

Building Your Behavioral Health
Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)
Data-Driven Digital Marketing Strategy

A Digital Marketing Guide for Behavioral
Health CBOs – March 2024

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Introduction

Community outreach is a key component for helping behavioral health community-based organizations (CBOs) reach the individuals who can benefit from their integrated behavioral health services. While community outreach can take many forms, social media is one of the most readily available and cost-effective tools for reaching members of the community where they are with targeted messages about behavioral health and wellness. In this guide, we'll explore social media basics as they relate to community outreach by behavioral health CBOs, specifically focused on expanding access to integrated behavioral health services.

Understanding Social Media for Data Storytelling

For behavioral health community-based organizations (CBOs), social media presents a unique opportunity to engage in data storytelling—the act of translating complex data and insights into compelling, humanizing narratives. Traditional media, such as annual reports or research papers, often present data in a static, one-way fashion. In contrast, social media platforms allow CBOs to bring their data to life through interactive, engaging content that sparks conversation and drives action. Imagine sharing a poignant client testimonial that illustrates the transformative impact of your integrated behavioral health services, and then inviting your followers to contribute their own stories in the comments. Or picture posting an eye-catching infographic that highlights the urgent need for mental health support in your community, and then facilitating a live Q&A session to help your audience make sense of the numbers. By translating data into relatable, actionable insights, social media allows CBOs to not merely inform their communities, but to actively involve them in the storytelling journey.

Social Media Platforms

In today's digital landscape, social media platforms offer a wealth of opportunities for behavioral health CBOs to engage with their target audiences and share data-driven stories. Each platform has its unique features, demographics, and best practices for content creation and engagement. By understanding the strengths and characteristics of each platform, CBOs can effectively tailor their data storytelling strategies to maximize reach, engagement, and impact. In the following table, we'll explore six popular social media platforms - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, TikTok, YouTube and LinkedIn - and how behavioral health CBOs can leverage them for data storytelling.

Platform	Description	Audience	Best Type of Content	Data Storytelling Use
Facebook	A social networking site for connecting and sharing with friends and family.	Broad, with a significant presence across most age groups, particularly with 75% of 30-49.	Diverse content including posts, videos, and live streams.	Share detailed stories and data visualizations to a wide audience.
Instagram	A visual platform focused on photos and videos.	Younger audiences, especially 18–29-year-olds but also popular with 57% of teens 13-17 years old.	High-quality images, stories, and short videos.	Use visual data presentations and stories to engage a visually-oriented audience.
Twitter/X	Platform for quick updates and real-time engagement.	Broadly used, with 27% of adults, skews towards younger users, 40% of 18–29-year-olds.	Concise content, updates, and discussions.	Share bite-sized data points and participate in relevant conversations.
YouTube	A video-sharing platform for a wide range of content.	Broad, with a strong presence among teens (93% of 13-17 years old) and 92% of 18-49 years old.	Long-form videos, tutorials, documentaries.	Publish detailed analyses, stories, and documentaries supported by data.
LinkedIn	A professional networking platform.	Working professionals across various industries, age groups skewing slightly older with	Articles, professional achievements, and educational content.	Share success stories, data insights, and research findings to a professional audience.

Platform	Description	Audience	Best Type of Content	Data Storytelling Use
		40% of 30-49 years old.		

Getting Started – Checklist

Here's a checklist you can use to guide you through the "Getting Started" section:

Getting Started Checklist

1. Assess your organization's readiness

- Ensure your website is up-to-date, accessible, and user-friendly
- Confirm that your services are clearly described on your website
- Verify that your intake and clinical workflows are well-defined and documented
- Ensure that your organization has a clear business case for providing integrated behavioral health services

2. Define your social media goals

- Identify 1-3 SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals for your social media presence
- Ensure that your goals align with your organization's overall mission and objectives
- Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the success of your social media efforts

3. Identify your target audiences

- Develop detailed profiles of your ideal audiences, including demographics, behavioral health needs, and social media preferences
- Prioritize 2-3 key audiences to focus on initially

- Gather insights from your staff, clients, and community partners to refine your audience profiles

4. Develop your messaging strategy

- Craft key messages that resonate with your target audiences and align with your social media goals
- Ensure that your messages are clear, concise, and compelling
- Incorporate calls-to-action (CTAs) that encourage your audience to take specific steps, such as visiting your website or scheduling an appointment

5. Choose your social media platforms

- Select 1-3 social media platforms that best align with your target audiences and messaging strategy
- Familiarize yourself with each platform's unique features, strengths, and best practices
- Create a content plan that optimizes the strengths of each platform

6. Establish your social media presence

- Create profiles or pages on your chosen social media platforms
- Ensure that your profiles are complete, on-brand, and include relevant information about your organization and services
- Invite your staff, clients, and community partners to follow and engage with your social media profiles

7. Develop your content calendar

- Create a content calendar that outlines the types of content you'll post, the frequency of posting, and the platforms you'll use
- Ensure that your content calendar aligns with your messaging strategy and social media goals
- Assign responsibilities for content creation, approval, and posting to specific team members

8. Engage with your audience

- Monitor your social media profiles regularly for comments, questions, and messages
- Respond promptly and professionally to all inquiries, using pre-approved templates when appropriate
- Encourage your audience to share their own stories, experiences, and feedback related to behavioral health and your organization's services

Part 1 - Creating Your Social Media Strategy

Determining Your Goals

Be specific about the behavioral health focused goals you hope to achieve through social media outreach. Use the SMART framework - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound. Some examples:

- Increase depression screening rates by 5% over the next 6 months
- Increase number of referrals to substance use counseling by 10% this quarter
- Increase suicide prevention education posts to 1 per week

Use the worksheet to identify up to 3 key goals. While you can have more, focusing on a few will help target your efforts.

