



A Hospital Leadership Guide 
DIGITAL & SOCIAL MEDIA
ENGAGEMENT

“Today, few question social media’s importance. Rather, the question is whether healthcare organizations can thrive without this ubiquitous technology.”

– Joel T. Allison, FACHE,
CEO of Baylor Scott & White Health, Dallas

Table of Contents

Digital and Social Media Opportunities, Limitations & Rewards	2
Section 1: Setting up an Infrastructure	3
Resource Allocation	5
Establishing Clear Policies	5
Benefits and Challenges of an Open Network	7
Section 2: 5 Steps to Get Started	9
Section 3: Opportunities to Engage	11
Employees	11
Legal Focus / HIPAA	12
Patients	14
Creating Communities	15
Addressing Negative Comments	17
Defining Success	18
Section 4: Tools & Resources	19
Platforms to Consider	19
How to Blog	20
Useful Resources	21
Digital Media Checklist	22
Key Definitions & Glossary	23



Hospital and health care executives have a unique role to play in social media execution. Recognizing the importance of social media is the first step in taking your hospital into the digital world. Understanding the value and the potential of this medium can help leverage your community benefit programs and patient engagement in a way never possible before the advent of the Internet.

This guide will help to explain the possibilities of using digital media to manage patient experience in your hospital. From connecting with community members and potential patients before they arrive at your doorstep to managing their care transitions after they leave – social media can help.

This guide aims to provide information and best practices for using social media from the provider perspective in a proactive and thoughtful manner. It is important to understand the various implications of using social media as they relate to, among other issues, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and employee and human resource considerations. As technology changes, so too will the options and availability of new resources for social engagement. This guide will provide you with the tools necessary to implement, manage and make informed decisions about the professional use of social media, no matter the current trend. While this guide is not meant to be an exhaustive resource, we hope it will serve as a blueprint for effective ways to engage online.

Handwritten signature of Richard Umbdenstock in black ink.

Richard Umbdenstock
President and CEO
American Hospital Association

Handwritten signature of Diane Weber in black ink.

Diane Weber, RN
Executive Director
Society for Healthcare Strategy & Market Development

Digital and Social Media Opportunities, Limitations & Rewards

As you are reading this, a patient is searching the Internet for a hospital location, while another is writing a review about her experience. Another patient is posting about his visit to the hospital directly from his hospital bed, as a mother posts to a message board about her daughter's first trip to the emergency department. Even if your hospital is not actively using social media, it's a safe bet that your patients and employees are. The intersection of health care and social media is unavoidable. Social networks, blogs, discussion forums and other social and digital media platforms have become a primary medium for communication between people and businesses. As the number of these outlets increase, so too does the number of people using them via mobile device, tablet or home computer, and the expectation of instantly accessible information.

Hospitals are in a unique position to influence social interactions about health care. Many hospitals use social media to communicate with and provide assistance to patients and families within their communities. Providing an alternative mode of communication can help make a patient interaction more comfortable and less clinical. By publicizing local health programs, explaining hospital services and answering questions in ways that are easily accessible by mobile device, digital media offers hospitals an opportunity to expand their point of care to a patient's own living room – a place oftentimes more comfortable for the patient. When used appropriately, social media platforms can be effective in advancing the mission of your hospital or health system.

9/10

adults in the United States are onlineⁱ

Roughly

3/4

of them are active on social mediaⁱⁱ

Within the U.S.,

72%

of Internet users looked online for health information within the past yearⁱⁱⁱ

DIGITAL MEDIA: Any type of information stored in a computer or mobile device, including data, voice and video.



Section 1: Setting Up an Infrastructure

All social media platforms are fundamentally designed to be shared with the public at large. As such, whatever social media activities your hospital engages in should be undertaken with the understanding that the public will see them and may engage in an online dialogue with you as a result. How many departments in your hospital have YouTube pages? Do you know who is responding to comments? Are they in line with your hospital media relations messaging? Have you done a search on Twitter for any physicians or spokespeople with established followings? If these questions make you stop and think, rest assured you are not alone. When first diving into digital media planning, many organizations discover social media accounts from different departments that they weren't aware existed. The excitement around social media overtook the health care environment rapidly. And with it, the speedy adoption of platforms without clearly articulated goals.



