

Success Story: Regency “Tweets” into the G-20

Need/Opportunity

On September 24 and 25, 2009, leaders of 20 established and emerging countries from around the world met in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for a G-20 Summit on international economic cooperation. When President Obama announced the G-20 Summit was coming to Pittsburgh, many businesses in the region hoped to benefit from this opportunity, with Pittsburgh in the world media spotlight. Regency Global Transportation Group, a leader in first-class, reliable ground transportation, knew its 40-plus chauffeurs would be driving six of the international delegations. Working with its public relations agency, WordWrite Communications, Regency leadership developed a plan to employ public relations and social media to debut its Twitter identity. Because Regency would be driving delegations, the company would have first-hand knowledge of traffic conditions caused by the overwhelming security considerations for the summit. The Regency-WordWrite team agreed this created a perfect public service opportunity to deliver real-time traffic tweets to help the Pittsburgh community learn of security-caused traffic situations near the downtown G-20 meeting site, and on major arteries leading to the airport and other G-20 venues.

Intended Audiences

- Pittsburgh Media – print and television
- National Print Media
- Pittsburgh Citizens, particularly commuters
- Pittsburgh Twitter Community

Objectives

- Create a Twitter identity that leveraged opportunity of driving G-20 delegations, traffic patterns, and first-hand look at the Summit
- Generate effective media coverage locally and nationally
- Position Regency as a leader in transportation and traffic updates

Project Description

WordWrite and Regency worked quickly to launch the Twitter page for the Summit. WordWrite held a “Twitter 101” demonstration for the designated social media person at Regency, as well as dispatchers. The dispatchers play a pivotal role for Regency’s Twitter presence because they

receive real-time traffic updates round-the-clock from drivers. The dispatchers would be tweeting the updates most often. Since they were unfamiliar with Twitter, this 101 session shared the basics, tools to help organize the process (such as CoTweet), and set a schedule to determine kick-off of the page and when to tweet throughout the day.

The team agreed that WordWrite would assist in the tweeting process and check traffic updates from other sources during the Summit, given the client demands on Regency. The team agreed that the main measure in the first few months after launching the Twitter page would be mentions and word-of-mouth that acknowledged Regency in the Pittsburgh social media space as a reliable source for real-time traffic updates.

WordWrite and Regency "soft launched" the Twitter page (@regencytrans) two weeks before the Summit so dispatchers could get used to tweeting and learn "Twitter lingo." The team also devised a hashtag so its audience could follow along more easily – #regtraffic. WordWrite recommended Regency tweet other items to make the page more engaging and personal, including re-tweeting its audience, and sharing miscellaneous facts about Regency. WordWrite also suggested tweeting interesting information about the delegations being driven, to give its audience an "inside look" at the G-20. The team also followed influencers identified earlier to begin engaging its target audience.

Results

The Twitter page slowly started to gain followers organically, but during the week of the Summit, it was the time for the page to really come alive. WordWrite re-tweeted Regency from its own Twitter page, as well as posting the link on its Facebook page to start to spread the message virally. In addition, WordWrite pitched the Twitter effort as a news story and sent a press release to national media, the AP and local media. On September 22, the press release became an online story for KDKA-TV, the number-one news station in the market. This led to interviews with KDKA-TV and WPXI-TV, and also the AP, who included Regency in an international story. Once word spread about this new Twitter initiative, the page gained 200+ followers in a period of a few days.

News stories were an important tool in the success of Regency's Twitter page. As stories appeared, a corresponding increase in Twitter followers was clear. Online mentions, especially via Twitter, were the other most important component driving additional followers. WordWrite used Twitter Analyzer to demonstrate the actual reach of the page. Regency only had about 200 followers during the summit, but during that week, it was reaching 3,020 Twitter users at a time because of re-tweets. For example, if someone with 1,000 followers re-tweeted Regency, Regency's 200 followers plus that person's 1,000 followers saw the tweet, and so on. This showed the power of Twitter as a public relations tool, and the viral additional success of re-tweeting.

The Regency Twitter campaign illustrates how social media and public relations can work together to deliver additional combined success. While it is too early to determine the long-term financial impact of Regency's Twitter effort, company leadership is certain sales will increase as the page continues to tweet traffic updates and people continue to follow Regency. For example, the company has begun Twitter specials that offer a 10 percent discount if a customer mentions Twitter when booking. Regency leadership believes its short-term objective, being known in the Pittsburgh social media space as a reliable source for real-time traffic updates, has been successfully achieved with its G-20 PR campaign.