

## **PR Case Study Part 1: Research and Planning for UPS**

### **Company Summary**

UPS is “America’s leading delivery business,” specifically for package delivery (Fortune Editors, 2020). The multi-billion company has been around for more than a century, and it is now “powered by more than 495,000 employees connecting more than 220 nations and territories across roads, rails, air, and ocean” (UPS, 2021). The company’s website is resounding with the notion that people, whether they be customers or otherwise, are what matter above all. The slogan, “customer first, people led, innovation driven”, partnered with their guarantee of quality service, seems to summarize these values (UPS, 2021).

The company was started in Seattle, WA, in 1907 by means of a \$100 loan (UPS, 2021). At this time, it was named “American Message Company,” until 1919 when the business moved to Oakland, CA, and it was renamed to United Parcel Service and known as UPS (UPS, 2021). Now, the UPS World Headquarters are located in Atlanta, GA (UPS, 2021). According to their website, UPS currently has over 1800 operating facilities serving 11.5 million customers (2021).

### **Situational Analysis**

In 2019, “UPS’s revenues rose 3.1%, to \$74.1 billion” (Fortune Editors, 2020). Once the global COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 hit, however, shipping demand in general was pushed to an all-time high, as people stayed home and ordered online, and this trend was reflected in UPS’s numbers for the year. UPS reported a “record revenue of \$84.6 billion for the year, up 14% from 2019” (Yamanouchi, 2021). The company of UPS was one of the few that actually saw positive change in their numbers as a result of the crisis that has been the pandemic in the United States. The company really was able to step up and serve the people in this way, making it possible for many to be safe by staying home and order their groceries, household items, and more online to be delivered.

UPS was deemed “critical infrastructure” by the US government, and so it was able to stay open and running at full (if not over) capacity through the year of 2020 (UPS, 2021). The company also enforced new protocol “regarding the best ways to prevent the spread of infection, based on guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO) and, within the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention” (UPS, 2021).

### **PR Opportunity**

Another aspect of UPS protocol that was implemented more in 2020 than ever before was UPS My Choice, a free feature that allows customers to give specific delivery instructions and receive delivery notifications (UPS, 2021). Unfortunately, this feature is not currently available for free to everyone, which provides an opportunity for the company. UPS should implement My Choice for free to everyone in the continental United States, with the rest of the nation and world to follow. This change, partnered with a strong PR campaign to inform the public about it, would likely increase business and raise public perception of the company.

To make the public aware of the change, online advertising and social media use are most important. As the customers who will take advantage of My Choice are primarily online shoppers anyway, the internet is the best space to use to reach them. Similarly, social media should be used more and in ways that specifically educate followers about My Choice benefitting them in multiple ways. After such PR work has been implemented, the public should be made aware of My Choice and how useful it can be for tracking packages, redirecting deliveries, and

minimizing face-to-face contact through safe alternatives. These features will be desired and therefore utilized as well, and this will cause word-of-mouth to spread endorsements as well. The century-old, reliable but often taken for granted, UPS will have new life in the eyes of the public as My Choice gains public notoriety.

The UPS Instagram page currently has 131k followers, which seems very minimal for such a big company that has been serving the public for so long. After more regular, up-to-date posting is implemented with sponsored posts being shared to new audiences as well, a total of 250k followers would show success of the campaign. This larger audience would also be subject to grow more, as new social media practices will continue to be utilized.

### **Information Needed**

“The fundamental responsibility of public relations as a management process is to build and maintain a hospitable environment for an organization” (Wilcox et al., 2013). In order to maintain a positive relationship between a company and the public, it is first necessary to understand the public that the business is interacting with and trying to reach. Based on the proposed course of PR action above, it will be necessary to conduct research concerning multiple aspects of the plan. First, general demographics of UPS customers must be established. It will also be beneficial to understand what people are already using My Choice before this PR opportunity is put into effect. Finally, it will be helpful to understand the analytics of the existing UPS Instagram account: Who is already following UPS on Instagram? How many people are seeing each post of UPS? How many people could be reached through sponsored posts? How specific can the demographic of the Instagram ads be? What do effective Instagram ads look like?

