

# Securing Food Security for the University of Pittsburgh

Social Media Strategy for the Pitt Pantry

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# Introduction

In a city where everything is within walking distance, it's easy to assume that we have access to everything we need. Yet, thousands of citizen residents, including those in Pittsburgh, don't have the means to buy food. This becomes even more problematic for students beneath the poverty line. It's time to stop making University of Pittsburgh chose between buying books or eating dinner. The Pitt Pantry and its new social media will focus on transforming food insecurity on Pitt's campus.

In order to educate the Pitt community, promote the pantry's services, and draw in more donations, I am creating a social media strategy for the Pitt Pantry. This strategy will focus on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Each platform will be catered to its specific audiences and to garnering the most activity. With social media, the Pitt Pantry will be better equipped to increase food security for Pitt students.

Overall, the content, tone, voice, etc. will all be crafted in a way that will be welcoming. Currently, the Pitt Pantry doesn't have a consistent and warm social media presence. This doesn't inspire any confidence in potential customers, especially considering most customers are already worried about things (like getting food without judgement). Therefore, this new strategy will create a more friendly presence that reflects the openness of the Pitt Pantry.

# Competitor Analysis

Overall, the JFCS Squirrel Hill Food Pantry is a perfect aspirational competitor. Their follower counts are higher (over 1,000) and they update regularly. Additionally, their posts are brand consistent but do not overwhelm followers with too many updates. Therefore, they stay on their audience's radar while not becoming overbearing. JFCS's social media shows how pantries can get the follower account and activity necessary to become a helpful fixture in the Pittsburgh community.

This can be inferred from their various social media accounts: Facebook, multiple Instagram accounts, and even a website. Their website is extremely professional and clean looking, which reflects their focus on fresh food. It is constantly updated with news on the pantry and information about any events occurring. The website is also extremely informative: JFCS's email and phone number are displayed in multiple locations on the front page alone and they make it easy to donate. This gives their audience an easy way to get involved or get help if they need it. They come across as approachable and dedicated on their website.

Their Instagram accounts, however, are a little different. One features fresh recipes while another is dedicated to celebrating their employees. Both, however, have the Pantry's location as the very first thing visible. This makes it easy for viewers to know where to go to either get food help or to donate. Their Facebook account incorporates both the website and Instagram strategies. Contact information is always front and center and posts outlining cheap recipes are interspersed with posts about food drives and donations. This account specifically makes good use of Facebook as a platform, with pictures and testimonials altogether.



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# Current Social Media



Facebook:

- 299 likes
- 303 followers

Instagram:

- 113 followers
- 24 posts



Twitter:

- 22 followers
- 24 posts

# Current Audience Analysis

As the Pitt Pantry is a food bank geared towards the Pitt campus, much of the audience is made up of Pitt students. Therefore, the primary audience would be a Pitt student. Usually, this person (male or female) is between the ages of 18-25 and college educated. Additionally, because this is a charitable service, the primary audience does not receive a lot, if any, income. They are looking for quick, easy, and cheap ways to get food. This is based on the fact that college students, especially such an underprivileged population, don't have the skills, time, or means to buy and cook elaborate meals. They also don't want to go far to get the food as not many people have a car to get to the grocery store. They will be looking for coupons for other items so the pantry should focus on advertising that service as well.

As for the secondary audience, we will target Pitt staff and other Oakland residents for similar cost and distance reasons aforementioned. In this section we will also target anyone in the area willing and capable of donating foods, as a business or individually. People don't want to be inconvenienced to give to charity. The tertiary audience will include any Pittsburgh resident in need of food assistance. Regardless of the section of audience, however, each has the same general goals: they want their basic needs met in a cheap and easy way. And, they want help discreetly and hassle-free.

Therefore, the social media should express how the Pitt Pantry is able to fulfill the audience's needs. This means constant updates, event notifications, and postings about the foods and services they have available on every given day. This way, our audience has a way of knowing when to come in to get not only the food they need, but the food they want.

The social media will also offer tips on how to go about using the Pitt Pantry. One complaint about the pantry is that a lot of people either don't know about it or don't know how to start using their services. By posting this on social media, our audiences will know what to do before arriving, again making the process easier. Our audiences already have enough to worry about: everything about the Pantry will help alleviate this.

# New Strategy Justification

The Pitt Pantry is a wonderful organization, one that helps struggling students and Pittsburgh residents. The workers there are caring and empathetic. They do everything they can to combat food insecurity and poverty on Pitt's campus. But even more importantly, they provide comfort and care for those having trouble.

