



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/LinkedIn 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 (45% 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 (63% accessed these at least monthly), followed by the LinkedIn group (42%) and website (38%). Website page views revealed that the most-viewed topics were meeting reports, guidelines updates, and articles on plagiarism or predatory publishing. Survey respondents confirmed these observations, with 90%, 90% and 66% 'interested'/'very interested' 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' (89% and 87%, respectively). In spite of this, most respondents 'never'/'occasionally' shared articles with colleagues (73%) or interacted with peers online (95%).

Conclusions

Based on this small survey, although medical publication professionals value online news services, this is not reinforced through online interaction and information sharing at the individual level. The professional community could improve the dissemination of news and information through more active engagement online, thereby improving education and advancing the field of medical publications.

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.

Figure 1. The Publication Plan: Key services



METHODS

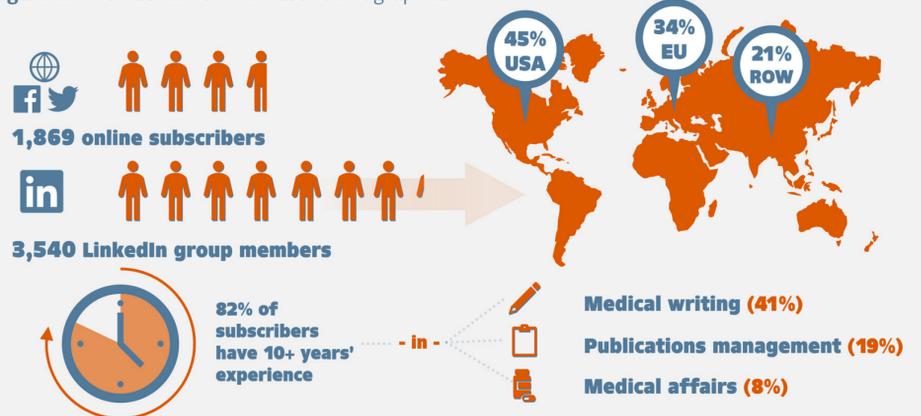
- Between 26 June 2017 and 31 July 2017 we conducted an analysis of the usage preferences of medical publication professionals using 'The Publication Plan' news website (<https://thepublicationplan.com/>) and its related online resources.
- Users were invited to complete an anonymous*, 13-question survey developed to record respondents' views on their publication news requirements, the services provided by The Publication Plan and on potential future developments.
- The survey was created, distributed and analysed using SurveyMonkey, and was publicised via the Publication Plan's website, LinkedIn group, Twitter feed and Facebook page.
- Survey results were examined alongside broad usage statistics:
 - Website usage statistics for 2017 were reviewed.
 - LinkedIn group metrics were recorded in January 2018.

*Email addresses were collected if respondent chose to enter the optional prize draw.

RESULTS

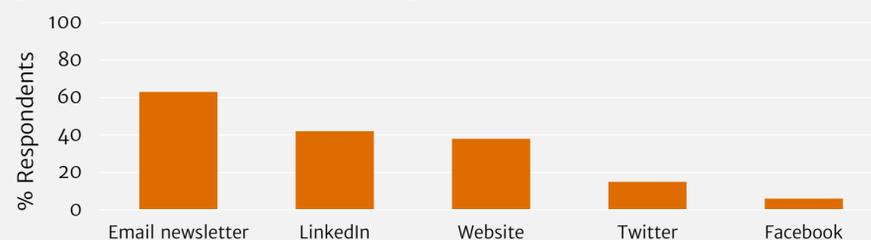
- As of January 2018, The Publication Plan had:
 - 1,869 online subscribers.
 - 3,540 LinkedIn group members (45% USA, 34% Europe, 21% rest-of-world; Figure 2).
- Seventy-nine users completed the survey. Most reported their job role as medical writing (41% of respondents). Nineteen per cent of respondents worked in publications management and 8% in medical affairs (Figure 2).
- Analysis of The Publication Plan LinkedIn group revealed that group members are generally experienced publication professionals; 82% have ≥10 years' experience (Figure 2). Members are drawn equally from a range of companies, from those with 50 or fewer employees, to those with 10,000 or more employees.
- Usage preferences showed a divide between the platforms used for personal vs professional communications.
 - For example, of those that did not access the Publication Plan via social media, 34% indicated that this was because they use that platform for non-work purposes only.

Figure 2. The Publication Plan user demographics



- 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%; Figure 3).
- Where respondents did not use one of the available platforms, only 7% reported that this was due to an excess of publications news – suggesting that most users do not have abundant access to publications news sources.

Figure 3. Proportion of respondents accessing each Publication Plan platform at least once per month



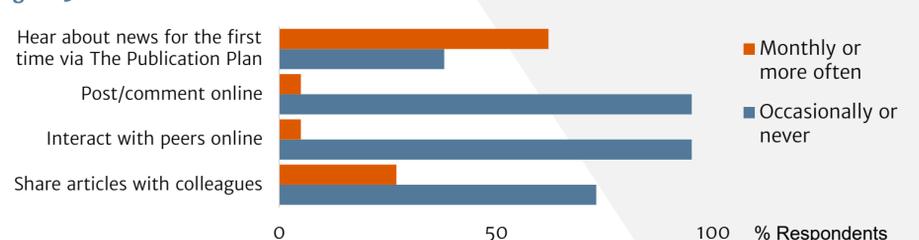
- According to the survey, publications professionals were most interested in guideline updates, publications news, free webinar/training alerts, and meeting reports (Figure 4) on the Publication Plan. The actual most-viewed topics were meeting reports, guidelines updates, plagiarism and predatory publishing.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

Figure 4. User content preferences relating to The Publication Plan



- As a broad-spectrum publications news resource, The Publication Plan provides 60% of users with their first indication of new publications news/events at least monthly (Figure 5).
- The majority of respondents rated the quality and usefulness of content as 'good'/'excellent' (89% and 87%, respectively).
- In spite of this, most 'occasionally or never' shared articles with colleagues (73%) or interacted with peers online (95%; Figure 5).

Figure 5. User behaviour and online interaction



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.