

SOCIAL MEDIA COPY REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust is responsible for providing emergency medical services to the over 7 million residents of the North West of England. As one of ten ambulance trusts in England, it forms an integral part of the National Health Service, receiving direct government funding to fulfil its crucial role.

As a content creator, I assist the Communications team in crafting social media copy, photographing staff in a range of different settings and contributing to the overall promotion of the activities we take for our followers.

This essay explains the process, analysis and thinking behind creating some social media copy and posts for a recent road traffic collision joint training exercise undertaken by our ambulance service, the Police and the Fire Service. Below, I will delve into the target audience, tone of voice, and many more elements to give clearer justification in my overall process for crafting these social media posts.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Our target audience for this report are the followers we have on our social media platforms. This includes Instagram, LinkedIn, X and Facebook. Our followers encompass a diverse demographic range, spanning across different ages, genders, locations, and races. We pride ourselves on being responsive to anyone seeking assistance, whether it's an urgent matter or a non-urgent inquiry. Our commitment to inclusivity knows no bounds, as we welcome and support individuals ranging from as young as 6 months old to those who are 99 years old, or older.

It's important to emphasise that our dedication to aiding others extends unconditionally to our social media followers. We firmly stand against discrimination and rejection, ensuring that everyone in our online community feels valued and supported. Utilising the Sprout Social content management system, we have the capability to meticulously track our followers. This tool empowers us with analytics that enable us to analyse the engagement levels, likes, and responses to our content.

One noteworthy statistic gleaned from our social media analytics is the notable prevalence of female followers. Additionally, our content garners the highest engagement from individuals aged 18 to 60 years old. This information provides valuable insights into the composition of our audience and aids in tailoring our content to better resonate with most of our engaged followers.

Beyond our followers, another crucial aspect to consider is our stakeholders. These individuals play a significant role in shaping the focus of our content. This implies that any material we generate must incorporate them into our campaign or content plan. To ensure their involvement, we develop a stakeholder bulletin that serves as a dedicated communication channel.

For each new campaign, we go a step further by creating a comprehensive pack specifically designed for our stakeholders. This pack serves as a resource that we share with all stakeholders, enabling them to amplify our message by releasing it through their own social media channels. This collaborative approach not only expands our reach but also reinforces our key messages across multiple networks.

In essence, by actively involving our stakeholders and equipping them with the necessary tools, we not only enhance the overall impact of our campaigns but also foster a collective effort in promoting our messages. This collaborative strategy aligns with our commitment to engaging not only our followers but also those who hold a vested interest in our initiatives. To summarise, it makes sense that the target audience of my social media copy is both male and female, all ages and those who we help in our North West communities as well as stakeholders.

TONE OF VOICE

When we create any written content, not just on social media, our main goal is to sound like we're having a friendly and respectful chat. It's crucial for us to find the right balance between being friendly and professional, avoiding being too casual but also not sounding too formal. Our aim is to talk to our audience like a knowledgeable friend having a meaningful conversation, using words like "you" and "we" to make it feel personal and direct, like we're sitting across from them.

At the same time, when we write, we focus on being clear, concise, honest, and open, all the while keeping things professional and easy to understand. We stay away from complicated language and jargon, preferring a simple and direct approach. We know our followers like real-life stories, so we make sure to share case studies and staff projects, using visual elements like videos and images to keep things engaging. Even when we tackle complicated topics, we prioritise simplicity and accessibility to avoid confusion without losing the message's importance.

This commitment to clear communication and plain English extends to our social media posts. We're aware that certain words can be challenging for people with accessibility needs, so we make a point of avoiding unnecessary complexity. Ultimately, our goal isn't just to assist our followers, it's about building a supportive and connected community where everyone benefits from improved experiences, contributing to our collective growth.

GOALS

To keep our social media audience engaged, we prioritise maintaining and, wherever possible, boosting engagement levels that may fall short. Our strategy revolves around quality over quantity, opting for less frequent but more engaging and thought-provoking content. Rather than posting five times with lower-quality content, we focus on sharing one outstanding post three times. This approach aligns with our commitment to nurturing our online community by actively seeking feedback, creating interactive content, and consistently engaging with our followers. As part of our efforts to enhance our online presence, we are exploring the creation of more short-form vertical video content, such as reels, to adapt to changing preferences and reach specific audiences such as Gen X, and Z or millennials.

