

BDI Conference Notes

Kate Miltner hosted a discussion at Flightpath's New York Social Media Roundtable™ on June, 4, 2009 at the LGBT Community Center.. This is a summary of notes from Kate and participants.

Kate specializes in Social Media Strategy and Community Management at Flightpath.



Participants

Soraya Darabi

As the Manager of Digital Partnership & Buzz Marketing for The New York Times, Soraya established The Times's relationship with Facebook and YouTube amongst other social-media Web sites. Prior to The Times, she worked for CondeNet (the web division of CondeNast), where she co-founded the communications department for online properties such as Wired.com, Style.com, Epicurious.com and Concierge.com. Soraya was recently named a "Top 25 Person in Media to Follow on Twitter" by AdAge and was profiled in USA Today last year for her work in Buzz Marketing.

Soraya is the Communications Board Founder of Goods4Good (<http://www.Goods4Good.org>), a 2 year old non-for-profit in New York City that brings excess goods from the United States to third-world countries like Malawi.

Mathew Knell

Matt is a web technologist, brand marketer, and product manager with a history developing and marketing a wide array of successful products and brands including About.com, JetBlue Airways and Columbia University. He also teaches Social Media and Information Architecture at NYU's School of Continuing and Professional Studies. He's been profiled in the New York Observer, Mashable.com and writes about life at tagsmith.org

Mathew is co-founder of Social Media for Social Change (<http://www.sm4sc.com/>).

Rachel Sklar

Rachel is the Editor-at-Large of "Mediaite," the soon-to-be-launched media site from Abrams Research. She is the former Senior Contributing Editor for the Huffington Post and was the founding editor of the site's Eat the Press page. She writes media commentary for the Daily Beast and has contributed to the New York Times, the Village Voice, the Financial Times, Glamour, New York Magazine, and numerous publications in her homeland of Canada.

Rachel is the author of *A Stroke of Luck: Life, Crisis and Rebirth of a Stroke Survivor*, and is currently working on *Jew-ish*, a humorous book about cultural identity

Rachel recently launched the online charity site Charitini.com (<http://www.charitini.com>), which promotes micro-giving by allowing donors to substitute a small charitable donation for a "birthday drink" for a friend

Allison Palmer

Allison Palmer is Web Manager at The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, which is the second largest LGBT community center in the world. It has been in existence for over 25 years, and 6,000 people visit the Center each week.

Allison is responsible for all of the Center's online communications, including the Center's website, [gaycenter.org](http://www.gaycenter.org); the Center Blog; email communications; and online fundraising. She developed and implemented the Center's social media strategy, which has expanded the reach of the Center's advocacy work, social services programs, and fundraising campaigns. Her initiatives have increased visits to the Center's website (<http://www.gaycenter.org/>) by more than a third.

Round Table Discussion

The notes below are paraphrased from the discussion, not a direct transcript.

- Question: Can you give us some background on your Charity?
 - Soraya Darabi: Goods4Good.org is an organization that takes excess goods from United States corporations that were going to be recycled and gives them to third world countries. This includes clothes and food, but also includes items like bookbags, pens, etc. Goods4Good's mission is also to see how these products contribute to the country over a period of time.
 - Mathew Knell: Social Media for Social Change is a virtual organization on Twitter. There is no physical office. All the individuals involved in SM4SC met and communicate through Twitter. This includes fundraising events that are created through Tweetups and Meetups. Social Media for Social Change is an organization that fosters relationships with charities that brings people together around a social cause. Historically SM4SC has done work with domestic violence groups, City Harvest, and many other charities.
 - Rachel Sklar: For my birthday, I decided to ask my friends instead of buying me a birthday drink; they should take that money and donate to 4 charities that I chose. I got a big response from many people who thought it was a good idea. By inviting friends to do the same on their birthdays, Charitini.com because a wider organization. I used Twitter to help drum up support for charities through their Gratuitous Public Interest Campaign Thursday.
 - Allison Palmer: The Center has provided social services for the LGBT for 25 years. This established charitable organization that currently is trying to bring their physical space to the online world
- Q: What platforms does your charity use (Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, etc), and how are they used?
 - SD:

