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Utilizing Social Media in marketing communication of Mission Goes Global

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Abstract

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This thesis describes social media and its different applications in the business point of view. The thesis consists of two parts: the report part and the product part. In the report part the most relevant themes and topic related to communication planning and social media are explained. The product part has a social media communication plan, which contains tools and ideas, which can be used for communication purposes.

This thesis was conducted for Mission Goes Global, a project in Haaga-Helia, which aims to promote international co-operation when writing thesis. The communication plan was designed to help Mission Goes Global to take as much advantage of social media as possible. The communication plan was designed to suit Mission Goes Global's needs and to help them become more familiar using social media.

The thesis and the product include information and tips about the basics of social media and communication planning. With examples and ideas it will be easier for the Mission Goes Global team to start communication in a more effective way and achieve their goals as social media users.

The research in this thesis was conducted as an action research and the methods used to collect information were observation and brainstorming. The methods helped to gain knowledge, get new information and to come up with new ideas that could be useful in communication planning.

Keywords
Social Media, communication planning, communication strategy, strategy, communication, strategic communication

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1 Introduction

The creation of social media has been a big game changer for communications, businesses and marketing. All these three walk hand in hand with each other. Social media has brought business more close to their customers and has given businesses a more human image. It is a great tool to network and market your ideas. Social media marketing has replaced a huge part of traditional marketing and also communication. Today people communicate more freely not only with each other's but also with businesses. It gives a great opportunity to take your operations overseas and make yourself global.

The main purpose of this thesis was to create a social media communication plan for Mission Goes Global, a project organized in Haaga-Helia. It is a project that encourages students to use international co-operation when writing their theses or implementing another project with a commissioning partner. The communication plan was designed to help Mission Goes Global take as much advantage of social media as possible as they were not utilizing it properly. A good communication plan will help them recognize their own and their target groups' needs and knowing them will help them develop as social media users. The main goal is to boost their image and get more visibility. The social media plan gives them the right tools and methods to reach their audiences and it even helps them to strengthen their position among the Haaga-Helia students.

To understand the idea behind the social media communication plan it is important to understand the basics of social media, communication management, and strategic management and of course communication planning as well. Social media has become so complex and it has many applications that serve different needs and purposes. To see which social media applications or platforms suit Mission Goes Global the best, all the social media applications need to be researched.

The social media applications are for example discussion forums, social networking sites, blogs and wikis. Today the most popular ones are the social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, but blogs still have a solid fan base. All of the applications have different functionalities and have different interest groups and the users have different backgrounds. For example when comparing the users of Instagram and LinkedIn you can easily see that business people prefer LinkedIn.

As already mentioned, business can really benefit from using social media in their communication and in their marketing communication. Utilizing it correctly, they can reach their audiences more efficiently and create new customer relationships and contacts.

This thesis consists of two parts: the report which explains the relevant topics related to communication planning such as social media applications, communication strategy communication planning and benefits of social media, the methods I used to complete the communication plan and thesis and it ends with conclusion. The second part is the actual product: a communication plan for Mission Goes Global. The plan contains ideas and tools for Mission Goes Global, which will help them to boost their image.

2 Mission Goes Global

Mission Goes Global is a project within Haaga-Helia University of Applied sciences. It is part of the thesis theme group principle and its aim is to inspire students to integrate international co-operation into their theses. The main idea is to focus on and to promote the core messages of businesses, but also to create many possibilities for collaboration between the students of Haaga-Helia and different organizations. The goal of the project is developing strategic communication in organizations, in other words implementing the stated mission and strategy into a company's or organizations basic functions, which include sales and revenue world-wide. This is in conjunction with businesses and working life along with the students.

Mission Goes Global gives the students the tools to write their theses in an international environment. Students can choose their company of their interest and by taking part in Mission Goes Global, share their expertise and maybe even work with students from abroad. The collaboration will give additional value to the students' theses and at the same time offer creative solutions to businesses. In addition the students can gain practical experience from a real-life international project work.

When businesses co-operate with Mission Goes Global, they have a chance to develop the implementation and communication of their strategy, as well as help them to develop working model on a practical level. Haaga-Helia students and their partner schools will develop communication according to a specific company's mission, vision and strategy. It can be seen as positive effects on the business in question.

2.1 Mission Goes Global in social media

Currently Mission Goes Global is present in three different social media applications: Facebook, Twitter and their website is a blog, which is in WordPress under the Haaga-Helia blog service. These platforms suit and meet their needs the best and there Mission Goes Global can reach their target audiences in the most effective way.

Mission Goes Global uses Facebook for marketing communication purposes. The main idea is to reach their target audiences which are: students, companies and partner schools. The content, pictures and posts are meant to be informative, inspiring and appealing and the idea is to raise interest among the target groups and even attract new audiences. At the moment their Facebook page needs marketing to gain more likes and followers since currently the page only has a few likes and views.

In addition Mission Goes Global also uses Facebook groups to communicate with the students working on their language projects in co-operation with Mission Goes Global. The students can communicate there freely and they can also find the important files that may concern their projects. The reason why Mission Goes Global is using Facebook for communication with the students is because it is the fastest channel to reach them. After all many students have told that they prefer using Facebook for school projects over the school's official platforms, which in this case is Moodle.

Mission Goes Global uses Twitter for same purposes as Facebook. Mission Goes Global follows interesting accounts that share same interests and the idea is to start publishing interesting and encouraging tweets about Mission Goes Global and themes that concern communication, strategy, business world and globalization. When someone tweets about something concerning Mission Goes Global's interests there is a possibility to retweet it or comment the post to start an interesting conversation. When you compare the target groups of Mission Goes Global's Facebook and Twitter accounts, Twitter is more useful when they want arouse interest among their partner schools and companies or organizations. After all, the business crowd tends to use Twitter more than Facebook.

The blog, which can be found through the Haaga-Helia blog portal in WordPress, works as Mission Goes Global's homepage. That is where the biggest amount of information about Mission Goes Global is available and the students can find matters that may concern them. It has section for all the most important languages: Finnish, English, Swedish, French, Spanish and Russian. Furthermore, it has a section where you can find information about theses conducted with Mission Goes Global. Naturally the homepage also has a section for contact details and a simple homepage, where all the news and most important information can be found. The blog serves all of their target groups as it works as their homepage. The blog is the most official channel for Mission Goes Global and the other platforms work better for a more open discussion with the audiences. However, there is a possibility to leave a comment in the homepage since it has the same functions like any normal blog.

3 What is social media?

Social media is electronic media for social interaction (Brennan & Schafer 2010, 13-14). Social media, at its core, is a communication channel like email or phone calls (DeMers 2014). To understand social media, one must also know what web 2.0. means. Web 2.0. is the second generation of World wide Web, where the content is generated by the users. How do these two connect? Social media uses Web 2.0 to create dialogues between the web users. In social media people can communicate with people with same interests and share their ideas and thoughts. Social media is democratic, when it comes to knowledge and information, since it allows the users to produce content. Such pages are Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, LinkedIn, and YouTube among others.

