**2020 Online KT Conference:**

**Social Media Strategies for Knowledge Translation**

*Panel: Use of Social Media Platforms for More Inclusive and Accessible Research and Programs*

Christina Bard and Chithra Adams

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>> ANN OUTLAW: Thank you so much, Christina. Thank you, Chithra. Now we are going to have our panel discussion. I appreciate all the questions that are coming into the chat box. So, please keep on chatting in your questions.

So, first up, I would like to introduce our panelists for those of you who weren't able to attend our panel discussion earlier. Welcome back Jerry Smith, he is the marketing and business development manager from the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota.

Also joining us is Erica Machulak, she is the founder of Hikma Strategies, an organization that helps scholars bring their ideas to new context through communication and collaboration. Last but not least is Denise Henrikson. She is from Social Policy Research Associates where she conducts research and analysis to develop training and technical assistance tools for work force system partners. Thank you all for joining us. Let's start back up a little bit and answer some of the questions that the participants had, and I'll move the discussion over to the panel.

Christina, first up, you mentioned so many great resources. Someone was asking about alt text. Which of those resources would be best to define what alt text is and what it should include and how to get help?

>> CHRISTINA BARD: So, I would go to the usability.gov site. I think they have some good lists on how to write good alt text. They all really do. Alt text is a big issue in accessibility. There is some good guidelines on how to practice with that. It goes down to including users of it in your conversations and practice, so you get feedback from users. The usability.gov I really like because it's incorporating all the different usability and really getting down to how the greatest number of people can access that content cognitively and to the point of comprehension, right?

>> ANN OUTLAW: Definitely. Thank you. Something that came up during your presentation Chithra. Do you have recommendations for using social media if you are not given the time or expertise or even have social media fatigue just because?

>> CHITHRA ADAMS: That is a very good question. Social media fatigue is real. Especially the Covid and so many things going on. I think you have to give grace. This is one more venue of information. It's our choice to use it. We continue to follow people who are good sources of information, who will provide accurate sources of information. So, we do have a little bit of downtime that is needed we can use it. I think this is where it's really nice to have an organizational account that does all the branding and need for constant presence. For your own account, that is when you give yourself grace and time to step back and time to consume when you are ready to consume.

>> ANN OUTLAW: Thank you, so much. I think that resonates with a lot of us today. I saw some chats going in there today.

Let's move onto question for Erica. Erica, Christina spoke about the importance of using of plain language. Your work at Hikma Strategies is all about plain language. What are some common pitfalls you see sharing research findings via using social media?

>> ERICA MACHULAK: That is a great question and I think Christina made some great points there about things like choosing words that are commonplace and accessible instead of jargon and trying to breakdown sentences and paragraphs into smaller units. She made a couple other points there that I think are really useful.

I think one of the things that many of us do that trip us up when trying to use plain language in something like a tweet where you don't have that much space is try to incorporate every nuance that is the nature of their work and every complexity. One of the things that drives journalists crazy about researchers is they don't make these bold, punchy statements. They want to add the context and the nuance that is the nature of their work. I think part of the trick is to try to distill into the things that you can say are true and not to try to tell the whole complexity story in one tweet, but to try to figure out something that you can say that is a small nugget especially in a context that things get re-tweeted really quick. Having a tweet that has many, many threads can work sometimes but it isn’t appropriate for every context ‑‑ you can have a bigger impact if you can package something more tightly a lot of the time. Christina and Chithra I don't know if you would agree with that. That seems to work well.

>> CHITHRA ADAMS: Crafting a good tweet is an art. My first few tweets ‑‑ you want to add as much nuances in because when people are discourse you have the whole knowledge. I think if you have one thing and let people know for FYI here is additional context. But I agree with you on what you are saying.

>> ANN OUTLAW: Definitely. Relating back to the presentation earlier, if you have something pretty complex to share or something with a lot of nuance, perhaps setting up a Twitter chat ‑‑ I'm forgetting the word.

>> ERICA MACHULAK: I think having integrated dialogues and interfacing between multiple clients of social media which they talked about earlier. If you want to write a longer piece or a piece on media, always link to it in your Twitter as well so you can use different strategies to get different nuances. You can use citations and things like that. Using images too. Images today can convey a lot of the nuance and I think the study shows they get more traction on social media.

