

Public Relations Drives Excellent Content: Effective B2B Social Media Strategy

Dana Incorporated is a world leader in highly engineered solutions for improving the efficiency, performance, and sustainability of powered vehicles and machinery. The Fortune 500 company supports the passenger vehicle, commercial truck, and off-highway markets, as well as industrial and stationary equipment applications.

As the company's agency of record, Gelia manages nearly all aspects of Dana's marketing communications efforts. Gelia's public relations team is responsible for tradeshow and event support, writing content for press releases, white papers, and other communication pieces, and managing editorial opportunities and media relations, among other efforts. The Gelia PR team regularly engages with Dana's corporate executives, engineers, and industry experts, and the role of public relations is viewed as a management function. This gives Gelia PR an in-depth level of knowledge, putting them in a unique position to develop engaging content based on Dana's highly-technical product offerings. This was the framework that Gelia PR used to plan and execute a year-long social media strategy for Dana in 2016.

Research and Planning

Dana's social media presence was focused on three existing channels with nearly 45,000 total followers across Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. LinkedIn had the most followers, and served as an excellent platform for reaching business-to-business (B2B) customers. Dana's breadth of product and service offerings was also a strength, giving Gelia access to a large amount of content to serve a wide range of vehicle and mobility-related industries.

But the nature of this content posed a challenge. Gelia needed to find a tone appropriate for social media that was also consistent with Dana's highly-technical culture. A balance had to be struck between the conversational nature of social media, and establishing Dana as an innovative thought leader.

With the exception of LinkedIn, Dana's other channels had relatively fewer followers compared to many of their competitors. It was difficult to reach B2B customers organically, resulting in low reach and engagement on many of Dana's posts over the previous year. In addition, each of Dana's four product groups had a different internal marketing manager responsible for approving content. Posts lacked consistency across the light vehicle, commercial vehicle, off-highway and power technologies markets.

The B2B mobility industry lags behind other mainstream consumer brands in their adoption of social media as a public relations tool. Publications, tradeshow, and other industry events do not always make the most of social, creating an

even bigger challenge for Gelia. We also faced skepticism from some of Dana's internal marketing communications team members, who were unsure if social media was the right tool for their conservative industry.

Research was conducted in order to analyze three segments: Dana's existing core audience, potential new followers, and competitors. Gelia wanted to have a better understanding of who was already following Dana. We studied existing fans on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In order to overcome the client's belief that their customers were not using social media for business, we began pointing out each time members of key target segments engaged with the brand on social. These targets were identified by job title, industry, employer, and interests, and were tracked in a weekly report.

At the beginning of 2016, LinkedIn was Dana's largest and fastest growing channel with 10,000 new followers gained in the previous year reaching a total of 36,877 by January 2016. LinkedIn's native analytics tools showed that 35 percent of Dana's followers held entry-level positions, 26 percent held senior-level positions, 21 percent were managers, and 8 percent were directors or vice presidents. We determined that the content for this channel should be focused on positioning Dana as an innovative industry leader. It was the best channel to reach people on a professional level, which tied in well to B2B strategy.

On Facebook, we found that the newsfeed algorithm was an obstacle to increasing our post reach. Instead of showing users content in chronological order, Facebook selects the most relevant and engaging stories to show first – prioritizing content that will be liked, commented on, and shared. With a much smaller audience of just 2,900 on this channel, we found that the most Facebook engagements came from Dana employees. We were also boosting select posts to specific audiences based on targeting, which helped extend reach.

Twitter had the smallest base, with a little more than 1,000 followers in January 2016. We had already experienced success using this platform to communicate with the media, and research found that a growing number of trade publications and journalists covering vehicle-oriented industries were on Twitter. We also saw both customers and competitors sharing press releases, company news, videos, and live updates, particularly during tradeshow.

Gelia PR was determined to find the human side of Dana's technologies and create quality, engaging content on a consistent basis to help the client increase followers and grow engagement. We launched a strategy based on the following objectives:

- Develop consistent messaging to generate awareness of Dana's offerings across four primary markets: light vehicle, power technologies, commercial vehicle, and off-highway.

