
Creating User-generated Content Libraries for Social Media: An Application-based Project for an Online Experiential Learning Course

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Providing meaningful experiential learning opportunities in online courses requires careful preplanning to develop course materials and projects that work well in this unique learning environment. Students enrolling in online course sections are often geographically dispersed and the instructor may not be cognizant of how prevalent this dispersion really is until after the course is in session. Yet, in experiential learning, there is an expectation that students will directly engage with businesses, non-profits, professional societies, etc. as a key portion of their coursework so it is incumbent upon the instructor to make available projects that will facilitate this essential connection and still meet the time and location constraints of students who do not reside within the local area. This paper explores one example of a project-based solution to the issues posed by online experiential learning, centered on creating content libraries for social media applications. Theoretical and practical aspects of developing a successful social media content libraries project are presented along with a case study of how the concept was implemented in a senior-level undergraduate business course.

Introduction

The genesis for this paper is to provide a detailed practical example of an experiential learning project designed specifically for online learning situations. The work described here serves as a sequel, or extension, of research published by this investigator in the Journal last year, arguing that delivering meaningful, participative service-learning and experiential learning project experiences to online students is achievable if care is taken to address the challenges of this unique learning environment. Based on the concepts explored in that earlier work, the project under discussion here illustrates how to create, introduce, and evaluate an example of an individual-student experiential learning project in practice.

Experiential learning courses, including the subset of offerings known as service-learning courses, afford students the opportunity to gain real-world experiences and knowledge by working on issues of importance

to their communities, private businesses, charitable organizations and many other constituencies while they master essential course concepts. Benefits of such relationships, which often are gained across an entire academic term, include developing long-standing partnerships within the community, giving students an appreciation of how to apply their learnings to critical and immediate unresolved problems, and providing students with exposure to talent and ways of thinking that they do not encounter within the classroom (Bureau, Cole and McCormick, 2014; Bennett, Sunderland, Bartleet and Power, 2016; Ricke, 2018). While these benefits, and others, are well-understood, it also has been reported that achieving successful integration of experiential learning projects into online coursework, where students may not have direct accessibility to community clients, requires diligent selection of both teaching methods and projects or assignments (Baim, 2019; Wagner & Pigza, 2016).

For example, providing meaningful experiential learning opportunities in online courses requires diligent attention to the relationship between the student and the client since the parties may not be able to interact readily in a common face-to-face manner. Similarly, it is often more difficult for the online student to fully absorb the needs of a client's organization because visiting it in person and/or interacting with others involved within the organization may not be possible. Complexities arise in developing realistic goals for a project, following up with progress on an interim basis and providing a satisfying, factual evaluation of the work performed by the end of the project term as well. Addressing these concerns, and others that may situationally arise, can seem daunting at first, but making a strategic choice for the project topic and being mindful of the pinch points in managing online learning will result in a collaborative partnership between the student and client that is rewarding for both parties.

Social Media: A Foundation for Successful Online Project Collaborations

University students today tend to be prolific users of social media. According to Newberry (2019), social media usage world-wide continues to rise with 3.48 billion people using social media of some kind, up 9% from 2018 to 2019. Of those users, 3.26 billion access social media from their mobile phones – an increase of 10% from 2018 to 2019. In the US, 88% of citizens between the ages of 18 and 29 (prime university age bracket) use social media and 51% say that it would be hard to give up. Preferred

platforms continue to change and evolve. Instagram and Snapchat remain highly popular with teenagers favoring Instagram (72% are current users) and young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 preferring Snapchat (78% are current users). Facebook is declining slightly in popularity among teens and young adults, although still popular, with 51% usage – a drop of 20 percentage points since 2014. These figures, however, are dwarfed by YouTube usership, encompassing 94% of the 18 to 24-year-old age bracket and 73% of all US adults overall.

