

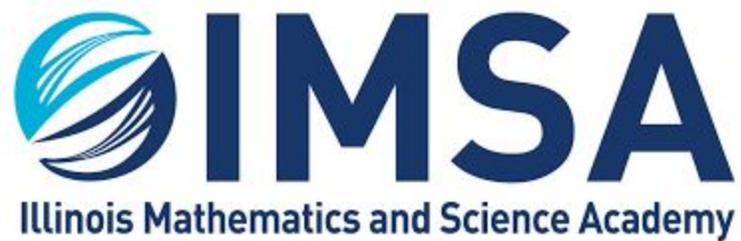
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Building the Coursestars Brand

Business Mentor: Jill Ko, Education Consultant

Organization: Coursestars

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Executive Summary

The main purpose of this project was to build the brand of Course Stars, a small tutoring business based in Illinois. This brand building was done through Facebook and Instagram, and the project lasted from November 2019 to March 2020. In that time, the analytics from Facebook and Instagram were tracked and analyzed. While there was a slight increase in the amount of interactions from the sites combined, there's still few followers on Instagram. Marketing on social media is generally helpful, but in this project it did not make a large difference.

Business Context

Industry

The tutoring service industry is very diverse. While it is saturated, all the companies have different aspects that make consumers choose it over their competitors. Different tutoring companies are suited to different age groups and aptitudes. Every company is dependent on the quality of their tutors. Depending on the age group the tutors serve, the company presents themselves differently to appeal to their audience.

In the Princeton Review's case, their target demographic ranges from kindergarteners to college graduates. They use many tactics to make themselves unique in the industry. Their proven results are one of the main ways that gain customers. With the power of proven results they are able offer SAT prep courses for \$1,899 and subscription based services for rates starting at \$29 dollars an hour ("Get better grades," n.d). The more popular companies in the industry use

their history of success to attract customers. Small businesses compete against the big companies by offering their services at a lower rate.

This industry is dependent on reviews and the success of previous customers. Not having many success stories makes it more difficult. In a study it was found, "students but not older adults were strongly influenced by average consumer rating," (Helverson, et. al, 2018). For small businesses, it's important to have positive encounters with most of the customers. Negative review would make their customer ratings low, which makes it difficult to build brand credibility.

Company

Coursestars is a small business that currently employs twenty college students as tutors. They offer many unique opportunities that would draw in people seeking tutoring and people looking for employment. Coursestars offer many services for high school and college students, including one-on-one and group tutoring. All of the tutors are current college students who offer tutoring in the courses they aced at their schools. The frequency, type and subject of tutoring is dependent on the tutor. Unlike the Princeton Review, Coursestars doesn't offer 24/7 support or subscription based tutoring services.

A main advantage of Coursestars is the age group of the tutors. The tutors have recently taken the standardized test, they help students. They recently completed the coursework, they are tutoring students in. Other companies may employ people who are out of touch with how it feels to be the students. That experience is something that doesn't happen to Coursestars customers.

Department

Market research and social media management requires literacy in how to navigate social media platforms and the ability to network. The purpose of market research is to gather more information on the company's consumers. Qualtrics offers many different types of survey and makes a distinction between fundamental and applied research. The most easily understood way to distinguish them is that applied research asks questions about something specific, but fundamental research seeks information on general topics (Malhotra and Peterson, 2009). Social media management feeds directly into market research since it offers helpful analytics.

Project Description

Every Wednesday new posts were made on the Instagram and Facebook pages. When communication needed to happen with a school or some other person, emails were sent. Posting on social media worked as free advertising to those who saw. Since Coursestars tutors are college students tutoring in college classes, it would be expected that they tell their classmates about the tutoring services they offer. That communication happens less than expected. To reach a larger audience and let people get to know tutors, posts with tutor names and subjects are created. To gain more tutors, posters with attractive taglines were made to pique many people's interest.

The designs of the posts were made with the audience and platforms in mind. For both platforms, bright color and the name of the company was used to catch people's attention. The Instagram posts contained less words to be more eye-catching. On the Facebook page a consistent style was used consumers could visually associate Coursestars with. The designs for both the Instagram and Facebook page were created using Canva.

