



Using Social Media to Reinforce ThinkFirst For Teens

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An affiliate chapter of the ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation

Introduction

ThinkFirst Missouri is an evidence-based trauma prevention program of the University of Missouri. The mission of ThinkFirst is to prevent traumatic injuries through education, research and policy. Programs are aimed at helping people, especially high-risk young people, learn to reduce their risk for injury.

ThinkFirst For Teens (TFFT) is a fast-paced school assembly program delivered to junior and senior high school students throughout Missouri. Presentations feature compelling testimonies of Voices for Injury Prevention (VIP) speakers. VIP speakers are people who have sustained a brain or spinal cord injury, usually due to a motor vehicle crash. These speakers present sobering yet motivational messages about the consequences of life-altering injuries and encourage audiences to take personal responsibility and make safe choices.

ThinkFirst Social Media Campaign for Teens

Corporations targeting young adults have been using social media to connect with consumers since the advent of new media platforms in the mid-2000's. As of 2008, injury prevention programs targeting youth had yet to utilize this medium on a broad scale.

In 2009, ThinkFirst Missouri launched a Traffic Safety Social Media Campaign for teens. The goal was to reinforce safety messages presented during ThinkFirst assemblies by connecting with and engaging young people through Facebook. The content, theme, personality and voice of the page leveraged the powerful influence of the VIP survivor testimony through regular discussion threads, video clips, and photos. Teens were recruited to the page via a personal invitation from the VIP speaker during the school assembly program. Daily site management and digital assessment were used to keep the intervention targeted and relevant.

Purpose of the Study

To demonstrate how social media can be used to reinforce the ThinkFirst For Teens traffic safety education program.

