familiar with that. Retargeting people that visited our site or visited certain pages of our site and making sure those ads pop up in certain areas. YouTube, video ads – usually we try to do prerolls, 15 second or 30 second pre-rolls for that. And Facebook it’s images and video that we do. We also outsource some of our Facebook advertising for our subscription stuff to a company called Mogo. And they take care a lot of that to because they do a lot of really focused targeting as well.

Our strategy involves a lot because I’m in the communications department, we have a marketing department as well – and we work very closely together. I’m actually going to have a meeting later today with our marketing director to talk about more of our Facebook advertising. It’s a weekly meeting. So it’s one of those things too. It’s a weekly thing that we work on targeting for our Facebook advertising too because it’s that big of a deal. For instance, let’s see here. In the last two years, actually let me readjust this. To give you an idea of how much we actually spend with Facebook, let’s say in the last 30 days we have spent about 5,000 dollars. Which isn’t really isn’t that much when you think about having a budget for our venue. But out of 5,000 dollars we’ve had 1.2 million impressions which is pretty darn good. And then performance wise, Facebook advertising is pretty great because it’s pretty cheap advertising compared to like a billboard, newspaper – the old style of advertising which we still do. We use digital billboards now. It’s much easier to change that.

We are way more focused now on the Facebook advertising because we can reach a lot more people on a very targeted way which is what I’m sure you’re looking at is how to become more targeted with this. So we use a Facebook pixel to track our purchases because through our ecommerce part of our website we are able to track people that may have look at our ad, clicked on our ad, and within a 7 day window if they purchase a ticket it tracks the cookie back to know they purchase because of the Facebook ad. So we are able to track our ROI based on that Facebook ad to see and no matter what – anytime we are doing an ad, we are always making way more money than we are spending. So we are maybe spending $200 and we make maybe $1500 even. That’s still a great return on the investment there. Facebook has all these options which is insane. [Brings up a Facebook Ad] So here we’ve spent about $5000 and we’ve sold about $15,000 in ticket sales. So it shows right there that a 40,000 gross gain is pretty darn good. I may even be answering questions that you have set to ask later, but to give you a really good overview of what we are doing here and why I love Facebook advertising too. Because it’s fun.

Because a part of managing social media is well is I get to interact with the people that are responding to our ads. And I love that part because I use gifs a lot. Who
doesn’t? So replying to people on there – whether it’s a customer service perspective or even trying to help sell tickets and people have questions when asking on our Facebook ads. I get to interact with them and show there’s a person behind it. So there’s a lot of places out there that will do a Facebook ad, but then they won’t actually manage the ad after it. People comment but they won’t get a response. We actually go and we manage to where we look at how people are responding to our ads and interact with them because it actually sells tickets. So for one of the movies in concert, someone responded snarky and I replied back with a gif to be snarky back. And he replied that just because of that response he was going to buy tickets to the show right now. He was on the edge and wasn’t sure but now he was because I responded in that way. Five minutes later he posted a screenshot of the receipt. I was like, alright! So it works! I mean it’s social media for a reason. You’re supposed to be social and I think a lot of places forget that. They think, ‘oh we can just push, push, push.’ But you have to give back a little bit too in terms of your interaction and your personality in order to really make it function in a way that it’s meant to be functioned. So long winded answer to that question. But that’s kind of the build-up to where I am now.

Lindsay: When did [organization name] become seriously present on social media and what sparked this need for social media marketing?

Justin: That’s tough to say because I’ve only been here for two years. I would say maybe about two or three years before my time here. Maybe five years ago they realized that it was something important. What I can talk about is my strategy when I came in. So when I came in two years ago, interviewing for just the job, I went and looked at all the social media for the Symphony, the website and everything like that. And came in with a this is what needs to happen. Instead of just interviewing for the job, I came in with a plan of action. Cause I really wanted this job. And so when you go in and know you really want a job, you prepare for it and I did. The biggest thing that was missing from the Nashville Symphony was video. And we can already see two years ago and especially nowadays that video is the way to go. Whether its interactions, interviews, music even, people are listening to music on YouTube. You don’t have to have a video associated, just a still image for people using YouTube to listen. Which shows the video capability there is tremendous. Because whether it’s advertising or not, people are going to YouTube. Which is a place where there are videos and they’ll see other things. They can find stuff on there. And so video was one of those things that was missing, I thought. Because there was maybe only a video recorder. Now we have, probably, four or five original videos per month. Which is a lot for us because I’m the only one doing it. But I like that cause it’s worked for us.

I spoke earlier about that viral video. That made so many people recognize us and it gained like a few thousand likes just from a video that didn’t cost any extra
money to produce. I just did a time-lapse. I just set the camera up at night, pressed record, sat with my phone and played on it for two hours, stopped, loaded it in, compressed it, put some music behind it…boom! Millions of hits. Something so simple like that whereas I’ll spend hours editing another video and I’ll get maybe 500 views. But that just shows that you put your time and effort into all of it because you never know what’s going to hit it. But video is the biggest thing I saw in terms of strategy. And that’s whenever I talked to people about it. Video is the thing to do. Even if it’s simple video. Something as simple as replying with video on Twitter.

Using that functionality of 2:20 on Twitter. Utilize that 2:20 because people like to view in the app more than clicking and having to go to YouTube. And there’s a reason for that. They don’t always get along. Same thing with Facebook. It’s better to upload directly to Facebook then to post a YouTube link because YouTube and Facebook don’t necessarily always get along. So it won’t appear in the feeds near as much based on the algorithm if you post a YouTube link. But if you post a direct video, it skyrockets. For instance, with hockey side for me, I’ll post my post game video that I do directly to Facebook. I’ll put it on my website through a YouTube link. That YouTube link will maybe get 500 or so views. Facebook I’ll get over 7,000. Now even though I push people to go to the website, I know they’re going to view it directly through the Facebook app or Facebook PC version. Right there because it’s there. They don’t have to go somewhere else and navigate. So it just shows the different functionality there. Why it’s important to realize you can’t just make it a one stop shop in social media because when you do you’re losing out on so many things. You have to focus on one and give each app, each medium a strategy too.

So for instance with our Instagram. We try to make it different from our Twitter and our Facebook because we have a different type of following there. We have a much younger following there. People are obviously there to get the lifestyle more so. So we try to get a little creative with it. There are a lot of things that we’ll post across the board because we just need to or because it’s great. For instance, with the Predators, the orchestra and the chorus doing a let’s go Preds chant [was posted] across the board. But there’s more artistic things on Instagram, for instance, that we try to do a little bit more of. For instance, when we have our musicians going out to play in schools – we’ll post it more on Instagram because it’s more of a neat thing and we can get a little more artsy with things like that. Like with the fashion show we did a heck of a lot more. This [video] had over 1800 views which for us is a good bit for a fashion show and showing more videos. Which we aren’t gonna post on Facebook because not as many people care. We know our following on Instagram is more about the lifestyle of it. Certain things like this – sunset at the Schermerhorn, 228 likes. It’s a picture of the building with a filter. Doing things like that goes such a long way for us. Reposting Carrie Underwood being here for a concert – people will flock more to
that. With this medium we can post more often, especially with stories, then we do in the other platforms.

Just like Twitter, I’m way more snarky on Twitter than I am on Facebook because it’s an older crowd on Facebook shown by how people comment even on our ads. It’s the Schermerhorn Symphony Center. They’ll reply, “where’s this concert at?” So I reply, Nashville. “Well, where in Nashville?” So I had to reply back at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center. Me being as snarky as I can get on there. You’re talking about a Schermerhorn Symphony Center Concert ad and asking where the symphony concert is at. It’s a little rough sometimes. But that’s part of the strategy is knowing the audience and knowing how to shape your strategy around that. So Twitter, it’s tough for us to get a lot of interaction because we use it more as a push out than of people talk to us. I don’t really check the feeds there because we follow too many people and it’s too tough.

Sometimes things will just take off. Like our Predators’ message on Friday boomed because Twitter is a great sports tool as well compared to necessarily Facebook which is a little bit more behind because Twitter is more in the now type of thing. So in terms of strategy there it’s again knowing the audience, knowing the type of following, knowing whose following, creating the strategy around what you think people who follow you on those different accounts too. So in terms of looking at it... In terms of music in the arts, Instagram has a very good opportunity to be the best tool because arts are visual and vocally in all audio, there’s a really good opportunity there. Especially with being able to edit content and get it all to one minute in video and even advertising on Instagram too is a great opportunity to reach people that way. Same thing on Facebook. It just depends on the audience but Instagram just has that mechanism where it’s set up for success for the arts. So I hope that answers your question.

**Lindsay:** How have you seen the organization’s presence on social media grow?

**Justin:** Overall, it’s been exponentially. Again, I can only speak since I came here. But we can consistently rise. One of the reasons is because of what I spoke of in the last question: video. Because video reaches so many more people. So many people want video. Video in advertising. We weren’t that active on Facebook advertising before I came here. And especially with video, if you’re trying to advertise a concert, especially for a guest artist for instance... We had the Temptations come perform at the symphony. Video/audio helps. People don’t know who the Temptations are, but they hear, “My Girl,” they know. Certain songs - Frankie Valley. You hear “Big Girls Don’t Cry.” Boom. You know Frankie Valley. Certain things like that. Or Grease. You know certain songs. So people may not recognize the name but as soon as they hear a song, it clicks. So video has become very important to advertise as well.
But that’s helped our growth because we do a good job with video now compared to what we used to. Instagram has probably grown the most. Twitter, let’s see… Twitter, we are at 39,000 [followers] which has grown a lot too. But for instance, part of this growth and strategy for this is that if there’s a time where I need to be replying to people, I’m replying. So it was last summer. We did that concert [points to poster]. It was outside. There was 7,000 people there to watch us which is huge and awesome. We were doing the music of John Williams – which is my idol. And our social media was blowing up. Just booming on Instagram and Twitter. For it to blow up on Twitter was great. Facebook was people tagging us in pictures. Well the concert around, I’d say 9:45/10:00 pm. I get back to the office and I was here till 12:30 am. But I wanted to be because people are blowing us up and so I just started posting on… What was your favorite part of the concert? Reply back with a picture or a gif. What was your favorite part of…. Interacting… and we just boom! Boom! Boom! And our interaction levels were all just through the roof. People saw that oh hey, there’s someone behind this actually working at it right now at 12:00 at night. This is awesome. We sold some tickets to some other things too. Because we left a great impression on other people too because we interacted and didn’t just like a tweet. Sometimes I just like stuff to show, “hey we saw it and thanks for tagging us.” But the interaction level for that concert and sensing out the interaction level that’s appropriate and needed for certain performances or things like that is very, very important to know.

