

SNC Insider, Digital Storytelling
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Introduction

Telling a story with digital technologies is something that may seem very basic such as an online interactive story or video games but it can also take other forms. SNC Insider is our example of what other forms it can take. For our project, we wanted to create a space for people to interact and ask questions within the SNC community which is what we hope to have completed with our project. By exploring the basic idea of SNC insider, what SNC Insider accomplished, our inspiration for the project, audience engagement, and what we have accomplished, along with touching on the key concepts of digital storytelling that we talked about in class we can prove that we successfully made an example of digital storytelling.

Description

Our digital storytelling gave us the idea of SNC Insider. The basic idea of SNC Insider was to give incoming students and parents a place to ask questions and find out the information that you do not find out on the tours. We use both Instagram and Facebook to distribute our information, our Instagram was more for the younger generation, so incoming students, and our Facebook was more aimed towards the parents of these students. Using both of these platforms gave us the opportunity to reach more people and have more interaction with the people who did follow us. We post places to eat around the area, dorm room decoration ideas, laundry tips, and so many other things. We did not only post our own ideas but we took the feedback that our followers were giving us on what they wanted to see and posted those things as well. SNC Insider has become a great resource for incoming students and students at SNC alike.

SNC Insider accomplished a lot over the past month. We created the page on April 7th and have made 14 posts so far. Within 12/14 of the posts, there are about seven pictures of

content covering the chosen topic. The first thing SNC Insider accomplished was achieving its purpose. The first post we made, on both platforms, stated the purpose of the account, which was to: post the inside scoop on St. Norbert for things that you can't get answers to on a tour. We accomplished this by posting what we thought would be helpful to know as a student, the things we wish someone told us as an incoming freshman. We would ask current students what they wanted to see, and we made posts based on followers' suggestions. Several followers on both platforms informed us that SNC Insider was the most helpful place to find information for coming to college.

The next thing we achieved was creating a community within SNC Insider where followers felt comfortable interacting on the account. The Facebook group had a lot of interaction from parents of SNC incoming or current students. Parents became active by posting questions or feedback on the account. There are six threads of conversations that parents created on their own with either questions or suggestions. Also, six of our posts on Facebook have several comments on them. Having the group page become an environment where followers feel comfortable interacting with us and each other was our hope for this account. Our followers on Instagram usually only liked the post and rarely commented. This was unfortunate to see, but we did receive two direct messages from followers, thanking us for all the help this account provided.

Lastly, SNC Insider accomplished gaining a large following. The Facebook group currently has 348 members, and the Instagram account has 172 followers. Neither of us expected such a large following but were hopeful of achieving it. With the numbers we have now, we can confidently say that SNC Insider outdid our expectations. The Facebook group has a majority of parents following it, 84% women and 16% men between the ages of 35 and 64. There are a few

18-24-year-olds following it, but the most engagement comes from the parents. The Instagram account does not let us see the metrics, but we can tell from the followers' accounts that they are primarily students rather than parents. Since Facebook tends to attract the older generation and the younger generation more commonly uses Instagram, we predicted that the two platforms would attract both aspects of our target audience, students and parents (Anderson & Auxier, 2021).

Our product is different from what we originally imagined it to be in some ways but we also stayed true to what we imagined. For a platform, we originally thought our product would be mainly on Instagram. We ended up having more of a following on our Facebook group after we posted it on the parent's page on Facebook. Meaning that we had to change our mindset slightly about how we were going to interact with our audience. The one thing that did not change due to the main platform we were using were our posts; we kept those the same on both platforms.

Our account also gained a larger following than either of us could have imagined and as mentioned by Dr. Glantz is one of the projects with the largest following. A larger following as we mentioned later made us think about how we wanted to present our information and ourselves on the internet. We did set ourselves up to gather a following though as we mentioned before we posted it on the parent page and reached out for it to be advertised in other places as well. Overall watching SNC Insider grow was awesome and showed both of us that we were making an impact. The last thing that wasn't what we imagined was that we both would like to continue with this account after we turn in this paper. We both originally thought that it would just be a

project for this class but after interacting with the following we built we both realized we enjoyed the impact we were making, and are excited to continue and see where it goes.

Inspiration

When coming up with the idea of this digital storytelling and SNC Insider, we as a group originally had really no idea what we wanted to do. This led us to start asking people for ideas and one of our members' friends gave us the idea of what they do not tell you on tours. This led us to ask ourselves would we have used something like this when we were freshmen. We both thought that we definitely would have used something like this. So with the combination of our opinions and others, the idea of SNC Insider came to life. By creating our idea for SNC Insider we both knew we wanted to provide support and connections from people who have experienced things at SNC. For the inspiration for our posts, we originally thought of things that we wished we would have known such as places to eat, get coffee, and how certain things work around campus. But, after building a following we allowed our followers to ask questions and base our posts on what they wanted to know. When looking around if there were other projects that were similar we could not really find any nor had we ever had any experiences with projects or accounts doing what we were thinking of doing. But, there were things like places to visit in Green Bay that you can find on websites that are similar to some of our posts. Other than that we felt our idea was pretty original.

