

119 Ma Marketing 120 Me Membership 121 Co Communications

Buried in Email Hell! Overcoming Message Overload

Leverage market & member data to ease member overload and build winning communication strategies

Debra Stratton
President, Stratton Publishing & Marketing

Felicity Clancy, VP, Communications and Marketing
American Physical Therapy Association

Melissa Ferrari, Director of Membership and Marketing Services
Society for Neuroscience

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Content Delivery: It's a Jungle!

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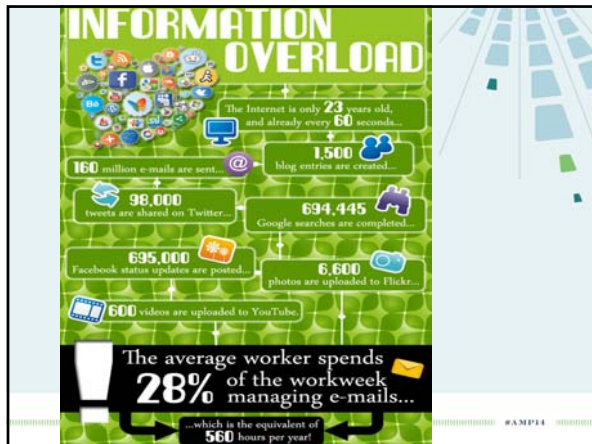
Confronting the Communication Challenge

—too much noise, not enough value—

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Are You Really Communicating???






How to cope?

- Signs of fatigue
- Decentralized v. centralized
- Message and brand fuzzy
- No content strategy: messages + channels

Communication Audit: Review and assessment of mix of member communications/messages, member perceptions, association's goals, perceived value, engagement, and develop strategies to tame the information beast.



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The Guide for Member Leaders

Where to start?

- Explore data already on hand
- Gather statistically valid data on member perceptions, preferences, activities
- Broad perspective v. silos
- Benchmark against best practices, other organizations, data sets from prior research



Tame the Beast!




- Broad look at content
- Gather data: who accesses what, values what?
- Analyze and develop strategy
- What members want: customize
 - Target specialized needs , preferred formats
 - Less is more: integrate
 - Amazon-like experience; know what I need before I know it
- Deliver value: avoid the delete button and email Hell!



Lessons Learned: Taming Overload




Why Conduct a Communication Audit?



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Why Conduct a Communication Audit?

- Hit a plateau

source: www.parkavegrp.com



STEIN

"Your career seems to have plateaued."

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Why Conduct a Communication Audit?

- Too many e-mails
- Better integration
- Benchmark against other associations
- Member feedback and data
- Build buy-in and make case for change

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Data Delivered: What Did We Learn?

- Strong overall strategy and infrastructure
- Challenged with continually refining communications mix to meet changing needs



The cartoon depicts a wedding scene with a bride and groom. A man in a suit is speaking to the bride. Two speech bubbles contain the following text: "You may now post a picture of your self kissing the bride to FACEBOOK" and "Can you guys redo your vows in under 6 seconds so I can post them to VINE?". The cartoon is signed "www.flooded.com".

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What Did We Learn?

- Members overwhelmed with information
- Want more specialized information
- Favor consolidation
- Magazine well-liked but not well-read
- Weekly e-newsletter lacked brand identity

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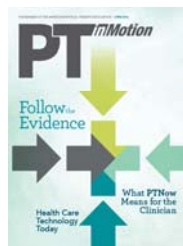
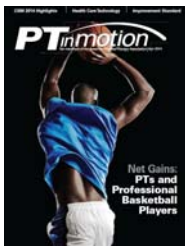
Implementing Recommendations

- Create buy-in
- Breakout sessions with staff
- Development of communications plan
- Buy-in from senior staff
- Cross-departmental team to implement changes



In Process and on the Horizon

- Magazine redesign to be launched in June



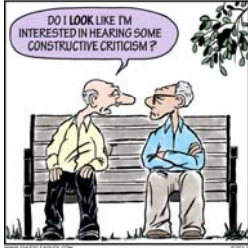
In Process and on the Horizon

- Rein in member e-blast calendar
- Consolidate e-mails
- Create targeted, topical e-blasts
- Incorporate more video, social media



Pointers

- Approach with open mind



DO I LOOK LIKE I'M INTERESTED IN HEARING SOME CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM?

