Re: question about belarus

[redacted]@usaid.gov Joshua Machleder Monday, June 21, 2021 at 2:37:04 PM Eastern Daylight Time
To: [redacted]@fb.com Mike Bradow

Thanks much!!!

On Mon, Jun 21, 2021 at 2:32 PM Mike Bradow <[redacted]@fb.com> wrote:

> Thanks, Josh - I'll let you know once I hear something back on this.
>
> **From:** Joshua Machleder <jmachleder@usaid.gov>
> **Sent:** Monday, June 21, 2021 12:27 PM
> **To:** Mike Bradow <[redacted]@fb.com>
> **Subject:** Re: question about belarus
>
> **Hi Mike,**
>
> **Thanks so much for your response. And I hope you had some quality time off!**
> **Below is the summary they sent us. The link to the ePramova FB page is:** https://www.facebook.com/login/?next=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fepramovaorg%2F
>
> **Summary**:
> ePramova uses its Facebook page as a main tool for outreach, to promote its original and partner content. Our ability to reach the audiences declined dramatically after we received a notification from Facebook that our page is at risk of being unpublished (associated with a post we made). Conversations with Facebook support did not yield any productive results and did not introduce any clarity.
>
> **Detailed description of the situation:**
> Our typical monthly reach was around 2.5 million users (over the period since the beginning of this year).In the beginning of May, our coverage was approximately 70k users per day, during May 7-12 we peaked at 524k organic outreach (through advertising - 11,428). The successful outreach during this period is associated with the 9th of May "Victory day" celebrations and holidays in Belarus and the intense news cycle during the period. Also, one of the videos posted on 7th of May went viral, contributing to the overall outreach during the period.
>
> On May 14, we received a notification from Facebook that 1 (one) of the posts does not adhere to the community standards. The post in question included a video of a Belarusian teacher shouting at a student while trying to confiscate his phone. Link - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHP3oqUfRgk Needless to say, the purpose of the post was not to promote violence, but to expose the problems in the Belarusian school system.
>
> Also, on the same day we received a notification that "Page is at risk of being unpublished ". We filed an appeal which was not approved (May 24). Previously, on May 7th we received a warning related to Facebook Business Account (advertising account) about imposed restrictions. It is indicated that it is based on a number of violations, however, the exact violations are not specified. This account has not been used for a long time, since the promotion was performed by a Belarusian in-country advertising specialist with his own advertising account. We do not know if these events are related in the general context.
>
> From May 14 (after receiving notifications about the post and about the risk of hiding our pages), our daily reach has plummeted - to 40k per day, and continued to decline, reaching the low of 16k per day. During the past few days, it appears that our new "baseline" is about 20k per day.
>
> We are confident that this is not related to our activities (content) or behavior of the audience, since our partners working in this Facebook niche do not report any similar problems or decline in outreach or other metrics; On the contrary, they experience further growth associated with the intensified news cycle.
>
> This situation with a sharp drop in our ability to reach the audiences is an extremely serious problem both for us and for partners with whom we work (who rely on our capacity to reach the audiences), especially in the context of the on-going repressions and silencing of the media in Belarus on one hand, and a great demand for the content we produce on the other, as the current news cycle is very intense and significant.
>
> After sending a series of letter to Facebook, we received a call that our situation is being investigated and they will provide us with an answer in writing; This was the answer we received on May 24, which only stated that our appeal about the post was rejected; No further communication is expected, and the main issue – sudden decline in outreach is not addressed.

On Mon, Jun 21, 2021 at 9:52 AM Mike Bradow <[redacted]@fb.com> wrote:

Hi Josh,

I'm just coming back from leave and seeing this. Can you send me more details on the case - including the link to their FB Page and any information about the piece of content that they think was wrongly removed? I can create an internal task to have it investigated more closely.

Thanks,
Mike

From: Joshua Machleder <jmachleder@usaid.gov>
Sent: Thursday, June 17, 2021 12:40 PM
To: Mike Bradow <[redacted]@fb.com>
Subject: question about belarus

Hi Mike,

Hope you're doing well! I had a quick question. My OTI colleagues are working with a local group in Belarus (ePramova) that is putting out information aligned with the democracy movement. The group organizes extensively on Facebook, but received a warning from Facebook for content that they think might have been misinterpreted, and subsequently have seen a dramatic diminishment in their reach.

They've not had much success in speaking with customer support to appeal any decisions made about their account. Is there someone that I could direct their case (I have a summary from them of their situation that I'm happy to share).

According to our anchor in Belarus, "[ePramova] is a prominent and well-respected US-backed organization (and which is not extremist) which plays an important role in the democratic movement." But we don't know all the details about this case and we haven't funded ePramova directly, so I think an initial conversation between FB's Belarus / Eastern Europe PoC and our in-country anchor would be a helpful next step.

Thanks!!!

Best,
Josh

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Josh Machleder (*he / him/ his*)
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