Another portion of the project was individually contacting various schools. This was done to reach more high school students. The person in charge of college counseling at each institution was emailed. This venture proved to be unsuccessful because few of the schools replied to the email. The lack of success was the push to solely work on managing social media for this business project.

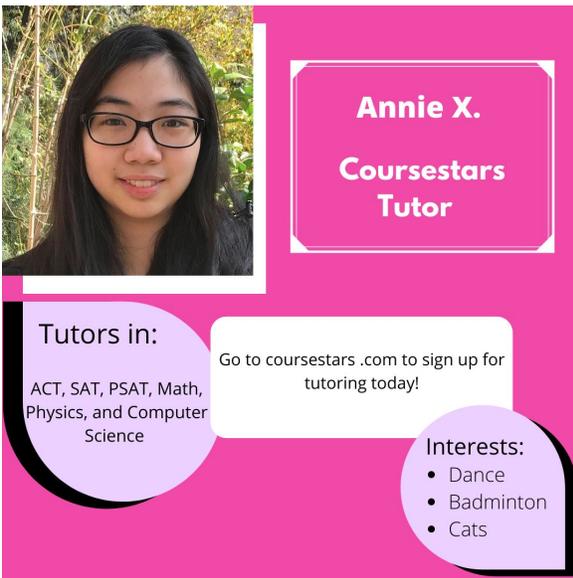


Fig.1 A design made for Facebook including a tutor's name and the subjects they offer.



Fig 2. A design for Instagram made to attract more tutors.

School	Website	Student Enrollment	Career Center Website
Lane Tech College Prep High School	lanetech.org	4,194	https://sites.google.com/site/lanetech/
Warren Township High School	d121.org	4,158	
New Trier Township High School	newtrier.k12.il.us	4,057	
Adlai E. Stevenson High School	d125.org	4,028	
Lyons Township High School	lths.net	3,981	
East High School	https://easthigh.d131.org/	3,854	
West Aurora High School	https://westhigh.sd123.org/	3,724	
Neuqua Valley High School	nvhs.ipisd.org	3,698	
Bolingbrook High School	vwsd.org/bhs	3,473	https://www.vwsd.org/Page/773
J. Sterling Morton East High School	https://www.morton201.org/Page/1	3,459	
Dak Park & River Forest High School	oprffhs.org	3,296	
Evanston Township High School	eths.k12.il.us	3,208	
Joliet West High School	https://www.lths.org/joliet-west-high-school	3,271	
Taft High School	ops.edu	3,268	
Joliet Central High School	lths.org/joliet-central-high-school	3,120	
Barrington High School	barrington220.org	3,004	
Carl Sandburg High School	d230.org	3,003	
Huntley High School	district158.org/bhs	2,995	
Glenbrook South High School	glenbrook225.org/gbs/home	2,972	
Curie Metropolitan High School	cmc.edu	2,937	
Metea Valley High School	mvhs.ipisd.org	2,852	
Naperville Central High School	naperville203.org/domain/27	2,851	
Hinsdale Central High School	hc.hinsdale86.org	2,767	
Naperville North High School	naperville203.org/nrhs	2,742	
York Community High School	elmhurst205.org	2,734	
South Elgin High School	edline.net/pages/sedu46	2,733	

Fig 3. This is a screenshot of the Excel spreadsheet to account for the school's contact. The columns school, website, student enrollment, career center website, contact person name and email, head counselor name and email, phone number, date emailed, and response were filled out. If a school didn't have one of the categories, it was blacked out.

Research

For this project the question, “how can social media be used to reach more potential customers and tutors?” was asked. This inspiration behind this question stemmed from the lack

of social media presence Coursestars had in November. The company's Facebook and Instagram had infrequent posts and few followers.

Various business magazines and websites were used as references to form the question and to explore the question. Using social media to market has gained popularity in recent years. Depending on what platform used, businesses can reach different demographics. Facebook and Instagram are used at different rates by teenagers and middle aged adults. That information can be applied to the way Coursestars markets itself, because the demographics enjoy different things.

