

About the ANR Communicating Your Story Tip Sheet Series: This is a series of monthly publications designed to provide communications tips to ANR academics and staff. The Tip Sheets are intended to augment the “Communicating Your ANR Story” (CYS) project.

What is CYS? Communicating our stories as researchers and educators is essential. Increasingly, this involves digital technologies. CYS consists of interactive webinars hosted by ANR Learning and Development that provide insight about a range of tools and platforms that will advance your work. The series covers a range of communications topics, including: writing blogs for ANR and other platforms, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Hootsuite, and more. Through the CYS program, you'll learn how to create compelling content, use it effectively and efficiently...and also how to develop a communications strategy that works. In addition to the webinars, online resources supporting CYS are located on the Learning and Development webpage, and one-on-one “consulting” is available from UCCE Advisor Rose Hayden-Smith (rhsmith@ucop.edu 805.794.1665) to support your efforts.

Positive Communications in 2019: Three Resolutions

Resolution season is upon us. I've got a suggestion for your list: *a commitment to a regular communications practice in 2019*. How we extend information and share our story is an area where following through on a couple of resolutions can really pay off. Most of us realize we could do more/should do more in the digital space, but it's overwhelming. Self-doubt creeps in...is what I'm doing interesting? Do I know enough to do this? Do I have time to do one more thing? Social media can be a scary place, too, which doesn't make it easier to venture there.

Take heart...you're not alone. And take a look at these three tips to help you communicate your ANR story in 2019.

1. Commit to better social media by going back to basics: Begin with some basics of strategy – *purpose, audience and capacity*.

What *purpose* do you want your social media to serve? Do you want to share information, increase awareness, reach new people?

To whom do you want it to appeal (*audience*)? Who do you follow on social media? Who do you want to follow you? These things will vary depending on your program and clientele, but it's worth sketching out a few notes.

Once you consider those fundamental questions - *purpose and audience* - probe further. Really examine the concept of your ideal client or follower. What do they find *interesting*? What do they find *useful*? What are they liking or sharing on social media? Who are they following?

Effective social media is about so much more than projection. Creating a FAN-tastic Twitter or Instagram account doesn't happen overnight. You need to consider how to cover a range of relevant content, stay true to your core values...*and* share *your* story while remaining mindful and grounded.

The third thing to consider is your *capacity*. What's realistic for you to do? How much time can you devote to social media? Can you be consistent in posting? Would developing strength on one platform be better than spreading yourself too thinly on several? (There are many ANR academics who follow this strategy). Sometimes, *less is more*.

Social media has a bad reputation for many reasons. But academics are increasingly in that space and our presence can make social spaces better places. Stay in that better space: make *your* social media feeds a positive, thoughtful, useful and intellectually challenging place to be - both for your followers *and* for you. Make sure social media remains a powerful communication tool rather than a place where you feel insecure or inauthentic.

2) Commit to a better blogging practice: Blog posts are your opportunity to expand on your story beyond a succinct soundbite or caption.

A good blog is many things: sincere, informative, thought-provoking, challenging, or even entertaining. A blog can be all of these things across a number of different posts - or even in *one* post! You probably don't need me to extol the benefits of having a relevant, up-to-date blog: they help people find your work in Google searches, allow ideas and messages to develop and build over time, and can assist in cultivating a loyal and engaged following.



So why don't more people use them effectively or consistently? Well, because they're usually not part of 'core business', they slip to the bottom of the To Do list time and time again. However, if you commit to regular blogging, you'll see the pay-off.

And remember, you don't need to have a blog or website to submit a blog post to ANR's website. ANR is developing an "educational pipeline" for academics to share timely information for the public via the ANR website and social media. You can submit a story via this online form <https://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=25898>, then Strategic Communications will take it from there to distribute. Make it a resolution to take advantage of this in 2019!

3. Be a lifelong learner: With a series of informative ANR Learning Development webinars coming your way nearly every Thursday in January from 10:00-11:00 a.m., this is one resolution that will be easy to keep! LinkedIn: 1/3/19; Blogging Basics 1/10/19; Instagram: 1/24/19; Facebook: 1/31/19. Creating a Communications Strategy: daily ½ hour webinars with "homework" and "office hours" during the week of 2/4-2/8/19. More details later.

Happy New Year!

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