



# Hershey Bears

## Summer 2018

### Social Media Strategy

Prepared For:  
The Hershey Bears Marketing team

Written By:  
Ashleigh Simpson



April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Dear Hershey Bears Marketing Team:

As a former Hershey Entertainment and Resorts communications intern, as well as a lifelong Hershey Bears fan, I have always felt drawn to preserving the passion and incredible atmosphere that the Hershey Bears have fostered during their last 80 seasons in the American Hockey League.

The Hershey Bears have created an engaging, family friendly and community focused sporting environment for fans across Central Pennsylvania, and you have continued to expand that community into the digital world with the use of social media, keeping your fans connected both inside and outside of the Giant Center.

In today's competitive online landscape it is important to consistently research, re-evaluate and implement new social media strategies to keep your team at the forefront of your audience's digital consumption. The following digital document is a marketing strategy targeted towards the redesign of your team's current summer social media method. This strategy identifies the need for change, as well as explores potential social media initiatives, and the positive outcomes of implementing those initiatives.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to working with you,

*Ashleigh Simpson*

Ashleigh Simpson

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# Why Now?

While the Hershey Bears have continuously had the support of an incredibly loyal fan base, one that has led the Bears to rank #1 in regular season attendance for the last 11 consecutive years, in terms of wins and losses, the Bears have fallen relatively flat on this year's record board. This season saw the highest number of regular season losses in the past 12 years, and on top of that, it is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in the past 13 years that the Bears have not qualified for playoffs.

With contracts of fan favorites including, Garrett Mitchell, Liam O'Brien, and Zach Sill, expiring at the end of the season, it will be incredibly important to maintain that fan loyalty as new players come into fill important roles, if it is determined that those contracts will not be resigned.

This strategy is important not only because the Hershey Bears are coming off of a rough season and we want to rebuild fan morale for the upcoming 2018-2019 season, it is also important because the Bears have never truly had a set social media outline for the off-season. Once the season ends, our online fan community becomes the only audience that the Hershey Bears have access to, and dedicating our focus to our online community should be of utmost importance. Across the board, companies who maintain a social media channel, or channels, are dedicated to year round maintenance of that channel regardless of the season of their team or their business. In an article on brand consistency posted by *Greater Than*, they warn [that] "your consumers and followers access your accounts to engage with you in a positive (or sometimes negative) way or research your product or serve. If they see that you have not posted in weeks it will turn them off and decrease your relevancy." We want to make sure that the Bears are able to stay relevant during the off-season while making sure to post meaningful and engaging content.

One of the most beneficial things about implementing a social media strategy over the summer season is the freedom it will give the Bears to post content that you would not have had the opportunity to post otherwise during the season. The sheer number of content that is pushed out over the regular season ranging from game updates, to game highlights, to upcoming promotional nights, etc. weighs down the free space for experimental content to be shared with fans. Not having those obligations will allow your marketing team to post new content that will work to engage the fans in a way that is tailored to the off-season



