

BEST PRACTICES

**Mindful Mondays:
Utilizing Social
Media as an
Educational Outlet**

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Abstract

Social media is a powerful tool that can reach large audiences in real-time and collects insightful user data to customize programming. Social media as an educational outlet allows for a wide reach and easily collects consumer data. Making the most of social media data provides a research-based approach to data-driven program planning. Mindful Mondays is a social media education program structured to provide financial education while collecting data that is analyzed to determine future content. A year of weekly posts (48) accumulated a total post reach of 93,920 with an average post reach of 1,957 per week.

Mindful Mondays: Utilizing Social Media as an Educational Outlet

Mindful Mondays is a social media education program structured to provide financial education while collecting data that is analyzed to customize future content. Social media as an educational outlet allows for a wide reach and easily collects user data including views, clicks, and geographic reach. Making the most of social media data provides a research-based approach to data-driven program planning. Mindful Mondays are weekly social media posts dedicated to personal finance education written by the local University Extension Educator. Reviewing a year of weekly social media education resulted in 48 posts for the year and achieving a total post reach of 93,920 with an average reach per post of 1,957 people each week.

Literature Review

Educational Methods

Mindful Mondays is a social media-based educational program that provides concise up-to-date personal finance information. Current information is provided in the form of a weekly post on Facebook titled Mindful Mondays. According to Greenhow and Galvin (2020), social media can complement and enhance traditional educational approaches, and students benefit from frequent, varied interaction through this informal learning environment. Mobile-based microlearning allows for innovative just-in-time resources to be provided to learners in creative ways and research shows a positive gain in learner outcomes (Moore et al., 2024). Weekly social media posts can provide the most current information to the community and attract a large audience in real-time. The ability to provide current information, specifically in the content area of financial education, provides a way to make an immediate impact. With the recent pandemic, society has been forced to be flexible and adjust with little notice. Digitization trends in education are changing the expectations of learning and educational institutions may need to adapt to these changes to stay competitive (Mohamed Hashim et al., 2022).

Social Media Effectiveness

Mainstream academics see social media as effective in transforming toward a learner-centered approach in a new age of education (Barge & Parkhi, 2022). Muller and Mildenerger (2021) found equivalent learning outcomes with blended online learning environments that provided more flexibility to learners. In addition, some educational opportunities are best received in small doses. When it comes to a topic that may seem overwhelming like many personal finance topics, small amounts of

information at a time may be more palatable and effective in supporting a call to action. Conde-Caballero et al. (2024) found a positive application of social media as a high-quality microlearning complementary tool for university students. Social media can be a means for sharing small amounts of information to help people learn or reinforce their knowledge in a user-friendly way. Providing tools to support behavioral changes in community members is a monumental task that may benefit from a baby-step approach, as small changes may add up to a significant outcome.

Social Media Data Collection

Mindful Mondays is designed to deliver educational content while collecting meaningful data to support and customize future programming efforts. Social media can be utilized as an informal ongoing needs assessment. Extension is challenged to meet the changing needs of the community and this includes regular needs assessments. (Jewkes et al., 2021; Sneed et al., 2022). The Mindful Mondays educational program was established with an organized method for assessing the personal finance topics that interest the community. Collecting data online is valuable for customizing educational offerings. Chala et al. (2022) discuss the efficiency of utilizing data collected through social media. Stakeholders may use this data to develop educational programs, courses, and training.

The challenges addressed with Mindful Mondays include providing educational resources to rural communities with limited staff and continually assessing the changing educational needs and interests of the communities. With limited staff resources, there is only so much availability to travel throughout the regions to provide in-person education. Additionally, the logistics of finding available space for presentations can be a challenge in some areas. Community members also have busy schedules with limited in-person availability and some programs are seeing lower attendance rates than

in the past. When conducting regular needs assessments, typical methods of surveys and evaluations may pose a challenge of low response rates and the time-consuming nature of data collection.

