

Kids Voting Durham Communication Audit

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Executive Summary

In this communication audit, our group, Kids Voting PR, evaluated and recommended further steps for Kids Voting Durham's internal communication. Kids Voting Durham is a nonprofit organization located in Durham, NC, with the primary goal of helping young people understand and believe in the power they have as active citizens and informed voters. We analyzed Kids Voting Durham social media, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and their website to evaluate the effectiveness of its online communication. We interviewed our contact with Kids Voting Durham, Carolyn Kreuger, over a video call in order to find out more about the organization, its mission and how she thought it might improve. We also conducted a survey to board members of the organization, asking the participants to rate the communication of KVD in their personal experience. After collecting all of this data, our group worked to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of their communication, also known as a SWOT analysis, in order to better understand the breadth of their ability to communicate with fellow members and target audiences. After our analysis, we decided on a few recommendations based on the SWOT analysis for how to further KVD's internal and external communications. These recommendations include updating Kids Voting Durham's website and creating a blog template in order to consistently update the website without having to create completely new content. We also recommend the Kids Voting Durham create a year-round internship program that would provide the organization with the extra help it needs to communicate with its target audiences and fulfill its mission. While observing and analyzing this data, we kept a diary account of how our group worked and examined the communication materials. After all of this information, we attached an appendix detailing all of our findings and notes from the interview, survey and data

collection. We hope this communication audit thoroughly examined every aspect of KVD communication and successfully suggested feasible recommendations on how to best continue communication for Kids Voting Durham, both internally within the organization and to volunteers and to the target audiences the organization is best trying to reach.

Introduction

We conducted this communication audit in order to evaluate and progress the internal communication for the nonprofit organization Kids Voting Durham. Kids Voting Durham is an organization based out of Durham, N.C. in partnership with the Durham County Cooperative Extension. Kids Voting Durham's mission statement is to help young people understand and believe in the power they have as active citizens and informed voters. Their goals are to create informed and active citizens and leaders, support classroom learning and standards in civic education, provide teachers with tools and training they can use to educate their students about democracy and voting, encourage greater adult voter engagement and turnout, including many more. The organization is located at 721 Foster St., Durham, N.C., 27701.

Since the organization's partnership with the Durham County Cooperative Extension in 2005, Kids Voting Durham has helped students cast 150,000+ ballots in Kids Voting mock elections, had thousands of students and families participate in candidate forums, voting celebrations and other educational activities, and had more than 1,000 youth and adult volunteers work with Kids Voting Durham. This affiliate of Kids Voting USA, the parent nonprofit organization, is the only one located in North Carolina. Kids Voting USA has affiliates in all 50 states of America. Another nonprofit organization interested in voter encouragement is Democracy North Carolina, located in Morrisville, N.C., located 24 minutes from Durham, N.C.

Methodology

Interview

On February 14 2020 at 9 a.m., the team met with our contact with Kids Voting Durham, Carolyn Kreuger via a zoom video call. In this interview we asked Kreuger her expectations of us throughout this process as well as what she believes Kids Voting is doing, and what can be done better for their communications.

Survey

Conducting a survey to measure the communication of Kids Voting Durham began with the idea of surveying teachers from Durham County Public Schools how well they felt the organization communicated their purpose, provided the necessary resources for implementing kids voting and made itself available for follow-up questions. We initially emailed Kelly Stevens, K-12 Social Studies Content Specialist with Durham County Public Schools, on Feb. 18 to inquire how we might conduct this survey.

“Dear Mrs. Stevens,

My name is Yancey Coltrane and I am a student in the Hussman School of Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am currently enrolled in a class that partners with nonprofits to provide public relation experience for the students. I was assigned Kids Voting Durham and I, with the help of four group members, am conducting a communication audit for KVD. We hope to survey teachers in Durham County Public Schools to measure the reach, implementation and effectiveness of the Kids Voting program in schools. I felt you would be the best person to coordinate with to distribute this online survey if you are able. I will be in touch and hope to hear back from you soon.

Best,

Yancey Coltrane”

In the morning of Feb. 19, we received an email from Carolyn Kreuger who said Stevens had emailed her upon receiving our original email. Kreuger continued to explain that Kids Voting Durham already asks so much of the teachers of Durham County Public Schools and did not think it was the best choice of action. She offered to send us prior surveys they had conducted of the teachers and suggested we survey the board members of Kids Voting Durham.

“Hi all,

Again it was great to talk with you last week, and I look forward to seeing what you come up with in your audit and for Kids Voting blog!