So there’s some concerts here that we’ll have where maybe we’ll have two things that we’re tagged in. Other times it will be 40 things. So it’s knowing when to log on and make sure that we’re doing the appropriate things and responding to people whether it’s Facebook, Twitter, Instagram cause that helps our growth. Interaction always breeds growth. And if there’s one way to answer that question it’s that you can’t expect to grow on your social media platforms if you don’t interact with people because it’s social media for a reason. But that’s whether its advertising, your simple content that you’re posting directly to it. You have to interact with people or give them a reason to interact. So it’s asking rhetorical questions, for you, but you want people to actually answer. Asking questions – asking for interaction. Every once in a while I’ll post, “it’s Music Monday, what are you listening to right now? What’s on your playlist?” We’ll get maybe ten or so responses but those ten people want to interact with us. So even though it’s only ten people, that’s better than zero.

We try to come up with something to stay up with memes sometimes. So it was maybe a year and half ago when squad goals was huge. We did a squad goals picture but with the composers that were coming up in our classical season and it went over very, very well for most people. Some people went “I don’t get it.” A person replied, “It’s a millennial thing.” But a lot of people commented – hey they know how to reach the right people. Because there are plenty of people in their
twenties right now that are interested in this. They just have to be reached. Or they would be interested in it if we can reach them. One of those things being we do some mash-ups now. Back in February we did *Brohms vs. Radiohead*. So it was a composer that mashed up Brohms symphony with the music from Radiohead. And it was just one of those explosive things. And to let you in on it, we’re also going to be announcing *Tchaikovsky vs. Drake*. Yeah, but it’s a way that when we do those things it’s introducing people to orchestral music which makes them realize oh there’s a whole different world of music out there that you would never realize is out there. But if you’re able to introduce them to it they’ll see other things are out there and take a dip into it. They’ll realize that it’s been used in movies before. Classical is used all the time – especially *Looney Tunes*. We use classical music so much. You know people growing up listen to that. Or other different things as well like *The Planets*. All of those different pieces of music have been used in movies. So realizing that interaction opportunities help these platforms grow. And we’ve seen that so much just because of interacting with people on all of our platforms, even LinkedIn, we see interaction increasing.

Because what we do too, you know what the Facebook algorithm – looking at it. When you interact and other people interact with you it boosts how many times they’re gonna see you in their feed. So that’s why when we run contests we say, “tag a friend.” *Who would you bring to this concert?* That’s way better than just a flat out answer. Because a comment is one thing but when you tag another friend, one that friend sees it, that’s two people that have seen it, and then if you have 300 comments, that’s six hundred people right there that really are interacting with that post compared to three hundred people just commented something without tagging anybody. That’s one way to really boost our interaction in comments too is through contests. But its contests that are legit. Like last week we gave away different types of subscriptions packages. That’s five, six concerts right there that people are getting two tickets for free. So we have lots of interactions because people want to win, but they’re winning something that is tangible. And so they’re not seeing kind of stuff I have no chance of winning. Cause we look and research too when we do that. We look at what we call Tessa-Tura – which is our database. And we look to see how many times this person has been to a concert especially if they’ve never won before or never been to a show here. They’re probably more likely to win. So it’s random but we try to make sure it’s given to people that have never been here before to introduce them to stuff too and bring other people. And try to make it fair that way. We are providing experience to more people.

Again, it’s all leading back to growth with how you brand that experience because people tell other people about it. This weekend we have Harry Potter in concert. That’s really helped us grow too because well, I’m a Potterhead and Potterheads are crazy. And the amount of interaction we get from those on social media is great too cause people dress up for it. And that just grows too because we have a
lot of first time ticket buyers coming in and when they see, oh they’re on social media! – we get a follow. So I know that our social media is going to boost this weekend just from our four concerts because we’ll have maybe half the crowd never being here before but then they’ll be looking to tag us on social media from our pictures and we’ll get follows out of it. So it’s just being present and marketing it well too.

Structure

Lindsay: How many people are involved in the social media aspect of the organization?

Justin: I would say it’s 90% me and 10% my boss whose right there: Jonathan Marks. He is the Vice President of Communication. So for instance, I was on vacation all last week at Hilton Head – and that was awesome. And he took very good care of me in terms of managing all the social media. I prepared him for it. So in terms of looking at this detailed plan, preparation is important because… especially as an organization looking at a strategy it’s important to have a voice. If someone can tell that someone different is replying to them, that’s a bad thing. So he has done a very good job of seeing my voice in how I respond to people and how I interact with people to make sure that it’s a consistent message. Because people know… There’s a lot of people that know it’s me behind it, especially my friends on Twitter and everything. But it’s still a consistency with interacting with people. So it’s one of the biggest things of strategy there. If you’re going to have more than one person interacting, it’s decide upon by whoever the main person replying – establishes a voice for social media. And that’s on every platform too. Because every platform, like you said, is different. So Twitter voice is very different from Facebook voice which is different from Instagram voice. Which is very important to decide because if people can tell, again, it could almost go the wrong way. Cause people could think, “Well, oh I guess they just handed it over to someone else or is it a company that’s managing this.” And someone else is doing it. All those kinds of things. So it’s making sure there’s a lot of communication between partners who are managing social media.

Another for instance is that we have two interns coming in through our departments this summer and a lot of what I’m going to have them do is I’m going to have train on is Instagram. Doing Instagram stories for our community concerts. So we do free community concerts throughout the community – seven of them in June. And I love highlighting the people that are there. Like for instance, last year one of our interns, she shot a great picture of a couple sharing a glass of wine and it was just perfect because the sun was setting and everything. You just sold a community concert as a romantic event! With one picture, you can do that. So it’s training them to realize how to capture the moment but still have the same voice as us and not going overboard by trying to be cool on the account. So that’s the biggest thing too in terms of managing it. That right here there are only two people but we have the same mind set of how the social media strategy
is and he understands what my strategy is as well and so communication between people is going to be our biggest asset in establishing the right kind of voice and just knowing, hey how do you think we should reply to this. What’s the right content for this? What’s the right copy for this? Is this an okay picture to share? Is this the right video to share? Is this a good way to reply? Especially starting off, you want that strategy of everyone communicating so they know that this is the way that we’re going to reply to complaints even. What kind of voice do we use when replying to something that’s negative. We get that. Every venue is going to have that. Most overall, you’re usually going to get positive but you’ll get your few bad apples that are always trying to find something to complain about. And so it’s finding the right way to that without snark, but actually having good customer service value too. No matter who’s responding. Because when a complaint comes in, multiple departments are having to manage that because we want to make sure – if it’s something with audio or the bar isn’t having the right thing or anything like that when you have multiple departments getting in. Then the communication is really important to make sure you’re not [upsetting] the customer anymore with the way you reply. So as it is with social media and maybe my department – it’s all about communication.

**Lindsay:** What other positions/departments do you find yourself working with on a daily basis to post on social media?

**Justin:** Here in the symphony, basically… Okay. Most organizations group marketing and communications into one. Which in my opinion, is a bad idea. Because then it becomes Communications solely working for Marketing. Which in many cases, they do a lot of marketing work. That’s why we are partnered with our marketing department, but we’re not the same place. We have different budgets. We have different management, like different VPs, for a reason. For a nonprofit arts organization, like us, we serve basically as like the in-house media company for the entire organization. So, not only do we serve marketing, we also serve our education department and trying to get the word out on them, creating content for them and posting social media and web for them about what they’re doing. The good things in the community that they do. We also work with our development department for fundraising, charitable giving, - everything of that sort. We also work with artistic a lot in terms of how we brand certain concerts, what’s the right billing for concerts. Are we able to talk to our soloists? Or different artists that we have coming in. Making sure we have the right permissions and all of that sort and are we able to shoot video of this too? Because there’s a lot of restrictions on shooting video. And then we also work with our events side for building rentals to make sure that we are posting videos and pictures every once in a while of the building. That we are sharing things, liking things that companies that rent our facility do – especially weddings. So many weddings here. Don’t know how people afford it. It’s expensive. If you ever look on Pinterest, the Schermerhorn, we are talking about $25,000 plus just to rent
the building. People that have that kind of cash flow are able to shut down parts of the streets and do carriage rides around the building and I wish I had that kind of money. So all those different departments we work with, I wouldn’t say mostly on a day-to-day but at least once a week always touching base. Marketing obviously the big one because we have to sell tickets to keep the venue going.

