

Social Media Network

Notes from the discussions: Providing supporter care – and dealing with the trolls – on social media

4 April 2019

Processes and procedures

Processes, team set up and responsibilities

- Each organisation's processes are different with different challenges arising as a result. For example, the larger charities had complex assignment processes and areas of responsibility that could often lead to slowness in handling enquiries, whereas the smallest charities had just a single representative covering the entirety of customer service, which made things simpler but was a massive strain on resource!
- There was a mix of charities who have a small team vs. an individual responsible
- Some people were spending up 2/3 of their day doing community management
- There were queries around whether you should reply to every comment
- Supporter Care look after social at some charities. Where there's a supporter care team, it makes sense for them to field enquiries; but many charities don't have this luxury
- Customer Experience team were involved a bit more at one charity – they have a rota for social media for different teams across the organisation
- There is a danger/disconnect of being a social media manager or content producer but being disconnected to the engagement it creates – if the separation between content creation and supporter care / moderation is too strict or too wide
- One charity had set up a Chatbot through Facebook for standard questions such as 'Where is my t-shirt?'. Downside to this chatbot was that it took a long time to build.
- One team had a Digital Innovation specialist – member of staff knew a team who was testing a chatbot in BETA phase so they decided to go with it. It learns responses through AI in Facebook Messenger. Although a lot of people press 'Speak to human'
- Learnt that chatbots may be easier just for specific events as a general chatbot gets so many questions it's hard to have enough responses ready in the chatbot.
- One charity is using an external moderation agency. This was difficult at the start but a year later the agency had upped its game as they became more familiar with the brand. But if a comment is a reputational risk then the charity themselves handle that comment.
- Some charities don't have messenger at all.
- A useful tip: schedule potentially contentious posts at lunchtime, so you have time to react/respond to how they're received. Definitely don't post something risky on Friday at 4.30pm then go to the pub and forget about it, as a social media crisis brews over the weekend!
- Always on vs having set "opening hours" – need to consider the mental stress / workload implications of checking feeds at the weekend etc. It's important to be able to switch off, but be available (eg: if there's a major crisis), perhaps via an emergency-only WhatsApp Group

Tools/platforms

- Several organisations were doing it natively, without the help of a third-party tool e.g. Sprout or Spradfast
- Sprout Social was given a big thumbs up. Especially for its workflows, tagging of content and reporting, as well as being good for escalation... but it is expensive.
- A tool called Toggle was also mentioned for keeping an eye on how long you're spending on different tasks like social media management: <https://toggl.com/>
- Agora Pulse is good for finding your top users <https://www.agorapulse.com/>
- These tools should be used within the context of having a strict routine for moderation and social media management otherwise it can take over your day if you're always "dipping in". Need discipline and maybe even to block time out in your diary, especially at the start of the day and on Monday morning

Following the rules

- No one was clear on the legal obligations e.g. is the platform or the page responsible for libellous comments from others?
- Several charities had formal guidelines on their pages and groups, which were useful when being asked why comments had been deleted etc.
- One charity didn't have social media guidelines until a few months ago. They said with no guidelines there's nowhere to point people to – this is a bad thing
- Have a common sense approach; drawing attention to “house rules” or “user guidelines”
- Charities dealing with controversial topics, e.g. fracking, must be very careful what they post and verify any contentious issues
- Some organisations auto-filter posts e.g. for swearing, but others felt it healthy to allow people to express themselves (can be done positively depending on context)
- It's OK to be “hide happy” (ie: hiding lots of comments/posts) but banning people should be a last resort, as this inflames the trolls and they're likely to escalate, or come back with a new user name and a chip on their shoulder. Better to “know your enemies”. Also don't want to give the impression we are censoring people.
- One charity had a repeat person commenting – was told about their behaviour four times and was then blocked.
- For a cancer charity – cancer cures, cannabis cure etc were hidden straight away
- To keep in line with charity being politically impartial – charity cannot like political posts which happens a lot for many charities
- One charity will only hide comments if against social policy. They said they didn't want to fire the flames by hiding comments.
- Swear words and the c word are straight up deleted at many charities
- We also spoke about signing off comments in first person – a lot of charities doing this as it sounds personal.
- More negative responses on ads – creating stock responses and a guide – escalate this situation with the rest of their organisation
- Comments on trans community – direct people to what you are doing with the trans community
- Regional marketing teams – Facebook Groups need more work on guidelines and lots of teams are working independently in groups

Helping vulnerable people

- Some charities are able to assign comments to specialists e.g. nurses
- Social teams fall back on their charities' online resources to give correct info
- One charity said that if someone seems suicidal in their comments then they are referred to one particular person in their organisation and then if unable to do so passed on to supporter care team
- Some charities support people by letting people know about services available to them and letting the person know how they can get support

Dealing with difficult comments

- While there's no 'one size fits all' when it comes to monitoring procedure, everyone agreed that a universal tactic is to try and encourage difficult users to get away from public conversation and into direct messages
- One person noted that they have a very simple triage system in place for dealing with 'trolls': people who are sincerely sharing misinformation (which they will try and correct), and people who are deliberately trolling, who can be ignored or banned.
- Special cases can be made for beneficiaries - people may be aggressive or use inappropriate language because they're going through difficult challenges, and it's important

for us to demonstrate care and understanding rather than toe the line for the sake of sticking to policy

- Facebook is easy, but what about Twitter where you can't delete? Although some felt Twitter is more transient and they are less bothered by offensive comments in that space
- One charity used a trained agency (ICUC) to deal with community management and only really tricky comments came through to the charity's staff
- On the topic of CEO salaries, most said they would be transparent and link to this information about yearly budget on website. Some people said they would ignore these types of questions or just say how their support helps and look away from honing in on salaries.
- It can be tricky to find the balance between responding in a sassy and serious way. Probably better to do one or the other.
- A guideline one charity uses is 'Would your 13-year-old be ok with reading this comment?' - They decide on hiding and deleting comments this way.
- Try to address comments with facts. Myth-bust, ideally with solid content on your website. If people from your community step in to help, PM them to say thanks.

Dealing with trolls

- Beware giving your name, they may try and call/email or even visit your office
- Every charity has their repeat offenders
- Sometimes a response to a troll is as much for your community as for them
- Some people say they would lay low and see if comments get traction – if they do they may respond if needs be.
- Some charities have been responding with correct info on website to shut down wrong info comments
- Need to trust your audience can recognise a troll
- Guidelines help when deleting or blocking
- For trolls that think they know everything and share loads of articles, some charities said that after a while someone like this would not be engaged with. Some charities said someone like this would not be blocked and that they try and be as patient as they can.
- For one food bank charity they received comments like “you're getting into bed with big corporations and building a food bank empire”. They responded by creating a rolling series of blog posts about ending food banks – this meant they were linking these trolls to somewhere else – this had mixed reactions.
- There seem to be more trolls on paid activity

Mobilising your community

- 'Brigading' online - criticisms appearing on mass may be mobilised by an external source. It can be helpful to have criticisms coming from a single public figure or body rather than a number of anonymous individuals - it gives the community someone to mobilise *against*.
- Investment is needed to create a community that knows and echoes your core. Your audience won't be able to moderate for you unless you put that messaging out there and explain why it matters.
- Give volunteers rough guidelines (dos and don'ts) on how to get involved
- Post copy can encourage advice sharing
- Respond positively with a like or comment to people who have been positive in a sea of negative comments
- Private message people saying thank you if they corrected wrong info in comments or have just been positive
- Ask more engaged users to help moderate online community (this is more for a Forum)