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# Effective Health Communication Measures within the Silicon Valley

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**Effective Health Communication Measures within the Silicon Valley**

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**Abstract**

Effective and reliable communication is vital in the field of Public Health. Fieldwork conducted with the Silicon Valley Leadership Group's Communication Team demonstrated the importance of using various social media platforms to effectively reach the largest audience. Content creators need to be aware of the target audience and identify the appropriate communication platform in order to provide relevant information in the most user-friendly and efficient manner. This paper is a summary of a 300 hour fieldwork experience completed through an internship with the Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

## **Introduction**

This paper outlines the results of fieldwork conducted with the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. The Silicon Valley Leadership Group is a small public policy business trade organization. The Silicon Valley Leadership Group represents more than 400 employers within the Silicon Valley. The membership companies represented are among the most respected companies throughout the Silicon Valley contributing more than \$3 trillion to the worldwide economy. The Leadership Group represents their members on issues, programs and campaigns that are designed to facilitate the positive growth of economic health and quality of life within the Silicon Valley.<sup>1</sup>

Among other topics, the organization promotes and advocates public health policy for various issues that are important for their member companies. The Silicon Valley Leadership Group works with almost all Public Health lenses. The root of public health problems addressed by the Leadership Group and its members include: energy, transportation, education, housing, health care, tax policies, economic vitality and the environment. Each public health problem is assigned a portfolio team. The teams are directly led by employees of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. The CEO Carl Guardino is very involved and informed in every aspect of all portfolio groups. Each portfolio has specific goals that align with a work plan for 2016-2018.

During the fieldwork experience, I served as a Communications Coordinator on the Silicon Valley Leadership Group's Communication Team. In doing so my preceptor, Nancy Sanchez, the Director of Communications, and I worked to keep our member companies informed and updated on the public health issues and current events the portfolio teams were

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<sup>1</sup> <http://svlg.org/about-us>

leading. As a Communication Coordinator, I worked closely with my mentor, the Director of Communications, to help publicize the accomplishments of the portfolio teams. Publicizing is done through several social media platforms as well as radio talk shows known as “The CEO Show” hosted on 1590 KLIV. Along the same lines, one of the larger projects that the Communications Team worked on was a “Social Media Workshop”. The “Social Media Workshop” was a live presentation put on by the Communications Coordinators for the rest of the company employees. The presentation served as a platform to inform the employees on how to correctly use social media platforms to properly promote public health events, portfolio team achievements, and important announcements. Finally, in my role as Communications Coordinator, I helped create and distribute the weekly newsletter referred to as the “Executive Update” that highlights major public health accomplishments, public health events or concerns within the Silicon Valley. The newsletter then was distributed to all of the member companies of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

This paper is a summary of findings from the fieldwork experience and how they relate to effective health communications within Silicon Valley communities.

## **Background**

Communication plays an important role in everyone’s daily life. It is especially important in the realm of health care. Communication itself is deemed useless unless it is done in an effective manner that is easy to understand by the target population. Health communication plays a key role in making improvements by increasing the overall health literacy within the United States. Health literacy can be defined as “The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make

appropriate health decisions” (Seldon et al. 2000). Health literacy is increased by effective public health communication.

One of the primary goals of public health communication is to design effective messages that can persuade the target audience to change attitudes or behaviors relevant to a range of health issues (Shen et al. 2015). These messages can be delivered in the form of advertisements, brochures, pamphlets, and other educational materials. In recent years, the use of narratives and its impact has received considerable attention by scholars in the fields of advertising and health communication (Shen et al. 2015).

Traditional media outlets, like newspapers and television stations distribute information using a one-to-the-many model (Vos and Buckner et al. 2015). Public understanding of research and its implications is founded primarily on news coverage (Valenti, 1999). There is abundant evidence that news media can strongly influence public perception about the salience of issues (McCombs, 2004) and the severity of public health threats (Young, Norman, & Humphreys, 2008) and can affect community health behaviors (Abroms & Maibach, 2008; Chapman, 2007; Noar, 2006; Wallack & Dorfman, 1996).