- YouTube.com
 - Twitter (800 Followers)
 - Tumblr
 - Flickr
- MK:
 - Twitter – for donations and awareness, and live blogging and streaming
 - WordPress with shared hosting
 - EventBrite – for events.
 - Tumblr – for live blogging, for example: the “Stay in and Help us” campaign – we asked people to stay home and donate what they would have spent on a night out to a charitable organization.
 - Flickr – somewhat, for photos.
- RS:
 - Tumblr – to start Charitini because it was easy. I use it as a way to blog on it continually about Charitini as well as my personal self.
 - Twitter -- for everything from my day job, self, event coverage, Charitini.
- AP:
 - Facebook and Twitter – to get people into physical events
 - Facebook Causes – for fundraising, also to get instant feed back from the community – what people are talking about, what other non-profits are doing, voices from the LGBT community.
 - Twitter -- to find out what people are talking about throughout the day.
 - We are also on MySpace and Flickr, and we use WordPress to blog.
- Follow up Q to AP: What platforms have been the most successful and what tactics have been most successful?
 - AP: We’ve had the most success with Facebook – where most of our effort has been. It has a lot of different tools you can use, and it really fits with work we are doing. With event promotion we’ve had success with viral promotion through Facebook. Cross promotion of events, protests, etc – to stay relevant. We just started building our Twitter presence. So far it’s been successful. We have only used Facebook Causes for fundraising.
- Can you give the audience some suggestions on building a Twitter Presence?
 - SD:
 - Our focus is more on Tumblr – we reach out to other people who are blogging and who are influential, who post on Twitter and Tumblr, etc.

- Use vocal, influential people (“over sharers”) within the non-profit community to help spread the word.
 - Stay in communication with people who come to your events so that they will continue to spread the word.
 - RS:
 - Target the influential people, don’t spam them.
 - On Twitter don’t put an @ reply just so they see it – respond to something they have said and address them directly.
 - MK:
 - Leverage personal relationships through Twitter. Start by selling the passion to friends to help the “freight train start going”.
 - We started with one to one communication with friends who were passionate. This helps to create a transparent, authentic relationship and other interested people will run with that.
 - People don’t always want to get involved, don’t spam. If they are not interested that means they aren’t passionate. Cultivate smaller relationships of passionate people instead of spamming.
- Q: Have you done online or offline events? Do you have a preference, and if so, why?
 - SD:
 - There are organizations that use SMS applications to check into events.
 - We created a calendar for summer events which also exists online.
 - It is important to use good aesthetic design and good writers for blogging.
 - Use online strategies to bring people to an event, like Tweetups. Once people are at the even they will tweet and blog about it.
 - MK:
 - Our fundraising events tend to be in one city. Through twitter people who are not in the area were asking how they could help.
 - People can contribute through twitter and Tumblr during the event – even those who can’t be there. That way we can have donors beyond the physical area.
 - People who volunteer their time and are passionate about the cause can actively blog during the event to keep people informed.
 - AP
 - Like most established non-profits, The Center is very rooted in special events as the main fundraiser.

- We use social media to bring people to events.
 - We create online components – those that are contest driven or goal driven (such as show a ‘thermometer’ of raised funds).
 - I’d like to see a trend starting in established non-profits to pick up online-only events, especially in these economic times and non-profits being hit so hard with it. Non-profits also need training in this area (social media) – how to use Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, etc.
- Q: How does Social Media and the issue of demographics affect the donor base?
 - SD:
 - The founder of Goods4Good has a prestigious board filled with good connections. The Communications Board, however, is there to reach a younger, savvy group of users. We are talking to people who are online all day.
 - It’s not just about asking for money with younger people, we also ask them to volunteer their time (to pack goods for shipment, for example people)
 - Be widespread to reach all the demographics:
 - Twitter is mostly female
 - Primary Facebook users are between the ages of 25-35
 - YouTube are mostly used for Males who are 35 years and older.
 - Women communicate on Facebook walls 10 times more than men.
 - MK:
 - Give people a compelling reason to give and an easy way to do it – and demographics don’t matter as much.
 - Younger people have lower attention spans.
 - Online donors will be web savvy people mostly, but on a secondary level, there will be people who didn’t realize that giving was so easy.
 - Go with volume channels. Go everywhere. Give at least a little bit of your time to different channels (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, etc).
 - Even if you do not update your content often, update it regularly to keep it fresh.
 - RS:
 - Micro-giving, let people know that as long as they give a little it doesn’t matter.
 - The point is to do a something small.