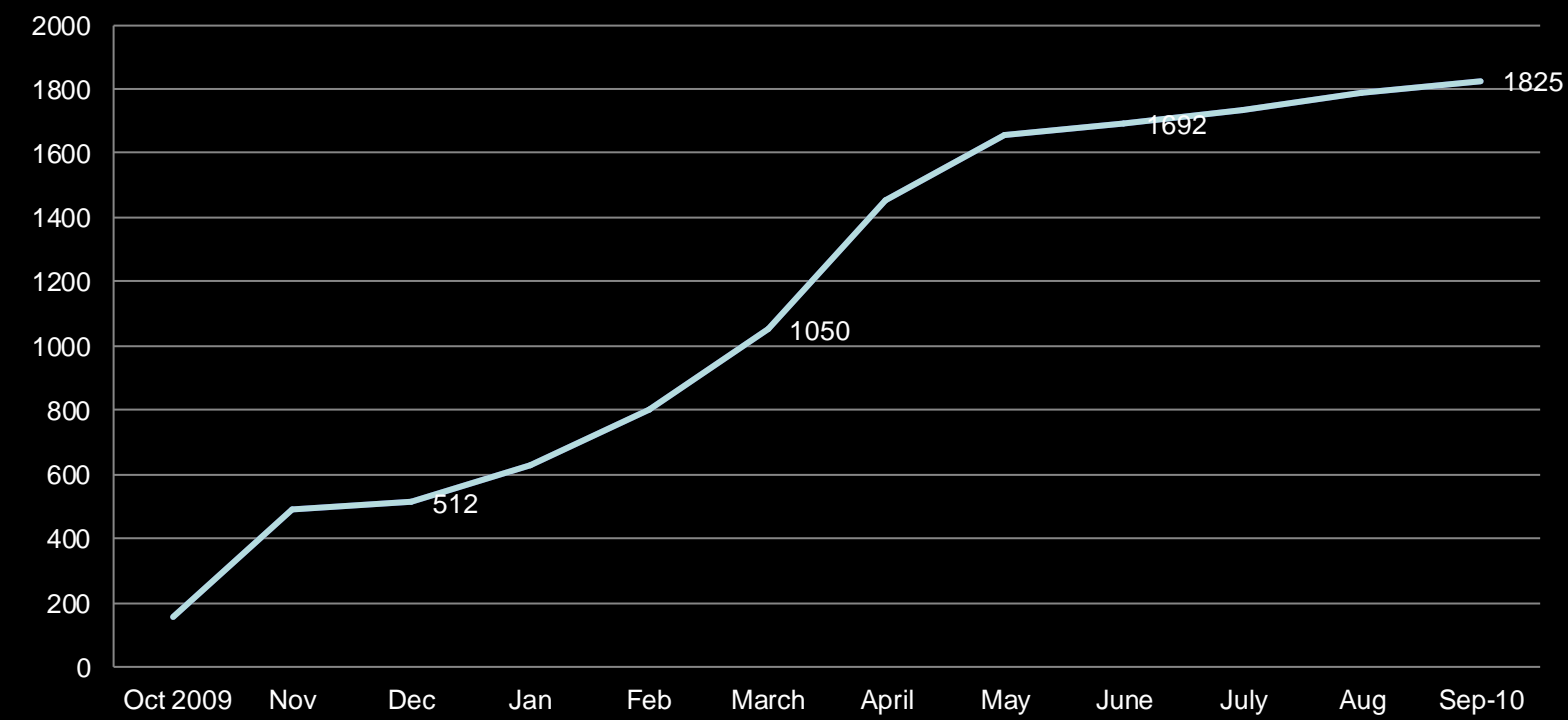
Methods

Beginning October 2009, page content, participation and interactions were monitored daily for 12 months using Facebook *Insights* analytics.



Growth

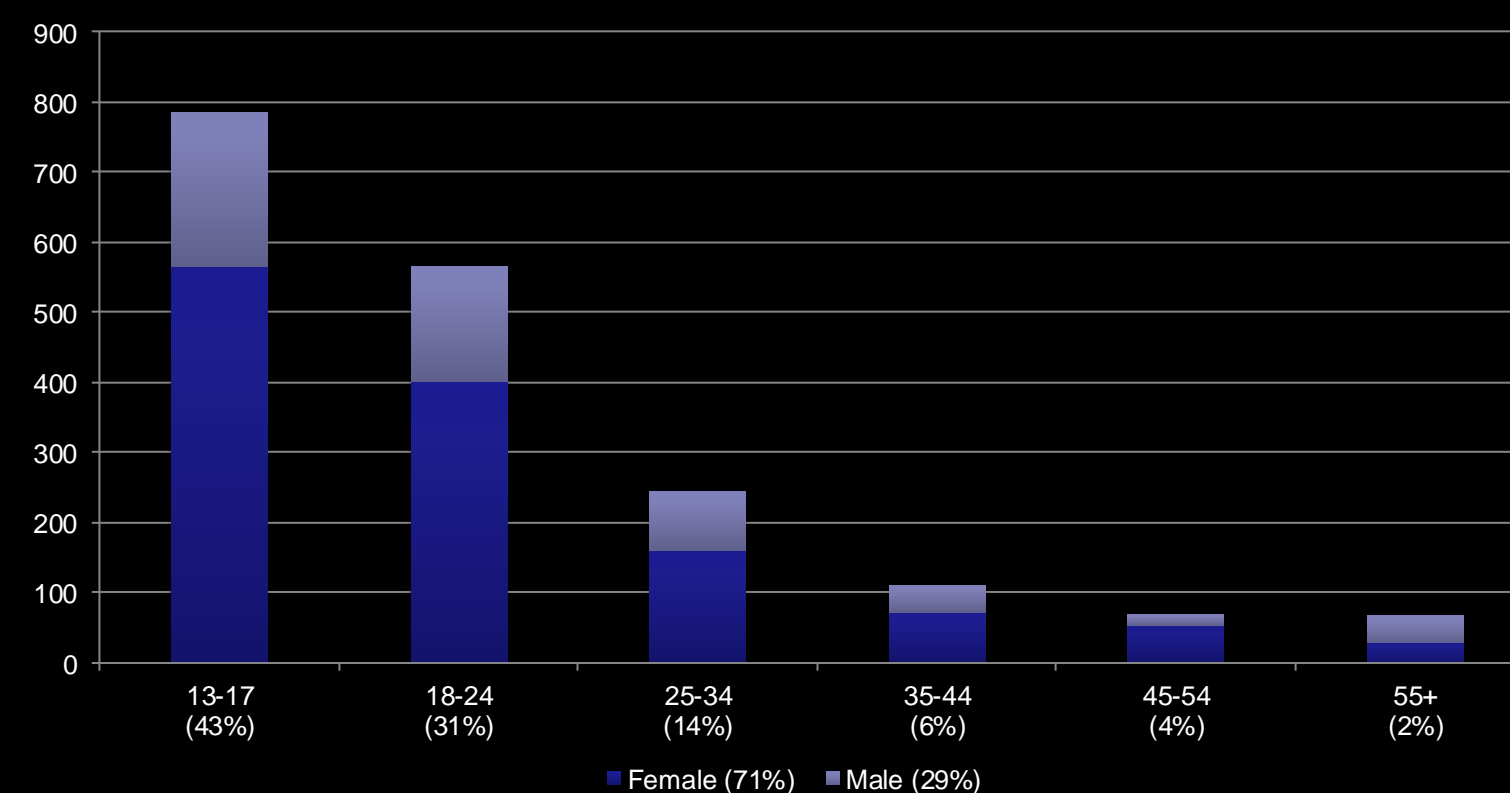
ThinkFirst Facebook Subscribers/Fans Year 1
10/1/09 - 9/30/10



The Facebook page experienced steady growth throughout the school year, especially during periods of peak program delivery (October through May). Year 1 logged in 1,825 total subscribers ("Fans"), an average of five new Fans/day.

