



Course Description

Social Media Online Course

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Project Consortium: University of Applied Sciences Magdeburg-Stendal (Germany); Aalborg University (Denmark); Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Finland); University of Lincoln (United Kingdom); University of Ljubljana (Slovenia); Potsdam University of Applied Sciences (Germany); Tampere University of Applied Sciences (Finland); University of Tampere (Finland); YMCA University of Applied Sciences (Germany)



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Abstract

The social media course is a joint course between Tampere University of Applied Sciences and University of Magdeburg. The student knows how to use social networking, blog publishing, microblogging services to broadcast and to communicate with targeted audiences. (S)he is also able to establish and moderate online discussion groups and wikis for knowledge and community building.

Course Description

The students form teams to collaborate on various tasks related to analyzing and creating social media content.

The aims of this course include:

- The practical implementation of a distributed social media room
- Collaborative creation of engaging social media content, with a focus on infographics and video
- Embedding this content into a communication strategy
- Trying and adjusting the strategy
- Learning online collaboration in a practical way

Course overview

The focus of the course is to learn social media communication by example:

1. Students provide a self-assessment in form of
 - A) a “trump” card and
 - B) an online-pretest.

Trump cards > Teaching Method — Matchmaking Trump Cards

2. Students form teams in a matchmaking game.
3. Team choose a lightweight team collaboration platform (whatever,





they just have to describe it. We might need to give some basic criteria)

4. Teams choose a challenge
5. They start working on the challenge as publicly as possible:
 - a. Reach out to pundits on social media when you research for your project (e.g. ask people on Twitter, reddit fora or similar)
 - b. Build a friendly-user focus group on a social media platform of your choice to crowdsource user requirements and target group characteristics
 - c. Get feedback by posting work-in-progress in related fora and platforms (e.g. behance.net for visuals)
6. Launch your project / campaign as early as possible. Define success metrics.
7. Measure your success and continuously improve your content and strategy.

Collaboration Mode

- **Integrated Project / Virtual Team:** Students formed real virtual teams, with intensive collaboration (and intensive coordination needs) in order to collaborate on the tasks.
- **Synchronous Collaboration:** The students collaborated using live tools like chat, Slack, Concept Board, Google Docs live editing and online conferencing software (Adobe Connect, Skype).
- **Asynchronous Collaboration:** The students used asynchronous communication tools like forums, shared documents (Google Docs), shared folders (Google Drive).

Duration, Intensity & ECTS

The course went over a duration of 12 weeks from mid March to mid June 2016. A particular challenge was the harmonization of the course schedule between Tampere and Magdeburg, as Magdeburg's term lasted till mid of July. This was solved by adding an open project phase at the end of the course, where students designed further content for their project. In mixed teams, Tampere students were asked to express clearly whether and how they would commit to the project beyond the end of Tampere's Spring term.

5 ECTS were awarded for the course.





Platform

Communication Centre of the course was a facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/193749940998027/>

Synchronous lecture and consulting sessions were hosted on Adobe Connect. Slack was used as the asynchronous communication tool of choice with most teams. Google Drive/Docs served as standard for general collaborative content development and sharing.

Method

OnCreate Teaching Methods (i.e. methods that we specifically adapted to online collaboration): Multidisciplinary team

