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Abstract

Over the past 4 months, our team at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Business Honors Academy has been working directly with Nebraska's own, *Arbor Day Foundation*, or Arbor Day, in hopes of applying our skill sets and mindsets to solve a pressing problem Arbor Day currently faces. We have been tasked with the challenge of identifying creative, scalable, and profitable new business ventures for Arbor Day that will aid the generation of new revenue sources. With these sources of revenue, Arbor Day desires to further inspire people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees and in turn solve some of the world's biggest challenges. Our recommendations to Arbor Day are to invest in social media to increase its brand awareness and presence with a younger demographic, to make use of influencer campaigns to increase social media engagement, and to utilize on-the-ground events and personalization tactics to increase repeat donations via social media.

Key Words: Arbor, Consulting, Social, Media, Influencers, Marketing

<center>**Executive Summary**</center>

Project Summary*:* Over the past 4 months, our team at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Business Honors Academy has been working directly with Nebraska's own, *Arbor Day Foundation*, or Arbor Day, in hopes of applying our skill sets and mindsets to solve a pressing problem Arbor Day currently faces. We have been tasked with the challenge of identifying creative, scalable, and profitable new business ventures for Arbor Day that will aid the generation of new revenue sources. With these sources of revenue, Arbor Day desires to further inspire people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees and in turn solve some of the world's biggest challenges.

Recommendation: It is our recommendation that the Arbor Day Foundation bring the Arbor Day experience online through the following methods:
- Heightened Social Media Presence Across Platforms
- Campaigns Pushed through Social Media Via Partnerships with Influencers and other Organizations
- Appeal to New, Younger Consumers such as Millennials and Generation Z Through Enhanced Brand Identity on Social Media Platforms
- Community Involvement with Campaigns

Rationale: According to *Broadband Search,* "more than 3.8 billion people, over half the world's population, use social media worldwide". These individuals are projected to spend almost 7 years of their life on social media (BroadbandSearch, 2020). Additionally, "young people have been identified as critical stakeholders in sustainability initiatives such as those embraced under the UN 2030 Agenda", according to an article by Niankara and Al Adwan (Niankara and Al-Adwan, 2019). With a growing population of social media users and the increasing importance of sustainability and giving back to the environment among young people, social media is the next space for a company like Arbor Day to be. Arbor Day's current customers range from age 45-60+. While this is still a relevant group of customers, millennials and Generation Z are becoming increasingly important as their buying power and voices grow. Therefore, it is important for Arbor Day to optimize its social media to bring a new generation into the Arbor Day customer base. Improving and utilizing social media to promote brand awareness and campaigns, Arbor Day can get its voice out into the world on social media, becoming a thought leader in the space for the world's most environmentally conscious generations.

Timeline for Implementation: The benefit of pursuing better social media content is that the process can begin immediately if one decides to commit to the venture. The first step is to begin discussing a plan of action for the 'new' content being posted and establish goals and critical metrics to the organization's success online, and then more closely identify their target audience to achieve those goals. Next, the Arbor Day foundation should begin consistently posting content on all social channels and track key metrics from those posts. All while this is occuring, the Arbor Day Foundation can research influencers to enter into new relationships with, and reach out to ones previously worked with for potential campaigns, and begin to curate content and event ideas for new campaigns.

Results: *Arbor Day Foundation* is doing its part in the movement for sustainability and environmental improvement. As the data shows throughout this report, the need for and benefit from an improved brand presence on social media is increasing as younger generations are moving online. With an aging customer demographic and the increasingly dated medium of direct mail purchases, Arbor Day may be missing out on the beneficial impact of social media. We are hopeful that through improved branding, finding a voice in the social media space, and structuring a successful business model for social media campaigns, *Arbor Day Foundation* will generate brand awareness and revenue to further support its mission. We believe that the implementation of these recommendations will aid Arbor Day in "inspiring people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees" for many years to come.

Supported Analysis and Evaluation

Branding, Recognition, and Presence:

Our first recommendation to Arbor Day Foundation is that it invests in social media in order to improve its brand recognition and presence. We recommend this because social media is a relatively inexpensive outlet that allows companies to reach targeted demographics through creative posts and other digital content. Improving brand recognition and presence can significantly increase sales. But it goes beyond simply increasing sales. Ideally, social media doesn't just boost sales; it increases engagement with a company's brand. Engagement is extremely valuable as it helps a company get on the radar of new potential customers, who may then either buy a product or recommend that company to another person. According to Sproutsocial, one of the most valuable things a smaller company can do is promote sales through social media and stay in the public eye, so people are reminded of the company and its mission.

Social media also presents a unique opportunity for Arbor Day Foundation to grow its presence with a younger demographic. The average customer or donor of the Arbor Day Foundation is over sixty years old. According to Sproutsocial, approximately 46% of people aged 65 and up use Facebook. However, among those aged 18-49, 79% use Facebook (Chen, 2020). Arbor Day Foundation has engaged in effective social media marketing on Facebook in the past, and, while we will still focus on helping make Facebook marketing more effective, many of our primary recommendations involve linking content across multiple social media platforms, which will reach an even younger audience. Instagram has 72% usage among those aged 13-17, 67% among those aged 18-29, but just 8% among those 65 and up (Chen, 2020). Clearly, improving Arbor Day Foundation's use of social media will enable better penetration into a more long-term, younger demographic. This is highly advantageous for Arbor Day Foundation's mission "to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees," as concern for the environment increases with decreasing age. Data from statista.com, shows that among those aged 18-34, 70% worry about global warming, while among those 55 years and older, only 56% worry about global warming (Wang, 2019). This nearly 15% increase in concern for the environment represents 15% more environmentally conscious consumers in the younger generation, who in turn would be far more likely to buy products or donate to a non-profit like the Arbor Day Foundation. Since more young adults both use social media and are environmentally conscious, we believe that Arbor Day Foundation can tap into a large target market through effective social media marketing.

