Prevention
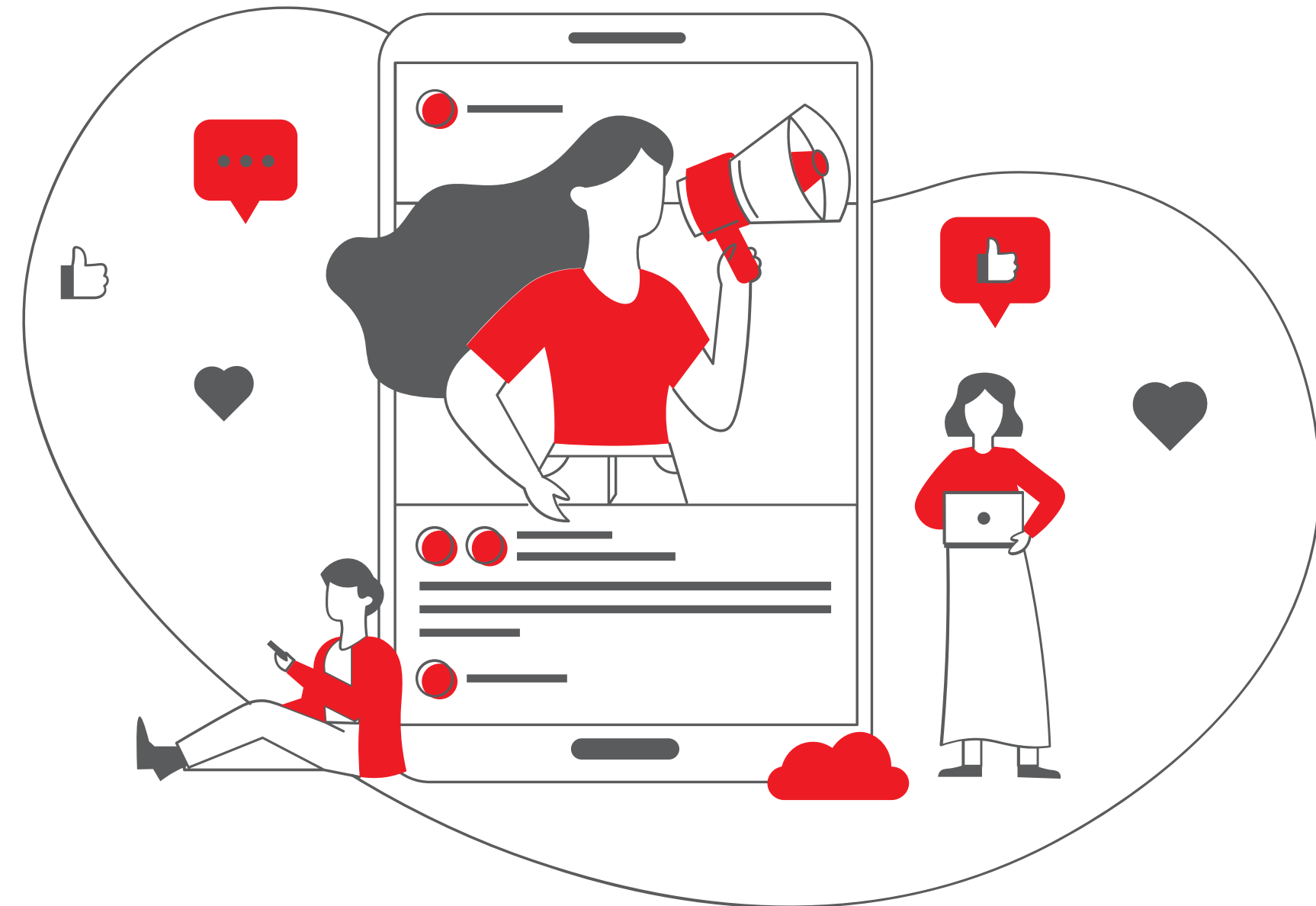Training
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Innovation in Social Media Marketing

Tools and Tactics for Effective Substance Use Prevention Campaigns

April 30, 2025

Presenter: Emily Thompson

preventiontrainingcenter.org

Introduction

Social media is one of the most powerful tools available to prevention professionals today. It allows us to meet people where they are—online—providing opportunities to raise awareness, share resources, and promote healthy behaviors.
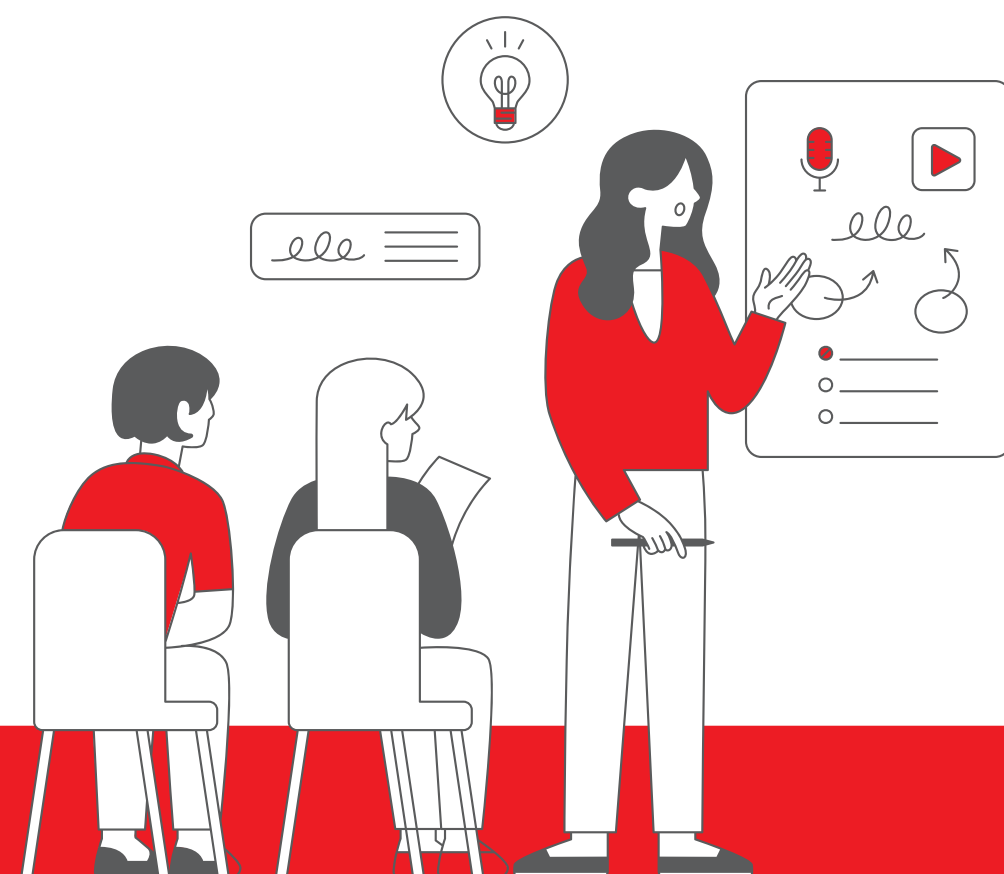
By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Develop a content strategy aligned with your prevention goals
- Create engaging and effective posts that maximize audience reach and interaction
- Understand best practices for posting frequency, content types, and platform-specific engagement
- Navigate challenges such as limited time, public perception, and changing social media trends
- Analyze performance metrics to measure success and refine content strategies

Set up account on TTASC LMS: https://ttasc.talentlms.com/

Why Social Media Matters

Social media is one of the most powerful tools available to prevention professionals today. It allows us to meet people where they are—online—providing opportunities to raise awareness, share resources, and promote healthy behaviors.
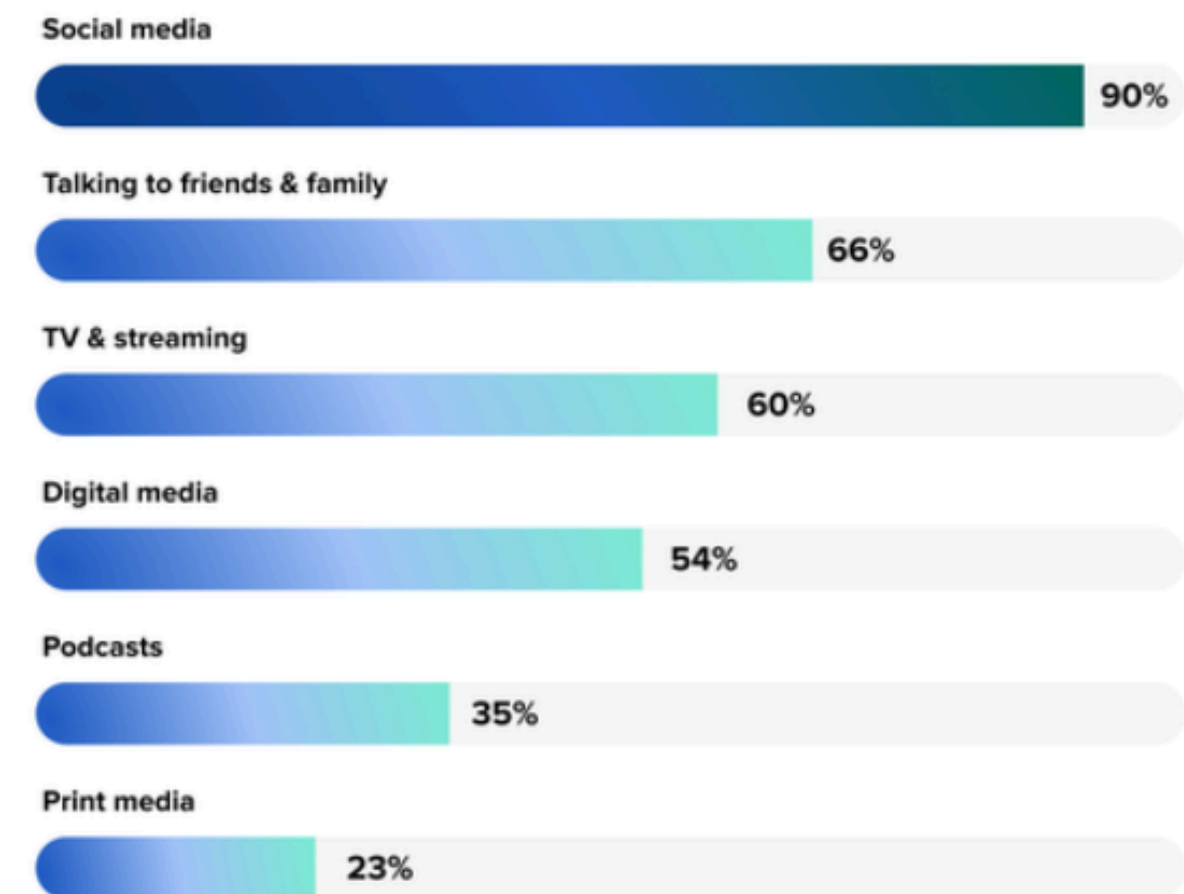
In 2025, there are estimated to be 5.42 billion total social media users worldwide

In the US, around 72% of adults report using at least one social media platform with nearly 50% using it to get some news

81% of parents with teens aged 13–17 report that their child uses at least one social media site

35% of teens say they use social media "almost constantly."

