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Manning, IA

STRATEGIC PLAN

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Executive Summary

The town of Manning is looking to grow their population. Faced with the struggles of a small town in rural Iowa, Manning is working hard to make sure it continues to not only sustain but grow. This plan provides background information, the product, environment and target publics as well as key objectives that will occur during the year 2019-20. The plan targets four key campaign publics: families, community from surrounding metropolitan areas, millennials who attended smaller colleges in Iowa, as well as IKM Manning alumni. This plan covers objectives related to the recruitment of people moving to Manning. It touches on conducting research, creating a brand, social presence as well as advertising items that make Manning stand out from other small rural communities.

Background

The city of Manning, Iowa, is located in Carroll County along Iowa Highway 141 in west central Iowa. Surrounding the town are the counties of Carroll, Crawford, Audubon, and Shelby. Manning is approximately 80 miles from the Des Moines metro area and about 85 miles from the Omaha metro area (Manning Proposal, p.2).

The approximate population is 1,600 people. Within the past ten years, Manning's population has grown by 24% (Manning Proposal, p.2). Although Manning is one of the few rural communities in Iowa to have their small-town population increase in the past few years (Ron Reischl), they are not satisfied with their numbers. As the constant increase of young families begin moving to urban areas, Manning wants to offer an alternative lifestyle for young people that cherish community, family and environmental values, all while being within proximity of metro cities.

The town's biggest current challenge is securing a steady increase in population, especially with young people and those looking for a safe place to raise a family. Manning's ambition to increase their population is reflected in the energy throughout the community: vibrant, positive and upbeat.



In August 1881, Manning became a railroad boom town. These towns first appeared east of the Mississippi long before the 1860s. Manning formed as the construction of new railroads were authorized to continue maintenance after the Civil War. New towns began to spring-up around the nation, specifically in the West where few cities had existed before (*Railroad Towns, American History*).

Historically, Manning is predominantly a traditional, yet contemporary, German heritage community. One of the main attractions worth boasting about is the authentic 1660s era reconstructed German Hausbarn, brought over from Germany and assembled in 1996 in Manning (German Hausbarn). The Hausbarn is unique in the sense that not only is it a household, but also includes areas for equipment, livestock and their feed. These hausbarns were a common form of dwelling throughout Germany. Prior to being dismantled and sent to Manning, the hausbarn stood in Prussia, Austria, Denmark, and Germany. This hausbarn alone has survived tribal boundary disputes, state wars, and stood through two world wars.



Manning has made many community advancements in regards to the organizations they offer within the community. Some organizations include but not limited to: Alcoholics Anonymous, Alumni Association, C-3 Committee, City Council/Board, Garden Club, Habitat for

Humanity, Homemakers Club, Knights of Columbus, and Little Flower Study Club (Manning website).

Although there are many opportunities for the residents to get involved in the community, Manning offers activities suitable for tourists as well. Some nearby activities include the Hausbarn and Heritage Park, which the tour includes the German Hausbarn (built in 1660 in Germany but moved to Manning in 1990), the Leet/Hassler Farmstead (on the National Register of Historic Places), and Trinity Church (a local country church that was relocated to the Heritage Park) (German Hausbarn). Other tourist activities include Willow Creek Campsite, a swimming pool, the Forgotten Corner Museum, Veterans Memorial Museum, Carroll County Freedom Rock, Main Street, Milwaukee Railroad Trestle, Manning Light Plant, and the Manning Public Library (Manning website). Popular restaurants in Manning are Deb's Corner Cafe, Cliff's Place, and Brickhaus Brews. As for lounges or bars, Whitey's Bar and VFW Hall can be found on Main Street. General stores include a Casey's and Heartland Market. Main Street also includes speciality shops, tanning salons, a spa, and other novelty stores.



Within Carroll County, Manning is the second largest community. There are approximately 550 students who attend the Manning schools within the district. From preschool to high school, the average graduating class is around 40 students (Manning website). The public school district covers approximately 112 square miles. Other schools and educational facilities

include: Zion Lutheran Preschool, Kuemper Catholic Schools, IKM (Irwin, Kirkman, Manilla) and Manning, and various community colleges (DMACC Carroll Campus, Western Community College IWWC, Shelby County Center, IWCC Cass County Center).