As addressed above, expanding Arbor Day's presence and reach to new demographics will allow the organization to attract new customers and increase sales, but how much can one expect sales to increase? While there is a myriad of opinions on the impacts of social media branding, there is academic research that found that sales elasticity, the percent increase in sales following the implementation of effective social media marketing, was 51.47% (Fei & Fei, 2017). This includes both sales growth from existing customers buying more products and from new customers buying for the first time. However, given the low amount of available data, it is beneficial to look at some specific real-world examples, namely two social media success stories: Wayfair and Starbucks.

Wayfair is a company focused on online sales of home décor. As of 2019, Wayfair was a $9 Billion company with significant growth prospects. According to Shorty Awards, LLC, Wayfair was nominated for its Shorty Award for Retail and Commerce in 2017. The Shorty Awards honor top-notch social media companies, so Wayfair's social media strategy became successful during their FY 2017. Data on advertising expenses and sales revenue can be obtained from Wayfair's financial statements and taking the percent change in sales per percent change in advertising expense gives a proxy for advertising dollar effectiveness. During FY 2017, Wayfair's advertising dollar effectiveness was 1.15, meaning that for every percent increase in advertising expense, revenue grew 1.15%. The average of the previous four FYs was just .9986, representing a 15.32% increase in the effectiveness of their advertising dollars during their 2017 social media campaigns. Now, as with any data, these must be appropriately put in context. Not every ad dollar went to social media, and not every boost in revenue is due to advertising expenses. However, the result is still significant. It should also be noted that after 2017, we see a decrease in their

advertising dollar effectiveness back to about 1.00. This is still a .2% increase from prior years, but the decrease from 1.15 is due to Wayfair's pursuit of an aggressive growth strategy, which led to a huge increase in advertising expense. Advertising expenses, like any marketing cost, have diminishing returns, but this doesn't negate the effectiveness of Wayfair's social media strategy. Had they not engaged in social media marketing, the decline in effectiveness would've likely been to a value far below 1.

A second example, Starbucks, needs no introduction. The coffee behemoth has sales of $21.3 Billion, although their growth rate is fairly small since the company is well-established. Starbucks began to truly excel at social media in 2014, as they began a cross-platform campaign using an appealing, mission-focused style (Huff, 2014). In 2014, advertising expenses dropped 3.3% while revenue grew by 10.4%. For the past two years, their advertising efficiency had averaged .715, but now, their advertising was so effective that ad expense could drop while revenue still rose. During the following two years, ad efficiency rose to a value of 1.18, a whopping 65.63% increase. Unlike Wayfair, Starbucks was able to achieve sustained increases in advertising efficiency after leveraging social media well. This is largely because Starbucks didn't pursue rapid, high-cost growth in the ensuing years.

The average of the two companies is a 40.48% increase in advertising efficiency, which could be reasonably foreseen to generate the 51.47% long-term sales increase predicted by the academic journal above. Due to the growth in Arbor Day Foundation's followers as well as increased engagement from existing customers, we believe that Arbor Day Foundation's sales may increase in the long-term by approximately 50% due to social media, although a short-term prediction for the next 1-2 years would be approximately a 5-10% increase.

Influencer Campaigns:

Another key recommendation we have for Arbor Day Foundation is to engage in the recruiting and utilization of social media influencers. An influencer is someone who has a large social media following around a particular topic. Their followers are passionate and engage regularly with the influencer and as such are likely to be swayed by the influencer's endorsements (Influencer Marketing, 2020a). Influencers can range from just a thousand followers to several million, but, as the following increases, so does the price tag for endorsements. As stated previously, influencers operate within a particular niche or topic area where they are regarded as a sort of expert, and they must have a certain level of care about the Arbor Day Foundation's cause. For this reason, we recommend that Arbor Day Foundation recruit their own influencers rather than making use of a third-party service. Speaking with Rusty and others at Arbor Day Foundation, it was clear that using influencers was not something that Arbor Day Foundation had engaged with in the past, largely due to the perceived lack of ROI and high pricing. A third-party influencer service was tried, but to little effect. We believe that Arbor Day Foundation can more effectively leverage social media if it reaches out to influencers who have a following related to the mission of the Foundation, as those influencers will not only have a target audience to whom Arbor Day Foundation's products will appeal, but they will also likely be willing to work for a reduced rate for a cause they're passionate about.