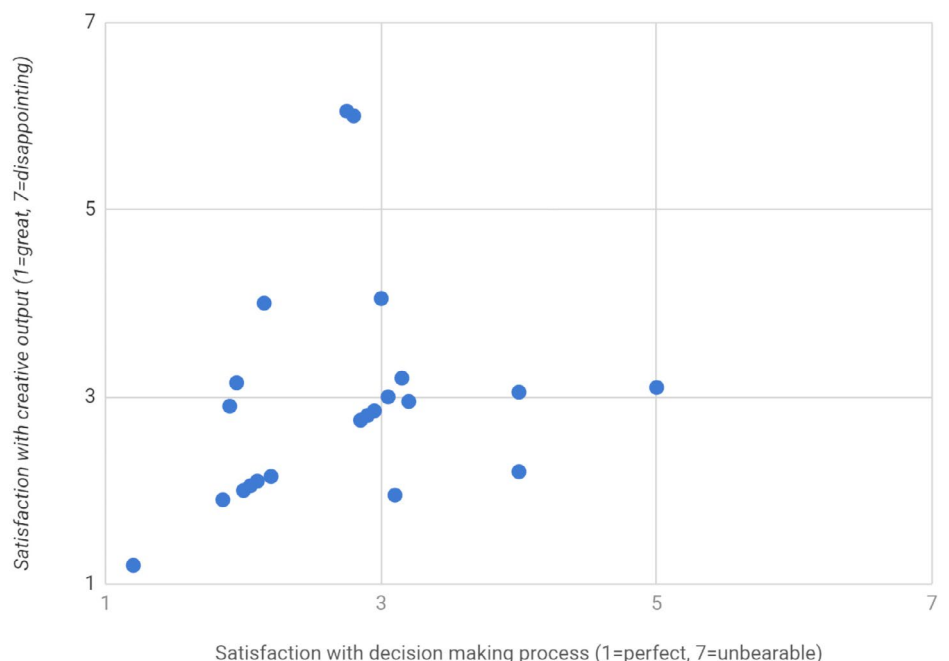
Other used methods:

Gamified team building – The students created trump-cards in which they identified their strengths and weaknesses

OnCreate Evaluation Methods

The OnCreate decision making questionnaire was tested in this course. Among other questions, the team members were asked about their satisfaction a) with the decision making processes during the collaboration and b) with the creative output of their teamwork on a scale from 1 to 7 each. The scatterplot gives an indication that there might be a positive correlation between both. Note that multiple instances of the same answer were slightly shifted in position to visualize the full number of answers in the diagramme.

Satisfaction with creative output in relation to decision making process



Curriculum

| Week | Challenge Phase | Material / Related Lesson | Status | Responsible Person |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------|
| — Project setup and basics | | | | |
| 01 | Team Building - the “distributed social media room” | <p><u>Pretasks</u></p> <p>-Survey for the students to get a picture of their current status regarding social media platforms and collaboration tools</p> <p>-Create your trump card</p> <p><u>Live Session</u></p> <p>Team Building - Matchmaking with Trump Cards. Points are given for things like Visual Design & Communication Theory; Software skills (Photoshop etc.).</p> <p><u>Introduction of the Platform:</u> 20 min presentation on the platform</p> <p><u>Speed chat session</u></p> <p><u>Weekly Assignment:</u> Assignment 1: Agree on a collaboration charter within the team</p> | <p>Week 11 i.e 14.-18.3. Kick off 14.3. (8-10 pm Finnish time)</p> <p>Attendance: Everyone</p> <p>The teachers form the teams during the first session; the students have the rest of the week to get familiar with their team.</p> <p>Antti will create a customized learning suggestion based on the survey results during the next few days.</p> | Antti, Björn, Kirsi |
| 02 | Explore Platforms: Each team member explores a new platform | <p>A lesson on the topic of identifying and researching relevant platforms for targeted audiences</p> <p>Weekly Assignment: Choose your platform</p> | <p>4.4.-8.4.2015</p> <p>Checkup 4.4.2015</p> <p>3-4 pm German time</p> <p>4-5 pm Finnish time</p> <p>Attendance: Antti</p> | Antti |
| — Easter Holiday — | | | | |