Businesses see great value in social media use as well. Again, according to studies summarized by Newberry (2019), 90% of brands rely on social media to boost brand awareness and 77% of brands expect that their reliance on social media will increase in the future. Online or digital storytelling is skyrocketing in importance with stories growing at a rate that is 15X faster than information sharing based on brand feeds. When analyzed by dollar volume, social media advertising increased 332%, globally, in 2018 with an additional growth of 73% predicted in the next five years. Stories, photos and embedded videos all are primary drivers of this success (Newberry, 2019).

Taking all of these numbers into account, the potential for a worthwhile collaboration between students and business clients on any one of a number of topics related to social media is very high. Students have strong social media expertise, particularly in terms of applying the technologies. Businesses (as well as non-profits and governmental agencies) have an equally strong need to advance their social media presence in a manner that attracts interest, followership, and/or intent-to-purchase from the ever-expanding percentages of the US population that spend time online. For example, organizations of all types are quick to realize that social media platforms can play a critical role in forming an organizational reputation, particularly as individuals shift their reliance for news and information from traditional media outlets to the broader scope of positions and opinions offered through social media. As expressed by researchers Etter, Ravasi and Colleoni, “social media offer alternative ways to disseminate evaluations about organizations in the public domain than through the vertical, top-down, one-to-many diffusions that characterize traditional news media (2019, p. 33). Astute organizational leaders recognize the essential nature of appropriate social media interactions and are eager to connect directly with social media users, thought leaders and influencers to build positive reputations online. Not only must such

relationships be built and cultivated, they must be seen as an integral part of an overarching social media strategic plan that begins with a set of clearly established goals, moves through well-thought-out executional steps and culminates in appropriate analytics to measure success and suggest opportunities for improvement (King, 2015).

Social media communications are multi-faceted and many interactions are beyond an organization's control. (Consider, as examples, a restaurant patron that writes a scathing blog about a poor meal, a vehicle owner using Instagram to show a vehicle at the side of the road with the hood up, or perhaps a YouTube user posting a short video of water cascading into a beautifully furnished home through a leaky roof.) In contrast, what is to a very large degree totally under the control of an organization is the social media content that it chooses to create and disseminate across all chosen social media platforms in support of the organization's goals. When that content is on target, it can establish a strong foundation for the organization's offerings as well as position the organization effectively relative to its peers and competitors.

Generating appropriate content for social media can be a difficult task, especially for an organization that has little to no history of building a presence online. Smaller, community-based organizations may also lack the resources needed to hire professional content developers and social media marketing experts to create a portfolio of materials that cast the organization in the best possible light. Partnering with social media-savvy students in an experiential learning setting offers a potential solution to this dilemma by pairing the students' creative expertise and knowledge of social media platforms with the organization's basic message and desire to communicate online.

The Importance of Great Content

As the usage and influence of social media grows, organizations have come to the realization that traditional marketing channels are no longer sufficient for reaching their target market segments. Failing to capitalize on social media channels today would be similar to an organization deciding not to move into television advertising in the 1950s and early 1960s or deciding not to use radio advertising a few decades earlier. Today, many individuals of all demographic descriptions rely exclusively, or nearly exclusively on social media channels for their news, general day-to-day social planning, communications with friends, and

product/service purchasing decisions (Etter, Ravasi, & Colleoni, 2019). They do so because social media channels contain the content that they seek, delivered in a manner consistent with how they like to receive it.

As noted by Dahllof, “Great content creates marketing momentum, giving the brand a voice rooted in cultural relevance and with staying power. A video, game of puzzle cannot hit the market and disappear immediately; it must become evergreen, passed from person to person, creating buzz and talkability” (2012, p. 57). Describing what makes great content is a continuously evolving process that moves rapidly with changes in social media technologies and the popularity of specific platforms and applications. Within this evolutionary state, however, Dahllof observes five distinct parameters that typify great content in social media. These parameters include relevance, engaging, creative, entertaining, and dynamic (2012, p. 57). Individuals in charge of developing great social media content must keep all five parameters in mind as they seek to maximize the user experience associated with a given brand’s choice of social media platforms and overall presence online. It is an iterative process that, fortunately, is facilitated by typically rapid feedback from users through their “likes,” “shares,” and overall willingness to engage with the organization’s content in a variety of different ways.

