Social Media Case Study:

A Look at API's "Vote 4 Energy" Campaign

Objective:

The objective of The American Petroleum Institute's "Vote 4 Energy" Campaign is to bring energy to the forefront of the 2012 Election conversation. The campaign aims to educate voters about the importance of domestic energy production to job creation, national security, and economic growth.

Strategy:

The primary component of the Vote 4 Energy campaign is the website, vote4energy.org, that serves as the source of voter education and campaign messages. Equally vital to achieving the campaign's objectives is the development of vibrant online community through social media sites to extend the digital reach of the campaign's messages. The following outlines how the Vote 4 Energy campaign has utilized Facebook and Twitter to grow and engage an online community of energy advocates.

Tactics:

Design

The Facebook Timeline and Twitter Page design for the Vote 4 Energy campaign utilize several tactics to build an online image, reinforce campaign messages, and direct attention back to vote4energy.org.

- *Consistent Branding* – Both the Facebook Timeline and the Twitter page mirror the color scheme and design elements of vote4energy.org. While often taken for granted, this consistency of branding is an important element in building familiarity with the campaign, building brand recognition, and creating a seamless experience when users move across the different digital platforms.

- *Visually Compelling Content*- the Facebook Timeline design is focused on using visually compelling elements such as graphs, info-graphics, videos, and advertising images to display the campaign messages and draw users deeper into the site.

- *Humanizing the Campaign*– Both the Facebook cover photo and the Twitter page background images feature the "faces" of the campaign. This adds the important elements of creating a more human image for the campaign and giving a relatable image for campaign supporters.

- *Referencing other platforms* – Both the Facebook Timeline and the Twitter page reference the other properties where you can learn more about Vote 4 Energy, including the website and YouTube channel. This is a simple tactic that drives more traffic to all campaign digital properties by making it easy for fans and followers to find and be directed to the other sites.

Content

There are several elements of good social media content development that have been implemented by the Vote 4 Energy campaign to build organic growth of followers and engagement:

- *Sharable Content* – By creating visually compelling content that is easily shared across social media platforms, the campaign messages have a far greater reach. Each time a fan or follower likes, shares, comments, or RT's one of these posts, the reach of the message extends to their network as well. This is a key component to building organic growth and engagement on social media platforms. Some examples of sharable content include:

 - *Infographics* – infographics are visual representations of statistical information.
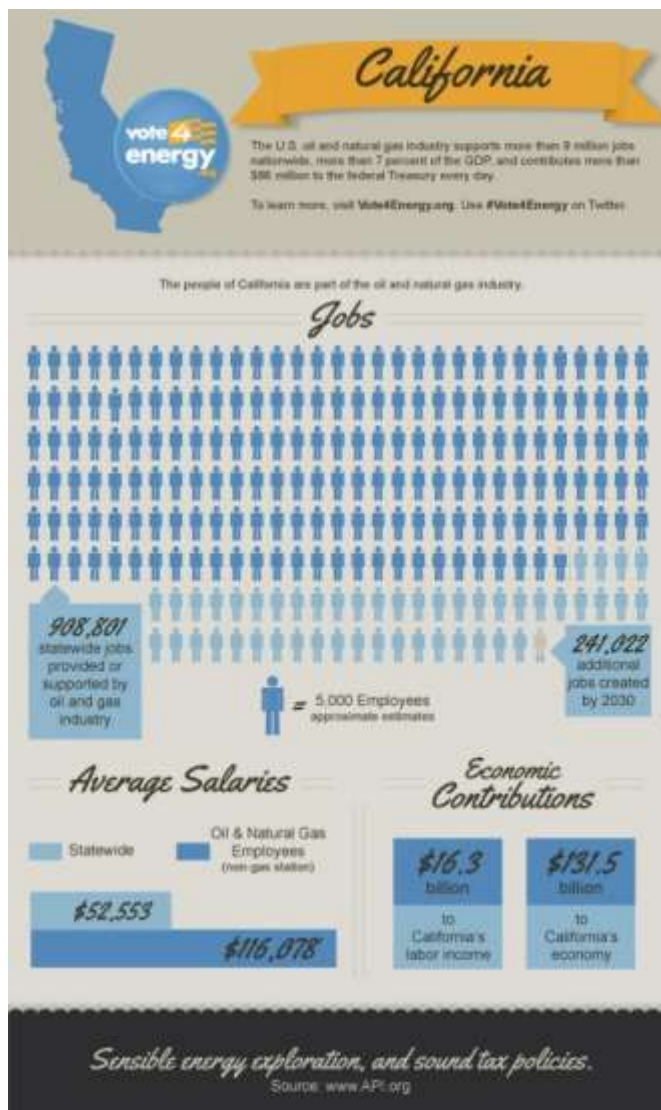
o   *Photos* – photos from campaign related events are not only great sharable content, but also provide an opportunity to humanize the campaign.