To keep our organization going we have to have butts in the seats to see the Nashville Symphony play in order for us to be successful. There’s so much more to it than that because we have to. With education we reach 80,000+ students every year through free programming. We have volunteers that work so much for us as ushers and things of that sort. We have so many people that help that we want to make sure we’re getting the right word out about every single thing. It shows that it’s important that communications…because it’s me, in terms of social media and web, our publicist over there, and we have two graphic designers plus a VP. So it just shows that there’s completely different skills within this department, but all our all our very important in terms of serving every other department within our organization. And so that’s why it’s good that we keep it separate because we can become one function of any one of those departments we have to serve them all. Make sure that they are receiving the proper amount of communication and the proper amount of support that they need to be successful in what they’re doing well. So that makes it a great job for us because a lot of people here or in any company, you don’t necessarily always know people in other departments unless you’re working with them. Well the great thing here is I’m a people person – I know people in every single department and communicate with them. So I feel like I have a really good friend network at work because of that. Because I communicate with people. And I’ll mention sometimes to other folks, oh yeah this person and they’ll be like I’ve never met that person or talking to that person. And it’s not because they don’t want to, it’s because they have no opportunity to work with them. So I love that ability to be able to work with all these different people and communicate with them because it helps me and it helps them as well because we’re able to work together and be a cohesive unit as an organization.

Lindsay: Can you describe the audience of each platform?

Justin:: Okay. Let me get to our calendar. Maybe it will make it a little easier here. The audience. Facebook is probably going to be 30+. I would say 75% live within, let’s say the middle Tennessee. I would say it varies education wise. I would say most have at least college experience. Just because when you look at music, classical music and everything of that sort too, tends to apply more to people that at least have college experience. Not to say the people that aren’t, it’s just that demographic. Twitter is probably a little different. I would say it’s probably 25+ for Twitter in terms of age. For that one, it’s kind of interesting. Cause I would say for that platform I’d say maybe only 60% are local to middle
Tennessee. Because we get a lot of people of that’s how they keep up with us is through Twitter. Or they interact with us or have a lot more companies or other bands or musicians that will follow us too that may not be local. They interact with us or they visited with us. Instagram, probably going to be a bit younger because the way our Instagram is growing is every year in December we have what’s called the Symphony Ball. And we have big artists that usually come and perform with us. It’s ranged from Carrie Underwood, Brad Paisley, Tim and Faith…two years ago it was Miranda Lambert. Oh gosh, there’s been so many different…But when you thing of musicians like that they kind of skew younger in terms of the super fans. So I’d say our Instagram is probably 20+. Actually, probably 20-45 is a good estimate there and that I would say maybe is around 55-60% local. Because ewe gain a lot of followers from our special events of people that just want to see what’s going on with us. We just had our fashion show last night which featured the designs of Zac Posen. So that was pretty big and then music was Kelsey Ballerini. So we gained a lot [of followers]. When you think about bases of those, they’re probably going to be in their twenties. And those are the people that are on Instagram. In terms of demos, that’s probably our top three right there.

**Lindsay:** Which platform receives the most engagement? – Why?

**Justin:** Facebook for sure. Easily. Just because we have the most fans on Facebook. Let me see where we are at now. We are at over 45,000 likes. So it’s easily our biggest one for sure.

**Lindsay:** Do you use a scheduler when posting?

**Justin:** Yes and no. Especially for weekends I’ll schedule ahead. It it’s something that needs to go out say at 7 at night and I’m not sure if I’m going to be home from traffic, I’ll schedule it for that evening post. So evening post I’ll schedule and weekend post I’ll schedule. And that’s usually for all platforms except for Instagram. Because Instagram is only live. And it comes in handy that’s for sure.

**Lindsay:** So for Facebook you use the Facebook scheduler, you don’t use an outside tool?

**Justin:** Yes and for Twitter I’ll use TweetDeck. And if I’m not going to be here I’ll use HootSuite for our Google+, LinkedIn and Twitter sometimes and the reason being why is that by boss, my supervisor will use HootSuite too and he’ll see that I’ve schedule things to know that they’ve been done. We also use a social calendar on Google Sheets. We use a calendar there to make sure. So color coding to see if something has been scheduled or posted or if it’s tentative or live. All throughout that, but personally when I’m using stuff when I know I’m going to be there the next day, I’ll use TweetDeck to schedule things because at least I’ll see it on my personal account.
**Lindsay:** How do you handle replying to comments/questions on social media?

**Justin:** Yes, it’s me unless I’m out of the office. The reason why, again, going back to the one voice and consistency kind of thing. It’s just me and again, like I said about the negative comments, if there’s something that needs to be replied to with more information then I will reach out to the right people. So again that goes with working with all the departments then too. That there will be times when we need to have someone from Marketing help with a reply because they didn’t appreciate the performance, there’s something wrong with the ticket or something like that. It might be the Venue. It might be too cold or they thought the sound was off, that will be Venue. There could be something else where they’re displeased with the artist and we’ll tell Artistic. It’s all about communication but it’s me that has to filter that through to the right people and get that appropriate response.

**Lindsay:** How do you measure the success of a social media campaign? A platform’s analytics or an outside tool?

**Justin:** I use Facebook Ads manager for Facebook because that’s where the majority of our money is spent. And we have it set up as business manager through Facebook and the reason why we do that is so we can have access to other pages as well because we’ll sometimes do takeovers on pages where we are advertising. But yeah we’re using the Ads Manager here because we can see all the numbers: results, reach, cost per result, amount spent, impressions, frequency, and our total conversion with our pixel. You see everything there so we’re able to see just real quick like I showed you. Well, we spent this much money on this show for Facebook and how much did we bring in just from Facebook. Well, that was successful. It’s pretty easy to see just through the eye test in terms of knowing that. On YouTube with the Google ads, and usually that’s really cheap cause we’ll spend maybe $10.00 a day and then get thousands of views. Because it’s YouTube and that’s always gonna happen with the way we target. Adroll: we don’t really look at that because we know it’s working and we use them minimum spend on those which is $25.00 a week. That’s not much at all. That’s pretty much it. The Facebook Ads Manager is actually pretty neat. If it would be just a little more intuitive it would be better because it’s just not intuitive.

**Content**

**Lindsay:** What is the organization’s main goal when using social media for marketing?

**Justin:** Hmm. That’s a good question. Huh. I think the main goal for the Nashville Symphony on social media is to provide the people that follow us the right information in knowing who we are, the people we reach, what we think about American music, and the importance of recording new music. And so I’ll say all that with we post so many different videos with guest artists, composers, things of that sort to show off what our mission is. And I don’t know the mission...
statement of the top of my head but it’s on the website there. One of the things of our mission is to champion new American music. And that’s very important to us because hey – Grammys. We have a lot of Grammys to show that. So our mission is that. And through social media we have fun, but overall the mission is to educate people of what we offer and why we do it. So it’s a lot of the what and why, whether it’s education, music, recording, getting people here – it’s all about education them about what we do.

**Lindsay:** How do you plan for posting content? What steps are there to organize a campaign?

**Justin:** Yeah. My boss and I will work closely. We meet each week on Monday afternoon and we kind of plan out the week. A lot of the times we get pretty ahead of ourselves so I’ll just show you an example here so you can visually see it too of what we have on the Google Sheets. This is the week of May 15th through the 21st. We already have a month ahead just in case. And that’s for instance, if we know the concert announcements are coming up, we know certain events are coming up, or somebody contacted us saying - hey can we push this out, it’s in three weeks. So we go ahead and work forward on that. There’s also some blanks on the schedule to it. Like here, there’s not that much but we know that we want to put out a community concert promo video. Sometimes we’ll build out and there won’t be anything but events that are coming up, so if we do want to pop things in there, we can. Musician Instagram story…little things like that, trying to get ahead of different things. So we’ll meet and plan and see if articles have come across, other things to share – what are musicians up to and strategize based on our other schedule that we have which is video/audio schedule. We have all of these video content ideas that we’ve tried to get through or tried to publish. That means I need to edit…And different ideas too that maybe I haven’t done yet but ideas like how to get to Symphony place to the theme of Sesame Street. What I really want to pull off, it’s just been hard to do, is to do a carpool karaoke but carpool symphony. [Another Symphony] did it, but I know we can do it better. It’s just the time frame. But yeah in terms of the strategy of that, we work ahead and other departments can sometimes contact us and say – hey can you put this out. Or – hey can you put this out there. So it’s a listening again, and communicating with other departments – if you have something you’d like for us to push out, send it to us and as long as it’s not a deadline kind of thing we can usually just fit it in. We try to post something at least once a day and if anything we leave Sundays open unless there’s just something that has to be played. Sundays during the summer… what happens is our vocal/classical station will actually take and push our previous performances from the entire season. So every Sunday night they’ll have the Nashville Symphony performance from the previous season which is pretty good to help build up during the summer. Once a week we strategize but throughout every day we are always looking for something
to add to the calendar because it is very important that we don’t miss anything. And sometimes we do. But it happens.

**Lindsay:** How many different people work on creating content for social media?

**Justin:** Videos, yet. Photos – if they’re taken by me then yeah. If they need a type treatment or anything like that Graphics will help take care of that. Again, we all work closely together. In terms of live video and photos and everything that’s usually always going to be me or someone will send me a picture to post. But for the most part, yup, it’s coming from my phone which is why I really need to upgrade it.

**Lindsay:** How do you create a consistency across platforms?

**Justin:** Consistency is with every department working together. So we’re always working closely together to make sure we’re consistent messaging. If it’s something that is more of a serious matter or something about a grant or something of that sort, I get a lot of help from Jonathan – my boss – to help write the copy for that because we want to make sure we are having the right branding message coming from the Symphony page. For the most part, I’m creating most of that because I’m taking a lot of copy from our event pages and just kind of rehashing it for our post. Or a lot of times it’s a copy of one sentence just to introduce a video or what we’re posting as the link. So copy a lot of times will be mostly me, but a lot of the time we’ll get help from other people especially if it’s a branded message or something that we need to sound not more professional but in the right tone for what we’re producing.

