

SOCIAL MEDIA

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North Plains

A B2B CASE STUDY from:



INTRODUCTION

North Plains Systems (NPS) is one of the world's leading providers of digital and media asset management, and end-to-end publishing solutions. As digital media use continues to rise, organizations are adopting new ways to communicate, train, advertise, or monetize content. North Plains' TeleScope™ platforms help organizations of all sizes and industries to streamline creation, collaboration, management and distribution processes while reducing costs and time-to-market, increasing efficiencies and revenues, opening opportunities, and helping organizations become more agile and competitive.

North Plains' traditional marketing & communication strategies include:

- Newsletters
- Press releases
- Webinars
- Whitepapers
- Events

In 2009 North Plains decided to augment its traditional marketing efforts with social media. North Plains' goal was to increase visibility for North Plains Telescope™ platforms.

ABOUT MAD PERSPECTIVES LLC

MAD Perspectives is an independent consultancy providing strategic planning services to help B2B companies align, define and coordinate their use of digital media solutions. With the increasing volume of online solutions for storytelling, MAD Perspective helps clients sift through the myriad of online video, presentation sharing, micro-blogging and social networking platforms to select the platforms that help them fulfill their business goals.

MAD Perspectives is providing this case study to help B2B companies learn from their counterparts. North Plains Systems is not a MAD Perspectives client.

TO PLAN OR NOT TO PLAN?

[North Plains](#)' social media effort is led by Joshua Duhl, VP Marketing and Product Management. Joshua's background reflects his focus and experience around dynamic publishing and digital asset management. Upon joining NPS in 2009, he jumped into the deep end with social media. Joshua won support from the executive suite and elected to pursue an ad hoc approach to test the social media waters and increase awareness of North Plains and its products. With his past focus on content management solutions, Joshua is intrigued by the management of social content. While NPS does not have a formal social media plan or social media policy, their social media effort is part of their overall marketing strategy. These efforts are managed by a small group (3 people, including Joshua) who have added social media to their existing set of responsibilities.

North Plains is pursuing a cross-channel marketing strategy, ensuring that there are links between each of their social platforms and their corporate website. The corporate site prominently positions links to their social platforms on their website landing page.



North Plains elected to use the following platforms:

Blog:

NPS established a blog, [“We Speak Digital Media”](#) using WordPress, independent of its corporate website. The blog is not North Plains branded. However, the blog can be accessed directly, via the link on the North Plains website, and is displayed on Joshua's LinkedIn page using the WordPress app for LinkedIn. North Plains is making good use of alternate channels to attract followers to the blog – announcing posts via Twitter and into LinkedIn forum groups.



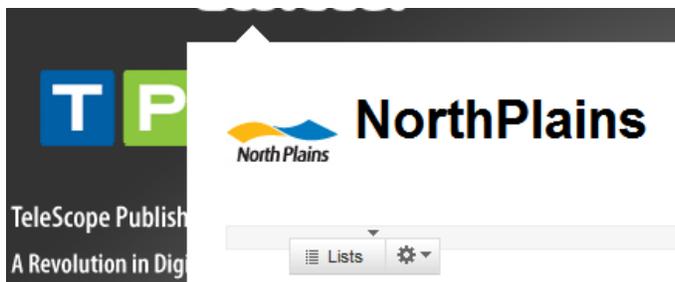
NPS’ goals for the blog is to discuss issues relevant to the industry and topics that are of interest to their existing and potential customers. Topics include digital asset management, eBook publishing, video, industry trends and hot issues, market statistics, and adjacent topics such as eReaders. In this way, North Plains’ creates a conversation, and a potential community of interest. They incorporate links to information sources or incremental North Plains content. The blog includes a link back to the NPS corporate website, which simplifies navigation for those seeking more information about the company or NPS products.

North Plains will be establishing a blog schedule aligning posts, as much as possible, with known industry events and planned company announcements. In addition, North Plains has started to invite guest bloggers (myself included) who can bring complimentary content to their audience.