In that spirit, it is extremely important that all hospitals centralize social media messaging to ensure everyone is not only following the same guidelines but also supporting the mission of the organization. Therefore, it must be clear internally that social media does not exist within a vacuum. Although social media programs can be started slowly by adopting only one platform (e.g., Twitter) at a time, all communications should be integrated within the framework of your hospital's communications and marketing strategies.

A common misconception with social media is that it requires the creation of additional content. Any content that is being used for newsletters, information packets, marketing materials or other promotional items can be repurposed for digital media. Replicating your organization's mission statement and goals through digital strategy is a crucial element to ensuring proper and effective adoption. The voice of the content should shift to be more conversational and casual, but many messages can stay the same. Many hospitals run effective marketing programs that could easily be adapted for social media. In addition, many hospitals are beginning to use video and digital media advertisements to promote services within their hospitals. These mechanisms can be used easily to drive traffic back to your hospital's website and your social media profiles. In doing this, you can successfully incorporate a social media infrastructure into your existing communication model.

Case Study

New York Presbyterian established its social media program in 2012 and great care was taken to develop a strategic plan and appropriate social media platforms. The goal: to create authentic relationships and engagement among patients, staff and health care partners.

To create the hospital's social media story, a newly hired, two-person team spent three months meeting staff and touring each campus. Through these meetings, the team identified staff to be social media "all-stars" or advocates who would establish personal social media accounts and share the work of their team.

SOCIAL MEDIA: The online forms of communicating that any individual can employ, which include blogs, microblogs such as Twitter and social networking sites such as Facebook.

Where to start

If you're revamping your social media strategy, tackle one platform at a time. It is important to understand the strengths and weaknesses behind each social network, which will help you better designate the appropriate time and resources for using them. Although content can be repurposed, hospitals should consider which platform best suits a particular piece of content.