**Lindsay:** What type of posts do you find to be most engaging with followers?

**Justin:** Ones with gifs. Yes. That and funny videos. When we show our personality, people really appreciate it and like because with most arts this there’s that negative connotation of well the symphony is just for old, rich, stuck-up, white people. We understand that. So by doing different videos and different projects and showing off our personality, we show that we’re not just that. We show we have variety. That we’re, I don’t want to say hip and cool, but that we get it and that we’re not the stereotype that people have associated with us and we are trying to change that. Just by showing our personality. So that’s why enjoy replying to gifs to people. I’ll show you an example just so you see what we deal with here and I know I can find it because this one’s getting so much interaction it’s ridiculous. So, for instance here, this is for Pokémon in concert at the amphitheater. Someone replied, “You really want to make my wallet cry, don’t you?” So I replied with a Joey from Friends [gif], “I’m not even sorry.” On an ad. On an ad that has 15 interactions right there. And someone replies, “What you talkin’ about, Willis?” And another replies, “NSO getting savage.” So interaction right there, is my favorite part because I love seeing people interact with us. They know a person had to do that. It wasn’t just a bot or some corporate person from
an outsource company doing that. An actual person that works for the Nashville Symphony had to do that. To think of doing something just like that. So we do that a lot. Same thing here with replying back with a Pikachu on Pokémon things. Those are my favorite things to reply to because whether it’s on Facebook or Twitter, I want to research the person too that I’m replying to and make sure that I’m replying with something that means – hey I looked to see who you are first and understand what you’re asking us about. So if I look at a person’s profile and they ask us something and I see that, hey they’re a Batman fan, I’m going to try with something Batman related. Then they’ll go – oh my gosh they get it! – kind of thing. And it goes so much further to show the personality with that. That’s why I love those posts when I can reply back with a gif or with a meme or something and it shows heart behind because it shows that we are more than just what people think we are and that’s been the biggest strategy for me. Is to always have a personality in our replies and our posts and everything of that sort. So those are my favorite. The ones with personality.

Lindsay: What type of content do you post on each platform? (videos/photos/links/articles/contests) Does it vary by platform?

Justin: I’d say a lot of video. Video is probably going to be, not the number one, is probably the most interactive one. Links to concerts, concert announcements, pictures from events, feature stories on our musicians or our guest artists, stories about accomplishments – win Grammys or get a grant – then it’s pretty neat to see that. Yeah, for instance, this Go Preds video that we recorded, had 216 shares and over 430 likes. Pretty okay with that. So all these different kinds of things here, but it’s a lot of the same in terms of categories of stuff it’s pretty much what I just explained.

Lindsay: What’s your goal when creating a caption or headline for a post?

Justin: Don’t screw it up. It makes sense because we’ve all had typos. That is the very…one of the main goals is to not mess it up, really. The main goal is to be short with the message, be clear and concise as well. The real answer to that is to be clear and concise, and make sure we are introducing whatever the people are about to see makes sense. There’s going to be some times where maybe we get a little more detail. For instance here I’ll show you: This is for our chorus director. We shot a video with him talking about John Harvest’s Requiem which was last weekend. And this isn’t even that long of copy, but that’s even getting long for me. But it was important to show why because it’s saying that for one weekend it was being performed as well as who’s joining, so it’s world class vocalists, what they’re performing, who’s talking and what he’s talking about. So all that is important information. It just gets a little long, but it was necessary. Plus, the buy tickets link because we have to drive people to buy tickets. That’s the goal of that post right there even though it’s there to learn more about the thing as well. Now for contests we get a little bit more because this is to enter and win a subscription
package we want to show which concerts there is to win, have instructions, and to learn more. Because what we are hoping is that when people are entering to win and they don’t win, they go and look at it because they go – oh well I’m interested in buying that ticket package too. So we have to have all of that information. One of the other times where…let’s see. Like this one. “Special message for our friends, the Nashville Predators, from the Nashville Symphony and Chorus.” Nice and simple. Just introducing a video clip there. It explains itself. So that’s really the goal there is to be as clear and concise with the message as humanly possible.

Lindsay: What types of tools – Photoshop/etc. – do you use when creating content?

Justin: I use iMovie a lot. I’m pretty proud to say that every video that I’ve created has been done using iMovie and most people don’t realize it is iMovie. Which is a very big victory for me because iMovie is one of the simplest things to use, but I try to make it look not so simple. So until I get my update equipment next fiscal year, I use iMovie. And then I’ll be upgrading, thankfully. iMovie has been a great tool to do this because it’s actually pretty quick, as long as my computer’s not crashing. That’s always the thing because my MacBook Pro can only handle so many gigs of video. But yeah, usually iMovie. Sometimes Photoshop for quick edits, but we have our graphic design department that will handle that. So in terms of outside sources, I don’t know if Hootsuite is considered one of those for creating copy and content to post, it would be that one and that’s probably about it.

Lindsay: How often do you use contests on social media to engage followers?

Justin: I would say we run maybe on average, two or three per month. There’s going to be some weeks when just won’t have any. For instance, last week, because we had a big push, we had four. So on average, two to three a month.

Lindsay: Do you usually do retweet or Reposts [for contests]?

Justin: On Facebook we always do a tag a friend to enter. We notice that usually contests on Twitter don’t go over that well. Because like I said in the demo, a lot of people aren’t local. So it’s a little bit harder there. The people that follow us on Twitter aren’t the ones that like to retweet to enter. So Facebook and Instagram are the best places for contests. We’ll do the same thing on Instagram too: Tag a friend. Because then it gets seen by another person. It’s what can we do the most to make this be seen my more people. We always look at those numbers… “Posts seen by 11,000 people and it’s organic.” It’s always great to see when an organic post breaks the 10,000 mark. You didn’t have to boost it.

Lindsay: How do you coordinate posts for other organizations?

Justin: So, for instance, with the Ballet, we work closely with them, often. Back in February we actually had the ballet here at the Schermerhorn. It was the first
ever time the Ballet performed here at the Schermerhorn with the Symphony. So it was absolutely phenomenal. It was awesome. Appalachian Spring was the closer and it was…… [speechless]. So we worked with them to make sure to give them access to certain things. We did a lot of things with their rehearsal and they tagged us in everything as well and we tag them. The tougher part is though… Our strategy shifts a lot of the times if a concert is sold out because it’s one of those, well, we don’t have to sell any tickets to it so why are we doing this. Whereas, I know that needs to change a little bit because people still want that access to stuff. So it’s realizing that and putting the time and effort in there just because we have so many concerts we have to do and to sell. So our strategy shifted and we didn’t have to do much with the Ballet because it’s already sold out and it’s nothing against them – they took care of it. They did it on their own social terms because they have the access. They’re the dancers. They’re the performers. That’s more unique, so they’re showing rehearsal footage and things like that, but always tagging us. That’s one of the big things too, to make sure we’re always tagging organizations especially if the Opera is doing something as well – we’ll tag them. So we’ll have different shout-outs especially other performing arts organizations. We work closely with the Nashville Philharmonic because a lot of our musicians are in that as well. So the great thing about the musicians of the Nashville Symphony is that they’re involved in multiple organizations, so we try to help them out too by posting about their upcoming concerts especially since most of them are free. By helping and communicating with them, they’ll reach out to us sometimes and say hey – can you post this to help promote the concert. Yeah, sure! Because they know we have a large audience. So it’s working closely with organizations like that. If they send us things we are making sure we are tagging them to help promote them as well because everyone knows we’re the behemoth, we’re the egg or eight headed monster here.

Lindsay: Do you ever have any posts that are paid for by sponsors?

Justin: Not by sponsors. We pay for all of them. On the other end, we will have artists post on their page and boost it from their page. And that’s why we use the business manager to have access to their pages because they’ll say hey- can you post this, here’s the copy, here’s the picture to use – everything of that sort, but they’ll just post it on their page. Because their fans will see it. And then we’ll just boost it from their page for them. So that’s pretty much our paid content: working with other artists or other organizations like that.

Lindsay: Do you ever post real-time content during/before/after a concert?

Justin: Yes, absolutely. Especially with Facebook and with all three of our major platforms. Especially for a great performance. If I can snap a picture of a great performance, as soon as I can get out in the hall to a signal, I’ll post it right there. So we actually have those in this schedule (Google Sheets)… Harry Potter Live
Shot is what we’ll call it. We can actually do it of the performance, but when we say live shot it means in the moment. So we do you plan to do in the moment stuff. And it will be people dressed in costume and things like that. Last week we had a live shot of orchestra and chorus which my boss was able to do. So yeah live shots we’ll actually plan those out for certain things. We’ll do that a lot for community concerts and things like of that sort. Like I told you earlier. But yeah, we definitely plan things in the moment for sure.

Lindsay: Name a favorite campaign or post for the Nashville Symphony – why was it your favorite?

