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Creating a Successful College Blood Drive Plan: Lessons from the Trenches

Original Session at ADRP Annual Conference 2023

Original Speakers: Ellen Kirtner and Allie Van Dyke, The Blood Connection

Summary

In the high-stakes world of blood donation marketing, success isn't just measured in pints—it's measured in lives saved. As we dive into the intricacies of organizing blood drives on college campuses, let's explore the strategies that can turn a good intention into a life-saving success story.

The Evolution of Campus Blood Drives

The landscape of college blood drives has undergone a significant transformation. Gone are the days of simply setting up a table in the student union and hoping for the best. Today's successful drives are the result of meticulous planning, strategic marketing, and leveraging the unique culture of each campus.



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Take, for example, the "Blood Bowl" initiative. This clever play on words not only captures the competitive spirit of college sports but also taps into the rivalry between institutions. By pitting Clemson against the University of South Carolina in a battle for blood donations, organizers transformed a routine health initiative into a thrilling contest, dramatically boosting participation rates.

The Power of Digital Engagement

One of the most striking innovations in recent years has

been the integration of digital technology into blood drive promotion. The use of QR codes, as highlighted in our source material, has been a game-changer. By encouraging students to "Take out your phone and scan the QR code to start the game," organizers have found a way to make the first step of engagement as simple and appealing as possible.

The Importance of Timing and Growth

Our data shows a clear pattern of growth from 2021 to 2023. This upward trajectory isn't accidental—it's the result of careful timing and persistent effort. The key months for blood drives appear to be August and September, coinciding with the start of the academic year when student enthusiasm and campus activity are at their peak.



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But success isn't just about choosing the right months. It's about building momentum throughout the year. The "Starting a New Year" initiative in January 2023 demonstrates how organizers are thinking beyond single events to create a culture of regular donation on campus.

On-Site Recruitment: The Human Touch in a Digital Age

Despite the effectiveness of digital tools, our findings emphatically state that "On Site Recruitment Works." This underscores a crucial point: while technology can open doors, it's face-to-face interactions, the personal stories, and the tangible presence of donation centers on campus that ultimately convince students to roll up their sleeves and donate.

Conclusion: A Holistic Approach to Blood Drive Success

Creating a successful college blood drive plan isn't about finding a single silver bullet, it's about orchestrating a symphony of strategies. From leveraging digital engagement and campus rivalries to timing drives strategically and maintaining a strong on-site presence, each element plays a crucial role.

As we look to the future, the key takeaway is clear: adaptability and innovation, grounded in a deep understanding of campus culture, are the cornerstones of success. By continually refining our approaches and staying attuned to the evolving needs and preferences of college students, we can ensure that campus blood drives remain a vital source of life-saving donations for years to come.



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