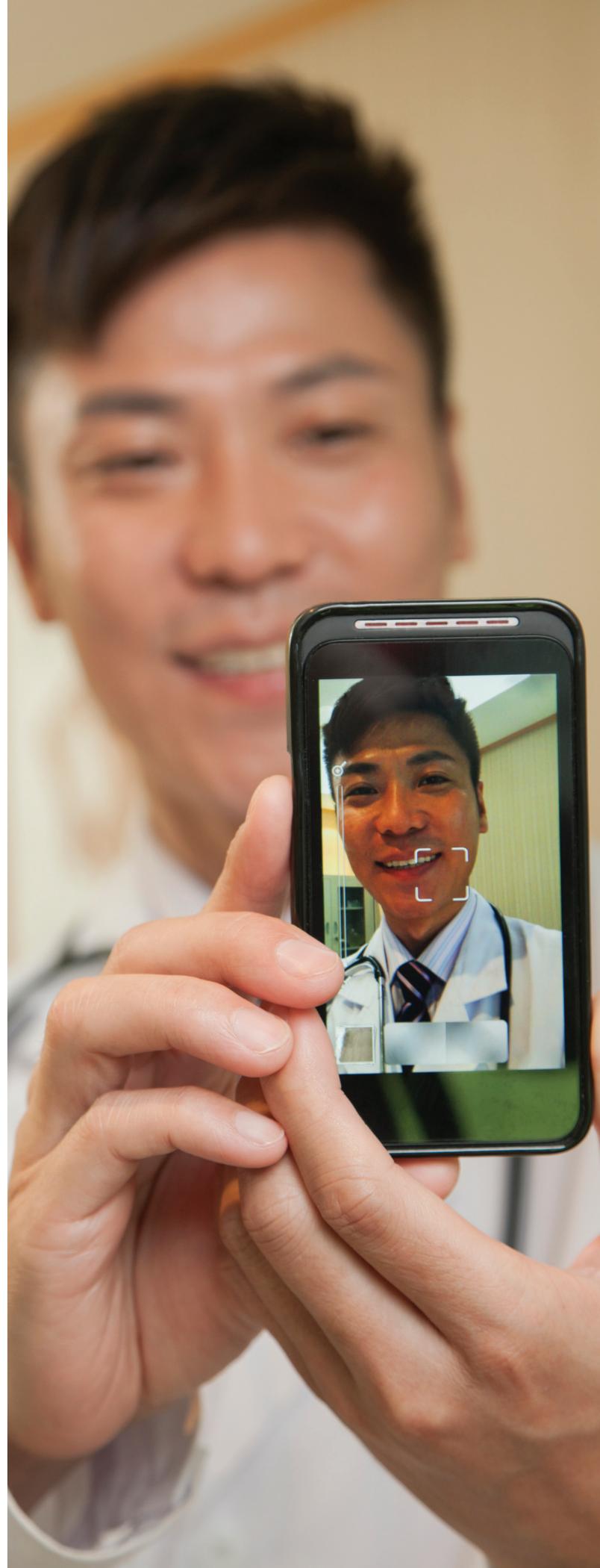
Where to post

Your hospital sponsors a holiday party in December where patients and caregivers come together to celebrate the holiday season. Your marketing team takes photos of the event and receives patient and staff consent to post them online. Which platform should you use?

Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter are the best choices

Each of these platforms excel when it comes to graphic postings. Users engage and share the images more often, allowing your holiday photos to be shared with a wider audience.

Researching and thinking through the best platform and method to distribute information is important for social media use in general, but it's crucial for hospital and health care professionals because of the sensitivity of information that could be shared. Patients are often at their most vulnerable when in the hospital, so understanding the best way to connect to people during this time and share information about their experience should be considered thoughtfully. For example with patient authorization, a good story about a father donating a kidney to his daughter would be a very compelling post to share on Facebook. Twitter is less ideal given the character restriction, making it difficult to adequately explain the story in detail.



In the first two years of its social media program, New York Presbyterian offered nearly 75 Twitter 101 training sessions to explain its social media policy to employees.

Resource Allocation

As your digital brand grows, you will be in a better position to determine whether more resources need to be allocated to digital media. The most recent “By the Numbers” report published by the Society of Healthcare Strategy and Market Development (SHSMD) found 90 percent of hospital and health system communication professionals surveyed were responsible for social media management in addition to advertising, communication, marketing plans, website management and media relations, among other duties. As such, 14 percent of full-time employee time is dedicated to electronic media, including social media, and roughly one out of two hospital and health systems recently experienced budget growth for social media, website and other online media.

It is important to continually review your social media accounts in order to confirm what is working best for your organization. You can track social media usage by using metrics and data from Web analytics platforms such as Google Analytics. Free tools exist to manage social media – in fact two-thirds of hospitals and health systems use free platforms^{iv} – in addition to more robust social media tracking programs such as Radian6 or SproutSocial. When uncovering elements of your strategy that are not working, revise. Social media is constantly changing. Having a fluid and nimble strategy is key to your hospital’s digital media success.

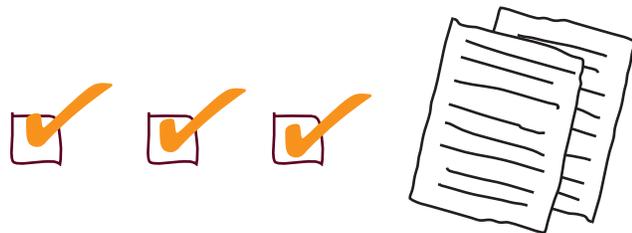
Understanding the resources your hospital has available to social media, including both staff and additional budget, is crucial for program development. Based on your digital media strategy, needed resources could include:

- Dedicated personnel, including a small team to manage day-to-day work.
- Strong internal expertise and/or external consultants, if needed, to offer HR, IT and legal guidance.
- Social media-monitoring programs to track analytics and growth.

