

Using Social Media to Encourage SunWise Behaviors

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Social Media is a Game-Changer

- Social media provides a tremendous opportunity for EPA to share environmental information with the public.
- The environmental information we share most widely is our UV Index.

The UV Index and SunWise Behaviors

- The UV Index is a numeric next day forecast of the strength of the sun's UV rays. The higher the Index, the more important it is to be sun-safe.
- The SunWise program educates the public about sun safety. SunWise is a key component of EPA's stratospheric ozone protection program.
- As EPA works to heal the ozone layer, which protects us from harmful UV radiation, we want to prevent skin cancer by changing sun protection practices.
- Our goal is to get people to check the UV Index when they check the day's weather forecast and to practice sun safe behaviors.
- The UV Index app is important because it combines environmental information with public health messages.

UV Index Market Reach

- In 2009, we developed a UV Index widget and put the UV Index on Facebook.
- The UV Index is among the most-often accessed resources on EPA's Web site, nearing 1,000,000 requests per month.
- We released the UV Index as the first Agency smartphone app for Blackberry and Android phones.
- We hope to soon be the Agency's first iPhone app.
- We are developing an expanded version of the UV Index app for the iPad.
- We are developing an iGoogle gadget and a gadget for the Windows sidebar which would let anyone with Windows Vista version 7 drop it right onto their desktop.

Issues

- Consideration should be given to the type of information that is appropriate for social media. Not everything should be on or accessible from a mobile device. There will be a gov't app that has a Body Mass Index calculator, which probably doesn't need to be mobile.
- The UV Index app:
 - 1) location is integral to its usefulness
 - 2) UV information changes so daily updates are important
 - 3) the information is somewhat urgent because sunburns hurt
- BMI app
 - 1) location is unimportant
 - 2) the information is slowly changing if at all
 - 3) the information is not urgent
- It would be nice to get user feedback. What do "real" people think of the UV Index, and how do they use it?

Issues, cont'd

- Small headaches during development:
 - working with constraints of a small screen
 - questions of deployment (e.g., iPhone vs. Blackberry vs. Android)
 - outreach with our widgets - convincing 3rd parties to host links to the UV Index
 - time it has taken to get our iPhone app finalized

- For the mobile apps (BB, Android, and mobile web), from your mobile device go to: <http://www.epa.gov/enviro/mobile>