Knowing and Being Known

**INCREASING VISIBILITY FOR LIFESPRING,
A PREGNANCY CARE CENTER IN CENTRAL VIRGINIA**

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LifeSpring

SERVING WOMEN. NO COST. NO JUDGMENT.

Disclaimer

The author conducted this study as part of the program of professional education at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia. This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the Master of Public Policy degree. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Batten School, by the University of Virginia, or by any other agency, including LifeSpring.

Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

LifeSpring is a pregnancy care center in central Virginia that seeks to serve women facing an unexpected pregnancy. As a small nonprofit, LifeSpring is always looking for ways to increase their visibility in the community; however, recent Google algorithm changes have made it harder for women to find LifeSpring on Google and Google Maps. To combat this, several alternatives are examined to help LifeSpring increase their visibility without having to rely on Google searches. Ultimately, it is recommended that LifeSpring craft dialogic Facebook posts that are designed specifically to increase engagement and build an online community with the hope that expanding the online community will help reach potential clients. This alternative performs well on all three relevant criteria of effectiveness, ease of implementation, and cost as it has to potential to reach hundreds of women, carries little administrative burden, and is free. Concerns and limitations of this social media strategy are discussed, and tips are provided to help with implementation.

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Introduction and Problem Statement

Too few women experiencing an unexpected pregnancy are aware that they can receive comprehensive guidance about their options through pregnancy care centers.

Pregnancy care centers are local, nonprofit organizations that provide support and resources to women who are facing an unintended pregnancy. Women face unintended pregnancies, also referred to as unexpected or crisis pregnancies, when they become pregnant without planning to, either because the birth control they used failed, or they did not use birth control at all.

LifeSpring (formerly ThriVe Women's Healthcare) is a local pregnancy care center serving Charlottesville, Virginia and Culpeper, Virginia that offers free services with the goal of helping women and men make an "informed and empowered decision for [their] unplanned pregnancy" (LifeSpring Website, 2022). In addition to free pregnancy tests and ultrasounds; free STI tests and treatment; and free post-abortion support, LifeSpring also walks alongside women to provide free baby supplies; a supportive community to help them navigate the tangled web of information, doctors' appointments, and decisions that come with pregnancy and parenting; and referrals to social services that can have extreme impacts on the health and wellbeing of both the mother and the child. In short, pregnancy care centers like LifeSpring can provide a *spring of life* and help women and children *thrive*. But they are unable to help women and families meet this potential if they are unknown to the women who most need their services.

Thus, too few women experiencing an unexpected pregnancy are aware that they can receive comprehensive guidance about their options through pregnancy care centers. Additionally, these women miss out on referrals to prenatal care facilities, referrals to social services, parenting classes, free baby clothes and supplies, and a supportive community simply because they lack knowledge that these centers exist.

Problem Background and Cost to Society

Visibility in the community is crucial for a pregnancy care center to fulfill its mission of caring for women and families during their unexpected pregnancy. Advertisements on Google, Google Maps results, and social media posts and advertisements are a large part of how LifeSpring obtains that visibility with the individuals they exist to serve (LifeSpring Interview, 2022). Between 2015 and 2022, 16.5% of women who used LifeSpring's services learned about the center through either social media or Google, likely after they suspected they were pregnant (LifeSpring Data, 2022).

In August 2022, however, Google Maps changed the filtering of results that populate when users search "abortion" or "abortion clinics" or "abortion pill" (Isakowitz, 2022, p. 1-2). Before, organizations that mentioned abortion and/or the abortion pill or were otherwise associated with abortion (even via counseling or offering post abortion support) might be included in the list of results. Now, the filtering hides organizations that do not provide abortions, like LifeSpring, unless the user actively changes a preset filter (Isakowitz, 2022, p. 2). While these changes prevent women who are actively seeking out an abortion clinic from being routed to a facility that does not provide abortions, it also prevents women who did not know about pregnancy care centers and thought abortion was their only option from discovering the community and resources of these centers, like LifeSpring.**

**There were allegations of centers posing as fake abortion clinics specifically for women seeking an abortion to be routed to them. These allegations were based largely on anecdotal stories, but it is important to note that not all pregnancy care centers are created the same nor have the same commitment to providing a loving, gracious, nonconfrontational, and noncoercive consultation and advice that LifeSpring and numerous other pregnancy care centers do. The alleged wrongdoings of some appear to have now harmed all.
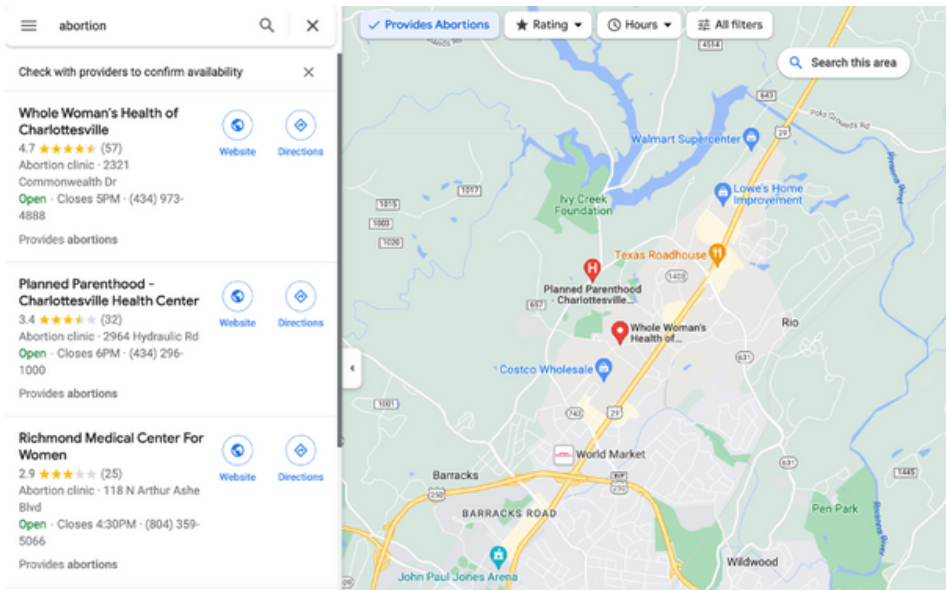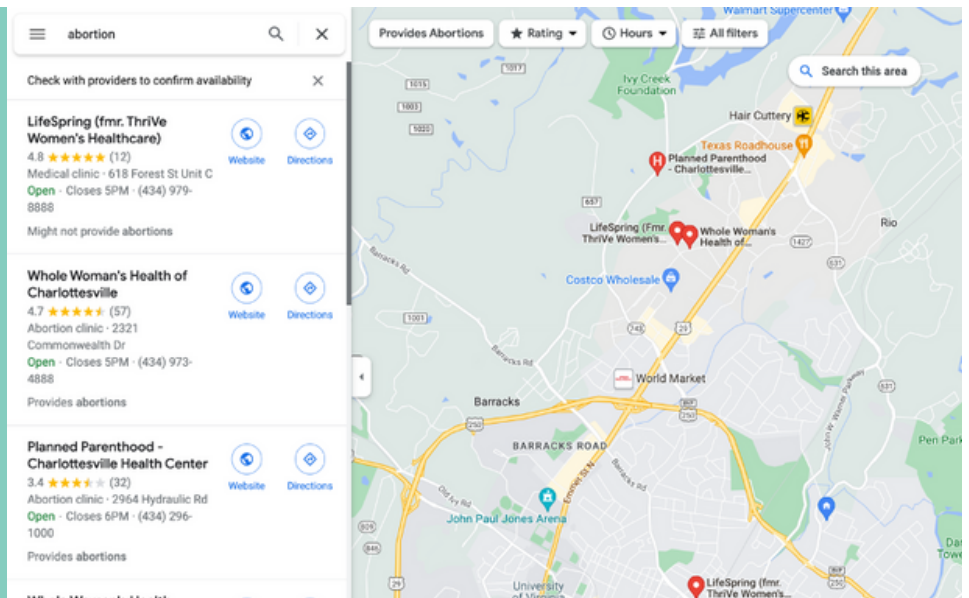
These are screenshots of Google Maps searches run on December 7, 2022, for and within the Charlottesville area. The first shows the results when the automatic "Provides Abortions" filter in the top middle portion of the map is still applied (highlighted blue), and the second image shows the results when the automatic "Provides Abortions" filter has been manually turned off (not highlighted), causing LifeSpring to appear. In both images, there are disclaimers underneath the organizational result for whether the clinic provides abortions or if Google is unable to guarantee that they provide abortions.