Sources consumers use to keep up with trends and cultural moments

Social media
90%

Talking to friends & family
66%

TV & streaming
60%

Digital media
54%

Podcasts
35%

Print media
23%

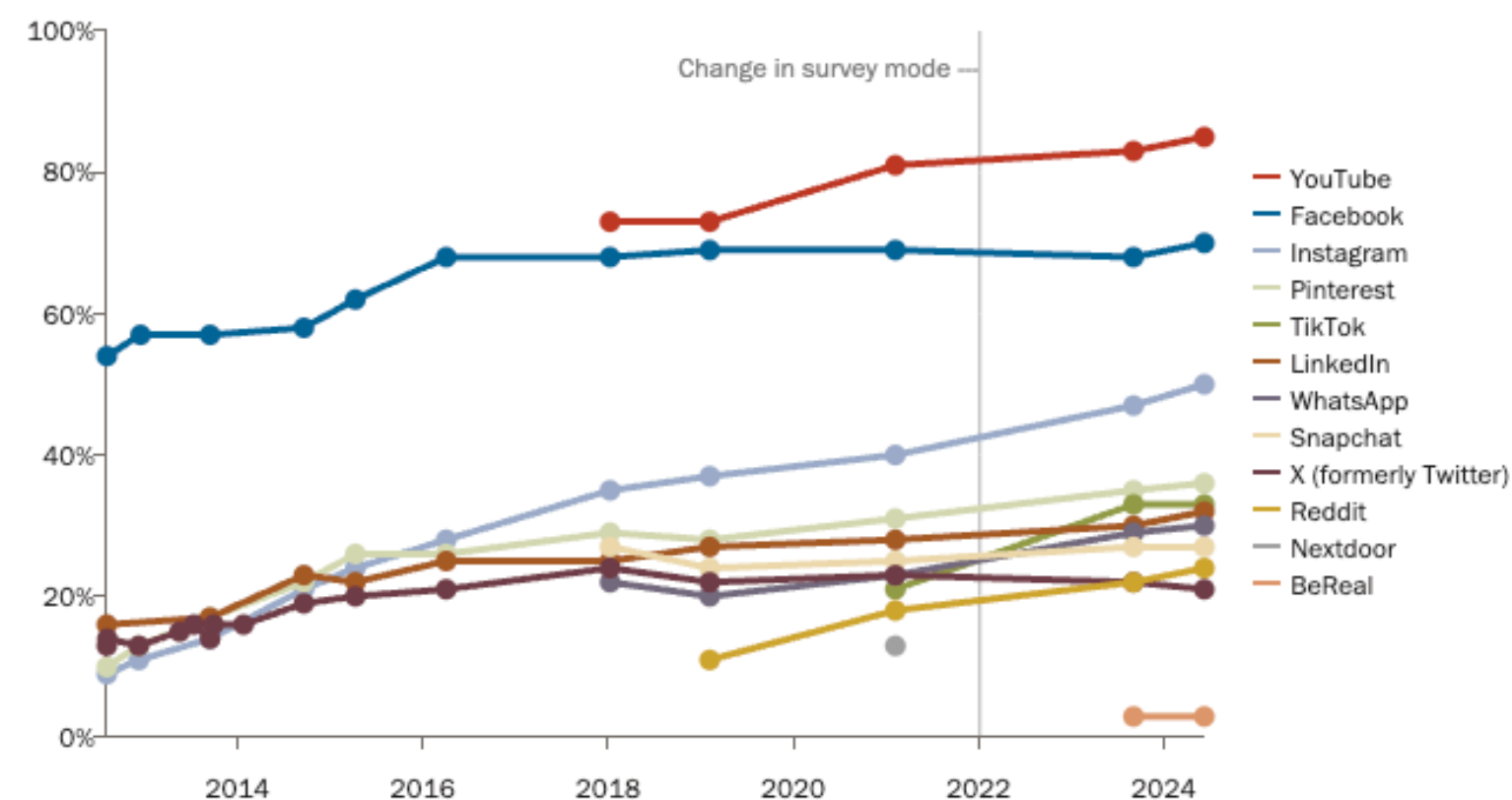The 2025 Sprout Social Index™   sproutsocial

Focus on 2-3 platforms where your audience is most active.

Choose the Right Platforms

Which social media platforms are most popular

% of U.S. adults who say they ever use …

Change in survey mode —

- YouTube
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- TikTok
- LinkedIn
- WhatsApp
- Snapchat
- X (formerly Twitter)
- Reddit
- Nextdoor
- BeReal

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted 2012-2024.
Note: The vertical line indicates a change in mode. Polls from 2012-2021 were conducted via phone. In 2023, the poll was conducted via web and mail. In 2024, the poll was conducted via web, mail and phone. For more on the mode shift in 2023, read our Q&A. Refer to the topline for more information on how question wording varied over the years. Pre-2018 data is not available for YouTube, Snapchat or WhatsApp; pre-2019 data is not available for Reddit; pre-2021 data is not available for TikTok; pre-2023 data is not available for BeReal. Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

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Major Platforms & Best Uses:

Facebook
build community connections, share updates, promote events, and distribute educational resources.

Instagram
visual storytelling through photos, graphics, reels, and short videos to engage audiences in a creative way.

TikTok
create short, entertaining, and educational videos that quickly capture attention and connect with younger audiences.

LinkedIn
professional networking, sharing research, promoting initiatives, and organizational partnerships.

X (Formerly Twitter)
real-time updates, advocacy, sharing news, and participating in trending conversations.

Youtube
host and share longer-form videos, educational series, webinars, and campaign content for broad and lasting engagement.

Professional Page vs. Business Page

If you represent a prevention coalition, town agency, or nonprofit, a Business Page is the better choice

Professional Accounts (Instagram/Facebook)

- Designed for creators, influencers, and public figures.
- Focuses on personal branding and content creation.
- Access to basic insights (reach, engagement, audience demographics).
- Can hide or display contact information depending on your preference.
- Better for individuals growing a personal brand — not an organization.

Business Pages (Instagram/Facebook)

- Designed for organizations, coalitions, nonprofits, and businesses.
- Provides full access to analytics (Meta Business Suite), ad tools, and appointment scheduling.
- Can run ads, boosted posts, and targeted campaigns.
- Lists important information like location, website, services, and business hours.
- Required for grant reporting or formal campaigns in many prevention settings.

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Meta Business Suite

Personal Profile Required

- A Facebook Business Page must be linked to a personal Facebook account.
- Your personal information will NOT be visible on the Business Page.
- You can manage multiple Business Pages from one personal profile safely and privately.

Why Meta Is Important

- Helps Facebook verify that a real person is behind the organization.
- Enhances page security and access recovery if needed.
- Allows you to assign multiple people to help manage the page.
- Allows you to manage Facebook & Instagram pages in one place

Tips & Tricks

- Create a "dummy Facebook account owned by coalition or organization in case someone leaves
- Always assign at least two Admins to your page in case someone loses access.
- Connect Facebook & Instagram to one Meta Business Account to manage both

AI & Social Media

Benefits

- AI accelerates content development by streamlining the writing process.
- AI improves scalability by increasing your content output without needing more writing resources
- AI reduces costs through automating some content creation tasks.

AI is a powerful tool to support your social media content creation but it should complement, not replace, your authentic voice, lived experience, and community insight.
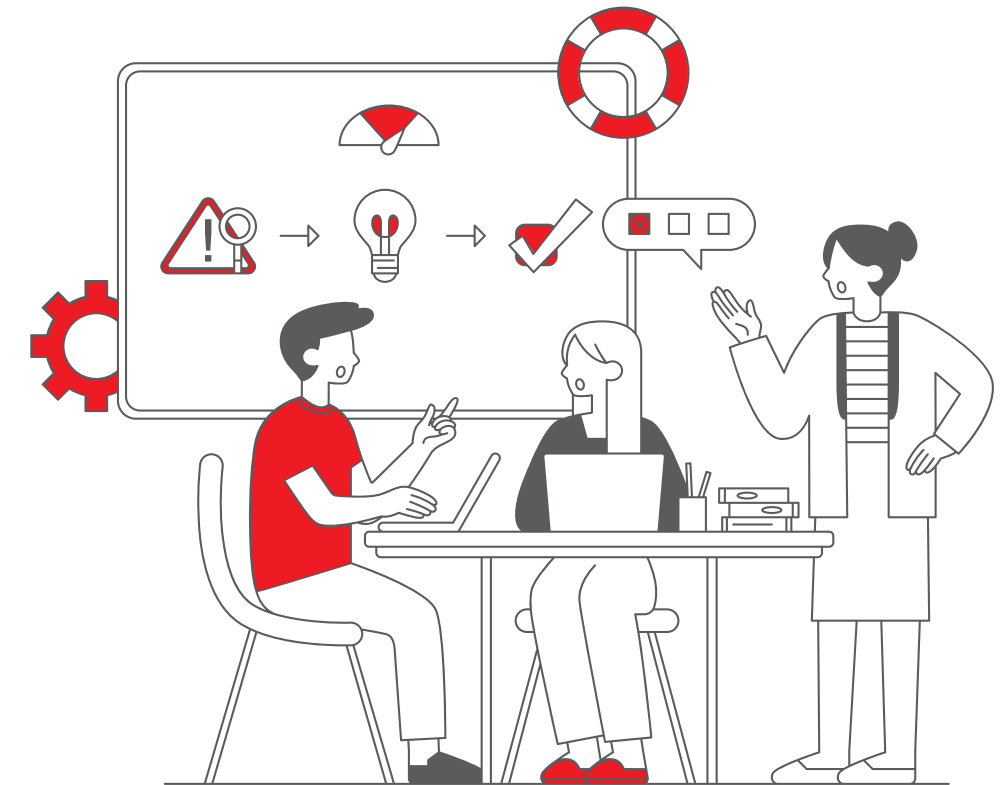
Challenges

- Lack of accuracy
- Risk of plagiarism
- Lack of human touch
- Wrong tone of voice