NPS sees its blog as another inbound link to its website. It leverages defined keywords and phrases to enhance search engine optimization.

Twitter:

NPS’ twitter presence, @NorthPlains, is branded using the corporate logo and reflects product information in the background. North Plains’ tweets primarily focus on their presence at key industry events and highlight their booth activity, panel discussions and product highlights. Secondly, NPS alerts its followers to new blogs, scheduled webinars and important industry articles.



LinkedIn:

Approximately 50% North Plains employees are using LinkedIn. There is a company profile, which is branded as much as LinkedIn allows. With the new “follow” feature on LinkedIn, individuals can choose

to follow companies and NPS employees have elected to follow their employer. Employees participate in groups related to North Plains core competencies in Digital Asset Management and Digital Publishing.

North Plains promotes upcoming webinars via the various LinkedIn Groups that they have joined. They also provide information about promotions, new white papers, blog posts. Their goal is to actively participate in the group discussions to maintain a presence and show thought leadership. NPS also uses LinkedIn to advertise open jobs and attract candidates.

Facebook:

North Plains has implemented a Facebook Fan Page: North Plains, Digital Asset Management and Publishing Solutions. The fan page is fed twitter feeds using Smart Twitter for Pages. This Facebook enabled link eliminates the need to re-enter Twitter content in Facebook. It is setup when establishing the Fan Page.



NPS uses its Facebook Fan Page to alert its fans to North Plains announcements and events. They have posted some pictures of their solutions and from industry events. The solution diagrams are consistent with those provided on the corporate website.

Similar to other B2B companies, North Plains acknowledges that it is not using Facebook in any significant manner.. North Plains is considering use of Facebook as a user group discussion forum, but is concerned that this is outside Facebook's capabilities. .Similar to other B2B businesses, NPS will continue to monitor activity of other businesses to best understand if and how Facebook can be leveraged.

LESSONS LEARNED, THUS FAR

North Plains has found some early success in leveraging social media channels. In particular they have seen webinar attendance grow significantly when webinars are promoted on both Twitter and LinkedIn Groups. In addition, they are well on their way to meeting their goal to double the number of Twitter followers by the end of the year.

Social media provides North Plains with incremental opportunities for cross channel marketing. NPS recognizes that their customers are using the wide variety of channels available to obtain information about the company and its products & solutions. They are actively leveraging Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to promote North Plains activities and are using some platform embedded tools to share links between platforms (i.e., Twitter feeds linked Facebook page). However, they are investigating the use of a platform to aggregate, schedule and distribute content to the relevant platforms. Given the size of their marketing team, this makes a lot of sense as it will streamline their efforts.

When speaking with Joshua Duhl about North Plains success or challenges with social media, Joshua indicated that any company intending to leverage social media “must have commitment and intention”. For example, while the blog had several contributors when it was initially established, the commitment from several of the authors waned and now Joshua is now the sole contributor. He was aware this could happen from the start and notes that this is the same for regular newsletters or other social media communications tools like Twitter. This is a challenge for many companies just getting started in social media. North Plains may want consider establishing a quarterly editorial calendar that aligns topics, platforms and resources.

As North Plains moves forward with social media, they may want to assess and implement a “listening” tool to monitor activity and discussions across the various social networking platforms. In addition, they may want to consider using Facebook to highlight the “personal” face of NPS (i.e., NPS community projects, NPS presence at industry events), invite debate on industry trends, recruit new employees, or reinforce product support solutions.

SUMMARY

North Plains is a great example of a small (75 employees) company in the B2B space who is figuring out the best leverage of the various social media platforms. They’ve jumped into use of the primary platforms and are happy to see positive results in the form of increased webinar attendance and twitter followers. As they proceed, they will increasingly focus on planning and coordination to ensure a more consistent flow of content. As a content centric solution provider, North Plains clearly understands the value of providing relevant content.