

Lost In Translation: Social Media Outreach, Concerns, and Responses to the Potential
Decommissioning of Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant

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ABSTRACT

The following study investigated the process in designing a social media campaign that effectively conveys a large corporation's, like Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), essence online during a significant event that will impact the entire community that corporation serves. The trend in social media campaigns to reach a greater audience during events like the potential decommissioning of Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant (DCPP) is important and becoming a more efficient approach in keeping the public informed. The campaign's focus was to restore PG&E's online presence by taking down real-life concerns of those who will be impacted by the decommissioning of DCPP. With extensive scholarly research, interviews of PG&E officials, and a survey that recorded concerns and reached 233 people, the design of the campaign attempts to change the perspective of PG&E in the eyes of the public of San Luis Obispo (SLO), as well as strives to change the stigma about big corporations and the communities. This stigma was apparent in the way they communicated with the residents of SLO, which was very much in big-corporate fashion during public meetings. Notes were taken of the public's concerns, but nothing was returned to them in terms of a response. This paper and coinciding project addresses the concerns of the public, while also reiterating the essence of PG&E's brand online, which has been essentially forgotten by the public. The importance of sensitivity and awareness in the topic of nuclear power is addressed, as well as the corporations that run those nuclear plants. The focus of more effective awareness through a social media campaign and online presence is maintained throughout the study.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

With the recent proceedings of the potential closure of Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant (DCPP), the public of San Luis Obispo (SLO) has been led to only see the closure as a point of contingency, as well as perceive Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) differently from how they've branded themselves. PG&E has a well-established brand for caring about the environment and the community they serve, however communicating that looks different today. Public forums where all are welcome to speak their opinion can be useful, but having an online presence that conveys their brand and how much they care can generate more information on concerns of the public, as well as genuinely get to the know the people who light up their living room windows with the energy PG&E provides. PG&E can have a direct link to concerns in the community about the closure of DCPP, and better show those they serve that they are listening, by having a stronger social media presence and responding to the public's concerns.

Since it was built in 1963, Diablo has been highly opposed by the Sierra Club and environmentalists. Come the 1970s it was opposed by another group called The Mothers for Peace. However, it's also been a projection of economic growth for the local community with a local payroll of \$202.5 million, and 714 local retired PG&E employee pensions totaling over \$19 million, which created a total 2011 economic impact on San Luis Obispo and Northern Santa Barbara counties of \$919.8 million (Mayeda & Riener, 2013).

When it was announced that DCPP would be shut down by 2025, there was lobbying for it to close earlier by 2019. After attending a local hearing at the Ludwick Community

Center, it appeared that a main concern was the threat of a meltdown from an earthquake or radiation, as well as the toll it's taken on its surrounding environment. From observation, while PG&E gave these citizens of SLO a chance to voice their opinion about the date of its closure in this open hearing, there was no active acknowledgment that their concerns were heard, even if they were. All of their concerns were taken note of with a court reporter and judge present, however it could be of use to PG&E to be more active on social media to show they are listening.

Background of Problem

Big corporations and powerhouses similar to PG&E are expected to adjust to the changing digital revolution of communication that is happening today. Part of the problem with the closure of DCPD is how it has been perceived by the public, and this is imparting the way PG&E has been communicating what is happening to the concerned public, as well as what PG&E stands for. Corporations like PG&E have a brand, a brand that thrives in mini television commercials about marking your power lines before you drill and alerting the community when their lights will come back on after a major outage via email. This is not enough. This kind of communication only acts as a one-way street. To further understand the underlying background of the problem of communication and responding to the public, it starts with how PG&E is currently conveying their brand to the public.

It's not necessary to rebrand the corporation, but rather show how the brand of PG&E lives on the internet. A brand is a brand, environment aside. What is different is the way in which the corporation's essence is executed online (Vernuccio, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

With the digital revolution well underway, many corporations have taken to starting social media campaigns and having a stronger presence on social media. Communication of important events, updates, and messages now come in the form of Facebook posts, Instagram bios, viral videos that get the point across quickly and still invoke emotions, Tweets that act as news in the form of 140 characters, and so much more. The question arises, would implementing these forms of communication in some form that is relevant to the closure of DCP help PG&E better communicate its essence of care and service to the public? Nuclear power plants, (especially California's only nuclear power plant), is a sensitive subject that needs to align properly with how PG&E address the public's concerns. The conclusion of this should leave the concerned citizens of SLO and PG&E with a better relationship that is no longer a one-way street.

Studying the use of a social media campaign to help a big corporation reach out and reconnect with its community should expose the value and urgency for similar corporations to do that same, no matter what kind of significant changes they are facing or if they simply need to reconnect with their audience. In recording research in outreach attempts on a social media platform or campaign, it is important to remember that the audience and their concerns come first, and an accurate approach can be rendered in communicating with the public who a corporation has responsibility to listen and acknowledge.

Setting for the Study

This study was completed by the use of an online public forum by way of survey, in the form of a social media platform as a space for citizens to voice their concerns about the closure of DCP. With regard to public forum input, implementation of PG&E's response

will be through the creation of a social media campaign that addresses the public. This will happen by placing the survey on a Facebook page.

Research Questions

The following questions were generated to better understand the requirements for a successful social media campaign when a big corporation is involved. The purpose of the questions was to understand the best methods in communicating with today's public in the form a corporation with a strong, online presence who responds to the community they serve.

Research Questions:

1. How can a social media platform for DCPD be beneficial to its relationship with the public?
2. How could a social media campaign be used to communicate with public?
3. How has a social media campaign in a different business/cause been used to promote public awareness and inclusivity?
4. What are some examples of campaigns for a similar cause that have been used beneficially/ not beneficially?
5. How could a social media campaigns be beneficial to the relationships between big companies and the public when big changes abound?
6. Why is it important to implement a social media campaign during an event like the DCPD closure?
7. What strategies are used in a social media campaign to incorporate and engage the public?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are listed below to clarify and emphasize repeating topics during the study, as well as assist in further understanding of how social media can play a part in aiding in a communication.

Execution of Brand Essence: Brand is a brand regardless of its environment. What is different is the way the brand's essence is executed. To thrive with brands on the internet a looser form of brand control is needed, welcoming the active participation of consumers (Vernuccio 2014, pg. 211).

