Education First Credit Union's 2015 Annual Meeting:

A Master's Capstone Project

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Abstract

Every year, credit unions are required to hold a meeting so their members can hear about the health of the company. While most credit unions limit themselves to light refreshments in their lobby, Education First Credit Union (E1CU henceforth) seeks to create a party-like atmosphere. E1CU serves a full dinner, has games, prizes, and giveaways.

Five months prior to the meeting, E1CU's social media usage was close to none. To test principles of Relationship Management theory, it was necessary to increase the amount of daily posts via Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest, and add a blog to E1CU's website.

Over the weeks leading up to the meeting, social media was updated daily and new blogs were being published weekly. From social media usage, E1CU saw a 13% increase in attendance from the year prior (see Appendix A).

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my professors and committee members: Jee-Young Chung, Ellen Treanor, and Art Challis. Thank you for advising me, helping me, and pushing me throughout this entire process. Thanks also to Holly, Tom, Clint, and Charlotte Campbell for giving suggestions and offering support. Finally, thank you Zac Shackleford for keeping me grounded and being my de-stressor.

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Introduction

The current capstone project is to develop and execute E1CU's strategic marketing plan for the 2015 Annual Meeting using the principles of relationship management theory. This is both theoretical and practical approach to plan the marketing and social media use, then examine its success.

E1CU has been serving the teachers of Ogden City School District since 1932. Over the years, membership eligibility expanded to include teachers, employees, students, and alumni of Ogden City Schools. Residents of Weber County also fit membership requirements. Although membership eligibility requirements have become more lenient, teachers, administrators, and other faculty members still make up the largest E1CU member demographic. Just as membership requirements have expanded, so too has the Annual Meeting experience. It started out as punch and cookies in the main branch lobby and has evolved to a party complete with dinner, dessert, decorations, prizes, and entertainment held in one of the District's high schools.

"As of January 2014, 74% of online adults use social networking sites" (Pew Research Center, 2014). This is a part of a growing trend of social media usage across all age brackets. As it becomes more prevalent, companies must try to utilize this tool as a part of their marketing strategy. Public relations scholars argue that an organization must cultivate a positive relationship with its public in order to have a large turnout at an event (Scott, 2013). An easy way to begin such a relationship is to create and maintain a relatable, transparent, and truthful persona in the social media sphere (Shaffer, 2013). Above all else, companies seeking to incorporate social media into their strategic marketing plan should strive to create such an online presence.

This capstone project uses the theoretical framework of relationship management theory to test these findings when applied to E1CU's Annual Meeting attendance. The focus of this project is the use of various social media platforms in preparation of the meeting. How does social media usage influence the public's opinion of a company? Do social media have an effect on event attendance?

E1CU chose to employ four different social media platforms in their efforts to boost public opinion and increase Annual Meeting attendance: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and a blog. Each of these platforms specializes in different realms within the social media sphere. Facebook uses both visual and written elements; it is the platform where E1CU has the most social media activity. Twitter relies mostly on short, to the point, written messages; however, sometimes visuals are employed. Pinterest is primarily visual driven; posts are pictures or videos with a short description of the linked content. Blogs are mainly written content about one topic per post; however, the most successful blogs include visuals such as infographics, charts, pictures, and video clips.

In the weeks and months leading up to the Annual Meeting, E1CU increased their social media usage to encourage a positive opinion of the company. Social media was also used to advertise the upcoming event.

Project Objectives

- Increase audience attendance from 180 people in 2014 to 240 people in 2015

- Gain at least 30 new likes on Facebook between October 2014 and February 2015

- Gain at least 10 new Twitter followers between October 2014 and February 2015

- Gain at least 15 new Pinterest pinners between October 2014 and February 2015

- Create a blog for E1CU by the end of 2014

- Update Facebook and Twitter with either pictures, statuses, or third-party content at least five times per week from October 2014 to February 2015

- Pin at least 30 things on Pinterest per week from October 2014 to February 2015

- Add a blog entry every Wednesday from October 2014 to February 2015

Literature Review

Relationship Management Theory

Relationship management theory predicts how a company will begin to cultivate a relationship with its key audiences. Then as the relationship changes and adjusts, the theory describes how the relationship will finally end. Relationships can end on a positive note as a job completed, or on a negative or bitter note. Creating and maintaining a positive relationship is important because it is the audience that lets the company thrive.

