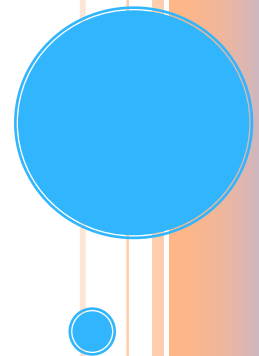


Youth Marketing

In-Year Funding Project 2013-14

This project was funded by Employment Ontario, a program of the Ontario government.



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Overview

To align with the focus of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (TCU), Literacy Link Niagara (LLN) applied for funding to conduct a region wide youth marketing strategy. It is known the youth make up a large number of the people who participate in adult literacy programs, but most their recent projects have focused on more general programs or applied more to the older worker. This has been because of the large manufacturing layoffs that have occurred in Niagara in the last decade.

Literacy Link Niagara has extensive knowledge of social media and connections to youth organizations in the region. For this reason, LLN felt they were in a position to immediately create a youth campaign. They were also in a position to assist their programs with social media and marketing, which they offered and will continue to offer after the project is completed.

LLN began the project by completing some research around the type of marketing that youth are attracted to. This research drove the messaging used on a rack card. Programs who had received youth funding in Niagara were also consulted on the rack card messaging. Rack cards were distributed to adult literacy, employment services and other community organizations. The feedback on the layout and design has been extremely positive.

LLN held focus groups with youth at two adult literacy programs. As part of ABEA's in-year funding, LLN also held a focus group with older workers at an employment service. The findings were interesting in contrast.

LLN made an active effort to use more social media to promote and showcase adult literacy in Niagara. LLN created a list of 50 tweets in preparation of the campaign. In February, it became evident that the Twitter account was a better tool than Facebook to connect with people in and outside of literacy. LLN saw an increase in Twitter followers during the campaign. They were also retweeted several times. For this reason, LLN will focus on Twitter as a main marketing tool after the project is completed. LLN will also investigate emerging social media tools as they gain popularity.

LLN created a roadshow to take to Ontario Works, Employment Services and other key community partners to train staff on the role of literacy in their client's successes.

The Niagara Employment Network (NEN) is a quarterly meeting for organizations that play a part in supporting an adult's entry or re-entry into the workforce. The group is coordinated by Literacy Link Niagara. To support the work of TCU and LLN, the focus of the March 2014 meeting was on youth services in Niagara. A panel of programs were gathered to showcase services and best practices, followed by open discussion.

Activities

The original proposal included the following four strategies (activities) -

Strategy 1- Focus Groups

Hold focus groups with youth enrolled in LBS programming to learn what drew them to LBS, what benefits they experience and what key messaging should be used in a marketing campaign.

Strategy 2- Social Media

Develop and implement a social media campaign to connect with youth

Strategy 3 – Travelling roadshow

Create a "travelling roadshow" for Ontario Works and other community organizations to present the benefits of LBS programming to young clients

Strategy 4 – Rack Card

Develop a marketing campaign using traditional media

As the project progressed, Literacy Link Niagara added the following activities –

Marketing research

To determine key messaging for youth

Niagara Employment Network Meeting

To facilitate discussion about youth programming and best practices

Deliverables

Deliverables of the project include

- Notes on marketing research
- Rack card
- Notes on focus groups
- Roadshow materials
 - o List of literacy indicators
 - o Sensitive language document including the term “youth”
 - o Adult literacy myths
- List of literacy tweets

Partners

Partners in the project included

- Adult literacy programs in the Niagara region
 - o Specifically
 - Programs who were funded to deliver youth programming
 - Programs who hosted focus groups
- NEXTNiagara, who gave feedback on the traditional and social media marketing campaigns
- Employment Services, who distributed rack card
- ABEA, who provided questions and dollars to host an older adult focus group
- Learning Networks of South Western Ontario, who provided feedback on rack card and shared best practices of their youth marketing projects

Key Findings/Learnings

The majority of learning came from the focus groups. The two youth focus groups were very different from each other in age. The first group was closer to the top of the age bracket (mid-20s), while the second had people in the lower bracket (late teens to early-20s). Both groups were unsure of the term “youth” as a good description of their experience, but the older group was much more disconnected from the term.

Social media was used by both groups, but more used by the younger group. A surprise to LLN was that a good number of focus group participants do not use social media. This finding supported the idea to create the rack card.

In contrast to the older worker focus group, both focus groups were interested in exploring their options and learning more about themselves before making an education or career choice. The older worker group did not want to participate in these types of exercises, but the youth groups were asking for more of this type of work.

Challenges

Practitioner Knowledge of Social Media

The social media campaign was challenging because it was difficult to engage practitioners and many local programs to participate. While we know social media is growing in power, many practitioners lack the knowledge and skills to use it. As more and more employers use social media to check potential employees or as part of their businesses, it is imperative that we train adult literacy staff to use tools effectively and safely.

Youth as a descriptive term

As evidenced in the focus groups, many people aged 15-29 do not identify themselves as “youth”. It is important that we don’t overuse this term in marketing as it may ostracize our target market. Literacy Link Niagara has recommended to programs that they leave this term off of marketing or pair it with the age bracket to avoid confusion.

Additional Documents

Documents associated with this project include

- Notes on marketing research
- Rack card
- Notes on focus groups
- Roadshow materials
 - o List of literacy indicators
 - o Sensitive language document including the term “youth”
 - o Adult literacy myths
- List of literacy tweets

They can be found on the project page of the Literacy Link Niagara website.