

2009 North Carolina State Fair Social Media Campaign

- **GOAL:** Use the Internet and social media to introduce the N.C. State Fair to new audiences; interact with media; engage in open conversations to make connections and answer questions; and increase pre-Fair buzz and excitement.
- **STRATEGY:** Plan and execute a four-month-long social media campaign by creating and maintaining five key Internet and social media outlets to reach target audiences: **blog; Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and MySpace.**
- **TARGET AUDIENCES:** **Current fairgoers** who are familiar with the State Fair and view it as a tradition; **friends of current fairgoers and potential fairgoers** who are familiar with the State Fair or may live nearby but rarely or never attend; **college students** who utilize the Internet and social media; **traditional media reporters** who use social media, their audiences and to build stories; **new media**, including bloggers and online photographers.
- **EXECUTION PROCESS:** The N.C. State Fair began its first social media campaign for the 2008 Fair in June 2008. Using the goals, strategies and target audiences outlined above, we worked to increase the impact of our social networking pages in 2009 through targeted events, competitions and Web sites, including:
 - **Deep Fried @ the N.C. State Fair blog:** “Behind-the-scenes” information on the Fair from the N.C. State Fair Press Office. Blog underwent a platform change from Blogger to Wordpress and received a custom design to play off “deep fried” theme. Posts were publicized on Facebook, MySpace and Twitter. Contests were executed on the blog and we announced concert lineups and new deep-fried foods before releasing the information anywhere else.
 - **Twitter:** We were one of the first fairs to utilize Twitter, putting us at the forefront of using it as a communication tool for fairs and expositions. With more followers in 2009, we were able to better answer questions, diffuse negative comments, develop relationships with fairgoers, release “VIP” information and interact with the media.
 - **Facebook:** Daily status updates, tagged photos and videos, posted on friends’ walls and answered Fair questions. Also posted status updates and contests that stimulated conversations through comments and wall posts.
 - **MySpace:** Entertainment information, Fair dates and times, YouTube postings, information on the Fair and links to the Web site and Deep Fried blog.
 - **YouTube:** Posted video footage of kiddie rides, interesting exhibits, tobacco stringing, interviews, behind-the-scenes features and more using Flip Mino video recorder and its internal editing software. In 2009, we developed “A Whole Lotta Happy Productions,” a web series that played off the Fair theme and delivered campy announcements of Fair news.
 - **Deep Fried Triangle Tweetup:** On Oct. 22, 2009, we held the Fair’s first tweetup. Twitter users and friends from other social media sites were invited to the tweetup tent to sample fried foods, interact with Fair artists and entertainers, socialize with local tweeters and participate in a Twitter-themed scavenger hunt. More than 150 people attended the event, and blogs about the tweetup consistently ranked highest for number of page views.
 - **Deep Fried Ambassador contest:** A contest that invited N.C. bloggers to write a creative post on their blog telling us why they love the Fair and why they should be the Deep Fried Ambassador. The winning blogger was invited to the pre-Fair media lunch, where we introduce the latest deep-fried foods, entertainment and more, to blog, tweet and Facebook the event. The winner we chose helped spread the word about the Fair to a potentially new, wider audience. We launched this contest Monday, Sept. 21, announced the winner Monday, Oct. 5, and the Deep Fried Ambassador posted at least one blog each day before and during the fair. The Ambassador’s blog posts drew nearly 800 views
- **RESULTS:** Using social media as a customer service tool, we were able to answer thousands of questions, develop relationships with fairgoers and give a friendly face and voice to the Fair:
 - **Media relations:** In 2008, dozens of news stories (on both blogs and traditional outlets) written about the Fair’s increased online presence, and dozens of blog posts and tweets were used by media for story ideas in articles and online content. For the 2009 State Fair, we’ve used the blog and Twitter to tip media off to new information such as the concert lineup, social media events, new competitions and deep-fried foods.
 - **Deep Fried @ the N.C. State Fair blog:** Ended the 2009 State Fair with 451 reader comments, 73,521 unique visits and 141,004 page views. 195 e-mail subscribers receive daily updates through RSS. Posts’ content and photos are also used in media stories and blog posts.
 - **Twitter:** Ended 2008 Fair with 273 followers, 560 updates, and 45 Direct Messages (DMs). At the end of the 2009 N.C. State Fair, we’ve grown to 2,308 followers, 1,852 updates and 468 DMs.
 - **Facebook:** Ended 2008 Fair with 1,631 friends and 563 tagged photos. At the beginning of the 2009 Fair, we reached out 5,000 friend limit and had to add a Fan page. We now have 460 fans.
 - **MySpace:** Ended 2008 Fair with 3,567 blog post views, 941 friends, 45 profile comments, 43 messages and 285 tagged photos. MySpace also tracks how many profile views the page received, a unique feature that tracked 6,491 page views. At the end of the 2009 Fair, we now have 928 friends of the Fair and 10,075 page views.
 - **YouTube:** Ended 2008 Fair with 28,370 video views, 24 uploaded videos, seven video comments, 4,607 channel views and 32 subscribers. At the end of the 2009 Fair, there were a total of 68,807 video views, 68 uploaded videos, 9,786 channel views and 55 subscribers.