



A HKU project supported by The Hong Kong Jockey Club

## How to Plan a Good Activity for Your Facebook Fan Page

### Introduction

Rotary International (also known as Rotary Clubs) is a global nonprofit organization that provides a variety of voluntary services with the objective to bring leaders around the world together to exchange ideas and then take actions to help empower the youth, enhance health, promote peace, and eradicate polio.<sup>1</sup>

Founded in 1905, Rotary International has been dedicated to making the world a better place over decades, and now it has more than 32,000 clubs, with an estimated number of 1,200,000 members (who are also known as Rotarians) in 200 countries and regions. Rotary Clubs are nonpolitical, nonreligious, and open to all cultures, races, and creeds. Usually, members meet on a regular basis in social events—such as breakfast, lunch, dinner, or other occasions—to share their ideas and seek for opportunities to work on their service goals. Their primary motto is “service above self.”

Rotary first entered China in 1919 and then extended its entrance to other Asian countries and cities.<sup>2</sup> Having gone through expansions, withdrawals, returns, and regroupings several times during these years, Rotary International District 3450 (RID 3450) has been formed, and now it encompasses more than 72 clubs in Hong Kong, Macao, Mongolia, and the People’s Republic of China (Guangdong Province), with more than 1,900 Rotarians in these service regions.

End Polio Now,<sup>3</sup> one of Rotary’s major service projects, is a large international campaign that Rotary has prepared with other partner organizations to help eliminate polio by vaccinating children. And with these efforts paid, the disease has been largely reduced since 1979. The End Polio Now project aims to (1) raise funds, (2) seek voluntary help, and, last but not least, (3) build awareness and get the word out to the world about their efforts to fight polio.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.rotary.org/>

<sup>2</sup><http://rotary3450.org/>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.endpolio.org/>

*Eleanore Lau prepared this case under the supervision of Dr Michael Chau, Professor Cecilia Cheng, and Professor Paul Yip. The case was based on an interview with Dr. Eric Chin, Deputy Chair (Membership Development and Retention), Membership Development and Extension Committee of Rotary International District 3450.*



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To do so, the campaign carried a central idea in their promotional materials and websites, which aims to capture the public’s attention and makes it easier for people to spread it out. And that is the “This Close” concept:

Polio still cripples thousands of children around the world. With your help, we can wipe this disease off the face of the earth forever. Visit [endpolionow.org](http://endpolionow.org) to help. End Polio Now. We Are THIS CLOSE to Ending Polio.

Next to the above message, there is usually a person (mostly celebrities or major public figures in print advertisement) doing the signature “This Close” gesture with the thumb and the forefinger. Featured celebrities and public figures include “Bill Gates (co-chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, one of the partner organizations of End Polio); Nobel Peace Prize laureate Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu; action movie star Jackie Chan, boxing great Manny Pacquiao; pop star PsyGoodall; premier violinist Itzhak Perlman; Grammy Award winners A. R. Rahman, Angelique Kidjo, and Ziggy Marley, and peace advocate Queen Noor of Jordan.”<sup>4</sup>This summer, famous Hong Kong action star Donnie Yen has also signed on to become a Rotary ambassador and participated in Rotary’s “This Close” public awareness campaign in order to eliminate polio.<sup>5</sup>



Source: [http://farm6.staticflickr.com/5441/9573855144\\_2a41ee098b.jpg](http://farm6.staticflickr.com/5441/9573855144_2a41ee098b.jpg)

The news and the official advertisement were globally and publicly released in August 2013 through different types of media and in different languages. A press release was published in Rotary International’s media center in English, Korean, and Japanese.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.rotary.org/en/donnie-yen-signs-rotary-celebrity-ambassador-polio-eradication>

<sup>5</sup><http://rotary3450.org/donnie-yen-signs-on-as-rotary-celebrity-ambassador-for-polio-eradication>



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Another version of the press release was put in RID 3450's website and Facebook fan page in both English and Chinese. Apart from official websites and a Facebook page, the news was also spread on other social media sites, such as Twitter (see the figure bellow) and Google+.



Source: <https://twitter.com/EndPolioNow>

This worldwide-known campaign is not limited to only people with big names. As a matter of fact, Rotary Club also encourages people to make it personal by creating their own version of the public service announcement (PSA) and adding it to their official campaign site. Because of that, this campaign has been launched as the world's biggest commercial, and everyone in the world is cordially invited to be part of the campaign. After making their own impressions, visitors can, in fact are recommended to, share their personalized photos with their friends and families through e-mail and social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, to generate further awareness of the End Polio effort. Participants can also add their own personal message of support and their own country with their submission. In that way, we will see which countries are involved more and lead digitally in this world's biggest commercial site to spread awareness concerning polio eradication.<sup>6</sup>

## Background of Our Case

Having their Facebook fan page established recently, RID 3450 aims to use this social network platform to gather its 1,900 members from different district areas and to create

<sup>6</sup><http://thisclose.endpolio.org/en>



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a better communication among members online. Dr. Eric Chin, deputy chair of RID 3450's Membership Development and Extension Committee, said,

We want to first increase our internal members' participation and networking on the fan page, make sure they stay tuned and respond. Then we can expand it to the public. This is more than just a fan page. It is a brand-building process. But we need a higher members' conversion rate first. Right now, we have around 1,900 members and we hope to get at least 60% of our members to become our Facebook fans.