Social Network Site: The primary source of information for media-centered young publics in the domains of health and tourism (Men & Tsai, 2014, pg. 4).

Successful Social Media Campaign: one or more social media channels to promote a product or service, build brand awareness, and create a sense of community (Sukhraj, 2017).

User-Centered Social Media Platform: allow individual users to become media gatekeepers and content-creators who collaboratively and proactively engage with companies through likes, posts, and shares within their personal social networks (Men & Tsai, 2014, pg. 2).

User-Generated Content (UGC): Allows consumers to upload their own content to a platform help big corporations adhere to principles of transparency and authenticity (Distaso, McCorkindale, & Agugliaro, 2015).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 lays out the statement of the problem, background of the study, purpose of study, and a definition of terms that will be used often. Chapter 2 is a literature review which helps determine the essence of successful social media campaign when it comes to big

corporations by reviewing relevant literature on the subject. Chapter 3 describes how the data for the study will be collected and analyzed. Chapter 4 will measure the outcome of the survey and the Facebook page by analyzing and evaluating community response to efforts by PG&E. The information collected will be interpreted and considered with the literature review in mind. Chapter 5 will conclude the study for future corporations and marketers by including a summarization on what it takes to imagine and implement a successful social media campaign for a corporation that wants to better communicate with the public.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This literature review exemplifies the framework of an effective social media campaign that connects a big corporation to the public it serves.

Social Media and Communicating with the Public

In order to form a healthy relationship with the public whom a corporation is serving, it's important to understand how an audience stays informed, if at all. Or if they don't stay informed, give them a reason to be. In a digitized century, "user-centered social media platforms allow individual users to become media gatekeepers and content-creators who collaboratively and proactively engage with companies through likes, posts, and shares within their personal social networks" (Men & Tsai, 2014, pg. 1). To gain the audience's perspective or opinion, it might be harder to get them to a public forum at City Hall than it is to post to a public forum online, where anyone can post their ideas and opinions. Instead of handing out pamphlets at the farmers market, one might turn to a mass-email or post on Instagram to get the audience's attention. Today, it's not only personal---it's digital, and there to live on the internet forever. Whatever it is that needs posting, it can't hurt to make it eye-catching, aesthetically pleasing, and somehow center back on the individual and how it affects them. To reach all sides of the public, it's important to recognize and reckon with this digital-age so no one is left uninformed. This means adapting to the "media-centered lifestyle of young publics, and in domains such as health and tourism, where social network sites have become the primary source of information" (Men & Tsai, 2014, pg. 2).

Social Media Expectations for Corporations

Corporate rebranding might not be something a well-established company (PG&E, 2017) needs to do, but when it comes to social media, the portrayal of one's company on a tiny screen can have a major impact on how the public perceives its values and brand. It is not necessary "to develop a new theory about the concept of a brand in an online, as opposed to offline, environment: A Brand is a brand regardless of its environment. What is different is the way the brand's essence is executed. To thrive with brands on the internet a looser form of brand control is needed, welcoming the active participation of consumers" (Vernuccio, 2014, pg. 212). If the problem here is that PG&E's closure of DCPD has not taken well with the public, then there is a possibility of miscommunication of what PG&E stands for and how they treat and serve their community. This could call for a "more active participation of consumers" as Vernuccio states (2014, p. 212). PG&E has established its brand via its mission statement: "*Satisfy energy demand. Respect the environment. These are the principles that drive Pacific Gas and Electric Company*" (Mayeda & Riener, 2013). What could be needed here, as Vernuccio states, is a better way of their essence executed through a social media campaign that establishes communication with the community it serves and acknowledges their concerns (2014).

There are boundaries when it comes to sharing on social media, as well as a need for transparency. Companies looking to make bigger leaps on the social media platform or campaign need to consider:

- To what degree are interactivity and openness used in communicating corporate brands through social media? (Vernuccio, 2014, pg. 223)

- What are the distinctive strategic orientations toward interactivity and openness in communicating corporate brands through social media? (Vernuccio, 2014, pg. 223)

Awareness through Social Media Campaigns

The subject of the closure of DCPD is tough and has been a topic of heated disagreement since the '60s. One interesting approach to making the news of its closure more accessible and comprehensive to the community, would be humor. Although this is a serious topic, I appreciate the idea of trying to lighten it up. Since the decision to close the plant is in the works, and many changes will take place, including the loss of many jobs and green energy, there has to be a way to find the positive in this situation. The Centers for Disease Control created a campaign based off of “zombie” humor, and being prepared for anything. These kinds of “campaigns appear to use social media and pop-culture-related humor to grab attention” (Fraustino & Ma, 2015, pg. 224). Incorporating some kind of pop-culture to not only lighten the subject field but to appeal to a younger audience as well could be a way to effectively communicate to a larger audience.

This could potentially inspire a way to talk to the public about nuclear emergencies and how to be prepared if one were ever to occur. Radiation and meltdowns has been voiced as a concern of those attending the meetings and forums that have been conducted by the city at the Ludwick Community Center. If there were a way to be more transparent and show the community they are heard, this could be a lighter way to go about it, while still taking the subject matter seriously. Results from an experiment conducted by the CDC “showed that when crisis information was disseminated via social media from a third-party source such as a friend’s Facebook post (as opposed to an official organizational source),

participants were most likely to seek additional information” (Fraustino & Ma, 2015, pg. 222). Instead of leaving the public to their own devices in figuring out how to be prepared for a disaster such as a nuclear meltdown (or reassuring them that it’s very unlikely), which could lead to a wormhole of information, it could be of interest to make a video or share a guide via social media on how to be prepared, as well as address the real risk factor.

The Effectiveness of User Generated Content

User Generated Content (UGC) could act as an advantage for big corporations and the way they interact with the community. Allowing consumers to upload their own content to a platform can help big corporations “adhere to principles of transparency and authenticity” (Distaso, McCorkindale, & Agugliaro, 2015, pg. 166). This could come in the form of a Facebook page and allowing the subscribers of that page to post relevant information. Or in the case of Instagram, encouraging users to tag (@DiabloCanyon) could also open up a large dialogue. A corporation could inform their users they are heard by reposting UGC and responding. It’s a two-way form of communication that intimately allows a community to voice their opinions, concerns, thoughts, and encouragements, and *expect* an accurate response from the corporation.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter will be utilized to discuss the means of data collection containing data sources, participants, survey design, collection and presentation of the information, limitations, and delimitations of the survey.