In order for the public to commit to a relationship with a company, that company must be perceived as trustworthy; this feeling of trust has a direct impact on the relationship (Ki & Hon, 2007). The audience should be able to trust a company. Higher levels of trust lead to a more feelings of satisfaction. When an audience is satisfied in a relationship with a company, they are more willing to invest their time, emotions, and energy into that company.

This level of trust and affection will prove useful if the company should encounter a crisis. In a time of crisis, those companies that had already achieved a perception of trustworthiness were able to retain their audience's support while trying to recover (Park & Reber, 2011). When in crisis, a company's level of transparency and truthfulness should not decrease. Giving timely updates about the company's critical situation will set an audience at ease during a crisis.

Waters (2009) discusses specific ways an organization can build trust with its audience. Not violating the audience's trust is important, but "nurturing the relationship over time is an even stronger method of developing trust" (Waters, 2009, p. 118). Also recommended is staying in touch in non-solicitous ways such as sending birthday cards, get well notes, and congratulatory messages.

Nurturing these relationships is becoming increasingly easy with the use of social media. Lee and Park (2013) found that using strategic social media for interaction may increase positive perceptions of the organization-public relationship and the organization's reputation. These findings suggest that if an organization were to reply to a consumer's online questions and comments, the customer would be more likely to perceive a positive and well managed relationship with that company.

Social Media Marketing

The invention and growing popularity of the internet and social media have blurred the line between public and private knowledge. In 2005, 9% of people ages 18 to 29 were using the internet; in 2013, that percentage skyrocketed to 90% (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Fuchs (2014) stated that people consider intimacy, family and the economy as a private knowledge, while topics like state, civil society, and the media are considered public knowledge. With this mentality, organizations must strive to remain truthful when using their social media profiles. The audience feels entitled to the company's knowledge and disclosing that knowledge is the best way to earn the audience's trust.

What used to work for marketing and public relations has changed with the increasing prevalence of social media. In the past, big media companies, such as the *Wall Street Journal*, used to be the ultimate gatekeepers of information, but now anyone can report and investigate news and other information (Scott, 2013). Marketing and public relations rules have changed, social media are replacing the outdated rules with something that works better.

Social media works better than traditional marketing plans when a company is trying to promote themselves and their products. However, companies range in their willingness and successfulness when it comes to social media. The companies that see the biggest return on

investment (ROI) from their social media endeavors are the companies that have accounts with several social media platforms and actively interact with their audience (Vernuccio, 2014).

In social media, a company is expected to use a conversational tone; this tone is reflected in its tweets, posts and blogs (Shaffer, 2014). Companies touting successful social media results have maximized their efforts by being friendly and open. In the social media sphere, the audience expects to have candid conversations with 'real' people. The companies that give a face to their organization see a higher ROI.

Out of the thousands of different social media platforms available, E1CU uses Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and a blog. Pinterest employs visual elements to promote the transfer of ideas; typical posts are usually pictures, infographics, listicals (articles written in list form), and sometimes videos. Twitter is mainly short (140-character) statements, although some pictures and videos are tweeted. Facebook is a hybrid of written and visual content; photographs, links, short statements, long stories, and videos are all valid and important types of posts. Blogs are largely a written media with a comment section for the readers to chime in, but the most successful blogs incorporate pictures, videos and links to other websites.

Facebook

In 2004, Facebook opened up for college students, three years later, the site began encouraging businesses to participate as a part of that company's strategic marketing plan (Vorvoreanu, 2009, p. 1). Now the site is open to anyone with an email address and over 71% of online adults have an account (Pew Research Center, 2014). The site's popularity continues to grow.

