

---

**Date: April 16, 2016**

**To: Minnesota Swimming House of Delegates**

**From: Sandra Hibbard**

**RE: Communications Marketing Coord. Report to 2016 MN House of Delegates**

---

This is year one of this position. And while we've been easing into various types of communications and topics, we're figuring out what this role could be even more than what it is today. Driving that development are my personal beliefs in two things:

- 1) What we talk about and where we spend our time is what think is important and what we care about. And our perception of what this is, doesn't always match reality.
- 2) All of our activities/communications should be in support of our mission and vision—which has become better honed in this year.

So, where have we made the most impact?

- **Defining and refining how we use each media channel:** what do we post on our website (business, LSC news, promoting and celebrating events) versus Facebook (more human interest and related but not directly LSC) versus Instagram (pictures targeted to athletes)?
- **Trying to expand our storylines** to make sure we cover those who excel in the pool, to include activities that happen outside of the pool as well. Athletes remain the main focus, but we also want to talk about what our coaches are doing, what our clubs are doing (i.e. Edina's Brad Grey attending the President's Summit and sharing what he learned), and what else is happening that affects the LSC (i.e. new pools).
  - **Athletes remain the #1 focus**—it's what draws attention to the LSC and what everyone responds to on the website, Facebook and Instagram. We will continue to celebrate athletes' performances in the pool—highlighting excellence sportsmanship, integrity and fun—but also what they are accomplishing outside of the pool. This means providing focus on those in leadership roles, those providing specific support in a range of areas, and those who may be struggling to overcome a challenge or beat the odds they face.
  - **We'd like to talk more about coaches**—this has proven to be the most challenging, since coaches are busy and focused within their clubs. We need help to raise the profile of coaching to be more visible, and welcome opportunities to talk about what you are doing and what you want to be doing (coach mentorships, experiences interacting at the national or international level, etc.).
- **Supporting clubs with materials that help their own communications.** We have had requests for a small number of specific FAQ types of information. We've asked how to help you support the post-Olympics surge. We need to know more about HOW we can best help you with communications and marketing your clubs.

- **Engaging athletes to support communications.** We hired a communications intern with the intent of focusing on Core Values. The stories were slow January through March (with a great story posted about Calista), but what we learned is we have a group of student athletes who are skilled and willing to help with communications. We expanded to add a fourth Correspondent and now have five working on stories. So stay tuned!

This year also saw us begin to transition communications through the TeamUnify website. It's been a beginning; we have a ways to go but will see benefit for efficiency and recognition.

### **The Year Ahead**

In 2016-17, some of my focus will be on overcoming the challenges this year in getting stories done in a timely manner—usually due to trying to gain input, make decisions and personally balancing time against my “day job.”

We tried keeping a marketing/communications calendar this year, but it proved impossible to keep updated. Priorities shifted throughout the year as new issues popped up. This became better managed through monthly communications meetings at MSI, but establishing a more planned calendar for communications still will move us toward best practices in communications.

I look forward to leveraging our Correspondents team and to working more closely with staff to gather information that feeds into certain types of stories (i.e. post-championship season) and to continue to create consistency in raising the profile of Minnesota Swimming, as well as supporting our membership.

Thank you for your continued support.