However, with the large base of members from multiregional backgrounds, it does not seem like an easy task. Dr. Chin said,

There are challenges indeed. Our fan base is relatively small at this stage. That might be because sometimes our senior members may find it difficult to react on Facebook. They may not know how to like, share or comment. It takes time to nurture the engagement within our members; on the other hand, it also takes time to run the fan page and to build up its infrastructures. That's why we have to keep monitoring too; it is a long-run thing.

First launched in 2012 and then handled by Dr. Chin in May 2013, Rotary District 3450's fan page had only 100 followers (likers) initially, yet when we visited the fan page today in October, the number has soared up to 672 already. And it seems that this escalation is not slowing down; we are foreseeing a larger growth coming in the near future.

What have been done in this six-month time for RID 3450's fan page to enjoy such an exponential increase of followers? What exactly happened to make people suddenly aware of this page's existence and engage in its activities?

Dr. Chin shared one of his successful cases with us.

## **The Local "This Close" Album**

Flashing back to March, there is the happy news about Rotary Club having Donnie Yen as their latest End Polio Now ambassador this year and having him featured in the "This Close" print advertisement. Having a famous Hong Kong celebrity as Rotary



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International's endorser, Dr. Chin believed, would also be a great encouragement to the local members.

Therefore, in an occasion of RID 3450's club meeting, Dr. Chin decided to ask the members to take their own "This Close" awareness pictures as a form of support and response to the End Polio campaign. He said,

Making good use of our regular meeting, we were able to get the photo shooting done pretty easily. All we needed to prepare was just the logistic materials (such as backdrop; logo and slogan) and of course a photographer as well. It was taking the opportunity with everyone here to take these pictures that matters.

Having captured 104 photos with members making the signature "This Close" gesture, Dr. Chin did not release those pictures immediately. He said,

We thought timing is rather important so we decided to wait at that time. We were looking for the right moment.

The moment eventually came when Donne Yen's "This Close" public service announcement was launched on August 22, 2013, globally in Rotary Club's media center and official sites, including RID 3450's Facebook fan page.

Three days after the global launch, on August 25, 2013, Dr. Chin released the album containing 104 photos on their fan page. And an impressive result was noticed when he evaluated this local Facebook fan page's activity later.

## **Measurement of the Outcomes**

The launch of the local album apparently has surprised and impressed the visitors. According to the statistical result from Facebook analytics provided by Dr. Chin, while the post of Donnie Yen's PSA received 2,100 views, the view count of their local album has escalated up to 5,200. This album has also become one of the most popular photo albums on RID 3450's fan page.

The drawn response was not restricted to be found only online; members started talking about it in meetings or networking events as well. Dr. Chin said,



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It definitely created noise. I can hear our members talking about it in their daily conversations. When it comes to a fan page activity's evaluation, of course the online measurement counts, but how people respond in real life also tells us something.

## How Did It Get Viral?

Plenty of successful and remarkable fan page cases can be found on the Internet, but most of the time, organizations or companies still find it hard to run one effectively themselves. It may be because sometimes they may take it too casually. Some of them just create a page, update a few things occasionally, then leave it there wishing it to become viral someday. Yet apparently, this is not how it works. Like running a business, operating a fan page needs time to plan and run.

Dr. Chin's sharing has taught us something really important here. Even for something as simple and easy as creating a photo album, there are rounds of considerations and steps of actions behind.

Apart from communicating with the world, like other fan pages usually do, RID 3450's fan page also serves as the members' networking site: an online gathering platform for its large scope of multiregional members.

The local "This Close" photo album launch helped RID 3450's fan page receive the members' attention that it needs and get the End Polio message circulated. It was a success because of the following reasons:

1. Celebrity effect (and localization)

Although it was Rotary International's call instead of RID 3450's to invite Donnie Yen as their latest ambassador, of many international and local activities on hand, RID 3450 understood the influence of Donnie Yen in Hong Kong and even in the Asia Pacific area, where almost all of their members are located, so they took the opportunity to anchor this local celebrity news to its own fan page activity.



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The celebrity effect is fully used. They did not just pick a random star to put the spotlight on. Instead, they chose someone who works particularly well for their audience.

To do so, they must have understood the background of their members and also what they are usually interested in.

## 2. Relevancy

Every day, we may spend quite a considerable amount of time on Facebook reading our friends' posts and photos. We then "like" or comment on them because that is how we feel connected on a social network.

