

Engaging Minds, Empowering Growth

A Marketing Proposal for the Google Developer Student Club at Penn State University

Prepared for :
**Google Developer Student Club
Executive Board**

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Executive Summary

This business proposal seeks to provide a marketing solution for Penn State University Park's Google Developer Student Club (GDSC) in order to bolster membership and create a committed body of student developers eager to learn.

About GDSC

At heart, GDSC focuses on connecting, learning, and growing. It seeks to provide a place for student developers at Penn State to learn more about Google technologies and have a group of like-minded students to connect, learn, and grow with. In terms of social media, GDSC currently has a semi-active Instagram and an inactive LinkedIn. The club uses Discord for its internal communications.

The Problem

The current overarching problem is the difficulty of finding a loyal and passionate membership base. This problem largely stems from the COVID-19 pandemic and year of remote learning that many college students experienced. Currently, there is a lackluster membership and not much activity on social media, either.

Proposed Plan & Budget

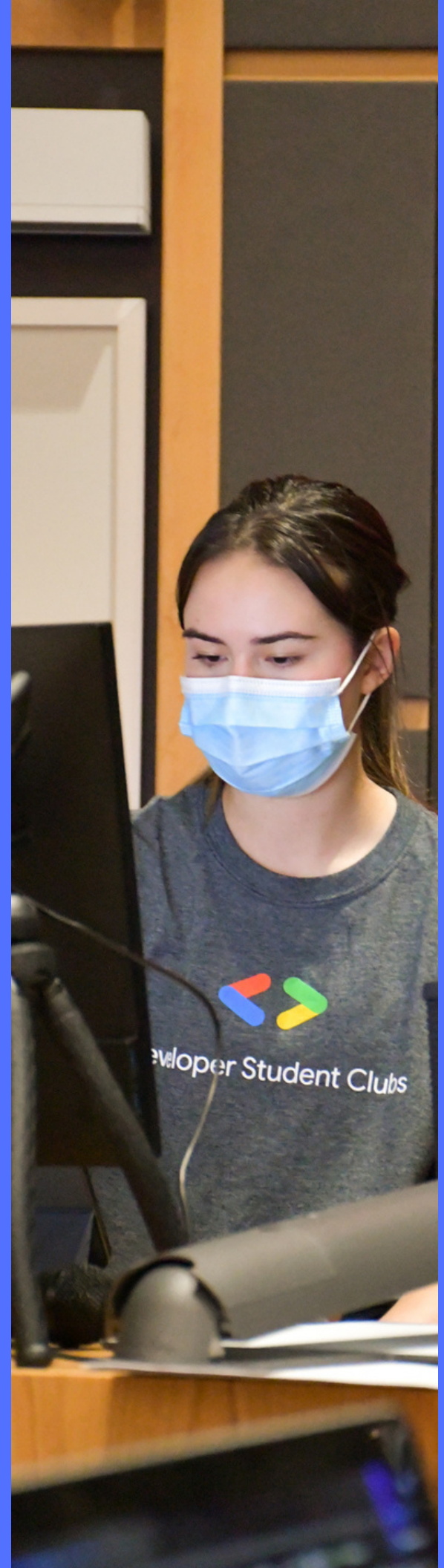
The proposed plan is two-pronged, involving both a print and a digital marketing campaign. The print campaign comprises of bulletin boards, flyers, and word-of-mouth marketing. The digital marketing campaign involves enlivening the Instagram as well as starting a TikTok account to market to the college student demographic.

Benefits

There are three proposed benefits: increased awareness of GDSC on the University Park campus, steady engagement and membership, as well as a sustainable executive turnover. These tangible benefits align with GDSC's values as well as have the club's long-term goals in mind.

Table of Contents

About GDSC	1
The Problem	4
Marketing Plan Proposal	6
Budget Proposal	8
Proposal Benefits	9
Contact	11



About GDSC



Google Developer Student Clubs (GDSC) are a Google Developers program that can be found at over 1,900 college and university chapters across 100+ countries. This proposal focuses on the Penn State University Park chapter of GDSC.

GDSC's Values

GDSC focuses on three main values: "Connect," "Learn," and "Grow." With "Connect," the organization seeks to be a hub for students from different backgrounds, interests, and geographic locations. GDSC effectively functions as a large network of clubs, each led by a Google-ordained "Lead," who has the responsibility to start or run a student club on their campus, elect a core team and find a faculty advisor, host workshops, and build projects. "Learn" focuses on growing student knowledge of Google technologies and platforms through hands-on events. "Grow" encourages students to apply their education and give back to the community by building solutions for local problems, effectively advancing their skills, career, and network.