Our liaison at DPS let me know yesterday that you all had requested that she you email DPS teachers as part of your KVD communication audit. Can you tell me a little more about that since I don’t remember us talking about it last week. With any survey, I would like to know more about it and see it before it is sent out. DPS teachers are our most important constituents, and we already ask them for feedback a few times a year – but we try to limit those requests out of respect for teachers’ time (and because they will just start ignoring us if we make too many requests for KVD [smiley face emoji])

Thanks, Carolyn”

Upon receiving this email we created a survey tailored to the board members. The survey included three questions:

1. What is your affiliation with Kids Voting Durham?
2. What method of communication do you use most often with Kids Voting Durham?
 - Answer Choices
 - Email
 - Phone Call
 - Text
 - Social Media
 - All of the above

3. How would you evaluate Kids Voting Durham's communication with its partners/staff/board members?
 - Scale from 0-5; 0 being not well at all, 5 being extremely well

We emailed the survey to Kreuger, who emailed the link to the Google Form to Kids Voting Durham's board members. The board members then responded to the form at their convenience and the results were compiled on February 29.

Observations

On Feb. 18 we conducted a thorough exploration of the online communication outlets Kids Voting Durham uses to communicate with its publics. These outlets include their own website, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Pinterest. The exploration included a general overview of the information provided, the accessibility, the recency and frequency of posting.

Audit Diary

The group members assigned to work alongside Kids Voting Durham held an initial meeting in Carroll Hall to discuss how to approach the audit and took time to analyze the organization's platforms. After doing so, a Zoom call with Carolyn Kreuger, the program director, was coordinated by email to discuss the work that would be done and to further understand what was expected. The Zoom call was held in an empty classroom in Carroll Hall on Feb. 14.

On Feb. 18, members performed a detailed analysis of their social media efforts and outreach towards the intended publics. A meeting was also held in Carroll Hall for about an hour. The team was better able to identify the methodology of choice for conducting the audit and concluded that a survey about their outreach and its success would be most beneficial. The initial audience was intended to be teachers in Durham County, but this was ruled out by Carolyn Kreuger who was emailed by Kelly Stevens, the initial contact for sending out the survey. Carolyn suggested surveying the board who represent the key sectors of Kids Voting through email on Feb. 19.

After putting together a survey on Google Forms, one of the group members emailed a link to the board members and those affiliated with the key sectors. Nine responses were received between Feb. 24 and Feb. 26., evaluating Kids Voting Durham's communication efforts. Following the second meeting, group members continued to work individually on their section of the audit. This took place between Feb. 18 and March 1. Leading up to March 4, the group members worked on reviewing and compiling each piece to the audit in order to turn in a copy and in order to review with their client.

Results

Interview

After conducting our Zoom call with Carolyn Kreuger it was apparent to us that there is not enough staff at Kids Voting Durham to have all of the communication of their organization that they want. The organization has a good base and an important message that they are trying to get across to their publics, but they are not effectively sending that message to their audience.

There also seems to be a disconnect between how those within the organization see their communication efforts and how they actually are. They are communicating well with teachers and their own staff but if there is not enough communication between the target audience of the kids who are voting and their parents the organization's message will not be seen.

We were all in agreement that the website itself needed some work, especially focusing on making sure all tabs led to information, that the information was accurate and updated, and more cohesiveness throughout the website and other media platforms. One of the purposes of the website is to be a tool for educators in their classroom, which does not come across from how their website is designed or the materials they display to the public. If Kreuger had not communicated in the interview that a major part of the program was through the school curriculum we would not have known about it because it is not a major part of their communications.

Through the interview we also developed other ways that communication between the organization and its public could be made through the use of blog posts, newsletters and letters to the young people. It was evident that Kreuger was extremely passionate about the work that she is doing, and there is a need for this in the community.

Survey

Question 1: What is your affiliation with Kids Voting Durham?

The study had seven respondents, seven of which are board members and one respondent is the Chair of the Advisory Board.

Question 2: What method of communication do you use most often with Kids Voting Durham?

Email was the most common method of communication, with 87.5 percent of respondents saying that was the most common way they communicated with Kids Voting Durham.

The remaining 12.5 percent chose the “All of the above” option (email, phone call, text and social media).

Question 3: How would you evaluate Kids Voting Durham's communication with its partners/staff/board members?

On a scale from 0-5, 0 indicating not well at all and 5 indicating extremely well, 6 respondents chose 6, or extremely well, and 2 respondents chose 3.