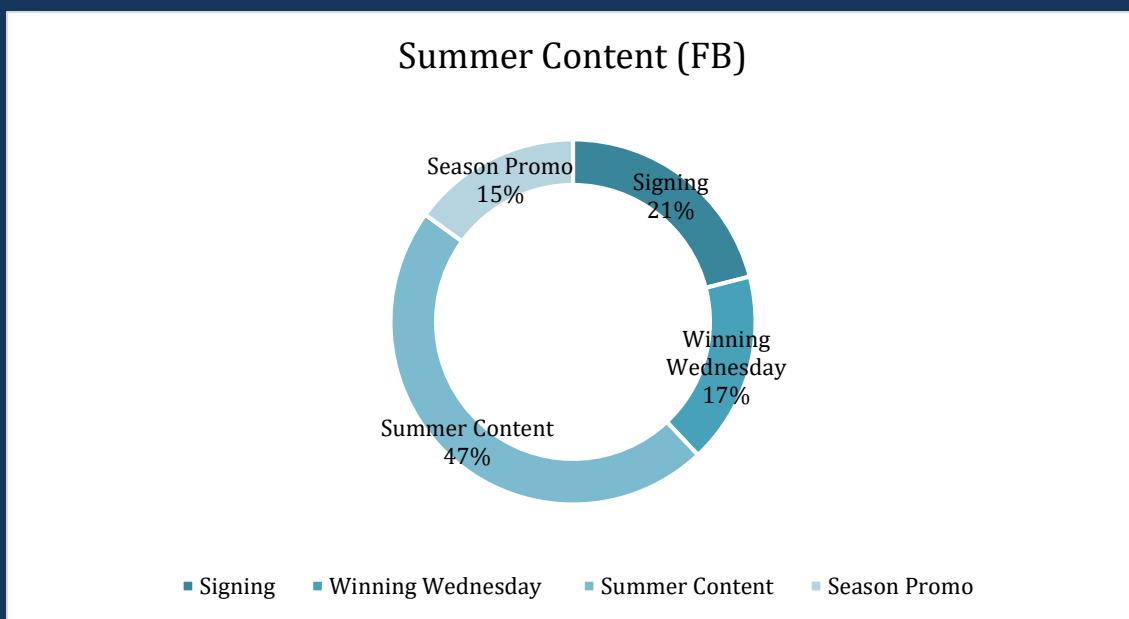
# Your Current Plan

After analyzing the past two summer seasons, ranging from June 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> I wanted to present you with a snapshot of the Bear's average social media landscape during the summer season.

\*These numbers are averages from the 2016 and 2017 summer season

- Average number of summer posts on Instagram: 70
- Average number of summer posts on Facebook: 90
- The Bears average around one post per day on Instagram, and 1.5 – 2 posts per day on Facebook, with occasional intermittent gaps of up to 4 days

After noticing several themes and reoccurring posting trends, I decided to break down the Facebook content from this past summer, 2017 into different categories. These are the main categories that each Facebook post fell into over the course of that summer.



- 21% was dedicated to posts about recent signs/resigns
- 17% was dedicated to the weekly contest – Winning Wednesday
- 15% was dedicated to upcoming season promotions, pushing ticket packages and releasing scheduled game dates
- The remaining 47% was dedicated to any summer content that fell outside of the 3 other categories

# Your Current Plan Cont.

Each of these different categories are in their own right incredibly important to the Bear's summer season. Fans want to be in the know about player resigns and new team additions and they also want to be kept in the loop about schedule announcement and ticket releases. Due to this, this summer strategy focuses solely on making sure that the large remaining section of content, categorized as "other summer content" is filled with fun, unique and innovative content for your fans to interact with.

## Audience Analysis

### **Demographics: (for online community)**

**Location:** Hershey area, communities surrounding Hershey

**Age:** Teenagers 13 - 18 / Young adults 21 - 28 / Middle-age Adults: 29 - 50s /

**Gender:** Both males and females

**Race:** Hershey has mainly a white population however messaging is targeted to whoever is a hockey fan

**Occupation/Income:** Mostly middle-class incomes status, usually 9-5 jobs that would allow attendance to Wednesday night games or jobs that take off on the weekends (games are at 7pm on Sat and 5pm on Sun)

### **Interests:**

Hockey, family time, community involvement, sporting culture, spending time with friends, an activity to do on the weekend, the immersion in a fan base, sports merchandise, interactions with hockey players, kids who want to pursue hockey as a sport, high school and middle school players, individuals who want to participate on the on-ice activities during half time, the Hershey Entertainment brand, love for the town of Hershey, tradition of going to the games over the course of the Bear's history

