Facebook Breakout Room

Steven Boydston, Bruce Newbold, Katty Inge, Cate Weir

October 29, 2014

Unedited transcript for 2014 KT Conference: Effective Media Outreach Strategies sponsored by SEDL’s Center on Knowledge Translation for Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

Conference information: https://www.ktdrr.org/conference/

My name is Steven Boydston, and I will hosting this Facebook discussion for our breakout room today. I'm glad everyone made it here as the process of switching rooms can be a little difficult at times.

I will also be joined by our three wonderful panelists: Bruce Newbold, Katherine Inge, and Cate Weir. I’ll first give a brief description of the room and brief introduction of our panelists, then we'll go over the questions that we have for them.

If at any point you all as the participants would like to chime in, please feel free. As Ann mentioned there will be several different ways to participate. If you would like to "chat" your questions you’re more than welcome to do that. Please email us if you’d like, I’m also on our active Facebook page if you have questions there; or you can use the "raise your hand" feature if you have a microphone attached to your computer, that is also an option. So if you have any questions, please feel free to let us know.

The first panelist I would like to introduce is Bruce Newbold, as you just heard in his presentation; he did a great piece on social media. Dr. Newbold is the professor of school of geography and earth sciences at McMaster University as well as the director of McMaster University School of Environment and Health, an institute dedicated to sharing and communicating results of their research that unravels the complex interactions of environment and health.

The second panelist is Katherine Inge. Katherine has worked at the Virginia Commonwealth University for a long time on several different federally funded projects. She is currently the director for the Research and Training Center on Employment for People with Physical Disabilities. She and her colleagues are at working at the KTER Center on a research project on Facebook, and she will talk about that.

Last but not least, Cate Weir from the Institute of Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, project coordinator for the NIDRR‑funded Center on Postsecodary Education Options for Students with Intellectual Disabilities, and the ADD‑funded Consortium on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities. I hope I got all of that information correct. We’ll go ahead and get started with our

First question for Dr. Newbold which is, excuse me as I advance the slides. How would you describe your use of Facebook? What goals are associated with your group, and how have you used it in the past?

Bruce Newbold: I am working in an educational institution. The primary goal of our Facebook page is connecting with our current students that are in‑program at the undergrad and grad level, as well as past students.

We recognize that just a few years ago we recognized the traditional linkages we would have, university mailings or the web really wasn't keeping in touch with both current and past students as well as we wanted.

Students were looking for a quicker, more informative realtime type piece to engage in, so we set that up.

Now we use it to highlight departmental activities, research, new publications or other events that are happening within the school here, and then also sharing that, so pieces of information that would be relevant to what people do here from a researcher/academic perspective, re-sharing that information through our Facebook pages.

So it is really just a tool to be able to keep in touch to engage our students.

Steven Boydston: Thank you. Katti I eluded to it but feel free to tell us how you are using Facebook.

Katherine Inge: VCU is working with the knowledge translation for employment research center and we are partners in that center. One of the research studies is looking at the effectiveness of using Facebook as a tool to translate information or knowledge to individuals, in this case individuals with Traumatic brain injury, sharing information related to employment and how they can become employed or increase their employment outcomes.

It has been a series of studies we have done. One was a systematic review where we determined that supported employment was a promising evidence‑based practice. The gist of the information we are sharing with the individuals in our page relates to supported employment as a strategy for individuals who have a traumatic brain injury and how they can access services to become employed.

It sounds complicated, but it is a lot more user friendly than it sounds. An interesting component from my perspective, we also did a series of focus groups.

We determined individuals with traumatic brain injury wanted to access their knowledge from their peers.

So we actually have a person who is leading our Facebook group who has a traumatic brain injury who started out as a supported employment customer, and has since moved to owning his own business.

He has a private rehab counseling business, he is the person who is leading our Facebook group.

The intent ‑‑ I will try to make this brief ‑‑ is to determine if we can use Facebook as a way to disseminate knowledge in this area.

