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A Consultant's Analysis of Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy

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A Consultant's Analysis of Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy

An Internship Report

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Arts Administration

by

Suzette Elizabeth Lake

B.I.D.S. University of New Orleans, 2012

May, 2014

Dedication

The consultant dedicates this, the final deliverable in her mission to obtain an Arts Administration Master's degree, to her mother, Kristie Lake. The support and encouragement provided by Ms. Lake remains invaluable to the consultant's efforts toward her goal.

Acknowledgement

The consultant offers her sincere thanks to Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy for hosting her consultancy work. The firm's leadership and upper management, including Skipper Bond, Jordan Friedman, Jennifer Bond, and Abhishek Bhansali, were exceptionally gracious in granting interviews and answering impromptu questions regarding the firm's inner workings. Additionally, the consultant offers her gratitude to Bond Account Executives Hannah Topping, Emily Reimsnyder, Katie Jones, Kelsey Hyde, Andrew Freeman, and Ryan Evans, as well as to fellow intern Kristen Miller, for their kindness and consideration in facilitating her integration.

The consultant would also like to express her genuine appreciation to Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer Advertising for a truly insightful and informative interview, to John Deveney of Deveney Communication for his conscientious and artful interview responses, and to Margaux Maizlish of FSC Interactive for contributing a wealth of valuable information regarding social media marketing and account management.

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Abstract

In order to demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired during her tenure in the Arts Administration graduate program, the consultant works four hundred and eighty hours as a Social Media and PR intern at Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy in New Orleans, Louisiana. The following body of work is a consultant's report written from the perspective of a professional Arts Administrator, and includes the following items: host company profile; description of internship activities; consultant's contributions and gains; summation of company and industry best practices; host company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats – both internal and external; and the consultant's recommendations for improvement.

Keywords:

Public Relations, Brand Strategy, Social Media, Digital Strategy, Online Marketing, Best Practices, Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy, Deveney Communication, Peter Mayer Advertising, FSC Interactive

Organization Profile

History

Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy, formerly known as Proscenia Communications, is a for-profit company founded in 2004 by Skipper Bond and Jordan Friedman. As founding Partners, Skipper and Jordan manage daily activities within the firm and guide its business development, client service, and corporate culture initiatives. Both have managed accounts in multiple public and private sectors, and have provided strategic consultant services to Fortune 500 companies as well as to small local businesses.

Prior to founding Bond, Skipper worked with Fleishman-Hillard International Communications as an account supervisor and managed a team of account executives in the Corporate Group. In the years leading up to his move to New York City, Skipper spent four years with the Beerman Miller Group (now Beerman Miller Fitzgerald), where he worked closely with Elmer's Candy Company, the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board, French Market Corporation, BP Amoco, and many others.

Today, Skipper is an active force in the New Orleans community and serves as a board member for the Young Leadership Council, the GNO, Inc. NextGen Council, and the Advisory Council of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation. Both Skipper and Jordan make it a point to work *pro bono* for select non-profit and charitable organizations, such as Voice of the Wetlands, ActiveMusic, the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Founding Partner Jordan Friedman handles financial and professional services for Bond, and designs and implements communications programs for industrial clients. One of Jordan's specialties is helping clients navigate highly politicized environments and contending with

complex situations by placing an emphasis on nuance, subtlety, and pragmatism. His sophisticated understanding of the aerospace, finance, energy, manufacturing, and telecom industries allows him to manage programs for some of the world's most admired companies.

Before establishing his own operation in 2002 and co-founding the New York City-based PR firm the Clarion Group in 2004, Jordan spent several years as global account director for the Lockheed Martin account at international communications consultancy firm Fleishman-Hillard. He also worked on the DuPont Safety Resources, International Paper, International Copper Association, and MeadWestvaco accounts. After three years with the Clarion Group Jordan moved to New Orleans to manage program development and client service at Bond.¹

Since its inception, Bond has become an award-winning and progressive firm that offers superior public relations, brand strategy, and marketing services to almost 200 clients in 29 categories. Bond differentiates itself from the bevy of communications and PR firms in the area by cultivating a deep understanding of the industries in which its clients work, and by its ability to deftly respond to ever-changing market dynamics.²

The firm's client roster includes everything from New Orleans-based small businesses, to national corporations and publicly traded companies with a global reach. Bond places a high level of emphasis on its arts and cultural accounts, currently boasting over one hundred nonprofit and for-profit creative organizations. Partner Jordan Friedman describes these arts and cultural organizations as "a pillar" of the firm's clientele.³ This fondness for working with creative and culturally important institutions is evidenced by Bond's recent recognition at the Public Relations Society of America awards, which came in the form of two Silver Anvil awards for

¹ "Bond Public Relations & Brand Strategy," *Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy*, February 8, 2014, <http://www.bondpublicrelations.com/index.php>.

² "Bond Public Relations & Brand Strategy," *Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy*, February 8, 2014, <http://www.bondpublicrelations.com/index.php>.

³ Lake, Suzette E., "Internship Interview with Jordan Friedman of Bond and Brand Strategy," December 19, 2013.

their work with the Louisiana Film and Entertainment Association and the 2013 Bugs and Brew for Drew Crawfish Cook-Off and Beer Festival. The firm also picked up an Award of Excellence for its work with the George Rodrigue Foundation of the Arts Annual Art Contest.⁴

Mission

Bond's core mission is three-pronged:

1. The delivery of exceptional and consistent client service;
2. Fostering a corporate culture centered on creativity and innovation, an academic approach to client service, professional and personal development of staff, and social and environmental awareness; and
3. Being a thought-leader within the PR and marketing space.

Bond's client experience, coupled with its talented team of problem solvers and strategists, fosters a depth and versatility of service in which the firm takes great pride.⁵

Goals and Challenges

The company is currently developing a 3-year strategic plan for both the firm and its subsidiary companies. Some of the broadly sketched goals for 2014 are as follows:

- Increase gross revenue by 150% (Bond's average over the past 3 years has been 70%)
- Hire tier 2 management personnel (includes Client Service VP and Administrative VP)
- Hire 2 additional Client Service and Account Representatives

Bond is currently challenged by space concerns as its ever-expanding staff outgrows the company's current office location on Magazine Street. However, firm leadership is prepared to

⁴ "Bond Public Relations & Brand Strategy," *Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy*, February 8, 2014, <http://www.bondpublicrelations.com/index.php>.

⁵ "Bond Public Relations & Brand Strategy," *Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy*, February 8, 2014, <http://www.bondpublicrelations.com/index.php>.

address these concerns, should they arise, by securing supplementary office space. Additionally, the public relations industry in New Orleans is quickly evolving, requiring all major players to deftly adapt if they are to maintain staying power. Bond feels the urgency of this industry change and is determined to remain effective and relevant.⁶

Programs

Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy holds partial ownership over a local New Orleans fast food restaurant, a technology company, a toy company, a merchandising business, and a holding company. Additionally, the firm is currently entering the film industry and is quickly becoming a strong presence in Hollywood South.⁷ In an effort to protect the privacy of all involved parties, specific names for the aforementioned companies and endeavors are not disclosed.

Funding

The consultant made a formal request for access to the following financial documentation from Bond:

1. Annual revenue amounts
2. Quarterly revenue amounts
3. Monthly revenue amounts
4. Net profit summaries (annually, quarterly, and monthly)
5. Cash flow sheets

⁶ Bond, Skipper, "Internship Q&A with Skipper Bond," January 16, 2014.

⁷ Bond, Skipper, "Informational Interview with Skipper Bond," February 17, 2014.

The firm declined to disclose any financial information. The consultant's immediate supervisor, Abhishek Bhansali, submitted a formal letter of refusal,⁸ citing the firm's for-profit designation and accompanying right to privacy as the main reason for the denial. All other Bond documents included in the appendices are approved for inclusion in the consultant's report, via an official letter of permission from Bond.⁹

The consultant's graduate program is aware of this refusal and approves the omission of said information from this report.¹⁰ Additionally, the University of New Orleans' Arts Administration Graduate Program Student Handbook stipulates that great care should be taken when discussing or disclosing sensitive host organization information. The handbook specifically dictates¹¹ that the host organization must provide written permission for the use of any company documents by the consultant in her thesis. Therefore, the omission of financial documentation from Bond, based on the written denial of permission, satisfies the guidelines set forth in the graduate program handbook.¹²

⁸ This letter detailing Bond's denial of the consultant's request for financial documents can be found in Appendix B.

⁹ This letter detailing Bond's approval of certain documents' inclusion in the consultant's report can be found in Appendix A.

¹⁰ Baker, Laura, "Suzette Financial Docs Denial (Internship)," E-mail message to author, February 18, 2014.

¹¹ A graphic excerpt of the handbook can be found in Appendix E.

¹² Baker, Laura, Rachel Swan, Sarah Stevens, and Sarah Hitchcock-Langley, *Graduate Program in Arts Administration Student Handbook*, Google Doc.

Consultant's Residency

Hours and Compensation

The consultant's residency period with Bond begins Monday, January 6, 2014 and culminates Friday, April 11, 2014. This provides a 14-week period of 5-day workweeks, with obligations to Bond beginning at 9:00 a.m. (CST) and ending at 6:00 p.m. (CST) daily. An exception is made on Fridays, when the consultant's workday ends at 1:00 p.m. (CST) to allow for thesis and class work, as well as for meetings with University of New Orleans personnel and other community contacts. Optional lunch breaks amounting to no more than one hour each may be taken, and the consultant is free to arrive early or stay late as long as accumulated hours do not exceed 40 per week. Bond is paying an hourly wage, with total time worked not to exceed 560 hours. Any hours beyond 40 in a given week occur at the consultant's discretion and are unpaid. The consultant's hours are tracked via the online application FunctionFox,¹³ and are accompanied by highly detailed descriptions of specific tasks performed. While Bond's Magazine street office is relatively small in comparison to its growing staff, the location has ample space for the consultant to occupy a private workstation and computer.

Description of Tasks

Due to the small size of the Bond team, the company relies heavily on the work and support that temporary team members, such as the consultant, provide. While other residencies may involve large amounts of administrative items, Bond residencies are geared toward providing temporary staff members with real, relevant agency experience, while at the same time allowing them to support the entire account staff. Temporary team members at Bond are

¹³ Simple online timesheets and project management software for creative companies.

expected to contribute meaningful work while simultaneously arming the account staff with research and intelligence to help them better pitch media, develop partnerships, and market clients.

The consultant's residency includes fulfillment of the following activities:

- Create comprehensive social media strategy for Bond
- Help to provide comprehensive social media service for specific clients
- Conduct media monitoring, sweeps, and media intelligence briefing development for specific arts and cultural client accounts and analyze industry trends
- Participate in list development regarding media, strategic partners, and community targets
- Conduct brand research and case study development
- Assist in writing press releases and media advisory drafts
- Perform on-site event coordination and interview attendance
- Create social media strategies for client accounts
- Contribute ideas for brand development and recognition
- Write copy for online and print items
- Participate in bi-weekly staff meetings and professional development courses
- Perform occasional administrative tasks such as greeting clients, and answering phones

These latter assignments are shared by all Bond employees and are not specific to temporary staff members.¹⁴ The Partners, Account Supervisor, and Account Manager at Bond are conscientious to task the consultant with higher-level assignments and to support her exploration of any facet of public relations and brand strategy she wishes. The consultant's main interests during her residency with Bond include social media strategy and content generation,

¹⁴ Bhansali, Abhishek, "Internship Q&A with Abhi Bhansali," January 14, 2014.

developing innovative tactics for online brand positioning, procuring creative copywriting deliverables, planning special events, and executing online marketing plans. The Bond accounts with which the consultant works most frequently, include Salire Fitness and Wellness, Ole Saint Kitchen & Tap, the George Rodrigue Foundation, New Orleans Audi, Camellia Brand, the Atomic Burger, Tiffany & Co., BUKU Music and Art Project, Louisiana Distilleries, and Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy.

Consultant Gains

The consultant’s residency at Bond aims to refine all abilities currently possessed, as well as to introduce the consultant to a wide variety of new skill sets. The Bond residency is intended as the final step in the consultant’s trajectory toward a full-time Arts Administration career. The consultant intends to hone the skills she currently possesses, to integrate them with those developed at Bond, and to center her efforts on social media marketing, digital strategy, and creative copywriting. Over the course of the residency the consultant aims to achieve the following goals:

Public Relations	Brand Strategy	Online and Social media Marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen copywriting skills • Navigate nuances of client/media relations • Fortify contact database compilation skills • Purchase ads for clients • Initiate and foster client/media relationships • Strengthen press release composition skills • Negotiate Sponsorships • Identify valuable media opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn process of building a brand from scratch • Redouble speed, efficiency, quality of idea generation • Become familiar with day-to-day brand strategy tasks • Learn to think creatively and strategically • Devise marketing strategies based on client brand • Create poignant and effective brand presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devise original social media content strategies for clients • Drive traffic to websites and increase engagement with existing client social media accounts • Strengthen micro-blogging and copywriting skills • Fortify online monitoring and content generation abilities • Create branded online presence for clients through visuals, text, and voice

Graphic 1 – Residency Goals

Upon the completion of her residency, the consultant is exceptionally well prepared for a full-time staff position in social media marketing, digital strategy, and creative copywriting.

Consultant Contributions

Having already completed a yearlong practicum with the TW/NOLF, a summer internship with Social Butterfly Event Management, and an intensive contract position with the New Heights Therapy Center, the consultant already possesses a solid skill set relevant to the industry in which she works. Therefore, her goal for the residency at Bond is to not only assimilate within the organization and gain experience, but to make a significant positive impact through the sharing of her unique expertise as well. This contribution manifests as innovative ideas for existing clients, the creation of comprehensive social media strategies, creative copywriting deliverables, and all other tangible results that strengthen the position of the company.

Specific contributions the consultant makes to Bond during the course of the residency include the following:

- Provide unique social media support, innovative ideas, and knowledge regarding best methods of monitoring, researching, and generating content for specific clientele
- Add new perspective to brand strategy and marketing brainstorming sessions on all accounts
- Establish new resources for social media, online marketing, and general public relations efforts
- Perform research on best practices in social media marketing, public relations, and brand strategy

- Generate comprehensive social media strategies and provide social media platform management for Bond itself, as well as for Bond client accounts
- Enable the Bond team to increase its social media management capacity for existing and new client accounts
- Provide thought leadership strategy support for the firm, its leadership, and staff
- Provide third-party insight into organization strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- Formulate recommendations for improvement based on organizational SWOT analysis
- Contribute light administrative support

Description of Internship Experience

The consultant began her work with Bond having limited experience in traditional public relations. Her past working experience consisted mostly of social media strategy and execution, lifestyle blogging, creative writing, event planning, and Japanese language and cultural studies. This skill set was a natural fit for the consultant's previous internship with the Tennessee Williams/New Orleans Literary Festival, where she worked first as a Development intern and later as Social Media Manager. As part of the natural progression of her work with the TW/NOLF – which included a great deal of marketing, strategy, and interaction with the media and public at large – the consultant identified public relations as the logical next step in her career trajectory. After deciding to fulfill her Master's consultancy requirement with a PR post, the consultant learned of an internship opportunity with Bond and submitted an application. After several interviews with local firms the consultant was invited to intern with Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy.

Upon arriving at Bond's Magazine Street offices for her first day of work, the consultant felt immediately accepted by her new supervisors and colleagues. The camaraderie and family-style nature of the Bond office was readily apparent and made the consultant's transition into the daily routine exceptionally smooth. Everyone on the Bond team, from the Partners themselves to the Account Executives and interns, made a conscious effort to welcome the consultant and to help acclimate her to the fast-paced environment of a PR firm. Senior Account Executive Hannah Topping was particularly helpful in this regard and spent a great deal of time mentoring the consultant in various aspects of public relations. It was during this time working on a local restaurant account with Hannah that the consultant began to broaden the scope of her work to include social media strategy.

While many internships have a reputation for under utilizing interns and relegating them to perform the least desirable office tasks, Bond consistently militated against convention by challenging the consultant with impactful assignments. The management team and firm Partners were attentive to the consultant's interests and talents, and shaped her responsibilities accordingly. As a result of this unobstructed and organic development the consultant was able to strengthen her online marketing skills to such a degree that she was eventually asked to develop a comprehensive social media strategy for the firm itself. After her proposed strategy was accepted and its execution was underway, she also helped to develop and execute a thought leadership campaign for the firm and its individual team members. While she continued to perform the staff support functions of an intern until the internship's agreed upon culmination date, the consultant's projects became increasingly social media related.

When looking back on the span of her internship, the consultant is exceedingly pleased that she made the decision to sign on with Bond. Beginning as she did, determined to carve out a

career in traditional PR, the consultant is fortunate to have interned with a firm that realized her nontraditional talents and encouraged her to pursue them. She surely would not have been given the opportunity to develop her aptitude for social media marketing or been asked to contribute such meaningful work to an established organization if she had chosen another firm with which to intern. Indeed, one of Bond's greatest strengths as a company is the character of its team; and the consultant is thankful for the opportunity to work with and learn from this incredibly talented and tight-knit staff.