However, partnering with influencers who do not have a page that revolves around tree planting or sustainability efforts is worth mentioning as well. For example, the team trees campaign was incredibly successful with collaboration from MrBeast. While MrBeast is a YouTuber with a focus on capturing his extreme stunts on video, he was still able to raise nearly twenty million dollars for a tree planting initiative with Arbor Day. This can be easily replicated with another influencer who simply wants to do good. The Arbor Day Foundation can easily replicate this sort of campaign with influencers who utilize their platforms for environmental activism, in addition to influencers who may use their platforms for an unrelated topic who simply care about any sort of philanthropy. Regardless, influencer marketing will help Arbor Day Foundation to expand its permanent social media following in a meaningful way, and, as will be discussed shortly, will also increase return on advertising significantly.

In order to determine if influencers are a viable long-term strategy for Arbor Day Foundation's social media, our group conducted research into the value of influencers on social media. For 89% of companies, influencer marketing has a comparable or better ROI than other methods (Bailis, n.d.). Instagram is by far the best channel for influencer marketing, so it is highly likely that Arbor Day Foundation would use Instagram for its influencer campaigns. Instagram posts, stories, and videos should all be used to maximize effectiveness (Bailis, n.d.). A powerful opportunity with influencer marketing is that, as Arbor Day Foundation better understands the landscape of Instagram and leverages influencers, return on ad dollars increases significantly. According to a benchmark report from Influencer MarketingHub that analyzed over 2000 business campaigns, the average earned media value was $5.20 per dollar spent on influencers, while the best companies gained up to $18 (Influencer Marketing, 2020). Even more significant is that, since Arbor Day Foundation is a non-profit with a compelling mission, it can potentially get even more return as influencers may be willing to work for a reduced rate or for free. We believe Arbor Day Foundation is in a unique and highly opportunistic position to leverage influencer marketing to permanently expand its social media following and customer base while simultaneously increasing return on advertising in a big way.

Community Involvement on the Ground:

Now we move onto the parts that tie social media directly to the person to increase engagement. CEO Matt Harris had mentioned the desire to have a more boots-on-the-ground approach with people actually out planting trees to better fit the mission. Our campaigns can maximize involvement with two phases that may occur separately or concurrently: fundraising via social media and physically planting trees.. The concurrent approach would have the planting operate as marketing for the campaigns. Partway into the campaign, the influencer would inform their followers that they will be heading to X location and physically planting the trees. Not only does it show that participants are committed to helping plant the trees, but it also provides a means for those unable to donate money to help with the project. We recognize that some people are not able to help out financially, but they may be able to come to the physical location and help out by actually planting. At points in most people's lives, they have either time as more valuable to them or money as more valuable to them. This is often tied to age based on how people transition to progressively better jobs. A 17-year-old making $9 an hour probably believes they can best benefit the cause with their time. Take instead, a 45-year-old lawyer making $200 per hour. While we would love to have them put boots on the ground planting trees, we should also recognize that logically they will have a larger impact with their money from an extra hour of work as opposed to planting trees for an hour. People with this larger discretionary income are more likely to volunteer, though, so we can hope to get their time as well.

A campaign like this, which allows time or monetary donations, should work well because the additional options allow people to best contribute. Beyond those two options, people can like and share the information to boost reach. All of these are completely valid options for people to aid in our cause and should not be discounted despite our focus on boots on the ground.

A great way to execute on-the-ground events would be partnering with local scout troops. Scouts are constantly out in nature, so they are a great group to aid in Arbor Day's mission. One aspect of Scouting is Leave No Trace, that way nature is preserved and can act as a campsite in the future as opposed to ruining it for everyone. Some key points for this are leave what you find, minimize campfire impacts, and plan ahead. One saying I learned from scouts was "Fluff your Duff" which means following packing up a campsite, you fluff up the vegetation that was compacted so it has a better chance to live and looks less like it was camped at.

Scouts will be much more willing to do service projects as opposed to monetary donations as they are young and looking to volunteer. They can help cover the physical planting of some of the campaigns. Part of camping is often a campfire, something that is only possible through the presence of trees. The BSA recommends using camping stoves as opposed to campfires, but we can offset even those by planting more trees in these areas. Scouts have many recurring things through the months or annually, so

adding a time to head out to campsites and plant some trees would not be difficult to organize. My troop was always busy with something: from annual popcorn sales, can drives, monthly service projects, and monthly campouts. Combining a campout and a service project into one sounds like it would be easy to swing. Throw that in with a contest between troops for who can plant the most trees and suddenly you've got an easily repeatable, on-the-ground campaign.

Personalizing Donations and Visualization of Impact:

Now we can't expect everyone to go out and plant trees at all of these campaigns. However, that won't stop people from wanting to make an impact. With dollar donations, people are going to be more willing to donate if they know where their money is going to. This is not just telling them their donation created 10 trees, but showing where it is their donation went. 83% of people in the U.S. think it's important to know the real outcomes of their time and money put into non-profits (Gollihue, 2018). Especially since some charities have a low passthrough rate, consumers want to know that their money is making an impact and not just spent on advertising or other fundraising events that never actually reach the destination.

By tracking where the money goes you will be able to send out emails to donors at intervals such as planting, 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 5 years, 10 years, and 20 years. The actual time is not set in stone but something that can flow as needed. It's a reminder to donors of the impact that they have made, and that they can recreate that impact again. An idea that may also work is providing the tagged location on Google Maps so people are able to visit the group of trees they helped plant. As most photos now include geotagged data, it would not require too much additional work. If the consumer is more satisfied with the donation, they are also going to be more likely to refer it to others, resulting in future donations.