Justin: I’ll think I’ll go with the one that went viral. It was the unexpected one. Let’s see. It’s insane how it took off and I’ll say why just because of the numbers on it is what’s insane. And the thing is, we’re getting close to I think it’s been nine months now, and we’re still getting comments on it. Nine months later people are still seeing this video. Somehow it’s popping up in different feeds which is just absolutely phenomenal. But I would say that’s my favorite one because it’s the unexpected viral video. So it is now at 759,000 views on Facebook. The reach is close to 3.1 million. Over 9,000 shares. And over 5,000 interactions. And it’s just been insane because I’ll have to – see, just so many people from different countries. We’ve had every continent but Antarctica comment on this video comment on this video. So that’s why it’s my favorite because the reach has been insane. So even as recent as May 2nd we had a comment in all these different languages. It’s been absolutely phenomenal to see this because we have people performing arts, from churches, from event venues, just random people, engineers – that have seen this thing. It’s flattering to be stolen but I was getting pretty ticked because we had so many different outlets trying to steal our video. So I was on the hunt. So that’s why it was one of my favorites ones too because I would turn into Investigator Bradford and every day, on Google Alerts, I was searching to see who was trying to steal our content and I was reporting it. And it was fun. It is fun to burn people to stealing your content. What they’ll do is go in and use a downloading tool and upload to YouTube. This is ours. I’ve seen it on Facebook, Twitter, people would steal it and someone “gif-ed” it. This is our content. You need to at least tag us in it if you’re gonna share it or re-share what we have. Going kind of off-track here. That is one of my biggest pet-peeves – content re-purposers. Because they steal our stuff and even if they give credit to someone, it’s still not getting the interaction to that original creator. So for instance, those things on the Dodo that you see on Facebook. All the time, they’re a re-purposer. Or Insider. They’ll get permission usually from the content creator and all they do is tag them, but that creator is not getting any of the actual views that Dodo is. And so the advertisers are getting to see those interactions. So that’s why with us, people are commenting to us or trying to reach our publicist and saying – hey we’d like to post this video on our Facebook. Would you give us permission to do that? We’ll tag you. Like no. Re-share ours. To me that’s a big
thing especially. We are in the arts. We are content creators whether it’s music, dance, or anything like that. Arts are creation. You shouldn’t be stealing someone else’s creation and just to get you own. I know I’m going on a tangent here but it’s one of those things for me why I’m so proud. Bringing it back why I’m proud of it. We created something so simple that has reached so many people from different walks of life, literally, all over the world. And people are trying to steal it. That’s how good it was because it was going viral. So that’s why I’m pretty proud of it because the simplest thing went huge. And that’s probably the best way to describe it. When something so simple can go so big you know you’re doing something right.

Lindsay: What do you consider a strategy for content creation in social media?

Justin: Let’s see. I would say something that is well thought out. One that quickly portrays the right message. That reaches a wide variety of people and has a call to action. That is what I would say would be a successful piece of content. Because when it addresses all four of those things, it’s taking them down the right funnel to eventually purchase or have a call to action. Whether it’s give, purchase, interact, what-not. The call to action doesn’t necessarily have to be purchase, but the call to action has to be something that creates an interaction with an organization. Whether it’s to comment or to give money, or buy tickets, or to show-up. Just some sort of action that can be done.

Summary

Lindsay: What do you consider to be the organization’s strengths when it comes to social media?

Justin: Personality. I’d say is a big one. Education content. Education and informative content. Let’s see. Probably would stop at that because that kind of covers the gamut of what we do. Personality, we educate and we inform. No matter what we’re doing, even with videos, we’re always informing.

Lindsay: How do you see social media growing in the next five years or so?

Justin: That is the billionaire dollar question. That everyone always want to ask. No one knows. The way I see it or what we’ve seen so far is, boy I’m probably going to go on a tangent here. Okay. So what we’ve seen is lots of copy jobs. And we’ve seen in the past what, three years, Snapchat developed. We saw all these different things start to develop their own personalities as well within it. Instagram has copied what Snapchat has done. Facebook has copied what Snapchat has done because Instagram is part of Facebook as well. So you’re starting to see everyone steal different strategies. Now in that place it’s not stealing. It’s seeing what works and trying it out. Google Plus tried all these different things and well, poor Google+. Facebook, on the other hand, with they’re story thing, I don’t see it taking off whatsoever. Because Facebook is not
that type of tool. So I see the way social strategy and content is through pictures and video. Our attention spans are so short nowadays. And that is a big thing that I try to push when creating videos. Sometimes we’ll have a video that’s five minutes long. And we already know. Only the people that care about this are gonna watch it. Because we’re probably going to lose a lot of people to the first 30 seconds. So if we’re able to create content that hopefully keeps people watching for at least a minute, we’ve done a very good job because attention spans are so, so, short.

So that’s why, for instance, Instagram has been so popular. And they started at 15 seconds for video, but now they’ve increased it to a minute. I’m going to find it hard to see them go over a minute because the scroll feature on Instagram. But that shows right there, that’s where this is going because the Instagram tool, being social like with Snapchat, and having stories where you can interact with people just through video and picture and text a little bit, is where everything is going. Because now you’ll have people that communicate only through Snapchat and don’t even use text anymore. One because sometimes it’s easier that way or even cheaper for some people, but two, it just shows the importance that people have a short attention span and they don’t care what you said before, they just care about what’s happening now. And that’s where I see social media continuing to go. And the virtual spectrum is also going to be important. Because we are seeing so many VR things. We even have our own VR. So if you go to our YouTube and you look on your phone, we have a full [VR] Nashville Symphony experience. We actually won some awards at a virtual reality conference. Which was pretty awesome. But we actually put the 360 camera during a concert. So it’s not just rehearsal, it’s concert footage. So it’s pretty cool. You’re right there in the middle of the orchestra and you can look around and see it. So that’s one of the big experiences that’s building now too. And we even see on Facebook, people doing more of the 360 pictures on Facebook. 360 video is still important. I don’t see it as huge right now because have gotten used to it. But it’s still very important in terms of the VR experience because for instance, you look at Samsung for the S8. If you preorder, you get a free VR headset and that pushed a lot of people there. If the video and picture still reign supreme, I see in the next five years going so far as to make it more interactive to where if you’re watching a videos, where your eyes are doing is how that video is going to be interactive video ads.

Other:

Lindsay: What social media experts/influencers do you personally follow?

Justin: Do you know who Gary V… is? Look him up. He is my favorite digital marketer. He tells it like it is too. I got to see him speak at a concert back in 2011. A digital media conference. And this guy started out from being a wine salesperson and now he’s a multimillion dollar corporation where he does digital media strategy. He had an office in Chattanooga now and also in New York. But
he is awesome to the point where he’s real and legit. You can kind of see how part of my strategy has been built listening to him and I’m not somebody that watches every single video or every single podcast. I follow him enough to know that he tells the important part of social media strategy. One, we have metrics. We can look and what’s working and what’s not working and that’s so important numbers wise. We don’t have to be nerds about it and I don’t mean nerds in a negative fashion, but we can see what’s working and what’s not and adjust. We don’t have to freak out. We can adjust our strategy. If we know – for instance, we are always looking too at our Google Analytics in terms of when we build pages for things. If we know building a landing page is only getting 100 people in a year, then we know not build that type of landing page anymore. We need to adjust the strategy. So it’s the same thing as Gary Vee said too. ROI is everything you invest in whether its communications, interactions, people, everything of that sort is so vitally important. To recognize the value of people in social media because it’s social media for a reason. You have to be social with it. You can’t just push out a strategy and expect people to interact or react with it. If you haven’t researched for it, then you haven’t brought it the right people to do it. And I know, it’s getting kind of preachy but that’s what everything with social media is. It’s people. Ever since I started doing social media work back in 2008 to now, is knowing that it’s about the people that you interact with in terms of trying to force that. So it’s like you have to interact with people. You have to talk to people about. You can’t just push out content and expect people to interact with you unless you give them a reason to interact with you. So that ties in everything in that I’ve answered. Its how you grow is that interaction value. That’s the value of social media right there is the people.

**Lindsay:** Favorite part of the job?

**Justin:** It’s hard to choose one thing. I’m one of those people that I love my job. I absolutely love my job. I love both my jobs. I love doing work here in the symphony and I love doing work with the Nashville Predators and sports. And the reason why is they interact so much together. There are certain strategies that I’ll take that I’ll use in sports and apply directly music because like I said way earlier – it’s all about entertainment. What’s the strategy that we can utilize to get to people the way we want to get to them. And so that’s why I like my job so much is that I’m able to take things that I’m passionate about in terms of hobby and utilize them for my job. Not many people can do that. Completely separate from what you do for a living. But I love it because I’m able to utilize the things that I learn in each thing and apply it to the other. And a lot of times, they’ll cross over. So why I love my job too is the Nashville Symphony performed at the Opening Night for the Nashville Predators and played live music while the team roster was getting introduced on the ice. Talk about worlds colliding. I was down there with the 360 camera, recording it all, to do a 360 VR experience for our followers. Then it was awesome because our worlds collide and that’s why I love it so much.
cause my worlds get to collide here. Because it’s music and sports, two of the things that I’m very passionate about and also working at a nonprofit. I love working at a nonprofit because one, I know that we are doing good things for the sake of the society because music is continuously shown to be important to development of young children. Whether it’s math skills, science skills, things of that sort, music is shown to increase brain power if you’re introduced to music at a young age. So for me, being passionate about that goes all the way down to the children and why I think it’s important that we do what we do. Not just showing that classical music matters or that hey we’re recording new American music. But we’re trying to keep this art going by introducing it to young children and making them realize – this is something [they] can do when they grow up. This is something [they] can be a part of. This is something [they] can at least appreciate and watch when they’re older and can afford tickets too. That it’s not meant just for certain people that are stereotyped into loving the symphony. That we do so many different things like Pokémon. To bring people in. To show them.

All of these encompass why I love my job because it’s never boring. There’s always something different going on here and I get to experience so many different things about this job because I work in social media too. I get to go to any concert that I want to. I can just hang in the back. I get to interact with people. I work the front of house quite often just to help people find the right door to go to for their seats. And again, it goes to the whole social aspect. That I’m a Type A personality, but I’m also an INFJ in terms of my Meyer’s Briggs. Those two together I think go very well for the type of job that I do. Is being organized, being personable, being a leader. And I’m not trying to brag. That’s just what my type of personality is and that’s why I love what I do. It fits so well with my personality, I fit so well with my coworkers and I have an amazing boss. And wonderful people that actually care about my interests. That I can actually talk to about different things. It’s not just work related. We can talk about sports. We can talk about what’s going on in the world. Talk about different things. All that goes together in terms of why I love my job. And it’s one of those things I always try to tell people is that you have to be happy in what you’re do.

