



Mindframe
National Media Initiative

Consultation Report
***Mindframe* Communication Managers' Meeting**
Views on Social Media
April 2013



Background to the consultation

Social media usage in Australia has grown exponentially in the past decade and is now widely recognised as one of the most popular activities for Australians online. Given the recent rise, organisations within the mental health and suicide prevention sectors have begun to enter the space both as a marketing tool, and to engage with and influence consumers.

In 2012, *Mindframe* commissioned Dialogue Consulting to conduct two scoping studies on social media use by the Australian mental health and suicide prevention organisations and news media (available through the *Mindframe* team). In the mental health sector, 70% had a Twitter account and 60% had a Facebook presence. Within the media sector, most major outlets had at least one social media channel.

The main risks identified in the studies are associated with user-generated content, which organisations are now responsible for monitoring and removing if deemed inappropriate. Until further legal guidance is provided, organisations owe a duty of care to users who engage with a mental health service on social media. It is suggested that operation hours and 24-hour crisis support help numbers are included on social media sites.

In early 2013, the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, in partnership with *Mindframe*, held a Young People, Social Media and Suicide Prevention Roundtable in Melbourne. More than 50 representatives from Australia's leading youth, mental health, media and technology providers, including Facebook, Yahoo7, Lifeline, headspace, Hunter Institute for Mental Health and a group of young people, came together to develop a collaborative approach to tackle the risks, challenges and opportunities presented by social media. Outcomes and recommendations will be disseminated in mid-2013.

In April 2013, *Mindframe* allocated two hours of its Communication Managers' Meeting to run three consecutive focus group-like discussions. As a guide, senior managers at the Hunter Institute of Mental Health asked each group a series of questions surrounding five primary topic areas to gain their views about:

- The ways that the mental health and suicide prevention sectors currently interact with audiences through social media;
- The challenges associated with communication staff using social media to engage with potentially vulnerable audiences;
- The strengths and limitations of any current practice standards;
- Resources that would assist those in communication roles;
- Specific areas where *Mindframe* could support the sector.

This report is a brief thematic analysis describing some of the key issues raised by communication managers during the meeting.

Summary of Key Themes

1. In what ways do the mental health and suicide prevention sectors currently interact with audiences through social media?

There was a general agreement that organisations within the mental health and suicide prevention sectors have begun to adopt social media. Many stated that the technology now forms an integral part of their communication strategy.

We also have social media, we have Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, you know, we pretty much, whatever is available, we use

We've got a general Twitter account, we've got a YouTube channel, and we've got Facebook and Linked In

However, some thought that social media is still relatively new to the sector and was primarily used for informal communication, and that the formal usage is not yet widespread.

My sense is that the sector itself is not actually using it all that much, but the informal sector and people are using it. There may be the presence of some organisations that are using it

Mine's very brief, because we don't have any social media presence at all

Within the organisations that have begun utilising social media, there was the common observation that this presence was limited to the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter.

It seems that Facebook and Twitter are it for the sector

I know [organisation] has quite a strong influence on Twitter and Facebook

We have Facebook and Twitter

In terms of the usage of this medium, a number of different strategies were identified where social media has been effectively implemented within the mental health and suicide prevention sectors. For instance, some members indicated that the platforms were particularly useful for the recruitment of participants for research, and for obtaining information from specific target groups.

We're working with [organisation] for their men's project, and we are doing an online survey. But the whole campaign is about getting people, you know, 2500 men, to do an online survey, and we are doing it all through social media. And that's what we got last year when we did the first [organisation] survey, we got 2000 people in two weeks, and it was through that social mobilisation

Others indicated that social media had now formed an integral part of their organisation, and that this was associated with significant changes in their service delivery.

It's really about service delivery and trying to understand how service delivery is changing roles in the social media space

We are also seeing it used in service delivery, and that is a real concern for us, because we are actually a crisis service, and people shouldn't be doing long term

Many suggested that they used social media as a method of communicating with partners within the sector, and as a mechanism for the sharing of information with key stakeholders.



We are a research organisation, so we don't do direct service provision to people with mental health difficulties, so the purpose of our social media is to disseminate new research, to share new practices with our partner organisations

Our social media is much more about information sharing and research sharing

However, one of the most common uses of social media that was identified within the sector was for marketing and public relations purposes. The group agreed that using social media in this way was proving to be quite beneficial, both in terms of its cost effectiveness and reach.

