

Utilizing social media to increase knowledge of advance directives in a rural community

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Abstract

Problem/Purpose: This public health project attempted to increase community awareness of advance directives—an integral part to health outcomes and healthcare spending, particularly in older populations—in Northeast Wisconsin through social media outreach. Advance directives have been shown to improve health outcomes while decreasing healthcare spending. Early efforts to educate community members on the importance of advance directives had limited success due to low attendance at in-person events. Challenges included limited advertising, large distances for residents to travel in a rural setting, and scheduling limitations. Considering this, we sought solutions to this poor participation.

Research Method: We hypothesized that integrating an evidence-based social media campaign would increase the public's awareness of the project as well as participation at in-person events. To achieve this, we created a Facebook page, "Advance Directives Northeast Wisconsin", with educational content and advertising for existing events. We then observed the amount of community engagement online as well as the attendance at in-person events.

Data Analysis: We used Facebook's administrator tools to track the total number of views and clicks on each post and to quantify the average amount of engagement-per-post.

Results: In the first 3 months after going live, "Advance Directives NEWi" reached 1821 people (average reach per post = 70.04), and generated 217 personal engagements (average engagements per post = 8.35). In addition, we have seen an increase in attendance at in-person events, although there have been too few events for this to have statistical power.

Implications: This early data indicates that integrating a social media presence into an advance directives public health project increases community outreach in a rural setting.

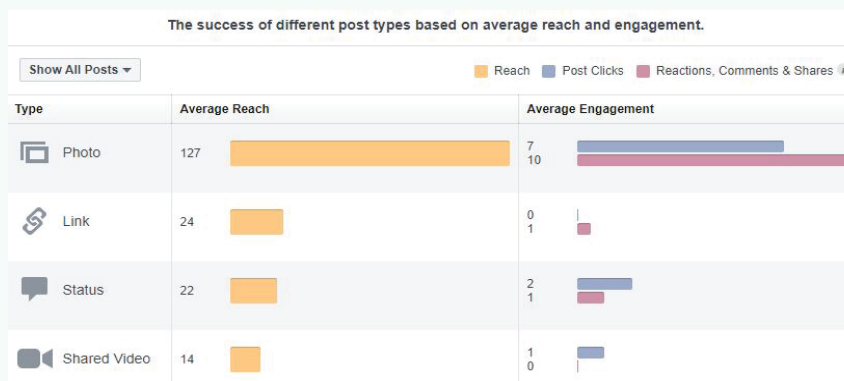


Figure 1: Graphic generated from Facebook's "Insights" feature showing the breakdown of collective post success based on post content. Notably, posts with photos had the highest average reach and engagement metrics.

Results

After 3 months of operating a public-facing Facebook profile for the Advance Directives Northeast Wisconsin, the page accrued 35 followers (people who can see ADNEWi's content on their timelines).

People Reached: The number of "eyeballs" on each post. Total = 1821; mean = 70.04; median = 22.5; standard deviation = 162.67

Engagement: Number of clicks, reactions, comments, and/or shares on each post. Total = 217; mean = 8.35; median = 2; standard deviation = 26.41

Discussion

Outcomes: Based off engagements and reach online we exceeded the amount of people participating in this project in 3 months that we did the entire previous year. Interestingly in the first 3 months post going live with social media, the attendance at in person events also increased compared to previous years.

Limitations: Hard to determine/measure how much action/change a person will take based off their tracked "engagement". Most effective communication campaigns utilize multiple media modalities which was not fully integrated during these 3 months → true power of this campaign may be undermeasured at this time point.

Future Steps: Integrate other media modalities like print or TV into campaign. Utilize "community influencer" strategy to increase draw to social media accounts. Integrate social media more strongly into in-person events.

Background

- Advance directives improve health outcomes and patient satisfaction while decreasing health spending HOWEVER most patients unaware of ADs, their benefits, and how to complete³
- Mass media and social marketing strategies used in public health campaigns effectively communicate knowledge and change behaviors⁴
- Social media useful in public health because of low cost of entry, high use among multiple populations, and no geographical barriers⁵
- Senior citizens cite the internet/social media as a primary resource for health-related information⁶
- Social media changes behavior in public health campaigns with interactive communication that is multi-directional rather than top-down⁷

Methods

- Created Facebook profile for Advanced Directives NEWi using evidence-based social media best practices:
- showing the people behind the account/organization AND replying to every user interaction personally
 - actively asking for contributions from users AND creating content encouraging engagement
 - basing all content in traditional behavioral change theories: health belief model and social cognitive theory

Utilized Facebook's "Insights" feature in the administrator view to analyze each post's "reach", "clicks", and "reactions."

- after 3 months of being live, plotted post date and reach into Excel
- determined average reach per post and developed a histogram of the outcomes

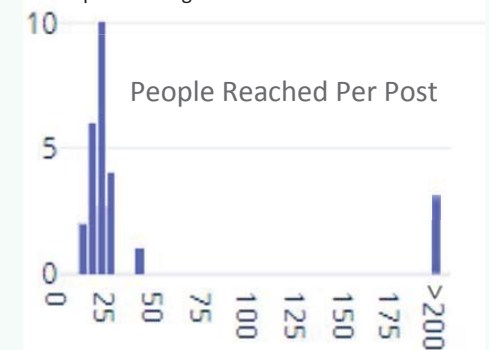


Figure 2: Plotting post reach in a histogram form with a bucket size of 5 units helps illustrate ADNEWi's post reach's bimodal distribution, explaining why the mean is >> the median.



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