**2020 Online KT Conference:**

**Social Media Strategies for Knowledge Translation**

*Panel: Making Your Messages Stick: Thinking Differently About Communication Online*

Heather Mannix

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>> JOANN: Thank you, very much, Heather. I'm so amazed at how much information people are really able to share in a relatively short time and you definitely did that, too. We do have a little bit of time for discussion after your session than we did the previous session. So first, I would like to invite the reactors to turn on their web cams and I'll do a little more full introduction than I did last time.

The reactors we have Paul Baker, PhD is Senior Director of Research and Strategic Innovation at Georgia Tech Center for Advanced Communications Policy and Interim Chief Operations Officer Center for the Development and IOT Technologies. He’s also a Principle Research Scientist within the School of Public Policy and Operations Manager of the NIDILRR funded Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Wireless and Inclusive Technologies or Wireless RERC. He is researching the role of innovation networks in workforce development and policy approaches for advancing technology and universal accessibility goals for persons with disabilities and the operation of communities with practice and online communities and public sector use of information and communication technologies.

Marta Garcia is bilingual Information Media Specialist for NARIC, which is a NIDILRR contractor. Marta has experience in the development of digital content in English and Spanish, social media analytics and account management. As NARIC’s bilingual information media specialist Marta oversees NARIC Spanish language social accounts and creates content that is seen in the Spanish speaking disability community around the world. Her strong background in recreation therapy for the geriatric and pediatric communities has instilled a deep love for evidence based and innovative interventions. One of her specialties is being able to translate research and evidence-based materials into Spanish social media bites.

Hilda Smith is a queer, trans, and disabled person who is a vanguard of radical social justice work focused disability, addiction and knowledge mobilization. They recently finished their doctorate in critical disability studies at York University. This passion led them to explore how knowledge moves between grass roots movements, academics and policy makers. Hilda's research led to work the school boards, research institutions, knowledge mobilization units, social planning councils and community organizations. Hilda became an expert in knowledge mobilization, clear language, event promotion and relationship building. An essential part of Hilda's work has been exploring how anti‑oppression can work alongside inclusion and accessibility within knowledge mobilization. So we have a varied group of reactors as you can see. And we have a lot of interesting topics to see if we can cover.

Marta let's start with you. Which of the strategies that were mentioned for creating engaging messages were most important for you in your work at NARIC?

>> MARTA GARCIA: Believe it or not, all of them. But, really all of them, but I would say probably making it more ‑‑ making things more personable. For example, when I speak about ‑‑ when I'm sharing information from let's say the wireless RERC I say our friends at instead of our colleagues. Because that is just more humanizing, I find. And I find that a lot of in the Spanish speaking community, they go, oh, they are friends. It makes the science and scientists more ‑‑ not that they are not people, but more personable. So, I think that is one of the biggest ones that I have used as far as strategy.

>> JOANN STARKS: Great. Thank you, very much. Paul, in your role I'm sure you have to share information about your work to a wide range of audiences. And given that social media encompasses such a wide range of platforms, audiences and use, can you tell us how you choose the appropriate platform for a given output and how do you assess the efficacy of the approach? Are there specific analytics tools that you employ?

>> PAUL BAKER: During the last session I talked about the analytic tools and the same thing would hold true here. So I'll focus on the first part. A lot of what we do, a lot of what wireless RERC see and advanced communication policy and CDATE does is serve as interface for translational, much like the center, translating technology to policy makers and policy makers concerns to technologist. It goes both directions.

One of the things that we use, we tend to use social media ‑‑ again, as I said there was social media as a data collection, social media as recruitment, social media as dissemination. The whole concept of networking was something I neglected to mention because it wasn't as pertinent to that particular presentation.

One of the things that we do, for instance, is use social media to draw attention. Like, we do papers fairly frequently and Heather can probably tell you when you look at the building a metrics of publication in scientific communities, the typical paper that is published gets one or two citations if you are lucky.