If it's the only strategy you do, you can make a pretty fair assumption that using technology will reach a large majority of that particular kind of demographic... and it's certainly the most cost effective. There is no other way that you can do a \$6,000 advertising strategy that pinpoints the specific demographic in the specific suburb

We certainly use it a lot for marketing

We don't use it as an avenue for people to seek help through. We use it as a marketing tool to direct people, firstly to encourage help seeking, and secondly to direct people towards the help that is available

The role of marketing is about engagement, building your brand, building trust, which is what the end point of marketing being ultimately about product usage and getting people to understand what it does and why it would be a value in life.. What social media does is allow you to do that in a lower cost continuous way, but it does shift your cost-base towards continuous engagement

Whilst many noted advantages of advertising through this medium, others were more cautious about this approach, suggesting that it may actually be a detriment to the organisation.

I think that the biggest mistake that most services do is sort of see it as an advertising source, which effectively what you are doing is you're breaking into a teenager's party, having fun with their friends and you're breaking in. And if you're that weird guy in the corner of the party talking about stuff that no one else is interested in, then you stand out like a sore thumb

2. What are some of the current challenges or issues faced by communication staff when engaging with potentially vulnerable audiences through social media (including risks)?

With the recent rise of social media, organisations worldwide have been required to adopt the technology and rapidly adapt their current communication strategy/policy, with little guidance or knowledge of the potential consequences. One of the major challenges identified with this was that we are still very much learning about the technology, and that if used incorrectly, it has the potential to cause ill-effects to the organisation.

We are learning this through the school of hard knocks, it's quite new

One of the challenges or risks even, is that you can have very detrimental impacts

Within the mental health and suicide prevention sectors, the risk of potentially damaging their organisation's reputation had made a number of organisations reluctant to enter the space.

Currently we don't have, we don't tweet and we don't have a Facebook page but we are watching to see what is happening

While I absolutely think it is a place that we need to be in, we haven't gone there yet... I worry about the risks of starting social media and then not staying on top of it



But other members felt that it's imperative to have a presence in this space because the alternative option could carry far greater repercussions. There was a general sentiment that conversations surrounding mental health and suicide were happening anyway and that not entering the space could make your organisation obsolete.

We can't really go 'should we really be doing it?' It's going to happen anyway

We have to be there to manage the risk

If you don't do this [use social media] when you say you are a consultative organisation then you make yourself irrelevant, massively

One of the challenges posed by many organisations was simply an issue of logistics. Restrictions on the access to social media sites using the company internet network prevented many organisations from having the ability to set up and/or moderate the space.

Technically, as part of the health service, we don't have access to social media

One of the biggest challenges is the lack of access

We're obviously trying to do some internal comms and get people to like our pages, but at the same time, that's so hypocritical because we are not giving them Facebook access at work either

There was also the opinion that social media provided a new mechanism for members of the public to seek help. Members agreed that it was important to recognise that increasing numbers of people are seeking help via this method, as they find it more comfortable than traditional methods of help-seeking.

Young people don't like to connect in traditional ways. They don't like to use face-to-face services; they don't like to use crisis lines

I think that if someone comes to you in that way [through social media], what they are doing is reaching out in a way that is comfortable to them

In terms of challenges, one of the most consistent overarching themes raised in all of the focus groups was the issue of moderating the social media space. One component of moderation that caused particular concern was the immediacy of social media, with participants stating that it was critical to respond to questionable posts in a timely manner.

If you look at the spike on social media as opposed to regular press, it happens almost immediately. It's within the first hour virtually, where the comment is, and if you are commenting on something a day later, it's lost

To ensure a rapid response, many expressed that this type of service required moderating 24-7, as often comments requiring a response occurred outside of office hours. The after-hours moderation was particularly concerning as it created a strain on already strained resources.

Yeah, that is the issue. It is often the stuff that happens on weekends

The thing is that stuff happens after hours, and you are suddenly scrambling and you can't leave that overnight because the impact it has when you let it stew overnight

I think that the resourcing thing is the biggest challenge

We will go there but those issues of after hours, which we will clearly not be able to staff, are important ones



This had created a situation where members of organisations felt obligated to monitor their organisation's social media feeds in their personal time, in an attempt to limit the potential risks posed to those who subscribe to their organisation's social media channel.

If Insight on SBS does a program, two or three of my staff members and I all stay up basically sitting on our couches working the different platforms and making sure that people are staying safe, that they are getting the right messages... countering any missed information or incorrect information

One potential method that was raised to overcome after-hours moderation issues, was hiring independent organisations specifically to deliver this service, or using automated services that have become recently available.

