

CPWF/WLE Social Media Campaign: Lessons Learned

Background

From April 16-30, 2014 CPWF conducted an online promotional campaign to mark the formal wrap-up of CPWF and its transition into WLE. The campaign aimed to communicate and demystify this transition; promote CPWF's results and research-for-development approach; and solidify support for WLE activities, programming, and partnerships.

Results

Over the course of two weeks, the campaign utilized Twitter, Facebook, Yammer, CG Center and CRP blogs and e-letters. The following summarizes the campaign results:

- 5,392 page views and 1,428 unique visitors to waterandfood.org, of which 63% were new visitors
- 1,901 page views on CPWF's CG Space
- Interaction with and attention from key audiences such as IWMI, CGIAR, CIMMYT, CCFAS, CIAT, SEI, ILRI, CONDESAN, CIP, Syngenta and FarmingFirst

Lessons Learned

Channels for Promotion

The communications team decided to promote the new CPWF learning portal through WLE channels and to WLE audiences based on the assumption that it would only be meaningful to promote "a living program". However, it was at times challenging to communicate from a point midway between the CPWF and WLE programs. For example:

- It might have been confusing for audiences to see one program (WLE) posting about another program's (CPWF's) results.
- Sometimes CPWF and WLE content were "competing" for attention on platforms, such as the WLE Facebook page.
- We wanted to communicate the CPWF program's transition into WLE but beyond a blog post by Andrew Noble (WLE director) we had limited resources we could use to back up our claim.

Take-away lesson #1

WLE and other CRPs will continue to face a similar challenge when using social media to promote content, or when promoting the content of other CRPs or Centers. Social media admins should be made aware of any existing guidelines for communicating potentially 'confusing' content. For instance, is the goal to promote the CGIAR, the CRP, the Center or the project? The way content is communicated will impact the way that external audiences understand and interact with the CRPs. Such guidelines may need to be updated or made more explicit as the CRPs progress.

Take-away lesson #2

More materials are required in order to fully substantiate WLE's assertion that it is building upon CPWF.

CGIAR Social Media Listserv

The CGIAR social media support group is a great resource and hugely helpful.

Take-away lesson #3

When conducting social media campaigns, communicators should draw on the support of the CGIAR social media group. That said, CRP and Center communicators should do their part to keep the community flourishing by 'returning the favor' of posting content that is shared within the group. Note that this invariably leads back to the issue raised in take-away #1.

Staff Buy-In

CPWF program staff did not engage in sharing resources via social media. While this can be explained in part by the fact that at the time of the campaign most staff were no longer contracted to CPWF, achieving buy-in from staff and their active contributions could have benefitted the campaign significantly. CPWF has maintained a relatively active social media presence since 2011 and initial efforts were made to make program staff aware of, and encourage them to use, social media channels. The lack of sharing for the final campaign seems to indicate that program staff did not see the value in social media promotion.

Take-away lesson #4

Arguably, greater program staff buy-in for the value of social media promotion should have been engendered prior to the end of the program. In the future, if CRPs plan to invest time and resources into social media then they would be well served to not only introduce their program staff (including 'high visibility' figures such as Program Directors) to social media, but also cultivate a culture around staff becoming active social media users. Additionally, it would make sense to time such social media campaigns so that they take place while staff are still contracted.

Communicating through Multiple Platforms and Channels

It was bad luck when our hosting company had an outage during the campaign; however, we were luckily able to direct people to other content (WLE's AgEco blog and Youtube). This included CPWF- and WLE-related promotional blog posts that had been written in collaboration with, and posted on the websites of, CPWF's partners and CRPs.

Take-away lesson #5

Beyond identifying a 'backup plan' in case of unforeseen technical difficulties, social media campaigns can be strengthened by working to generate content on partners' platforms. This approach not only gives your content wider exposure, but also, by generating buy-in from partners, recruits more messengers for your cause.

The Value of Social Media

Social media accounted for almost 40% of referral sources during the campaign.

Take-away lesson #6

Social media can be a powerful dissemination tool, particularly when used in conjunction with other forms of promotion. When planning campaigns, the emphasis given and resources devoted to social media promotion should be determined only after establishing the campaign's goals and target audience.