Social media has a very large presence in the majority of today’s population’s daily life. This is especially true in the Silicon Valley. Most likely the reason being is that social media includes a variety of internet platforms that allow individuals to communicate by producing and consuming content (Vos et al. 2016). The Silicon Valley is known for its rapid advancement in technology and business. A lot of the advancement is due to wide spread use of the evolving technologies capable of instant sharing and collaborating on new and innovative ideas. The Silicon Valley depends largely on social media users with smart devices to keep up with rapid change. With the potential to reach out to a broad audience on an ongoing basis, social media

serves as a cost-effective and powerful communication tool (Park et al 2016). Social media sites have become popular venues for seeking and exchanging health information, contributing to a tremendous amount of health information available online (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015).

Social media platforms encourage users to spread information through their networks (Vos and Buckner et al. 2015). Several popular social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, and You Tube. By far the most commonly used and extensively researched social networking platform is Facebook (Dunlop et al. 2016). Facebook utilizes personal networks that are established by the user. Large news media outlets use Facebook to post predicted relevant articles as it relates to the personal online activity of the user. You Tube is the second most popular social networking site (Pew Research Center, 2014). You Tube is an interactive video-sharing site where users can upload their own videos and receive feedback and comments (Dunlop et al. 2016). Twitter has emerged as the third largest social network site behind Facebook and You Tube (Barnett, 2011; Parmalee & Bichard, 2012). Twitter allows users to send messages known as “tweets” of up to 140 characters to other users (organizations, governments, or individuals), hashtags (short words or phrases beginning with a pound sign that function like discussion boards), and followers (other Twitter users who receive message updates directly from another user’s account) (Vos and Buckner et al. 2015). Use of social media platforms has increased the importance of ensuring that public health messages being distributed are clear, easy to understand and legitimate.

Responsibility for information accuracy falls to public health practitioners and researchers. They need to develop relevant information and assess whether the content of social media messages can contribute to an effective and appropriate response from the public. As a

result, understanding the types of information that people send via social media during risk and crisis events is of practical interest (Vos and Buckner et al. 2015). Human beings are social creatures and often turn to each other for physical assistance and psychological sustenance (Fiske, 2010). Moreover, social support offered via the Internet can likewise contribute to an individual's overall well-being driving the need to have competent social media messages distributed to the public (Klemm & Wheeler, 2005; White & Dorman, 2001).

### **Description of the Agency**

The Silicon Valley Leadership Group is a small policy advocacy company that has about 30 compensated employees and approximately 8-10 volunteer coordinators at any given time. The Leadership group focuses its efforts on the Silicon Valley and its neighboring cities. The Silicon Valley Leadership Group represents over 400 member companies located within the Silicon Valley. The Silicon Valley Leadership Group works closely with the member companies to address relevant health issues and goals agreed upon by the leader representatives within each member company. Each goal and issue addressed has one common objective: achieve increased health and well-being within the Silicon Valley.

The public health areas addressed by the Silicon Valley Leadership Group and its members include: energy, transportation, education, housing, health care, tax policies, economic vitality and the environment. Each public health area is assigned a portfolio team consisting of 3-4 compensated employees. The portfolio teams create individual subsections of the overall Silicon Valley Leadership Group Work Plan. Pursuant to the [Silicon Valley Leadership Group 2016-2018 Work Plan](#), the organization promotes four central issues related to public health, including:



1. Health Care Law Implementation: Promote increased access, quality, and cost controls while minimizing burdens on employers in health care reform implementation.
2. Prevention and Wellness – Worksite Programs: Help employers start or improve wellness programs and offerings as a long term cost containment strategy.
3. Prevention and Wellness – Public Health Promotion: Advocate for public health issues that are critical for achieving greater health equity and for increasing the quality of life.
4. Healthcare Innovation: Promote innovation in growth areas and advocate for policies that help providers, biotech/medtech companies and research institutions innovate

Energy research and development is a top priority for the Energy Portfolio Team.