It has been discovered that Facebook users feel that small business who are on Facebook are able to cultivate relationships with their audience; on the other hand, large corporations are

perceived to be on Facebook solely to gain sales (Vorvoreanu, 2009, p. 10). This discovery is important because E1CU considers itself a small credit union. If the surveyed Facebook users are reflective of the entire Facebook user population, it can be inferred that E1CU's audience trusts the company to have good intentions of cultivating a positive relationship between them.

There are four types of Facebook users, as defined by Wallace *et al.* (2014): Fanatics, Self-expressives, Utilitarians, and Authentics. Characteristics defining these users include level of brand-loyalty, number of Facebook friends, opinion leadership level, and a level of self-monitoring. For a business, the most valuable Facebook user is the Fanatic because that user is an opinion leader with a high level of brand-loyalty. Authentics are also important to a business because they only follow brands they are truly interested in and thus maintain a high level of brand-loyalty (Wallace *et al.*, 2014, p. 102). These are the type of users E1CU seeks to attract, make, and retain.

Twitter

The Pew Research Center (2014) reports that as of September 2014, 23% of online adults have a Twitter account. The number has increased steadily from year to year.

When a Twitter user has a large amount of followers, that user is perceived to have a higher level of credibility. If a Twitter user has a low number of followers, it is more likely that consumers will spread word of negative product information (Jin & Phua, 2014). A company needs to continue to strive for more and more Twitter followers. Gaining followers will boost credibility, and as long as the company maintains a positive reputation, the business-consumer relationship will continue to flourish.

Some scholars have made cautions for Twitter usage. For example, Schmierbach and Oeldorf-Hirsh (2012) studied how the public would react to the same piece of news coming from

different channels. They measured people's perceptions of trustworthiness when a piece of news came from The New York Times' Twitter feed and their printed newspaper. It was found that even though the information was coming from the same source, the Twitter channel seemed less trustworthy than the printed paper. Whereas the 'filtering' performed by a blog may suggest the information is worthwhile, Twitter apparently lacks this effect. Perhaps this stems from media coverage of Twitter linking it to celebrities and shallow posts from 'average' Americans" (Schmierbach & Oeldorf-Hirsh, 2012, p. 331).

Pinterest

Pinterest is not the most popular site for marketing, but it is still in the top seven social media sites used in strategic communication plans (Stelzner, 2014, p. 23). There are over 70 million pinners as of 2013 (Rayburn, 2014, p. 28). Those numbers continue to grow; as of September 2014, 28% of online users had a Pinterest account (Pew Research Center, 2014). Pinterest is dominated by women.

The value of Pinterest as a marketing tool will increase as more people join the website (Rayburn, 2014). Within a certain industry, pins are spread around and shared. Through this sharing, Pinterest business-pinners find ideas that will benefit the company and their targeted audience.

Mozdzer (2012) discusses ten outside-the-box ways to add Pinterest content. Among the suggested pins are quotes, user-submitted content, and staff bios. A company could also do a profile on an audience member. The Des Moines Register pins links to interesting people from that community (Mozdzer, 2012). A social media platform like Pinterest, that hasn't been used to its full marketing potential has the ultimate creative freedom when it comes to the type of content a company pins.

Pinterest, like many other social-bookmarking sites saves ideas to a specific board; the difference is that Pinterest uses pictures that are more pleasing to look at than an underlined blue link (Holtz, 2012). Although Pinterest is more pleasing to the eye, a company needs to have a clear plan before jumping right in. It is particularly important to define the audience's needs and map out how the company can fulfill those needs before beginning to pin things.

Blogs

The type of content a blog reader is looking for will determine the perceived credibility of a blogger's post (Armstrong & McAdams, 2011). If the reader is looking for instructions, current event stories, or other such informational content, that reader will perceive a higher level of credibility. If the reader is simply reading for pleasure, that person will be more likely to challenge the blog's ideas.

With that in mind, blogs are beginning to gain credibility especially when it comes to political news. "Similar to other social networking media…blogs rely on the formation of a large virtual community that is fascinated by reading blog postings. Blogs allow people with related interests to come together to exchange ideas and information, as well as to learn from other community members" (Yang, 2011, p. 133). When readers with a shared interest come together via a blog community, it is easier for a company to market their blog's readers. A company like E1CU can blog and gain readership, then discover through that community what the readers want. Once their needs are clearly defined, the company can begin to market themselves in such a way as to fulfil those needs.

