8.03 IFMA Chapter Website Management: Best Practices

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Learning Objectives:

A. Discuss best practices for pulling together a volunteer team to run chapter communications.
B. Learn how to use social media to promote your chapter and share essential FM related information.
C. Discuss best practices for designing your website home page and subpages.
D. Discuss best practices for capturing and sharing IFMA.org information on your chapter website.

A. Pulling Together the Team

Find the right members. In order to create a high performing communications committee, it is vital to find committed, active members that understand the set expectation of their participation. In some cases, the right members find the right committee for their interest, skill set, and committable time. If that doesn't happen, referrals are best. Look within the membership of your chapter to your colleagues and friends that you know have the right skills and recruit them. Recruiting the right team members is the best way to find the qualities your committee needs.

Recruiting Tips and Selling Points. The benefits of being an active member on a committee are probably the best form of recruiting and sustaining an active team. There is no better way to get the return on the investment or to maximize your membership than to participate on a committee. Meeting and building relationships with other members in your chapter does not usually happen as quickly as it does when working towards achieving committee goals together. The camaraderie that happens when teams achieve goals and tasks is an invaluable relationship builder. Further, when working on committees, it often happens that you accrue new skills from the training and round-tabling that occurs in the committee meetings. The great thing about the communications committee is that you are the hub of everything that happens in the chapter. This is a great group to participate in and meet the other chapter members.

Retaining great members is key. It is important to set the expectation of what the committee and individual participation will be. Be honest about the time commitments: how long and how often the meetings will be, the average time outside of the committee meeting the member will be working, etc. Identifying people’s strengths and applying them to the right tasks will keep your committee moving towards success. Staying focused and structured with agenda items, brainstorm sessions, and follow up tasks shows respect for the member’s time as well as keeping the committee calibrated to achieve the set goals. Further, when creating goals, remember that this is a volunteer based commitment. At any time, the committee can lose participants for any number of reasons. Be prepared to move forward with your agenda with a smaller team. Utilizing leadership techniques and delegating is critical in keeping members on task and in keeping the committee moving in the right direction.
The above parameters of choosing and keeping the right members are a true recipe for success.

**B. Social Media**

Social Media can help build your chapter’s following, reputation, and trust with these simple practices:

**Blog** - Blogs are a great way to post upcoming events, meeting recaps, awards, the latest chapter’s news or anything IFMA. Don’t think that every blog post needs to be a homegrown story written by one of your chapter members. The San Diego Chapter is using our blog as a news outlet. The ‘In The News’ section of our home page is a direct feed from our blog page and shows the 5 latest blog posts. The stories are updated almost daily, keeping the home page content fresh. We also use the IFMA International website as a source of information. What better way for a chapter to be connected to International then to share the stories that they are posting. We feel that it is important for our membership to have the latest facility management information at their fingertips without them having to search the web for it.

**eBlasts and Newsletters** - eBlasts are a great way to send out information for upcoming events, educational opportunities, community service projects, surveys, and chapter news. Constant Contact is one of many tools to use for sending eBlasts. Members are able to get more information about or register for events through these eBlasts.

**Twitter** - Members and users come to Twitter to get and share the latest about the chapter, so give it to them!
1. **Share.** Share photos and behind the scenes info about your chapter. Recap events or provide real time commentary during events. Even better, give a glimpse of developing programs and events.
2. **Listen.** Regularly monitor the comments about your chapter, committees, and benefits.
3. **Ask.** Ask questions of your followers to glean valuable insights and show that you are listening.
4. **Respond.** Respond to compliments and feedback in real time.
5. **Reward.** Tweet updates about chapter programs/education opportunities, discounts and time-sensitive items.
6. **Demonstrate wider leadership and know-how.** Reference articles and links about the bigger IFMA picture as it relates to your chapter.
7. **Champion your stakeholders.** Retweet and reply publicly to great tweets posted by your followers and members.
8. **Establish the right voice.** Twitter users tend to prefer a direct, genuine, and of course, a likable tone from your chapter, but think about your voice as you Tweet. How do you want your chapter to appear to the Twitter community?

**LinkedIn Groups** - Make sure your Group members do the following:
1. **Create** valuable content by providing a fix or solution (answers to burning questions members/prospects ask all the time).
2. **Monitor** for people demonstrating need for it (in LinkedIn Groups)
3. **Reveal answers** in ways that create cravings for more of what we have to share (provoke interaction that creates discussion outside of LinkedIn!)
4. When posting insightful articles, videos, etc., link back to the chapter website page that applies (membership, sponsorship, or event).
Facebook - Be human, be genuine, reply to fans, foster conversation, don’t be gimmicky, and don’t use the same content for every social channel.

