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Utilizing social media to promote services

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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to help Valley Health Associates have more outreach with their clients, the community and potential partners. Valley Health Associates is a non profit agency in Monterey and San Benito counties. This project was approved, reviewed and completed with a team made up of the student intern, the mentor, executive director and the peer support specialist in charge of running the social media pages. The purpose of the project is to connect clients and the agency and to help the agency promote their services more effectively. The project did not have a positive impact, only three people completed the survey the student created. Disengagement was a major issue found by the student intern. The agency needs to work on captivating the clients attention. There are many ways they can do that. Like providing clients with incentives for participating and or hosting meetings where they serve hot meals.

Keywords: Clients, feedback, agency, intern, outreach, social media

Agency and communities served

Valley Health Associates is an agency that has been established since 1992 in Monterey County, it is a nonprofit agency. Valley Health Associates is an agency that serves different types of populations. The clients served by the agency range from employed adults to homeless individuals. This agency not only serves adults that have experienced addiction but also youth. The agency provides these vulnerable individuals with the chance to receive counseling services, safe medication disposal and outpatient services for both adults and the youth. Every client at the agency is served with dignity and respect, privacy and confidentiality, supportive service, and compassionate and meaningful services. (VHA, n.d). This agency brings the community together and helps individuals recover faster.

Problem model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Disengaged adults (staff and clients).	Substance use in Monterey County.	Not reaching/helping enough people.
Poverty/homelessness.		Losing funds/donations.
Community unaware of services.		Limiting collaborative partners.

Social problem

The issue identified at the agency is that they lack client outreach and promotion of their services. As an agency that is funded by donations and grants this could be an issue if it is not changed. It is very important that agencies learn how to market their services and themselves. This will ensure that the clients become successful in their own journey. Fourteen agency council experts shared ways that agencies could market and promote their services successfully. Half of the items listed are not addressed thoroughly in the agency; these are authenticity with the

content, be consistent with sharing the messages and to leverage testimonials on positive cases (Forbes, 2019). These recommendations will be taken into consideration when addressing the problem in the capstone project.

In order to help individuals in need, agencies should have an individual take over their website and social media pages to ensure that information is up to date. Especially agencies that are funded by donations or grants. There could be a serious issue if a client is looking for a precise phone number and that information is not found or is not up to date. It is recommended that the agency's information is reliable, relevant and useful. If it's not clients, partners, donations will find their way to another agency. (Agent image, n.d). We don't want that to happen, as it will affect our agency, clients and staff.

Contributing factors

A very important factor to acknowledge is the consequence of having disengaged staff. One of the issues that is seen in this agency is that employees don't last, therefore this affects the connections between clients and the agency overall. Clients are tired of meeting new people and having to connect with unfamiliar faces throughout the year. Therefore they avoid using many services that are provided and only show up to take their medication. Disengagement from the clients could cause a big problem in the agency, without feedback or communication the agency will not know if the client is actually succeeding in their rehabilitation journey (Forbes, 2020). As for the agency, being short staffed caused the employees to become tense and burn out. So it is important to identify behavioral signs that employees may exhibit when they are becoming disengaged. These could be lack of initiative, low productivity, irritable attitude...etc. (Herrity, 2021). Identifying these signs on time could help agencies fight the problem with being short staffed and having to train and hire new employees throughout the year.

Another major factor is that the majority of the clients that the agency serves are homeless, living in shelters or are living in poverty. This makes it more difficult for the agency to have them participate in certain surveys or programs. These individuals are affected with many barriers like not having access to phones and have transportation issues. (Evening standard, n.d). The agency also needs to focus on making accommodations for everyone, especially the vulnerable. Staff should make sure that the agency is very welcoming. This will ensure that clients return for treatment, services and will be engaged. (Corell, 2020).

