

To: Arts Council of Greater Lansing Board Members and Executives

From: Communications Department

Date: February 3, 2016

Subject: Our communications and how we can improve



**WE'RE DOING
PRETTY WELL**

BUT

we need YOU to be more engaged and directly contribute to our communications.

SUMMARY

Our one-way communications (website and newsletters) are effective at conveying content and are appealing and inviting to audiences.

- The content we're putting out through two-way mediums like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram aligns with our mission.
- **But we aren't getting any communication back through those two-way channels.**
- So we're going to tell more relevant and compelling stories with photos and hashtags.
- But we need you to start engaging with the brand.
- Start using your personal accounts to:
 - *Share our content* and spread our messages to your own audiences.
 - *Start conversations* online to expand upon ideas our posts bring up.
 - *Tell your stories* so audiences can see the actual people behind ACGL.

INTRODUCTION

The communications staff looked at and analyzed our major points of external communications, and, for the most part, we're doing very well. Our stories are getting out to residents, artists are obtaining resources and recognition, and we're making Lansing a home for arts and culture.

But we're not engaging the way we could be.

This report will look at the differences in audiences and interaction between our **Instagram** and **Twitter** accounts. This analysis will let you, our board members and executives, understand how you can help increase engagement, advocacy and relevance of the Arts Council of Greater Lansing.

OUR AUDIENCES

On **TWITTER**, we have 2,800 followers. Compared to other nonprofits of our size in the area, that is an above average following on Twitter¹. The majority of our Twitter audience is comprised of other **professional, place-based organizations in Lansing** like the YMCA of Lansing, and the City of Lansing, and **young, active professionals** working in the arts and culture industry.

On **INSTAGRAM**, we have 450 followers, and when compared to other nonprofits our size in Lansing is an average amount of followers². Our audience on Instagram is made up of **young artists and students**, and other, less professional organizations in the area, including many **groups affiliated with Michigan State University**.

OUR ENGAGEMENT

The average tweet has gotten only 1.32 favorites and .41 retweets in the last month. The average Instagram post has received 25.1 likes. But we have over 6 times as many followers on Twitter than we do on Instagram. So what's making our followers engage more on Instagram?

INSTAGRAM

Instagram Post 1: The first Instagram post to the right promotes our new Greater Lansing Festival and Event Guides. The picture includes the colorful brochures and the caption is more conversational than professional. Two hashtags were used, both relevant to the area and area happenings. This post invites people to engage in something concrete and in their area. It gives them clear directions—come and and get a festival guide, so you can enjoy your town as much as you can. This resonates with our audiences, as they want to keep being involved Lansing residents.

The engagement we got on this post was almost exclusively from young people and Lansing-based organizations, and that engagement was simply a “like.” There was not written interaction, or propulsion of the story.

Instagram Post 2: The second Instagram post was of the our new scrolling digital window displays in Old Town. There were multiple hashtags and locations embedded in the post, typing it to a concrete location audiences can recognize and go to. The language was also conversational and a little corny in the post, starting with a “Test, test!” This again works to make our brand more approachable and personable.

In this post, a community member positively commented, and our team immediately responded back. This back and forth brought a realness to the post; this window is right down the street for most of our audiences, and by responding to one of them, we made our brand personable and real.

What we can learn from Instagram: Both of these posts use engaging, conversational language. They make the Arts Council of Greater Lansing a more personal organization and seem more approachable — easier to



interact with. With this understanding that captivating images, relevance to Lansing, and conversational language engages on Instagram, we need to spread these practices to other outlets. We have to bring these elements out of Instagram, and apply them to other forms of social media, like Twitter, and our other forms of external communications.

The key lesson from Instagram comes from how and why people engage. When people comment on a post, even one that's below average in content, that post can become popular. Our organization is brought down to a real level, interacting with real individuals, and responding directly to our audiences. Writer Mark Fidelman explained in Forbes Magazine that responding the every single resident is imperative to a successful social media strategy, and ultimately a successful organization³. Being available for inquiries increases credibility and humility in the ACGL.

TWITTER

Tweet 1: The first you see on the right is a simple reminder that submissions for our youth billboard program are due. This tweet only uses text and a link. There are no hashtags, images, or videos for the audience to interact with, and as a result, there was no engagement.

Even if I was someone interested in the youth billboard program, I would have scrolled right past this post. It's uninteresting. Most of you would argue its content is important – and we agree. But to effectively reach audiences, the post not only has to have some richer media, like a hashtag and a picture, but also would benefit from engagement from our community members. A reply with an example of one of the previous years' billboard, or just a retweet would have gotten the attention of our Twitter audiences.

Tweet 2: The second tweet uses text, hashtags, and a photo. Note that this tweet uses the same content from one of the Instagram posts we looked at. Though this tweet has more engagement than the just-text tweet, 6 interactions is much lower than the 34 likes the Instagram post had.

Unlike Instagram, retweeting is a popular way to spread messages to your network on Twitter. Lansing Area Living retweeted this post out to their audiences, and we therefore received more engagement on our already bright and inviting post.

What we can learn from Twitter: It takes multiple components for our tweets to really have an impact on our mission. We, the ones creating the tweets, not only have to make image-based, location focused, engaging posts, but we also have to have the support and broad reach from our internal and external networks. The combination of a well-done tweet and the sharing and conversing of the tweet by our community and board members let our messages reach its full potential of audiences.





WHAT THE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT IS GOING TO DO

We're going to make sure we tell our stories. Not just through Instagram, but all our outlets, including Twitter. We're going to implement visuals and photos whenever we can. Colorful, general images attract more engagement than the more bland photos, so we will make sure our photography of events and happenings is lively and interesting. We will also hashtag relevant phrases that integrate ourselves with community happenings. #LoveLansing and #LansingPlacemakers seem to be quite effective in rooting our organization within the community, and we'll continue to use those in all our media.

We've seen what works in this brief analysis – rich media and tributes to Lansing – and we will work to increase the interaction between our brand and our constituents.

WHAT WE NEED YOU TO DO

We can only make the content more appealing, we can't spread it throughout our entire network potential without you. To bring ALL our outlets up to their fullest reach potential, we need you to engage, especially on Twitter.

- When you see a post by us, favorite it, retweet it, quote it.
- Tweet at us if you're at an event, or engaging with an artist. We want to know what you're up to, and our audiences do too!
- Share something inspirational, artistic, creative, or fun. Put faces and personality behind our brand, and help us make the Arts Council of Greater Lansing a force for arts and culture in the area.

Thank you for all of your support, time, and dedication to this organization. Help us spread, and help your community be a destination for arts, culture, and creativity.

Sources

1. Arts Council of Greater Lansing Twitter Followers. (n.d.). Retrieved February 8, 2016, from <https://twitter.com/ArtsCouncilGL/followers>
2. Arts Council - Greater Lansing (@artscouncilgl) • Instagram photos and videos. (n.d.). Retrieved February 08, 2016, from <https://www.instagram.com/artscouncilgl/>
3. Fidelman, M. (2013, June 5). 3 Twitter Engagement Tricks You Should Do Every Day (From The #1 Most Engaged Brand On Twitter). Forbes Magazine.