The consultant is proud of the work she completed during her time with Bond and is glad to have made significant positive contributions to the social media and online marketing efforts of the firm and its clients. She looks forward to further developing her online marketing and strategy abilities as the firm's Social Media Manager, beginning this summer 2014.

Organization Analysis

Management Structure

The Bond team currently consists of twelve individuals spread between New Orleans, Louisiana and New York, New York.¹⁵ The firm takes a professional yet friendly approach to intra-office interactions and cultivates a sense of inclusion and amity among all employees, regardless of hierarchical classification. However, for the sake of accuracy and efficiency, hierarchical assignments must be well defined and job descriptions must be strictly adhered to. The basic management structure within Bond at the time of writing is as follows:

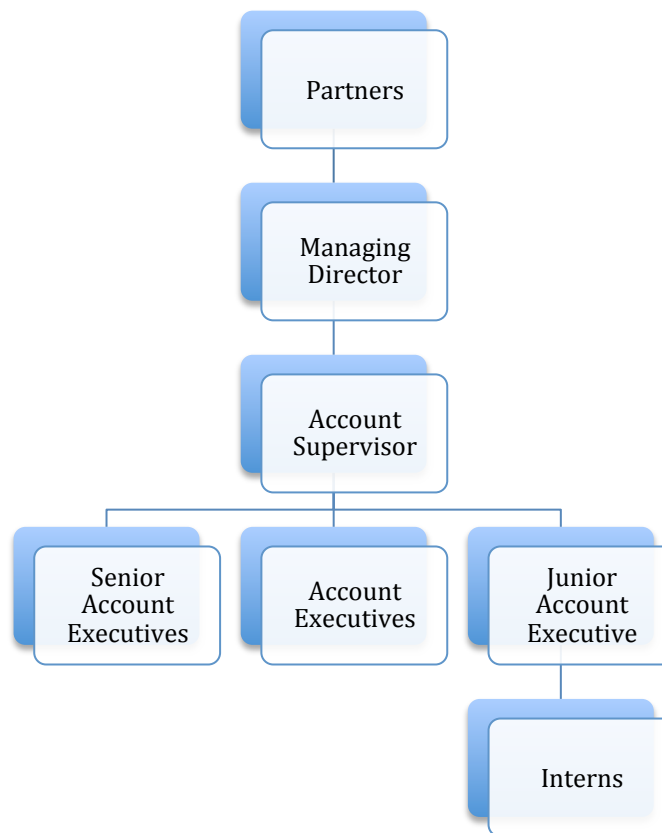
- Partners:
 - Partner X,¹⁶ New Orleans
 - Jordan Friedman, New Orleans
- Managing Directors:
 - Jennifer Bond, New Orleans
 - Peter Craddick, New York City
- Account Supervisor:
 - Abhishek Bhansali, New Orleans
- Senior Account Executives:
 - Hannah Topping, New Orleans
 - Katie Jones, New Orleans
 - Ryan Evans, New Orleans
 - Emily Reimsnyder, New Orleans

¹⁵ "Bond Public Relations & Brand Strategy," *Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy*, February 8, 2014, <http://www.bondpublicrelations.com/index.php>.

¹⁶ This Bond Co-Partner asked not to be referred to by name in the Management Structure section.

- Andrew Freeman, New Orleans
- Junior Account Executive:
 - Kelsey Hyde, New Orleans
- Interns:
 - Kristen Miller, New Orleans
 - Suzette Lake, New Orleans

The structure and channels of duties, responsibilities, decision-making, and the distribution of tasks are visualized in the graphic below.



Graphic 2 – Management Structure

Financial Profile

The consultant does not include a Financial Profile on Bond, as she is denied access to the firm's financial documentation.¹⁷

Business Viability Profile

The consultant does not include a Business Viability Profile on Bond, as she is denied access to the firm's financial documentation.¹⁸

¹⁷ This letter detailing Bond's denial of the consultant's request for financial documents can be found in Appendix B.

¹⁸ This letter detailing Bond's denial of the consultant's request for financial documents can be found in Appendix B.

Industry Best Practices

The consultant combines industry research, interviews, and personal observations to produce a series of best practices in the public relations and brand strategy industry. The series includes information on social media and online marketing best practices, as the realm of digital marketing is quickly becoming a principle feature of public relations and brand strategy. Comparisons between Bond practices and those of similar area firms are discussed in their respective subsections after each best practice. It is important to note that, given the abundance of public relations, brand strategy, and online marketing best practices across the entire industry, the consultant tapers her focus to those practices she finds most prevalent in the New Orleans sector.

1. Track and Maximize Employee Time

Due to the amorphous nature of public relations and social media marketing, it can be difficult to keep an accurate record of actual time spent on individual client accounts. This work is likely to be sporadic and unpredictable as well, as PR executives are not typically able to dedicate large consecutive blocks of time to individual clients on any given day. Instead, the work is done piecemeal, with one quarter hour spent on the phone with media for Client A, one half hour spent generating social media content for Client B, ten minutes crafting an email for sponsorship negotiations on behalf of Client C. In an industry that often bills by the hour these small quanta of service can add up quickly, leaving firms wanting to know exactly how their employees' time is spent and clients wanting to know for what exactly they are paying.

In the Council of Public Relations Firms' "Outstanding Best Practices of PR Firms," Ron Weiner stresses the importance of accurately reporting client service hours expended by PR practitioners, and calls data-driven management of employee and client time a public relations

best practice.¹⁹ Indeed, the use of time tracking software builds trust between employees and their firms, as well as between firms and their clients. It also carries the added bonus of increasing accountability for individual employees and ensuring that all compensated time is spent wisely. Weiner explains that the maximization of employee time is an important PR best practice from a cost expenditure perspective, saying “on the cost side it is all about the productivity of personnel. If you analyze your financial statements you will generally find that almost 70% to 80% of your operating costs are payroll related.”²⁰

As a method of decreasing frivolous payroll expenditures, accounting for individual employees’ time via tracking software enables staff to identify the areas in which their time is most necessary, as well as the areas in which it is not. In a study conducted by the time tracking software OfficeTime, it was shown that 31% of individuals who track their work time in an effort to bolster productivity were doing so in order to discover not only where their time is being spent, but where it is being wasted, as well.²¹ This suggests that time tracking applications can empower firms to trim wasteful activities and reinforce more effective ones. In other words, companies can focus not only on the allocation of time spent, but on discerning ways to make employee time more constructive overall.

These time tracking applications usually come with further useful features to aid productivity, such as web-based access – which is important for instances when staff must work remotely – and the ability to categorize labor by client, project, and task type, with an open-

¹⁹ Weiner, Rob, “Managing Your PR Firm By The Numbers to Increase Profit,” p. 1.49 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

²⁰ Weiner, Rob, “Managing Your PR Firm By The Numbers to Increase Profit,” p. 1.49 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

²¹ “Does Your Business Need Time Tracking Software?,” *BusinessNewsDaily*, March 04, 2014, <http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/4709-business-time-tracking-software.html>.

ended space for detailed description of the work being done.²² A full report of any employee's time logs within a specific date range are available for print, as is a report of all time spent on specific client accounts. According to Jessica Lawlor's article for *PRDaily.com*, "5 PR and Social Media Trends for 2014," this kind of hard data is important because it can provide grounds for increased budgets or greater human resources allocations within an organization.²³ Seeing how employees spend their time arms a firm with the tools it needs to make executive decisions about client account allocation and other matters of workplace infrastructure.

Although time tracking applications are highly effective industry standard productivity tools, it is important that firms maintain the human element when judging employee efficiency and time management. In a statement about the pros and cons of using such time management applications, the founder of Payroll Services for Small Businesses, Eleanor Ditzel, cautions firms to avoid judging employee performance solely on time maximization. She elaborates by saying that "integrity and creativity are more important than statistics," and that firms should not expect machine-like qualities from human beings.²⁴ Time tracking software should be a tool to encourage productivity and creative, innovative thinking – not to stifle it. The overarching point is that use of time tracking applications is a public relations best practice because it increases efficiency, encourages accountability, provides transparency, and offers quantifiable measurements of how a firm is producing client deliverables.

²² A graphic example of a Function Fox time sheet can be found in Appendix D.

²³ "5 PR and Social Media Trends for 2014," *PR Daily News*, February 15, 2014, http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/5_PR_and_social_media_trends_for_2014_15667.aspx.

²⁴ "Does Your Business Need Time Tracking Software?," *BusinessNewsDaily*, March 04, 2014, <http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/4709-business-time-tracking-software.html>.

Bond Implementation

The time tracking software used by Bond is TimeFox by FunctionFox.²⁵ It is a web-based time and project tracking application built specifically for small, creative companies specializing in graphic design, advertising, communications, marketing, multimedia, or public relations. The number one application of its kind in North America, FunctionFox integrates with Quickbooks, iCal, and the company's unique Mac widget and iPhone app for even further levels of customization.²⁶ Bond makes good use of the application's various functions and generates monthly reports for each staff member outlining their time usage over the previous four weeks. The reports contain detailed information regarding time allocation for specific clients, projects within certain client accounts, and actual accounts of employee activities. These reports are structured so that they clearly justify all billable hours a client receives. Time reports are carefully analyzed by employees, as well as by the firm's Managing Director, and adjustments are made for implementation during the following month.

For instance, if Employee A logged 80 hours in the previous month for a client who only retained the firm's services for 60 hours per month, adjustments are made to ensure the same error is not made again. Either the client's account needs are more involved than previously thought and a new estimate must be generated, or the staff member is not making efficient use of his or her time. The final versions of time sheet documents are then delivered to respective clients. All questions regarding billable hours are encouraged by the Bond team, as the firm's highest priority is providing quality service on client accounts. In short, time tracking

²⁵ "Simple, Online Timesheets & Project Management," *FunctionFox*, February 8, 2014, <http://www.functionfox.com/>.

²⁶ "FunctionFox Named as One of the Top 15 Web Applications in 2013," *FunctionFox News*, March 4, 2014, <http://www.functionfox.com/news/2013.09.25/>.

applications empower staff members and Managing Directors to maximize time, to better serve the client, and to keep the firm profitable.

Similar Organizations

Other local firms also use time tracking applications like FunctionFox to account for employees' time spent. Local full-service firm Peter Mayer Advertising²⁷ also uses an Enterprise Resource Planning system (ERP) to sort time by component, job, function, and job number. Peter Mayer's Director of Public Relations, Kristian Sonnier, explains that firm staff is encouraged to complete detailed time sheets at the end of each day to avoid memory-related error. He cites the detailed descriptions of employee efforts as a key to transparency between the firm and its clients. If a client ever questions why the firm exceeded the agreed-upon monthly time estimate, for instance, the account supervisor can easily refer back to specific dates on which large time efforts were logged and explain in detail what caused the overages. The appropriate supervisor or director can then make a decision to write the hours off or to expand the scope of the client's time estimate. In keeping with industry standard practice, and in a further effort to cultivate transparency, the firm's time log reports for individual accounts are provided to clients upon request.²⁸

2. Create Clear and Effective PR Plans

Building upon the sentiment that a firm's efforts should be quantifiable and defensible, it is important to emphasize the importance of clear and effective communication between the firm, its team members, and its clients when discussing account goals. This is especially true in larger public relations firms where the management structure is often divided into several departments,

²⁷ "Peter Mayer Advertising," *Peter Mayer Advertising*, March 07, 2014, <http://www.peteramayer.com/>.

²⁸ Sonnier, Kristian, "Best Practices Information Interview with Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer Advertising," February 7, 2014.

each containing experts in a particular specialty. These divisions can include dedicated departments for Public Relations, Digital Strategy, Creative Strategy, and various other titles depending on firms' individual needs. Even smaller firms that have not yet departmentalized still have a sizable number of people working on a specific account at any given time.

This sort of duty delegation is standard in the industry and necessary for timely completion of client deliverables, but it is not without its inherent drawbacks. When a larger account wants to utilize multiple service offerings, it requires several of the firm's teams from different specialty areas to communicate effectively with one another about all aspects of the account – no matter how minute the detail. This can be a difficult to achieve and even the slightest miscommunication between client desires and firm deliverables can lead to far-reaching negative consequences.

The Council of Public Relations Firms lists clear and effective communication between firm and client as a public relations best practice, and says that “when there's a disconnect between what the client expects in the way of service and what the PR firm delivers, the account can go south. [...] On the other hand, when the agency understands what the client wants and produces it consistently, this heaven-made marriage can last for decades.”²⁹ Therefore, the consultant asserts that any specific method of ensuring clarity in communication between firm, employees, and client, is also a public relations best practice.

Such methods include, among other things, the creation of documentation that clearly sets forth client needs and goals, as well as the firm's tactics and strategies to achieve those goals.

These documents are broadly referred to in the public relations industry as PR plans. Claire Walker, a PR practitioner and writer for *Firefly Communications: PR in High Definition*, asserts

²⁹ Sneider, Mark, Lisa Visconti, Clifton Lambreth, David McCulloch, and Cheryle P. Heiks, “What Do Clients Want? Client Budgets Reflect Commitment to PR and Prudence,” p. 5.2 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

that account executives should “spend more time thinking and planning than doing.”³⁰ Walker adds that this reasoning may seem counterintuitive, but that lots of “doing” and less planning can lead to vague directives and employees who misinterpret account goals then spin off in various directions. The result is that client needs are not met and the firm’s reputation is damaged.

It is important for firms to be clear on all upcoming objectives for the firm and its client accounts, which includes the implementation of detailed PR plans with measurable targets.³¹ Firms should avoid populating PR plans with “woolly objectives,” as Walker calls them, which are goals that do not include timeframes, values, or any hard numerical targets. Simply writing inspiring and motivational content is not enough, and often results in the wasting of employee efforts and company budgets.³² In its best form, a PR plan should include both subjective reflection and objective research. Firms should avoid making spurious assumptions when knowledge is lacking, and instead ask for clarification or expand the scope of their research. Asking questions about the client’s desired position within the brand industry, how the client wants to be viewed and understood, and how consumers perceive the client in comparison to competitors, is integral to the planning process.³³

At the most basic level, the term “PR plan” is a general expression used by the consultant to encompass any and all instruments a firm might employ to maintain accuracy in communication regarding client accounts. Each firm has a slightly different format for such reports, which results from varying management structures and internal needs. The key

³⁰ Walker, Claire, "How to Write a Great PR Plan!," *Firefly Communications: PR in High Definition*, Accessed March 16, 2014, <http://www.fireflycomms.com/pr-blog/how-to-write-a-great-pr-plan>.

³¹ Walker, Claire, "How to Write Good PR Objectives," *Firefly Communications: PR in High Definition*, Accessed March 16, 2014, <http://www.fireflycomms.com/pr-blog/you-have-reached-your-pr-destination-or-have-you>.

³² Walker, Claire, "How to Write Good PR Objectives," *Firefly Communications: PR in High Definition*, Accessed March 16, 2014, <http://www.fireflycomms.com/pr-blog/you-have-reached-your-pr-destination-or-have-you>.

³³ Walker, Claire, "Tip 1: General Tips on Completing a PR Plan," *Firefly Communications: PR in High Definition*, Accessed March 16, 2014, <http://www.fireflycomms.com/pr-blog/tip-1-general-tips-on-completing-a-pr-plan>.

consideration with this best practice is to maintain the integrity of account-related correspondence and the quality of client deliverables, regardless of the firm's chosen instrument.

Bond Implementation

In order to fully understand the client's needs and to produce targeted deliverables, Bond creates a Media Intelligence Briefing (MIB) and a Brand Intelligence Briefing (BIB) for each new client. These documents are also generated for existing clients throughout the life of the account. The Media Intelligence Briefing is specific to each account and provides a summary of current media coverage relevant to the client and the industry to which it belongs. This document is constantly updating as executives conduct nationally and internationally focused news sweeps throughout the account's tenure with the firm. Within each MIB and BIB is a list of media highlights pertaining to topics that are germane to the client account, followed by full-length articles for each highlight. Additionally, "Story Highlights" and "Questions to Consider" sections, crafted by account executives with specific clients in mind, are situated directly following the full text of each relevant article. These latter sections are designed to cull the most pertinent insights from each text, and to raise important questions about the client's brand that may not have otherwise occurred to account holders.

The Brand Intelligence Briefing is similar to the MIB but is geared toward brand strategy clients. It is the naturally evolved counterpart to the MIB and allows Bond to achieve a more in-depth understanding of marketing concerns relevant to strategy accounts. The BIB includes all components of the MIB with the added benefits of brand best practices, case studies, and successful campaigns by similar brands.³⁴ The BIB is, in a sense, the larger picture that includes not just coverage for the client account and its competitors, but coverage of successful

³⁴ Bhansali, Abhishek, "Internship Q&A with Abhi Bhansali," January 14, 2014.

campaigns in disparate industries that may provide important insights into the client brand as well. These documents arm account executives with a better understanding of the client, which bolsters their ability to market said client.