We have two groups of participants. We randomly assign 60 individuals to two groups. One group is just receiving information from a general list‑serve where we’re sending them with monthly resources available on employment and TBI, while the other group is assigned to our Facebook study.

So that is a very brief summary of how we are using Facebook to determine if the strategy is effective.

Steven Boydston: Great. Thanks. I know everybody will be forward to looking for more details. Cate, any thoughts about how your organization has used Facebook or the goals associated with it?

Cate Weir: Sure. We use our Facebook page to primarily advance our own message about the opportunity for young people with intellectual disabilities to attend college.

Because this is a fairly new idea, we want to use a lot of different platforms to get our word out to constituents and stakeholders in as many ways as we can.

Facebook gives us a way to really do that quickly and sort of realtime, and when we do trainings or events, if people want to know things as they're happening, follow us on Facebook and you will learn some things along the way.

One of the things I think is important as we started our Facebook page a couple years ago, is that education and intellectual disability and disability are all very vast categories.

I think you can get overwhelmed with all the information you can put on your page that can be tangentially related, so we made a conscious decision to keep our resources focused on postsecondary education and intellectual disabilities.Once in awhile some tangential things around transition for example, but rarely. We try to keep it focused and this is one of the things what people like about it. And we really want to educate our audience. That is our goal. And give them a way of finding this information that will be delivered to them unli.

People do like it focused, but it gives people a way of finding this information that will sort of be delivered to them, unlike our web page, for example, where they have to go out there and find the information.

Steven Boydston: Absolutely. Before the next question, we had a question here in the chat for Dr. Newbold. What is the state of evidence on KT and media? If you can focus on Facebook, that would be great.

Bruce Newbold: There is limited understanding about how successful KT is through social media.

Anything I have seen through the systematic review we have done really shows it is a limited uptake in terms of the messages out there.

It may depend on how the message was constructed or how it was delivered, how it was disseminated and who it was disseminated to.

One intriguing thing is issues of trust in terms of social media, so people will see it, and this is Facebook or any type of social media that. There is some evidence people are asking ‑‑ and it is a healthy question.

But they are wondering how reliable is the information I am seeing, and the question around the reliability piece hampers the uptake of the knowledge translation piece.

I think a lot more evidence needs to come in to determine if social media really is a good way for knowledge translation.

Steven Boydston: Great. Thank you very much. Both Cate and Bruce have addressed parts of the next question, so I will move on.

What are some roadblocks you may have experienced in developing your platform? The question can be asked from the user's perspective, as well as your perspective as a researcher developing the idea of a Facebook page and a core audience and a group of people. I’ll open it up Whoever would like to start

Bruce Newbold: I can jump in there.

In terms of our core audience, it was easy for us to identify so we could tap into our existing student body and say we have a Facebook page up, make sure you encourage people to join.

Not so much a roadblock, but something to consider is who posts to facebook or any social media.

We created a committee who could edit, and if that person was away, somebody else could access it, and the same with the content, the same committee was responsible for checking through the content of what goes up, so performing a moderator‑type effect.

Steven Boydston: Katti, any thoughts?

Katherine Inge: I’m not sure we had any major roadblocks. The only one we faced that is probably different because of the nature of this being a research study was the confidentiality with the individuals participating and their hesitancy to post personal comments on the page for fear other people would see the information.

We dealt with that with by creating a secret group, and that is the term it is referred to on Facebook. No one has access to our page, other than our research participants

If you were to go out an find our page, you would not be able to do that. So I guess that was our main roadblock we faced because Facebook has a regulation that people must have an account associated with their name.

But since it was a research study, we had to figure out how we’d protect confidentiality while style adhering to Facebook policies.

That is the only roadblock I can think of at this point.

Steven Boydston: Thank you. I have a difficult question with you in regard to that, which is not planned. Feel free to say if you are not able to answer.