The terms social media and social networking often get mixed up. Brennan and Scafer (2010, 14) state that social networking Web sites are a subset of social media, which means that not all the forms of social media are social networks. The social-media sites, which also are networks, are the ones for connecting people with common interests such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

To understand social media it is crucial to understand what it is not: social media is not a strategy (Golden 2011). Social media is still changing set of tools that take advantage of online relationships and information sharing. Social media are plural and, individually or collectively, they are not strategies. In addition the applications are neither initiatives nor tactics.

To explain social media, the easiest way is to explain the two words behind it. Lon Safko's Social Media Bible (2010, 4) explains: the first word, social, refers to the instinctual needs we humans have to connect with other humans. That has been part of our life since our species started to develop. People have always had the urge to be around and be included in groups of similar like-minded people. By being with that kind of people we are able to feel at home and comfortable sharing our thoughts, ideas, and experiences. The second word media refers to the media we use. By using that media we make connections with other humans. It can be radio, televisions, e-mail, websites, audio, video or text messages that we use to connect with the others.

Social media is only a new set of tools, new technology that allows more efficient connection and relationship building with other people, customers or prospects. It is used side by side with the telephone, direct mail, print advertising, radio, television, and billboards. But then again social media is much more effective and is also slowly replacing the old com-

munication tools. Today social media has become one of the biggest communication channels both for personal life and business life. Most of the businesses today use Facebook for marketing and communication purposes as well.

4 Social Media Applications

Since social media is rapidly changing and growing, it is almost impossible to present all of the existing social media applications. New applications are being created all the time and others are slowly dying, when new medias emerge. In this part the most popular and current social media applications are presented briefly: blogs, discussion forums, social networking sites, virtual words and photo- audio-, video sharing platforms.

4.1 Discussion forums

Discussion forums are the oldest established form of online social media. Discussion forums normally move around specific topics and interests. Each separate discussion forum is called a thread, and many threads can be active at the same time (Mayfield 2008, 23). In discussion forums it is possible for the participants to post a topic, which the other users can review and comment on.

The typical characteristics for discussion forums are the common message storage, the option every forum participant has to read and write to any other participant and a communication topology based on messages and knowledge as the main connection axes (Ravid & Rafaeli 2004, 4). When it comes to the challenges that discussion forums are facing, it is hard for them to remain interesting and entertaining for their readers.

The difference between a blog and a discussion forum can be explained by the role of a moderator (Mayfield 2008, 23). Discussion forums are moderated by an administrator, who can remover unsuitable posts or spam, but is not allowed to guide or lead the discussion. Then again blogs also have a clear owner, whereas discussion forum's threads are started by the members of the forum.

Most discussion forums and blogs can easily be distinguished. In discussion forums the content of the forum is created by several participants and in the blog there is the writer and others can only comment the posts.

4.2 Social networking sites

Social networks emerge from the ability of users to represent themselves and their interests and to activate engagement with other users (Jarrett 2008, 2). These days social networking is very popular and the number and variety of all the social networking sites are impossible to cover. MySpace used to be the most famous and popular one before Facebook took over and replaced it. These days it is obvious that Facebook is the leading social networking site, but other pages such as LinkedIn are also getting more and more popular among business people. Today the social networking sites have been influenced by the different social media platforms. For example today you can also share pictures and videos on Facebook and also send private messages and it is also been said that they have come up with the new live video streaming tool.

4.3 Blogs

Oxford dictionary defines blog as a regularly updated website or web page, typically one run by an individual or small group and it is written in an informal or conversational style. Blogs are communication channels where one-to-many communication and two-way communications take place (Demopoulos 2007, 5). It can also be described as a diary that other people can comment on (Evans 2008, 57-58). In blogs the discussion happens by commenting the posts and then answering to the comments. In the early days blogs mostly contained only text, but today video blogs i.e. vlogs and podcast are getting more and more popular. Today even schools take advantage of blogs and use them for collaboration on projects that they have at schools and universities. Non-profit organizations use blogs to raise awareness and money for their causes. Politics category is mainly used by members of parliament, political parties, government agencies and activists to create connection with their constituencies.

Since blogging is becoming commonly used tool in personal life, but also business tend to take advantage of blogs to market themselves and to communicate with the public, there are many blog types from which the author can choose from. The blog portal WordPress (2015) defines different blog types, which are the most common ones in the blog world: personal, business, schools, non-profits, politics, military and private and so on. Obviously personal blogs are the most popular ones and they include personal topics such as politics, music, family, travel health and so on. Simply by googling you can find the most popular blogs in the current blog scene. Nowadays in Finland style or fashion blogs have become more and more popular among younger crowds. The personal blogs are based on the opinion of the author. The business blogs are created by the professionals from realtors to lawyers and their purpose is to share knowhow. Then again the companies use

blogs to engage and interact with their customers. Military blogs are created by the member of the military and they use them to give reports about the happenings in their current location to keep their families aware of their life. Private blogs are commonly used to share photos and other information within a certain group of people for example families or companies. These types of blogs are visible only for the certain groups and only they can comment the content.

4.4 Wikis

Wiki is described as a website that allows anyone to add, delete, or revise content by using a web browser (Dictionary.com 2015). In other words anyone using internet is able to freely create content to the page using any Web browser. It supports hyperlinks and uses simple text syntax for page creation. Like other social media applications also wikis are participative.

Today Wikipedia is the best known wiki. Wikipedia describes itself as free content dictionary, which is based on wiki-technique (Pönkä 2014, 131). Many of the articles are not finished, but in those cases additional comments are asked to encourage the readers to add their information. It is made really easy to edit and correct the content since it is done freely and directly. The information available on Wikipedia can be used without permission and no-one gets paid for creating content. The other different characteristic of Wikipedia, when comparing to other social media applications, is that it does not allow advertising.

5 Benefits of using social media in modern business

Today most of the companies are utilizing social media in their daily operations. Social media has many benefits and is constantly giving amazing opportunities for the companies to reach new audiences and interest groups. Besides it offers different tools to communicate with their target groups.

Jason DeMers (2014) lists ten different benefits that social media gives its users. Such benefits are increase in brand recognition, improvement in brand loyalty, opportunities to convert, higher conversation rates, higher brand authority, increase in inbound traffic, low marketing costs, better search engine rankings, richer customer experience and improvement in customer insights. Furthermore it is easy to locate the future customers and other target groups (Wilson, S. 2010, 5). When the social media is utilized in correct way it will give you many new opportunities and benefits.

Social media gives a great opportunity to increase visibility, which is vital in today's competitive business life. One should see the social media networks as new channels for one's brand's voice and content. It is very important to see the opportunity because one can simultaneously make it easier for the customer to contact you and also make you more accessible the approaching and existing customers. Besides it is way cheaper than the traditional ways to make your company visible.

DeMers writes that according to a report published by Texas Tech University, brands who engage on social media channels enjoy higher loyalty from their customers. It states that companies should utilize the tools available in social media to connect with their audiences. A strategic and open social media plan can be a good way to make the consumers loyal to brands.

The opportunity to make new customers appears every time you gain a new follower in which ever social media platform. The people following you can be divided into new customers, recent customers and old customers. When they are following you in social media, you obviously are able to interact with all of them. Whatever you post in the channel you gain a chance that the customers react, which then again may lead to site visit or even a conversion.

