Mythbusting Strategies to Promote Truth Online

Presented by Dawn Crawford
@bcdcideas
Who We Are

- Full-service communications agency that works exclusively with nonprofits across the country
- **20 years** of dedicated nonprofit experience paired with **10+ years** of corporate advertising experience
- bcdcideas.com
- @bcddcideas
Causes

- Conservation
- Public Health
- Education
- Arts/Culture
- Human Services
- Animal Welfare
- Foundations
Dawn Crawford

• Healthcare and vaccine communications are my passion
• Spent every day of the past 20 years supporting nonprofits to better communicate their mission and change the world
• Worked with over 100 nonprofits as CEO of BC/DC Ideas
• Still a hands-on practitioner
• Practical-Optimist
Middle School Health Starts Here

Get a routine well visit to check your child's overall health and growth
Keep your child in tip-top shape at MiddleSchoolHealth.org

You are Entering an Immunity Community

Over 80% of our children and staff are fully vaccinated to protect our community against certain diseases.

YOU ARE POWERFUL!
The power to prevent cancer is in your hands!
HPV vaccination increased 5-fold in August at the peak of back-to-school appointments. It's time to put all your young people as possible on the path to lifelong prevention of HPV cancers.

TAKING CONTROL: Vaccines to Protect Me

Taking control of your future starts with protecting yourself from five diseases. It's never too late to start.

Welcome to Camp Wannaprevent

HPV Vaccination is Cancer Prevention
I’m not a medical expert.

Communications strategist focusing on change behavior

OG Mythbuster – Spreading truth online for 15 years

Love to engage with empathy online
I’m NOT going to give you talking points today

I AM going to give you the strategies to always have the most “correct” answer.
Why Mythbusting is Hard
Healthcare and Public Health professionals earned your titles and earned your knowledge.
We know the science and what is “right” or “correct”
Education + Information = CORRECT in our minds
Science and recommendations change ALL THE TIME. That is the power of science.
People believe the first thing they see. Cognitive science research shows people are biased to believe a claim if they have seen it before.
There is a lot of BAD information out there. It spreads easily.
Change makes people uncomfortable. Even scared.
Uncertainty is uncomfortable. People make up what they don’t have answers to solve.
People feel powerless. It feels like you are “doing something” when you argue online.
We Are All Trolls
WE ARE THE
PRO-LIFE
GENERATION
MAKE
AMERICA
GREAT AGAIN!
We are in an era of **OPINION**
Inside The Mind Of A Troll
Why we are seeing more doubt?

Fear dies slowly
People are afraid and it takes time to heal.

Nature of scientific reporting
Most online media outlets don't benefit from the quality control of journalists and editors.

Facts don’t always work – remember your own faith
Research shows that bombarding people with evidence about the safety/science may make them more resistant to your message.
What are they thinking?

- Different information + different perspective
- Protect their family/themselves
- May have experienced trauma
Trust shifts

Society changes who they believe and trust.

Trust in government climbs among Republicans, falls among Democrats


Pew Research Center
Voices of Authority Regain Credibility
Percent who rate each spokesperson as very/extremely credible, and change 2017-2018

- Technical Expert: +3, 63
- Academic Expert: +1, 61
- A Person I Trust: -6, 54
- Financial Industry Analyst: +4, 50
- Successful Entrepreneur: +1, 50
- Employee: -1, 47
- NGO Representative: +3, 46
- CEO: +7, 44
- Board of Directors: +6, 41
- Journalist: +12, 39
- Government Official: +6, 35
Less than a Quarter Now Trust Social Media

Per cent trust in each source for general news and information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Change, 2017 - 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional media</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>+13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search engines</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online-only media</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>+5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Owned media</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media as an institution</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer Q4. 78-192. When looking for general news and information, how much would you trust each type of source for general news and information? Please use a nine-point scale where one means that you “do not trust it at all” and nine means that you “trust it a great deal.” (Top 4 box: Trust) General Population, United Kingdom, question asked of half the sample.
Why Bother
Why it’s important to bust myths

Good Experience
Remember that MOST people who support you agree with you! However, there might be some days that you encounter negative comments.

