



National
Urban League



National Urban League Case Study

Marketing Registered Apprenticeships Through Social Media

A Case Study and Best Practices Guide on
Amplifying Registered Apprenticeship
Using Social Media and Digital Platforms



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Contents

1. Introduction: The National Urban League and a 21 st Century Approach to Amplifying Registered Apprenticeship, Diversity, and Inclusion.....	2
1.1 Meeting the Demand for Labor	2
1.2 A Solution through the USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Initiative	2
1.3 Introduction to National Urban League as an Equity Contractor	3
2. The Importance of Marketing Apprenticeships Using Social Media.....	3
2.1 Using Social Media to Target the Next Generation Workforce	3
2.2 Using Social Media to Increase awareness of the NUL Consortium’s Capabilities to Employers.....	4
2.3 NUL Consortium’s Objectives for Marketing Through Social Media	4
3. Key Benefits of Marketing Through Social Media.....	5
4. Digital Outreach Tools.....	6
4.1 Podcast Platforms – Soundcloud and TalkShoe	6
4.2 Examples of Podcasts created by the NUL’s Consortium	7
4.3 Digital Narrative Platforms.....	8
4.4 Example of a Digital Narratives created by the NUL Consortium	9
5. Summary	9

Purpose/Goal of Case Study: To provide a detailed case study and best practices guide based on the National Urban League’s (NUL) contract with the U.S. Department of Labor to amplify Registered Apprenticeship and to promote diversity & inclusion using social media and other digital platforms.

Target Audience: U.S. Department of Labor’s Industry and Equity Intermediaries, American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI) Grantees, Urban League (UL) Affiliates, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), federal and state agencies, employers, nonprofit advocacy organizations, and other entities working to amplify messaging on Registered Apprenticeship.

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1. Introduction: The National Urban League and a 21st Century Approach to Amplifying Registered Apprenticeship, Diversity, and Inclusion

1.1 Meeting the Demand for Labor

In traditional industries such as construction and manufacturing, Baby Boomers are retiring, leaving an insufficient number of skilled workers to replace them. In new and evolving industries, such as the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, new jobs are being created that require specialized skills and training. As per the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a number of reasons contribute to the future growth of employment opportunities versus supply of workers, including slowing of population growth, decreasing labor force participation, and an increasingly lower unemployment rate¹. Even though the national unemployment rate has steadily lowered over the past several years, African-American unemployment remains about twice as high as white unemployment. As per a study concluded in March of 2018, black unemployment averaged 7.4 percent, compared to an average of 3.7 percent for white unemployment². Moreover, the numbers for discouraged and underemployed workers are still high for black workers. The Labor Department defines “discouraged workers” as those who want a job but have given up looking and the “underemployed” as people working part time because they cannot find full-time work.

1.2 A Solution through the USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Initiative

The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) is working to meet the demand for labor through Registered Apprenticeship, a formalized, government-credentialed approach for preparing workers for jobs through an employer-driven, “earn-while-you-learn” model. Apprenticeship has been part of the fabric of America since its earliest beginnings. In 1937, U.S. leaders recognized the benefit of apprenticeship for individuals and industry, and formalized apprenticeship through the National Apprenticeship Act³.

Today, there are more than half a million registered apprentices in training in American industry. The Trump Administration has set an ambitious goal to grow the number of apprentices exponentially by 2020. In 2016, the USDOL, in order to 1) accelerate expansion of the scope of Registered Apprenticeship programs, 2) increase the number of individuals employed as Registered Apprentices, and 3) achieve diversity and inclusion of previously underrepresented populations (women, persons of color, persons with a disability, etc.) initiated a competitive procurement process to identify organizations to serve as Intermediary Partners, Equity Partners, or both⁴.

So far, since 2016, more than \$35 million has been allocated by the U.S. Department of Labor with the goal of increasing, promoting, and diversifying Registered Apprenticeship programs through Industry and Equity Intermediary contracts.

¹ <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2015/article/industry-employment-and-output-projections-to-2024.htm>

² <https://www.marketplace.org/2018/03/12/economy/african-american-unemployment-is-nearly-twice-high-white-unemployment>

³ <https://www.doleta.gov/oa/history.cfm#original>

⁴ <https://blog.dol.gov/2016/09/21/new-intermediaries-will-help-scale-us-apprenticeships>

1.3 Introduction to National Urban League as an Equity Contractor

In 2016, the National Urban League (NUL) was awarded one of several “Equity Partner” contracts by the USDOL. NUL partnered with the Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC), and the Wireless Infrastructure Association (WIA) to execute the deliverables under the contract. This trio, along with a number of Urban League Affiliates in several regions throughout the country, is known as the NUL Consortium.

