



The MOWAA Superhighway: Reaching the Volunteers of the Future

SEPTEMBER 1, 2010

10:45 AM – 12:15 PM

PANELISTS: Wilda Belisle – Council on Aging Meals on Wheels, Kissimmee, FL
Suzanne Grubb – MOWAA National Center for Nutrition Leadership
Tiffani Paige – Meals for the Elderly, San Angelo, TX
Patrick Rowan – Metro Meals on Wheels, Minneapolis, MN
Christine Franklin, Facilitator – BoardMatters, Savannah, GA

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: When participants leave, they will have --

- 1) an understanding that employing social media is not difficult
- 2) learned how social media works and how it can be managed
- 3) some practical applications for use back home

AGENDA

Introduction to session	Christine Franklin
Housekeeping: hold questions to end	
Panel presentations	Tiffani Paige Wilda Belisle Patrick Rowan
Summary Comments	Suzanne Grubb
Q & A	

About the Panelists

Panelist: Patrick Rowan (patrick@meals-on-wheels.com)

Organization: Metro Meals on Wheels

Minneapolis, MN

Metro Meals on Wheels (MMOW) provides referral services, fundraising, marketing, volunteer recruitment, advocacy, capacity building, and technical support for 40 member programs in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. MMOW functions at the regional level so member programs can maximize their impact in the community.

Panelist: Tiffani Paige (programs@mealsfortheelderly.org)

Organization: Meals For The Elderly

San Angelo, TX

Volunteers: We rely completely on volunteers for meal delivery and have no paid delivery staff.

We deliver meals to about 550 people in the San Angelo, Texas, area each weekday. We are also completely privately funded and are not a government or United Way agency. We have an office staff of 8 and a kitchen staff of 7. We have three major fundraising events each year and two public relations events.

Panelist: Wilda Belisle (belislew@osceola-coa.com)

Organization: Osceola Council on Aging Meals on Wheels Program Kissimmee, Florida

Volunteers: We have 123 volunteers to cover meal delivery routes.

Meals on Wheels is one of the many services the Osceola Council on Aging offer to seniors. The program helps 206 homebound seniors and disabled adults each day with a hot and a cold meal.

Panelist: Suzanne Grubb (suzanne@mowaa.org)

Organization: Meals On Wheels Association of America

Alexandria, VA

MOWAA doesn't actively recruit volunteers for our own organization, but we work to support our Member programs by tapping into national volunteer networks and raising public awareness about the general volunteer needs of all MOW programs.

Most Used Social Media

Patrick Rowan:

MMOW uses a variety of social mediums to communicate with stakeholders. **Constant Contact** and **Facebook** offer a very clear and simple way to manage communications while allowing stakeholders to choose their level of participation.

Tiffani Paige:

We are involved in **Facebook**, **Twitter**, a **blog**, and **YouTube**. Because of our limited staff, we use Facebook more than the other media, and have our Twitter linked to our Facebook page. We have cultivated a larger following on Facebook than the other sites, and find that more of our volunteers and community supporters keep up with us there. As I am more directly involved with marketing for my organization, I find the Facebook page insights particularly helpful for analysis.

Wilda Belisle :

We do not use our website as much as we use **Facebook**, the reason being that the Osceola Council on Aging website is too broad and does not go into each program's details. Therefore Facebook has helped us spread the word of our needs for volunteers as much as for our needs for funding. As well, it is an interactive media.

Successes Using Social Media

Patrick Rowan:

Meals on Heels is a community event started in 2009 to raise awareness about the need for Meals on Wheels delivery volunteers. This event is targeted toward the 20-40 year olds that will need to step up and volunteer to fill the gap. **The event was wildly successful, in part because of the buzz created through online marketing and promotion to the target audience.**

The Road Trips blog uses **Wordpress and gives opportunities for volunteers to express their experiences delivering for Meals on Wheels.** The blog component integrates well into our social media outreach because it is genuine feedback in the first person and it can be leveraged and promoted on our parent website, Facebook, and twitter.