Observations

Website

The website, www.kidsvotingdurham.org, includes information on the mission of the organization, the staff and partners, their blog, and resources for parents, teachers and kid voters to use for planning and carrying out the Kids Voting program. The information

is thorough and expansive, however the organization and presentation of the information could use improvement. As a non-profit KVD has a demand for volunteers and donations, yet the calls to action are not prominent on the website and are hard to navigate. The resources available are also spread out across separate pages of the website and in order to gather all the documents that may be helpful to anyone wishing to implement kids voting a website user would have to visit many pages. The home page of the website does not include a clearly stated mission of the organization. The accessibility of the website was measured by the ease of use, readability of content, and effective functions. The website can be navigated by clicking through the tabs that redirects users to the coordinating page. The “Events” and “Contacts” pages were both blank when this audit was conducted. Much of the text on the website is a color that does not sufficiently contrast against the background and is hard to read. Some of the images on the website are also distorted or blurry. There are links to all of their social media profiles except for its YouTube channel. As for the recency and frequency of posting, the last blog post on the website was in Oct. 2019.

Twitter

Kids Voting Durham’s Twitter profile, @KidsVotingDurha, was originally published in January 2014 and boasts 697 tweets, 298 followers and follows 377. The profile includes a brief summary of the organization in the bio of the profile, as well as a link to its website. The posting of tweets correlates with election times, most recently in relation to the primary elections in North Carolina on March 3, 2020. The types of tweets

range from reminders of election events, re-tweets of other election tweets and links to election-related resources such as candidate guides.

Facebook

Kids Voting Durham's Facebook page has 467 followers. KVD posts regularly on Facebook including content like links to voting guides, pictures and reminders pertaining to voting.

Pinterest

Kids Voting Durham's Pinterest profile includes a description of the organization and a link to its website in the bio. It comprises 28 boards entitled: 2016 Elections, Voting, Get out the Vote, July 4th!, Civic News and Research, Quotes, Civic Lessons & Curriculum, Kids Voting Information, Women's History Month, Controversial Issues, Constitution and Bill of Rights, Things We Like, Youth suffrage/voting age, Durham, Presidents, Local government, Media Literacy, Habits of the Mind, Japanese Internment WWII, MLK Day, Women's Suffrage, Immigration, Black History Month, Civil Rights, Nelson Mandela, North Carolina, Quizzes and Games, Youth Voice. The profile has 440 monthly viewers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

SWOT Analysis

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Momentum around voting in current political climate ● Have material in Spanish, so can reach out to those communities ● Those who are currently involved are dedicated to the cause 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Struggle with keeping things updated such as the website because lack of employees ● Social media presence, followed to follower ratio ● Small staff, and lack of paid staff ● Struggle with getting materials to teachers in time for them to implement in their classrooms
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tap into the large universities that are near by for an unpaid internship program ● Leverage current political climate and the need to vote ● Expand the board ● Have a intern dedicated to social media 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of sufficient resources, staff and money ● Many tasks to complete in short span of time

Strengths

Kids Voting Durham has several strengths. KVD rallies around how important voting is in the current political climate which creates momentum within the organization and in their educational outreach. KVD also has educational materials in Spanish which helps them reach often underserved areas of the population. Along with the Latino population, KVD also strives to reach a range of students with diverse backgrounds. Those who are currently involved in KVD,

are heavily invested in the cause and dedicated to educating young people on the importance of voting.

Weaknesses

KVD has several key weaknesses, that if addressed could be beneficial to the organization and their mission. KVD's website has many problems. Many links on the website lead to nothing, such as the "contact us" tab and the "events" tab. The last blog post is from Oct., 2019 and several other things on the website are outdated.

They do not have a significant social media presence, but when trying to reach young people this is vital. For example, on Twitter, they have a bad follower to following ratio. They are followed by 376 people while KVD is only followed by 298. Since KVD has such a small staff, not updating social media as often as it should be is an important weakness.

Opportunities

KVD can leverage the current political climate in developing curriculum and social media content that emphasizes how important voting is. The organization can also leverage the amount of students in the two large universities that are nearby. They could create an unpaid internship program, since lack of resources is one of KVD's weaknesses. This intern or interns could be solely focused on social media and/or the website. In a phone conversation with Karolyn Krueger, she expressed that no one really focuses on the website. By having an intern focus on social media and the website, the two employees of KVD could focus all their attention on curriculum and programs within the schools.

Threats

The main threat that is keeping KVD from being able to complete their goals is their lack of resources, both monetary and personnel. KVD lacks sufficient resources to add specialized personnel to the team, so the two current staff members are forced to spread themselves thin and perform all tasks within the organization. KVD has so many tasks to complete in such a short amount of time that some things are not completed to the level that they could be if they had additional staff.

Recommendations

For this year, we recommend that KVD focuses on updating their website as well as being more present on social media. We plan to work on their website as part of our assignments within the Apples Service Learning. Within the website, we plan to work on a template for KVD blog posts, so that when one is written, it only has to be placed into the template. This would make it easier to post on the blog more often. We are also going to write several blog posts. Carolyn expressed to us that the goal of the blog posts were to keep the website updated without constantly having to generate new content for the website.