Data Sources

For this study, a Facebook page was created to generate conversation about concerns and information on the potential closure of DCP. The page acted as a home for the survey to be conducted. After the survey questions have been created and put into a data collecting tool, in this case SurveyMonkey, the link to the survey will be posted on the Facebook page. The Facebook page will be shared throughout the course of week to collect responses that pertain to PG&E and closure of DCP. Once the survey is closed, the Facebook page will act as an online forum for the community to talk about the closure further and what PG&E can do to help the community.

Participants

The participants in this survey and on the Facebook page will range from three different target audiences. The survey participants consisted of mostly Cal Poly students in the San Luis Obispo Community, ages 18-25. With the town meetings and forums in mind, the participants will also consist of ages 25 and older, seeing that those who have already expressed their concern through these meetings were generally over the age of 25. The

greater San Luis Obispo community will act as the last audience as random survey participants.

Survey Design

The survey design was based on multiple choice questions and free response to give the audience a better way of expressing their true concerns. Each multiple-choice question revolved about the likes of PG&E and how they've informed the community of the closure of DCP. The free response questions were used when the question that needed to be asked would have had too detailed an answer. The survey describes quantitative questions such as age range and connection to the community of San Luis Obispo. Qualitative questions are also described in the form of how participants heard about the closure and when they think of PG&E, what exactly comes to mind. The ten questions in the DCP Awareness Survey pertain to the research questions about how to successfully reach an audience through social media.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study was conducted through having the participants click the link to the survey on their own time, which they came across through Facebook. Figure 1 shows how the participants were invited to take the Facebook survey. The survey focused on one quantitative question regarding their age. The survey mainly consisted of qualitative multiple-choice questions that measured the participants personal opinion on DCP and PG&E, and the overall effect PG&E has when communicating to their audience. The design of the survey's purpose was to collect positive and negative outlooks on effective communication in effort to record the most accurate strategy in communication of

information through social media by a corporation. The incentive that participants received to take this survey was not instantly gratified, but will eventually amount to PG&E hearing how they are personally concerned about the closure.

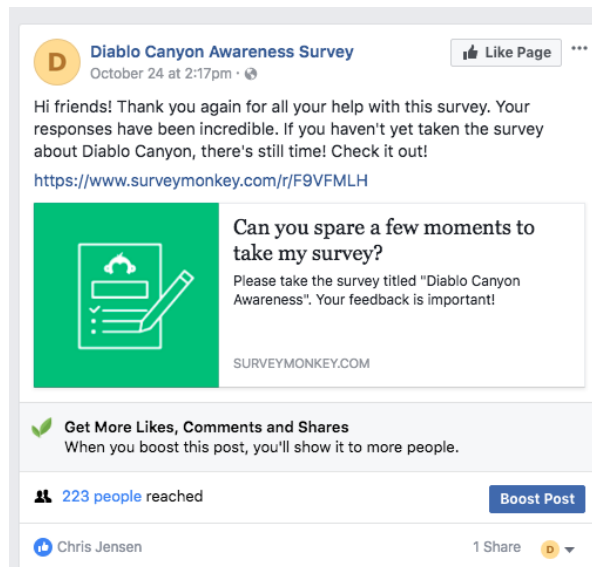


Figure 1. Example of how the participants were invited to take the Facebook survey.

The collected data was plugged into graphs to clearly see what citizens were concerned about and what they think of PG&E. SurveyMonkey was used as the main tool to record responses and provide analysis. Facebook was also used as a tool to record the survey and track what kind of people were engaged with the posts about the closure and the survey.

Limitations

The limitations to this study mainly consist of limited time constraints to thoroughly conduct a survey and generate the most responses. The timeline for this project follows the California Polytechnic State University quarter system, which is a ten-week period. More

thorough and extensive research was also limited due to time constraints. Another aspect that proved problematic was the way in which the survey was presented to the public and the incentive to participate. It was solely up to everyone on Facebook to respond to this survey. It was also up to how well the public could be reached through word-of-mouth and others sharing this survey with people they knew.

Delimitations

Due to time and sharing constraints, delimitations were also played a part in this study with the survey pool of responders in mind. Since sharing on Facebook and social media is still something largely for Generation Y, that is who mainly took the survey. Had there been more time, the choice to share this survey as an open forum or town meeting about the closure would have been an option, but again, due to time this was not possible. With only ten weeks to conduct this study, sharing this survey with other surrounding communities affected by the closure was also not possible. Had there been more time, more efforts for sharing with other communities and hearing their concerns would have helped create a larger, more diverse demographic for this study.

CHAPTER 4

Data Analysis

Chapter 4 will explain the methodology that was implemented to carry out the outreach and response plan between PG&E and the public, as well as display the survey participants primary concerns about the decommissioning of DCP. The data will summarize the social media campaign and outreach method that was created based on a survey (See Figure 1 and 2) and gathering responses through interviews with PG&E officials (See Appendixes A, B, C, D for interview responses). The data will also measure the amount of awareness reached in the community through using social media platforms, and how community members receive news. The responses and concerns of those reached by the platforms and the survey have been presented to PG&E, who has been given the chance to respond.

Participants

This study had 47 participants. Table 1 summarizes participants by age.

Table 1

Participant Ages, by Percent and Number

Age	Percent (Number)
<18	0% (N=0)
18-25	68% (N=32)
>25	32% (N=15)

Table 2 summarizes the participants by occupation.

Table 2

Participant Occupations, by Percent and Number

Occupations	Percent (Number)
Student	67% (N=11)
Financial Advisor	6% (N=2)
Teacher	6% (N=2)
Accountant	3% (N=1)
Small Business Owner	3% (N=1)
Software Engineer	3% (N=1)
Irrigation Engineer	3% (N=1)
Sales	3% (N=1)
CPA	3% (N=1)
Planner	3% (N=1)

Diablo Canyon Decommission Social Media Action Plan

The main focus of this action plan is to encourage PG&E to reach out to the public in a more effective manner in regards to the closure of DCP, primarily through social media. This exemplifies Vernuccio's reasoning about maintaining brand essence through social media, as PG&E claims that they care for the community they serve (Vernuccio, 2014, pg. 212; PG&E, 2017). A survey was conducted to identify the public's main concerns about the decommissioning, and the survey was then posted to Facebook page made specifically for that survey to live on. The purpose of the page was to generate awareness through social media and give those who might have been in the dark about the closure before a chance to have a voice. After the responses for the survey were collected, interviews were conducted with local PG&E officials, as a way for PG&E to directly respond to the concerns, and see firsthand, the effect of using a social media platform to inform their customers.

