

Choosing the Right Pitch: Customized Orientation Emails to New Residents and Fellows

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Objectives:

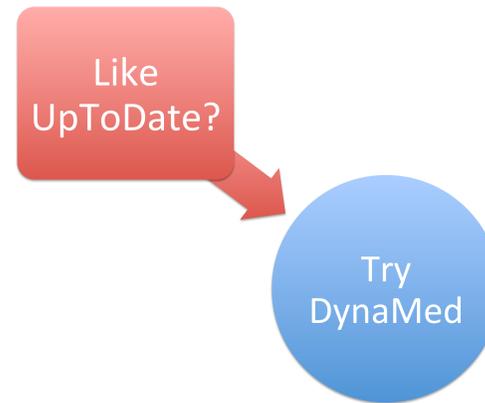
A common challenge we face is how to make new students, residents and fellows aware of the library and its resources. Formal orientation sessions are focused on survival essentials, attention is very limited, and information organization and retrieval is not a priority. As a result, the library often takes a back burner.

During the 2011 orientation, I decided to send a welcome/orientation email to all of the new residents and fellows. As an experiment, half would received a customized email and half a form email. The customized email would compare resources at their medical school to resources at University of Minnesota.

The hypothesis was that links in the customized email would be clicked more and this would indicate greater readership and usefulness.

Click Rates

	Customized	Uncustomized
AccessMedicine	10	1
ACP Journal Club	1	0
ACP Pier	2	0
AHFS Drug Information	0	0
Bio-Medical Library	10	58
Cochrane Library	1	1
Email Responses	3	1
ExamMaster	3	0
FirstConsult	5	9
Google Scholar	3	1
MD Consult	4	3
Micromedex	2	4
Natural Standard	2	1
Orientation Video	10	17
Ovid Medline	1	3
PsychInfo	0	0
PubMed	25	5
R2 Library	0	0
RefWorks	0	0
Springer E-Books	0	0
StatRef	0	0
UpToDate	0	3
Web of Science	0	0



Methods:

I began by requesting a list of the 242 new residents and fellows from the Graduate Medical Education office. I cleaned the list and divided the residents into two groups. Due to the method of splitting, 128 would receive customized emails and 114 would receive an uncustomized email.

Next, I built a database in Microsoft Access which tracked:

- 1) Resources at UMN
- 2) Resources at the medical schools of the customized email group
- 3) Mappings between our resources and those at their medical schools.

From this database I could generate a report that would show the resources at their previous institution and the name and link to our equivalent at the University of Minnesota. The uncustomized email would simply include a list of our core resources. I generated two, shortened URLs for each resource (one for customized and one for uncustomized) that would allow me to measure differences in click rates.

In addition to the resource list, the email included links to the library and a short welcome/orientation video.

Results:

Click counts were measured for the same links in each resource and can be seen in Click Rates table. The system only tracked the number of clicks rather than unique users who clicked. As a result, frequent clicks from one user can easily skew the data.

In general, the total number of clicks was quite low and there was no clear difference between clicks from the customized and uncustomized emails.

The click counts with large differences (e.g., PubMed, library homepage) are most likely due to a single user clicking the link multiple times.

Conclusion:

The creation of the customized email database was labor-intensive, but the pay-off was minimal. This method of increasing awareness of and access to library resources does not appear effective. Other methods of engaging residents, such as staffing a table and distributing App codes, were more successful in this situation.