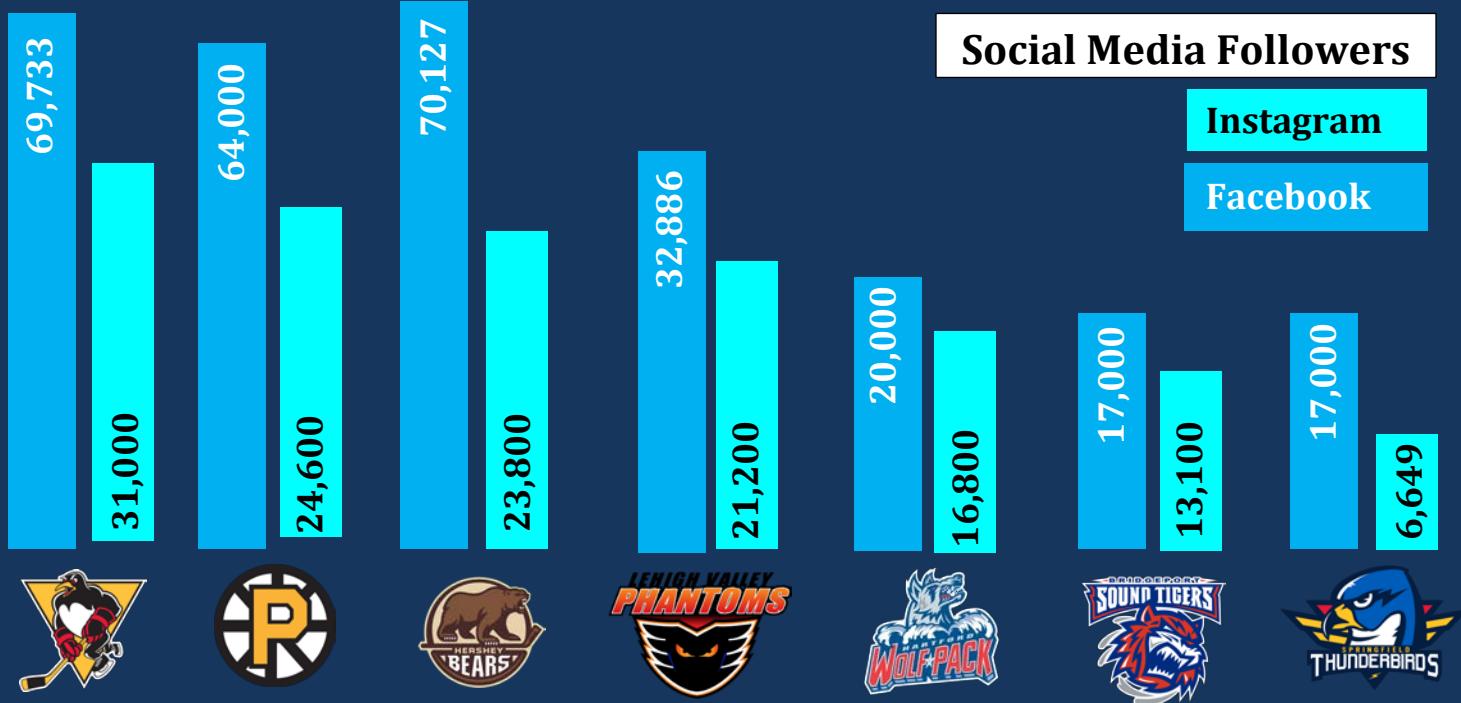
### **Behaviors:**

Passion for the games, lots of excitement for the Bears, commenting and liking social media posts, getting involved in community initiatives, meeting new community members, drinking, grabbing snacks and dinner with friends in the community, wearing jerseys/merchandise to in season games,



## Competitor Analysis

There are 30 teams across the American Hockey League. Even if the Bears do not directly play some of these teams, they still can be considered social media competition. For this strategy however, I chose to focus on the 5 other teams that, along with the Hershey Bears, make up the Atlantic division. These teams include the [Lehigh Valley Phantoms](#), the [Hartford Wolf Pack](#), the [Providence Bruins](#), the [Wilkes-Barre Scranton Penguins](#), the [Bridgeport Sound Tigers](#), and the [Springfield Thunderbirds](#).



# Strategy Goals

Enhance social media content on the Hershey Bears Facebook and Instagram channels over the summer season (June-September) in order to boost fan engagement and brand loyalty.

