Celebrating 20 years

AMOSSHE

The Student Services Organisation

Using Digital and Social Media in Student Services

A Toolkit for Student Services Managers

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The University Of Sheffield.

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Introduction – The Digital and Social Media Landscape

Developments in digital and social media represent a rapidly changing environment with a huge societal impact. According to socialmediainfluence.com, in 2010 there were 50 million tweets every day; now the figure stands at 340 million. Active users of Facebook have grown from 500m to 901m over the same period. In 2010 there were 2 billion YouTube views per day; this doubled to 4 billion in 2012. According to the IT consultancy Gartner, more than one billion people worldwide will use online social networks this year.

It is self-evident that students are using social media within their HE experience and some may have a particular preference for using new technologies. There is an increasing blending of the digital with the social: 400 YouTube links are tweeted every minute; 150 years worth of YouTube content is viewed every day via Facebook. Nearly 40% of social media usage is via a mobile device (all figures from socialmediainfluence.com).

Where do Student Services managers stand in relation to these rapid and significant developments? Based on feedback from a request to the AMOSSHE jiscmail list in 2012, Student Services colleagues across the HE sector are making some use of digital and social media tools but there is little or no evidence of engagement with the issue strategically. While there is a myriad of generic technological guidance available to potential users of these technologies, and examples of information and support directed at students (eg, how to develop a digital 'footprint') there is no obvious reference point on effective practice specifically for managers working in a Student Services context. This toolkit is intended to provide that practical management resource.

Previous work by AMOSSHE, the Student Services Organisation, has demonstrated that the effective use of IT in a Student Services context can be an area of particular challenge for our members – as such we are focussing here on a theme which is both of great significance in the current and future student experience; and of immediate relevance to our members.

Part 1 Being strategic

Arguably the dynamic context set out in the Introduction to this toolkit is not susceptible to strategic planning. A contrary argument is expressed by the cartoon below (from Intersection Consulting - a digital marketing consultancy in Vancouver):
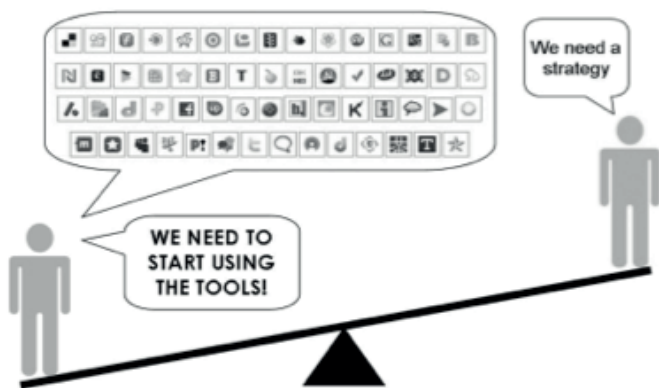

The rush to start using the tools should NOT outweigh the need to formulate a social media strategy

If, in your Student Services team or department, colleagues are already using digital and social media tools but there has been no attempt to step back and engage with the issue strategically, we hope this toolkit might help. As a starting point, we suggest that the following eight themes constitute a helpful strategic 'framework':

1 **Vision & purpose** – articulating why you are harnessing these technologies and what you are trying to achieve.
2 **Content** – identifying which topics, themes, functions and services are most relevant for the purposes of digital and social media.
3 **Tools & media** - selecting the most appropriate technologies from the myriad of available options.
4 **Leadership, management & monitoring**, including issues relating to job roles and training.
5 **Integration** – the question of whether your digital and social media activities are additional to; or stand-alone from; or integrated in your broader communication efforts.
6 **Promotional activity** – ways in which you encourage users to engage.

7 **Evaluation** - including assessing the value and impact of using these technologies in a Student Services context.
8 **Technical considerations** – from the perspective of Student Services managers, ie, accepting that this toolkit is not a technologists' guide.

The strategic framework is depicted in summary form in a diagram below. In Part 3 of the toolkit you will find a self-assessment tool, in the form of a set of questions and discussion prompts relating to each of the eight elements. Appendix 2 contains a sample reflective response to the self-assessment questions (relating to the Student Services one-stop-shop at the University of Sheffield). Appendix 3 presents an action planning template, which you might find a helpful format to record key points arising from a self-assessment, and a way of summarising planned follow-up action. The case studies in Part 4 of the Toolkit are included as a means of prompting further ideas for reflection and action planning.
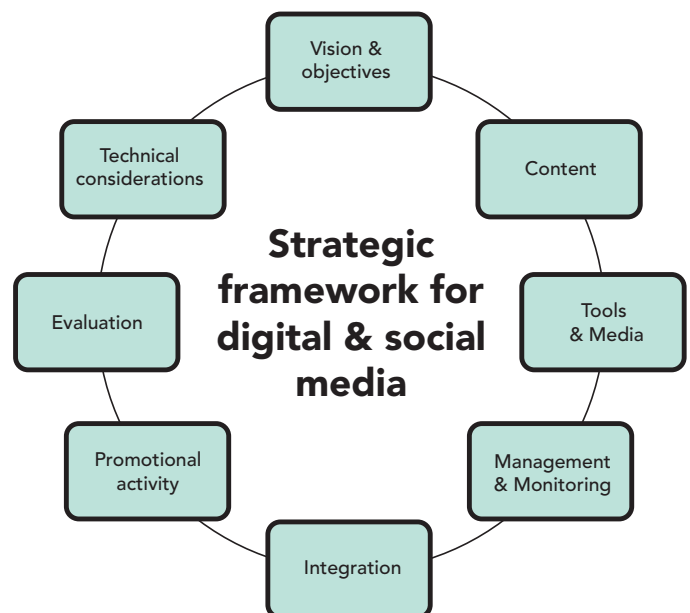
Part 2 Self-assessment questions

