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Creative Industries Banner Center to offer powerhouse social media course
By Vesta M. Anderson, Division of Continuing Education

The Employ Florida Banner Center for Creative Industries in the Division of Continuing Education at the University of North Florida will be offering Guerrilla Social Media Marketing, a no-nonsense, powerhouse course, for new and experienced social media managers from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 16, at University Center on campus.

“What sets this course apart from other social media courses is that it teaches users how to combine the timeless principles of guerrilla marketing with the latest social media applications and networks,” said Sheila Green, course instructor and president of Green Productivity Solutions.

Experts maintain that while most social media campaigns employ traditional, directive marketing techniques and produce little results, successful campaigns recognize that social media is controlled by those who engage within each platform.

This new phenomenon creates a unique dialog between a company and the end user, and builds the need for new tactics like guerrilla social media marketing, which generates powerful word of mouth (WOM) marketing by creating innovative, attention-grabbing communications in the digital world.

“Not only does social media require a different approach to promote businesses, products, services, and ideas,” said Glen Caruso, social media

strategist and VP of sales for BLiNQ Media, “but you also have to find a way to penetrate through the social media frenzy and ignite a fan base.”

According to Caruso, the foundation to a successful social media campaign is listening to understand your audience in order to excite and encourage two-way communication, otherwise known as social media engagement.

“When you ignite followership, you create buzz around your offerings,” said Caruso. “When a new person follows you, or ‘likes’ you, their friends see this and it may entice the friends to do the same. That positive word of mouth marketing is the most trusted among consumers and helps you become viral.”

Still, many new and current social media users continue to be discouraged.

“Social media can be overwhelming,” said Green, adding that many become confused and disheartened with their social media efforts due to lack of online knowledge and the plethora of social media sites, rules and changes.

Another downfall for many beginners may be the ease in which social media profiles, fan pages and business pages can be created. This simplicity may be deceiving to beginners who may believe they can dive into social media without knowledge, experience or a game plan.

“You can’t just build it and expect them to come,” said Caruso. He adds that jumping in social media without a plan can add to a user’s deterrence, instead managers must create buzz around their brand to stand out from their competitors.

“There are many companies out there still refusing to join social media,” said Caruso. He explains that while this may be okay for businesses that don’t necessarily require a social media campaign, there are other ‘s who should engage but are either discouraged due to failed attempts or simply do not see the need.

“You need to control your brand image – if you don’t someone else will,” said Caruso. “Do you think Pepsi would allow Coke to control their brand image – or vice versa?”

Yet many unfamiliar, new users leave profiles half complete, rarely update statuses, only to wonder why their followership is low. Other individuals try and maintain their social media platforms, but focus more on their company than the customer.

“Social media is an opportunity,” said Green. “It’s a new frontier; a space in cyberspace that gives you and others a place to stand out and brand yourself in a potentially profitable way, if used correctly.”

The question social media managers need to focus on answering is how to deploy their campaign successfully in order to impact sales, Caruso advised.

The Banner Center course seems to be the answer, teaching new and experienced social media managers to build a step-by-step integrated brand marketing plan across all mediums to start, grow, measure, and optimize online presence in a realistic and attainable method.

“We pride ourselves for our entrepreneurship in Jacksonville and throughout Florida,” said Kristin Kristen, Banner Center for Creative Industries program manager. “We devised this course to meet the needs of small business owners and large firms who want to leverage their message across all social media platforms to stimulate action – and this course does just that.”

The Guerrilla Social Media Marketing course enrollment fee is \$129; current UNF students have a reduced fee of \$103. It is one of many new courses offered by the Banner Center in an effort to provide a trained workforce for the expansion and sustainability of Florida’s Creative sector.

For registration or more information about this or other Banner Center for Creative Industries’ courses, contact UNF’s Division of Continuing Education at unfce@unf.edu or call (904) 620-4200. Find the Banner Center on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn by searching for Creative Industries Banner Center.

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