Your Guide To Advanced Snapchat Marketing Strategy

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The number of brands on Snapchat is growing daily. But, there isn’t much help for brands out there when it comes to marketing strategy except a few case studies. In this white paper, we’ll talk about scalable goals, objectives (how to measure), strategies, and tactics for using Snapchat as a marketing tool. Also, we’ll do a quick visual overview of a how a few brands are using the channel.

A Snapshot of Snapchat

There is some data out there telling you who is and isn’t on Snapchat. Depending on what “report” you look at, you’ll get all kinds of numbers. Be careful not to be fooled by the message that you shouldn’t use Snapchat because there are more people on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other channels. Your decision to use any social media channel should not be about numbers. If it were, everyone would stick to Facebook and every other channel would fade away. It’s not about numbers, it’s about your why: why should you use Snapchat? Before we look at Snapchat’s audience and their online behavior, let’s lay down a few caveats.

1. Snapchat is a channel to reach a young demographic. This means if you’re selling high end luxury vehicles (like Audi, for instance) or RVs, Snapchat is probably a waste of time unless you just want to make a splash in the earned media department. And we are just about at the point where a name brand getting on Snapchat is not a big deal anymore. So unless you’re doing something spectacular like the Taco Bell movie from the MTV Awards, or the Mashable Hobbit movie scavenger hunt, there isn’t much earned media value in just signing up for Snapchat anymore. As the channel becomes more mainstream, expect a wider demographic to get on board, but it hasn’t happened as of this writing. Not in big enough numbers, anyway, to make it worthwhile. The basic audience demographic is 15-29 year-olds.

2. Snapchat has some negative PR to overcome. Just as Facebook started as a controversial site rating the attractiveness or ugliness of male and female students at Harvard, Snapchat has had a rough beginning as a place to get into trouble. Truth is, according to a recent survey by Sumpto, a marketing firm that does influence campaigns with college students, only two percent of college students use Snapchat for sexting. One explanation for this small number might be that savvy users recognize that snaps don’t necessarily disappear anymore. With the increasing number of apps that save snaps (SnapSave, SnapBox), students know that Snapchat is not a place to hide indiscretions. Snapchat is well aware that brands would like to get on board and they are continuing to develop a number of features, such as Stories (October 2013) to encourage brands to use the channel.

3. Snapchat isn’t for everybody, and if you decide to use it, be strategic. According to Alex Restrepo, Social Media Manager for the NFL New Orleans Saints (saints), Snapchat is not a typical social media channel, so it should not be treated it that way. We’ll hear more about how to decide if Snapchat is for your brand throughout the paper.
4. **Snapchat is a mobile-only application.** Snapchat is limited to smartphone use. Also, another limiting function is its inability to search for users (as of this writing). Snapchat growth relies on word-of-mouth and cross-channel promotion, as do all social media channels. All the brands interviewed for this paper use multiple social media channels plus their websites to create a promotional loop for their fans.

**Numbers Never Lie...Or Do They?**

Before you put together a Snapchat campaign, you’ll want to do some basic research about your audience and who is actually using Snapchat (remember the why).

When looking at marketing research, it’s always important to understand methodology. Some marketers pull random facts out of research without any thought to what the research is really measuring. Know the context of the numbers. Understand what questions were asked (and why). What was the population sample? Were the conclusions valid for just their sample or do they have implications for a wider audience? Here’s a short list of companies that consistently produce good social media marketing research:

- Pew Research Internet Project
- Nielsen Reports
- Edison Research
- Altimeter Group
- Forrester Research
- Blue Ocean

This is not an exhaustive list by any means. The only 100 percent free resource on the above list is Pew Internet Research Project. Oftentimes the others will publish blog pieces or Slidehare presentations with some highlights from their reports. It’s a good idea to follow reputable marketing research firms on an RSS reader or Google Alert to get their latest reports.