- Target key customers, including employees of major vehicle manufacturers and other industry leaders.
- Increase followers across all of Dana's channels by 10 percent.
- Increase post engagement – likes, shares, retweets, favorites, comments, and clicks – across all channels by 25 percent compared to total post engagement in 2015.

Our 2016 social media budget for three of Dana's four product groups (light vehicle, commercial vehicle, and power technologies) was approximately \$168,000. This included all research, writing, client relations, content management, monitoring, measurement, and reporting. In addition, this budget covered project management support from Gelia's interactive department, creative time for graphic design, and management of the boosted post program by the media team. Social media for the off-highway group was included as part of a proprietary overall public relations budget.

Execution

Our team determined relevant topics, wrote content and worked with the client on approvals, oversaw the creative team's efforts to design images for each post, coordinated with the media department on a schedule of paid content, monitored and responded to comments and messages, tracked metrics, and reported weekly on these measurements.

We scheduled one light vehicle and one power technologies post per week on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Commercial vehicle content focused weekly on Facebook and Twitter, with LinkedIn posts added for major news and announcements. Additionally, off-highway content was posted on all channels timed around annual tradeshows.

Facebook strategy included both organic and paid content, allowing us to micro-target specific audiences through boosted posts. With help from Gelia's media department, we developed audiences for each product group based on location, age, language preference, and interests in engineering, key industry publications and tradeshows, competitors, and customers. For example, our light vehicle audience included people with an interest in Toyota, Honda, and General Motors, while our commercial vehicle audience focused on Freightliner, Mack, and Kenworth trucks. One post per week for each product group was boosted to these audiences, increasing our reach and promoting engagement by finding people who were interested in our content.

On LinkedIn, we continued to develop new content to position Dana as an innovative industry leader. While on Twitter, we interacted with media whenever possible, using popular tradeshow and event hash tags to make Dana's content easy to find. We also used the Twitter lists feature to curate groups

of Twitter accounts by industry and stay on top of current events and trends.

We utilized a content calendar to track posts, approvals, and metrics as well as a schedule of major events, videos, print and display ads, product launches, press releases, and other marketing collateral planned for the year. Content was scheduled on Hootsuite, a free social media management tool, and Facebook Business Manager. Metrics were tracked using only the tools available within each platform – Facebook Insights, as well as LinkedIn and Twitter Analytics. Every engagement for every post – likes, shares, comments, etc. – was recorded and these numbers were continually monitored to measure success, which allowed us to adjust content accordingly as the year went on. For example, if we saw a trend toward better engagement on Facebook image posts versus posts featuring a link, we could add more of that type of content to the calendar.

We scheduled a weekly call to provide each of Dana's product group marketing managers with metrics. This also gave us the opportunity to review and obtain approval on new content, and discuss ideas for future posts.

Results & Evaluation

By the end of 2016, Dana had more than 59,000 fans across all social media channels. With a limited budget and a small but effective team of talented people, Gelia helped Dana increase social media followers by more than 30 percent, exceeding our goal.

Facebook saw the most dramatic change, growing from 2,900 to 11,477 fans – a staggering increase of 296 percent. LinkedIn followers grew by 25 percent, and Twitter followers increased by 35 percent. These numbers were achieved without a specific campaign to increase page likes. Gelia concluded that by consistently posting excellent content targeted to specific audiences, the right people were reached and chose to like Dana's social media pages on their own.

Compared with the previous year, post engagement across also dramatically increased. In 2015, Dana saw a total of 14,320 post engagements. This metric measures the number of times someone liked, commented, shared, clicked, or otherwise interacted with a Dana post on any of the company's social media channels. Post engagement grew to more than 64,000 in 2016, an increase of more than 346 percent that far surpassed our goal.

The client was thrilled with these results, and we moved the needle on educating those who doubted the power of social media for B2B public relations. With excellent content and a targeted strategy, Gelia helped Dana find and engage with a record number of stakeholders on social media, and we established this highly-technical B2B brand as an innovative industry leader.