

**HOW HASHTAGS
CHANGED THE
WORLD.**

POWERED BY  TINT

HOW HASHTAGS CHANGED THE WAY

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01. HOW HASHTAGS CHANGED THE WAY WE TALK

#ParaLanguage #BenjaminFranklin #Memes



For a generation especially interested in brevity, that's a pretty cool way to talk.

—Lauren Schuhmacher, Huffington Post¹

There's a story about hashtags and how they're changing our speech patterns. It goes something like this:

The hashtag arose in 2007 as a way to categorize and

"tag" tweets. It slowly gained traction, until 2009 or '10 when suddenly hashtags (and their users) went *rogue*. These errant tweeters took hashtags from their *good and purposeful* tagging function,

¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lauren-schuhmacher/how-the-hashtag-changed-t_b_3407787.html

and changed them into *something terrible* – a form

of parenthetical commentary on the rest of the tweet.

For example:

 @DANNSAYER

Late night milk and cookies and I accidentally just dunked my earphones, fml #FirstWorldProblems

The narrative doesn't end there of course: Hashtags escaped Twitter, and spread, like a plague, to Facebook ("they don't even use hashtags" irate bloggers complained, until Facebook

adjusted), to Instagram (#dog #hat #thisismyhat #Sunday #thisismydoginmyhat #followmeplease #aghhhh), to everyday speech, where it is now acceptable to say (say!

things like "I love you guys! Hashtag blessed!"

"The colloquial hashtag has burst out of its use as a sorting tool and become a linguistic tumor – a tic more irritating than any banal link or lazy image meme," declared Sam Biddle in his oft-referenced

Gizmodo article: [How the Hashtag is Ruining the English Language](http://gizmodo.com/5869538/how-the-hashtag-is-ruining-the-english-language).²

Yup. The hashtag is a linguistic tumor.

The tweet that invented the hashtag:

 @CHRISMESSINA

how do you feel about using # (pound) for groups. As in #barcamp [msg]?

Sometimes we agree with this version of events. We'll hear someone drop a hashtag into daily conversation in an ironic but not-so-ironic way, and think, *hashtags are ruining the English language.*

In case you have no idea what we're talking about, stop reading this right now and Google the video of Justin Timberlake and Jimmy Fallon speaking with hashtags.³ See? Please don't ever say "Hashtag: Blessed." It's terrible.

But after a little research about

language and hashtags, we don't think they're destroying the English language.

And neither do linguists, who seem delighted by hashtags and their mission creep away from tagging and into conversation. In fact, a number of linguists see Twitter's fast-paced environment as a microcosm where they can study language trends that often parallel language trends offline.⁴ Not one linguist has called hashtags a tumor. So far.

So if they're not a tumor, what are they? Here's what we found:

HASHTAGS ARE "PARALANGUAGE"

Paralanguage is something you already use, every day. It's the non-verbal cues that accompany speech and help us express meaning and tone – shoulder shrugs, intonation, facial expressions. But in the world of text, it is difficult to communicate those non-verbal ideas – like sarcasm or self-mockery. Its part of the reason that "JK" and "LOL" are so heavily used. Emoticons do their fair share of substituting as paralanguage as well. But hashtags expanded that ability drastically.

Now we could do sarcasm and self-deprecation.

"Among Twitter's triumphs is the reinvention of self-mockery."

So says linguist Ben Zimmer, who argues in the Boston Globe that hashtags have given us a "sly new way" to undermine what we say. When we complain about milk covered headphones and append "#firstworldproblems", it shows we know our own complaints are ridiculous.

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57dzaMaouXA>

⁴ <http://www.aclweb.org/anthology/W11-0708>

Zimmer tells the story of the spread of the hashtag from tag to tic very differently than Biddle:

“Suddenly, a humble indexing tool became a sophisticated new technique for self-deprecation in type.”

Hashtags aren't a tumor – they're a sophisticated new technique. They help us add a much-needed tonal layer to our communications.