Tactics and Tools

The social media action plan is based off of Vernuccio's analysis that a brand is a brand regardless of its environment, but the essence of the brand can get lost in translation in the of communication with the public (2014, pg. 2). The action plan was built with this in mind, so that PG&E could find a better way to communicate with the public about a tough subject that will have a huge impact on the community. The tactic here, for PG&E to stay true to their essence and effectively communicate, was collecting their responses through interviews and sharing the data (concerns), as this related back to PG&E's mission statement. Tools involved in this plan include social media, word-of-mouth, and SurveyMonkey.

The first stage of the plan began with creating the survey and generating questions that were popular during the public meetings for the decommissioning. Figuring out the proper questions for the public to answer was crucial so that an accurate and careful response could be possible. 10 questions were made, with multiple choice answers and free response sections. The average time to take the survey was about two minutes and thirty seconds. The goal with this survey was generate as many responses as possible, and that meant keeping it short.

The next stage consisted of creating the social media to go along with the survey. A Facebook page was created to act as a home base for the survey, as well as to generate awareness of the closure. The page became the source of communication between the participants and the survey. The page also acted as a source for the most recent news about the plant, that way those who were curious and felt they needed to know more before taking the survey had the chance to do their research. This page acted as a tactic in seeing the effect of a social media page and gathering responses, as well as generating awareness.

The last stage of this process came with sharing these responses by interviewing officials from PG&E. Responses to these interviews can be found in Appendices A, B, C. This tactic was to help maintain the essence of PG&E, as it has gotten lost in the way they've communicated with the public in the past. Interviews were conducted away from the plant, but around San Luis Obispo, in a setting of the interviewees choice. This was done not on purpose, but just happened to be the easiest way to meet with most of these current and former employees of PG&E. The data collected through the survey was expressed to the PG&E officials, as well as separate questions that encompassed what the survey summarized.

Effectiveness in Communicating Brand Essence

There were pockets of examples when PG&E's essence came through in a better light with the public. For this community outreach through social media, the essence of PG&E could not be lost in order to generate responses through the survey. PG&E states that they care about the community they serve (PG&E, 2017) and gauging from the response's from the PG&E officials that is the essence of the brand. In one Facebook post in particular about the survey, the most "reach" was generated at 233 people. See Figure 4 of screenshot of post below. This is from a single post on the Facebook page, encouraging the public to participate. It is also byway of convenience through this post that helped generate the most engagement. All they had to do was click to be heard, instead of attending a public meeting. People want to be heard, and through interviews with PG&E, they were, which in itself exemplifies the essence of PG&E as a brand that serves the SLO community.

Survey Results

The tables that follow summarize the survey results.

Table 3 summarizes how the participants learned that DCPD was closing.

Table 3

How did Participants Learn that DCPD was Closing, by Communication Type, Percent, and Number

Communication Type	Percent (Number)
Social	29% (N=12)
From PG&E	0% (N=0)
Other	71% (N=30)

One limitation of this question was that the “Other” category was too large.

Table 4 summarizes how the participants became aware of the PG&E closure campaign.

Table 4

Participant Awareness of PG&E Closure Campaign, by Types of Communication, Percent, and Number

Age	Percent (Number)
Town Hall Meeting	9% (N=5)
Social Media & Emails	9% (N=5)
PG&E reaching out	7% (N=4)
Other	7% (N=42)
Not Aware of PG&E Campaign	67% (N=36)

Table 5 summarizes participant perceptions about PG&E.

Table 5

Participant Perceptions about PG&E, by Percent and Number

Age	Percent (Number)
Neighborhood Powerlines	61% (N=36)
Care About the Environment	10% (N=6)
Care About the Community	14% (N=8)
Late to the Game When Problems Arise	10% (N=6)
Keeps the Community Informed	5% (N=3)

Table 6 summarizes the easiest way to reach a participant.

Table 6

Easiest Way to Reach a Participant, by Percent and Number

Age	Percent (Number)
Facebook	43% (N=35)
Television	6% (N=5)
Printed Newspaper	9% (N=7)
Flyers Around Town	12% (N=10)
Emails	28% (N=23)
Other	2% (N=2)

Table 7 summarizes participant perceptions about PG&E.

Table 7

Participant Perceptions About PG&E Feedback, by Percent and Number

Type of PG&E Feedback	Percent (Number)
PG&E Takes Notes	2% (N=1)
PG&E Responds to Emails	2% (N=1)
PG&E Social Media	12% (N=5)
I Don't Feel Heard by PG&E	83% (N=35)

Table 8 summarizes whether or not the participants follow or like PG&E on social media.

Table 8

Participants Follow or Like PG&E on Social Media, by Percent and Number

Follow or Like	Percent (Number)
No	97% (N=36)
Yes	3% (N=12)

Note: the participant who follows PG&E indicated that he or she follows John Lindsey.

Table 9 summarizes how the participants prefer to receive community information.

Table 9

Participant Sources of Community Information, by Percent and Number

Source of Information	Percent (Number)
Social Media	19% (N=11)
Newspaper	16% (N=9)
TV News	14% (N=8)
Online News	12% (N=7)
Cal Poly News	12% (N=7)
Word of Mouth	9% (N=5)
Radio	7% (N=4)
SLO County Health Dept	2% (N=1)
Online Newspaper	2% (N=1)
NPR	2% (N=1)

Mayor's Instagram	2% (N=1)
Email	2% (N=1)
BBC	2% (N=1)
Axios	2% (N=1)

Note: Participants could enter more than one answer.

The participants were asked about their concerns regarding the closure of DCPD with the following results (X indicates how many times a concept was mentioned):

- Not enough electricity X6
- What happens to the leftover waste? X4
- Such a significant source of clean power is coming to an end X3
- Loss of renewable energy sources X2
- No nukes means more expensive power X2
- The plant employs a lot of people X2
- The plant should be kept open X2
- Loss of revenue for schools
- The closure should be done efficiently and no corners are cut
- Who monitors the site after closure?
- Reuse or recycle of materials
- Will the plant be used for other purposes?

