

To Tweet or Not to Tweet: Role of Social Media in Public Outreach

Amanda Waters

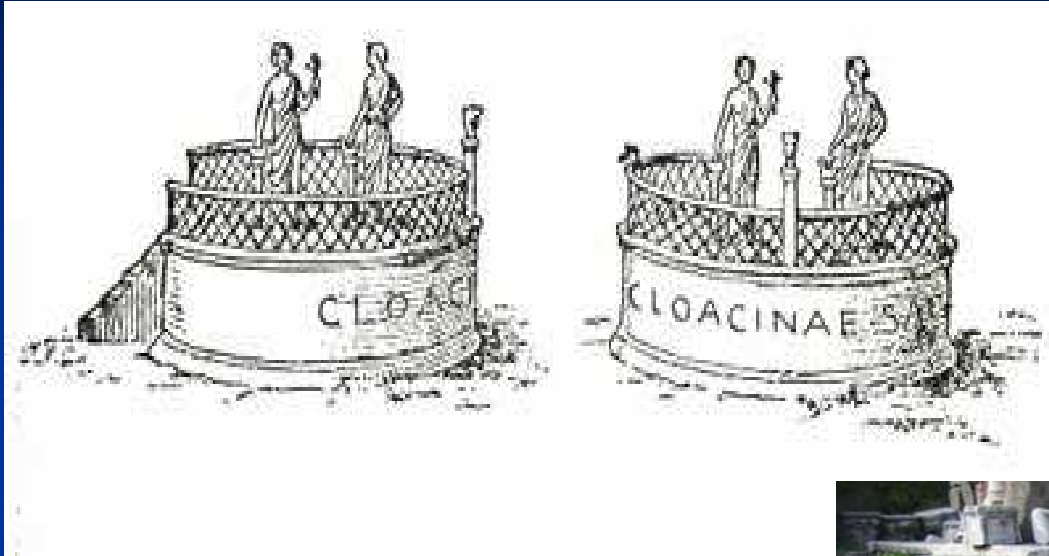
Sanitation District No. 1

Northern Kentucky

Goddess of Sewers

- Roman Empire
 - Sewers important enough to Romans to have a goddess of sewers
 - Patron of the city's overall sewer system
- What was the name of Goddess?

Cloacina



Greatest Medical Advance

- British Medical Journal asked experts/doctors:
 - Most important medical advance since 1840?

And the Oscar Goes to...

Sanitation

- It beat
 - Antibiotics
 - Anesthesia
 - Vaccines
- Valued by experts/scientists
 - What does the average person think about sanitation?

Why Aren't We Worshipped?

- Unpleasant issue
- Lack of understanding of service provided
- Do not value service provided – not considered vital
- Entitlement rather than a privilege
- Rate Increases
- Recession