Origins of GDSC at Penn State

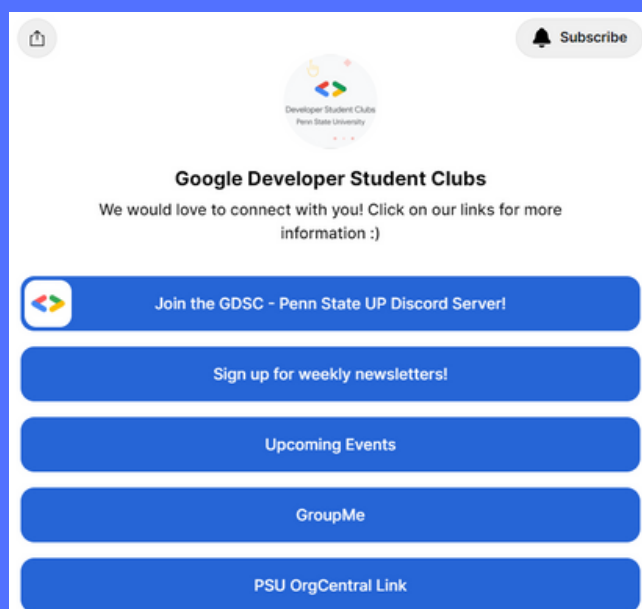
The Penn State University Park chapter was founded in 2019 when GDSC campus liaisons sought to jumpstart their relatively new program and reached out to Brad Zdenek, current Innovation Strategist and Program Manager at Nittany AI Alliance at Penn State. He agreed to be a faculty advisor for GDSC at Penn State UP and put out a general call for students interested in helping build the club.

Quite a few students ended up responding, including Tiffany K, who ended up becoming the Google-ordained Developer Student Club Lead for the UP campus. Each of the other students also underwent an interview process for leadership positions and ended up kickstarting ideation for the club's vision, based on Google's own value of sponsoring technical student organizations that would foster knowledge of and help students understand Google products better. This initial group ended up making goals to encourage collaboration between technical clubs at Penn State as well as pushing for more self-paced, project-based learning.

The first school year, 2019-20, featured mostly study jams (sessions where student developers could meet and discuss) and technical workshops. Due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and studying from home, August 2020 saw the club pivot content to accommodate remotely-hosted meeting options.

GDSC's Marketing History

The initial target audience for GDSC was computer science students. To jumpstart the club and garner awareness, emails were sent to major computer science classes as an advertising effort. The first few meetings had great attendance rates although very few non-computer science students participated. However, as the club soon fell under the domain of the College of Information Sciences and Technology (IST), marketing efforts began to be geared toward a broad IST audience, which comprises Cybersecurity, Data Sciences, Enterprise Technology Integration, Human-Centered Design and Development, and Security and Risk Analysis majors.



GDSC's marketing efforts in the past few years have been minimal. The club participates in each semester's campus-wide Involvement Fair and sporadically signs up for the IST-specific Involvement Fair. These events have done well in driving awareness for the club, as well as sign-ups for the newsletter and additions to Discord.

Other marketing efforts include posting all events on Instagram and (previously) LinkedIn. The @gdscpsu Instagram currently has 281 followers and posts, once a month on average, garnering anywhere from 5 to 31 likes per post.

Fig 1. GDSC's LinkTree



Fig 2. GDSC's Instagram

The LinkedIn is not currently active but has 320 followers. The main channel used is Discord. The GDSC Discord server is where all communications are pushed through. There are currently 206 users on this platform. GDSC has also used physical flyers in the past, though rarely. The club also sends weekly newsletters out to a 300+ person audience, with an average open rate of 20%.

Despite these efforts, there is a lingering issue that exists.

The Problem



Although several factors have contributed to the current problem of non-committed and decreasing membership, major sources of the problem are the COVID-19 pandemic and ineffective marketing efforts.

COVID-19

As previously mentioned, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a drastic impact on university operations across the globe; GDSC was no exception. The passionate membership that had previously characterized the founding members of the club soon died out to only ten or so “camera-off” Zoom squares every week. Although clubs were able to meet in person again in the 2021-22 school year, the dwindling number of people was still highly apparent. There were often meetings where the number of officers and tech leads surpassed the number of other members. This issue has unfortunately persisted into the 2022-23 school year.

Ineffective Marketing

As the current officers and tech leads have sought to ignite the ashes of GDSC at Penn State over the past few

years through Involvement Fair events, flyers, and social media posts, nothing has yet to turn the tide for club membership. Dana L, current President and standing GDSC Lead, describes the current marketing situation as “very poor.” However, she acknowledges the difficulty of getting students to come out due to the highly technical and lecture-based format of meetings, which can make the club “hard to market.”

"GDSC ideally looks like an **interactive club with 20+ members** attending each meeting and **feeling comfortable participating** in the workshops and feeling **connected** to the organization. [Currently], the membership is **lacking**. There's a noticeable **decline in attendance** as the semester progresses."

~ Eric S., current Marketing Lead

The GDSC Discord currently hosts more than 200 students. However, the weekly meeting attendance tells a different story. Although there can be certain meetings where many people attend, the usual crowd is not large; this calls into question the effectiveness of the club's marketing and retention.

The biggest problem to solve is to find a stable and committed membership base who come out regularly. To do so, GDSC will have to employ new tactics for identifying and reaching out to these students in an effective way.

