

Public Health Social Media Challenge: Tip Sheet

Social media has emerged as an important communications and engagement platform and a way for public health organizations to listen to and engage with their audience. This is why Canada Health Infoway (*Infoway*) is challenging public health organizations to extend their reach through social media.

While it is a relatively low-cost communications strategy, creating an effective social media campaign can be challenging. Through a series of webinars, *Infoway* brought together experts to help participating teams maximize the impact of their social media campaigns.

Since a social media strategy is often an integral part of an overall digital marketing strategy, some of the tips shared by the experts touch on both.

Strategy

- To effectively reach your audience your digital strategy, which encompasses your social strategy, must start with a “channel-agnostic” approach. Determine where your audience is and which medium is best suited to your audience, including non-social channels.
- There is temptation to focus on extending your reach, but don’t neglect depth. Are you having meaningful conversations with your audience?
- Targeting a specific audience is important since this will determine your subject matter.
- Quality is better than quantity - stand out and resonate with the audience you’re trying to reach. Go niche and focus on a smaller, more targeted audience.
- Ask yourself: Why would someone choose to follow me? Try to see it from your audience’s perspective and let this be your guide.
- Think about ways you could connect your social media strategy to your offline strategy - include #hashtags on offline collateral, such as a brochure or poster.

Community Building

- People like when others show interest in them — use this to build engagement and a community.
- Engagement isn’t easy. Social media tools and platforms may be free or inexpensive, but developing human relationships is not.
- Value conversations that establish commonalities between your community members. Join these conversations and share or like them.

Audience Segment

- Build websites that are tailored to your audience. If you are targeting more than one audience, create separate landing pages for each segment.
- Different demographics use different platforms. Try to figure out where your audience is and go where they already are. If your audience is younger, for example, then you might find them on Instagram rather than Facebook.
- Tailor your branding to your audience. Consider fun visuals for younger audience segments.
- If you are using channels such as Twitter where you target more than one audience segment, consider using #hashtags to narrow your focus.
- Consider a content strategy in which you focus on a particular audience segment on a particular day to target your reach. It will alert your key audience to look for content on that day.
- Use promoted status updates as one way to target Facebook posts to different audience segments.

Crowdsourcing

- To crowdsource effectively, you need to build a community first.
- Before you can hold a successful crowdsourcing campaign, you must first educate your community. Informed community members can have a greater impact.
- If you collect feedback via social media, you have a responsibility to report the results back using those same channels.
- Consider doing a survey of your audience to learn more about them.

Mobile

- If your audience is younger and will primarily be consuming your content through mobile devices, tailor your content and website design for those devices by simplifying navigation.
- Don't make your website "also" mobile friendly — make it primarily mobile friendly. Your social media and wider digital strategy should be integrated.

Metrics

- When considering your social media approach, consider the desired outcome and establish measurement against that.
- Add tracking codes to your links so you are able to follow your traffic throughout your eco-system. Adding [Google Analytics](#) tracking codes to all your links will let you track where your website traffic is coming from and how engaged your members are when they arrive. This will allow you to assess which social channels are the most effective for you.
- If possible, go beyond measuring social media metrics to measuring the action you want your audience to take. Are you driving your audience to fill out a registration form or book an appointment? Track whether these metrics are going up as a result of your campaign.
- Have a clear call to action in order to make it easier to measure your effectiveness.
- Examine conversations with your audience — they can prompt questions about what you're doing and how you're doing it.

Search Engine Optimization

- Use the right nomenclature when defining keywords for search. What terms are people actually using to look for content? Don't get stuck using your own corporate language.

Content

- Social media is an "always on" strategy on which you can layer different campaigns.
- Enrich your content by finding inspiration from your community and asking them to share photos and stories.
- Create a cohesive content strategy: Think about the tone of voice and visuals you are using. They should be consistent. If the tone of your message is fun and playful, for example, then so should your visuals.
- A lot of content is consumed on mobile devices, so keep it short and punchy.
- Plan out your content. It's work up front, but reduces the burden later.
- Not all social media channels are the same. Tailor your content and engagement strategy to each, and don't feel that you have to participate in all of them.
- The worst thing you can do is go silent. If you don't have new content, post about other things your target audience would be interested in.

Content Continued

- Get people accustomed to using your #hashtags, so they can effectively join the conversation. Use them consistently and add them to your offline marketing material so people become familiar with your hashtags and start using them.
- No one wants to be preached at. Instead, try telling emotive stories with a positive message.
- Use group chats for longer-form content, which can live on your site. Not a lot of people are spending time on Google+, but the hangouts function is great for chatting.
- Social is now very visual, even on those channels that were not traditionally visual. Engagement can increase significantly when visuals like images and videos are used.

Go Beyond Social

- Don't restrict your messages to social media; traditional channels continue to be an effective way to reach your audience.
- Don't ignore channels such as your blog and website, where you can have longer conversations with your communities.

Paid Campaigns

- The nature of Facebook is changing and paid dollars are becoming more important – but spend your money wisely. Amplify your most popular posts with paid campaigns.
- Don't try to amplify everything with a paid campaign. See what resonates with your audience first.

Risk

- Be familiar with the rules of the social media platform you are using. For example, Facebook has limitations on how much text an image can have in paid campaigns. If you plan on promoting your most popular posts with a paid campaign, keep this in mind.

Acknowledgement

Infoway would like to thank the *Public Health Social Media* Challenge expert panelists:

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