

It Takes Two

A Social Media Strategy for



Composed by Brian Murray

For ENGCMP 1112

University of Pittsburgh

I. Introduction

[Penguin Teen](#) proves to be a clean, accessible, and compelling brand built off of the history of historic publishing companies. Founded separately, Penguin Press and Random House (along with their various imprints), operated for decades establishing themselves as the major platforms of literary works both for adult audiences as well as the emerging teen readership in the mid twentieth century. Merging into Penguin Random House in 2013, the two changed the Big Six of publishing into the Big Five, establishing themselves as the superpower in the American literary landscape.

Penguin Teen, which represents the young adult offerings by this publishing giant, offers the same crisp presentation as is in keeping with all of Penguin Random House's various social media, but emphasizes a more [poppy, colorful aesthetic](#) while maintaining a considerable level of accessibility. Many of their tweets use [a casual peer vernacular](#) to connect to a teen audience while their Instagram posts emphasize a bright, popping aesthetic.

In general, Penguin Teen is at the top of their social media competition, garnering more followers than other young adult publishers. Notably, they share a similar audience, which just varies in size. The clear primary audience would be teen readers, which rounding off can span between the ages of 12 and 20, though this is a rough approximation accounting for early and late teen readers. Another clear audience would be the growing adult market, which includes growing readers maintaining an interest in young adult literature as well as adults discovering an interest in this vein (teachers, parents, etc.). However, the key difference between Penguin Teen and its competitors comes in the curation and editorial nature of content. Other publishing houses connect to their teen audiences but seem to sacrifice a level of professionalism, displaying a more casual aesthetic that doesn't grab attention quite as well as Penguin Teen.

II. Area of Potential

While Penguin Teen appears to stand well above its competitors, this does not suggest that it should merely maintain its status quo. Rather, Penguin Teen needs to continue to evolve to maintain its dominance. The brand displays obvious strengths, but looking at its competitors, there are many ideas that Penguin Teen can use better and more effectively than its competitors (for example, many companies now display their staff on social media to make the companies more relatable face, though Penguin Teen does not employ such methods). As a leader in the industry, it needs to explore new methods of connection in order to stay relevant.

When considering new strategies, it is important to consider the strengths of the brand. Being the largest publisher in the industry, Penguin Random House already has a terrifically large network considering its various imprints that cover virtually all genres and audiences in the American readership. However, it remains somewhat divided as much of the industry does. There is difference in genre, audiences, and content. For example, Penguin Press may focus on adult literary fiction, whereas Penguin Teen focuses on the young adult audience. It is a simple, classic organization used by the entire industry, from the publishers to the sellers. Here, I see an opportunity for growth in the company using social media.

Despite the popularity of Penguin Random House and Penguin Teen, the organization focuses on discrete audiences. However, I think there is tremendous opportunity in encouraging a greater connection between audiences. For example, a secondary audience for Penguin Teen may be a primary audience for Penguin Press. While it is easy to discriminate readers based on specific tastes, often readers look across genre to satisfy their reading needs. Acknowledging and exploring this dynamic will strengthen brand loyalty while pushing the company forward.

III. Action Plan

For my social media campaign, my goal is to increase brand loyalty through fostering audience interaction, both with the brand and between different audiences. To specifically accomplish this, I aim to increase audience interactions (likes, retweets, replies) while also increasing and diversifying audience and its demographics.

To accomplish this, I plan to use the #ItTakesTwo campaign that I have developed. The inception for this idea originates from [a post](#) in early 2018 which showcased two books, *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng (Penguin Press) and *Turtles All The Way Down* by John Green (Penguin Teen). Both published in 2017, John Green praised Ng's novel and encouraged his readers to check it out. In response, the Penguin Teen social media team sponsored a giveaway of the two books. This was of particular interest to me as it used the Penguin Teen brand to showcase another imprint. I think there is great potential in exploring this more, while also looking at other ways in which this dynamic could operate.

Thematically and aesthetically, this campaign will focus on pairings of books including but not limited to Penguin Teen titles (however, the content produced will focus primarily on titles within the Penguin Random House company). Because there is a great possibility and flexibility within this campaign, I am envisioning a longer timeline of three months, specifically to encompass the pique of summer reading.

Month 1 (June):

This month will launch the campaign, establishing its operations, aesthetics, and concepts in order to maintain retention in the audience. This will mostly show curated examples of teen books. For the first month, I want to keep it within the Penguin Teen brand not only to maintain a relative early simplicity but to also allow room to grow and flex the campaign later on. This month will focus on organic content posted through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Month 2 (July):

As audiences become more familiar with the campaign, I plan to use this month to expand imagination as to how the audience can see such pairings. This will include cross-genre pairings as well as pairings that connect different imprints within Penguin Random House with Penguin Teen. This month will focus on bridging different audiences to diversify brand loyalty.