So if you’re passionate about something and you’re happy about it, you’re going to be perfectly fine in your career. Because there’s so many people out there that are in jobs that they hate. Or they’re not happy. If you’re forced to make a change. I was forced to make a change. I was let go of from a job before this. I was unemployed for 12 weeks and I know it was only 12 weeks but it sucked. Sucked to the point that I cried because a scoop of ice cream fell on the floor. I was like, that’s money. And the reason I tell that and open with sharing that with people is that it shows how I was so unhappy in the previous job. Cause they could have laid me off, but they fired me because they were doing downsizing. They found a way to save money. And it hurt especially because I found I hated that job too. It was just in email marketing so it was boring. It showed how important it was to
be in this job and so when I saw this that’s why I wanted this job and prepared for it because I wanted this job. Because I knew it was going to be a good place to work at. And that goes back to being happy and choosing the thing that makes you happy. Because if you’re happy doing social media, interacting with people, and coming up with fun strategies and finding ways to help grow an organization then do it and decide to that as well. Because I think that goes so much farther than being good at your job, but if you’re happy, you’re going to do a much better job of having a good social strategy. You’re going to be good at knowing what's new and upcoming in social media. You’re going to follow what’s going on because you’re passionate about it. So for instance, with dance and marketing, if you’re able to mix those two together in a job then you’re gonna be happy. Because those are two things you’re happy about. You wouldn’t have chosen to major in those if you didn’t at least enjoy it too.

**Additional Questions**

Note: These questions were answered through email on September 21st, 2017.

1. **What tips do you have about posting articles and links on Facebook and Twitter?**

   Do more than just post the link and the title of the post. Take a quote from it, develop a call to action. Include something that will make a person WANT to click it. And pictures. Use pictures. A picture will stand out on Twitter and bring more attention to the tweet/link.

2. **How do you utilize Instagram stories?**

   I sure do. I utilize it on my personal, symphony and hockey website accounts. For the Symphony, I use it to give a behind the scenes look at concerts and other big events here. For hockey, I use it for practice, morning skate and other things that fans may not see all the time.

3. **Have you incorporated social media takeovers before?**

   Not yet, but it’s in the plans. I want to have a musician take over our account. It’ll take a few steps to make it happen, but it’s in the works this season for us.

4. **What are your thoughts on the use of hashtags?**

   They can be very helpful and also very overdone. Social media keeps evolving. The thing that frustrates me is seeing people be involved in a random discussion on Twitter just by using the hashtag. It creates a clot of clutter on a feed. I think there are better ways now. On Instagram, there are obviously accounts that go overboard on hashtags. I try to find a happy medium to target legitimate hashtags that will help our content be discoverable.
5. **What was your objective by participating in the Nashville Predators #StandwithUS campaign during the Stanley Cup Playoffs?**

We wanted to show a sense of community pride to our neighbors a block away. We have a lot of musicians and employees that are also big Predators fans, too. So that was a great way to show pride for a Nashville team as well as promote our organization. We had a lot of interactions with our videos and posts. It was a win-win opportunity for us to get involved, show off our musicians and our hall.
Interview #3: Nashville Ballet

Lauren McKirgan – PR Manager

Conducted through email.

**Background:**

How did you begin working for the Nashville Ballet?

I started working for Nashville Ballet in December 2014. I came to Nashville Ballet after college, where I studied Public Relations at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. My educational background coupled with my interest in the arts and nonprofit organizations led to the job at Nashville Ballet. As Public Relations Manager, my main responsibilities include handling the organization’s media relations, email marketing and social media efforts.

When did the Nashville Ballet become seriously present on social media and what sparked this need for social media marketing?

Nashville Ballet joined Facebook in 2008, Twitter in 2009 and Instagram in 2013. We decided to begin using each of those platforms because of their unique capabilities for hitting certain demographics of people in the way that resonates with them the most. We also chose these platforms according to their specific advantages that they offered to us as marketers. Social media marketing is a critical tactic for building our brand, increasing visibility, communicating our messages and connecting with our constituents every day.

How have you seen the organization’s presence on social media grow?

We’ve seen a steady increase in the organization’s presence on social media since we began using each platform. In 2011 (when Nashville Ballet’s Facebook and Twitter tracking begins), Nashville Ballet had 4,319 likes on Facebook. Today, Nashville Ballet has 18,128 Facebook likes. In the past two years, we’ve seen about 2,000-3,000 new Facebook likes each year.

In 2011, Nashville Ballet had 3,098 Twitter followers. Today, Nashville Ballet has 11,392. In the past two years, we’ve seen about 600-1,000 new Twitter followers each year.

In 2015 (when Nashville Ballet’s Instagram tracking begins), Nashville Ballet had 1,427 Instagram followers. Today, Nashville Ballet has 9,282 Instagram followers. In 2015, we gained about 2,300 Instagram followers in one year. In 2016, we jumped up to almost 3,500 Instagram followers within the year. I see the most potential for growth on our Instagram account because of the increase in new followers each month, each post’s engagement and the visual nature of the platform that directly aligns with the visual nature of our art form.

**Structure:**
How many people are involved in the social media aspect of the organization?

Generally, the daily social media functions funnel through me (curating the schedule, writing the content, gathering photos/videos, posting, scheduling, responding to comments, etc.). The marketing department (a four-person department, including myself) creates a plan together prior to each of our performances, with social media being a tactic of that. We talk through ideas of what we’d like to do, and I typically execute those ideas for the most part. I do work regularly with the Marketing Manager, though, who gathers and edits a lot of our content (more details in the question below).

Beyond our performances, we have additional messages we need to communicate. The marketing department at Nashville Ballet essentially works as a PR/marketing agency for all of the organization’s individual departments. We have regular meetings with each department (artistic, School of Nashville Ballet, development and Community Engagement) to go through what each has coming up and assess how marketing can assist, which can include social media. We typically don’t outline specific social media plans with each department, rather these meetings help me stay aware of everything that’s going on in our building so I can make sure to pull important messages from each department to share on social media when appropriate.

Additionally, Nashville Ballet staff and faculty members and company dancers know that they can always reach out to me specifically with photos, videos or important messages at any time to make sure I’m always in the loop. I make the determination from there if this is a message we should share on social media, or if it is more suitable for another avenue.

It’s my responsibility to take all of this information and curate a weekly social media calendar that appropriately balances both the messages that are important for Nashville Ballet to communicate, as well as engaging content that both educates and inspires our followers.

What other positions/departments do you find yourself working with on a daily basis to post on social media?

I work most closely with the Marketing Manager. She’s trained in video production, so one of her duties is producing polished videos that we share through our social media (for example, behind-the-scenes videos to educate our followers leading up to a performance, creating informational videos about School of Nashville programs, etc.). She also often records rehearsals leading up to a performance and splices out short behind-the-scenes clips to share on social media. I don’t work with her daily on social media, but I certainly work with her frequently at times like before a performance when she’s assisting with generating video content to promote the show.

As I mentioned above, social media concepts are brainstormed with the marketing department prior to each performance. Beyond that, I don’t work with any other positions/departments on a daily basis. It’s more dependent on our organization’s individual needs throughout the year. For example, I work closely with the development
department a few times annually on social media campaigns when we use it as a tactic for large community fundraising efforts.

**How was it decided to choose platforms? By audience?**

Yes, we decided to begin using each platform according to audience. Facebook and Twitter skew older while Instagram skew younger, so it’s important for us to reach our target audience on their preferred platform. Another factor in choosing a platform is by their unique advantages. Dance is obviously an extremely visual art form, so Instagram makes perfect sense for us since it’s visually driven. Facebook and Twitter are great platforms for us because we’re able to share editorial content and engage in conversation with our followers. The information we share on Facebook and Twitter can also be easily shared by our followers to their own personal networks, so it’s an effective way for us to share our messages quickly and to many new people that we may never have been exposed to.

**Do you use a scheduler (Facebook scheduler, Hootsuite, Sprout, TweetDeck, etc.) when posting?**

I currently use Facebook scheduler and Hootsuite for Twitter. What I typically do is create a social media schedule at the start of the week with topics/messages I’d like to post, and then I actually write the content and post each day at a time because it’s easier for me to manage in smaller pieces. I’ll either just post in real-time if it’s a popular time of day for posting, or schedule for a time that day that has proven to yield good engagement for us (typically 9 a.m., noon and 5 p.m.). Our popular post times center around commute times and lunch, so that makes sense because folks are on their phones during that time. I rely on Facebook scheduler and Hootsuite for scheduling weekend posts because Saturdays and Sundays generally result in high engagement for us.

**How do you handle replying to comments/questions on social media? Is there a different protocol for negative comments?**

I handle replying to comments and questions on social media in real-time as I see them come in. As for negative comments, I typically like to have another set of eyes on my response before responding. I’ll typically craft a message to negative comments and run it by my supervisor (Director of Sales & Marketing) before posting to be sure it’s an appropriate response since the conversation is public.

**Content:**

**What is the organization’s main goal when using social media for marketing?**

Our main goal when using social media is to offer a place where you can get to know us better with content that allows us to not only engage our current fanbase, but also grow our audience and brand to new people.