These briefings also function as a common link between involved team members and the client's brand. Any new additions to the team need only review the BIB and MIB documents to familiarize themselves with the account and augment their ability to effectively assemble a strategy. Bond's MIBs and BIBs also serve to refocus firm efforts on what is most apposite to the client's account trajectory. Team members are encouraged to consult the MIB and/or BIB for a given client before generating new strategies or pursuing media coverage. This system ensures that everyone within the firm is moving toward the same end, and that the client's expectations are met in full.

Similar Organizations

A similar best practice for clarifying goals and deliverables is employed by Peter Mayer Advertising. The firm's Director of Public Relations, Kristian Sonnier, explains the importance of ensuring that all team members are moving toward the same goal for a client. To achieve this end, the firm creates two documents upon receipt of a new client: a creative brief and a recommendations document produced by the PR department. The creative brief outlines the client's goals, its personality, and what deliverables the firm is hired to produce. Sonnier calls it "the blueprint for communicating on behalf of the client," and explains that even a new staff member with zero knowledge of the client's brand can glean everything she needs to know from

the creative brief.³⁵ Every person working on an account must be intimately familiar with that client's creative brief, as it is the cipher for understanding and effectively marketing the brand.

The second document Peter Mayer generates when signing a new client is a three-pronged recommendation. More granular than the creative brief, the recommendations document addresses the three factors that drive the firm's marketing efforts: objective, strategy, and tactics. It is developed by the PR department in tandem with the client and describes mutually agreed upon objectives for the impending campaign, the strategies the firm will execute to achieve those objectives, and the tactics that will support the strategy. This document provides transparency for the client and defensibility for the firm; but perhaps most importantly, it keeps the team members focused and moving toward an achievable goal.³⁶

Regardless of what specific tactics are used, it is most important that firms implement some variety of system to keep workers and clients focused on the same measurable and achievable objectives. This practice facilitates a unified front for the firm and increases the likelihood that account needs are addressed and that clients feel their concerns are being heard.

3. Optimize Management Structure

According to the CEO of Cubitt Jacobs & Prosek Communications, Jennifer Prosek, the enhancement of firm management structure is one of the most important best practices in the public relations industry.³⁷ While the size of a firm does dictate to some degree the range of departments in which it can divide its staff, it is still important to emphasize that optimizing management structure is one of the easiest ways a firm of any size can ensure its own success.

³⁵ Sonnier, Kristian, "Best Practices Information Interview with Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer Advertising," February 7, 2014.

³⁶ Sonnier, Kristian, "Best Practices Information Interview with Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer Advertising," February 7, 2014.

³⁷ Prosek, Jennifer, "Flat Is Beautiful: Why an Army of Entrepreneurs Agency Model Is Now Essential," p. 1.32 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

One way to accomplish structural optimization is to departmentalize based on function, creating separate departments within the firm for high-demand client services. This allows firm team members to specialize within their department and to co-create more effectively with other like-minded people. Functionally structured management permits employees to develop their abilities in a focused environment and obtain greater upward mobility within their specialty group. In turn, the firm can consolidate necessary resources within each department and staff it with experts in the field.

In today's world of 24/7, instantaneous communication, many public relations firms are exploring how to restructure their departments to efficiently deal with increasingly high client demands. Ray Kotcher, CEO of Ketchum, discusses this development, advising that firms must learn new ways to organize themselves, work together, and retain strategic advantages over the competition.³⁸ The restructuring of internal departments is one way to accomplish this goal. Separating employees by skill set assigns a firm greater control over each department's actions, and improves the quality of associated deliverables.³⁹ When a firm can produce high quality results in shorter amounts of time, and avoid overtaxing its employees or assigning tasks to team members not qualified to execute them, that firm can secure a solid competitive advantage.

To that end, functional structuralizing encourages firms to play to their employees' strengths rather than thrusting a miscellany of general account tasks upon them. If Employee A has experience in industrial shipping and shows a knack for securing media coverage, then it makes more sense to place him on a Media Strategy team working with an industrial client, rather than ask him to develop a digital strategy for a restaurant client. Even smaller firms that do

³⁸ Kotcher, Ray, "The Firm Voice: Helping to Meet The Challenges Today's PR Agencies Face," p. 8.4 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

³⁹ Samozain, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Departmentalization," *Business Basics*, March 07, 2014, <http://business-basics.org/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-departmentalization/>.

not have enough manpower to designate a wide variety of fully staffed departments can find a way to match clients with appropriate account executives.

The most important aspect of functional structuralizing is the effect it has on a firm's corporate culture and its future in the public relations industry. Jennifer Prosek discusses the evolution from older, linear management structures, to newer structures that are more inclusive, saying, "clearly, all companies need lines of authority and supervision – but those things should help the agency function efficiently, not squash initiative and creativity. In my view, this is the only structure of the future, [the new generation] does not respond to traditional management rules, hierarchies and structures."⁴⁰ Prosek elaborates on the importance of firm employees truly "owning" firm accounts and identifying with company clients as their own. Subsequently, employees feel a sense of autonomy in the workplace and work harder to achieve company and client goals.⁴¹ Manager of Human Capital Practice at Deloitte Consulting, Sean Martin, reinforces the importance of protecting corporate culture, saying that it "sustains innovation, loyalty, and productivity" in the workplace.⁴² Functional structuralizing is one way for public relations employers to promote these corporate culture values and retain talented, happy staff.

Although functional structuralizing is a standard practice for most public relations firms because it provides various professional benefits, it is also important to note the downsides that can accompany such an arrangement. The quality of communication within functionally structuralized departments must be constantly evaluated and improved upon, as information may be relayed improperly (or not at all) between dissimilar departments. There is an additional risk

⁴⁰ Prosek, Jennifer, "Flat Is Beautiful: Why an Army of Entrepreneurs Agency Model Is Now Essential," p. 1.32 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

⁴¹ Prosek, Jennifer, "Flat Is Beautiful: Why an Army of Entrepreneurs Agency Model Is Now Essential," p. 1.32 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

⁴² Martin, Sean, "Recession Buster for PR: Agency Culture Sustains loyalty, Productivity in Times of Uncertainty," p. 1.13 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

that employees may identify with department needs to such a degree that the needs of the firm itself become secondary.⁴³ This error in corporate allegiance need not be intentional to be costly. Similarly, individuals within a department may think in such a closely aligned way that outside input may become necessary to compel creativity. Perhaps the most harmful drawback to functional structuralizing involves the stifling effect it can have on employees that are too highly specialized, rendering them unable to perform the variety of managerial tasks a non-functionally structured employee might.⁴⁴

Despite these challenges to the functional structuralizing method of optimizing management, many firms continue to employ it. It is also somewhat telling that growing firms that have not yet expanded their staff base to allow this practice have plans to do so in the future. All negatives considered, the fact remains that greater and more specific levels of hierarchy, when arranged properly, will maximize efficiency, help team members achieve their professional goals, maximize employees' experience within the company, and improve client deliverables.⁴⁵

Bond Implementation

Bond is currently in the midst of a rebranding campaign that involves doubling its current number of employees and functionally structuralizing the firm's services. Projected specialty areas will include Economic Development, Entertainment, Consumer and Lifestyle, Technology, Professional Services, Nonprofit and Education, Industrial, and Multicultural departments. Additionally, the firm is moving toward a new management structure in which different aspects

⁴³ Samozain, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Departmentalization," *Business Basics*, March 07, 2014, <http://business-basics.org/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-departmentalization/>.

⁴⁴ Samozain, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Departmentalization," *Business Basics*, March 07, 2014, <http://business-basics.org/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-departmentalization/>.

⁴⁵ Prosek, Jennifer, "Flat Is Beautiful: Why an Army of Entrepreneurs Agency Model Is Now Essential," p. 1.32 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

of client accounts are compartmentalized and assigned to employees based on skill set.⁴⁶ The firm plans to leverage this new management structure, among other changes accompanying the rebranding, to expand into markets outside of New Orleans.

Although Bond has a strong desire for growth and management expansion, it is important to note that the firm does not view its current management structure as a negative. Bond Managing Director, Jennifer Bond, emphasizes that one of the advantages to being a small firm is that new clients can utilize the entire firm as a resource, as opposed to one small team that is part of a larger staff. She also highlights the intimate experience smaller firms can provide their clients and stresses that at Bond, “we’re a partner, not just a vendor.”⁴⁷ This alternative perspective to that of larger area firms is one of the things that makes Bond a unique industry player. Rather than attempt to be something it is not yet prepared to be, the firm finds and maximizes the advantages inherent to its current state while planning and preparing for the future.

Similar Organizations

Local public relations firm Deveney Communication⁴⁸ is a full-service firm of public relations practitioners divided into specific divisions. Within each team is an additional hierarchical structure that enables individual mentoring and development opportunities for each staff member, increasing employees’ quality of work life. The firm’s President, John Deveney, describes this divisional structure as a natural evolution that coincided with his firm’s expansion from only three or four people, to nineteen or twenty, and eventually beyond. He feels the firm’s

⁴⁶ Bond, Skipper, "Informational Interview with Skipper Bond," February 17, 2014.

⁴⁷ Bond, Jennifer, "Informational Interview with Jennifer Bond," February 20, 2014.

⁴⁸ "Deveney Communication," *Deveney Communication & PR*, March 04, 2014, <http://www.deveney.com/>.

departmentalization increases productivity and efficiency because it sets forth mutually agreed upon expectations and “facilitates an ease of performance and success.”⁴⁹

The Peter Mayer Advertising firm also employs an optimized and functionally structured management hierarchy. Social media work, for instance, is tasked to the Strategy Department, which employs several Community Managers and a Digital Team who handle individual account needs directly. “Light,” or limited, social media work still falls within the purview of the Public Relations Department, but “heavy,” or comprehensive, social media and/or visual branding goes directly to the Strategy Department’s Digital Team.⁵⁰ This delegation of tasks to specific departments ensures that clients with specific needs such as social media receive advice and services from the most qualified team members at the firm. This divisional assignment of tasks also encourages employees to focus their efforts on doing a small number of things extremely well, as opposed to completing a larger range of work with less attention and less competitive end-product quality.

A further example of how Peter Mayer Advertising departmentalizes to aid productivity is the firm’s Project Management Department. A non-account facing department, Project Management prepares a scope of work to guide Community Managers handling client accounts, and includes an estimate based on the firm’s fee and the expected number of hours to be worked. The deliverables from Project Management are essentially contracts the firm can present to the client that detail the monetary and time estimates required to achieve the proposed deliverables.⁵¹ It is an elegant alternative to tasking account executives with excessive amounts of paperwork, and attests to the firm’s value of quality over quantity when it comes to duty allocation.

⁴⁹ Deveney, John, "Informational Interview with John Deveney," February 13, 2014.

⁵⁰ Sonnier, Kristian, "Best Practices Information Interview with Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer Advertising," February 7, 2014.

⁵¹ Sonnier, Kristian, "Best Practices Information Interview with Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer Advertising," February 7, 2014.

4. Engage in Dynamic Professional Development

All brands require constant progression to stay relevant, including a public relations firm's own brand. In this framework progression does not refer directly to increased client load, but rather to the quality of a firm's services, its reputation in the industry, and the capability of its staff. Put simply, the caliber of a firm's employee training and professional development efforts affects all other aspects of production and is key to its future success.⁵²

There are many ways for a firm to achieve thorough and effective professional development, including regular staff meetings with an educational component, company seminars, online webinars, conferences on industry topics, and even intra-office learning sessions. Diane Hoey, Director of Training and Development at Chandler Chicco, discusses three ways to create a truly successful professional development program. Firstly, Hoey advises firms to customize their development programs for each individual. Leadership should sit down with each employee and select aspects of the training that are most relevant. Secondly, training opportunities need to be consistently and constantly promoted throughout the office. It is not enough to ask questions about professional development progress once or twice a year; rather, it is something the firm and its staff should talk openly about on a regular basis. Thirdly, Hoey instructs firms to tap into existing resources by selecting individual employees to lead a professional development session for his or her peers.⁵³

⁵² Glazer, Michael, Shana Harris, Diane Hoey, and Robert Burnside, "Supercharge Your Agency's Training Initiatives: Ten Tips for Creating a Professional Development Program that Drives Retention, Results, and ROI," p. 3.8 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

⁵³ Glazer, Michael, Shana Harris, Diane Hoey, and Robert Burnside, "Supercharge Your Agency's Training Initiatives: Ten Tips for Creating a Professional Development Program that Drives Retention, Results, and ROI," p. 3.8 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

In addition to Hoey's points, other contributors to the *Firm Voice* article, "Supercharge Your Agency's Training Initiatives: Ten Tips for Creating a Professional Development Program That Drives Retention, Results and ROI," advise firms to execute the following steps:

- *Make It Accessible* – Provide online training options that are self-paced.
- *Take It To The Top* – Professional development is for all members of the organization, not just lower-level employees.
- *Promote Collaboration* – Allow staff members to learn together and bounce ideas off one another.
- *Set Goals and Measure Success* – Be clear about what you want individual staff members, and the firm as a whole, to achieve then measure that success by analyzing the resulting deliverables.
- *Recognize Success* – Reward team members for exemplary behavior and achievements with new assignments, a larger role at the firm and even increased compensation.
- *Look Beyond Your Firm and Industry* – There are a few core skill areas each firm finds most important. Identify those areas and look for examples outside of the PR field.
- *Demand High-Quality Content and Delivery* – Monitor the quality of delivery for professional development programs and adjust it so that team members are inspired to action, rather than bored into mediocrity.⁵⁴

The overarching point is that public relations firms should analyze professional development needs individually and create programs based on the results of that analysis.

While arming PR firm staffs with the most current industry tools, technologies, and strategies does lead to higher employee output and increased client satisfaction, employees and

⁵⁴ Glazer, Michael, Shana Harris, Diane Hoey, and Robert Burnside, "Supercharge Your Agency's Training Initiatives: Ten Tips for Creating a Professional Development Program that Drives Retention, Results, and ROI," p. 3.8 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

clients are not the only ones to benefit.⁵⁵ The firm also gains from this expanded perspective with an increased ability to make artful and informed decisions about future service offerings and business strategies. Professional development activities not only bolster the knowledge base of firm staff, but encourage active sharing and listening among professionals. This is a powerful tool that can enable a firm to better understand its audience's needs and to communicate more effectively with clients in the future.⁵⁶

Bond Implementation

At the most basic level of professional development, Bond currently holds monthly staff meetings where the entire firm meets to discuss current client accounts, recent professional and personal successes, new ideas for strategy campaigns, and industry trends overall. This allows team members to participate in open discussions regarding account details and to receive external feedback from colleagues who offer a fresh perspective. These staff meetings also include what Bond calls Enlightenment Presentations, which are compiled and presented by a different team member each month. These presentations allow employees to discuss topics that hold personal and/or professional significance and encourage the lively exchange of innovative ideas among meeting participants.

Company retreats are another firm-initiated opportunity for expanding industry knowledge. Although there is relevant team-building aspect to retreats, these events focus more heavily on professional development. Firm leaders present employees with the company's current status and its goals for the future, providing a clear picture of what is expected in the coming period. The group also discusses strategies and supporting tactics it can employ to

⁵⁵ Glazer, Michael, Shana Harris, Diane Hoey, and Robert Burnside, "Supercharge Your Agency's Training Initiatives: Ten Tips for Creating a Professional Development Program that Drives Retention, Results, and ROI," p. 3.8 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

⁵⁶ PR Newswire, *Active Listening: The Key to Relevance and PR Results*, PDF.

achieve the goals set forth by leadership. One such goal for Bond is to develop each of its employees as a thought leader in specific public relations industry-related sectors. The most recent company retreat at the time of writing included a session where team members were urged to explore their PR interests and talents in order to develop individual thought leadership sectors. Once each employee decides on a sector and has his or her decision reinforced by both the group and firm leadership, that employee is expected to actively blog and speak about the chosen topic to establish his or herself as a thought leader in that sector. This practice not only develops the firm's professional reputation and service capabilities, but increases employees' professional stock as well. What results is tight-knit group of employees working together to optimize their professional relevancy and the firm's overall success.

Bond also places great importance on the extra-office professional development of its team, by requiring that each employee take at least one third-party professional development course per month. These courses may include online lectures and webinars or locally hosted classes sponsored by authoritative bodies such as the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). The PRSA is one of the more common sources for PDCs (professional development courses) and Bond employees are encouraged to participate in the group's Lunch and Learn sessions, as well as to attend any local chapter events.⁵⁷ In addition to these online resources, Bond employees may also participate in more involved PDC opportunities, such as multi-day conferences or out-of-town seminars.

While there is no set budget for professional development at the firm, Bond leadership is dedicated to increasing the knowledge of its staff and strives to financially support all worthwhile PD endeavors. Team members need only to identify a PDC and present it to

⁵⁷ Bond, Jennifer, "Informational Interview with Jennifer Bond," February 20, 2014.

leadership for approval. Indeed, the consultant requested financial support for herself and another Bond employee to participate in the Hootsuite scheduling platform's Hootsuite University program⁵⁸ and, after a formal presentation of potential benefits to the firm and its staff, was approved for funding. The consultant also initiated participation in a free webinar for Sprout Social,⁵⁹ which is designed to initiate new users into the proper use of the scheduling and analytics platform.

