ZEN PATH is a Zen Buddhism monastery near Coos Bay, in Oregon. It is located in a beautiful spot, overlooking the ocean with breathtaking scenery. The monastery is built in the traditional Japanese temple style and has been operating for over 50 years. There are 23 full time monks living there and depending on the time of the year and the activities another 10-15 people may be present.

Most of the funding for ZEN PATH comes from wealthy sponsors who are attracted to the philosophy and values of Zen Buddhism. However, the monastery has been forced, during the last 5 years to rely on the tuition they charge for week-long Zen meditation retreats that target upscale white collar professionals who are seeking ways to relieve the stress of modern life and who want to explore spirituality based on the traditions of the Far East.

ZEN PATH is facing budgetary problems. The two main methods proposed are to either try to attract more sponsors through fundraising, or to expand the meditation seminars and workshops. Both methods have some limitations and advantages. Fundraising will minimize the impact of the outside world on the monastery, but given the economic conditions the potential sponsors are very few. The demand for the meditation seminars is high, but this would distort the monastery’s mission as being "beyond the material world" and create the danger that it may end up as a commercial enterprise.

What method or combination of methods should ZEN PATH select?

1. Outline the pro and cons of either method. Identify in detail the metrics ZEN PATH's management should use to assess which one is the best. You are not supposed to select a method, just compare them and provide ALL relevant information that you will need to make a decision.

2. Who are the key stakeholders for ZEN PATH?

3. Let us assume that ZEN PATH chose to offer meditation seminars as the main source of additional income. They will still try to get sponsors, but the seminars will be the main source of new funds. What is the image that the monastery should project to the diverse stakeholders given the new changes? Describe it in a short statement (20-word limit).

4. What social media should be used and how should they be structured to help ZEN PATH deal with its financial constraints given the choice of offering seminars? Provide a detailed list of the social media they should use, as well as how they should use them. Be as specific as possible. For example, if they were to use Twitter, then you should provide a sample tweet message. Listing all possible social media is not a good answer. You may list several, but I would like to see how ZEN PATH should rank the ones they should use based on their importance for this particular situation.

5. Describe the key elements of the web site to maximize awareness, and attendance to the services (meditation training) as well as to make ZEN PATH more attractive to sponsors.
6. Once ZEN PATH started offering more meditation seminars, a philosophy professor at a local university sent a sarcastic twitter message claiming that ZEN PATH should change its name to DOLLAR PATH since they had become very commercialized. The message has been re-tweeted a lot. How should ZEN PATH use reputation management techniques and social media to defend themselves from a message that may soon go viral?

7. What metrics (both in terms of web analytics and non-web metrics) should ZEN PATH use to assess (a) the success of the offering of meditation seminars, (b) the effectiveness of the modified brand image to attract more sponsors, and (c) the effectiveness of their activities to limit the reputation damage from the philosopher’s tweet?

Grading Rubric

1. (10 points) 10 points will be given on a detailed and proper selection of the key metrics needed to compare the two methods
2. (5 points) The points will be given based on identifying the key stakeholders and explain what they want from ZEN PATH.
3. (10 points) The points will be given based on describing a brand image that can balance the diverse stakeholder demands and be communicated effectively
4. (20 points) The points will be given based on identifying the most appropriate social media, ranking them in terms of importance, and explain how they should be used to generate long term interest for ZEN PATH.
5. (20 points) The points will be given based on identifying and describing in detail how the website should be designed, and what should be on it, to generate long term interest for ZEN PATH.
6. (15 points) The points will be given based on how effective the countermeasures for defending ZEN PATH’s reputation are. You need to select the right tools and use them appropriately.
7. (20 points) The points will be given based on identifying the key metrics for all activities and goals listed throughout the situation except question #1 which is separate.