- Celebrate people who give, not how much. On your blog, etc, acknowledge people who made the donations not the dollar amount.
 - In these times of things not being easy – make it easy to give.
 - Package your message well.
 - AP:
 - Our development department is primarily concerned with cultivating relationships offline. We are just now stepping into the online space.
 - Fortunately, the LBGT community is very much using the internet. As soon as the Center starts anything online people jump on it – because it is an identity based organization.
 - We use online channels to reach a broader audience in a way that is relevant to both the LBGT and non-LBGT communities.
- Q: What are some challenges specific to your charity that you've encountered? What are some solutions?
 - SD:
 - The internet is big. It's very easy for people to read things and not realize the work it takes to raise the money, etc.
 - The challenge is reaching out to this audience of people who are already saturated by websites.
 - Be direct and ask specific questions: "do you have extra boxes of pens in your office".
 - Find a way to communicate and touch the heartstrings of people who are inundated. Make them understand what their dollars are achieving.
 - MK:
 - The challenge is soliciting people who want to get involved without being spammy to drum up support.
 - Empower other people to spread the message about events.
 - RS:
 - The biggest challenge is time. Finding the time to sit down and get actually dollars and take Charitini to the next level.
 - It's important to set plans: "Ok on Thursday I need to X", and make the time to do this stuff.
 - AP:
 - Some challenges for non-profits are the basic internal structure. There is old school communications department structure

- People are used to press releases, newsletters; they aren't used to informal communications over social media. – There is a barrier to adopting new tools.
 - Each Facebook status update can't be approved by the executive director – a shift needs to happen through out non-profit staffers.
 - Staffers need to be on the sites themselves getting the word out to get past the adoption hurdle.
- Q: What will the future of charitable giving be; what trends have you noticed?
 - SD: The word of 2009 is “micro”. Micro-blogging, micro-payments. There has been a shift away from large charitable giving, towards social media to raise awareness and smaller donations.
 - MK: There has been a change in the relationship between the organization and the individual. We are moving away from the one-to-many to the one-to-one. Reaching out to one person at a time. Also, there will be a shift of using for-profit metrics and e-commerce based tools coming into the non-profit sector.
 - RS: Becoming very viral with events using hashtags. Tap into the excitement of “nerdy togetherness” that the internet is good at fostering.
 - AP: I hope that non-profits will catch on to this and start including it in job descriptions and funding proposals so that it will gain legitimacy as an actual job function. Find ways to go beyond fundraising; what other things can be done online? Advocacy, Information Gathering, etc. Non-profits need to figure out engagement – so that the organization is relevant passed the hashtag event.

Public Questions

- Direct mail has always worked – we know the value of a donor, we know how much to expect from our efforts and can monetize them. What is the value of 1 Twitter follower? How many followers do I need if I need to raise \$5000? What is the monetized value of advocates?
 - RS: Followers are useful in their own ways. People can smell when you are trying to use them or just gain them for things (fundraising).
 - MK: Anyone willing to carry a message is valuable. Your question speaks to what the value is in social media is period. Is it a “mention”? A “re-tweet”? An @? It depends on what is valuable to use. If your goal is to reach out to local markets that you haven't gone for before it's harder to quantify. If your goal is to get 50,000 followers, that is quantifiable.
 - SD: Use bit.ly or WebTrends and web analytics to find out how many hits you are getting.
 - AP: The public needs to be as empowered as non-profit employees to speak on behalf of the non-profit.
- Implementation is an issue. If you spread out people doing posts through an organization, how do you train them – how do you respond to what doesn't work.
 - AP: A lot of people can be working on the social media sites within the organization. When you speak from the organizational perspective it's important to train people not to be personal and inappropriate, but to be friendly and

transparent. Have volunteers within the organization and external to it who will post on their sites and re-tweet.