In addition to PDCs, Bond staff members also boast an impressive collective resume of general involvement in professional organizations. As a testament to the quality of this involvement, several Bond team members recently won awards for the quality of their work within these organizations. Senior Account Executive Hannah Topping currently serves as Treasurer to the New Orleans chapter of the PRSA and won a "Great Ball of Fire" award in 2013 for her willingness to give freely of her time, talent, and resources to aid the New Orleans chapter in achieving its goals.⁶⁰ Other Bond team members, such as Senior Account Executive Ryan Evans and Junior Account Executive Kelsey Hyde, also serve as members of the PRSA's New Orleans chapter.

Similar Organizations

Another local firm that employs company retreats as internal professional development tools is Deveney Communication. The firm's annual planning retreat takes place out of town over four or five days and includes a session where firm President, John Deveney, reports back

⁵⁸ The Hootsuite University program is an online course that uses webinars, lectures, and course level exams to certify social media marketing practitioners in the use of the platform. The program also includes best practices for the industry as a whole, as well as for specific social media platforms. Hootsuite certification is industry-recognized and provides a competitive advantage over non-certified practitioners.

⁵⁹ Sprout Social is another scheduling platform similar to Hootsuite that also provides analytics for social media networks and teamwork collaboration within individual accounts.

⁶⁰ "Bond Public Relations & Brand Strategy," *Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy*, February 8, 2014, <http://www.bondpublicrelations.com/index.php>.

to the team on how the company is performing. Oftentimes these reports can be rather granular. For instance, Deveney might research what the industry ideal for the percentage of expenses going toward employee compensation is, then counter with the actual percentage the firm dedicates to salaries. The result is transparency and increased trust between firm and employee, as well as a quantifiable value attached to employment at the firm. By consulting known best practices in the industry at large and within professional organizations like the PRSA, Deveney generates certain expectations and gauges whether or not the firm has lived up to them. The necessary adjustments are then made on-site. Deveney credits the Annual Planning Retreats as a great way to stay on top of changing industry trends, explaining that it was one such retreat that inspired the firm's decision to implement a Digital Division. He says the secret is to "make sure that we are well-informed and making decisions so that our position continues to be bolstered by trends."⁶¹ Regardless of the specific instrument employed, the implementation of professional development activities in firms of all sizes is a key driver behind company and employee success.

5. Embrace Digital Marketing

John Bell, Managing Director and Executive Creative Director at Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide, provides convincing reasoning for why public relations firms should embrace in-house digital divisions, saying "the best reason to start a digital group is to stay in business."⁶² Bell's words certainly ring true today, with social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram becoming less recreational and more necessary for business with each passing day. A

⁶¹ Deveney, John, "Informational Interview with John Deveney," February 13, 2014.

⁶² Bell, John, Jud Branam, and Tim Oliver, "Go Digital or Go Home – Why Your Firm Should Start a Digital Division," p. 4.32 of *Firm Voice: Outstanding Best Practices for Public Relations*, PDF, The Council of Public Relations Firms.

recent study conducted by *WordPress SEO*⁶³ reveals that as of 2013, 93% of marketers use social media for business with 47% of those businesses spending six or more hours on social media per week.⁶⁴ Social media efforts for client branding and promotion as well as for firm self-promotion are becoming more common as businesses discover this new method of reaching target audiences.

In their article for *Public Relations Journal*, doctors Marcia DiStaso and Tina McCorkindale highlight social media platforms as an ideal place for open and ethical discussions between a brand and its consumers.⁶⁵ Additionally, they cite how social media can aid public relations executives in developing meaningful relationships with firm clients. This is particularly important for PR firms that regularly interact with their own stakeholders, as well as with consumer groups for client accounts.⁶⁶

While there are benefits for both PR firms and their clients, the potential perquisites for PR clients are much greater. An exhaustive public relations strategy that includes comprehensive social media management provides clients with faster and more widespread coverage for their content, greater visibility for their brand, and increased communication with and among the brand's customers.⁶⁷ According to Nic, a writer for *Vitis Public Relations'* online blog and a PR practitioner herself, social media is an ideal way to stay abreast of current trends and public opinion, as well as to increase clients' customer bases. She suggests that account executives

⁶³ The infographic relaying this information can be found in Appendix C.

⁶⁴ JessicaDraws, *JPEG*, Social Media Infographic, *WordPress SEO*.

⁶⁵ "A Benchmark Analysis of the Strategic Use of Social Media for Fortune's Most Admired U.S. Companies on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube," *Public Relations Journal* 7, no. 1 (2013): 1-25, Accessed March 15, 2014.

⁶⁶ "A Benchmark Analysis of the Strategic Use of Social Media for Fortune's Most Admired U.S. Companies on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube," *Public Relations Journal* 7, no. 1 (2013): 1-25, Accessed March 15, 2014.

⁶⁷ Nic, "Benefits of Social Media in Public Relations," *Vitis PR Agency*, January 13, 2011, Accessed March 15, 2014, <http://www.vitispr.com/blog/benefits-of-social-media-in-public-relations/>.

observe the activity on clients' social media accounts then use that information to tailor future PR activity.⁶⁸

In addition to social media marketing, specifically, digital marketing also refers to online versions of print publications, blogs, microblogs, websites, and optimized search options. *PR Daily's* Alyshia Kisor-Madlem describes how online counterparts to print, and Internet-only media are exceeding traditional PR media outlets.⁶⁹ She cites a study by the Pew Research Center regarding print versus online media, which states that over half of Americans consume their news via digital outlets. This shift in consumer habit can greatly benefit PR practitioners by allowing earned media (such as an online brand feature) to become owned media (such as the brand's own tweets, Facebook updates, and blog posts about the initial feature). Tracking tactics such as Google Analytics also support PR efforts by enabling content creators to track the progress and impact of their campaigns, empowering them to scrap the tactics that do not work and reinforce the ones that do.

However, the most advantageous aspect of online media placement is the fact that it lives on forever, as opposed to being thrown away after reading, as many people are wont to do with printed publications.⁷⁰ For example, a write-up about a client's product can be shared and referenced months after the fact and potentially create a renewed interest in something that might not otherwise be available any longer if it was published in print.

⁶⁸ Nic, "Benefits of Social Media in Public Relations," *Vitis PR Agency*, January 13, 2011, Accessed March 15, 2014, <http://www.vitispr.com/blog/benefits-of-social-media-in-public-relations/>.

⁶⁹ "7 Ways Online Media Benefits Public Relations," *PR Daily News: Public Relations News and Marketing in the Age of Social Media*, Accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/7_ways_online_media_benefits_public_relations_13116.aspx.

⁷⁰ "7 Ways Online Media Benefits Public Relations," *PR Daily News: Public Relations News and Marketing in the Age of Social Media*, Accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/7_ways_online_media_benefits_public_relations_13116.aspx.

However, despite the obvious benefits of digital marketing there are still firms that remain on the sidelines, hesitant to participate in such a non-traditional media landscape. Mike Maddock, a contributing writer for *Forbes*, discusses the reluctance some corporate leaders express regarding using social media as a marketing tool. He counters their disinclination with the simple assertion that people are, at the core, social beings. In other words, social media is just the newest format for people to do what they have always done – connect, communicate, inspire one another, and celebrate life. Maddock asks hesitant entrants to the social media scene to consider that “while technology may change, the need to be social won’t.”⁷¹

The intra-office worth of social media is a long-debated industry issue, although recorded data suggests that the results of implementing social platforms in the work environment are more favorable than not. In her *WorkForce* article, “Companies That Don’t Embrace Social Media Might Be Treading Water,” Sarah Fister Gale explains how refusing to accept the prevalence of social media prevents firms from achieving better business results. She cites a study performed by the consulting firm Towers Watson & Co., which confirms that employees who interact on social media platforms for work-related reasons improve their productivity by 41% on average.⁷²

Business executives need to conquer their fear of social media tools by gaining a solid understanding of how various platforms work. Only then will their companies reap the full benefits of a socially active network. This stance is supported by one of Towers Watson’s global practice leaders, Kathryn Yates, who asserts that “the key is to train managers and employees

⁷¹ Maddock, Mike, "Why Future CEOs Must Quietly Embrace Social Media," *Forbes*, March 06, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikemaddock/2013/08/13/i-tweet-therefore-i-am-not-a-ceo/>.

⁷² Fister Gale, Sarah, “Companies That Don’t Embrace Social Media Might Be Treading Water, Experts Say,” *Workforce*, March 06, 2014, <http://www.workforce.com/articles/companies-that-don-t-embrace-social-media-might-be-treading-water-experts-say>.

about how to use social media in a productive way,”⁷³ as opposed to for personal amusement only.

While the advantages of harnessing social media for corporate use are undeniable, there are still pitfalls of which to be careful. Cutting-edge public relations firms embrace social media as a key player in today’s marketing mix while at the same time realizing that there is a right and a wrong way to execute online efforts. For instance, 90% of consumers trust peer recommendations disseminated on social media, while only 14% of consumers trust advertisements delivered the same way.⁷⁴ Therefore it follows that a company trying to create an organic following for a client brand would avoid employing devices such as Facebook Ads⁷⁵ or Promoted Tweets,⁷⁶ and opt instead for creating meaningful conversations with customers to generate positive word-of-mouth. Similarly, firms should always have a clearly defined social media strategy to keep team members up to speed on how to achieve account deliverables in the social sphere. Only experienced and qualified individuals should be in charge of crafting a given brand’s online presence, and any negative feedback or company errors should be acknowledged and dealt with as soon as possible.⁷⁷ It is important to not only participate in the new marketing landscape, but to understand the forces that drive it in order to maximize online efforts.

Bond Implementation

While Bond does not currently employ a Social Media Manager or offer comprehensive social media services for its clients, the firm is making an effort to catch up to its digitally

⁷³ Fister Gale, Sarah, “Companies That Don’t Embrace Social Media Might Be Treading Water, Experts Say,” *Workforce*, March 06, 2014, <http://www.workforce.com/articles/companies-that-don-t-embrace-social-media-might-be-treading-water-experts-say>.

⁷⁴ JessicaDraws, *JPEG*, Social Media Infographic, WordPress SEO.

⁷⁵ "About Advertising on Facebook," *Facebook*, March 07, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/advertising>.

⁷⁶ "What Are Promoted Tweets?," Twitter Help Center, March 08, 2014, <http://support.twitter.com/articles/142101-what-are-promoted-tweets>.

⁷⁷ Freifeld, Lorri, *TrainingMag*, "Last Word: Embrace Social Media Carefully," March 06, 2014, <http://www.trainingmag.com/content/last-word-embrace-social-media-carefully>.

initiated contemporaries by implementing a social media strategy for the firm itself.⁷⁸ This comprehensive online marketing strategy was developed by the consultant during her residency, and contains detailed procedures for promoting Bond as a thought leader in various sectors via several social media platforms. In addition to the social media content strategy, the consultant also proposed that she and a current Bond Junior Account Executive complete social media certification with Hootsuite University.⁷⁹ The Hootsuite program is designed to familiarize Social Media Managers with the Hootsuite platform and to train them in the most current industry best practices. After a series of webinars and online lectures, candidates must complete an examination in order to graduate. Once completed, this certification will provide Bond – a firm that is relatively new to in-depth social media strategy – with increased leverage when offering heavy social media services in the future. The consultant and the aforementioned Bond Junior Account Executive will also participate in a webinar for the similar social media scheduling platform, Sprout Social.

Bond partners Jordan Friedman and Skipper Bond agree that social media is a necessary addition to the firm’s future marketing efforts.⁸⁰ Friedman concedes that social media is no longer a subspecialty but is part of the primary news channels, stating “every PR firm that bills itself as a serious firm should be able to handle social media, and should have people who do it.”⁸¹ To that end, the company plans to double the size of its staff in the next calendar year⁸² in

⁷⁸ The actual headings and subcategories used in the consultant’s Bond social media strategy can be found in the SWOT section under the second Opportunity, “Create Dedicated Social Media Plan” (Graphic 6). A full-length sample social media strategy written by the consultant for a generic firm can be found in Appendix G.

⁷⁹ “HootSuite University, Social Media Certification,” *HootSuite University*, March 04, 2014, <http://learn.hootsuite.com/>.

⁸⁰ Bond, Skipper, “Informational Interview with Skipper Bond,” February 17, 2014.

⁸¹ Friedman, Jordan, “Informational Interview with Jordan Friedman,” February 17, 2014.

⁸² Bond, Skipper, “Informational Interview with Skipper Bond,” February 17, 2014.

order to add more middle management positions and to departmentalize certain services.⁸³ This departmentalization will include some version of a digital team and enable the firm to begin offering more comprehensive social media services. All of these strategic changes combined will ensure that Bond makes becomes an effective presence on the social media scene.

Similar Organizations

Two similar organizations that currently embrace social media and digital marketing are Deveney Communication and Peter Mayer Advertising. The Director of Public Relations at Peter Mayer, Kristian Sonnier, views the social media promotion of the firm as being equally important to the online promotion of its clients, although he admits that the former often gets pushed to the side. The firm currently offers heavy social media services for clients and has a dedicated Digital Team in place to handle these kinds of accounts. The problem, according to Sonnier, is that social media promotion of the firm is not billable. As a result, it is difficult to justify pulling a team member away from a client account to work on the firm's own social media promotion.⁸⁴ Never the less, Peter Mayer still manages to project an impressive social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, with regular updates including images, informative articles, in-house thought leadership pieces, and various other updates that reinforce its reputation as a creative, effective, and fun place to work.

John Deveney of Deveney Communication also expressed some personal hesitation toward firm self-promotion, citing consumers' tendencies to trust other consumers' recommendations over the claims a firm makes about its own services.⁸⁵ While this is certainly a valid point, it is important to acknowledge that there is a way to promote one's company via

⁸³ Bond, Jennifer, "Informational Interview with Jennifer Bond," February 20, 2014.

⁸⁴ Sonnier, Kristian, "Best Practices Information Interview with Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer Advertising," February 7, 2014.

⁸⁵ Deveney, John, "Informational Interview with John Deveney," February 13, 2014.

social media without employing direct advertising tactics. The key is to generate rich content in an easily digestible format that will appeal to the target audience and inspire organic shares. That being said, Deveney Communication also offers social media services to clients, maintains a dedicated digital division within the firm, and manages to have an impressive social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Deveney, John, "Informational Interview with John Deveney," February 13, 2014.

Bond Best Practices

Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy is one of the more successful public relations firms in New Orleans not only because it employs industry standard best practices, but because it exceeds the industry standard by implementing innovative operations that enhance client accounts and add value to deliverables. The following list outlines some best practices Bond utilizes in addition to the aforementioned industry standard best practices.

1. Relationship Development

The nature of public relations requires working long hours, constant multi-tasking, handling impromptu crisis management, and leading a generally fast-paced working life. The convergence of these factors can make it difficult for account executives to be as thorough and mannerly with contacts as they might like to be. Interpersonal communication is always important in public relations, but it holds added significance in a small, tight-knit market such as New Orleans.⁸⁷ One improperly phrased email or impatient telephone response can cause lifelong damage to existing relationships and even spurn future attempts at gaining contacts in similar circles. Whether working with a client, media contact, or strategic partner, Bond puts great emphasis on properly developing relationships. By behaving in an authentic, ethical, patient, and relevant manner, the firm is able to achieve long-term, sustainable relationships with its audiences.

2. Thorough Media Research

Many public relations firms react to time constraints and high service demand by embarking on media relations campaigns for clients without logging an accurate amount of

⁸⁷ Bhansali, Abhishek, "Internship Q&A with Abhi Bhansali," January 14, 2014.

media research. This can be detrimental to the firm's reputation and its client's campaign by significantly reducing the chance of coverage, negatively impacting relationships with media contacts, and eroding trust between the firm and its client. One of the best practices employed at Bond is a heavy focus on preparatory media research, as well as continuous media research throughout branding and marketing campaigns. The former prepares the firm staff to secure the best possible results for clients, and the latter guarantees the firm's high standards are maintained throughout the campaign. Account Supervisor Abhishek Bhansali stresses the importance of Bond team members being on top of all current trends and stories, explaining that the goal is not only a multitude of media placements, but "valuable media coverage for our clients and the media outlets they are placed in." Bhansali also cites the meaningful relationships Bond builds with the various media outlets they deal with as part of this key best practice.⁸⁸

3. Adding Value Through Story Telling

Another Bond best practice is the firm's desire to create narrative value for clients and achieve mutually agreed-upon account goals by promoting the brand story, rather than simply generating high quantities of media hits. While fewer press conferences and press announcements may at first sound like a bad thing, the superior value of effective storytelling in lieu of empty media hits is difficult to argue. The world of traditional PR is evolving and Bond's media relations approach is evolving with it. By targeting narratives to specific media outlets and creating pitches to function as press releases, Bond is able to tell a brief, yet engaging story to reporters and journalists. Each story is relevant because it is backed by extensive research into what each media outlet and journalist cares about, and

⁸⁸ Bhansali, Abhishek, "Internship Q&A with Abhi Bhansali," January 14, 2014.

connected with a conversation that is of-the-moment.⁸⁹ The result is significantly more valuable coverage for Bond clients and associated journalists, which in turn creates stronger media relationships.