In terms of Facebook updating its policies and the platform itself changing fairly regularly, if something were to change where the privacy settings were affected, how would it affect your research?

Do you think it would be something that would be able to move along with the flow?

Katherine Inge: I don't have a brilliant answer at this point, other than saying we need to keep an eye on it, I know it would affect group participation and some people would drop out. I know for sure

several participants were very concerned about confidentiality, based on relationships such as ex‑spouses trying to track them in the group, that kind of a thing.

If there was a change and there was no thing such as a secret group, it would be a problem in relation to people participating.

Steven Boydston: Thank you for that. Cate, any thoughts on any roadblocks you may have experienced, or any from a participant perspective?

Cate Weir: When I Thought about this question, I thought about the time and organization it requires to manage it.

When we first started using social media at Think College, I think it was sort of random. If anybody on our team thinks of something to put on Facebook or tweet out, just do that.

That strategy was way too random. Until we assigned it to be somebody's primary responsibility to at least coordinate our social media, it was much more haphazard than it is now.

We think it probably takes about five hours a week for each platform, for somebody to effectively manage it for our purposes.

As far as in response to that, we do use "buffer" a social media planning app you can use to plan ahead of time and schedule our tweets and Facebook posts to come out at certain times.

It helps us a lot with the time management aspects and when we may be traveling at a conference or are otherwise occupied.

We like to keep data fresh and reliable in terms of things being posted on a fairly regular basis.

Steven Boydston: Thank you so much. If there are no other questions, I will move to the next one. If there are any other questions, let me know in the chat.

What are successes you have seen with your social media campaign, if possible, focusing on analytics and what specific measurements are important to your organization or project. We’ll open it up to Bruce.

BRUCE NEWBOLD: Successes, it is harder to tell. We have seen an increase in the number of people using the Facebook page.

We have also seen an uptake in terms of faculty or other students who want to post something to the Facebook page, so people are getting that. They see it as a valuable tool or a way to communicate ideas and what they're up to.

But beyond that, I really can't point to a particular success or eureka moment where we said: Yes, this is it!

I guess that is, in part, because this is a way we want to keep in touch and we will do it regardless, so it is sort of a cost of doing business, in a way.

Steven Boydston: Absolutely. I can say from my own personal experience, having started this position I was sort of assigned the project of handling some social media, including Facebook.

One of our sort of interesting successes has always been if our posts or content is translated into a different language from one of our audiences, I think that is something that is hard to think about, but if possible, it would open up the material to a lot of other people. Cate or Katti, any thoughts on successes you’d like to share.

Katherine Inge: Cate would you like to go first.

Cate: Go ahead and I’ll go next.

Katherine Inge: I can't really speak to what our successes are yet. We have finished 12 weeks of working with the group as of this Friday, and we did a pretest with everyone based on knowledge and use of Facebook our post‑test will be next week.

As far as successes, I have seen increased engagement from some people giving feedback in the group as far as people commenting on things such as I really needed to hear this today

For instance, Yesterday we were talking about disclosure to employers, and one person responded: This is just what I needed to hear.

So that kind of feedback has been fairly consistent across the 12 weeks. We have been somewhat measure the success of posts by the number of comments people post as well.

Our formal successes, I suppose, are yet to be seen as to whether we translated any knowledge through the use of our Facebook group.

I would say we have developed a sense of community within the Facebook group. Since we're kind of different from what everybody else is doing, and we can tell that based on when people are looking at posts, and if they have responded to different things and to each other.

So we have seen an increase in that, but in the last week it spiked off a bit, but we are looking for things to do to spark additional interest.

That was probably a long‑winded answer.

Steven Boydston: Not at all. Cate, any thoughts?

Cate Weir: One thing that came right to mind when we talked about success, this is really what generates a lot of followers for us on Twitter and Facebook. We started a social media campaign related to the character Becky on Glee.

She was in high school and was a character with Down's Syndrome, the year when everybody was talking about what they were going to do after high school, and all the other characters were talking about going to college.