Through advocacy for state and federal investments, the Energy Portfolio Team will promote research and development in the energy field. The Energy Portfolio Team has four main goals for the 2016-2018 work plan. Their primary goal is to promote and finance clean energy through legislation with the end result benefiting the tech sector. The Energy Portfolio Team will promote and facilitate integration of new technologies for a safer, more efficient gas and electric grid through third parties and customers. In addition, the Energy Portfolio Team will plan to assist end users to improve energy efficiency through key legislation.

The Transportation Portfolio Team has six main goals for the 2016-2018 work plan. Their primary goal involves the 2016 Santa Clara County Transportation Measure. The team is working towards passing a transportation measure on the 2016 November ballot that will relieve traffic congestion and improve economic vitality in Santa Clara County. The Transportation Portfolio Team is pushing for BART to be extended to the Silicon Valley by advocating for funding at the federal and state level. The Transportation Portfolio Team will also work with Caltrain on a long-term basis to increase passengers. In addition, the team will work with the Silicon Valley Leadership Group members at the San Jose Airport to survey their

top three Domestic priorities.

The Education Portfolio Team has four main goals on the 2016-2018 work plan. Number one is to promote policies and programs that support the STEM Pipeline. STEM is an acronym for curriculum based on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). The Education Portfolio Team works to encourage the inclusion and participation of women and under-represented minorities within STEM based careers. The second priority of the Education Portfolio Team is to support the implementation of new statewide and national reforms within education. Their purpose is to stimulate the demand for workforce development focusing on recruitment, training, and retention. Finally, the Education Portfolio Team works with schools to promote education technology that will improve learning and academic outcomes.

The Housing and Land Use Portfolio Team has multiple goals for the 2016-2018 work plan. The priority areas consist of local and state policy, regional planning, project advocacy, community outreach and education, member company employee engagement, and promotion for renewed CEQA legislative strategy. Several of the housing goals involve events that are coordinated with local leaders who have power to push through legislation alleviating housing placement stress involved with funding, planning, zoning, and structures.

The Health Policy Portfolio Team has four main goals for the 2016-2018 work plan. These goals promote public health policy within the healthcare setting. The Health Policy Portfolio Team also works with business employers to start or improve wellness programs within their companies. Each goal focuses on growth and advocacy for increased quality of life within the Silicon Valley.

The Tax Policy Portfolio Team has several major goals for the 2016-2018 work plan.

The first goal involves U.S. Business Tax Reform along with permanent research and development tax credit. The Tax Policy Portfolio Team will urge congress to bring the business tax rate to a level that is equivalent to other countries as well as implement a territorial tax system. The Tax Policy Portfolio Team will also aid in improving research and development for tax credits in California. The focus for the Silicon Valley involves looking into property tax valuation fairness. A main goal for the Tax Policy Portfolio Team includes reasonable audits for business taxpayers.

The Environment Portfolio Team has several main goals. The goals are designed to support local and state efforts that focus on flood control, SF Bay restoration, environmental sustainability, water supply, and ecosystem health for California and the Silicon Valley. Each goal works to engage business and community support to advance policy affecting environmental issues as well as promoting advancement in new environmental markets.

The Silicon Valley Leadership Group covers very diverse public health platforms that are targeted to reach a large heterogeneous population within the Silicon Valley. To accomplish this, a variety of communication methods are employed. One tool that has been very critical and effective for the success of the public health work completed by the Silicon Valley Leadership Group is social media.

### **Overall Project Plan and Learning Objectives**

My fieldwork projects working with the Silicon Valley Leadership Group involved enhancing in-progress work. The projects addressed the unmet needs of the corporate interest in health and well-being of employees of the member companies of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. The overall goal was to enhance the health and well-being of the community members in the Silicon Valley. The focus of my projects was to explore and enhance effective health

communication for the Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

Communication plays a very important role in the success in all aspects of daily life tasks. This is especially important when it comes to health communication. My projects explored effective, timely and reliable health communication strategies. Effective health communication is important because the intended recipient needs to be able to understand the health information that is being delivered. If the recipient does not understand the information, the desired effect will not be accomplished. Timely health communication is also important because the recipient needs to get the information in a relevant time frame in order to take the necessary steps pertinent to the given situation. Reliable and accurate health communication is vital. People need information that is valid and comes from trusted and proven sources.