Purpose & Objectives

Social media is a powerful tool that can be utilized in education. Facebook is an avenue for distributing time-sensitive educational information to make an immediate impact while collecting data that provides valuable insights. Some examples of time-sensitive community information may be the current student debt relief applications, deadlines for property tax submissions, and timely tax tips that may impact the community members. Some dates, deadlines, and information are most useful if provided timely and social media is an avenue to distribute this type of educational information quickly. In addition, social media is an option that allows community members to have self-directed learning with educational material that may be sensitive such as personal finance. The objectives of this new programming effort are to reach a large audience quickly and assess the topic areas that draw the most interest based on the collected user metrics.

Method

Mindful Mondays uses Facebook as the main platform, which collects insights regarding post reach, post clicks, and engagement. The target audience is the general community. This program launched on the first Monday in October 2022 and continues weekly. The posts typically include relevant links to partners, collaborators, and government agencies. The program area addressed is personal finance education focusing on five money principles identified by the Financial Literacy Education Commission (FLEC).

Post Content

Posts include current financial information and

links to additional educational resources such as another website, a video, a webinar, or a downloadable file. Facebook gathers data representing the local population and is valuable when determining future educational content in the online community. Classifying posts aids in determining which content area sparks the most interest from local users. This information allows for the customization of programming toward local needs. When a topic elicits a significant amount of engagement, it may be valuable to expand upon the subject in other forms of programming. A social media program must be organized with outcomes in mind to capitalize on this wealth of information. Structuring a weekly post by category, then collecting and analyzing this data provides valuable insights for data-driven programming.

Categorizing Data

Mindful Mondays posts are internally classified by the five principles of money: Earn/Awareness, Save and Invest, Protect, Spend, and Borrow (My Money Five). By creating a classification system, the data can assist in directing future educational program offerings. The five broad content areas are used as a guide, and then the specific topic is also recorded to see which topics draw considerable interest within the categories. This informal needs assessment provides data to support the areas of need and interest for the local community that is the target audience for programming.

Results

The results of this research provided indicators of local interest and educational needs of the local community without collecting surveys or evaluations. The data collected by Facebook for the Mindful Monday posts includes the people reached, post clicks, and engagement. The post reach metric shows how many people saw the post. The post clicks metric shows genuine user interest as users who click on the post links are likely to be

more engaged in the educational programming. Engagement metrics include the post clicks, likes, and shares of the post.

Post Content

The Educator selects the post content to meet the current educational needs of the community by providing relevant content on personal finance topics. This program is marketed with a customized graphic, as shown in Appendix Image D, for the weekly posts that occur every non-holiday Monday. The post content is tracked with the date, topic, content area, people reached, post clicks, and engagement metrics. The classification by content area for each week with corresponding metrics is shown in Appendix Table A: Insights Data with Content Classification.

Post Reach Metrics

The number of users reached by the educational posts varies weekly. Appendix Table C1: Post Reach by Month and Figure C2: Post Reach by Week shows the impact results of the post reach. A single staff member, the Financial Educator, can provide educational information to a very large audience every week by dedicating time and effort to weekly content creation. The total post reach over the twelve-month period resulted in a total post reach of 93,920. During the year, the posts averaged 1,957 people reached per post with a range from 601-3402 people reached each week.

Post Click and Engagement Metrics

Appendix Figure C3 and Figure C4 depict the clicks and engagement per post. The post on January 23 received the most post clicks with 88 clicks and the most engagement with 110. During 2023, the average number of clicks per post is 24, which indicates the content is actively engaging at least 24 partici-

pants a week on average. The engagement metric, which also includes likes and shares, averaged 44 per post over the year. The impact is noticeable based on the collected metrics that the financial education information is reaching a large audience and engaging them to continue learning by the post-click and engagement metrics.