Using social media results in higher conversion rate in a couple of ways. When companies use social media, they become more humanized when they become more accessible for the people. This is vital since people prefer to do business with people over companies. In addition it increases trust and credibility.

In his book Harto Pönkä (2015, 168) says that the culture of sharing promotes common benefit. When you interact with the customers you show that you have good faith to the other customers as well. If people want to compliment a product or service, today it is done in social media. This works the same way as if your friend would share his or her good experience of a product. Obviously the more people talk about your company and your brand, the more possible customers you get and again it makes you look more valuable and authoritative. In case of negative feedback you can develop your services and gain their trust again.

Different social media profiles can be seen as paths leading to your site and to your brand or idea. The more profiles you have the more paths lead to your website. If you do not use social media your inbound traffic is limited only to the people, who already are familiar with

your brand. When you use social media successfully you evidently create more inbound traffic to your site and again this leads to increase in customer conversions.

It is obvious that social media today is the best and cheapest way to market your operations. Since social media is a vast channel you do not have to make an huge effort to increase traffic in your website. Even if you start small you can make miracles and increase your conversion.

Search engine optimization is one of the best ways to see which companies are relevant and most searched. However the requirements for high ranking are constantly changing and one has to follow them if hungry for success. When you interact in social media constantly, Google and other search engines such as Yahoo see you as a strong brand, it also gives them the picture that you are legitimate, credible and trustworthy. That is why a strong social media presence today is vital.

Social media gives the opportunity to demonstrate the level of your customer service and also deepen your customer relationship. If a customer is not pleased and complains about the service on Twitter you can address the comment right away. A public apology creates trust and reliability and in case a customer gives a compliment you can thank them and give them further information of other additional products that might be interesting for the customer. This will give the customer the feeling that he or she is valuable to your company. Then again it is vital to react to critic in a correct way. It takes time to build a good customer relationship, but in one second you can ruin it and also harm your image.

By using social media it is easy to find out what the customer are interested in and how they behave. Social listening is method that you use to monitor user comments and to investigate what people think of your business. You can find out what content creates the most interest and learn from that.

After all it is people who are using social media and one should always see the customers as individuals, who have different interest and personalities. Social media is all about human psychology (Meyerson & Clark 2010, 14). If you want to create a long lasting customer relationship you should think about it as the process of creating networks in real-life.

6 Communication planning

So what is a communication plan and what does communication planning mean? The online business dictionary's definition of communication planning is: Communication plan-

ning is a step by step process to ensure that the intended message is received, understood, and acted upon by the recipient. It involves: determining the objectives, choosing the audience, and selecting appropriate channels to reach them. Before an organization can start planning their communication, they first have to design their communication strategy.

6.1 Communication Strategy

To be able to start planning the communication within a company, project or another organization, one has to have a communication strategy. Communication strategy consists of many different part and details and it exist to help the company or organization to communicate in an effective way and to meet the main organisational objectives. Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2015, 3) explain it to be a distinct approach focusing on the process of communication which offers complementary insights and open up new fields for interdisciplinary research. Then again communication strategy can also be explained with the definitions of the two words: communication and strategy. Strategy is the method how the wanted outcome is reach. It is common that companies or organizations, even people, set goals. To reach the goals the induvial must implement certain actions. In other words the set of actions can be seen as a strategy. It can also be seen as a pattern (Mintzberg, H. Ahlstrand, B. Lampel, J 2009, 9). Communication then again is when people or businesses interact either verbally or non-verbally. When communicating, one is always sending messages, which can be seen as the purpose of communication.

To be able to start planning the communication it is essential to recognize the purpose of the communication. The purpose of the communication means the expectations of the communication, in other words, what the company is trying to achieve with the communication. It can also be seen as where the company wants to go (Devereaux Ferguson, S, 1999, 8) It can be such thing as: engaging with the stakeholders, demonstrate the success of the organization's work, ensuring people understand what the organization is doing.

The other thing to look at before designing a communication plan it is important to see where the company is at in that moment. The organization should shortly outline what the organization is doing, its functions, operation environment. This can be done by using tools such as SWOT or PEST analysis. SWOT is a tool designed to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an organization. PEST analysis then again is used to list the possible factors, which may have an effect on the organization's work. PEST stands for political, economic, social and technological factors. It is also a good idea

to consider the other organizations operating on the market. That is why it is useful to perform a competitor analysis. It will give information on the competitors and what they are currently doing.

The strategy should also reflect the organizational plan of the organization. One should consider the overall vision and core aims and objectives of the organization. The idea is to propose how the communication can help deliver those goals. It is crucial that the communications objectives are visible to contribute to achieve the overall objectives of the organization.

When designing the communication strategy, the company should be familiar with its main audiences whether it comes to external or internal audience. The audience, or in other words the stakeholders can be the public, politicians, service user, customers and staff naturally depending on the organization. The organization should also consider the potential audiences that they are willing to create a connection with. It is common that organizations have many different audiences who they need to interact with and the audiences might have different interest, when it comes to the company's activities. When investigating the audiences it might help to ask few questions (Stanton, N 2009, 7): What sort of people are they? Personality? Education? Age? Status? When the organization understands this, it will be easier for them to plan the communication.

When the company knows its audiences it can start to write down its objectives into relevant messages for each of its audiences. It is sensible to start with the biggest audience or with the audience that they communicate with the most. That audience is called the high priority audience. Obviously the message varies depending on the audience and the organization should always consider the audience to which they are targeting the message at. The language of the messages may also vary again depending on the audience. The most important part hear is for the company to make sure that all of their stakeholders understand what kind of organization they are so the message should always somehow be linked with the organization's objectives and values.

Before starting to communicate the organization should also identify the communication channels, which they can use when they want to connect with their audiences. Since nowadays social media plays a big role on the online communication, the company should be familiar with all the different applications and know their pros and cons. Not all the channels should be use, only the ones that suit the organization's purposes the best. The company should also consider its resources and how they can utilize them for the communication. At this point the organization can actually start designing their communication

plan, which then can include for example the communication methods, budget and resources and so on.

It is always important to check whether the communication strategy is working. They can be checked for example through amount of likes on social media, or hits on the organization's website or even the amount of email that the organization receives.

6.2 Communication plans

The process of creating a communication plan is very similar to the process of planning communication strategy. A good communication plan has many benefits that will help the organization further at its operations and activities. Communication plan will make it easier for the organization to focus on daily activities, help set priorities, provide sense of control and order, help to get the staff oriented and enthusiastic, and give protection when it comes to last-minute situations.

A communication plan is a written document which is created to describe what the organization wants to accomplish, in other words, what are the objectives of the organization. The plan also describes how the organization can achieve the objectives, which it has set. It contains the audience, which is the people or customers to whom the communications will be addressed. In some cases it also includes evaluation, which will then measure the results of the communication.

