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Key factors contributing to the success of Ozioma

I think there are a couple of things missing in the way we – in the process from the development of these behavioral interventions to when they actually get adopted, if they ever get adopted. I think one of the key things that's missing is what I would call demand. That there's actually some user that wants this and that it's not that you can convince them to want it, or that you can persuade them that this has value for them, they see it and they want it, and they take it. And I think one of the nice lessons about Ozioma, is that the success of Ozioma reflects that demand. There's no arm twisting, there's no trying to sell the newspapers on these Ozioma stories. The Ozioma stories are created for their community and made available. And the newspapers can take them, or not take them. They control that completely. When they take them, that is, in essence, an act reflecting demand, that they have an interest in using this. And so I think that part of what Ozioma shows is that when you create a product, an intervention, these news stories, with a particular audience in mind, a black newspaper in a certain community, that there's some demand for that, that they'll pull that and use it. And so I think that's an important lesson from Ozioma.

One of the keys to making any intervention effective is understanding the needs and the interests of the target audience. And in the case of Ozioma, that target audience has been black newspapers. And so it was very important that we understood how those organizations operated, what are their goals, who is it that they're serving, what sorts of information are they trying to present to their audiences? And so what are the demands? What are the needs of a newspaper? Well, they want to sell advertising, for one thing. To sell advertising, they need stories that readers are interested in, right? And so, we had to come up with stories that would be appealing to the readers of these papers, hence, the local relevance, hence, the race specificity of the stories. And frankly, hence the positive slant on all of these, that your community, you as a person, your family can – you can improve your health if you do these things, if you know these things. That has proven to be an important message, at least to the gatekeepers at these newspapers. So that's very important.

There's also a wealth of experience from different disciplines that generates the solution that we come to. So our team includes, not just health communication experts and health behavior experts, but also journalists who understand that industry, and also, frankly, public relations people who understand how information and ideas can be packaged for easy consumption for uptake. And so by bringing all those groups together, I think we had a better idea of the kind of solution that would meet the needs we identified for the black newspapers.

I think one of the keys to the success of Ozioma has been that we're very reliable. So one

of our stories comes out on a certain day, every other week, and it's always been like that. We don't miss weeks, we don't skip weeks. So they come to, we believe, rely on us as a source of information. And related to that is that we work really hard to assure a high level of quality of the stories. For them to keep coming back and using our stories, they have to believe, not just that it's there and it's available, but that it has some value, it's quality work. And so controlling those, sort of the regularity of our service and the quality of the product, has been really important.

Throughout the Ozioma project, there was a lot of real time monitoring of how the newspapers were responding to the stories that we sent them. So we see every week how many newspapers adopted a particular story, and that can tell us several things. It can tell us what topics are they interested in, it can tell us – we can look at the characteristics of that story and say, well hmm, what did this story do differently than another story that wasn't picked up nearly as much? So I think our approach to constructing these stories was and is constantly improving and evolving. And that's important, obviously, to have a kind of a dynamic and adaptive approach to change it.

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