Month 3 (August):

This month will see summer reading winding down, which lends itself to a more laid-back approach compared to the two more aggressive months previous. This month will focus on highlighting audience interaction with the brand as they reflect on a summer worth of reading. The Penguin Teen social media will focus less on organic content and instead will promote audience generated content, retweeting suggesting or reposting pairings audiences have discovered for themselves.

Content Examples:

1. #ItTakesTwo

This is the simple hashtag that will encompass all of the campaign. It plays off of a common phrase which implies the basic message of the campaign, that being that we do not read in vacuums and rather books communicate with one another.

2. Instagram Post



Like the aforementioned post, this displays a pairing. This would be appropriate with the focus of the first month. Both John Green titles are within the Penguin Teen brand, but tackle the same issue in different manners. Namely, both novels focus on illness. However, where *The Fault in our Stars* focuses on physical illness (the protagonist is diagnosed with a form of lung cancer), *Turtles All The Way Down* focuses on mental illness (the protagonist grapples with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder).

3. Prompt Post



Tweet: Salt and pepper apples. Peanut butter and pickle sandwiches. Some pairings seem odd, but wow do they work well together. What are some of your favorite, if unconventional, bookish pairings? #ittakestwo

This post does not specifically target a specific book, but rather prompts the audience to respond. This post would most likely belong in the third month of the campaign.

4. [Playlists](#)

Many of the Penguin Teen posts (particularly on Facebook) sponsor curated playlists based on the release of upcoming books. By creating a playlist that connects two books, it not only promotes both titles, but creates a cognitive space in which audiences are thinking of the relationship between the two titles. It is a way of forming a communal, shared space between two titles.

5. Giveaways

While this also emphasizes a pairing, it also pivots attention towards the titles themselves, encouraging those who do not win the giveaway to nonetheless check the books out for themselves.

IV. Evaluation Plan

Metrics to track:

Number of followers (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)

Inbound Tweets Per Day

Outbound Replies Per Day

Click Throughs

Follower Demographics

Individual Product Sales

Mentions

As previously stated, my goal is to increase audience interaction and overlap. This will strengthen the Penguin brand while developing brand loyalty. These metrics fall into three categories.

The first data I want to measure tracks the strength of the Penguin Teen summer reading campaign. The data I will look at includes inbound tweets per day, outbound replies per day, likes, and mentions. I want the #ittakestwo campaign to connect with followers, but also lead them back to the Penguin brand. Measuring these will determine the reach of this campaign as well as how well it brings followers back to the Penguin Teen brand.

I also want to track follower demographics closely. One of my objectives is to have the Penguin Teen and Penguin Random House audiences interact with both brands more. That is to say, for Penguin Teen followers to start following Penguin Random House and vice versa. Another objective is to strengthen the secondary and tertiary audiences. For example, Penguin Teen's primary audience is teenagers. By looking at the demographics closely, we can see the growth in the older audiences.

The final component I want to measure is the return on investment. I plan to track individual product sales for featured titles in our posts as well as click-throughs to the Penguin Teen home site. This will demonstrate the campaign's effect on revenue and demonstrate the loyalty to the Penguin brand.

I think focusing on these sets of data will best help gauge how the campaign strengthens the Penguin Teen brand and revenue. I plan to use both in-platform metric services as well as independent ones to best collect the most detailed data in these specific areas.

V. Supporting Documents

Social Media Policy

This policy governs the activity, use, and behavior on various social media platforms by employees of Penguin Teen. This policy includes internal and external use, as well as official and private use.

Internal:

Employees are not to use personal social media on company time or resources without the approved exception of their supervisor for company and industry related occurrences, at which point, employees are allowed to use and interact with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and Pinterest.

External and Private Use:

As representatives of the company, employees of Penguin Teen are expected to use and maintain respectful and inclusive language. Disrespectful, purposefully exclusive, and hateful language will not be tolerated.

Employees are allowed to interact with other publishing houses, their content, and the creators of that content on social media. However, employees should not do so at the expense of the Penguin Teen brand. Negative talk of the company, its employees, and its content, as well as any other rhetoric that would damage and hinder the brand, are prohibited.

Employees are encouraged to interact with followers and fans of Penguin Teen and its content in a respectful, positive, and friendly manner. This approach is absolutely necessary when interacting with the young adult audience.

Official Use:

The only individuals approved to use and post on official Penguin Teen social media accounts are members of the Marketing and Publicity Departments. Use by any other individual in the company must be approved by the Director of Marketing.

All content posted on official Penguin Teen platforms must be consistent with policy as well as the style guide.

Privacy:

All accounts associated with Penguin Teen must be kept public and maintain the company's interests and preservation in the public sphere.

Official company information (such as upcoming publications, release dates, author events, and private company operations) previously unpublished by official Penguin Teen accounts are strictly prohibited from both public and private use.

Copyright:

All accounts, both official and personal, are prohibited from publishing or sharing unapproved copyrighted material, including but not limited to author and illustrator content, official company content, and protected content outside of Penguin Teen.