This part of the Toolkit sets out a series of questions and discussion prompts relating to each of the eight elements of the strategic framework introduced in Part 1. Appendix 2 contains a sample reflective response to the questions (relating to a Student Services one-stop-shop). Appendix 3 presents an action planning template - a potential format to record key points arising from self-assessment, and a way of summarising planned follow-up action. The case studies in Part 4 of the Toolkit are included as a means of prompting further ideas and action.

1. Vision & purpose

This first element of the strategic framework encourages you to be clear about your overall vision. The following questions might prompt discussion and help clarify:

- Can you articulate clearly why you are harnessing the use of these technologies; what are you trying to achieve?
- What is the link to broader strategies (eg, your student support strategy/student experience strategy and/or any IT strategy for support services?)
- How do you intend your use of digital and social media to be linked to your wider communications objectives and activities?

The basic point is that any digital strategy should not be an end in itself but will prove authentic and effective by means of the support it provides for your core purpose.

2. Content

The following questions are intended to help you be clear about the topics, themes, functions (aka "content") where it is most relevant or sensible to use digital and social media.

- Do you have existing exemplars of service or activity areas where digital and social media is already used to good effect?
- Is there a sense of priority areas for development and what is the rationale for this? What is the link-back to the strategic purpose mentioned above?
- Do you have a clear sense of user behaviour and pref-

erences, for example rather than considering how you want to communicate with students, instead you might ask how students want to communicate with you. Feedback from any institutional surveys on student IT usage/levels of confidence with IT might be a helpful reference point and also to assist in prioritisation.

- Are there areas where a social media presence (eg, Facebook) might form your main or single communications channel? This would make social media the communications "hub" for a service area rather than simply a "spoke" in their communications effort.
- How are you taking account of the international dimension/s within these technologies, for example foreign language content; continent-specific tools, etc?
- If you provide services to staff as well as students (eg, guidance for staff on student support issues), how might digital and social media be deployed in that context?

3. Tools, channels, media

There is a multiplicity of options, some heavily used in the UK and some marginal/emergent. As such there are important issues about deploying the relevant tools/media in the appropriate context. Arguably a scatter-gun approach may have less impact; there is also a question of being realistic about the maintenance overheads and thus being selective in the tools you use (see also 4 below).

Some media options include:
Text, audio, photographs, video, live streaming, chat; and/or a combination of media (eg, video embedded in text site; QR code leading to picture/diagram; automated text-back including a weblink, etc).

Some tools/platforms include:
- Social & Professional Networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, etc.)
- Instant Messenger (AIM, GChat) and Texting (on cell phones, BlackBerries, iPhones and other PDAs)
- Blogs (Wordpress, Blogger, etc.)
- Micro-Blogs (Twitter, etc.)
- Content (Wikipedia, etc.)
- Social Bookmarking (Digg, Delicious, StumbleUpon, etc.)
- Opinion Site (Yelp, MouthShut, Epinions, etc.)
- Crowdsourcing (eg, see http://www.crowdsourcing.org)

- Multimedia Sharing (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.)
- Virtual Worlds (Second Life, Active Worlds, etc.)
- Social Aggregators (Netvibes, Friendfeed, etc.)
- E-learning systems (Blackboard, Moodle, etc)
- Tools with a specific educational focus (iTunesU, Learnist, etc.)
- Online shopping systems.

In all this there is an overarching question to ask about the balance of provider - or user - generated content.

The template in Appendix 2 could be used to help assess and record to what extent each tool is currently deployed / might be more effectively deployed / might not be relevant in your context.

4. Leadership, management, monitoring

Research suggests that effective digital development requires adequate resourcing in the relevant functional teams (ie, it is not feasible to pass responsibility to IT or communications experts outside Student Services). The following questions are intended to help you self-assess your approach to this challenge:

- Who is leading the strategy for digital and social media across any Student Services structure or in particular teams?
- Where dedicated role/s exist, how do these colleagues communicate and support each other; where there are no such roles, can/should they be created? Can you build on or use any existing networks, eg, any team responsible for Student Services communications or websites?
- How are you supporting staff training and capability building (eg, skills for writing in these contexts). Could you identify social media "champions"? This site from a student affairs team in the USA is an interesting example of an approach to staff training in this area: http://sat.weber.edu/techtrivia/
- What is your procurement practice where new tools are introduced or content is developed using external suppliers: do you have links to trusted local providers with skills in areas like video content? Are you sharing this knowledge and getting best value? Are you sufficiently familiar with any in-house services (eg, provided by your marketing or IT departments) or any list of agencies already tried and tested in the university?
- Where tools are already in use, are roles clearly defined to carry out monitoring of sites and taking a lead to interact, respond, etc. Is there a calendar in place so that the sites are used proactively? Where you are in a reactive mode, are you using google alert or similar to help with this? For those posting content, probably an excellent customer care mindset is required alongside an understanding of potential PR implications, and you may need to have arrangements in place for escalating issues as necessary.
- It is important to remember that social media is a 24/7/365 operation. How is this reflected in your expectations of relevant members of staff and how might that be reflected in job descriptions and reward arrangements?
- How do you share practice across functional teams to provide development and support on the use of these technologies?
- You might consider creating practical guidance notes and 'how to' guides, eg, covering matters such as accuracy, respect, tone of voice, confidentiality, personal vs 'official' usage, potential legal pitfalls (there is an interesting article on this topic at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20782257).
- How do you take account of any existing corporate guidelines on style and accessibility of digital content?
- What benchmarking do you carry out? There are some case studies of effective usage in the next section of this toolkit which you might find a helpful starting point for benchmarking reference sites.
- How do you find out about and test the ever expanding range of new products? Who is monitoring sites like Mashable.com or socialmediaexaminer.com?
- If concerns arise, do you have arrangements in place to remove access to sites and/or reset security permissions and the like – have you considered relevant information security/data protection issues?

5. Integration

This element of the framework relates to the extent to which your digital and social media activities are additional to; or stand-alone from; or integrated in more 'traditional' methods of communication. The following questions should help you reflect on this:

- What is your approach to piloting new technological approaches?
- Do you intentionally design your digital activity such that there is effective mutual referral/connection with the traditional media, including email?

- How are any members of staff with a remit for digital communications linked to colleagues who have a broader communications role in your teams/services?
- Given the pace of change in this area, arguably you might need to consider integrating your approach to more traditional forms of communication with your digital media strategy, rather than vice versa. In some areas, digital communications might become the core communications medium.
- A contrary argument might be that some students may not wish to use social media and you will presumably wish to ensure that alternative communication channels remain available.
- There could be issues to consider regarding equality of access/take-up. An equality impact assessment (or similar process) might prove helpful.

6. Promotional activity, marketing and user engagement

An important strand to any digital and social media strategy concerns the ways in which you draw users (aka participants) into your digital services. Some questions for consideration include:

- As a starting point, reflect on whether you are offering digital and social media as an alternative to traditional communications or instead of traditional communication (for example for reasons of efficiency)? Depending on the answer to these points, different promotional activity will be required.
- Do you have realistic plans for piloting/experimentation followed by a formal launch with sustainability in mind?
- What arrangements have you made for search engine optimisation in an attempt to drive usage?
- Do you have an agreed/consistent approach to referencing social media services eg, including links on existing well-used websites; URLs in email signatures; QR codes in printed publications, etc?
- If you can see potential efficiency gains from deploying social media, are those developments being appropriately prioritised?
- How are you designing-in mechanisms for user retention (on the basis that an average user might leave an online environment after 3 clicks)? Typically this might involve interactivity; "social communication", online conversations, chat rooms, instant messaging, time-limited competitions, etc.

- Are resources in place such that relevant sites will be characterised by the sort of <u>constant</u>, accurate, relevant and <u>sustained</u> activity which makes for a successful social media presence (see also element 4 of the strategic framework)?
- Have you thought of ways in which digital media can assist in building 'brand loyalty'? For example do your sites promote a "Long Tail" approach akin to Amazon's recommendations feature ("we saw you were looking at X; had you thought of Y?")? An Amazon employee described the Long Tail as follows: "We sold more books today that didn't sell at all yesterday than we sold today of all the books that did sell yesterday".
- Are you exploring all the ways in which these technologies can assist in customisation/personalisation of services?
- Building on the point about user engagement, an interesting observation regarding social media and values from the commercial sector in the USA is that Oreo (http://brands.nabisco.com/oreo/index.html) apparently achieved 1m new "Likes" after it posted a bold message in support of gay pride on its Facebook page. Are there issues about the way in which these technologies support discussion of opinions and values (rather than information) which you might consider? These developmental themes might be particularly relevant in a Student Services context - what are the opportunities and risks if you move in this direction?

In conclusion, the following "Four Es" of social media might form a helpful checklist when considering marketing and promotional issues:

➢ **Education** – to what extent are you using this media to share information and resources to enrich your users' understanding?
➢ **Entertainment** – to what extent are you offering content which is fun and memorable?
➢ **Engagement** – what are you doing to actively draw in and welcome your user community in and foster their active participation?
➢ **Empowerment** – how are you enabling users to make contributions and how do you empower them to influence your service?

7. Evaluation

There are various aspects to consider in this element of the strategic framework. Where do your services stand in relation to the following:

- Initially at a very practical level - getting the appropriate technical methods in place to provide ready access to things like hit rate, click-through, usage tracking, number of likes/followers, etc.
- Having a plan which builds in milestones to realign an approach after a period of piloting.
- Given the inherently social nature of many of the tools, ensuring that the user feedback/customer view is firmly embedded. To do this you might find it helpful to work closely with your students' union or equivalent representative body. Student representatives might also help self-assess your current approach, using the framework suggested in this Toolkit.
- User-preference is a key concept underpinning effective evaluation: do you understand this adequately for the area of social and digital media? The list of tools in element 3 (above) might be a helpful reference point.
- Do you have any arrangements in place for usability tests, and the like?
- Are there ways in which social media might be used specifically as a means of encouraging feedback on services or for the design/co-creation of new services (eg, crowd sourcing techniques, facebook polls, online contests)?
- Consider ways in which you might assess value for money/benefits realisation. AMOSSHE's Value & Impact assessment toolkit might help: http://www.amosshe.org/viptoolkit

Some of the points made above in section 4 are also relevant to the theme of evaluation (of course there is a connection across all elements of this suggested strategic framework).

