

Reaching People with Disabilities through Healthy Communities

Phase six- Communication and Dissemination

Social Media

[Karma Harris] when you think about how to launch social media campaigns, or maybe where to start, it might be daunting for a lot of people. And so, could you expand on that just a little bit more and tell us which of the many social media platforms that you recommend for communicating inclusive healthy community messages, like those with this project?

[Allison Tubbs] Absolutely. So first off like you mentioned, very important to have a plan. A lot of people think social media is just posting pictures, posting information. It's just kind of on the whim, on the fly, but especially when you're utilizing social media in business, you have to have that plan. You have to have messages built out and you have to have a whole framework around it, and a team to support. So, thank you for reiterating that.

But as far as platforms are concerned, there's really three main platforms that I recommend using in business when you're using social media and to be able to get your healthy community messages out to the world. And so those three platforms are – that you probably already heard of – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. So, diving a little bit deeper, Facebook is super popular. It's still considered the world's most popular platform. It has almost 1 billion people utilizing it worldwide.

So, when utilizing Facebook for business, the best thing to do is to first create what's called a business page. And what this will do, it allows you to be able to get access to Facebook's free analytic tools. They're already built into the platform. And when you use these analytic tools, you'll be able to tell how many people you are really reaching with your messages.

So, then the next one that I recommend is Twitter. So, Twitter is a microblog site and it really serves as an open forum. You have access to nearly anyone in anywhere, and it's predominantly a public space. Very few people have private Twitter accounts, whereas you might see more people who are using Facebook for personal use – have private accounts where you have to request friend access, and whatnot. That's not necessarily the case on Twitter. So, you have more accessibility to more types of people.

So, Twitter messages are short: they're only 280 characters. And with Twitter, it allows you to use what's called a hashtag. And this is a number sign, which is now called “hashtag” followed by a phrase, or a theme. And what this does is allows you to theme your messages, and to be able to track those themes and trends, and to also tap your messages into larger themes that you want people who are following those trends to be able to see the messages that you're putting out.

So, when you're using Twitter, you want to make sure that you're being intentional because you do have that limited character space of only 280 characters, and you do have limitations as far as hashtags. So, we don't really want to see 10 different hashtags on one post. Kind of a common rule is one to three maximum number of hashtags. We don't want to diminish the value of our messages, and make sure that we're really communicating what we want people to read.

So, then the last platform is Instagram and this one is still fairly new to the social media space, but it's really growing in popularity, as of lately. So, this is another option that businesses can use to share their messages. What Instagram differs from Facebook and Twitter is that it's primarily a photo and video-based platform. It's not as much text content, or sharing links, or URLs to web-based content.

So, if you want to share a beautiful image, or to showcase work that you've done in a community, and you want people to visualize what you mean by your projects and your work, Instagram is a great tool and vehicle platform for that use.

[Karma Harris] I think that's a great update on taking three of some of the most popular platforms. I know there are others out there – and I really see the value in using these and I know a lot of our communities use each of these or some of these.

And so, thinking about that, Maggie, can you tell us a little bit about how your two Iowa communities used these platforms, and let us learn a little bit about how they actually apply it and use it on the local level?

[Maggie Ferguson] Sure. So, each of the communities really wanted to create a social media presence using platforms of their choice to either communicate the healthy inclusive messages, or just to share information specific to the project. So, they were tasked with choosing at least one social media platform to use for project messaging that they felt like they could sustain once the project was over.

So, in our Carroll, Iowa community, they disseminated information through their local health and wellness coalition. Because they're so rural, their membership cast a wide net in terms of reaching and engaging community partners. All in total, they have three different platforms that they're using: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and the folks that house those platforms include the Carroll County Health Department and then the lead organization, which is Homecare Options.

An example of what they're doing, the Carroll County Health Department includes a weekly Facebook post that details inclusive health messaging for the community. They also have announcements, or other project news, that they shared. And then the lead project organization, the Homecare Options, is in the process of really developing a more robust social media presence consisting of the three modalities that I have mentioned before: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and they will also link back to the local health department and to Platinum Fitness, who is their project partner.