Style Guide

Multi-Platform:

At all times, posts and responses on behalf of Penguin Teen are expected to maintain inclusiveness and respect for its diverse audience. That is not to say that we want to be cold and distant. Quite the opposite. We have the privilege of sharing compelling, reflective, and important stories with a rising generation. We look to encourage, energize, and even have fun. But none of that should come at the expense of respect.

We should also do everything we can to respond to our readers and followers. Complements and praise should be acknowledged with a like across each platform. Questions shorter than fifty words should be responded to publicly while maintaining an energetic and social tone. Longer (or more complex) questions, as well as complaints, should be acknowledged and responded to privately.

Facebook:

The Penguin Teen Facebook account should act as a central information hub for its followers. The page should promote events in addition to creating official events for the platform. If promoting the same information as on another platform (for example, posting and tweeting about an upcoming event), the page should use its own language to avoid too much overlap between platforms. Primarily, the page will share content created by Penguin Teen including listicles, recommendation pages, playlists, etc. The page may share content created by other official sources (such as BuzzFeed) if they feature multiple Penguin products, though these posts should be in the minority compared to our own original content.

Instagram posts may be shared on Facebook, but only those with a high response rate, as to avoid too much overlap.

Twitter:

The Penguin Teen Twitter should follow all of the authors it publishes. We should acknowledge any news or updates for these writers (especially if it relates to Penguin content) with a like or retweet.

The pinned tweet should promote the closest upcoming release or major event hosted by Penguin Teen.

The account may retweet the posts of users and followers if it is relevant to Penguin Teen content and reflects a similar refined composition in keeping with the Penguin Teen brand.

Tweets should always feature an image or video. Also, they should tag relevant people (authors, for example) whenever possible. Posts should not exceed 200 characters. Posts should use a hashtag to promote a title or campaign by Penguin Teen whenever possible.

Instagram:

The photography on Penguin Teen Instagram posts should maintain a professionalism in their composition and structuring. We do not want any post to look like it was shot on an iPhone. Only occasionally repost other user content if it is relevant to upcoming Penguin Teen content and embodies the same professional and refined aesthetic as Penguin Teen posts. Always tag the original poster early in the description to give them fair credit.

Posts should have one or two corresponding emojis maximum. But if none are particularly fitting or appropriate, it is best to abstain.

Use questions in posts to encourage audience engagement.

Hashtags relating to the content or the book community on Instagram may be used but should be posted as a separate comment on the post.

Tumblr:

The Tumblr account can be more informal. We can reblog posts that are simply book related and may not directly link to our brand. However, all shared posts must be grammatically correct.

In posts relating to Penguin Teen content, make sure to add tags for the author, title, characters, and genres, as well as other more general book tags.

Pinterest:

Any content that specifies a title or author must fall under Penguin Teen contents (this includes quotes, covers, fan art, etc.). The account should maintain boards with upcoming releases.

VI. Conclusion

My strategy for Penguin Teen stems from their previous campaigns while also looking at competitor examples. Penguin Teen already has an established brand across various platforms. Their style is consistent, professional, and refined. They have many established campaigns that have proven effective (most recently, see #readswoonrepeat). Therefore, I think the best approach in crafting a new campaign is to move the brand forward in ways it has not previously. Penguin Teen has had similar operations to this campaign but has yet to employ them on a larger, more curated scale. Penguin Teen proves to be especially appropriate for this campaign given the Penguin Random House umbrella. This house has several well-known and successful imprints, such as Penguin Press or Penguin Classics. The prestige and history of this company give it a great opportunity for success in this campaign. Because of the history of this company, there are several titles in the catalog to use in order to create content, allowing for an ideal flexibility in the campaign. And according to a survey from Book Business, Penguin Random House has the greatest number of followers among the big five publishing houses, giving it the greatest opportunity for engagement.

This proves to be a fairly economically feasible strategy, despite the limitations some platforms present. For example, Instagram only allows clickable links posted in bios (or in stories for some users). However, because titles from Penguin Teen appear not only in bookstores but also various online retailers and even department stores, advertising using Instagram will still prove effective (whereas other companies limited to their own locations/websites would find themselves far more limited). Furthermore, according to a quarterly report from Twitter, the prices for advertising is decreasing while audience engagement is on the rise.

Expanding audiences proves to be a particular challenge for the publishing industry. Because of the various imprints in Penguin Random House, there is a wonderful potential for Penguin Teen to tap into these audiences while allowing the Penguin Teen audience to help build brand loyalty across various other imprints. Also, there is the opportunity to tie this campaign with the campaigns of upcoming releases, allowing Penguin Teen to further promote their new releases while strengthening the presence of the campaign.

Works Cited:

[Twitter: Letter to Shareholders Q3 2017](#)

Eagar, Rob. "Does Social Media Marketing Actually Sell Books?" Book Business, 23 Mar. 2016, www.bookbusinessmag.com/post/social-media-marketing-actually-sell-books/.