

Additional Resources

CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit

www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/tools/guidelines/socialmediatoolkit.html

CDC's Guide to Writing For Social Media

www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/tools/guidelines/guideforwriting.html

CDC's Gateway to Health Communication and Social Marketing Practice

www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/

Howto.gov: Social Media

www.howto.gov/social-media

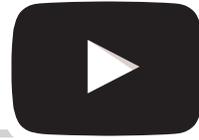
U.S. General Services Administration: Social Media Navigator

www.gsa.gov/portal/category/101299

Mashable: The Beginner's Guide to Social Media

<http://mashable.com/2012/06/12/social-media-beginners-guide/>

Planning & Getting Started



Social Media 101

What is social media?

Social media is online communities where content (conversations, photos, videos, links, personal messages, etc.) is created and shared in real-time social spaces as a way for interested parties to access and interact with brands, businesses and organizations. Examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, text messaging, and blogs.

Why is social media important?

Social media can improve health communication by expanding the awareness and reach of a message, fostering engagement that allows for real-time feedback and communication, and increasing access to credible evidence-based health messages. Social media reaches people when, where, and how they want to receive health information. Benefits include:

- Disseminate health and safety information in a timelier manner
- Increase responsiveness to emerging issues
- Increase the potential impact of important messages
- Reach people not engaged with traditional media
- Leverage networks of people to make information sharing easier
- Create different messages to reach diverse audiences
- Engage with the public
- Learn how the message is received (through levels of engagement)
- Peers, at times, are more likely to listen and follow what a peer says or does rather than paid media

Where should I begin?

Developing content for social media sites can be challenging. Active readers of social media are sifting through an onslaught of information. They often skim topics and browse sites to determine where to focus their attention. The keys to effective social media outreach are:

- **Identify the target audience(s)** – People access information in different ways, at different times, and for different reasons. One benefit of using social media is audience segmentation. You can develop messages that are specific to the concerns and needs of a particular demographic. Not only will understanding your audience increase the effectiveness of your social media efforts, it will help you select the best channels for reaching specific audiences.
- **Determine what you are trying to achieve** – Know your goals, messages and target audience in order to know which social media network is the best fit, or whether or not social media is right for your business or organization.
- **Look at your existing marketing plan** – Don't have one? Now is the time to develop one. Social media should work within your current marketing efforts; social media is not a stand-alone effort. Social media can and should align with all your other marketing and communications efforts.
- **Develop a social media plan** – Develop a plan for the staff time and resources needed to manage social media.
 - Who will generate content?
 - Where will the content come from?
 - What does the approval process look like?
 - Who will post and monitor?
 - Who is the backup point person?



Department of Health

How do I know which are the right social media sites to use?

The factors previously listed should influence social media sites to use. In addition, the rapidly changing popularity of existing and emerging social media tools requires using current market research, metrics, and other data to determine the most appropriate channels. Knowing your target audience and their behaviors on an ongoing basis is a key to success.

Do your homework. Know who your target audience is, which social media network they use and how they tend to use it. (Hint – look at how similar organizations are using social media to see how your target audience is or isn't interacting on social media sites).

What should I know about writing content for social media? Are there best practices?

Social media moves fast and is an ever-changing area, but there are some best practices that work for most commonly used networks such as Facebook and Twitter.



Facebook Best Practices

Facebook is an online community where people can interact with friends, family, coworkers, acquaintances, and businesses with similar interests. When writing posts for Facebook, note the following best practices:

- The average length of a post should be between 140-250 characters or approximately three lines of copy when posted on Facebook; the shorter the post, the better.
- Facebook links do not need to be shortened.

- Posts should contain engaging content that encourages a follower to like a post, share the post, or comment on the post.
- When asking for a post to be liked, it is recommended to use upper and lower case along with quotation marks (e.g., 'Like' this post if you plan on eating more fruits and vegetables!).
- When writing content, include a link (preferably to your site or another credible organization), a photo, and video, whenever possible.



Twitter Best Practices



Twitter is an information-based network made up of 140-character messages called "tweets." Twitter users

follow various people and businesses to receive tweets. Used by millions of people, organizations, and businesses, Twitter can be a powerful, real-time way of communicating and is beneficial for frequent, daily updates, especially in emergency situations.

- Tweets must be 140 characters or fewer; get creative in how you cut down on your copy.
- Twitter will now automatically shorten links when a tweet is posted.
- When including a link, your tweet can be up to 120 characters.
- Tweets need to be engaging. This can be done through the use of:
 - Links
 - Asking questions
 - Promoting followers to RT (Re-Tweet) posts
 - Use hashtags to help your tweets gain more visibility i.e., #publichealthweek.

- Common abbreviations to use when a tweet needs to be shortened include:
 - To – 2
 - For – 4
 - Be – B
 - And - &
- Abbreviations NOT to use:
 - Your - UR
 - At - @



YouTube Best Practices

YouTube is a site for sharing video clips.

- When a new video is uploaded, be sure to include a title and description of the video.
- Include any licensing information for audio tracks, as YouTube regularly checks to ensure there are no violations of audio copyright.

Pinterest Best Practices



Pinterest is a social bookmarking site where users collect and share images of their favorite events, interests and hobbies. One of the fastest growing social media platforms, Pinterest is currently the third-largest network (behind Facebook and Twitter). People using Pinterest create and share collections of visual bookmarks that help them to plan projects, organize events, or save articles. Although this site may not be the best fit for all health communication efforts, it is being used in the field successfully for nutrition, physical activity and parenting-related topics, as women are the top users of this site.

Best Practices:

- Cover photos for your board should be eye-catching and enticing.
- Board descriptions should be no longer than 160 characters.

- Content accompanying the image should be concise, friendly and conversational. One short sentence, tops, is recommended. Lots of copy is looked down upon.
- #hashtags are a great way to show up in searches.
- Avoid blatant self-promotion. It's a turnoff for this audience. Think in terms of your target's lifestyle and how your content and related content can fit into your 'lifestyle' board.
- Images should be pinned from your own site whenever possible. Photos should be engaging and appropriate for the platform and the target audience of the board.

Pinterest Terminology Overview:

- **Pins:** Pins are the bookmarks; when individuals find images on the internet they want to keep, they can be added to their Pinterest account. The pin will always link back to the site from which it came.
- **Boards:** Boards are created, managed and named by each user for their account (a user may have boards named: Dinner Recipes, Kitchen Makeover, Snacks for the Kids). When a user pins an image it is added to one of their boards to keep pins organized by topic, (as folders are used for organizing projects materials). Group boards can also be set up to share ideas among multiple users.
- **Follow:** Pinterest users follow other users' boards that they like, which can be viewed in their pin feed; users can follow all of someone's boards or just the ones they like best.