A relation between bloggers, their content, and their readers was found: blog readers read an equal amount of blogger- generated content and user-generated content (Exploration, 2011). The popularity and audience participation relate to one another cyclically. A popular blog has

more user-generated content, more content means higher levels of popularity, which leads to

even more user-generated content.

Procedures

To meet the objectives, the following strategic marketing plan was executed:

Annual Meeting Planning Time

Time spent on directly planning the meeting increased between October 2014 and February 2015 (as illustrated in Appendix A). Over the course of these few months, time spent on creating artifacts, ordering supplies, organizing equipment, and other such activities for the annual meeting increased from one hour a day to six hours a day.

Daily Social Media Time

The Marketing Director, in charge of all of the social media accounts, planned time each day for social media usage. From 3:30 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. the Marketing Director focused exclusively on Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest. The types of posts included interesting financial news articles, fun craft ideas, notices for holiday closures, and promotional reminders. This time was also used to gather ideas for the weekly blog.

Weekly Blogging Time

Creating original content on a regular basis is useful for search engine optimization. The Marketing Director set aside time on Wednesday afternoons from 2:00 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. to organize ideas and write the blog.

Monthly School Visits

It is important to E1CU to be supportive of all the schools in Ogden City School District, and especially the financial secretaries, with whom E1CU works the closest. One way to show this support and appreciation is to visit the schools monthly bringing the secretaries candy and other goodies.

Results

Written Social Media Outlets: Blogs

Blogs are a major way to boost search engine optimization (SEO). Because of all the content a blog includes, search engines have a lot of keywords to pick up. Regular blog posts keep readers engaged with an organization's activities. Blogging once a week about one of four predetermined categories can make regular blogging seem less daunting of a task (Scott, 2013).

E1CU's blog was not used specifically to convey information to the members about annual meeting. Its purpose was to increase E1CU's SEO. Therefore, the posts contained useful information, tips, tricks, and ideas about money. The blog was divided into four broad topics: spend, save, invest, and donate (see Appendix C). The blog has had over 30 comments since its launch on December 31, 2014. It has also gone under several remodels to streamline readability and user-friendliness.

Visual Social Media Outlet: Pinterest

The use of visual social media sites, like Pinterest, should not be underestimated. Consumers enjoy seeing pictures and ideas that will help them in their daily lives. On Pinterest, it is more acceptable to pin third-party content.

Each blog post was pinned on Pinterest, and over the course of the project, E1CU gained 15 followers. E1CU follows 12 entities to promote the sharing of ideas.

Hybrid Social Media Outlets: Facebook and Twitter

Facebook and Twitter should be updated about once a day (Scott, 2013). Many consumers have one, if not both, of these social media platforms. These are great sites to keep followers updated on an organization's news because posts on these sites are typically shorter than blog posts.

As the annual meeting drew nearer, devotion to creative, daily posts dwindled. There is plenty of room for improvement here, but E1CU did gain 19 new likes on Facebook and over 50 new page views. Twitter activity also grew slightly by 7 new followers.

Meeting

The 2015 Annual Meeting was held at Ben Lomond High School on February 18 at 6:00 p.m. The theme was Fiesta Mexicanna. In keeping with the theme, Mexican decorations were used to create a festive atmosphere (see Appendix B). Bean and chicken burritos with rice was served. The grand prize was a trip to St. George. Two hundred and four people were in attendance.

Elections were to the Board of Directors were held. Three E1CU members ran for two available board member positions. After the ballots had been totaled, the results were announced: the two current board members retained their positions for another three-year term. E1CU is in good health and they continue to grow and offer their members the best service and services.

Evaluation on Impact Objectives

The meeting's attendance saw an 11% increase from 2014 to 2015. There were 180 attendees at the 2014 Annual Meeting; at the 2015 Annual Meeting 205 members came to enjoy the event. The goal was to have 240 people show up for this year's meeting, so 85% of that goal was reached.

