

Kari:

Hello, and thank you for tuning in to the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development podcast. My name is Kari Robideau and joining me today is Molly Frendo. We are both youth development extension educators with a focused role in distance learning technology. So, for today's podcast we decided that we would tackle about three questions that we are frequently asked, and we thought we'd call this podcast Q and A, frequently asked questions youth workers ask about technology. And as a clarification in this discussion, youth workers are defined as paid or not paid adults who are working in youth programs. However, before we jump into these questions, Molly, please say hello.

Molly:

Yeah, so my name's Molly Frendo. My focus of my work is on integrating distance learning and technology into the youth side of our program. And so, one of the ways I think... It's kind of funny when I think about how I came to work with technology, it really was by accident. I had been getting in... I was involved with extension with my work, and I was also teaching as an adjunct, and they asked me to start teaching online. And I started, as I learned to teach online in my other role, I started seeing the benefits, and the ways that we could apply it to our work in extension. And that was right around the time when Facebook was becoming really big, and then soon, within seriously like months, it was, Molly, can you help us? You're young, you know how to use this stuff, can you help us learn how to do this? Because this is where our youth and volunteers are, so we want to be able to figure out how to reach them. And so from there just kind of grew and took off.

Kari:

And you know, we met about four years ago now at a conference.

Molly:

Hard to believe, isn't it?

Kari:

And discovered that... I know, I know. And we instantly discovered that mutual, real similar background. I was teaching as well as an adjunct instructor, and asked to teach online, and then when I came into a role of youth development extension educator, saw those connections. And I have, while you're working on the youth side, I have been working with those non-credit adults. They aren't doing anything online for the A, B, C, D or F grade. They are there because they want professional development, staff development, need to learn something.

Molly:

So, you really got to hook them, right?

Kari:

It's a challenge to engage those audiences, but at the same time I think people have really found the benefit in coming to online classes, self-studies, webinars, and well, most recently have added the podcast series to our...

Molly:

Yay.

Kari:

So, without further ado, I think speaking of this podcast series, we should get started with our Q and A's. As I mentioned, we're going to go through just a few questions that Molly and I have received and we thought it might be helpful for people. So Molly, the first question is for you. So, here's the question. The background is when you and I did a podcast, actually a live podcast, at a conference on volunteerism, someone asked you, how do I stay current on the latest social media tools young people are using?

Molly:

That's a tough one.

Kari:

I know.

Molly:

It just moves so fast and really, I mean, I've noticed that there's even a generational difference. I'm close to 35, and I realize now that teens are using tools that I'm like, well why would you even use that? You know? So, I have to really force myself to stay on top and to stay knowledgeable, that's part of my responsibility. And so, some of the things I would say first and foremost, just ask youth what they're using. A lot of times, if you're a parent yourself, sometimes it's easier to ask your kid's friends than it is... They're more likely to talk to other adults perhaps that aren't their parents necessarily.

Molly:

There are some websites that I like to use. A great one for youth workers and for parents is called commonsensemedia.org and I love that source. Not only does it have all sorts of resources for youth workers about digital citizenship, and media literacy, and all that kinds of stuff, but it has ratings and reviews of all of the apps, and all of the movies and music, and that kind of stuff as they're coming out, so you can see if it's age appropriate for the kids. And if you have specific things in your family, or in your community that you're watching for that might be offensive or dangerous, in terms of trying to stay on top of things, a lot of times I just, every so often, every couple months or so, I just kind of do a Google search to say what are the top social media tools? What are the hottest apps, mostly for teenagers, and how are the things, the statistics growing on that?

Molly:

Really the one that I see that's growing the fastest is Snapchat, and I know we've had some conversations about how to use Snapchat in an educational way with young people. And it's kind of a challenge because the content disappears. And so, one of the things that I've made some suggestions to the youth workers here at our center is to think about how they can ask young people to use Snapchat almost to promote, talk about what they're doing in the program, in 4H, share with their friends, get the ideas out, showcase their learning. Maybe, I think it could also be a really fun reflection tool or a recap of the day, how to highlight maybe what they did at camp, or what they learned, but just know that it's going to be hard for any of that content.