- Increase Instagram Followers by 20%
- Gain 5,000 likes on Facebook
- Increase overall engagement with posts including likes, comments and shares
- Increase percentage of pre-season ticket sales by 15%
- Boost percentage of fan-generated content/tagged photos

## Where We Can Improve

For this summer social media strategy, I have decided to specifically focus on your Instagram and Facebook platforms in order to generate the highest percentage of growth in follower count, fan engagement and fan loyalty during the 2018 summer season.

### *How will we accomplish this?*

#### Boost Fan Engagement:

- Utilize content that encourages interaction (use of polls, voting, etc.)
- Capitalize on what works
  - Based on information gathered from the performance of past social media posts I have compiled a list of our top performing posts and have scheduled a higher posting frequency of similar content for the upcoming summer season
- Leverage the power of Hershey
  - Spread the name of the Hershey Bears through the influence of top Hershey performers

#### Increase Brand Loyalty:

- Implement a fan-generated summer video contest
- Unite the online Hershey Bears community with the in-game experience during the 2018-2019 regular season opener in order to promote continued community pride and brand loyalty

## Encourage Fan Interaction

A great way to not only boost engagement from your users, but to strengthen your brand loyalty is to increase the usage of polls on social media, Particularly on Instagram. Social media polling is not only a great way to get transparent feedback, it also encourages conversation and participation. "Porter Haney, CEO of the social polling company Wedgies says, 'polling shows your customers that the communication channel isn't a one way street, and it invites them to join in the fun'." By paring the usage of polling with an increase in social listening/monitoring your team will be able to learn more from your audience, and in turn create content tailored to their preferences and needs.



# Capitalize on What Works

During the summer of 2017 you posted 6 behind the scenes posts of players to Instagram. Based on the top 25 most liked Instagram posts during that summer season, 4 of those 6 behind the scenes posts made the top 25, averaging 976 likes per post.

After doing some research across the board on similar accounts it was clear that there was an increased level of interaction with posts that capture a behind the scenes aspects, particularly those that showcase the personality of team's players.

Listed below are three examples behind the scenes/player personality Instagram posts that performed extremely well, or even better than the average engagement received on the surrounding 8 images that would make up a grid of 3 rows (9 posts)

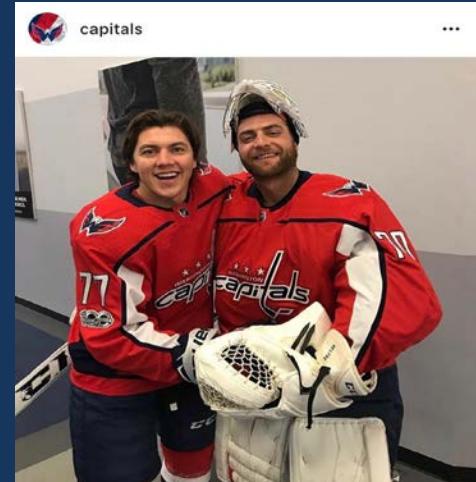
Avg. 21,516  
24,927



Avg. 1,220  
1,168



Avg. 8,882  
25,494



Some of the other posts that online Bears fans have engaged highly with include:

- Throwback pictures of past championship wins
- Pictures of Coco
- Top player re-signs
- Giant Center events: particularly the removal of ice
- Young Hershey Bears fans
- Pictures that incite a feeling of nostalgia for long-time fans



# Leveraging the Power of Hershey

The town of Hershey hosts enough star power to compete with just about any large scale venue, and some of those that are located in cities that dwarf the population of Hershey.

Hersheypark Stadium alone has held past performances from Beyoncé and Luke Bryan to Justin Timberlake, One Direction, and many more.

With access to these performers, who will be performing mainly during the summer season, asking them if they would be willing to sport a Hershey Bears jersey either for a photo, or to be briefly worn on stage could be a huge platform elevation for the Hershey Bears brand.



[Chris Caffery](#), a guitarist for the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, has infamously worn a Hershey Bears jersey to address the crowd before the start of their set during many of their yearly winter performances at Giant Center. These small acts bring a sense of community and team pride to attending residents of Hershey, and also expose the brand to audience members who may be unfamiliar with the team. Acts like these and like this image of Ed Sheeran, posted by the Washington Capitals, provide all of the benefits of influencer marketing even though they are actually posted organically.