Considering, specifically, the concept of engagement, many researchers have noted that content designed to maximize the probability of significant engagement with the desired user base (as opposed to simply delivering relevant information or providing entertainment value) provides the best recipe for long-term success (Moser, Tumasjan & Welp, 2016; Twyman, 2015; Halevi & O’Hanlon, 2016; Wilkinson, 2018). In their study of the effectiveness of social media employment postings, Moser, Tumasjan and Welp observe that companies simply posting job ads online are significantly less likely to engage potential recruits in productive conversations than are companies that provide both informational postings on the company and inspirational messages designed to create an emotional connection to the job seeker (2016, p. 1108). With this emotional connection comes an increase in sharing of information about the company with other job seekers and also a noted increase in loyalty of the job seeker to the prospective employer’s brand (p. 1109). Researchers Halevi and O’Hanlon took a similar approach when studying how to increase user engagement with library services in major medical teaching and research facilities, finding that matching social media content to the customary

workflow activities of library users substantially increases the willingness of users to take full advantage of library offerings (2016). Their research identifies a series of five steps designed to optimize user engagement including, 1) Identifying gaps between existing programs and target audience; 2) Collaborate with users in designing activities; 3) Create messages for social media channels based on engagement activities; 4) Create informational postings of interest to the user audience; and 5) draw in interesting new user groups to broaden h user audience (Halevi and O’Hanlon, 2016, p. 345). Again, the centrality of creating great content to engage the user is critical to success.

In generating great content to engage users readily, video has played an ever-increasing role over the past decade. The prominence of social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram all attest not only to the popularity of online video, but also its effectiveness in driving social media messaging and engagement. Lessard (2014) observed that video applied in a social media context grabs users’ attention quickly and results in conversion from observer to engaged user more effectively than other types of content commonly in use. There is an important difference, however, between results generated from video meant simply to entertain and video used as a marketing tool to sell products and/or services online (Coker, Flight and Baima, 2017). These authors note that users have a strong tendency to avoid online advertising in any form, including video, and that social media platform architecture often enhances users’ ability to bypass ads either completely or after only a very brief exposure (p. 75). Thus, content creators seeking to use video as a means of driving engagement, or ultimately a user’s intent to purchase a product or service, must creatively develop approaches that encourage users to remain “tuned in” to receive the desired video message.

Coker, Flight and Baima note that on a level playing field with all factors carefully controlled, a video featuring a storytelling format is less likely to be skipped over and more likely to relate in a positive reaction such as a “like” or a “share” from an online user than a video that delivers its content in a straightforward informational manner (2017, p. 84). Storytelling processes are inherently engaging and serve to build a familiarity with the user, thereby enhancing the user’s willingness to engage. These researchers also observe, however, that despite the greater popularity of storytelling-based videos online, there is no evidence of a greater intent-to-purchase score among users watching storytelling videos and users watching

comparable information-only videos (2017, p. 85). While such findings would appear to suggest that content creators can save unnecessary time and expense by not creating more complex storytelling videos, additional learnings from Coker, Flight and Baima suggest that the answer is not always that simple. For example, social media advertising videos following an informational strategy are most effective for newer or less-well-known brands while social media advertising videos following a storytelling format are most effective for well-established/well-known brands (p. 85-86). Informational videos are favored by “light social media users” while storytelling videos are favored by “heavy social media users” (p. 85). The point is that while video as content continues to grow in importance, content creators must be careful not to fall into the trap of using a single format or strategy in all cases. Fortunately, as video usage becomes more prominent in social media applications, the tools needed to rapidly create and distribute high-quality video offerings is also growing at a fast pace (Meliones & Karidis, 2001; Burke & Tumbleson, 2016; Rossman & Young, 2016).