HASHTAGS ARE OUR GREEK CHORUS

“The spoken hashtag is part of a general trend—one rarely treated as a scourge, generally barely perceived, and actually a sign of the zeitgeist.”
-McWhorter, *New Republic*, 2012⁵

In 2012, when spoken hashtags were first 'causin a ruckus, *New Republic* published an article that claimed hashtags were a sign of our modern times – part of a recent trend to see ourselves in the third person, to frame ourselves

as performers, view ourselves from an ironic distance. Saying “hashtag #happy” elicits a mental picture of the speaker viewed from a distance, labeled with the word happy.

McWhorter claims that this perspective would have been impossible before movies and television began to deeply permeate modern life.

In this framework, Hashtags are a way of distancing ourselves from our own words – commentary on what we've just said or experienced. But is that really a sign of the zeitgeist?

Gabe Doyle, a linguist at Stanford, makes the same point about tweets as meta-commentary, but he compares hashtags to the narrator of a book and a chorus in a Greek play. He calls it a shift in viewpoint from first person to third person.⁶

And put that way, it doesn't seem like the sign of our times that the *New Republic* article makes it out to be. Forget television – hashtags are serving as a very ancient literary device.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SPEECH?

Linguists are pretty much divided. Some say verbal hashtags are a passing fad. Others don't. Anne Curzan, a linguist who specializes in the history of the English language, points to Benjamin Franklin's dislike of the verbs *colonize* and *notice*, comparing it⁷ to modern objections to LOL or using "friend" as a verb.

As if to prove that new internet-words will someday be as inoffensive as "notice," the

Oxford English Dictionary added "TL;DR" (short for Too Long; Didn't Read)⁸ to the dictionary in 2013 – at least in their online version.

In a recent Mashable article,⁹ Linguist Gerard Van Herk argues that internet speak has made us smarter:

"Today's youth are much more aware of the social and stylistic uses and meanings of different genres and language types, and are able to discuss them using metalinguistic terms like meme," he writes.

Yeah. That's right. We're the generation that uses meta-linguistic terms in everyday speech. *Feel brilliant yet?* Good.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SOCIAL MEDIA?

If you're trying to create a hashtag that will stick, there is at least one lesson we can take from the linguists:

Hashtags that straddle its multiple uses (tagging *and* paralinguage) are most likely to be successful.

The fairly funny Facebook satire

group "Condescending Corporate Brand Page"¹⁰ mocks bad social media marketing efforts from corporations. They like to point out when companies fall prey to creating the *#corporate-hashtagthatnoonewilluseever*. For example, asking consumers to tag posts of their Halloween costumes with *#spookysavers*.

Nope.

A common failure with these hashtags? They often only use the tagging function of hashtags—not the metacommentary function, or the paralinguage

⁷ <http://chronicle.com/blogs/linguafranca/2013/03/01/txtng-rules/>

⁸ <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/august-2013-update/>

⁹ <http://mashable.com/2014/09/25/what-is-internet-speak/>

¹⁰ https://www.facebook.com/corporatebollocks/photos_stream

function. There is an easy litmus test to avoid creating the *#corporat hashtag that no one will use ever*. Ask your-self: Would you say it in daily speech? Would Justin Timberlake?

The answer should be yes.

**#CORPORATE
HASHTAG
THATNOONE
WILLUSEEVER**



02. HOW HASHTAGS CHANGED THE WAY WE ADVERTISE

#BannerBlindness #TheRiseofContent #UserGeneratedContent



THE DECLINE OF BANNER ADS

Twenty years ago,¹¹ the first banner ads ran on the web. They were psychedelic and unabashed and stood out beautifully against the gray webscape of 1995. The early banner ads were cheap and effective, boasting a jaw-dropping 50-90% CTR.¹² They were lucrative and spread like wildfire. Until everyone, including the inventors, realized how terrible banner ads are.

It's not news that banner ads have become a poor investment. Modern day banner ads have a click rate of less than .1% (or 1 in 1000 people) which means you are more likely to complete NAVY SEAL training than click a banner ad.¹³ What's worse, a small percentage of internet users (about 8%) do 85% of that clicking – and those humans (or bots) probably aren't the high quality traffic advertisers are looking for.