Partly is there is so much material published people lose it. One of the powers of social media is to take it and amplify. Our friends at NARIC both in Spanish and English also as part of what we are doing regularly we probably disseminate across our different platforms in different properties probably between 20 and 30 tweets a day for instance. I do a lot of that across ‑‑ I manage or am involved with eight different Twitter accounts. You cross amplify them. For instance, let's say we published a policy filing to NTIA or FCC. It's well and good, but five people will see that. The other people who commented, the FCC, but there may be things that you want. For instance, we will publish the paper on your website and start running through with Twitter. We post it on LinkedIn and then tweet that it’s on LinkedIn and that posts back to the website and there is an amplification process that occurs.

One of the things that we do regularly is to follow and retweet colleagues or as Marta says, our friends. If you don't have ‑‑ one of the things ‑‑ one of my pieces of advice is for my colleagues is it doesn't matter if you don't have new stuff to put up all the time. Curate stuff. What you are doing is signaling not just that you are experts by what you publish, you are experts in a sense of that which you understand and are able to communicate. The curational role is a very powerful role. Different platforms are able to convey different amounts and different flavors. Know your audience.

When speaking to policy makers these days, scientists and certain political parties tend to make data based arguments which cause eyes to glaze. You have to link telling a story to the data. The hybrid approach tends to be effective. The story catches their attention. The data, if you will, is what provides political ammunition. Again, primarily my audience is policy makers. I have gone on way too far. I hope that at least addressed some of it.

>> JOANN: I think that was great. I like the way you tied the story telling to the data and making it double useful that way. Let's talk to Hilda now. This presentation really seems right up your alley as a knowledge mobilization and clear language specialist. So in your work with research institutions and community organizations, how do you gauge the appropriate tone and content messages for diverse audiences?

>> HILDA SMITH: One of my things when comes to messaging I believe in targeted messaging as Heather mentioned. Trying to create something for a general audience is really very difficult and typically doesn't get picked up very well.

So, when the resources exist, I really like to kind of identify kind of the top three to five kind of audiences that you want to connect with. And then, identify platforms or ways to connect with them best. Of course, always if you can having engagement and input by those people into what the products will look like.

I will admit, especially when working with community organizations or a researcher there is not a lot of funds to do that broad, really extensive piece. One of the things I like to do is similar to what Paul was just talking about is creating kind of different pieces that interconnect and bring people in in different ways. So if there is a published paper or a presentation and you want to promote that, I really like there being some kind of clear language summary, easy to read document and that can be what is shared on your social media and becomes kind of this in between piece which is easier for people to access. If they want more information they can go to the larger journal article or to the presentation that you have. Just using these kind of steppingstone pieces that all integrate and work together can be really great.

>> JOANN STARKS: Thank you. We have a couple questions coming from the audience directed to Heather. Wondering if you can comment on the literature that shows support for the deficit model in the better understanding of the science and improve science literacy can change attitudes towards science?

>> HEATHER MANNIX: So I'm not familiar with that research about sorting the deficit model, but I will say that definitely having more support ‑‑ I was just answering someone's question, too, typing it along these lines. There is a scope and place for more education sort of about the scientific process and about why evidence matters and how science works and why it works the way it does to build trust in science.

I do think a lot of that comes from the messengers as well. We live in a world where the messenger and the message matters. It goes back to making it clear and concise and making it understandable to people. I think that is what we want to do as good communicators and that is something we should be focused on. There was a question earlier and I'll answer both of these at the same time. Someone said, how can we become more a person but avoid the personification of scientists? I think by having that message that is what we can do. You don't have to be super personal in how you communicate if that is not your style. But it goes back to some of the research I shared about jargon where if you were giving someone something that is hard to understand that has a lot of jargon that causes people to have backlash against you, they feel like they are on the outside looking in instead of feeling like you are bringing them into this conversation with you or into this research or showing them why it matters to them.

I think simply by doing that, by bringing them into it and making them feel like a part of it because they can understand what you are saying, can go a long way to breaking down some of these barriers and building trust, but not necessarily having to be super personal or share personal stories if, again, that is not your style. Hopefully that can help answer your question.