Additionally, there was a small change in disclosures in Google Ads. Previously, if the result was a sponsored advertisement, it included a disclaimer beneath the ad that said either "Provides abortions" or "Does not provide abortions." Now, that disclosure has been moved to the top of the ad. This is not expected to have a serious impact on the visibility of pregnancy care centers. The image below is pulled from Google's Letter to Senator Warner on August 25, 2022 (Isakowitz, 2022, p. 4). These changes came in the wake of a letter from Senator Mark Warner (and 20 other member of Congress) to Google on June 17, 2022, asking them to address the anecdotal stories of women trying to visit abortion clinics and instead being routed to organizations that do not provide abortions (Warner, 2022, p. 1). Google explained the changes in a reply letter dated August 25, 2022 (Isakowitz, 2022).
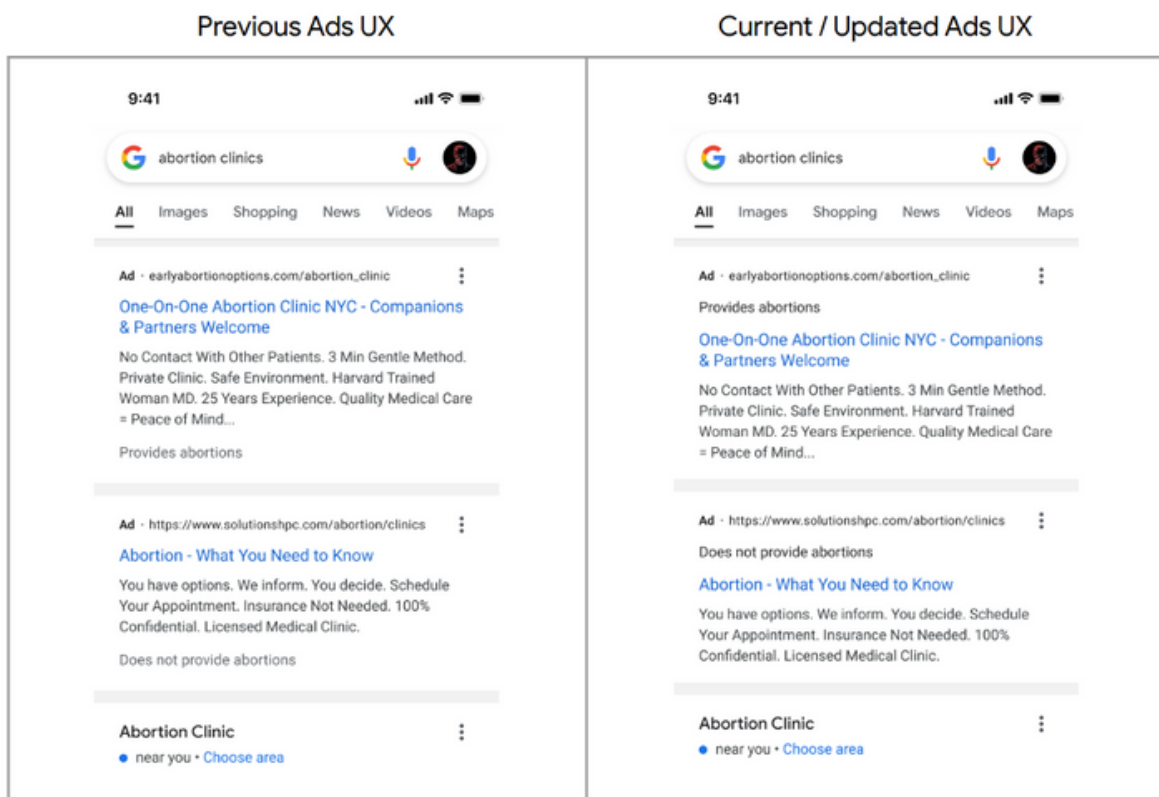
These algorithm changes appear to have had a direct effect on the number of clients that LifeSpring serves. In 2022, prior to the algorithm change, LifeSpring served an average of 9.5 clients per month who reported they first learned about LifeSpring through Google (LifeSpring Data, 2022). Additionally, an average of 10.6 clients per month reported they first learned about LifeSpring through the website (LifeSpring Data, 2022), which can be viewed as a proxy for Google, as an individual who does not know about the organization likely did not guess the website address and instead found it via Google. After the algorithm change, LifeSpring saw a decrease to 7.8 clients per month and 6.4 clients per month for Google and website originations respectively (LifeSpring Data, 2022). This phenomenon is depicted in the graph below that compares clients who learned about LifeSpring by various media types.
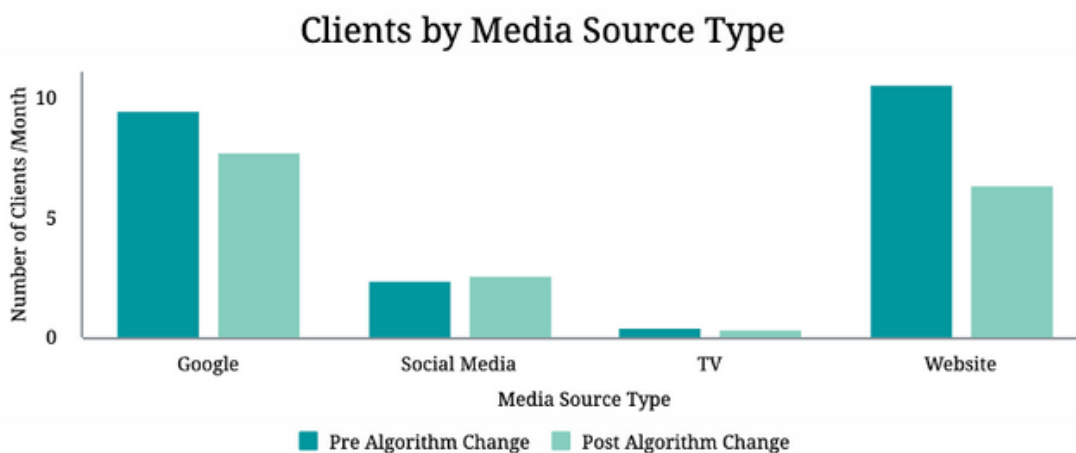
The decrease in clients served from the algorithm change has important consequences for women facing an unexpected pregnancy as it is now harder for them to find and receive compassionate, nonjudgmental, and coercion-free information about their options and family. Additionally, if these women decided to carry their pregnancy to term without knowing about LifeSpring, they would miss out on the financial and social support system that LifeSpring offers, perhaps impacting their and their children's future socioeconomic projections.

Additionally, Facebook posts remain an important avenue for pregnancy care centers to gain visibility in the community. However, there is a balancing act for pregnancy care centers who seek to promote themselves through Facebook posts; they need to engage an online community while being conscious of revealing personal information about their staff/volunteers and organization (LifeSpring Interview, 2022). These safety concerns for the volunteers and staff at LifeSpring are front of mind due to the increased attacks against pregnancy care centers and pro-life groups since 2020, and especially after the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* Supreme Court opinion was leaked in May of 2022 (83 attacks total) (CatholicVote, 2023; LifeSpring Interview, 2022).

Finally, over-generalizations are made about the goals and methods of serving women, and harsh terms like "fake clinics" are used (Warner, 2022, p. 1) that sours the public's perception of pregnancy care centers, causing women to not know of the resources available to them.

After the advertising landscape changed in August 2022, it is clear that LifeSpring saw a decrease of clients served who learned of the clinic through the Google and their website. If their approach remains unchanged, LifeSpring may be unable to reach many of the women they exist to serve and those women will miss out on referrals to prenatal care facilities, referrals to social services, parenting classes, free baby clothes and supplies, and a supportive community simply because they lacked knowledge that these centers exist and struggled to find information about them online. However, should pregnancy care centers become more visible, both online and in their community, they would be able to serve more women, offering life-altering resources and community to promote both their own health and wellbeing and that of their child.

Literature Review and Potential Solutions

As Google is unlikely to change the algorithm or filtering of Google Maps results and LifeSpring rightfully refuses to lie on their website or their Google certification information (required for advertisements), LifeSpring and other pregnancy care centers need to find alternative methods to increase their visibility.