Marketing Plan Proposal



The proposed marketing plan is two-pronged. The first branch of the plan is **traditional**, while the second branch is **digital**. This is due to the many marketing resources that GDSC has at its disposal, being a club on Penn State University Park campus.

Traditional Marketing

The two main marketing channels that GDSC will run through are print and word-of-mouth.

Since Penn State has many bulletin boards scattered across the buildings on campus, particularly in areas with much foot traffic, print will be an asset for GDSC as a club. This print campaign could include flyers that are posted in relevant buildings (Willard Building and Westgate Building are two ideas), printed ads through the HUB marketing office, or even small cards that are handed out to passersby at the Involvement Fair.

Word of mouth has also been a great way for many clubs on campus to advertise. Many people will refer their friends to certain clubs that they've been a part of, increasing the chances for a student to stay in the

club and become a committed member. In the past, some GDSC officers would present about the club in their IST or Computer Science courses. These venues are particularly valuable since these presentations are given to a room of 30-40 students in the most relevant majors to the club. These presentations work particularly well to provide awareness for the club. This tactic could also be especially useful to use before a bigger event like the first meeting of the semester or a special guest speaker.

Digital Marketing

Since the vast majority of students at Penn State University Park are a part of Gen Z, the generation that is the most active and engaged on social media, the fastest and easiest way to get to them is through a well-crafted digital marketing campaign. This digital campaign will involve both a set Instagram posting schedule and the start of a GDSC TikTok account.

Although the @gdscpsu Instagram account has been frequently used in the past to advertise events and post information, the posting schedule has recently dwindled to a stop. GDSC should invest full force into their Instagram account, particularly launching campaigns during the first few "recruiting" weeks of the school year, where people are most likely to join and commit to a club.

A comprehensive plan and campaign should be made, making sure that all links, posts, and captions are updated to reflect the current events and happenings of the club. Since most, if not all, students have Instagram accounts and access club communications on this platform, Instagram will be a good choice to invest into.

Since TikTok is the fastest growing social media platform in recent years, it has the potential to reach many college students who are studying at Penn State campus. According to Later, 68% of Gen Z, from ages 13 to 25, are on TikTok. As a college student, I have personally seen firsthand the impact that short-form video on platforms such as Instagram Reels and TikTok can have.

TikTok can lend GDSC a hand with their somewhat-mythical "algorithm." This algorithm can identify a particular user's interest in Penn State and technology-related clubs and topics and push our content toward these users. Many university-affiliated clubs and organizations have also been able to garner much awareness and following due to a creative TikTok strategy alone.

Budget Proposal

Since GDSC is university-affiliated, many of the resources on campus are available to the club. The marketing costs will therefore not be as much as it would be in the professional marketing industry. Below is an estimated budget for a print and digital campaign.

Print Campaign	Cost
Printing (8.5" x 11") Flyers for Bulletin Boards	\$30
Printing Business Cards for Word-of-Mouth Marketing	\$100
Poster & Materials for Involvement Fair	\$20
Total:	\$150
Digital Campaign	Cost
Re-design of Digital Assets & Branding	\$300
Instagram Paid Advertising Posts	\$100
Total:	\$400

Proposal Benefits



Major benefits that will come out of implementing the solutions outlined in this proposal include increased awareness of GDSC on the University Park campus, steady engagement and participation in events, as well as a sustainable executive turnover.

#1: Increased Awareness

One of the biggest benefits that will come out of an enhanced marketing plan for GDSC is increased awareness of the club's presence on Penn State University Park's campus. Since there is a large pool of technical clubs, especially geared toward computer science and information sciences students, it is difficult for any smaller club to make their presence known.

The perks of successful print and digital campaigns will be that students will know that there is a Google-sponsored club on campus, and be able to come and check it out for themselves. This way, the initial hurdle of awareness will be skipped over. Word-of-mouth interest may also be spread quickly through an increased awareness of the club.

#2: Steady Engagement

Another possible benefit that the club can reap from this marketing plan is steady engagement at events and meetings. GDSC is in great need for revival. Since there is currently no loyal membership base for the club, meetings often lack engagement and passion that was evident pre-COVID.

Steady engagement and membership has been a big goal for GDSC since its start. With an increased social media presence and awareness for the club on campus, the possibility to find students passionate about Google technologies may emerge. This will help the club's overall goal in making it a great place to learn and thrive with others in a like-minded community.

#3: Sustainable Executive Turnover

One thing that many college clubs and activity groups struggle with is being able to sustain the future of the club by handing executive power over to those who are trustworthy and know the foundations of the club well. This is a big concern for GDSC as well, since a small and lackluster membership means that there aren't many who know what GDSC is all about and are able to handle running the club.

An increased awareness and loyal member base that may come out of an enhanced marketing plan can be ways that GDSC is able to make it out of this post-pandemic slump. A strong executive team from year-to-year is a valuable asset for any club to have, and marketing to students who have the potential to become committed and passionate members is the first step.



Questions? Get in touch!

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