



**How Keele University builds its brand and loyalty using
Sprout Social**



Succeeding on social media is part art, part science.

So is it any wonder an institution devoted to these disciplines would master social strategy?

Located in the heart of England, [Keele University](#) is more than just Britain's largest single-site campus.

It was [rated joint No.1 in England for course satisfaction](#) in The Guardian's 2019 rankings, [classified as No. 1 for student satisfaction](#) in the 2018 National Student Survey of public universities in England, and [awarded a Gold ranking](#) in the 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework.

In short, Keele University is devoted to excellence, and that extends to its online presence.

Whether through innovative publishing strategies or automated chatbot technologies, Keele University relies on Sprout Social to help create a real connection and a true sense of community with students, staff and alumni on social media.





Keele University ✓
@KeeleUniversity



How I think I looked during [#FreshersWeek](#) vs how I actually looked... [#DancingQueen](#)

♡ 100 7:50 AM - Oct 3, 2018

💬 36 people are talking about this



Standing out from the crowd

As Keele University's Deputy Head of Communications, Paul Newton knows better than most how crucial social media is to recruiting and retaining modern students.

So when the university began exploring social media management platforms, Newton dug deep into real user reviews to find the right tool for the job.

"I did a lot of research online and first discovered Sprout Social on [G2 Crowd](#)," Newton said, referring to the peer-to-peer review platform. "I was reading some of the reviews and I felt that they were positive, especially on the support side. We had a trial, and also tried out some of the other well-known social media management platforms, and I felt that Sprout Social was the most user-friendly, especially on mobile—Sprout Social's [mobile app](#) was really polished."



“ With Sprout, I can quickly analyze our followers, reach, impressions, video views, link clicks, and send reports to our senior colleagues.... ”



Paul Newton

Deputy Head of Communications

Harnessing humor

Keele University is known for its humorous presence on social.

“We want to reach people organically and generate an authentic interest,” Newton said. “So besides our academic research content, we try to use humor and topical content to reach digital natives. It gets our audiences’ attention, and gets more shares and better responses from people.”

This focus on fun, trending content also makes it easy for the university’s student ambassadors to join in.

“Keele Student Ambassadors do a great job of showing off our personality on social,” said Digital Communications Officer Tom Maurice. “We’ve had students tell us that seeing campus photos on our Instagram account helped solidify their choice to come here. We had one digital ambassador who came to Keele because she saw our content on Facebook, which helped with her decision, and then she went on to be an ambassador for us creating content of her own.”

But as any social media practitioner can attest to, behind the clever copy and viral videos is a lot of hard work.

“Our day starts by going through Sprout’s [Smart Inbox](#) to see if there are any messages that need our attention,” Maurice said. “Obviously, we’re looking for anything that mentions us directly that needs a response, but the inbox is also really good for getting a general overview of our brand activity and seeing all that information in one place. We get an accurate overview of what people are talking about, both on and off campus.”

Next, the team turns to Sprout’s [scheduling and publishing tools](#).

“With the publishing and calendar tools, we can schedule things for the days and weeks ahead,” Maurice said. “We can just let that run by itself. And from there we can look at what’s trending online and decide if we want to publish anything else that day.”

Sprout makes it easy for team members to collaborate, ensuring all stakeholders enjoy the benefits of open communication.

“The ability to [assign tasks](#) was probably the biggest improvement for us when we first started using Sprout,” Newton said. “Being able to escalate messages between ourselves and our management team was really useful.”

The ability to [share vital metrics](#) with management was also a big help.

“With Sprout, I can quickly analyze our followers, reach, impressions, video views, link clicks, and send reports to our senior colleagues at the University,” Newton said. “Sprout is also really useful for breaking down analytics and looking at different campaigns to see where we may need to focus our efforts.”

Automating aid

Keele University’s commitment to delivering an exceptional online experience extends to its use of [automated technology](#).



“ Sprout chatbots are really easy to use. The bots are like the rest of the product, so it wasn’t a surprise to me how simple they were to use. ”

Tom Maurice

Digital Communications Officer

“We really wanted something that would help us serve our campus community, especially if there’s a crisis or emergency, even if we’re not in the office,” Maurice said. “We also saw that a lot of the questions we were getting were repeat questions that could be easily solved with an automated response.”

Enter Sprout Social’s Bot Builder.

“Sprout chatbots are really easy to use,” Maurice said. “The bots are like the rest of the product, so it wasn’t a surprise to me how simple they were to use. I think we gained access to bots on a Thursday, and had them up and running by the following Monday. The way it’s integrated into the platform just makes it quick and easy.”

