

## **Looking to the Future: The Use of Digital Media Marketing to Reach and Engage Our Audiences.\***

### ***What is Social Media?***

Social media is a two-way conversation that starts with listening and then moves to providing useful and relevant content. It begins with building trust often referred to as “authority” so as to earn the trust among audiences to use digitally designed social strategies for outreach purposes. Social media provides a way to create a more personal connection with our audience, to achieve an expanded reach of our messages and to better secure long-term engagement. In addition, social media can be used to confirm relationships, seek influencers and identify potential new audiences.

The use of social media has exploded over the past several years and has begun to redefine how we digitally connect with our audiences. First and foremost, it provides our audiences a more engaging way to identify with our organizational messages and enables better sharing of information, ideas, concerns, and audience feedback in new and cost-effective ways. Social media includes platforms such as blogging, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Wikipedia (the big five). With a few country exceptions these digital channels are global in scope.

China is one of the most restricted countries in the world in terms of internet use, but these constraints have directly contributed to the staggering success of local Chinese social media sites. China favors the search engine Sina Weibo and in 2013 it reported over 550 million users. The Russian Federation which heavily monitors its main social media site VKontakte (VK) is currently the most popular local social networking site with a reported 80 million monthly visitors. VK allows its users to send messages, create groups, and share photos, audio, and video.

When our occupational and environmental information is tailored to answer recognized audience needs and where sites allow audiences to freely interact with each other social media marketing provides an appropriate platform for our global audiences to increasingly voice their concerns, share information of value as well as assist our overall health communication outreach strategies.

### ***Social Media is Disruptive***

“Disruption” appears to be the new catch phrase applied to business innovation- changing the status quo needs to violate and disrupt expectation. Disruptive Innovation is defined by Clayton M. Christensen who coined the term as a “technology or innovation that helps create a new market and value network, and that eventually goes on to disrupt an existing market and value network.” It’s fairly easy to grasp how the disruptive-innovation model works when it’s applied to commercial products and services (Uber, Amazon, online universities, and walk-in medical clinics located in retail stores, are examples), but how, exactly does the model work in the communication sector? Basically, if we measure the five recognized criteria of a “disruptive innovation” to new social media innovations they match favorably.

1. Disruptive innovation provides systematic change through scaling and replication. The worldwide use of the social media giant YouTube provides an example of a platform with huge reach being

used by over a billion users per day- almost one-third of all people on the Internet. Everyday people watch hundreds of millions of hours on YouTube, much of which they produce.

2. Disruptive innovations provide real-time needs assessment through self-initiated content driven venues. As of the third quarter of 2015, Facebook had 1.55 billion monthly active users passing one billion in 2012. (Active users are those which have logged into Facebook during the last 30 days). Furthermore, as of 2015 the social network had 1.31 billion mobile access users. Facebook is the most popular social network worldwide and is in large part driven by user developed content.

3. Disruptive innovations offer products and services that are often simpler and less costly in reaching target audiences and while often perceived as having a lower level of performance, users consider them to be good enough as a starting point for learning. In the United States NIOSH has been editing and improving occupational safety and health information on Wikipedia since 2010. Approximately 1200-1500 occupational safety and health sites are undergoing scrutiny. In 2013, Wikipedia became the number one driver of information seekers to the NIOSH web site (other than the search engines, Bing and Google. Wikipedia is a major communication disrupter but if managed correctly has the potential of worldwide occupational and environmental safety and health information management, audience reach and engagement. Disruptive innovation generates resources, volunteer manpower and intellectual capital in ways that are original, creative and economical but may not be attractive because they are simply unknown. Pinterest, an online social curation web site for sharing information and categorizing images, is the fourth most popular social networking site worldwide with over 250 million users mainly in North America, the Middle East and Africa but remains virtually unknown and unused in other global regions, especially in Europe.

5. Disruptive innovation is often ignored, disparaged or even discouraged by existing organizations even though their current branded outreach and marketing models are unattractive or out of touch with the intended audiences...especially younger audiences.