Literature supporting three potential solutions is examined

Using Facebook to Increase Visibility
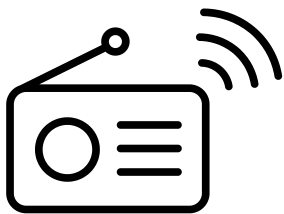
Using Radio Public Service Announcements to Increase Visibility

Using College Students to Increase Visibility

Using Facebook to Increase Visibility

Search engine advertisements and social media campaigns remain widely accepted ways for nonprofit organizations to raise awareness, increase their visibility in the community, and, if relevant, advocate for their chosen causes (Campbell & Lambright, 2019; Guo & Saxton, 2017; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Building online communities and upping online presence via social media are also important ways that nonprofit organizations can increase their financial and volunteer support (Lee, 2021; Lee & Shon, 2021). Social media presence has been an especially popular and successful outlet for smaller nonprofits, which local pregnancy care centers are, as these platforms are available at low cost to the organizations and they are collaborative in nature allowing the organizations to interact with their local community and build relationships (Campbell & Lambright, 2019; Guo & Saxton, 2017; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Given et al., 2013).

Research has empirically analyzed what types of posts perform best and how nonprofits can tailor their online presence to generate more interaction and community building. Organizations that take advantage of posts that mimic dialogue and highlight the goals and personality of the organization usually receive more interactions (Facebook "likes," comments, and shares), thus building community and increasing their visibility (Saxton & Waters, 2014, p. 289). By examining the posts of 100 top nonprofits, they find that posts designed to build community receive an average of 562.8 likes and 37.6 comments, which was a statistically significant increase over posts that are strictly informational in nature (Saxton & Waters, 2014, p. 289). For comparison, the average number of likes and comments received by the other types of posts examined is recorded in the graph, with data labels to show the exact number of likes, comments, and shares. This suggests posts designed to start a dialogue or build a shared community, such as sharing the stories of previous clients, introducing staff and volunteers, or doing video clinic tours, might help reach potential clients and make them feel more comfortable visiting the clinic.

Average Facebook Interactions by Post Type
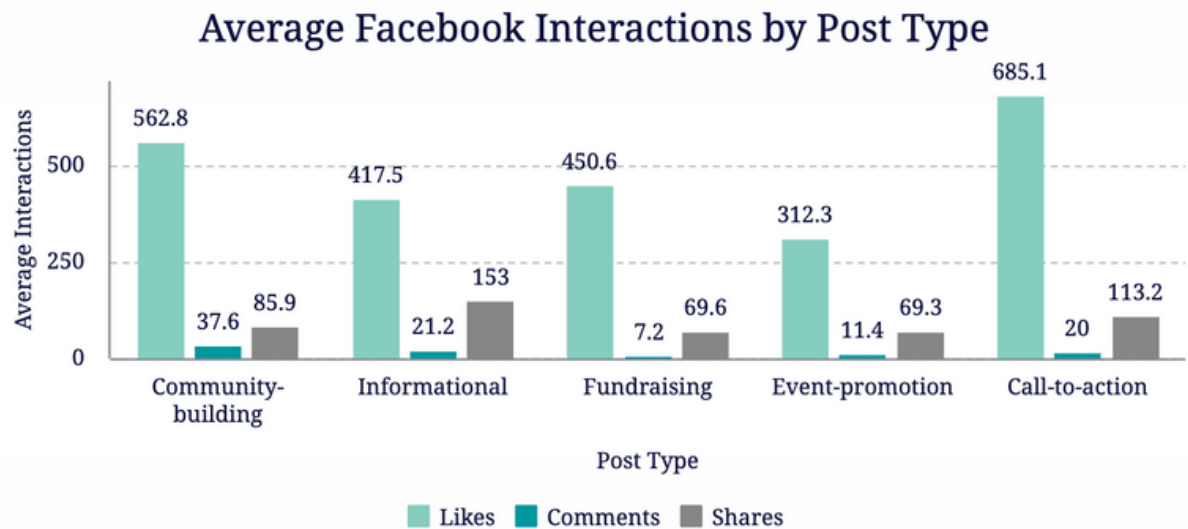
While dialogue and community building posts are most likely to generate "likes" and comments, one-way informational posts are most likely to be shared by followers and fans (Saxton & Waters, 2014, p. 289). These informational posts contain key information either about the organization or the broader cause behind the organization and can link to the organization's website. An increased online visibility and engagement will result in more potential clients (and/or potential donors and supporters) being reached.

Additionally, increased online engagement and well-crafted social media posts can help pregnancy care centers increase fundraising, which is vital to the health of the organization. However, the community most likely to donate or offer support is distinct from the client base and these two different groups may respond very differently to certain types of messaging. For example, clients might be wary of posts or advertisements that label LifeSpring as a "pregnancy care center" as that term carries a negative connotation within groups that favor abortion and has often been used interchangeably with the term "fake clinic" (Warner, 2022, p. 1) and the allegations mentioned earlier (LifeSpring Interview, 2022). On the contrary, donors, who know the heart and goal of LifeSpring, and many similar organizations, enjoy affirmatively knowing that they are supporting a "pregnancy care center" (LifeSpring Interview, 2022). This can create tension as LifeSpring seeks to craft advertisements and promoted posts.

To combat this tension, LifeSpring currently maintains two separate Facebook pages and two separate websites that target the two groups. The client-facing Facebook page and website are simply the organization's name, LifeSpring Central Virginia and lifespringva.org, while the donor/supporter-facing Facebook page and website include the label of "friend", LifeSpring Friends of Central Virginia and lifeva.org. The client-facing Facebook page has 337 likes and 376 followers (Facebook has an option where users can "follow" a page and see their updates without having to "like" the page) and the donor/supporter-facing pages has over 2,000 followers. Currently, both of LifeSpring's Facebook pages have rather low engagement (Facebook "likes," comments, and shares), with the client-facing page having the lowest engagement (usually between one and five "likes").

On the client-facing side, the majority of the posts are advertising events that LifeSpring will host or the resources that LifeSpring offers. These posts are similar to the informational posts described earlier, but distinct in that they are less about the organization as a whole or the cause LifeSpring is dedicated to. Additionally, there are few dialogic posts that share client testimonies or reveal information about staff and volunteers.

Finally, research suggests that followers of Facebook pages see only about half of the total number of posts (Woolley and Peterson, 2012, p. 35–36). LifeSpring currently posts approximately two or three times a week to avoid overloading its followers' feeds. Given that many of these posts may be lost and not appear on individuals' feeds, posting more frequently may be an additional method for LifeSpring to increase their visibility.

Using Radio PSAs to Increase Visibility

LifeSpring has expressed interest in increasing their visibility within Charlottesville's Hispanic community (LifeSpring Interview, 2023). This population is the third largest demographic group in Albemarle Country with an estimated 6,270 people (or 5.76% of the entire population) in 2020 (Census Bureau, 2020). LifeSpring is interested in better reaching and serving this community as they are statistically more likely to experience an unexpected pregnancy (Guttmacher Institute, 2019). As Hispanic women experience an unexpected pregnancy at roughly twice the rate as non-Hispanic women (Block, 2018, p. 1), LifeSpring's resources and services are of particular benefit to members of this community.

There are several barriers involved with reaching members of the Hispanic community, including cultural and language barriers (Arlikatti et al., 2014). These barriers, particularly the language barrier, present challenges for outreach as materials and popular outreach methods, such as social media, are often in English and a majority of staff and volunteers are not Spanish speaking. While one of the most effective methods for combatting the language barrier is hiring a Spanish-speaking staff member, ideally also Hispanic, to serve as an outreach coordinator, that is simply not feasible for many nonprofits, like LifeSpring, who lack the funds to hire a full-time Hispanic Outreach staff member (Arlikatti et al., 2014).

Though there is limited research on how pregnancy centers have increased their outreach efforts and visibility in Hispanic communities, there is interesting research involving outreach for disaster preparation organizations that could be paralleled here. Arlikatti et al. (2014, p. 544–45) find that organizations lacking funds to hire a Spanish-speaking staff member can still have success in reaching the Hispanic community by taking advantage of Spanish television and radio advertisements (i.e. advertisements in Spanish broadcast on Spanish television and radio stations). This is due in part to increased use of the television and radio in Hispanic communities. Additionally, having respected members of the community act as ambassadors of sorts can help guide individuals in need to the appropriate service, in this case (Arlikatti et al., 2014, p. 545), it would be guiding women experiencing unexpected pregnancies to LifeSpring.