8. Technical issues

Probably this element of the framework is largely the territory of IT experts, perhaps based in a corporate IT services department or equivalent. For example there might be a need for guidance on matters such as mobile device compatibility or fit with any prescribed website template/format. Some questions for Student Services teams to consider might be:

- Generally speaking do you rely on standardised web templates (such as those provided by your corporate IT or marketing team)?
- If you diverge from standard settings, do you understand the consequences and the potential future resourcing implications, eg, maintenance and upgrades?
- What is the level of integration across systems? For example how do your digital and social media services relate to core (back-end) systems like the student record system or other corporate systems which are used in your teams, eg, Customer Relationship Management systems. What is the integration with your email platform; are you adequately exploiting technology like RSS feeds, and the like?
- How effective and interactive are the online links between (for example) digital resources concerned with student support, and e-learning systems like Moodle and Blackboard, where they are in use?
- How do you balance "out-sourcing" of technical support with the need to foster skills in your own teams (see also element 4 above)?

As a reminder, in concluding this part of the Toolkit:
- ➢ Appendix 2 contains an example reflective response to the questions and discussion prompts set out above (the example relates to a Student Services one-stop-shop).
- ➢ Appendix 3 presents an action planning template, which you might find a helpful format to record key points arising from the discussion prompts, and a way of summarising planned follow-up action.
- ➢ The case studies in Part 4 of the Toolkit might prompt further ideas and action.

Part 3 A student perspective

**Contributed by Lisa Scanlon and Tom Dixon from the University of Sheffield Students' Union:
http://www.shef.ac.uk/union/**

Why is digital and social media an important area to be focussing on?

Writing from the perspective of a Student Union, our research continues to indicate that our students want to be contacted and engaged with online, highlighting the importance of our own digital presence. We like to operate a 'fish where the fish are' type model which basically means we speak to our audience on platforms we know they are already using, and this has been a successful approach for us.

Traditional offline communication channels are relatively one-way and significantly less conversational - therefore it can be difficult to measure their effectiveness. With Facebook's built-in analytics (called Insights) for example we have the ability to measure the reach and level of engagement from everything we put out there. This is of huge value to us.

Communications and marketing without the ability to measure are difficult to develop, but with digital we can look at what works and what doesn't work in real-time, and adapt and refine our strategy quickly.

What are the key issues?

A key issue from our point of view would be the ever-changing landscape of digital media. Remaining abreast of current trends, norms and cultures on various platforms requires a lot of research and development, and time is therefore a factor. We've seen audiences jumping ship from social media platforms overnight because of controversial changes in terms and conditions (Instagram for example), so we can never afford to stand still.

Another key issue is the huge number of digital media

tools out there - we have to accept that it's not practical to try and be present and influential on all of them. And it's essentially impossible to predict which ones users will adopt or abandon. Pinterest for example has recently caught up with Twitter in terms of active users but unlike Twitter, Pinterest is widely overlooked by brands, organisations and political figures.

Pitfalls, challenges and opportunities

Nothing is risk-free online, even if you only stand to lose time, but it's potentially more harmful to be risk averse and therefore miss out on great opportunities to connect. An upside is that most digital media tools are free to use, and if not there are usually open-source freebies that can give you the same or similar results, so financially you don't stand to lose a great deal.

Reputation however is always at risk when you are a voice in the public domain. By its very nature, social media is spontaneous and timely. Therefore it's easy to make a mistake or a bad judgement-call very publicly, having not had time to agonise over potential reactions and consequences. We've seen many cases of PR disasters on social media (thankfully not our own) but it's just one of those things you have to accept. Probably the only way to really avoid this type of thing is to ensure the people at the reins know what they're doing, can think on their feet and have the right attitude when things go wrong. Being criticized is just part of being in the public eye, it's what you do next that counts.

In terms of opportunities, they're endless. With a great web presence you have the potential to mobilise a huge audience and turn them into your evangelists. We all want our audience to love us, trust us and tell their friends about how great we are, and we're lucky enough to see that happening on a regular basis online. Our audience also love to tell us when we get things wrong which is just as valuable, if not more so.

One final recommendation would be to look at what others are doing. We learn so much from the successes and mistakes others make online. Consume, borrow, adapt and develop what other people are doing and you'll soon see the results. Social media is essentially a free-for-all because it's just conversation, and just like face-to-face interaction the best way to get better at it is to immerse yourself in it.