During my fieldwork, these important health communication aspects were determined by examining gaps in knowledge on the topic. The gaps in knowledge that were agreed upon for the scope of this fieldwork included accessibility and relevance of content for member companies. The scope of my fieldwork entailed several projects constructed to fulfill the objectives and goals created for the course learning contract objectives. There were four main projects:

- Effectively Communicate with Corporate Companies
- Create Effective Social Media Messages for Targeted Audience
- Create a Social Media Workshop Presentation
- Conduct a Literature Review on Health Communication

The project goals were achieved through weekly and bi-weekly tasks agreed upon in

conversations with my preceptor. Tasks included:

- Develop communication content
- Identified appropriate communication platform for targeted audience
- Creation weekly newsletter
- Participation in promotional events

Developing communication content was one of the main tasks of my fieldwork. Relevant content was obtained by interviewing portfolio teams, attending the bi-weekly staff meetings and Internet data mining. One objective was creation of the “Executive Update”, the weekly newsletter. The weekly newsletter the “Executive Update” was distributed to the member companies of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. It provided weekly updates of upcoming events held by the portfolio teams, relevant and current media articles, and upcoming announcements regarding new membership companies, special events with invitations, and promotional events.

Another objective was developing content for promotional events. The key promotional event was “The CEO Show”, a radio broadcast of previously recorded interviews with various leaders of the Silicon Valley. Promotion and announcements of events also were distributed via social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. One of the larger projects I worked on while at the Silicon Valley Leadership Group was a Social Media Workshop Presentation for the Silicon Valley Leadership Group employees. The workshop covered all aspects of how to effectively use Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn to most accurately distribute the intended message to the correct audience. The presentation also defined many relevant terms and provided necessary knowledge to effectively use social media platforms. The concluding objective was conducting a comprehensive literature review regarding the necessity and

relevance of social media platforms for effective health communication.

### **Summary of Findings**

Post analytics were used to determine what mode of social media communication had the highest response rate. Each social media platform has an option to perform usage analytics and follow the click traffic and views of posts created by the user. By examining the various analytics, we found that recipients were most responsive to announcements sent via Twitter as the social media platform. The second most popular was the weekly newsletter distributed directly to the member company leaders. The two least used platforms were Facebook and LinkedIn.

### **Lessons Learned**

One of the largest lessons learned through the fieldwork experience was the difference between corporate communication and communication with the general population. When it comes to corporate communication, it is important to be more descriptive and extensive while ensuring the information is being presented in a concise manner. When communicating with the general population the most effective communication is done through short and concise messaging that is easily accessible and easily understandable. The importance of effective communication also played a critical role in creating and maintaining corporate relationships among various company CEOs.

### **Conclusion**

The fieldwork experience was a very important aspect for the conclusion of the MPH program at USF. I was able to grow professionally and put into practice various tools learned throughout the program. I was able to engage in very high level conversations with corporate CEOs from various large Silicon Valley companies. In addition, I was able to create many

personal network connections through my communication work with the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. The communications work done through my fieldwork at times seemed very overwhelming and challenging due to the large amount of public health areas the Silicon Valley Leadership Group covers. However, the work completed through my fieldwork experience was very beneficial in providing leadership skills and direction for my future career in public health.

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## **Appendices**

### Final Learning Objectives

<b>Goal 1: Increase my knowledge base of effective corporate and community communication</b>				
<b>Objective 1: Demonstrate an understanding of effective verbal and written communication</b>				
<b><u>Activities</u></b>	<b><u>Timeline</u></b>	<b><u>Anticipated Hours</u></b>	<b><u>Person Responsible</u></b>	<b><u>Deliverables</u></b>
Routinely create wording for documents that will be sent out to invested community involved companies	June 6-August 12	120	Lauren	Written professional documents
Shadow CEO for a day	June 6-August 12	10	Lauren	Notes from the day of a CEO
Communicate with all working portfolios within the organization	June 6-August 12	20	Lauren	Updated description of active community projects
Create media platforms to promote important ballot measures for Nov. election	June 20-August 12	100	Lauren, Nancy	Direct communication with community members