Ways to use AI

- Generate Content Ideas
- Write Social Media Captions
- Re-purpose Existing Content
- Create Visuals
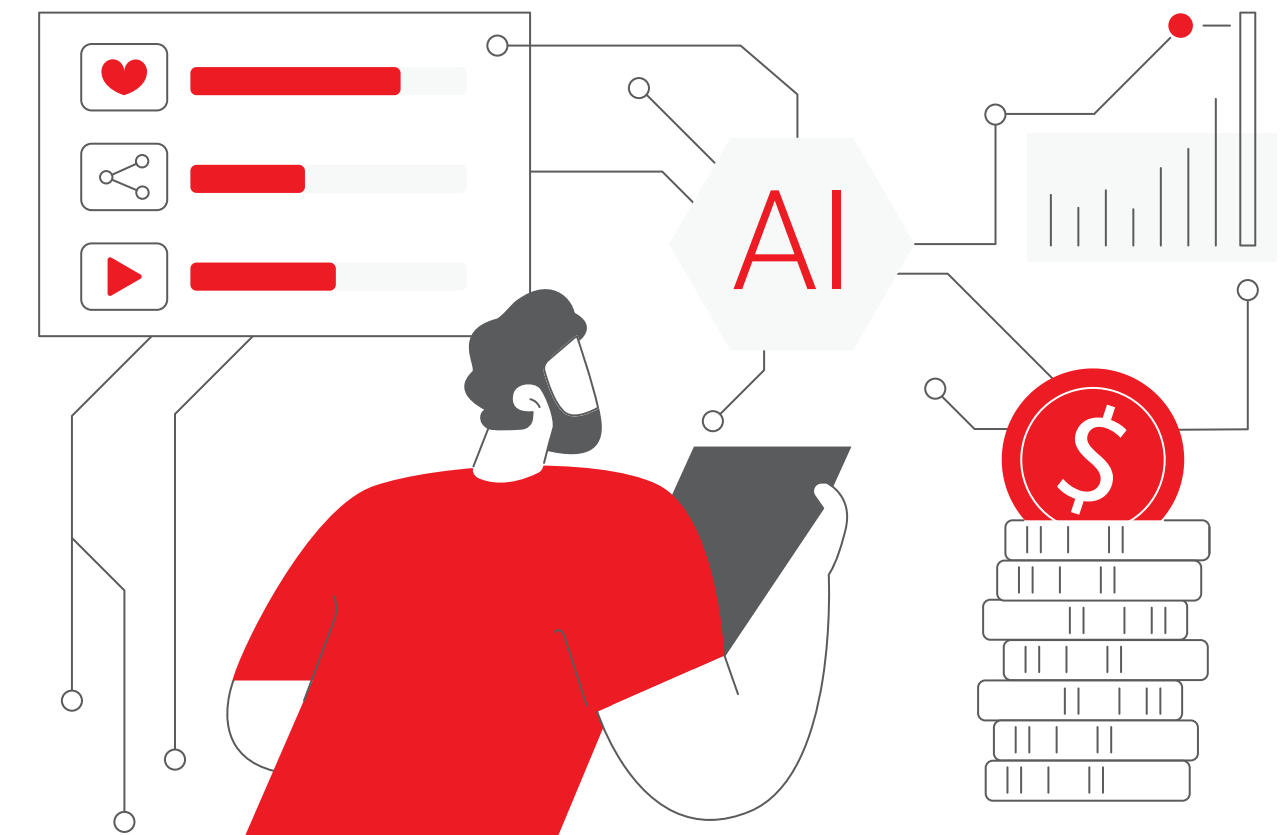
5 Phases of Running a Successful Campaign

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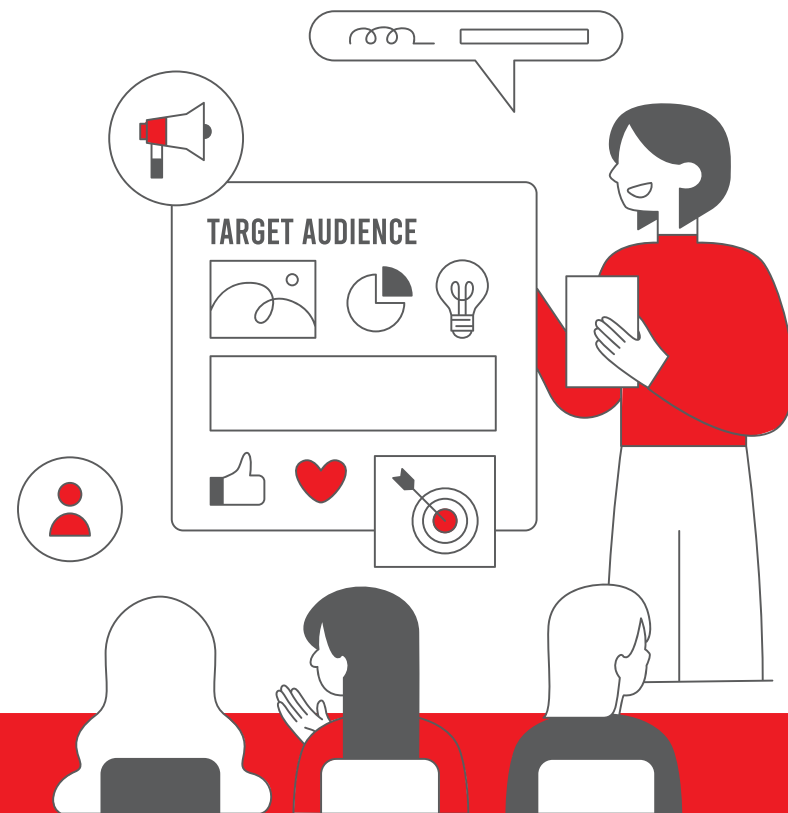| 1	2	3	4	5
Understand	**Plan**	**Build**	**Test**	**Refine**

Phase 1: Understand

Goal: Know your audience, community, and message

Identify Your Target Audience

Are you reaching teens, parents, professionals, or community leaders?

Determine Which Platforms They Use

Below is a breakdown of social media usage by age range in the US:
- 13-17 years – Instagram (59%), Facebook (33%)
- 18-29 years – Instagram (76%), Facebook (68%)
- 30-49 years – Facebook (78%), Instagram (66%)
- 50-64 years – Facebook (70%), Instagram (36%)
- 65+ – Facebook (59%), Instagram (19%)

Recognize Challenges, Language, and Stigma

Understand potential barriers like stigma around substance use or mental health.

Align with Organization's Mission and Prevention Goals

Every campaign should reflect your coalition's broader mission. Connect each post back to your key prevention messages.

Phase 2: Plan

Goal: Develop a clear roadmap

Key Elements

- Set Goals & Objectives

- Brainstorm themes & timeline

- Build Content Calendar
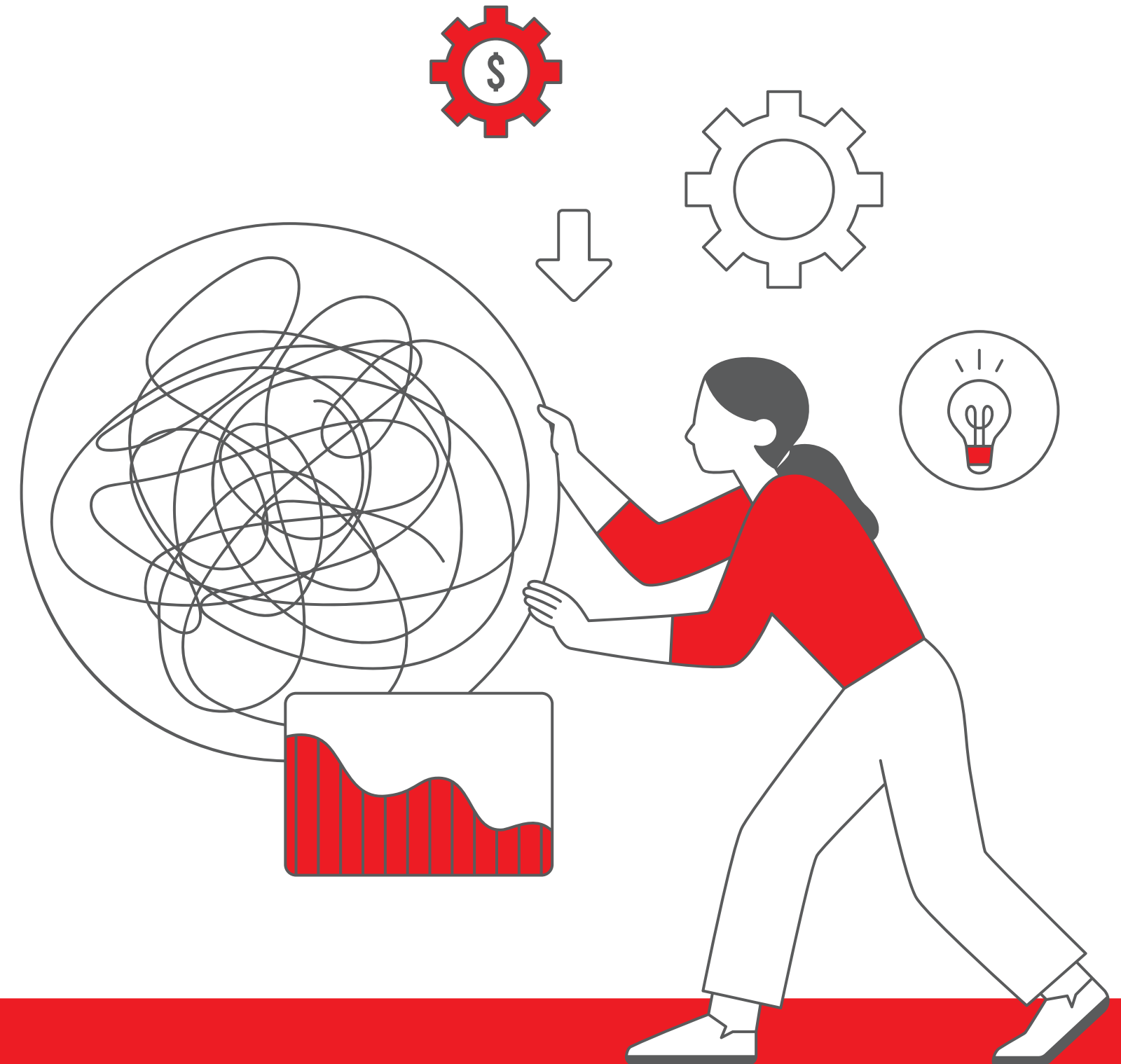
Define Your Goals

Before you create posts, define what you want to achieve.