The first part of a communication plan is normally the strategy overview. It consists of four different parts: communication objectives, positioning statement, target audiences and desired action. The communication objectives describe what the organization wants to achieve with its efforts. In order to be able to measure it, the efforts should be as concrete as possible. It could be something like an increase on likes in a Facebook page. The objectives should also be listed in order of priority. The positioning statement describes your position in the market. It describes your organization and also your offering. It gives information on such things as what makes your organization unique and how you differ from the other similar organization. The target audiences then again describe who you are trying to reach and what do you want them to do. It is crucial to consider the primary target audiences and also the people who influence them, in other words, the secondary or tertiary audiences. Also here it is better to be more specific so it is easier to research the audiences and understand their interest and platforms that they are using. When you are thinking about the desired action you are thinking about what kind of actions do you want your target audiences to take. It might be donation, becoming a member, or simply spreading the word of your company.

An important part obviously is what communication platform you are going to use and how often. It is important to define which of your target audiences you are trying to reach and through which channels. It is vital that you set a timetable so that you reach the people without being too annoying. When you know your audiences you can also start creating content that they will find interesting. Still it should be taken into consideration that the interests of the stakeholders may vary depending on situation (Juholin, E. 2009, 200).

The University of Chicago (2015) recommends you to decide which social media applications suit your target audiences and stake holders the best. For example if you want to communicate with business people you should investigate, which social media platforms they tend to use. If your target audiences consist of different kind of people you can use many social media platforms. Business people tend to use Twitter more whereas students prefer Facebook.

You should also create a list of topics or themes that are related to your company and your brand. Using these topics it is easier for you to come up with content that you can post in your different profiles. It is important because only few companies can create contents that audiences find interesting only by writing about their operations (Hakola, I. Hiila, I. 2012, 138). You can use daily or weekly themes. You can set some of your themes to be more important and generate more content related to that topic. However it is very important that the theme has something to do with your business. The key dates can also be related to the themes and topics you are posting about. They are events that recur each year. It can be an annual conference, meeting or a customer event.

When the plan is being implemented, the company can also measure how it is working. Such meter can be for example increase in followers, likes, comments and subscribers. The results can be monitored frequently, not only after a few months of the kick-off (Forsgård, C. Frey, J, 2010, 146-147). This will also help to redesign the plan into a form that serves the organization better.

7 The process of developing a communication plan

My thesis process consisted of four parts (Figure 1). But before going to the first step, my process started with coming up with the thesis topic. I had worked as a project assistant for Mission Goes Global during the spring 2015. I was already familiar with their operations and knew their goals and visions. During the spring I had already started developing their social media profiles as it was one of my duties as their project assistant. The idea

already then was to make them more visible in the media and among their target groups. When I found out that I could do further development and write my thesis about the communication planning, I was really pleased. A good topic really helps to get started. Ojasalo, Moilanen and Ritalahti (2014, 26) state that having an interesting theme is really important, when doing a developing work. They explain that innovation based developing means that you try to find new solutions. I really wanted to develop their social media profiles and give them new ideas. There was a lot of room for progress. Giving them new concrete ideas, would help them go further with their operations. My thesis process was really hands-on project as it is completed as product oriented thesis.

As I started to write my thesis, I first had to make a thesis plan. As already mentioned my process of developing a communication plan consisted of four parts (Figure 1): doing research on the topic, doing research on the commissioning party, creating the actual plan and last part evaluation. Following these steps it was easier to implement the plan and the process was much clearer. The figure below demonstrates the process I went through, when writing my thesis and designing the communication plan for Mission Goes Global.

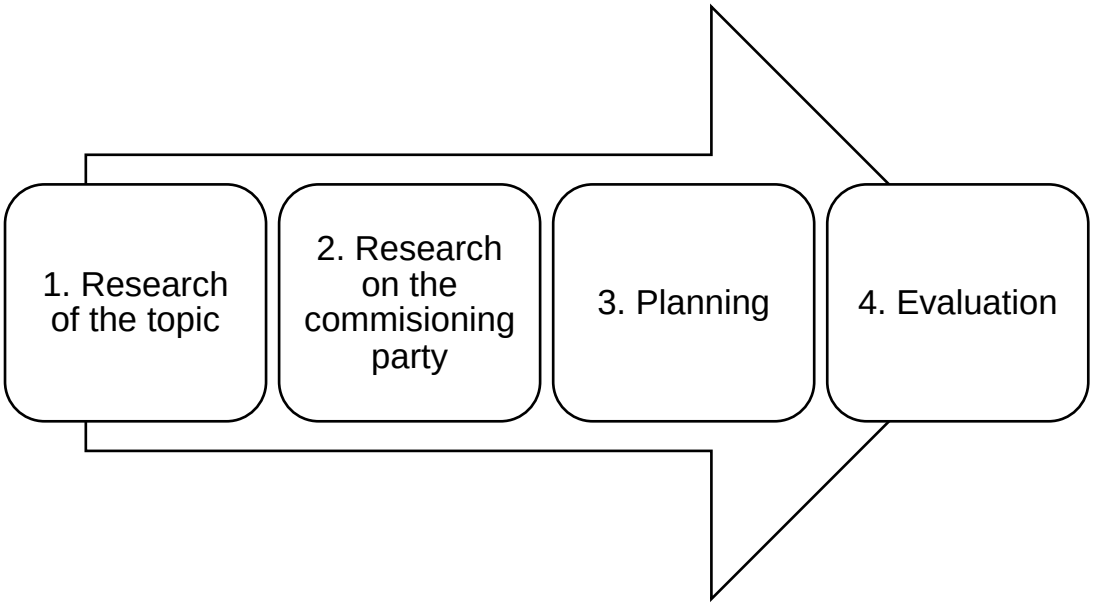

Figure 1 The process of designing a communication plan

The first step was to collect information about the topics related to my thesis for the theoretical framework. The themes and topics most relevant for my thesis were: social media, communications, and communication planning, strategy and communication strategy. Obviously I also had to find information about Mission Goes Global, though it already was quite familiar for me. When I had the topics that were related to my thesis topic, I was able to start looking for sources to use. Since social media actually is quite a new phenome-

non, it was easier to find information online than from written sources. There are many books about social media, but many of them only stick to the basics of it. After all it has changed a lot since it started growing. Still I had to be careful not to use any sources that did not seem trustworthy. Furthermore, I had to find enough sources to see that the information is real and that it could be justified.

When I had enough sources I could start writing the report part of my thesis. It was important to first write the report and then do the product. This way I had all the right tools to create and develop the plan. When starting to write the report, I had to design the structure of the thesis: what would be the right order to present the topics and ideas. At first I structured my thesis starting with social media and its applications, then moving on to communication strategy and communications planning. Then lastly I introduced the commissioning party Mission Goes Global and its ideology. Through feedback I realized that it's more important to introduce the commissioning party first and that is why I ended up with the current structure.

Since I am quite familiar with social media myself it was easy to write about it with my own words. Of course I used references to support my points of view and the information that I searched to justify it. Social media is constantly growing and changing so it is almost impossible to mention all of the current social media applications. I decided to write about the most popular ones. I decided to divide the social media applications into four different types: wikis, social networking sites, discussion forums and blogs. For example social networking sites include both Facebook and LinkedIn. It was more reasonable to go through the types of social media application than explaining all the applications in social media because the number is constantly growing.

