



Case Study: Cambridge University

How one of the world's top higher education institutions manages over 260 social profiles to attract top talent and build a global audience.

In order to remain one of the top education institutions in the world, the University of Cambridge must attract the best students and top talent in today's digitally competitive market.

University of Cambridge

The [University of Cambridge](#) in England is one of the most recognisable and universally respected education institutions in the world. It wasn't until 2009, with its 800th anniversary, that the university was able to prove the worth of a social media campaign through data.



**400%
Increase**

*in Facebook fan
followers*



**260
Social accounts**

*successfully monitored
from one dashboard*



**9000+
Staff empowered**

*to advocate on the
university's behalf*

What They Did

The university's mission is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence. Applying a layer of digital media to this mission develops and deepens the connection between the university and potential and existing students, employees, Ph.D students, and alumni.

Social media makes the University of Cambridge more accessible to new and broader audiences who may not normally have visited the official website. It also gives the communications team the opportunity to build and promote a greater understanding and public awareness of the work, programs, and research taking place within the university.

The challenge for the university is that there are over 260 social accounts that bear the university's name and are managed by a variety of people, from students to different departments across the organisation. With over 9,000 staff and nearly 18,500 students, there is no shortage of potential advocates and content creators, but the scale of support and contributors comes at a cost.

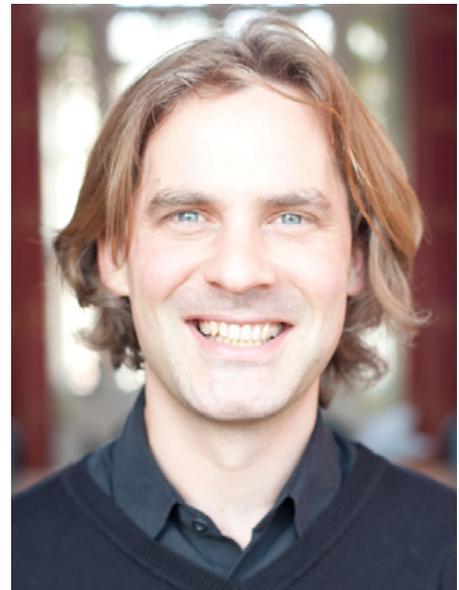
As a relatively small communications team, led by Head of Digital Communications Barney Brown, they were challenged by the lack of resources necessary to monitor and maintain that many channels manually. They needed an effective, cohesive way to respond to all incoming enquiries while building awareness globally.

“The bulk of what we do from our central channels focuses on sharing content, asking questions, and gauging audience responses to different types of content, which is often experimental in nature”

Barney Brown, Head of Digital Communications, University of Cambridge



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How They Did It

To gain a better understanding of the content shared, conversations taking place, and accounts representing the university, the communications team turned to Hootsuite. Setting up multiple streams and using Hootsuite insights helped them get an overview of all communications in order to begin developing social media guidelines.

With so many advocates and contributors, developing an evolving set of guidelines for training allows them to feel empowered to confidently share on social media. These guidelines provide ideas and best practices on types of content to produce, how and when to share, and how best to engage the university's core audiences.

Using Hootsuite Analytics, the communications team aggregates reports to monitor over 260 accounts belonging to PhD students, affiliated organisations, influencers, and friends of the university. This also allows them to see the impact of those channels and measure the effectiveness against the university's overall digital strategy. Knowing how content performs helps optimise external communications for the biggest impact.

Results

Now that the university knows what content works, they've found success in providing easily digestible, engaging content that draws a broad audience into a traditionally academic-focused world. Based on recent rising figures of shares, likes, and comments, this strategy is working. Facebook, a key platform for the university, saw a 400% increase in fan follower growth in just a few months.

Social data from Hootsuite provides superior insight into how the university's social media efforts are being interpreted by the public in real time. This helps shape how the organisation engages with their target audience and gives them a chance to play with new content and ideas.

Together these insights and Hootsuite's listening and monitoring capabilities prepare the team for crisis management and quick responses, should something arise.

Brown and his team can now track their output and see the impact that social media is having on attracting and engaging with the best students and top talent.



“Metrics from Hootsuite have provided us with tangible and quantifiable insights to measure content that is shared with leadership teams. These metrics illustrate the success of content and how we can reach new and existing audiences better.”

*Barney Brown,
Head of Digital Communications,
University of Cambridge*