We don’t want our social media to just be a vehicle for pushing our messages out without considering what the constituent wants—which is to have an authentic idea of life at
Nashville Ballet and what we stand for. We do this by creating educational content that builds your knowledge about our programming, dancers, mission and company so you feel more connected to the brand. That means, we post exclusive behind-the-scenes access into rehearsals and classes (including live streams), provide meaningful captions that allow you to better understand what’s going on, and do company dancer social media takeovers all season to show what dancers’ lives are really like and get to know them better. We want to break down the barrier that people often have up with ballet to make it approachable, and social media is our biggest tactic in achieving this.

**What would you consider the social media mission statement to be for each platform?**

Our social media mission statement is consistent across each platform and aligns with Nashville Ballet’s overarching mission: To create, perform, teach and promote dance as an essential and inspiring element of our community. Social media is just one tactic that allows us to carry out our mission, which ultimately is sharing our passion for dance with our followers. In other words, you could say our social media mission statement is to engage new and existing constituents with meaningful content that allows them to connect with our organization on a deeper level.

**Who is the audience you speak to on social media? (persona)**

In general, our social media followers are a mix of both die-hard fans and newcomers. We want to make sure our content supports the needs for both of these groups. We post engaging content that we see as being beneficial to both. For example, posting rehearsal clips and videos with insights into performances only adds to our die-hard fan’s education before heading into the theater, while also serving as a tool to get newcomers in the door for a performance.

Our audience differs according to platform (Instagram skews younger, and Facebook and Twitter skews older), but we keep our social media persona consistent across all our platforms for consistency. We want our voice to be professional, but also relatable and understandable no matter your level of knowledge about ballet.

**How do you plan for posting content? What steps are there to organize a campaign?**

The social media campaign for performances begins with a planning session with the marketing department that covers our entire strategy for selling that particular show, with social media being a tactic of the strategy. Once we’ve identified the angle(s) we want to highlight, that helps drive the direction of our focus for social media content to promote the performance.

Leading up to a performance, we always incorporate a mix of behind-the-scenes videos with interviews with artistic staff/company dancers, short rehearsal clips/photos taken in-house, a company dancer Instagram takeover, news articles, professional performances photos and more. There’s no specific timeline that I abide by for when I post each, rather it’s more fluid. I plan to post engaging content about 4-6 times a week leading up to a
performance, but I don’t always know what that content will be in advance. I think the key for us in posting engaging content is that we’re showing what’s happening in the studio or theater that day so our followers can see in real-time where we are in the rehearsal process. That means I often don’t receive content until the day I post it, but I think that’s more authentic and genuine to the process and gives our followers much-desired access behind the curtain.

**How far ahead do you plan posts?**

Answered above, but I typically create an idea of what I’d like to cover on our social media at the start of each week, and then generate the content and post each day to make it more manageable for myself. When I’m planning for the week, I usually keep a few days open with nothing planned because we always have something going on either in the studio or while we’re out in the community that results in great content that I can’t plan for.

**How many different people work on creating content for social media?**

Answered above in “What other positions/departments do you find yourself working with on a daily basis to post on social media?”

**How do you create a cohesive brand across all relevant platforms?**

I think the trick to creating a cohesive brand across all platforms is to have one person writing the content. The photos and videos posted may differ here and there depending on the platform, but the voice needs to remain consistent across all channels to avoid confusion and allow people can connect with your brand no matter what platform they’re using.

**What type of content – pictures/videos/articles/links/etc. – do you consider to be most engaging for your audience?**

We’ve found that posting short (10-30 second) clips of the dancers rehearsing in the studio to be most engaging. These clips are usually just taken on an iPhone, and I think that makes it feel really genuine. Our followers are getting a glimpse into what’s going on in the studio usually on that day and seeing the behind-the-scenes of what it takes to make a performance happen. We’ve found that these raw clips have much more engagement on social media than our sleek performance trailers or the polished videos we produce that include rehearsal clips along with interviews with artistic staff/dancers. The rawness of the video clip mixed with its short length has proven to be a great formula for engaging content on social media.

**What’s your go-to content when promoting an upcoming performance or production?**

My go-to content when promoting an upcoming performance is organizing a company dancer Instagram takeover. Several of our company dancers are very engaged and interested in social media, and we started introducing Instagram takeovers at the end of
our 2015-2016 season. We’ve seen our Instagram account grow significantly over the past few years with great interaction (plus the platform is visually-based, and so is our art form), so that felt like the right platform to launch this on.

I send out the opportunity for any company dancer to take over our Instagram account at the start of the season. From there, I divvy up the dancers and assign one or two to take over Nashville Ballet’s Instagram for one week leading up to a performance. I send the dancers a list of potential ideas for content based on the angles we’d like to highlight for that show, but I also encourage them to get creative and feel like they have the freedom to post what they’d like and see as valuable. I want them to use the week to allow our followers to get to know them better by inserting their own opinions and using their own voice to let their personalities come through.

I always love seeing how the takeovers turn out and how well received they are each time. Our followers learn things about the production from the dancers’ insights and feel more connected to them as people. The content feels genuine and breaks down some of the walls people often have up toward ballet by giving a behind-the-scenes look not only into performances, but the people who perform on stage.

What is your primary goal when captioning a photo or creating a headline for a post?

My primary goal when captioning a photo is to provide a description of what’s going on with succinct and easy-to-understand language. Providing meaningful captions (what section the dancers are rehearsing, what’s going on in the clip, who’s featured, etc.) allows our followers to connect with what they’re seeing (rather than just watching a cool dance clip). This is especially my goal with the company dancer takeovers. I want the dancers to insert their opinions (share their favorite sections, technically difficult sections and why, important aspects of the performance to take note of when watching, etc.). Creating these captions allow people to connect more deeply with the work and remember those clips and why they’re significant when in the audience at the performance.

What’s a favorite post or campaign that you’ve done for the Nashville Ballet?

My favorite campaigns are our company dancer Instagram takeovers. Answered above.

How do you use hashtags in posts (frequency, by platform, etc.)?

I use hashtags (1 or 2 per post max on each platform, usually) when it makes sense. We create a specific hashtag for each of our performances, so I’ll use that with every post about that show to create and continue the conversation around that performance. The other time I typically use hashtags is when we’re posting about a larger community event, national holiday, etc. that allows us to become a part of a larger conversation.

What types of tools – Photoshop/iMovie/etc. – do you use when creating content?
I personally don’t use any of those tools when creating content, but the Marketing Manager uses both Photoshop and Adobe Premiere when producing content (like behind-the-scenes videos) that I’ll then share on social media.

**How often do you use contests on social media to engage followers? Does it usually require an RT of a post or a specific hashtag?**

We typically do a “Trivia Tuesday” campaign about four weeks leading up to each performance. We’ll create a series of trivia questions that relate back to the performance we’re about to put on stage. Each week, our followers can enter to win tickets to the show if they answer the trivia question correctly by commenting on the post. We’ve seen great engagement with that. Oftentimes we make the questions relatively easy, but we mostly just use the giveaway as another way to provide perks to our followers and engage with them.

**How do you plan content for posts that are paid for by sponsors? How is this organized?**

We don’t offer social media posts paid by sponsors (that’s not a part of our agreement). If our sponsors would like to explore using our social media channels as an avenue for promoting their brand, we’re open to hearing their ideas. However, we make it clear that it’s their responsibility for brainstorming ideas that are creative and relevant to our followers and bringing them to the table (we avoid doing generic “shout outs” to our sponsors that have little meaning to our followers). For our sponsors who express interest in social media posts on our account, I’ll work with them directly. They come up with an idea or two, and I’ll help execute if it’s relevant. For example, we recently did a social media post about our partnership with a local physical therapist company. They brought the idea of incorporating a post about their work with Nashville Ballet into an upcoming dancer social media takeover to discuss the importance it has on their well-being and career. That’s a great example of creating relevant content that’s both beneficial to Nashville Ballet and our sponsor. One of our dancers created a time lapse video of one of the therapists working on a few dancers and provided meaningful insight into how it relates to dancers’ daily lives. Our followers understood more of the additional aspects of a dancer’s training and career well-being, and our sponsor received additional exposure about the important work they do.

**How do you organize posts for/with other organizations?**

We organize posts for/with other organizations as a trade. We are one of several resident companies at Tennessee Performing Arts Center, including Nashville Opera and Nashville Repertory Theatre. We work regularly with these three companies throughout the year and are always willing to help each other out as needed to promote their shows with social media posts. Because we’re all local arts companies, the content is relevant to our followers. I’ll work directly with each organization to facilitate (I’ll write and send content for the social media posts I’d like them to post for us, and vice versa).
As for other organizations, we will make a list of potential community partners prior to each performance that tie into that particular show (meaning we see clear audience crossover). We’ll reach out to each and see if there’s a way to work out a trade to communicate our message to their audience, with social media being one of the suggestions. Sometimes organizations will reach out to us, and we’ll determine how their brand and message aligns with our audience before moving forward. When we agree to a social media trade, we follow the same guidelines as listed above (I’ll write and send content for the social media posts I’d like them to post for us, and vice versa). I always try to create a clear link in the content that explains why a person that is interested in the other organization would be interested in ours to make it relevant.

**Summary:**

**What do you consider to be the organization’s strengths when it comes to social media?**

I consider one of our greatest strengths on social media to be our commitment to showing and not telling. I try to limit posts that are solely driving ticket sales (like a photo with “This performance is on this date and here’s a link to tickets.”). Instead, I want to show people what the performance is like with interesting clips and captions that motivates them to purchase tickets without blatantly having to tell them that over and over.

I also consider another one of our strengths to be utilizing the company dancers for social media takeovers. Their insight is invaluable and it provides our followers with special access into the daily lives of dancers and humanizes an art form that can often be a bit unapproachable.

