

To: Michelle Pierson, Gitchi-Gami Trail Association
From: Nicole Brodzik
Date: 04-28-2016
Subject: Social Media Strategy

In this memo I'll be discussing my research and findings on Gitchi-Gami Trail Association's online presence and be recommending some options to help improve their online and social media performance.

The current audience base for Gitchi-Gami on Facebook is 521 followers and is comprised of mostly women (62%) in the 35-44 year age range. According to the Outdoor Foundation in 2014, more than half of all outdoor recreation enthusiasts in the U.S. were men. I believe this discrepancy comes more from the small number of posts rather than the style of posts. A way to reach a different demographics is to share posts from other pages. This suggests to those other organizations that you are friendly and they will be more open to sharing your content, thus creating a farther reach and new people.

The other big way to reach a wider audience is to expand on which platforms the trail association is currently using. My recommendation is to start up an Instagram account and a Twitter account, if time allows. Instagram is mostly used by a younger demographic, and with the thousands of college students in Duluth, along with the hundreds of thousands of young adults in the Twin Cities area who come to the Northland to vacation in the summers, this would be a great way to connect with that market. As for Twitter, with the steady decline in users and stock plummeting, I'm not sure it's worth your time other than the fact that in my preliminary research, I found that people are there talking about the Gitchi-Gami. With an existing audience waiting to be connected with, I think spending just a few minutes each day checking in and retweeting content could be worthwhile, at least in the short term..

In the next month I'd like to see the trail association utilize rule of thirds on Facebook. This means, they add more personality posts and share posts of other trails or outdoor organizations in the Northland. This helps create that connection with followers and makes them a credible source for all things outdoors. Creating that community feel will help bring people to your page, and more importantly, keep them there. In three months, I'd like to see the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association get involved in Instagram. The ability to share photos from such a scenic trail is key. People love taking pictures, especially of the outdoors, and it's a great way to get curate photos as well. The trail association's website has a section for people to submit photos, but by using Instagram you can simply comment on a photo from the trail and ask the user permission to add it to your site. It creates less work for the user and allows you to connect with people who aren't taking the time to visit the website.

The six month goal I have for Gitchi-Gami Trail Association has two steps. First, I'd like to see them set up a blog on the website where they can explain any major initiatives or where money people are donating is going and why. This will allow them to publish shorter posts on social media that are easier to consume on mobile devices. Most people spend just a few seconds looking at each post on their social media feed, and by throwing a lot of information at them in one post, it can get murky and scare people away. What I propose is that the association's website add a blog and put the longer, more detailed information there. Then, you can write the shorter posts that are exciting and easy to read and link to your blog for the people looking for more information. The second thing I'd like to see is posts on all social media platforms happening at least every day. Each post on social media only reaches about 10% of that page's audience. This also means, you can reuse posts by changing the associated photo and rewording some of the language to save time and make sure that message is reaching the greatest number of people.

Below is a mock up editorial calendar that the trail association could use for weekly posts. I would also recommend setting up month themes so that you can easily plan the content. One thing we had talked about during our consultation was that the annual bike race is in August, so month you could tailor content to that theme as well within this calendar.

The other big thing to think about when creating individual posts is how people can connect with the content. A way to make this happen is to make the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association into personality. After talking with Michelle Pierson about what characteristics the association would like people to think of when they talk about it, we came up with this list: accessible, active, clean, earnest and exciting. My recommendation here is to make sure every time you post, at least two of these characteristics come through. By doing this, posts will be sure to have a consistent voice that people can connect with and know what they'll be getting when they see a Gitch-Gami Trail Association social media post.

| | Platform | Theme | Type of Post | Hashtags |
|-----------------|-----------|---|-------------------------|---|
| Tuesday | Facebook | Trail Tales from people using the trail system | Personality/Promotional | #GitchiGami #ExploreTheShore #TrailTales |
| | Instagram | Photos/short videos of people on the trail | Personality/Promotional | #GitchiGami #ExploreTheShore #TrailTales |
| Thursday | Facebook | Throwback post showing progress of trail. (Show success stories, how the money has helped, etc.) | Promotional | #GitchiGami #ExploreTheShore #ThrowbackThursday |
| Friday | Facebook | Share posts from others about being outdoors/exercising in nature | Share | #GitchiGami #ExploreTheShore #FitnessFriday |
| Saturday | Facebook | Support another trail system or Northland outdoor rec group. Share their posts, create relationships where they will share your content | Share/Personality | #ExploreTheShore #NorthlandOutdoors |
| | Instagram | Support another trail system or Northland outdoor rec group. Share their posts, create relationships where they will share your content | Share | #ExploreTheShore #NorthlandOutdoors |
| Sunday | Facebook | Sharing photos from trail users, can use contest to get people to contribute | Share/ Personality | #GitchiGami #ExploreTheShore |

If you have any question, please feel free to contact me at brodz006@d.umn.edu.