



Guidance for Spring Aboard Campaign Measurements of Success/Analytics

Prepared for:

National Association of State Boating Law Administrators

www.springaboard.org

Table of Contents

2

- 3** - Welcome
- 4** - Measurements of Success
- 7** - Digital and Social Media Analytics
 - Press Release Distribution
 - Media Monitoring
 - Google Analytics
 - Social Media
- 10** - Recommendations for Campaign Improvements



Welcome

3

Dear Boating Safety Partner,

Join us as we encourage boaters to Spring Aboard by taking a safe boating course. Spring Aboard is a national public information and education campaign to reduce boating injuries and fatalities by encouraging the boating public to take a boating safety course. The campaign combines the efforts of boating education course providers, recreational boating safety organizations, and state and local entities involved in recreational boating regulation.

The Spring Aboard campaign is designed to serve as an umbrella message for the recreational boating safety community across the country.

At this point in the campaign development process, you've achieved the following:

1. Joined on as a Spring Aboard Partner
2. Drafted a Communications Plan unique to your own campaign efforts
3. Implemented a Social Media Campaign
4. Executed a Spring Aboard Media Marketing Plan

Now there's one final step that should be included in the Planning Process, but will be applied throughout and *after* the Spring Aboard Campaign: **Measurements of Success and Analytics.**

This document will provide you with a practical approach to evaluating your campaign's success. It will discuss how to track and interpret analytics and will introduce recommendations for improvements for future Spring Aboard outreach efforts.

Please take a moment to review the **Guidance for Spring Aboard Campaign Measurements of Success/Analytics** and the Spring Aboard website, www.springaboard.org. If you have questions or can't find what you need, contact us at 859-225-9487 or info@nasbla.org. We wish you a happy – and safe – boating season!

Regards,

John Johnson, CEO

National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)



Measure Success

In order to determine the success of your agency or organization's Spring Aboard campaign, it is important to implement Measurements of Success. This should be done in the planning process in coordination with developing the Communications and Marketing Plans. This will allow you to gather useful data and analytics throughout the campaign and be able to effectively analyze it at the completion of the campaign.

Depending on your agency or organization's level of involvement, the Measurements and Success may also offer only basic insights or more comprehensive results. We present **Suggested Measurements of Success** so you can choose which will be most beneficial for your purposes.

Number of Participating Partners

During the planning process, you have determined who you will partner with: will your agency or organization work closely with NASBLA and other national boating safety organizations? Will you embark on collaborative efforts with boating safety course providers? Will you work closely with other state, regional and local agencies? Will local partnerships with businesses, Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla and Power Squadrons and volunteers be your focus?

However you decide to coordinate your partnership efforts, keep track of the number of participating partners. This can be as simple as setting up an Excel Spreadsheet before the start of the Spring Aboard campaign identifying:

1. Name of Agency/Organization/Partner
2. Point of Contact
3. Contact Information
4. Summary of Partnership Effort

At the end of the campaign, revisit the document. Did the partner deliver on your expectations? Are there opportunities for increased partnerships moving forward for next year's Spring Aboard Campaign or other boating safety events and outreach efforts? Are there partners that may not be worth the initial time and energy you invested into cultivating that relationship? Create another column in your document to capture your thoughts and insights so you can refer back to them in the future.

Number of Students Enrolling in and Completing a Boating Safety Course

Set a Baseline: For state agencies, organizations and course providers that offer boating safety courses, this Measurement of Success is worth implementing into your Plan. To begin, look at historical data to set a baseline: how many recreational boaters enrolled in and completed a boating safety course in your targeted area in the spring in the previous year? After this year's Spring Aboard campaign, compare the same span of time to determine if there was an increase in enrollment and course completion in that same geographical location?



Update the Course Evaluation: Most course providers ask the student to fill out an evaluation on the course. If you have access to the evaluation, consider adding the following questions:

1. Have you heard of the Spring Aboard campaign encouraging boaters to take a safe boating course?
2. If you answered yes, did the Spring Aboard campaign prompt you to enroll in a safe boating course?