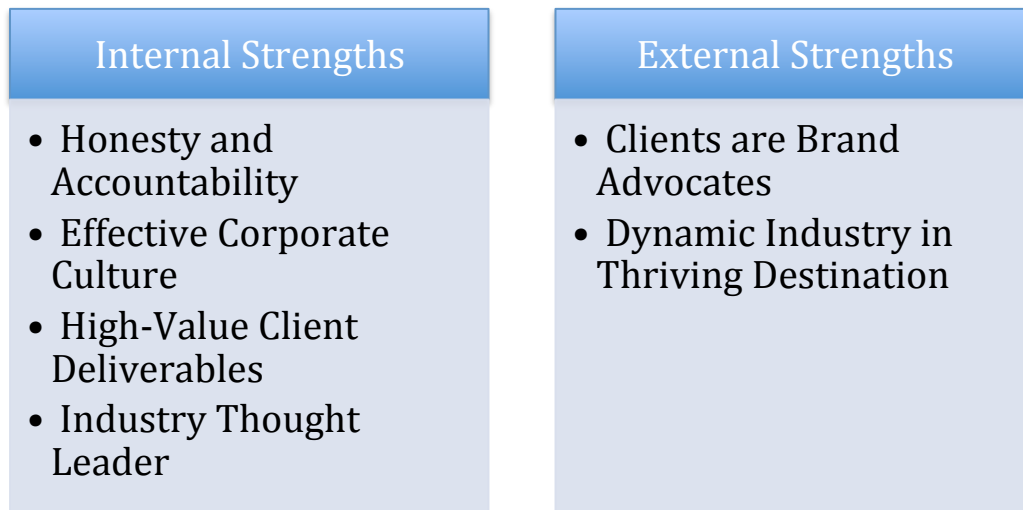
⁸⁹ Bhansali, Abhishek, "Internship Q&A with Abhi Bhansali," January 14, 2014.

SWOT Analysis

The consultant performed the following SWOT Analysis after working full-time at Bond for approximately four months, compiling a large body of industry research, and conducting multiple interviews with Bond employees as well as with staff and leadership from similar organizations. The following analysis is based on the consultant’s professional and informed opinion as an Arts Administrator.

Strengths

The Strengths section is a summary of Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy’s assets. Internal strengths are those resulting from within the firm itself while external strengths are those afforded the firm by a favorable outer environment.



Graphic 3 – Internal and External Strengths, Bond

1. Honesty and Accountability

Public relations and social media marketing efforts – and to an even greater degree, the results of those efforts – can be formless and vague to the untrained eye.⁹⁰ Clients seek the advice and assistance of trained public relations and social media professionals because they either do not wish or do not know how to navigate the complexities of these industries. It is, therefore, the firm's responsibility to be as honest with new accounts as possible and to hold itself accountable for any errors that may arise. Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy satisfies both of these criteria in two ways.

Firstly, the firm has a strict policy governing new account procurement. This policy includes a refusal to commit to unreasonable account deliverables. If a potential client presents a request that is grossly outside the realm of possibility for the firm, it will disclose this information to the client and attempt to refashion the objective specifics.⁹¹ Bond understands that no benefit can come from agreeing to perform an impossible task. This includes agreeing to perform a reasonable task within an unreasonable amount of time, or with an unreasonably low number of executives handling the account. The results of making uninformed agreements include an unhappy client, a damaged reputation for the firm, and – as Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer so aptly puts it – a feeling of intense guilt for having let down a client.⁹² All of these negative results can be avoided when firms level with their clients and manage expectations appropriately.

⁹⁰ Sonnier, Kristian, "Best Practices Information Interview with Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer Advertising," February 7, 2014.

⁹¹ Bond, Skipper, "Informational Interview with Skipper Bond," February 17, 2014.

⁹² Sonnier, Kristian, "Best Practices Information Interview with Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer Advertising," February 7, 2014.

Secondly, firms must have procedures in place to avoid not achieving client goals, as well as a contingency plan for what to do if such an unfortunate incident does arise. Bond works to prevent client disappointment by clearly stating account objectives prior to beginning work on the account.⁹³ This keeps all parties apprised of the work to be done, and allows Bond to reference the original goals if a client changes his or her expectations without informing the firm. In the event that a client's deliverables take longer than estimated or are not achieved to the satisfaction of the client, Bond admits to any potential error on its part and absorbs the extra hours in order to still deliver a positive and productive experience for the client.

2. Effective Corporate Culture

The daily working atmosphere that springs from a company's shared customs, values, and practices⁹⁴ is one of the most important aspects for both employees and clients to consider when choosing a public relations firm. A firm's internal environment is an important component of its overall efficacy as an industry force. The leaders at Bond understand this better than many, and have worked hard to cultivate a corporate culture of openness, understanding, mutual benefit, and professionally competitive practices. The consultant has the opportunity to experience day-to-day life as a Bond employee and is impressed by the level of genuine camaraderie and cross-account support displayed by its team.

Everyone, from the firm's Partners and Managing Director to its Account Executives and Interns, makes a point to share general account and media-related tips with the rest of the team; and staff members do not hesitate to consult others when faced with a particularly complex challenge. There is no competition that exists between individual members of the firm, but rather

⁹³ Sonnier, Kristian, "Best Practices Information Interview with Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer Advertising," February 7, 2014.

⁹⁴ "Corporate Culture," *Dictionary*, March 08, 2014, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/corporate%2Bculture>.

a unified competitive drive directed outward from the firm to the industry overall. Praise is given freely when firm members achieve success, and the lines of communication between Partner and Intern are just as open as those that exist between the Partners themselves. Rarely a week goes by without at least one team member bringing baked goods, or some other culinary treat, to share with the office. Everything, even office chores like recycling and dishwasher duty, is completed through the shared effort of the entire Bond team.

The firm also places a great deal of emphasis on team-building activities that occur at least once monthly. These events usually revolve around a fun and accessible activity that appeals to all staff and managerial members. Firm outings to a local bowling alley or a happy hour rendezvous at a local restaurant are just a few examples of such team-building sessions. Rather than be strictly focused on the business of public relations, these exercises are aimed at improving relationships within the group, which is invaluable to the proper functioning of the staff and the development of the firm as a whole. Overall, Bond creates an office environment that is comfortable, fun, productive, and encouraging.⁹⁵ This sort of tight-knit corporate culture may seem ancillary to a firm's operations but it is, in the consultant's opinion, one of the most important aspects of a firm's overall success.

3. High-Value Client Deliverables

The bottom line in public relations and brand strategy service is the quality of client deliverables. Without a high caliber product a firm's social stock plummets and new business comes to a halt. The focus is entirely on what a given company is able to achieve, and how well it can be done in comparison to other firms. Bond satisfies clients with superior service and deliverables in a way that sets it apart from the competition.

⁹⁵ Bond, Jennifer, "Informational Interview with Jennifer Bond," February 20, 2014.

Some may view the small size of an agency as a weakness – and indeed, in some ways it can be just that – however, specific nuances of a firm’s size can allow it to occasionally function as both. In the instance of Bond, the firm’s small size and tight focus on public relations and brand strategy allows it to offer these clients a higher level of expertise than other firms who are “trying to be everything to everyone,” as Bond Managing Director Jennifer Bond puts it.⁹⁶ In other words, rather than doing several things reasonably well, Bond does a fewer number of things exceedingly well.

The firm’s high quality deliverables are due to countless internal factors, such as thorough Media and Brand Intelligence Briefings, the prioritization of client/media relationship development, a heavy focus on intra and extra-office team-building and professional development, honesty and accountability in new client procurement, thought leadership, and experienced and skillful account executives. Bond manages to balance its ever-growing staff and network of clientele while still maintaining high standards of quality for those clients it currently services.

4. Industry Thought Leader

After ten years in the New Orleans public relations and brand strategy sector, Bond has earned the reputation of being a PR thought leader. *Forbes* writers Russ Alan Prince, Bruce Rogers, and Michael Brenner define thought leadership as the dramatically enhanced brand equity that results from the efforts of a thought leader,⁹⁷ which is someone who is “recognized by others as being innovative [and] covering trends and topics that influence history.”⁹⁸ This

⁹⁶ Bond, Jennifer, "Informational Interview with Jennifer Bond," February 20, 2014.

⁹⁷ Prince, Russ A., and Bruce Rogers, "What Is A Thought Leader?," *Forbes*, March 08, 2014. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/russprince/2012/03/16/what-is-a-thought-leader/>.

⁹⁸ Brenner, Michael, "What Is Thought Leadership? 5 Steps To Get It Right," *Forbes*, March 08, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/sap/2013/01/30/what-is-thought-leadership-5-steps-to-get-it-right/>.

position as an industry thought leader is something virtually all public relations firms aspire to reach, and one that Bond has worked hard to win.

Bond's reputation as a public relations thought leader is cemented both locally and nationally. One of the firm's Partners, Skipper Bond, recently participated in *Entrepreneur Magazine's* 6th Annual Growth Conference (GrowthCon) as a panelist on the "PR Perspectives from the Media Pros" discussion.⁹⁹ Bond's other Partner, Jordan Friedman, also served as a panelist for the "PR is The New Black" discussion¹⁰⁰ during the 2013 New Orleans Entrepreneur Week (NOEW).¹⁰¹ Additionally, Managing Director Jennifer Bond recently conducted a lecture on Strategic Problem Solving in Advertising and Public Relations for the Loyola New Orleans School of Mass Communications.¹⁰² Other members of the Bond team are also making strides to promote the firm's thought leader reputation through their memberships in various professional and community organizations, such as: The PRSA New Orleans chapter; Young Audiences of Louisiana; Prospect New Orleans; Junior League of New Orleans; 504ward; Kappa Alpha Theta New Orleans Alumnae chapter; Word Trade Center New Orleans' Government Affairs Committee; and the Delta Gamma Sorority New Orleans alumnae chapter.

Individual employees of Bond are also encouraged to carve out their own positions as thought leaders in various public relations-related sectors, such as: Industrial Business; Economic Development; Real Estate; Aerospace; Lifestyle; Healthcare; Luxury Brands; Retail; Restaurants and Tourism; Music and Film; and Arts and Culture. Employees are expected to become experts in their respective fields and to share that expertise with the Bond team, its clients, and the industry audience. Team members can do this via local and regional speaking

⁹⁹ "2014 Growth Conference," *Entrepreneur.com*, March 08, 2014, <http://www.entrepreneur.com/growthcon>.

¹⁰⁰ Friedman, Jordan, "Informational Interview with Jordan Friedman," February 17, 2014.

¹⁰¹ "The Idea Village," *PR Is the New Black*, March 08, 2014, <http://ideavillage.org/calendar/event/1385/>.

¹⁰² Bond, Jennifer, "Informational Interview with Jennifer Bond," February 20, 2014.

opportunities, writing blog posts and articles, and publishing papers on their respective topics. By employing experienced, knowledgeable people who are deeply dedicated to and affiliated with the New Orleans community, Bond positions itself as industry authority and local thought leader.

5. Clients are Brand Advocates

In virtually any consumer-driven industry the importance of client testimonials and word-of-mouth cannot be understated. Any brand, including the brand of companies that brand other companies for a living, needs client advocates – those customers likely to refer friends and make recommendations.¹⁰³ Just as words of praise about one’s self do not carry much weight in the civilian world, statements to the efficacy of a firm’s services made by its own agents are not taken very seriously by consumers. As the President of Deveney Communication, John Deveney, so succinctly puts it, “[...] clients look for a peer outlook because they want to see how we’ve treated other clients.”¹⁰⁴ This is particularly true for public relations companies who make a living shaping the public perception of client accounts.

Fortunately, Bond has produced such a high level of deliverables for its clients over the years that those clients have now become brand advocates who vouch for the firm’s quality of service. Bond’s Managing Director, Jennifer Bond, feels that the firm’s diverse client base is a key contributor to its continued success. She asserts that in the firm’s early years, up to 85% of new business was initiated by client referrals.¹⁰⁵ The increased brand awareness Bond has enjoyed over the subsequent years has lowered that number to approximately 65-70% today – a

¹⁰³ "Top 10 Brand Advocate PR Secrets for 2014: How to Succeed (or Fail) in Search and Social Publicity," *Iacquire*, February 15, 2014, <http://www.iacquire.com/blog/top-10-brand-advocate-pr-secrets-for-2014-how-to-succeed-or-fail-in-search-and-social-publicity>.

¹⁰⁴ Deveney, John, "Informational Interview with John Deveney," February 13, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Bond, Jennifer, "Informational Interview with Jennifer Bond," February 20, 2014.

figure of which the company is proud.¹⁰⁶ Partner Skipper Bond notes that new business is now a healthy balance of client referral accounts and accounts that find the firm through its presence online and as a thought leader in the community.

iAcquire writer Lisa Buy puts it best in her recent article, “Top 10 Brand Advocate PR Secrets for 2014: How to Succeed (or Fail) in Search and Social Publicity,” when she refers to a brand’s online presence as a “brand advocate energizer.”¹⁰⁷ The most engaging brands, including public relations firms, are those who use all available resources to facilitate a platform for brand advocates to offer organic support. Not only does a bevy of satisfied clientele from a variety of industries offer Bond widespread positive word-of-mouth, it also makes the firm more attractive to potential employees. This, in turn, results in higher quality staff, higher quality work, and even more positive reviews from clients.¹⁰⁸

6. Dynamic Industry in Thriving Destination

While the location of a public relations firm does not automatically imbue it with superior professional abilities, being positioned in a popular tourist destination such as New Orleans can present exceptional opportunities for growth.¹⁰⁹ Bond’s location in a thriving city that is also a major international tourist destination affords it the opportunity to work with local, regional, national, and even international accounts. The New Orleans public relations industry is highly

¹⁰⁶ Bond, Skipper, "Informational Interview with Skipper Bond," February 17, 2014.

¹⁰⁷ "Top 10 Brand Advocate PR Secrets for 2014: How to Succeed (or Fail) in Search and Social Publicity," *iAcquire*, February 15, 2014, <http://www.iacquire.com/blog/top-10-brand-advocate-pr-secrets-for-2014-how-to-succeed-or-fail-in-search-and-social-publicity>.

¹⁰⁸ Bond, Jennifer, "Informational Interview with Jennifer Bond," February 20, 2014.

¹⁰⁹ Sinclair, Lea, and Grace Wilson, *Why New Orleans Is Important to America*, PDF, New Orleans, Louisiana: New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, <http://www.neworleansonline.com/pr/releases/releases/Why%20New%20Orleans%20is%20Important%20to%20America.pdf>

adaptable and exposes the firm to a larger pool of prospective clients, as well.¹¹⁰ The city is rife with opportunities for both Bond as an agency and for its current and future clients.

Besides being one of the oldest cities in America, the city of New Orleans also boasts one of the busiest ports in the country and contains 15,000 more historical landmark buildings than the nation's capitol.¹¹¹ It is home to 11% of the petroleum industry, the second largest seafood industry in America, and is one of the top 10 largest producers of cotton, sugarcane, and rice in the entire country.¹¹² Bond's clientele – an eclectic group composed of arts and cultural organizations, restaurants, steel refineries that depend on sugarcane farming as a key client base, and companies with significant interests in the television and film industry of Hollywood South, among others – draws great benefit from the firm's New Orleans location. It is largely because of the New Orleans' many man-made and natural resources that the city holds such rich opportunities for businesses to make a profit and, subsequently, for the public relations industry to represent this plethora of thriving organizations.

Taking advantage of this fortunate geographic situation, Bond anticipates a significant amount of company growth in the coming year. New and existing business won in New Orleans now presents the opportunity for expansion into other markets, including those employing alternative languages. The appeal of New Orleans as a place of residence also assists the firm in attracting new talent for the Bond team. Between attracting new businesses, potential clients, and

¹¹⁰ Bond, Jennifer, "Informational Interview with Jennifer Bond," February 20, 2014.