Paid moderators from an organisation that does it, most of the big brands don't actually do their own. They pay a company to do it... Outsourcing moderators

Alternatively, members discussed the possibility of clearly outlining the hours that their organisational feeds were monitored; however, it was believed that this method was insufficient to address the problem.

We had a big discussion when we first started about whether you have that message on Friday night saying 'don't contact us over the weekend because we are not checking this', and we took it off because we are basically sending a message to young people that 'oh we don't care enough about you to be checking this out over the weekend'

Others suggested the implementation of both national and international collaborations to assist with moderating sites after hours could be something to consider in the future.

Could we have Western Australian organisations taking up some of the slack in the early to late evening, where they are not having to keep staff on that much later in the day? Or are there international partnerships that could support some of these...

So what opportunity is there to say, pair up with Ireland or the UK in similar services, and saying, 'we will do your after-hours moderating, because we are awake here in Australia, and you can do ours?' And can we get some international partnerships, because in the online space, it's global

The need to quickly address posts made by vulnerable individuals was an issue not only for those seeking help, but also for others who may be exposed to the content vulnerable individuals post on social media. Members expressed the very real concern of contagion if the problems were not addressed in a timely manner.

It's also a risk to onlookers. I think that a lot of us have strategies, or policies around when we identify a risk online that you take that conversation offline and have a personal conversation, to try and push that person into support. But then, I think that we need to think about, where does that leave the onlookers that have seen the start of that conversation and know that that person is at risk? We can say that we're having this conversation with this person online and trying to get them into support but is that enough? And does that put other people at risk?

One of the issues that we are very aware of is contagion between people with lived experience. Eating disorders has a characteristic of that and they tend to, like attract like kind of thing and they will get into a Facebook feed and you need to shut that down and that is an issue that we are constantly dealing with

These problems were further complicated by the issue of trolls – people who post inflammatory content in an attempt to induce a response. Content posted by trolls was of particular concern, given the potential impact these comments may have on vulnerable audiences.



You can just leave a post up there from a troll for an hour and it could do ridiculous amounts of damage. Cause that's what it's intended to do

Has anyone had any issues with trolls and those sorts of thing? And how is it managed, especially with moderation? I understand that you can delete posts and you can remove them but it's hard if you're not literally moderating every minute

It was widely recognised that there are difficulties associated with managing social media. Other factors that contribute to these difficulties include individuals who falsely claim affiliation to an organisation, or alternatively, associate organisations with their comments by tagging them. Members expressed their concern relating to the lack of any form of evidence checking or censor to social media.

Anyone in the community, in their description of themselves, can self-identify as being linked to your organisation, and in most cases there is no actual link and there is absolutely no level of control. So, quite often their comments, particularly from the media's point of view and the public point of view, can be taken as comments of the organisation, where in fact they are not comments of the organisation, they're their own personal comments

Where is the censor?

I don't think there is any evidence checking on social media, if it's an opinion of someone that is well-known, particularly if they have got a brand behind them, then their opinion is accepted as truth, and so opinion and facts get very muddled, very fast

Another important issue was that organisational social media channels were typically moderated and updated by communication staff. This was particularly concerning as they may not possess the same knowledge and understanding of how to respond to vulnerable people as those with clinical training. Furthermore, many consumers may associate the organisation's brand with a clinical service, and have the perception that they are communicating with a professionally trained clinician.

A complexity is that, do people understand who's behind the organisation when using social media. So, if you are using them for messaging and communication, not kind of engagement or service delivery, that's ok, but do they get that

I know there is a comms person behind that Twitter account, not someone who is on the phones, but do people in the community get that? Sometimes the risk is in the community not understanding what we are using the channels for

Others raised the concern over the lack of control when using social media. There was the fear that once information has been posted by either consumers or even staff, the information was then immediately publicly available, and there are many difficulties associated with trying to control this information.

Once it is out there, it is out there

There are all sorts of risk around privacy, managing to contain the conversation, you don't know who has been copied in, you know, it's very hard to contain

There were also legal aspects to consider in running an organisational social media channel. A number of members expressed concern over who was legally liable for the information posted on organisation social media channels.