Part 4 Case studies

University of Sheffield, UK: University of Sheffield Enterprise (USE)
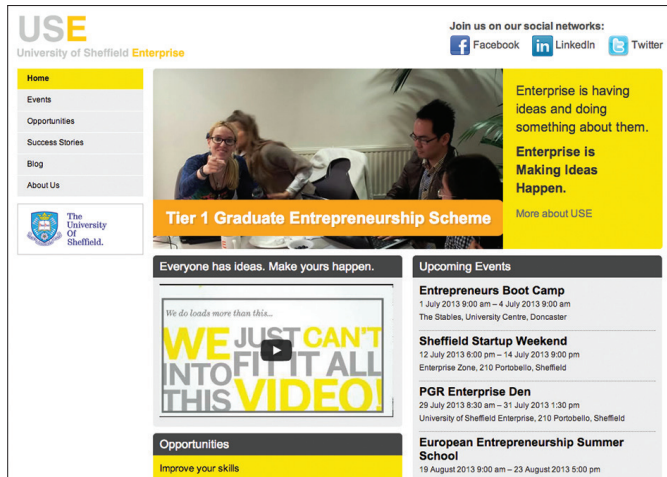
A website comprising a range of social and digital media including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. The site includes a multi-author blog that is predominantly written by eight part-time student interns working at USE and updated almost daily with topics around the theme of enterprise. The blog won the 'Best Business Blog award' at the 2011 Some Comms Social Media Awards. The blog is monitored and edited by USE's Marketing Coordinator who also evaluates and reports on its effectiveness utilising Google Analytics, Facebook Insights and Twitter statistics.

www.shef.ac.uk/enterprise

University of Kentucky, USA: see blue

A comprehensive collection of videos and articles about real student experiences on campus designed to support the university's admission process. Utilising YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, Twitter, Prezi, blogs and live chat, seeblue prospective students to chat with an admissions administrator and get all their questions answered in the comfort of their own home. The "ask the cat" section contains a frequently asked questions database to provide students with the answers they need quickly and efficiently. See blue is maintained and managed by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions.

http://www.uky.edu/admission

## University of Birmingham, UK: Power Outage Communications

In November 2012 the University of Birmingham Campus experienced a massive rolling power outage which was completely beyond their control affecting university buildings along with student residences. The outage impacted on lectures, seminars and classes as well as IT systems, including the university website. As a result the university turned to its established and popular social media as the main way of communicating up-to-date information to the student population and deal with complaints and queries. The level of student engagement through the university's social media was unprecedented, and in response staff established a rota to provide near 24/7 coverage. In addition the university minimized negative sentiment by asking students to suggest songs for a #UoBBlackout playlist. During the two week blackout 1995 tweets were sent using the #UoBBlackout hashtag and nearly 3,000 new followers were added to the university's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

https://storify.com/sam__jones/uob-blackout

University of Sheffield, UK: allaboutlinguistics.com
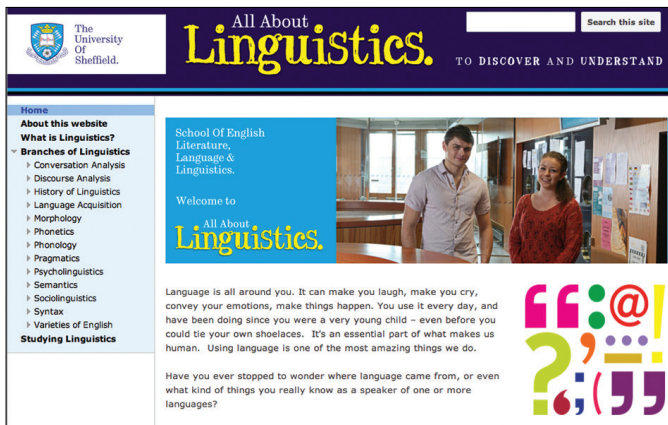
An award winning website produced by undergraduate students in the School of English for prospective students. The site uses Google apps such as Sites, Docs, Google+, Maps, YouTube, and Calendar. It has proven so popular that it has now been expanded to include feeds from Facebook and Twitter along with a departmental blog written by staff, postgraduate students and potential undergraduates. The site is maintained by the department's eLearning Support Officer and two committees review content before final approval is granted.

http://allaboutlinguistics.com

Johns Hopkins University, USA: Hopkins Interactive

A social media website designed to enable prospective and current students the ability to connect with the university by offering them candid, uncensored information about student life on campus and in Baltimore. It includes feeds from Facebook and Twitter along with blogs, videos, message boards / forum and other social media including Pinterest and Flickr. The 'This Month @ H.I.' feature brings together everything about the site in to one page and includes highlights from what is going on around the campus that month, featured blogs and links to articles about the university featured in mainstream news. The site is maintained by current students who are members of the Student Admission Advisory Board, which meets weekly to review the content.

http://www.hopkins-interactive.com

University of Glamorgan, UK: Glamlife

The Times Higher Awards 2012 winner for Outstanding Student Support, Glamlife is a student portal backed by a strong social media presence. It caters to both current and prospective students by funnelling communications into different profiles depending on which audience the message is for. In addition, the Glamlife's Facebook profile syndicates news stories across the portal giving visibility to services that don't have a social media presence of their own. Glamlife's Facebook and Twitter feeds convey relatively formal communications and broadcast university messages. The moderators are responsive to student comments and include any issues in an annual feedback report which is published for the student community to see what actions have been taken.