Under the current contract, the NUL Consortium is bridging the wealth, skills, and employment gaps by exposing underrepresented populations to middle-skill jobs through apprenticeships and job-readiness programs that support and strengthen America's most important industries.

In order to promote and diversify Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs and opportunities across industries in which RA is already prevalent, and in nascent RA programs in the ICT Sector, the NUL Consortium has two principal objectives:

- (1) To work with industry employers and other relevant stakeholders to promote Registered Apprenticeships in vocations across numerous industries, including wireless and telecommunications infrastructure, public utilities, construction, manufacturing, healthcare, and transportation.
- (2) To build and leverage a set of regional partnerships, consisting principally of Urban League Affiliates, in order to recruit underrepresented populations for available employment opportunities through Registered Apprenticeships.

2. The Importance of Marketing Apprenticeships Using Social Media

Recognizing the importance of getting the word out about the USDOL’s registered apprenticeship program and targeting specific “hard-to-reach” populations, the NUL Consortium used social media tools early on during their contract with the USDOL, for a variety of reasons.

2.1 Using Social Media to Target the Next Generation Workforce

As discussed earlier, the U.S. is facing a workforce challenge as a large segment of the national workforce is retiring, and millennials are looking for new opportunities and are eager to learn new skills⁵. Moreover, the higher unemployment rates for people of color noted previously undoubtedly contributes to the lack of workforce diversity in certain sectors. One of the biggest challenges for employers in attracting diverse workers is ensuring that outreach is targeted using the right platforms and the best tools to reach the desired workers. Many employers involved in the NUL Consortium report challenges in implementing the right strategies⁶. Traditional marketing methods, such as newspaper advertisement, TV and radio broadcasting, and billboards alone may not bring the message across to diverse or next generation workforce prospects.

To address these concerns, some industries and government organizations have started adopting new tools, such as using social media, which allow them to reach a wider audience quickly, often using algorithms that enable direct targeting of workers.

⁵ <https://www.onpointconsultingllc.com/blog/one-thing-millennials-want-most-at-work>

⁶ <http://uajp.iamempowered.com/download/ULCC%20Case%20Study%20-%20Closing%20the%20Wireless%20Jobs%20and%20Skills%20Gaps%20through%20Apprenticeship%20---%20FINAL.pdf>

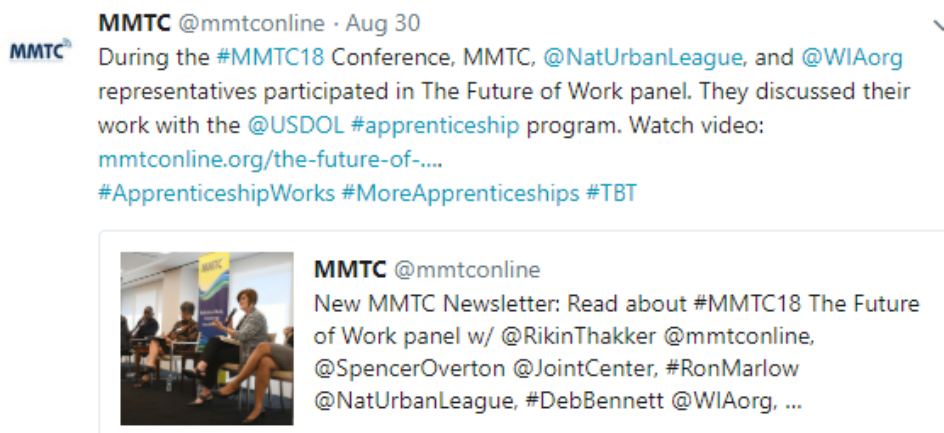
2.2 Using Social Media to Increase awareness of the NUL Consortium’s Capabilities to Employers

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) of the NUL Consortium tested and implemented various tools for outreach and marketing campaigns. The NUL Consortium’s goals in using social media tools such as podcasts and storytelling blogs were to: 1) test the effectiveness of new social media tools by making sure the tools allow the partners, members, and sub-contractors to share and deliver compelling stories that enabled them to reach diverse communities; 2) offer unique technical assistance to participating employers and RA sponsors who need help meeting their Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) obligations; and 3) reach not only employers who are already active in the registered apprenticeship domain, but bring in new employers, community partners, and community and 4-year colleges.