RID 3450's fan page, by using its own members' photos, also created this sense of relevancy to readers. With familiar faces on the PSAs, other members are more prone to pay attention and even respond (like/share/comment) to the album.

The tag function was fully used here as well. When the members in the photos were tagged, their families and friends on Facebook saw the photos as well. They might have also discussed about it and hence helped attain a further viral effect for this campaign.

## 3. Speed

Besides using a celebrity and then their own members as eye-catching gimmicks, speed is necessary in creating that attractiveness. In our case, the local album was published only three days after the post about Donnie Yen's endorsement, and there is no other post in between on the timeline. The linkage was obvious.

## 4. Timing

Every good plan needs a schedule, including this case here. Dr. Chin has reiterated that the right timing took an important role in his plan; from when



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to do the shooting to when to launch the photos, he put them all into consideration when planning this fan page activity.

## **Current Performance of the Fan Page and Insights**

The local members' "This Close Campaign" album case was only one of the fan page activities launched by RID 3450. With the same operational direction, the page's performance is now steadily reaching its target—that is, 60% or more members to become fans.

When Dr. Chin was asked how he found the result so far, he said he was quite satisfied.

Indeed, with 100 followers initially in May, RID 3450's page has been expanding its fan base. "Like" numbers have currently (October) sprung up to more than 600. In other words, it has a 100% growth every month in average from May until now.

Dr. Chin shared some of his thoughts with us:

To run a successful Facebook fan page, patience and regular monitoring are needed. It is not a one-time process; instead, it takes time to operate and to build up the connection with the followers.

Staying active is one of the ways that engages visitors. Other than that, sometimes you can even directly motivate your target to like your page; for instance, we asked our members to stay tuned on Facebook by spreading this message out in our gatherings.

It is also very important to ensure the page content is attractive enough to make your visitors stay. In fact, content and the number of audience are interrelated: while page contains interesting contents is able to get people to stick with, topics on page with people talking around appear to be more attractive at the same time. And that is the word of mouth we have been talking about.

Apart from the insights on operations, Dr. Chin reminded us of the importance of evaluation:





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It is also recommended that, for the page owner, or admin(s) in the exact wording, to keep track of the performance. As admin(s), we are able to see the statistics provided by Facebook analytics. And those numbers can tell if the fan page is performing in the desired way or if it is able to induce further reaction from the visitors. Like I said, it takes time to run a fan page, and the measurement has to be done to make sure it is running towards the right direction.

Besides the insights brought up by Dr. Chin, there are also a few other factors that are generally regarded as essential.<sup>7</sup>

As we can see, on RID 3450's fan page, they have a link to their official website and Twitter page. This can bring the traffic from their homepage to the Facebook fan page and vice versa. They also post links of other rotary-related sites, such as the Rotary International media center and Rotaract Club (a Rotary International youth program), and "share" each other's messages. Connecting with multiple sites and other associated platforms helps make the audience stick around and funnel them throughout the network.

Apart from the speed and timing mentioned earlier in the case, the frequency of these page activities is also a key aspect. Like RID 3450's fan page, they post two to three times a day on average. Its timeline stays active with regular status updates, videos, and images (and creating multimedia content enhances the attractiveness of the fan page as well). What is more, not only do they share frequently, but they react swiftly as well. All of the responses from visitors, such as comments, wall posts, and external shares, are handled (by commenting back or clicking "like"), and usually in a short period of time. This active participation is able to keep the visitors interested and keeps them in touch.

With the objective to get along and communicate with visitors, it is suggested that a more friendly tone of voice should be used. Personal tone messages—for instance, "Who is the one?" "Look! You may discover . . ." or "Dear Rotarians, it's here!"—can be

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.seototal.net/blog/five-most-important-aspects-of-having-a-successful-facebook-fan-page.html>; <http://www.postplanner.com/secret-of-successful-facebook-pages-expert-opinions/>



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found here and there on RID 3450's fan page. This successfully created a sense of closeness.

Also regarding the content, direct action can be asked for. Like what RID 3450 does with their posts, they include call-to-action phrases, such as "Please like and share this!" "Take action!" "Stay tuned!" and "Act now!" With these direct commands, it may effectively prompt their audience to take the desired actions.

## Summary

With thorough considerations and planning, the local "This Close Campaign" photo album launching made good use of the celebrity effect; it enhanced the sense of relevancy to followers and controlled the speed and timing well. With these, it has effectively channeled the attention of audience to RID 3450's Facebook fan page and created a discussion among the audience, both on and off the Internet.

All in all, to run a successful Facebook fan page, it is believed that regular monitoring is necessary. One has to stay active and fresh to keep the followers engaged. The content, of course, should be attractive as well and involve an understanding of the followers' interests. There are also other tactics, including linking with other platforms, updating and responding frequently, using a personal tone, and remembering to call for action.

Aiming to enlarge the fan base size to more than 60% of their members, RID 3450's fan page is taking its own time to build up its image and is now stepping to its objective at a good clip.