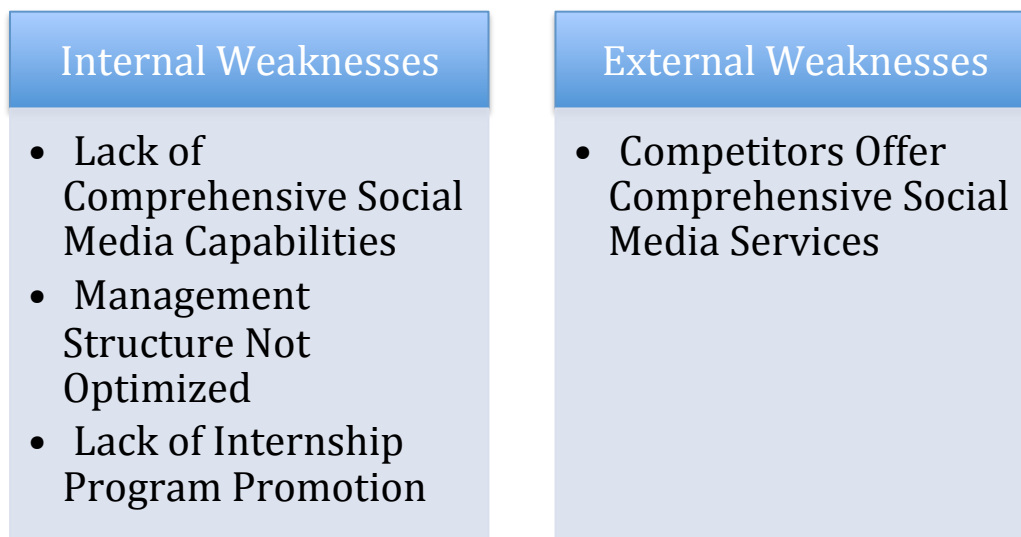
¹¹¹ Sinclair, Lea, and Grace Wilson, *Why New Orleans Is Important to America*, PDF, New Orleans, Louisiana: New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, <http://www.neworleansonline.com/pr/releases/releases/Why%20New%20Orleans%20is%20Important%20to%20America.pdf>

¹¹² Sinclair, Lea, and Grace Wilson, *Why New Orleans Is Important to America*, PDF, New Orleans, Louisiana: New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, <http://www.neworleansonline.com/pr/releases/releases/Why%20New%20Orleans%20is%20Important%20to%20America.pdf>

skilled public relations practitioners, the city of New Orleans is a strong external strength benefitting the firm.

Weaknesses

The following is a summary of deficiencies exhibited by Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy. Internal weaknesses are those resulting from adverse qualities of the firm itself while external weaknesses are those afforded the firm by an adverse outer environment.



Graphic 4 – Internal and External Weaknesses, Bond

1. Lack of Comprehensive Social Media Capabilities

The ability to provide clients with heavy social media services is exceedingly important in this increasingly digital age. Frank De Maria, CEO for the Americas at *Social360*, echoes this sentiment, saying that organization leadership needs to accept that “the conversations taking place [on the social web] are having a real impact on the growth and future value of the business and its products.”¹¹³ Indeed, a greater number of businesses than ever before are starting to

¹¹³ DeMaria, Frank, "All This Talk on The Social Web," *PRWeek US*, March 08, 2014, <http://www.prweekus.com/pages/login.aspx?returnl=/all-this-talk-on-the-social-web/article/333498/&pagetypeid=28&articleid=333498&accesslevel=2&expireddays=0&accessAndPrice=0>.

understand that social media is a free or inexpensive way to reach target audiences and promote more effectively. As a result, these companies turn to public relations firms to build, optimize, and maintain their online presence. This is fantastic news for those firms who can commit to managing the entirety – or at least the bulk – of clients’ social media needs. It is not, however, as promising for smaller firms who simply do not have the manpower for such tasks.

At the time of writing, Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy is a relatively small firm with only light social media capabilities. The firm does handle some aspects of social media for many of its client accounts, but does not yet offer in-depth social media strategy or scheduling services. As things currently stand, this is a considerable weakness for the Bond brand. But just as being a small firm has never prevented Bond from achieving monumental success in the past (the firm won the Tiffany & Co. account in both the New Orleans and Atlanta markets despite competing against many larger area firms),¹¹⁴ it is unlikely to stand in the way of Bond’s eventual ascent as a digital thought leader. The firm is currently in the midst of an ambitious re-branding effort inspired in part by its 10th anniversary – celebrated this year – which includes doubling the number of current staff positions and moving forward as a comprehensive social media services provider.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the consultant hesitates to list this as a deficiency given that the firm is currently taking steps to implement intensive social media services; however, this point remains categorized under “Weaknesses” simply because the firm’s re-branding is not yet fully implemented.

2. Management Structure Not Optimized

The benefits of optimizing management structure through functional structuralizing are clear in the public relations and brand strategy industry, and most of the larger area firms do

¹¹⁴ Bond, Jennifer, "Informational Interview with Jennifer Bond," February 20, 2014.

¹¹⁵ Bond, Skipper, "Informational Interview with Skipper Bond," February 17, 2014.

departmentalize in this way. Bond, as of this writing, is not yet large enough to stratify its employees in this manner. As noted in a previous section,¹¹⁶ the firm's small size and current management structure does have its inherent advantages; but the consultant asserts that restructuring management by specialized departments offers a much greater advantage than that afforded by the current structure. This sentiment is shared by Bond leadership and the company plans to roll out a larger roster of employees, as well as a structurally altered team member hierarchy, in the coming year. Again, the consultant hesitates to list this as a deficiency given that the firm is currently taking steps to implement a new optimized management structure; however, this point also remains categorized under "Weaknesses" simply because the firm's re-branding is not yet fully implemented.

3. Lack of Internship Program Promotion

Much like other local firms, Bond employs interns year-round to support the work of account executives and contribute to the firm's corporate culture, in exchange for valuable and practical hands-on learning experience. This, in itself, is a strength. What makes Bond's internship program a weakness is the lack of meaningful promotion of said program. Other firms such as Deveney Communication¹¹⁷ and the Ehrhardt Group¹¹⁸ make it a point to explain the specifics of their internship programs on their respective websites and to promote them in the field. Deveney's program in particular positions itself as an extremely effective resume builder. The firm even employs a special hashtag¹¹⁹ to promote the program, its former members, and the career opportunities they have enjoyed since participating in the program. These kinds of

¹¹⁶ As noted in the "Strengths" section, under "High-Value Client Deliverables."

¹¹⁷ "Deveney Communication," Associate Program, March 08, 2014, <http://www.deveney.com/careers/associate-program>.

¹¹⁸ "Internship Program," *The Ehrhardt Group*, March 08, 2014, <http://www.theehrhardtgroup.com/contact/>.

¹¹⁹ #DeveneyDifference

promotional efforts project an image of a well-planned and highly incentivized internship program with measurable career benefits for accepted candidates. While Bond's internship program offers these same incentives – and likely more, seeing as it is a smaller firm that can promise more diverse hands-on experience for interns – the firm does not promote this program as effectively as it could.

4. Competitors Offer Comprehensive Social Media Services

Similar to the first weakness discussed, Bond's main external weakness is the speed with which other area firms are adapting (or have already adapted) to the new digital aspects of public relations. This issue also harkens back to the ubiquitous topic of firm size. Many of Bond's competitors are able to adjust to this changing landscape much more quickly simply because they wield greater manpower. This does not mean that competing firms are any more industry savvy than smaller firms like Bond, but it does mean those firms have a competitive advantage and that Bond would be wise to follow suit. Indeed, at the time of this writing Bond is unfolding its strategic re-branding plan, which includes a stronger presence in the digital realm for the firm and its clients.

Opportunities

The following list of internal and external opportunities refers to possibilities for improvement and advancement that exist both within and without the firm, and offers suggestions for seizing said possibilities.



Graphic 5 – Internal and External Opportunities, Bond

1. Further Specialize Employees

As previously discussed, Bond has an opportunity to use its impending staff growth as a catalyst for implementing a function-based management structure. Once there are enough staff members with the appropriate skill sets to fill-out Bond’s various new service departments,¹²⁰ the firm will be in a much stronger position when competing with larger companies. The consultant asserts that additional benefits include more focused on-the-job training and greater upward mobility for specialized employees, influx of new clients attracted by newly expanded firm

¹²⁰ Proposed service departments include: Economic Development, Entertainment, Consumer and Lifestyle, Technology, Professional Services, Nonprofit and Education, Industrial, and Multicultural.

capabilities, and a more enjoyable working environment for team members allowed to work on accounts and/or projects they personally enjoy.

2. Create Dedicated Social Media Plan

At the time of writing, the consultant has designed a comprehensive social media strategy¹²¹ for Bond itself. Drawing on her extensive experience managing social media accounts for other businesses, consulting on social media strategy, and developing such strategies for other companies,¹²² the consultant was able to fashion a plan to meet all of the firm's online promotional needs. The strategy developed by the consultant includes the following main segments and subsections:¹²³

¹²¹ A redacted sample comprehensive social media strategy written by the consultant for a generic public relations firm can be found in Appendix F.

¹²² Lake, Suzette E., "Suzette Lake," *Suzette Lake*, February 08, 2014, <http://suzettelake.com/>.

¹²³ This graphic can be found on the next page.

Social Media Goals and Metrics

- Facebook Metrics
- Twitter Metrics
- LinkedIn Metrics

Current Social Media Inventory

- Bond Current Stats
- Competitor Current Stats

Content Development Strategy

- Appropriate Content Types
- Frequency of Posting
- Sample Weekly Content Plan
- Target Audience
- Content Creation
- Content Promotion
- Recommendations
- Scheduling Posts
- Post Approval Process

Protocol for Tracking Progress

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly

Protocol for Content Generation and Posting

- Digital Strategists
- Supervisors

Strategic Adjustments Plan

Glossary of Social Media Terms

Graphic 6 – Consultant’s Social Media Strategy Sections¹²⁴

In addition to the social media strategy plan, the consultant also created a social media content scheduling grid¹²⁵ and a metrics-tracking grid. The scheduling grid is designed to keep communications between client, Account Executives, Social Media Managers, and Supervisors

¹²⁴ Please note that Graphic 6 presents the actual sections in the consultant’s social media strategy for Bond. For a full sample of a generic social media strategy, see Appendix F.

¹²⁵ The consultant’s social media scheduling grid can be found in Appendix G.

as clean as possible. The consultant's grid format allows supervisors to view the day, date, time, platform, post language, and the reasoning behind the post language for each scheduled message, with a final space for suggested edits. Tabs along the bottom of the spreadsheet are separated by week (Monday through Sunday), and scheduled posts are filled with a light grey color to denote that they have already been published.

The implementation of such a strategy is an opportunity that Bond should take advantage of as soon as possible. In doing so, the firm can fortify its position as an industry thought leader and exhibit its ability to provide comprehensive social media management for clientele.

3. Employ In-House Social Media Manager

A key aspect of the social media strategy the consultant developed for Bond is that there be a designated staff member to manage the firm's social media presence. This individual would handle strategy implementation, ensure that all strategy coincides with the brand character, conduct content planning and scheduling, perform crisis intervention, troubleshoot, analyze metrics analysis, plan adjustments, and perform content generation for no more than four bundled client accounts.

The limit of four accounts per Social Media Manager at a time is industry standard, and is important because it ensures the efficacy of the Social Media Manager's efforts and the quality of client deliverables.¹²⁶ Social media management – which includes content generation, monitoring, interaction with users, strategy development, scheduling, and crisis intervention, among other activities – is an extremely time-consuming operation. In order to generate organic brand advocacy, the Social Media Manager must participate in social media circles in a consistent and genuine manner. Posts that are too corporate or obvious sales pitches are easily

¹²⁶ Maizlish, Margaux, "Informational Interview with Margaux Maizlish," Interview by author, March 26, 2014.

identified and ignored by users. Proper strategy implementation is heavily dependent upon constant monitoring and activity that is usually sporadic and unpredictable. Similarly, it is important that the Social Media Manager understands the rules of communication for individual social media platforms. This is a crucial requirement of the position because each platform is so drastically different regarding what type of content is acceptable to post, when and how often one should post, what grammatical and stylistic rules apply, as well as many more granular considerations.¹²⁷ In social media situations an inexperienced practitioner can cost brands the loyalty of their following and the goodwill of future customers. This is why hiring an experienced Social Media Manager is the foundational step in building an effective social media strategy.

In many ways, the strategic social media plan and the Social Media Manager tasked with running it are inseparable. The plan, if improperly implemented and maintained, will not fulfill its desired goals. Therefore it is necessary for Bond to attach a new staff position to the plan if it is to reach full efficacy.

This position should also monitor and supervise social media efforts for all existing client accounts. The individual holding this title would be tasked with training Account Executives in foundational social media and online marketing practices, such as content generation, demographic targeting, keyword use, brand voice consistency, and popular platform navigation. The consultant envisions the in-house Social Media Manager as a link between traditional public relations practitioners and online marketing professionals. This individual can be hired from within or without, depending on experience and skill set.

¹²⁷ Maizlish, Margaux, "Informational Interview with Margaux Maizlish," Interview by author, March 26, 2014.

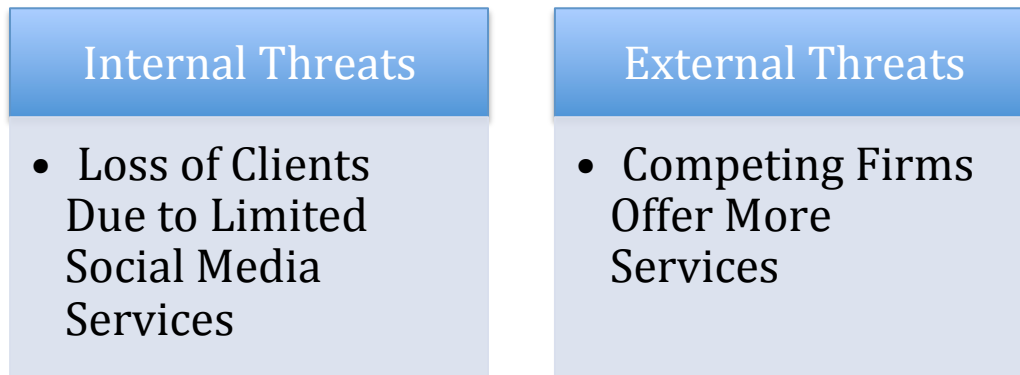
While Bond does currently employ Account Executives who have experience in professional social media management, the firm self-describes its current social media service offerings as “light,” or limited, rather than comprehensive. The consultant asserts that, while Bond team members are more than capable of comprehensive social media functions, these team members’ current job titles do not allow for the fulfillment of “heavy,” or comprehensive, social media functions. Put simply, the responsibilities and day-to-day tasks of comprehensive social media practitioners are so great that it is necessary to create a position whose sole area of focus is social media and online marketing. It is not enough to add social media responsibilities to the job description of an existing position.

4. Become a Digital Sector Thought Leader

Bond has already achieved the status of industry thought leader in public relations, and there is now an opportunity for the firm to garner the same recognition for its knowledge and understanding of online and social media marketing. Rather than wait for other firms to take these positions, Bond should aggressively pursue them itself by developing its staff’s online marketing abilities, participating in digitally focused workshops, and speaking on as many online marketing conferences as possible. The social media field is young enough that it is still possible to cement one’s self into a position of industry authority without much upheaval. However this will not be the case for long, and it is important that Bond recognizes and seizes this valuable opportunity.

Threats

The following summary of internal and external threats refers to perilous situations that exist both within and without the firm, and offers solutions to minimize risk.



Graphic 7 – Internal and External Threats, Bond

1. Loss of Clients Due to Limited Social Media Services

Although Bond plans to implement an aggressive rebranding that will expand the staff as well as the firm's offered services,¹²⁸ it is important to acknowledge that at the time of writing this has not yet come to fruition. While the consultant has no reason to doubt that this re-branding will indeed occur, she is compelled to point out that there is a definitive risk of losing future clientele for a lack of holistic service offerings if the re-branding effort is delayed.

Social media is gaining traction in the business and public relations spheres. It would be irresponsible to ignore future clients' need, and desire, for full-service social media with their PR services. While more involved online marketing efforts such as SEO, SERPs, SEM, PPC, and AdWords¹²⁹ are arguably much too involved to warrant inclusion in the public relations sphere –

¹²⁸ Bond, Skipper, "Informational Interview with Skipper Bond," February 17, 2014.

¹²⁹ SEO: Search Engine Optimization; SERPs: Search Engine Results Pages; SEM: Search Engine Marketing; PPC: Pay-Per-Click, also called CPC or Cost-Per-Click, ads that are purchased to provide a site with greater search engine traffic; SEM: Vendor that places advertising copy in various positions surrounding search engine results.

at least for the time being – social media management is more directly linked to a brand’s public image, and therefore falls more squarely in the realm of public relations.

2. Competing Firms Offer More Services

Similar to the preceding internal threat, the service bundling capabilities possessed by competing area firms is a significant external threat to Bond’s future position in the public relations industry. In addition to these companies’ larger staff capabilities, the ability to offer a plethora of in-depth services in an *a la mode* style format – referred to by Peter Mayer’s Kristian Sonnier as “bundled” or “un-bundled”¹³⁰ – gives them the competitive advantage when wooing clients. Put plainly, if Company Q needs traditional public relations services, comprehensive social media services, website management, and branding services all in one place, it is forced to sign-on with a larger – and likely departmentalized – PR firm. By not offering as wide a variety of services as its competitors, Bond opens itself up to future client loss such as this. If Bond recognizes this threat and reacts by expanding its service offerings to include greater variety (e.g. website management and social media services), it can assert itself as a more formidable presence among New Orleans’ larger public relations firms.