The agency offers many services but they are not promoted. The student intern has analyzed that most services are displayed in flyers and placed around the agency. The issue with this is that clients don't spend much time in the lobby to read them all. These issues could definitely be fixed by having more social media presence and improving the website's visibility. (Marketing, n.d). Individuals like having fast access to information. No promotion or poor customer service will impact the outreach of the agency. Having effective department management will ensure that the agency's customer service improves. (Patel, 2022). Front desk should introduce new services to clients and follow up with "follow us on our social media pages for more information".

Consequences

There is definitely an issue when an agency is not reaching or engaging with the community. Not having the agency display or promote their services can continue to negatively affect the community. In 2018, Monterey County had high rates of opioid related deaths. It was the second most affected county in California. (Kenny, 2022). Not promoting the benefits of agencies like Valley Health Associates could possibly help the increase of these numbers in 2023 as we see fentanyl continuing to destroy individuals lives. A report released by the offices of

Gavin Newsom stated that there was enough fentanyl reaching the state to kill everyone in North America, twice. (Ria Roebuck, 2022). Methadone clinics and counseling could help individuals from getting drugs off the streets and potentially save many lives.

If the community doesn't know you exist, how could they possibly donate to your agency. Lack of funding is a consequence that tends to happen when non profit agencies aren't being involved with the community and are not active on social media. Another result of this is having donor attrition. As it was reported by the Fundraising Effectiveness report done in 2018, less than 50% of individuals who donated to nonprofits donate again. (MightyBlog, n.d). The decline is because old donors lose interest, when the agency isn't being engaging.

Collaborating partners want to join forces with agencies that have a well kept image and are run in a very professional and modern way. The failure to do that will limit the partners who would want to join forces with you. Every successful partnership has a couple of key elements to follow, these are communication, shared values and mutual respect. (Chow, n.d).

Project description and justification

The name of my capstone project is "Utilizing social media to promote services and build a connection with the community". The student's mentor approved the idea of allowing the student to create a survey for client feedback in hopes of having more outreach with the community on social media. The intern will also be working with Paris, an employee of the agency, to help create a connection between the agency and their clients through these social media platforms. The agency will be having a survey displayed on their Facebook page. This survey will ensure that the agency is living up to the county's expectations as well the clients. It will also help the clients provide us with feedback on any improvements that the agency may need to make. The social media platforms will be updated with any changes that the agency may

have. Like dosing hours, holiday schedules and information on new services. Having a very active social media page will make the agency look very professional and modern.

Benefits

Promoting services and programs to clients will benefit both the agency and their clients. The benefits for the clients itself is that they receive the help and attention they need. Having more outreach and having an employee respond to their questions fast can ensure that the clients have an easier rehabilitation process. Now in regards to the agency, this project can help the agency share their services with the community in a more sociable and effective way. The agency is established in a predominantly Latino community, who may not know that methadone/rehab clinics exist. So running a bilingual social media account can help change that, the community will be able to ask questions and see what the agency offers in spanish and english.

Expected outcome

Improving the relationship between the agency and their clients. The agency has no social media outreach whatsoever. The expectation is that the survey and QR codes displayed around the agency will attract more people to the agency's social media pages. The student expects to at least captivate the attention of 10 clients with their survey. That way the student can identify some issues that staff may need to address. Hopefully this project could help the agency and their clients build a stronger ethical bond, and save many lives in the County.

Implementation Process

When implementing this project the student started off by introducing her ideas to the executive director and the peer support specialist in charge of the social media pages and the agency's website. Together they decided to let the student create their own survey questions.

Once the survey questions were completed, the student shared them with the executive director for approval. The survey was created on google forms, that way the student was able to check to see if the clients were completing the survey. A big part of the project was to gain followers on the social media platforms and have more activity on there, so the student created a flier with the QR code for the survey and the Facebook page. In order to captivate the intended audience the student also displayed that there was an incentive for completing the survey. The project was successfully completed on time and the student was able to record the results by the deadline.

