Like, Comment, and Subscribe: Developing Engaging Online Communication Strategies for Environmental Non-Profits

Sarah Butruille*, Program on the Environment, University of Washington
Site supervisor: Peter Donaldson, Sustainability Ambassadors
Faculty advisor: Lubna Alzaroo, Program on the Environment, University of Washington

Background

- Environmental nonprofits are vital in combatting environmental issues.
- Nonprofits work closely with communities to create change and broadcast information to the public.
- However, nonprofits historically have struggled successfully developing their communications plans.
- For nonprofits to optimize their impact, they need to remedy their communication strategies.
- Social media plays a large part in modern marketing.

Methods

- Conducted an interview with Mikaela Bolling, co-founder of Brilliant Marketing and expert in nonprofit communication.
- Analyzed the most recent 10 Instagram (IG) posts of 23 other environmental nonprofits based in the US to look for their engagement rates, messaging tones, and if they follow social media trends.
- Conducted a literature review on environmental communication.
- Analyzed the effect of implementing productive communication strategies on the engagement levels of SA’s Instagram (IG).

Results

In order to develop an effective communications strategy, an environmental nonprofit should:

- Develop a clear target audience. (According to interviewee)
- Focus on curating positive messaging. (See Fig. 2)
- Adapt to trends and format shifts on their social media platforms. (See Fig. 3)

Implications

After the implementation of these strategies, I tracked the metrics of Sustainability Ambassadors’ Instagram page (Fig. 4) and found that there was a substantial increase in engagement over time.

By utilizing these three methods, other environmental nonprofits can create effective communications strategies and institute more sustainable change.

Question

What methods can environmental nonprofits implement to create effective social media communication strategies?

Internship

- Interned with the environmental nonprofit Sustainability Ambassadors (SA) on their communications team.
- Curated content for both Sustainability Ambassadors and their grant-holder, Cascade Water Alliance, (see Fig. 1)

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my site supervisor Peter Donaldson, my internship partner Nick Chappelear, my coworker Sofia Loetta, my interviewee Mikaela Bolling, and my other friends and family.