specifically transportation				
<b>Objective 2: Conduct a literature review including relevant literature with regards to effective communication with community members with regards to political agendas</b>				
<u>Activities</u>	<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Anticipated Hours</u>	<u>Person Responsible</u>	<u>Deliverables</u>
Complete a literature review based on objective 1 topic	June 13 – July1	10	Lauren	5-10 Page Literature Review
<b>Goal 2: Increase ability to establish meaningful and productive networking connections</b>				
<b>Objective 1: Establish consistent timelines for routine communication</b>				
<u>Activities</u>	<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Anticipated Hours</u>	<u>Person Responsible</u>	<u>Deliverables</u>
Attend the Bi-weekly staff meetings	June 6-August 12	10	Lauren, Staff	Updated description of active community projects
Communicate with preceptor on a daily basis	June 6-August 12	50	Lauren	Feedback on work and staying on track for deliverables

### Student Evaluation of Field Experience

Student	
Student's Name: Lauren Rodrigues	Campus ID # 20342364
Student's Phone: 925-237-0076	Student's Email: lrodrigues@dons.usfca.edu
Preceptor	
Preceptor's Name: Nancy Sánchez	Preceptor's Title: Director of Communications
Preceptor's Phone: 408-501-7864	Preceptor's Email: nsanchez@svlg.org
Organization: Silicon Valley Leadership Group	
Student's Start Date: June 6, 2016	Student's End Date: Hours/week: August 12, 2016

**Please use the following key to respond to the statements listed below.**

SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree N/A = Not Applicable					
<b>My Field Experience...</b>					
Contributed to the development of my specific career interests	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
Provided me with the opportunity to carry out my field learning objective activities	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
Provided the opportunity to use skills obtained in MPH classes	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
Required skills I did not have Please list:	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
Required skills I have but did not gain in the MPH program Please list: Writing and research, networking	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
Added new information and/or skills to my graduate education Please list: Advanced professionalism, effective communication using social media platforms	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
Challenged me to work at my highest level	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
Served as a valuable learning experience in public health practice	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
I would recommend this agency to others for future field experiences.	Yes			NO	
<b>My preceptor...</b>					
Was valuable in enabling me to achieve my field learning objectives	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
Was accessible to me	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
Initiated communication relevant to my special assignment that he/she considered of interest to me	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
Initiated communication with me relevant to general functions of the agency	SA	A	D	SD	N/A

2. Would you recommend this preceptor for future field experiences? Please explain.

Yes     No     Unsure

Nancy was great! She was very accessible and enthusiastic throughout my fieldwork experience. She was also very knowledgeable.

3. Please provide additional comments explaining any of your responses.

4. **Summary Report:** All students are required to prepare a written summary of the field work to be submitted with this evaluation form.

Lauren Virginia Rodrigues

August 14, 2016

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Student Signature

Date

### MPH Program Competency Inventory

USF MPH Competencies	Notes
<p><b>1.</b> Articulate the relationship between health care delivery and financing, public health systems, and public policy.</p>	<p>Silicon Valley Leadership Group is a public policy advocate company using social media platforms as communication tools to identify issues and promote change.</p>
<p><b>2.</b> Demonstrate leadership abilities as collaborators and coordinators of evidence based public health projects.</p>	<p>Created and presented Social Media Workshop to Silicon Valley Leadership Group employees focusing on effective methods of health communication.</p>
<p><b>3.</b> Identify and prioritize the key dimensions of a public health problem by critically assessing public health literature utilizing both quantitative and qualitative sources.</p>	<p>Conducted a comprehensive literature review of using social media platforms as effective health communication tools.</p>
<p><b>4.</b> Effectively communicate public health messages to a variety of audiences from professionals to the general public.</p>	<p>Created and distributed content for the weekly corporate newsletter, the radio broadcast and social media announcements.</p>