https://www.facebook.com/uniglamlife

University of Sheffield, UK: Well Connected
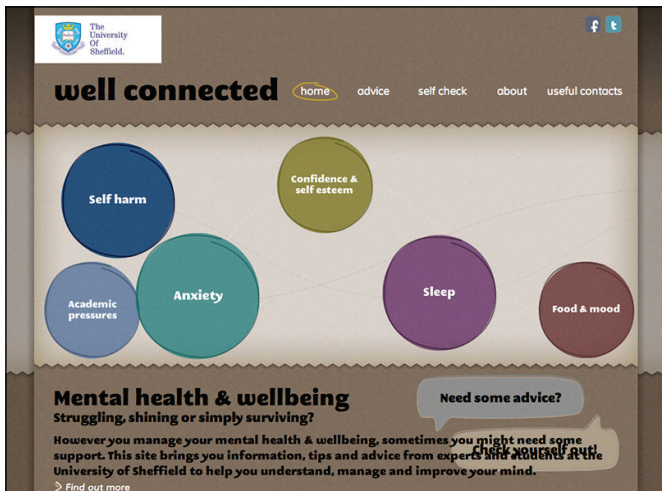
A digital resource to support student mental health concerns and issues, the Well Connected website features video and audio content along with a Facebook group, Twitter feed and interactive self-service assessment tool. This tool is an on-line version of a highly researched mental health assessment instrument designed specifically for the Well Connected site. Users are given immediate, personal feedback to their responses to a set of 34 questions over five interactive screens. This feedback provides suggestions for possible sources of additional help and support regarding mental wellbeing. The system is managed by a specific member of the University Counselling Service team and overseen by a steering group with both staff and student membership.

http://well-connected.group.shef.ac.uk

University of Sheffield, UK: Laurbubble interactive video tour
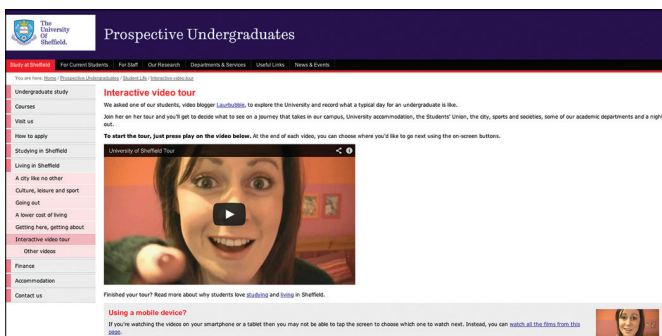
Hosted by YouTube celebrity and University of Sheffield graduate Laurbubble, this series of 17 videos enables prospective and current students to conduct a self-guided tour of university locations and services. Using YouTube's internal link annotations, students are able to choose where they would like to go next at the end of each individual video. The content is informal, engaging and fun, capturing many aspects of University life that aren't necessarily immediately accessible. Since they were released in May 2012 the videos have been viewed more than 130,000 times. YouTube analytics are constantly monitored to evaluate the effectiveness of the video series.

http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/studentlife/videos

Cornell University, USA: Life on the Hill
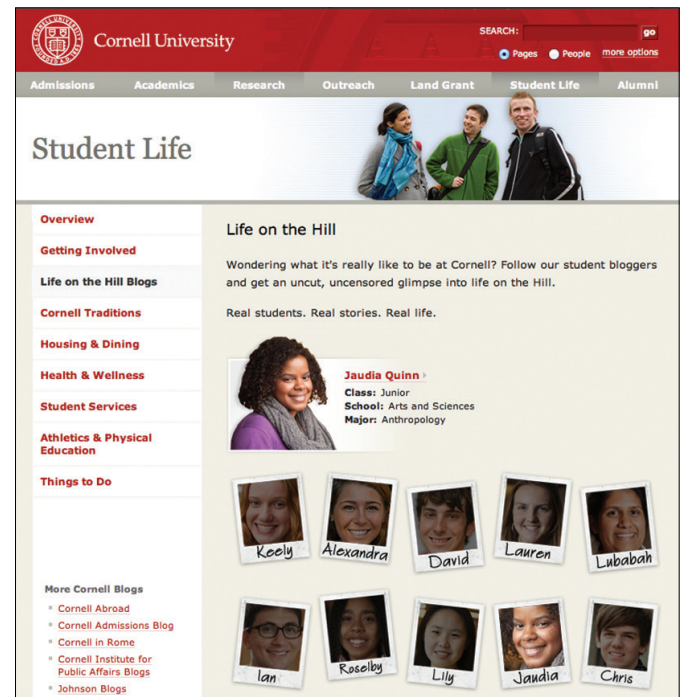
Cornell University's Life on the Hill blogs is a resource for students to learn more about the college life there and what it means to be a Cornelian. In order to become a blogger, students must fill out an application and be chosen. Currently, there are nine bloggers that discuss topics such as, sports, activities, classes, news around campus, and much more. Each blogger has ownership of their own blog page and updates it weekly. The site

carries a disclaimer that "All views expressed in the student blogs are the authentic, original voices of Cornell students, and do not reflect the viewpoint of the University of which they are members."