Facebook likes were projected to increase by 30. By February 18, the event date, E1CU had gained 19 new likes since the project began in October. That equates to 63% of the desired goal. Twitter reached 70% of the goal; between October and February, E1CU's Twitter account gained seven out of the projected ten new followers. Pinterest reached its goal of 15 new

followers. The E1CU blog also reached its goal of one new blog post every week starting December 31, 2014.

Blog posts and social media content continue to be added regularly since the Annual Meeting. Subjects of recent blog posts include an infographic on how to spring clean a closet, things to spend money on when planning a wedding, and how to invest in traveling. Pictures and short write ups have been posted on Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest about several community events E1CU has attended.

Discussion

The Annual Meeting for E1CU is designed to be an evening the members are informed of the health of the institution. In an effort to gain attendance, attendees are served a meal and entered into a drawing for various prizes. Other activities may include games, photo booth, or a bounce house. Social media is used to convey these messages to the potential attendees.

Research suggests that a company can get by without having a presence on at least one social media site. It is recommended that an organization must have a blog, Facebook and/or Twitter at the very least. Using social media cannot be the only avenue of marketing a company employs.

In social media, it is always a good idea to post lots of interesting information, even if it does not necessarily have to do with the organization. Being transparent and accessible will go a long way in creating a positive relationship with your consumers. Positive relationships can only mean good things for the success of the organization. An organization should strive to keep loyal fans and create even more of them.

Daily planned social media time is a manageable way to constantly update profiles. There are times during the day (around lunch and just before dinner) where social media usage spikes. Websites such as HootSuite that allow a user to schedule posts would be beneficial so that content can be posted at the height of activity.

Suggestions for Future Projects

Future annual meetings could benefit from certain suggestions. Chief among these suggestions would be to delegate tasks at least one month prior to the meeting. Go so far as to create small, one- to two-person committees; one for buying and displaying decorations, a committee for preparing and serving the food (or being the contact point for a caterer), one for

developing games and prizes, another for cross-checking address lists for invitees and check-in, and a final committee to be in charge of anything having to do with elections. The marketing director should be familiar with the needs and status of each committee.

Another suggestion would be to consider the holidays surrounding the meeting. These include Mardi Gras and Chinese New Year (both would make fun, appropriate themes). Another holiday to be aware of is Ash Wednesday. On this day, practicing Catholics cannot eat meat. The 2015 Annual meeting was held on this holiday, and some of the members could not eat the chicken and rice burritos that were served for dinner.

In the future, more things need to be done to involve the members. Getting them included in planning the event would be an interesting addition to future plans. The employees of E1CU could brainstorm a few possible themes, and then put out a poll on Facebook for the members to vote for their favorite idea. Similar opinion polls could be created for activities, types of prizes, and giveaways. As the meeting is planned, and decisions are finalized, it would be nice to create a board on Pinterest to show what types of things the members can expect. This board can be an open one where E1CU's followers can also pin ideas and recipes. Although the blog wasn't designed to directly promote E1CU's marketing endeavors, a brief paragraph at the end of each post updating the readers on the status of the event would make the members feel more involved in the process.

Once the members and their families arrive at the meeting, more things need to be incorporated to encourage a party-like atmosphere. At past meetings, there were games, face painting, photo booths, and other such activities for the attendees to participate in. In an effort to streamline the 2015 meeting, these activities were left out and the attendees were disappointed to discover the omission. So, the importance of these elements is not to be under estimated: include

games for the kids to play, and an exclusive children's prize drawing. The children's prize drawing was a feature of past meetings, and it too was removed from the 2015 Annual Meeting agenda for time and budget concerns. Competition between the members (i.e. chili cook off, cake decorating contest, trivia questions, etc.) is an excellent way to encourage participation.

A few final suggestions include creating a special play list of music for background noise and ambiance; investing in loud audio equipment so that everyone can hear what the presenters are saying; and drawing a floor-plan map of tables, decorations, food serving areas, game areas, doors, windows, outlets, etc.