And yet, the pantry's social media doesn't reflect this. It's bare and repetitive: it doesn't show its customers just how great the Pitt Pantry is. This is why there needs to be a complete overhaul. We need to do away with the repeat content across platforms, the abysmal follower count, and the sporadic posting schedule. Our new strategy will be aimed at doing all of these things in order to increase followers and, subsequently, the amount of people the Pitt Pantry will help.

# Target Audience

As the Pitt Pantry is a food bank geared towards the Pitt campus, much of the audience is made up of Pitt students. Therefore, the primary audience would be a Pitt student. Usually, this person (male or female) is between the ages of 18-25 and college educated. Additionally, because this is a charitable service, the primary audience does not receive a lot, if any, income. They are looking for quick, easy, and cheap ways to get food. This is based on the fact that college students, especially such an underprivileged population, don't have the skills, time, or means to buy and cook elaborate meals. They also don't want to go far to get the food as not many people have a car to get to the grocery store. They will be looking for coupons for other items so the pantry should focus on advertising that service as well.

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## **Primary:**

Pitt Students in need  
of food assistance

## **Secondary:**

Pitt Staff and Oakland  
residents in need of  
food assistance

## **Tertiary:**

Pittsburgh residents in  
need of food  
assistance

# Goals and Objectives

## **Goal: Increase awareness and participation for our potential customers**

- My main business goal for the Pitt Pantry is to increase awareness and participation for our potential customers and donors. With my media strategy, I will be able to achieve this goal. Some specific strategies that I will employ are informational sessions and giftcard drawings. This will give people more incentive to get involved and get them more aware of what the Pantry actually does.
- Additionally, to achieve these goals and implement these strategies, I will be using various social media platforms, like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Facebook will be the main tactic source: on this site, we will post longer content that explains any upcoming events/programs in more detail. Twitter and Instagram will be used to supplement this information, drawing more people in, and attract a different audience.
- In order to measure if these strategies and tactics are working, we will conduct a survey before, during, and after they are implemented. This will mean comparing the social media interactions, follower count, and conducting surveys for original followers.

# Distribution Plan

My strategy for the Pitt Pantry's social media is very straightforward: I want to utilize multiple social media platforms and their strengths. For example, Twitter is good for rapid-fire, short reminders and blurbs. Therefore, nothing of great detail will be posted on Twitter. Facebook, on the other hand, is great for longer explanations and creating events. Facebook isn't great for the multitude of posts like Twitter is though. Lastly, Instagram will be the true visual representation of what The Pitt Pantry is. This media will show, not tell, what we do. It has its limits though: like Twitter, Instagram doesn't lend itself to too long of captions or word content.

More specifically, our Facebook account will focus mostly on highlighting specific aspects of the organization and explaining them in detail for people who don't understand. These longer posts will also be used to inform our audiences about any food/gift card incentives we are creating for donating food. The longer post lengths will lend itself to allowing this to be possible. Additionally, we will utilize the event feature on Facebook. We will create and share more events, like themed food giveaway days and informational sessions. On Instagram, we will post spotlights of our different workers and positions and give a brief explanation as to who they are or what they do. Instagram will also be used to promote our events by reposting any graphics we created for the Facebook posts. Lastly, Twitter will be used as a more blow-by-blow update platform. Every day, we will Tweet what kind of food we have available in the pantry. Twitter will also be used to give short reminders/incentives to come to our events.

All of this will be conducted in a more centralized fashion; as in, only a small group of individuals will be assigned to manage the social media accounts. This will make it easier to keep things consistent and organized. When putting everything together, the new strategy will meet our main goal by drawing more people into the organization. This is not only because the platforms will actually be utilized to the best of their abilities, but also because each platform will reach a specific audience and draw that audience in based on the utilization of the media they prefer.

# Distribution Plan

## **Facebook**

Detail/event focused

Frequently asked questions

## **Instagram**

Picture/volunteer focused

People oriented

## **Twitter**

Update/reminder focused

Food and product oriented

# Timeline

## 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter (Months 1-3)

- Initial follower count
- Conduct initial follower questionnaire
- Initial customer count
- Conduct initial customer questionnaire

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter (Months 4-6)

- Track follower/customer count
- Follow post interactions
- Establish post schedule
- Utilize the Facebook event function
- Begin interactions with followers

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter (Months 7-9)

- Track follower/customer count
- Follow post interactions
- Initiate donation incentive program

## 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter (Months 10-12)

- Final follower/customer count
- Compare numbers
- Compare post interactions
- Conduct exit follower/customer questionnaire

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

# Sample Content



31 likes

Say hello to our Marketing and Outreach Director, Laura! Laura has worked with the Pitt Pantry for 7 months and has been a great addition to the team. As the Marketing and Outreach Director, Laura works with the Pittsburgh community, keeping them informed and getting them involved in our events!