Conduct a Focus Group

Focus groups are used to gather qualitative data and feedback from a small, diverse group of people.

Consider the following elements when conducting a focus group session:

1. Who will be invited to participate in the focus group? Consider what characteristics are most important: age, sex, ethnicity, boater vs. non-boater.
2. Have a script planned beforehand, ensuring that there are open-ended questions included to allow for discussion amongst the focus group.
3. Hire an experienced moderator to lead the focus group.
4. Record the focus group session and have at least two people take notes during the session.

Ask yourself what Measurements and topics for discussion are most important to you and develop your focus group from there. Some examples may include:

1. Is my agency/organization's communications and messaging effective, i.e. - did the messaging elicit a change in the target audience's behavior?
2. Was the Spring Aboard campaign effective in educating the target audience about the importance of taking a safe boating course?
3. Did the Spring Aboard campaign directly influence anyone in the target audience to take a safe boating course?

Conduct an Online Survey

Just after the Spring Aboard campaign has ended, while it is still fresh in the minds of your target audience, conduct a survey to gather feedback and data.

Develop an online survey to determine the campaign's effectiveness, specifically to: (1) determine and quantify the impact of the campaign on encouraging and influencing the target audience to take a safe boating course, and (2) gain insights that might be helpful in improving the campaign in the future.

Keep in mind these Best Practices when developing an online survey:

1. Keep the survey short: determine what goal(s) you hope to achieve with your survey questions and don't ask any unnecessary questions that are unrelated to those goals



2. Ask direct, non-leading questions with “Yes” and “No” answers or develop questions using a Likert Scale: this will help keep the survey short and easy to complete. If you start adding too many open-ended questions, the respondent is more likely to abandon the survey
3. Be selective and intentional if requiring certain questions: ask yourself whether you need to require any questions. If not, then allow the respondent to skip questions.
4. Offer a “Free Response” question at the end: to reiterate, you want to keep the survey short, but some respondents do appreciate the opportunity to express their thoughts. A voluntary free response option allows those that was to expand on their thoughts to do so.
5. Offer incentives: who doesn’t like free things? Something small, like a discount on a future safe boating course or a bumper sticker from your agency or organization, are often enough incentive for someone to want to complete a survey.



Analytics

In addition to implementing Measurements of Success to determine the overall effectiveness of your Spring Aboard Campaign efforts, consider including Digital and Social Media Analytics in your planning process. While some analytics need to be set up before, many of the analytics will be automatically generated as part of your outreach efforts and will only require you to pull the data and analyze the results.

Press Release Distribution

If you're using a credible press release distribution service, analytics will be included in the cost. When choose a press release distribution service, keep in mind the following standard analytics that they should provide, including:

- Daily Read: How many people are reading your press release each day?
- Impressions: The number of times your content is displayed on a website or RSS feed.
- Click-Through: Most press releases have hyperlinks embedded into them. In the instance of Spring Aboard press releases, they'll likely have a link to the Spring Aboard website, www.springaboard.org, and the agency or organization's website. The analytics should provide the click-through rate to all links in the press release.
- Referral: How did the reader/media find your press release? Did they search a certain keyword like "boating" or phrase like "safe boating course"?

Media Monitoring

It's important to monitor and track where your press releases and other communications are being placed. A Media Monitoring service helps to do just that: not only will a media monitoring service track placement, but it will include key analytics such as impressions and reach. In addition, many media monitoring services will also provide a Press and Media list so that you can enhance and expand your future contacts.

Sometimes, basic media monitoring is included in the price of press release distribution. However, there are many paid media monitoring services that provide more comprehensive reports that are often worth the investment. In addition, most media monitoring services will include monitoring of digital, broadcast, print and social. Some services will also offer cloud-based search solutions to help you determine the best media contacts and opportunities to leverage your placement.

There are many media monitoring services available. Schedule a demo with a sales team member with a few before making a decision. You will be able to see how their



platforms work, learn about the benefits of their service and determine whether their services will work best for your agency or organization.