It’s Our Duty to Correct Misinformation
It’s your duty to protect the credibility of your organization. Sharing misinformation is not acceptable.

We Have Work to Do
You are meeting your mission and there is more work to do. The middle isn’t good enough.
Empathy is a choice.
We are at the mercy of the tide of information
RULE 1: 
Do Not “Mythbust”
Myth vs Fact Communications Don’t Work

- Cognitive science research shows people are biased to believe a claim if they have seen it before.
- Even seeing it once or twice may be enough to make the claim more credible.
- This bias happens even when people originally think a claim is false, when the claim is not aligned with their own beliefs and when it seems relatively implausible.
- What’s more, research shows thinking deeply or being smart does not make you immune to this cognitive bias.
- Older adults were especially susceptible to this repetition. The more often they were initially told a claim was false, the more they believed it to be true a few days later.
- Repeating a myth may also lead people to overestimate how widely it is accepted in the broader community.

The impact of mythbusting sites

What you see:

**MYTH:**
"The moon is made of green cheese."

**FACT:**
The Moon formed 4.51 billion years ago, some 60 million years after the origin of the Solar System. Several forming mechanisms have been proposed, including the fission of the Moon from Earth’s crust through centrifugal force (which would require too great an initial spin of Earth), the gravitational capture of a pre-formed Moon (which would require an unfeasibly extended atmosphere of Earth to dissipate the energy of the passing Moon), and the co-formation of Earth and the Moon together in the primordial accretion disk (which does not explain the depletion of metals in...
MYTH #1:

Aphasia is a rare disorder.
MYTH: COVID-19 is only dangerous for people 65 or older.

FACT: Approximately 12% of all COVID-19 cases are serious enough to require hospitalization. Between 14-21% of patients aged 20-44 who get COVID-19 will get sick enough to require hospitalization. 20% of those hospitalizations were among patients 20-44 years old.

orangecountync.gov/Coronavirus
RULE 2: You Are Correct

You have science and professionalism on your side.

You have your organization’s credibility to defend but getting into an online fight is unpleasant and unproductive.

You got THIS!
RULE 3: Spread Good Information

- Have a go to source of information.
- Create your own Truth document/webpage and update monthly.
- Know it’s okay if things change.
Create Your Own Truth Page

Make this easy for yourself

Park information and resources in a central, shared space
Make a Truth Page

- **Low Reading Level** – Keep language simple and common usage.
- **Use Concrete Language** – Give a clear understanding, providing precise details and specific identifying information.
- **Repetition** – Use the same talking point in every answer.
- **Connect Information To Personal Experience** – Give testimonials or tell a patient story.
- **Trigger Memory And Emotion** – Make it about their lives and their family.
Myth Based Content

Myths About COVID-19

There are many myths and a great deal of misinformation on the internet about COVID-19. Make sure you get your information from a trusted public health source such as the VDH, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the World Health Organization. Here are some common myths that are making their rounds on the internet and social media.

Garlic and onions: Garlic and onions are healthy foods that may have some germ fighting abilities; however, there is no proof or evidence that eating them will protect you from or cure COVID-19.

Pepper: Pepper added to food does not protect you from or cure COVID-19. Hot peppers might make your nose run so be sure to have tissues on hand when enjoying spicy food!

Truth-Based Content

Truths About COVID-19

The scientific information about COVID-19 is changing rapidly as the medical community learns more about this illness. Make sure you get your information about COVID-19 from a trusted public health source such as the VDH, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the World Health Organization.

Here are some truths about COVID-19.

Home remedies are not effective in preventing or treating COVID-19. COVID-19 is best prevented with social distancing, face coverings and frequent hand sanitation. Home remedies like eating more garlic, onions and pepper are not known to prevent COVID-19.
FACT:
Eating garlic does not protect from COVID-19.