To demonstrate the importance of a social media communication plan, I wanted to give some examples of the benefits that companies and organizations get when they have a good communication plan. This also gave good tools and points of views for the communication plan I was about to implement. With each point I could think: is this something what Mission Goes Global wants to achieve? I tried to include many types of benefits from different kinds of sectors not only to focus on Mission Goes Global's needs, but to give a wide range of opportunities what you can gain by using social media.

When moving on to the actual type of product. It was important to explain the main parts of it. When developing a communication plan it is important to understand communication strategy and to understand communication strategy it is vital to understand what strategy

actually is. That is why I included communication strategy and communication planning in the report as well.

As I had collected all the needed information for the report and started planning the communication plan, first I had to analyse the current situation of Mission Goes Global. I had to check, which social media application they were using and which social media applications they could use to communicate. I also had to check what kind of messages they already had been sending through the social media and how often. I came to the conclusion that there was a lot of room for progress and for development. They were using the right tools, but not enough. Their communication of social media was quite small and they did not use it in an efficient way. All in all you could say that they did not take the most advantage of the social media as they could have.

As a result I started planning the communication plan and at first I created a preliminary communication plan. The preliminary communication plan gave a simple idea of the communication plan and what it should include. The idea of the social media communication plan was to make Mission Goes Global more visible for Haaga-Helia students and other parties who might be interested in Mission Goes Global's operations. Such parties could be for example partner schools and exchange students. The social media communication plan can also be seen as a marketing communication plan since social media is commonly used to market services, goods, ideas and innovations. And after all the main purpose of the social media communication plan is to make Mission Goes Global look more attractive for students.

When I had the preliminary plan ready, I started to further develop it. The actual plan then again included: the aim of the plan, Mission Goes Global's social media presence, target audiences, themes, visual effects, key dates and events, content creation and last measurement. These are the parts that most of the communication plans of today's business world have. Each part has important tools and ideas, which Mission Goes Global can use to support their operations. I had to plan each part for Mission Goes Global's needs. I had to keep in mind what do they want to achieve with the plan and who are their target audiences.

I included some screenshots in the plan to give some ideas of what they could publish in their social media profiles and which profiles suit for what kind of posts and messages. This would give them a concrete picture of how it should be done. With the examples they can now start posting themselves.

The target audiences had to always be taken into consideration also when considering which applications to use. Snapchat for example would not bring them together with their target audiences. They already had created the base of their Facebook page, but it had to be published. So far they have not been that active there. The blog, which they used as their homepage, was already up and running. However with a good planning it will help Mission Goes Global to schedule the updating process and make it easier to manage the blog.

One of the most concrete tips and tools on social media plan is the year clock. There they can easily find when they should post something on their social media applications. The year clock has each month and each social media platform. Almost every month has one event, which they should keep in mind. When there is an event they can easily wrap their messages around the event. As I was doing research on their year clock, I used my knowledge from the time I worked as Mission Goes Global's project assistant. There are some events that take place each year and those are occasion when Mission Goes Global should take an active role in the social media.

As a last part I created a job advert for the vacancy of Mission Goes Global. I wanted to make it visual as well since the idea was to post it on Facebook as well. I used the logo and the picture of the map of the world as background. I also tried to formulate the text so that it would attract the audience and also arouse questions and the need to know more about the project.

7.1 The methods

As methods for my thesis I decided to use observation and also little bit of brain storming. Because I worked as a project assistant for Mission Goes Global, I participated in meetings with different departments. In most of the meetings I promoted the social media profiles and the departments also gave tips on how to use the applications. For example the communications department gave good practical tips on what kind of messages they should post in Facebook and Twitter.

When it comes to observation I used the netnography form of observation. It is a qualitative research method, which utilizes social media and different types of forums online (Ojasalo, K. Moilanen, T. Ritalahti, J, 2014, 117). The main idea was to do benchmarking and to see what social media applications students use and which applications would fit Mission Goes Global’s needs the best. As an observer I decided to take the role of a passive observer. This means that for example in social media I did not comment or like any posts, pages or videos that I read or watched, as I felt that there was no need. Only by

seeing and reading how others operate, helped me to come up with ideas that could help Mission Goes Global go further with their social media appearance.

Then secondly I also used brainstorming. Brainstorming is a creative way to solve problems, where you create ideas within a group of people (Ojasalo, K. Moilanen, T. Ritalahti, J, 2014, 160).Mission Goes Global uses students taking part in course called Language Project. With some students we had a brainstorming session when we were thinking about what Mission Goes Global could publish in their homepage, Facebook and Twitter. Their ideas and contribution was then included in the plan in the content creation part.

You could also think that doing the research on the topic that I chose was conducted by using action research. It is a research, which aims to solve current practical problems and to create organizational change (Myers, M. D, 2009, 55). In own words you could say that by doing the research and analyzing the results helped me to create the plan, which aims to make Mission Goes Global more visible and attractive.

These methods helped to come up with new ideas and to find the information needed. The information collected using the already mentioned methods helped to get started with the plan and to give a big picture of it. Using problem solving really helps to think outside the box and gives new ideas.

8 Discussion

All in all I am quite pleased with the outcome. The main focus of the thesis was on the product and personally I think that the plan is useful and will help Mission Goes Global go further with their operations. It gives many ideas regarding different points and takes their different target groups and social media platforms into account. The report also gives a good picture of the themes related to the actual product and supports the plan.

The reason why I ended up with the outcome, is due to the sources and own experiences about social media. The sources gave good ideas on how to develop the social media communication plan for a project or an organization. After all I personally belonged to the other interest group; students. It really helped to think that the communication plan is designed to create relationships. As Meyerson and Clark say (2010, 14) if you want to create a customer relationship, you should think about it as creating any networks in real-life. Because in this case Mission Goes Global operates with people, not machines. I could think what I would like to see in their social media as a student. The harder part was to think about it from the professionals' point of view. University of Chicago's (2015) commu-

nication instructions really helped me to understand what businesses would like to see and that not all the platforms can be used for all of the interest groups.

Like already mentioned the focus of this this is on the product: the social media communication plan. The sources helped me to create a plan that will fit Mission Goes Global's needs. To create a plan it was vital to understand what communication strategy means and what most of the communication plans look like and include. For example Stanton's (2009, 7) ideas gave good tools on how to find out the interest groups of a company or an organization. This also helped to create a plan that suits all of the Mission Goes Global's interest groups. Devereaux Ferguson also says that it is important to know the purpose of the communication. (1999, 8). So I had to think about what Mission Goes Global wants to achieve with the communication plan. It was obvious that they want more visibility and make the communication with their target audiences more relaxed and easy.

The thesis had a current topic and the information used was valid, even though some of the sources might have had only the basics of the themes. It was easier to find the information online, but to justify it and to make sure it was valid; I used written sources as well. Even though I implemented a product oriented thesis, I had to use certain research methods to find the relevant information and to come up with new ideas and innovations.

For future development Mission Goes Global can use the social media communication plan that I developed for them. When they start using their social media platforms on weekly or monthly basis they can conduct a research to find out, whether it is really working or not. At this point it is really hard to say if the plan is really working. First the plan really has to be put into force and the results can be seen later. It also requires support actions from traditional media and traditional marketing. However, the plan is a good plan for a project like Mission Goes Global, which is only starting to learn how to use social media for marketing communications purposes.