Knowing the groups were different was important, and various resources gave insight on how to use that information to Coursestars' advantage. One source performed a study on Instagram and posts that used the hashtag gamification. Through their analysis they found most posts that used gamification had other overlapping hashtags. Those hashtags usually were related to education or business(Pilar, et. al, 2019). With that knowledge, more than one hashtag was used when posting on the official Coursestars Instagram page. People who liked similar posts, with similar hashtags, had a higher chance of seeing a Coursestars post when hashtags were used in a productive manner.

Before one can caption a photo, one must have a photo first. The approach taken by the Coursestars' social media pages was unique to how Coursestars wants to be represented. One study helped choose the best type of images to post. Researchers found consumers preferred Instagrams where the photos were taken organic rather than more obvious studio photography (Colliander and Marder, 2018). While the designs were well-put together, they had a playful energy. This allowed them to function like the snapshot pictures rather than the harsh studio

photos. Gaining knowledge of the intricacies of social media took two weeks before the design process could begin.

Most complications were outside of anyone's control. There wasn't much traction on the Facebook or Instagram pages. The best result from this project is there are more possible results when someone looks up Coursestars than before the project started.

Key Learnings

Through this internship, I became more well versed in various tools like Excel and Canva. I also learned how to make a marketing plan. Marketing plans are something to reference for guidance, making them useful when trying the market. Marketing can be unpredictable, but things can be done to ensure a business a higher chance of success.

In the future, it would be beneficial to see the previous suggestion I made on the website implemented. Including tutors in the market research process would help make the business more successful in the future.

References

Colliander, Jonas, and Ben Marder. “‘Snap Happy’ Brands: Increasing Publicity Effectiveness through a Snapshot Aesthetic When Marketing a Brand on Instagram.” *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 78, 2018, pp. 34–43., doi:10.1016/j.chb.2017.09.015.

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<https://www.princetonreview.com/academic-tutoring/pricing?ceid=nav-1>

Helversen, B. von, Abramczuk, K., Kopeć, W., & Nielek, R. (2018, June 18). Influence of consumer reviews on online purchasing decisions in older and younger adults. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167923618300861>

Malhotra, N. K., & Peterson, M. (2009). *Basic marketing research & qualtrics*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Pilar, L., Moulis, P., Pitrová, J., Bouda, P., Gresham, G., Balcarová, T. and Rojík, S. (2019) ‘Education and Business as a key topics at the Instagram posts in the area of Gamification’, *Journal on Efficiency*

Appendices

My Attendance

DATE	CHECK IN	CHECK OUT	BREAK TIME	TOTAL HOURS	
04/01/2020	9:04 AM	4:16 PM		7 Hours 11 Minutes	▶ Details
03/25/2020	9:00 AM	4:10 PM		7 Hours 9 Minutes	▶ Details
03/11/2020	9:04 AM	4:08 PM		7 Hours 4 Minutes	▶ Details
03/04/2020	9:02 AM				▶ Details
02/28/2020	9:27 AM	4:20 PM		6 Hours 52 Minutes	▶ Details
02/19/2020	9:02 AM	4:09 PM		7 Hours 7 Minutes	▶ Details
02/12/2020	9:04 AM	4:05 PM		7 Hours 0 Minutes	▶ Details
02/05/2020	9:05 AM				▶ Details
01/15/2020	9:00 AM				▶ Details
12/11/2019	9:05 AM	4:08 PM		7 Hours 3 Minutes	▶ Details
12/04/2019	9:00 AM	4:05 PM		7 Hours 4 Minutes	▶ Details
11/20/2019	9:06 AM	4:18 PM		7 Hours 12 Minutes	▶ Details
11/13/2019	9:00 AM	10:59 AM		1 Hours 59 Minutes	▶ Details
11/06/2019	9:09 AM	4:00 PM		6 Hours 50 Minutes	▶ Details
10/30/2019	9:20 AM	4:00 PM		6 Hours 40 Minutes	▶ Details

Fig 4. This is my attendance sheet from the website Imbaze.