**What do you consider to be an opportunity for growth for the organization’s social media?**

An opportunity for growth for the Ballet’s social media would more content creation. As it stands now, I handle the social media for the organization on top of other major responsibilities like media relations and e-marketing. We’re headed toward the direction of designating someone to more specifically focus on social media and digital marketing as their main job responsibilities. That means we’ll be able to post videos and photos of what’s happening in rehearsals, School of Nashville Ballet classes, etc. much more frequently. We have a unique opportunity as an organization because we have access to endless opportunities for content each day (because our studios are always full of activity), but it’s just a matter of having someone designated to collecting and posting that content more frequently.

**Do you see the organization exploring a new platform anytime soon?**

We’re currently hitting our target audiences on their preferred platform(s) at the moment, so I don’t see us exploring a new platform in the immediate future.

**What do you consider a strategy for content creation in social media?**
1. Establish the objectives and how you’ll measure their success. For us, we have more than one objective at all times. Broad objectives for us include growing followers and boosting engagement. Individual objectives align with goals for larger campaigns (for example, meeting revenue goals for specific performances).

2. Understand your audience’s interests/needs and keep those in mind at all times.

3. Create content that combines both your overarching objectives and audience interests/needs.

4. Constantly monitor analytics and engagement, evaluate what’s working and what’s not, and adjust plans as necessary.

Other:

What is your favorite part of the job?

I have so many favorite parts of the job that it’s hard to just say one. One is that because I have my hand in so many different pots in the marketing department, each day is never the same or monotonous. I’m constantly on the move from project to project, and 5 p.m. hits without even checking the clock. Because our department is so small and we’re responsible for so much, I’m constantly getting new experience learning so many different facets of marketing to become more well-rounded in the field. Another favorite part, and the biggest key for me, is that I think we’re really doing great work every day that’s making our community better. I’ve seen and heard first-hand what ballet does for the people who are sitting in the audience at performances, taking classes at School of Nashville Ballet and meeting us through our Community Engagement program. We’re not saving lives, but I do think my job is allowing me to touch and make lives better.

What social media experts/influencers do you personally follow?

I mostly keep track of what other professional ballet companies are doing on social media. My feed is full of ballet companies just so I can keep tabs on what’s being done by industry peers, but my personal favorite is Boston Ballet. Their content is always spot-on. Not only is their content beautifully produced, but their tone is really light-hearted, fun and feels relatable (whether you’re a die-hard ballet fan or newcomer). The amount of great content they’re able to produce on a regular basis is definitely where I’d like to see Nashville Ballet one day.

Additional questions answered on October 17th, 2017:

How do you plan when to post content (time of day and what day(s) of the week)?

We’ve found that posts typically yield great engagement for us around 9 a.m., noon and 5 p.m. during the weekdays. Our popular post times during the week center around commute times and lunch, so that makes sense because folks are on their phones during that time. Ideally, we post each weekday during one of the times listed above. On the weekends, we’re a little more experimental with what time we post. I’ve found that 11 a.m. posts do well for us on Saturdays and Sundays. That being said, though, we’re
always open to experimenting with different post times and days of the week, so you may see us post outside of those windows listed above. You never know how something will work unless you try it.

Describe the demographic of your average follower (this can be by platform or overall). Facebook: Based on Facebook’s analytics, our followers are 84% women and 16% men. Of the women: 0.7% are 13-17, 10% are 18-24, 24% are 25-34, 24% are 35-44, 14% are 45-54, 7% are 55-64 and 4% are 65+. Of the men: 0.04% are 13-17, 2% are 18-24, 4% are 25-34, 4% are 35-44, 3% are 45-54, 2% are 55-64 and 1% are 65+. The majority of our followers are from Nashville or the surrounding areas.

Twitter: Based on Twitter’s analytics, our followers are 78% women and 22% men. 54% are married and 46% are single. 45% completed high school, 39% completed college and 16% completed graduate school. 71% have a household income of $75,000+. They are generally interested in music, dance, comedy, movies, performance arts, business and news, and politics and current events. 80% of our audience purchases premium brands and they are online buyers.

Instagram: Based on Instagram’s analytics, our followers are 83% women and 17% men. The age range is: 5% ages 13-17, 21% ages 18-24, 36% ages 25-34, 21% ages 35-44, 12% ages 45-54, 3% ages 55-64 and 2% ages 65+. 32% live in Nashville, and our other top locations are in the surrounding areas.

What do you consider viral content to be? Have you seen this type of success with the Predators’ content? I consider viral content to be any piece of online media that spreads to the masses in short amount of time, oftentimes reaching new audiences who may have never come in contact with your brand. Social media is a massive driver in facilitating viral content. There are many reasons something could go viral; it could be shocking, funny, emotional, etc. The piece of content essentially takes on a life of its own. There’s no formula to predict what goes viral, so it’s a bit mysterious and oftentimes unexpected. There isn’t a definition of what metrics qualify a piece of content as going viral, and it’s all relative depending on what your typical engagement is like.

For the Predators content, I would not personally consider that viral content. The Predators content certainly did well for us, though. For example, we did one post with the Nutcracker and Mouse King cheering on the Predators while watching the game in customized jerseys with their names on the back. On Facebook, that photo received 390 likes, 51 shares and five comments. On Instagram, it received 580 likes and 12 comments. On Twitter, it received 17 retweets and 30 likes. For comparison, a typical successful photo for us has about 50-100 likes on Facebook, 400 likes on Instagram and 5-10 retweets/likes on Twitter with a few comments and shares. However, we’ve had several posts that have exceeded the likes, comments and shares that our Predators posts received. The Predators content yielded great engagement, but I wouldn’t consider it viral because it wasn’t too far outside of the realm of what’s possible for us to receive from an everyday post.
What tips do you have about posting articles and links on Facebook and Twitter? When posting articles, I like to pull out the most compelling quote and use that as the caption to entice folks to click on the article and read it. The article should also be embedded into the post if possible so it’s large and easy to click (rather than just including the link, which could get lost in the copy).

We use Bitly.com when posting links. Not only does it shorten the URLs, but more importantly it collects data to measure how many folks clicked on the link. By looking at that data, you can gauge how successful that post was in getting people to do what you ultimately wanted them to do (which is to click on the link that leads to a ticket page, an important news article, etc.). We use the free version, which only tells you how many clicks your link received and when, but a more sophisticated measuring system is available if you purchase it.

What are your thoughts on the use of hashtags?

We create a hashtag for each of our performances, which is usually pretty straightforward and is the name of the performance. I’ll use that with every post about that show to create and continue the conversation. The other time I use hashtags is when we’re posting about a community event, national holiday, etc. that allows us to become a part of a larger conversation. Other than that, I’m generally pretty conservative with my use of hashtags. I want to make sure they each serve a purpose and we don’t overdo it.

What are your tips in regards to writing headlines and captions?

When writing headlines and captions, I try to keep it short and succinct. In my opinion, the photo or video should do most of the talking because that’s what’s going to grab your followers’ attention on a competitive newsfeed. I don’t think folks are interested in reading long captions, so your caption should complement your visual by providing a little context. Your followers are generally scrolling on their phones and are grabbed by an interesting photo or video, not a long paragraph of copy.

We’re more willing to experiment with playful copy and keep it light and fun on social media. Particularly on Instagram, we’re catering to a younger audience so we want to make sure our copy is appealing to them as well and isn’t too formal.

What was your objective in participating with the Nashville Predators #StandWithUs campaign? For a little context, we received a grant from the Nashville Predators Foundation in 2015 and have maintained a great relationship with the organization since then. During one of our appearances with the Predators in 2015, we brought the Nutcracker and Mouse King to a game where they participated in fun activities with their mascot Gnash, rode the Zamboni, met fans and players, etc. The Predators gifted us with two custom-made jerseys with the Nutcracker and Mouse King names on the back.

When the Predators were in the Stanley Cup finals, Nashville was totally immersed in the experience and Predators-mania took over the city. The entire community was rallying
behind the team, and we wanted to show our support as well. Since we also have a relationship with them, that was just another reason why we wanted to find creative ways to get involved. The objective for the campaign was really as simple as showing one of our community partners our support and being a part of the excitement that was taking over the city.

What do you see as the future of social media (either specific to the Nashville Ballet or as a marketing tool)? Specifically to us at Nashville Ballet, I see us creating a full-time position that handles social media and digital content within the next five years. That person would be responsible for collecting more visual content that would ultimately help us accomplish our goals as a marketing department. Having a dedicated staff member means we would have more time to create compelling content, better understand our social media audiences according to each platform, create custom content depending on the platform, better measure success and more. Additionally, I think we’ll begin putting more and more money into our social media advertising budget. The level of targeting you’re able to do based on age, gender, interests, location, occupation, etc. is unmatched. Plus, as the level of organic reach keeps dropping, we’ll need to be advertising and boosting more posts so we make sure our content is visible.

Speaking in a general sense, I think social media will move toward more and more utilization of video, including live streams. I see the future of social media being dominated by visuals, and the use of copy will become less important. As marketers we’ll have to find creative ways to get our messages across without words and let our visuals do the talking.

How do you utilize Instagram stories?

We’re still in the early stages of utilizing Instagram stories. We do it occasionally, but we haven’t fully incorporated Instagram stories into our social media strategy. With stories, you don’t have to worry about over posting, which is great. For us, with a small staff and limited resources, that’s not a major draw to use the tool because we simply don’t have the time to be posting more than once per day. On Instagram stories, you can utilize cool features that are fun and creative like text and drawings, but again, it’s just a matter of time for us at the moment. I’d love for us to start utilizing this feature more, and I think the best way for us to do this in the immediate future is to ask our company dancers to begin incorporating the use of stories into their Instagram takeovers.