Project results

The project did not go as planned. Everything was implemented effectively but only three clients completed the survey and we didn't have any engagement on facebook from new people. The results have been graphed and could be found on Appendix B, at the bottom. The student waited two weeks to see if more clients completed the survey but the numbers remained the same. After week one, the student sent the flier to counselors and the peer support specialists to see if they could help them introduce the project directly to clients but that didn't help either. The google forms allowed the student to be checking for responses, that is how they were able to collect data. The facebook engagement was also the same, at most two to three likes per post or flier uploaded. The agency was also very active during those days, uploading pictures of tabling events, invitations to certain events, hosting pizza days for the clients but they still didn't have a lot of individuals show up. Even with more than three fliers/invitations posted around the lobby and on facebook.

Conclusion & Recommendations

It is really hard to engage with clients who are going through the rehabilitation process, are homeless and have other personal issues going on. For the reasons that they only want to take

their dosage of medication and leave the agency. It also doesn't help when the agency doesn't promote their services much. Disengagement was a major issue that the student found when implementing and finalizing their capstone project. There is not a strong relationship between the agency and their clients, besides the Medically Assisted Treatment service. There is also no motivation or intention from the clients to change that. This issue could potentially affect the agency in the future. Social media is key when it comes to promoting services, gaining followers and captivating the community. But, what could be done when only one party wants to make a change?

The agency should really focus more on creating QR codes and introducing their social media pages to clients directly during their appointments. There is great information shared on Facebook and almost all the fliers with the services and tabling events could be found there. It would be awesome if clients could see that the agency really has many services to offer and is more than just a methadone clinic.

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Appendix A

Table

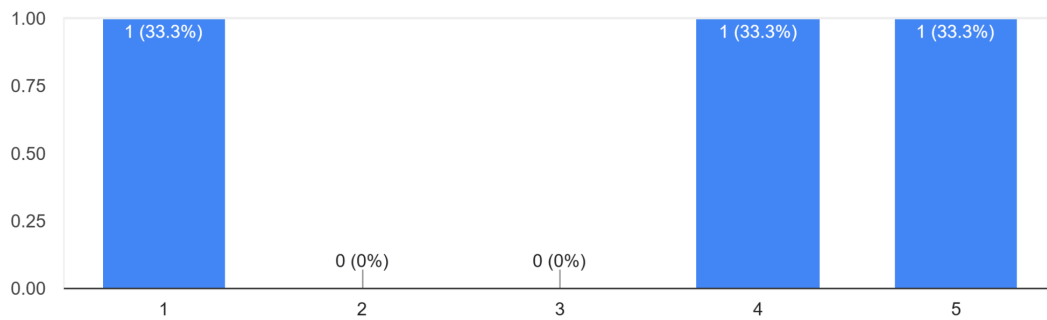
Task	Timeline	Parties Involved	Materials/Services needed	Deliverables
Email Paris (the employee I will be working with) to have a date set to meet and start working on the project.	February 28, 2023	Mentor (La Tonya Glover) Paris (VHA employee) Student	Email	Meeting minutes.
Finally meet in person with Paris so I can introduce my ideas and my capstone project.	March 7, 2023	Paris (VHA employee) Student	Google slides	Sharing information with other employees.
Get access to social media accounts already existing and access to the website.	March 7, 2023	Paris (VHA employee) Mentor (La Tonya Glover) Tech dept.	Google Email Facebook Link Website Link	Analyzing the existing pages.
Have my survey questions reviewed	March 14, 2023	Student Mentor (La Tonya Glover)	Google docs Email	Survey questions reviewed for approval.
Create my survey for client feedback	March 28, 2023	Student	Google forms Email	Finalized the survey for the clients.
Create a QR code for my survey	March 28, 2023	Student VHA employee (Paris De La Torre)	QR creator	QR code for the survey so clients can access it easier.
Upload my first	April 7, 2023	Student	Facebook	N/A

fliers to the social media accounts.		Mentor (La Tonya Glover) Paris (VHA employee)		
Review likes, comments and suggestions after the first uploads.	April 11, 2023	Student	Facebook Social media accounts	Collect data
Collect data to see if the agencies and clients' interactions are improving.	April 13, 2023	Student	Google docs	N/A
Collect results from the survey	April 13, 2023	Student	Google forms	N/A
Finalize the project and upload the fliers and survey to the capstone paper	April 20, 2023	Student	Google docs Google forms	N/A

Appendix B

How satisfied are you with the overall service provided by the agency (Valley Health Associates)?

