

To: Heartland Trans* Wellness Group
From: Clarity Amrein
Date: April 21, 2017
Subject: Heartland Trans Wellness Group Social Media Proposal

Purpose and Introduction

For English 3074: Rhetoric of Social Media, a course at the University of Cincinnati, we have been asked to follow a professional organization on social media for 15 weeks, and create a comprehensive social media campaign proposal for them. The purpose of this blog is to report my thoughts and findings after analyzing this organization weekly and to present my final campaign proposal.

Background and Company History

Heartland Trans Wellness Group is a Cincinnati, Ohio-based project dedicated to creating accessible, affirming community resources for Midwestern trans*, queer, and LGBTQPIA people¹. Heartland Trans Wellness Group provides accessible, inclusive, and affirming resources to community members and service providers through comprehensive educational programming, community building, creative cultural growth, and socially just activism.

Heartland Trans Wellness Group originated, at very first, in 2007 as a small grassroots trans resource project called The GenderQueer Coalition. The GenderQueer Coalition, created and lead by Jac Stringer in Cincinnati, Ohio, was initially designed to be a radically organized community based resource hub for trans people, their partners, and family members in the Cincinnati area. By 2010, Stringer sought to expand the project's reach and renamed the it, "The Midwest Trans and Queer Wellness Initiative (MTQWI)." The name change was significant because it signified an intermediate phase of growth, ideally resulting in the founding of a formalized non-profit.

The year 2012 marked the growth of several significant partnerships with local Cincinnati organizations including Caracole House, Pones Inc., Planned Parenthood, Crossport, and the Cincinnati Police Department. Cincinnati Trans Community Group doubled in size and activity from summer 2011 to summer 2012 and by 2013 it was noted to be one of the most active trans community programs in the country. In September 2013, the Midwest Trans and Queer Wellness Initiative formally transformed into Heartland Trans* Wellness Group. The organization kept the goals of the initiative from which it was board, with an added sense of urgency to address the growing need of the trans community.

Heartland began to obtain small grants from community funders like the Trans Justice Funding Project and local donors and by 2015 Heartland was able to launch a small Binder-Share project to support local trans people in accessing safer binding methods. Heartland Trans* Wellness Group continues to grow and strive to serve the Midwest's greater trans community of trans people, their partners, families, and friends. The organization's work continues to be recognized

¹ Heartland Trans Wellness Group. "History." Heartland Trans Wellness Group. 2015. Web. Accessed April 2017. www.transwellness.org/about/history

locally and nationally, and the organizers, past and present, are all anxious to provide more services and resources to the community.

Current Social Media Analysis

Heartland Trans Wellness Group has only a Facebook and Twitter account. On Facebook, they have a fluctuating 1,252 likes (they've received an additional 20+ likes since I began following them), and on Twitter, they have 71 followers. They do not use other social media sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, or LinkedIn. HTWG has only a single tweet on Twitter from March 2016; needless to say, they are not really active on Twitter. Their main activity of social media, or arguably their only activity on social media, is on Facebook.

The good thing about their social media presence is that they have a detailed profile with reliable contact information, they post high quality images, and they always have a positive and upbeat tone. However, their Facebook postings are somewhat inconsistent and not particularly engaging. Based on their postings, a pattern can be determined. Most of HTWG's posts are to promote their events or events with partner organizations, with whom they are very well-connected. When I first began this analysis in January 2017, I noticed that since January 3, 2017, they had three FB posts: a post about an event, the event page for said event, and a different event page. Event pages do not have captions. In February, they reposted an event for a transgender youth rally at City Hall. Later, on March 14, they shared an event from a partner organization called Trans Ohio. On March 29, they posted about the event occurring that evening, which was a free Name and Gender Marker Change Clinic held at HTWG's center at 6pm. This post received 11 reactions and 4 shares, which is much more than many of their other posts.

Aside from event posts, they have very few other posts except for the occasional reshare of a trans solidarity-related image. I notice that these events are posted only one time a few days before the event, there is sometimes a post on the day of the event, and there are usually no posts following the event. There is often not very much notice for events.

