



How Pulsar helps Oxford University improve the impact of its research

Case Study – University of Oxford

How Pulsar helps Oxford University improve the impact of its research

Challenge

When it comes to awareness and reputation, the University of Oxford has a head start on most. But that doesn't mean that the nearly millenium old institution isn't competing for top academic talent and research funding.

Liz McCarthy is the university's Head of Campaigns & Digital Communications– which means her work impacts the University of Oxford's research reputation and brand beyond the quadrants of the colleges.

One of her core objectives is to ensure that the academic research carried out by Oxford academics is given the best possible opportunity to reach influential figures, in the hope of helping Oxford's brand and academic research have the greatest impact amongst the public and key stakeholders, which include funders and policymakers

And in order to do that, she needs a tool that makes it easy to connect the dots between the academic work & ideas Oxford produces, and the pre-existing conversations and audiences that exist around a particular topic.

“One of the biggest areas where we use Pulsar is for reputation and brand awareness.” Liz explains. “Both generally but more often through the campaigns. And then more and more those campaigns are linked to business fundraising needs.”

As the planet continues to warm, a key focus of both academics and policymakers has become the climate crisis, with a number of institutions positioning themselves as authorities on the topic. The challenge for Liz was how to position Oxford at the forefront of a crowded field.



One of the main reasons why we switched over to Pulsar was how easy it was to use and how much support we were getting. It made it a lot easier to set things up, check them, and validate whether we were doing the right things and get support.



Liz McCarthy
Head of Campaigns
Digital Communications
University of Oxford



Solution

The research Liz and team set up around the climate crisis provides an instance in which both methods were used, to discover different insights that, together, combine to provide a fuller sense of the topic. Utilising one approach, Liz team were able to compare the concurrent conversations taking place about climate change across TikTok, Blogs, Reddit and News. Each of these sources reflected a different audience, and a different conversational dynamic. This was combined with a Twitter-centred search that mapped individuals identified as environmental journalists or MPs.

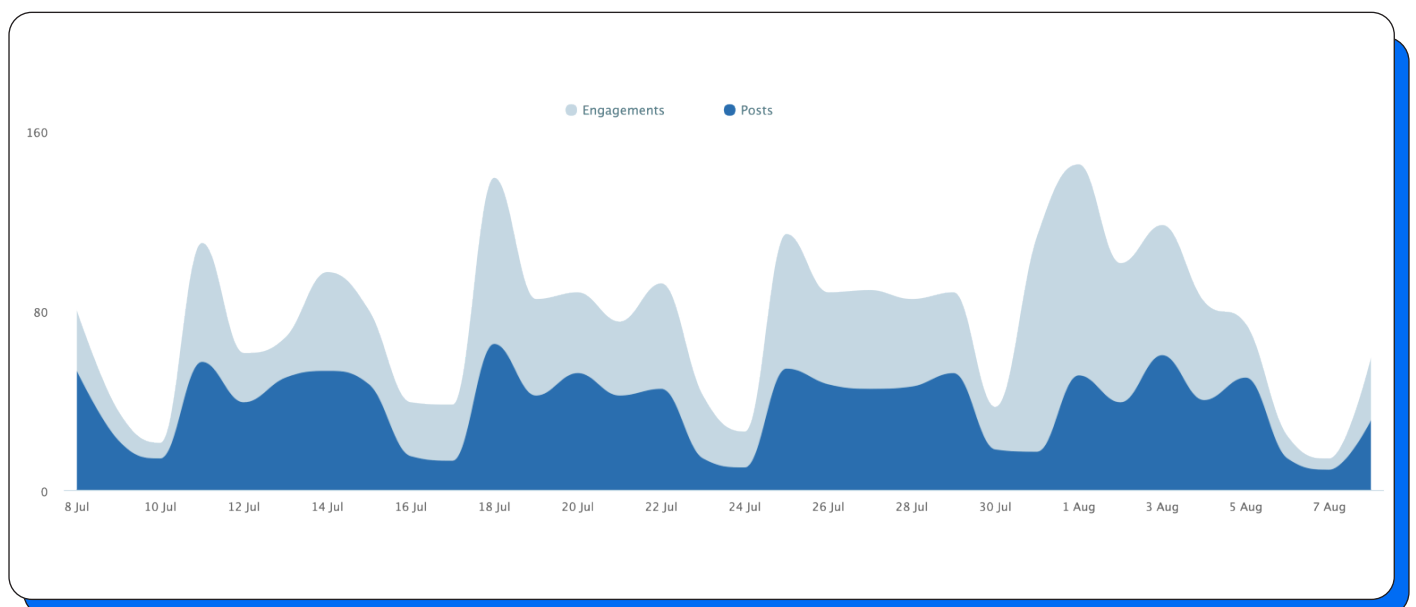
Each one of these conversations reflects a different demographic, and different set of stakeholders. Each one of these conversations reflects a different demographic, and different set of stakeholders.

“We used it before the campaign to do quite a lot of research and monitoring into whose tone of voice we should reflect, which influencers we should be reaching out to, and what people were saying more generally,” says Liz.

“We certainly took action based on things we found out. There were specific people we contacted. There were ways that we changed the language that we use to match some of the best-performing examples”.



Pulsar's data has helped us to understand what our key audiences are and how best to reach them.



Results

“We wanted to position Oxford academics as the go-to experts. So we spent a lot of time focusing on COP26, and the media and government members who attended, in an attempt to make sure that they knew about our research, had access to it, and could use it if necessary.”

Clearly, the impact of the project cannot be measured by instant engagement metrics, but rather by the development of policy and relationships over time. The success of the project is reflected, however, by the steps Liz and team have taken to embed the tool in future projects.

“Pulsar has definitely affected planning – are there different audiences we haven’t thought of, who become apparent? Are there people or organizations in this area? Are there topics everyone is interested in?”

As Liz continues to develop the function within the University, she is not only building out the impact, efficacy and ease of individual projects but also, by adopting an approach that delivers qualitative data on a quantitative scale, setting the conditions for more in-depth measurement to take place in the future.

As the University’s researchers continue to innovate, it only follows that the communications team do likewise in ensuring that research is given the best possible chance to drive societal change.



Pulsar is the leading
AI-powered audience
intelligence platform

Get in touch

+44 (0) 207 874 6599
info@pulsarplatform.com
www.pulsarplatform.com