¹³⁰ Sonnier, Kristian, "Best Practices Information Interview with Kristian Sonnier of Peter Mayer Advertising," February 7, 2014.

Consultant Recommendations

The following is a delineation of the consultant's recommendations for Bond's improvement in the areas of management, marketing, and development, and serves as this report's conclusion. The consultant refrains from providing financial recommendations as she is denied access to Bond's financial documentation.¹³¹ Additionally, the consultant refrains from making legal recommendations, as no legal issues involving Bond are applicable to this report.

Management

Based on industry research and the firm SWOT analysis, the consultant recommends that Bond divide its operations into strategic departments (i.e. Digital Department, PR Department, Brand Strategy Department, etc.) and reorganize its employees by specialty to fit within this new infrastructure. This recommendation may not be as meaningful until more staff members are brought on-board, but it is still important to begin thinking and acting in the suggested direction.

Steps

Initial steps to implement this change should be executed by firm leadership and employees alike, and include the following actions:

- Outlining proposed new department categories, names, functions, and deliverables
- Discuss the number of employees to insert within given departments
- Survey current employees to discern interest in specific departments and respective abilities to fulfill new obligations
- Decide on new job titles within each department, including the duties, qualities, experience levels, and pay grades attached to each

¹³¹ This letter of denial can be found in Appendix B.

- Reassign current staff members with new departmentalized titles and job descriptions
- Coordinate with the company bookkeeper and accounting department to make necessary adjustments
- Put word out that the firm is seeking to expand the staff (include specific departments and position titles with criteria)
- Be sure to staff each new department (i.e. Digital Department) with practitioners who are expert in their respective fields – these will be the new team leaders for each division
- Devise a comprehensive re-branding strategy to notify the industry of these changes, attract talented workers, and inspire confidence in potential clients
- Set up protocol for communication between departments and consider hiring a Department Supervisor or consultant who is experienced in managing and facilitating workflow between specialized departments
- Develop protocol and schedule to evaluate the new management structure, as well as contingency plans for dealing with failures
- Begin day-to-day operations and prepare for both inevitable growing pains and exponential positive growth for the firm

Long-Term Impact

It is the consultant's opinion that, if implemented properly, the firm's division into specialized departments will attract new business, give Bond an even greater competitive edge against its larger competitors, improve corporate culture, aid in furthering individual employees' skill sets and on-the-job confidence, and assert Bond as an industry leading public relations firm.

Marketing

Based on industry research and the SWOT analysis, the consultant recommends that Bond execute a comprehensive social media strategy for the firm and employ a dedicated Social Media Manager to implement it. The social media strategy should be akin to the plan developed by the consultant for Bond, and must be managed by a knowledgeable and experienced social media practitioner. The Social Media Manager position will also be responsible for training existing account managers on foundational social media topics, overseeing the social media strategy for all relevant client accounts – including the firm itself – and for interacting with clients to assess individuals needs and develop comprehensive and customized social media strategies.

It is important to note that the Social Media Manager's client load should never exceed four accounts. For the purposes of this report, the term "account" refers to a single client and includes monitoring and content generation for all platforms associated with that client. For example, if Company A asks for content generation and monitoring on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, then that bundle of services is still considered to be one account. This limit is imperative to the proper execution and quality of the Social Media Manager's work, and is a standard number within the industry.¹³²

Steps

Initial steps to implement this change should be executed by firm leadership and employees alike, and include the following actions:

¹³² Maizlish, Margaux, "Informational Interview with Margaux Maizlish," Interview by author, March 26, 2014.

- Develop a comprehensive social media plan for promotion of the firm that includes all main headings of the consultant's social media strategy¹³³
- Outline specific job description for the Social Media Manager position, complete with duties, hierarchical placement, required experience and skills, and pay grade
- Hire a qualified individual to fill the Social Media Manager position
- Orient this person will all actions currently taking place on social media-relevant client accounts
- Decide which members of firm leadership will act as the Social Media Manager's supervisors
- Initiate all staff members into the specifics of the social media plan and explain each employee's respective role
- Set up protocols for evaluating efficacy of the social media plan
- Set up a contingency plan for dealing with potential crisis or failure
- Execute the social media plan
- Monitor the results and record them in a metrics grid at agreed-upon intervals
- The Social Media Manager and his or her supervisors should meet at a regular and mutually agreed upon time to evaluate the plan
- Implement any changes or adjustments for plan optimization
- Continue with expansion of Digital department

Long Term Impact

It is the consultant's opinion that, if implemented properly, Bond's comprehensive social media plan and the accompanying Social Media Manager position will jettison the firm to a new

¹³³ This information can be found in Graphic 6, located under the second Opportunity in the Opportunities section

level of industry relevance and productivity. New clientele will be attracted by the increased brand awareness the strategy lends, and account managers will have more time to attend to traditional PR and brand strategy activities without the burden of “heavy” social media tasks. In turn, the Social Media Manager will provide increased value to the firm’s corporate culture and professional development, as all team members will be trained in basic social media tasks.

Development

Based on industry research and the firm SWOT analysis, the consultant recommends that Bond execute an aggressive promotional campaign for its internship program. This campaign should create greater awareness of the program, clearly delineate its requirements, and detail all incentives for participation. Promotional efforts for the internship program should fold into the aforementioned comprehensive social media strategy for Bond, and include the development of blog posts, hashtags, and other online marketing tactics. The Social Media Manager will oversee online promotion of the program, while the Account Supervisor continues to manage the internship program itself. Firm staff should also be willing and active participants in the program’s promotion via word-of-mouth and individual thought leadership posts (where relevant).

Steps

Initial steps to implement this change should be executed by firm leadership and employees alike, and include the following actions:

- The Account Supervisor should create a document outlining all details related to the internship program (i.e. hours expected, tasks to complete, experience and education required, forms that must be signed, the interview process, the benefits of interning at Bond, the rate of pay or course credit option offered, etc.)

- These materials should be translated into social media-ready formats and disseminated via Bond company platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Representatives from Bond (former interns and/or current employees) should volunteer to conduct speaking engagements at local colleges to drum up enrollment
- Printed promotional materials should be placed at choice locations throughout the city, with details on what is required and how to apply
- The company website should have a dedicated page for potential interns to gather information and, ideally, apply online
- Applicants should be put through a thorough interview process, with only top level students being chosen
- The Account Supervisor should orient the new support staff member and ensure that his or her experience with Bond is pleasant (to ensure positive word-of-mouth)
- The Account Supervisor should check-in with past interns for an update on what they are doing now, and this information should be included in future program promotions to add value to the internship experience

Long Term Impact

Aggressive promotion of the firm's internship program and its associated benefits will attract a greater number of staff support interns and add value to the firm's client deliverables. When account managers have the assistance of qualified interns, they are less burdened by foundational tasks and free to focus their attention on more complex business items. Similarly, interns with no real hands-on experience can learn the ropes in an insulated environment where there are multiple account managers and supervisors to correct mistakes and teach proper PR techniques. A competitive internship program that is properly promoted will also inspire

confidence from clients, who will take note of the firm's dedication to grooming the next generation of PR practitioners. Lastly, increased numbers of applying interns allows Bond to be more selective in its choice of support staff, and to potentially develop future Bond employees from the Intern to Junior Account Executive level.

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Appendix A
Letter of Permission from Bond to Consultant



To: Suzette Lake
From: Abhi Bhansali
Date: March 11, 2014
Re: Disclosure of Documentation for Use in Internship Report

Dear Suzette,

We received your request to include the following Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy documents in your Arts Administration thesis report:

1. Financial Documentation Access Denial Letter from Bond
2. Social Media Plan the consultant (Suzette Lake) developed for Bond (redacted, whole or in part)
3. List of professional affiliations for staff and partners (redacted upon individual request)
4. Sample TimeFox sheet (redacted)
5. Sample social media content scheduling grids (redacted)
6. Consultant's (Suzette Lake's) TimeFox logs (redacted, whole or in part)

We grant you permission to use the above documents in your thesis, whole or in part, on the condition that all sensitive information regarding the company and/or its employees is redacted from said documents before inclusion.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "ABH", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Abhi Bhansali
Account Supervisor
Bond Public Relations & Brand Strategy

Appendix B

Denial of Request for Financial Documents



To: Suzette Lake
From: Abhi Bhansali
Date: February 17, 2014
Re: Disclosure of Financial Documentation for Use in Internship Report

Dear Suzette,

We received your request for the following financial documents related to Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy:

- Annual/quarterly/monthly revenue amounts
- Operation expenses for the same period as revenues
- Net profit summaries
- Cash flow sheets

Unfortunately, we are unable to provide you access to the requested documents as they contain sensitive information and are private in nature. As you know, Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy is a for-profit company and our financial information is not a matter of public record. That being said, we are happy to answer any questions you may have that are not financial in nature.

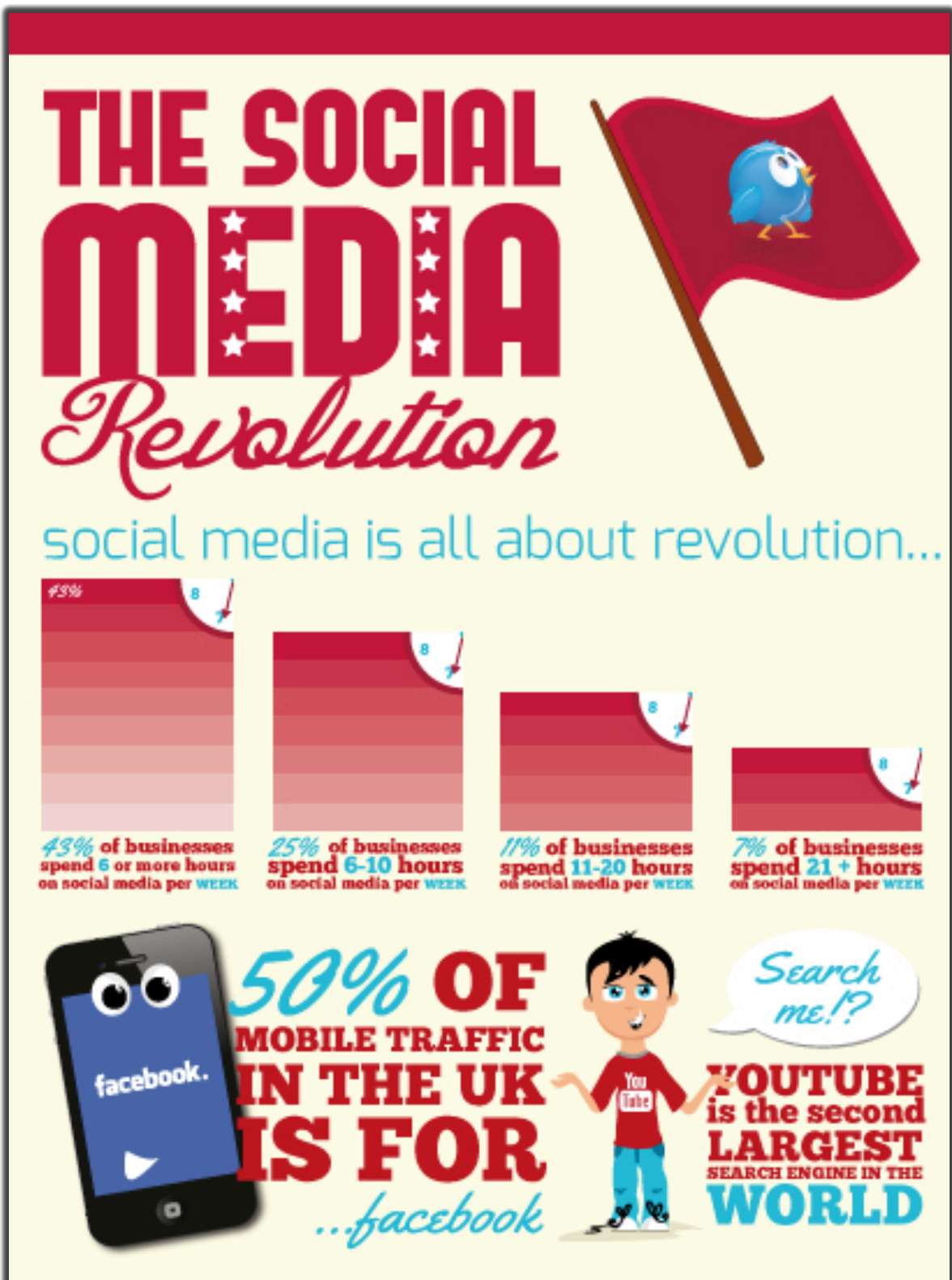
Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Abhi Bhansali".

Abhi Bhansali
Account Supervisor
Bond Public Relations & Brand Strategy

Appendix C

Infographic from WordPress (SEO) by JessicaDraws





if **WIKIPEDIA** WERE MADE INTO A **BOOK**, IT WOULD BE *2.25 million* PAGES AND WOULD TAKE *123 years* TO READ IT ALL

IF facebook WERE A COUNTRY IT WOULD BE THE *3rd* LARGEST IN THE **WORLD**



A NEW MEMBER JOINS **LINKED IN** *EVERY second*



Pinterest was the fastest **SITE TO HIT THE 100 MILLION VISITOR MARK IN 2012**

Instagram
now has over
100 million users



**Britney Spears, Lady Gaga
& Justin Bieber have more
followers than the
ENTIRE POPULATIONS OF**

**SWEDEN
ISRAEL GREECE
CHILE AND
AUSTRALIA**

It even impacts our offline behaviour...



*1 in 5
couples*
met online



*3 in 5
gay couples*
met online

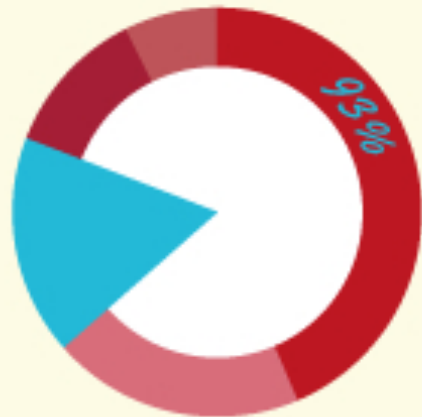


1 in 5 divorces
blamed on facebook.



but only...
14%
trust
advertisements

93% of
MARKETERS
use social media
FOR BUSINESS



In 2012, every MINUTE of every DAY...



100,000

TWEETS WERE SENT



1684,478

POSTS WERE SHARED ON FACEBOOK



2 million

**SEARCHES WERE DONE
USING GOOGLE**



48 hours

**OF VIDEO WERE UPLOADED
TO YOUTUBE**

JOIN THE
Revolution...

brought to you
by www.jessicadraws.com

**jessica
Draws.**

Appendix D

Sample graphic of FunctionFox Time Sheet (Redacted)

Bond PR and Brand Strategy Friday, March 14, 2014							Support Help Log Out	
Personnel: Suzette Lake Date (m/d/y): <input type="text" value="March"/> <input type="text" value="14"/> <input type="text" value="14"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/> < Today > My Week My Month My Preferences Client: <input type="text" value="REDACTED"/> Project: <input type="text" value="01106-March 2014"/> Task: <input type="text" value="Intern/General Account Management"/> Time: <input type="text"/> (decimal hours) <input type="text"/> : <input type="text"/> (hh:mm) Total: 3.53 Description: <input style="width: 100%; height: 40px;" type="text"/> <div style="text-align: center;"> <input type="button" value="Save New"/> <input type="button" value="Save New & Start Timer"/> </div>								
Timer	Edit	Delete	Client	Project	Task	Time	Description	▲ Entered On
			REDACTED	01111-March 2014	Intern/General Account Management	0.42	Saving and formatting press clipping for REDACTED	03/14/2014
			REDACTED	01109-March 2014 - Business Development	Bond PR/Business Development	0.18	Signing up for a free Sprout Social webinar with Kelsey.	03/14/2014
			REDACTED	01107-March 2014 - Administrative	Bond PR/Administrative	0.10	Adding social media voice determination points to staff meeting agenda.	03/14/2014
			REDACTED	01109-March 2014 - Business Development	Bond PR/Business Development	0.24	Researching REDACTED social media strategy topics.	03/14/2014
			REDACTED	01126-March 2014	Intern/General Account Management	0.24	Researching musical act options for REDACTED	03/14/2014
			REDACTED	01106-March 2014	Intern/General Account Management	0.42	Editing and scheduling social media content for REDACTED	03/14/2014
			REDACTED	01107-March 2014 - Administrative	Bond PR/Administrative	0.08	Mailing billing invoices to clients.	03/14/2014
			REDACTED	01126-March 2014	Intern/General Account Management	0.25	Researching event furniture rentals for REDACTED launch event.	03/14/2014
			REDACTED	01109-March 2014 - Business Development	Bond PR/Business Development	0.60	Reviewing Sprout Social pre-webinar PDF.	03/14/2014
			REDACTED	01106-March 2014	Intern/General Account Management	1.00	Creating Brand Intelligence Brief for REDACTED	03/14/2014
Total						3.53		

Appendix E
UNO AADM Program Student Handbook Excerpt



THE UNIVERSITY *of*
NEW ORLEANS

Graduate Program in Arts Administration

| Student Handbook

Spring 2014 Edition.