There are a group of marketing companies that also do research to showcase their products and services. Their research is still valid, but sometimes they are measuring a specific set of data that they know will reflect positively on the need for their products. They include:

- Exact Target
- Hubspot
- Salesforce
- Marketo
- Expion

I’ve downloaded many free research reports from brands in the above group. There is often an email sign-up involved and a few follow-up emails, but they have a methodical conversion system where they give away good information to get you aimed towards their products. Not all research is created equally. Read carefully.
So what are some of the recent numbers on Snapchat? There is a genuine lack of universal data available on Snapchat, but here is some of what we have so far:

1. Let’s start with Pew Internet’s latest data. The survey was done in October 2013 and measured responses from adults 18 and over:
   - 64% of respondents used a smartphone to access the internet
   - Of those, 26% of the 18-29 year old respondents use Snapchat. Of this group, the majority used it “several times a day.”
   - In contrast, 43% of the same age group uses Instagram and 31% of the age group uses Twitter.
2. Hart Research Associates conducted a survey on behalf of the Family Online Safety Institute in November, 2013 of teens age 13-17 and found the following:
   - 32% of the respondents used Snapchat. Snapchat did not exist when their 2012 survey was done. On this same survey, Instagram was used by 42% of the group, up from 30% in 2012. Twitter users were at 35%, down from 42% the year before.
   - 86% send and receive text messages. This data is only important because advanced Snapchat brands have described the channel as more of a messaging platform than a true social media platform where fan interactions resemble texters more than tweeters or Facebook users.
2. This Sumpto survey is a good example of a marketing company using data to highlight its product. They are a marketing company that basically gives free products to college students who are tagged as influencers in the social media space. They are assigned a score, similar to a Klout score, and can win rewards based on online actions. The survey, published in late February 2014, raised a lot of eyebrows about Snapchat use among college kids. They claimed:
   - 77% of their “influencers” use Snapchat at least once per day. The sample number was 1,650 students. The high percentage jump would make sense for a group of influential social media users.
   - Only 2% of respondents had used Snapchat for sexting.
   - 45% of respondents said they would open a snap from a brand they did not know and 73% said they would open a snap from a brand they did know.
   - 58% of the respondents said they were likely to buy a product if they received a discount via a snap.
3. Random factoids:
   - Jing reported in August 2013 that Snapchat was the eighth most popular download on the iPhone and had the highest growth rate in the top ten apps.
   - In November 2013, Tech Crunch reported that Snapchat generates about 400 million pictures a day on their mobile app. At that time, the number was just higher than Facebook and Instagram combined.
   - Snapchat has not released the number of brands on Snapchat since the October 2013 addition of the Stories feature.
Marketing With Snapchat Using The GOST Strategy: Goals First

Some social media managers believe Snapchat does not necessarily require a marketing plan. However, if you fail to attach a measurement to a goal, even in a broad context, you will never know if your marketing efforts are producing a result other than “having fun” or “taking it for a spin.” Using a strategic template such as GOST (Goals-Objectives-Strategies-Tactics) will guarantee that you’ll know if you hit the mark. For more information on the philosophy and execution of GOST strategic planning, this piece from author Amber Naslund does an excellent job of illustrating the process. Naslund, who wrote The Now Revolution with Jay Baer, emphasizes the need for writing measurable objectives.

Whether you actually write out the process or do it in your head, becoming familiar with how to design measurable objectives will help you most with a channel like Snapchat where metrics are few. Marketers learn to rely on tools like Facebook Insights and social media management system (SMMS) dashboards so much that we lose the knack of how to set objectives for channels that don’t provide them. Learning to measure actions is critical in marketing. Every channel has measurable actions. We just have to learn how to plug them into our goals. Goals do not have to be elaborate, but they should be measurable for maximum success.

