

# **Social Media Networks for Behavioral Health Professionals: A Brief Proposal**

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There has been a trend toward an increasing rate of mental health issues coupled with an aging "baby-boomer" generation. The demand for health care, and more specifically behavioral health services, has correspondingly been steadily increasing. Due to geographical, scheduling, and funding restraints, these behavioral health professionals lack a setting in which they can collaborate or seek peer support and input. The purpose of this action research study is to utilize a social media network to facilitate collaboration and support for behavioral health professionals on the island of Maui.

There exists significant literature on educational benefits of social networking that are applicable to this paper's objective. Social media is an ever growing force in our lives today. "Facebook's global membership increased from 350 million to 500 million in a period of 7 months. This figure represents more than 7% of the total world population, with a user base twice as large as the world's third most populous country" (Lin, Le, Khalil, & Cheng, 2012, p. 196). The new generation of web, or Web 2.0, as it has been labeled, supports social interaction and makes it easy for individuals to exchange information and to share their life and interests in one form or another (Hung, 2010). According to Walling (2009), drive and motivation are furthered by interaction with the work of others. Benefits of the social media network from the perspective of an employee include being "less costly, more engaging, and even fun" (Grensing-Pophal, 2009, p. 38).

The subjects of this intervention would include behavioral health professionals spanning 3 or more companies and non-profits across the island of Maui. These professionals are an extremely diverse population. Cultural backgrounds, age, educational background and amount of experience all vary significantly. Furthermore, job tasks also vary significantly between

clients. This represents a fairly significant obstacle when implementing the suggested intervention.

Initially a survey will be provided for participants to reveal their experience, perceptions, expectations, and any potential adversity to the social media network. Further interviews and focus groups will both be utilized after implementation of the social media network to reveal any changes in perception of the program as well as any potential issues. Lastly, follow-up questionnaires with the opportunity for open feedback will be conducted after the network has been utilized for a 4 week period of time to determine effectiveness in reaching the desired outcome.

A social media network will be developed for these behavioral health professionals. Members will not only be able to interact with each other in terms of support and collaboration, but they will have access to events and other various resources as applicable to their clients. Following the initial set up of this network, a brief written and multimedia guide on use of the network will be provided for instruction and support on the new material.

Following implementation of the proposed intervention data will be collected and analyzed. The researcher will then determine the effects of this intervention, and whether the initial goals were met. Data will be summarized in a final report in narrative form.

As time and monetary restrictions become increasing obstacles for professionals to do their jobs efficiently and effectively, alternative methods of support must be explored. A social media network potentially addresses these issues as well as providing additional benefits. These implications are applicable to any setting in which there is a need to increase employee collaboration and support.

References:

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