With many of the Hershey Bears players and coaches gone for the summer, there is a high value in the creation of new and engaging summer material as opposed to feeling limited to online picking from a library of past season images for reposting

# Fan Generated Summer Video Contest

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One of the goals for this summer is to boost user-generated content. In the 2018 social media trends report posted by Buffer, user generated content is hailed to drive more reach and boost engagement.

During the 2015-2016 summer season there were 2 #FanFriday posts on the Bears' Instagram that featured fan generated content. Unfortunately, these two posts ended up receiving some of the lowest engagement over the entirety of the summer season and clearly set a bad precedent for the attitude towards posting user-generated content.

The goal of implementing this fan-generated summer video contest is to take a really innovative and creative approach to displaying user-generated content in order to excite fans, not only so that they participate, but also so that they are looking forward the start of the upcoming hockey season.

**VIDEO CONTEST PREMISE:** Ask fans, coaches, and players to submit a video recording of themselves during the summer season either enjoying their summer in Hershey, or anticipating the start of the Hershey Bears hockey season. These videos will be submitted to an inbox dedicated specifically to receiving fan submissions. Submissions will be selected, gathered and in the end, edited into a fan/summer appreciation video that will play during the beginning of the 2018-2019 regular season home opener. Fans who submit videos will receive a discount on tickets for the regular season home opener in order to watch the finalized video at the start of the game.

This contest is unique because there will not actually be any fan-generated content reposted onto your social pages before the video is released. This is to not spoil the fan-generated video content that will be featured before the final video is created, and also to keep engagement levels with social media posts high. The only user-generated content that will be previewed on the Bears' social channels will be videos submitted by current Bears players and coaches due to the fact that the engagement history of behind the scenes posts perform so well.

Social media posts on both Instagram and Facebook during the summer season regarding the video contest will include reminders for fans to participate, guidelines for the contests, posts that feature submissions from players and coaches, behind the scenes clips of video technicians editing the video together, etc.



The other really unique thing about this video contest is that it will merge together your online social media audience with fans who do not have an online social media presence, but are dedicated “in-person” fans during live Bears games.

The goal is to promote the idea that hockey never stops, even in the off-season, and also to celebrate our Bears fans as individuals, not just as bodies that fill seats during the regular season. We want the Hershey Bears hockey community to feel proud of their fan-base and of their community and excite the fans for the start of a great 2018-2019 season. Since the regular season home opener is always a time to hype up the fans about the players, I want to make regular season home opener to also be a time that fans can get hyped about the fact that they have a community of Bears fans around them every time they step into the Giant Center.

Sample Social Posts:

 **Hershey Bears**  
Yesterday at 2:00pm · 

**SUMMER IS HERE!**



While the Bears are away how will the fans play?  
Submit a video of how you, your friends, or your family enjoy the summer Hershey Bears style.  
Winners will be featured on the big screen during the opening of the 2018-2019 and will even win tickets to see their big screen debut!  
Upload your video to [www.hersheybears.com](http://www.hersheybears.com) or using the hashtag #HBH  
For more information and for rules and regulations please visit [www.hersheybears.com/summer](http://www.hersheybears.com/summer)

Introducing our very first Hershey Bears summer video contest!! Head to [www.hersheybears.com/contest](http://www.hersheybears.com/contest) for more information! #HBH

Like · Comment · Share

800 people like this.

120 shares

 Write a comment ...  