The implication is clear, social media by its very nature is disruptive but can't be dismissed because of its incredible potential to disseminate occupational and environmental safety and health messages globally. The management of content and venue requires our attention, understanding and mastery. Worldwide public health organizations do a very good job providing important health messages for their audiences and while communication interventions have a good chance of showing impact overtime our organizations struggle to reach the far broader populations that are in need of our information and that would be happily satisfied with simpler evidence-informed offerings if they were available. What's required is utilizing a fundamentally more social way (we don't have to give up the old way) of delivering and measuring the impact of occupational and environmental safety and health information through the use of tools and strategies of social media.

*What do Public Audiences Expect?*

1. People expect us to be on social media. HubSpot, a U.S. business marketing firm found, 84 percent of respondents expect companies and organizations to be on Facebook, while 64 percent expect them to be on Twitter. The third, a bit of a surprise wasn't Google, Instagram or Pinterest -- it was YouTube.

2. People expect to be able to find us. It's not enough to have a social media account but we need to market them vigorously through cross-posting, web links, proper branding and regular updating. The HubSpot survey reported above found audiences expect organizations to be present on three or four platforms. This is important for us to note: don't overuse social media messages better to interact with our followers on a few platforms and use them well rather than to be on all platforms with sub-par offerings and interaction. When creating accounts we need to consider who the audience is and what social media tools they will be using.

3. Audiences need a reason to be engaged. What reason do audiences have to follow us on social media? Are they looking for the occupational and environmental safety and health information we have? Do we have information they need to know? Can they get their questions answered easily? The old telephone answering service seems like a last century strategy. People that use Twitter expect answers almost immediately. Our best approach is to use social media to make followers feel personally involved with our organizations. Pay attention and reward our audiences- make them feel special and encourage them to share our information with others in their community.

4. Fresh content is king. Content is king but web site navigation performance standards must be maintained. In a 2015 survey conducted of internet users in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Singapore consumers overwhelmingly reported that fresh personalized content and good web site performance were the keys to a successful digital experience. This was true across all countries surveyed. (90) It is important for us not to just re-circulate similar occupational and environmental safety and health content on all social media platforms- it's tempting but not acceptable communication practice. What works well for our occupational science blog may not be appropriate for Facebook and may not translate well to Twitter and edits within Wikipedia. Audiences are smart enough to tell the difference and in addition just re-circulating similar information doesn't help with optimizing organic search.

5. Branding content is essential. If the content appears too promotional, it will lead to a dead-end with our followers because it will appear that we are marketing ourselves. We have to be strategic but not intrusive concerning the branding of our occupational and environmental information and about branding policy. Our organizations should have a voice that comes across as real, human and relatable. We must always be transparent in the use of social media. Whatever we put online we must take responsibility for and assure its security and accuracy. In addition social media is not free. It requires both human and fiscal resources. Content must be monitored and constantly updated. Written guidelines are a must.

## Box 26.17. The 2015 Global Digital Landscape

	World Population	Active Users	Active Social Media Accounts	Mobile Users
Totals	7,210 Billion	3,010 Billion	2,708 Billion	3,649 Billion
Penetration	53%	42%	29%	51%
Year to Year Change 2014-2015.	+1.6	+21%	+12%	+5%

### Think and Utilize Mobile

#### *Background*

Mobile increasingly dominates the digital world, and it is likely that growth will be greater in the coming decade as cheaper handsets and more affordable data connections reach further worldwide. If we want our targeted audiences to retrieve and use our occupational and environmental information we need to be aware of mobile download costs. Mobile data download connection costs are a real burden in most developing countries. Wikipedia, through its Wikipedia Zero initiative is urging countries worldwide to provide Wikipedia downloads free of charge on mobile phones, particularly in developing markets where often Wikipedia is the only encyclopedia available. As this project matures Wikipedia may provide an innovative mechanism for sharing occupational and environmental safety and health information worldwide that can be managed globally.

#### *Mobile's Incoming Data*

As mobile phone availability expands so does the extractable incoming data which, if analyzed correctly, can provide important audience information. As an example, let's assume your organization has discovered a particularly dangerous baby product that is being extensively marketed in your country. You have been tasked to reach out to potential purchasers of the product with a strong warning and action message. Because of limited resources you have decided to narrow your target audience to young mothers and families with children which intuitively and historically seems like an

appropriate segmentation strategy. Box 26.18 below indicates why this demographic might not be the best segmentation approach.