Public Opinion of SD1 in Northern Kentucky

- Elected Officials/Community Leaders
- Average customer

Change to Monthly Billing: Efforts Taken to Educate Public

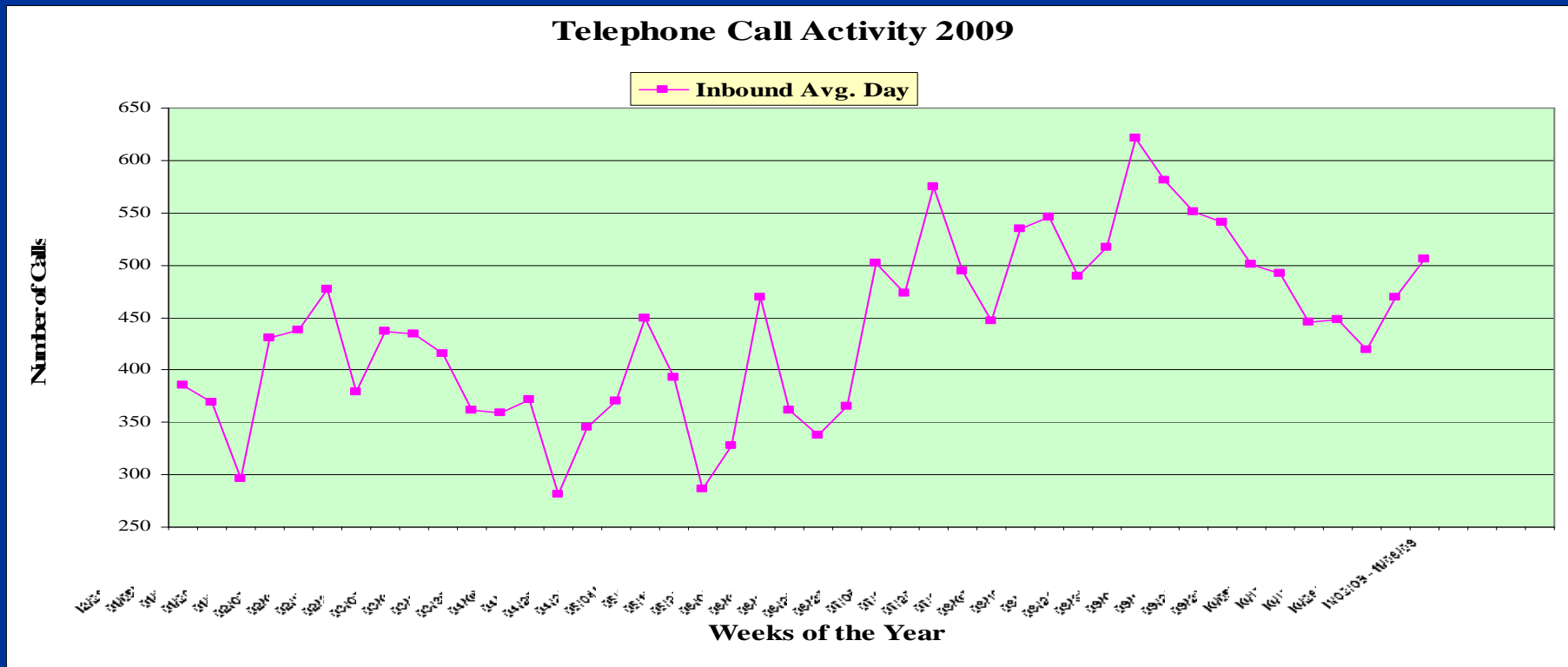
- Put article in county newsletters
- Sent pamphlet to all customers



Monthly vs. Quarterly Billing

Call Volume Increased from Average Monthly Volume ~ 8,000

- July – 11,085
- August – 10,867
- September – 12,767



E-mail Volume

- Feb. 1 to May 31 - 350
- June 1 to September 30 - 953

Love Letters

- I just received my bill and couldn't believe how **stupid** you people are.
- To say that changing the billing from every three months to every month is better in any way is **the dumbest** thing you could do.
- I guess you all didn't do to [*sic*] good in math class when you went to school.

Blog Postings

- Extreme negativity
- Positive articles/friendly blog postings
- Until recently, no official response from SD1
- Recent posting:
 - Antitax: Why are some citizens forced to pay the storm water tax even though they don't have sanitary or storm sewers?

SD1 Response

- It is important to us that all of our customers understand who we are, what we do and what their money pays for.
- If you would like information about the storm water program, the storm water fee, storm water related projects, or SD1 in general, please feel free to contact us at info@sd1.org.
- We would be more than happy to send you some educational information and answer any questions that you may have.

Why do we care?

- Monopoly
- Lack of public support for Consent Decree efforts
- Proposed legislation
 - Public Service Commission Oversight
 - Unanimous Fiscal Court Approval of Rates
- Budget/rate adjustment approvals

What can we do better?

- Do more, with less
- How much effort should we focus on our vocal critics?
- Role of social media
- Interactive Website

Interactive Website

- Create videos that share specific educational messages
- Virtual Tours of facilities
- Interactive Maps
- Create social media pages that people can link to from our website (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)

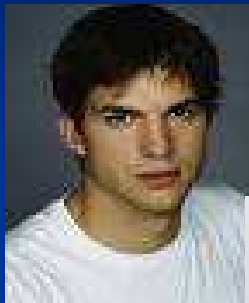
Will you reach customers using social media?

- Social networks and blogs
 - 4th most popular online activities
- 10% of all time spent on internet
- ~64% of marketers are using social media for 5 hours or more each week during campaigns

Blogs

- 900,000 blog posts are created within a single 24-hour period
- 77% of all active internet users regularly read blogs

Twitter

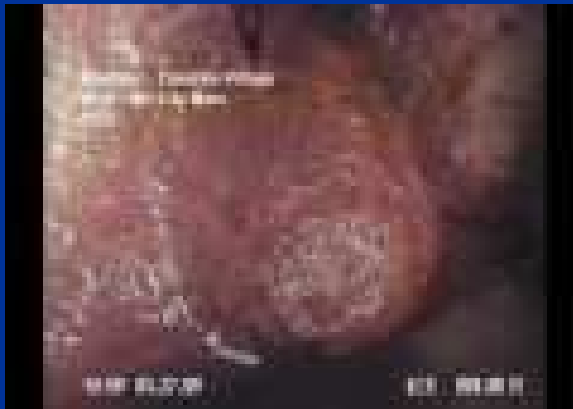


Twitter

- Breaking news
- Companies monitor
 - Avert PR disasters

YouTube

- Serve over 75 billion video streams to around 375 million visitors this year
- Terrifying - Inspection of Sewer Reveals New Life Form
 - What is it? Alien creatures? Invasion of the body snatchers? Mad Mutant Mold?