Given that Manning is a German heritage community, they focus on maintaining those relationships within their town. In 2015, the Iowa Small Business Administration launched a new award called “Small Business Community of the Year” in which Manning won (Manning Proposal, p. 6). Since then, they have continued to build upon their community by creating the Manning Betterment Foundation: which buys old and abandoned commercial properties and improves them (Manning Proposal, p. 6).

Manning has maintained their relationships within the surrounding community. They have a strong relationship with the Downtown Resource Center within the Iowa Economic Development Authority (Manning Proposal, p. 9). Manning aims to be diverse and 52% of Manning households have low-to-moderate income which indicated economic diversity. Manning hopes to become more racially diverse as well.

The plan aims to present measurable research on Manning, Iowa, in order to increase population size in young adults and awareness of the town. We will be targeting three key target publics: families with children under 10, community from metropolitan areas, millenials as well as IKM Manning. With the most emphasis on families looking to live in a safe community. The leadership in Manning hopes to dispel the notion of small towns providing little to no economic activity and cultural attractions/events by positioning themselves in favor of the interests and attitudes of millenials and young adults. “In an effort to reverse the brain drain in Iowa we must begin to showcase and celebrate the quality of life that can be achieved by living the American Dream - right here in Manning, Iowa”, according to the Manning Proposal (p.22). Although

Manning has maintained its population in the 2010 census, it fights to continue to increase its size, despite the common trend of population decrease in small, rural towns.

Within this strategic plan, there are three main areas of concentration. The product, target publics, and environment. The product is the the town itself and what it has to offer. There are several target publics; families with children under the age of ten, community from surrounding metropolitan areas, millenials and IKM Manning alumni. Lastly, environment and Manning's proximity to surrounding towns and the county seat are considered.

The Product

Manning's product is itself. It is the values, opportunities, and culture that come from Manning and the feel of a small town. Product development also means planting the idea in people's heads that living in a small town like Manning is a possibility for them. This then becomes a behavior where people physically move to Manning and start living there. Once there, new residents will ideally invest in a house or get a job, ensuring that they will stay in Manning for a long time. Manning uses the theme of "Manning, It's Refreshing!" to sum up their quality of life. Manning is a safe environment that many would consider a perfect place to raise or start a family. They are a progressive community that is always moving forward and getting things done. Manning has population that is diverse in terms of income and age, but everyone matters there.

Target Publics

Manning is an attractive place to move for families, communities from surrounding metropolitan areas, and millennials who attended smaller colleges in Iowa as well as IKM

Manning alumni. Manning has certain qualities for each public that make it an attractive place to call home.

Families — Particularly with children younger than 10

Manning is a town in which families can live the “life they want to have.” City officials claim that mothers and fathers will be able to hold a stable job, be able to afford and own their home, making it a perfect place to raise their families. Shelly Grieving, a local marketing professional and collaborator for this plan, talked of the quality of life for the families. She mentioned the easy commute for parents to go to and from works well as extra-curricular opportunities for their children at the local school. It is a place in which families can “Live, Work and Play.”

One of the major keys to attracting families is the IKM Manning school district. Along with broadcasting that children will be able to participate in many extra-curriculars, there should be a focus on all the advances in learning. The school seems to have an advantage in many areas, such as their STEM program and 21st century learning environment. This is what is going to attract parents to the school. The way in which they are implementing technology in the classroom as well as the collaboration is something that only few small schools in Iowa can offer. If parents are the right mindset, the different approach to learning will attract them to this school. When you have such a progressive learning environment, it is important to show that off.

Community from Metropolitan Areas

Manning is in close proximity to a few of the bigger cities in the Iowa-Nebraska area, such as Des Moines, Omaha, Council Bluffs, and Sioux City. Manning is located nearly right in the middle between Des Moines and Omaha. Des Moines is about 80 miles away or an hour and

a half drive. Omaha is about 85 miles away, but it is a little bit shorter of a drive. Council Bluffs is four miles to the west of Omaha, so it is closer to Manning. Sioux City is roughly a two hour drive from Manning. The appeal here is for people that want to have a job in a bigger city but then commute to Manning because of the benefits of living in a small town. These people could potentially work from home in Manning as well but only have to commute when absolutely necessary. This is a realistic possibility for new Manning residents as there are currently people there who commute to jobs that are farther away.