This is also for all of our organisations reputation, our brand is at stake. If something goes wrong... on a social media platform that we own and run, we are legally liable, that is now codified by law



You are legally responsible for stuff that goes on in social media channels, whether you posted it or not, you're still responsible for it

Many members also expressed concern that the sector focus is exclusively on the two primary platforms, Facebook and Twitter, and suggested that organisations should also consider looking into moderating other social media channels. In particular, organisations need to start monitoring the graphic images which have appeared on social media platforms that are more visually oriented.

It's not so much what happens on Twitter or Facebook, I mean although there are some concerns. It's Tumblr that is the problem, and Instagram. The problem, I think Instagram and Flickr have been a lot of self-harm and self-injury, as well as eating disorders. They're the things that you can sort of see visually... that seems to be particularly challenging. Whereas if you look at our sector, we are not really on Tumblr

There was also the concern that organisations would be evaluated by the social media output. Many claimed that there already exists a tendency to measure an organisation's success by the number of people that like their page, or are actively engaged, and that funding often depended on these figures. However, many felt that focusing solely on these numbers can be misleading.

Funding goes off the reach that you've got as well. You've got to take them on a journey where you say 'the number of people accessing a service doesn't tell you much about whether the service actually helped or hindered the process...' It has to sort of have an impact – not whether or not they thought the show was nice

The biggest question with data is what do you want the data for and how does it change your business decisions? If you get 100 Twitter followers a month versus 1000, does it really matter?

One final concern expressed by the members was that this platform is still evolving, and organisations need to continuously adapt to keep pace.

And the other thing is, it has the potential to change really quickly

3. Are there current practice standards available? What are the key features and gaps?

A number of companies have developed comprehensive social media policies, specifically outlining how staff should conduct themselves when using both the organisation and their own personal social media accounts. Some members suggested that staff were required to sign a form, agreeing to adhere to the organisation's social media policy when signing their employment contract.

We have [organisation] guidelines and those guidelines are tagged to their employment contracts. So just like your OH&S and your workplace, any sort of, any of your workplace guidelines and rules and behaviours and you know, values and mission statements are all locked into the employment contract

If they are using their personal social media accounts to engage in the issues that the organisation represents, they must follow the organisation's key message platforms, guidelines for help seeking, they are not to offer opinions at all unless they have been given permission to do so

Other organisations have developed policies regarding social media use, but they have been limited to employee's personal usage whilst outside of work.

There is a whole of agency policy but it is not around, it is around personal use, and there are some parts of our organisation who can use it, but it is quite separate



However, one of the major gaps identified was the lack of a legal framework in this space. This raised an important discussion around organisational liability for information posted to an organisation's social media space.

I think the issue is that there is no legal framework in this space. We need to work with our lawyers to develop an easy-to-read guide, effectively around the legal and ethical restraints, and there is no legal framework... basically what we need to come and do is to come back with a company-specific policy that you think you can defend in court. Because that's the end point.

If a young person dies, suicides after... and then their parents go back and say 'hold on, at four o'clock in the morning they were on the [organisation] site and they told you and you did nothing', which if you get enough traffic it's going to happen to one of us at some point. Have you done enough so that when the coroner comes to you and says 'what did you do?' Our kind of view is that you have to go 'well here is our care framework'

There was a general consensus that all of the organisations within the sector could benefit from a universal social media policy developed at a government level. At the very least, there was a clear theme indicating the inherent need to construct some national standard that all organisations could base their social media policies on.

We could probably get some kind of policies out of practice, which gives us a pretty good minimum standard that we could consider as best practice

I think if we can create a phase one standard that we all sign up to that would be helpful rather than one organisation going off and doing it

It's more about what's the broad sector agreement of practice, not about how organisations want to utilise them on their own

One of the things that would help this space is that common minimum standard framework. The biggest reason for that is if you are up against a barrister or a coronial inquiry, it's much better than going back and saying 'here is the government standard' than saying 'here is our company policy'

4. What type of resources or strategies would be most useful to people in communication roles?

One strategy that was frequently raised as particularly useful for those in communication roles was utilising social media as a collective space for inter-organisational information sharing and communication. It was suggested that this may take the form of a closed Facebook group that maintained strict regulations, allowing only nominated organisations within the sector to join to maintain confidentiality of the content.

Is there actually, even for this group of people, is there a Facebook group? To bring together? Somewhere we could jump on and have that conversation?