The Impact of User-Generated Content

Contemporary researchers of social media trends and practices are placing a lot of effort toward developing a better understanding of the role that user-generated content plays in an organization’s online success (Melumad, Inman & Pham, 2019; Etter, Ravasi & Colleoni, 2019; Wilkinson, 2018). User-generated content is defined as blogs, wikis, podcasts, photos, videos, social networks and other forms of communication produced and posted online by social media participants as opposed to posted by professional content creators, Website owners and others of a similar background (Lee, 2008). While arguably one of the hottest topics in social media research today, the nature and effects of user-generated content have been of substantial interest to academic scholars and business experts since the early 2000s (Agichtein, Castillo, Donato, Gionis and Mishne, 2008). User-generated content is popular, at least in part, because it enjoys the credibility of being thought of as an independent voice on issues of public interest, quality of products and services received from a vendor, and, in part, because it carries the feel of being more “personal/human” than other online sources of information such as Web searches (Agichtein, et al, 2008, p. 183). While the quality, and hence the credibility, of any given user-generated online response can vary wildly from excellent to worthless,

these researchers observe that the leveling effect of having many contributors on most topics tends to produce results that are relatively robust (p. 192).

User-generated content is often directly associated with the online social ties between a group of individuals. Researchers Shriver, Nair and Hofstetter studied this effect, finding that a codetermination can occur “between user-generated content and social ties in an online social network” (2013, p. 1425). In summation the effect is one of building additional social ties through posting relevant user-generated content to the site. In turn, such content drives additional ties and traffic to the site. Over time, such traffic can generate additional awareness of the site from individuals outside of the original network and, ultimately, build general awareness of an organization and/or its brands (Shriver, Nair & Hofstetter, 2013, p. 1440-1442). Similar findings are reported by Goldenberg, Oestreicher-Singer and Reichman in their research linking user-generated content and online exploration (2012). It was shown that social media sites permitting and encouraging user-originated pages develop a “dual network” structure where the users’ pages with links to other content act as content brokers in parallel with and complementary to the information network furnished by the site itself (p. 452). This situation again drives overall traffic, keeps users engaged longer and can facilitate both information transfer and purchasing intent (p. 466).

The widespread growth of user-generated content in social media over the past decade is generally perceived as highly positive by users and social media content developers alike (Yildirim, Gal-Or & Geylani, 2013; Tang, Fang & Wang, 2014; Melumad, Inman & Pham, 2019). Nevertheless, researchers note that user-generated content is not necessarily free from issues that can plague any type of media within the public domain. For example, Tang, Fang and Wang observe that neutral user-generated content “is not truly neutral” (2014, p. 56). In cases where users provide an overall neutral review to a product or service, but list various positives and negatives in the course of their evaluations, the result can be a substantial positive sales advantage for a business due to the creation of more dialog about the product. On the other hand, if users come across as indifferent by not providing specifics, a substantial negative for the sales effort of the business can result (p. 54-55). Yildirim, Gal-Or and Geylani report another effect of user-generated content in their investigation of print versus online editions of newspapers that allow user-generated content in their online

versions. The effect of user-generated content was found to increase bias in online reporting as users sought to interject their personal viewpoints on stories (2013, p. 2665). A somewhat surprising effect is that bias in reporting in the print editions of the same newspapers declines when users have access to and could comment on the online editions (p. 2665). Finally, Melumad, Inman and Pham note that the rapid increase in smartphone usage is causing users to be briefer in their online comments, focusing on the “gist” of reviews as opposed to more detailed observations (2019, p. 259). The result is a bias in favor of more emotional and less factual content that could serve to influence other users in ways that more detailed, traditional computer-generated user reviews would not (p. 272-273). Regardless, the point is clear that individuals responsible for developing social media platforms that encourage user-generated content must take into consideration that the content so produced may be influenced by a number of factors that are, at times, at least partially hidden from view.