Your Goals Might Include:

- **Awareness:** Increase recognition of an issue.
- **Education:** Share important facts, strategies, or resources with your audience.
- **Attendance:** Promote events, trainings, or webinars and boost participation.
- **Behavior Change:** Encourage actions like safe medication disposal or talking with teens about alcohol.
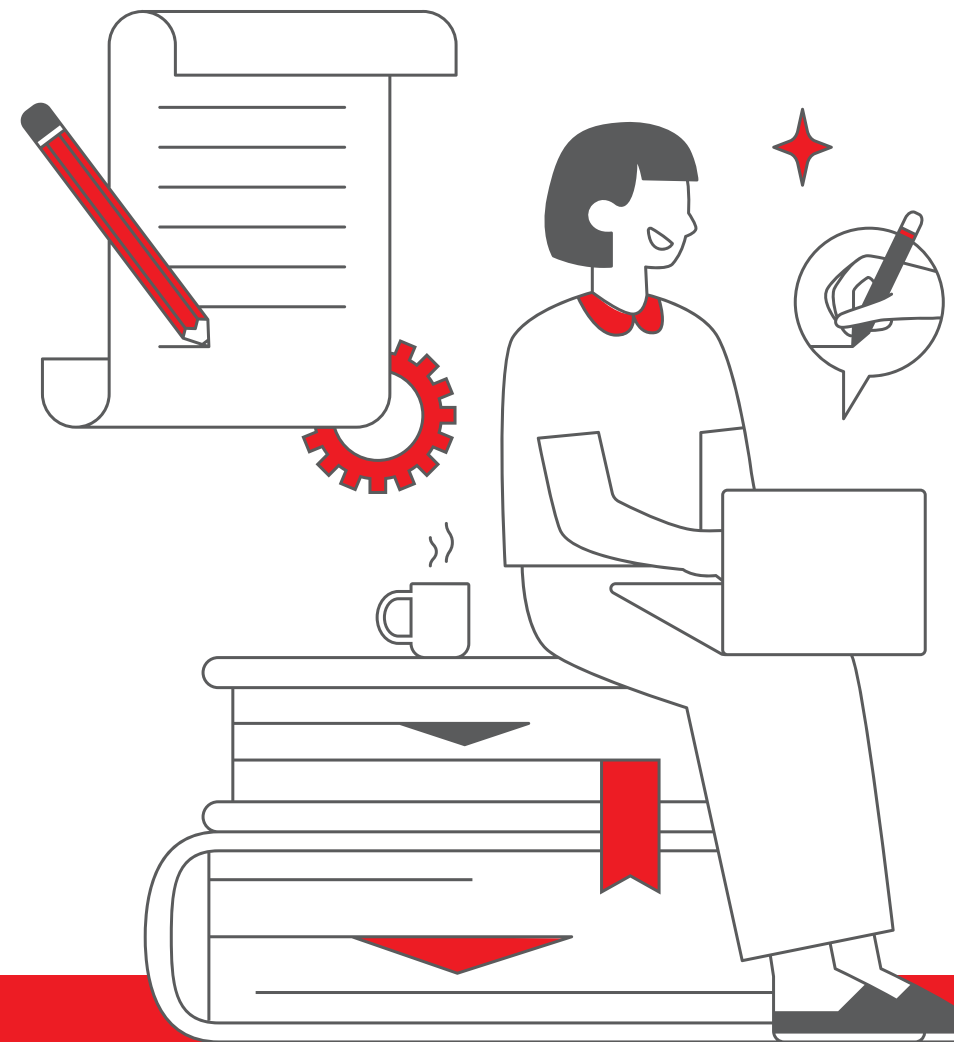
SMART Goalsetting Objectives

S Specific
Be clear, concise, and detailed

M Measurable
Choose metrics to track and evaluate progress

A Actionable
Ensure a step-by-step plan is plausible and on-budget

R Relevant
Align each goal with broader business objectives

T Time-bound
Set timelines for progress and deadlines for completion

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SEMRUSH

Determine Content Strategy

Types of content to share:

- Awareness days
- Prevention/Coalition Data
- Promote local events
- Share prevention news
- National Holidays
- Promote other groups/coalitions
- Infographics and explainer videos
- Testimonials and quotes
- Photos from local events
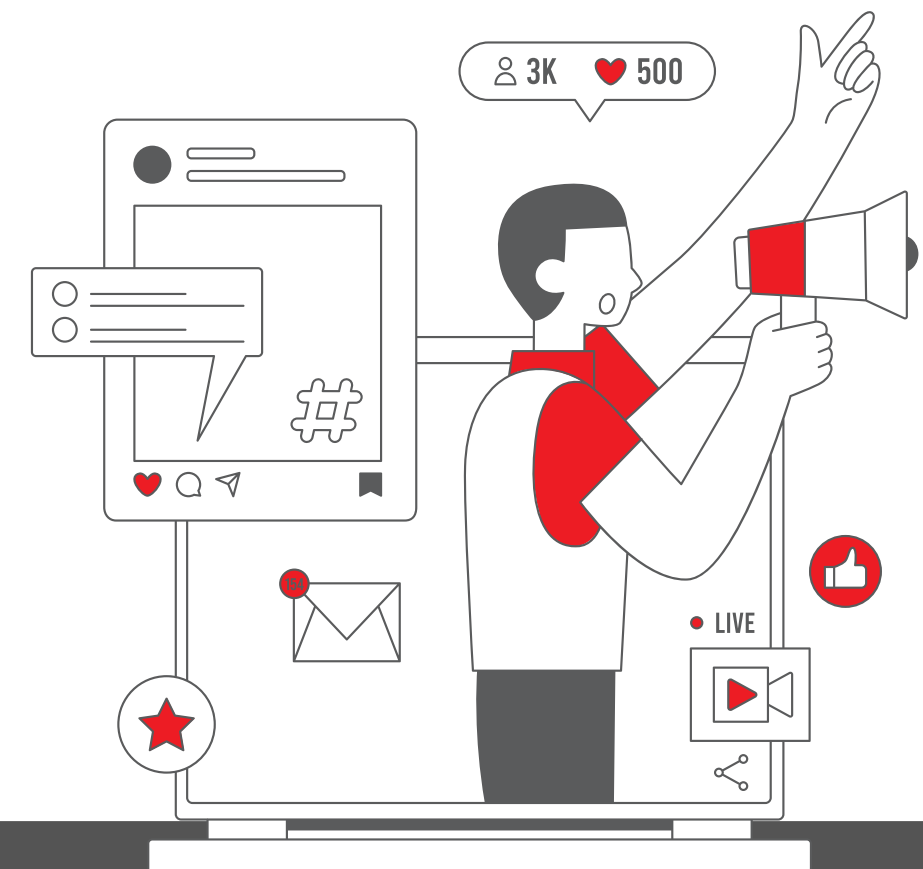- User generated content/responding
- Existing campaigns

80/20 Rule

80% of your content informs, entertains or educates your audience. The remaining 20% promotes your products or services.

4:1:1 Posting Ratio

For every 6 posts, you post:
- 4 pieces of curated content
- 1 original post
- 1 promotional post

Content Examples

Curated Content

Original Content

Promotional Content

Building a Content Calendar

Benefits of using a Content Calendar:

- It saves you time
- Helps you stick to a consistent posting schedule
- Keeps you organized
- Helps maintain post quality
- Easy for team members to collaborate

Consistency is key!

Plan Posting Frequency:
Aim to post 3–5 times per week to stay visible without overwhelming your audience.

Plan Ahead:
Map out your posts at least 1–3 months in advance.

Consistency Over Quantity:
It's better to post regularly (even 2–3 times/week) than to post a lot all at once and then disappear.

Use Themes:
Motivation Monday, Wellness Wednesday, Thinking Thursday, Flyer Friday

Free Tools to Create a Content Calendar

Google Sheets or Google Calendar

- Why it's great: Free, flexible, and easy to share with team members.

- Tip: Create a simple spreadsheet with columns like Date, Platform, Content Theme, Post Copy, Image/Graphic.

- Sample Google Sheet Content Calendar

Canva

- Why it's great: Canva offers free calendar templates you can customize and pair with your graphics as well as an interactive calendar.

- Tip: Search "Content Calendar" inside Canva templates to start easily.

- Canva Templates
- Canva Calendar

Meta Business Suite

- Why it's great: Built directly into Facebook/Instagram. You can plan, create, and schedule posts from one dashboard.

- Tip: The calendar view lets you see scheduled posts for both Facebook and Instagram at once. (Cannot be used with personal profiles pages)

- Meta Business Suite Planner

Phase 3: Build

Goal: Create content that resonates
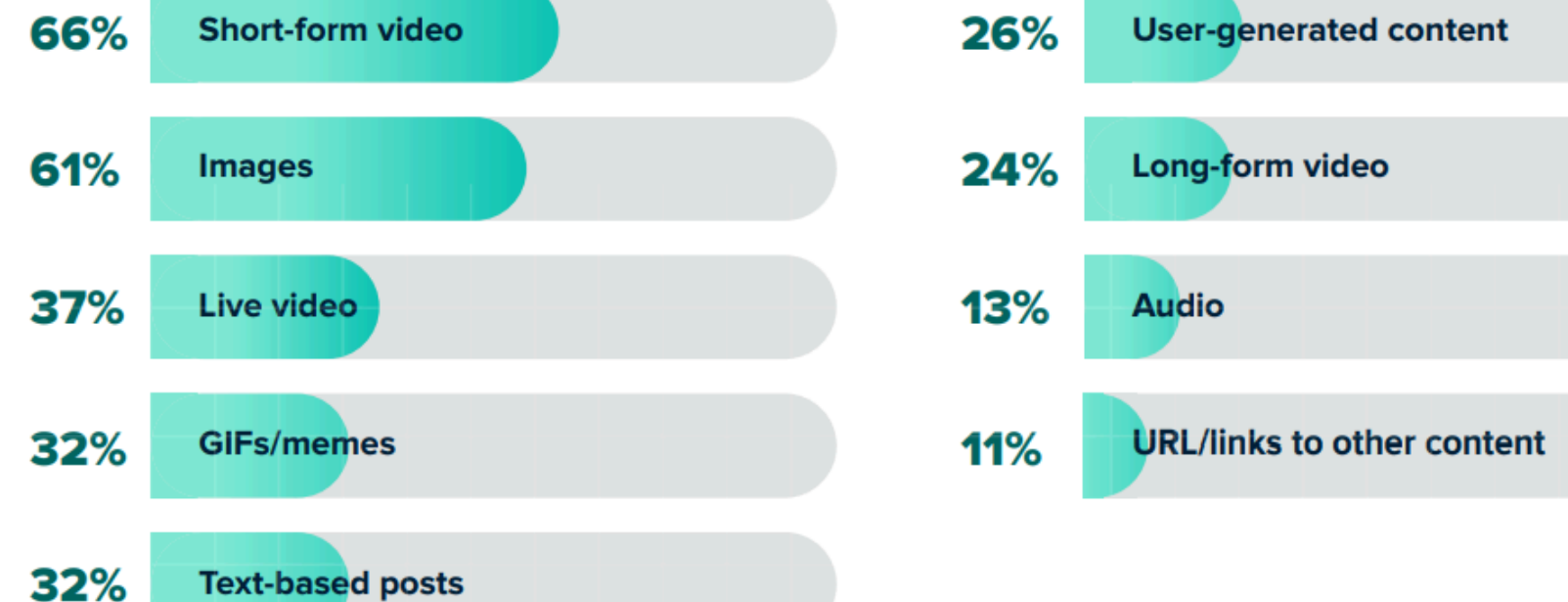
Key Elements

- Use a mix of different formats

- Use high-quality creatives

- Create engaging captions

Use a Mix of Formats to Boost Engagement

Using a variety of content formats—like photos, videos, carousels, stories, and reels—keeps your feed dynamic and engaging. Different formats resonate with different audiences, and platforms like Instagram and Facebook prioritize video and interactive content in their algorithms, helping you reach more people.