Post Classification

The classification structure is important for customizing future content. Appendix Table B: Average by Content Area shows the average number of post reach, clicks, and engagement as classified by the five principles of money: Earn, Save & Invest, Protect, Spend, and Borrow. The Protect content area received the highest average clicks per post of 30 and highest engagement of 50. The data supports a need/interest in the Protect content area. Although the Spend content area showed the highest average reach per post of 2,332, the click and engagement metrics were lower as a percentage of the reach than for the categories of Earn/Aware, Protect, and Spend. For 2023, the Save & Invest category received the lowest average reach, clicks, and engagement for the year relative to the other content areas. The more data collected, the more the Financial Educator can learn about their audience. Adjustments can be made to customize the content, although at this stage the data will not be used to rule out any educational content. The data is used to guide the educator as to what seems to be resonating with the local audience to expand on what appears to be the most useful/relevant content. Trends may change over time and this tracking is just a general indicator of the pulse of the audience that may be valuable when making decisions on what content to provide.

es a large audience in real-time, exceeding the limited capacity of other educational programming outlets. Providing educational information in small amounts coincides with the need for flexibility and a more learner-centered approach. In addition to being a useful medium for educational delivery, Extension staff may benefit from the user information gained from social media programming. Sharing the method to Mindful Mondays can inspire others to create organized social media programming and utilize the data when making future programming decisions. As this example covers personal finance education, the method of using social media for educational and needs assessment purposes may be extended to other program areas within extension as well. Providing research-based information to the local community in a timely fashion is achievable through social media educational programs like Mindful Mondays.

Summary

Social media educational programming has great potential within Extension as a platform that reach-

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I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Appendix A

Table A: Insights Data with Content Classifications

Date	Content Area	Reach	Clicks	Engagements
9-Jan	Spend	2118	32	49
23-Jan	Protect	2980	88	110
30-Jan	Spend	601	50	62
6-Feb	Spend	2231	41	66
13-Feb	Spend	1655	51	72
20-Feb	Spend	1388	48	62
27-Feb	Save & Invest	2545	14	40
6-Mar	Protect	1948	41	61
13-Mar	Borrow	1659	41	59
20-Mar	Save & Invest	1046	30	40
27-Mar	Earn/Aware	2167	33	54
3-Apr	Earn/Aware	1169	57	70
10-Apr	Earn/Aware	1541	4	17
17-Apr	Protect	1946	34	51
24-Apr	Earn/Aware	1528	43	59
1-May	Save & Invest	1998	13	28
8-May	Spend	892	55	67
15-May	Spend	1249	37	51
22-May	Earn/Aware	1243	49	68
29-May	Borrow	3391	32	69
5-Jun	Earn/Aware	3014	14	38
12-Jun	Borrow	3402	18	49
19-Jun	Protect	1679	4	22
26-Jun	Borrow	2880	22	42
3-Jul	Save & Invest	2749	25	46
10-Jul	Borrow	2917	10	34
17-Jul	Spend	2757	9	33
24-Jul	Save & Invest	1432	4	22
31-Jul	Spend	3045	11	32
7-Aug	Borrow	1218	18	37
14-Aug	Spend	1933	9	39
21-Aug	Earn/Aware	2693	9	31
28-Aug	Protect	1054	4	20

Table A: Insights Data with Content Classifications

11-Sep	Borrow	1303	15	32
18-Sep	Save & Invest	2055	13	39
25-Sep	Borrow	1571	9	32
2-Oct	spend	2659	16	42
9-Oct	Save & Invest	1189	6	28
16-Oct	Spend	2199	17	38
23-Oct	Save & Invest	1214	5	20
30-Oct	Earn/Aware	1314	28	52
6-Nov	Earn/Aware	2645	13	36
13-Nov	Save & Invest	1959	18	38
20-Nov	Spend	2270	4	20
27-Nov	Earn/Aware	1273	13	34
4-Dec	protect	1714	9	33
11-Dec	Save & Invest	1842	4	24
18-Dec	Borrow	2645	10	32
48		93920	1130	2100

Average Reach per post 1957

Appendix B

Table B: Averages by Content Area

Posts	Content Area	Average Reach	Average Clicks	%	Average Engagement	
10	Earn/Aware	1859	26	1.4%	46	2.5%
10	Save & Invest	1803	13	0.7%	33	1.8%
6	Protect	1887	30	1.6%	50	2.6%
13	Spend	1923	29	1.5%	49	2.5%
9	Borrow	2332	19	0.8%	44	1.9%
48						