¹¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/06/technology/personaltech/banner-ads-the-monsters-that-swallowed-the-web>

¹² <http://www.launchbit.com/blog/why-banner-ads-are-dead-and-native-ads-are-the-future/>

¹³ <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/horrifying-display-advertising-stats>

We could spend a lot of time analyzing why banner ads are in decline. *The New York Times* argued that the banner ad is in decline¹⁴ because the web itself is in decline – replaced by mobile apps and social networks. Perhaps – but the mobile equivalent of banner ads – mobile popups – are similarly ineffective (50% of mobile banner clicks are reportedly accidental). It's not just the platform – it's the medium.

HUMANS ARE SMART AND THEY HATE YOUR BANNER ADS

Humans – internet users – your

customers – are smart. They learn quickly what is an ad and what isn't, and they don't want to click on your banner ad. The market is unbelievably saturated – the average person is served over 1,700 banner ads per month. We've developed ways of coping: eye tracking studies show that consumers now have "banner blindness."¹⁵ Do you remember any of the 1,700 banners you've seen in the past four weeks? Neither do we.

A big problem with banner ads is that they are disruptive and involuntary. Why would you want consumers to associate you

and your brand with something annoying that they want to avoid?

Susan Wojcicki, Google's SVP of Advertising, predicted a future where online ads are governed by choice and views are voluntary—consumers choose to look at the ads because they provide value.

CONTENT CONTENT CONTENT

Adobe's own content marketing effort CMO.com, covered the rise of content¹⁶ over the death of banner ads. The idea behind content marketing is

simple: Instead of trying to create ads that look like content, create the content itself. Don't try to sell anything – just be useful.

In its simplest form, content marketing can be done by publishing your own content, creating your own content and publishing it elsewhere, or sponsoring content that is created elsewhere. BuzzFeed is one company that has seen success with selling quality sponsored content that doubles as an advertisement.

¹⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/06/technology/personaltech/banner-ads-the-monsters-that-swallowed-the-web>

¹⁵ <http://www.nngroup.com/articles/banner-blindness-old-and-new-findings/>

¹⁶ http://www.cmo.com/articles/2013/9/18/the_banner_ad_is_dea.html

USER GENERATED CONTENT

Getting consumers to post about you to their social networks is a powerful new form of content marketing – a recent study¹⁷ showed that friends' posts or pins about a product are a bigger influence on purchasing decisions than any form of paid advertising. UGC is becoming an important piece of any content marketing strategy – and brands can employ a couple tactics to turn social posts into useable content. Whether online or at an event, using a branded social hub to attract eyeballs

and generate posts can be an effective use of advertising dollars.

For example, TEVA Sandals used a social hub to encourage fans of the sandals to post their own “advertisements” to their personal networks of friends, in hopes of seeing it on the TEVA website. The advantage of User Generated Content is two-fold:

1. The content itself is more enticing and genuine (we don't have social media blindness . . . yet.)

2. When sourced through social media, that content is now shared to the user's social networks as well as through the normal channels a brand might employ.

SOCIAL PROOF

The power of social recommendations from trusted friends or other brand users can be leveraged at multiple stages of the buying process. In addition to the earliest stages of the buying process—advertising—the social proof offered by hashtagged photos can help

convert buyers in stores and on checkout pages, when a little extra social proof can go a long way.

Online and offline, it is no longer enough for consumers to see a model or a mannequin sporting the goods they might buy. They want to know that other real people have bought these items, and look good in them. This began online—where insecurities at the point of purchase are especially high. Consumers can't try on or touch the items, so they turn to social proof to make sure these clothes look good. Social

posts embedded on checkout pages increase conversions by easing buyer tensions at time of purchase.

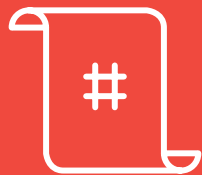
In 2012, U.S. shopping-center retail sales totaled more than \$2.4 trillion,¹⁸ accounting for half of all retail sales in the U.S. In the face of increasing competition from cheap and convenient online retail, shopping malls are investing in technical innovations that integrate the online social experience with the in-person social experience of shopping at a mall. Have you been to a mall lately? The large number of digital screens, which increasingly

carry social content, is a testament to this shift in shopping habits.

Both online and offline, the most powerful marketing tool brands have is the voice of happy customers,¹⁹ and their willingness to share their experiences. Investing in creative ways to prompt shoppers to share their love for a brand has redefined both how brand marketing operates and how consumers expect to be communicated with.