Establishing Clear Policies

As part of your digital strategy, it is important to have policies governing employee use of social media and the Internet within the work environment. Hospitals must establish an environment where employees who do not directly work on social media for the organization are made aware of and trained on the proper use of social media. Digital media policies should address personal use of hospital equipment, personal device use and the kinds of websites that can be accessed during work. Hospitals should educate employees about the goals of the organization’s social media strategy.

Before posting content on social media while at work, employees should first ask themselves whether that content is consistent with the mission and vision statements of your hospital. It is critical to stress to employees that once something is online, it will never be completely deleted and can be found and seen by anyone at any time. With education and training, social media applications can be used to enhance the patient experience with the hospital.



Case Study

Initially, social media employee guidelines at Nemours Children’s Health System discouraged the use of social media while at work and were viewed by many as overwhelming. However, Nemours’ positive experience with social media tools led to a more approachable “common sense” policy for associates, which simply states that all existing policies, HIPAA considerations and regulations and standards of behavior apply to social media. Also included in the policy are practical examples and helpful tips, like important considerations before accepting a friend request from a patient.

Rx
HIPAA
©



Workforce-Related Policies

Organizations can increase employee engagement and reduce lost opportunities by fully embracing digital and mobile media opportunities. Allowing employee use of social media deputizes additional brand ambassadors to share an organization's values and mission. But there must be policies and training to help employees understand how to best use social media effectively on behalf of an organization, as well as how to manage difficult situations that could arise.

The very nature of this medium can pose risk as it easily facilitates instantaneous engagement without allowing or requiring time for reflective thought. It

carries the added burden that communications posted live forever on the Internet. Therefore, organizations should be clear about who is authorized to contribute as an official spokesperson for the organization and through which social media communications tool. Authorized contributors, such as bloggers, need to be educated not just about HIPAA, but a host of other issues, including copyright law, conflict of interest and restrictions on endorsement and medical advice, to ensure they can properly use social media and minimize associated risks for the organization. If used wisely, digital media can be a powerful tool.

Case Study

The idea of using social media as a communication tactic can be terrifying at first, as users must learn the various rules of the road for these new communication platforms. For Palm Springs-based Desert Regional Medical Center, initial concerns stemmed from how to incorporate the fluidity and openness of social media into an environment focused on preserving patient privacy. With cross department planning and ongoing policy reviews Desert Regional's experience has been enthusiastic and positive.

Benefits and Challenges of an Open Network

As more hospitals use social media such as Twitter and Facebook, patient and employee access to social media sites within hospitals is still often limited. A 2013 survey found social media was blocked for 59 percent of health care professionals working in hospitals.^v Often, hospitals worry about employee performance as well privacy or security breaches related to wide employee and patient use of social media. An open network approach can eliminate that risk when clear social media policies are in place so that hospitals don't miss out on the many benefits of social media. One way or another, hospitals have options of how much control they can place on digital activity within the hospital walls. It's important to explore these options, and decide what works for both your patients and for your employees.

The biggest challenge of an open network is setting easy-to-use guidelines and appropriately training all employees to follow those guidelines. This requires ongoing education within all levels of the hospital from volunteers to clinicians, support staff to board members. Further, once you begin social media you need to keep it up. Realistic expectations should be set within your organization. Regardless of your approach – banning social media and Web usage or fully embracing it – nurses and patients are on smartphones, people connect to their doctors on Facebook and employees use Twitter accounts from home. By opening your network to allow this to happen freely, you are providing a gesture of good will and allowing yourself to be part of the conversation in a positive way. You also stand to gain a new audience that supports your organization, from voicing support for new initiatives to turning out for charity fun runs.



Case Study

Spearheaded by the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) Communications and Public Affairs department, UMMS involved HR, legal, compliance, IT and others in its yearlong roll out of a social media program. Social media guidelines were developed, employee policies were revised and rules for monitoring and responding to comments were established. This was 2008 and, initially, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter were blocked on the UMMS internal and public Wi-Fi networks. While many were apprehensive about the adoption, the comfort level increased as social media became more familiar to senior leaders and others. IT opened access to social media sites and that action helped promote a culture of trust and respect within the organization. Patients also gained a crucial line of communication to the outside world in a time when they needed support.