Some simple things to include in these updates are: the location, how many trees your donation helped plant, type of trees, progress pictures, and time to carbon positivity. The inclusion of time to carbon positivity I believe is needed, as I did not know that it was 10 - 20 years for the trees to net a positive change. A message along the lines of "These trees have made a positive impact, but you have been doing that already for years, thank you for your support and commitment" seems like a great little message to include at that time. This simple personalization will encourage repeat donors as well as higher levels of donation as, in the U.S., nearly 70% want a personalized experience (Gollihue, 2018).

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Synopsis of Results and Recommendations

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Resulting recommendations, tools, and products.

Our resulting recommendations for the Arbor Day Foundation are increased branding, influencer or partnership marketing campaigns, on the ground events that correspond to these campaigns, and personalized impact showcases. First, we recommend creating an increasingly valuable brand image across social media platforms and increasing social media presence across platforms. A report from Digital Hothouse says that "companies with active social media profiles enjoy more loyalty from their customers. When you are sincerely engaging and interacting on social media, an impression is created that you are more than just a faceless corporation, but a group of people with a shared vision" (Thornton, 2018). With this increased loyalty, there will be increased engagement across all social media platforms, which has the potential to increase donations, purchases, and the longevity of Arbor Day's success.

Our next recommendation for the Arbor Day Foundation is for them to utilize and create partnerships with influencers and other organizations. For example, one influencer who we thought would be a good fit for ADF to partner with is Ashley Graham, who is a model and television personality. With nearly 11 million Instagram followers, an incredibly supportive follower base with high engagement on her posts, and frequent posts, we believe that Ashley would be a great candidate for an Arbor Day Foundation social

media campaign. Ashley is a plus-sized model who is dedicated to women's empowerment and who has done campaigns for numerous clothing brands that have younger target markets such as Levi's and is also featured by fashion brands across their social media, magazines and blogs. Therefore, her followers are also more likely to be the people who shop at and follow those brands. She was also born in Lincoln, NE, and visits the state frequently! Another reason why she would be an excellent social media campaign partner is because she does post photos of nature, the environment and being sustainable. Some of the most recent posts on her Instagram @AshleyGraham include: a picture of her on her aunt's farm in Nebraska, paddleboarding in Mexico with a caption about Earth Day, and a picture of Pioneers Park. In Ashley's social media campaign with the Arbor Day Foundation, there can be posts that fall in line with what she already currently posts. She could post a picture of her and her family planting trees with a caption that promotes ADF's mission and a link to donate in her bio. Given her supportive and younger follower base, she will be able to make an impact on ADF's donations, website traffic and overall brand image. However, given that ADF is still new with influencer marketing, there are always opportunities to start with smaller influencers who have fewer followers. For example, an Instagram account such as @Lizannelately, a Minnesota based blogger with around 5K followers, would also be a great partner. She is a big advocate for local shopping and also enjoys showcasing her travel adventures. Like Ashley, she also shares photos of the environment and has even partnered with sustainable companies for sponsored posts. Whether ADF targets a large or a smaller account, there is going to be a great impact over time. Examples of both of the influencer's content mentioned above can be found in the appendix. Additionally, ADF should leverage its existing relationship with MrBeast, which has the potential to become a recurring campaign if done correctly. Given that the relationship exists and that MrBeast's followers who donated all shared in the success of the campaign, there may be an incentive to create a similar campaign..

The next recommendation is influencer marketing and partnerships with corporations. Partnering with influencers will increase engagement with Arbor Day's social media platforms and increase donations. For example, there is an account on Instagram called @beautifuldestinations. This account posts photos of beautiful photos on earth that are taken, usually professionally, by Instagram users. Essentially, most of their content is user-generated content that features a nice caption about the picture. Beautiful destinations has nearly 14 million followers with lots of active users that send in photo submissions, which makes it an ideal account to partner with due to its high engagement and post interactions. A recommendation for a potential partnership would be for Beautiful Destinations to promote planting trees through the Arbor Day Foundation to offset the carbon footprint that their followers create from traveling to new places.

The final recommendation is on-the-ground events. An impactful reality that can spawn from enhancing Arbor Day's digital brand through social media platforms is the effectiveness that Arbor Day, and its influencers, will have when executing a call to action. Laid out below are a few ideas of how the Arbor Day Foundation can take a successful online movement and bring it to local communities across the United States, creating more of an experience for those partaking in furthering Arbor Day's mission. These in-person events would bring communities together around the cause of planting, nurturing, and celebrating trees. We want people to see what kind of impact the Arbor Day Foundation can have in their community, and we want this shared cause to be visibly and physically experienced, as well as digitally, through as many people as possible. We also want to show that people will rally together when they are called to action to help the sustainment of their environment. Hopefully, in portraying to individuals that they are a part of a greater team and a greater mission in supporting the Arbor Day Foundation, it will inspire them to join in on future campaigns with Arbor Day Foundation and continue to interact with the brand on social media.