http://www.cornell.edu/studentlife/blogs/

University of Sheffield, UK: Browzer
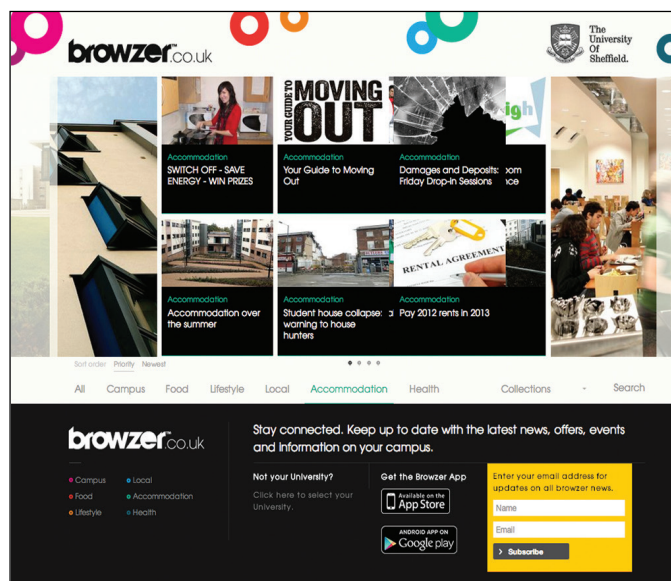
Browzer is an online portal run by the University's Department of Accommodation and Commercial Services (ACS). It enables quick, effective and measurable communication of important information to students living in University accommodation and includes links to the both departmental and University social media channels along with a variety of digital content. The ACS Marketing and Communications team has lead responsibility of managing Browzer and delegates the inputting and updating information to operational teams to enable staff engagement in the communication process. The system is evaluated through ongoing analysis of analytics and user surveys. An annual review ensures the system continues to meet the department's needs and is taking advantage of developments in technology while reflecting changes in the student market.

http://www.browzer.co.uk/sheffield

East Tennessee State University, USA: LAUNCH
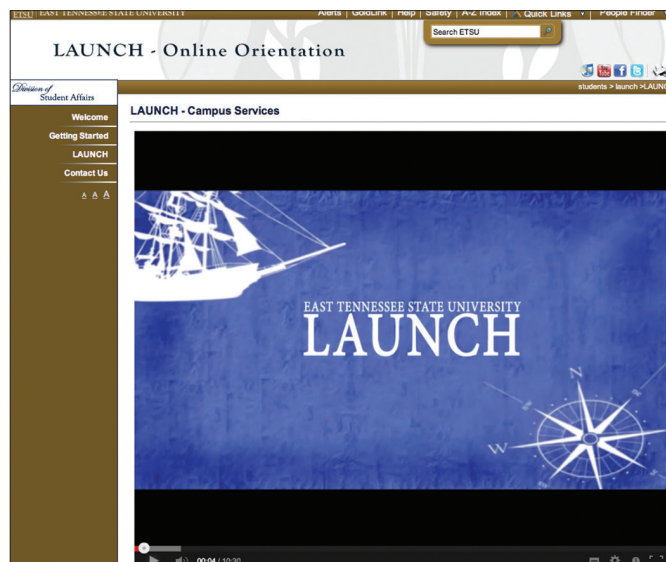
A series of YouTube videos designed for new students to help them find out more about the campus. The videos allow students who are unable to travel to the campus before enrolment to familiarise themselves with different departments and buildings. Students are also shown how to register for classes, activate their email and other vital things that they need to know before they start. The service is managed by student interns and both parents and new students are asked for their feedback on the videos. This feedback suggests the audience finds the films beneficial and informative.

http://www.etsu.edu/students/launch

Part 5 Top Ten Tips

1. Your social media is only as good as the messaging it delivers, and is most effective when used to encourage conversation, collaboration and a sense of community.

2. Be prepared that social media needs to be staffed 24/7, 365 days a year to enable prompt responses. Using tools like Hootsuite and tweet deck can help you prepare your communications in advance and still deliver a quality service. These tools can also enable you to follow hashtags (#) easily and track a conversation about your project or initiative.

3. Students appreciate the views of their peers first and foremost, so capturing the "student voice" and getting them involved in the creation of digital and social media can really help.

4. It can be very beneficial to use multiple social media channels however it is only worthwhile if each has a clear purpose and is regularly updated with fresh and interesting content.

5. Facebook likes and Twitter followers will only come if you have something worthwhile and important to draw users in.

6. People engage with digital and social media platforms in different ways – Twitter is very different from LinkedIn for example. Be mindful of what you are saying and how you are saying it; adjust the formality of your communications accordingly.

7. A good, innovative and well presented student-oriented video can be an extremely effective digital tool.

8. Facebook groups are a great way of bringing like-minded people together to help one another and learn about Student Services. Adding videos, photos and other digital media spurs comments and conversation.

9. Don't be afraid of controversy when using social media - you get far greater recognition for dealing with issues transparently than ignoring them and letting concerns and problems fester.

10. Have fun with digital and social media - let creativity be your guide and be prepared to laugh at yourself.

Appendix 1

Example reflective commentary in response to self assessment questions

Social and Digital Media in the Student Services Information Desk (SSiD) at the University of Sheffield

1. Vision and Purpose

The Student Services Information Desk (SSiD) is a:
- One stop shop (c85% one-stop rate) for student related enquiries and support
- Signposting service for the c15% of queries that cannot be answered immediately, including referral to specialist services
- Student status confirmation and verification service for past, present and future students
- Central point to facilitate student administration processes
- Service for in-person information provision, including verbal information exchange, brochures, leaflets, guides and information sheets
- A significant web presence, including various self-service applications and "Ask SSiD" knowledge base.

There is a staff team of around 15 FTE.

By using digital and social media we aim for improved effectiveness at putting messages into a format that is appropriate, relevant, understood and targeted. This vision relates to social and digital media but also a far wider context, including website copy, email and telephone management, publications, etc. As such the approach to digital and social media is congruent with our broader service mission/purpose.