### **Research Application**

The results of this research will be used to craft advertisements and plans for advertising and running the social media, specifically Instagram, of UPS to make consumers aware of My Choice and its availability to them. Knowing who is already using UPS and My Choice, the company will know who else needs to be made aware of it. Putting ads on YouTube videos of a certain demographic of viewers or sending out targeted ads to demographics who may be using UPS but are not aware of My Choice will be useful. Also, anything learned about what good ads should look like will be implemented when creating new ones. Whatever posting schedule and post types are deemed most efficient will be used.

### **Research Method**

In order to get such information, evaluation research will be utilized. This research method “is a process of determining whether the intended result was produced” (Baxter & Babbie, 2014). In application, this method of research will look like analyzing the reach, popularity, failure, etc.... of previous Instagram posts on the UPS account. Looking into how these previous posts either achieved their goals or failed and applying this knowledge to future use of the social media platform will help grow the audience and effectiveness of the account.

### **Specification of Publics**

As stated as part of the information needed for this PR work, details about current UPS customers, current My Choice users, and current UPS Instagram followers will all be helpful in establishing what demographics are more informed on specific aspects of the company and

which people need to be informed yet. Knowing who needs to be reached, posts and advertisements can be made to target more specific groups to achieve the best results.

## **PR Case Study Part 2: Reflection**

The proposed PR campaign is centered around accessibility as well as a revamp of the existing UPS social media pages. Because this campaign is also characterized by the news of My Choice being available to all who are in the continental US, an event will be held by UPS to celebrate this happening and inform consumers about its implications. A real-life event will be held at the headquarters, but most of the audience will be watching the livestream of it. This will require the audience to visit the social media of UPS in order to tune into the event, so they are already equipped with the necessary skills to engage in the future.

The demographics of the target audience for this campaign include all residents of continental US. Because of this, the event will be accessible to everyone with internet access. The accessibility of the event and the information that will be presented there reflects the accessibility of UPS My Choice. The audience will have access to the features that CEO Carol B. Tomé presents, and if they are tuning in from anywhere outside of the continental US, they will be informed about the plans for free My Choice to reach their areas moving forward.

## **PR Case Study Part 3: Internet and Social Media**

### **Social Media**

“Social media networks...offer a promising way of fast, cost-effective and direct communication between enterprises and stakeholders” (Pakura & Rudeloff, 2020). For this PR endeavor on behalf of UPS, social media platforms Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok will be utilized to increase awareness of UPS My Choice and make the company more accessible. These specific platforms will be useful due to their diversity in format of content as well as their extensive user bases. As an article detailing recommendation for a university’s social media use emphasizes, “all activities...should be highlighted through social media” (Pradhan, 2020). Because a major aspect of this campaign is the increased accessibility of My Choice, it is important to share about such happenings on social media.

In a study of a fashion brand’s social media use, it was found that “messages on various social media accounts interacted with each other to become a unified branding tool” (Smith et al., 2018). This principle will be applied in UPS accounts’ content across different platforms. Instagram will be used to post photos of UPS employees, happy customer testimonials, and infographics. The story feature will also be used for Q&A’s and influencer takeovers. Twitter will be used in a more professional way: sharing current events of UPS. Witty replies will also be tweeted for the purpose of humanizing UPS. Finally, TikTok content will be similar to that of Instagram, but with the format being strictly videos and the incorporation of social media professionals participating in trends on behalf of the company.

### **Blogs**

Blogs can be a useful tool for PR because they are free and can reach wide audiences online (Ochman, 2002). In fact, organizations have found blogs to be their “favorite destination for information among organizations, reporters and others within those industries” (Plus Company

Updates, 2020a). Blogs can be personal and current in ways that traditional websites often are not. Some potential blog post headlines for UPS to use are:

- Make your own delivery decisions: An introduction to UPS My Choice
- Our commitment to sustainability
- Diversity in the UPS work force
- The year of online shopping: Updated COVID-19 precautions in the shipping process
- Celebrating UPS history

Keywords delivery, My Choice, sustainability, diversity, online shopping, COVID-19, and shipping are utilized in these stories to optimize audience searches. These topics provide a great place for renewed UPS blogging to start. These blogs touch on important ideas that have especially been receiving attention lately, such as sustainability, diversity, and being safe through the COVID-19 pandemic. They also have a lot of potential for informing readers about UPS: its values and history. In an article about utilizing blogs, author Burrows found that a blog that was “positive, negative, informative and even inane at times, but most importantly it was open” proved to be an example of “a corporate blog that instilled trust” (2011).