>> CHRISTINA BARD: Just thinking about which platform you are using. If you need to write more words to nuance and to offer a description around your topic, use Facebook or one of our other accounts that allow you to do so.

>> ANN OUTLAW: Thank you, so much. Denise, let me ask a question to you. Christina also spoke about using plain language and not using ablest language. When developing training and TA materials or technical assistance materials for work force system partners, how do you check for accessibility and ableist language and do you have suggestions.

>> DENISE HENRIKSON: One of the guides that we use is people first, so it's not disabled people or individuals with disabilities will always think in terms of people first. Acronyms is something you want to spell out because even we are working on a project now where both systems have the same acronym but do different things. It's really important to spell those out and explain it because people might have assumptions even given the content that you are talking about there could be overlapping acronyms.

>> ANN OUTLAW: That is a question that commonly comes up at our center and other places when person first language is definitely what we choose to use, but there is a preferred nomenclature by other folks in the community. So, for instance, we couldn't say people with autism or autistic people which I heard has been the preferred choice of people with autism or autistic people. So, Christina, do you have comments about that or what do you do at HDI?

>> CHRISTINA BARD: We distinguish between person first language and identity first language. We recommend the default person first language. There are particular groups that prefer identity first language like you gave the example of autistic people. So, it's about getting to know the individual and what they prefer. Also, the deaf community to use deafness as part of their identity. So, they identify that as something that they call themselves deaf people. So, that is exact same process that we move forward with at this point. Yeah, always being willing to understand and hear the voices of people with experiences preferences and respond accordingly.

>> ANN OUTLAW: Definitely, listening. Like what Chithra was talking earlier in her presentation. So, Jerry, let me talk to you for a second. Metrics mattered less to Chithra based on her purposes for using social media. She mentioned identifying her blind spots, figuring out appropriate language of communities and hearing from stakeholders. It's not quite a dissemination tool like other people in organizations use social media. So, what is your take on this and do you as the Institute of Community Integration associate social media primarily through metrics.

>> JERRY SMITH: Metrics matter a lot to us. Our purpose is for dissemination and engagement with the audience rather than individual conversations. We also found if we don't use accounts frequently and we probably have eight or nine Facebook accounts and other channels as well. But if we are not using some of them frequently or just using them to show ourselves at a conference or just fully about us, then we are following off other people's feeds. We are not being popular enough to be in the algorithm to get seen. It's important we post frequently. We try really hard to make our stuff engaging and visual and relevant to people. For that reason, metrics matter a lot to us.

Organizationally I'm on Facebook and LinkedIn all the time. Personally, I don't want to go near it anymore. I'm very fatigued with it. There is a separation of work and home there.

>> ANN OUTLAW: Mostly definitely. While we are all staying home ‑‑ forced to stay home, maybe that was a place where we had community and now that it's stretched on for so many months, we are taking a step back or at least personally that has been my take on the fatigue of social media. You spoke a little about infographics at institute for community integration uses visuals to share your work and your research.

I wanted to pose this question to Christina and Chithra. I know there has been some comments in the chat section, but for everyone to hear. What are your thoughts on sharing information via graphs and infographics and data visualizations? Are they hard to gather your alt text for this?

>> CHRISTINA BARD: Yes. Infographics particularly in print are wonderful, they do incorporate universal design. They help people that have visual access to them be able to receive that information in different ways, not just text. That is great for diverse learners and people coming from different places. But in terms of those being incorporated into a social media post or a web‑based, a website, they do pose a problem with being accessible because you can't alt text like with a reference effectively. So, you know, there is a great time and place for things like infographics. And I guess that is a just a limitation that builds into the utilization of them is that they can't be fully accessible.

>> CHITHRA ADAMS: I would add, if I use an infographic, I usually describe what is drawing the infographic. I found an infographic on housing cost and the rising cost and how most people can't afford it. Great infographic and put the punch line in the tweet and please check out this whole link because usually those links will have a more accessible format. Not just retweeting but put the punch line in of what draws you in and then put a link to it.

>> ANN OUTLAW: Great. Thank you. Something that is also been mentioned a couple of times is if you don't have the staffing to manage social media to the extent that it's helpful, what are some different ways that organizations can do this? And I'll pass that to you, Christina and then others can join.

