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### **Social Media Audit: American Heart Association**

Since a group of pioneering physicians and social workers formed the first Association in 1915, the American Heart Association has grown into the largest voluntary health agency in the country. Over the years, the AHA has been very protective of their brand, choosing to only partner with companies, hospitals and brands that they feel will reinforce the seriousness of their mission to “building healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke.”

Inversely, the AHA has also been notoriously slow at adapting new methods of communication with their audiences. Although first founded in 1915, they didn’t officially create the AHA brand until 1924 and it wasn’t until 1948 that they even made their first public debut during a network radio contest.

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of Americans, killing 1 in 3 women every year and killing more people than the next four causes of death combined – including ALL forms of cancer. Despite these staggering statistics and despite being one of the oldest and most well-reputed health charities in America, the AHA lacks behind most other health related organizations in several ways. The AHA does not even rank in the top 10 in trust among American health charities. Charity Navigator only gives the AHA three out of four stars for accountability and transparency, an odd ranking considering how protective the AHA has been of their brand name.

One would think that social media could play a significant role in increasing the brand recognition and trust factor of the AHA, but it seems that this is where the AHA fails significantly in their social media outreach for the following reasons:

- The organization is too big and too fractured. The Association is broken down into seven regional affiliates with each state having representation within that affiliate and each state containing numerous local divisions.
- The AHA is extremely conservative in their advertising campaigns, as opposed to a group like the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation. SGK’s more controversial and risqué campaigning is much more attention-grabbing than the AHA’s more conservative (i.e. bland) campaigns.
- The AHA is so protective of their brand that their partnerships are more limited. This means that the brand is less visible than smaller organizations such as SGK whose products and partnerships are visible to consumers on a daily basis in nearly every market.

**Website**

Typically, most social media efforts should redirect the user to the company's website for more information. In the case of the American Heart Association, their website is particularly difficult to navigate and is poorly organized. The primary problems with this website include:

- The website contains numerous landing pages depending on how the user was directed there.
- There is too much information on each page and the pages change depending on the campaign it refers to. For example: The AHA main page has a completely different style and feel than the Go Red for Women page. See images below.





- The primary landing page is <http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/> (see above) and currently features a Billion Calorie Count-up promotion that links to another page with more information about getting healthy but not necessarily to the Billion Calorie Count-Up promotion (that link is further down the page and requires scrolling down to see it). The point of the Billion Calorie Count-Up, however, is to link to the Heart Walk page. But the slideshow at the top and the link at the bottom link to two different pages. See images below.



Nutrition Center | Physical Activity | Healthier Kids | Weight Management | Stress Management | Fats & Oils | Quit Smoking

## Billion Calorie Count-Up

Like 18 | Tweet 2 | +1 0 | Share 13 | Updated Wed, 28 Mar 2012 1:43:00 PM



The American Heart Association is excited to announce the "Billion Calorie Count-Up" – a multi-year, nationwide challenge to get Americans to collectively burn 1 billion calories by 2020. Calories collected at Heart Walks across the country in 2012 will be tallied up and reported on the "Big Ticker" counter for the "Billion Calorie Count-Up" on Nov. 7, 2012, which is National Eating Healthy Day.

To be part of the "Billion Calorie Count-Up," visit [www.heartwalk.org](http://www.heartwalk.org) to sign up for an American Heart Association Heart Walk in your area, and to access healthy living resources including information about getting active and eating healthy.

And, taking your first steps can be easy with more than 19,000 American Heart Association [Walking Paths](#) and [Walking Clubs](#) that you join or create across the country.

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## Heart Walk.

WHY WE WALK | PARTICIPANT TOOLKIT | GET INVOLVED | NATIONAL / GLOBAL COMPANIES | COMMUNITY TEAMS | SPREAD THE WORD

RESET MAP

VIRTUAL EVENT

ALASKA

HAWAII

MA

RI

CT

IL

IN

DE

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DC

### Welcome

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2011 TOP 25 HEART WALK CHAMPIONS!