Another noticeable pattern is the pacing of their posts. HTWG will post a few things, usually events and images, in a span of about 2-4 days, then they do not post for 2-8 weeks, leaving long gaps between their posts. For instance, they posted on January 3, 2017 and not again until February 25, 2017 (approximately eight weeks). After February 27, they posted again on March 14, 2017 (approximately two weeks). And after March 14, they posted again on March 29, 2017 (approximately two weeks). Since their last post on March 29, they have updated their cover photo and profile photo, but have not posted anything else.

While the images they post are high-quality and positive, and they are well-connected within their community, the inconsistency in their Facebook postings and their inactivity on other social media sites gives them a pretty weak social media presence.



Figure 1. HTWG Facebook Post 1.



Figure 2. HTWG Facebook Post 2

Final Social Media Campaign Proposal

Facebook: Facebook will be the most important medium for this group. HTWG should share updates about the organization, bios of staff members, trans-related news and current events (particularly about government and policy changes), and detailed information about local and partner events. They would also benefit from sharing both serious and light-hearted trans-related images, GIFS, and memes, creating polls or opinion posts, and by reposting content from partner organizations and their members (using tags with their permission).

Foremost, this group should focus on building and maintaining their community. I strongly recommend that they engage with all or almost all commenters, and that they comment and like posts on other organizations' and users' pages. Supported by the book *No Bullshit Social Media*², it is suggested that social media marketing and engagement is not about technology, -not what sites you're on or how complex your posts are- but about communication, and that rings particularly true for this type of organization. The book writes, "Instead of thinking about websites, widgets, and whiz-bang apps, you should be thinking about listening to conversations, participating in them, developing key talking points, and providing information as a resource to those you converse with." Fortunately, networking is already one of their strong suits, and it will be vital to expanding their online community.

In addition, HTWG should create a closed or hidden Facebook group that includes screening questions. This group should be for members only, and should be a space for them to talk, vent,

² Falls, Jason, and Erik Deckers. *No Bullshit Social Media: The All-business, No-hype Guide to Social Media Marketing*. Indianapolis, IN: Que, 2012. Print. 56.

ask for advice or resources, and additionally, the organization should share their published content through this group. This is designed for people who are not out as transgender in their personal lives and may not be able to follow the public page. I also recommend that HTWG establish and post times that the organization will be available on Facebook for live chat, and commit to being online at that time.

Instagram: Because Facebook is typically a better medium for an organization to convey information, HTWG can engage less on sites like Instagram and Twitter. However, it's important that they still have an active presence on them. HTWG should post light-hearted and/or trending trans-friendly images and memes, user/member submitted images (such as transition progress photos), and particularly, pictures before, during, and after events. They should utilize hashtags and tag their followers.

To see these ideas in action, read the article about 25 helpful tips for Instagramming for a non-profit group on Classy.org³, the most popular platform for community building for non-profit organizations. Also, for extra inspiration for posting content, see the infographic below from CauseVox.com⁴, another online fundraising platform.



Twitter: Because of the increased risk of abuse and the overall decline in the medium, HTWG should focus minimal attention to Twitter. They should certainly tweet information about the organization and events, retweet members and followers posts, retweet trans-related current events, and perhaps share Instagram photos. They should utilize hashtags and provide noticeable links to their other social media sites.

Additional: HTWG should consider making and publishing their own image and video content, and should become minimally active on sites like YouTube. Also, I recommend that they update and remodel their organization's website. Be sure that all media, posts, and websites are compatible with mobile devices, as many users access social media almost solely from their phones.