¹⁸ <http://www.icsc.org/uploads/default/2013-Economic-Impact.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://www.tintup.com/blog/8-brands-effectively-leveraging-user-generated-content/>



03. HOW HASHTAGS CHANGED THE WAY WE SOURCE CONTENT

#UGCRights #CopyrightLaw #HashtagPermissions

User Generated Content (UGC) is on the rise. Brands have realized how valuable it is to tell their story and advertise their products using genuine images shared on social media by real-life customers, either in place of—or in addition to—traditional ads staged with models.

With this shift has come a host of legal questions: when is it ok to use an image shared to social media? When does a brand need to get permission to use the photo? And from whom? The photographer, the subject in the photo, and

the network where the content was posted all potentially have a legal claim to content that brands might use for advertising or other monetary gain. It's a new legal domain – and the legal teams of large companies are often wary of “User Generated Creative.” The good news is, it's not impossible to navigate, it doesn't need to be confusing, and it can be done safely.

WHEN DO YOU NEED TO GET THE RIGHTS TO USER GENERATED CONTENT?

There are a couple key ques-

tions marketing managers or legal teams can ask themselves, to understand when and who they need to get permission from. The two most important questions are:

1. *Will we profit from using this image? / Does this qualify as an advertisement?*
2. *Are we taking the content out of the protections of the network's terms of service?*

There is a myth that once content is posted to social

media, it is free to use by anyone. This is not true – thanks to copyright law, the photographer still retains the legal rights to these images. This was supported by the ruling of a judge in the 2013 U.S. District Court case: *Agence France Presse v. Morel*.²⁰ Morel, a professional photographer, sued the news wire for publishing his photograph without his permission and won. The news wire unsuccessfully argued that by uploading the images to Twitter, Morel had indirectly given them permission to distribute and reproduce his photo. If

you want to use a photo, you need to get permission from the photographer.

The exception to this rule is if you keep the content *on network*.

Every social network, from Instagram to Youtube, has users sign an agreement that gives the social network *and its partners* a license to share and display public photos and text. For example, in the case of *AFP v. Morel*, the judge cited the Twitter Terms of Service (TOS), which he stated, “provides that users retain their

rights to the content they post – with the exception of the license granted to Twitter and its partners.”

These partners include social media aggregation and display services like TINT, who legally pull the content through the networks' APIs, and comply with their requirements for partnership – for example, including the Twitter icon on all Twitter posts. So it's possible to display social media content on your own website or at an event without technically removing the content from the protection of the

network's TOS, provided you do so through a partner of the network.

However, most networks do not allow brands to profit from their content or use their content for advertising purposes, while still under protection of their TOS. In order to avoid owing the network a cut of your revenue from advertising, you will need to get all the proper permissions that you would for any type of advertising – this includes the photographer (to protect your brand from copyright law) and possibly the subjects of the

photograph (to protect your brand from statutory publicity rights).²¹ *The larger the potential monetary gain from the advertising campaign, the more careful you will want to be about complying with publicity statutes.*

Whether you need to get permission from the photographer and subjects depends on whether you are still protected by the network TOS. This depends on how closely the User Generated Content is associated with the advertising. There are three main types:

TYPES OF ADVERTISING WITH USER GENERATED CONTENT

ADJACENT = GOOD TO GO

Adjacent advertising means that the user generated content and the ad appear on the same page, but clearly separated from one another. For example, a webpage with both a social hub with a banner ad. For the most part, you can do this safely without specific permission from the poster or subject, provided you follow the above guidelines to make sure you are still protected by the network TOS.

CONTENT AS ADVERTISEMENT = DEFINITELY NEED PERMISSION

If you change the content to become an ad itself – for example, putting text over the image, or including it on a billboard – you must follow all the necessary guidelines for traditional ad creative.

*Trademarks and Brands Online*²² had this to say on the matter:

“Once the UGC has been verified and the copyright cleared, the usual advertising copy clearance process will also need to be completed. For example, has rule 6.1 of

the Committee of Advertising Practice Code, which “urges” the obtainment of written permission before referring to or portraying a member of the public or his or her identifiable possessions, been complied with?”