Experiential Learning

SNC Insider provided us with new skills that we can use for the future. With having a high standard set for the account, we had to learn how to use Canva to make the content look professional, clean, and cohesive. Although both of us have used Canva for other projects, we never had to use it to create posts for a social media account. After looking at other accounts on

Instagram like Ed's Cafe, SNC Athletics, and the main St. Norbert account, we found that there was usually a color scheme or pattern with the content posted. Therefore, we concluded that our page should be two main colors: dark green and light yellow, to resemble the college's colors, and chose the font, Libre Baskerville. However, that was not enough, so we decided to make cover photos for each post with the same look so the account would have a theme. Having to put thought into all the details it takes to create a professional-looking account was something new that neither of us has ever done.

This project taught us how to accommodate followers' needs and professionally respond to them. Although both of us had Facebook and Instagram before the project, we never have tried to conduct ourselves in a polished manner when communicating over the two platforms. This specifically applies to the Facebook page since there were more comments. Since the page has a majority of members being 45 to 54 years old, we knew we were responding to many parents. Trying to respond in a formal yet inviting manner was new for us. There would be comments on our posts or comments on group members' questions asked. Either way, we had to reply without using emojis, text language, or any informal language. The other thing we learned was how to accommodate followers' needs. We had made a document with different topics and dates for posting. However, sometimes that would get disrupted by a follower asking to see a topic we didn't have planned. Some topics we covered from followers' requests were cleaning and parking. Although we were happy that followers were telling us what they wanted to see that week, it did cause us to have to regroup our plan for when to post our original ideas of that week.

The last thing we learned from this project was how sharing SNC Insider was so helpful for growing our follower base. As soon as we had one post on the Facebook group, we shared the page in the SNC Parents Facebook group page. We advertised it with the purpose of the account

and directed people to follow it on Facebook and Instagram. After we shared it in that group, our members for Facebook increased significantly. I believe we gained the majority of our 348 members from doing that. We did gain a few followers on Instagram from doing this, but not as much as the Facebook page. We also shared the Facebook page by inviting our personal friends on Facebook to like the page and reached out to people we knew on campus. Once the Facebook group began to grow rapidly, we decided to figure out a way to grow our Instagram page. We reached out to St. Norbert College's Instagram page and asked if they could share SNC Insider on their story. Within that day, we reached out, they shared the page on their story, and we gained over 60 followers by the end of the day. Emily wrote an article on SNC Insider in the SNC Times newspaper, but we don't believe that increased our numbers too much. Although there is no way to tell which followers came from the article, we don't think the newspaper has enough of a following to impact our metrics.

Digital Storytelling

SNC Insider embodies all of the principles of digital storytelling. Digital storytelling, in simple terms, is telling stories with digital technologies (Alexander, 2011, p. 3). As the digital age grows, so do the elements of digital storytelling. Bryan Alexander has provided five principles of digital storytelling in his book *The New Digital Storytelling*. To have something be considered digital storytelling, it is best to have at least three out of the five elements. However, SNC Insider incorporates all five principles.

The first principle is serial structure. Serial structure is when "digital stories arrange content as separate iterations over time" (Alexander, 2011, p. 41). The chronology depends on the creator; it can take place over time or have little series that form into a full-circle moment in the end. SNC Insider has the first principle, serial structure because we make posts over a period

of time. We started the account on April 7th and have made 14 posts as of right now. Each of the posts is a different topic covered, but all are related to the purpose of the account.

The second principle is personal presence. Personal presence is when “the chosen medium is mobilized to support a character. These representations are usually in third or first person, biographical or autobiographical” (Alexander, 2011, p. 41). Having a personal sense in the medium is a powerful strategy for digital storytelling. A lot of companies give digital story accounts a voice by using “I”. Our account does the same. In the post’s captions, there is usually the use of “I”, “me”, or sometimes “we”. In addition, when replying to followers, there is often the use of “I” or “we”. Using the first-person gives the account a voice, so participants feel they are interacting with a person and establishing a connection.

The third principle is social framework. Social framework refers to the digital age having every story be a part of social media. Stories engage through social media whether they are directly on a platform or are shared elsewhere (Alexander, 2011, p. 42). The use of the social Web can amplify digital stories. SNC Insider takes place on both Instagram and Facebook. These are popular social media platforms where people can follow, comment, like, share, and post.