Figure 3. "Be Remarkable on Instagram: A Nonprofit's Quick Guide" Infographic

³ Kelm, Juliana. "25 Instagram Tips for the Modern Non-Profit." Classy.org. 30 September 2016. Web. Accessed April 2017. <https://www.classy.org/blog/instagram-tips-modern-nonprofit/>

⁴ Lui, Winnie. "Be Remarkable on Instagram: A Non-Profit's Quick Guide." CauseVox.com. 16 August 2016. Web. Accessed April 2017. <https://www.causevox.com/blog/best-nonprofits-instagram/>

Event Posting: Heartland Trans Wellness Group hosts and promotes many events in the community, and their visibility through events is how I found out about them myself. They are well-connected to their audience. With their already present strengths, a more frequent and detailed event posting schedule could build their community exponentially and drastically increase attendance to their events. I designed an infographic as a handy and downloadable guide to event posting for HTWG⁵.

This blog on BufferApp.com by Rachel Grate⁶ suggests different strategies for event posting and stresses posting before, during, and after events. For this infographic, I broke it down further into four "types" of posts. Firstly, there should be an initial and informative post containing all known information about the event. Secondly, there should be a reminder post to keep the event fresh in followers' minds. Thirdly, there should be a post (or several on the day of the event) and lastly, there should be a follow-up post about the outcomes of the event to let members know what they missed if they didn't attend the event.

Notice that they should update all mediums for events, but not necessarily at the same times. Users notice when the same content is posted on different sites around the same times and it can seem disingenuous to an audience. Try to stagger posts if possible, both throughout the day and throughout the week. See [Shortstack.com's](https://www.shortstack.com)⁷ infographic or [Coschedule.com's](https://www.coschedule.com)⁸ guide to see the best days and times to post on social media sites.



Figure 4. "Event Posting" Infographic

⁵ Amrein, Clarity. "Event Posting Infographic." Imgur.com, <http://imgur.com/nzoKggV>

⁶ Grate, Rachel. "Event Marketing 101: How to Keep Attendees Engaged Before, During, and After Your Event." BufferApp.com. 18 August 2016. Web. Accessed April 2017. <https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-event-marketing>

⁷ "The Best Times to Post on Social Media [Infographic]." Shortstack.com. Web. Accessed April 2017. <https://www.shortstack.com/the-best-times-to-post-on-social-media-infographic/>

⁸ Ellering, Nathan. "What 16 Studies Say About The Best Times To Post On Social Media." Coschedule.com. 13 April 2016. Web. Accessed April 2017. <https://www.shortstack.com/the-best-times-to-post-on-social-media-infographic/>

Safety and Privacy: Due to the controversial nature of HTWG's mission, they may have an increased risk of abusive and threatening comments and messages, as well as discussions of personal information on their social media pages. Here are some strategies to combat potential harassment and address legally sensitive information:

On Facebook, create a closed and hidden group for members only and include screening questions. This will protect user privacy as well as afford members a safe place to talk without the risk of abuse.

Do not engage with abusive or threatening people through comments or direct messages. Take screenshots if necessary, but then immediately delete all comments and block the user.

Do not give out personal or location information about any member of the organization. Receive consent from members before tagging them in posts, photos, or videos.

Advise members not to discuss legal, health, or private information on the organizations' public page; guide them instead to the closed group (with discretion). Note that no communication is completely private.

Do not allow other pages or social media accounts to tag HTWG's content in anything adult or porn-related. Remove the tags and block or report to Facebook immediately.

Restrict passwords and account information to only a few select administrators. Change passwords often. Have honest and clear communication with employees who run the organization's account about what is and isn't acceptable for the organization to do or post.

Note that many members may confess personal thoughts, details about their mental health, and crimes or situations that have or are currently happening to them. Have readily available resources on hand for LGBTQ and mental health services in their location (such as the one they've already compiled⁹). Advise those in dangerous situations to seek police or emergency medial help. Be aware that you may be contacted and private messaged directly by minors. Save or screenshot message threads for transparency and be sure not to discuss private or legal information. Be direct and inform them that the organization has an obligation to report anything they feel is an immediately threatening situation to the appropriate agency (for example, Child Protective Services).

⁹ Heartland Trans Wellness Group. "Support and Community Resources." Heartland Trans Wellness Group. 2015. Web. Accessed April 2017. <http://transwellness.org/resources/support-and-community-resources/midwest-state-links/>

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