Step One: Understand The Channel And How Fans Use It

Before we dig too deep into setting goals for Snapchat, we need to understand what is unique about the platform and why people are using it. This will dictate what kind of goals you set for the channel. In a recent interview with CKSyme Media Group, Alex Restrepo, Social Media Manager for the New Orleans Saints (Saints), addressed what makes Snapchat stand out from other channels:

The last day of the season (2014), we did a thank you video on Snapchat right from the locker room after the game—four or five players gave thank you messages to the fans ending with Drew Brees. We were hearing about that on Twitter still two to three days after the story had disappeared (on Snapchat).

The high reaction we get from those kind of messages I think is mainly because of the audience and what they’re using Snapchat for—they’re using it for messaging. Snapchat isn’t a regular social media outlet. When you send a snap, it’s perceived as a direct message from the brand or team. When you watch what people say on other social media channels, they say something like “The Saints just Snapchatted me,” or “McDonald’s just Snapchatted me”—they perceive it as a personal message because it’s on their phone to them, not on a newsfeed or a timeline. It comes up as a message on your phone, not as, “I just happened to be scrolling through my timeline and I see something from the Saints.” Obviously a message from Drew Brees would do well anywhere, but if it’s a snap, they see it as more of a personal touch.
Some social media managers are using Snapchat as a social experiment to try and elevate their relevance with the 18-29 year-old age group. Jakob Gutierrez who manages the Snapchat channel for Wichita State University Athletics (goshockers) said:

Our strategy is to simply share new content that is unique from everything else we post on other platforms and provide close up or behind-the-scenes footage that most fans aren’t able to capture.

Social media managers currently using Snapchat stress the importance of the channel’s real-time culture. Because fans think of it as a messaging app, managers emphasized the need to operate “in the now.” Snapchat fans respond to snaps in the same real-time fashion they would a text message.

**Step Two: What Do You Want To Accomplish?**

Goals for using a channel like Snapchat will vary depending on what you want to accomplish. The most common goal I have heard from social media managers (that is measurable) is:

Increase brand engagement with the 15-29 year old age group through Snapchat.

Does your brand already connect with this age group in social media? Do your products or services resonate with this age group? If your answer is yes, then some version of this goal could work for you. We’ll talk about how to measure this in the next section.

While doing social media audience research, Eastern Washington University Athletics (ewuathletics) found a deficit of brand and event engagement with their institution’s student population. EWU has a tradition of being a commuter school and in past years has worked hard to get students to athletic events on campus. They saw Snapchat as a way to highlight the student fan experience at their games and widen the reach of their other social media channels in an integrated campaign to get more students to come to events. This is a good example of how to make goals that fit your needs.

EWU also set a goal to capture a specific number of followers in a defined time frame. They based their goal numbers on a comparison of the same age group on Twitter. When the campaign started, they had approximately 1000 Twitter followers between 18-24 years old. Using the formula that Snapchat had five percent less users in that age group (according to Pew), they set a goal of capturing 950 Snapchat followers in the given time period. Once those goals were designed, objectives were the next step.

Marketing With Snapchat Using The GOST Strategy: Measure Goals With Objectives

After you have a goal, the next step is coming up with objectives that will help you measure whether or not you have reached your goal. This is a step that some marketers either skip intentionally because
their goals are somewhat nebulous, or just fail to define because they don’t desire any social proof that their campaign was successful. Lack of measureable objectives is the most common missing element in social media campaigns, especially as it relates to Snapchat. The newness of the channel and lack of traditional metrics makes social proof more difficult—but not impossible.

Before we talk about specific objectives you can accomplish around goals, there needs to be a discussion of how to establish metrics. These principles apply to all social media marketing channels, but it is important not to assign a set of blank metrics to every social media channel. For instance, the meaning of impressions on Facebook does not equate to impressions on Snapchat. Restrepo gives his take on this tricky difference and talks about which actions he measures:

The amount of followers that we have on Snapchat is growing all the time. And the fact that it’s only on a mobile phone and our fan numbers are still growing, that’s huge because it’s a sign that word-of-mouth is working. I believe our numbers would not be growing if fans didn’t like what they were seeing.