The fourth principle is multiple proscenia. Multiple proscenia refers to how “digital stories can be distributed in space and time, which can necessitate multiple platforms for experiencing them” (Alexander, 2011, p. 42). SNC Insider has multiple proscenia since the content is on Facebook and Instagram. These are two different social media sites that have a different demographic following each. SNC Insider has also been shared on the college’s Instagram story, which introduces our account to a larger audience. In addition, it has been shared on the SNC Parents Facebook group. This group page has 1.4k members, so sharing our

account for a large audience to see allowed our group page to grow with their members joining SNC Insider.

The last principle is platform affordances. Platform affordances refers to how “every digital story can take advantage of the unique affordances of each platform it uses. This can mean a platform with a comment section, an interactive environment, vibrating game controllers, or pictures” (Alexander, 2011, p. 43). SNC Insider has this principle since each platform allows for something different. The Facebook group allows members to make posts of their own, whether that be questions or suggestions. Instagram allows for followers to direct message the account, and we can post Instagram stories on the account. However, both Instagram and Facebook have the option for followers to comment, like, share, and tag people.

Another way that SNC Insider is digital storytelling is that it has adopted Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm. Narrative paradigm is a concept that developed from the oldest form of communication, storytelling. Fisher stated that all meaningful communication takes the form of storytelling, and experiences from the past influence this process. The narrative paradigm says that communication occurs between a narrator and listener to form a story (Communication Theory, 2014). Two elements make up the narrative paradigm, narrative probability and narrative fidelity. A story has narrative probability if it is coherent, consistent with itself, and hangs together. A story has narrative fidelity if it rings true and resonates with the target audience (Clair, Carlo, Lam, Nussman, Phillips, Sánchez, Schnabel & Yakova, 2014). As long as a story has both of these elements, then it constitutes as having narrative rationality.

SNC Insider has both of these elements; therefore, it has developed narrative rationality. First, SNC Insider has narrative probability. It is coherent in its look and in the content shared, which consists of inside knowledge for students at St. Norbert. Having cover photos over each

post, a color scheme, and specific content shared, allows SNC Insider to hang together as a story. The story is consistent with itself as all of the posts provide information that followers asked to know or that we thought would be helpful for incoming and current students to know. SNC Insider also has narrative fidelity. Resonating with the correct target audience, incoming or current parents and students, allows the story's meaning to truly resonate with people. SNC Insider has reached students on Instagram and parents on Facebook that are interested in or currently at St. Norbert College. Both of these demographics hold interest in the topic of our digital story and therefore follow SNC Insider because of the importance it has. By adopting the narrative paradigm, narrative rationality, SNC Insider has become a place where the targeted audience can judge the story based on probability and fidelity. Ultimately, the public decides whether they want to join SNC Insider's story and the creators are subject to meeting their needs (Clair, Carlo, Lam, Nussman, Phillips, Sánchez, Schnabel & Yakova, 2014).

Engaging Audiences

This project engages audiences in several ways. Engagement is defined as "how involved or responsive the audience is to a particular message" (Humphreys, 2016, p. 48). Measures of engagement include retweets, likes, and shares. Having the project on two different platforms with two different demographics allows for the opportunity of a large community to engage with SNC Insider. Facebook has more parents engaging with SNC Insider, whereas Instagram has more students engaging. In terms of likes, on Facebook, the average amount of likes per post is 22, and for Instagram, it is 23. In addition, SNC Insider on Facebook has group members commenting on several posts. There are comments on our posts we make and on questions that members post. Although there are only a few comments on the Instagram posts, we have received direct messages from followers thanking us for the account being so helpful. In regards

to sharing as a form of engagement, on Facebook, there are comments of members tagging people to join the group or to see a post. Members have even shared some posts on their feed or in the SNC parent group. Another engagement piece worth mentioning is that SNC Insider became a place where followers felt comfortable engaging with us and each other. Conversations between us, parents, and students occurred in the comment section of posts. This increased engagement and helped achieve part of the purpose of the account. Having SNC Insider be shared on St. Norbert's Instagram story and in the SNC Parent Facebook group has allowed the account to reach more people and increase our following. By gaining more followers on each of the accounts allowed for more engagement with each post. Currently, there are 348 members in the Facebook group and 172 followers on Instagram. When writing captions on posts, we would leave the post open to the followers by instructing them to comment down below with questions or suggestions on the topic posted. Leaving our posts open for interpretation for followers created a participatory culture where audiences could participate in consuming the material and producing it (Humphreys, 2016, p. 66). This significantly increased engagement on Facebook because members would feel comfortable liking, commenting, and sharing the post with other people.

Conclusion

Digital storytelling can be done in many different ways and SNC Insider is just one example of how it can be done, with all of the five principles Alexander addresses, along with having Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm. SNC Insider also gained quite a bit of a following and was given a large amount of exposure on different platforms. SNC Insider also had a lot of engagement with the audience with many people asking questions and commenting on posts. With the combination of both the theories we touched on along with the engagement we had with

our audience, we had a successful digital storytelling project. Maybe SNC Insider's next post will be a how-to on how to create your own digital storytelling project.

References

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