Molly:

Some of those are really great and you'd love to be able to show them to stakeholders or whatever. But Snapchat's not going to let you do that. So, be aware of kind of the temporal nature of it. The other big one is Instagram right now, and Instagram is a little bit nicer because obviously that's going to stay. You can also use, if your program has a hashtag or something like that, you can use that to sort and aggregate. And I don't know, do you get questions about hashtags? I get a lot of questions about hashtags?

Kari:

A lot of questions about hashtags, and I kind of giggle to myself sometimes when people hashtag and they have their account limited. So, if only your friends can see it, then only your friends who also hashtag that same hashtag can see it. It's not on a... And that may be what people want as well. But when you're talking about a program and perhaps using it as a way of other young people to see what's happening, and to get it out there for parents and everything else. How do you talk to people about hashtags?

Molly:

Of course, when I do it, I feel like I'm someone's mom at the prom. I feel like I'm just really dorky trying to explain it. But I think there's two ways that people use hashtags. The first one is in a serious way to be able to find certain content, like #4H for example, that would help you find all of the 4H related posts. I read an article this week and this sort of reiterated my thinking around this. The other way that hashtags are used are kind of like an ironic way, like a way to almost make a joke. And I read an article this week about the major faux pas that teens think that you can make on social media amongst other teens and made me like, I don't know, want to crawl in a hole, like just feel so old.

Molly:

But hashtags, they think for them, I think, that any hashtag not used in an ironic way is kind of dorky. So, I don't know if that's true. I don't know if that was that limited audience of people that they talked to. But I think if you had a group, for instance, of youth leaders or something, and you asked them to use a specific hashtag, if it had a purpose, I think that that would be okay. But hashtags probably, I mean for me, a good way to tell is if it's longer and kind of goofy, it's more likely, probably meant to be a joke, you know?

Kari:

Right. Well, and it sounds too like, as you're running a youth program, from what you're saying, if your audience for that hashtag are adults, or is that audience young people, you'll use it differently.

Molly:

Right. Well, and Kari, something popped in my head, I forgot to say it when you were talking about if you have a private account and you're using hashtags, that's another reason why I really recommend that it may be... That youth workers on something like Instagram, shouldn't use their personal accounts if they're doing something for the program.

Kari:

Sure.

Molly:

Because that allows them to keep their boundaries private, and not mix those lines of what do I want young people to be aware of in my life, or volunteers, how do I want to keep that private? And then when you're representing the program, then you can make that a public account, man, then you're not worried so much about what people are able to see and what they're not.

Kari:

And that really has been a big question of can I have two accounts? Can I have three accounts? Is that against the rules? And I've understood it as well is it's, you're not acting like you're two different people. You are acting on behalf of an organization-

Molly:

Of an organization-

Kari:

Or a program-

Molly:

That you have a program name.

Kari:

It's okay.

Molly:

Yeah. You know that I'm, when I'm have Molly Frendo, that's me. But I could have, for instance, Dakota County 4H or something, that people are following. And the nice thing about that too is, actually I'm not sure if Instagram allows you to have a... I think that more than one person could have that login, if it was a shared account. I don't think it's like Facebook where you can assign multiple administrators, but I think that if you had an institutional login and password that would be fine.

Kari:

Yep. You'd all just use the same one.

Molly:

Yeah.

Kari:

Of course, how that is right now, if somebody listens to this a year from now, they might have changed that. That's exactly what the question is, how do I stay current?

Molly:

If they listen a year from now they might be like, what's Instagram?

Kari:

Well, you have a question for me. Why don't we move on to the next.

Molly:

So, I am speaking as a youth worker here. So Kari, can you help me learn how to create a video, in articulate storyline, on serving healthy snacks at events and programs?

Kari:

Yeah. So, when I hear that question, the first thing I think about is more and more, and both of us have been working in distance learning technology in the youth development world, in both that communicating with young people, communicating with parents, adults, volunteers for a long time. And more and more I'm seeing that people want to reach all of these audiences through distance learning technologies, and a lot of that is because our mobile devices have gotten that much higher tech. There are better data plans and there are places people want to get information and it isn't always by the phone and by getting something in the mail anymore.