For this social media campaign, my primary objective was to raise awareness about the collaborative efforts between our emergency services, including the Police and Fire Services. Collaborating with the lead for the ambulance service, I aimed to capture high-definition images of our staff in a road traffic collision (RTC) mock-up, showcasing their involvement in real RTC events. These images were intended for use across various platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and X. Our goal was to convey to the public the significance of attending RTCs and highlight the importance of utilising the Ambulance Service wisely.

In terms of analytics, my expectations were exceeded, with the Instagram post receiving 340 likes, the Facebook post garnering 22 likes, and the LinkedIn post securing 17 likes. This positive outcome indicates the success of our approach in effectively conveying the importance of our work and resonating with our audience.

HISTORY OF EVENT

The RTC joint training day serves as an annual gathering facilitated by Kirsten McDermott and Sara Harris (team leads), alongside other services, to foster collaborative efforts, enhance understanding of various roles, and shed light on the intricacies of operations during an RTC.

This event stands as a valuable opportunity for members of the Communications team to actively participate, broadening their comprehension of the trust and gaining insight into the collective service initiatives we undertake.

By encouraging cooperative working and sharing insights into RTC scenarios, this day not only strengthens our internal cohesion but also reinforces our commitment to unified service work and effective communication within the organisation.

DAY OF SHOOTING

To start documenting the event, I used my iPhone to take pictures of our ambulance staff, including leaders Kirsten McDermott and Sara Harris. I also captured a group photo to capture everyone involved.

In capturing the event, I utilised a range of equipment, including a DSLR Nikon D3300, a DJI gimbal, and my iPhone 11. The DSLR played a crucial role in providing me with enhanced control over key photographic settings such as ISO, aperture, shutter speed, and white balance. This control allowed me to capture images with precision and clarity. Specifically, when capturing images of the 'moving' staff engaged in the simulation, I adjusted the shutter speed to 1/80 and higher. This adjustment was a strategic move aimed at preventing any blurriness and ensuring that the moving 'objects' or people were sharply focused.

This decision was influenced by my past experiences in photoshoots, where I learned the importance of avoiding blurriness or lack of focus in post-capture evaluations. Recognising the frustration that can arise from capturing what seems like a great image only to discover later that it is blurry or out of focus, I proactively adjusted my settings to address this issue. This attention to detail in adjusting the shutter speed reflects a practical understanding of the potential challenges in capturing dynamic scenes and a commitment to producing high-quality images.

Later, I moved to the area where the simulation was happening. Wanting to make sure everything was done ethically and with consent, I talked to Kirsten about getting approval from people in other service lines who were part of the simulation.

Once she confirmed we had their consent, I switched to using my DSLR camera for more detailed photos. This change in equipment allowed me to capture a more sophisticated and detailed visual record of the simulation.

The careful consideration of ethical concerns and the choice of appropriate photographic tools demonstrate a dedication to ethical practices and thorough documentation in the academic setting.

Despite gathering consent to take pictures I believe the Police staff partaking in the event were confused about my appearance and kept trying to remove me from the 'scene'. I confidently told them who I was and how I was here to photograph our staff however they continued to move me elsewhere.

Not wanting to go home 'empty-handed' I persevered and raised the issue to our ambulance lead Kirsten who told me to avoid them and stay nearby. My hard work was rewarded when at the end of the event the staff that moved me came over and were extremely apologetic and friendly. I managed to foster and maintain a friendly relationship with other emergency services.

To adhere to the uniform policy, I made sure not to capture any images that were in contravention of it (for example our staff wearing watches). Instead, my focus was on capturing a variety of shots that could serve multiple purposes beyond the immediate function. I zoomed in to take close-up images of staff epaulettes, showcasing their roles.

Additionally, I aimed to capture the camaraderie among the staff by taking pictures of them smiling at each other. To ensure versatility, I also experimented with different angles, including close-ups, mid-shots, and other perspectives.