Learn more: emoryhealthcare.org/covid

Adapted from the WHO
TALKING POINTS: COVID-19 Resources


- **CHOP** - [https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/making-vaccines/prevent-covid](https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/making-vaccines/prevent-covid)

- **FactCheck.org** - [https://www.factcheck.org/2020/09/q-a-on-coronavirus-vaccines/](https://www.factcheck.org/2020/09/q-a-on-coronavirus-vaccines/)
It’s okay for things to change

Science is about testing and retesting
Let’s Do Some Mythbusting!
Step 1: Be Prepared
Before you share any information about your mission on your social media channels, make sure your Community Rules are up to date and easy for you to follow.

Unfortunately, you may at times have to block a user. Be clear with yourself and your community when that happens.
I have sample Community Rules in the download area!
EXAMPLE: COMMUNITY RULES

Welcome! This is a Facebook group for HPV vaccine advocates, supporters, healthcare providers and others where you can ask questions and share information and relevant news about HPV cancers and the HPV vaccine.

MISSION:
This group is hosted by The National HPV Vaccination Roundtable which is a national coalition of public, private and voluntary organizations and invited individuals dedicated to reducing the incidence of and mortality from HPV-associated cancer in the U.S.

GUIDELINES FOR POSTING:
When you post, please provide as much information as possible, such as the organization you represent and your reason for posting.

WE LOVE IT WHEN YOU--
- Are considerate of our mission, and respectful of one another's opinions.
- Ask questions of the "hive mind" of other parents, HPV vaccination experts and advocates
- Share new projects you've launched or read about
- Read and share news headlines about HPV vaccination and innovative education projects

PLEASE—
- Use your discretion; invite members to join our group who will benefit our community
Step 2: Triage the Question
Relax

The first thing to do if you encounter a negative comment is to...

take a deep breath and stay calm

Remember that you have science and professionalism on your side. You have your organization’s credibility to defend but getting into an online fight is unpleasant and unproductive.
Stop and really listen to the QUESTION
Two Types of Negative Comments

Questions Phrased in a Negative Way
- May be well-intentioned but are antagonistic, provocative or needlessly nitpicking. With these types of questioners, direct them to links on your website or other resources.

Overtly Rude or Misleading Comments
- Comments that are hostile to your organization, harmful to your community or contain misleading information about vaccination cannot be tolerated. Enforcing the “two strikes & you’re out” rule is important for these individuals.
RESOURCE!

I have the Decision Tree in the download area!
Is it a question phrased negatively or a strong trollish comment?

- **Question Phrased Negatively**
  - Be kind and guide them to your resources to answer questions.
  - Still Asking Negative Questions?
    - Yes: Offer to direct message (DM) to take the conversation private.
    - No: Congrats! You informed another person on the internet!

- **Overtly Rude Or Misleading Comment**
  - First and Second Strike: “Hide” their comment and reply with a reminder of your community rules.
  - Third Strike: Block them from your account.

If they continue to ask questions, they are a troll. Use the Overtly Rude decision tree.
Step 3: Answer with Heart
Speak from a place of EMPATHY
Use “I” Statements

Use “I” statements to make a connection. Try saying…

“I hear your concern. I have some information from ….”

Send them to your website or a credible source to get more information.
You Don’t Have All the Answers

Use a phrases to redirect a conversation.

If someone is asking too many questions, say…

“You know, I don’t know the answer to that question. But you could….
Check out our website…
Try our partner’s website…
Talk to your doctor….”
Step 4: End the Conversation
“Wow – I can see that we are both really passionate about this topic and just want to do what is best for humanity/dogs/kids. I hope you enjoy your day!”
Empathy is A Choice
Resources

**World Health Organization**
Best Practice Guidance for Responding to Vocal Vaccine Deniers

**Science Alert**
The Real Reason Anti-Vax Beliefs Spread So Fast Online

**Edelman Trust Barometer**
https://www.edelman.com/trust-barometer
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