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Diversity in Morris with Social Media

Trey Rockey and Breckin Silvain

Breckin Silvain: Sue Dieter

Commentator & Trey Rockey: Trey Rockey

ACT I

Commentator: We will be embarking on the experiences of an ambassador of University of Minnesota Morris named [Sue Dieter](#). She works on the social media page with her group to make Morris have one of the best social media pages around. This is her introductory story.

Trey: I have a special guest to introduce to yall here is Sue Dieter

Sue: Hello everyone my name is Sue Dieter

Trey: We have a few questions for you Sue. Let's get started. So Sue, what do you do?

Sue: I am a Public Relations and Communication Specialist. I specialize in public government, and media relations, writing, editing and social media.

Trey: How did you get into the industry?

Sue: I was once a student here at the University of Minnesota Morris. I graduated in 1986. I needed three more credits for that semester to qualify to get my financial aid. And so I talked to my advisor and I talked to the dean, and I took an internship at the local radio station, KMRS/KKOK, writing ad copy, which was three credits and was three days a week. So it got me interested in being on the air. And after I graduated with my English major at that time, the only thing you could do with an English degree was teach.

Trey: It fascinating to hear there are many different ways to get into the industry for whoever wants to continue in this field. What are your opinions on social media?

Sue: It's a double edged sword. It's a way for people to tell their own stories and get their ideas out there. There is no median it's just you and the world. However it's much like the wild west there are no rules, there could be some better guidelines. But yes, social media's a good thing. I do really enjoy using it at the University because there are folks like you who are doing really cool things with social media. But you will always have those people who will have something bad to say about it.

Trey: I never thought about it like that, thanks for enlightening me. For you personally was it an easy change to use social media in your everyday job or every day to day life? Was it an easy change or was it difficult? How was that?

Sue: Well, social media became a thing when I worked at the *Morris Sun Tribune*. And it was a companywide verdict, such as, you will post three times a day and you will drive traffic to your website. For me I started to get on social media via Facebook mainly to see what my kids were up to, but it was hard from a business standpoint on how to promote on social media. Sometimes we'll put something on Facebook, see what happens. Other times you know, something that you're really proud of and you wanna drive some traffic to it. And when I first started, you know, you couldn't buy advertising on Facebook. You couldn't boost your post, You couldn't do any of that. So it's been trial and error. And again, I wouldn't be on social media and I wouldn't be any good at it if it weren't that my kids were doing stuff and I needed to keep track of them.

Trey: Moving forward, what social media sites are best for the university and recruiting?

Sue: Surprisingly you wouldn't believe the demographics with our Facebook following for the university. Which is surprising because Facebook is my age mostly. Also TikTok is a good source, it's shocking how much information you can supply from just a one minute video.

ACT II

Commentator: Now that we have a good background on Sue, Trey will ask about how social media is helping promote social justice on campus and beyond. Social justice has been a big topic around social media, because this is now a main way/form of communication. Just a quick definition of social justice is a distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.

Trey: From your perspective, how do you think your social media page promotes social justice on campus?

Sue: We try to promote and highlight the work that the students and the faculty are doing that supports those issues: diversity, equity, inclusion, higher education, the liberal arts, which in my opinion, the liberal arts actually helps you better understand social justice and figure out your role in it. We as a social media team make sure we are not reducing what these people are doing but instead promoting them.

Trey: Speaking on that, Do you have any statistics that the diversity increases due to the social media account?

Sue: I do not have any statistics from the social media page however from my time being a student here there were only like 3 international students. Now as the years go on and on I am seeing a lot more depth of students. There are also times where diversity is not obvious. Our office did a video for admissions to take to a Native American college fair. And one of the students that we talked to actually said, I'm very white passing.

Trey: Yes that makes sense. So you're talking about how you got an English major and throughout your college process and going into your first job, or do you wish you started the social media process earlier?

Sue: That's a good question. I wish that somewhere along the way in there was a way to engage folks your age in traditional media to understand like what it is, and how absolutely freaking boring it is to go to a city council meeting for two and a half hours to write a story that's 30 seconds long to try and tell you what important thing happened and how it will affect you. And some of it you just can't make sexy. Some of it isn't anything that will gain attention on social media in the paper anywhere.