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STATE

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### My Heart

#### Raise Awareness...



of heart disease and stroke among your family members and friends and share with them your support of American Heart Association.

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### My Life

#### CONGRATULATIONS TO...

- 2010 Heart Walk Champions!
1. Union Bank
  2. Philips
  3. Kaiser Permanente
  4. UnitedHealthcare
  5. Harris Teeter
- Click here to see full list...

[READ MORE](#)

### My Community

Celebrate healthy lifestyle changes and money raised for the American Heart Association.

#### Top 10 Nationwide Events

01. Cincinnati, OH	\$2,093,305
02. Twin Cities MN	\$1,408,647
03. Run and Hear...	\$1,107,187
04. Dallas, TX	\$1,049,595
05. St. Louis MO	\$1,008,899
06. Utica, NY	\$897,619
07. Denver, CO	\$829,755
08. Detroit MI	\$813,497
09. Orange County...	\$754,191
10. Tulsa, OK	\$728,528

[VIEW TOP 100](#)

- The entire website would benefit from a complete overhaul with a more streamlined look, user-friendly interface and more organized and visible links to the various platforms and campaigns in addition to better linking to local divisions and information.
- Information is frequently out of date or slow to be updated. For example, the Dallas Go Red for Women Luncheon is to be held on June 8, 2012 at the Hilton Anatole hotel in Dallas. But when the user goes to that site (<https://ahadallas.ejoinme.org/MyEvents/20112012DallasGoRedLuncheon/tabid/313945/Default.aspx>), the latest updates and news hasn't been updated since September 20, 2011. Luckily, the keynote speaker is currently updated but with the Denton Go Red Luncheon, that information wasn't available until almost two weeks prior to the event. The Breakout Sessions are currently not updated and were never updated for the Denton luncheon held in February 2012.

## Twitter

One of the most frustrating aspects of following the American Heart Association on Twitter is the sheer number of Twitter accounts available for following. In the Southwest Affiliate alone, there are 16 Twitter accounts:

- General SWA account ([@heart\\_south](#))
- You're the Cure Texas ([@yourethecuretx](#))
- You're the Cure Oklahoma ([@yourethecureok](#))
- You're the Cure New Mexico ([@yourethecurenm](#))
- You're the Cure Arkansas ([@yourethecurear](#))
- Cities:
  - Austin [@ahaustin](#)
  - Colorado Springs [@ahacos](#)
  - Dallas [@aha\\_dallas](#)
  - Denver [@denverheart](#)
  - Houston [@ahahouston](#)
  - Little Rock [@ahalittlerock](#)
  - Northwest Arkansas [@ahanwa](#)
  - Oklahoma City [@ahaokc](#)
  - San Antonio [@hasanantonio](#)
  - Tarrant County [@ahatarrant](#)
  - Tulsa [@ahatulsa](#)

This does not even begin to take into consideration the Twitter accounts that the National Center maintains for the Go Red for Women Campaign, START! Eating Healthy, My Heart My Life, Power to End Stroke, Founder's Heart and literally dozens more including:

- @American\_Heart – 5994 tweets, 27,150 followers
- @AHA\_nutweetion – 709 tweets, 5593 followers
- @HeartNews – 459 tweets, 9111 followers
- @AHAScience – 1243 tweets, 16,457 followers
- @hearthub – 1047 tweets, 3764 followers



- @AHAJobs – 876 tweets, 124 followers
- @loveurheart – 49 tweets, 1029 followers
- @AmericanHeartU – 35 tweets, 314 followers
- @NancyatHeart – 179 tweets, 830 followers

This does not even begin to include the Twitter handles for each individual division within each of the other six regional affiliates. Put together, the AHA operates more than a hundred different Twitter handles altogether. While it can be argued that the local divisions can benefit from having their own Twitter handle for engaging with the local community, the problem really lies with the National Center which is stretching itself entirely too thin to truly be effective.

The national handle @HeartNews only has 459 tweets but has more than 9000 followers. Those followers could be more actively engaged if that handle were tweeting more frequently or combining tweets from some of the other handles. Similarly, @loveurheart only has 49 tweets and more than 1000 followers. That is an example of a Twitter handle that could be completely eliminated and those users pushed towards another handle instead.