>> CHRISTINA BARD: Do I look ready to talk again? So, this is where it becomes really important to have the social media policy. The University of Kentucky has a lot of students and trainees. This is something we are able to often pass along to be on their plate. They are typically younger people who can bring more of that energy into social media. Having a social media policy to where they are very clear as to what we as an organization are comfortable with and what matches with our values is really important.

So, we have used a lot of trainees under the leadership of our information services director. It gets complicated we have 55 to 60 projects. A lot of our projects will have the social media page or two. So, keeping those aligned and making sure all those projects are representing our organization as we are comfortable with and in the way that aligns with our vision and mission is really important.

>> ANN OUTLAW: Thank you. There is also a point of creating social media policies. Denise, I would like to welcome you back now. Do you help the people that you provide training and technical assistance to create social media policies or ‑‑ what is your role with that sort of issue?

>> DENISE HENRIKSON: I can't really speak to that. I work specifically with the work force branch of social policy research. I haven't come across that yet in my work. I'm not ‑‑ I don't want to misspeak for the organization.

>> ANN OUTLAW: Definitely understand that. I was just wondering if that was part of your role. So, let's see, Christina or Chithra, do you have policies on social media explicit policies that you could share?

>> CHITHRA ADAMS: You know, nothing comes straight to my mind. I think this is where having social media manager would be able to speak to exactly what the policies are. Having the policy really helpful across all projects and multiple projects and multiple tweeters.

>> CHRISTINA BARD: I just shared the link. This is one of the strategies and tools from Hootsuite. I share their guideline and I think its good guidance for writing a social media policy and what is important about it offers some examples.

>> ANN OUTLAW: For the person who mentioned or asked that question, I'm recalling I think it was the second year we hosted this conference, we created a work group to create social media policies within the NIDILRR community, so you’re welcome to reach out to me. It's been six years ago so I'm sure there has been updates since, our social media has improved with the addition of Felice, our social media guru. But I can give you some of the nuts and bolts of what we shared and perhaps reach out to Felice as well. Jerry or Erica, do you have something to say about social media policies, some best practices or what you would include or not include in it?

>> JERRY SMITH: Go ahead, Erica.

>> ERICA MACHULAK: Thank you. I'm at an organization that has a social media manager but understanding who is in charge of the final posting. I can you can preload the posts and have someone who is in charge decide which ones are going to be posted to the public. That is a way that you can involve multiple people in the organization but still have someone vetting to make sure you have a shared voice. In some cases when you have the resources, I think that could help balance the time management and workload issues we talked about having a consistent voice and having someone who can really take a leadership role in the organization and decide what is appropriate.

But I think having general terms for the organization so everyone agrees what should be included and to Chithra's points you have different accounts and threads and understand your strategy and what is going to align with your goals. Not only what is appropriate, but what is going to speak to your core messaging. Those are all great ideas. I, myself, don't have an articulated social media policy, but I think it's a fantastic idea.

>> JERRY SMITH: I got all of those including not having an articulated social media policy. The we have a couple centers within our institute that are autonomous, so they do their own thing. We come together every six months or year if there is some issues around messaging and very much having a common voice. We used a third person. We don't get folksy, we try to provide news in a concise, readable way, plain language, no ableist language. We do try to make it sound like it it's coming from one voice. We don't have multiple different perspectives. That has served us well. But I think having the time to come together every three or six months to revisit how you are doing is an important thing.

>> CHRISTINA BARD: For us, since we are part of University of Kentucky, we fall under theirs, and I would be happy to share theirs if that is something that is helpful. As part of the university, we fall within that.

>> ANN OUTLAW: That would be great, thank you Christina. A lot of questions came in the registration form about platforms. Like how to choose the correct platforms for the types of audience that you are trying to hear from. The types of stakeholders that you want to get in touch with. So, I would like to hear from all of you about how you chosen your platforms that your organizations use? How do you get to the particular audience members that you are trying to hear from? Let's start with you, Christina and Chithra.

>> CHRISTINA BARD: That would be more of a Chithra question. Mine would be to the one that reached the greatest number of people. So, the one that has the best accessibility. But they are all following each other's lead there I think in recognition they can reach more people, Chithra?

>> CHITHRA ADAMS: Yeah, I completely agree with you Christina. Twitter is a good place to follow when you want to do real time decision making. Facebook is more about let's post it or preload it. And LinkedIn is very business oriented and really doesn't lend to individual sense making. Of course, not just temporary. I haven't done Instagram and I know if you want to reach a younger audience, the Instagram is the way to go, especially with Instagram stories. The reason I chose Twitter is because I really wanted to know what is the discourse happening right now in the moment and how are people bringing in different issues into perspective? Twitter is a great place for that.