- How will the site be cleaned?
- It's more unsafe to close the plant than use it
- Nuclear energy is not perfect but its cheaper than other alternative

CHAPTER 5

Discussions and Recommendations

This chapter starts by restating the research questions and discussing the data in relation to each question. The chapter continues by making findings. And finally, the chapter concludes by making social media recommendations.

Research Question #1

Research Question #1 asked: How can a social media platform for DCPD be beneficial to its relationship with the public?

The data from this study in relation to this research question shows a much higher audience reach on Facebook. One post about taking the DCPD Awareness Survey reached 233 people. No public gathering was required to gather the public's concerns. This shows a much more effective way of reaching a broader audience for PG&E, and communicating also to more people that they care about the public's concerns about the potential decommissioning.

Research Question #2

Research Question #2 asked: How could a social media campaign be used to communicate with public?

The data from this study in relation to this research question shows that a much larger audience and broader demographic is possible with a social media campaign. With 233 people reached on Facebook, meaning that many people saw the post about the survey

and clicked on the post, and with 47 total responses to the survey, many more concerns and voices were able to be heard.

Research Question #3

Research Question #3 asked: How has a social media campaign in a different business/cause been used to promote public awareness and inclusivity?

When the Center for Disease Control wanted to reach more people, they created a social media campaign with humorous videos about crisis management. Results from an experiment conducted by the CDC “showed that when crisis information was disseminated via social media from a third-party source such as a friend’s Facebook post (as opposed to an official organizational source), participants were most likely to seek additional information” (Fraustino & Ma, 2015, pg. 222).

Research Question #4

Research Question #4 asked: What are some examples of campaigns for a similar cause that have been used beneficially/ not beneficially?

Keeping with CDC example, one benefit in relation to this study would be instead of leaving the public to their own devices in figuring out how to be prepared for a disaster such as a nuclear meltdown (or reassuring them that it’s very unlikely), which could lead to a wormhole of information, it could be of interest to make a video or share a guide via social media on how to be prepared, as well as address the real risk factor. CDC did this very effectively with “zombie humor” in crisis management of a zombie apocalypse. What’s beneficial about that is it grabs everyone’s attention while they scroll through Facebook and people are compelled to click on it because it could involve their own safety. One thing that

could be unbeneficial is also the humor. This might cause the audience to doubt the CDC's authority when it comes to crisis management if the viewers are somehow led to think the CDC doesn't take things like this seriously.

Research Question #5

Research Question #5 asked: How could a social media campaigns be beneficial to the relationships between big companies and the public when big changes abound?

The data in relation to this study shows that social media campaigns can mend the brand's essence in the eyes of those scrolling through Facebook and other online platforms. Before, PG&E's message of caring for their community and the environment had been lost on the internet, leaving those who are concerned about DCPD still unassured of PG&E's mission to take care of SLO. But after the survey and the 233 people that were reached over Facebook, their brand essence over the internet is temporarily restored. This winds back to Vernuccio's analysis of a brand online: A Brand is a brand regardless of its environment. What is different is the way the brand's essence is executed. To thrive with brands on the internet a looser form of brand control is needed, welcoming the active participation of consumers" (Vernuccio, 2014, pg. 212).

Research Question #6

Research Question #6 asked: Why is it important to implement a social media campaign during an event like the DCPD closure?

After attending public meetings at the Ludwick Community Center, it was made clear that the citizens of SLO did not feel heard or their concerns recognized. Allowing their concerns to be heard through social media, created a dialogue among a broader part of the community other than those who attended the public meetings. With an issue like DCPD, it's

hugely important that everyone is heard because it's something that will affect all aspects of the community.

Findings

Analyzing the data from Facebook and the survey, social media outreach was at an all-time low to begin with, and campaign began with starting from scratch. According to the survey, 76.6% of participants felt that PG&E had not addressed their concerns whatsoever about the potential closure. This was due in part to another survey question that asked how they stayed informed, which close to 60% said through Facebook or some other online source of news. Before now, PG&E had no other campaign that addressed the public's concerns and their lack of communication was reflected in the survey responses. An issue that could have conflicted with the findings would be the demographic the survey reached, where about 68% were between the ages of 18-25 and received much of their information through social media platforms. The other 32% were over the age of 25 and more often than not stayed informed through local television or printed newspapers. While there have been many printed articles written about DCPD in recent months, none have addressed the true risk factor accurately. Both responses, of those who have received their news via both social media and printed media, provided equally intriguing data, since both felt neglected by PG&E. All three of the PG&E officials interviewed also agreed the communication could be better on all ends of the spectrum, but especially through social media (Platt, interview participant). Because of the limitations of time and only being able to present this survey to the surrounding public of SLO, the concerns of other towns such as Arroyo Grande, Avila Beach, and Pismo, were not collected. The survey was confined to only those who were somehow involved with SLO through Facebook.

Conclusion

DCPP in any conversation with the locals who are part of SLO usually bring the formalities and niceties to a halt. It's nuclear power plant that draws so much opposition and an equal amount of support (Hartz, interview participant). However, it has been, in recent years, the communication of risk factors that has sent PG&E and the plant into a spiral of misinformation. When something as serious as nuclear energy is mentioned, most only hear the word nuclear and all of the catastrophes that go with it (Hartz, interview participant). What has hardly been brought to light online, aside from PG&E's poor brand essence communication, is the realities of what the public of SLO is truly afraid of. According to the PG&E executives who were interviewed, most of what everyone thinks *could* go wrong, absolutely *cannot*. The key here to the misinformation of risk factors is the result of a media that loves catastrophes, and thrives off of fast-paced, breaking news, and who can generate the most clicks, and the biggest audience. Rarely is the audience considered when it comes to what is being portrayed when an event like Fukushima happens. All that might matter, in grand scheme of it all, is who can draw the most viewers to their network NOT with the most accurate information, but with the most horrific videos and photos. The media has an advantage in a society that is fascinated by drama and often violent, catastrophic news. At the public forums, held at Ludwick Community Center in SLO, many of the concerns were in regards to radiation, meltdowns and earthquakes. In the survey, the concerns varied more around what would become of the economy, where our energy will come from, and how the nuclear waste will be disposed of. Something to consider, would be that those who took the survey, had a better understanding of the true risks associated with DCPP because they had done their research beforehand. They knew that Diablo had run for forty years absolutely risk-free (Hartz, interview participant). Those who attended the public forums were of an

older demographic and most-likely only received their news from sources that were solely working to generate the biggest audience and the most clicks, which could possibly mean the information they were putting out was inaccurate and sensationalized.

