



Gold Group Social Media Case Study

Five Lessons from the SIGGART Online Word Of Mouth Campaign

By **Jeff Greene**, Executive Director of Client Services, Gold Group

Do social media outreach efforts really produce word of mouth engagement? And if they do, what are the most effective components of social media that should be incorporated into a campaign?

This case study follows the development of a social media marketing campaign for SIGG Switzerland, a producer of eco-friendly aluminum water bottles. The clients were Steve Wasik and Roni Rudell, who work out of SIGG's Stamford, CT headquarters. Steve is president of SIGG USA and responsible for the company's new e-commerce site, MySIGG.com. (He's also a former Chanel marketing executive who innately understands branding – he carries his SIGG everywhere.) Roni is interactive marketing director for MySIGG.com. The pair hired Gold Group to create and market the SIGGART Design Contest, in which bottle designs would be collected and visitors could vote on their favorites. One winner would have his or her design produced on a SIGG bottle and sold by the company.

SIGG products are unique in their category. Their inventive designs and high quality aluminum materials have sparked a consumer base committed to purchasing green products with European aesthetics: upscale, yet responsible. We knew it would be important to focus our social media efforts on these qualities if we wanted to gain broad grassroots support.

First lesson: *The Internet is a research tool and a marketing tool combined into one.* SIGG decided a few months prior to hiring Gold Group that it wanted to run an online design competition, because so many people were sending in designs unprompted. “We were listening to our customers and they were basically saying ‘We love the product, now give us a chance to design something cool,’” Steve said. “People were constantly asking us if they could submit a bottle design, so we decided it was the right time for a contest to happen.”

Second lesson: *Social media sponsorships are vital to supporting an outreach campaign.* Our first idea was to ask an eco-friendly website to create a landing page for the competition. But Roni saw greater opportunity. “We recognized that SIGGART could help launch a whole variety of user-generated marketing

programs,” she said, “and the chance to build MySIGG.com into a content destination site of its own.”

So we talked advertising with Jill Fehrenbacher, a New York-based designer who founded the blog Inhabitat, focused on eco design. Jill had already written about SIGG in previous blog posts, and she and managing editor Emily Pilloton agreed to take on SIGG as a sponsor during the contest. Unlike a banner “buy” with one of the traditional ad serving networks, our Inhabitat sponsorship got us the custom treatment. Jill’s staff designed the SIGG ad and ran it above the fold on Inhabitat’s home page, which gets 450,000 monthly unique visitors. She also wrote a great post about the contest the week we kicked off – although it wasn’t part of our sponsorship fee – and a post at the end to announce the winner.

Jill said: “I was really interested in getting involved in the SIGG bottle design contest because as a designer, I believe strongly in design democracy, and want to see the wider public more involved in the creative process. In terms of a publicity campaign for a company, I can’t think of a better way to connect with, engage and inspire your customers than a design competition. We love design competitions at Inhabitat and are always happy to support them as much as we can.”

Third lesson: *Contacting bloggers is time-consuming work, but it can pay off.* We spend a lot of time reading blogs like The Bad Pitch Blog and B.L. Ochman’s What’s Next blog to learn what many agencies do wrong when it comes to blog outreach. Our hope is that we do it a little better with each client, and we were successful with SIGG in earning more than 75 blog mentions the first three weeks of the contest. A few of the tactics we used:

- **Hard work:** Using tools like Technorati and Ice Rocket, we identified more than 150 target bloggers we thought would be interested in sharing our contest with their readers.
- **Online press releases:** These are critical since they add credibility to the pitch: A blogger gets an email from us, then sees our release running on the Reuters RSS feed, then Googles us and finds 30 recent mentions as the release continues to propagate.
- **Sponsoring social media:** Our Inhabitat sponsorship paid off again when Treehugger, one of the best known eco sites on the web (1.4 million monthly unique visitors), picked up Jill’s story.

Fourth lesson: *Social media is more than bloggers and MySpace; it’s any special interest group with a strong web presence.* Since we needed designers to submit contest entries, one of our first tasks was to find and send emails to local chapters of the AIGA – a prominent association of graphic designers – as well as colleges and universities with graphic design programs. We received more than 170 contest entries by the deadline, including several submitted by a design professor and his students at the University of Pennsylvania.

Sara McGovern, head of Gold Group IMPACT teams which conduct social media outreach, said: “While MySpace and blogs may be the most popularized examples of social media, I feel that anywhere a community gathers actively online is a key social media space. By moving beyond the typical borders of social media, we were able to find communities that were in fact far more active.”

The IMPACT teams are important as much for their personal contacts as for their web research skills. One team member who participated on SIGGART outreach is an alternative model with many contacts in the tattoo industry. She emailed them about the contest, along with many of her 1,000-plus friends from MySpace.

Fifth lesson: *Social bookmarking sites can be a great resource, when chosen carefully.* We’ve found over time that it’s hard to influence users on a site like del.icio.us, which is extremely useful yet lacks many ‘community’ features. Instead we targeted two bookmark sites that are now among our favorites: Treehugger’s HUGG and Ma.gnolia. By introducing the contest as a link on HUGG (a sort of eco-friendly DIGG), and in Ma.gnolia groups including “Going Green,” we were able to create interest and cross-links. For several days during the heart of the contest, our link on HUGG made it to the front page, causing a lot of excitement on our part and traffic back to the contest site.

Bonus lesson: *If at all possible, involve a celebrity.* We saw this first-hand when we worked with Oxfam America to auction off a stunning dress worn by Keira Knightley to the Oscars. SIGG was fortunate enough to have several big names in the eco world agree to judge the contest, including Jill at Inhabitat; Adam Gardner, lead singer of the band Guster and co-founder of Reverb, which shows rock stars how to run greener tours; along with Wanda Weller, director of design at Patagonia. Not every company, obviously, is in position to attract celebrity interest. We think it’s important though to define “celebrity” as it relates to an individual organization, and assess the types of people who would garner interest and respect if aligned with an outreach effort.

Learning Summary

The social media are masses of audiences rather than one mass audience, so social media marketing is the art of catering deeply to niche audiences. In the final tally SIGGART drew more than 12,000 visits from about 8,000 people. Each visit was a whopping 17 minutes on average; compare with Nielsen’s most recent benchmark of 49 *seconds* per average U.S. web visit. In total, SIGGART was viewed for 204M user-minutes or, we’d like to offer, 204 *mums*. A 90-second viral video viewed by 100,000 people would only measure 150 mums. SIGGART did reach a small niche, yet that niche was deeply engaged – the result of a well-planned, online word of mouth campaign.

For more information about Gold Group, social media, SIGG or interactive marketing, please contact Gold Group by sending an email to info@gold-group.com.