Millennials and Students from smaller Iowa colleges

Within the families target public, there is a specific age range of people who might be looking to start a family or have just started a family. That age range is about 22 years old to 37 years old. This age range can be referred to as millennials. Manning likes to put young adults in leadership roles in the community which can be attractive to those who are looking to make a difference where they live.

A potential target for millennials in Iowa are those that attended smaller colleges in the state. Iowans that attend community colleges or private colleges in the state are more likely to stay in Iowa than students that attend large public universities such as Iowa State University or the University of Iowa. Surveys conducted by the Iowa Workforce Development in 2008 and 2013 show that 55% of community college students are leaning toward staying in Iowa after finishing school, and 43% of private college students are leaning toward staying (Mills, 2015). Students from the University of Northern Iowa are a potential target as well with about 85% of their graduates staying in Iowa.

IKM Manning Alumni

One of the target audiences Manning hopes to attract is the alumni of Manning. Approximately 30% of college grads return to their hometown for a permanent lifestyle, with that number slowly dwindling in rural Iowa, attributing to the “brain drain” issue of the Midwest.

Environment

The city of Manning, Iowa is located in Carroll County, along Iowa Highway 141 in west central Iowa. Surrounding the town are the the counties of Carroll, Crawford, Audubon, and Shelby. Manning is approximately eighty miles from Des Moines metro area and about eighty-five miles from the Omaha metro area (Manning Proposal, p.2). With its close proximity to these metro areas, it makes Manning an attractive place to live. Our target publics can have the benefits of living in small town Iowa while also having a short commute to larger metro areas. Being in this location, we believe non media channels such as in-person communication as well as community involvement could be a great thing to use. Interactive channels that we feel would be beneficial are social media. Facebook and LinkedIn could be fantastic resources to use to reach a large group of people.

Summary of Objectives

The objectives laid out below all come back to one main goal: recruiting the four target publics that are outlined in the plan to Manning. They cover the following general ideas: increasing Manning’s digital presence on social media, housing websites, and job boards. These points touch on the benefits of living in a small town as well as advertising Manning and what they are about. Also, they focus on finding strengths in the community, such as the IKM

Manning school district. Lastly moving communication from administrative to appeal to people's emotion and personal side.

Problem Statement

The town of Manning is a long standing, German-American town that has grown in economic development and thrives on the sense of community. Research has shown city leaders have seen a decreasing population like many other small, rural towns in Iowa and across the country. In preparation to get people to move to Manning, a brand needs to be established on digital channels in which will help the recruitment process. This will be accomplished through the strategic communications plan.

Goal

To position the town of Manning for youthful residence expansion by developing a strategic communications plan.

OBJECTIVE 1

Increase Manning's digital presence on social media, housing websites, and job boards by implementing 7 projects by end of 1st quarter 2019.

Publics: Families, Alumni, Community from Metropolitan Areas

Project 1: Develop a Twitter account (Jan 31, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Engage with influencers in surrounding areas
2. Interact with people in town and surrounding towns
3. Enhance Twitter presence with a strong bio; explain "It's Refreshing!"
4. Retweet news that may impact Manning or events going on nearby
5. Follow alumni
6. When gaining a new follow, DM them and thank them for their follow

Project 2: Develop an Instagram account (Feb 28, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Create a business account
2. Do a spotlight on the local businesses on a certain day via a post
3. Spotlight people in the town on the Instagram story and show diversity in age, gender, race, etc.
4. Follow alumni
5. Share fun facts about the town of Manning on #FunFactFriday
6. Schedule 2-3 posts to be posted per week
7. When gaining a new follow, DM them and thank them for their follow

Project 3: Direct businesses to develop a LinkedIn presence (Feb 28, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Have these businesses connect with those who pop up in their "suggestions"
2. Connect with alumni or other stores similar to themselves
3. Post jobs on LinkedIn
4. Boost the jobs so they come up first when someone searches for a job in the area