Sue: I think that's again, why I think liberal arts are so important because you see the interconnectedness between things. Sure, I had an English major, but all of my classes that raised my civic awareness and my civic engagement helped me understand how to tell that story and why it's important to tie the two together.

Trey: Oh yeah. Yeah. For sure. That makes sense!

Sue; I'd also like to see some sort of media literacy that everybody has to take in high school. I actually, this is my tangent, <laugh>, I think that in order to graduate from high school, you have to pass the civics test, like more than just how a bill becomes a law, but a civics test, which by the way, I give all of my nieces and nephews every Christmas. They don't get to get their presents until they pass my civics quiz, <laugh>. And I also think that you, in addition to that, a media literacy. So you, so you can figure out is this really factual or is this so twisted? Just trying to move an agenda forward. And how do you tell the difference? I think personally particularly, and that's been exacerbated by social media because you can put blatant lies on social media, First amendment protected speech, and how do I know the difference?

Trey: Yeah. No, I agree. I mean there's just so many, like you can post anything and you seem like a genius even though you know nothing.

Trey: How did Covid affect the university and the social media page?

Sue: And I know for the university nothing, I mean, all of the social media was focused on Covid and how to stay safe and what do you need, You know, you're gonna need your immunizations as soon as they came out. And masks are required. We still get a little flack about immunization requirements, which is nothing new. When my kids went to college 10 years ago, they had to have their immunizations up to date. This is just one additional immunization. What the hell is the big deal? So Covid, it increased the amount of people who were on social media because you were online all day, you were working from home, you were working from your dorm room, wherever you were. And so how, how hard was it to just keep Facebook or Instagram or whatever on the task bar and just pop into it now and then? So everybody was on there. Not everything that was on there was good.

Trey: It's just hard to make you fluctuate with your job too. It was just so many different things that just kept on getting put on top of you. It's just hard to finally find something that consistently works all the time when new things are just coming in.

ACT III

Commentator: Now since Trey has asked all the questions about her career and how it connects with social media and her own experience with it. With going into depth about social justice and her thoughts, now he intends to wrap up the interview. With being open to questions from Sue herself.

Trey: So we have one more question to wrap up and then I'm gonna let you ask us questions because we are the age range of people you're trying to recruit. So just, you can shoot them at us if you have any. Where do you see social media usage in the next 10 years?

Sue: Well, we're always gonna have some sort of social media, how it looks though. I don't know. There's so many factors that go into that because there's always something new. You know, it started with just Facebook and then it was Instagram and then it was whatever the precursor to TikTok was. Vine was it? There's always something new and then you've got Tumblr and then you, you know, Reddit and so on, so there will always be something. I'm hopeful in the next 10 years that Congress can get its act together and come up with some guidelines and some rules and some, like, here's how we all agree to behave on social media. The internet is 30 plus years old and they still don't have it all figured out as far as what the rules are for, you know, net neutrality. And so am I convinced that in 10 years we'll have something figured out? No. Am I hopeful? Yes. But I mean, nobody goes anywhere without one of these. So there's always gonna be figuring out how to get the message to you that we'd like you to hear or see.

Sue: Well, let me ask you guys then. How did you decide to come to UMM?

Trey: So at first when the project got brought up, I immediately thought of just how social media has been used around with my prior knowledge. And the reason I found Morris was recruiting through a social media app called Field Level. The coaches reached out to me and that's how I found it. So I got a visit here, loved it. And I wouldn't have even known about this college unless they reached out to me via that platform. So then that's when I thought about people who are making this decision to go to college, how can we make that better through social media and UMM is just right at our fingertips where we can contact you whenever we want, we could see you in person if we wanted. And just, there's so much information that's around us. And that could make it so much easier than, say, reaching out to a big company that has a CEO that you have to reach through and then go through their advisor and then go through the advisor's advisor. Just so many steps that are not necessary for us. And we can just go to what, a five minute walk?

Commentator: In conclusion, Sue Dieter and all of UMM use social media and other outlets to promote diversity and social justice all throughout campus. They inspire every diversity to come to Morris and give everyone a chance to further their education.