Target Audience Demographics

Gender and Age Distribution Year 1
N=1,825 Subscribers

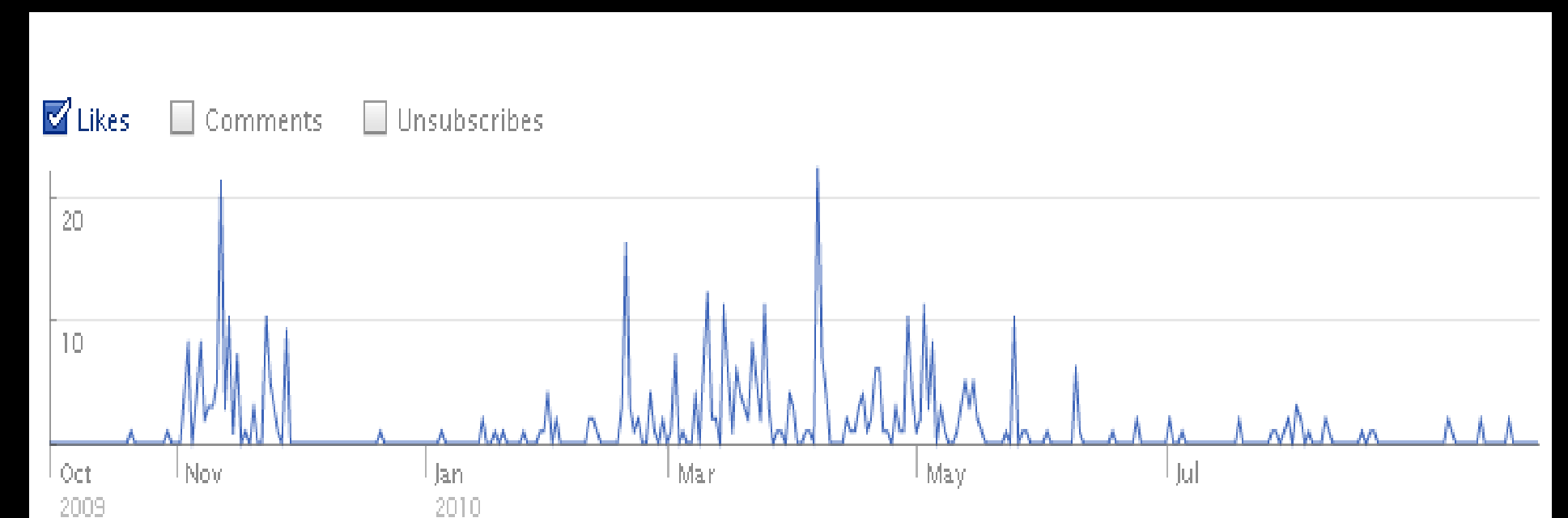


The majority (74%) of users were within the 13 to 24-year-old target demographic, with 43% between the ages of 13 and 17 and 31% between 18 and 24. Gender distribution: Female 71%, Male 29%.

Subscriber/Fan Interaction with Content

Fan engagement and interaction was critical to the success of this intervention. Facebook interaction in this study was demonstrated by the number of times people expressed a "Like" or logged in a comment in response to a News Feed post.

Daily Facebook "Likes" Posted by Fans Year 1
10/1/09 - 9/30/10



Year 1 experienced an impressive amount of interaction. The graph above indicates spikes in interaction occurred immediately following school program delivery. April 7th was the busiest day of interaction with 22 Likes and 16 comments. This spike was linked to an active week of program delivery reaching 1,483 high school students. A total of 700 indicators of Post Feedback (combined Likes and comments) were received in Year 1. Preliminary Year 2 data indicate an even greater level of Fan interaction.

Results

- 1,825 Fans at end of Year 1
- Number of Fans increased as number of students reached increased
- Interaction indicators high
- Interactions increased during peak program periods
- Minimal loss (< 4%) of Fans over the course of the year
- Majority (74%) of users in target demographic, age 13-24
- Majority (71%) of users female

Conclusion

Based on the response following the assemblies and interaction indicators, the ThinkFirst Facebook trial was a successful reinforcement tactic among teens. This effort should be expanded nationwide with the possibility of creating a parallel initiative using an emerging media platform such as Twitter.

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