Arts Council of Greater Lansing

The Alliance of Creative Students

Social Media
Communication Strategy

Arts Council of Greater Lansing & The Alliance of Creative Students Social Media Communication Strategy

Overview of the Organizations

The Arts Council of Greater Lansing

The Arts Council of Greater Lansing (the Arts Council) works to promote arts and culture in the capital area. The Arts Council provides information on artists and events to the public while also offering the opportunity for grant funding opportunities to artists and cultural leaders to maintain a lasting impact on the community. They provide meeting space along with a resource center to encourage new project collaborations and relationships. By connecting artists with local business and law makers, they are able to foster a stronger voice for artists and cultural organizations in the area. The Arts Council is dedicated to make the arts a driving economic force in the region.

The Alliance of Creative Students

The Alliance for Creative Students (The Alliance) was created from a relationship between the Arts Council and the Michigan State University Residential College for Arts and Humanities (RCAH). The Alliance is a student group comprised of 18-25 year-olds committed to promoting arts and culture in the capital area. One of the main objectives of The Alliance is to promote and retain local emerging talent in Greater Lansing. The group is designed to connect students from local colleges and universities with each other and local artistic talent to encourage a more vibrant art scene in the region. The Alliance also provides students on the leadership board with experience in non-profit organization and administration to help them achieve their future professional goals.

Objective:
Increase membership and awareness of The Alliance

To be effective in its mission to engage, support and inspire a connected community of emerging and established artistic and cultural talent in Greater Lansing, The Alliance must be able to reach its constituency. It is important that students in the region are aware of the organization and that The Alliance is able to easily communicate with them. It is also important that The Alliance establish effective communication methods within their leadership board and with the Arts Council. Since The Alliance is student based, high turnover in leadership is inevitable. A structured communication plan will help to maintain consistency within the organization and with its primary partners in the region (RCAH and the Arts Council).

Communications Strategy

Internal Communication between Arts Council and The Alliance
Internal Communication for The Alliance Leadership Board
External Communication from The Alliance to its Members
External Communication to the Creative Community

Internal Communication Between the Arts Council and The Alliance

Content Strategy

Context
As an organization under the Arts Council entity, it is necessary for The Alliance to have a communication strategy in place to ensure a constant exchange of information and ideas between the two. This will not only help the students on the leadership team to learn from the experience of an established non-profit, but will also help them to be accountable for continuous progress even with their busy school schedules. In order to be successful, The Alliance must be a progressive, event filled organization to attract as broad a following as possible. Consistent communication with an active, full-time non-profit with a similar mission will help them to do that.

Topics
Until The Alliance becomes a recognized non-profit organization it will be important that methods are in place that will keep the Arts Council informed of what The Alliance is doing in regards to administration, communication, and event planning on a weekly basis.

Tone
The Arts Council and The Alliance should communicate in a tone of mutual partnership. While The Alliance is just becoming established with the help of the Arts Council and RCAH, the relationship should reflect the ultimate goal of The Alliance becoming an independent organization working alongside the Arts Council.

Channels and Distribution
Effective lines of communication between parties with similar interests include e-mail, blogs, and forums. In the case of communication between the Arts Council and The Alliance a private forum would be the best way to organize communication, until The Alliance is an independent organization. Only members of the Arts Council, RCAH, and The Alliance staff should be able to access the forum since it will be used primarily for planning, such as building meeting agendas and organizing events, and sharing updates, including meeting minutes and event debriefs.

Maintenance
The protected forum would be managed and maintained on the Arts Council website, since they have permanent staff. All appropriate staff from the Arts Council, RCAH, and The Alliance would be expected to regularly access and add information to the forum.

Effective use of new media channels

While e-mail is often the best way to share information between busy professionals, it is not necessarily the most collaborative way to communicate. Since The Alliance leadership board is comprised of volunteer students, and the Arts Council of full or part-time employees, the platform on which they communicate must be level so as not to imply a 'parent-child' organizational relationship, but rather a mentorship arrangement. Often times, e-mails will be received but not read or responded to in a timely fashion which can instantly create a power struggle and hierarchical structure. To avoid this, we suggest that the organizations communicate through a password protected forum where they can organize their ideas by theme and everyone can add input to develop strong programs. This regular communication will also serve as a tool to remind the two groups that they can both benefit greatly by maintaining a close working relationship.