Project 4: Ensure that comments, good or bad on social are responded to (Feb 28, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Respond to each negative comment by saying something along the lines of “We are sorry to hear that, (their name)! We just sent you a DM. We would love to hear what you have to say!”
2. Give each negative interaction/customer two interactions, if they are still negative/unresolved after the second time, delete the post
3. Respond to all negative comments by apologizing to them first and trying to get at what the customer wants to get out of commenting
4. Reply to positive comments by saying, “Thank you, (their name)”
5. Always use their name when responding to comments

Project 5: Direct businesses to post their jobs to job boards (March 31, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Job boards: Indeed, Craigslist, LinkedIn, Ziprecruiter, Glassdoor,
2. Instruct businesses to boost their posts on the jobs boards

Project 6: Direct people selling homes or real estate agency to use Zillow (March 31, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Boost posts to reach select areas of the country and college towns in Iowa
 - a. Surrounding towns (Carroll, Crawford, Audubon, and Shelby, Des Moines, Omaha, Iowa City, Ames, etc.)

Project 7: Evaluate the social media platform statistics to analyze reach and engagement (March 31, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Twitter:
 - a. Go to Twitter Analytics and view which tweets reached how many people
 - b. View which content posted had the most interactions
 - i. Continue posting content similar to tweets that got the most interactions
 - c. See which of your followers has the largest following and gear a post towards them so they will retweet it and their followers will then see.
 - i. Getting a Top Follower to retweet or mention your account is the best way to boost your impressions and gain following.
2. Instagram:
 - a. As a business account, view analytics by:
 - i. **From your profile** – Just tap the bar graph icon
 - ii. **From a post** – Click the arrow in the bottom right corner, then click “View Insights.”
 - iii. **From a story** – Tap the bar graph icon on your profile, scroll down to the “Stories” section, then hit “Get Started.”

1. Story insights are only available for **two weeks after they were posted**, so make sure to access those before they're gone.
- b. Instagram Insights offer data on three sectors of the account: followers, posts and the stories (and how all three of those interact).
 - i. Insights show demographic data, including the gender, age range and geographic location of people who follow the account and who engage with the posts.
 - ii. View country, state and city of your followers. This is helpful for local businesses because they can target a customer base in a particular area.
 - iii. They can also give you important time zone data, so you can time your posts properly to maximize views and engagement for the particular geographic areas in Iowa.
 - iv. Follower insights can also reveal the number of times each of your followers is active on Instagram daily, as well as how many of them have clicked on the link in your profile.
 - v. Can view how many new followers have been gained and when – stats that can substantially help analyze the efficacy of the posts and stories.

OBJECTIVE 2

Raise awareness among target publics about the benefits of living in a small town like Manning by implementing 6 projects during 2nd and 3rd quarter of 2019.

Publics: Manning Alumni, Millennials, Community from Metro Areas, Families

Project 1: Identify how target publics feel about living in a small town (January, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Conduct surveys among target publics with questionnaires on a scale of 1-10 on how they feel about living in a small town like Manning. Ask if people have heard of Manning in the survey. Distribute surveys through the mail and email and offer incentives such as a chance to win a gift card
2. Conduct surveys on students at smaller colleges like community colleges such as Iowa Western and private colleges like Buena Vista. Distribute through their university emails and offer incentives
3. Create visuals to show survey results, most likely bar charts

Project 2: Identify what pros and cons people would like and dislike about living in a small town (January, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Conduct surveys about how much certain aspects of living in a small town would affect decision-making of living there.
2. Have a contest in the surrounding towns where the winner gets a free weekend trip for two to Manning that includes a tour of the city. Document the trip to get what they liked and disliked about it. Share the story on social media and promote to surrounding areas

Project 3: Figure out how Manning differentiates from other small towns in the area (February, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Survey residents of other small towns in Iowa to see why they are living there
2. Perform content analyses on those small towns' websites and social media sites
3. Find out what makes Manning unique and promote that on social media

Project 4: Use Manning residents to showcase benefits of living in a small town (March-April, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Have a social media contest where Manning residents submit their own 30 second video about why they love living in Manning and what Manning has to offer. The winner gets a gift card to in-town restaurants
2. Use the best clips from the above contest to make a video to put on the manningia.com website's homepage in place of the current "Why Manning?" video. Promote on social media to surrounding areas