The similar companies to UPS are USPS and FedEx, both of which do have blogs (<https://uspsblog.com> and <https://www.fedex.com/en-us/blog.html>). USPS has a separate website for their blog that includes a menu for finding posts on certain topics. FedEx has a page on their website dedicated to blogging, which is also categorized. The USPS stories seem more personal, while the FedEx posts feel like just an extension of the “About” portion of their website. For UPS in this PR campaign, it would be best to make a separate website for blog posting, so that it is its own separate aspect of the company’s online presence. Utilizing the personal feel of USPS, while also being organized for the readers like FedEx, would sum up to an overall effective blog. This would be valuable for the relationship between UPS and its customers, which is the whole goal of PR work.

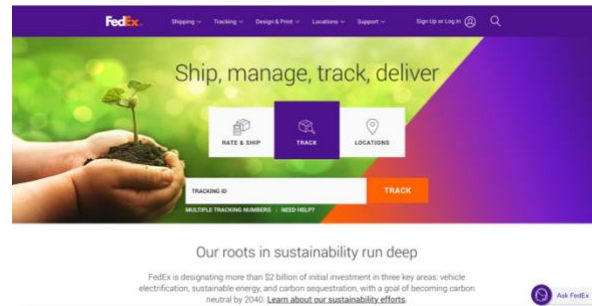
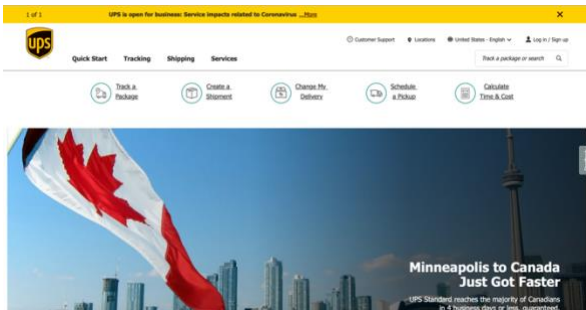
## **Website**

When revamping a website, there are several important aspects to consider. A company’s website should be a “reflection of who [it is] as an agency and the amazing work that [it] constantly produce for [its] clients” (Pet Age Staff, 2018). This means that it should be transparent and up to date, as well as “functional for reporters...customers, partners, and investors” (Plus Company Updates, 2020b). Having a website that is accessible and user friendly for all takes detailed consideration, from which it can be useful for “education, promotion and marketing” (DiVittorio, 2019).

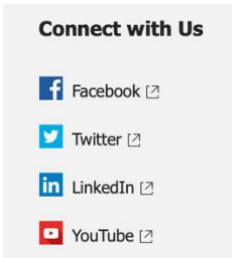
The current UPS website is not bad. It is easy to navigate and well maintained, making it a good resource to represent the company. Some improvements would be beneficial, however. The biggest change that should be made to help the website is the physical design appearance of it. The font, colors, and graphics are outdated-looking. Similar company FedEx has a better-looking website, with more color, sleeker fonts, and effective graphics. UPS should incorporate these details for an overall better look. This may cause some initial confusion for regular visitors of the site, but it will look better for all traffic and be best long-term. The actual images used by the

companies are similar, and there is no need for UPS to update those, as they are effective in not being too distracting while representing the company and its work well.

As for the actual content of the website, UPS has that covered already. The site is easy to navigate and presents useful links from the home page, so users can get to whatever information they need with little effort. One improvement that could be made is the incorporation of social media links. “Publishing content in different formats, without forgetting links to online social networks and multimedia... may allow more sharing and dialogue, and simultaneously present examples of the offered services to potential customers” (Sebastiao, 2013). Currently, these links are at the bottom of the website homepage accompanied by bulky logos. Updates should be made



that move these resources to a more accessible location on the website with better graphics.



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