Strategy Implementation

The forum would be created and linked to The Alliance web page from The Alliance section of the Arts Council web page so that it could be easily accessed by all parties. Since it will be password protected and not used for any advertising purposes, monitoring the site would require minimal staffing and could be managed by the Arts Council communications coordinator. Often times, host servers already have a forum feature included in the host fee. Contacting the host to see what resources are available would be the first step in starting a forum. Other options would be using free forum programs such as phpBB, or asp supported Snitz Forums 2000.

Members of The Alliance leadership board and key staff at the Arts Council will have access to the private forum and each group will commit to having their weekly information posted for review and suggestion by a certain day. For example, if The Alliance holds weekly leadership meetings on Wednesday evenings, then the leadership board will promise to have administrative, communication and event summaries from the most recent leadership meeting along with key topics for the upcoming meeting posted no later than Monday at 12noon each week. The Arts Council and RCAH faculty will then guarantee that comments and suggestions will be posted no later than Tuesday evening at 5:00PM each week. This will allow the Arts Council to have a full understanding of what The Alliance is doing each week and to give constructive input to help them proceed in the most efficient manner possible. By operating on a timeline based on the regularly scheduled weekly Alliance leadership meetings, this will also ensure that topics that must be covered and new ideas to be shared all make it onto the weekly agenda. The accountability of having to report to each other by a specific, mutually agreed upon time will help both groups to stay on track, even when they are very busy with other matters.

Internal Communication of
The Alliance Leadership Board

Content Strategy

Context
Since The Alliance is still a very new and growing organization it is still in the process of not only establishing its presence in the community, but the leaders also have to work to establish their presence within the organization. A plan for effective intra-organization communication must be put into place. The solution must address the following key issues:

      Availability - The solution must be available to all members at any time.
      Accessibility - The solution will have easy access for those who can edit, and view it.
      Simplicity - The solution must be able to be used with little to no learning curve.
      Editable - The solution must be able to have revisions made to it in real time.

Topics
The leaders of the three core components within the organization (Administration, Communications, and Events) to communicate well before the scheduled weekly meeting. This can be difficult due to conflicting schedules, so using a new channel for communication aside from in-person meetings is necessary.

Tone
Each of the leadership roles is equally important, therefore the members should communicate with each other as equals in a respectful way. They should feel confident editing their colleagues work as well as keep the environment creative and friendly so that each is comfortable making suggestions to improve the organization as a whole.

Channels and Distribution
The person holding the administrative role on the leadership board will be responsible for initiating a weekly electronic communication request via Google Docs or the Cloud to the other members of the leadership board.

Maintenance
This communication strategy will require a group effort, but little to no maintenance work.

Effective Use of New Media Channels

The Alliance's leadership board currently uses a few tools to communicate with one another. The current system of communication revolves mainly around e-mails and various forms of instant messaging, focusing mainly on Facebook.

E-mail
The structure of e-mails make them ideal for quick messages that do not require an immediate   answer. However, e-mails do not allow for editing the content within them nor do they provide the optimal storage of previous messages.

Facebook Instant Messenger
This solves the issue of response time but does not allow for communication if an individual is not also online. The storage on this media is even worse than e-mail, and also lacks the ability to be edited.

Google Docs
Simple and free to use, Google Docs are able to be used by anyone with experience with a word processing program. They allow for multiple authors of a document that can then also be printed. Google Docs are available to be opened on nearly any form of computer and many internet connected mobile devices. The storage is also stored on Google's servers so if one of the authors should lose the file it can easily be recovered.

Cloud Storage
Use of the Cloud Storage system would cost money (generally an annual fee) but would provide extra security beyond that of the Google Docs. Essentially the Cloud Storage system would act as a universal drive for all members of The Alliance (and possibly the Arts Council) to not only save documents for communication, but also any other file necessary for the organization. By uploading a document to the Cloud, any member could download and then re-upload. There is virtually no learning curve associated with the process.

