

Enhancing Employability: A Student-led Project using LinkedIn

Why ViewPoints?

April 2020 was a time when the whole world was still trying to deal with the shock of a global pandemic. The lives of everyone were turned upside down and university students were no exception. For almost all students who were entering their summer term of studies, the future had never been so uncertain. All plans for placements, internships and jobs came crashing down. Whilst some businesses pivoted rapidly and enabled remote placements and jobs, most were not equipped to do this.

Discussions with a cohort of postgraduate marketing students in the Faculty of Business made it clear that students' offers of placements and internships were either withdrawn or they were receiving responses stating that companies are not, at that point in time, planning to take on placement students. Most students, rightly, felt that in such a catastrophic time this was one more strike against their future career plans. They were very concerned about how they could stand out in the employment market which is likely to be even more challenging as we navigate our way through the pandemic. As a response to these concerns from students, ViewPoints was launched in May 2020.

Viewpoints is a LinkedIn based blog forum where students of the MA Marketing Suite of programmes share their thoughts and learning with the professional community. The aim of the project was to enable students to showcase their skills to potential employers and develop a professional network.

How does it work?

All students of the programme were encouraged to share content in areas of specific interest to them and their future careers. In addition to this, students were also provided the opportunity to become more involved with the project in the following ways:

Project Management – expressions of interest were invited from students who were interested in managing this forum. The project management team worked with the Programme Leader to set parameters on content quality, length, and launch schedule. Their responsibilities included planning and scheduling content, liaising with students to generate content, reviewing and designing the layout of the final publication, and monitoring and reviewing data to make decisions on increasing engagement with the forum. A group of six students worked together to manage the project in the first year and a group of the same size took over the management in the new academic year.

Content Creators – although creating content was open to all students, a formal role of content creator was offered to any student who committed to producing a set number of content pieces during a defined period. The amount and schedule of the content was agreed following discussions with the content creators and the project management team. Examples of content include critique of lockdown themed adverts, impact of the pandemic on Indian retail businesses, and tips on working from home.

Special Interest Series Creators – students also had the opportunity to identify and work on a series of content pieces related to a theme that is topical or is of specific interest to them. This provided small groups or individual students to take the lead in liaising with colleagues and their wider networks to launch a content series. Some examples of special interest series since the launch of ViewPoints includes a Black Lives Matter series and a Countdown to Christmas series.

Has it Worked?

ViewPoints has generated significant interest within the MA Marketing Suite of students – past, present and future. Alumni of the programme not only follow, and share content posted in ViewPoints, but also have engaged in producing content. The inaugural project management team are all in employment in related fields of social media marketing and content creation and have credited their experience of working on ViewPoints as an important contributor towards their job roles.

Employers who have contributed to the programme through guest lectures for instance, have also engaged in producing content for ViewPoints. This has, in turn, attracted more employers to follow and engage with the forum which has only enhanced student exposure to potential employers.

One of the most rewarding aspects of ViewPoints has been to see how the students have led this to become a success. The creative ideas generated by them not just in terms of content but applying their marketing know-how to grow the project has been exceptional.

What Next?

LinkedIn was chosen as the primary platform for its professional and career networking opportunities. The inaugural Project Management team subsequently launched an Instagram site for ViewPoints as a way to attract a younger audience to the LinkedIn forum. The subsequent Project Management team have developed plans to launch ViewPoints on TikTok. This was a result of a student content that demonstrated how TikTok is increasingly being used by employers to engage with and recruit candidates.

All in All ...

ViewPoints was born as a response to a challenging set of circumstances. It was the active engagement and involvement of students that has enabled the project to grow and succeed. Trust students to take responsibility and give them a little guidance, you will be amazed at what they can achieve!

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