"Organizations lacking funds to hire a Spanish-speaking staff outreach coordinator can still have success in reaching the Hispanic community by taking advantage of Spanish television and radio advertisements"

As a nonprofit organization, LifeSpring is eligible to run Public Service Announcements (PSA) for free and has experience setting up and running PSAs in the past, though they were in English instead of Spanish. LifeSpring could take advantage of the free PSA program again to run radio advertisements in Spanish.

Using College Students to Increase Visibility

College students are generally recognized to be a valuable resource for nonprofit organizations as they are often passionate about supporting the cause, offer new insights, and are technologically savvy (Reczek, 2018). College students at the University of Virginia (UVA) represent a population that has been largely unreached by LifeSpring, that may be both a source of potential clients and a consistent volunteer basis. Unfortunately, there is little quantitative research examining the best methods to reach college students, but anecdotal stories and observations from college students suggest a course of meeting students on campus through tabling events and informally through their friendship networks.

Though LifeSpring is energetic about becoming better known by college students and serving them as clients, reaching this population has proved elusive in the past due to formal limitations that prohibit LifeSpring from coming onto grounds by themselves (LifeSpring Interview, 2022). Thus, if LifeSpring wants to connect with UVA students, they'll need to partner with current students and student organizations (referred to at UVA as Contracted Independent Organizations or CIOs).

There are currently three pro-life CIOs listed on Hoos Involved/UVA Presence, UVA's student involvement website: Advocates for Life, an organization for pro-life law school students; Future Medical Professionals for Life at UVA, an organization for pro-life undergraduate students who plan to enter the medical profession; and Hoos for Life, an organization for pro-life undergraduate students. LifeSpring has little to no involvement with any of these CIOs and perhaps is missing the opportunity to disseminate information about their organization to current students through these CIOs. All of the CIOs host speaker events and at least occasionally table on grounds. Providing flyers to pass out while tabling or at speaker events could help more current students receive information about LifeSpring and the resources they provide. Further, these CIOs maintain mailing lists for current students and could help LifeSpring advertise current initiatives or upcoming events. This would help LifeSpring become more known by current students who may remember them should they or any of their friends find themselves in need of the resources that LifeSpring offers.

Additionally, members of these three CIOs as well as UVA students generally could become a large and consistent volunteer base, which is vital to nonprofit survival (Febriani & Selamet, 2020). Partnering with these CIOs would give LifeSpring a direct access to a group of students who believe in the pro-life movement and are eager to help make a difference. Further, independently advertising volunteer positions on UVA Public Service Learning in Action's online forum could help LifeSpring cast a wider net in its search for college volunteers.

One thing to keep in mind when recruiting volunteers, especially college students, is the value of a consistent brand personality (Febriani & Selamet, 2020). A brand personality is best described as the set of human characteristics most likely associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997). Volunteer intention has been shown to increase when the brand's personality is able to be interpreted from the logo, slogan, and materials presented in the volunteer solicitation (Febriani & Selamet, 2020). Particularly when the brand personality is one that is indicative of sincerity (Febriani & Selamet, 2020), as defined by Aaker (1997) as warm, accepting, wholesome, and down-to-earth. LifeSpring recently went through a rebranding; in the summer of 2022, they changed their name from ThriVe Women's Health to LifeSpring and added the slogan "Serving Women. No Cost. No Judgment." This slogan is present on all of LifeSpring's materials, and the materials are always filled with words such as "hope," care," and "support," which capture the ideas of warmth and acceptance that are associated with sincerity (Aaker, 1997). Thus, LifeSpring seems well-situated to succeed in recruiting volunteers with its current materials.

Evaluative Criteria

Based on the literature in the previous section, three alternatives are presented that could help LifeSpring increase their visibility within the community. In addition to describing the actions each alternative requires, the next section also evaluates each alternative on three criteria: effectiveness, ease of implementation, and cost. Each are described more fully below.

Effectiveness

Number of individuals presented with the information
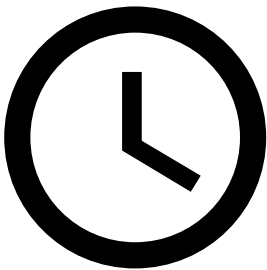
Ease of Implementation

Hours it will take LifeSpring to implement the alternative

Cost

Any expenses associated with implementing the alternative

Effectiveness

Any program worth implementing must actually achieve the overarching goal of reaching more women. If a program does not work, it is not worth proposing to LifeSpring when their time and resources are already so constrained. Thus, the effectiveness of each alternative will be closely scrutinized when deciding between the alternatives presented.

LifeSpring's mission is to serve these women and their families, which requires them taking advantages of LifeSpring's resources; however, there is limited data available for how much more likely an individual is to voluntarily visit a clinic simply because they saw a Facebook post, heard a radio advertisement, or received a flyer. Thus, "reaching women" will be defined by how many potential clients were presented with information. This is done in the hope being presented with that information actually increases the likelihood of visiting a clinic and LifeSpring sees an increase in clients who learned of the organization through these mediums.

Though the main metric is how many women were presented with information, approximations are given on how many of those women are likely to change their behavior in response to that information. That behavior change may not necessarily result in the woman becoming a client, but it may cause her to see out more information, perhaps by viewing the website or reading a blog post.

Ease of Implementation

Given the limited time and resources LifeSpring has, any outreach program implemented cannot present too large of an administrative burden. Ease of implementation will capture the average amount of time and effort LifeSpring's staff and volunteers must expend to implement the outreach program. As all of the options presented are designed to be substitutions or extensions of activities LifeSpring is already engaged in, limited time and resources need to be devoted to implementing the programs.

While ease of implementation might traditionally be thought to include how well an alternative is supported by the organization or advances the organization's mission, it does not here. All of the alternatives are extensions of activities that LifeSpring is already engaged in and thus do advance the mission.

Cost

LifeSpring is a fantastic steward of their resources and devotes the vast majority of their budget to serving their clients. As such, expensive outreach programs or large budget line items are not an option. All of the alternatives were developed with this constraint in mind. Therefore, the vast majority of costs are offset because the alternatives are designed to be substitutes or extensions of activities LifeSpring is already engaged in; however, there are still some upfront expenses associated with some of the alternatives. Costs will be measured by summing these expenses; as the time it takes to implement the alternative is covered within Ease of Implementation, time is not considered as a cost here.

While the alternatives will inevitably score differently on the criteria and therefore must be traded off against each other, these criteria were selected to help ensure that the recommendation actually increases visibility, thus reaching more potential clients, does not pose too large of a burden from the standpoint of implementation time, and is not prohibitively expensive. Additionally, these specific criteria were chosen because LifeSpring is a busy nonprofit with a goal of increasing visibility within the community. While it is, of course, the hope that increased visibility will lead to an increase in the number of women who take advantage of LifeSpring's resources, visibility is the key metric. These criteria help present LifeSpring with alternatives that are actually possible to implement without taking time and resources away from the mission of serving their clients.

Each alternative will receive a score of poor, moderate, or excellent for each of the criteria. An alternative scores poorly if it has low increase in visibility, requires a large amount of time to implement, and has a large amount of costs associated with the program. An alternative scores excellently if it is the opposite of poor. An alternative scores moderately if it falls between poor and excellent. To make the evaluation process more objective, a score of poor will receive one point, moderate receives five points, and excellent receives 10 points; the point values will be added together to receive a total score. The criteria are all weighted equally because they are equally important to LifeSpring—they desire to have a low cost, easy-to-implement option that maximizes their visibility within the community. However, should there be a tie, effectiveness will serve as the tiebreaker.

Alternatives

The alternatives presented below mirror the potential solutions discussed in the literature review above

Facebook Posts Designed to Increase Engagement
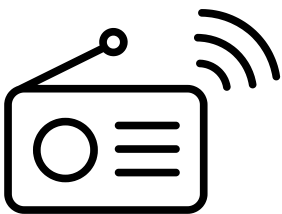
Radio Public Service Announcements in Spanish

Increase Presence on Grounds at the University of Virginia

Status Quo

Before proposing three alternatives to help LifeSpring increase their visibility within the community, the status quo is briefly examined. Currently, LifeSpring relies predominately on word-of-mouth for visibility in the community with their past clients, donors, and volunteers/employees providing the bulk of those words. Google searches, Google Maps searches, and Google advertisements are usually bread-and-butter visibility boosters for nonprofits like LifeSpring; however, recent algorithm changes have limited the search terms that return LifeSpring's website and advertisements. Hence LifeSpring's desire to proactively increase their visibility in the community so they are not so beholden to Google algorithms. Should nothing change, LifeSpring would continue to serve Charlottesville and Culpeper but may not reach as broad of a population due to limited knowledge in the community about the clinics. This project hopes to increase the visibility of LifeSpring, perhaps with a broader community than LifeSpring has traditionally reached, by formulating low-cost options to circulate LifeSpring's name.