As marketing communication and communication are operations require not only knowledge and expertise, but also creativity, it was almost obvious that brainstorming would be a great method to come up with new ideas. As the brainstorming was done with student, one interest group of Mission Goes Global, it really gave good ideas and views on how Mission Goes Global should be present in social media. It was also great when I had the opportunity to participate in meetings with the communications department of Haaga-Helia and when they gave good tips on how Mission Goes Global can get started with their social media. They really helped on creating the Twitter account and gave good advice as I was quite new with the application.

Benchmarking is always a good method, when it comes to business life. I could already do it on my free time when using different social media platforms. I could see how other business communicate in social media and by looking at their posts I could see what kind of messages get more likes and boost conversation. For example in many posts that businesses publish, there is a question in the end. That is something that really encourages their audiences to interact.

I did not have to write any agreement on handling business and trade secrets. When collecting information and data about the themes related to my thesis and always had to keep in mind that if I use any source I have to mention the source, writer and so on. The information I used was reliable and I tried to use as many sources as possible to see that the information really was real and trustworthy.

It took longer for me to finish the thesis than I had planned. It is really important that one makes a specific thesis plan and follows it. Having a good plan will help to proceed in the planned schedule. As I started my work placement, it slowed my thesis process a lot. It was hard to find time to write and design the plan. The process really taught me about time management, as I have always been a person who favors the last minute. This is something that will help me in working life and I have now learned by doing.

I was quite fluent with social media, but writing this thesis gave me knowledge on how business can utilize social media and how they can benefit from using it. Reading about social media and its benefits really taught me to read social media differently. Today when I read something on social media I can really see what they are trying to achieve with the posts and comments. This is something that is really important in today's business life as business are moving more and more towards social media marketing and communications. To conclude I can say that writing the thesis really gave me new knowhow and made me use the knowledge and interest that I already had about social media and communications.

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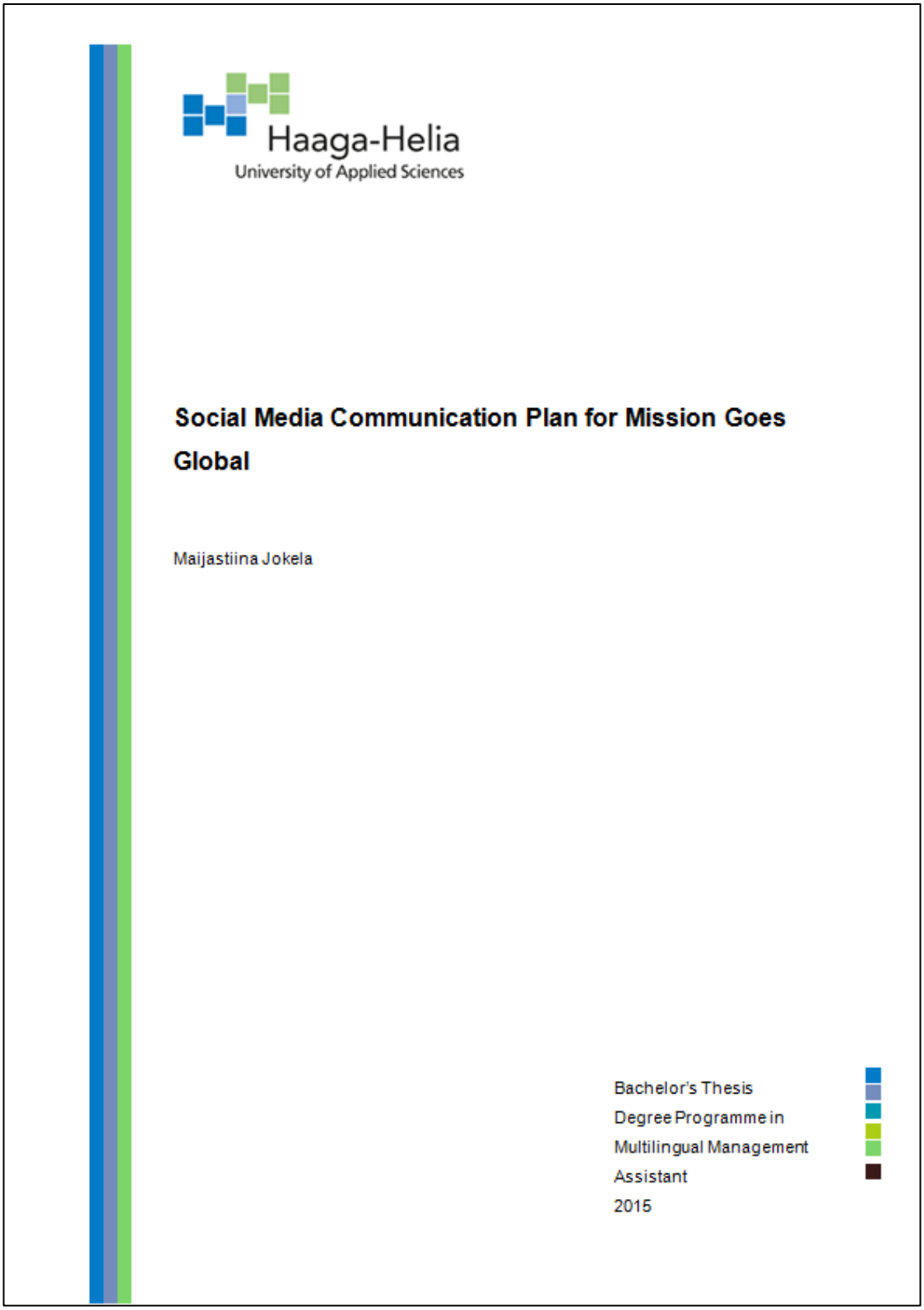
Appendices

Appendix 1 Social Media Communication plan for Mission Goes Global



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1 Introduction

The purpose of this communication plan is to help Mission Goes Global boost its image and create interest among its target groups. Mission Goes Global has Facebook, Twitter and blog, which it utilizes for communication and for marketing purposes. This communication plan will help them to take advantage of the social media platforms and gain more followers and get more people involved with their services.

The plan consists of six parts: the social media applications Mission Goes Global is using, target audiences, themes, visual effects, key dates and events, content creations and measurement. These are normally included in communication plans used in today's business world and each part support each other and give tools and ideas for Mission Goes Global. The tips will help Mission Goes Global team get started with the social media. There are figures and screenshots that give examples of their social media posts and messages. That way when someone new to the project takes over, it will be much easier for him or her to understand what to post.

It is planned so that the people working with Mission Goes Global could easily find tips and ideas for updating the profiles. The best scenario would be that there is only one person, who would be in charge of the social media communication for example the project assistant.

2 The aim of the communication plan

The aim of the social media communication plan is obviously to make Mission Goes Global more visible among Haaga-Helia students. At the moment their Facebook page only has a few likes and same goes to their Twitter followers. When students become more aware of the project, Mission Goes Global will start working more efficiently and it will become a natural part of Haaga-Helia thesis options. After all Mission Goes Global wants to help students integrate international co-operation in their thesis. When there are more students writing their thesis in Mission Goes Global theme group the more contacts and partners they most likely will get.