Conclusion

If a company or organization has a loyal fan base, social media and public relation endeavors will be more successful. Creating content, sharing relevant third-party content, and being engaged and honest with consumers is the best way to increase the numbers of loyal fans who love your brand. It can take much effort to maintain a steady flow of information via all the available channels. It is worth the time because of the loyalty seen from a growing group of people will emerge who want to support their favorite brands in any way they can.

The final number of attendees at the meeting was 204. E1CU increased its social media following, but not as much as originally planned. The blog has had success increasing traffic to the website.

Artifacts including a weekly progress report, pictures, marketing materials and a sample blog post can be found in the Appendices.

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Appendix A: Weekly Progress Report

As of October 1, 2014 there are 20 weeks until February 18, 2015 which is the date of E1CU's Annual Meeting.

WEEK ONE: E1CU's social media usage is close to zero. I hardly ever tweet on Twitter or pin on Pinterest. Facebook is the most used social media platform. I post about once a week on average. I have decided to create a company blog so that the members that visit our website (www.e1cu.org) can find out what has been going on lately. A blog will also increase our SEO which will draw more people to the site and hopefully more to the annual meeting. The blog will be on our website under the Social Media tab on the main page.

WEEK TWO: An intern was brought on at the Ogden High School Branch to train two days per week. Writing of the Prospectus Paper is in full swing. Posted on Facebook four times.

WEEK THREE: Posted on Facebook two times. Employees of the credit union decided to revamp our mission statement. It is currently about three quarters of a page in length, but we want it to be short enough to put on a bumper sticker.

WEEK FOUR: Visited all the schools in Ogden City School District to maintain E1CU's support and appreciation of the schools. Finished the autumn edition of the quarterly newsletter. A company blog was approved by the board members.

WEEK FIVE: Another credit union began following E1CU on Pinterest. Gained two new followers on Facebook. Posted on Facebook two times. Brainstormed ideas for weekly blog topics.

WEEK SIX: The prospectus paper is in its first revision stage. Pinned four things on Pinterest. Tweeted once. Posted on Facebook five times.

WEEK SEVEN: Three Facebook posts and a new follower. Two tweets on Twitter and following two new people. 13 pins on Pinterest, one new follower, following three new people.

WEEK EIGHT: Four Facebook posts. Four Twitter tweets. New Pinterest board created called Achieve Your Dream: Home Edition. Other similar boards to come (Wedding Edition, Vacation Edition, Clean Living Edition, College Edition, etc.)

WEEK NINE: One new Facebook like.

WEEK TEN: Decided on four blog topics: spend, save, donate, and invest. Created a year's worth of scheduled blog posts. Date for Annual Meeting changed from February 6, 2015 to February 11, 2015. Decided on a theme for the meeting: fiesta.

WEEK ELEVEN: Pitched idea for the blog to the board members. Designed blog's logo. Blog to launch December 31, 2014 and have new posts every Wednesday.

WEEK TWELVE: Lots of likes and repins of several Pinterest posts. Ordered new pens for the Credit Union. Ordered flexible cutting boards for Annual Meeting giveaways. Research how to add a blog to E1CU's website.

WEEK THIRTEEN: Annual Meeting dated changed from February 11, 2015 to February 18, 2015. Launched blog The Divided Piggy Bank. First blog post on a 52week money saving challenge. Two Facebook posts and one new follower. Lots of likes and repins of several Pinterest posts.

WEEK FOURTEEN: Designed Annual Meeting Invitation. New blog post on January being national blood donor month. One Facebook post, and two new followers. Lots of likes and repins of several Pinterest posts.

WEEK FIFTEEN: Had the invitations printed, addressed, and mailed out. New blog post on how to invest in startup businesses.

WEEK SIXTEEN: Blog on how to pay off your car faster. Board meeting with the board of directors. Three new Facebook likes. Two new Twitter followers. Four new Pinterest followers. Designed the program for annual meeting.

WEEK SEVENTEEN: Blog describing the origin of the piggy bank. Designed ballots for elections at annual meeting. Printed name plates for the board members. Four new Facebook likes. Four new Pinterest followers. One new Twitter follower.

