



Lerner Center for
Public Health Promotion



Maxwell X Lab

Project Summary

The Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion and Population Health at Syracuse University hosted a virtual program called the Healthy Monday Race Across the U.S. Participants in the race tracked a variety of their healthy activities (e.g., steps walked, physical exercises, cooking a vegetarian meal, meditating, and more). Each activity was converted to virtual miles that moved the participant across a computer-simulated map of the U.S. throughout the six-week challenge. The program was designed to help individuals create and continue healthy habits by using gamification. The Healthy Monday Race Across the U.S. took place from September 12th to October 21st, 2022.

Project Origin

A signature program of the Syracuse University Lerner Center is Healthy Monday, a national initiative. The initiative aims to stop the spread of chronic, preventable diseases by offering weekly tips to help people start and sustain healthy behaviors. Under the Healthy Monday portfolio, there are programs centered on physical activity (Move It Monday/Monday Mile), mental health (DeStress Monday), and diet/nutrition (Meatless Monday). The Lerner Center partnered with DIEMlife to expand the reach of Healthy Monday on a national scale.

DIEMlife provides tech that solves the challenge of change for anyone and everyone. It is designed to be a holistic hub where anyone, from organizations to individuals, from corporations to communities, can curate and customize virtually any initiative imaginable. It aims to help members thrive through challenges called Quests[®] on a platform that delivers all the resources needed to manage initiatives, fundraise, launch events, and mobilize people.

The Lerner Center and DIEMlife created the Healthy Monday Race Quest to encourage a sustainable approach to a healthy lifestyle. This Quest combines Move it Monday, Meatless Monday, and DeStress Monday programming in a virtual race across the United States. Participants log their healthy behaviors into translatable miles on a virtual map. The more activities people log, the faster their team will move across the U.S. The goal was to get your team to the Golden Gate Bridge as quickly as possible. The Quest features Healthy Monday tips that inspire participants each week, along with a gallery and newsfeed for participants to celebrate progress, share wins, and connect. The race included a leaderboard to spark friendly competition among teams.

The Quest aimed to turn Healthy Monday programs into an accessible and inclusive format through a gamified experience.

Project Activities

Engagement/Weekly Themes

The Lerner Center developed weekly themes related to health behaviors to bolster engagement. Each week participants were “challenged” to try a new health behavior within the Healthy portfolio. Members of the race were encouraged to post images of themselves completing the challenge to the news feed. This provoked conversation amongst other race members and encouraged other members to participate in the challenge while improving camaraderie and retention within the race.

Marketing

The Lerner Center developed a strategic marketing plan to maximize our efforts in recruiting individuals for the race. Below is a list of promotional activities used for the Quest.

Activity	Timing
Update Lerner Center website	1 month prior to event
Email past participants	Week of 8/28
Update DIEMLIFE website	ASAP
Quest Participant Toolkit	Delivered 9/12 to participants
Social media ads (Lerner Center and Healthy Monday)	From 8/28-9/15; 1 ad per platform
Social media posting (Lerner Center and Healthy Monday)	From 8/28-9/15; 3x per week
Lerner Center newsletter promotion	August newsletter; special announcement newsletter
Healthy Monday newsletter promotion	8/28, 9/5, 9/12
Promotional announcement via Lerner Center listserv	9/8
SU News and calendar articles	8/27
Partner outreach for cross promotion	Week of 8/28
Post on DIEMLIFE newsfeed	Began on 9/12

Quest Participant Toolkit

The Lerner Center developed a *Start Here* toolkit to help navigate the Quest. Toolkit components included a program schedule, program contact information, DIEMlife website “How-to Guide”, Quest

tools and resources, promotional social media posts, and images for participants to use. This toolkit was delivered to participants via email on September 12, 2022.

Email Nudge Evaluation

For this research project, the Lerner Center partnered with the Maxwell X Lab (MXL) and DIEMlife to create email messages to encourage engagement in weekly activities and challenge. Specifically, the project aimed to determine whether receiving an email nudge increased the frequency and duration a participant logged activities on DIEMlife's web-based application.