The most engaging types of in-feed social content

66% Short-form video	26% User-generated content
61% Images	24% Long-form video
37% Live video	13% Audio
32% GIFs/memes	11% URL/links to other content
32% Text-based posts	

Platform Specific Tips

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Facebook

The types of brand content social users are most likely to interact with on Facebook

1 Text posts
2 Static images
3 Short-form video (<15 seconds)
4 Short-form video (15-30 seconds)
5 GIFs and memes

Technical Specs to Know:
- Photos: 1200 x 630 pixels (recommended size)
- Videos:
  - Portrait: 1080 x 1350
  - Landscape: 1920 x 1080
  - Max length: 240 minutes (but aim for 1–2 minutes)
  - Maximum file size: 4 GB

Instagram

The types of brand content social users are most likely to interact with on Instagram

1 Short-form video (<15 seconds)
2 Static images
3 Short-form video (15-60 seconds)
4 Sponsored influencer content
5 GIFs and memes

Technical Specs to Know:
- Photos:
  - Square: 1080 x 1080 pixels
  - Portrait: 1080 x 1350 pixels (performs best!)
  - Landscape: 1080 x 566 pixels
- Videos:
  - Reels & Stories: 1080 x 1920 pixels (vertical)
  - Regular feed videos: Up to 60 seconds (longer for Reels)
  - Max file size: 4 GB

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Use High-Quality Creatives to Strengthen Your Message

First impressions count — especially on social media! High-quality visuals make your message clearer, more professional, and more engaging. Clean, attractive content builds trust with your audience and helps drive action.

Best Practices for Creating Strong Creatives:

Keep a Clean and Consistent Color Scheme

- Use your coalition or organization's brand colors if you have them.
- Stick to 2–3 main colors to keep visuals professional and recognizable.

Avoid Blurry Images or Videos

- Always upload high-resolution photos and videos.
- Check your visuals before posting — if it's grainy or unclear, choose another!

Keep Text Minimal and Easy to Read

- Use large, clear fonts.
- Avoid overcrowding graphics with too much text.

Free Tools to Create Eye-Catching Content
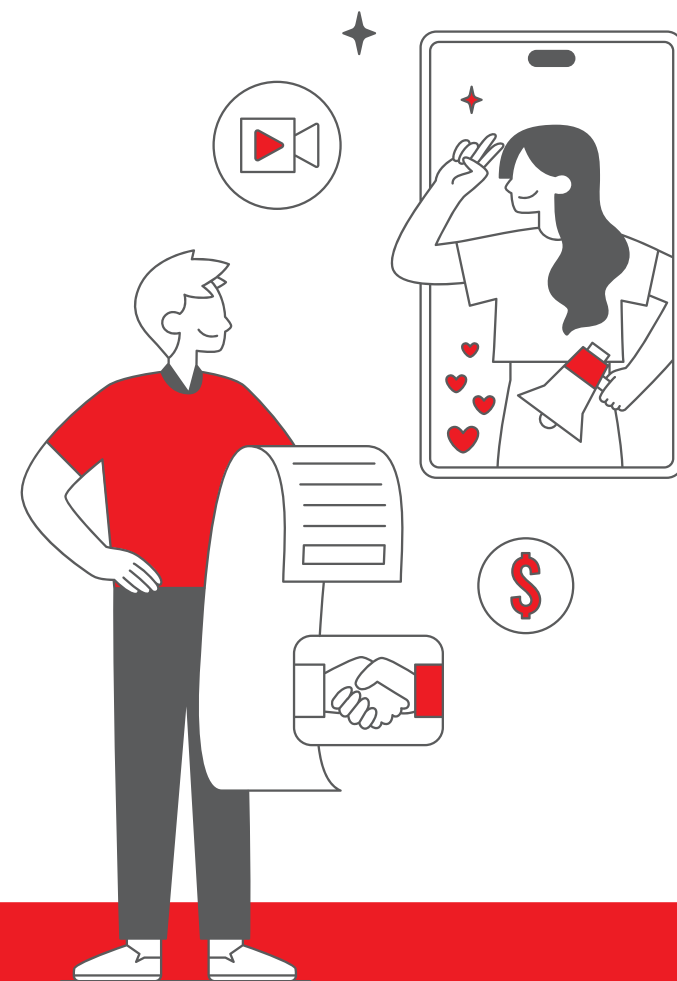
Canva

- Easy-to-use graphic design platform
- Ready-made templates by platform
- Has AI built in to create images and videos
- Free version is powerful enough for most needs
- Great for flyers, social media posts, infographics, and event promotions
- Easily resize images to the correct dimensions
- Paid version offers more tools like Brand Kits to keep content consistent

CapCut

- User-friendly video editor
- Perfect for creating short videos and Reels
- Free templates, music, text overlays, and transitions
- Has AI built in for video creation and voice generator

Crafting Strong Social Media Captions

Your caption can make or break your post! A good caption invites action, builds community, and connects people to your prevention message.

Tips for Writing Effective Captions

Tools for caption generation

- ChatGPT
- Hootsuite
- Content Studio

Make Posts Actionable

- Share a resource from your website
- Provide a link to register for events or sign up for newsletters
- Ask questions to spark conversation or encourage followers to share their thoughts

Use Minimal, Impactful Text

- Keep it short and clear!
- Focus on one main point per post.
- Use line breaks, bullets, and emojis (sparingly) to improve readability.

Be Choosy with Hashtags

- Quality over quantity: 1–5 relevant hashtags is best.
- Statista (2022) found that engagement drops when posts have more than five hashtags on Instagram.
- Choose hashtags that are specific to your audience and your prevention message

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Changing the Narrative on Substance Use: Why Language Matters

- Language shapes public perception, fuels stigma, and influences policy and treatment outcomes.

- Studies show that people described as "substance abusers" are more likely to be judged harshly than those described with person-first language ("person with a substance use disorder").

- Positive, medically accurate language promotes recovery, encourages help-seeking, and reduces shame.

END THE STIGMA
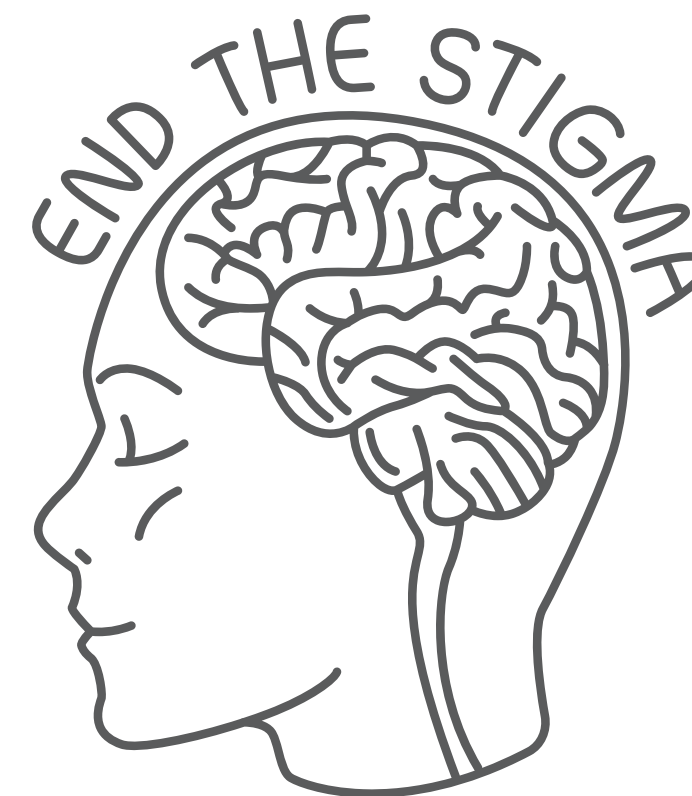
The Impact of Stigmatizing Language

Do Words Matter to Professionals?

In a study of 516 mental health professionals:

- Participants read a vignette describing an individual as either a "substance abuser" or a "person with a substance use disorder."

- Those who read the "substance abuser" description were significantly more likely to:
    - View the individual as personally culpable
    - Recommend punitive actions over treatment options

Key Point:

Yes! Even trained professionals are influenced by stigmatizing language.

Source: Kelly, JF, Dow, SJ, Westerhoff, C.Int J Drug Policy 2010. 21 (3) 202-207f

The Impact of Stigmatizing Language

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Do Words Matter to the Public?

In a study of 314 members of the public:

- Participants provided recommendations after reading about a "substance abuser" versus a "person with a substance use disorder."

- Those exposed to the "substance abuser" label were more likely to suggest punishment rather than treatment and support.