WEEK EIGHTEEN: Blog on what to spend your money on for Valentine's Day. Redesigned program for a different size of paper. Went shopping for decorations. Three new Facebook likes. Two new Pinterest followers. One new Twitter follower.

WEEK NINETEEN: Blog on donating to a heart disease charity. Two new Facebook likes. Two new Pinterest followers. Two new Twitter followers. Sent out an email blast reminding the members of annual meeting. Saw the venue for the meeting and began to create a floor plan. Booked Ben Lomond High School's JROTC for the flag ceremony.

WEEK TWENTY: Blog on how to save on your heating and gas bill. Redesigned the program again for another size of paper. Prepared prize drawing buckets. Printed and folded the programs. Cut individual ballots. Decorated for the meeting. Held the meeting. One new Pinterest follower. One new Twitter follower.

Appendix B: Artifacts

Pen/Highlighter/Stylus to give as a party favor to all attendees:

Flexible Cutting Board in three different colors to give as favors to all attendees:

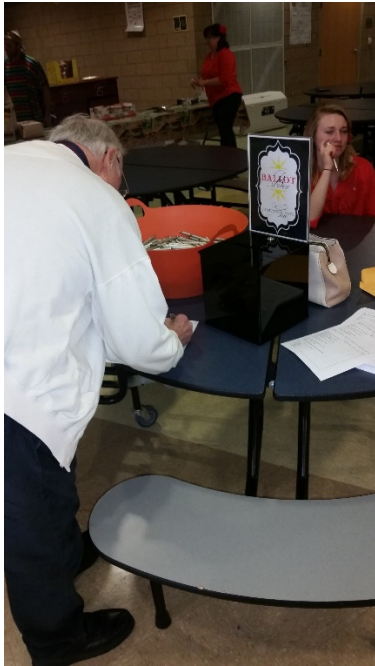Official invitation mailed to all primary account owners (Front/Back):

Program handed out to attendees at check in (Outside/Inside):

Pictures taken of the annual meeting:

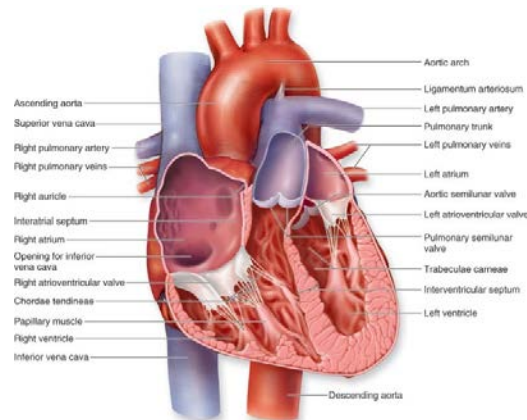**Appendix C: Sample Blog Post**

Donate: Heart Disease

FEBRUARY 11, 2015 by <u>MEGHAN</u> in <u>DONATE</u>, <u>FEBRUARY</u> with <u>0 COMMENTS</u>

In this month of hearts, let's take a moment to consider the anatomical heart.

A heart works hard, in fact it never stops working. And look at how many specific parts make up a whole heart. It's no wonder heart disease is so prevalent. So this Valentine's Day, or any time this month, I encourage you to donate to your favorite heart disease charity. Here are a few that I found fairly easy:

- [American Heart Association](#)
- [The Children's Heart Foundation](#)
- [World Heart Federation](#)
- [Women Heart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease](#)
- [The Heart Foundation](#)

Heart disease is very complex. It can cause other health issues, and is often caused by other health problems. It is hereditary which means that if someone in your immediate family has been diagnosed with heart disease, then you are at a higher risk.

Here's the thing with donating: there are TONS of charities out there. There's no way anyone could give to every charity. So the trick is to simply pick a just few charities that are near and dear to your heart and donate to those ones (personally, I usually choose to donate to breast cancer cure funds because my mom is a survivor). Even though there are five different charities that I've given you the links for, don't feel pressured to donate to every single one.

To find out your risk for a heart attack, click the button!

Heart Attack Risk Calculator