Box 26.18. U.S. Smartphone Purchases of Baby Products, 2015

40 % of all purchasers of baby products (in the U.S.) live in households without children.

In the above example, communicators who relied on intuitive demographics to reach audiences risked missing more than 60% of the target audience that would benefit from the message. Demographics rarely tell the whole story. Mobile services will increasingly provide real time data not only to deliver our message but better target our recipients.

### *Mobile Services*

Mobile-oriented services like WhatsApp, WeChat and Facebook Messenger and other apps are achieving the top social media ranking spots in some of the world's biggest economies. It's clear that much of our communication digitally is now converging around mobile devices. NIOSH recently released a mobile app that allows the user to measure decibel levels providing real-time data to protect against environmental and workplace noise induced hearing loss. Based on mobile trends, some predications expect that mobile will help to push internet penetration beyond 50% of the world's population during mid to late 2016.

### **Wikipedia: A Strategic Tool for Delivering Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety Information Worldwide.**

#### *Background*

To many professional audiences Wikipedia seems highly disruptive. In 2001, the idea of an online, open-source encyclopedia seemed harebrained. But by 2005, this non-profit venture had become the largest encyclopedia on the planet. Today Wikipedia offers more than 5 million articles in English. U.S. NIOSH has been strategically editing Wikipedia with evidence-based occupational safety and health information to improve and refine the site that's delivering health and safety information globally to 400 million unique visitors, accounting for 7.8 billion page views per month. Wikipedia has 37 million articles in 291 languages and is one of the seven most-visited websites in the world. Globally, one out of every two hundred visits to the internet is to Wikipedia.

In the U.S. Wikipedia is the leading single source of healthcare information for patients and healthcare professionals and nearly 50% of U.S. physicians who go online for professional purposes and use

Wikipedia for information, especially for specific conditions. Patient trust in clinicians and the broad reach of social media puts occupational and environmental healthcare professionals in a prime position to drive their agendas by editing Wikipedia.

### *Wikipedia's Security*

Because Wikipedia is an open-content encyclopedia, its articles can be edited by anyone with access to the internet and registered editor articles are not subject to peer review. Approximately 30,000 editors make 5 or more edits per month. In addition, community members vigorously police the site to enforce Wikipedia's editorial policies (that is, they remove vandalism and factual errors from pages, identify and tag neutrality issues, and ensure that claims in articles are supported and cited). Wikipedia contains thousands of articles relevant to environmental and occupational safety and health. All sources in Wikipedia articles are footnoted, and the footnotes are linked to the source web site therefore, serious information seekers can follow links to official publications from Wikipedia articles. Wikipedia should be an introductory resource for general information, not the only or last resort source.

#### Box 26.19. Wikipedia-An Internet Heavyweight Driving Search

In late 2013, Wikipedia became the number one driver of information seekers to the NIOSH-CDC web site (except for organic search). In response, the Institute has added Wikipedians in Residence to monitor and improve occupational safety and health information on Wikipedia. In a recent review of Wikipedia the Institute has identified over 1200-1500 occupational safety and health related sites that it has targeted for review and edits of evidence-based information.

Given Wikipedia's popularity and high search-engine rankings, the general public and health professionals searching for occupational and environmental safety and health information will be able to find it more readily on Wikipedia entries than on organizational web sites. The advantage of the wisdom of evidence-driven crowd is that results can scale both in breadth and depth. This makes Wikipedia an excellent tool for disseminating occupational and environmental safety and health information worldwide to the people who are searching for it.

### **How to Optimize Our Web Pages and Keep Search Engines Happy**

#### Background

Search engines have two major functions; crawling the internet, searching for our information and building an index, and providing search users with a ranking to the web sites they've determined are the most relevant. Once search engines find our web site pages they store the information in global warehouses, holding billions of pages that can be assessed in a fraction of a second. Search engines

typically assume that the more popular and relevant a page is the more valuable the information it contains must be. The assumption has proven fairly successful in terms of user satisfaction. If we want our information to be accessed by our audiences we need to structure our web sites for our users in a clear hierarchical format with appropriate text links.

