The significance of social media in a post-pandemic world

Many years ago, the only means of communication and media for my generation was limited to the radio and monochrome television. In contrast, during the twenty-first century, we have witnessed a communications revolution, and we are now able to connect with information, resources and each other through an astonishing variety of technologies, whether that be the artificial intelligence of smart TVs and computers to a voice-controlled virtual assistant in the home, such as Amazon's Alexa. Today's generations are now able to express themselves and exercise their freedom of speech through countless digital channels, ranging from the written word, via blogs, to shared conversations on Twitter and telemedicine—to name a few.

However, regardless of what the technology is, our life's journey is built on communication, enabling our lives to become a tapestry of experiences and events. How we reflect and interpret these is unique to everyone. As adults, we learn to foster and develop strategies to communicate and express our emotions, thoughts and ideas through different means of communication, whether it is face-to-face, through body language and eye contact, or on social media.

The art of communication is perhaps one of the most important life skills, enabling us to cascade information to others. In another time, the COVID-19 pandemic could have proved a barrier to such opportunities, with lockdowns and social distancing measures making meeting in-person difficult, if not impossible. Thankfully, when the world changed in response to COVID-19, the resources, platforms and tools we are able to access in the modern day meant that I was able to maintain contact with my Leg Club community, along with international friends and professional colleagues, over the past 20 months. During those unprecedented times, the capabilities and impact of social media and communications platforms meant I was able to remain positive throughout, as I was able to keep in touch with the people in my professional and social communities.

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While the impact of the pandemic altered everyone's lives in so many ways upon entering the new decade, and despite the fact that the current situation is still far from perfect, I realised how important relationships within the wider community really are. When the COVID-19 pandemic first began, I soon comprehended that I had to address the status quo and address my laggard attitude towards social media, adopting and learning new communication and technological skills. This certainly was an exciting educational challenge!

As a third-sector charity, one of the Leg Club Foundation's objectives is to provide a communication service to our Leg Club community and a wide range of stakeholders that includes a global range of the public, patients, clinicians and volunteers. Having recognised the importance of providing a social media channel that would dramatically enhance our engagement with the public, nurses and patients, thereby supporting the work of existing Leg Clubs and giving the Foundation a more effective platform for health promotion internationally, the establishment of a social media and communications (SM&C) committee was necessary.

This was duly undertaken, designed by a committee group within the Leg Club with the objective of promoting and showcasing the work of the Foundation and its Leg Club community. One aim of this SM&C committee was to implement and develop a series of podcast episodes that would be easily understood and informative, featuring an eclectic mix of international, intergenerational guest speakers. The mission behind this was to ensure a consistent and accessible way to reach target audiences, taking into consideration the demographics of each group and its access to different social media platforms and streaming services. It is my pleasure to say that this objective has been successfully achieved, with podcast episodes accessible on multiple platforms, available via our website (www.legclub.org), Spotify, Google Play and Apple Music. Listeners are able to access and follow the podcast using their computers, mobiles or tablets.

The SM&C committee are also committed to the oversight and development of media platforms through which the Foundation's values, messages and stories can be shared. Over time and through reflections, I am sure that we will have many questions, insights, moments of hilarity and sadness, failures, successes and wonderful human connections to piece together and share as part of the chronicle of the Leg Club community.

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The members of the Social Media and Communication Committee, who will be working to connect with Leg Club members

To make this happen, we are presently working behind the scenes to establish policies and pathways for utilising social media platforms that will connect, support and encourage us to even greater endeavours and find ways for us to be interactive with one another, using platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, the Lindsay Leg Club Foundation website and through podcast presentations. To this end, we will be asking friends and professional colleagues for their ideas, inspiration, news and, especially their stories. Their narratives are gifts to the rest of us, as we share our collective journey. CWC

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