We have shared some general ideas and brief descriptions in appendix A.1 regarding these potential on-the-ground events. We have chosen to share and analyze the idea of influencer retreats in more detail (see appendix A.1 for further details). Part of the analysis we conducted is to show how Arbor Day's current campaign #TeamTrees can exploit these ideas. The concept behind influencer retreats is to bring people together in person where the influencer can engage with them in some unique way. This will look vastly different depending on the current running campaign and the influencer involved. One successful example

comes from the #TeamTrees campaign. The YouTube influencer, MrBeast, tweeted about wanting assistance from people for planting trees in Oregon. Many people saw the tweet and came to help MrBeast plant trees, furthering our point of how impactful and beneficial social media can be. This influencer retreat was simple, effective, and had little to no cost. These attributes are very appealing for a business venture and are one of the reasons we believe Arbor Day should pursue these retreats. If the Arbor Day Foundation can push its influencers to take part in events like this one, while handling the logistics behind them, it would surely be an effective way to bring people together to support the cause on the ground. It would be relatively simple to incorporate revenue streams from these on-the-ground events. With influencer retreats, for example, there could be an admission fee or trees to take home and plant for a cost. Regardless of the revenue, these retreats would serve to strengthen the following of the current campaign, grow commitment from existing followers, and spark new followers as well. Overall, these types of events can further develop Arbor Day's presence in specific communities while at the same time furthering its recognition around the world through promotion on social media. Moving forward with the MrBeast campaign, Arbor Day can harness the current attention from MrBeast's national following and use it to their advantage. This campaign provided revenue for Arbor Day, but why not utilize it effectively to grow Arbor Day's following on social media and create a lasting impact for the company rather than simply one quarter's spike in revenue from #TeamTrees? This is what our new business venture is all about, utilizing resources and the potential voice that Arbor Day has in the digital space. There are so many individuals today who are truly passionate about companies like Arbor Day, companies that are improving this Earth and the people living on it. These people are more than willing to help and simply need direction from Arbor Day on what to do and how to do it. Younger generations are extremely motivated by sustainability efforts, and Arbor Day can use this, along with the social media platforms these young individuals live on, to their advantage. Influencer retreats, campaign challenges, and any other idea that brings people together in a fun, cost-effective, and innovative way to support a good cause can be done to provide that immersive community experience Arbor Day is looking for. However, these highly motivated individuals can help Arbor Day themselves.

A great, innovative, and relatively easy example of how to utilize individuals on social media comes from Apple's "Shot On iPhone Campaign". According to Baker, "Taking beautiful pictures has also become increasingly important for social media users over the years, especially with photo-focused platforms such as Instagram. Apple innovatively decided to mesh these ideas together" (Baker, 2019) and launch this campaign where the content was taken directly from the target market; talk about a resource saver! "Apple started the campaign, but iPhone users are the people doing the hard work. Through this campaign, the company builds a feed of the most beautiful and unique pictures that also serve as a way to improve brand awareness" (Baker, 2019). All users have to do is take a photo, post it to their Instagram, and add the hashtag #shotoniphone. There have been over 4.3 million posts so far using this hashtag (Baker, 2019). This kind of creativity is what Arbor Day needs. Creating a #doingmyplantingpart or #plantedmytree campaign suggesting individuals plant a tree and post about it or post about the most unique tree they have seen is next to free. Perhaps some will only get a few takers, but the one that hits the right target and blows up is what Arbor Day needs to get the kind of traction and support they are looking for. This venture is structured to support campaigns on different social media platforms, but the ideas and longevity are limitless. The right partnership and the right influencer will do numbers for Arbor Day, but even a little creativity and sustained brand identity can go a long way.

The last recommendation to the Arbor Day Foundation is to create a level of personalization of donations and visual impact. During our conversations with the Arbor Day Foundation, we felt that gathering data such as people's emails and utilizing that for future advertisements and engagements. When a person donates through a partner's donation link or signs up for an "on the ground" event, we can gather these people's emails for later use. Essentially, this would be great for sending out a "thank you" letter with a photo or infographic that showcases the visual impact. After that, these emails can also be utilized for future promotions.

Challenges or potential risks associated with recommendation:

Given that influencer marketing is growing quickly, the space is still relatively new with its own set of challenges. According to a website called Mediakix that conducted a study on influencer marketing, the top 2 challenges working with influencers are: "fake followers of inauthentic engagement & social algorithm of platform changing"(Mediakix, 2019). While most influencers have authentic and organic followers, some influencers may try to manipulate their impact by using fake followers. This goes for other companies and businesses as well, who may also manipulate followers to make their brand seem more important or authentic. These fake followers stem from an increasing trend of bot activity, where individuals can buy followers to make their accounts look like they have a large impact. This can be troubling for an organization that hires an influencer with a large percentage of fake followers, as these bots do not boost engagement in any way. However, social media platforms, especially Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, are taking this seriously by deleting millions of accounts with automated, spam or inactive accounts. Additionally, it is easy to tell when there is a large number of fake followers on an account: There will be an enormous amount of followers on a page, with very low engagement on posts. While bot activity is a concern in working with influencers, this is relatively easy to mitigate.

The other large problem that companies who work with influencers find is that social media algorithms can change, making it difficult for their post to be seen. However, an article from SproutSocial states that "For starters, social media algorithms treat engagement (think: likes, comments, and shares) as a sort of snowball effect. That is, the more engagement a piece of content gets, the more likely it is to be rewarded by the algorithm." (Barnhart, 2020) Therefore, if Arbor Day finds an influencer who gets high engagement, social media algorithms should not compromise the social media campaign.