Project 5: Promote Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook posts to Des Moines, Omaha, and Sioux City (All through 2019)

Tactics:

1. Post weekly pictures on Instagram to showcase Manning's attractions
2. Post monthly stories on Facebook and Twitter about different Manning residents and their stories. Share those stories to a Manning alumni page on Facebook
3. Boost Facebook posts and promote Twitter and Instagram posts

Project 6: Assess if previous projects helped to raise awareness about Manning (December 2019)

Tactics:

1. Conduct surveys to same places as before, offering similar incentives to see if people are more aware of Manning. Also ask if people's opinions have changed on whether or not they would live in a small town
2. Create visual showing differences from previous surveys and these surveys

OBJECTIVE 3

Advertise Manning and what they are about (community, German heritage, “refreshing”) by implementing 4 projects during 3rd quarter of 2019.

Publics: Manning Alumni, Millennials, Community from Metro Areas, Families

Project 1: Advertise community as welcoming (July 31, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Demonstrate the level of community engagement
2. Advertise the promotion of young/diverse leaders

Project 2: Describe what German heritage looks like in Manning (August 31, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Answer the question of why these are unique items to have in Manning:
 - Hausbarn
 - Church
 - Water tower
 - Bridge

Project 3: “It’s Refreshing” (September 31, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Describe meaning of it
2. Communicate that this is the “town’s” brand
3. Show it

Project 4: Assess to see if recent people who have moved to town believe in what Manning is about (EOY)

Tactics:

1. Conduct in-depth interviews
2. Put together research findings

OBJECTIVE 4

Advertise the IKM Manning school district as a 21st century learning environment by implementing 7 projects during 1st quarter of 2019.

Publics: Manning Alumni, Families with children

Project 1: Identify other state schools that offer the technology (Jan 31, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Conduct research through contacts
2. Contact Department of Education

Project 2: Figure out ways in which you differentiate from other schools. Ex; 3D Printer. (Feb 28, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Conduct interviews with staff that have recently moved into school district who have been apart of other districts

Project 3: Identify the teacher-to-student ratio (Feb 28, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Count number of teachers
2. Count number of students
3. Take number of student and divide number of teachers
4. Create infographics with this data

Project 4: Describe the overall environment of the school (Feb 28, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Conduct interviews with staff, students and parents
2. Create short testimonial videos, quotes, etc.

Project 5: Create a historical overview of the stability of the school district (March 31, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Create timeline to show whole grade sharing, mergers, etc.
2. Explain how this has made a strong school district

Project 6: Advertise the school district on social media. (March 31, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Create posts with graphics created from earlier projects

Project 7: Assess social media, engagements, reach, etc. (EOY)

Tactics:

1. Dig into statistics in social as stated above in objective one to determine reach and engagements with post about school district

OBJECTIVE 5

Change communication from administrative into an approach that appeals more towards the personal side. Will complete by implementing 3 projects during 2nd quarter of 2019.

Publics: Manning Alumni, Millennials, Community from Metro Areas, Families

Project 1: Identify and evaluate previous communicative language and make changes if needed (April 31, 2019)

Tactics:

1. Proofread all content released under Manning (ie brochure, the website).
2. Identify administrative language, make changes if needed.
3. Determine what constitutes as administrative language and how to make it personable and relate to an 'everyday audience'.

Project 2: Actively write future content emphasizing appealing and personable language over cordial administrative language for 2019. (Year round)

Tactics:

1. Write all future content in an easily digestible way with specific target audiences in mind depending on whatever is being posted.
2. Use Microsoft Word to evaluate Readability level. Aim to keep all communication below 9th grade level.
 - a. Click the Microsoft Office Button , and then click Word Options.
 - b. Click Proofing.
 - c. Make sure Check grammar with spelling is selected.
 - d. Under When correcting grammar in Word, select the Show readability statistics check box.

Project 3: Assess whether or not this has been done on website and social media (EOY)

Tactics:

1. Determine if websites communication is changed from administrative (numbers, new buildings, etc)

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