

BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS OF NCDA LINKEDIN GROUP

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To assess NCDA's LinkedIn strategy, the groups of four peer organizations were reviewed, including the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), and the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP). The author was a member of each of these groups for more than a year and was able to gather data on the growth and activity of each group since its creation under the information tab of each group.

Growth of NCDA Group

The NCDA group was created on July 7, 2009. During its first year, 452 individuals joined. As Table A indicates, the group has grown to 10,256 members since its creation. This is lower than two peer organizations (i.e., NACE and ASCA), but this may occur because the group was launched later. NCDA includes the LinkedIn link on its homepage, e-blasts, conference materials, and printed publications. NCDA was the only organization to include its logo in the manager's choice banner, which enhances its visibility. NCDA does not require LinkedIn members to be paid members of the organization because it is labor intensive to maintain and manage this. The ASCA and NAWDP operate in a similar fashion. It is difficult to assess NACE's policy because the author is a paid member of this organization.

Membership trends during the past year were examined. NCDA's paid membership consists of less than half of the LinkedIn group member. Although employing professional staff would require the organization to invest additional resources, the return of investment could be substantial. Of its current LinkedIn membership, 38% joined the NCDA group during the last year. (See Table B.) The rate at which NCDA is adding members is slowing, but peer organizations are also experiencing this trend. (See Table C.)

Table A: Year to Year Growth of NCDA LinkedIn Group

Year	Total # Members	YR:YR Growth	Numerical Change
As of March 21, 2014	10256	36.75%	2756
July 2013	7500	72.1%	3141
July 2012	4359	190.0%	2856
July 2011	1503	232.5%	1051
July 2010	452	--	--

Table B: Year to Year Growth of NCDA LinkedIn Group

Percent Growth Last Year	ASCA	NACE	NAWDP	NCDA
Total Number of Members	16,178	23,381	10,961	10,356
Year Over Year Percent Growth	61.58%	28.45%	38.45%	60.73%
Percent membership joined since last year	38.11%	22.15%	27.77%	37.78%

Table C: Percent Growth per Year of Existence of Peer Organizations

Year Created	ASCA	NACE	NAWDP	NCDA
5th Yr	39.66%	28.45%	14.50%	
4th Yr	86.96%	43.70%	62.01%	
3rd Yr	238.58%	77.49%	194.42%	72.1%
2nd Yr	189.10%	66.53%	192.57%	190.0%
1st Yr	118.3%	111.80%	178.9%	232.5%
Year of Creation	6/11/08	2/27/2008	8/13/08	7/72009

Exploratory analysis was conducted to identify if membership increased during the month before, during, and week after each organization’s national conference. Unlike some of its peer organizations, NCDA LinkedIn membership remained stable during the conference. NACE experienced the largest gain in membership, while NCDA experienced only modest gains. Surprisingly, both NASWDP and ASCA did not have any new members the week of and the week after their conference. Perhaps individuals reached out to the association via social media less because they were so engaged at the event. The author was unable to examine the content of posts leading up to and during the national conference due to limitations in LinkedIn’s archives.

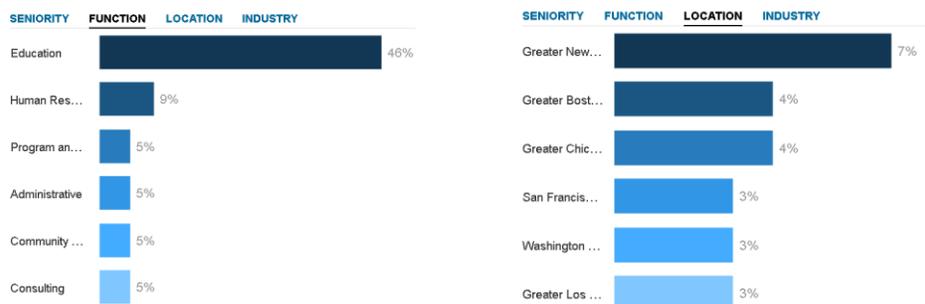
Table D: Membership Before, During, and After National Conference

Number of New Members	ASCA	NACE	NAWDP	NCDA
Average Number Non-Conference Week	75.75	98.75	46.41	74.167
Average Number During Four Week Period Before Conference	100.75	125.25	76	79.75
Week of Conference	0	115	0	73
Week After Conference	0	110	0	71
Date of Conference	6/30/13	6/4/13	5/22/13	7/8/13

Demographics of NCDA Group

As Figure A on page three indicates, NCDA’s LinkedIn membership is diverse in function and industry. The largest membership is in education (46%) and no one geographical area dominates the group.