This strategic approach not only aligns with policy guidelines but also maximises the utility of the images for various contexts beyond the specific event.

PROCESS

My process of writing and designing social media posts involves a strategic blend of creativity, audience understanding, and effective communication.

First, I define objectives and acknowledge target audience. For this social media post my objective was to raise awareness on the joint training exercise. Then I needed to understand my target audience. As mentioned previously, we want to reach our stakeholders, members of the public who live in our local communities in the North West, both males and females, as well as those typically aged between 18 and 60.

My language needed to be approachable, not too formal and I didn't want to use words that were confusing or full of jargon.

After this, I then began researching other social media posts that we had done previously. This was to better expand my knowledge and skills of my company's tone of voice, style and approach to the public. Also, doing this helped me reference previous posts done on the last joint training day to better understand how that was displayed on social media.

Next came the content creation. I utilised Photoshop to edit my bank of images after uploading them onto the shared drive our team has access to, labelling and then filling in and signing the metadata for SEO.

Editing them in Photoshop was challenging due to my scratch disk being full as a result of my computer not having enough RAM. Not wanting to delay the posts being put on social media I then changed applications and instead used Adobe Lightroom to edit them. This approach benefitted me more as it better enabled me to edit a bank of images in one go and is a common tool for photographers when editing numerous pictures. The other reason it's good is I could export them into smaller

JPG file sizes so when the team used them they wouldn't cause their software to crash.

When editing them in Lightroom I used the auto function to ensure the software programmed the image to the best lighting, colour scheme, white balance and more. Then, individually I colour corrected each image to achieve its maximum high-resolution filter for social media.

When exporting, I saved them in a smaller size JPG, but nevertheless one that didn't sacrifice quality. Then, I uploaded them into Canva and used the automatic ratio aspect formatting tool to format them into Facebook, Instagram, X and LinkedIn. Some of the images didn't quite work and looked wrong being dragged or spread wide so I used a gaussian blue filter to make the background image look blurry, copied it and de-blurred and then placed that in the middle.

Once editing and exporting was finished, I then began working on writing the copy. Knowing that our social media needs to be chatty but not too over-personalised I set myself the task of writing my first draft. Here is the final version as posted:

“Last week, we facilitated our latest joint emergency services road traffic collision training day.

We collaborated with colleagues from GMP Manchester North, North West Air Ambulance Charity, and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS).

The day was a great success despite the warm weather! In the morning, each service provided small group training sessions. Then, in the afternoon, we put what we learned into practice with a real-time simulation involving a tram car, with support provided by Metrolink UK staff.

These training days are crucial for all staff involved. They allow us to gain experience dealing with different emergency scenarios in a safe learning environment. They also help break down barriers between the various services, enabling us to work together with a better understanding of each other's roles when responding to road traffic collisions.

Feedback was positive from the day, with comments sharing how great it was to connect with colleagues from other services without the pressure of an ongoing job.

We want to thank all the partners who participated in the training day, and we look forward to doing it again soon.”

Once approved I then used our social media management system Sprout Social to calculate the optimal times for posting to the individual social media platforms. At this stage I wrote alt text in the picture itself on Facebook, X and LinkedIn and did alt descriptions on Instagram for accessibility.

REFLECTION

With hindsight, I wonder if the posts would have received greater engagement if they had been done as a reel. Using a reel is incredibly popular and recent studies have found that most of the population now engages with short-form reel video content compared to images. This is especially the case with young people.

Another thing I learned was the importance of dressing correctly and appropriately on the day of the shoot. Despite wearing my lanyard and being introduced to staff, it was increasingly apparent that the other external emergency services didn't know who I was. I believe in future wearing my NWS white polo shirt and grey hoodie should limit this and, if not, I should be confident enough to say who I am!

Lastly, I wonder if having a call to action in the copy would have better encouraged the public to interact and engage with the posts. This could be a quiz, or an interactive session but it may have impacted engagement levels.

That said, overall I am happy with the results but believe the above changes could have improved the amount of likes, as well as engagement. I think learning the theory and then applying it in practical situations will give me the opportunity to hone my skills as a content creator.