Screenshots and number of views each snap is getting are staying at a steady percentage of the increasing follower number. Snapchat is like every other social media outlet—there are more numbers I wish I had. But, the fact that I know exactly how many people saw each snap is huge. Even though Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can tell me how many followers I have, there is no way anymore of knowing exactly how many people saw a post unless they take action. We have 3.5 million followers on Facebook but I’m not sure how many people actually see any post in their newsfeed even though Facebook gives me an impressions percentage. Just because it runs through their Facebook newsfeed or Twitter feed doesn’t mean they saw it. But I know for a fact that in order to see a snap they have to open it.

Another common misunderstanding is the concept of engagement. Some marketers assume that engagement is not measurable on Snapchat because it cannot be defined by actions such as conversations, comments, likes, retweets, and the like. But some managers disagree. Restrepo says:

Another big number to us is screenshots taken because we know that means people are going to share it with friends or another social media outlet. A share of something from Snapchat to Twitter or from Instagram to Facebook is still a share. People are constantly sharing content across channels.

Engagement is any interaction. It’s hard to differentiate it in a level-type system, but a screenshot is an action—it is engagement. If your numbers are growing and people are sharing your stuff, that’s engagement. It’s not responsive in the sense that they can comment, however, unless you are accepting snaps from your fans. We only do that for contests. The sheer number of snaps we would receive on a daily basis is not manageable because the majority of people send the same snaps to all their followers.
I don’t limit engagement to just a Klout score, or number of retweets or replies or likes. We’re measuring direct engagement with fans one-on-one because that’s what we do with it—connect one-on-one. Engagement can be anything that gets your fan to interact with you or promote your brand.

Nikki Sunstrum, Director of Social Media at the University of Michigan (uofmichigan) talks about how they measure engagement on Snapchat. According to Sunstrum, they follow all their fans back on Snapchat and accept snaps to see what kind of content their fans use to engage them back.

We track the traditional demographics of any social network, audience size, content submission (snaps from fans). More important to us however is the level of engagement. The visual nature and ability to tell “stories” with this network means we have the ability to showcase not only our campus, but also our culture. As long as those that follow us do the same in return, we see that as successful.

Both EWU and Michigan have enlisted the help of the Snapchat business team to better understand the present limitations of Snapchat’s reporting metrics. Kyle Bruce, Social Media Manager for EWU Athletics expressed concern about the present “Snapchat score” as it relates to brands on the channel:

The score that each user gets on Snapchat is a combination of the number of snaps you send and receive. Consequently, brands like us have a lower score than a Michigan would, for example. We don’t follow anyone back at this point. We have plans to do that this summer to engage our followers for contests but right now we haven’t experimented with that feature yet. So, even though we have very high open rates and screen shares, we have a lower score on Snapchat’s system. That number doesn’t really mean anything to us at this point and I’m not sure it ever will depending on our goals.

Restrepo added:

One of the problems with the Snapchat “number rating” that each user gets is that we don’t send that many snaps during the week compared to the average user that is probably sending pictures several times a day or even an hour. For brands, that number really doesn’t indicate much because you probably shouldn’t be snapping your fans ten times a day.

Step One: State The Objective That Defines (Or Proves) The Goal

If your goal is to increase brand engagement with the target age group on Snapchat (which is at zero before you start), you could use a measure of follower numbers, open rates, screenshots, or snaps
received from followers. The numbers you attach to that objective will vary greatly depending on how strategically you are going to use the channel.

For instance, Gutierrez stated:

_We decided to use Snapchat as another way to share content with our fans. Snapchat’s platform is much different than Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram in the way that we have the opportunity to share spontaneous content that is fun and engaging. Snapchat is an easy platform to use because it’s not something that we necessarily will create a plan for._

Because Wichita State has opted to use Snapchat as an addition to the other channels they already have in place, their goal is very broad: “share spontaneous content that is fun and engaging.” Objectives for this type of goal may consist of number of snaps sent per week or number of contests to run during a given season.