There is not a definitive baseline measure of how well-known LifeSpring is. However, LifeSpring maintains separate outreach efforts for supporters and clients/potential clients, and this project primarily targets the efforts among clients/potential clients where visibility seems lowest. Thus it is a fair assumption that each person these alternatives reach is an individual who is learning about LifeSpring for the first time.

Alternative One: Facebook Posts Designed to Increase Engagement

As mentioned above, social media presence is an especially popular and successful outlet for smaller nonprofits as these platforms are available at low cost to the organizations, and they are collaborative in nature allowing the organizations to interact with their local community and build relationships. However, merely being active on Facebook may not translate into best utilizing Facebook as a tool. Organizations that take advantage of posts that mimic dialogue and highlight the goals and personality of the organization usually receive more interactions (Facebook "likes" and comments), thus building community and increasing their visibility (Saxton & Waters, 2014). This suggests posts designed to start a dialogue or build a shared community, such as sharing the stories of previous clients, or introducing staff and volunteers, might help reach potential clients and make them feel more comfortable visiting the clinic.

To increase engagement in the form of "likes" and comments, LifeSpring should begin crafting and posting more of the dialogic posts described earlier as they foster an online space for community members to gather to learn more about the organization and interact with it.

Effectiveness: Score of Excellent

Effectiveness of Facebook posts is measured by the average number of interactions a dialogic post is expected to receive as observed from Saxton & Waters (2014) and scaled down to match LifeSpring's current fans/followers. Saxton and Waters' (2014) sample was 97 of the top 100 noneducational nonprofit organizations as listed in the Nonprofit Times. Saxton and Waters (2014) found that dialogic and community building posts received a mean of 562.8 likes and 37.6 comments. As these organizations had thousands of followers and fans even a decade ago, it is not realistic to import their engagement numbers (which measure in the hundreds for likes and dozens for comments/shares) to LifeSpring, who has only 376 followers and often receives one or two likes and no comments or shares on their posts. However, it is realistic to expect that LifeSpring would see growth within six months in engagement to match the proportion of engagement the top nonprofits received. I am assuming six months is needed to allow time for the brand personality to be communicated and established as well as allowing online followers to become used to interacting with the new style of posts. Since LifeSpring has approximately 5% of the followers as the large nonprofits, they could reasonably expect to receive approximately 5% of the engagement; using this proportional approach, engagement with dialogic and community building posts could be expected to be around 20 likes and two comments. Because it is recommended that LifeSpring post about three times a week (or 156 times per year), it is estimated that this alternative would result in 3,120 likes and 312 comments per year.

Though visibility is the key metric, this project would be remiss to not offer a least a brief survey of potential down-the-line result, i.e. how likely an individual is to learn more about LifeSpring and their resources after interacting with them on Facebook. Research on Facebook's ability to change behavior suggests that engagement is related to change (Edney et al., 2018) and those who interact with posts are likely to seek out more information or visit the organization's website 20-25% of the time (Woolley and Peterson, 2012). Thus, LifeSpring may expect up to four or five of the roughly 20 individuals who react to a post to seek out further information about LifeSpring, perhaps by eventually becoming a client. Thus, LifeSpring could see further connections (though not necessarily clinic appointments) with roughly 600 individuals per year. However, that number assumes that all of the reactions are by unique individuals who have not interacted with other posts, which simply is not likely. Therefore, I am discounting the 600 to 300 and assuming that about half of the reactions on a post would be unique from other posts.

Additionally, it should be noted that there will likely be a delay of a few months in the amount of individuals who are reached by the new-style Facebook posts both because it will take some time for the part-time staff member to become comfortable with writing and managing the new posts and it will take time for the community to begin reacting with LifeSpring's posts

Ease of Implementation: Score of Moderate

Ease of implementation is measured by the amount of time it takes LifeSpring's part-time social media manager to learn to write more dialogic Facebook posts instead of the current more static posts. The barriers to ease of implementation are front-loaded in that the greatest investment of time will be in reading the relevant literature, learning how to draft these posts, and spending time researching fellow nonprofits with successful dialogic posts so as to mimic them. I estimate that it will take the part-time staff member approximately one week (or 25 working hours) upfront to learn and adopt this style of social media engagement. Two weeks gives time to review the literature, study other successful organizations, practice drafting more dialogic posts for LifeSpring, and have roughly three posts to begin to implement this new tactic.

A full work week and the amount of study/practice required is not a negligible amount of time as the part-time staff member would also be expected to perform all of their normal duties, but it is not insurmountable nor prohibitive.

Cost: Score of Excellent

Cost for this alternative is zero as LifeSpring already has a staff member dedicated to writing and managing Facebook posts—this alternative only requires tweaking the style of the posts and the language used within them.

Alternative Two: Radio PSAs in Spanish

Last year, 15% of the clients served by LifeSpring identified as Hispanic (99 individuals) (LifeSpring Data, 2022). LifeSpring has expressed interest in increasing their outreach efforts within the Hispanic community to become more visible in that space. Given the research of Arlikatti et. al (2014), running a radio advertisement in Spanish presents a unique opportunity to bridge the language barrier between LifeSpring and the community's Spanish speakers both increasing LifeSpring's visibility within that community and making LifeSpring seem more approachable to them. LifeSpring has experience using Public Service Announcements to advertise on the radio and has already created an advertisement that has received positive feedback form their supporters.

LifeSpring should translate their existing radio advertisement into Spanish to air as a PSA on Spanish radio/music streaming stations. LifeSpring has Spanish-speaking staff and volunteers who will be able to translate the existing advertisement into Spanish and ensure that it fits with the local dialects as well as any other cultural aspects that are specific to the Hispanic community in Charlottesville. Because PSAs are free for nonprofits, LifeSpring could run both Spanish and English advertisements or choose to only run the Spanish PSAs.

Effectiveness: Score of Moderate

Effectiveness is measured by the average number of people who hear the advertisement. Because LifeSpring does not know how many people heard their English radio/streaming service advertisements, I am not able to estimate on that basis. Therefore, I am estimating based on the Hispanic population in Charlottesville in 2020, 6,270 people (or 5.76% of the entire population) (Census Bureau, 2020). I am conservatively assuming that, over the course of the year, approximately one third, or roughly 2,000, of those individuals would hear the advertisement.

Again, though visibility is the key metric, this project would be remiss to not offer a least a brief survey of the potential down-the-line result, i.e. how likely an individual is to learn more about LifeSpring and their resources after hearing the radio advertisement. Because LifeSpring uses Public Service Announcements to run these advertisements, there is data to suggest that a long-term, effective PSA can encourage a behavior change—up to 20% of hearers taking further action (PSA Research Center). Because LifeSpring's PSA has not be running for years, only runs on the radio, and is arguably targeted to only half of the population (women), I am discounting this further action percentage from 20% to 10%. Thus, 10% of the roughly 2,000 hearers, or 200 individuals, may seek out further connections with LifeSpring (though they may not become clients). For additional context, when LifeSpring produced English radio advertisements for part of 2022, they served only one client who first heard about them on the radio.

Ease of Implementation: Score of Excellent

Ease of Implementation is the amount of time it takes for a LifeSpring staff/volunteer to translate the advertisement into Spanish. Additionally, this alternative considers the time it takes to communicate with a Spanish radio station in order for them to air the advertisement. LifeSpring estimates it will take their Spanish-speaking staff members and volunteers about 3 hours to translate their English PSA into Spanish. LifeSpring also estimates it will take approximately 5 hours of communicating with the radio/streaming service station to coordinate the logistics of running the advertisement and 5 hours of follow-up communications and reviewing the engagement numbers. The estimate for time spent communicating with the radio station is based on LifeSpring's experience with radio stations and their English PSAs in the past. The total time needed to implement this alternative is 13 hours.

Cost: Score of Excellent

Costs are the expenses associated with running the advertisement. Public service announcements are free for nonprofit organizations, such as LifeSpring. For this alternative, they would simply run the advertisement as a PSA with the message translated into Spanish and targeted radio/streaming stations that serve Spanish speakers. Again, LifeSpring could choose to also run an English advertisement as a PSA concurrently, which would also be free.