2.3 NUL Consortium’s Objectives for Marketing Through Social Media

The following are some of the ways that the NUL Consortium has implemented a 21st Century approach in fulfilling the objectives of the Consortium’s Equity Partner contract with the USDOL:

- i) **Promote** RA Programs and generate exposure by promoting the mission, work, efforts, resources, and goals of the NUL Consortium and diversifying Registered Apprenticeship Programs.
- ii) **Expand access** to RA Programs among historically under-utilized populations
- iii) **Advocate** for Diversity Programs that promote and preserve equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion in the Registered Apprenticeship domain.



- iv) **Increase awareness** of the NUL Consortium’s capabilities, including Technical Assistance for EEO
- v) **Provide a social media portal** for those who cannot travel to various conferences and educational events
- vi) **Expand and strengthen relationships** with
 - (1) Underrepresented communities
 - (2) Conference and policy event attendees, speakers, and intermediaries
 - (3) Community and industry partners
 - (4) Federal and state agencies
 - (5) Mainstream media and other press
- vii) **Connect** with “social media influencers”

3. Key Benefits of Marketing Through Social Media

As per Blue Fountain Media⁷, about 90% of marketers claimed that social media generated immense exposure for their companies, and that being only one of its many advantages. Social networks are now a substantial part of every marketing strategy, and the benefits of using social media are so great that anyone not implementing this cost-effective resource is missing out on a phenomenal marketing opportunity. Marketing strategies must be adapted to 21st century standards, using a combination of conventional tools and marketing mechanisms in addition to social media tools to reach today's digitally-savvy generation. Some of the key benefits of engaging social media for marketing campaigns are highlighted below.

1) Increased Brand Awareness

Implementing social media strategies can increase brand recognition because of engagement with a broader audience of users and consumers. Brand awareness is increased through various stake-holders' engagement on social media, such as the "like" and "share" activities of a social media post. Each post that is shared can be introduced to a new network of individuals. For example, 90 people created 766 tweets at MMTC's July 2018 Access to Capital conference which featured a panel on the Future of Workforce and Apprenticeship. The tweet activity of those original 90 people created 399,654 unique views resulting in 1,596,719 impressions online. An "impression" or impact refers to the number of times a hashtag or social media handle, in this case #MMTC18, could have been seen by Twitter users.

2) More Inbound Traffic

Without marketing on social media, the inbound traffic to any organization's website might be limited to its usual, loyal customer base and/or stakeholder circle. Many of the opportunity partnerships that have been created by the NUL Consortium are with organizations who initially learned about the Consortium and its unique role in apprenticeship through our social media campaigns.

3) Improved Search Engine Rankings

It is important to achieve higher page rankings through search engine optimization. Higher social media posts improve search engine rankings according to the publication, Social Media Examiner⁸. By using targeted keywords, such as Equal Employment Opportunities, Registered Apprenticeship, Technical Assistance, and Pre-apprenticeship, the NUL Consortium's website has gained more traffic from employers and other stakeholders.

4) Cost-Effective

At its core, social media marketing is nothing but "digital word-of-mouth" campaigning; and it is possibly the most cost-efficient part of any promotion and marketing strategy. Most of the social networking platforms offer free membership and profile creation. Being cost-effective enables greater returns on investment.

5) Thought Leadership

Integrity is key when posting content on a social media platform. Posting insightful and well-written content on social media is a great way to become an expert and leader in your respective field. The NUL Consortium connects with the right audience through strategic meaningful posts. For example, the NUL Consortium helped WIA produce various workforce development panels at WIA's annual conference, Connectivity Expo, in Charlotte in May 2018. Through strategic posting on social media, we increased the awareness of the program

⁷ <https://www.bluefountainmedia.com/blog/advantages-of-social-media-marketing/>

⁸ <https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/social-media-seo/>

before it took place, we gathered intellectual content *while* it took place, and we created a “storytelling blog”, i.e. a digital narrative, *after* the event for people who could not attend the event in person.

The link to the blog from the WIA Connectivity Expo is here -

<https://wakelet.com/wake/f1a32122-dcdf-4247-b9e7-663e6558dfde>

Recognizing the unique benefits of incorporating social media tools into marketing apprenticeship, the USDOL specially requested that the NUL Consortium present our marketing strategies to other industry and equity partners through a training webinar, which was delivered in March 2018.