Project Example from a Business Leadership Course

Undergraduate students at Miami University are required to complete a minimum of one service-learning course as part of their degree programs. (Service-learning is a subset of the broader category of experiential learning, emphasizing a community-oriented volunteer/service aspect to the project and its outcomes.) As described previously, completing this service-learning requirement can be challenging for students taking their programs online, due to the need for frequent and detailed interactions between the student and the client (Baim, 2019). Developing and implementing a rigorous service-learning project that can be completed exclusively through electronic communications has the advantage of simplifying logistics for online students without compromising service-learning goals.

The project presented here was originally conceived to meet the service-learning requirement for students in the Miami University four-year Commerce program. It was introduced as part of the curriculum in a senior-level leadership course (CMR 401 – Leadership Decision Skills) and has been in use for several academic terms. Although originally envisioned specifically for service-learning, the basic format and principles of the project are equally applicable to the broader classification of experiential learning courses, particularly those with an orientation toward online communications and social media.

Project Overview

The project is based on having students directly interact with a business, nonprofit, or governmental client that has a need to increase the quality, reach, and/or timeliness of the organization's presence online. Students work to define a set of deliverables that meet the client's expectations for quality social media content. Over the course of the academic term, students then produce the required content, placing each item into a directory known as a content library for future application by the client (A content library is a bank of material that an individual responsible for launching new postings can pull from anytime he/she needs to put fresh content on social media. It is based on creating a list of customized content that can be used for an organization's social media platforms. The content must be meaningful and actionable as it relates to both the organization's audience (customers) and its business). Presentation of the content library to the client, accompanied by a final report on the theory and practice behind generating the requested content, occurs at the end of the term. Project evaluation is handled by the instructor, with client feedback, using a custom-designed rubric for guidance.

Detailed Project Guidelines

The "core" of the project described here is best undertaken once students have been exposed to fundamental content generation theory and best practices, largely delivered according to the structure and topics outlined earlier in this paper. Students can combine fresh theoretical learnings with their own social media experiences to begin thinking about how to develop value-added content to meet an organization's needs. With this early-stage learning underway, the actual project can proceed as follows.

1. While it is certainly possible for student to be assigned the task of identifying their own clients, there are advantages to having clients pre-identified and pre-qualified by the instructor. In this manner, the instructor can be certain that the clients have defined needs that are realistic for a semester-long course, that the clients have time to interact with the students on a fairly frequent basis and that the overall scope of the work requested aligns well with the spirit and formal requirements of a service-learning or experiential learning project.

2. Assign students a client to work with or allow students to pick from a list of pre-approved clients. Require students to set up an introductory meeting with the client to begin understanding the client’s needs and wants. Considering that the course is taught online, meetings may be by phone or preferably by a video conferencing application such as Skype, Amazon Chime, Google Hangouts, etc. Communication exclusively by e-mail at this stage of the project is not recommended as it is nearly impossible to establish the person-to-person connection necessary for best collaboration through e-mail.
3. Once working relationships are established, have students set up a schedule for completing a series of novel social media postings for the client over the course of the academic term. This schedule should dovetail appropriately with the client’s schedule for posting new content online. Although beyond the intended scope of this paper, a thorough discussion of online content scheduling may be found in research by Kanuri, Chen and Sridhar (2018). Experience has shown that a student can generate approximately 50 new pieces of content, using a verity of media, during a typical semester-long course. Providing student with a template, such as the one shown in Figure 1, helps them establish their timelines and keep all of their deliverables clear. Note that the template shows lines for only 10 out of 50 entries. There is merit to having students break up the project into multiple segments and to deliver the templates and the actual social media posting content in increments spread across the duration of the overall project.