57%

of consumers report that a hospital's social media connections would strongly affect their decision to receive treatment at that facility^{vi}.

Case Study

Just months after New York Presbyterian (NYP) began their social media program, Hurricane Sandy devastated New York, leaving power outages and travel restrictions in its wake. Traditional methods of communication were limited and for the first time, social media was relied upon as a critical method of communication. NYP used social media (Facebook and Twitter) to provide updates to the public and employees about what services were still available, locations of blood drives and a schedule for NYP-chartered buses for employees. The team also used social media to share photos of employees working during the crisis. Encouraged by the NYP president's active involvement on Twitter throughout the recovery period, employees signing up for Twitter accounts grew and the role of social media as a viable, long-term communications strategy was solidified. Currently, more than 500 employees are active on Twitter, including a large percentage of senior leadership who use the platform to connect with employees. Employees routinely share content with the social media team and in one instance, a picture the president took of a new CT-scanner, and later posted on Twitter, went "viral" and earned nearly 50 million impressions.

The Downside to Avoiding Social

Avoiding social media brings its own risks, including:

Risk to patients

Hospitals can help to reduce the potential for harm by correcting misleading or inaccurate health information transmitted through social media, providing reliable information, educating and guiding patients and the community to reputable sources of information.

Risk to brand

By not participating in social media, hospitals are missing an opportunity to grow their brand recognition and engage with a larger community. When hospitals do not monitor social networks, they are less likely to be aware of threats to their reputation. Without an established social media presence, organizations are in a weak position to counter incorrect assertions with relevant facts. In addition, patients increasingly look at which providers share information and are more transparent about their performance.

Risk in a crisis

In addition, should a disaster strike, the community will look to your social media presence for updates and direction. There should be a clear plan and designated communicator to ensure such moments reinforce with your community the hospital's ability to care in all circumstances. The key to that is appropriately managing your social media foot print, be it big or small, to provide a consistent voice in a manner articulated through your social media policies.

If you don't embrace social media use in your organization, you can count on one thing: employees, patients and your community will use it anyway. Better to set parameters that define the extent to which your organization will engage in social media as well as how social media will be used by the organization. This approach gives you more control than attempting to keep social media out of the hospital.

Section 2: 5 Steps Get Started

For a hospital launching social media for the first time, below are five steps to get you started and an overview of the most frequently used platforms to consider when building a social media presence. While a smaller, core set of individuals may manage daily social media needs, before diving in, be sure you pull together a planning team that includes team members from HR, IT and legal and as a team review the rules of engagement for social media.

Step 1: Do a digital inventory.

This includes identifying staff contacts and administrators for every platform in existence for your hospital, including blogs, websites and social media sites, whether they are actively used or not. This is an important phase that should not be overlooked.

Step 2: Pick your team and set goals.

Success starts here. Meet with all team members and define goals. Determine what you want to achieve using each platform and where it fits within other communications and marketing activities. In most cases, this can take the form of establishing a social media strategy that identifies the key goals that you are attempting to accomplish. Keep in mind that social media should be an extension of a regular communications and marketing plan and should be tied to your organization's overall strategy and vision. Set performance metrics to be monitored. Create a content calendar to guide your activities.

Step 3: Set ground rules and talk about them ...to everyone.

Rules must be simple enough to be easily remembered and clear enough to avoid confusion. This step is essential for both internal and external audiences. Employees need to be informed and trained on social media guidelines and the guidelines should be easy to find (online, in employee newsletters, new employee orientation, etc.). Any platform that is launched on behalf of the hospital, including internal exchanges and private patient / family communities, should include these guidelines and disclaimers. Guidelines should be publically posted and easily accessible.