A screenshot of a Facebook post from 'The Pitt Pantry'. The post features a blue profile picture of a person, the text 'The Pitt Pantry', and the question 'How do I go about donating food to the Pantry?'. The post contains two paragraphs of text: 'This process is super fast and easy! Come to our location at Bellefield Presbyterian Church on Fifth Avenue and drop the canned/non-perishable food off at any time of the day. It can be given to a Pantry or Church employee; either way, we'll get it.' and 'If this doesn't work for you, contact us at pittpantry@pitt.edu and we'll let you know when our next food drive is. Give us your address and we'll be sure to stop by next time we collect food around Pittsburgh!'. Below the text are interaction counts ('15 people like this') and a comment input field.



The Pitt Pantry  
@Pitt-Pantry

Follow

Check out today's great deals: buy two boxes of cereal for \$6 and get 4 packets of oatmeal for \$4!

2:48 PM - 6 May 2015

# Evaluation

## KPIs

1. Did the number of customers increase from the beginning of the strategy to the end?
2. Did the number of social media followers increase?
3. Did the number of different donors increase?
4. Did the Pitt Pantry receive more donations?
5. Are more people aware of what the Pitt Pantry is and what they do?

## Tools/methods to measures KPIs

1. Obviously, the first indication of if the goals were met are the actual numbers we have. If we have more customers, more donors, more donations, than we know that we've made an impact with our social media strategy. To do this, we will conduct a consensus before we begin the strategy, 6 months into it, and one year after. We will compare these numbers and see if they've changed over the time.
2. We will also check if we've had more followers on our social media. This will not only indicate if we've reached more people than previously, but it will also show us that we've made more people aware of the Pitt Pantry. Additionally, when more people follow the accounts, more people are aware of what the Pantry actually does.
3. Lastly, we will create a survey to give to Pitt students. We will send this out before the strategy has commenced and then after a year, we will follow up with those who responded first and see if they have a better idea of what the Pitt Pantry is.

# Policy

## **Policies for engaging on social media**

- Never post on social media without first creating a draft of the content and having two or more employees proof-reading that draft.
- Be straightforward and informative.
- Engage our followers: if they comment, respond.
- Refrain from posting spam or inappropriate comments (to get a better idea of what is accepted, refer to our style guide).
- Respect the confidentiality of our shoppers and never disclose their information with express written consent.
- Always cite any documents, articles, statistics, etc. used or referenced to in content.
- Remain professional and friendly no matter what.
- When addressing a complaint or negative comment, acknowledge the comment publicly and then directly message the poster to get a one-on-one experience.
- Follow our style guide for any and all content posted.
- Hold your peers accountable when posting on the Pitt Pantry social media. Follow these policies and the voice detailed in our style guide in order to put forth the best image for the organization.

# Policy Cont'd

## Rules for social media

- Always proof-read content before posting
  - Along with our style guide rules, it's important that we present ourselves as competent and grammatically sound. This is just one way our customers will see us as a capable and professional organization.
- Respect our customers and their confidentiality
  - Many of our shoppers have remarkable stories that we feel would serve to inspire more people to donate to our cause. However, none of the things discussed with any shopper can be disclosed on social media or otherwise without that shopper's direct written consent.
- Be polite and understanding when addressing complaints
  - When receiving a complaint, be sure to address the issue as soon as possible. If seen in the comment section, reply to the comment and indicate that we have received the complaint and are working on solving the problem. Directly message the poster to give them a more detailed run down of the solution.
- Stay friendly and transparent
  - We want our shoppers to feel at home and comfortable when interacting with the Pitt Pantry in any capacity. Therefore, all content must facilitate open discussion and transparency so as to give our shoppers a feeling of inclusion.

# Style Guide

The Pitt Pantry is dedicated to providing our community with the cheapest and healthiest food that we can. Our passionate team of employees and volunteers work to end food insecurity in the Pittsburgh area while providing our shoppers with the dignity and care they deserve. Such a goal needs to be reflected in everything we do, including our writing. Therefore, we value accuracy and key words in our style guide.