I think for us actually getting together and doing that sharing scenario

We kind of need some sort of 'pot' or feedback channel where we can say 'we've done this and we really need to realise that it did work. And this is why. And now you guys don't go and do the same thing that we did'. Otherwise, you do things and it stays within the walls of each organisation and then others go out and make the same mistakes

I think using Facebook groups would be a lot better because you're in that space. Then setting up parameters so that you have to actually be organisations, because you don't want your in-house conversations getting out



The introduction of social media within the sector has caused a major transformation in what is expected of those in communication roles. One important strategy that was raised was the need for a collective resource clearly outlining how communication officers could provide support and assistance to the public, whilst working within the boundaries of their professional role. There was a general consensus that communication officers should not engage with the public through social media, but need to be trained so that they are able to respond and refer the public onto more suitably qualified clinicians to provide assistance.

Having comms professionals that are experienced, that are trained, that they can contain the conversation and make that referral appropriately, as opposed to 'I am just going to DM this person to see what is going on, then I am going to listen a little bit more then I'm going to...' and if you have let that conversation go too far then that referral can be even more difficult

I think it is also about having that robust discussion about who is the subject expert and who is expert in specific areas and if you are not the expert, agreeing that you wouldn't hold onto it just for the sake of wanting the referral, you would head it their way

[Our organisation] is about to launch in the next week or two its telehealth service, an online two way chat to support the telephone line, and we are very clear right from the get go that just because it is online, it is still a support service, so you don't engage, you are the comms person, the first catch. You are the referral point

A number of members indicated that communication professionals within the mental health and suicide prevention sectors need to better understand their role when engaging with social media and that the development of universal guidelines would help to achieve this.

It would be really good just to have a rubric of pointing the way. If people mention XYZ then you need to act on that more quickly

If it were to go wrong, tragically wrong, then it would be good to know that I followed the rules, or agreed protocol. That is a much better situation to put your employees in

Respondents also proposed that a collective voice for the sectors would enable more effective engagement with social media service providers.

I think collectively, our voice is far stronger than just as a singular, so I think that what we have to do is, we need to engage with Facebook and Twitter and all the others better than we have in the past

We need to get a collective request to technology providers, rather than individual

If we came together, decided what we wanted to do, as a sector, and how we can work with these organisations, and prioritising, and then went to them gently as one – rather than 100 people all yelling at them and screaming that we want these things – then it might actually be a little bit more palatable

A benefit of effective engagement with service providers could be the sectors receiving assistance to develop sophisticated customisations of organisational profiles. For instance, one strategy that respondents found particularly useful was the addition of an alert button to suicide related pages on Facebook.

The idea of working with the online providers to introduce, like, an emergency alert button, or something that is very, very visible on any official suicide or mental health related page. Where people could use it if they were in distress, but also if they had seen something and you know, it had not been picked up by the moderators, and then the organisation could intervene. Or Facebook could



5. How can *Mindframe* support the sector to do this?

There was consensus that *Mindframe* developing universal guidelines about engaging with social media would be beneficial across the sectors.

The best thing, or the initial thing, would be to develop a brief checklist of risks that we need to consider before we engage with social media. The do's and don'ts

There is so much more that needs to be done. If you want to play in this space and you want to be well meaning, these are the kinds of things you need to know. You need to know who does what in the sector, who you call on... you don't contact people publicly, you contact people privately, when do you call the police, when do you call Lifeline or whatever

Members suggested the guidelines could include information about engaging with influential figures in the social media space.

Something else that Mindframe can do, I mean, maybe there is a program, or a subset of your program that is around engaging influencers?

I think some specific efficacy around use of social media as well. I don't know whether that is with the mainstream media organisations that use social media, or whether it is some of the big players that exist out there, but the power of someone with above and beyond 1000 followers is immense

Given *Mindframe's* extensive experience in providing guidance on managing traditional media, many felt *Mindframe* were well positioned to take a leadership role in the development of resources and provision of education to the sectors about how to manage social media.

I think that it would be really good to educate the sector on how to best use their communications people

Provide that leadership, you know, we have said it a number of times today that we need leadership and I think that Mindframe are in a good position to do that because you can be impartial and you do have an understanding of all of the different services and organisations

Actions arising

- *Mindframe* to develop guiding principles that address the interface between social media and traditional media and integrate into relevant *Mindframe* resources and activities;
- *Mindframe* to enhance resources through use of innovation and technology;
- *Mindframe* to develop and implement an active dissemination strategy for new resources including updated training materials;
- *Mindframe* to support sectors to incorporate *Mindframe* principles into existing policies, plans and guidelines.