Methods

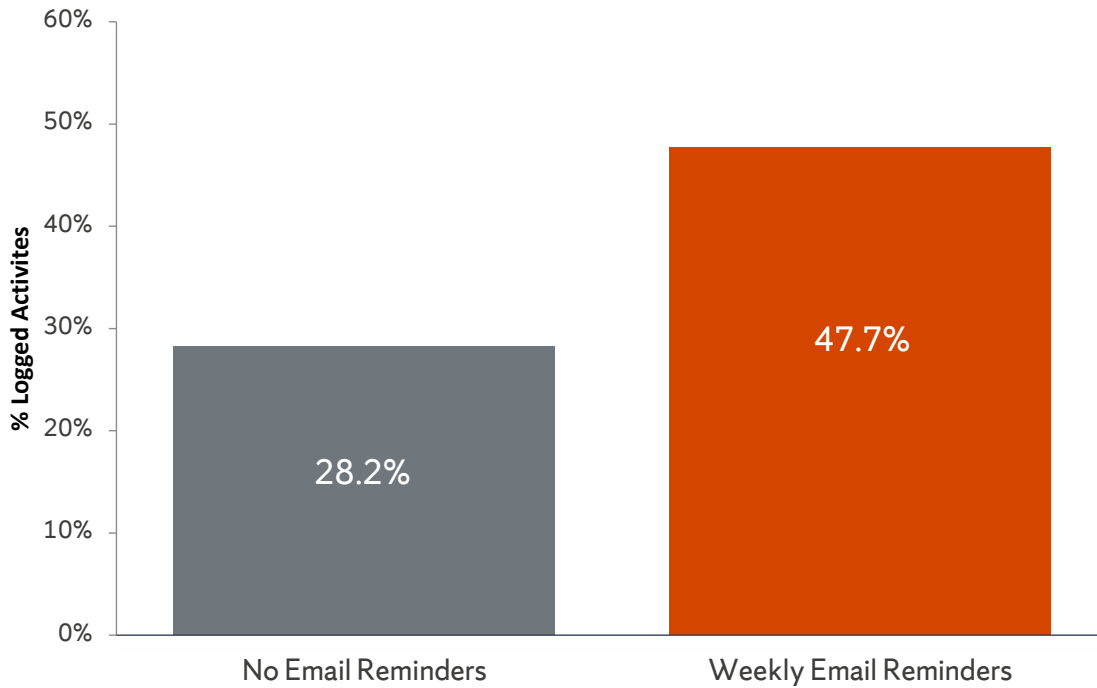
To address these research objectives, participants were randomized to either receive a set of reminder emails every Monday through the course of the race (the "treatment group"; n=25) or not (the "control group"; n=29), and then tracked the participants' engagement with the race. Given the small sample size of race participants, we did not expect to observe "statistically significant" effect sizes. Rather, this pilot was designed to provide suggestive evidence of race elements that might improve program participation in the future. The outcome of interest is whether a participant logged activities during the race.

The MXL worked closely with the Lerner Center to design the weekly emails for the treatment group. The study team created short messages that encouraged participants to engage in a healthy activity, varying the message each week to avoid email fatigue. See Appendix A for the weekly messages. The participants were randomly assigned to either a treatment or control group by DIEMlife using a randomizer formula provided by MXL. Every Monday at 9:30am, the MXL used DIEMlife's platform to send the weekly email to the treatment group. The nudges were sent every Monday to encourage the fresh start effect, where participants may view the beginning of each week as a fresh new start to achieve their health goals. At the end of every week, DIEMlife provided email data, including whether the email was successfully delivered, opened, and if the participant unsubscribed from the platform. At the end of the race, DIEMlife provided activity data allowing MXL to track participant engagement with the race.

Results

While this pilot was small, it appears to have been very successful. The results indicate that participants who received weekly email reminders were 69 percent more likely to log activities during the race (19.5 percentage points) than those who did not (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Reported Activities Logged by Email Reminders



The results in Figure 1 demonstrate the impact of receiving a reminder email for the Healthy Monday Race Across the U.S. However, of those who received emails, only 25.4 percent opened them. When comparing the group who opened the email to those who did not receive the email, we see a greater likelihood of logging activity.

Take Aways

Email reminders sent to participants of the Healthy Monday Race Across the U.S. led to a large increase (69 percent) in the likelihood of participants logging activities. While this pilot does not have a sufficiently large sample size to state the impact with statistical confidence, it does suggest that email nudges may have large and important impacts on participation in health activities. The evidence suggests that the Lerner Center may want to use this form of light-touch nudge in future health virtual activities.

Appendix A: Weekly Emails

Week: 1

Theme: Commitment

Subject: Healthy Monday Race Across the US: Congrats on committing to complete the race!

Message:

Hello Race Participant!

Welcome to the race! When will you do your first activity? An easy way to get started is taking a short walk during your lunch break. It's a great way to recharge. Will you give it a try this week? Mark a few days on your calendar so you don't forget!

Best,

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Week: 2

Theme: General Reminder

Subject: Healthy Monday Race Across the US: Welcome to week 2!

Message:

Hello Race Participant!

Just a friendly reminder that you can participate in the race by logging a variety of activities - from reading to running. Be sure to check out all the options and don't forget to log an activity once completed!

Best,

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Week: 3

Theme: Monday effect/Fresh start

Subject: Healthy Monday Race Across the US: It's a brand-new week!

Message:

Hello Race Participant!

It's the start of a new week! No matter how last week went, take this fresh start and consider what you will do for the race in the next few days. You can do it!

Best,

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Week: 4

Theme: Monday Tips

Subject: Healthy Monday Race Across the US: Switch up your Monday with our Healthy Monday Tip

Message:

Hello Race Participant!

You made it to week four! Today is a great day to turn your Meatless Monday meals into plant-based masterpieces. Click the link for some cooking hacks. [Meatless Monday Cooking Tip Collection - Meatless Monday \(mondaycampaigns.org\)](#)

Best,

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Week: 5

Theme: Benefits

Subject: Healthy Monday Race Across the US: Can you believe you've made it this far?

Message:

Hello Race Participant!

Congrats on making it to the fifth week of the race. Now is a great time to reflect on how far you've come and all the healthy habits you've formed. Keep up the great work!

Best,

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Week: 6

Theme: Competition

Subject: Healthy Monday Race Across the US: Log your activities before the race ends this week!

Message:

Hello Race Participant!

The end is in sight! You started off strong - time to finish stronger. Keep logging your activities this week so YOU can be the one to bring your team over the finish line!

Best,

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