Appendix C

Table C: Post Metrics by Month

Month	Reach	Clicks	Engagements
January	5,699	170	221
February	7,819	154	240
March	6,820	145	214
April	6,184	138	197
May	8,773	186	283
June	10,975	58	151
July	12,900	59	167
August	6,898	40	127
September	4,929	37	103
October	8,575	72	180
November	8,147	48	128
December	6,201	23	89
	93,920	1,130	2,100

Figure C!: Post Reach by Month

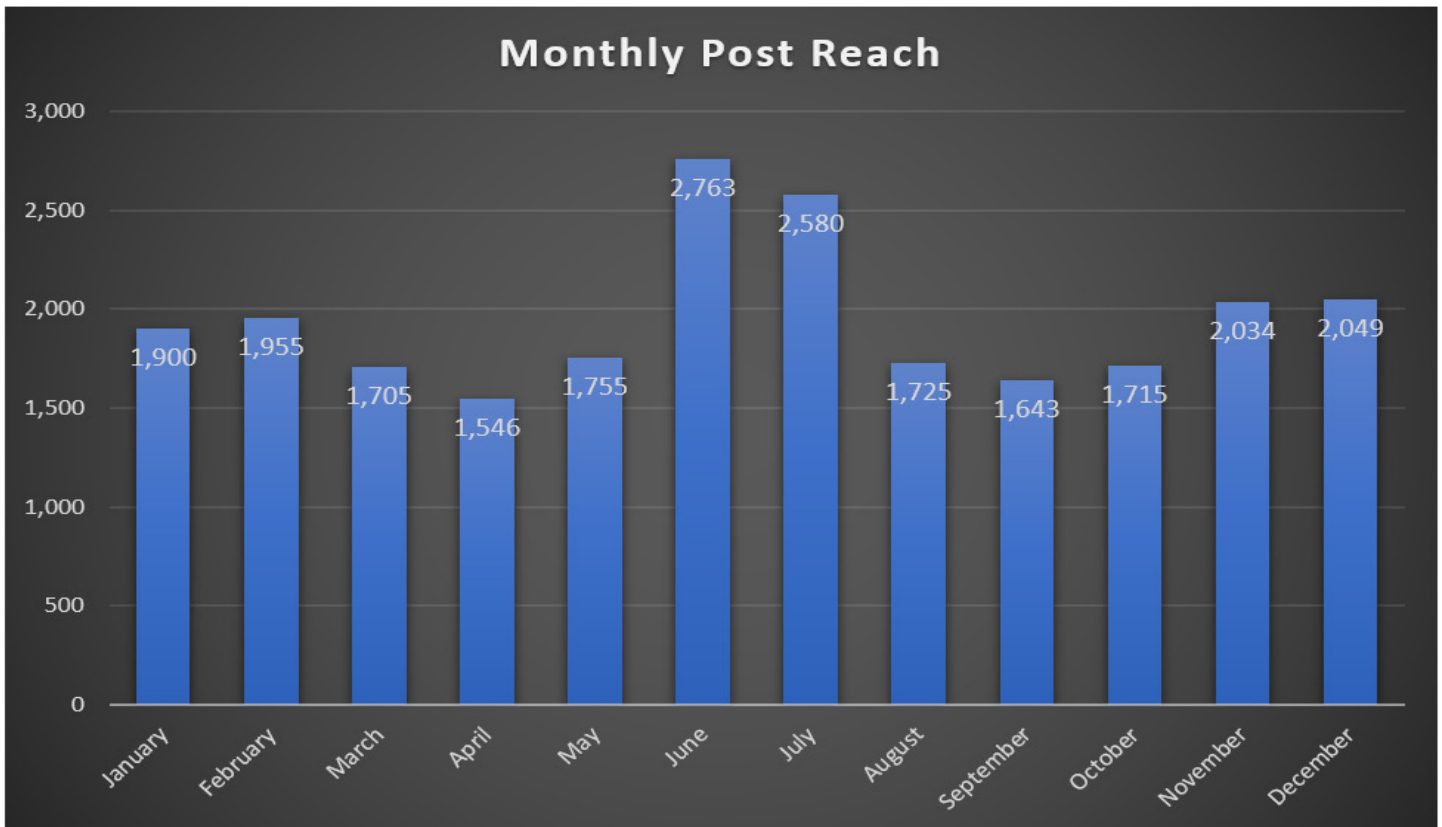


Figure C2: Post Reach by Week

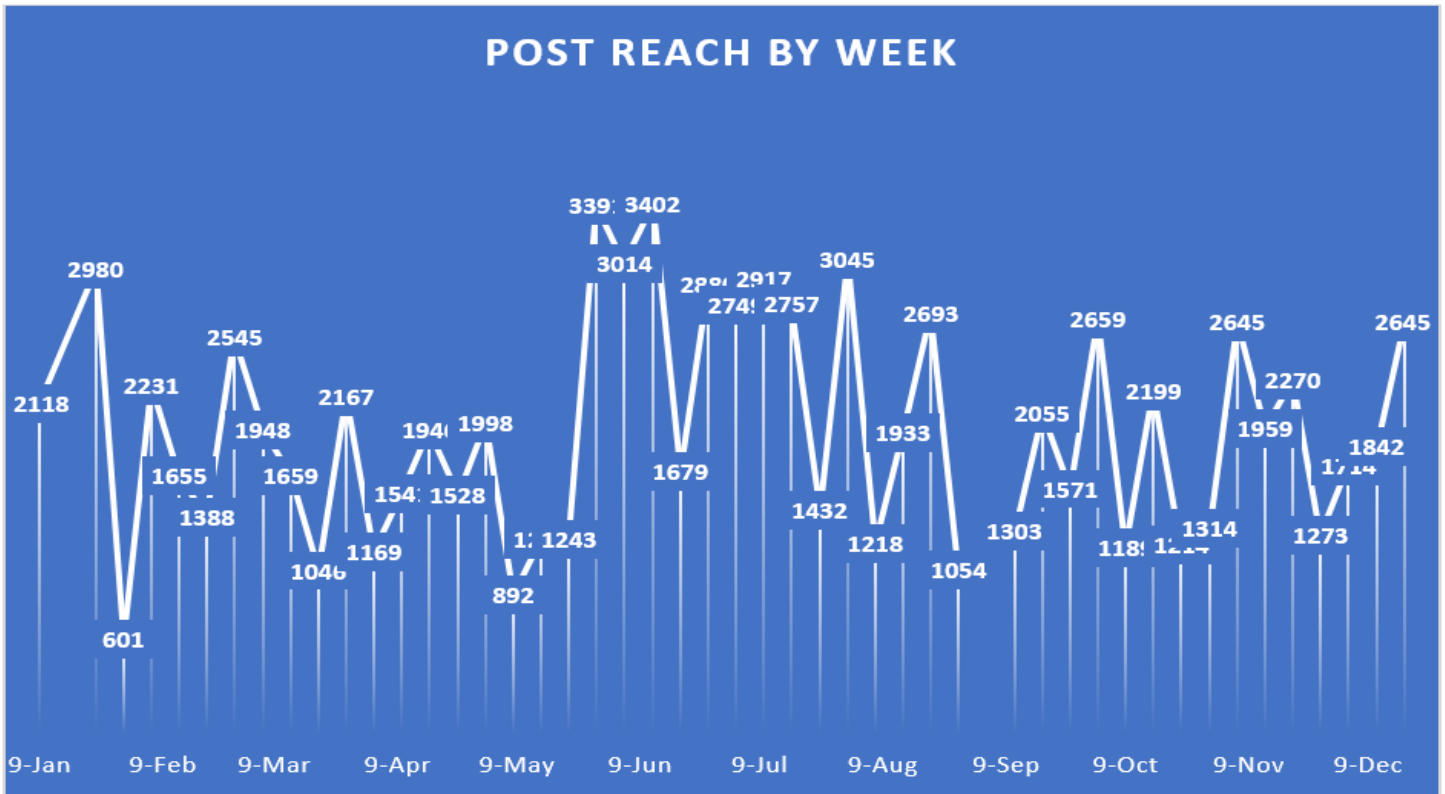


Figure C3: Monthly Post Clicks and Engagement