Figure 1: Content Tracking Template

Entry Number	Category	Date Created	Suggested Use	Specific Topic
<i>Example</i>	<i>Photo</i>	<i>9/1/19</i>	<i>Facebook</i>	<i>Front entrance to client’s business.</i>
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

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4. Students tend to find the content generation process to be straightforward – as long as they have diligently worked to define and understand their client’s needs and wants. At this point in the project, calling students’ attention to a short list of bulleted guidelines and requirements for success is prudent.
- All content library entries must be the original work of the student undertaking the project. Use of content taken from other sources (known a curated content) runs the risk of violating copyright laws and/or could constitute plagiarism.
 - Students must obtain and record permission to use the likeness of anyone that may be featured in a photo. Incidental capturing of images of people “in the background” does not constitute a violation as long as the photo was taken in a public place.
 - Students must make sure that any Internet link or URL used or displayed within content library entries actually works properly. Be sure to “chase” any connections to make sure that they operate properly when “clicked” or that they can be copied and pasted into a browser address line and used to “pull up” the site of interest.
 - All work must be completed in a timely manner. Pay close attention to the due dates specified on the course calendar.
 - Extra credit points may be earned for a “video story” of the Content Library Project. For example, a student could interview his/her client(s) and upload the result. Another possibility would be providing a video tour of how certain types of entries were created.
 - Extra credit may also be earned for creating a zip file of all content library entries and templates, for the convenience of the client.

Along this same line, suggestions regarding the types of content that may be appealing to clients are appreciated by students as they begin their work in earnest. A short list of topics might include the following ideas.

- Spotlights on interesting people within the organization.
- Interviews with outsiders of interest.
- A photo with a thought-provoking caption.
- A short video clip on a key topic for the organization.

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- Shared points of view from industry or academic experts.
 - A call to action (CTA) on a critical issue.
5. Beyond the use of the Content Tracking Template as a quick guide to what has been accomplished, students should also set up and use some form of catalog, database or repository for the full pieces of social media content that they have created. Such a repository must be easy to access for the student, the instructor and the client, plus it must be capable of holding social media content produced across a variety of different media types. There are many options on how this can be accomplished. For example, the student could create a Google Docs directory and upload all of the individual content files to it. Then, the student must grant access to the client and to the instructor as a final step in allowing access. The student could also use a program called “Airtable” to catalog all of the content library entries (<http://airtable.com>). For an example of this software program in use, please see <https://airtable.com/shrfXn2hHRMbtKjCQ/tbldmnQ720mt4SikA/viwyftUjxuWWnAxGt>. (Airtable is fairly self-explanatory. Students needing help using a Google Docs directory for the first time could contact the instructor for assistance or be referred to the institution’s computer center for help.)
 6. During the actual content creation phase of the project, it is advantageous to have students turn in copies of their templates and grant access for the instructor to view the actual content created on a regular basis. By doing so, each template and its associated content can act as a graded assignment and an opportunity for the instructor to provide additional coaching and feedback to students as needed. This process also facilitates periodic contact between the instructor and the client to follow up on any issues that have arisen and ensure that the project remains on track.
 7. As students are wrapping up their projects, requiring a short final report to be shared with the instructor and the client is a way to help students process and reflect on their learnings. Guidelines on what to include in a cohesive and thoughtful summary will help students finish their work in an effective and professional manner.
 - How and why was this project selected? What interested you about this Service-Learning Project and what did you hope to learn?

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- What is the theory behind content libraries? What are they used for in a social media context? Be sure to cite applicable references from the business literature as part of your response.
 - What was your strategy in creating the entries for the content library? Did you establish a common theme over time? Did creating content help you to understand a specific social media platform and/or to explore different kinds of topics?
 - What insights did you develop from completing this Service-Learning Project? What was easy to do? What required the most effort?
 - Are you satisfied with the content library that you created? (Note: This may or may not be the same as the client's level of satisfaction.)
 - Did the organization's target audience respond positively to your content? If not, why not? What are some lessons that you learned with respect to marketing yourself in the future?
 - What would you do differently if you were to undertake this Service-Learning Project again?
 - What suggestions might you have to improve this Service-Learning Project for future students?