We started a social media campaign called "College for Becky." We got a ton of interest about it. It was really fun to be able to get our message across by tapping into something from popular culture, and I think it really expanded our audience, and those people continue to be our followers.

That was one real successful thing we did, and we did it in a very organized way with a number of different strategies for the campaign.

More generally, I know we also benefit greatly from the fact that because of our area of postsecondary education for kids with intellectual disabilities, there tends to be a lot of media coverage like last week a young woman with Down's Syndrome was elected homecoming queen.

We are happy to put on general media coverage related to our area. And particularly if it has a video, it gets a lot of attention and followers which bring a lot of energy to our page.

Steven Boydston: Thank you so much. I think that echos what a presenter said earlier, not only trying to connect the real life events that are happening with what’s on TV or what people are interested in about your Facebook page, but also just to connect people in different mediums, whether TV or Internet, a great way to grow your audience and keep people engaged.

Next is a quick question from Tracy here. I will get to the crux of the question: Is there a difference recommended in practice for a short-term versus long‑term maintenance of Facebook dissemination?

So if you have a tool or product you are trying to disseminate to an audience, is there a best practice anybody can recommend in terms of a short or long diffusion or dissemination of information? Open to anyone who would like to chime in.

Bruce Newbold: This won't directly answer the question, but the idea of "followers" was raised a moment ago.

The problem with the short‑term problem, you do something on Facebook and then you stop. You generated interest for these people, and then nothing happens.

So a trick to Facebook or social media is a ongoing roll‑out of ideas, discussions and thoughts to keep people engaged over a period of time and, but you don't have to reinvent the wheel every time you go back to Facebook.

Katherine Inge Somewhat of a play on that, each week we try to have a theme. A moment ago I mentioned disclosure, and that was this week's theme. That way we build on topics and we're just not all over the roadmap.

Doesn't mean we can't go back to something we have talked about before, but trying to maintain interest so there is some organization to the information we're putting up which shows we're here for the long haul.

So we put out a little bit of information, and then it sort of dwindles down.

Steven Boydston: Cate, any thoughts about this one?

Cate Weir: I think a good point was made earlier about if you have some followers and there is a way to keep them engaged with you, because if you start something up again, people may not join up because they will think the last thing lasted such a short while. I think your example may be one of those, the perfect platform for your goals kind of depends on your goals, and I think the answer was good answer about generating followers and thinking of ways to keep them engaged.

Steven Boydston: I think that addresses it very well. Next question from Paul: You mentioned issues around privacy, but what about a group of those under 18? What kind of safeguards do you recommend or what about your liability if something doesn't go well?

Maybe Katti has some insight because of the secret groups or information about specific groups.

Katherine Inge: First, based on research and IRB regulations, we don't have anybody in our group who is not 18 or older.

That is a sneaky way of dealing with the whole issue of individuals under 18 because we couldn't do it in our research study.

So I'm not sure I'm really a good person to answer that question, other than just say there is some really good information on Facebook about the safeguards and privacy features in the secret groups.

I would be happy to send the document that passed IRB standards with regard to secret groups. They aren't indexed on Google, so if you don't belong, you can't use the URL.

There are all kinds of privacy things connected with secret groups if you are concerned about individuals under 18. Obviously none of that applies to just Facebook in general as far as the privacy settings.

The secret group is the only one I think that has the stringent rules around the privacy settings, but maybe Cate can speak to that because her participants might fall into that group.

CATE: I thought it was a good question and I wish I had a brilliant answer. I think there are young people and we hope there are people younger than 18 who look at or follow our page or follow our page.

We hope their parents or whoever watches what they do on Facebook because we're not a group, so maybe it's different.

But we don't do anything in particular about young people. Sometimes young people may post something and you can tell they are a young adult on our page, but we have no particular processes in place about that.

Steven Boydston: Hopefully that was able to answer Paul's question. If you need clarification, Paul, feel free to let us know.

