

Public Engagement in Planetary Science through Europlanet Social Media

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Abstract

From ‘Save the Hubble’ campaign to ESA’s Rosetta mission, social media has played a major role in public engagement and continues to grow. However, with this growing number of social media platforms and the amount of content that goes public daily, the ‘noise’ level is high - making it difficult to reach a good, relevant audience. Hence, it’s important to use different strategies with the content created, from launching a video to live session to issue a press release. Under the Horizon 2020, the Europlanet Media Centre^[1] identifies the importance of using social media for outreach. Europlanet uses primary and secondary social media platforms strategically to engage with the followers and a new audience.

1. Introduction

Social media plays a major role in bringing latest in planetary science to the public and also gives a platform to discuss it. What are the best practices in using social media for science communication and how much should we invest on it? With ever increasing advancements in science, the ways people communicate have drastically changed. With how scientists interacting with peers and public, the ways that scientific information is disseminated, and methods of scientific outreach/education have changed, in many ways becoming more efficient. The use of social media has not only allowed scientists to engage in more efficient public outreach and education but has provided a unique platform for communication and networking within the scientific community.

2. Europlanet on Social Media

While Europlanet has a representation across all the major social media, it focuses on the platforms at two levels. Primarily Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube,

where content is posted daily with regular engagement. Also, the most campaigns are run on these platforms. Europlanet also produces regular videos for organisational events, planetary highlights, topical discussions, and also live webinars. Secondly Europlanet uses Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+ where updates are posted regularly to keep a presence. Each of the platforms serves a different purpose and an audience. Having a presence in different platforms helps to reach a wider audience. Europlanet also maintains a Flickr profile to archive photos from the organisation related events.

3. Best Practices: Europlanet Social Media Campaigns

While there are regular posts across all the social media platforms. Europlanet organises various campaigns to keep the public engaged. From the past campaign results, it clearly shows the public engagement can be spiked and reach a wider audience.

Europlanet social media strategy uses important planetary milestones and events to create campaigns, such as ‘Transit of Mercury’ featured video animation reached 17K views, Juno mission video reached 9K views. Europlanet also runs a monthly webinar series featuring planetary scientists with various expertise. The first series of webinars focused on general public while the second series is addressed teachers and students as the primary focus.

As another effort towards building a better relationship between scientists and public, Europlanet will focus on getting planetary scientists involved via Twitter in the future. This effort was tested during the EPSC2016 where Europlanet Twitter account was given to few conference attendees to Tweet for Europlanet. This allowed

multiple engage and better coverage of the conference.

References

[1] Heward, A., Miller, S., Barrosa, M., Fouchet, T., and Raszler, V.: Europlanet outreach in Horizon 2020, European Planetary Science Congress 2014.