 **Hershey Bears**  
4 hrs ago



392 likes

Check out what Liam O'Brien is up to this summer! Don't forget to submit your own summer video for the chance to be featured in the regular season home opener fan recap video!  
#OneBigHockeyFamily #HBH  
#SummerVideoContest

# Sample Summer Content Calendar

Platform	Asset	Content	Type	Timing
FB & Insta	Organic	<b>Luke Bryan with Bears Jersey:</b> Looking good Luke! #HBH #LivingFreeTour	Single Image	06/10-4pm
Facebook	Organic	<b>Coco with Bears Prize Pack:</b> It's Winning Wednesday! This week enter for a chance to win this Coco approved Hershey Bears prize pack	Single Image	06/13-11am
Facebook	Shared	<b>Fan-Generated Content:</b> Once a Bears fan, always a Bears fan #TBT #HBfamily	Collage of Pictures	06/14-12pm
Instagram	Shared	<b>Fan-Generated Content:</b> Once a Bears fan, always a Bears fan #TBT #HBfamily	Multi-Pictures	06/14-12
Instagram	Organic	Celebration Hug: Happy Friday Bears Fans! Bring on the weekend!	Single Image	06/15-2pm

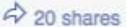
 **Hershey Bears**  
Yesterday at 12:00pm · 



Once a Bears fan, always a Bears fan #TBT #HBFamily

Like · Comment · Share

 123 like this.

 20 shares

 Write a comment ...  

 **Hershey Bears**  
5 mins



 200 likes

Looking great Chris!! Time for us to rock out to some Trans-Siberian Orchestra! #HBH

# Measurement

In order to successfully reach the identified summer season goals, the Hershey Bears Organization will be responsible for the consistent monitoring, re-evaluating, and recording of both internal and external social media content in order to deliver the best content for your followers. The monitoring of social media posts must remain a top priority throughout the course of the summer season.

**GOAL:** Grow Facebook and Instagram numbers:

**MEASURE:**

- Log follower numbers at the start of June (June 1<sup>st</sup>), track monthly, and record end of the off-season (September 30<sup>th</sup>) total.

**GOAL:** Increase Overall Fan Engagement/ Number of Fan Generated Content

**MEASURE:**

- Using Sprout Social or Google Analytics track likes, shares, and comments for each post (per platform)
- Monitor which posts capture the most engagement and measure engagement comparatively on a month-by-month basis
- Monitor response rates to content prompting audience participation (polls, voting requests, for fan generated content, etc.)
- Track number of tagged photos and the use of the hashtag #HBH

**GOAL:** Increase percentage of pre-season ticket purchases by 15%

**MEASURE:**

- Tracking this goal will be in coordination with the Giant Center box office in order to access data records of past pre-season ticket sale numbers
- Because we are tracking this increase as a result of social media efforts to boost brand loyalty by introducing a new user-generated summer video contest, we will monitor this goal by tracking clicks to the contest website as well as clicks to the box office website through social media posts that push the contest
- From this monitoring we can gauge:
  - How many social media followers are interacting with the contest
  - How influential our summer social media contest is in promoting the pre-season purchasing of game tickets

# Social Media Policy

Attached below are two different policy guides. The first is a policy guide to be publicly released to your social media audience. The second is an internal social media policy guide for both your employees and for the Hershey Bears players. These documents will help establish the social media expectations for every party involved with the Hershey Bears brand.



For Public Release

## Hershey Bears Social Media Policy

The Hershey Bears are dedicated to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of their fans and the Hershey community, as well as upholding the ethics and moral standards of Hershey Entertainment and Resorts as a whole. With our active role in the social media community, the Hershey Bears strive to create all content strictly within the guidelines of our social media policy and we ask our employees and our fans to do the same. Thank you.

*-HE&R Communications Team*

### Fans and Spectators: Personal Accounts

As fans of the Hershey Bears we encourage your interaction with our online social presence, in fact, that's why we created the channels in the first place! Our fans are incredibly important to us and help to cultivate a safe and inclusive environment to enjoy the sport of hockey in the Sweetest Place on earth. As Hershey Bears fans we ask you to please be aware of the effect that negative comments can have on the fan community. While we appreciate all of your love and support, certain inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.

Examples of inappropriate social content include:

- The use of vulgar/derogatory language targeted specifically at other fans, players or coaches, opposing teams, or the organization as a whole
- Disrespecting other players, coaches, fans or opposing team members on the public social walls of any Hershey Bears platforms. (The Hershey Bears have the right to remove any comments that they deem to be harmful or disrespectful)
- Posting links to malicious software (viruses, phishing, spyware, etc.)
- Posting any material that violates general social media platform policies (Facebook's code of conduct, Instagram's code of conduct, etc.)