Google Analytics

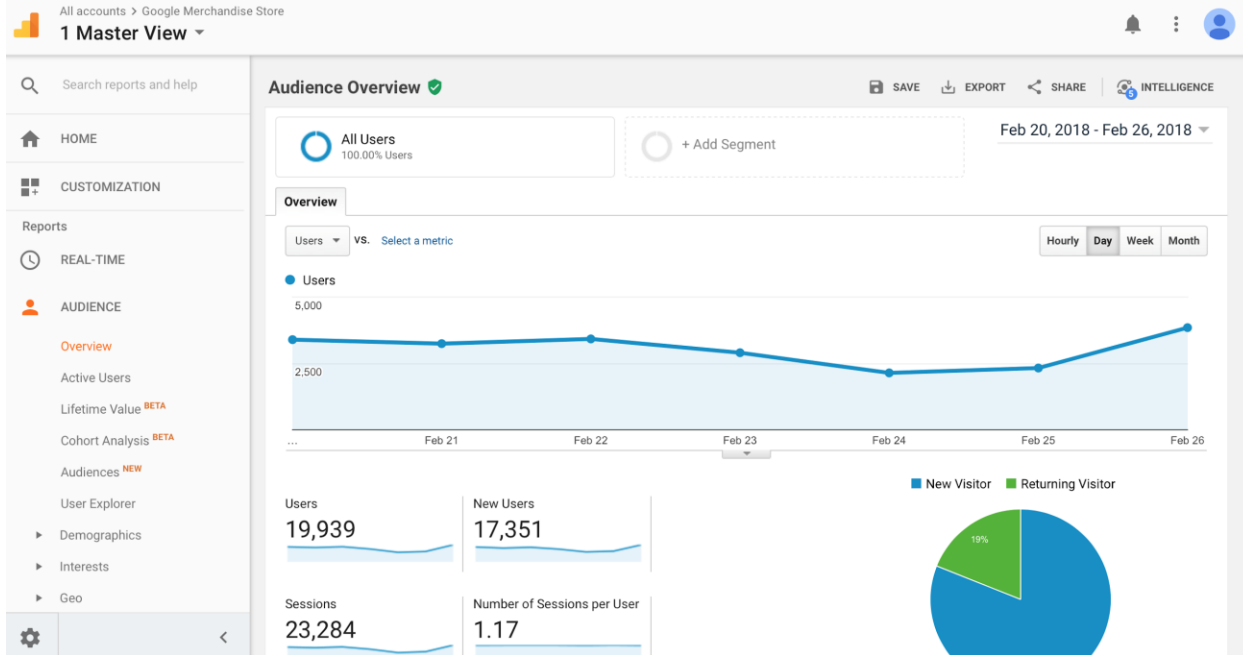
Are you planning on using your website as part of your Spring Aboard campaign? If so, then one of your first steps should be to ensure that you have a web analytics service added to the backend of your website to start tracking important data. While there are many web analytics services available, Google Analytics is one of the top tracking services available on the internet.

Why use Google Analytics?

1. It's free.
2. It's easy. Google presents an easy-to-use digital platform to manage and analyze Google Analytics. In addition, they periodically update Google Analytics to ensure that the tool is current and addresses industry standards.
3. It offers support for both the novice and the experienced user. Google offers documentation that make set-up and use of Analytics simple: just follow the steps. Google complements its documents with video tutorials.
4. It offers customizable reports based on automated data collection: after you first set up Google Analytics, there's not much maintenance and reporting can be pulled easily and quickly.

Ultimately, the data presented by Google Analytics will allow you to analyze how your marketing and outreach efforts are driving user behavior. You can learn more about your visitors: demographics, technology data and even their behavior and actions on your website. You can then make changes to your site to enhance the user experience.