2. Content

We have decided that user preference will be the main driver in our identifying the most appropriate areas of content in which to use digital and social media. To achieve this understanding we will build on our strength in encouraging feedback and make use of existing SSiD focus groups.

3. Tools, channels, media

We currently have the following digital media in use on the SSiD web pages. Six members of the SSiD team (identified anonymously below as team members A-F) hold a collective responsibility for creation/maintenance/update, as shown in the table below.

Type of media	Team member responsible
Animations	A
Chat Rooms / Instant Messaging	B
Gamification	A
Infographics	B
Interactive Student Guides	A
Mobile Sites	A
One Minute Videos	C
Photography	C
Screencasts (Text Driven Video)	C
Search Tools	A
Sixty Second Podcasts	D
Social & Digital Media Evaluation	E
Student Navigation Tools	A
Talking Head Videos	C
Vox Pop Videos	C
Internal Systems (to support above)	F

In relation to social media, in the short term we will concentrate our efforts on building the SSiD Twitter effectiveness. Our Facebook presence will be used principally to support the University's main Facebook site.

As new forms of social media come on line we will research them and test their possible applications within SSiD. Our themed team meetings (see section 4 below) will be a forum for those considerations.

4. Leadership, management, monitoring

Several members of the SSiD team have experience in areas related to social and digital media, including colleagues with responsibility for web pages, student communications, administrative systems, and self-service applications.

In SSiD we use our monthly themed team meetings to drive forward developments in the service. Digital and social media issues will be considered under the "Responsive Innovation" theme. In the longer term we are looking at the role of the Student Services Web Page Management Group and if it needs to exist as a physical presence. We are investigating if it could be feasibly replaced with an online forum. Alongside this, a reconstituted web group with cross departmental representation could facilitate Social and Digital strategy implementation as well as the wider web strategy.

5. Integration

SSiD has always been quick to recognise the benefits of developing new applications for social and digital media and piloting new and innovative solutions. Furthermore we are in unique position with over 300,000 non website interactions from students, parents, visitors and staff to continually evaluate and review the balance of various communications including those using social and digital media. However social media can be resource intensive, so when we embark on a particular initiative we need to be confident that the web support team have the skills and time to ensure success. The themed team meetings mentioned in section 4 above will support this assessment.

6. Promotional activity and marketing

We think there is benefit in using the main communication channels to raise awareness of digital and social media as a complementary medium. The challenge will be explaining the purpose and benefits of using it. For example over the next few months we will be promoting SSiD Twitter and will explore the trade-off between enquiries received by email and questions via twitter; tweets, email messages and web copy; etc.

7. Evaluation

We will ensure that we build measurement, evaluation and ongoing monitoring into the development cycle of each solution we implement. This is in line with our general approach to service evaluation, so is not a new development for digital and social media per se.

8. Technical issues

We do need the support of [our corporate IT department] and previously we may have been limited by the resources that they are able to make available to us.

However as [SSiD team member A] is now working one day a week in [our corporate IT department] alongside IT developers there is an opportunity to tap into and develop expertise in these areas.

Appendix 2

Action Planning Template

As an alternative to, or in addition to, the sort of reflective self-assessment commentary included as an example in Appendix 1, you might find the following template a helpful format to record key points arising from the questions and discussion prompts set out in Part 2 of the Toolkit.

Having summarised issues and possible action relating to each element of the strategic framework, you might apply an overall self-assessment judgement using red/amber/green "traffic lighting". That could help you identify areas for priority focus and action.

Element of Strategic Framework	Reflection in response to questions	Evidence base/examples	Areas for development	Summary self assessment (red/amber/green)

Appendix 3

References and acknowledgements

In producing this Toolkit, we are grateful to all institutions contributing case studies. We have also appreciated assistance from members of the Technology Knowledge Community of NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education): http://www.naspa.org/kc/tech/default.cfm

We also acknowledge material drawn from the following sources:

Digital media guidelines from the University of Georgia - Division of Student Affairs http://www.studentaffairs.uga.edu/ and from Student Affairs at Weber State University http://www.weber.edu/studentaffairs/

Digital media strategy checklists produced by Advanced Human Technologies (a consultancy based in San Francisco) ahtgroup.com/services/social-media-strategies and Know How Non Profit (part of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations) http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/

Secrets of Successful Social Media Engagement (an article by M Yeomans & A Mayfield published at SocialMediaInfluence.com)

Reports produced for the University of Sheffield Students' Union and for University of Sheffield Enterprise by Rattle Research http://www.rattlecentral.com

Report to the Joint Information Systems Committee on The University of Sheffield's "Well Connected" digital media project relating to student mental health http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/5035/1/UniversityofSheffield CaseStudy.pdf

Material from Intersection Consulting (a digital strategy and social media marketing organisation based in Vancouver, Canada) http://www.intersectionconsulting.com/

The longer long tail: How Endless Choice is Creating Unlimited Demand, C Anderson, Random House, 2009

A 2012 Gartner report on worldwide social media revenue 2011-2016, available from http://www.gartner.com/id=2061016

"Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media", AM Kaplan and M Haenlein, Business Horizons 53(1), 2010

JISC Digital Media resources, to be found at http://www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/

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