Strategy Implementation

The solution can be either very simple or very complex. Using a Google Document or using a Cloud based storage system resolves the issues that other media channels present. E-mails and Facebook Instant Messenger can still be used for quick messages that do not need to be saved or are pertinent to group organization.

However, implementing the Google Docs strategy is simple. The leader of the Administration department will start a Google Doc following the conclusion of a weekly meeting. In this document, there will be room to plan the agenda for the next meeting as well as identify anything from the previous meeting. The leaders of the Communication and Events departments then have until a set time before the next meeting to make any following changes to the agenda so that it can either be sent to other members or printed to be passed out. Google Docs also offer a function similar to the Facebook Instant Messenger so that they can still make quick communications through that function.

Implementing the Cloud storage strategy is slightly more complicated. It would be necessary for the Alliance to acquire funds in order to supplement the annual cost of having the storage capacity. Once that is finished, setting up the account and establishing an account name and password are necessary. Upon completion, the group can then use the drive as a shared drive. They can use it the same way as the Google Docs for the agenda, but they can then also upload content to it. If there is a particular aspect of a presentation (video or photo for example) that can be uploaded and in conjunction with e-mail let the other members know to preview it.

External Communication From The Alliance To Its Members

Content Strategy

Context
In order for The Alliance to successfully reach out to all of its members, it must recognize who its members are. Once there is a full understanding of the constituency The Alliance will be able to focus on the media channels that they frequent most and highlight the types of events they will be most likely to attend.

Topics
The Alliance has yet to reach its goal of being a widely recognized non-profit organization, so it is important that it can have a strong relationship with the current members.

Tone
The Alliance should communicate with the members in a tone that is inclusive and welcoming. Members should feel comfortable asking for additional information about events and programs.

Channels and Distribution
Notifications should be sent by the communications leader (or someone on that committee who has been given the specific task) via different media channels twice per week, once at the beginning to inform members of what is happening in the future, and once near the end to serve as a reminder.

Effective Use of New Media Channels

Facebook
Members of the the Facebook fan page, should be reached out to on a regular basis via group-wide messages. There are a lot of events going on, so event invites are not recommended for all programs.

Twitter
Tweets should be used to inform followers about upcoming events and meetings. Daily reminders are the best tools to make sure followers have the chance to learn about everything that The Alliance is involved in.

Blog
The blog should communicate every event along with time and location, and of publicized well in advance, events should also have reminder posts on the blog.

Strategy Implementation

The Alliance should add the following to the Facebook and Twitter pages:
>Email address for members who wish to speak directly to the leaders
>URL for the alliance website/blog
>Time and location for executive board meetings. Members should feel that sense of inclusion, even if they are not required to attend board meetings.
>The logo with the name of the organization. Current members may have an idea of what the organization is, but people who may stumble upon the Alliance should see some consistency in order to get familiar.

External Communication From The Alliance
To the Creative Community

Content Strategy

Context
In order for The Alliance to achieve success it must increase membership and participation in the organization and inform the creative community about upcoming events and Alliance development. The Alliance has to be able to effectively engage members and the community in acts of creativity over the Internet, as well as to display and circulate the art, projects, and initiative within the creative community. They will hold a major role in helping bridge the gap between East Lansing and Lansing.

Topics
Content geared toward members of The Alliance will focus on highlighting member's creative activities, interest, and specialties. Content for both members and non-members will include event information, photographs, and video. Both members and non-members will be exposed to content that will allow them to actively engage in creativity in digital spaces. The use of photos, video, and other forms of multimedia is highly encouraged for all audiences.

Tone
In all forms of communication, The Alliance should both embrace and engage others through creativity. Language used should be fun and clever yet innovative and insightful, given the context and publishing venue. Social Media accounts should be written in an engaging, and conversational style, and posts should be friendly and upbeat. Blog posts should maintain a slightly more polished and serious tone appropriate to professional present content to a The Alliance audience. Posts should be written in a positive, enterprising manner.

Content Strategy (Continued)

Channels & Distribution*:

Website
The Alliance for Creative Students website should act as the hub of all external communication. The website should include information about The Alliance's mission, major announcements, event calendar, blog, links to social media accounts, and multimedia galleries.