In Sioux City, Iowa, that community uses a combination of traditional and non-traditional media to communicate their project messages and successes, as well as using statewide presentations to spread some of the information that they have done in their community, as well as really highlighting their work as some of the best practices to be used across the state. So, like in Carroll, they are using social media, and regularly implement inclusive health messaging into the messages that they sent out, and they are focused on using Facebook and Twitter as their platforms.

[Karma Harris] So that's interesting. So, we've learned a little bit about the types of social media platforms as recommended first use, and then we've learned a little bit about how the two Iowa communities use it. And now, I'm kind of in my head going back to Allison, and I really have a question of, you know, if we use these, who is creating these messages? How can we tell how effective our messages are?

[Allison Tubbs] Yes. So that's a very common question when you're utilizing social media for campaigns.

But there are many different ways that we can measure effectiveness of our social media messages. And when it comes down to, as we mentioned earlier, is first defining what your goals are related to your messaging and utilizing that as part of your communications plan. So that's really going to help you clearly identify what you want to analyze and what you want to show effectiveness related to your social media work. So, there are some common types of measurements that organizations can often track and report.

So, for the three platforms that we've been talking about: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, like I mentioned earlier, you have to create that business account and then once you've done that, it will allow you the free access to the analytic tools and insight metrics. So, I'm going to talk about three of the different types of measurements that we can utilize. So, the first one is called impressions, and what impression is, is simply just the total number of times that your content on social media is displayed to a user's newsfeed.

So, impressions can be considered a general measurement of reach because what it does is it gathers a total metric from people who follow your page, in addition to people who follow and share others' pages and engage with your content. The next metric is called engagement, and engagement is the number of times that people have engaged with your post. And what we mean by engagement, is they may have liked your post, they may have commented on your post, and they may have shared it.

So, engagement is really important to track because what it does, is it tells us how well we're building relationships with our audience, and whether our audience is really interested and invested in the messaging that we're putting out. So, if you're sharing a lot of posts on social media and your engagement rate is really low, then you might want to rethink your strategy and the type of messages that you're putting out. So, the third metric is called reach, and reach is just simply the number of people who had any content from your page, or about your page enter their screen on social media.

So, kind of wrapping it up, I think impressions, engagement, and reach are really the most important social media metrics to track, but you can also look at other things, like the number of followers on your pages. You can track whether that number increases or decreases. You can look at the number of messages that you're sharing. Also, the type of content that you're sharing, and you can track different demographic data about your audience.

So again, related to the different types of social media metrics that you want to measure to capture effectiveness of your communication, it really goes down to defining the clear goals and objectives,

putting that into a communications plan, and then being able to match what the appropriate metrics are to your goals.

[Karma Harris] Thanks Alison. I think this is fascinating. Just learning about this and really thinking about the priority that social media plays in a lot of our lives and how we can use this as an effective vehicle, and making the numbers really stand out, I think would be a goal in our messaging.

So, Maggie, really thinking about these numbers, do you have any measures for social media in Sioux City and Carroll County? Can you give us the numbers? Do you have any information on how effective their social media messages were?

[Maggie Ferguson] Sure. Before I even share that, I just would say our Community Coaches really benefited from the training that Allison at NCHPAD was able to provide. She provided that overview of using social media in a communications webinar and then they were able to really put that to work for them.

So just to give you a snapshot idea of kind of how it's worked in our states collectively, the two communities Siouxland, or Sioux City, and Carroll County, they have implemented more than a 120 individual social media messages combined. And then with Facebook specifically, the total reach for the two communities has been 20,158 people and 1,559 engagements.

Then using Twitter as the platform, the total reach of the two communities has been 26,304 people and 803 total engagements.

[Karma Harris] I think those numbers are fascinating and I think for our listeners, even though this project is about four years old, we really only go into the communication content in the last two years, and only in this last year have they actually started implementing these messages. So, this data that Maggie is sharing with us, with Sioux City and Carroll, Iowa, really is representative just of the last project year. I think that's fascinating.