Contributors:

Laura Baker
Sarah Hitchcock-Langley
Sarah Stevens
Rachel Swan

| The Internship Report

If the student wishes to include internal documents from the Host Organization as appendices, the Host Organization must approve the use of *their* documents for this purpose.

The information in all internship reports will be made public and accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Please discuss this with your organization and keep this in mind while creating your report.

Appendix F

Sample Comprehensive Social Media Plan by Consultant (Redacted)

Company X Social Media Strategy 1 January 2014

Overview

The following is a step-by-step tour of the proposed social media strategy for Company X (X). It is designed to initiate new users and to maximize understanding of the logic behind the proposed strategy.

Note: The use of “SoMe” in place of “Social Media” is used intermittently throughout this report.

Steps to Developing Social Media Strategy

[One] Social Media Goals and Metrics

It is important to define specific, realistic, and measurable goals for social media campaigns. These social media goals should also relate to the overall sales, marketing, and productivity goals for X. The 2014 social media goals for the firm are as follows:

- Become a Thought Leader
- Inspire new business
- Engage our audience

Metrics

The processes and tools by which we will measure progress and the fulfillment of our goals are just as important as the goals themselves. The following metrics and analytics will be observed, tracked, and translated for all relevant social media goals: (Please see attached glossary for disambiguation of individual metrics)

- Facebook [sample metrics used to measure goal progress]
- Twitter [sample metrics used to measure goal progress]
- Website [sample metrics used to measure goal progress]
- LinkedIn [sample metrics used to measure goal progress]

Metrics and Attached Goals

The specific metrics we will use to measure individual goals are as follows:

Goal 1: Become a Thought Leader

Metrics: Analyze [sample metrics] on Facebook; [sample metrics] on Twitter, and [sample metrics] on LinkedIn.

Goal 2: Inspire new business

Metrics: Analyze [sample metrics] on Facebook; [sample metrics] on Twitter, and [sample metrics] on LinkedIn.

Goal 3: Engage our audience

Metrics: Analyze [sample metrics] on Facebook; [sample metrics] on Twitter, and [sample metrics] on LinkedIn.

[Two] Current Social Media Inventory

Before developing a new social media plan it is important to assess our current status on all platforms. We should know who is currently connecting with us and how our online presence compares to our competitors’.

X Current Stats

The following are the current metrics for X to-date, as of January 1, 2014:

Facebook

- XXXX Page Likes (up .X% since last week)
- XXX Total Reach (down X% since last week)
- XXX Total Post Reach (Down X% since last week)
- Total Engagement = XX people (up X% since last week)
- XXX Likes
- X Comments
- XXX Shares
- XXXX Post Clicks
- Popular posts: Each of the last two posts had a reach that was greater than the previous 5 posts combined: XXX and XXX reaches, respectively.

Twitter

- XXXX Followers
- XXX Tweets (sent by us)
- XX Retweets
- XX Favorites
- XX conversations
- XXX hashtags, #RandomHashtag, #SampleHashtag
- Tags (other accounts): @RandomAccount, @NolaPRaccount

LinkedIn

- XX Followers
- XXXX Products/Services posted (allows others to share and recommend)

- XXX Posts
- People also viewed: Company Y, Company Z, Company A, Company B, and Company C

Competitor Current Stats

We are “watching” the Facebook pages of seven local companies in order to compare their stats and progress with our own. The pages we follow include: Company Y, Company Z, Company A, Company B, Company C, Company D, and Company E.

Facebook currently (January 1, 2014) ranks the X page as #2 after Company Z (#1). This ranking is based on total page likes, new page likes, and engagement figures. The following is information on the social media strengths and weaknesses of these key online competitors:

Company Z

Facebook presented eight “top posts” from the past week at Company Z. Of these eight posts, four of them were captioned photos of Company Z events, two were in reference to non-work topics such as Christmas, and two referenced the company and/or business partners. The conclusion is that Company Z gets large amounts of Likes and Shares by posting mostly humanizing content (work events, Christmas) with a few informative pieces mixed in.

- **Strengths:** XXXX Fb Likes + Humanizing/fun Fb posts + Posting often on Fb + XXXX Twitter Followers + Use #SampleHashtag and #PopularHashtag Twitter hashtags + Ask their Followers questions + Monthly newsletter + Video + Active on LinkedIn company page + Host their own blog + Allow Facebook users to post reviews of their services + XXXX LinkedIn Followers + Post/update to LinkedIn once per week minimum
- **Weaknesses:** Might be a few too many community event photos on Twitter + Website is visually crowded and difficult to navigate

Company Y

Facebook presented nine “top posts” from Company Y over the past week. Of these nine posts, four were fun posts about Christmas (shopping guides, articles on holiday media trends, an event reminder for the tree lighting in Jackson Square), four were about social media platforms and/or trends, and one was a link to a PR related article.

- **Strengths:** Use #FunHashtag #Facebook #CompanyYHashtag and many more hashtags on Twitter + XXXX Followers on Twitter + Host their own blog + Links to presentations + Elaborate internship program that implies high level of value for students + Quarterly newsletter + Allow Facebook users to post reviews of their services + XXXX Followers on LinkedIn
- **Weaknesses:** Twitter posts are all text, no visuals + Only XXXX Facebook Likes + Facebook posts have too much text + Sometimes they post up to XX times per day on Facebook + Last LinkedIn update was XXX days ago

[Three] Content Development Strategy

Developing an effective content strategy is the most important tactic within the social media

strategy plan. Below are outlines for content type, frequency of posting, target audience, content creation/promotion, and current recommendations.

Appropriate Content Types

The following categories represent the suggested types of messages X should post on social media.

1. X Blog/News
 - a. Staff-written articles on industry topics
 - b. Post at least XX times per week/month
2. Industry Articles
 - a. Call attention to relevant industry articles written by others
 - b. Post at least XX times per week/month
3. Community Shout Outs
 - a. Praise success of other businesses/firms in community
 - b. As needed
4. Firm Successes
 - a. Highlight firm #wins
 - b. As needed
5. Corporate Culture/Humanizing
 - a. Fun and playful posts providing behind-the-scenes peek at X
 - b. As needed
6. X Internship Program
 - a. Promote internship program to recruit new interns and build reputation
 - b. TBD
7. Team Member Spotlight
 - a. Focus on a X team member's recent success
 - b. As needed
8. Social Media Reminders
 - a. Short posts to remind audience of other social media accounts (i.e. Remind Facebook user we are on Twitter and LinkedIn)
 - b. As needed
9. New Orleans Events
 - a. Demonstrate X's sense of community by staying socially involved with major local events (i.e. Mardi Gras, Jazz Fest, etc)
 - b. As needed
10. Professional Development
 - a. Speaking opportunities, conferences, panel discussions, retreats, webinars, etc
 - b. TBD

Frequency of Posting

It is difficult to assign a posting frequency to specific content items as the timeline for each platform differs greatly. Below are some general frequency rules for each platform:

- Facebook
 - The most successful Facebook pages (Company Y and Company Z) post XXX times per week or more. We suggest an initial plan of posting XX times per week until further notice.
- Twitter
 - Twitter posts have a much shorter shelf life and are easily buried in audience timelines, therefore a much greater number of posts-per-day are recommended. We suggest an initial plan of posting XXX times per week until further notice. Please note that this includes Retweets.
- LinkedIn
 - Include self-generated thought leadership posts

Sample Weekly Content Plan

Below is a proposed content plan and schedule for a given week at X.

- Monday
 - *Facebook*: [sample language]
 - *Twitter*: [sample language]
 - *LinkedIn*: [sample language]
- Tuesday
 - *Facebook*: None
 - *Twitter*: Retweet Company Y post + Comment on Company Z post
- Wednesday
 - *Facebook*: Link to X blog/news [sample language]
 - *Twitter*: Same X blog/news post as above + Open-ended questions about blog post [sample language]
 - *LinkedIn*: Self-generated thought leadership
- Thursday
 - *Facebook*: A #tbt post [sample language]
 - *Twitter*: Post shorter version of above #tbt post/image + Retweet another firm's #tbt post
 - *LinkedIn*: Comment on someone else's PR-related article
- Friday
 - *Facebook*: New Orleans event post [sample language]
 - *Twitter*: New Orleans event tweet + Tweet incorporating a trending hashtag
 - *LinkedIn*: Comment on someone else's PR-related article
- Saturday

- *Facebook*: None
- *Twitter*: New Orleans event tweet + Retweet
- Sunday
 - *Facebook*: Link to relevant industry article [sample language]
 - *Twitter*: Link to same relevant industry article + Key question associated with that article [sample language]

Target Audience

Our target audiences are XXXX businesses in the local, regional, or national public relations industry; audiences from related fields such as online marketing and event planning; new customers in any industry who may be in need of PR services.

Content Creation

The entire firm should share the responsibility of creating content, with final approval falling to supervisors.

Content Promotion

All employees should do their best to Share, Like, Retweet, and comment on as many X social media posts as possible. Not only does heavy support from firm staff exhibit a sense of community within the firm, it also helps spread our brand to new audiences.

Recommendations

The following are current suggestions for improving X’s presence on social media.

- Examples based on consultant’s observation of Company X’s current social media accounts on all platforms
- Optimize images for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- Create more effective bio on Twitter
- Change Facebook cover image
- Proof all posts for grammatical correctness

Scheduling Posts

The majority of social media content should be generated at least one week in advance, although there will always be some breaking news items that must be discovered and posted on the fly. In order to keep track of which messages should be posted on what days/times, Social Media Managers should enter specifics for all scheduled content into the excel sheet “Company X SoMe Grid.” This spreadsheet is saved to the drive so it can be easily accessed by Social Media Managers and supervisors.

Any suggested changes to content language, timing, etc., can be entered directly onto the spreadsheet (without editing the original text) in the “Suggested Changes” column. The spreadsheet is divided into tabs. Each tab represents one week, Monday to Sunday. Once a message is posted, the row in which it is contained should be filled with light grey so that no double-posting occurs.

Post Approval Process

Since messages are curated at least one week in advance, supervisors can open the grid to the appropriate tab and suggest changes and/or approve posts for at least one week at a time. It is suggested that Social Media Managers send the grid to supervisors for review by Monday at 5pm, and supervisors return the grid back to managers by the following Thursday by 5 pm. This way Fridays can be spent tweaking and scheduling posts for the following week. In the beginning of the social media strategy's implementation there will be a period of "catch-up" during which one or two weeks must be approved in a fairly short amount of time. However this is a one-time occurrence that will enable the more leisurely approval schedule proposed above.

Due to the instantaneous nature of social media there will often be times when an immediate response is required. For example: One Friday evening around 9pm a Twitter follower asks @XXXX if we are on Facebook. One of the Social Media Managers monitoring the @XXXX Twitter account via mobile should respond with something like "Absolutely. Find us at Facebook.com/XXXX or XXXX.com." These sorts of posts are impossible to approve via the usual channels. Everyone on the SoMe team should discuss guidelines for such situations and define which individuals are allowed to make real-time responses online.

[Four] Protocol for Tracking Progress

It is important to monitor platform metrics and develop analytics frequently enough to see how individual campaigns are performing, but not so often that one fails to see the larger picture.

Daily

Each day a Social Media Manager should monitor Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn accounts and respond to any pressing changes. Managers should also make an effort to "Like" other Facebook pages and posts that are relevant to our mission and to exhibit the same level of involvement on Twitter by Retweeting and Favoriting.

- Monitor SoMe accounts
- Respond to changes
- Interact with other accounts

Weekly

Metrics for Facebook and Twitter should be recorded in the "*SoMe Metrics - X*" spreadsheet once per week, preferably on the same day each week, as a rule. The metrics grid is separated into four tabs for all four social media platforms we use: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and the website. A weekly analytics report, in which a Social Media Manager clarifies the key take away points from the metrics grid to clearly summarize social media progress, should be developed on this same weekly schedule.

- Record current stats each Monday
- Compile weekly analytics report to explain metrics and email to supervisors
- Submit content schedule for supervisor approval
- Meet bi-weekly with supervisors to discuss progress

Monthly

At the end of the month a comprehensive monthly report, summarizing the previous four weeks' social media metrics and including the Social Media Managers' analytics, should be presented for discussion. However, during the first few months of the new social media strategy bi-weekly SoMe meetings with supervisors should take place in order to immediately address any issues.

- Compile comprehensive report to explain past month's metrics
- Meet with supervisors to discuss progress
- Adjust strategies as needed

[Five] Protocol for Content Generation and Posting

It is important to correctly identify individuals who are authorized to generate, as opposed to post, content. Content generation is something in which all staff members can participate by observing industry trends and submitting articles, suggestions, or even personal opinions for posting to X social media accounts. Content generators submit materials to Social Media Managers. Tasks falling to Social Media Managers are as follows:

- Social Media Managers should tweak post language so it is appropriate for specific platforms (i.e. shorten longer posts to 140 characters for Twitter and add appropriate hashtags)
- Social Media Managers should be the only ones to enter new content into the content schedule grid, although supervisors always have final approval rights over suggested content
- Social Media Managers should perform the actual scheduling of posts via chosen scheduling platform (i.e. decide on what days it is best to post specific content; what times are optimal for Sharing and Click-Throughs; and how to stagger messages so that they do not conflict with one another)

In summary, the Social Media Managers should act as the liaisons between content generators and supervisors. Content generators send their ideas to the Social Media Managers, and the Social Media Managers send a suggested finished version to supervisors for approval. Once approval is reached, Social Media Managers will then move forward with posting approved content.

[Six] Adjust Strategy As Needed

Sometimes it is necessary to retool certain tactics within the social media strategy in order to optimize results. To this end, the social media managers should meet with social media supervisors once per month (and bi-weekly for the first few months of the new strategy) to discuss the overall progress of the plan.

Appendix G

Social Media Scheduling Grid Created by The Consultant

Date	Platform	Time	Language	Image File Name	Notes	Suggested Changes
Bond PR Social Media						
Monday Jan. 6						
	Facebook	11:00 AM	"Wondering about the ROI for restaurant accounts versus lifestyle accounts? Employee X at Company X answers this and other burning questions raised by last week's PR Daily conference. [LINK TO ARTICLE]"	Linked image	Thought leadership post	OK - No edits
	Twitter	3:00 PM	"Follow @XXXXX on #Facebook for weekly blog posts and #PR updates: [LINK TO FB PAGE]"	No image	Expands SoMe audience across different platforms	Maybe add the hashtag #PRNews instead of #PR updates?
	Blog	2:45 PM	"Company X's own Employee X explains why luxury brand retail marketing is a sector all its own in her latest #CompanyBlog post: [LINK TO BLOG POST]"	Linked image	Promotes company and individual employees as thought leaders	Found a few typos in 3rd paragraph, second sentence.
	Twitter	2:45 PM	"Employee X explains the nuances of luxury retail marketing in her latest #CompanyBlog post: [LINK TO BLOG POST]"	No image	"	OK - No edits
Wednesday Jan. 8						
	Facebook	8:45 AM	"Congratulations to Employee X on his recent PRSA award! We are proud to have such talented and driven team members here at Company X."	JohnHeadshot.JPG	This highlights an employee's recent success	OK - No edits
	Twitter	2:15 PM	"#Congratulations @EmployeeX for winning the coveted #PRSA XXXXX award!"	JohnHeadshot.JPG	This highlights an employee's recent success	OK - but can we post at an earlier time so it coincides with the Facebook post?
Thursday Jan. 9						
	Facebook	10:50 AM	"Follow the Company X blog for weekly PR and advertising updates. [LINK TO BLOG]"	Linked image	Encourages blog readership and subscriptions	Let's move this post to later in the week - maybe Saturday?
	Twitter	10:50 AM	"Follow the #CompanyXBlog for weekly #PR and advertising updates. [LINK TO BLOG]"	no image	"	"

Vita

Suzette Elizabeth Lake began her undergraduate career as a Legislative Scholarship recipient at Tulane University. She later continued her academic work at Doshisha University in Japan, where she studied Japanese Language and Culture. In 2009 Suzette attended American University in Washington, DC, where she served as a staff blogger for *The Eagle* and won a fiction writing research grant. After returning to Louisiana Suzette graduated from the University of New Orleans with a Bachelor's of Language and Culture degree in May 2012. She graduates with a Masters of Arts Administration in May 2014 and has accepted a Social Media Management position with Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy.

Suzette has developed comprehensive social media and thought leadership strategies, established company blogging procedures, generated content to align with industry trends, and written creative copy for social media, websites, collaterals, and print. She has worked as the Social Media Manager for the Tennessee Williams/New Orleans Literary Festival, and has five years of blogging experience and three years of social media management experience. Her past internships include a Development Graduate Assistant position with the TW/NOLF, an Event Planner position with Social Butterfly Event Management, and a Social Media and PR position with Bond Public Relations and Brand Strategy.

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