>> JOANN STARKS: Thank you, very much. Another question that came in and I'm sure everyone would have a shot at answering this one. This came in from the registration form. My organization doubts the benefits of using social media. How am I going to get them on board? Would anyone like to take that question?

>> PAUL BAKER: I just became chief operating officer for a center and developmental of things. It was old school. The newsletter that came out and no social media. Very little engagement. And, we brought up a Twitter feed that went from zero ‑‑ right now it's only 150. But in a month and to be followed by the Brooking Institute and some large people. It's not how many followers, it's who is following you is also important. One of the things I was able to ‑‑ because I'm the COO, I get to decide whether this is a good idea or not. We told our board one of the things that was happening was we were being picked up and amplified and the awareness was going up. It was not costing advertising money. It was staff time.

The thing is, the point I was trying to make is what is the message and what are you trying to get out? There are a variety of ways of doing it and putting all of your eggs in one basket is not smart. In the real world it's not smart with communication strategy and not smart with research methodology.

>> HEATHER MANNIX: I can add something to that, too. I would be curious to understand why they think social media isn't effective. What is the hesitation? Are they worried it's not a good use of time? In my presentation I went through a lot of different reasons why we hear why this might not be a good fit or why people don't want to dive into social media. I think pinpointing maybe a little bit where the hesitation is coming from and why can help you kind of think about, you know, providing examples or data to kind of backup or say, maybe we can give this a try and see at a different level at one of these lower engagement levels and see how it goes from there.

But I would also say, again, it's where people are, right? 72% of people use social media now. By not using it I think you are missing out on a big audience potentially.

>> JOANN STARKS: I agree. Backlash is something you just mentioned and that was also commented on in our chat box. Is looking at the concept of risk of those who identify them as female or LBGTQ or persons of color. The example you gave was someone who identified as male. Who would like to comment on the concept of backlash and who might be more at risk of suffering from backlash? Hilda, would you like to start?

>> HILDA SMITH: So, we know that any time there is backlash online it can happen to anyone. But typically does happen to people who are viewed or fit within marginalized communities just because they are marginalized already. That is something that is good to think about. One thing that in my ‑‑ especially with my anti‑oppression work, I recommend anyone who has a plan for engaging with social media has some sort of training and support for people monitoring or working on social media, so they know who their coworkers are. They can go and talk about issues and supervisors to pull in for support. It's important to think about what happens when backlash happens? What happens when it's directed at the organization? What happens if it's directed at a specific individual at the organization?

So, if it happens, you are not surprised. You can automatically say, okay, this is what we are doing to help sort the situation and to support the people who are involved. And that is unfortunately just because of the way social media is setup and something we need to think about when we talk about social media policies and projects when we work with them.

>> JOANN STARKS: Thank you. Marta, do you have anything you might like to add in this discussion?

>> MARTA GARCIA: Yes. And I agree with Hilda. Having those policies in place is definitely very important. Thankfully, knock on wood we haven't received any backlash at NARIC as far as the Spanish language side or English as far as I'm aware. We make sure to have those policies in place if it does happen I know I can go to my boss. Or Mark Odum is the director of NARIC. I know where I can go to talk about that. I know what I can do to respond. But like I said, we have been very lucky and haven't had that. But we also try to support our followers.

Let's say I tweet about something in NARIC in Spanish and someone comments and there is a backlash about that comment. I know there are procedures I can take within NARIC to support that person or organization that got the backlash.

>> JOANN STARKS: Right. There is a comment in the chat box there are so many levels of approval before posting things on social media that it's almost not worth the trouble. I can see where that can definitely be an issue in some organizations. So you are taking care of that risk, but it might be right where it becomes more problematic than the benefit that you are hoping to get. We are just about out of time, but we do have a couple minutes left. Heather, I wanted to ask you if you had any further comments you wanted to make to close out the session?

>> HEATHER MANNIX: I don't think so. Please check out the resources we have on our website. There is a lot there that goes into more detail. And I hope that you take some chances and maybe try doing social media or some kind of communication that you might not have done before. Because I think that is where we learn and grow, and we are taking those risks. It's super worth it. I think I'll just leave with that thought.