>> ANN OUTLAW: Thank you Chithra and Christina. Jerry, what is your take? What platforms are your go to platforms?

>> JERRY SMITH: I think as people responded in the poll for this group, it's mostly Facebook. That is where our users are. We put out publications there. That has been our go to place for a decade. We are getting more into LinkedIn for job postings but also to reach a different audience. It feels like we can spend more time talking there and doing longer posts. And YouTube. We do a ton of videos and YouTube is a great place for search. We really underutilize Twitter because we don't have the capacity do it well. I feel like we would need to have somebody on this frequently. I know there are a lot of influencers out there, leaders in our field who are able to multitask and do it well. I'm not one of them. But we need to get better at that. It's an important platform and we need more capacity to do it right.

>> ANN OUTLAW: You bring up a good point. Understanding the capacity and putting your best foot forward publicly is an important aspect to consider before you branch out into more platforms. Erica, do you have a go to platform that you normally use with the people that you serve at Hikma?

>> ERICA MACHULAK: I used to create platforms for different things. Twitter, I try to use just to promote resources. If there is a grant deadline coming up or if there is a ‑‑ I see a really good link to something like probably some of the ones we will see today will end up with people. I try to use it as a repository so people can see there is a deadline coming up or that was a useful resource.

I have a Vlog I just started. Recently I started looking into Medium. It's not a platform used by all stakeholders. With certain groups I work with it's becoming more popular. You can get a little more into the nuance. It's longer form ed style articles and the functions are interesting. It has its own mechanism for community building. It's not for everyone. But its search engine optimized for blog functions more than on my own Square Space site. I try to integrate those things as best I can. When I have a blog post I put it on Medium and I can put it for free on my website and I can tweet it out and have people be able to access the free version through my website. You can only access a certain number of articles for free.

Facebook, I like the community building aspects of it. I'm part of a ‑‑ it's not for Hikma, there is an active crafting group I'm part of on Facebook. They do great facilitating, but I know people are concerned about the way Facebook uses data. I'm trying to get away from it from my organizational social media. To be honest, it's a work in progress to try to figure out what works best.

>> ANN OUTLAW: Denise, I understand your work is a little bit different as you provide research and analysis and training and TA to work force systems. But would you have a take on this? Are there specific platforms that work force systems that could be using to improve their dissemination or training?

>> DENISE HENRIKSON: Definitely. We highlighted the state of Wisconsin has off the charts. They are really able to get disability information and they have really good results with particularly disability population, and we found there is a tool that the lead center created called The Drive, which is the data resources to inspire vision of employment. And I'll put the link in the chat. And, when you go there, you can see which states are with the reporting the rates of reporting. You can even drill down into county. You can actually look and see which counties in your area are having really good reporting on certain data elements. You can get really specific with it. So, it's a tool that you would be able to use if you wanted to find out ‑‑ just create a best practices forum and do some of the crowd sourcing that was talked about in the first presentation.

So, it's definitely used by ‑‑ a lot of the best practices we find do use social media, especially in partnerships with leveraging with their partners. So, it is really an effective tool.

>> ANN OUTLAW: Excellent. Thank you. I would love to see the drive. It sounds like a really great resource. I do see question in the chat box. Chithra, I would like to address this to you before we close up.

Have you heard of any research about how the time and effort for posting on social media and its related impact has paid off?

>> CHITHRA ADAMS: That is a very good question. I don't have any research study that I can point to on how it's paid off. And what I can tell you from personal experience is it has allowed me to connect with people across ‑‑ beyond the US. It allowed me to connect internationally. It has allowed me to bring in people who were impacted by an issue into the research study. So, those are the ways it has impacted me personally. It has truly handled the view of interconnected issues. I also follow people who are tangentially interested. They look at it in a different perspective. But overall, I haven't seen what the impact is and that is a very good question.

>> ANN OUTLAW: I agree. That is a great question and something we are continuously trying to find information about and the next steps following this conference. So, let's move to the final slide and I wanted to say thank you Chithra and Christina for your presentation and Erica and Jerry and Denise for serving as reactors for the entire day of the conference and thank you. Enjoy the rest of your day. Goodbye, everybody.