Tiffani Paige:

We use Facebook to publicize our events, program needs, volunteer groups, and tokens of gratitude. I frequently post pictures and find that the people who "like" our page enjoy seeing pictures and reading notes from clients. We have also had success in using Facebook to identify and connect with new and existing volunteers in times of particular need.

Wilda Belisle:

We have gotten volunteers, **we have been able to reach people that otherwise we would have not been able to reach**, and as a marketing tool it has enabled us to get sponsors and participation in our events. It is a non-cost advertisement for our services. And helps us spread information locally and nationally.

Learning Opportunities from Using Social Media

Patrick Rowan:

It is better to give than receive! If the only communications you are having with your online community is requests for donations and more volunteers, the audience will lose interest quickly. **Communicate to your audience things that they might find interesting** (events you're interested in, political updates, senior or hunger related stories).

You will need to constantly update your contact list. Have sign-in sheets at any event you attend, raffles or drawings should be awarded via email so a participant will furnish their information!

Tiffani Paige:

Instead of trying to be involved with several different social media sites, pick one and do it really well before adding on another. Also, make sure you have a strategy in mind and know who you want to target and what you want them to get out of it.

If using Facebook, there are several different ways to go about it: profiles, pages, groups, causes, and events. Different methods allow for different things. Most of them can be linked in some way. Don't use a profile, because the Facebook staff will find it and delete it.

Know that using social media is being involved in an active conversation. You have to hold up your end while still responding to others' comments. It's not useful if no one is interacting with you.

Wilda Belisle :

We learn from other agencies, what they are doing, **and we get ideas from other people.** It is a way to **offer support to our colleagues or other programs in the area.** It is a great interaction tool. It makes us available to younger crowds.

Suggestions for How to Start Using Social Media

Patrick Rowan:

Have a simple plan and stick to it! This is not something that will produce a dramatic affect overnight, but if you're not participating, it will pass you by. **Start with one outlet**, like Facebook, and **identify one staff person that is responsible** for sharing information 1-2 times a week, and don't ask for anything from your followers to be going with.

Tiffani Paige:

Do research on different sites and decide which one best helps you accomplish your goals. Then jump in – it's not going to build and manage itself. You have to devote a small window of time at least several days a week in order for it to be productive. If you have any questions or would like more step by step directions, ask one of us. We would be happy to show you because it's truly the best way to learn.

Wilda Belisle :

You just have to jump into it. Do your own research and do what is best for your program. For example, twitter was not our tool because we could not tweet fast enough to keep up with the twitters. It caused us stress! Facebook, however, was a tool that was user friendly, allowed us everyone at the office easy access and to make updates as needed. And we got immediate results. **Team up with someone that knows how to use it and ask questions.**

A Broader Perspective

Suzanne Grubb:

While MOWAA doesn't use Social Media to recruit volunteers for our own organization, we do have a bird's eye view of how our Members are using Social Media. Here are a few things we've learned:

Geographic Trends. People in different parts of the country use social media differently – so it's important to know where people in your community like to "hang out" online.

- Twitter and LinkedIn are more widely used in cities than in other areas.
- Blogs and photo/video sharing are the most widely-used social media in rural communities.
- Facebook is popular with most everyone.

Existing Volunteer Networks. Idealist.org; VolunteerMatch.org; NetworkforGood.org; and Serve.gov all use multiple social media channels and have very engaged volunteer communities. Look at the people and organizations that are highly active in these networks – and look at how they use social media – to get new ideas. And introducing yourself on these national channels can sometimes be a good way to pick up an initial following.

Different Channels Are Suited for Different Purposes. Here's a rundown of some of the most common uses we've seen:

- Blog Posts: Can provide in-depth information; can be a destination for links in Facebook updates/Tweets/etc.; can be a way for volunteers to share their own stories.
- Facebook and Twitter: are good for announcements and reminders.
- Facebook and LinkedIn: are good for publicizing and managing events.
- Facebook "Likes" and Twitter "Hashtags": can help extend your network.
- YouTube Videos: can be powerful recruiting/promotion tools.