Case Study

The social media program at Nemours Children's Health System launched in 2010 with a Facebook page dedicated to children's literacy. Based on its success, additional pages were created to represent the system, hospitals and other Nemours niche groups. Nemours realized that the effort to maintain a high level of support for a large number of niche pages was unsustainable. Some were shut down and followers were shifted to the relevant hospital page within their region where posts have a broader reach. Specialty groups looking to communicate with a targeted audience are now given the option of a Facebook group. Community managers have been tasked with increasing engagement, and a new initiative seeks to grow the reach of the health system's message beyond its own core group of followers.

Top five social media sites in U.S.^{vii}



1. Facebook



2. LinkedIn



3. Pinterest



4. Instagram



5. Twitter

Step 4: Monitor. Repeat.

One of the main differences between social media and traditional media is the ability to monitor and revise in real time. Most platforms include analytics that allow you to track the effectiveness of your efforts. Many organizations use social media to drive traffic to their websites. If this is your goal, use Google Analytics and other Web tools to regularly track traffic from your social media platforms back to your organization's website.

Step 5: Check the data (and policy) and revise as needed.

When you have collected your data, review your strategy. Periodically evaluate performance metrics against goals. If you are using a platform that is ineffective and not accomplishing the original goal, consider using another platform. What works well for one hospital may not work well for another. Use your data to tailor a digital strategy that complements your organization's strengths and communication style. Also regularly check your social media policy – is it still up to date? Are there new technologies that need to be addressed?

Digital media includes websites, blogs and video while also encompassing the universe of social media that features community-created content through platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.



Section 3: Opportunities Engage

What you need to know about communicating with employees.

Social media offers a wide range of opportunities for hospitals to connect with their employees. Whether your health care organization has 75 or 7,500 employees, they are a group of dedicated people interested in the daily activity and happenings of your hospital. They also will be the first group to step up and share both positive and negative commentary. Deputizing your employees to serve as brand ambassadors online and leveraging their collective strength is important for brand awareness and growth. It is vital to establish clear expectations and responsibilities for those hospital employees who chose to engage in social media, whether that is on behalf of the organization or for personal use.

How do you do that? Many social networks provide an opportunity for you to search by employer or location. For example, a LinkedIn group for employees is a great place to start. The platform itself already aggregates this information; it's up to you to pull it together.

Health care professionals are extremely proud of their work, and many want to share that enthusiasm in a public manner. Commenting on social networks and posting pictures is a common practice of many hospital employees, bringing their care into their personal lives. Although it is important to educate staff members about HIPAA concerns and internal hospital policies regarding social media use, there is a major opportunity to leverage the collective strength of your workforce on digital platforms. Nurses, doctors, technicians, environmental services and all other hospital employees leave work on a daily basis knowing they helped someone in need.



Capturing those positive feelings and sharing them with a social community allows providers to put a human face on a clinical experience. Hospital employees provide a wealth of information and expertise. Allowing for that information and knowledge to live beyond the four walls of the hospital enables a hospital to share and connect with the community better than ever.

Physicians in particular are a valuable asset in social media. Often, physician and patient interactions, especially in an emergency situation, are characterized as quick and cold. But when a physician is able to take the time to communicate and expose his/her personality in a digital setting, a patient and family will be able to make a stronger, more trustworthy connection with their doctor.^{viii} Bloggers like Kevin MD / @KevinMD help give a face to physicians. Surgeons who explain procedures via YouTube or Vimeo put families at ease. Once guidelines and goals are communicated effectively, encouraging your physicians and care providers to engage on social media can be a huge value added to your organization.



Legal Focus

Although social media can be an effective tool for hospital communications, hospitals must consider some legal issues that the use of social media could raise in advance of the hospital's adoption. While this guide does not – and cannot – address every legal implication of social media, the discussion that follows highlights a few considerations of particular relevance for health care and hospitals.