1. Embrace Images: Show fans what happens “behind the scenes” – use Facebook’s Timeline to show the human side of your chapter.
2. Make the most of your Cover Photo – It’s the first visual your fans and visitors experience. Most will pay far more attention to your cover photo than any content on the wall.
3. Facebook does a lot of analytics for you. Understand what they mean and how to use them. (PTAT, Friends of Fans, Reach, Virality).
4. “Highlight” or “Pin” your best posts by selecting the star icon on the top right corner of any post on your Facebook Timeline. This will display your update across the width of the page, giving more weight to key news. “Pin to Top” option on your Timeline extends the life of the content. This cuts through the noise and ensures your fans will see your best posts.
5. Get your Apps in a row. Right below your Timeline you will find Apps. They can include photos, videos, notes, events and more. For Example: You can have an App that shows Sponsorship Levels without having to go to your website.
6. Drop in Milestones. Facebook is like a digital scrapbook and it tells a story. Populate memorable moments, big chapter advances, new membership benefits and always include a photo.
7. Embrace your Fans. Show off your Fans. Post their pictures on your chapter’s Timeline to put your fans front and center. This is great for photos of Award ceremonies showing off our fan’s latest accomplishments.

Launchpad - Websites and smartphone applications like HooteSuite are ideal to use for linking all of your social media outlets. From one application you are able to post a link from your website or blog and launch it out to all of your social media outlets. The key is to be efficient with your volunteer’s time. The easier it is to perform tasks, the more successful you will be.

C. Website Design

The key to a successful chapter website is to keep it clean and simple. Don’t clutter up the home page with too much text. You want to give the visitors specific areas that their eyes will focus on when they land on your site. Who you are, your calendar, latest news, and a distinctive navigation bar are where you want visitor’s eyes to focus. Your pages should be short and not require much scrolling. If they have to scroll more than another half page length you probably already lost them.

The design of the website should support its purpose. In the case of IFMA San Diego this is to communicate with our members, reach prospective members and encourage our chapter community through the sharing of knowledge, resources and ideas. The IFMA San Diego chapter website allows members and prospective members to click on links to information such as the calendar of events, educational opportunities, current and past newsletters and our social media updates. Additionally, chapter members are given access to job postings and opportunities, member directories as well as presentations from our monthly membership meetings.
Make navigating the website as easy as possible! Our Home Page contains a navigation bar with links to carefully selected subpages that contain additional information.

- ABOUT US (Information on IFMA San Diego, Executive Board, Committee Chairs, Members of the Year)
- MEMBERSHIP (Join IFMA San Diego, IFMA International)
- GET INVOLVED (Community Services, Committees, FM Credentials, Governmental Affairs, Sponsorship)
- LINKS (Links to several Facility related websites such as IFMA, BOMA, Facility Zone, OSHA, USGBC)
- EVENTS (Education, Facility Roundtables, Event Calendar, Event Recaps, FMP Courses)
- NEWSLETTER (contains current and past IFMA SD E-news Letters)
- GALLERY (Pictures of past events)
- JOB BANK (List of current Facility jobs - only available to members)
- BLOG
- MEMBERS ONLY (Chapter membership directory and search capability – only available to members)
- CONTACT (a link to join our mailing list – good for capturing prospective members and a link for readers to provide feedback on the Chapter, our events, or the website)

Keep the website “Sushi Grade” – fresh and local! Our website is updated by committee on an almost daily basis in order to keep chapter members engaged and promote the website as the hub of chapter communication. We recommend embracing social media and host links on our home page to our social medial sites.

Design it so it is easy to manage. Do not create too many subpages that require constant updating. Content that is always changing should be handled elsewhere. Instead of updating your own photo gallery, use Flickr. It is easy to use and multiple committee members can upload and edit photos. The use of a Wordpress blog for current events and stories is simple to manage and has its own archives. There is no need to constantly add and delete your own website pages with the use of Wordpress.

D. Sharing IFMA.org Information

Your website should be the key communications tool for your members and perspective members so it’s vital to keep the information up to date and current at all times. The IFMA International website is a great source of Facility Management related information. IFMA chapters should use the information available on the International website to share with their own members. By doing so, it saves members time by not having to visit multiple sites to find relevant information.

Creating a ‘Links’ page on your chapter website is a great way to give your members a shortcut to valuable FM information online. On the page include links to important pages on the International and IFMA Foundation websites. Those pages include IFMA’s Benchmarking Exchange, IFMA Bookstore, IFMA JobNet, Facility Management Knowledge Base, Sustainability How-To’s, etc. Also add links to other relevant websites like USGBC, Energy Star, FEMA, etc.