Whether you’re nervous about publicity rights or the networks, you should seek content rights to the image before using it directly as advertising.

INLINE = GRAY AREA

Increasingly popular, is the effective marketing method of mixing advertisements or

“click to buy” buttons with social posts. The posts are not advertisements in themselves, but unlike banner ads, the ads are disguised to look similar to the posts. An argument could be made that this is using the UGC effectively as advertisement. As we mentioned earlier – this is a new field, and there isn’t a concrete answer yet. It’s a gray legal area, and brands are deciding on an individual basis how carefully they need to protect themselves. Getting rights to the image directly from the photographer is a great way to play it safe and protect your brand.

NYMag’s *TheCut* employed in-line advertising for NY Fashion week, where posts from their reporters in the field were subtly combined with posts from Mac Cosmetics. All of the content was sourced from social, and Mac paid to have their content placed with the reporter’s content. In this case, NYMag obviously had permission from both Mac and their reporters to display their content.

HASHTAG PERMISSIONS

There are a number of ways that brands can seek permission from the photographer

in the new social media landscape. Some make a distinction between “Implied Consent” and “Explicit Consent.”

IMPLIED CONSENT V.

EXPLICIT CONSENT

1. IMPLIED CONSENT

Implied consent means that a brand can reasonably assume that the person who uploaded a photo intended for the company to use it, and was aware of the company’s intentions for the photo. The most common way that this happens is through the use of a specific

hashtag, which can convincingly be argued would only be used by consumers aware of the company's campaign. For example, *#ShareaCoke*.

These campaigns are marketed with terms and conditions that describe the brand's intended uses for the photo. Lonely Planet's *#BestPlacetoBeToday*²³ campaign is a great example of a hashtag campaign with terms and conditions attached. Essentially, you can argue that this is "commissioned" rather than

"native" content.

However, as we've outlined above, if you are displaying the content through a network partner and using it for non-monetary purposes, you don't even need implied consent – you could display *#Cars* (an example of native, not commissioned, content) and not worry. Therefore, for campaigns where you do need consent (ie, where the content is being used as advertising), it is likely worth your time and effort to procure explicit consent.

2. EXPLICIT CONSENT

Explicit consent means you have asked for and received specific permission to use the content.

Due to the increasing need from brands to get the proper permissions to use UGC in advertising, or in other uses beyond the protection of the network TOS, social display tools like TINT have expanded to include a Content Rights Solution for social content. These services allow you to discover content relating to your brand, request the proper

permissions from the author of the image via social media, and track which images you have the rights to. While services like TINT facilitate the permissions, the legal language is still determined by the brand. The agreement can include a certification from the author of the post that they own the image, and that they have permission from the subject of the photograph.

Legal permissions to content obtained through a social media is a new and rapidly changing legal field. For now at least, the hashtag is the newest and

quickest way for consumers to grant permission for brands to use their photographs.

Disclaimer: Our goal is to help you understand this changing field. This information should not be construed as legal advice, legal opinion, an endorsement with respect to any matter, or a solicitation for legal business. You should not rely on any such information as legal advice without actually consulting with legal counsel.



04. HOW HASHTAGS CHANGED THE WAY WE ADVOCATE

#Protests #Fundraisers #CaseStudy #WearYellowForSeth

Many years ago, Malcolm Gladwell suggested that social media lacked the ability to form the kind of close ties necessary to inspire drastic action. His article was titled, “Small Change: Why the Revolution will Not be Tweeted.”²⁴

In 2011 he was proven wrong by revolutions that were incubated on Twitter and Facebook: the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement, both of which grew in strength and numbers thanks to social media. In 2014 he was proven wrong again by the biggest climate march in history²⁵ and the

jaw-dropping demonstrations in Hong Kong.

“Hashtag Activism” – it’s a phrase reserved for ineffective, vaguely narcissistic Twitter do-gooding. And while many hashtags do just make us feel better, some hashtags have started to really make a difference.

PROTESTS

#BLACKLIVESMATTER,
#HANDSUPDONTSHOOT,
#ICANTBREATHE

The protests surrounding the

²⁴ <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-3>

²⁵ <http://www.tintup.com/blog/1-billion-impressions-the-digital-climate-march/>

deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner were viral on social – notably on Twitter much more so than on Facebook. The movement used a slew of hashtags, that grew with each new instance of police violence and tell its own sad story: *#BlackLivesMatter*, *#HandsUpDontShoot* *#IcantBreathe*.