HIPAA

HIPAA aims to protect an individual's privacy related to health information that can be used to identify a patient. While HIPAA doesn't speak directly to social media, without clear guidelines hospitals can come across social media situations that may be difficult to manage from a compliance perspective. All hospitals take HIPAA compliance seriously and that careful approach should be reflected in any social media policy. Hospitals should review existing resources and templates to assist in developing a set of social and digital media guidelines. The personal nature of conversation and sharing often gives a false impression of privacy, but hospitals must reinforce to employees that social media isn't private. Even the fact that someone is receiving care from a particular hospital can be a HIPAA violation. Always include legal review on policies before launching social media strategies.

Privacy: HIPAA standards generally prohibit health care providers from publicly disclosing any patient information – including that a patient received care from a particular provider – without the patient's authorization. State privacy laws can include more restrictions or limitations on the use and disclosure of patient information. The implications of the requirements for social media are vast. For example, if a patient comments negatively on a hospital's Facebook page and includes specific information about care received, a hospital cannot offer its version of that particular patient's course of treatment in response.

While HIPAA and other privacy laws and regulations may be viewed as counter to and inhibiting the open-nature of social media communication, hospitals can – and successfully have – incorporated patient privacy-related parameters within their social media policies to allow interaction with patients and facilitate successful online relationships. Once parameters are set, both staff and hospital administrators are responsible for enforcing these policies.

Education and awareness campaigns on what is and is not allowed under HIPAA privacy laws, as well as a hospital's social media policy, should be part of the hospital's digital strategy.



Case Study

Children's Hospital L.A. encourages patients and families to tell their stories on the hospital website. The way they work within HIPAA rules is by employing a 3-step process where the person submitting the story must:

- Review a "Use and Access" statement that is on their page
- Review the hospital HIPAA policy
- Fill out a secure online form where the story, images, and any links are uploaded to and reviewed by hospital staff for approval prior to being posted to the site for public viewing

See more at: <http://carenetworks.com/social-media-and-hipaa-what-you-need-to-know/#sthash.vzGSQfoi.dpuf>

Consider this example: A hospital employee takes a picture of other employees and posts the picture on Facebook. If the picture contained information in the background, like a patient name, or other personal information, the post would be in violation of HIPAA rules. It can be easy for this type of situation to occur, especially in a hospital where networks and Wi-Fi access are open and available to employees. However, if employees are trained and aware of internal policies as they relate to HIPAA and social media, everyone can do their best to avoid this type of situation.

Of special concern for hospitals is patient privacy and the potential implications of HIPAA regulatory restrictions on the use and disclosure of patient information on social media. Other issues to consider include policies outlining proper use of social media by your workforce, copyright and intellectual property and restrictions on political engagement.

All employees need to draw a clear line between expressing their personal opinion and their role as an ambassador of an organization. In general, hospital administrators and employees should consider separate personal and professional social media accounts, keeping the personal private and using professional accounts as an extension of their occupation. Many, if not most, hospitals already have guidelines in place that explain parameters for hospital staff regarding online interaction with patients. If not already included, it is important to note within such staff guidelines or rules of engagement the following issues:

- Discussions on social media do not constitute medical advice, recommendations, diagnoses or treatment.
- Users should not use any of the hospital social media sites if seeking professional medical advice.
- Clearly state that the hospital is not responsible for any comments or advice obtained through the social media forum. All participants joining the particular medium do so at their own risk.

Reliance on information obtained through the social media network is at the risk of the user. However, hospital policies related to employees' use of social media need to be drafted carefully to avoid placing any restrictions or limitations (or perceptions of restrictions) on employees' rights to engage in collective action related to the terms and conditions of their employment under the national labor laws. Careful drafting of such social media guidelines is especially important given recent enforcement actions by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) invalidating employee handbook policies that were found to be too general or overly broad and determined to convey the impression to employees that they could not discuss with other employees issues and concerns about their workplace or working conditions. The NLRB has not limited these activities to unionized workplaces, but has begun to scrutinize policies in non-unionized environments, noting that the rights afforded under federal labor law apply

to all employees whether unionized or not. Guidance from the NLRB about appropriate language to include in policies has created significant ambiguity and confusion about what is acceptable. Organizations may need to engage knowledgeable counsel to help with drafting.