Regarding the in-person events that Arbor day will organize to complement their social media campaigns, there may be some challenges associated with organizing these events. One challenge will be to ensure that the event stays within a set budget. According to a blog post from EventBank, a popular event management software, "organizations simply track their spending during the planning process and assess along the way. This can result in overspending, and organizations might find themselves literally paying for it in the end" (Tang, 2019). To combat this, it is essential to work within a fixed budget when planning for events. With proper planning, this challenge can be easily avoided.

Another problem that is common for events is finding enough staff to run the event. Understaffed events are a serious problem that is usually only noticed on the day of the event. However, given Arbor Day has experience putting on large events, this challenge can be easily mitigated. Arbor Day can ask local volunteer groups in the event area to help with the event or can ask the influencer at the event for help if they have a team working with them. Some other best practices to avoid understaffing events come from a blog called Socialtables. They recommend talking to stakeholders to obtain crucial event information on what they need help with and writing out job functions for each role at the event. (Waida, 2020).

Implementation Plan and Timeline

Investments
As discussed above, there is no finite beginning and end, should Arbor Day Foundation choose to pursue this new venture. The impact of investing in social media and improving one's brand image and digital presence can be multifold and everlasting. However, there is a need to put much time and work into this venture to ensure its success. Arbor Day Foundation will need to consider the necessary resources, debate what they are willing to invest, and create a plan of action.

First, Arbor Day Foundation will need to consider what they are willing to invest. Curating a successful brand image, operating on social media, and ensuring its success will take some investment on Arbor Day's part. Although some risks of social media campaigns, such as the inevitable "hit or miss" nature of advertising, Arbor Day can lower the chances of a campaign that falls through the cracks by doing their due diligence. Arbor Day Foundation must be willing to invest in the time, talent, and financial needs of

this new venture. In terms of the time needed to keep up with social media and the running of campaigns, this is not a venture that can be worked on initially and then forgotten about in the future. There will be many hours at the front end spent finalizing the brand image Arbor Day would like to portray, brainstorming campaign and content ideas, and discussing whom the campaigns will be pushed out to. But even more, Arbor Day's brand image needs to be sustained over time. As Arbor Day begins to attract more of a following, it will need to keep pushing out content to these interested consumers. Though this may seem like an uncanny amount of time, "91% of marketers said they noticed an increase in their brand visibility by only spending a few hours per week on social media" (Baker, 2019).

Arbor Day will also need to invest in talent that is capable and energetic about this new venture. Whether that is sending current employees in the social media and marketing space to get more training or meeting with them to discuss this new venture and mindset or perhaps even hiring an eager and creative social media intern or employee, this human capital and thinking will be an investment. Without the ability and motivation at Arbor Day, the longevity of this campaign would be in danger. Along with the need for talent comes financial needs. The extent of finances Arbor Day would wish to put into this venture is completely up to the company. If hiring a new intern or employee is the commitment Arbor Day would be willing to make, that would require a greater expense than shifting current employee's responsibilities to focus more on this venture. Expenses are also subject to deals with influencers, types of influencers, paid promotions on social media, and other types of activities. According to a *Buffer Marketing Article,* There are "companies that spend millions on marketing and others who spend zero", with "the industry average settling between $200 to $350 per day" (Lua, 2019). This venture is really one where expenses are extremely subject to change based on what Arbor Day is wanting to commit financially.

Plan of Action
Lastly, Arbor Day Foundation will need to create a plan of action. Because a single post on social media can easily get lost in the sea of users and content shared every day, Arbor Day needs to strategically and thoughtfully plan for this venture and arrange for its successful implementation. This business venture will be much easier to rationalize, quantify, and evaluate with specific goals put into place. In Kristen Baker's *Ultimate Guide to Social Media Marketing Campaigns,* she explains that "when creating a social media marketing campaign, you should keep specific SMART goals in mind to ensure your work is as effective as possible" (Baker, 2019). We have provided some options for goals in this new venture, but ultimately, the company will need to decide what the most important aspect of this venture will be to them, set goals concurrently with these aspects, and implement a follow-through plan.

After considering its goals in this new venture, Arbor Day will acknowledge the relevant target market. With "77% of the U.S. population on social media of some kind to "chat with friends, to stay connected to people across the globe, or for business and networking purposes, consumers are on social media for a multitude of reasons" (Baker, 2019). It is easy then, to understand that many users want different things from their social media platforms. As discussed earlier, there is an extremely large market of younger generations who are increasingly interacting with sustainable companies whose missions provide some type of value to them. As this is the space Arbor Day will likely desire to probe, it will need to do its due diligence in understanding this target market, how and why they are motivated, and what they are likely and unlikely to respond to.

Once Arbor Day has considered its goals in this social media venture and the target market in sight, the company should begin curating relevant campaigns and content, discussing which platforms to send these through, and inevitably releasing them through the respective platforms into the eyes of their target market. With diligent research, necessary investments, and a thoughtfully curated and implemented action plan, Arbor Day should see a rising increase in its interactions, social media reach, and improved brand presence across younger and more tech-savvy generations. Though these results may not come instantaneously, over time they will, in turn, improve Arbor Day's familiarity as an impactful non-profit amongst younger generations and will translate to more profitable campaigns and a more successful business overall.