A heat map of those hashtags spreading globally shows how the rate and topic of tweets change during key dates as grand jury decisions roll in. The thing that makes this separate from ineffective “hashtag activism” is that the Tweets were

more of an organizing tool than an end. Tweeting helped *#BlackLivesMatter* activists take action in the form of die-ins and other protests. This may be the first political movement identified primarily by its hashtag.

UMBRELLA REVOLUTION

The pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong were miraculous. They out-foxed censorship efforts from mainland China by frequently switching hashtags, and turned to a bluetooth-based messaging app, Firechat, when

rumors circulated the government might shut down the internet. The movement is student-based and tech savvy, and that’s probably why they’re still going.

PEOPLES CLIMATE

The People’s Climate March – billed as the largest climate march in history — made headlines for its turnout. But their digital campaign²⁶ was even more impressive. The organizers of the People’s Climate march estimate²⁷ that on that day their digital campaign reached 600 million people in

70 countries. According to our TINT analytics, those using the hashtag *#peoplesclimate* generated nearly 1 billion social impressions on Twitter alone. It may be one of the first major protests to cite its social media statistics alongside its turnout statistics.

Their list of most influential people tweeting about the campaign also provides a window into this movement: the mix of politicians, media outlets and entertainers shows just how universal and diverse the climate movement has

²⁶ <http://www.tintup.com/blog/1-billion-impressions-the-digital-climate-march/>

²⁷ https://Twitter.com/Peoples_Climate/status/514856368356872192

become: Obama tops the list, followed by The New York Times, Jason Mraz, Rolling Stone Magazine, the UN, and Chris Rock.

FUNDRAISING

#ICEBUCKETCHALLENGE

#WEARYELLOWFORSETH

For a small nonprofit without a huge budget for fundraising campaigns, hashtags provide an opportunity to reach a larger audience. The wild success of the ALS *#IceBucketChallenge* showed the power of a

personal story paired with a small action to spread on social media. The *#IceBucketChallenge* famously asked people to dump ice on their heads, raising an estimated \$115 million for ALS research -- possibly the largest single giving event in the U.S. outside a disaster or emergency.

The Bubble Foundation, a UK based non-profit addressing the rare disease SCID, also found success with their hashtag *#WearYellowForSeth*, which raised awareness about SCID while giving people a small action they could do in

the real world - wear yellow to support a small boy battling SCID. "We never meant to start any sort of campaign, and only expected friends and family to join in," Seth's mom, Lianne, told the Daily Mail. Then, as social media has a tendency it do, it snowballed.

CASE STUDY

GOING VIRAL WITH

#WEARYELLOWFORSETH

The campaign went viral extremely fast. Celebrities like Ashton Kutcher shared the

campaign to their networks, and Snapchat offered their services as a partner to help spread the word. At the one week mark, Cosmopolitan²⁸ and BuzzFeed²⁹ posted articles about the campaign on Facebook. That was the moment they realized, "Oh this is big now, this is going somewhere."

In the course of just a few days, over 97,590 posts poured in from around the world on every social network, generating 188.2 million social impressions.

For Seth, seeing the posts has

²⁸ <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/lifestyle/a37933/the-heartbreaking-reason-why-you-should-wear-yellow-on-march-27>

²⁹ <http://www.buzzfeed.com/rachelzarrell/a-5-year-old-bubble-boy-is-asking-people-to-wear-yellow-his#>

been a great way to boost his morale. “It all helps show Seth that people are thinking of him,” said his mom, “I told him about the views and he asked, ‘Is it more than 20?’ I said, ‘yes it is’ and he said, ‘wowee.’”

SMALL FOUNDATION, BIG CAMPAIGN

For The Bubble Foundation,³⁰ the tiny non-profit that supports Seth and other children born with SCID, the scale of the campaign was more than they could have dreamed of. We spoke with Dan, who vol-

unteers his time to the Bubble Foundation.