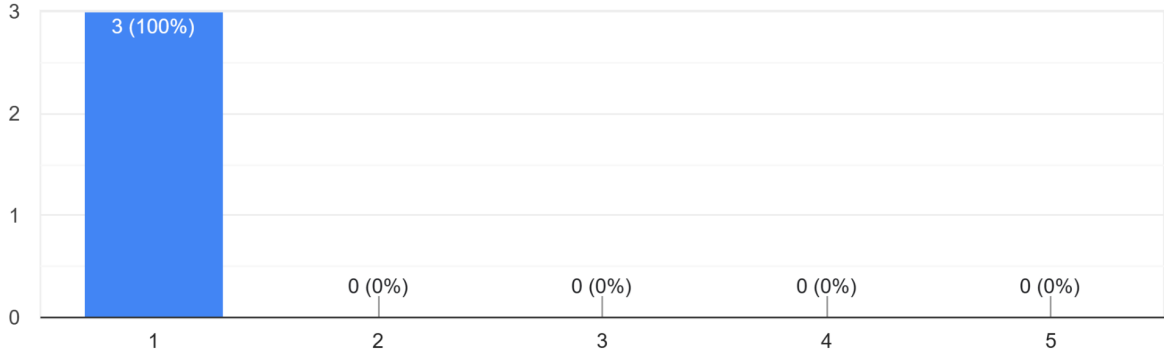
3 responses



(1 being least satisfied to 5 being most satisfied)

How easy is it to access services at VHA?

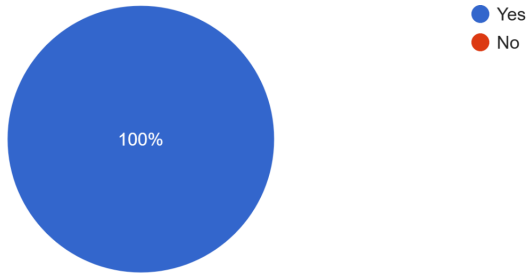
3 responses



(1 being very easy to 5 being very hard)

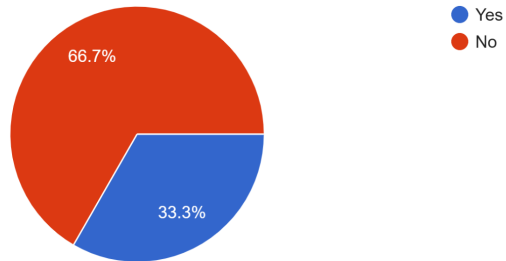
Do you feel that the staff at VHA treats you with respect and dignity?

3 responses



Do you follow us on Facebook? Social media?

3 responses



Appendix C



Follow us on Facebook.

Scan the QR code below. Complete the survey (intern created) and enter to win a \$30 starbucks gift card.

Facebook QR Code 

Survey QR Code 



Appendix D**SURVEY CREATED BY STUDENT**

1. How satisfied are you with the overall service provided by the agency (Valley Health Associates)?
(least satisfied) 1 2 3 4 5 (Most satisfied)
2. How easy is it to access services at VHA?
(Very easy) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very hard)
3. Do you feel that the staff at VHA treats you with respect and dignity?
 Yes
 No
4. Would you change anything about your experience with us? If yes, please explain.
5. Do you follow us on Facebook? Social media?
 Yes
 No
6. Any recommendations?