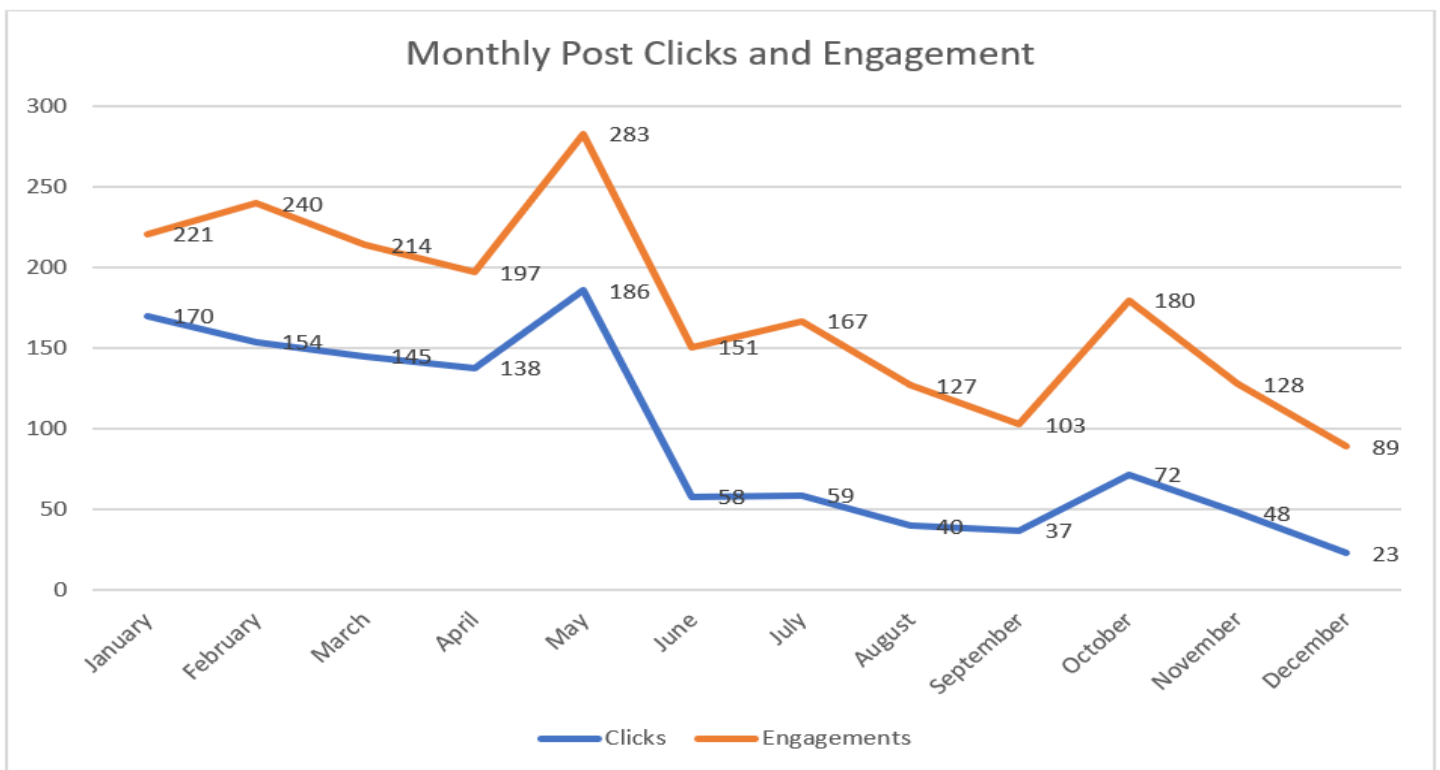
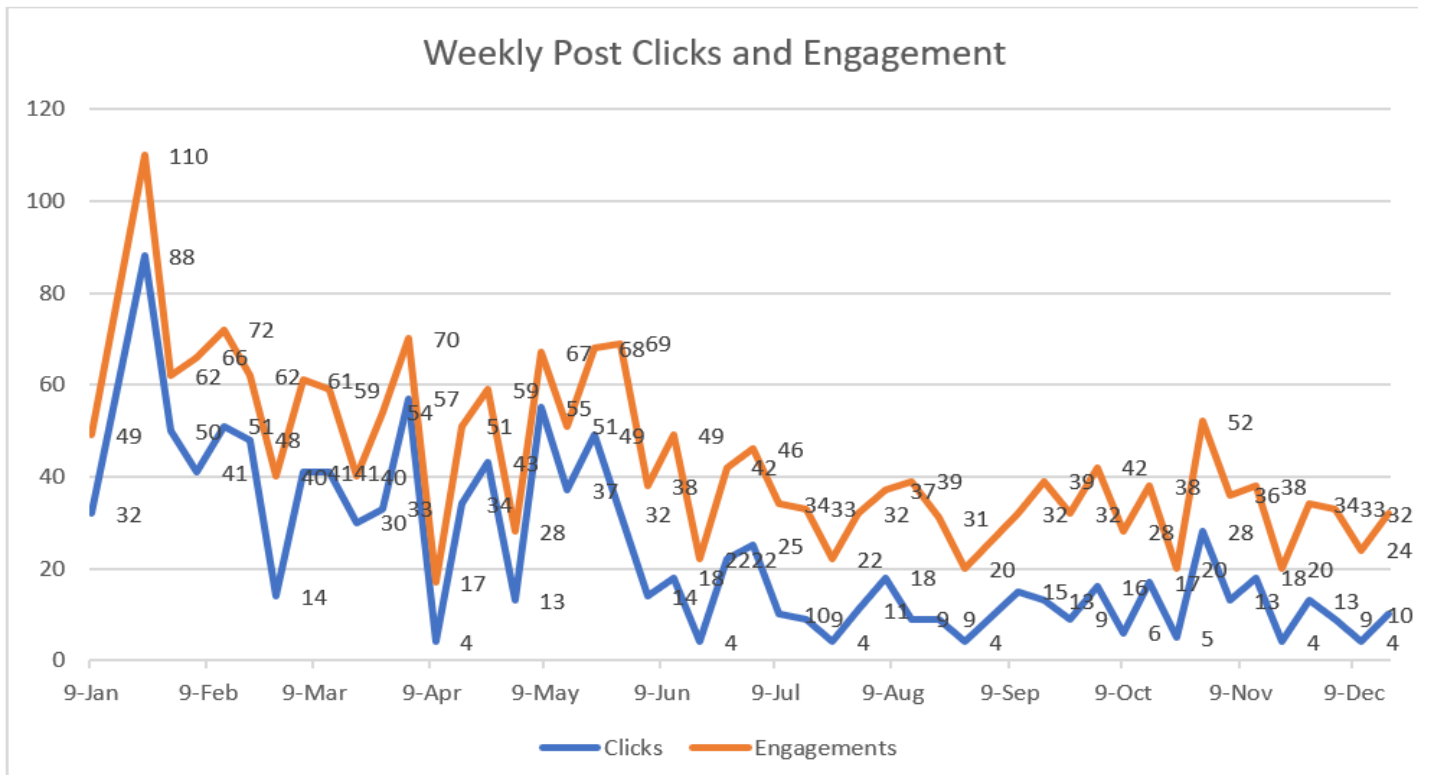


Figure C4: Weekly Post Clicks and Engagement



Appendix D

Image D: Mindful Mondays Program Graphic