“This is a huge thing for us,” Dan explained, “because this charity is run by one lady in an office – Gill Johnston — she’s a part time fundraising manager. I volunteer for her.” The Bubble Foundation does amazing work with their tiny team – as Dan pointed out, “Huge charities pay a lot of money for this kind of exposure.”

Dan started volunteering for the Bubble Foundation when he was 16 — at that time they had no digital presence, and

Dan helped in whatever ways he could – designing a poster, setting up social media profiles for the small organization: a Facebook page, a Twitter account.

“To go from no social presence at all to this huge campaign... It’s all paid off eventually, at the most unsuspecting times.”

“Huge charities pay a lot of money for this kind of exposure.”

REACTING QUICKLY

Like many successful social media campaigns, this one required the Bubble Foundation to react quickly. Since the hashtag wasn’t the charity’s

idea, Dan describes it as a *responsive campaign*. As it took off, “all we could do was respond to it and get involved.”

The campaign went viral so quickly, there was almost no

time to get the website up.

“We had to move pretty fast,” Dan explained, “it was a lot of late nights for me.”

Dan got in touch with us at TINT, and quickly put together a microsite with posts from celebrities, friends, and supporters around the globe.

Small details helped the Bubble Foundation get the most out of this sudden spike in awareness about their cause: They added Call-to-Action buttons on a few of the posts, directing visitors to the microsite

to an opportunity to donate. “The CTAs were really good,” Dan said, “that worked to get donations online.”

ADVICE FOR OTHER NON PROFITS: KEEP IT PERSONAL

When asked what advice he would give to other small nonprofits hoping to replicate their social media success, Dan focused on keeping it personal: “Involve the patients more,” Dan said, “people want to hear their stories.”

“This campaign might not have worked to the scale

it did if we had set up this whole thing as a charity. Since the idea and the video came from the parents, it was a lot more personal.” Charities will be most successful on social media when they not only tell the stories of the people their cause supports, but let those people tell the story themselves. Isn’t that what social media is all about?

And as for Dan, quietly modest about all his hard work, he would only say, “It all paid off.”



05. HOW HASHTAGS CHANGED THE WAY WE BUILD COMMUNITY

#VIPs #CommitmentCurve #CommunityCampaigns

#TINTLOVE

In this brave new world where effective advertisements and content are sourced from an engaged and loyal base of consumers, effective community management is more important than ever. Whether you're working for a non-profit, a company, or a political movement, your community can and

should become the pulse of your content marketing strategy. High quality social posts will come easiest from a well-built online community.

DO YOU HAVE A COMMUNITY?

First, make sure you have a real community, not just a

user base. In the age of the hashtag, what is the difference between a user or client base and a community? Communities have these properties:

1. *Self-identification: Members recognize the boundaries of membership and see themselves within those boundaries on an ongoing basis.*
2. *Influence: Members yield some degree of influence on the shape of the community.*

3. *Shared emotional connection: Members feel special due to their shared belonging to the group.*
4. *Fulfillment of needs: Members' values or identity aspirations are embodied by the community.*

If you don't yet have a community, you may need to spend more time identifying your value proposition for your community members. What can you offer them? Why should they participate? If you already have a community, the next step is to empower them to become your

greatest advocates.

"INTERACTIVE" BRANDS ARE COMMUNITY DRIVEN BRANDS

The better you understand your community's needs and emotional connection to your product or service, the stronger your community will be. How do you strengthen your understanding of your community? Empower your community to influence you and other members of your community through community-driven campaigns and UGC.

We've heard time and time again that brands are becoming more "interactive" than ever before, but what this really means is that they are becoming increasingly more community-driven. When your community is the pulse of your content marketing strategy, you are poised for high returns. Today, Millennials trust UGC more than any other form of media³¹ and 84% acknowledge it wields influence over what they buy.³² UGC has real power. When anyone can say anything about your product today with a single click, how do you empower them to

³¹ <http://corp.crowdtap.com/socialinfluence>

³² http://resources.bazaarvoice.com/rs/bazaarvoice/images/201202_Millennials_whitepaper.pdf

spread a constructive message, and who do you empower?

VIPS

The first step is to identify your VIPs and empower them to advocate on your behalf by understanding and including their voice. VIPs aren't necessarily the people spending the most money on your product, but they are without a doubt your most valuable customers. These are the community members who are talking about your product the most, both online and offline, yield-

ing influence over your community, and growing it in the process.