Katherine Inge: I have one more comment. Our group is set up that no one can post a comment without it being approved in your group.

I have had several instances where I didn't approve comments, and they didn't get posted.

Perhaps somebody posted offensive language, or somebody else posted inappropriate jokes. So that is a feature you can do in your secret group as well.

Steven Boydston: That might be a good solution if your core audience is under 18. You need to be very careful and use that solution.

Bruce had to leave early, and we do appreciate his contribution to our conference. If anybody has follow up questions for him, we will pass them along with him.

Next question is in terms of support. What supports do you need to keep your social media innovative and useful to your followers. Cate?

Cate Weir: Using an app that helps us schedule our post to show up on a fairly regular basis, and having a staff time associated with specifically being in charge of the social media.

We ask all colleagues on our project to give us idea, but we do manage it through that process. We started using that support in the last six months and I think it really has helped us.

The other thing I thought of, and this is specific to Facebook because we do something a bit different with Twitter.

I follow a lot of Facebook pages that are specific to postsecondary ed and kids with intellectual disabilities.

There may be some programs managing their own Facebook pages. We follow all of them. It gives us a lot great resources to repost of their activities and photographs, videos, giving us engaging content, which is success stories.

We tend to tell positive success stories for what is going on with young adults with intellectual disabilities on college campuses. So that’ a great resource for us too. Is following other pages.

Steven Boydston: Great example of the idea of the social network, continuing to grow your core audience and people willing to share your information and vice versa helps disseminate everything for a wider audience.

Cate Weir: The more you share it’s tit for tat. If they see us sharing their materials, they are more likely to share THEIR our resources directly that are college resources we post.

Steven Boydston: How about you, Katty? Have you thought of any supports you need to give innovative content?

CATHY: Not sure this is innovative, but this just echos what Cate just said because you need staff time to do this, somebody who is dedicated to it.

My time is dedicated to developing the research study and running it, but also having access to the individual who has a traumatic brain injury.

He is a wealth of information and we meet weekly to generate ideas to spark conversation on the Facebook page, and just commitment to doing it.

The interesting support Facebook provides to me, which is quite simple, I get an email every time somebody posts a comment on the page.

I have to be committed to doing that, but I can immediately answer questions, good support for the end user when there is new information on the page.

I think that feature is very beneficial for individuals with traumatic brain injury who may have memory issues just as a natural compensatory strategy Facebook provides.

I know that is kind of an odd answer to the question, but that's my answer.

Steven Boydston: I that I that's great. Thank you. Shannon has a question who would like to hear more examples about content that is responded to, is it just feel good or success stories?

I can say from our conversation yesterday, Sylvia Rincon talked about the news in terms of TV media, but I think this still applies.

A lot of the things people are seemingly interested in affects them in their daily lives, whether it is the money in their wallet or happy or sad things or learn something that is new.

I have always found the most successful social media posts that become viral are things that affect one of those four core areas, really happy or really sad, something that teaches you something really interesting, or something that is very relevant to your daily life.

Any thoughts on other examples of content that has done very well across your organizations?

Cate Weir: For us, it is a news story about something that is happening. We sometimes post things that are not positive but may interest our audience. Because it is something negative that might have happened to an individual, we do that some of the time.

But primarily we are trying to share what's happening because we still feel the main mission of our Facebook page is to raise awareness of the opportunities that exist. We focus our posts in that area.

These posts are typically reposted and engaged with to let people know what we're doing. We are national training center. We offer webinars, in‑person training, we go around the country doing trainings.

So we also use it to alert people to events we're having when we create a new publication, we put that on the Facebook page.

I think those tend to get a decent response, but nothing beats the short video clips. And it is great when it is something out of someone's real life that can respond to that.

People may have seen a video that went viral of a young man named Ryan who has Down's Syndrome reacting to his acceptance letter to Columbia University.

Taking advantage of that, and following up and people may be paying attention to that right now and other information they may be more interested in.