### *Tips for Optimizing Search*

Marketing and business professionals say creating quality content is the most effective way to drive more people to our web-based information. More than half of the global communication professionals polled in a 2014 survey say quality content is one of the most effective search engine optimization (SEO) strategies employed by their respective organizations. Other SEO efforts seen as effective include keyword research, site management (47%), frequent web site updating (37%), social media integration (32%), and frequent blogging (28%). Over half of respondents reported never performing tests on their web site pages to better understand web site traffic patterns or content analysis. Only 6% reported testing extensively. The lesson is fairly clear; if we want more people to receive and use our environmental and occupational information located on our web sites we have to assure search engine optimization by regular performance tests and by assuring our information is fresh, relevant, clear, and easy to access. That being said, search engine optimization is best about organizing our information to be reached and read by users not search engines.

### **SUMMARY**

Communication is a necessary core competency for our efforts related to delivering essential occupational and environmental safety and health information to the public. Effective health communication strategies both to inform and persuade when well implemented and evaluated contribute positively to worker and workplace safety, disease prevention and control, workplace and environmental health promotion, public policy debates and medical care and services. Thus, the effective dissemination of evidenced-based occupational and environmental information is critical for reducing or eliminating unhealthy behaviors and for adopting healthy behaviors; improving workers, employers, policy makers, and the community's ability to make decisions about their health.

Because persuading people to make changes is particularly difficult, most communication efforts focus on the antecedents of change such as information sharing, presenting new knowledge focused on increasing awareness.

Health communicators must increasingly be aware that our efforts need to go beyond dissemination to realistically address issues of confidence and motivation of our target audiences. This understanding seems particularly important in the workplace where workers are not the decision makers and a similar paradigm exists in local communities where citizens most affected are often outside the environmental policy and political decision making process. It is necessary to fully understand how our audiences see issues and involve them early in the communication process. It cannot be assumed that an audience will value our evidenced-based information simply because we are experts, academicians, researchers, or well-meaning representatives of government organizations.

Evaluation of communication initiatives cannot be an afterthought but must be an integral part of the

communication strategic process. If empirical evidence does support the predictions of communication theories that affect decision making and action of our target audiences then evaluation findings and recommendations are critical in developing communication programs that promote the effectiveness of utilizing these determinants more effectively.

Too many health professionals still operate under the belief that merely providing information to increase knowledge will result in behavior change and too few communication professionals have experience working within industry, labor and community advocacy and policy groups to fully understand the environment in which they work.

Although this chapter has focused on the importance of communicating with the public it is critical to recognize the importance of the interactions of health professionals with each other and the information they create and use in their interactions with the public. This is particularly true with needed efforts to professionally interact more globally.

Social media is clearly a disruptive innovation. While still somewhat of a mystery too many health professionals and the general public there is increasing global potential in utilizing digital communication venues and in the creation of mechanisms that allow us to work trans-nationally. As such, the use of Wikipedia is becoming an increasingly important tool for the engagement of our partners worldwide. To many professional audiences the use of Wikipedia is still seen as particularly disruptive and even harmful. But with new superior security, tracking and editing tools, and Wikipedia reporting metrics, health professionals worldwide can fix what seems to be broken and monitor the results. No one institution or individual researcher has all the information searchers are looking for. Pooling the resources of a motivated evidenced-based crowd creates the possibility of developing and delivering useful information worldwide.

Newer communication innovations, especially the proliferation of mobile services are pushing us to be more social in the scope of our communication strategies and will no doubt challenge some of our cherished communication beliefs. However, the promise of offering simpler, easier to locate, evidenced-based information to targeted populations will in the next decade significantly enhance and improve our community of practice.

\*Source: Lum, M. (2017). Communicating Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health Information Effectively: A Practice-Based Approach. Chapter 26 In Textbook of Occupational Medicine Practice, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Koh, D. and Tar-Ching, AW eds. World Scientific, Singapore.

### ***Suggested Readings***

*Making Health Communication Programs Work. (2009). A Planners Guide Bethesda MD; National Institutes of health. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. National Cancer Institute. NIH Publication 200-1493. Available at <http://oc.nih.gov/services/hpcw/home.htm>*

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