Since one of the EWU goals was specific in nature (accrue a number of followers over a specific time period), their strategies are more detailed. They consisted of integrating Snapchat into the master social media plan they had for increasing numbers on all their other social media channels. According to Bruce, this would include such objectives as:

- Increase number of in-game social media responses from fans by five percent (per event) during 2014-15 event season.
- Capture 950 Snapchat followers by fall 2014.

These objectives provide a measuring stick for the social media manager to check against and make mid-course corrections, if necessary, during the time period. Objectives and goals should have a specific beginning and ending point each for each campaign whether it’s an annual plan or a short term campaign.

### Marketing With Snapchat Using The GOST Strategy: Plot The Road Map With Strategies

The next piece is defining specific strategies for each of those objectives. A strategy is a road map that shows your path from point A to point B. It’s not a to-do list, just a map. These might include short term campaigns that work towards accomplishing the goal.

**Step One: Establish campaigns to reach the stated objective.** One of the strategies Restrepo uses for the Saints is to have contests during the off-season to keep fans interested in the channel. Many of their contests involve creative responses such as the Kenny Stills “catch” drawing contest they sponsored recently. The contest involved using Snapchat’s “paint” feature which allows users to draw with a finger or stylus:

_We only open our account to receive snaps during contests when we are asking for entries. Some of the content we get is really good. Like the contest we did for the Kenny Stills drawing a couple weeks ago. It’s amazing what these fans can draw in 24 hours just using their phone screens and_
their fingers. The drawing feature is one thing that can really separate you from the rest of the brands there (on Snapchat).

Cross-channel promotion is a frequent strategy used to increase follower numbers on Snapchat. Wichita State’s “Snap Fans of the Week” campaign featured screen shots of snaps that fans sent in showing their school spirit. WSU posted the winning snaps on other social media channels, encouraging fans to sign up for their Snapchat account.

Eastern Washington plans to attach social media sign-ups to a student t-shirt giveaway for an upcoming special event in the fall of 2014. To receive the free t-shirt, students have to show that they have signed up for the official Snapchat feed on their phones to receive the reward (t-shirt). Another incentive of this campaign is that Snapchat will be one of the channels where students will receive important information about the upcoming event.

These are all examples of strategies that support the fulfillment of an objective.

**Step Two: Fail Fast And Make Better Mid-Course Corrections**

Without objectives, campaigns can fail for lack of ongoing evaluation and benchmarks. If I don’t see the signs of early failure against my objective numbers, I won’t make a course correction. Using the above example, if EWU’s t-shirt giveaway did not produce the numbers they expected, it would be important to not only look at what might have gone wrong (prize not enough incentive, not enough promotion, wrong time, etc.) but to also think about adding an additional campaign to reach the objective by the end date.

**Marketing With Snapchat Using The GOST Strategy: Tactics Are The To-Do List**

The final piece of the GOST strategy template is where the rubber meets the road: tactics. This is where you take your road map and plan your trip from point A to point B. It is a list of the step-be-step processes of the strategy. Also, it is where you account for your time, people, and resources needed to implement the project. Many managers, especially those who are one-person shops, can do this intuitively. But if your campaign is part of a bigger picture and involves more than one person, you may want to make a plan.

Many of the Saints’ snaps involve players giving personal messages to a camera, so planning for the use of their time is a must. Restrepo has particular content he is looking for, something that fans feel is a personal message. Sunstrum agrees:

*Snapchat thrives on personability. It requires that you apply a face to your brand. We have seen great success with providing exclusive content on our channel, which then rolls out to our other platforms. For example, during a recent legacy event for our outgoing University*
President Mary Sue Coleman, we sent a “selfie” of her and the event emcee actor Jeff Daniels, as well as other officials.