Blog
Located on The Alliance website, the blog should act as the host for original content, consisting of both Quick Writes (50-200 words) and Feature Stories.
Facebook

The popular social networking site should be used primarily to promote and circulate upcoming events, to post event photos and videos, conversational and "LiveCreate" posts, and blog teasers.

Twitter
Similar to Facebook, this microblogging platform should be used to make announcements, launch "LiveCreate" activity, and reposting (re-tweeting) community tweets.

Tumblr
This social blogging site should be used to circulate The Alliance blog and to keep a track of current interests of the creative community in the Greater Lansing area.

Foursquare
The Location-based mobile platform should be used to as a part of the initiative to bridge the divide between creative professionals in Lansing and the digital generation.

*A detailed description of these channels and usage is located in the "Implementation" section.

Maintenance*:

Website
The Alliance website should be updated on an as needed basis. As the primary communications hub, the website should reflect the most recent initiatives, development, and membership of The Alliance.

Blog
Quick Write blog posts should be updated on a weekly basis, while Feature Stories should be created once a month. Blog posts should be circulated on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr.

Social Media
Social media accounts should provide a steady stream of information from The Alliance to the creative community. Accounts should be updated frequently, with announcements, links to Alliance content, and conversational content.

*Further description of maintenance is located in the "Implementation" section.

Effective use of new media channels

Above all The Alliance is focused on fostering relationships with students, creative professionals, and creative organizations within the Greater Lansing area. New media offers a platform to engage the general public in this creative community while still connecting with members of the organization. Targeting these audiences through social media channels (including the office blog,Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Foursquare) will lead to both the expansion of The Alliance's membership, as well as general awareness and support of its mission. Social Media for the creative community should include the following initiatives:

Alliance news, events, and networking:
New media should used to keep members of The Alliance and members of the creative community informed and enticed by upcoming events and initiatives. It should also be used to keep in contact with affiliates and to develop the creative community through networking.

LiveCreate:
The LiveCreate initiative should realize The Alliance's mission to actively value creativity in a digital space. LiveCreate will give followers tasks that will make them stop, drop, and create. While this is targeted towards members, anyone following The Alliance Twitter and Facebook accounts should be encouraged to partici-pate. LiveCreate activities are distributed via Twitter (#livecreate) and Facebook.

Strategy Implementation

The Alliance Website

The following content should be added and/or further developed on The Alliance's current website.

Mission Statement & Leadership

As an emerging organization, it is important to clearly define purpose and initiatives. The Alliance's website should include an "About" page, or create space on the existing homepage, that includes the organization's mission statement, objectives, long- and short-term goals, and current leadership positions.

Affiliates Page

As The Alliance continues to make connections with professional creatives and organizations in the Greater Lansing area, an affiliates page should be created. This can function as a detailed blog roll and should feature the partnership with:

Arts Council of Greater Lansing & MCACA
Venues ((Scene) Metrospace, Creole Gallery Creativity Exploratory, etc)
Companies (Peppermint Creek Theatre Company, Stormyfield, etc)
Lansing-area artists

Blog

The Alliance blog should act as the host for original content. Then, the posts themselves should be circulated on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr. The blog should be updated once a week and should alternate between the following formats:

Quick Writes
Quick Writes should make up the majority of blog posts, giving readers quick, accessible insight into current events in the creative community.
Posts should range from 50-200 words and focus on visual aids like photos, and videos.
Topics may include: Details about upcoming Creative Outings, profiles of current members and their creative pursuits, and networking tips and tricks.

Feature Stories
Feature Stories may include in-depth perspectives on the question: "WHAT IS CREATIVITY?", The Alliance's developmental progress, and interviews with Lansing creatives.
Write 1-2 feature posts per month ranging from 200-500 words each.

All blog post should include at least 1 visual aid (picture, video, infographic, etc), in addition to a thumbnail image on the blog's main page.

Spotlight

The Spotlight page should feature a profile of a particular artist or community initiative in the Greater Lansing area. The profile should include a photograph, artist/organization history, current initiatives/projects, and thoughts on the creative process and creativity in Lansing. This page should be updated once per month.