There also seems to be a consistent lack of engagement among most of the tweets from National Center while the local divisions seem to be working harder to increase engagement through a few scattered tweetchats and by replying to new followers and comments.

Overall, some Twitter handles should be eliminated by the National Center and engagement should increase with the most successful handles. The local divisions should also work on increasing engagement through strategic tweetchats and content sharing.

## Facebook

Similar to the Twitter situation, there are a multitude of Facebook pages for the AHA mostly consisting of the local divisions and the major campaigns. The Dallas Division has 1427 likes with a potential reach to 652,098 friends of fans. This week, the Dallas Division has a total reach of 97,031 which is an increase of more than 274% since April 13, 2012. One of the most talked about posts is the opportunity to meet BET's 106 & Park host and actor Terrence J. for a stroke awareness Twitter party. They have also been pushing follow-ups to their annual Cotes du Coeur gala and pushing promotions from Macy's and the One Man Dallas event. Prior to April 13, the Dallas Facebook page had been in a virtual flat-line with less than 2000 people reached on an average day.

Unlike Twitter though, this is one area where the AHA does not seem to be stretched too thin as they don't seem to have as many National Center based pages out there to flood the news feeds. This seems to be a smart and strategic move on their part and allows the local divisions to work on actively engaging their users more effectively.

## Flickr

This may be the biggest flop of all as most of the local divisions within the Southwest Affiliate have no pictures posted at all and very few members. One suggestion is to use Twitter and Facebook to encourage followers to post their own pictures to the local Flickr pages. At this point though, it is unclear what the AHA intends to use the Flickr pages for, or if they even will use them at all.

## YouTube

The AHA maintains a YouTube channel for each of its seven affiliates – a smarter move than allowing local divisions to have separate YouTube channels. However, the biggest problem here is a general lack of content. There are only 33 videos and most of them are posted few and far between each other. I would recommend that they work on posting at least two videos per month, if not more, and using their Twitter and Facebook pages to push that content to their followers. The Dallas division's last contribution was two months ago but there have been several events in that time that could be highlighted, including the installation of a Teaching Garden at Moss Haven Elementary and the annual Cotes du Coeur gala. Videos currently exist for Cotes du Coeur but are not connected to this YouTube channel.

## Blogs

The Southwest Affiliate has several blogs where users can read about local news, events and programs.

- [Heart to Heart](#) - This SWA Volunteer Blog is updated on a bi-monthly basis with news, volunteer highlights, and volunteer opportunities.
- **You're the Cure blogs** – This series of blogs focuses on state-by-state You're the Cure efforts.  
[You're the Cure Arkansas](#)  
[You're the Cure New Mexico](#)  
[You're the Cure Oklahoma](#)  
[You're the Cure Texas](#)
- [Houston Dines blog](#) - find news and information related to the Houston Dines program.

In general, the blogs have a clean and polished look to them but don't seem to be updated with enough frequency to make them interesting or engaging. The Texas blog hasn't been updated since February 3, 2012 whereas the other blogs seem to be updating more frequently (although that is tricky to determine because the other blogs have removed the date from their blog posts). This is a great opportunity to discuss legislation that pertains to heart health, such as anti-smoking initiatives, and other initiatives that relate to heart health. It seems that once again, the AHA has a valuable platform that is not being used to its full potential.

## Overview

It seems that the AHA has all of the necessary tools at their disposal but isn't properly utilizing the vast majority of them. In general, the AHA seems to be spreading itself too thin and clearly doesn't have the

manpower to manage all of these platforms. The Dallas division only has one employee, the Communications Director, to handle all of this and she makes do by utilizing an intern when she has one. But even still, it seems that the divisions would benefit by having a second full-time communications assistant to better manage the social media efforts and give each platform the attention it deserves. As for the Nationals Center, they would benefit greatly by condensing some of their platforms, overhauling and streamlining their website, and taking a few risks in their campaigns that will garner them more time in the spotlight.