My goal throughout this study was to remain neutral on the topic while being an objective reporter who cared only about the audience at hand and the information about the potential closure they had been presented with. Turning to social media in order to help PG&E and the public maintain a better relationship through these events was a relevant and cost-effective way to raise awareness about the true risk factors at DCP, along with essence of PG&E's brand. The limitation of not being able to reach those who do not have social media, is apparent, but there are other ways to help inform the public on that end of the spectrum. This limitation was addressed in the survey with the question of the best way to reach some of these people.

The social media campaign for the potential decommissioning of DCP has been designed because I recognized a need for communication about an event that could affect all of SLO County. Poor communication is the root of an audience misunderstanding a brand's essence online, where everyone has a say. When an effort is made to break this chain of misunderstanding, the corporation put is put in a better, more accurate light. I partnered with current and former executives at PG&E to put together a form of response to the public's concerns about the decommissioning that have not been properly addressed. The designed study consisted of survey that acted a platform for conversation and discussion, so residents of SLO could be informed and have a more accurate understanding of the risk factors and history of the plant. With responses gathered from the public, they were resented to the executives from PG&E who had the chance to address the concerns and be candid about the

potential closure. Sitting down with them one-on-one created a more authentic response than listening to them speak in a public forum in front of 30 people. They felt more comfortable and compelled to be frank and honest about the true risk involved with Diablo, which painted the company in a more accurate light, and in stride with their mission statement. With that in mind, the survey itself acted as a means of maintaining PG&E's brand online, as their essence of a caring corporation was not being portrayed at all through any online social medium. The purpose of this study conducted over the past three months was to provide a voice for the community and bridge the gap between the possible decommissioning and the public.

Facebook was the main tactic in research and keeping track of data. It provided analytics for the page and helped get the word out to take the survey. Participants who took the survey backed up Vernuccio's idea that a brand must maintain its presence online to communicate its essence (2014). PG&E's motto maintains that they serve the community and care for the environment. This survey spoke to that motto and conveyed to the participants that their brand was still intact online and could be trusted with their responses.

In summary, the use of social media for outreach, addressing concerns, and generating responses becomes beneficial when a conversation is sparked, questions are asked, and voices are heard.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Transcripts – Chris Hartz

The following interview was conducted to get an expert opinion the decommissioning of the nuclear power plant, as well as examine the public concerns and provide a response.

Interviewer: Madi Salvati

Respondent: Pacific Gas & Electric Company (Chris Hartz)

Date of Interview: 10/31/2017

Interview Transcription:

Madi Salvati: What is the significance of Diablo Canyon being the only working nuclear power plant in California?

Chris Hartz: Jerry Brown was not at all supportive of building this plant. He intervened when it was built and if there was a republican governor, my guess is that they would have shut it down.

Madi Salvati: Why is the history of this plant and others important to the decommissioning?

Chris Hartz: It's a two-unit nuclear power plant, it was designed and built in the 60s, construction started around 1966-19967.

When you build a nuclear power plant, you build to a certain set of requirements, but the seismic requirements are unique to each site. Most of the plants back east don't have to worry about that. We get bigger earthquakes out here. What happened in the late 60s, there were two shell oil geophysicists and seismologists out doing prospecting off the coast of California, close to Diablo Canyon. And they had found another earthquake fault, and the reason that's important is that they were looking for new oil reserves. And where you have earthquake faults that's a good place to look. The info came out in peer-reviewed literature, and caught PG&E and the NRC by surprise. It was a much closer fault. That fault is only about a mile off shore.

So the plant had to be redesigned, which is unheard of. It wasn't allowed to operate---it had to go through a lot of retrofitting.

When the plant was due to go online, in the 70s, Three-Mile Island happened in March and that stop all licensing for two years. But this plant was built differently. It has the same type of reactors, but it's a Westinghouse reactor. In some ways it's apples and apples. During the two years, when the plant was waiting to open, they found significant quality-assurance issues with the way the plant was built.

Madi Salvati: What has your role at PG&E and Diablo Canyon, looked like?

Chris Hartz: I came to work for PG&E in 1983 and I was part of the initial, permanent plant staff, hired to run Diablo Canyon. In 1984 unit one got its license, and 1985 unit two got its license. To my knowledge, there's never been anyone killed, there's never been anybody exposed to a significant amount of radiation. It's pretty much run event free.

After Three Mile Island, there was a group formed in Atlanta: The Institute of Nuclear Power Operations. It's an independent organization. They have their own staff and they rate nuclear power plants. From 1985-1994, Diablo Canyon was the top plant in the world. And even after that, it's always been in the top four or five. There's never really been any serious incident.

I retired in 2008.

Madi Salvati: How would you respond to the concerns voiced by the public and the data presented?

Chris Hartz: One of the concerns with this plant is something similar to Fukushima. It's important to know this: Fukushima wasn't caused by the earthquake. When the earth happened, the plant shut down and that was fine. The problem was that the plant was ten to twenty feet above sea level. When you have a large earthquake, you have the potential to get tidal waves. When that happens, the plant shuts down and it's off. One of the problems with a nuclear power plant is that when you shut down a nuclear power plant, the uranium is so hot that you have to keep cooling it, even though the plant is shut down. It takes about five days for it to totally cool off. The earthquake was so large that it created a tsunami, a tidal wave bigger than a breakwater. The water was going into the plant and it flooded. But remember, it's shut down. The problem was when shutting the plant down, there's a running a system called its residual heat removal. That's an *electrically* powered motored. But the electricity is gone because the earthquake caused the power lines to fail. So where's the electricity coming from? An onsite generator. But the water comes in, it floods the bottoms of the building, where the generator is. The problem is, the doors to the generator weren't waterproof. So it floods and wipes out all the pumps, loses the power source, so now there's no heat removal. The uranium gets so hot, it melts, the fuel melts, and melts through the bottom of the reactor.

