Dear Professor Belli,

December 13th, 2015

As I add the finishing touches to my project I realize just how much work went into completing it, the countless hours, tears, aha-moments and sigh of relief once it was all done. Collectively this project is without a doubt the most complex and demanding project I have ever had to complete in my academic career and I can honestly say I have given it my all and hope that my effort, research and knowledge will shine through. Creating and carrying out my own research project was a notably relevant experience because besides that fact that I’ve never done it before I was able to see the other side to writing papers about research and the way it is carried out. From start to finish there are so many different stages and things that have to be considered, just creating a viable experiment took multiple tries.

When I had to compose a multi media experiment I immediately thought Twitter, not only because it is one of my favorite social media sites but also because it has so many things to offer. I initially thought I’d be studying the site and its workings and that’s why I choose it. I planned to study two genres of tweets, entertainment and current events and determine which genre got more user engagement and recognition. I was missing however the key component in the project, my own involvement in its execution, so back to the drawing board I went. I think flipped the angel I was approaching the project from and proposed a trial of the things I was going to study of my own Twitter account. It took a few tries and a few deep breathes to fathom what on earth I could do that would even be worth attempting as my twitter following was extremely dismal, being less than 50 people. I wasn’t overly optimistic about using myself or any of my personal accounts as the subject of an experiment because I didn’t really believe I had viable content to put out there. Regardless I began cultivating a possible strategy to carry out.

Research for me has always been a trying task and one that I do not excel at or have any liking towards. I highly dislike doing research to me it is as mundane and unappealing as it gets. I muddled through it, using the data base at the college and Google scholars to find reliable and engaging material to rely on to not only refer back to but to make my own strategy. I went to the library once to try and find journal articles written about Twitter analytics but being that the feature is just over a year old the results were minimal. Aggravated that I wasn’t finding what I’d pictured I considered ditching my topic in favor for one that would have an abundance of sources and material. It wasn’t until I refocused myself that I realized maybe I had to expand my search, not just for Twitter but look for what is eye catching and inviting to engage with online as a whole.

Once I refocused my search parameters the results got a bit better and I was able to find material about how to increase online presence, online branding, producing content and so on. These sources helped me weed out what approaches I wanted to take to my own Twitter during the four-week experiment. Though these sources were important and useful in developing my game plan there were no articles no sources about these strategies ever being tested, or claims that they worked. They were just in essence a handbook or users guide to giving it a go and that frustrated me to no end that I had no after to compare to the before product. I then realized my product would be the after, though I had been hoping for multiple other accounts to compare my data to, and I would have to be thorough in explaining my results and process as my work would be a huge source in my final project. This meant I would have to be on top of data tracking and any information surrounding what I was doing.

The strategies originally had a six-week run but due to time I had to condense that down to four, essentially combining like strategies into one over all theme. The first week was the most important and was the bedrock for every week moving forward, a strong first week was crucial in the rest of the project. I started with hashtags and trending topics because they’re the most obvious, they jump right out at you when you open your Twitter app. They’re also the fundamental principal in getting noticed in various communities and threads. The first week was my favorite strategy and theme to apply it had so many potential avenues and ideas that I was able to apply multiple ones a day and get decent engagement for each. In that first week I got my highest engagement hit ever, a tweet about Charlie Sheen weighed in at 419 views. That was honestly the first time I was optimistic about being able to show any change at all or moderate success in doing this project and from there I kept applying.

My second week saw similar success of engagement but no so much in followers, that crawl was dismal seeing almost no change between the first two weeks. The Planned Parenthood debate gave me my second boost in engagement and it is also where I learned a valuable approach or lesson, it is important not to forecast my own opinion onto followers. I supported Planned Parenthood but I did it by posting facts about the organization, steering clear of my own bias. From the second week on though the results sort of flat lined and I started to get discouraged, cross posting and especially the third party apps showed little to no promise. Though I had continued engaging in the first two strategies the last two didn’t do much.

As a whole the project taught me a lot as a writer, a student and an emerging professional. The first being research is not my forte and for sure not something I want to pursue in my career, to me research is the ultimate stifle of creativity but I can respect its relevance. As a writer I learned it’s not enough to merely explain my ideas but elaborate on the foreground in how they came to be and why they were or were not viable. Thinking from the opposite side is also crucial in writing a paper with academic relevance and comprehension.

Though this project was overwhelming, time consuming and harrowing to complete I am glad I’m able to say I got thorough it and produced something that other people can reference and use as a tool to say what does or does not work when trying to build a social media strategy, I think my contribution while unsuccessful is worth noting in future endeavors others may take.

Sincerely,

Samantha Pezzolanti