Calendar

A calendar should be developed and featured on The Alliance's site. It should list Creative Outings, leadership and membership meetings, as well as creative events happening in the area.

Strategy Implementation (Continued)

Social Media

Social media content should both inform followers of events, and act as the primary space for the LiveCreate initiative, where users activly participate in creativity through technology.

LiveCreate Posts

Activities may include tasks like: "Encapsulate this image in one word," "Take a photo of what you are doing right now, include as many details as possible, without using words," "Create something that represents this word…"

Notable LiveCreate creations should be re-tweeted, posted on Facebook, and occasionally featured in blog posts.

Participants should have 24-hours to post a response to the prompt from the first time it was posted.

Twitter

Twitter should be updated the most frequently out of all the social media platforms. Posts should relate to the following:

> General Announcements
> Event reminders (#creativeouting)
> LiveCreate Prompts (#livecreate)
> Re-tweet and @mention Alliance members, affiliates, and members of the creative community (#ArtAllies)
> Blog post teasers
> Spotlight teasers (#spotlight)
> Conversation questions
> News articles of about creativity and art in the Greater Lansing Area

> Official Hash Tags: #ACS #livecreate #spotlight #creativeouting #ArtAllies

Facebook

A fan page for The Alliance should be created. This page should be used to circulate posts related to the following:

> Event invitations, announcements, and reminders
> Photos and videos from events
> Blog post teasers and links
> Conversational questions about creativity and input for upcoming events
> Circulation of member's creative pursuits (blogs, portfolios, photography, etc)
> LiveCreate activity

Strategy Implementation (Continued)

Social Media (Continued)

Tumblr

Tumblr should be used to circulate blog posts outside of The Alliance website. Its foremost purpose, however, should be to explore and discover the interests of the creative community in Lansing, this can be done by tracking tags like Lansing, East Lansing, MSU, etc.

Tumblr should be surveyed once per week in conjunction with blog posts published on The Alliance main site. Original blog posts may be shortened, if appropriate. Graphics and multimedia should be emphasized.

Foursquare

The use of Foursquare should be a part of an initiative to help artists and organizations bridge the digital divide. The Alliance should encourage their affiliates to join Foursquare. As members visit the organizations for Creative Outings, or on their own time, they will use Foursquare to "check-in." In turn, the affiliates will gain a stronger presence in the digital world.

YouTube

YouTube should serve mainly as a repository for all of The Alliance's original videos. A channel should be created for The Alliance to keep track of videos from Creative Outings and other events. Adequate descriptions and tags should be created for each video uploaded.

Flickr

Like YouTube, Flickr should act mainly as a photo repository for original content. Post photos taken at creative outing events, photos taken for blog features, etc. Make use of noting titles, tags, and location for easy search accessibility.

External Communication Maintenance

In order to ease the enormity of the external communication tasks, the following positions and responsibilities should exist among The Alliance leadership board.

PR Manager	• Event Planning • Calendar Maintenance • Poster Distribution • Press Contact
Social Media Manager	• Update & Maintain Twiiter, Facebook, Tumblr accounts • Maintains Foursquare initiative • Create & Monitor LiveCreate posts • Research & Maintain relationships with the creative community
Multimedia Manager	• Secure Photo & Video coverage for all ACS events • Maintains Youtube & Flickr accounts • Assures the use of multimedia in posts across all platforms
Blog Editor	• Create ideas for weekly blog posts & feature pieces • Secure writers & multimedia need for blogs • Maintain blog on main site & Tumblr

Templates
In order to aid in the effectiveness & timeliness of social media posting, a template document should be created. The document should be divided by social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, etc) with subcategories of Time and Context.

Conclusion

Clear and defined communications between The Alliance for Creative Students and the Arts Council, the executive board, members, and the creative community is crucial to the longevity and success for the organization. Since the Alliance has many different focuses of engagement, breaking the different types of communication into separate sections offers a more effective and efficient process for determining the communication needs of the organization. By referencing this document, The Alliance will be able to define and assign the workload to develop communication templates and standardized schedules for creating updates. Implementing the strategies defined above will help the Alliance establish and build a presence within the creative community of the Greater Lansing area, and in turn, allow the Alliance to realize its goals as an organization.