

Social media

Why we chose this method

- to find out how our use of social media is helping people become more aware of the support and information available around SDS
- to learn about our project's reach
- to help us increase our Twitter skills

What we did

- planned to choose a period of time, send some Tweets, track responses received and analyse the process and responses using a thematic approach
- Tweeted one message and analysed the replies, Retweets and comments after 24 hours

Top tips

- remember you won't know why people have engaged with your social media pages unless they leave comments
- if you include a link in your Tweet, check how many visits it typically gets before you Tweet so you can be sure how much difference using social media has made
- pick a period in time and then analyse the activity during that time – otherwise it can become an enormous task

Who we are

The Community Brokerage Network (CBN) provides a range of support to people who have been allocated an individual budget to help them have as much control as they wish, get the most out of their money and achieve creative support solutions. Brokers can help people put together support plans, negotiate the best possible deal with providers, source flexible solutions and undertake a variety of other tasks around facilitating support as needed by the individual.

The plan

The plan was to use the CBN Facebook and Twitter accounts which had recently been set up, pick a snapshot in time, send out some information in messages, track responses received and then do some analysis on the process and responses using a thematic approach. We chose Twitter because we wanted to know how well our use of social media is helping people become **more aware of the support and information available around SDS**. Also, as Twitter was a fairly new medium for us it would help us get better at using it. The snapshot in time was really just plucked from thin air on the basis we needed a start and finish time and opted for those dates. There was no other scientific reason!

Analysis involved grouping together common themes that were apparent in the responses.

The immediate challenges

Before it really got off the ground the plan needed a rethink based on some of the challenges that quickly emerged.

Some key difficulties were:

- the amount of activity on Twitter made it difficult and time consuming to track everything which became a resource issue
- the way Twitter and Facebook were linked, i.e. if you put a message on Twitter it automatically went on to Facebook running the risk of double counting
- four people were Tweeting on the same Twitter account on behalf of CBN with no way of identifying who said what

While some of the key issues could be resolved it would take time, disrupt the way CBN was using social media and as this was just an exploratory exercise the scope was too large at this stage. The scope was reduced and a new plan explored.

The new plan

After some discussion the new plan that emerged was to:

- pick a day and time; again it was plucked from thin air!
- agree a single message to be posted onto Twitter (remembering this would also show up on the Facebook page)
- ignore Facebook and only focus on Twitter responses for the purpose of the exercise
- follow the 'journey' of the message for an agreed period of time
- gather responses
- draw together and analyse what was found

What we did

- we posted a message on Twitter saying that brokerage support had helped a young man, Lewis Drummond, fulfil his incredible hidden musical talent, as illustrated in his [YouTube video](#)
- followed the 'journey' of the message on Twitter for 24 hours
- counted replies and comments
- analysed the responses

What we didn't do - but should have!

Taken a note of the number of YouTube video hits immediately prior to the comment being posted and again at the end of 24 hours. This might have helped to see if there was an increase that could be attributed to the posting. If there was an increase, however, it could not be assumed it was as a direct result of the posting. It would merely be suggestive.



Lewis Drummond

What we found

- The message was Tweeted to CBN's 117 Twitter followers
- The message was retweeted by three CBN followers
- These followers had the following number of followers:
 1. LM - 136
 2. LMC - 3322
 3. HS - 298
- A total of 3,873 people could therefore have potentially seen the original Tweet posted and the video on YouTube
- There were two comments made on the Tweet by two of the three CBN followers
- Both comments were positive i.e. "Awesome" and "Excellent"
- By the end of the 24 hours CBN had four new followers

Some analysis/discussion

It is clear that Twitter has the capacity for reaching large numbers of people but that will depend on the number of followers you have, and the number of followers that your followers have, and so on.

The more the message is retweeted the greater the number of people who will see the message or who have the chance of seeing the message.

The amount of activity overall on Twitter means that it is likely the window for your message being seen is a short one.

More people retweeted the post than commented on it. Other people retweeting your post suggests they have some connection with what you have posted. It cannot always be assumed this is positive.

Conclusion

As this was a very brief and focused analysis of social media in a snapshot of time, we cannot really draw conclusions but there is clearly potential to develop this approach for evaluation purposes.