

calebskidney - Indiana University Health

TrendyMinds and Slingshot SEO and Indiana University Health, Jan 1, 2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Events and Observances (Seven or Fewer Days) — Nonprofit Organizations

On June 13, 2012, the PR team at Indiana University Health spearheaded Indiana's first "Twittercast" of a surgery. Colin Newton donated his kidney to friend, Caleb Johnson, and Indiana – as well as the world – looked on as photos and updates from medical team came from the operating room and onto Twitter users' phones, computers and tablets. The goal was to raise awareness of the need for living organ donors, especially among non-relatives. By the end of the campaign, the PR team secured roughly 1,700 interactions and had more website views the day of the surgeries than the entire previous week.

Events and observances (seven or fewer days) includes programs or events scheduled for one to seven consecutive days (not including planning and preparation). Events may include commemorations, observances, openings, celebrations or other special activities, and must occur within a time span of one week. The nonprofit subcategory is specifically intended for health and welfare organizations, as well as educational and cultural institutions not included in other subcategories.

Full Text: SITUATION ANALYSIS

More than 90,000 Americans require an organ transplant and nearly nine in 10 need a kidney. Roughly three-quarters of all kidney donors are related to the recipient, leaving a large, untapped market of prospective donors. Unfortunately, many of these prospective donors shy away from giving up one of their kidneys due to myths and inaccuracies about transplantation. The Public Relations team at Indiana University Health recognized this problem and looked for a way to raise awareness of the need for living, non-related kidney donors among Hoosiers and to dispel myths about transplantation.

As one of the largest health systems in Indiana – by employee base and Twitter following – IU Health had the resources and staff to engage key publics in a novel way: Live-tweeting the state's first surgeries on Twitter. The project, named #calebskidney, brought friends Colin Newton (donor) and Caleb Johnson (recipient) to downtown Indianapolis on June 13, 2012 to share their respective kidney donation and transplantation procedures with the world. Photos and updates from the patients, their families and surgeons in the adjoining operating rooms fueled the 6.5-hour event, as did questions from followers.

RESEARCH

Consulting firm PwC released a report in April 2012 showing 41% of respondents said social media influenced their healthcare choices. This followed a 2011 report from YouGov Healthcare, which found 57% of respondents felt the same way. Furthermore, social media is seen as a tool for transparency and there is nothing more transparent than tweeting two patients' procedures live from the hospital.

With the growing importance on social media, in 2011, IU Health began researching how other health systems – including the Henry Ford Health System (Detroit), Ohio State University (Columbus, Ohio) and Aurora Healthcare (Milwaukee, Wisc.) – tweeted their surgeries. Based on this research and a conversation with Aurora Healthcare, IU Health PR realized it was necessary to:

- Develop a contingency plan should the surgeries go awry, with pre-written tweets
- Identify and engage stakeholders in a variety of areas, including legal, risk management, hospital administration, marketing, PR, internal communications, e-marketing and transplant leadership
- Start with a low-risk surgery (kidney procedures are among the safest surgeries)
- Place patient safety and the educational mission of the campaign front-and-center
- Create content for the web to share Colin and Caleb’s story pre-event via social media

PLANNING

Armed with that knowledge and benchmarking data, IU Health Public Relations crafted the following objectives:

1. To secure 500 additional followers on Twitter between the start of the campaign (June 6) and the day of the surgery (June 13).
2. To secure 50 Twitter mentions/retweets of the surgery by June 13.
3. To secure 25 Facebook likes or comments on the surgery by June 13.
4. To secure 25 media placements by June 14.
5. To increase traffic to the IU Health transplant webpage by 10 percent from June 6-13.

The PR team’s chief strategy was to expand awareness of living organ donation among non-relatives through sharing a personal story. Both Colin and Caleb were in their early 30s and already had Twitter accounts, making them the perfect faces for this campaign.

Furthermore, a secondary strategy was to *engage* Twitter followers and non-followers alike by sharing this touching story.

EXECUTION

IU Health used the following tactics to achieve (and far surpass) its objectives:

- **Media relations:** Organized a news conference just three days before the surgeries when Colin and Caleb were both in town for final pre-procedure tests. Coordinating this was difficult, given both men were still working and lived hours away from Indianapolis. In addition to the patients, one of the surgeons and patients’ family members also spoke at the event, giving media a “one-stop shop” for their stories. Interviews also included coordinating iPhone FaceTime interviews with Caleb from his home near Terre Haute and PR interviews with trade pubs.
- **Social media:** Regular posts to IU Health’s then-4,300 Twitter followers and thousands of Facebook fans in the week leading up the event. All tweets during the actual surgery were signed off on by medical personnel, which also answered all questions from followers. PR created the hashtag #calebskidney to help chronicle the patients’ journeys.
- **Web content:** A pre-surgery video shot by PR and edited by an outside vendor for a revamped organ donation landing page on IU Health’s website, with bios and information on the patients and surgical team. Two more videos would be shot and posted the day of the event. In all, the three videos have received more than 8,100 views on YouTube to date.
- **E-cards:** Those interested in wishing Colin and Caleb well could send an “e-card.” In all, the two men received more than 100 e-cards.
- **Marketing:** Reaching out to kidney organ donation groups locally and nationally with communication on the upcoming event.

- **Internal communications:** Frequent newsletter and e-newsletter stories to IU Health staff.

It's worth noting all this was done in the span of 13 days. Kidney donor and recipient do not get the final "green light" for surgery until about two weeks out, ergo, PR could not start promoting this or crafting content prior to that date in the event either man was unable to proceed with his procedure.

EVALUATION

Results of objectives:

1. To secure 500 additional followers on Twitter between the start of the campaign (June 6) and the day of the surgery (June 13).
OUTCOME: Added 1,363 followers from Indiana and beyond. IU Health previously added about 60-70 Twitter followers a week.
2. To secure 50 Twitter mentions/retweets of the surgery by June 13.
OUTCOME: 1,754 mentions, direct messages and retweets about organ transplantation, including from some big-name amplifiers like a Hollywood actress and the Los Angeles Times.
3. To secure 25 Facebook likes or comments on the surgery by June 13.
OUTCOME: 186 likes and comments.
4. To secure 25 media placements by June 14.
OUTCOME: More than 100 earned media hits by June 14, including hits in the LA Times, USA Today, Indianapolis Star and statewide media.
5. To increase traffic to the IU Health transplant webpage by 10 percent between June 6-13.
OUTCOME: The website saw more traffic June 13 (1,673 visits) than it did the entire previous week (1,478 visits).

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