Expected value to the organization:

While we believe that influencer marketing campaigns will bring great value to Arbor Day, there are also upfront costs associated with partnering with an influencer. According to an article from Mediakix, there are 3 partnership cost negotiation steps that are crucial in deciding how much an influencer will get paid (Mediakix, n.d.):

1. *Social reach,* or how many followers a creator has. Make sure that these followers are organic, and ensure that the level of engagement on posts matches the follower count
2. *Type of sponsored content:* cost will vary if its a post on the newsfeed versus publishing a blog post or a Facebook story.
3. *Length of sponsorship:* the average length of a campaign is from 2-6 weeks, with an average of 4 weeks.

Keeping these costs in mind, we can understand the average costs of an influencer. Given that influencer marketing is most commonly used on Instagram, we utilized data from Instagram influencer campaigns to calculate expected costs. These costs are still incredibly variable, and hard to measure, though. An article from WebFX states that Instagram influencers typically charge around $10 per post, per every set of 1000 followers. For example, influencers with 100,000 followers can charge around $1000 per post. However, some influencers may base their pricing off of a more performance-based approach that places a high value on engagement. The same article says that influencers may "charge $250 to $750 per 1000 engagement, on average", meaning that for every 1000 engagements (likes or comments) it costs between $250-$750 (WebFX, n.d).

Given the costs of these partnerships can be variable it is difficult to pinpoint an exact number that these partnerships will cost the organization. Additionally, given that the Arbor Day Foundation is a non-profit organization, some influencers may be willing to decrease their rates or take part in a campaign for goodwill or to give back. Rather, some critical metrics that we suggest are as follows:

- *Return on Investment on Specific Campaigns:* (donations/amount spent) *100
- *Number of trees planted*: for on the ground events, or number of trees that will be planted from donations for a specific campaign
- *Overall brand awareness:* website traffic, growth in likes, shares, followers, or views; usage of hashtags originated by Arbor Day
- *Engagement on Influencer posts:* likes, comments, and impressions received on Arbor Day sponsored posts versus other brands an influencer has partnered with
- *Click-through rate:* monitoring the average ratio of users that click on links in email marketing content from personalized donation emails

While the results from each campaign or post can be highly variable, adopting these metrics and tracking them long term can help identify what campaigns or types of content provide high return for Arbor Day Foundation, and what may not be as lucrative. Additionally, as ADF continues to adjust their digital strategy and utilize social media campaigns, we believe that this is scalable over time. We believe this is scalable because as brand image gets stronger online, more people will be aware of ADF's mission and story. This will allow ADF to broaden its reach: instead of partnering with one influencer for a social media campaign, this can turn into a group partnership with multiple influencers who are promoting the same campaign story in their own way. Digital content can be highly variable in its cost structure and returns, but it is our belief that adopting some of these metrics can provide a more solid framework for the Arbor Day team to evaluate their social media content and the value it brings.

The expected value associated with on the ground events will also be extremely variable. The costs and potential revenue streams will be different for each type of on the ground event. These events will require a level of customization and the Arbor Day team will need to identify what they want out of each event. At a simple level, the event could be something like MrBeast's influencer retreat where many of his fans showed up out of their own volition and planted trees. An event like this would come at no cost to Arbor Day, but would yield the benefit of volunteer labor and increased commitment to the cause. Due to the fact that the expected value of these events will significantly change based on what kind of event is carried out, potential costs and revenue streams have been included in appendix A.1. It is important to

note that the Arbor Day team should move forward with an event that fits their goals, the current campaign, and financial capabilities.

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Appendices

Appendix A - General Ideas

Appendix A.1 - On The Ground Implementation

1. **Festivals** - Large celebration event where people can come together and celebrate a current campaign. The reality of what these events could be is very broad and must be customized to each campaign.
    a. All inputs will vary immensely, but could include:
        i. Security
        ii. Vendors
        iii. Event Insurance
        iv. Promotional Expense
        v. Rental of Event Space
        vi. Entertainment
2. **Run for the Trees** - Fundraiser that can be executed in any city across the US, or abroad, that will consist of people entering into a race to raise money for the current Arbor Day campaign. This could look like a marathon, half-marathon, 5k, or anything similar.
    a. Needed Resources
        i. Route Certification
        ii. Volunteers
        iii. Signage and Barriers
        iv. T-shirt

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        v.   Chip Timers
       vi.   Event Insurance
     vii.   Water and Food
    viii.   Promotional Material
  b. Investments (Costs)
        i.   To put on the event approx. \$2,500 (Denning, N/A)
       ii.   Promotional expenses - variable depending on desired reach
  c. Potential Revenue Streams
        i.   Admission fee from runners to cover expenses for putting on the event
       ii.   Sponsorships for additional revenue

3. **Influencer Retreats** - These are events where the influencer that is supporting the current campaign holds an event where he/she engages with participants. A few examples include: planting trees, yoga with an influencer, learning how to compost, learning how to recycle, etc. These events have no bounds in terms of customization and creativity. These would most likely include days where influencers and participants plant trees together.
  a. Needed Resources:
        i.   The influencer
       ii.   A place to congregate
      iii.   Supplies/Equipment
  b. Investments (Costs)
        i.   Payment for the influencer (if necessary) - varies depending on the agreement
       ii.   Payment for a place to congregate (if necessary) - varies depending on location
      iii.   Payment for supplies to carry out retreat (hopefully already supplied by the running campaign) - varies depending on the event
  c. Potential Revenue Streams
        i.   Volunteer labor
       ii.   On-site donations
      iii.   On-site purchases
      iv.   Additional donations from enhanced commitment to the cause
       v.   Greater digital presence