Key Point: Yes! The words we use impact how communities and systems respond to people with substance use disorders.
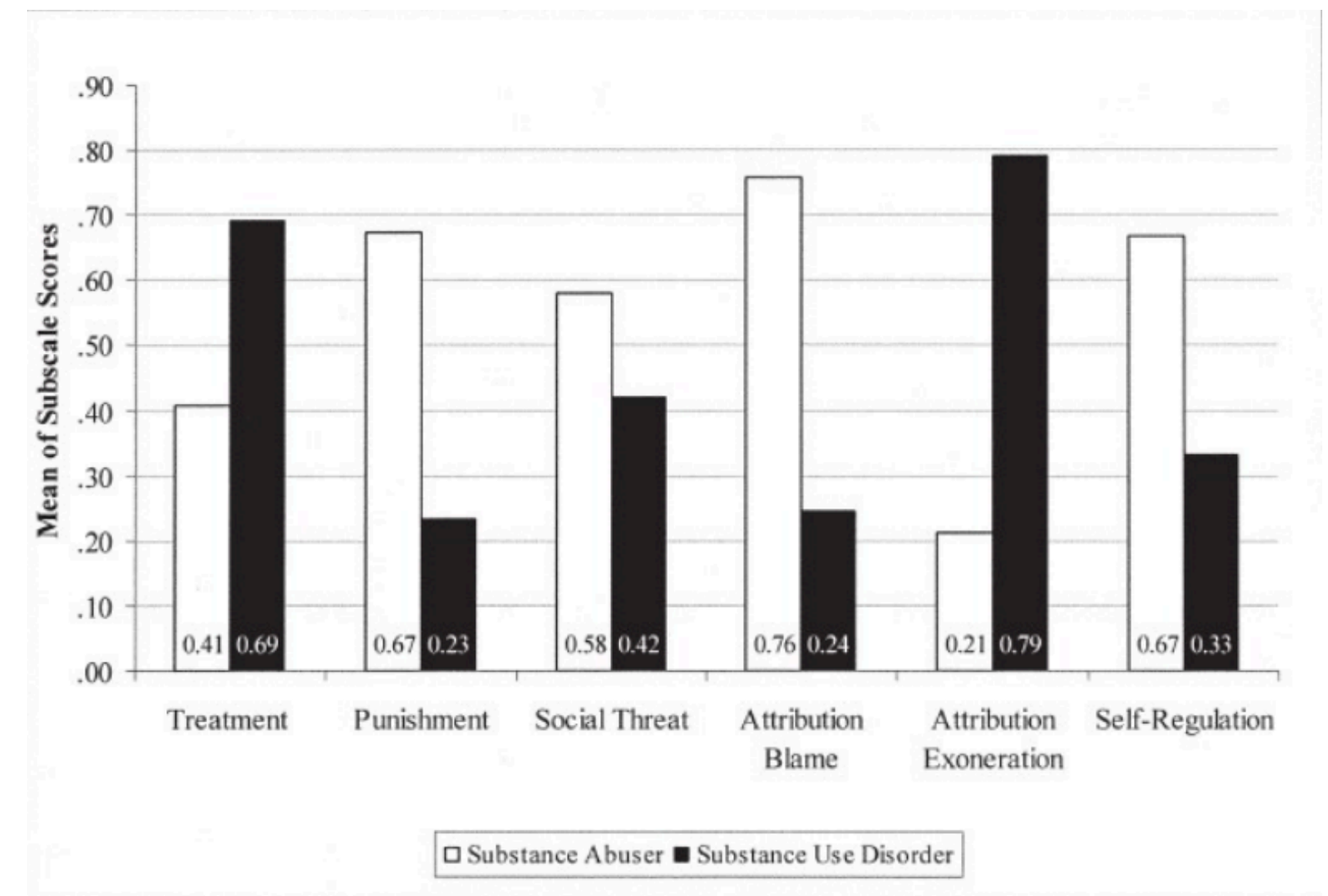
Checklist for Recovery- Friendly Reporting

- Use person-first, non-stigmatizing and medically accurate language (e.g., "person with a substance use disorder" instead of "addict").
https://www.recoveryanswers.org/addiction-ary/
- Report on methadone and other treatments using medical analogies (e.g., similar to insulin for diabetes)
- Include naloxone, treatment options, and resource links when discussing opioid use or overdose
- Use images that reflect realism and hope, not stereotypes
- Focus messaging on recovery and social functioning, not just addiction
- Balance stories of overdose and addiction with those of recovery from substance use
- Add helpful CT resources to relevant posts:
  - 1-800-563-4086 – 24/7 Treatment Access Line
  - drugfreect.org – Change the Script
  - liveloud.org – Live Loud
  - beintheknowct.org – Cannabis Awareness
  - norasaves.com – NORA

Examples in the Media

Perpetuates Stigma

Promotes Recovery

Phase 4: Test

Goal: Try, track, and learn

Key Elements

- Launch and monitor engagement

- Grow Audience & Awareness

- Engage with Audience

- Consider using Targeted Ad Campaigns

Experiment With Timing

Meta Business Suite:

- Try posting on different days and at different times to see when your audience is most active. Early mornings, lunchtime, and evenings often see high engagement.

- Use platform insights to find when your followers are most active and schedule your posts accordingly.

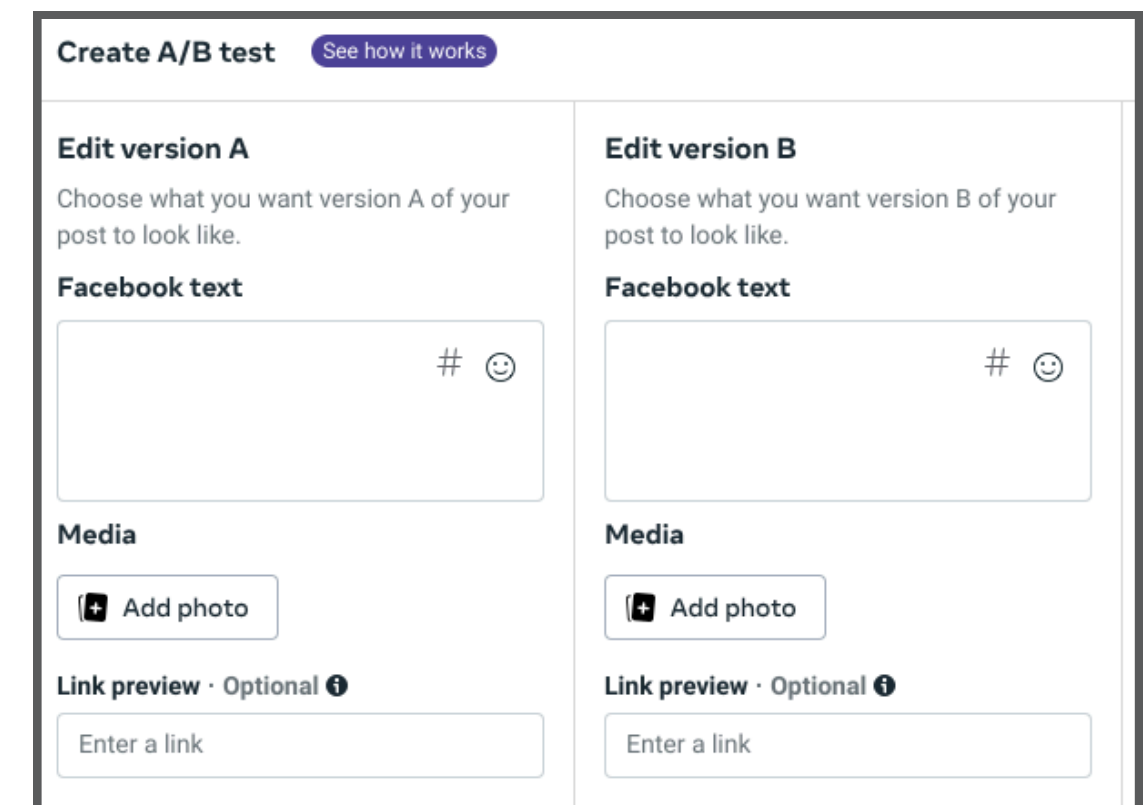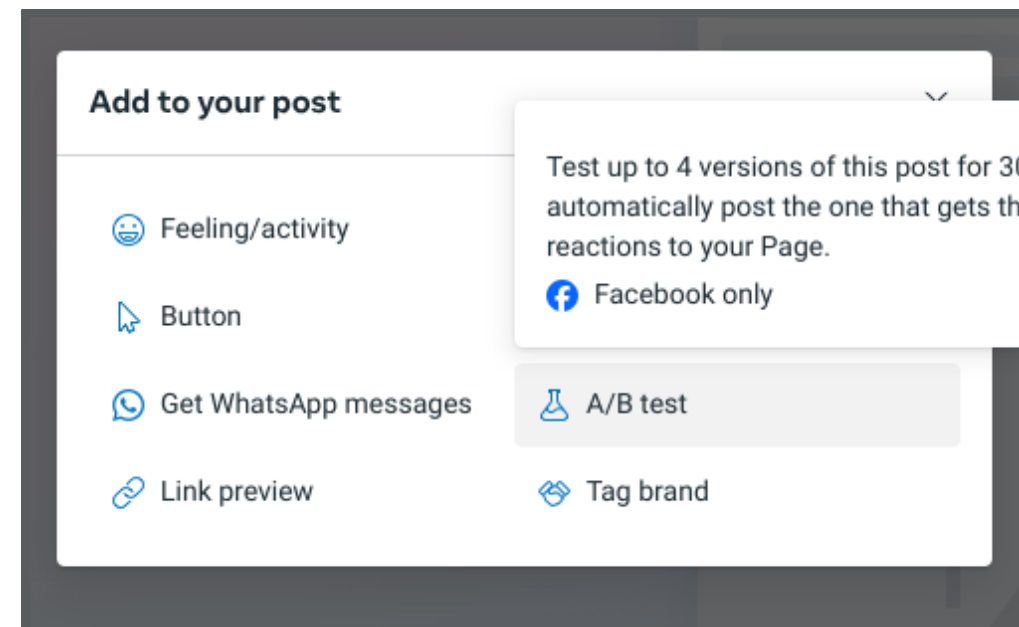**Instagram:**
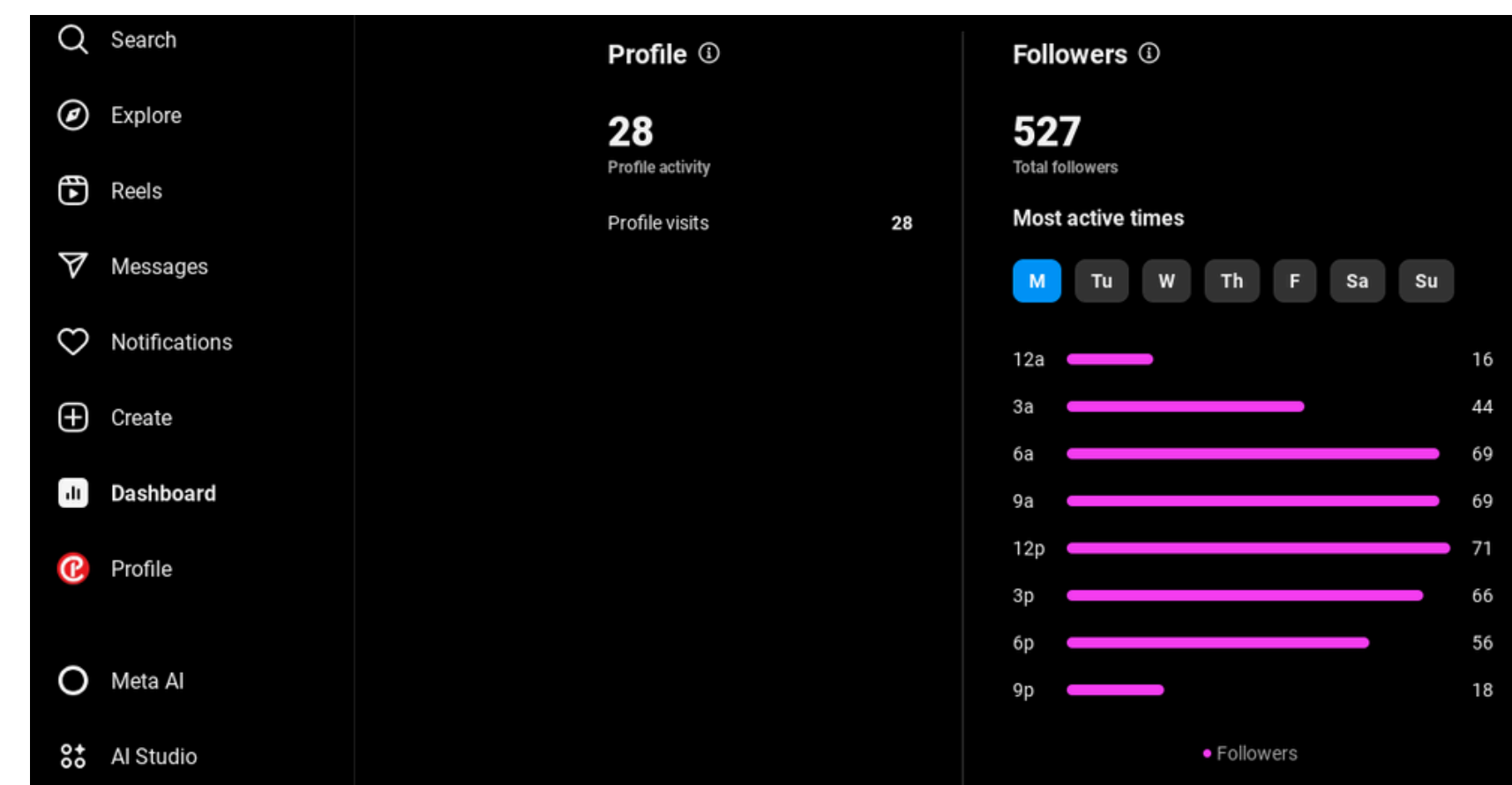
Use A/B Testing

