



## **How American Cancer Society Is Using LinkedIn for Stakeholder Managements: A Thematic Analysis**

Using a thematic analysis of LinkedIn group of Relay for Life benefiting American Cancer Society from 2010 to 2013, this study examines how health nonprofit is using LinkedIn to maintain stakeholder relationships. Specifically, health nonprofit employs LinkedIn as a platform for fundraising event planners across the U.S. to broadcast event information and share tips to recruit participants and raise funds. Although users are engaged in the online discussions, Relay for Life does not aggressively participant in those discussions. Practical implications are discussed in terms of how health nonprofits might better use LinkedIn to communicate health messages, build stakeholder relationships, and host fundraising events.

### **Significance**

Health nonprofits contribute to establish healthy communities, help pass health-oriented laws, and support scientific researches. To conduct their nationwide works and support their own economy, health nonprofits have to host community-based fundraising events. It is thus important to know how to build up good relationships with stakeholders using social media. While previous scholars have deeply explored such social media as MySpace and Facebook, little attention has been paid to LinkedIn.

### **Conceptualization**

Stakeholder relationships: control mutuality; trust; relationship satisfaction; and relational commitment (Huang, 2001, pp.66-68).

Dialogic strategies: dialogic loop; usefulness of information; generation of return visits; intuitiveness/ease of the interface; and rule of conservation of visitors (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

**RQ1:** How does American Cancer Society relate to their stakeholders via LinkedIn group?

**RQ2:** What dialogic strategy does American Cancer Society employ to maintain stakeholder relationships via LinkedIn group?

### **Methodology**

Thematic analysis: open coding; consistent comparison; and axial coding.

### **Discussions**

American Cancer Society conveys a high level of control mutuality, trust, and relationship satisfaction in their relationship building. Part of the reason might be due to the real identity and real job descriptions disclosed by LinkedIn users, which makes health nonprofits more likely to trust those users and allow their free discussions.

American Cancer Society also employs dialogic strategies including dialogic loop, the usefulness of information, and ease of the interface. Since American Cancer Society employees are not aggressive enough in responding or making comments to other members' threads, the generation of return visits is implemented majorly by the non-employee users. In addition, American Cancer Society did not employ the discourse strategy but just posted a simple sentence as their mission statement.

### **Practical Implications**

1) Participate in the discussions more aggressively, since the communication on LinkedIn is still one-way; 2) provide links to their home website or other related sites, in case users join to seek cancer-related information; and 3) routinely organize and analyze the strategies shared by event planners, and publish in their internal journals.