The Hershey Bears and HE&R appreciate your cooperation in respecting these policies and upholding the ethics and standards of the team that we each individually represent.



## Hershey Bears Social Media Policy

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*-HE&R Communications Team*

### Hershey Bears Social Accounts

- Follow all ethical guides and policies distributed by Hershey Entertainment and Resorts
- Confidential information, including user-generated content is not to be reposted without consent from user
- The use of vulgar/racially charged/obscene language is strictly prohibited
- Negative comments are to be addressed by placing a public comment on the original comment or concern asking the individual to have a private discussion via direct message with a communications team member, unless otherwise authorized
- Follow the style guide and expectations of the Hershey Bears brand
- Remove user-generated content from social channels that is either harmful or threatening to other fans, or to the organization/players
- Never release personal statements/opinions on a company channel, the correct voice and tone is to be maintained throughout all posts

### Players and Employees: Personal Accounts

As players and employees of the Hershey Bears organization you are in a position where your personal social media profiles reflect, either for better or worse, on the organization as a whole. Third party access to your profile, photos, videos, and comments are likely to increase due to the vast social media participation from our fans, community members, and outside media sources. Our goal for you is to understand how actions on your personal social accounts have consequences under the scrutiny of such a public audience. Inappropriate material found on your profile affects the perception, not only of you as an athlete or as an employee, but the overall brand of this hockey team.

Examples of inappropriate behaviors exhibited on personal social channels include:

- Unsportsmanlike content that is derogatory in nature towards another player, coach, employee, individual or institution. Posts that encourage unacceptable behavior such as discrimination, fighting, vandalism, hazing, illegal drug use, are strictly prohibited
- Photos, videos comments or posers showcasing the personal use of alcohol to an excessive level (no shot glasses, videos of individuals drinking, results of too much alcohol consumption, etc.) This also excludes any photos of dug or tobacco usage including the appearance of drug paraphernalia
- The release of undisclosed information about the Hershey Bears organization as an entity or of Hershey Entertainment and Resorts
- The use of vulgar/racially charged/obscene language

# Style Guide



## Hershey Bears Style Guide 2018 Summer Season

### Our Principles:

1. Maintain the values and ethics of Hershey Entertainment and Resorts
2. Community First
3. Family Short
4. Keep it short/Keep it engage
5. Market both the team and players
6. Be responsive to fan questions and comments
7. Be respectful
8. Build a trust in the fan base
9. Generate pride in the fan base
10. Appreciate every fan, the old and the new

### Generating Social Content:

(Topics to be aware of in creating social posts)

- Recent signs/re-signs
- Player's and Coaches' birthdays
- Summer holidays
- Season long promotions (Winning Wednesdays)
- Relevant current news happening within the AHL

### Resources:

Amy Rhine: Marketing Specialist  
ARhine@HersheyPA.com

Kaylee Dugan: Communications Manager  
KRDugan@HersheyPA.com

### Our Channels:

#### Facebook:

Page: Hershey Bears  
Followers: 70,127  
Avg. Posts: 1.5-2 per day

#### Instagram

Handle: thehersheybears  
Followers: 23,800  
Avg. post: 1 per day

### Fast Facts:

Colors: "Chocolate and White"  
NHL Affiliate: Washington Capitals  
Mascot: Coco the Bear  
Years in the AHL: 80  
Calder Cup Wins: 11  
Giant Center Seats: 10,500

## Conclusion

The Hershey Bears are an incredible organization and over the years you have grown a fan base that is truly one of the best in the American Hockey League. This social media strategy was designed to compliment the voice, tone, and community focus that the Bears have embodied both in the arena, and online through your current social media platforms



Contact:

Ashleigh Simpson  
Email: [acs194@pitt.edu](mailto:acs194@pitt.edu)  
Phone: 717-798-7321  
LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/ashleighcsimpson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ashleighcsimpson)

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