EWU uses the Snapchat Stories feature during athletic events. Each “story” has a shot list made up for the event that portrays an exclusive fan experience. Bruce explains:

I put together a shot list for every big event we cover on Snapchat. My goal is to portray the student fan experience. I ask myself what students would like to be seeing and doing during the game—behind the scenes stuff. I try to avoid things people can see on TV and also “ant pictures” with bunches of players off in the distance. Also, I try to avoid pictures fans would see on our website. I cruise the sidelines looking for players engaged in things most fans don’t see like an up close picture of a defensive back on the phone to a coach in the booth. I take “selfie” snaps of students in the stands, food at the concession stand, pre-game videos of speeches in the locker room—anything that will make them want to be there to see it for themselves next time, or something that will enhance the experience of the students following at the game.

For elaborate projects, such as the Taco Bell MTV Awards movie, the logistical challenges alone would facilitate the need for a detailed tactics list. Make sure to include equipment needs, people, resources needed, and any special considerations such as press passes needed for access, scheduling times for people involved in the snap, and also coordinate calendars with all those involved. Some snap stories may need the same kind of preparation a video shoot would require, depending on how elaborate your strategy is.

Brand Successes Can Fuel Your Fire

Brands on Snapchat have been around long enough now to produce some interesting case studies. On the following pages are several examples of snaps shared by social media managers that scored high in audience opens and shares. A Google search of “brands on Snapchat” will also produce an abundance of ideas. Some of the pictures on the following pages represent only pieces of a much bigger story. If they are from a story, it is noted.
Wichita State
Easter egg hunt (story)

University of Michigan
Easter message (snap)

University of Houston
Cougar Red Friday
contest announcement (story)

Mashable scavenger hunt for the new Hobbit Blue-ray release (movie/story)
EWU NCAA FCS Playoffs (story)
Pre-game locker room

EWU Tennis promotion (story)
EWU Women’s Basketball Student Attendance Campaign (story)

Wichita State “ESPN in the Roundhouse Today” (story)

Kenny Stills “The Catch” Saints drawing contest winner

Mariners Easter greeting
Is Snapchat For You?

Snapchat has emerged as a channel that many brands are using to engage a younger demographic. The first brands on Snapchat have been there less than a year and some are already realizing fan growth that exceeds other platforms. Parting words of advice on whether Snapchat is for you:

From Alex Restrepo, New Orleans Saints:

*Snapchat won’t work for everybody. Not like Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram could be for every audience. It’s a personal messaging app that is best viewed in real-time and if you can’t get your players involvement, then don’t do it. Our owner likes it, our players like it, our fans like it so that’s why we continue to use it. I also believe that Snapchat isn’t done with what they’re going to add to it. I’d love to be able to have linkable text or be able to use more graphics, more filters, or maybe slow-mo video. As Snapchat sees more and more brands pick up, I think they’re going to be looking for more ways to be brand-friendly. It’s not even a year old for brands. I think Snapchat is just scratching the surface on what they can provide.*
Nikki Sunstrum, Director of Social Media, University of Michigan:

*The instantaneous nature and quick hit content the Snapchat platform creates is unlike any other social platform. It requires a brand to put a lot into a 10-second moment in time and allows users to share a split second of their day with us, and their other friends as well. Our audience also takes great advantage of the writing pen feature, creating comical displays on their many images. The environment Snapchat creates and the way in which items eventually “disappear” provides a space for user generated content that we have not seen on other networks.*

Kyle Bruce, Social Media Manager, Eastern Washington University Athletics:

*I think it works for us because we’ve been strategic with it. Yeah, it’s fun for students but that doesn’t help us know what we’re accomplishing there. As long as the channel is super popular with our students, we’ll continue to use it to get their attention by incorporating it into our social media plan. We’re also looking forward to any new features that might come along and trying out contests where we receive snaps from our fans.*

For more information on social media marketing strategies, including how to integrate social media into your marketing plan, contact Chris Syme, Principal of CKSyme Media Group and author of this paper. You can email her at chris@cksyme.org.

CKSyme Media Group is a digital marketing and communications agency located in Bozeman, Montana and San Diego, California. More information on their services can be found at www.cksyme.org.