

Museum content marketing: reaching audiences effectively

During the RelnHerit interviews with museum professionals one expressed need was that of marketing skills. Marketing is one way of reaching out to your potential audience, telling people that 'we are here, come visit us because we give you this unique experience'. In present day society it is difficult to attract, especially young people, to museums and cultural heritage sites. There are so many other activities that grab our attention and provide ways for us to spend our free time.

So, how can you reach your audiences most effectively and attract them to the services and products you are offering? What are some of the basic principles of marketing that you need to know to help increase your museum's visibility on the market?

Recommendations

- Marketing is a strategic approach aimed at:
 - Engaging with new and wider audiences
 - Identifying what are the needs and pain points of your visitors
 - Customising the programmes, events and services you are offering
 - Providing accessible and diverse experiences, both online and offline
 - Communicating which mission and values your museum has
- Marketing is not only about advertising and selling your products. You also **need to understand your market** and **what methods to use to bring about profitable visitor action**. Through marketing you can provide a framework for encouraging people not only to visit your museum once, but also to become return visitors. It is an **ongoing process** that requires time, consistency and patience.
- Create a marketing plan:
 - Start by **analyzing the content you have on your webpage**. Is there content that is outdated or information that is incorrect? Look at page performance. Build new content based on pages that perform well. The same applies to social media posts and newsletters.
 - **Measure different types of metrics** such as web traffic, conversion rate, brand reputation, keywords and ranking, bounce rate (visitor showing up on your page and how fast they click away), load time (of the website), backlinks (links between your site and other sites), click-through rate (shows if your post is opened)
 - **Learn from your competitors**. What type of content do they have? Conduct a deep analysis of the content they have created on their web pages and blog. What is happening on their social media channels? Do google searches on your competitors.
 - **Understand your museum**. Do this by making an analysis of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). This technique helps you understand what makes you different from your competition, what resources you have and what can you improve, what opportunities you can seize.

- **Create a set of clear and realistic marketing goals.** Separate out metrics from Key Performance Indicators (KPI). KPIs are the long-term objectives of your museum marketing plan and they have targets. Metrics measure performance of smaller, individual activities (what needs to happen to improve performance such as how long a visitor is on your web page, how many new visitors visit your web page, how many visitors have clicked on your social media buttons).
- **Identify who your target audience is** and have a deep understanding of who they are. Do research on your target audience through eg. social media monitoring, interviews, surveys, competitor analysis. Use this information to create a visitor persona, which is your ideal visitor. You can do this on a template where you can fill in information such as name, a photo (stock photo image), demographics, position (where does this person work or study), challenges/pain points faced by the person, goals, likes and interests, favorite brands, social media channels used by the person. There are numerous templates available on the internet for creating a persona card.
- **Create an average marketing budget** – what resources are available? What do you need to spend money on? Who is involved? Are there any risk factors? What are the main actions to be taken and when? By making wise choices it is possible to do marketing with a limited budget. Focus on what your visitors want and get rid of what is not in demand, use free marketing tools, collaborate with partners so that you can share resources (a joint marketing campaign?), and repurpose content you already have in a more appealing way.
- **Initiate a branding project** that includes developing your brand vision, your logo and brand guidelines. Brand guidelines are a set of rules for using the brand - how the logo should be used including what colours, fonts, photos and written language to use. The guidelines should also include ready-to-use templates. The brand guidelines are crucial in bringing consistency to your museum brand and making sure that all departments use the brand correctly.
- **Define your unique voice.** This is also called a brand voice. Why? It makes you stand out from the competition. It is also a way to build trust with potential visitors and helps you build long-term connections with them. Do this by looking into what are the values and beliefs of your museum, what is your unique position on the market, what problems and desires your visitors have, what is the language used by your visitors (use similar language), what brand voice do your competitors use? Create a document of your brand voice.
- **Create an image bank for marketing purposes.** Use a professional photographer to take high quality images of your museum and its collections. These can be used in marketing campaigns. Images of high quality communicate that your museum is quality conscious and places high demands on visuality. A visual and attractive website plays an important role to visitors.
- **Use storytelling techniques to build authentic connections with visitors.** Tell a diverse, authentic and engaging brand story. The story should reflect the

diversity of the visitor base so that it connects with visitors from all walks of life.

- **Make sure that your content is accessible.** Follow inclusivity requirements and create an inclusivity plan for your web pages.
- **Plan your content.** Decide what type of content you want to create, on what channel and when you want to publish it. Have a content publishing plan with dates and areas of responsibility – who will create what type of content when? Keep these questions in mind: is the content useful for my target audience? Do the topics align with themes and messaging that we want to share as a museum? Does the content make sense to my visitors? Should you have seasonally specific content, tied to special holidays or promotional periods (eg. the international museum day)? What is being discussed in the sector – can you create content related to this? Learn from your competitors – what type of content are they creating?
- **Create user-generated content (UGC).** Use this content to tell stories that reflect the experiences of your visitors. Have UGC galleries on your website so that prospective visitors can have a peek into your exhibits and collections that may encourage them to make a visit in person. The great thing about having a UGC gallery is that your users will create content for you. This content can be both on your webpage and on display in the museum through digital displays. This is one way to foster a sense of community.
- **Measure what your return on Investment (ROI) is.** The simple formula for understanding ROI is looking at the revenue made from content marketing and comparing it to the time and resources your museum invested in it. The aim is to track costs and benefits that your content marketing activities have generated. Look at costs – how much is spent on content marketing? Usage – are you using all the content you have planned in your strategy in a proper way? What about performance? What results is your content marketing generating? Have you managed to attract more visitors?