How do medical publication professionals engage with online news resources?

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ABSTRACT

Objective
To determine how medical publication professionals access and engage with publications-related news online.

Research design and methods
We analysed usage and user preferences of a freely-accessible, multichannel website (email newsletter, LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook) news service for medical publication professionals. Usage and demographic data were collected from website/MedicalPlan metrics, and user feedback through a 13-question survey.

RESULTS

At the time of writing (January 2018), the service had 1,869 online subscribers and 3,540 LinkedIn group members (42% USA, 34% Europe, 21% rest-of-world). Seventy-nine users completed the survey, the most frequent user-reported job roles were medical writing (41% of respondents), publications management (19%) and medical affairs (8%). Email newsletters were the preferred distribution channel (66% accessed these at least monthly), followed by LinkedIn group (42%) and website (38%). Page view pages revealed that the most-viewed topics were meeting reports, guidelines updates, and articles on plagiarism or predatory publishing. Website respondents confirmed these observations, with 90%, 90% and 64% interested* in these topics in publications news, guideline updates and meeting reports, respectively. Most respondents (62%) heard about a piece of news for the first time at least monthly via the service, rating quality and usefulness as ‘good’/’excellent’ (96% and 87%, respectively). In spite of this, most respondents ‘never’/’occasionally’ shared articles with colleagues (73%) or interacted with peers online (95%).

Methods

Between 26 June 2017 and 31 July 2017 we conducted an analysis of the usage preferences of medical publication professionals using ‘The Publication Plan’ news website (https://thepublicationplan.com/) and its related online resources.

We were invited to complete an anonymous*, 13-question survey developed to determine how medical publication professionals find and engage with publications news, guideline updates and meeting reports, respectively. Most respondents (62%) heard about a piece of news for the first time at least monthly via the service, rating quality and usefulness as ‘good’/’excellent’ (96% and 87%, respectively). In spite of this, most respondents ‘never’/’occasionally’ shared articles with colleagues (73%) or interacted with peers online (95%).

As of January 2018, The Publication Plan had:

- 1,869 online subscribers
- 3,540 LinkedIn group members
- 66% accessed email newsletter at least monthly
- 42% accessed LinkedIn group at least monthly
- 38% accessed the website at least monthly
- The preferred method of accessing professional communications from the Publication Plan was via email newsletter (63% accessed these at least monthly), followed by the LinkedIn group (42%) and website (38%).

Conclusions

Confirmed these observations, with 90%, 90% and 64% interested* in these topics in publications news, guideline updates and meeting reports, respectively. Most respondents (62%) heard about a piece of news for the first time at least monthly via the service, rating quality and usefulness as ‘good’/’excellent’ (96% and 87%, respectively). In spite of this, most respondents ‘never’/’occasionally’ shared articles with colleagues (73%) or interacted with peers online (95%).

INTRODUCTION TO THE PUBLICATION PLAN

• The Publication Plan is a not-for-profit multichannel online news service for medical publication professionals.

• The service provides publication-related news alongside other publication resources (Figure 1).

• The service is disseminated via a number of platforms including: website, email newsletter, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn group.

METHODS

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- Conclusions

- According to the survey, publications professionals were most interested in guideline updates, publications news, free webinar/training alerts, and meeting reports (Figure 4) on the Publication Plan. The most actual–viewed topics were meeting reports, guidelines updates, plagiarism and predatory publishing.

- The Publication Plan is the primary source of medical publications-related news for 44% of respondents.

- Other sources included professional bodies, guidelines bodies, non-publication–specific websites, publications databases and social media.

- This broad range might indicate an unconsolidated reference base, meaning that publications professionals find it difficult to keep up-to-date with medical publications-related news.

- By and large, most respondents ‘never’/’occasionally’ shared articles with colleagues (73%) or interacted with peers online (95%).

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  • 66% accessed email newsletter at least monthly
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CONCLUSIONS

- Medical publication professionals tend to use different platforms to access personal vs professional communications.

- For optimal dissemination of information, news providers should tailor content accordingly across platforms.

- Based on this small survey, although publication professionals value online news services, there is a lack of community engagement online.

- The professional community could improve dissemination of news through more active engagement online and sharing of information with colleagues, thereby improving education and advancing the field of medical publications.

- To take account of the results of this analysis, enhancements are being made to The Publication Plan platforms to further improve the usefulness of the content and to encourage greater engagement.