Since most of the students use social media it is easy to gain visibility among students by communicating with them in social media. When they gain more likes or followers the more likely new students will learn about Mission Goes Global. By visiting their Facebook or Twitter most likely they will get more views on their blog aka in their homepage.

This also leads to the fact that Mission Goes Global will become easier to access. There is a lower barrier to communicate through social media than in the more official communication channels like e-mail or face-to-face communication. It is also very quick to communicate in social media. This plan will give them tools to communicate and help them use social media in an efficient way, which will also make them more attractive for their target audiences.

3 Preliminary communication plan

This preliminary communication plan was done earlier in 2015, when I started to work as project assistant for Mission Goes Global. It is a social media communication plan as its simplest way, but it was created to see what they could do with their social media. It also includes some other ways of communication, which can also be supported by the social media communication, but are not included in this communication plan.

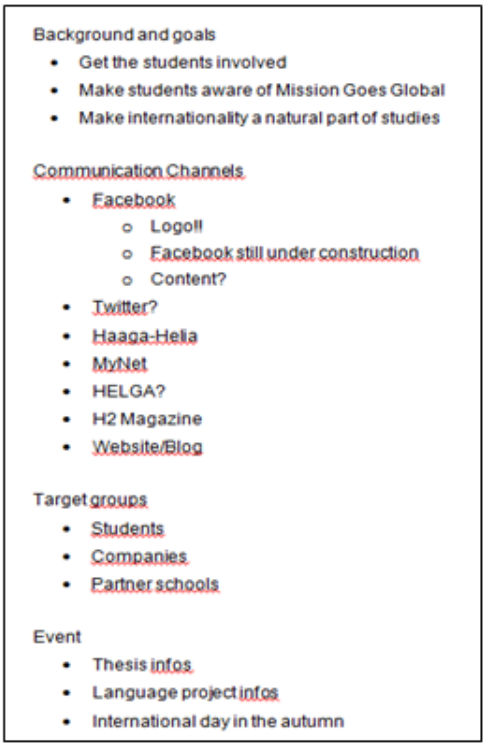


Figure 1 Preliminary communication plan.

4 Mission Goes Global in Social Media

4.1 Facebook

Mission Goes Global can use Facebook for all of their target audiences. All of their target audiences are using Facebook, but most likely the students will take a more active role when communicating in Facebook.

The logo is used as their profile picture and as a background photo they are using a picture of the map of the world, which presents internationality and globalization.

Figure 2 Mission Goes Global Facebook profile overview.

In the info page all the most relevant and needed information is presented. It gives a short introduction of Mission Goes Global and the ideology behind it and also gives a link to the homepage in this case the blog.

Figure 3 Facebook page info.

The screenshot below gives the idea, which kind of posts can be posted in their Facebook page. They should always be related to the themes and the ideology of Mission Goes Global. The posts should be short, informative and clear, but also encourage for open discussion. They can also include link to their homepage like in the figure (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Example of Facebook post.

4.2 Twitter

Their twitter also includes a profile picture and a background picture. The target audience for their Twitter account is more focused on the business people and people from the partner schools such as in-coming exchange student, teachers and student unions. The posts and messages published in Twitter should be short and informative and they can personalize their Twitter using hashtags. A good hashtag for Mission Goes Global is for example #goglobal.

The figure below (Figure 5) presents a screenshot of Mission Goes Global's Twitter profile. On the right you can see the tweets and above the tweets you can see the numbers of followers and profiles that Mission Goes Global is following. On the left side you can see the info box about Mission Goes Global. There a short introduction is offered and also a link to the homepage.

Figure 5 Mission Goes Global Twitter overview.

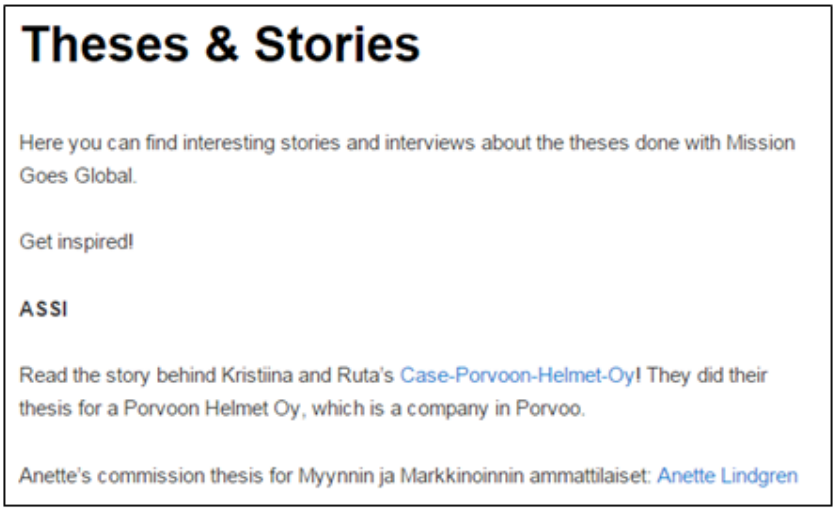
It is also a good idea to use hashtags like #missiongoesglobal so that the people will recognize them easily and it will also be part of the brand creation of Mission Goes Global.

4.3 Blog

The blog works as Mission Goes Global's homepage. That is where all the information about Mission Goes Global can be found. In the upper part of the page you can find the menu toolbar and using it one can check the pages for each language or find the stories of the theses conducted with Mission Goes Global. In the blog the current events will also be announced.

Figure 6 Blog Layout.

In the figure on next page you can see a screen shot of post promoting a thesis story published in the blog. The idea is to promote the thesis opportunities with Mission Goes Global. Every time a thesis story is published, there should be a post promoting it.



Theses & Stories

Here you can find interesting stories and interviews about the theses done with Mission Goes Global.

Get inspired!

ASSI

Read the story behind Kristiina and Ruta's Case-Porvoon-Helmet-Oy! They did their thesis for a Porvoon Helmet Oy, which is a company in Porvoo.

Anette's commission thesis for Myynnin ja Markkinoinnin ammattilaiset: Anette Lindgren

Figure 7 Example of a post in the blog.

5 Target Audiences

Since Mission Goes Global actually is a theme group for students who are writing their thesis, it is quite easy to recognize the target audiences. The audiences actually can be divided into two groups: audiences within Haaga-Helia and audiences outside Haaga-Helia. When they know their target audiences, it will be easier to plan the messages that they will publish in their social media platforms. Some audiences might require bit more official messages and others then again can be less formal.

The target audiences within Haaga-Helia are: students, the student union Helga, Haaga-Helia as it is and teachers in Haaga-Helia. The students obviously are their main target group since students are the ones who will write a thesis. It is important that they are taken into consideration in the communication. The student union then again can also help Mission Goes Global by marketing them in their own social media. Helga has many followers and it is very likely that students will read their posts. The teachers should also be aware of Mission Goes Global so that they can market the opportunity for their students.

The target audiences outside of Haaga-Helia are international companies in or outside of Finland, students in partner schools and also partner schools. In addition exchange

students can be put into this group since they come outside of Haaga-Helia and visit only for a short period. The companies are important for Mission Goes Global because the main idea of Mission Goes Global is to write a thesis with international co-operation and to a real company or organization. Therefore it is vital for Mission Goes Global that they can also communicate with them. The partner schools should also be taken into consideration when communicating. The partner schools can then spread the word among their own community and social media obviously works well for that.