The content library for the project will be evaluated on readability (Does it flow from section to section nicely?), content accuracy (Do the learnings make sense?), and originality (Are the learnings believable as they relate to the author?). Due to the complexity of this phase of the project, the use of a well-designed evaluation rubric is strongly recommended (Wyss, Freedman & Siebert, 2014; Dogan & Uluman, 2017). The rubric designed for evaluating the content libraries is shown in Figure 2. Evaluation of the final reports for the project is more straightforward and uses a similar, but simpler rubric that largely follows the same pattern.

Figure 2: Evaluation Rubric for Content Libraries

	1 – Does not meet		2 – Minimally meets			3 - Meets			4 – Meets to highest level		
•Does student readily engage with Service-Learning client?	•Meetings and/or other interactions with the client occur infrequently.		•Meetings and/or other interactions with the client occur, but are insufficient to maintain progress.			•Meetings and/or other interactions occur frequently enough to keep project on schedule.			•Meeting and/or other interactions are notably proactive and add substantial value to the project.		
	0	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50
•Are project activities completed in a timely manner?	•Project activities are frequently behind schedule or may not occur at all.		•Project activities are completed, but run late often enough to slow project progress.			•Project activities are completed timely in accordance with established schedule.			•Project activities are often completed ahead of schedule, leaving extra time for fine-tuning and revisions.		
	0	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50
•Is there evidence of innovation and creativity in design?	•Work product is very standardized or “canned,” showing little to no personalization for the client.		•Work product is basic, but does include elements directed at meeting client’s needs.			•Work product shows innovation and creativity appropriate for solving the problems at hand.			•Work product is notably innovative and creative, providing unexpected value in terms of solutions.		
	0	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50
•Does the content library meet overall quality standards?	•Content library has missing elements and/or poor execution of important details or functions.		•Content library is serviceable with a few errors in technology and/or execution.			•Content library has strong entries that function properly and meet client’s expectations.			•Content library delights client with superior entries and extraordinary functionality in all aspects.		
	0	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50
•Do student-generated content postings receive favorable Internet responses?	•When posted, content generates little to no positive feedback online.		•When posted, content generates occasional positive feedback online.			•When posted, content generates regular positive feedback online.			•When posted, content generates significant positive feedback (Likes, Loves, Shares, etc.) and inquiries online.		
	0	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50

Discussion and Conclusions

In terms of writing content, each student doing this service-learning project will need to set aside time to write. In general, course-related experience has shown that creating a content library is most straightforward if a student writes several posts – each post with a different title – at one time to get into a writing mindset. This can provide the student with the opportunity to think through his/her strategy for the organization’s needs and wants as a whole. The goal is to write a number of posts in a reasonable amount of time so that the material is ready to go when the client needs to post new content. Batch writing excellent content is the first step, but keeping it well-organized for the client is how each student will make it really work as a positive experience for everyone involved.

There is a virtually infinite number of topics that would make good content for raising the social media profile of an organization. It is important

to note, however, that not all types or categories of content will be suitable for all clients. Students may need some extra coaching at the beginning of the project to help them best define a reasonable set of parameters for content generation that appeal to the client and also follow the theory-driven concepts presented here. Clients may also be sensitive to the format taken for new content – some will allow a lot of creative freedom, but others may want new content to be similar in appearance to successful content already in existence or to convey an easily recognized alignment with their brand heritage. Periodic instructor contact with the client can go a very long way toward maintaining suitable and timely content generation. Students should be encouraged at all times to “bounce” ideas off of their clients – especially if the new ideas are a bit out of alignment with prior project discussions.

The content libraries project has been used successfully in a senior-level leadership course for multiple semesters. It is particularly popular not only among students that are social media savvy, but also among students with a strong creative orientation, such as marketing communications or media studies. Most importantly, it has proven to be a productive way for online students to complete a robust service-learning or experiential learning project with a “real-world” client without the time and place constraints of needing to work with the client in a face-to-face manner.

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