

NSMS: Social Media Pilot Summary

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Social networking platforms are many – they include Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, WeChat, Telegram, and others. In August 2017, the NSMS Settlement Program started pilot projects with WeChat and Telegram to assess the ability to reach Chinese, Persian, and young adult immigrants. The objectives were to identify general set up needs, parameters for use, and how to best maintain these social media outlets.

SET UP CONSIDERATIONS

Hardware/software:

Both WeChat and Telegram required the use of a smartphone to set up initial NSMS account. WeChat can generally be used on either a smartphone or iPad; we used an iPad. Telegram was accessed on a desktop computer or smartphone, but can also be used on an iPad.

Definitions:

- WeChat group chat – can be public or private; it does allow for commenting and posting from any member within the group. Any of the group members can add others, but only the group creator/administrator can remove members.
- Telegram group – can be public or private; these also allow for communication among members by comments/posts. Groups are ideal for sharing within a discrete set of people; administrators can be set up to restrict the addition of members.
- Telegram channel – these are generally public. A channel simply broadcasts a public message and does not allow for comments/posts. Public channels allow anyone in Telegram to search and join, while private channels are closed and members must be added by the creator or given a link to join.

Staff:

- Chinese Settlement Worker → recruited and managed a WeChat group chat
- Persian Settlement Worker → recruited and managed both a Telegram group for the Senior Sparks program and Telegram channel for Farsi speakers
- Get Connected Program Coordinator → recruited and managed a Telegram channel for young adult immigrants
- Communications Coordinator → provided flyers for posting to social media and tracked progress of the pilot

SUCSESSES

WeChat

- Identifying a few power members can rapidly increase recruitment. In the first week, a dozen contacts had brought in 200 group members.
- QR codes is a uniquely quick way to add contacts.

Telegram

- Again, members quickly spread views of our materials. Three dozen members resulted in nearly 600 seeing our flyers.
- In the seniors group, we successfully engaged 30 members in real-time.
- It was easy to see how many have viewed individual posts.

PROBLEMS

WeChat

- Initial recruitment was slow from among our clients – we verbally requested permission during client sessions or visited our language classes.
- Group chats do not allow for the restriction of member comments or posting.
- It is not possible to know how many people have seen a particular post.

Telegram

- Initial recruitment was slow – we had to invite from within the app using email addresses. Clients must then follow our channel or join the group.

MOVING FORWARD

It is important to remember that social media is primarily a tool for networking and staying connected. NSMS has established that the purpose of our presence on social media is to use networks to broadcast information, rather than to foster conversation. This is a more manageable task and reduces the likelihood of unmoderated comments/posts that may not reflect our organization's mission/values.

We learned that it does not take much effort to set up profiles on social media outlets, nor to manage as long as it is set up appropriately. This is what lies ahead for:

- WeChat: The initial group chat was deleted due to unmoderated comments/posts and it has since been determined that group chats may be too much to moderate. We will move to post on our NSMS profile and rely upon the account's contacts to share our materials. This is much more passive, but still has the potential to widely spread NSMS information.
- Telegram: The experience using both a group and channels were deemed successful and these will continue as is.

The next step will be to widely advertise our presence on these outlets to expand our networks; this may include announcing by mass email, to our website, and other social media (Facebook and LinkedIn).

MORE INFO

Lily Foster: Communications Coordinator (until November), communications@nsms.ca
Settlement Program Coordinator, lilyf@nsms.ca