

Gwella



HEIW Leadership Portal for Wales



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Addysg a Gwella Iechyd
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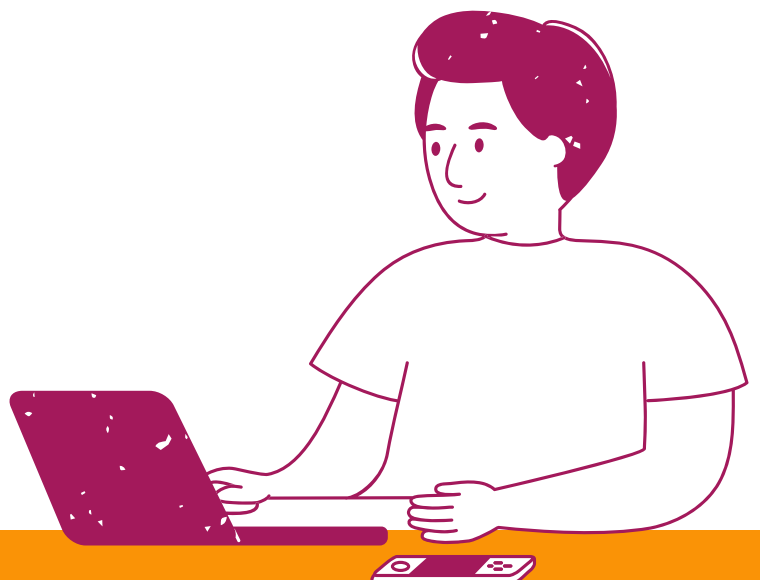
Best Practice Guide: Networks

Tips and tricks to Successfully
Manage your Gwella Network



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Tip One

Create the Purpose

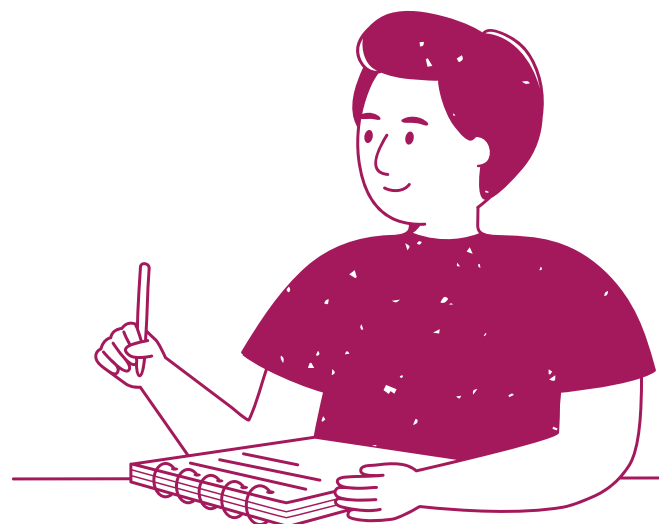
An engaged and active Network needs to have a clear purpose. Therefore, the first step is setting up the purpose of your Network, outlined in a couple of sentences so that your members understand the vision.

Having a Network to tackle every idea possible is unachievable in the long run. Therefore, having one or two clear bullet points will help guide you towards what you want to achieve within the community.

Action:

- **Set a clear purpose for the Network**

Once you understand what you want to achieve, you will be able to focus your content and target audience, and it will make it easier to manage. For example: 'Disseminating dentistry news from different health boards.'



Tip Two

Set a Manager

The first step in creating a Network is surprisingly not the branding, the messaging or the vision. It is the agreement of the manager of the Network and what comes with overseeing a network.

The role of the manager is to:

- Set up the Network
- Add members, manage the content
- Keep the Network active

A Network can never fully be self-sufficient and so a manager will need to login frequently to keep the discussion, resources, and announcements current and moderated. Without an engaged Network, members will quickly lose interest and the momentum will be lost.

An engaged Network requires preparation and commitment. Having a dedicated manager/s who will be able to co-ordinate content for the network is essential to ensure that the members do not feel neglected and that the Network remains current.

Tip Three

Get to Know Your Audience

Who is your audience?

If you are building a community, you need to know who they are, what their needs are and which of these needs you want to meet. If you do not understand your purpose, you will not be able to target your audience. Understanding who your audience base is will help create content which is relevant to them and will make them want to be active on the network.

Actions:

- **Set the audience of the Network**

You are limited by only your primary audience (aka target audience). Naturally there may be people who would want to be a part of this Network even if they do not fit the initial target audience. Those who are in this category can be called your secondary base. By no means should they not be added / included into the Network. However, understanding that you will want to focus your content on your primary base over the secondary base will aid in keeping the Network active and engaged.

An example of a target audience is 'Professionals in senior roles who want to keep up to date with new developments within the dental profession'.

Tip Four

Populate your Network

Before launching a Network you should already have it populated with content, so that when you add new members, they can start interacting immediately. A new member might lose interest if they are added to a platform with no content to explore.

Actions:

- **Welcome Message**

Have a welcome message on the Overview tab with instructions on how to use the Network and what they can expect from it. In this guide Go to Appendix 1, to find a welcome message template.

- **Discussions**

Have at least two discussion threads ready for users to comment on. Icebreakers, questions around a topic or sharing of a resource are some potential ideas to consider.

- **Resources**

Have a series of resources already available under the Files tab for members to explore.



Tip Five

Build Your Audience

Now that you have determined who your audience is and how you want to interact with them, it is now time to go and find them. There are numerous ways to bring people to your Network.