A big tidal wave is made. Here's the ocean, here's the plant up on dry land. If you look at pictures of Diablo Canyon you'll see there's a breakwater, two big breakwaters. Those breakwaters are there to prevent certain size waves from making it into the intake structure.

Why that's all important is that people have made a big stink about Diablo Canyon and earthquakes. Now, the reason why it's a stink is that it's essentially impossible at Diablo Canyon. When you're out at Diablo, you see the bluffs. The bluffs are way up there and that's where the plant is. I think the plant is at eighty-five foot elevation. There is no such thing as an eighty-five-foot tidal wave. That's not gonna happen. With an eighty-five-foot tidal wave, you would flood the entire county all the way to Carrizo Plain.

What's also different is the pumps at Diablo Canyon. Those pumps are behind doors that are water tight. It's like a submarine in that room. The reason that's so important is that a lot of people use that as an excuse for why the canyon should be shut down.

What Fukushima did was create more uncertainty with the licensing process.

Diablo Canyon was shut down a nuclear power plant gets a 30-year life. And PG&E had that extended a little bit until about 2025. The original plant was designed for a forty-year lifespan.

A lot of people in the nuclear industry recognized a long time ago that plants even at forty years old, are fine. The NRC established a process back in the 80s called plant life extension. And all the plants in the U.S. have gone in a gotten a 20-year life extension. But you have to get a new license for that.

Because you have to get a new license, that means you have to go through public hearings. That means you have interveners, such as the Mothers for Peace, and they get to have their say.

Madi Salvati: What's the significance of the history between the California Public Utilities Commission and PG&E?

Chris Hartz: PG&E is at the cutting edge of technology with the NRC. When Diablo Canyon started to operate, the State of California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has never liked PG&E or Diablo. Both units together costs 5.2 billion dollars at the time, which today, is at least 15-20 billion. But what you have to negotiate with the Utilities Commission is called the Prudency Hearance. This was gonna be a drag out, a very hard thing to do. So what happened was PG&E and the commission came to an agreement rather than litigating that stuff. This was a unique settlement in the entirety of the United States. They said instead of negotiating how much it all costs, forget that, you get nothing for that. But we're going to agree on the price per kilowatt and if you operate the plant then you'll get you money.

What happened was PG&E started running the plant, the capacity factor was at 70-percent, then 80-percent, then 90. Their running it as well it can be run. They are making more money than ever should be running a nuclear plant. It was like that for the whole forty years and they made tons of money. The P.U.C never thought it was possible. Since then PG&E is still doing well. But when the plant gets relicensed, that agreement has to be redone. PG&E might not get that same agreement---won't make the same amount of money.

Madi Salvati: So are the public's concerns about Diablo Canyon and earthquakes realistic?

Chris Hartz: There was a new analysis done on fault lines. Since 1973 there's been the Hosgri Fault. Those were two shell scientists. "Hos" is the beginning of one guy's last name and "gri" is the end of the other guy's last name.

The other big risk, let's say, if you really want to understand, is SONGS.

Appendix B: Interview Transcripts – Dustin Platt

The following interview was conducted to examine a relevant opinion about PG&E's response to concerns about possible decommissioning of the nuclear power plant.

Interviewer: Madi Salvati

Respondent: Pacific Gas & Electric Company (Dustin Platt)

Date of Interview: 11/1/2017

Interview Transcript:

Madi Salvati: What's your role?

Dustin Platt: Early-Career Engineer, I graduated this last June from Poly.

I'm part of the rotational engineering program right now. I just started in August. I'm still in my first 2-3 rotations. Normally they move us around every 2-6 months to get a feel for the departments.

Every 18 months they shut down one of the units completely, they do refueling and repairs on that unit if necessary.

Madi Salvati: What has the work environment been like with the potential closing?

Dustin Platt: It's been hectic. Something that happened last summer is sometimes they don't really know what to do with you as a new employee. In my case I was stepping in for an intern. There's a lot of turnover right now with the plant shutting down. We have most of our fire protection retire. We had a bunch of qualified people who had industry experience--- so they are there now.

Right now, the nuclear industry is going through an Affordability Initiative, and because of that we're trying to identify something that was brought up in a public meeting: cutting costs and what that means for the upkeep of the plant. I am helping with processing changes to maintenance plans and a lot of those changes are coming as a part of the Affordability Initiative. It's both on PG&E's side trying to cut costs to be more competitive and also on the nuclear side.

Madi Salvati: How well do you think PG&E has responded to the public's concerns?

Dustin Platt: We had one public meeting with the NRC to discuss decommissioning and then one or two with Senator Carbajal. I know people showed up because I watched them online. There were definitely people there for both sides. Some actually speaking on topic about the Joint Proposal, which was the subject of the meeting. From just living in SLO, I was kind of surprised because I didn't see any public announcements. I only knew about it because we have three emails that go out every day. The youngest person at these meetings was probably in their 40s. It was interesting.

Madi Salvati: How will these changes affect you as a new employee?

Dustin Platt: One work side of things, Diablo has historically called it, it seems to be an issue with nuclear, tribal knowledge. It's the term everyone throws around at DC. A lot of people know a lot of things and they know them off the top of their head. It hasn't been an issue yet. But turning over that knowledge could be an issue. They have to make it work. They can't lose that knowledge. The ideal was that all of these interns coming through are being brought in to be placed in some kind of system. From a personal perspective, just future stuff, I don't know what I'm going to do after eight years. There's basically three options: stay on for decommissioning, which probably isn't going to happen for someone like me because they don't need a lot of engineers and the people their hiring have decommissioning experience. The other option is to stay at PG&E. I don't know if I want to do that because of personal interest. I don't know if I want to be doing gas operations. The third option is to go and find something else. At the same time, I will have spent my first 8 years of industry experience at a forty year old plant. All of our valves are pretty old style. I mean, that's just the nature of the industry. Everything's old. It works but it's old. So I'm coming out of 8 years of experience with not a lot of current knowledge about other plants being built and how they compare.

Madi Salvati: How could PG&E better communicate with its publics?