As Mission Goes Global is using three different social media platforms they should also think about utilizing them in the right way. Obviously the blog works as their website so all of their target audiences should be aware of it. The blog is the platform which offers the biggest amount of information and that also is the most official communication channel for Mission Goes Global. Twitter then again works well for partner companies and universities since most businesses use it. Facebook works perfectly for students and exchange students as the communication on Facebook is more laidback and informal.

6 Themes

It is smart to come up with few themes around which Mission Goes Global can create content on their social media profiles. The themes should be from areas which have something to do with Mission Goes Global's ideology and its interest. Such themes can help students interested in those themes find Mission Goes Global. Such themes can be seen in the figure below:

List of themes	communication
	international co-operation
	globalization
	languages
	exchange life

Figure 8 List of themes.

7 Visuality

The visual part is important in social media. In Twitter and Facebook you can set a profile picture and a cover picture. A logo is a big part of the image of the service. The logo should represent the service and the ideology behind the service.

Pictures in Facebook and Twitter posts are appealing to an eye and make it interesting to read something. The picture obviously has to be related to the message and sometimes even only the picture can say everything.

7.1 Logo

The logo was designed to suit the ideology behind Mission Goes Global. It contains the name and the colours were chosen because they go well with different colours and with the banner picture of Mission Goes Global. The planet in the letter O presents the globalization and internationality which is an important theme for Mission Goes Global. The logo is used as profile picture and it should be included in some pictures as well if possible.

Figure 9 Mission Goes Global logo.

Logo is something that helps people remember Mission Goes Global. When they see the logo they will connect it with Mission Goes Global. If they see the logo somewhere, they might also become interested about the idea behind it and find Mission Goes Global that way. It is an important part of a brand and that is why the logo should be used wisely.

7.2 Pictures

If Mission Goes Global uses pictures in their post they should always keep in mind the copyright rules. They can use creative common pictures from picture banks such as Flickr, but they have to make sure that they are allowed to use those pictures. It is always better to use own pictures and if Mission Goes Global takes part into events they can take pictures from there. However if people can be recognized from the picture they should ask permission if they can use the picture.

Their background photo has a picture of the map of the world (Figure 10) and it has colours that go well with the Mission Goes Global logo. Just like their logo the map in the picture also presents internationality and globalization, which are important themes for Mission Goes Global.

Figure 10 The banner picture of Mission Goes Global.

8 Key dates and events

There are some days, events or annual infos that Mission Goes Global should keep in mind when planning their communication in social media. They can easily link their services with these dates and then make catchy and inspiring posts about them. They can also take advantage of the events happening all around the world and make interesting posts about them. Under are listed some of the events that Mission Goes Global team should take into consideration to make their social media communication effective. In the figure (Figure 11) you can easily find the events and dates that Mission Goes Global should take an active role.

8.1 Language day

Language day is organized each year in Haaga-Helia Pasila campus and there different schools, career opportunities and performances can be seen. Mission Goes Global has also taken part into this fair, but they definitely should also remember to market the event on social media. Pictures from the event and people behind Mission Goes Global would

give a face to Mission Goes Global. After all they are dealing with people and people always want to see the people behind different services and projects.

MONTH	Facebook	Twitter	Blog
January	Language Project Infos Start of semester New year	Work placement? Start of semester New year	Thesis story
	Exchange application period		
March	Exchange infos		
April			
May	End of semester	End of semester	Thesis story
June			
July			
August	Start of semester Language Project infos	Work placement	Thesis story
September	Language Day	Language Day	Language Day
October			
November			
December	End of semester Christmas	End of semester Christmas	Thesis story

Figure 11 Year Clock.

8.2 Exchange Infos

The future exchange students are a great way to take Mission Goes Global world-wide. Mission Goes Global should really be active during the exchange application period and when the exchange students are choses. They can make posts about the exchange and its benefits and at the same time market themselves to the outgoing exchange student. Such posts can be for example as simple as just congratulating them for their future exchange and also reminding them about taking advantage of the contacts created during the exchange semester.

8.3 Start of semester

As each semester start, at the same time the students start thinking about their thesis. At this stage it is a great opportunity to market Mission Goes Global and the ideology behind it. Normally the thesis infos are also scheduled at the beginning of each semester. At the same time the language project infos take place. They can advertise these events on their Facebook or afterwards thank everyone who attended them and tell them to contact them if the audience has any further questions.

8.4 Events related to Mission Goes Global

Basically any event that has something to do with communication, internationality or globalization is a good way to create some content on their social media platforms. As the communication in social media is less formal, it won't take that much time to plan the messages and posts.

9 Content creation

As mentioned above the post and messages published in social media can be related to different events taking place in Haaga-Helia or generally in the world. Some messages can be more informative than other and some messages can simply be there to create content since that will always create visibility and it gives an impression that Mission Goes Global is active in their actions.

The blog obviously can offer more informative posts since there is a possibility to post longer writings. Such posts can for example be so-called success stories. There are already a few examples in the blog. These stories are interviews or writings about students, who have implemented their thesis with Mission Goes Global. The idea is to give the reader an image that Mission Goes Global is a real and working project. When there are examples of success stories, the student will feel that it is possible to do their thesis with international co-operation. At this stage it is important to post these stories because Mission Goes Global is still at a pilot stage.

On Facebook and Twitter Facebook Mission Goes Global can then again post for example interesting articles related to their themes and interest. They can also try to create conversation with their audiences by asking questions and opinions about the article. It is important to remember however that they should try to keep their opinion quite neutral so that it won't drive away the possible followers.

10 Measurement

When the communication plan is being used, Mission Goes Global can check whether it is working or not. A very simple measurement tools is to check if there is increase in their followers, likes and comments. In Facebook there are also tools to check the views so they can also be utilized. However to see if the plan really works, they should really follow the tips and ideas given. If there is a notable increase in the followers and likes, it is obvious that the plan was designed in a correct way and that it suits Mission Goes Global needs and wishes. If it doesn't give any results, then it should be revised and further developed.

However they should also keep in mind that social media is constantly changing and people are always trying to find new ways to communicate. That is why they should also keep themselves updated about the newest updates and new applications that emerge on the market. Another point is that the traditional ways of communications also support the social media communication, so one cannot achieve the best outcome only by using social media, but together with the traditional medias like posters and e-mail.

Appendix 2 Project assistant job vacancy

Mission Goes Global

Want to go global?

Interested in working with an internationa project and gaining credits at the same time? Are you a person with can-do attitude and a person, who loves to use creativity? Mission Goes Global is looking for a project assistant!

As a project assistant you will attend meetings and be part of the development of communications and marketing. At the same time you can put your leadership skills into test while coordinating the language project students.

Mission Goes Global is a project in Haaga-Helia. Its aim is to encourage students to implement their thesis in international co-operation. As a project assistant you will see what it means to work as an project assistant and support a new project and at the same time give your dedication to help the project go further.

If you are interested or have any further questions, you can contact the project manager

Go Global!