o   *Videos* – video content has the highest engagement rate of any type of content on social media.
o   *Interactive elements* - such as graphs that you can manipulate, Facebook surveys, or quizzes.
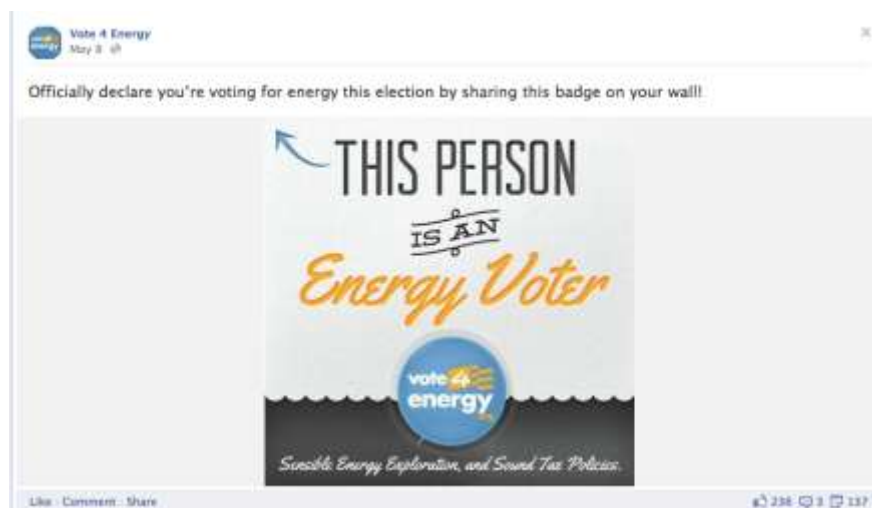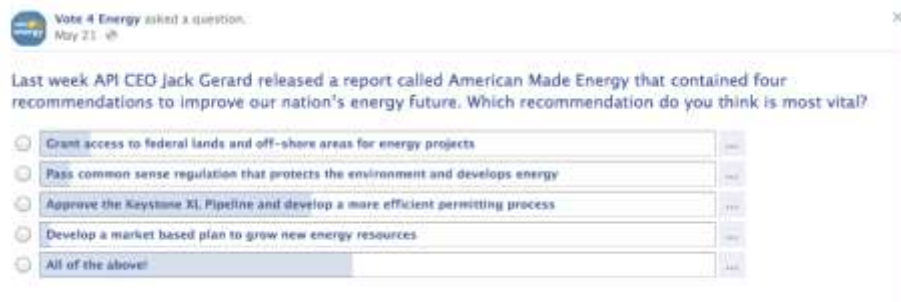
- *Unique content* – In order to become a valuable resource to your fans and followers, it is important that you provide information of some kind that is not readily available by other sources. This also helps aid the organic growth of fans and followers. For example, the Vote 4 Energy campaign uses the wealth of information that API has gathered on oil and gas production to tweet/post interesting facts and statistics about job creation, economic growth, and national security, in addition to reposting pro-domestic energy news.
- *Consistent posting* – In order to maintain an active an active and loyal followership, it is important to post/tweet consistently. Vote 4 Energy posts on Facebook every day and on Twitter two-three times a day.
- *Calls to action* – By regularly asking fans and followers to share, like, and RT it's content, the Vote 4 Energy campaign has a consistent response and engagement rate on social media sites.
- *Creating a forum for inquiry and response* – Vote 4 Energy consistently monitors the replies and comments to the campaign's posts on Twitter and Facebook and responds when appropriate. By responding the comments, Vote 4 Energy is able to actively join and drive the online conversation.

Advertising

The third major component to Vote 4 Energy building a large base of followers/fans online in a short amount of time has been digital advertising on social media sites. Information regarding Vote 4 Energy's advertising efforts isn't publicly available but advertising methods most likely used are: Facebook advertising; Twitter promoted accounts and Twitter promoted tweets, among others.

Results:

By implementing a strategy focused on consistent design, engaging content, and paid media, the Vote 4 Energy campaign has gained more than 18,000 followers and fans. Additionally, this online community is not only following content, but is actively engaged in responding to calls to action, joining the conversation, and sharing the campaign messages with other voters/friends online. While there is sure to be more to learn from this campaign as it continues through the November election, this case study

demonstrates that this is a great example of how an association can reach a large national audience with its messaging through an effective social media strategy.