Here are a few ways to identify your VIPs:

1. *Social media mentions: Who is mentioning³³ you the most across social media channels?*
2. *Referral codes: Who is evangelizing your product the most both online and offline through referral code traffic?*
3. *Self-selection: Send out an*

email asking for feedback through user experience interviews. Who jumps at the opportunity?

4. *Product usage: Who is using your product the most often or for the greatest amount of time?*

Once you've answered these questions, see which users' names emerge the most. These are your VIPs. Now, it's time to involve your VIPs in your feedback loop and work with them to create fitting opportunities to contribute to your content channels.

CREATING YOUR VIP PROGRAM

Here are three powerful ways to invite your VIPs into the fold:

1. *Content Beta-Testers: Invite your VIPs to an invite-only group where they can give feedback on copy for your communication channels before it goes live. You can even ask them to sign an NDA. This makes them feel special, and sets the tone that they are the voice of your product.*
2. *Media Ideas Lab: Include your VIPs in the ideation*

phase of any campaigns you intend to create. Ask for their feedback as you evolve your campaigns ideas. After they invest their feedback, they will help you promote the campaign even more. This also mitigates against creating campaigns that don't resonate with your audience.

- 3. Community Empowerment:** *Let go of the reins a little and help your VIPs to influence other community members through leadership opportunities. You can offer a stipend to your*

VIPs to create events offline that they can then cross-promote across your social media channels. Etsy famously did this by giving stipends to their VIP sellers to create events for their local seller communities.

When you involve your VIPs in the feedback loop and you empower them to help grow your community, you offer them both creative license and legitimacy, which is then reinvested into your marketing making it more authentic.

USING VIPs TO ENGAGE THE REST OF YOUR COMMUNITY

Once you've placed your VIPs at the center of your content strategy, there are a myriad of ways you can work with them to catalyze your greater community to participate. This is the moment that your work with your VIPs will repay itself with your broader content strategy:

- 1. Contests:** *Work with your VIPs to create contests that resonate with why or how your community uses your product. For example, Star-*

bucks White Cup Contest in 2014 asked customers to share their drawings on their Starbucks cups and then selected one winner for a limited edition cup. This contest captured how Starbucks' community uses caffeine for a creative boost and solicited 4k entries in less than 3 weeks.

- 2. Member Spotlight:** *When hundreds, or thousands, or millions of people use your product, then you're bound to have some really interesting stories, advice, and use cases amongst your*

community. Work with your VIPs to identify the knowledge valuable to your community from within your community and feature it across your blog and social media channels.

3. *Reviews: Create valuable spaces for your community members to review your products and design the experience in a way that maximizes the content shared. For example, add a photo icon to encourage users to share pictures of themselves using the product when applicable,*

a comment field to encourage responding to reviews, or allow upvoting to highlight the most valuable user generated reviews.

4. *Display tools: Use display tools like TINT to highlight your community's content in one place, which builds trust across your product, and prompts your community to produce more content. When you feature community participation on your website or live at an event, you draw in more community members to participate from your audi-*

ence while engaging them in new ways. For example, the SF Ballet recently engaged previously less active millennials in a new way during a show and they ended up trending on Twitter.³⁴

By relying on your community to create content, you can generate more authentic content than a full time staff of content writers could have produced -- just make sure to follow the guidelines in Chapter 3 for obtaining the legal rights to this content.

Whether or not you believe that community is the future of marketing, community content is trusted more today when making purchases than referrals from close family and friends.³⁵ Community-driven strategy is rewarding — it brings the organization's vision and customer voice closer together.

³⁴ <http://www.tintup.com/blog/dancing-millennials-sf-ballet-trended-Twitter/>

³⁵ http://resources.bazaarvoice.com/rs/bazaarvoice/images/201202_Millennials_whitepaper.pdf

NOTES

SOCIAL STUDIES is a free resource for digital marketers and community managers. *How Hashtags Changed the World* is the first print publication by Social Studies, and is part of a larger collection of blogs, podcasts, videos and events produced by TINT. Enjoying this resource? Get more great Social Studies content at tintup.com/blog.



TINT