Actions:

- **Explore Your Own Networks**

The most effective way is to go through your own networks and contact them directly. Contacting people one-on-one is more personable, thoughtful and you reach your primary audience immediately.

- **Use Gwella**

Advertise on Gwella via our Weekly Bulletin or by promoting it on a relevant webpage. If you do not have a webpage set up for your project or programme, contact the team to learn more about it.

- **Other Organisations**

Advertise your network in your Health Board intranet or bulletins and reach out other Health Boards leads that will have direct contact with your primary audience.



How to Interact with your Audience

Knowing your audience base is one thing but knowing how to interact with them is another.

You have brought your members into a space; how do you engage them? The best approach is trial and error and ensuring you learn as you go.

Actions:

- **Set Expectations**

How active do you want your Network to be? Daily, weekly, monthly? Post and upload content as often as you would like members to engage. If you contribute infrequently, your members will do the same.

- **Diversify Your Resources**

Different people interact differently. Some people will be interested in resources, while others will be interested in discussions. Ensure you vary the resources used to help engage all users. Read more about the different resources you can use



Tip Six

Interact with Your Members

Interacting with your members will be key in creating the activity you are looking for. There are multiple options within our network that allow you to interact with your members.

Actions:

- **Subscribe**

Get users to subscribe to the network when they first join. Subscribing means they will get automatic emails about any updates, updates to discussion threads, any announcements or any files being added.

- **Announcements**

Announcements allow new users to be kept up-to-date with any news, events or changes. You can pin or unpin these announcements to the the top of your Network homepage so users will not miss a thing.

- **Push emails**

Push email notifications will push a specific notification to users to receive in their inbox. For example, if you wanted to users to remember to sign up for an event through the network you can use a push notification to send all users and email. However do not overuse the push notification as this may result in users becoming disengaged due to email spam.

Tip Seven

Have Recurring 'Events'

Gwella is a platform that members might not visit weekly or even monthly, therefore, you need to give them a reason to log in and see what's new. Having recurring events will keep the users logging on and make them feel as though they are benefiting from visiting your Network.

By 'event', we mean something that happens weekly, fortnightly, or monthly that can bring your members together. This will most probably align with the purpose of your Network.

The discussion threads is the best tool for members to communicate and collaborate, and often promotes the generating and sharing of ideas for best practice. Here are some generic topics that you can adapt to your Network.

Actions:

- **Innovation and Ideas**

Promote generation of ideas and discussion around the Network's subject or profession.

- **Sharing resources, events and best practices**

Sharing relevant content will make the Network a hub of information.

More Ideas...

- **Monthly Topics**

Get members to engage and share ideas around a specific topic.

- **Ask Me Anything**

Nominate members or ask members to volunteer a discussion where they open themselves to be asked anything about their profession or area of knowledge

- **Spotlighting People**

Dedicate a discussion thread around a person that's a leader in their field, and give them the opportunity to discuss their journey and share any useful tips. Members can then engage directly to ask questions and comment.

- **Ask Questions**

People like to feel supported and that their contribution is valued. Frame your topic around a question that will make members want to participate in the discussion.

- **Encourage Troubleshooting Issues**

Ask members to share an issue they've been struggling with in their profession. No doubt, there will be someone in the Network that is going through the same issue and will be able to offer support and advice.

- **Ice Breaker**

Get your members to introduce themselves via an icebreaker.

More Ideas...

- **Set up Actual Events**

Create a physical or virtual event for the members of your Network to come together, share their work and experiences, and foster a sense of community. Seeing a faceless image is different to having face-to-face interaction.

- **Schedule It**

Create a schedule of discussion posts so that you can keep the Network active. You can plan them weekly, fortnightly or monthly.

Tip Eight

Collect Member Feedback

As you continue to grow your Network, you may find that what worked in the beginning isn't now. This could be down to multiple factors that are unrelated to the management of the Network. To keep your Network engaged, you need to know what your members want. Having this feedback could also change the purpose of the Network as the members interests may have changed.

Re-evaluation and reflection is always a good thing and means that you are seeking to improve and engage the Network.

Remember that a Network needs to constantly evolve to suit the needs of your user base.

Actions:

- **Start a Discussion**

Ask them how they are finding the Network, what resources they would like to see and what improvements could be made.

- **Feedback Form**

Create a feedback form and share with your members via the Announcements tab. Pin and push the announcement to help reach members and maximise your feedback.

Appendix 1

Welcome Message Template

"Welcome the [Network Name]. The purpose of this Network is to [Network purpose].

Navigating the Network

There are five tabs that will be useful for members in this network, below is a brief description of each:

Overview

This will give you a summary of what has happened on the network in a timeline format. If someone has started a new discussion, uploaded a new file or made an announcement you will see it here.

Members

You can use this tab to search for other members who are part of the network.

Discussions

This is the chat forum functionality of the network. You can start a new discussion topic and others can then respond, or you can simply respond to another discussion thread.

Files

This tab hosts any [type of content] files that have been uploaded to the network. There are numerous folders with different materials and you can navigate these at your own pace.

continues in the next page...

Announcements

If there are any important messages or events that need to be promoted, the Network manager can create announcements, these can be viewed in the Announcements tab. Announcements are different to discussion, as you cannot reply to an announcement. If an announcement is really important it can be pinned to the top of the overview tab, or sent in an email to all network members using the push function."

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Last updated: 6th July 2023