We also recommend that KVD creates an internship program, either paid or unpaid for class credit, for college students in the area that can work on their social media campaigns. A great way to be able to reach a younger generation is through social media and KVD is missing out on it right now because they do not have the staff or resources to dedicate towards it.

Appendix

Notes from Interview

- Expectations
 - 3-5 service hours per week for 10 weeks
 - Focus on the needs of the website
 - Links not working
 - Wants to be a tool for voters, but also in the classroom
 - Letter to young people, learning about the offices, primaries
 - Create a blog calendar, pieces about voting, etc.
 - Template for the blog
- Things we notice
 - Takes a long time to respond
 - Doesn't know a lot of things that are going on with the website
 - Small staffed, no one focuses on the website, why students are important
 - Blog posts: was going to be used to keep the website up to date instead of having to update website all the time
- If they want to focus on the classroom they should have more specific things for it
- Newsletters for educators
- Strengths
 - Fantastic mission, to really help young people understand their power
 - Something not many other people are doing
 - Wait until they are 18, and that is sometimes too late
 - Work with good students
 - Have these students write blog posts
 - Elected officials and candidates listen to youth opinion
- Challenges
 - Don't have a lot of staff, especially for all the variety of things that need to be done
- Opportunities
 - Incredible need for what they do
 - A lot they can do in curriculum development
 - 2020 is a big big opportunity
 - Help youth and parents in local election, but national elections are ways to get people more involved
- Next steps
 - Sending us all the documents
 - Login for wordpress

- projects , newsletters and blogs, pipeline articles, start with blogs

Data Collection

Communication vehicles

- Website
- Blog posts
- Youth Candidate Guide
- Quick Candidate Guide
- Durham City Election Resources
- Kids Voting Family Guide
- MomsRising Family Voting Kit
- KVD School or Group Sign-up (Google Forms)
- File a School Voting Plan (Google Forms)
- 2019/20 Information for Educators
- Using KVD in the Classroom
- Educator Resources
- Sample Ballot
- Events Page
- Donate Page
- Pinterest
 - Profile
 - Link to website, summary
 - 9 Followers
 - 18 Following
 - 395 monthly viewers
 - Boards
 - 2016 Elections
 - Voting
 - Get out the Vote
 - July 4th!
 - Civic News and Research
 - Quotes
 - Civic Lessons & Curriculum
 - Kids Voting Information
 - Women's History Month
 - Controversial Issues
 - Constitution and Bill of Rights
 - Things We Like
 - Youth suffrage/voting age
 - Durham
 - Presidents
 - Local government
 - Media Literacy
 - Habits of the Mind
 - Japanese Internment WWII

- MLK Day
- Women's Suffrage
- Immigration
- Black History Month
- Civil Rights
- Nelson Mandela
- North Carolina
- Quizzes and Games
- Youth Voice
- Facebook
- Twitter
 - o Profile
 - Link to website
 - Brief summary
 - 372 following
 - 295 followers
- Instagram
- Google Drive
 - (https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14HgRl_K6iLVzYoJU_r_uYebd-2rwxSPdJ)
 - o Resources for educators
- YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP4fVhhZX6IBuLLR5jP0Lzg>)

Mentions

- Meetup (<https://www.meetup.com/Triangle-Code-for-America/events/jrhtlpyzkbmb/>)
 - o Media Advisory
 - o Code for Durham: Kids Voting Durham
- City of Durham Website (https://www.pbdurham.org/kids_voting_durham_2)
 - o Rsvp for an event (May 2019)
- Smore (<https://www.smores.com/ug75x-election-2019>)
 - o Newsletter "Election 2019: Special Edition", Kelly Stevens (K-12 Social Studies Content Specialist with Durham County Public Schools)
- Meme (<https://makeameme.org/meme/kids-voting-durham>)
- WRAL, Go Ask Mom
 - (<https://www.wral.com/momsrising-celebrate-voting-as-a-family-saturday-at-durham-event/16167616/>)
 - o Story about an event
- ActivateGood.org (<https://activategood.org/opportunity/4197>)
 - o Opportunity announcement
- The Regulator Bookshop Website
 - (<https://www.regulatorbookshop.com/event/kids-voting-durham-kids-vote-regulator>)
 - o Media advisory
- Hulafrog website
 - (<https://hulafrog.com/durham-chapel-hill-nc/kids-voting-durham-at-locopops-durham/>)
 - o Media advisory

- Nextdoor – Durham County Government
(<https://nextdoor.com/agency-post/nc/durham-county/durham-county-government/kids-voting-durham-2019-youth-survey-on-durham-106858505/>)
- INDYweek article
(<https://indyweek.com/events/kids-voting-durham-regulator-october-2019/>)