Kari:

So, going back to that question, can you help me learn how to create, and there was a specific tool asked in that question, and that really is common when we're wanting to do this, we get comfortable with a tool, or we have seen a product that was used by a tool, and we want to use that tool as well. And so when we have a need come up, we instantly go to that tool. So, I think that what I wanted to really reiterate today is that never start with a tool, start with the basics of your content. And so, when someone does ask me a question like that, I'll say, well let's go back to this. First of all, who is your audience, and where will they be consuming this information? How long will this content last? And what I mean by that is, is this a one time, you all need to know this for this event?

Kari:

Now in 4H, we would use an example of, you need to know this for the 2017 county fair, but it's going to change for the 2018, so it's a one time deal. Or is it information that will last three to five years? What tool depending on that, and the other thing is, that is really important to know right away is, do you need to know who's watching it, or do you just need to know how many people have watched it? Do you need an evaluation, and then why do you need an evaluation? And being intentional from the beginning of setting up those supports for an evaluation, because I think we're all guilty of evaluating things and then no one ever looks at it. And so, did we need to use this means to provide this information, to teach this information, with an evaluation, or were there other ways that we're able to assess that?

Kari:

So, those are just some examples that I think help lead us to, should we be using an articulate storyline product, which is an interactive tool that can really engage audiences, and can take some time to create, but is well worth it if it's for an audience that lots of people will be watching. It has a long standing shelf life, all of those things that I just talked through. One example that I think of when someone asks this question, I remember not that many years ago, when we began using web-based technology, webinars, as a way to teach and have meetings, but specifically of how we would teach things, how we would communicate information, and a lot of colleagues were not comfortable with that system at that time. And it was a matter of learning, then when we're at that point, hopefully to say, oh, could we use this

means to teach instead? And this means to teach instead. Well, we've come along now and, and many of our colleagues are really comfortable teaching in that web based environment.

Kari:

And now we're at a point where when content comes up, a need to share information, go to that tool we know really well now. I'm really good at giving webinars. So, then we backtrack again, instead of using that tool, maybe we want to ask the question, is this one way communication, or do you need to hear from people?

Molly:

Right, absolutely.

Kari:

Do they have to hear-

Molly:

If there's no point of interacting, right?

Kari:

Then why are you using it? Do they have to hear it at noon today, or could they listen to it anytime in the next couple of weeks? Well, if those questions are answered in a different way, then it might be better to create an asynchronous video for that. So, I think there's some, there's some real... Going back to that question again, can you help me learn, of course I will help you in any way I can. But I will say that I think before we jump to the tool, is the biggest point that I want to make in that question, is that you've asked yourself all of the questions, and we have had many conversations about all of the tools available, ranging from-

Molly:

And they're always coming out with new tool, too, and making them easier to use.

Kari:

Exactly. All right, so don't jump right to the shiny tool is our point of that one. And you know, ask yourself a lot of questions first, and make sure that you're using what you should use. All right, for our last question that we're tackling today, we're both going to give an idea for this one, and it is, how do I use technology with young people, but, the big but, I don't want them on their phones or on their devices all the time. How do I work with this? So, you tackle it first.

Molly:

And this is a complaint I think we get a lot from our volunteers, sometimes our youth workers who are working directly with youth. And so, for me, that's the way they're learning, that's their world, and so instead of trying to fight them on using those devices, my suggestion would be, figure out certain points where they're intentionally using those devices. Send them on an internet scavenger hunt as they're trying to learn something, going back to bring resources. Or if you're having them, I don't know, examine if they're learning, for instance, about plants, have them use their camera and the notes feature on their device so that they can take some notes for themselves, and when they come back together to do that. I

think if you are intentional about, here's the appropriate time, we're going to let you use those devices, so we're not going to ban them all together, then they're going to fight you less on that.

Molly:

The other thing that I've read that has worked really well, and there are some great resources out there for teachers specifically, but I have found that a lot of times when we're looking in the field of formal K-12 education, a lot of those resources we can tweak a little bit just to apply to our setting of non-formal or informal education with young people. And so one of the things that someone suggested that they use in the classroom was a stoplight, just a picture of a stoplight. And so red, they used a clothes pin on the red when it was absolutely not okay to use the device, yellow when it was okay, there are some circumstances in which you can use this, and then green as to, okay, go ahead, anytime you need to use it, feel free.

