Social Media Engagement: How the Maryland Responds Medical Reserve Corps Used Facebook Analytics to Engage and Better Prepare Responders

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OBJECTIVES

Utilize Facebook analytics to produce a greater number of pre-identified and credentialed Ready Responders.

BACKGROUND

Housed within the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Maryland Responds Medical Reserve Corps (MRMRC) is a community-based civilian volunteer program consisting of public health and medical volunteers. The MRMRC mission is to enhance Maryland's emergency preparedness and response capabilities by augmenting county- and state-level public health and medical services with a source of pre-identified, credentialed, and Ready Responders. Fully trained volunteers are considered Ready Responders − volunteers who have completed all requirements for deployment, including the Responder profile, orientation training, and liability and confidentiality form.

In June 2016, the Maryland Responds Medical Reserve Corps (MRMRC) implemented a social media outreach project to increase the numbers of Ready Responders. Facebook posts were crafted based on Facebook Analytics in order to better reach our target audience. Facebook Analytics revealed when users were online and when they were most active, which was used to develop a posting schedule. Implementation of the posting schedule brought about immediate results by increasing the activity on our page by 38%.

METHODS

A review of historical data revealed that posts accompanied by an image reached a larger audience when compared to strictly text-only posts. Additionally, data showed that original content produced by the MRMRC program reached a larger audience than reposts of content from other organizations. MRMRC tracked post interaction and the number of users who liked, commented on, or shared these posts. This information was crucial in determining what gained the most attention and what worked to increase involvement.

To increase the number of Ready Responders, MRMRC followed a posting schedule, focusing on posts with pictures and original content that always included a link to instructions on how to become a Ready Responder. Posts ranged from preparedness tips to what the State Administrators were doing that day. The MRMRC audience wanted to see the faces behind the posts and what work they were doing to keep the MRC active.

MARYLAND RESPONDS

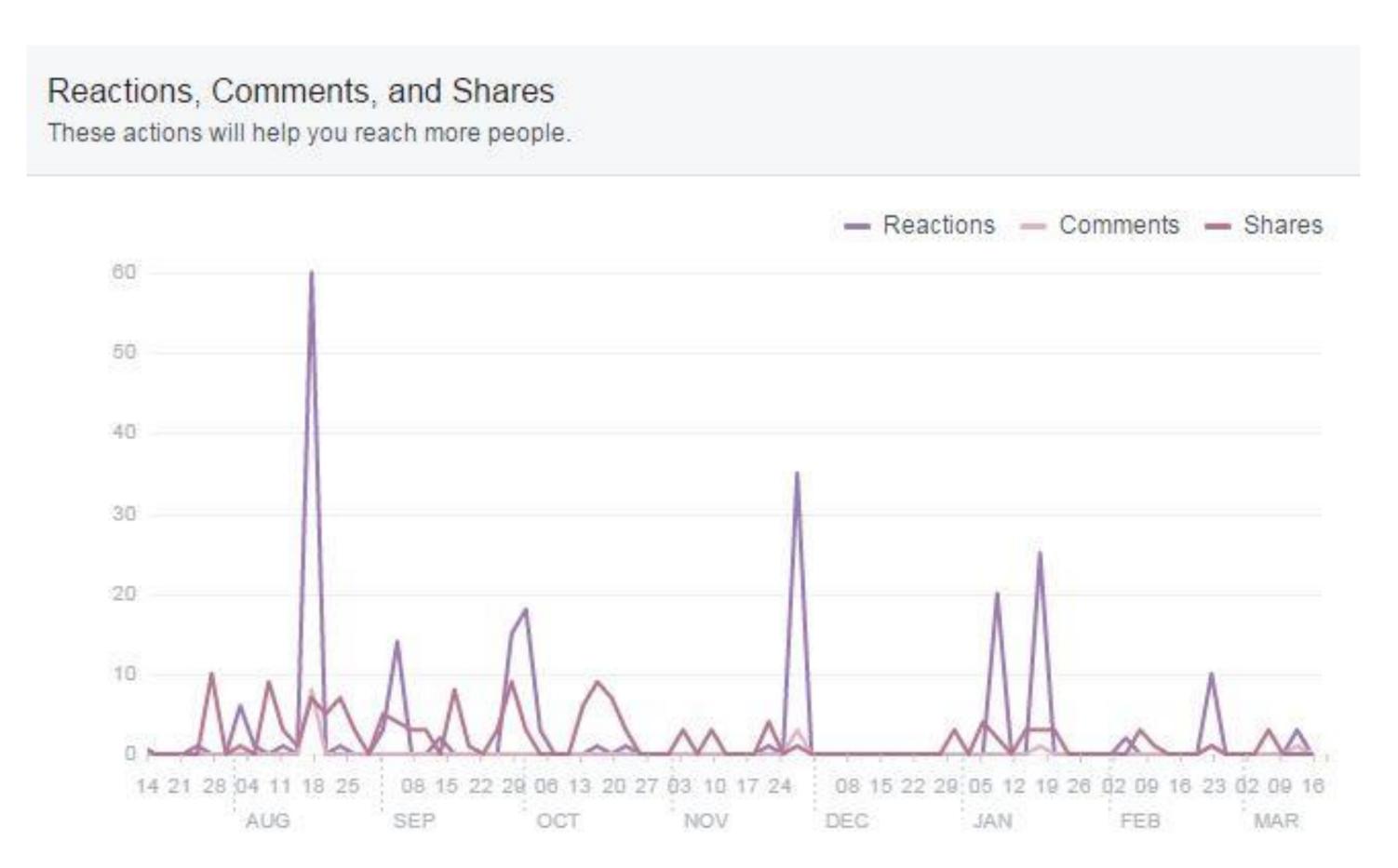## Maryland Responds Facebook Posts

RESULTS

Since the implementation of this project, the number of Ready Responders increased 27% (from n = 371 to n = 473). From June to September 2016, MRMRC posted 21 posts reaching 12,728 viewers. Comparatively, between February and May 2016, MRMRC posted 22 posts reaching only 9,204 people. Since the start of this project, MRMRC gained 132 new page likes, bringing our total number to 1,155, whereas from February 2016 to May 2016, the number of new page likes was only 30.

CONCLUSION

An amply staffed and trained Medical Reserve Corps bolsters emergency preparedness and response capabilities of public health and healthcare preparedness organizations during the mitigation, response, and recovery phases of an emergency situation. Increasing the number of Ready Responders can be a difficult task. Responders want to feel involved and connected and they are able to share this involvement through the use of their social media accounts. By enhancing engagement and targeting social media posts, the Maryland Responds Medical Reserve Corps was able to achieve this goal and increase the number of Ready Responders who are able to deploy in the event of an emergency.