And the time savings were immediate.

“We definitely get the same amount of questions we did in the past, but the bots have cut down on the time we need to take to respond to those queries,” Newton said. “Whether someone’s looking for more information about a course or wants bursaries information, our chatbots very quickly point them in the right direction and get people the information they need. We’ve gotten really good feedback from the people who’ve engaged with the bots.”

The team is planning to expand how it uses chatbots in the future.

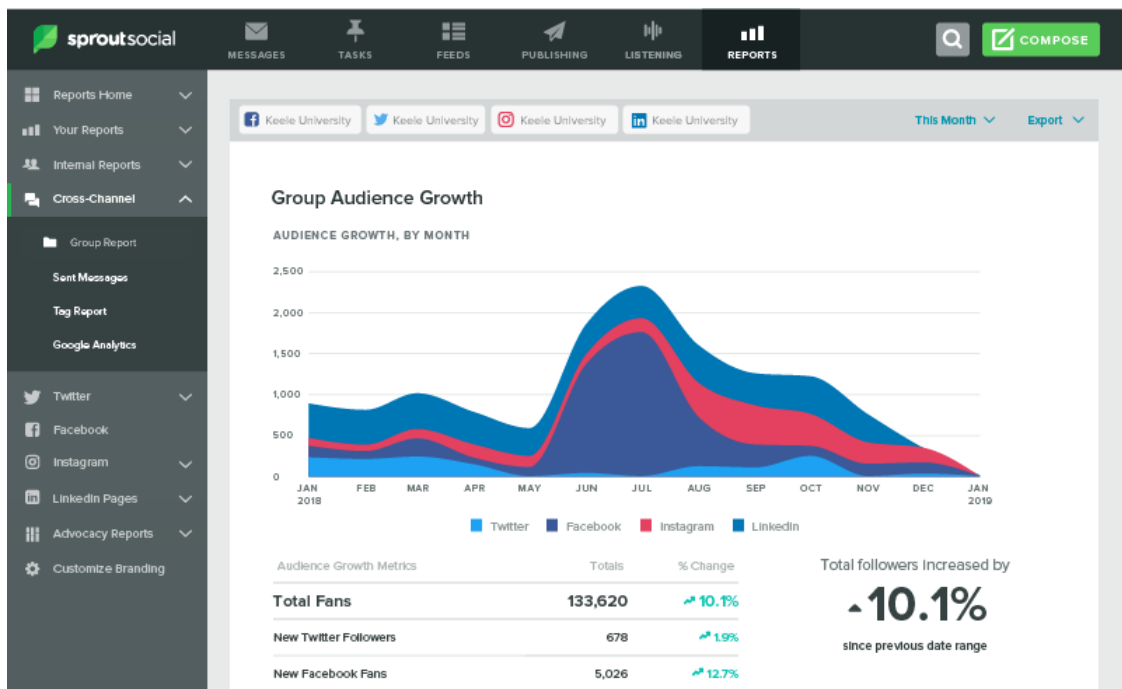
“We’re exploring ways to use bots to celebrate our 70th anniversary this year,” Newton said. “One idea is creating a sort of timeline of our history people could access through our chatbots, featuring different categories people can explore including historic photos of our campus from throughout the years.”

Staying head of the class

For Keele University, return on investment is about more than metrics.

“Sprout allows us to be speedier with getting things online,” Newton said. “The publishing tools, the analytics tools—they’re the best I’ve ever worked with, and they allow us to put content out there a lot quicker and measure the results. And with tools like the Smart Inbox and Bot Builder, it’s made us quicker at replying to people and enabled us to provide a better service to our students and applicants.”

That said, supported by Sprout Social, Keele University’s singular voice and comprehensive social strategy have resulted in impressive results that show no sign of slowing.



Year over year as of January 1, 2019, Keele University achieved a 10.1% increase in followers across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

And on the social channel the university prioritizes above all others, Instagram, there was a:

- 75.5% increase in impressions
- 34.8% increase in engagements

Additionally, in the five months since the university introduced automated bots, it's completed nearly 500 chatbot interactions covering everything from international student services to housing applications.

“Sprout is really useful for both internal visibility of how we’re performing, and just being able to get our message out there,” Newton said. “You can do everything without leaving the application.”

Based on the results so far, it seems clear Keele University will continue to teach others how social strategy is done right.