4. **Community Competitions** - Based on the current campaign and which areas of the country are engaging the most with the campaign, The Arbor Day Foundation could sponsor a challenge between different groups of people to support the current campaign. For example, schools could compete to raise money for a campaign that supports the reforestation of nearby land. Additional competing parties could be youth sports teams, companies, churches, university groups, etc. The winning group would win a prize of some sort.
  a. Needed Resources
        i.   Team at Arbor Day to put together the challenges
       ii.   Team at Arbor Day to "sell" the challenges to groups/orgs.
      iii.   A prize for the winning group
  b. Investments (Costs)
        i.   Promotional materials for the challenges - varies depending on desired reach and method of reach
       ii.   The prize for the challenge - varies depending on desired prize
  c. Potential Revenue Streams
        i.   Donations raised through the challenge
       ii.   Additional donations from enhanced commitment to the cause

5. **Social Media Spotlights** - Arbor Day could have a form where organizations can register to be featured on their social media platforms for the green initiatives they are pursuing. Many organizations or groups pursue green initiatives that relate to their purpose, and this would be a great way for the Arbor Day Foundation to give recognition to those groups.
  a. Needed Resources
        i.   Arbor Day team to find local green initiatives
       ii.   Social Media Account

b. Investments (Costs)
    i. Employees time to seek out local green initiatives
c. Potential Revenue Streams
    i. Donations from enhanced commitment that stems from the social media takeover

Appendix B - Documents & Images

Arbor Day Foundation Innovation Assessment Tool

Arbor Day Foundation
Innovation Assessment Tool

All questions should be answered on a scale of 1-10 (ten being best):

Model

1) Do we have the right people internally or is it easily outsourceable?

    1 2 3 4 5 6 7✓ 8 9 10

2) How easy will it be to test? (human/financial/time)

    1 2 3✓ 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3) On balance, does this provide a benefit to (or benefit from) any other programs, facilities, or business units?

    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10✓

4) Do current models exist to learn from?

    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10✓

Financial

5) How significant is the long-term annual revenue potential?

    None $1mm   >$5mm/yr
    1 2 3 4 5 6✓ 7 8 9 10

6) What capital investment is required to start?

    >$1mm $100,000   None
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9✓ 10

7) How long will it take to produce a positive net?

    5 years   3 years   Immediate
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7✓ 8 9 10

8) Does this project support or sustain diversification? (seasonality, audience, market...)

    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10✓

Market

9) How much competition exists in the marketplace?

    1 2 3 4✓ 5 6 7 8 9 10

Left margin notes:

This will be hard to test. Just have to watch for major results over time.

Many companies are already doing this - and succeeding. Anyone can look at other businesses' social presence and campaigns for free.

Competition will be the same as every day competitors of ADF. Using social media won't necessarily stop people from using different organizations with similar missions, but there will be many more supporters of ADF with a great digital presence. This venture could only benefit ADF in placing them above competitors.

Right margin notes:

Rusty, Shawna, & Max could be utilized. ADF could think about hiring an intern or a new employee with social media, campaign, content creating experience. This venture could definitely get started with in house talent though.

The revenue potential from an increased brand awareness, an increased following, more commitment to and support of the company is hard to monetize. The potential is very great, as social media gives companies so much exposure, and this will spill over into every aspect of ADF.

Great benefit will come from a persistent and eventual improvement of ADF's brand image. Should begin to see results trickle in starting right away. More followers, more interactions, more donations.

The essence of this project creates diversification in terms of many different social media audiences and platforms.

This venture to improve ADF's brand image and voice on social media has the potential to last as long as ADF is around. This is one of the most longest lasting ventures in terms of impact that ADF could pursue.

10) How does it stack up in the current marketplace?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8 ✓   9   10

11) What is the longevity?

1 year   5 years   10+ years

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 ✓

The current market place is owned by online. ADF is missing out on a great opportunity that so many other similar companies are benefitting greatly from.

Mission

12) How closely does it fit with our mission to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9 ✓   10

This completely depends on the success of this venture, but ADF has already had some lucky success in the social media space with the Youtuber, reaching far greater than 1 mm people with one campaign.

13) In an average year, how many people will this engage or touch?

None   100,000   >1mm

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 ✓

14) How strong is the experience with the mission?

1   2   3   4   5   6 ✓ 7   8   9   10

15) How important is the issue being impacted?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 ✓

16) Will this inspire others to act to further our mission?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 ✓

The point of this project is to inspire others and disperse proposals and ideas through the use of social media as a social media as a platform

The Foundation's stated corporate mission is "to inspire people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees." Having a voice on social media will only increase the reach of Arbor Day. ADF will be able to inspire more individuals.

The "on-the-ground" events included in this venture will help physically bring communities together. The online experience, however, is not to be disregarded. This experience can be just as important for some.

Content from influencers mentioned:

Ashley Graham, @ashleygraham on Instagram   Lizanne Dooner: @lizannelately on Instagram