Figure A: Function and Location of NCDA LinkedIn Members



Activity of NCDA Group

All of groups examined were private and required approval of new members. The number of discussions and comments posted were tabulated for the last twelve weeks (i.e., December 28 – March 22). Table E reflects the averages for each peer organization. NCDA group members are engaged, as indicated by the high number of comments during the 12 week period examined.

Table E: Average Activity during 12 Week Period

Averages	ASCA	NACE	NAWDP	NCDA
Comments	26.25	64.92	34.92	55.67
Discussions	11.17	9.25	29.00	29.50

The author also assessed who was posting. Percentage of posts by new individuals was tabulated for each organization, eliminating the posts made by group managers. As table F indicates, NCDA has a lower number of new people posting compared to NACE and NAWDP. Several of these posts were self-promotional and made by one individual. NCDA has since followed up with him and communicated its posting policy. He understands that posts should be listed in the promotions tab in the future.

Table F: Percentage of New People Posting

	ASCA	NACE	NAWDP	NCDA
% New People Posting	71%	80%	87.5%	72 %
# of Posts by Same Individual	8	6	7	11
New People Posting	20	24	32	28

NACE did not utilize the Manager’s Choice feature, while the other organizations did. Example Manager’s Choice posts from these peer organizations include the following: Funding Alert; Grants Totaling \$44 Million; Consolidation Bill Passes; Exciting Changes Coming to CWDP Credential; Nominate an Outstanding School Counselor; Legislative Alert. NCDA Manager’s Choice included the following: March Career Convergence Now Available; NCDA Annual Conference in Long Beach; Become a Member of NCDA; Considering CDF Training Programs? and NCDA Resources for State CDAs.

Management of Groups

In addition to assessing the growth of membership and frequency of activity, the author examined the management of groups. NACE is managed by an employee of the organization and ASCA is managed by a consulting firm. NAWDP is managed by the organization’s executive director. NCDA was the only organization managed by existing members. The manager of NAWDP posted relevant content nearly every day. ASCA posted nearly every-other day.

NCDA has converted its monthly announcement to a LinkedIn message. In lieu of discussion posts, NACE sends out weekly announcements. The author never received an announcement from NAWDP or ASCA in her year of membership. To assess the needs of members, the author posted a poll on the LinkedIn Group. Two individuals liked this and one person commented, "The more, the merrier!"

The group manager also posted an additional discussion per month to market an NCDA event or drive traffic to its website. A concentrated effort should be made by NCDA to keep group managers informed of NCDA activities in the future to enhance the frequency of these posts, as well as their ability to share relevant content in response to others' posted discussions. Because they do not attend Board Meetings or participate in every committee, current group managers are not fully aware of NCDA resources or events (e.g., legislation, certification, grants, upcoming events, etc.).

To enhance the quantity and quality of NCDA posts, the NCDA group manager sent an invitation to each committee in October 2013 urging them to post relevant content on LinkedIn since she was not always apprised of their activities or events. Examples were provided to help them leverage the medium to advance their mission. This was reinforced in a committee conference call in March 2014. Only the Professional Development Committee participated. In the future, NCDA should list this as an expectation for each committee in the list of chair responsibilities.

NCDA should also work to retain existing group members by offering a stipend or by waiving the conference registration fee. Additional staff support may also enhance NCDA's LinkedIn group and contribute to the retention of group managers. Currently each of the social media platforms is managed separately. Although each medium has its own audience and set-up, some of the content is similar. Perhaps all three individuals can help manage the group. In the past the LinkedIn group manager has created a content management schedule and sent it to the Web Manager. Given some of the duplication, all the social media managers should consider collaboratively create a content management calendar together. If the social media task force continues to exist, it is imperative that the group managers serve on and partner with this group.

Finally, the ASCA did not post group rules, but NCDA, NACE and NAWDP included this. These are provided in Table G on the following page. NCDA's group rules resemble its peers. However, it does not include a statement to define that promotions for a product, service, blog, website, event, survey, or other online community are limited. The group manager recently updated the rules to reflect this. NCDA should exhibit caution when moving some self-promotional discussions to the promotions tab because some of them are engaging members and eliciting comments.

Table G: Group Rules

<p>NACE Group Rules: The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) group and subgroups on LinkedIn offers members a virtual place to meet, interact and share ideas respectfully with each other on issues relating to career services, HR/staffing, and the employment of the college educated. By using the official NACE group and subgroups on LinkedIn, you agree to abide by the following group rules. Any violation of these terms will constitute a removal of the post, removal from the group, and/or addition to the blocked users list. NACE group owners, managers, and all NACE staff reserve the right to monitor postings and without further notice delete inappropriate postings, and move misplaced postings at their discretion.</p>