- Corporate Responsibility is a marketing revolution. How can brands integrate with the content stream from non-profits in a way that makes everyone money?
 - MK: Anyone can partner with us. Talk about your corporate responsibility program to get your corporation out there. When partnering with charities, brands that come out very transparent make the transition easier. Try to be as agnostic as possible, and find the right partner to brand with.
 - SD: Reach out to all of the small marketing agencies – all have at least one pro-bono client. Smaller agencies will give you more personalization. They want the tax write-offs. Call the communications strategists of corporations to discuss partnering with them.
 - MK: Also, talk to the corporate responsibility team.
- Do you have strategies and tips for non-profits working over seas?
 - SD: Be everywhere, but more importantly be where your core followers are. Soon more people internationally will have smart phones. Twitter might be the best bet. Also harness text messaging to get to countries that might not have broadband.
- Do you have ideas on how social media can be used to re-vitalize our most important relationships: those with our mates and our children?
 - RS: My mom follows me on twitter, my dad is on Facebook, so he can get a sense in an ambient way what I'm doing.
 - SD: Creating a micro-payment platform would be great. The concept is a “penny jar” to collect the extra cent from 99cent payments. For example, if you buy a song from iTunes, where does the extra penny go? If you were asked to donate it to a cause – that’s so small many people would – imagine if everyone donated a penny to each of these charities how much money would be raised.
 - MK: A great way to do micro-donations from Twitter is through TipJoy.
- No one mentioned We-Care.com, why was it not mentioned? Do we need to change our approach?
 - MK: We didn’t use it because we didn’t have the volume or scope to get there. There are already so many places that we exist in but only so many places to go around.
 - AP: Non-profits are so understaffed we go where we can get the biggest bang for our non-profit buck.
- How do you build your core of supporters? How do you go after that core and know where they are? Are the [social media] worlds big enough that you can build your core there?
 - SD: Twitter is changing the search platform. Find your organization’s key words, take the same terms that you are using for SEO and type them into twitter to see what people are saying about a particular term. Then you can engage them: “did you know we are doing xyz over here?”
- What are the trends in video in the social media space for small and growing charities?
 - RS: Each forum has it’s own language. Posting clips is always useful. For each of the platforms you are on, just speak the language of that platform. There are low cost things you can do. For example, use your camera or phone to make the “Charity Minute” every day and just post a short relevant video.

- MK: The minute you personalize the effort people get really passionate about it. The story with limited resources, what matters is the story not the production value. You don't need a film crew and thousands of dollars.
- AP: Video is a great opportunity for crowd-sourcing. We currently have a campaign where we have partnered with an LGBT community in L.A. – participants upload videos of themselves and share it as part of this campaign. We don't have to spend our time making videos, our supporters create the content for us. Crowd-sourcing is a really easy way to get video and to get a lot of people involved.
- Last Question: Is MySpace dead?
 - SD: Yes
 - MK: Yes
 - RS: No. It's still used very much in the music industry. It's very heavily used in the Music industry. MySpace is still the number one player for music and video.
 - AP: If you do any kind of youth campaigning MySpace is very important. That's the social network that younger people are on at this point, they still use it and are very active.

[Closing Remarks, Thank you to everyone who attended, we greatly appreciate your participation and hope to see you again at our next social media round table.]

Special Thanks to The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center

Twitter

In addition to these notes, Flightpath staff was twittering during the event.

For all of Flightpath's tweets from the BDI event, visit www.twitter.com/flightpathny. More twitter coverage of the event from other attendees can be found via the hashtag #nysmrt.

Flightpath's Upcoming Social Media Events

June 9, 2009 - Social Communications Leadership Forum - <http://tinyurl.com/olx6ys>

Flightpath will be presenting a case study at the Social Communications Leadership Forum on June 9th. This invitation-only event is geared toward an exclusive group of senior communications, marketing, and media executives who manage their corporate social media strategy. The leadership forum was created in response to the demand for a private program focused solely on social communications strategy and execution. These issues and needs will be addressed through case study presentations, analysis, and discussion. The forum meets on a quarterly basis in New York City and San Francisco.

About Flightpath

Flightpath is an award-winning digital agency headquartered in New York City's Flatiron district. Flightpath delivers superior digital solutions that drive client success through a combination of inspired creativity, enlightened technology, and team resourcefulness.

Primary service offerings include digital strategy development, web site design and production, and interactive marketing with an emphasis on social media, email and search.

Learn more at www.flightpath.com.

About the New York Social Media Round Table

NY Social Media Roundtable is a monthly gathering of anyone and everyone who has a use for social media in their personal or professional lives. With a new discussion topic every month, NYSMRT aims to foster and showcase social media thought leadership in the NY metro area. NYSMRT is presented by Flightpath: Bringing it to Digital since 1993.