Molly:

And I was suggesting that to one of my colleagues as they were preparing for camp. You know, thinking about, how do you have the counselors, because a lot of times kids now are coming to camp with their devices. They're not about to necessarily just set those aside. So, we want them to go to bed on time. We want them to be paying attention to not have their devices in situations where they might get ruined or wet or something like that. And so, helping teach appropriate times when they should and shouldn't, and then also modeling that good behavior ourselves too. And I know we're going to talk more about that, but what about you? What about suggestions? I know you're a parent, from a parent's perspective, and a youth worker perspective, I'm sure you have a lot to say.

Kari:

Yeah. Well, the modeling is a great segue to what I was thinking about when I heard this question. Not that long ago, I was driving by a park and there was a mom with a child, and the child was on the swing, and between the mom and the child was the phone and taking pictures. It just got me thinking about, wow, I think that's what our young people are growing up with, and then we're a little critical of them when they want to have it in their hand all the time.

Kari:

So, there's that modeling piece that you ended with I think just segues right into what I was thinking about it is, is that modeling for ourselves. And so I love the red, yellow, green idea. In fact, I even love that with adults. I think in meetings that would be a fabulous, you know, during this time everything is off, and not just phones, but computers, and every kind of mobile device. And then that there are times when it's okay to check and those yellow... So, I really like that idea. When I think about then how we're using it, and in that case, going back to the park, the mom was using it to take pictures and I thought, it links exactly to what you were saying, how are we using them?

Kari:

So how do you say, well, here's the thing, you can have your phones, but I want you guys to document what we're doing all day long. And then going back to the first question that you addressed, what medium could you be putting them on to share those? So, they're still in their hand, they're still using them, but you're keeping them engaged in the content and the activity that you're wanting to accomplish.

Molly:

Right. They do a collaborative thing together, right? Where everybody's sharing their pictures and they're showing up in one spot. The other thing that I think about is that function creep, right? Like if I have my phone out and I'm just, that we as adults especially need to be careful of, I have my phone out and I'm taking a picture of my kid for instance. Well, maybe I see a notification for email or Facebook or something like that pop up, and then it's really easy to sort of get sucked in and sidetracked, and really working on being present. My mom is a retired elementary school counselor, and one of the things that really has stuck with me that she said, so many kids that she would see just said, I think my parent cares more about their phone than they do about me. And trying to see it from the perspective of the kids that we work with, or our own kids and how do they view it?

Kari:

True.

Molly:

Sometimes we expect things, we require things of the kids that we work with, but we're not modeling that good behavior ourselves. We think that because we're adults, we're not subject to those same rules.

Kari:

Or we just don't realize, we don't see ourselves, I guess. And that's, when I went by the park I was like, oh, that's me, taking pictures of my kids all the time. As we wrap up that question, how do I use technology with young people but keeping them engaged? I think we're both agreeing that it's also something that you need to model, and think about how you're using technology, and how...

Molly:

Screen time hours, boundaries, when is it okay for everybody to be on their devices at home. Or if you set the rule, no devices at meal time or whatever, just having an idea of that and everybody following it.

Kari:

And then how can we incorporate it and use it, instead of just saying, no, bad.

Molly:

Yeah.

Kari:

Rid of it. All right. Well Molly, thank you for joining me. I hope that for all of the listeners, it was helpful to listen to that little Q and A of some questions that we frequently get. Maybe we'll do this again sometime, if we come up with a few other questions.

Molly:

Hey, if people have questions they want to send us, let us know.

Kari:

Let us know, and we'll talk it out on a podcast. That will conclude this podcast, but I do hope that you will look up www.extension.umn.edu/youth, for more information on working with young people in out of school time, as well as our research training and events that we offer. And we'd also invite you to check out our Minnesota 4-H program if you aren't already in it. Keep the conversation also going by checking out our youth development insight blog and that will conclude this podcast. This is Kari Robideau with Molly Frendo, please tune in again soon.