Test two variations of a post (different images, captions, or posting times) to see which one performs better. This helps you learn what type of content resonates most with your audience.

Meta Business Suite:
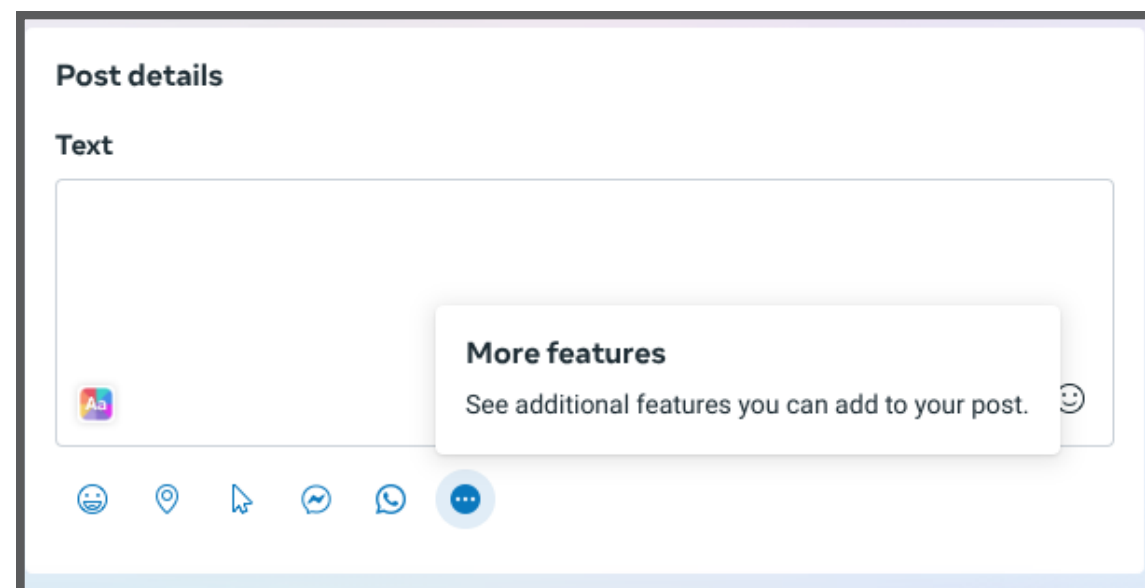
Boost Visibility

Share to Stories: Boost visibility by sharing your posts to your Facebook and Instagram Stories, especially event promotions or time-sensitive information.

On Facebook: Click "Share" and choose "Your story"

On Instagram: Click ⊿ on post and select ⊕ to add to story. **Must be done on a mobile phone.**

Pin Important Posts: Pin key announcements, campaigns, or event promotions to the top of your page so visitors see them first.
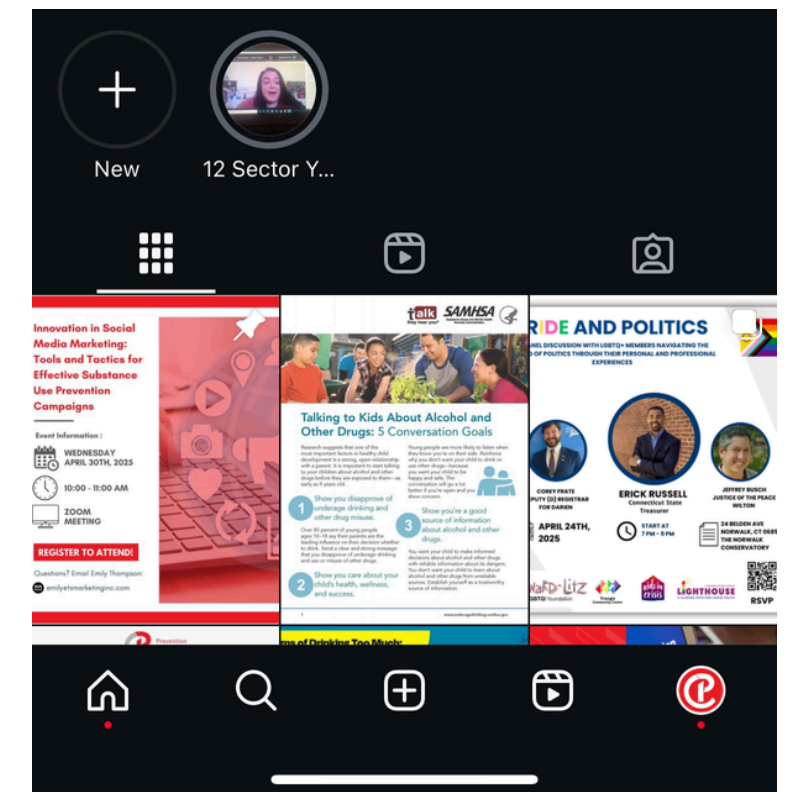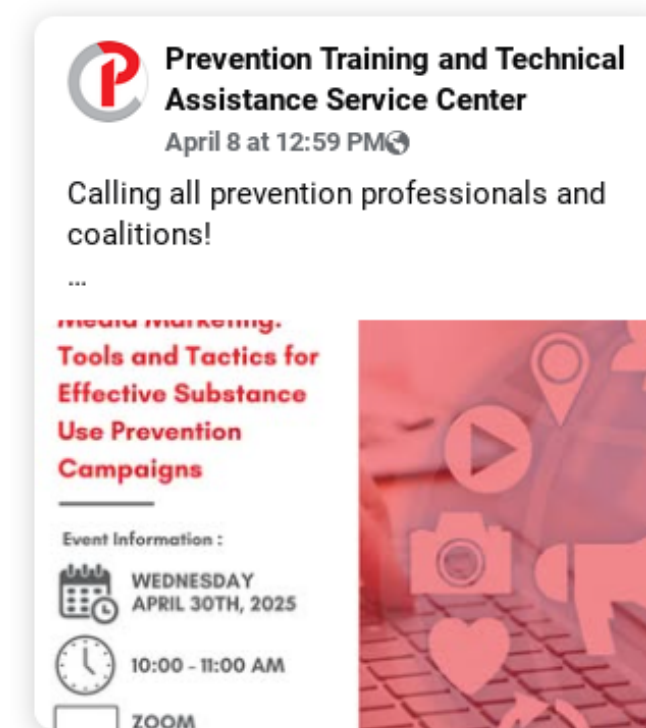
Must be done on mobile phone for Instagram

Grow Audience & Awareness

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Instagram & Facebook:

- Share posts to your personal page or stories. Add a personal message to encourage interaction!

- If using resources from another organization, tag them in the post or caption to give them the opportunity to reshare your post.

- Ask Your Team to Help: Encourage your coalition members, coworkers, and partners to also share your page/posts on their personal profiles and stories. A collective effort increases reach!

Facebook Only:

- Invite Friends to Like Your Page: Use the "Invite Friends" feature to easily ask your personal connections to support your prevention efforts by liking your page.

- Invite Engaged Users to Follow: After posting, you can invite people who have liked, reacted to, or commented on your posts to officially like your page—an easy way to convert engagement into followers.

- If appropriate, share your page or specific posts in local Facebook groups, professional groups, or prevention-focused communities to reach new audiences who are already interested.

- Comment on your Facebook post "@followers" and this will notify your followers of your post to encourage engagement.

Be Active & Engage with Audience

Strengthen relationships, boost visibility, and build a supportive online community.

> Pages that actively engage tend to perform better in platform algorithms, leading to more organic reach and visibility!

- Comment on other posts and in groups: Thoughtful, positive comments help raise awareness of your page and show you are an active community partner.

- Share posts from other trusted pages: Build relationships by sharing useful or inspiring content from partner organizations, coalitions, or prevention campaigns.

- Respond to comments, messages, and mentions: Timely, friendly responses show that you value your audience's engagement and encourage them to interact more in the future.

- Ask questions and use polls to spark conversations

Learn More

Paid Advertising

Boost important prevention posts around key times like National Prevention Week, back-to-school season, prom season, or awareness months.

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Types of Social Media Ads

- Boosted Posts: Quickly promote a post you've already made to reach more people.
- Traffic Ads: Send people to your page or website
- Engagement Ads: Get more likes, comments, shares, or calls
- Reach Ads: Promote page locally
- Event Ads: Promote local event

How You Can Target People

- Location: Target specific towns, counties, or statewide audiences.
- Age and Gender: Focus on specific groups like parents, teens, or adults 25–45.
- Interests: Reach people interested in mental health, youth sports, parenting, education, wellness, or community activism.
- Behavior: Target people who have engaged with your page, visited your website, or are active in related causes.

Suggested Budgets

- $5–$10/day can meaningfully grow your post reach and engagement.

- $50–$100 total can run a short 5–10 day campaign promoting an event or prevention message.

