

New Media Institute – Personal Public Service Announcement Project

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[Erin Edgerton] Thank you for joining me for this edition of health marketing and interactive media. I'm your host, Erin Edgerton. Today I'm talking with Scott Shamp, Director of the New Media Institute at the University of Georgia. Welcome, Scott.

[Scott Shamp] Hey, thanks for having me.

[Erin Edgerton] Let's start off by talking about the New Media Institute. What is it and what does it do?

[Scott Shamp] Well, the New Media Institute is a teaching and research unit dedicated to the creative, critical, and commercial dimensions of innovative digital media technology. It's been around since 2000. It took me that long to memorize that brochure speak, but it's a way that we try to use new media to innovate.

[Erin Edgerton] And why do you think new media is so important today and in the next couple of years?

[Scott Shamp] Well, it's changing the relationship that people have with each other and the relationship that they have with information. Technology is really changing almost everything we do and this new media technology is right at the heart of that.

[Erin Edgerton] Before we go on, could you define new media for us?

[Scott Shamp] Well, that's an easy question and a hard answer. For us, the new media really started with the Internet because it changed things so radically, but now it's branched out to a whole lot of different platforms, like cell phones and podcasting and just a range of new ways that people have of interacting with information.

[Erin Edgerton] There are lots of new media and new technologies and I'd like to talk about one example in particular today, and that's the personal public service project that you led, in collaboration with CDC and many other partners. So could you tell us a little bit about that project?

[Scott Shamp] Yeah. The personal public service announcement project was a way that we started to engage people in using mobile technology to inform other people about important health issues. So what we did with this project was took cell phones with high quality video cameras, we handed it to college students, and we said, "You've got one day to produce a message encouraging people to be tested for HIV," and at the end of it, we got some fantastic videos that took us in a surprising new direction.

[Erin Edgerton] How important do you think it was for this project to have the students creating the messaging and the videos?

[Scott Shamp] That was essential because we really started to hear new messages that were incredibly relevant to young people. See, the real problem is when you get a lot of health educators sitting around, we come up with the most informed way that we were *taught* to do it. But when you start talking to young people, they tell you what is the most important things that they're hearing, so we heard some things that really were surprising for us, and they came out in the messages.

[Erin Edgerton] In a way, this was user-generated content because the users, the young people, were creating the messages and sharing them with one another. Do you think this is an element that's going to be important in communications going forward, particularly for campaigns with younger adults?

[Scott Shamp] Sure, but I think it's really important to kind of draw a distinction between user-generated content that's not controlled or influenced. Sometimes we talk about user-generated, expert-influenced content, so in our project, it would have been a disaster just to turn these kids loose and say, "Come up with HIV messages." So what we did was we brought in a bunch of experts, which helped inform them about some of the most important issues and then the students produced their take on it, and they used their creativity to come up with new ways of telling those stories that they had heard from the experts. So I think it's really important to do user-generated content because it speaks to young people in a new way, but you can't just cut them loose, or you'll get YouTube.

[Erin Edgerton] Another important aspect of the project was the mobile element, so can you talk a little bit about why you wanted this project to be mobile and what you think that adds to this campaign?

[Scott Shamp] Well, we've been really amazed with the kind of high quality video and audio technology that people are carrying around in their pockets every day, so we really wanted to push the envelope to see, "Could you use these tools that you have with you at all times to produce high quality video messages?" So for us, yeah, using a cell phone as a camera, as a communication device, as an audio recorder, that's where we really wanted to kind of see what the new limits of this technology were.

[Erin Edgerton] And what did you do once these personal public service announcements were created? How did you get them into the hands of other young people?

[Scott Shamp] We've been doing it in a number of different ways, and I think that's always important to kind of have a multi-platform approach. So, we've been a very lucky to work with Verizon, and they've pushed some of these messages out on their V Cast network, which we were incredibly excited to see. We've also put it on YouTube. I mean, I love YouTube in a lot of different ways, but we've also put them on websites, and we've made them available on the iPhone for people to download and to a watch. But, right now people still are just getting

comfortable watching video on mobile platforms so you got to make it available for them in a range of different media.

[Erin Edgerton] Certainly Verizon was an important partner in this project in helping you get the message out. Tell us about some of the other partnerships that you set up that you think added to the success of the project.

[Scott Shamp] Right. Bringing together the cool group of people was the most exciting part of the project for me. So we had Verizon. We had Nokia who provided us with this, the cell phone cameras with the high quality video. But then we also worked a lot with the CDC and are you going to tell me that you love me, Erin?

[Erin Edgerton] Yeah. Yes.

[Scott Shamp] Ok, because you work for the CDC right?

[Erin Edgerton] <Laughs>

[Scott Shamp] And I will tell you that when we first went into this project, we were afraid that all these big corporations and bureaucratic entities weren't going to embrace creative, new, and in many ways, crazy approaches to technology. So the best part was to see people from corporate, from retail, from government come together and say, "What can we do that really might make a difference?" So we were impressed with the way that all of these partners embraced a brand new way of communicating with people.

[Erin Edgerton] For someone out there who's looking to start a similar project, how did you initiate these partnerships and do have any tips for ways that you can get some of the bigger organizations involved?

[Scott Shamp] Well, I believe that these corporations and these organizations are committed to innovation, but you've got to package innovation in a way that they are feeling comfortable with it and they can see the upside of doing it. So for instance, when we sat in a room with Verizon and told them what we wanted to do, I could see they thought it was an insane idea. But after you really explain to them how it was going to help their customers and how it could help the world around them, then they come around. So it's important for you to really do a lot of work in helping them see the benefit for themselves and how they can benefit people at large with it.

[Erin Edgerton] What other lessons learned do you have to share about this project?

[Scott Shamp] Well, I believe that creativity is the fuel that drove this project, and we've really found that working with young people, you got a direct line to all that creativity. But you got to find a way of structuring it where they don't have to make a long term commitment, and that they can really exercise their creative muscles. So what we really learned was you have to have a very structured way to work with young people and you got to give them a limited period of time to work, and for us it was two days and that was easy enough to do.

[Erin Edgerton] What's next for the New Media Institute?

[Scott Shamp] Well, we want to take this project nationwide. We don't see any reason why you couldn't pick a day and have students all over the country, heck, all over the world, running around with cell phone cameras and documenting their way of helping people understand the importance for being tested for HIV. So we really want to set it up so that people can be doing this all over and everybody can gain the experience. See, for us, it was important to produce these messages, but I will tell you, it something really special to be in the room with young people and to watch something kind of click off in their eyes. You know they, all of a sudden, realized this wasn't just a project that was academic, that a lot of those things they were hearing experts say had meaning in their life and maybe they needed to change some of what they were doing and maybe they needed to think about being tested themselves. So I think by making it go much bigger it could have a bigger impact.

[Erin Edgerton] Thank you very much for joining us today.

[Scott Shamp] Hey, it was great!

[Erin Edgerton] Thank you for joining me for this edition of Health Marketing and Interactive Media. For more information about this podcast series, please visit the CDC's Health Marketing website at www.cdc.gov/healthmarketing.

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