

# Transit Marketing Matters Twitter Chat January 30, 2019

## Summary

Julia Castillo, National RTAP Review Board member and HIRTA Public Transit Executive Director led an informative and resourceful [#TransitMarketingMatters](#) Twitter Chat on January 30, 2019. Visit the [chat transcript](#) for questions asked during the chat and attendees' replies. Participants chatted about many aspects of marketing, including community outreach, social media, working with news outlets and bus advertising. While transit agencies vary in their marketing structure and approach, the common theme of reaching riders and other stakeholders through many channels prevails.

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**Question 1:** Who is involved with marketing for your agency (staff, dedicated marketing manager, outside designers/writers, etc.)? Share advantages and disadvantages of this model.

### Answers

- [Jaunt](#) has a sole PR/Marketing Manager and a one-person Marketing Department. All marketing is done in-house. Copywriting, video, photo, graphics, brochures, TV/radio ads, social media ads/posts. The manager has a background in scriptwriting and production and purchased professional equipment and can control projects from concept to end result. But he gets lots of input from staff and drivers. When he is away, a supervisor will post on Facebook.
- [HIRTA Public Transit](#) encourages everyone in the agency to share items and photos to post on Facebook or Twitter. They have one dedicated person who posts, to ensure their content is consistent with their brand. If that person is away, social posts are scheduled ahead. In transit agencies with limited staff everyone does a little bit of everything so it's great to keep everyone involved in giving content.
- Everyone at National RTAP is involved with marketing. They create lots of materials in-house and contract with designers and photographers. It is important to have branding guidelines for consistency.
- It helps to have others' eyes, input and ideas!
- Some agencies have a defined budget for marketing. The advantages: maybe this makes you work smarter and more creatively. The disadvantage: it may put limits on realizing concepts. This may not be a big drawback for some agencies.

**Question 2:** How do you involve passengers (or potential ones)?

**Answers:**

- If no one knows how to catch your bus, do you have one?
- HIRTA has someone randomly ride the bus and take pictures and talk with those who use the service. At outreach events or presentations, they take pictures and educate why they are there.
- National RTAP has some great photos of riders in their [Marketing Toolkit](#) that can be used by transit agencies for their own marketing materials.
- Social media campaigns are good ways to communicate with thousands of riders and potential riders.

**Question 3:** What are some unique considerations for marketing to rural riders?

**Answers:**

- The channels are the most challenging aspect. Issues to consider: Do they have broadband? Access by mobile or desktop? What TV, radio, print media reaches them? Demographics (choice or non-choice riders, age, income, etc.)? Do we have resources to service them?
- Rural riders are looking for transit. Some of them aren't online, so don't forget about traditional print marketing and one-to-one outreach. Access to social media needs to be considered, and HIRTA also prints flyers to post on the buses, and sends them to social and human service agencies to help them promote the service to those who come into their facilities. They also do outreach to Congregate meal sites, and offer free rides after to give people a feel for what it is like to ride the bus.
- If you want to target certain populations, consider placing flyers or handouts in places like ethnic grocery stores, or barber shops and hair salons, for example.
- Treat your audience with respect. Images can project attractive tones and professionalism. Outreach, content, storytelling are primary motivators.

**Question 4:** How has the move to an “online world” affected marketing at your agency?

**Answers:**

- Online is easier to 'show' the story with photos and video. It makes transit more human ...
- The “online world” means marketing has to work across the board with your website, social media, news, and communications. Keep it fresh by using different images and copy.
- You can ask other agencies to share whatever we are marketing on their social media too, which reaches people who may not follow you on social media.
- HIRTA schedules posts in advance, and encourages people to share and like their Facebook pages, so they are able to spread a message more quickly, and it is more far reaching. They can easily do quick polls, to gather info or just for fun to have engagements too.

**Question 5:** What social media outlets do you use for marketing?

**Answers:**

- HIRTA uses Facebook, Twitter almost daily. Instagram occasionally. Their Facebook following is mostly customers, Twitter following is more transit-related followers and LinkedIn is more business partners. They do cross post occasionally too, but generally it's posts targeting the specific audiences.

- It's better to do a couple media outlets well, then to do a lot of outlets haphazardly.
- National RTAP uses Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Constant Contact. Their largest group of followers is people who subscribe to their [eNews](#) newsletter, which provides marketing for them and all their partners who offer great materials and training. Stay tuned for National RTAP's Instagram page this winter!
- Jaunt uses Facebook mostly, since most of their ridership is 45+. They also use Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. As they acquire more choice riders who use the service to commute to work, they'll increase their presence on Twitter and Instagram. They also manage different Facebook pages with different content.
- And don't forget about news coverage. News gives you credibility that may be lacking in advertising. Get to know and form relationships with reporters in your area. Jaunt's favorable branding impacted reporters a great deal at their events and from their service developments. A recent news article covered their free transportation for adult community members to reading help by literacy volunteers.
- The personal touch of outreach cannot be beat. However, marketing images can be the thing that grabs people to inquire or become curious. Also, you never know what it will be that attracts someone, so you're encouraged to use a variety of different marketing forms.

### **Question 6: What is your biggest marketing challenge?**

#### **Answers:**

- A big marketing challenge is keeping marketing materials up-to-date. Decide how often you need to update materials and have a plan.
- Marketing a transit system to those who don't currently ride is a big challenge. It's getting better, but a lot of people don't think about transit until they need to use it. We have to remember if people feel sorry for those who ride the bus, how likely will they be to want to ride the bus? We have to be positive and make riding the bus appealing. One of the ways you can do this is through marketing, creating attractive bus wraps, signage, etc. HIRTA is doing a marketing series during this freezing cold winter to appeal to those who drive.
- Another big challenge is convincing choice riders to get out of cars. Create a message that appeals. Motivations? Convey that however many times they ride, they make an impact on traffic and the environment. National RTAP provides [Transit Benefits Statistics](#). Numbers speak!

### **Question 7: Tell us about your most successful marketing campaign.**

#### **Answers:**

- National RTAP's most successful marketing campaigns have been Twitter Chats! They help spread messages beyond just current followers and lead to new followers. They also highlight the [advertising](#) and [social media](#) successes of rural and tribal transit agencies through their best practices spotlight articles.