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|---|--|--|--|---|
| 03 | Choosing Challenge | Case Studies as examples and inspiration; The teams choose the concrete challenge for the team's campaign (including the well-meaning aim, the target group etc.) | 4.4.-11.4. Checkup 21.3.2015 3-4 pm German time 4-5 pm Finnish time Attendance: Björn | Björn |
| — Start of project works (»lean social media strategies«) – Social media assisted design research, get qualitative feedback | | | | |
| 04 | What is communication in social media? | Each team study different aspects of theoretical background and creates a discussion group for the others; Focus areas: Communication sciences & social media; Characteristics of successful campaign in social media; Visual communication in social media <u>Weekly assignment:</u> Formulate a communication plan | 11.4.-15.4.2015 Checkup 11.4.2015 3-4 pm German time 4-5 pm Finnish time Attendance: Kirsi | Kirsi |
| 05 | Creating textual communication | Communication with Micromedia: Introduction and textual content <u>Assignment:</u> Create a media plan (i.e. strategy) for the challenge/Kirsi | 18.4.-22.4.2015 Checkup 18.4.2015 3-4 pm German time 4-5 pm Finnish time Attendance: Antti | Both TAMK and Magdeburg could probably contribute to this |
| 06 | Creating visual content | Micromedia: Infographics and Cartoons // Cartoon basics // Basics of Infographics - how to be both precise and entertaining // Tools vs. Handmade | 25.4.-29.4.2015 Checkup 25.4.2015 3-4 pm German time 4-5 pm Finnish time Attendance: Antti | Björn & TAMK |
| — Extending reach beyond comfort zone and looking for quantitative feedback | | | | |





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|---|--|---|---|
| | | Mandatory feedback session on team collaboration. | all |
| 07 | Start campaign | Social Media Metrics and how to read them // Introduction to key social media metrics and their use cases // Setting quantifiable communication goals in social media // Metrics vs. Action - Cause & Effect models // Iterative adaption of social media campaigns // (free) Tools for measuring social media metrics | Björn |
| 08 | Reflect and adjust strategy, creation of further content | Instructor feedback on micro-content | collaboratively by all participating universities |
| 09 | Reflect and adjust strategy, creation of further content | | |
| — Mutual Evaluation, Reflection and Documentation | | | |
| 10 | Summary & own reflection | | |
| 11 | Peer feedback. Collaboration feedback | Goals for the good collaboration introduced in the beginning. Middle feedback as well not only in the end. Reflective diaries | |
| 12 | Teachers' feedback | Final feedback session and course wrap up. Gathering feedback. | Antti & Björn |





Experience Report

Course Overview and Introduction

The course was ambitious in its scope. The teachers planned a lot of different learning activities for the students. While we had a pretty well formed plan before the beginning of the course, presenting the plan to the students in an understandable way was a challenge due to the complexity.

Learning Objectives (Competencies)

The field of social media and online collaboration is changing rapidly. We tried to find a balance between more established principles (ie. the POST method) and fresh and contemporary approaches (latest digital tools). Due to the mixed locations of the team members, it was also essential for the students to do online collaboration in practise, which was one of our key learning goals. The students learned things like working with clients, developing social media strategies and developing content aimed at viral marketing.

Assessment and Measurement

The course was assessed via several different criteria, including peer reviews, self review and teacher review. The following areas were assessed by the teachers:

- Use of methods
- Creative quality
- Communication Activities (Practice/Strategy implementation)
- Strategy quality (Theory)
- Continuity
- Challenge Partner Quality

Instructional Materials

The instructional materials consisted of different digital presentations (ie. PowerPoints and PDF's) and video lessons.

See the "Material" section below for links to some of the materials.

Course Activities and Learner Interaction

The learning was problem based and the students worked together with real clients solving real social media marketing projects.





Course Technology

Facebook was the main communication platform. Besides Facebook, we used services like Youtube, Slack, Adobe Connect and Google Drive.

Learner Support

The teachers provided asynchronous support on Facebook and live support during the contact lessons.

Accessibility and Usability

The prerequisites for the course were simply a computer with an internet connection and a webcam + headset combination. No paid software was used, but only free and/or open source platforms. This made the course quite accessible to a wide range of students.

Recommendations

Facebook proved as a good tool to trigger student engagement over the duration of the online course. Especially as the course was about social media strategies and content, the drafts could be commented upon in an authentic setting.

However, facebook has an inherent weakness when it comes to archiving and searching of content. It sometimes is virtually impossible to scroll back to a certain post more than a couple of days ago. It is a strong recommendation to host the teaching material in a structured way, e.g. on a separate website, that is solely used for that purpose.