Additionally, we intend to reach a large audience, one mostly comprised of college-age people capable of recognizing and understanding typical internet language and slang. While we do this, however, we also keep in mind our other large audience group: donors. This specific group cannot be alienated by the language we use so our style strives to strike a balance between formality and informality.

Our voice, tone, and vocabulary will always be geared towards providing our shoppers with the utmost dignity. We want them to feel comfortable coming to us for food assistance and to not feel embarrassed or uncomfortable with their food insecurity. Our word choices reflect this sentiment: we will not use societal slang like “food stamps” for services like SNAP or Welfare. Everything we do will work to not only make our customers feel comfortable, but will also work to positively highlight better, more acceptable word choices when dealing with poverty and food insecurity.

# Style Guide: Word List

- !, ?, !? (never multiples, like !! or ?!?!?)
  - Though we want to keep a more informal style (by therefore not shying away from bold punctuation), we do not want to become a parody of ourselves.
- abbreviations and acronyms
  - Use abbreviations and acronyms only after the first usage of the complete title or phrase. Include the abbreviation in parentheses after the first usage. (Ex. American Diabetes Association (ADA)). No periods will be used in either shortening.
- Able-bodied
- Disabled (instead of handicap)
  - A lot of our customers require special assistance; however, this does not mean they are incapable.
- em dash (use in place of double hyphens)
- Food insecurity/food insecure (to refer to hunger)
- hyphens (never use en dashes)
- Income level (instead of salary)
- Impoverished (instead of poor)
  - We require that our shoppers are treated with the utmost dignity; therefore, we follow a strict term list.
- Pitt Pantry (must always be capitalized)
- Recoveries
  - When referring to the gathering of leftover food, we call them recoveries.
- Shoppers/customers
  - We want our clientele to feel comfortable and unembarrassed to visit our storefront. This means treating them as though they were in any other shopping experience.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - Never referred to as food stamps.
- Welfare Services (never food stamps)

# Rationale

My main focus in the strategy was to create consistency and order in every platform. This consistency and organization would apply to the timeline and schedule of posts, the types of different posts for each platform, and the same common tone that threads its way through every platform. This, ideally, would give customers/potential customers a feeling of reliability that most food insecure people don't have. The tone would also draw them in and make them feel like the pantry is personable and welcoming.

The tone decision came from multiple readings: Ann Handley's Everybody Writes (Handley), Fenton and Lee's Nicely Said (Fenton and Lee), and Handley, Scott, and Chapman Content Rules (Handley, et. all). Each of these readings said the same thing: tone and voice must remain constant. This allows the audience to create a relationship with the writer and makes the writer seem approachable. This is especially important for the Pitt Pantry; most of the customers are experiencing trouble and, with the stigma surrounding asking for organized assistance, they are uncomfortable asking for help (Favilla "How to Not Be a Jerk"). Therefore, the tone of Pantry must always remain friendly and open (see my style guide and social media policy)

Additionally, I wanted to create a strict schedule of posts (Shields "Distributing Social Content") This way, the audience will know when to look for the very thing they need to see. This will make it easy for audience because people don't want to have to search too hard (Shields).

Each platform will follow the same general rules of the Twitter posts; i.e. there will be a schedule for daily/weekly/monthly posts plus additional updates catered to that platform. Again, this makes it easy for the audience to know where to find the information they need to know. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram will all work with their audiences the best way they can in order to most effectively distribute the information (Shields)

All of these strategies, put together, will result in my main goal: getting more people aware and utilizing the Pitt Pantry. Everything I planned is focused on dispersing information as efficiently and effectively as possible. With this, more people will hear about us and have a better idea of what we do. If we keep people informed, we will draw in the necessary audience.

# Conclusion

The Pitt Pantry's new social media strategy is aimed at drawing in more customers.

As a non-profit organization, the pantry strives to help as many food insecure people as it can. This can't happen without proper advertising and effective information dissemination. This new social media will allow these things to happen, subsequently bringing in more customers and helping more people.

By bringing in consistency and a sense of community into the social media, the Pitt Pantry will show its followers exactly what the organization is about: care and help.

This new strategy will emulate exactly the type of care people will get when they shop at the Pitt Pantry. But beyond that, customers will find consistency in something they so desperately need: food security. The Pitt Pantry will make these people's lives just a little bit easier.

**It's time to eradicate food insecurity in Pittsburgh, once and for all. The Pitt Pantry and its new social media strategy will help bring this about.**

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