- All posts should clearly relate to NACE subject matter (as defined above.)
- Users should act in a professional manner and not post anything harassing, abusive, or threatening.
- Posts should be written in English.
- Users and their posts must abide by the LinkedIn User Agreement, which can be found here:
http://www.linkedin.com/static?key=user_agreement&trk=hb_ft_userag.
- Job/Internship postings are not accepted in the NACE LinkedIn Discussions. For job postings please post to NACE's JobWire site at <http://www.naceweb.org/Jobwire/Jobwire.aspx>.
- Posts of a promotional nature should be placed in the proper area on the group. To help determine what constitutes a promotion, NACE will observe the following definition:

Promotions are group-relevant postings with any of the following attributes:

- Are not self-contained, and requiring clicking on a link to access information (i.e. news, blog, or resource announcements)
- Promote a product or service (even when free), blog or website, a LinkedIn Group or other social networking community, an event, or a survey
- Are self-promotional (e.g. personal introductions, holiday greetings, job requests, or networking calls)
- Are not clearly a discussion.

NAWDP Group Rules: This group is intended to inspire and enhance sharing of knowledge and best practices. Feel free to introduce new discussion topics or participate in any existing discussion. You can also ask questions pertaining to your profession/industry and get feedback from your peers.

However, this group should never be used to market a specific product or service. All discussions must be respectful of diverse opinions and professional in nature. NAWDP is not responsible for the content of the postings.

NCDA Group Rules: Greetings and welcome to the NCDA LinkedIn Group! The National Career Development Association (NCDA) empowers others to achieve their goals by providing professional development, resources, standards, scientific research, and advocacy. NCDA is a founding division of the American Counseling Association (ACA). Visit <http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/membership> to learn more about membership.

The NCDA group offers members a virtual community for engaging in discussion respectfully with each other about career education, counseling, or consulting. As you participate in this online community, please abide by the following group rules. Any violation of these terms will constitute a removal of the post, removal from the group, and/or addition to the blocked users list. NCDA group managers reserve the right to monitor, delete, and move misplaced postings at their discretion.

- All posts should clearly relate to NCDA subject matter.
- Users should act in a professional manner and not post anything harassing, abusive, or threatening.
- Users and their posts must abide by the LinkedIn User Agreement, which can be found at http://www.linkedin.com/static?key=user_agreement&trk=hb_ft_userag.
- Job postings should be advertised under the jobs category instead of discussions.
- Posts of a promotional nature should be placed under promotions instead of discussions. Quality discussions include a question and evoke a dialogue with members.

For more information about the NCDA group or to make suggestions on how this group can best meet your needs, please contact a LinkedIn Group Manager.

Subgroups

NCDA, NACE and NAWDP had subgroups, but ASCA did not. This past year the NCDA Board decided to align its subgroup with its governance structure. State subgroups were eliminated. This decision is supported by the practices of our peers, whose subgroups are also topical and function specific. If each constituent group is to have a subgroup, board members should also be asked to post a quality

discussion monthly or bi-monthly. Separate managers would also need to be identified. The groups of NCDA's peer organizations are listed below.

- NCDA: 1) NCDA Business & Industry; 2) NCDA Leadership Academy; 3) NCDA Diversity
- NACE: 1) NCDA Management Leadership Institute; 2) NACE Global Recruiting; 3) NACE Community Connections; 4) NACE Conference & Expo; 5) NACE Social Media
- NAWDP: 1) Workforce Development for Youth; 2) Working with Special Populations; 3) Business & Employer Services

The author closely examined the NACE Conference & Expo group to identify its value for NCDA. The public group consisted of 1,599 members. Roughly 70 discussions were posted since the 2013 conference. More than half were self-promotional. The remainder was posted by NACE, who often used the tagline "News from #NACE14" in the headline to solicit registrations or call for proposals. Two were presenters either advertising their 2014 session or soliciting information from readers to help them prepare their content.

During the 2013 NACE conference, 23 discussions were posted. Nearly half were invitations from presenters to attend their session or advertisements from vendors to stop by their booth. A couple of posts were self-promotional or personal in nature (e.g., help me find a kickboxing/zumba session, who wants to play golf, etc.). One individual inquired about starting a subgroup for professionals working in a School of Business. The majority of posts had no comments. Seven individuals responded to a request to find a kickboxing/zumba workout session. The only other posts that had a high number of responses (i.e., 17 total) provided tips for new attendees.

Summary

NCDA's LinkedIn Group continues to grow and its members are actively commenting on the discussions that are posted. Members remain engaged during the conference through the social media contest. The NCDA brand is visible on the website and the subgroup structure aligns with its governance.

Despite these strengths, however, the current oversight of the group creates challenges. There is an opportunity to enhance members' experience by helping existing managers run the group. A concentrated effort should be made to encourage committee members to utilize the group to advance their mission and to keep group managers informed of NCDA activities and resources. Managers continued collaboration with the other social media managers and the social media task force will also enhance NCDA's LinkedIn group.