Social Media Analytics

Social media analytics are important to ensure that your messaging is reaching the right audiences. It's also important to take these analytics one step further: is your messaging affecting and changing the intended behaviors you set out to achieve? Focus on the initial goal you set: getting boaters to take a safe boating course. How you compile reports and analyze the data should directly correlate to your goal and approach. Go back to that goal and compare it to your analytics. Your analytics tell a story: follow the story to determine your campaign's success. Here's how:

1. **Track Follower Growth:** During the period of the Spring Aboard campaign, did your social media accounts see an increase in new followers? Every social media platform's analytics will allow you to select specific timeframes to determine follower growth.
2. **Track the Best Times to Post:** Social media analytics will allow you to see your followers' daily activities and times of increased engagement. While there are general best practices for when to post on social media, ultimately, the analytics for your accounts should lead *your* social media plan. The metrics produced from this will allow you to improve your social media efforts moving forward.
3. **Track Engagements:** Are you seeing more likes, shares and retweets on a certain Spring Aboard post? Are you noticing that photos do better than videos on your social media accounts? When you tag a partner or other group, are you getting engagements back from that group and their followers? By tracking engagements, you'll get a better understanding of what your followers want to see on your account, allowing you to plan your messaging better in the future.



Social media is just that: **social**. Remember that posting on Facebook or sending out a tweet has more to do with the social element of engagement + information sharing, rather than a more one-sided approach of press release distribution. While impressions and click-throughs are equally important to note, pay special attention to those posts that got more responses or shares. While data and analytics should be documented, don't forget to also capture the somewhat more anecdotal data that presents itself.

Campaign Improvements

You've done it! You've successfully created and implemented a comprehensive Spring Aboard Campaign to encourage boaters to take a safe boating course. You've worked with partners and key stakeholders to reach more boaters nationwide. You've used multiple types of outreach methods, including traditional and social media. You've put key metrics and measurements of success into place and have compiled the data. Now what?

As you begin planning for next year's campaign, here are some recommendations for campaign improvements:

Don't stop the conversation: While the Spring Aboard campaign is *technically* a one-week campaign, don't stop communicating the Spring Aboard message and - more importantly - the importance of taking a safe boating course. For example, if you're planning an article or press release about boating in autumn, be sure to mention taking a safe boating course. If you post on social media frequently, i.e. - at least a few times a week, then try to have a post about taking a safe boating course at least once a week.

There's strength in numbers: Work together! Partners, volunteers, sponsors: if you want to improve your Spring Aboard campaign, don't do it alone. Determine who could possibly help enhance your campaign efforts and begin cultivating those relationships. In addition, others that have participated in the Spring Aboard campaign have also learned a lot from their own outreach efforts. You can learn a lot about what worked and what didn't work for others and you may even come up with some new ideas on how to improve your campaign in the future.

Do your research: The resources that NASBLA has provided are going to help you as you begin planning your Spring Aboard campaign efforts going forward. But that's only one resource. Conduct your own research of other agencies and organizations outside of boating safety that have a similar goal of trying to get the end-user to do a certain thing. Or, just conduct research about successful marketing and communications efforts in general.

Use the data: You've run the reports. You've compiled the data. Don't let it all be for nothing. If it seems like a daunting task, try this exercise. Pull one piece of data and create a measurable goal for next year's campaign. For example, say that you learned that your press release was picked up by only two local newspapers. For next year, set a goal that you'll reach out to those two newspapers, plus two others with your Spring Aboard press release and an offer to conduct an interview about safe boating practices and why it's important to take a safe boating course.

Invest in the Spring Aboard campaign: Budgets are often small when it comes to safe boating messaging, but if you really want to improve your Spring Aboard campaign efforts, invest in it financially. Increased advertising, offering free safe boating courses or offering incentives, boosting post on social media: all of these investments are going to bring greater attention to your campaign and, ultimately, will reach more people with the important message of taking a safe boating course



Reference in this Guidance for Spring Aboard Campaign Measurements of Success/Analytics to any specific commercial products, processes, or services, or the use of any trade, firm or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the U.S. Coast Guard.

For more information, visit www.USCGBoating.org.



Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.