4. Digital Outreach Tools

4.1 Podcast Platforms – Soundcloud and TalkShoe

Various online platforms allow users to create podcasts and share them via social media. The NUL Consortium has used two of the most popular platforms – Soundcloud and TalkShoe. Both of them are free and provide professional quality products.

Soundcloud is an online audio distribution platform that allows the host to record and stream in-person podcast interviews. Below are some of the key features -

- Cost: Free (up to 30 hours of podcasts)
- Website: <https://soundcloud.com/for/podcasting>
- Simple, for in-house podcast creation
- On-the-go tool: Can be operated through any smartphone
- Can upload your own podcast
- Limitation: Physical presence with discussants is required
- Example: The NUL Consortium members discuss 5G and Telecom Apprenticeships
 - <https://m.soundcloud.com/mmtconline/episodetwo>

TalkShoe is a popular tool for recording podcasts when the participants are not able to meet in person for recording. It allows the discussants to call in via phone or Skype and record the conversation for podcast. Below are some of the key features of Talkshoe -

- Cost: Free
- Website: <https://www.talkshoe.com/>
- For discussions with people who are remote
- Discussants can call in from phone or Skype
- Can schedule in advance
- Multiple discussants can conference call and record at once
- Example: MMTC’s Podcasts are housed here
 - <http://www.talkshoe.com/tc/145734>

DIGITAL OUTREACH STRATEGIES

This Toolkit, created by MMTC for the NUL-Consortium to spread awareness, implements:

- Website, conference, podcast, and webinar links
- Social Media Accounts – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn
- Social Media Ambassadors, targeted hashtags, and graphics (Canva) prior to the events
- E-blasts that aggregate and disseminate social media content to curated listservs
- Podcasts (such as Soundcloud and TalkShoe) and podcast posts on social media prior to each event
- Webinars/Live Streaming (Ustream, GoToMeeting, WebEx)
- Content creation during each event through MMTC, attendees, and Ambassadors
- Digital Narratives (such as Storify or Wakelet Blogs) after the completion of each event

4.2 Examples of Podcasts created by the NUL's Consortium

Below are some of the examples of podcasts created by the NUL Consortium over the last two years. Podcasts were marketed through various social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Twitter.

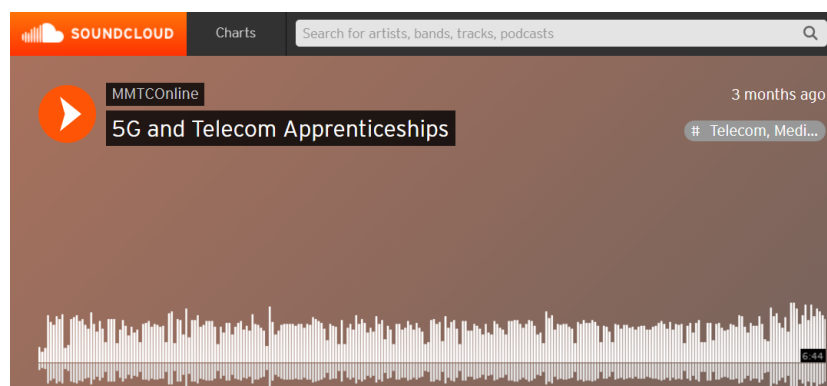
- Podcast Example Tweet featuring NUL's Ronald Marlow –
Ronald G. Marlow of the @NatUrbanLeague discuss NUL's #apprenticeship partnership with @USDOL, @WIAorg & MMTC; and his participation in the #MMTC18 Conference's The Future of Work session on July 19th.

<https://www.talkshoe.com/episode/4860314>



- Podcast Description featuring MMTC's Dr. Rikin Thakker –
The second episode of the Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council's (MMTC) Podcast features an interview with Dr. Rikin Thakker, MMTC Vice President of Telecommunications and Spectrum Policy, about 5G and telecom apprenticeships. During the interview, Dr. Thakker explains 5G, its driving forces, and how it transforms employment, business, and the economy in the United States. In addition, he discusses MMTC's 5G work and participation in the U.S. Department of Labor's ApprenticeshipUSA initiative through a partnership with the National Urban League and Wireless Infrastructure Association. Visit www.dol.gov/apprenticeship to learn more about apprenticeships. National Apprenticeship Week is November 13-17: dol.gov/apprenticeship/NAW.