Dustin Platt: Mail-links is probably the best way to do it. There's no way to send out some kind of mass email, they're not gonna do any online campaign. They do it with calendars, but people don't always read those. What do you think the sirens mean? It explains it in the calendars to turn to a local radio station. They've only been used once in Morro Bay for chemical spill and people did what they were supposed to do. And that's something we brought up, people don't really know that you aren't supposed to evacuate, you're not supposed to do whatever, because it doesn't necessarily mean DC is having an issue. PG&E, specifically Diablo, needs to be better about making it flashier? Something to get people to read it.

Appendix C: Transcripts---Heather Matteson

The following interview was conducted to the true of risks of nuclear power and potential decommissioning.

Interviewer: Madi Salvati

Respondent: Pacific Gas & Electric Company (Heather Matteson)

Date of Interview: 11/10/2017

Interview Transcript:

Madi Salvati: What is your role with Diablo Canyon?

Heather Matteson: I started out in operations. I graduated from Cal Poly in 2002 with a degree in materials engineering. I wanted to stay local and I couldn't find an engineering job... I did a bunch of odd jobs around town. I decided to apply to Diablo but was pretty nervous about it. All I'd heard was negative stuff. You probably know about the Mothers for Peace--I was on their mailing list. And my parents were nervous, my family was nervous. I just wanted to learn as much as I could. If I found something wrong than I would tell the Mothers for Peace and they'd have something to really protest. I've heard them speak out at some events with some really ridiculous-sounding stuff. I'm sure there's something real they could be talking about. So I kind of went in like a spy. I went into operating and was in training for the first 10 months and my coworkers would get really annoyed because I asked so many questions. But I asked tons of questions and after a few years I was qualified as an operator to do rounds at the plant. And then I went back to training get my license for operating the reactor. I was in there for about 8 years. Now I'm in charge of all the emergency procedures.

Madi Salvati: What would the potential decommissioning mean for you and your position?

Heather Matteson: It would go away. I'm sure I would find something else to work in. I want to work on helping nuclear stay alive.

Madi Salvati: What makes nuclear the better argument for keeping the plant open?

Heather Matteson: Last year on earth day, a friend of mine and I started Mothers for Nuclear mostly because we had heard rumors that something was going to happen at Diablo. We realized plants were getting shut down around the country and getting replaced with fossil fuels. The announcement of decommissioning came and the week after we had the pro nuclear march to end up at the State Lands Commission meeting. That was really sad because it had been announced the week before and our coworkers thought it was over, so

none of them came to the march. It was 5 day march. It was discouraging. Over the last year and half we've been investigating and learning more and more about nuclear and other energy options. We want to make sure we're doing the right thing, we don't want to advocate something if there are better options. The more we learn, the more certain we are that we need nuclear. We need nuclear to be part of a clean energy future. 1.4 billion people don't have any electricity at all in the world and so that's huge energy poverty. People can't advance their quality of life until they can get away from burning dung for everything they need. 9 million people die a year from air pollution, so until we start making some very very serious progress, we need to make sure we don't back track. So closing down clean energy sources when they are still viable is not the right thing to do.

Madi Salvati: What does this mean for California?

Heather Matteson: We've been writing to the CPUC and the government saying that it's gonna be really hard to meet our climate goals if we shut down existing nuclear. It's over 20% of our state's clean energy right now. And another discouraging thing that we've learned, that's really hard to talk about because everyone is really excited about renewables, but the more renewables we build the more we also have to have backup sources. There's lots of sightings for natural gas plants right now in SD. They typically put them in the poorer communities and there's nothing that they can do. We have to build something that is flexible.

Madi Salvati: How valid are the concerns the public has expressed at the public meetings and from what you heard?

Heather Matteson: People are scared. And it takes a long time for people to find out enough information to not be scared. I speak from experience because I used to be pretty scared of it. Now, I'm doing the right thing by helping this plant run and creating so much clean energy. Even after that I've gone through cycles in my career where I'm like, holy cow, I should not be doing this, this is way too scary. When Fukushima happened, I was in the control room at Diablo Canyon. So we had a tsunami watch to see if there was any change in ocean level, and seeing videos on the news of their plants exploding was so appalling. It was just pretty horrifying. When more info came out about what was actually going there, there's no impact from the plant to the people at all then what we created with fear, mental illness, people being scared to be outside, the evacuation killed people, and the media templates the tsunami itself. It killed 17,000 people. It flattened all this land. But it has nothing to do with nuclear. It was the tsunami that destroyed their homes. So I feel like a lot of us tend to be scared first, if we're scared do something, our tendency is to say no until we have more info. Specifically, as a working mom, we get targeted a lot by having to make decisions about a lot, there's a tendency to say no to everything. That's why we started

Mothers for Nuclear, we hope we can reach people that are scared. They want to make a snap judgement but they don't have any information on which way they should go. We could help provide that information. It's our only way forward.

Madi Salvati: If you had to advise the community about Diablo Canyon, what would you want to say to the public?

Heather Matteson: Decommissioning is going to be so impactful. There's really bad guidance right now on how to restore the site. It's physically impossible to get it back the way they want just from natural occurring radiation from the rocks, cosmic radiation everything combined. We have to ship our administration building out of state because of radiation. So we're tearing down concrete and shipping it to disposals sites in Utah. It's ridiculous, unnecessary, and it's going to be a huge amount of fossil fuels used to take it down. It's this amazing infrastructure that we shouldn't waste because it's already there. It's going to take resources to replace it. The community should stand up for it. But their all trying to get into the settlement money. The superintendent of the schools said it as a gut-punch that they didn't get as much money or any money. But PG&E doesn't really owe us any money and it wasn't going to be them anyway. It was ratepayers---us. They whole thing is a bad idea. The perceived risk is a lot lower than anyone knows. We'll overreact to anything that happens. How we talk about safety is way over the top. People get a paper cut and it's a big deal. So we're always trying to prevent everything---we go over all the emergency stuff every day, three times a day. We are one of the safest industry that there is in terms of accident rate and work injuries.

Madi Salvati: How has PG&E communicated the true risks?

Heather Matteson: They haven't. It's our whole industry has failed. They've been flying under the radar for 40 years because they probably should have originally picked different name, like fission energy because everyone thinks it's a big bomb and it could explode at any moment. It can't. The reactor cannot physically explode. It's a big mess. The industry hopes to keep flying under the radar, hoping no one asks any questions, while quietly producing 60% of the country's clean energy.