Let’s Give ‘Em Somethin’ to Talk About
(Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, YouTube & More)

Susan T. Evans
Director of Web and Communication Services
College of William & Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia
The problem?
The solution?
Mascot Search Communication Goals

• Open
• Inclusive
• FUN! (said the president)

Tribe spelled backwards = Ebirt
Mascot Search Communication Principles

- Use the web
- Encourage conversation
- Build trust
- FUN! (said the president)

Seems reasonable, right?
“Most of our alumni don’t use the Internet.”

• Really?

  – 58% of alumni who responded to the early email announcement and contact us form were 52 - 81 years old

  – In 6 months, 18,500 unique visitors to the mascot search website

• Huh.
“This could (will) get ugly.”

• Well, yeah.
  – 550 in official facebook group; 20+ mascot-related facebook groups
  – Nearly 1,000 wall posts
  – Nearly 250 blog comments
  – 1,226 on Twitter
  – 839 submitted mascot suggestions

• Not so far.
Mascot Communication Components

• The website is the hub - www.wm.edu/mascot

• Blog - http://wmmascot.blogs.wm.edu/

• Mascot Search group on Facebook

• Twitter - @WMMascot

• YouTube - http://www.youtube.com/wmmascot

• Just a bit of print (alumni mag, etc.)
Laying the groundwork

• The first focus was “criteria” for mascot ideas. We used comments on our blog for the discussion.

• We built/reinforced online communities - leaked things early to Facebook and Twitter.

Feel like getting a head start? You're the first invited...to submit a W&M mascot idea - http://www.wm.edu/mascot/ideas
Keeping it whacky

“My relationship with W&M is complicated. So I usually just go along with it when I get introduced as the former mascot - it's easier that way. Most people really don't care.”

Graphics from a video on the W&M Mascot Search on YouTube
Offering 90 days of SurveyMonkey

- Online and paper submission of mascot ideas
- 839 submitted “the perfect idea”
- Used blog and twitter to keep momentum going
  - Mascot Idea #
  - Can you see me now?

W&M Tribe Mascot Idea #586 – Champ the Ampersand
2:28 PM Jun 27th from web
Creating a buzz

• Lots of media coverage

• One of the crazier ideas got attention
Surviving the lull

• Share Your Mascot Memories (Swem Library Special Collections wiki)

• In Committee (blog feature)
Why it worked…

• We gave ‘em somethin’ to talk about
• consistent concept and brand
• multiple online community tools
• informal tone
• foundation of online community in place when announced (website, blog, facebook)
Why it worked…

- We kept up our end of the conversation
- print offered the basics/web offered more
- detailed communication plan
- all campus mouthpieces involved
- momentum from new communities (twitter, youtube)
- when reporters got interested, there was a lot to offer
Questions and comments???