Social Networks: Facebook

- Half a million new users each day
- 35-54 year old demographic fastest growing
 - 276.4% growth rate in 6-month period

Your Customers Are Using Social Media

- If not part of the conversation
 - others will answer questions and provide information
- Can you afford to devote staff time to social media?
- Can you afford not to?

The Price Is Right

- YouTube, Twitter, Blogger – it's all free
- Do not have to hire a marketing consultant

How is Social Media Different than Other Outreach Efforts?

- Authentic conversation rather than one-sided talking “at” people
- Casual talk
 - same questions/conversations that a customer would have with a friend or neighbor
- Building relationships through conversations without objectives
- Perceived as more honest and meaningful
- Humanize your story; create loyalty and earn customer understanding and respect

Getting Started: Stop, Look & Listen

- Observation:
 - Where are conversations taking place
 - Who's participating
 - What's being said
 - Tone of the discussions
 - Specific information being sought
 - Impressions and misconceptions
- Identify your customers and where they go for information
- Search for keywords related to utility

So Many Options, So Little Time

- Social Media Options – overwhelming
- Assess available tools based on our objectives and the conversations that are taking place
 - Soft rollout - don't do more than can be handled
 - If your customers aren't using a site, move on
 - Don't use tool because it's shiny, new or popular
- Create a social map by searching for keywords in each of the social media communities
 - Develop a detailed blueprint for engagement

If you build it, they will come - Wrong

- Create profiles on Facebook, accounts on Twitter, upload videos to YouTube
- Sit back and wait for interaction to come?

How to get started - Facebook

- Go to Facebook and search for the name of your utility
- If there is information related to your utility or a group formed, read what is being written
- Will existing group work for your needs?
- If not, create a new group

LinkedIn

- LinkedIn - company groups
- Same process as Facebook
- LinkedIn runs a section called "Answers"
 - can pose a question to the crowd

Twitter

- Set up an account
- www.search.twitter.com
 - search the name of your utility
 - See if people are tweeting about it
 - Use "Follow" button to subscribe to Twitter feeds
 - Each account gets an e-mail informing them that you're tuning in

Discussion Forums

- Monitor:
 - online conversations on blogs
 - comments in online newspaper articles
 - local news broadcasts on the web
- Read at least 20 recent posts
 - learn blogger's personality & interests
 - bloggers are not journalists
- Answer questions, provide context, explain and defend utility actions
- Presence can defuse negative discussions

Traditional Outreach Methods

- Use social media in addition to traditional outreach methods

E-Mail

- Write a personal, customized reply to almost every e-mail received
- No form letters
- In certain cases, will begin referring customers to social media links

Effective Internal Communication

- Employees – key to successful communication
- Need to know what's happening
- Well informed and appreciated employees vs. uninformed employees
- Must equip them with the necessary information

Create Sewer Ambassadors

- Major matters that should be communicated:
 - Personnel changes
 - Rate increases
 - Raise freeze
 - Major Litigation
 - Major Construction and Improvements
 - Awards

Peer-to-Peer Program

- Reached all 250+ employees
- Conducted a survey
 - learned and retained information
 - there are different needs for different work groups
 - employees want more of this type of communication
 - Small group, face-to-face communication is preferred method
 - peer leaders positively accepted
- Identification of communication gaps

Community Involvement

- FY09 - ~6,500 hours of community service
- actively involved with approximately 50 different community groups/initiatives
- 2001 - Zapper Program provides all staff the opportunity of 8-10 hours of paid time to participate in a community service project
- Certifying Organization for the President's Volunteer Service Award

Teach Your Children Well

- Environmental unit
 - 60 schools
 - 4,000-5,000 students
 - KY Core Content for grades 4 and 5
- "Journey of a Drop of Water" field trip
 - ~30 schools (2,000-3,000 students)



Public Education

- Middle/High School
 - Host "WaterIfic" annually for 6th grade students
 - Presentations and job shadow opportunities available upon request
- Post-secondary
 - partnered with local university to create a storm water focused college course

Have a Good Mascot



Questions?

Amanda Waters
SD1 General Counsel
1045 Eaton Drive
Ft. Wright, KY 41051
awaters@sd1.org
859-547-1318