Steven Boydston: I completely agree. Hopefully that will answer Shannon's question.

Katty, any thoughts on that?

Katherine Inge: Probably most of the things we have been posting are "how‑to's like how to access services.

We do post feel‑good things in the sense that successes for people who became employed and how they became employed.

Our participants also post their own experiences, and some of them aren't such great stories, but it is interesting to see some other participants reacting back, sharing examples.

So we're probably atypical in that we're a group sharing experiences, versus posting general information for people we haven't established a relationship with who we assume are looking at it.

Steven Boydston: I think it is still an interesting idea. Although it may be a smaller group but the similar source of information is available to everybody in the group.

So if people find a post particularly interesting, you may get more interaction within the smaller group versus the larger social network available when you post to the public.

Katherine Inge: I think that’s true.

Steven Boydston: Question from our registrant participant: It Seems that since Facebook changed algorithm for news feeds, our posts aren't being seen as much. What can we do to be more visible in our fans’ newsfeeds.

I’ve seen others ask this question. I have had friends ask me what happened, and I'm not sure there is a great answer to the question, but thoughts to make sure your content is seen by an audience, I would love to hear about that.

Cate Weir: Every once in a while, about once a month or so I will post a tip that says have you been missing things in your college newsfeed?

But there is a setting and you can select you always want to see news‑feeds and I will remind people they can do that. I don't know if it helps or not. That is one strategy I have used, and reposting helps too because it’s more likely to show up.

Steven Boydston: Great point. I don't think I knew about that feature.

One thing that works on your Facebook or organization page you can pin items at the top of the page so it is the first thing they say.

Cate Weir: That is a good idea.

Steven Boydston: Hannah's question might be the last one. It hopefully will be our last question. Have you ever created a Facebook account for the company itself?

If so, does one employee use his or her information or do you use a general company email to sign up?

It has been a while to do this but I can try to answer this. I know you sign up from your personal account in order to post to an organization's page, but anything they see at the organization's page doesn't reflect the individual who signs up to create that.

It is Facebook's way to see you are an actual person creating the page and not a random, anonymous bot.

Cate Weir: Right. You can establish any number of administrators for your page. Also, they use their own email address, but that is nothing you see on the Facebook page itself.

Steven Boydston: Hopefully that answers your question, Hannah. I think it is the individual that has to sign up, but you don't have to display that person's information.

So the point is to follow people's pages, not just "liking" them so you will be sure to see the content they post. Thanks for that reminder.

Any final thoughts or questions for us today? We have about a minute and‑a‑half left.

Katherine Inge: The only comment I would make about our page and trying to keep it active is make sure the person who is assisting me, Jay, the person with traumatic brain injury, he pretty much always posts a comment once a day at a specific time of day.

He is doing evenings, and I usually post something in the morning and I watch the posts throughout the day.

So we have a basic minimum requirement of making sure there is one new thing up there every day for people to react to.

Steven Boydston: I think that is a great practice. From the articles I have read, it is always recommended to have as much consistency as possible in the information you are posting.

Do you think there is a number in excess of that, like you wouldn't want to post more than five or six times a day?

Katherine Inge: I'm not sure I can speak to that. We haven't seen it, but Cate might have another opinion.

Cate Weir: This is my own opinion, nothing to back it up. My personal friends use Facebook, and I think people will "unfollow" you if you post too many times a day.

So I try to keep it lively and interesting, but not so much that they go, I'm sick of seeing this, whatever that scientific number is.

Steven Boydston: That is what I was thinking, and I haven't seen any research on that number, but that is sort of the general consensus.

Thanks very much for coming to our breakout group on Day 2 of the conference. We will be back on Halloween on Friday.

We appreciate everybody's participation and the questions. If there are follow‑up questions, we will forward them along with the panelist members.

With that, I will thank Catty and Cate for joining us. We will see everyone on Friday. Bye‑bye.