Alternative Three: Increase Presence on Grounds at the University of Virginia

College students at the University of Virginia represent a population that, though largely unreached by LifeSpring, may be a source of potential clients. LifeSpring is energetic about becoming better known by college students, but reaching this population has proved elusive in the past due to formal limitations that prohibit LifeSpring from coming onto grounds by themselves (LifeSpring Interview, 2022; LifeSpring Interview, 2023). Thus, if LifeSpring wants to connect with UVA students, they'll need to partner with current students and student organizations (referred to at UVA as Contracted Independent Organizations or CIOs).

There are currently three pro-life CIOs listed on Hoos Involved/UVA Presence, UVA's student involvement website: Advocates for Life, an organization for pro-life law students; Future Medical Professionals for Life at UVA, an organization for pro-life students who plan to enter the medical profession; and Hoos for Life, an organization for pro-life students. LifeSpring has little to no involvement with any of these CIOs and is missing the opportunity to disseminate information about their organization to current students through these CIOs. All of the CIOs host speaker events and table on campus, referred to a UVA as "grounds." Providing flyers to pass out while tabling and at speaker events would help LifeSpring become more known by current students who may remember them should they or their friends find themselves in need of the resources that LifeSpring offers.

LifeSpring should reach out to the leadership teams of the three pro-life CIOs to discuss partnering with them by providing flyers and materials for them to hand out while tabling and at speaker events. Additionally, LifeSpring could ask to have a staff member present at the CIOs tabling events or speaker events to pass out the information and strike up conversations with current students. This would help raise awareness of LifeSpring with current UVA students and perhaps provide an introduction to students in need of their resources.

Effectiveness: Score of Poor

Effectiveness is measured by the number of flyers given away to individuals, which requires the CIOs to keep track of this number. Advocates for Life only tables at the beginning of the school year at the law school student activities fair and is predominately only approached by students who are interested in joining the club. These individuals take less flyers as they usually already know LifeSpring exists and do not need the information; I therefore assume that Advocates for Life would only give away two tabling bundles per year. Hoos for Life and Future Medical Professionals for Life have not responded to emails asking about their tabling frequency or the number of people they interact with while tabling. Therefore I assume that each group gives away 5 bundles per year based on my experience tabling for pro-life causes when I was in college. This is a total of 12 bundles per year that would be given away between the three organizations.

There is little research on how likely an individual is to change their behavior or take advantage of a resource because a flyer or handbill that is handed to them. However, since it is such a small number of individuals who take the bundle each year, even assuming all of them do look into LifeSpring more and/or become a client, this alternative results in only 12 further connections each year.

Ease of Implementation: Score of Excellent

Ease of Implementation is the amount of time it takes a staff/volunteer member to communicate with CIO leaders and organize materials for the CIOs to use during tabling. I estimate it will take approximately 10 hours to initially connect with the leaders of the CIOs, build the flyer bundles and pass them off to the organization and have follow-up conversations as needed.

Cost: Score of Moderate

Cost is measured by the costs of printing the additional flyers/materials to give to the CIOs. LifeSpring's basic bundle of flyers/literature used during tabling consists of a letter from the development director, client rack card, a donor rack card, ways to give sheet, a document of the history of LifeSpring, business cards, and a few flyers on ways churches can get involved (such as baby bottle campaign, baby shower in a box, and Sanctity of Human Life); this bundle costs about $4 to print. Based on the effectiveness numbers, LifeSpring will need to print an additional 12 bundles to give to the CIOs, which at $4 a piece equates to $48 in printing costs.

Recommendation

It is recommended that LifeSpring adopt Alternative 1: Facebook Posts Designed to Increase Engagement. This alternative allows LifeSpring to maximize both their visibility and their follow-up engagement for free. Additionally, this option is flexible and allows LifeSpring and their part-time social media manager to observe and respond in real-time to what type of posts receive the most engagement.

A collection of guiding literature, practical tips for implementing this alternative, and examples from other organizations are included in the Appendix. Additionally, ways this strategy could be implemented on the donor/supporting-facing page (but without the following analysis) is also included in the Appendix should LifeSpring desire to expand this approach to that page as well.

Additionally, though Radio Advertisements was not the recommended alternative, given the low costs (this alternative is also free), ease of implementation, and solid effectiveness, LifeSpring could consider adding this outreach program in the future. Though LifeSpring could implement the Radio Advertisements immediately, I would recommend against it and instead recommend focusing sole attention and efforts on implementing Facebook Posts, "getting it up and running" until its application and implementation become mechanical and part of the standard operating practice. Then, once LifeSpring feels they have settled into using the Facebook Posts so that it no longer requires extra time or energy to implement, they can explore adding Radio Advertisements. This will allow each outreach program to receive undivided attention, hopefully yielding each one more successful than if they were implemented simultaneously.

Outcome Matrix

		Alternatives:		
		Facebook Posts Designed to Increase Engagement	Radio Advertisements in Spanish	Increased Presence on UVA Grounds through CIOs
Criteria	Effectiveness	Excellent (10)	Moderate (5)	Poor (1)
	Ease of Implementation	Moderate (5)	Excellent (10)	Excellent (10)
	Cost	Excellent (10)	Excellent (10)	Moderate (5)
Total Score		25	25	16

This Outcomes Matrix shows how each alternative scores on each criterion and provides the total score for each alternative. As mentioned above, Effectiveness is used as the tiebreaker, thus pushing Facebook Posts over Radio Advertisements.

Tradeoffs
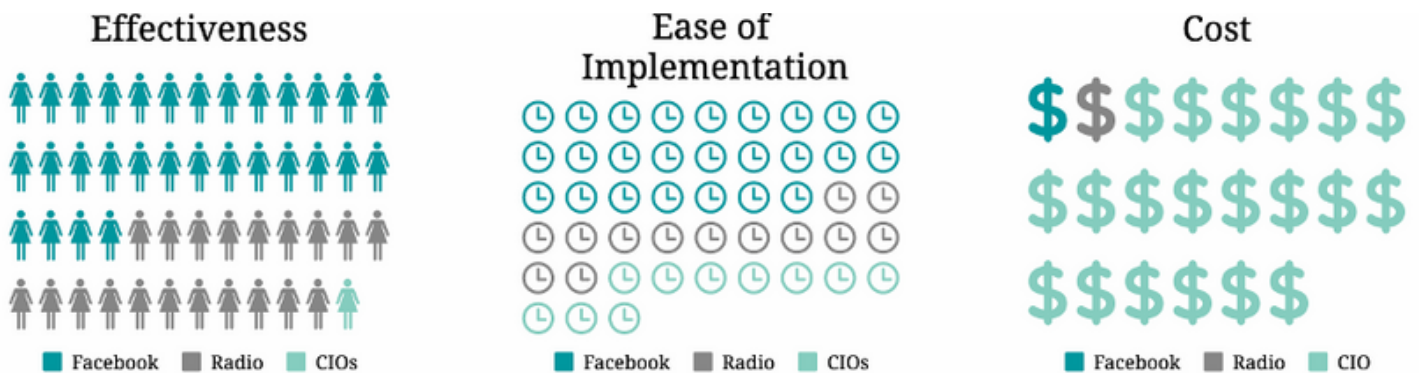
The graphs above visually depict how each alternative stacks up in terms of each of the criterion. Facebook posts has the greatest administrative burden (measured by ease of implementation) because it requires the social media manager to take about a week to review the literature provided in the Appendix, learn to draft the new dialogic posts, and participate in the feedback loop (discussed more below). However, the low costs (the alternative is free) and the effectiveness (potentially reaching thousands of women with hundreds seeking out additional information) associated with this alternative far outweigh the time required for implementation.

Implementation

It is easy to overestimate the ease of implementation for a seemingly subtle change in the social media strategy. However, there are three distinct challenges to successfully implementing this recommendation: stakeholder buy-in, especially the leadership team and the part-time social media manager; patience and experimentation within a feedback loop; and jumpstarting engagement with volunteers, staff, and current clients.

Stakeholder Buy-In:

This recommendation involves multiple stakeholders and requires buy-in from all of them to be successful. Those stakeholders are the leadership team, the part-time social media manager, LifeSpring volunteers and staff, and current clients. Each of these groups presents a slightly different challenge to effective implementation.