Identify Your Audiences

For each goal, identify the specific audience(s) you need to reach. Consider factors like:

- Demographics - age, gender, location, language
- Behavioral health needs and concerns
- Attitudes towards and past experiences with seeking services
- Social media access and preferences

Use the worksheet to map out key characteristics of up to 3 priority audiences.

Define Your Messages

Effective messages speak to your target audience's wants, needs, and motivators. Use the worksheet to brainstorm:

- What does the audience currently know/believe about the topic?
- What do you want them to know?
- How do they currently feel about it? How do you want them to feel?
- What specific action do you want them to take?

Craft sample messages that tie together these elements. For example:

- "1 in 5 adults experience a mental health condition each year, but less than half get help. You deserve support. We're here to help you take the first step with a free, confidential screening."

Select Your Platforms

Focus on the platforms that best reach your priority audiences. Rather than spreading efforts thin, go deeper on 1-2 platforms.

- **Younger audiences:** Consider Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube
- **Older audiences:** Consider Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram
- **Spanish-speaking:** Consider Facebook, YouTube, Instagram
- **More affluent/educated:** Consider Twitter, LinkedIn

Create Your Accounts

Reserve your CBO's username on your chosen platforms. Younger staff who are active on those platforms can be a great resource for setting up accounts in an authentic way for each channel. Fill out profiles completely to establish credibility.

Part 2: Creating Your Content Strategy

Creating Your 90-Day Social Media Plan

Create a social media plan and follow it for 90 days before making major changes. This gives time for your efforts to take hold. A basic plan could include:

- Platform 1: Post inspirational client story 1x/month
- Platform 2: Post behavioral health tip 1x/week
- Platform 3: Post CBO update 2x/week
- All platforms: Share curated content 2x/week

Use scheduling tools such as [Hootsuite](#), [Buffer](#) or [Metricool](#) to make posting more efficient. Aim for a posting frequency that is sustainable for your team.

From Content to Calendar

Use an editorial calendar to organize your content library into a strategic posting cadence. Strive for a mix of content types (text, image, video) and a balance of original vs curated, and promotional vs educational content. Time posts for when your audiences are most likely to engage. You can use the social media scheduling tools mentioned above to create an editorial calendar.

From Isolated to Integrated

Collaborate with other local organizations serving the same population. Share each other's content, promote each other's programs and events. Collectively, you can reach and positively impact more people.

From Social Broadcasting to Social Listening

Use social media to listen to your community's behavioral health needs and concerns. Follow relevant organizations and hashtags. Ask questions and solicit input. Let what you hear inform your services and communications.

Part 3: Honing Your Strategy for Greatest Impact

Tracking and Analytics

Go beyond vanity metrics (likes, shares) to track meaningful data like:

- **Reach:** How many people saw the content?
- **Engagement rate:** What % interacted with it?
- **Click-through rate:** How many clicked a link?
- **Conversion rate:** How many took your call-to-action?

Most platforms have built-in analytics. Dedicated social media management tools provide more robust data.

Interpreting and Evaluating Your Metrics

Regularly review your data to understand what's working. Let's say you notice:

- Videos get 2x the engagement as text posts

- Q&A posts produce the most comments
- Your audience is most active at 3pm vs 10am

This shows your audience craves interaction and prefers video as a format. You might adjust your content plan to feature an "Answering Your Questions" video series every Tuesday at 3pm.

Refining Your Approach

Assess if your content is supporting your goals. Ask:

- Is my call-to-action clear?
- Am I posting consistently?
- Does the content resonate with my audience?
- Am I leveraging each platform's strengths?

Make adjustments each quarter while maintaining enough consistency to build traction.

"Amping Up" Your Audience's Awareness

Bring your audience personas to life - give them names, backstories. Talk to real community members to pressure test assumptions. Identify influencers who can help spread your message. Stay on top of conversations and engage in real-time.

Refining your Key Messages

Evaluate which messages get the most traction. Experiment with different tones, styles, and formats. Tie messaging to awareness days/months. Keep a finger on the pulse of trending topics and new findings so your content stays relevant.

Refining Your Platform Selections and Uses

Focus on quality over quantity. Make the most of each platform's strengths:

- **Twitter/X:** Host a Twitter chat on a hot topic
- **YouTube:** Post informative and/or educational content
- **Instagram/X:** Spotlight staff and client stories
- **LinkedIn:** Share job openings and partnership opportunities

Cross-promote content across platforms to maximize reach and impact.

Try, Test, Tweak

The "best" approach is the one you can implement consistently and sustainably. Start where you are and iterate as you gather data. Set goals, define your strategy, execute your plan, track your results, identify opportunities to optimize, implement changes, repeat!

The Next 90 Days

Armed with insights from your first 90 days, set your strategy and content plan for the next 90 days. Expand what worked, rethink what didn't. The key is continuous improvement and alignment with your overall objectives.

Start small, post quality content, track diligently, and refine continuously. With a strategic approach to social media community outreach, you can build awareness, reduce stigma, and connect people to the services they need.

Resources

SAMHSA Share Your Story - <https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-tools/share-your-story>

Sources

- <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2023/12/11/teens-social-media-and-technology-2023/>
- <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/03/6-facts-about-americans-and-tiktok/>
- <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/teens-and-social-media-fact-sheet/>
- <https://www.tidio.com/blog/tiktok-statistics/>