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Pointers

- Position as positive opportunity for growth
- Involve staff in decision-making
- Use data to build support for changes

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Lessons Learned:



- Founded in 1969
- Global organization with nearly 40,000 members
- Staff of nearly 100

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About SfN Membership

- 40% non-U.S.
- 79% represent academic institutions
- 60% “regular” members
- 13% postdoctoral members
- 24% students (undergraduate and graduate)



Communication Challenges

To sum it up ...

- We never asked the members!
- No long-term strategy



Why Do a Communications Audit?

- Measure how tools AND messages meet member needs
- Ensure we communicate Society value
- Get data to drive member participation
- Ensure ROI in communication tools -- \$\$\$



What Was Involved

- Survey
- Focus groups
- One-on-one interviews
- Analytics for email and web
- Previous member satisfaction survey



What We Learned

- SfN – Strong brand and credibility
- Rated high on timely info on programs and neuroscience breakthroughs
- Key publications had low readership and value
- Website rated higher
- Prefer electronic communications, not print



What We Learned

- Want more info on the field, less on Society
- Too much info, too often
- Intense competition for member attention
- Ability to customize content
- Internally – bogged down by the review process



What We Changed

- Changed the tone of our copy ... focus is on "What is in it for the member?"
- Deeper dive into our email analytics
- More content marketing
- Increased segmentation
- A/B testing



What We Changed

- Enhanced preference center
- Revamped website
- Internal review process
- Created internal working group – marketing and communications



What We Changed

- Integrated messaging
- Shifting printed newsletter to digital version
- Introduced enhanced digital communication
- Value-based overhaul



How Is It Going?

- Still room to grow
- Long-term communication strategy still needed
- Email open rates remain strong
- Enhanced use of social media

KEY SUCCESS... Culture shift in how we think about communicating as an organization



Tips

- Ask your members – NO ASSUMPTIONS
- Use your analytics – email, website, social
- Give members options and preferences
- Integrate messaging
- Engaged staff across the organization ... not a marketing and communication problem!



You CAN Manage for Success

Leverage market & member data to create integrated communication strategy— avoid email HELL!



Checklist for Communication Audit

- ✓ Don't assume you know members/audiences—gather statistically valid data
- ✓ Track data information trends, preferences— social media, web, smartphones
 - Perceptions: Overloaded? Voids? Consolidation needed? Message/brand/voice
 - Variances by age, type, experience
 - What's read ? What is missing?
- ✓ Consider the value of outside perspective
- ✓ Competitive landscape: overload from multiple fronts.
 - What do you provide that is different/better?



Checklist for Communication Audit

- ✓ Analyze data: What does it mean? How to act?
 - Use data to build support for change.
- ✓ Map content messages and channels
- ✓ Manage information strategically: who is gatekeeper and how much authority?
- ✓ Develop Communication Strategic Plan—association-wide buy-in, integration. Less is more: integrated strategy and plan
- ✓ Build on data to respond to members: refine, evolve content strategy and delivery
 - Personalized/customized approach (“Read my mind!”)
 - Innovate with new ways to communicate: videos, infographics, social, communities.
 - Innovate with more message alignment
 - Less is more! Don't suffer “junk mail” syndrome



Contact Us

Debra Stratton
 President
 Stratton Publishing & Marketing
dstratton@strattonpublishing.com

Melissa Ferrari
 Director of Membership and Marketing
 Society for Neuroscience
MFerrari@sfn.org

Felicity Clancy
 VP, Communications and Marketing
 American Physical Therapy Association
felicityclancy@apta.org