The <u>leadership team</u> needs to be on-board and supportive of the new social media direction. Specifically they need to be willing to allow the <u>social media manager</u> to take the extra time to learn this new style. Additionally, part of crafting dialogic posts involves fostering community and allowing followers to feel as though they know the individuals involved in the organization. Thus, <u>staff and volunteers</u> including the <u>leadership team</u> will likely need to appear in some social media posts. This will be a delicate balancing act as there are genuine safety concerns for individuals associated with pregnancy care centers (CatholicVote, 2023), though the climate appears to be cooling in 2023 with the federal government showing willingness to prosecute attacks against pregnancy centers and their affiliates. The <u>leadership team</u> will bear responsibility for ensuring the recommendation is taken seriously, given time to develop, and setting the tone of support for this path.

The <u>social media manager</u> is perhaps the most pivotal stakeholder involved because they will ultimately be tasked with implementing this recommendation. They will need to understand that this recommendation is in no way a criticism of their efforts up to this point and merely an effort to increase their reach. Hopefully they will be supportive of the initiative and be willing to invest the time to learn the new style and continue working to improve the community building aspect as the recommendation unfolds. If they are not, it will be up to the leadership team to encourage them to continue implementing the recommendation and supervising them as they do so.

Finally, <u>current clients, along with staff and volunteers</u>, will likely need to be encouraged to interact with the new posts to help build that community and help the posts appear in more individuals' Facebook feed so that those subsequent individuals (possibly potential clients) have the opportunity to find and engage with LifeSpring. This also involves some of the safety concerns touched on earlier and will need the support and encouragement of the <u>leadership team</u> to navigate this, perhaps offering incentives to encourage engagement. This is discussed more below.

Participating in the Feedback Loop

Part of both the benefit and challenge of this recommendation is its flexibility and roll-out process. The recommendation is purposefully designed to allow LifeSpring, through the social media manager, to learn what prompts the most engagement and replicate that. However, that does require that LifeSpring pays attention to its posts beyond the initial posting; posts that receive more engagement should be replicated. Additionally, LifeSpring's organizational Facebook page will likely have to participate and respond to comments. The anticipated sequence of events is mapped out below.

Additionally, patience will be key in order for the recommendation to develop and take root. As discussed within the alternative, this new style of social media engagement will likely take a few months for the potential to be realized and that potential likely will only be realized if there is participation in the feedback loop. All stakeholders discussed above will need to be engaged in this process.

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┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
│ Discussing   │   │ Learning to  │   │ Implementing │   │ Encouraging  │
│ the          │──▶│ craft        │──▶│ dialogic     │──▶│ staff,       │
│ recommendation│  │ dialogic     │   │ posts        │   │ volunteers,  │
│ within       │   │ posts        │   │              │   │ and clients  │
│ LifeSpring   │   │              │   │              │   │ to help      │
│              │   │              │   │              │   │ boost        │
│              │   │              │   │              │   │ engagement   │
└──────────────┘   └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘

┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
│ Continuing   │   │ Continuing   │   │ Keeping track│
│ with         │──▶│ discussions  │──▶│ of which     │
│ dialogic     │   │ within       │   │ posts receive│
│ posts        │   │ LifeSpring   │   │ the most     │
│              │   │ about        │   │ engagement   │
│              │   │ the progress │   │              │
└──────────────┘   └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
```
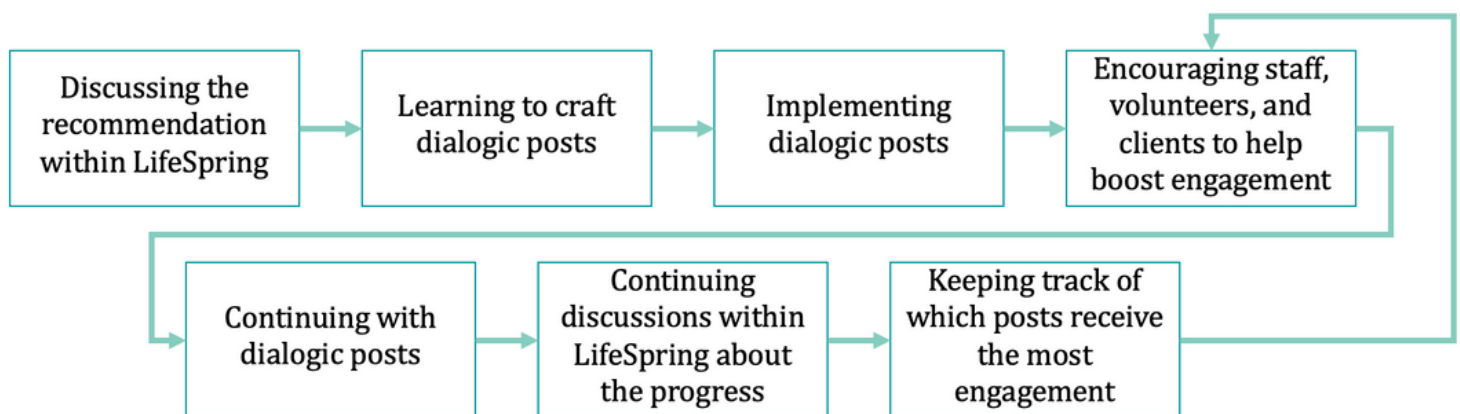
Jumpstarting Engagement

The success of this recommendation lies in the ability of LifeSpring to foster an online community. As discussed above, a large portion of that, especially in the first few months, relies on LifeSpring's willingness to encourage their staff, volunteers, and current clients to engage with their posts (by liking, commenting, and sharing) both so that the posts appear in more individuals' feeds and so that those additional individuals feel comfortable engaging themselves.

Logistically, this will involve giving notice to those stakeholders when new posts are made, which could be automated if staff and volunteers take advantage of settings that automatically send notifications for new posts. Encouraging engagement could take many forms, including offering additional incentives (like additional baby items) to clients who engage with posts. Balancing safety concerns are a little more challenging and will require a careful, evenhanded approach that facilitates honest discussion about individual stakeholder's comfort level in participating. Only sharing first names, appearing in groups, and not offering detailed descriptions of the building may be practical steps that can minimize risk.

Conclusion

LifeSpring has so much to offer women experiencing an unexpected pregnancy, but with the recent Google algorithm changes, these women may struggle to learn about and connect with LifeSpring. However, becoming more visible in the community can increase the reach of LifeSpring and provide more touch-points for potential clients to learn about them. LifeSpring has the opportunity to increase visibility by slightly tweaking their approach to social media, specifically Facebook posts. Crafting more dialogic posts that are carefully designed to mimic an online community and foster a conversation can help potential clients learn about LifeSpring initially, provide a jump start to knowing LifeSpring more deeply and connecting with their website, and may eventually lead to a client relationship.

These dialogic Facebook posts have been studied by academics and become part of the daily practice of many organizations seeking to increase their visibility and maximize their online engagement (see Appendix for a collection of sources). Additionally, these posts, which do not carry any external costs and only require a minimal investment of time, should be relatively easy for LifeSpring's social media manager to implement as the current posts only need a few tweaks to make them more dialogic. These tweaks and practical tips are also discussed in the Appendix. Though this report only examines and recommends changes to the client-facing Facebook page, the same thinking could be applied to the LifeSpring Friends Facebook page and translated to other social media platforms as needed.

Though LifeSpring need only make a few tweaks to their current posts, this endeavor is not without implementation challenges. LifeSpring needs to be aware that this process will likely take a few months to see results, needs buy-in from multiple stakeholders, and requires an ongoing conversation about balancing methods to increase engagement with genuine safety concerns. However, if successful, this social media strategy will help LifeSpring achieve their mission of serving women with no cost and with no judgment.

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Appendix

This appendix serves as a repository of information to help LifeSpring implement the recommended alternative of drafting Facebook posts that are dialogic in nature to increase engagement.

Relevant Literature to Review

Here is the scholarly literature used to craft this recommendation that details the importance of an online presence and explains how dialogic posts help increase engagement. These sources are listed in the references, but I've separated out the ones that support the recommendation for easy access.

- Campbell, D. A., & Lambright, K.T. (2019). Are You Out There? Internet Presence of Nonprofit Human Services Organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 48(6) 1296–1311.
- Edney, S., Looyestyn, J., Ryan, J., Kernot, J., Maher, C. (2018) Posts, Pics, or Polls? Which Post Type Generates the Greatest Engagement in a Facebook Physical Activity Intervention? Translational Behavioral Medicine, Volume 8:6, 953–957. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/tbm/iby006
- Given, L.M., Forcier, E. and Rathi, D. (2013), Social Media and Community Knowledge: An Ideal Partnership for Non-Profit Organizations. *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 50: 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1002/meet.14505001064
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Additionally, here are several less formal pieces that are informed by and largely compile the same research mentioned above. These sources are a little bit easier to digest and are often broken down into steps to be taken or tips to implement.

- Classy Blog (2020), 13 Tips to Level Up Your Nonprofit's Social Media Engagement Tactics, Classy Blog. https://www.classy.org/blog/nonprofit-social-media-engagement-tactics/
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Practical Tips for Social Media Posts

Currently, LifeSpring has several posts that share information related to unexpected pregnancies (like adoption or the abortion pill), which often include a link in the caption and an image that corresponds with the topic (sometimes a stock image or sometimes an infographic). Though information-sharing posts offer little opportunity to engage, even these posts can be tweaked to increase engagement. The main recommended change for informational posts is to stop pasting the link to the website/event in the post caption and instead directly linking to the website with the embedded link feature for Facebook posts. As the literature above explains, individuals are more likely to click on links that are embedded into posts instead of ones that are listed in the post caption. This would also make the post caption cleaner and easier to absorb in a shorter period of time. To retain the beautiful images that LifeSpring usually shares in these posts, those images should be added to the particular website page so that they become the preview image for those embedded links. Finally, the post descriptions can typically be shortened to one or two lines so that followers can see the entire caption without having to click "See more," and so the caption can be fully absorbed in a shorter period of time.

LifeSpring also has several informational posts advertising their own events (classes for new moms, social events, etc.) that request individuals to RSVP by texting a number or sending a DM. Similarly to the informational posts discussed above, LifeSpring should consider ways that individuals can RSVP without having to leave Facebook, such as by having a specific website page that can collect RSVP information that is embedded within the post.
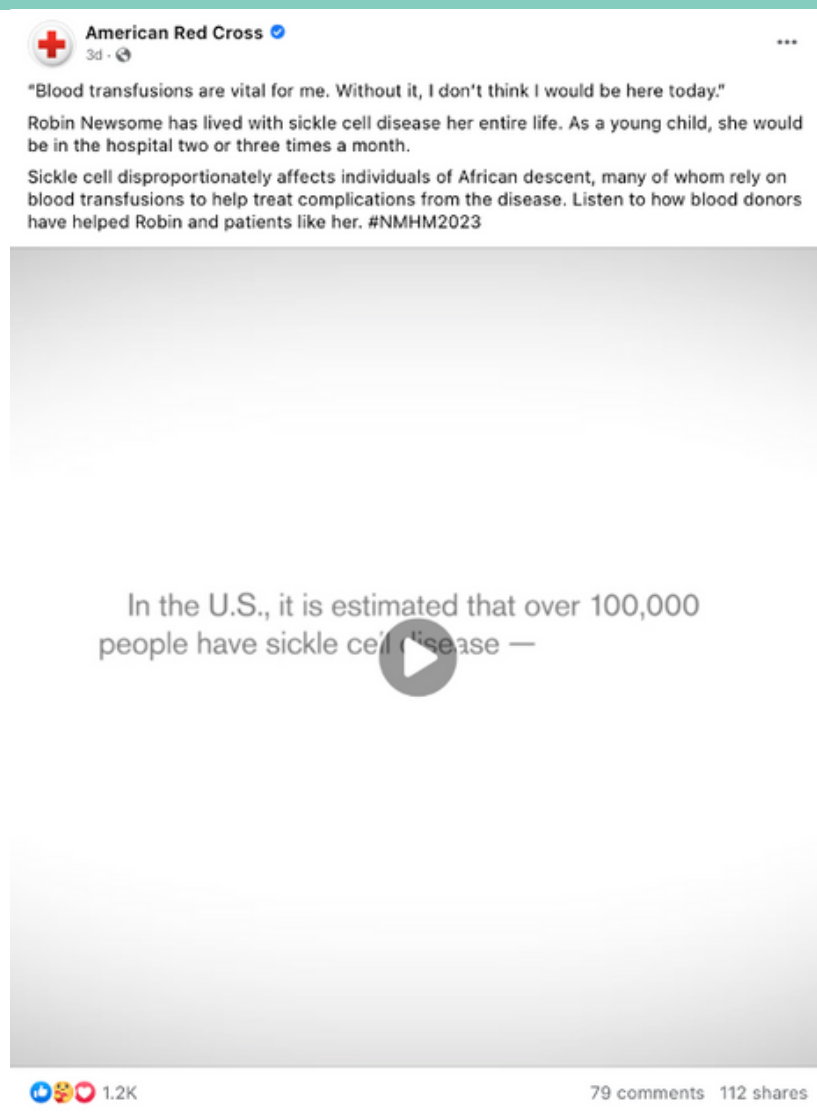
Often LifeSpring will share an infographic for their upcoming event or include one in a general announcement. All of LifeSpring infographics do a great job of matching the brand colors, style, and personality. However, some of them can be a touch busy and hard to absorb quickly because they contain too many words and multiple different fonts. Some editing down to short bullet points, including only crucial information, and only using two fonts can help make the infographics more easily digestible and effective.

Finally, LifeSpring should draft and share more dialogic posts to help build an online community instead of exclusively sharing information. Common dialogic posts are ones that ask a question for followers to answer in the comments. Several of the sources above talk about the effectiveness of asking questions and an example of another organization asking questions is listed below. LifeSpring could ask followers to share their favorite part of being parents, their favorite parenting tips, or things they wish they knew as first-time parents. The goal is to start a dialogue between LifeSpring and the followers as well as follower-to-follower. Additionally, as many of the sources above describe, videos perform especially well on Facebook and are great at helping individuals feel connected to an organization. These videos could be of the actual clinics, if LifeSpring feels comfortable sharing those, of volunteers describing what an appointment is like or the benefits of visiting LifeSpring, or of the baby clothes and items LifeSpring currently has to give to their clients. Here, the goal is to help followers feel like they truly know LifeSpring while giving them important information about what LifeSpring is and offers to the community.

Examples from Other Organizations

It's often useful to see the tips in action and working as they are designed, so here are some examples of the dialogic posts discussed above: videos to share a story and questions. Since the usefulness of dialogic posts extend to all organizations and not only nonprofits, for-profit organizations are also included. Additionally, these examples came from posts I saw in my own Facebook feed and thought illustrated the point well, but these types of posts are used by most organizations and examples abound.

The American Red Cross's post sharing a video of specific individuals who have been affected by sickle cell disease received 1,200 likes, 79 comments, and 112 shares.

American Red Cross ✓
3d · 🌐

"Blood transfusions are vital for me. Without it, I don't think I would be here today."

Robin Newsome has lived with sickle cell disease her entire life. As a young child, she would be in the hospital two or three times a month.

Sickle cell disproportionately affects individuals of African descent, many of whom rely on blood transfusions to help treat complications from the disease. Listen to how blood donors have helped Robin and patients like her. #NMHM2023

In the U.S., it is estimated that over 100,000 people have sickle cell disease —

1.2K   79 comments   112 shares

Chick-fil-A's post asking their followers to answer a question (whether they had tried a new milkshake flavor) in comments received 942 likes, 558 comments, and 173 shares.

And just to show that Chick-fil-A's success isn't all thanks to their very yummy milkshakes, here is another example of a successful question post, which is especially fun because it requests answers in emojis. This post received 377 likes, 361 comments, and 57 shares.

Implementing the Strategy on the LifeSpring Friends Page

This recommendation could be replicated for the donor/supporter-facing page as well. LifeSpring would simply change the information shared to match the interests of the donors/supporters and highlight more of their stories. Additionally, LifeSpring should build more informational posts that will generate more "shares." These posts would likely be infographics with a few bullet points about the topic and perhaps an embedded link to a blog post or website with more information. Again, staff and volunteers could be encouraged to be especially active, especially in the beginning, to encourage engagement numbers.

Specific examples of dialogic posts for the LifeSpring Friends page:
- Followers could be asked to share in the comments why they believe in and support the pro-life cause
- Polls could be generated asking followers what type of content they most like
- This could also be used to gauge community support and interest in fundraisers or other community events
- Links about the pro-life movement and challenges facing it could be shared from LifeSpring's affiliate or parent organizations like Care Net or Live Action
- Links to LifeSpring's own blog posts—such as the blog post about how the abortion pill works—could be shared as pro-life supporters are also curious about and need information on these topics
- Share simple posts of an image that captures the mission of LifeSpring and that many followers would likely interact with such as this post by Live Action that received 6.3 likes, 835 comments, and 924 shares:

Live Action ✓
2d · 🌐

Every human life has a purpose.

👍❤️ 6.3K   835 comments   924 shares

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ➤ Share