- Start small: Test different ads to find what works best for your audience before scaling up.

David vs. Goliath: Competing with the Giants

You don't need a million-dollar budget to make an impact. With smart targeting, compelling local messages, and consistent effort, prevention wins.

How You Can Compete

- **Use Targeted Ads:** Platforms like Facebook and Instagram allow you to create ads targeting specific demographics (age, location, interests).
- **Keep It Local:** Your biggest strength is community trust. Target ads to your town, county, or state to resonate more deeply with your audience.
- **Tell Real Stories:** Personal, authentic content cuts through flashy marketing. Focus on real people, community events, and genuine testimonials.
- **Start Small, Test Often:** Even a $5–$20 ad budget can build awareness. Run small tests to see what messages resonate best, then adjust.
- **Use Retargeting:** Reach people who have already visited your website or interacted with your page with gentle reminders and educational content.

The Challenge

Large companies like tobacco and alcohol brands spend millions of dollars to target young people and normalize substance use.

The Opportunity

Local coalitions and prevention professionals (David) may have smaller budgets, but smart, targeted strategies allow you to compete effectively by reaching the right people with powerful prevention messages.

Phase 5: Refine

Goal: Improve based on results

Key Elements

- Use Facebook, Instagram or Meta Insights to analyze performance and results

- Go beyond social media ans use additional tools to analyze website performance
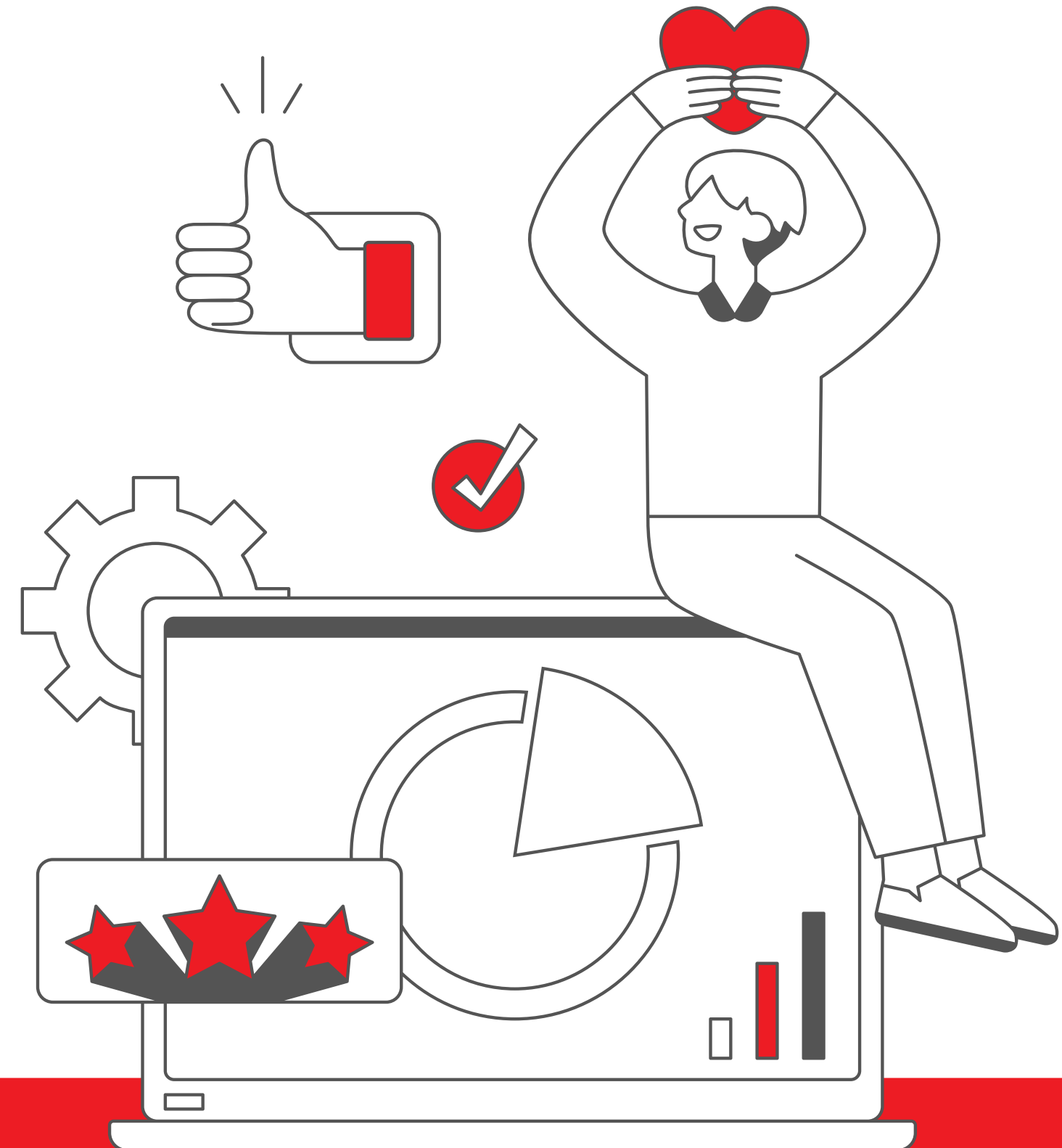
Analyze Social Media Insights

- Views: Number of times your content was played or displayed. (Includes reels, videos, posts, stories, and ads.)
- Reach: How many unique people saw your content organically or through paid ads.
- Interactions: Total likes, reactions, saves, comments, shares, and replies your content received.
- Follows: New followers gained during the selected time period.
- Link Clicks: Number of clicks, taps, or swipes on links you included in your content.
- Visits: Number of times your Facebook Page or Instagram Profile was visited.
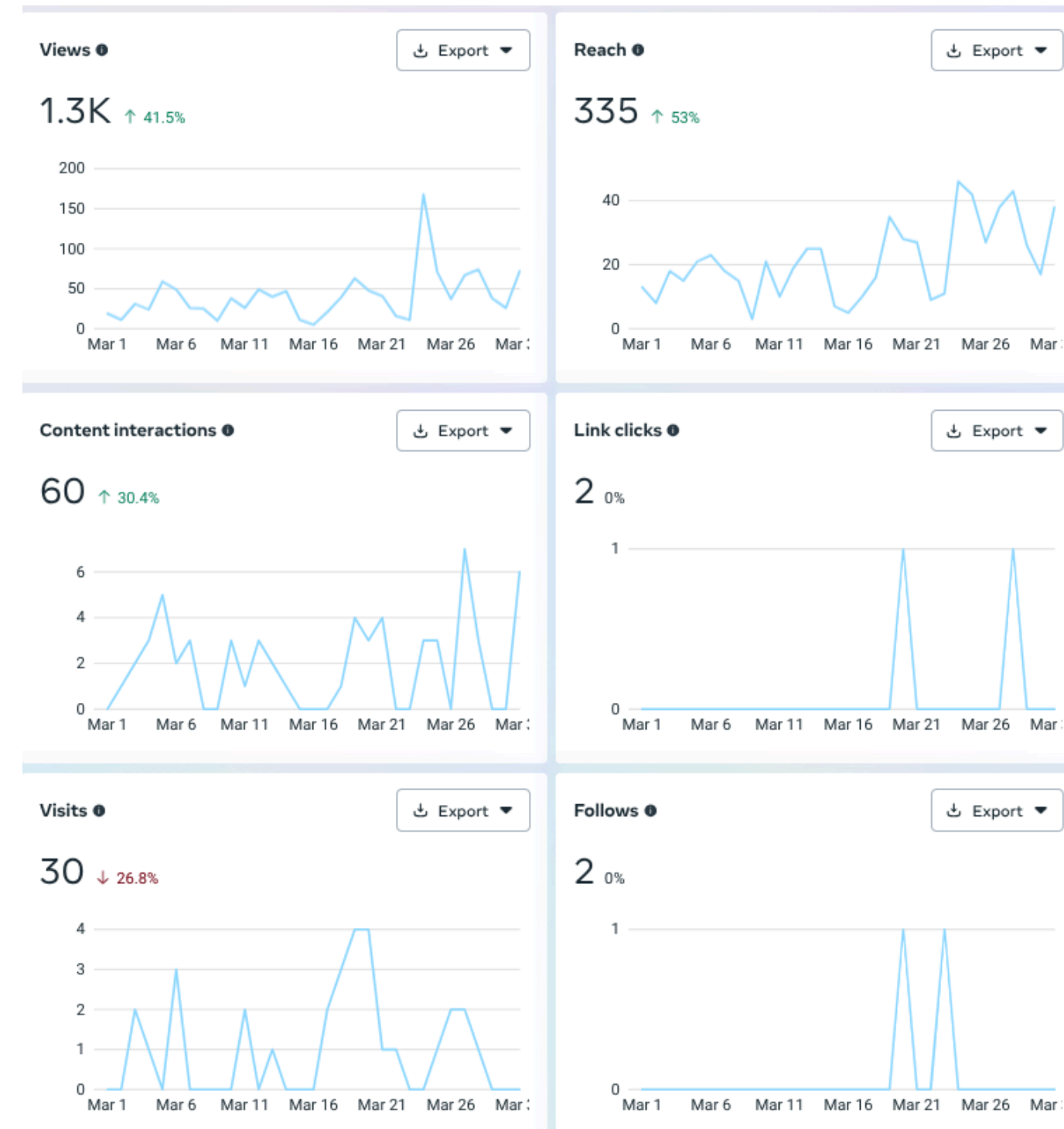
Additional Tools to Expand Your Insight

Google Analytics:
- Track how many people visit your website, where they come from (social media, email, ads), and what actions they take once they arrive.

Google Tag Manager:
- Set up and manage tracking tags (like button clicks, downloads, or video views) without needing to edit your website code.
- Great for monitoring the success of social media calls-to-action!

Meta Pixel (for Facebook & Instagram Ads):
- Allows you to track actions people take on your website after seeing or interacting with your ads — essential for refining campaigns.

Overcoming Common Challenges

Limited Time & Resources
- Solution: Use AI tools like ChatGPT for caption writing and Canva for quick designs.
- Tip: Use ready-made templates for posts and ads to save time.

Public Perception
- Solution: Combat stigma by consistently highlighting local success stories and positive community initiatives.
- Tip: Focus on empowerment and progress, not just risk or crisis.

Platform Changes
- Solution: Stay adaptable by following trusted social media blogs (like Social Media Today, HubSpot, Sprout Social) for updates.

Thank You!

I hope you're leaving with new strategies, tools, and confidence to elevate your prevention efforts on social media. Prevention is powerful — and your voice matters more than ever.

Don't forget to create an account on ttasc.talentlms.com to receive your CEUs!

For any follow-up questions, resources, or support, feel free to reach out:
Emily Thompson
emily@tsmarketinginc.com