<https://soundcloud.com/mmtconline/episodetwo>



- Podcast Description featuring WIA's Deb Bennett –
Deb Bennett, Director of Training and Apprenticeship at the Wireless Infrastructure Association (WIA): connectivityexpo.com. ConnectX will be held on May 21-24, 2018, in Charlotte, North Carolina. During the podcast, Bennett discusses the WIA's apprenticeship partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor, National Urban League, and MMTC. Visit dol.gov/apprenticeship for more information about apprenticeship. She also gives an overview of the ConnectX workforce development sessions she is producing. MMTC is participating in two of them. Visit WIA.org and follow @WIAorg on Twitter. The podcast was hosted and produced by MMTC Chief Social Media Officer Ananda Leeke. Visit MMTCOnline.org. Connect with @mmtconline on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

<https://www.talkshoe.com/episode/4860313>



4.3 Digital Narrative Platforms

A digital narrative platform allows users to collect, organize and aggregate a collection of content that previously has been posted on the internet, and share it online by embedding this aggregated content into blogs or websites. It is a powerful social networking service that lets users create stories or timelines using social media. Below are some of the key features of digital narrative platforms –

- Turns what users post on social media into compelling stories
- Allows users to search on Storify or Wakelet based on Twitter handles, hashtags or keywords
- Simple click-and-drag approach to easily create stories
- Users can implement descriptions, links, and videos, as well as connect to Facebook and Instagram

The NUL Consortium used two such platforms to amplify events and registered apprenticeship in general: a) Storify and b) Wakelet. Storify ended its free access services in May 2018. If organizations are interested in gaining access to Storify 2, they are required to purchase a Livefyre license by sending an email to support@storify.com.

Wakelet is an alternative to Storify and is available for free. More details can be found at <https://wakelet.com/>

4.4 Example of a Digital Narratives created by the NUL Consortium



MMTC, NUL’s partner in the USDOL contract, produced a panel on “The Key to Bridging the Wealth and Skills Gaps Through Wireless Apprenticeship” on July 20, 2017, at MMTC’s 15th Annual Access to Capital and Telecom Policy Conference. NUL Consortium members captured the key takeaways through social media and created a digital narrative of the panel through Wakelet. See this digital narrative here:

<https://wakelet.com/wake/1cd381b1-3513-424b-a250-b585326c28c0>

5. Summary

The National Urban League Consortium was created in 2016 to assist with diversifying Registered Apprenticeship programs under a Department of Labor contract. The NUL Consortium, with the Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council and the Wireless Infrastructure Association as sub-contractors, adopted social media tools using digital platforms early in the contract in order to reach diverse and underrepresented apprenticeship candidates that might not be reached by traditional marketing methods. Some of the social media tools and digital platforms used by the NUL Consortium included podcasts, digital narrative platforms such as Storify and Wakelet blogs, eblasts, webinars, and social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

This case study and best practices guide is a compilation of the tools used by the NUL Consortium, and is intended to be of use to other entities working to amplify Registered Apprenticeship and to promote diversity and inclusion using social media and other digital platforms.

Authors and Contact Information:

- Dr. Rikin Thakker, Vice President of Telecommunications and Spectrum Policy, MMTC
rthakker@mmtconline.org
- Maurita Coley Flippin, President and CEO, MMTC
mcoley@mmtconline.org
- Marcella Gadson, Director of Communications, MMTC
mgadson@mmtconline.org

About the NUL Consortium Members:

The National Urban League (NUL) is an historic civil rights organization dedicated to economic empowerment in order to elevate the standard of living in historically underserved communities. NUL serves as the lead partner in the USDOL Equity Contract and cultivates apprenticeship opportunities in the areas of seven of its Regional Affiliates. www.nul.org and www.nulapprenticeships.org

The Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC) is a nonprofit organization with a 30-year track record of increasing diversity in media and telecommunications access, ownership, and employment. MMTC develops and implements the curriculum, technical assistance, and training and marketing material for DOL-approved occupations under the NUL Consortium and conducts program evaluation. www.mmtconline.org

The Wireless Infrastructure Association (WIA) is the national trade association of companies that develop, build, own and operate the nation's wireless infrastructure. Members include wireless carriers, infrastructure providers, and professional services firms that collectively own and operate telecommunications facilities around the globe. WIA is the National Sponsor of TIRAP – Telecommunications Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program. WIA's role in the Consortium is to provide access to Registered Apprenticeships through identified and committed employers. www.wia.org www.tirap.org