Images are a great tool for getting attention on social media and hospitals will have their own images to share. However, posting and exchanging photos, videos, graphics and text on social media raises the specter of copyright or other types of intellectual property infringement. If a hospital wants to post a photo taken by someone else, be certain you have permission (in writing) to do so by both any persons in the photo and the person who owns (i.e., has taken) the photo. Simply providing credit for a photo does not protect against copyright infringement. "Fair Use" of copyrighted items is a much-misunderstood term and frequently misinterpreted as permission to use. And, importantly, Fair Use may not apply even for nonprofit organizations and non-commercial uses. When in doubt, loop in your legal department for input.

Also, play it safe and be sure individuals responsible for and using your social media accounts know the terms of use for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or other social media platforms you may be using. Most terms of use put responsibility squarely on the user for ensuring that information and materials shared do not infringe the rights of others, so be certain what you're posting, tweeting or uploading is either original content or something for which you have proper permission that permits you to share the content. If you are sharing publicly available content, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is in the "public domain" and therefore free to use; it's best to always link back to the original post, tweet or upload when possible.



What you need to know about communicating with patients.

As more and more people look online for health information, for a supportive community or even help finding a doctor, it's important for hospitals to be engaged online to maximize the opportunities to make a connection. A recent study found that hospitals with strong social media presence also had high Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) scores.^{xi} Further, active social media engagement has shown to be predictive of higher HCAHPS scores. Increasingly, digital media is a first stop for consumers of all ages tackling health issues. Finding your organization online and through social media channels can ease apprehension by showing the personal side of the people providing patient care.

So where do you begin? Social media starts with listening. Hospitals should approach social media asking, "How are we already using social media and what conversations are taking place?" and "How can this help us improve our organization's culture and achieve its mission?"

For patients in the hospital, social media also can be an effective tool for managing patient and family concerns. Some hospitals provide specific hashtags in patient rooms so family members or patients can take concerns to Twitter where they are fast-tracked and addressed by a patient care team. Others provide a password-protected online forum that allows family members and loved ones to access discharge orders before patients leave the hospital as well as when they're home. This can be done carefully in a manner that follows HIPAA requirements. HIPAA permits sharing patient information with a family member who is involved in the patient's care, but hospitals should note that HIPAA allows only the minimum

"If people are having conversations about your hospital services, you should be there to talk about it too. Maybe once a month, something pops up where a patient is having a problem. We can quickly step in and get them to someone who can solve it."

– Ed Bennett,
Director, web & communications technology, UMMS

Roughly

3 out of 4

people in this country are already using some type of social media platform and all age groups are increasing their social media usage^{ix}

Who uses social networking sites

% of Internet users within each group who use social networking sites^x

All Internet users	74%
Men	72
Women	76
18-29	89
30-49	82
50-64	65
65+	49
High school grad or less	72
Some college	78
College+	73
Less than \$30,000/yr	79
\$30,000-\$49,999	73
\$50,000-\$74,999	70
\$75,000+	78



necessary information to allow a family member to fulfill their role in caring for the patient.

Many professional societies have issued guidelines for clinicians, including the American Medical Association and the American Nurses Association (for a more complete list, please see the “Useful Resources” section).

Creating Communities

One of the most recognizable opportunities presented by social media for hospitals is the ability to create communities among your patients and community members. Social media leverages shared interests and history to bring people together in an online space, a place where, oftentimes, people feel more open to share and invite others into their lives. Quite naturally, a hospital stay can be a negative or disruptive experience for patients and their family members. Providing a community online where people can interact with both the hospital and others with similar experiences allows the hospital to connect with patients on a different level. It also can give patients the opportunity to control their interaction, something some may not feel during their experience at the hospital.

Building communities can be particularly helpful with disease management as it relates to population health. Providing a space where patients can come together with others experiencing similar situations creates a virtual community of like-minded people. It also helps patients to make a connection with the hospital, and to ask questions and prepare themselves for the care interaction, before entering the doors of the care setting.

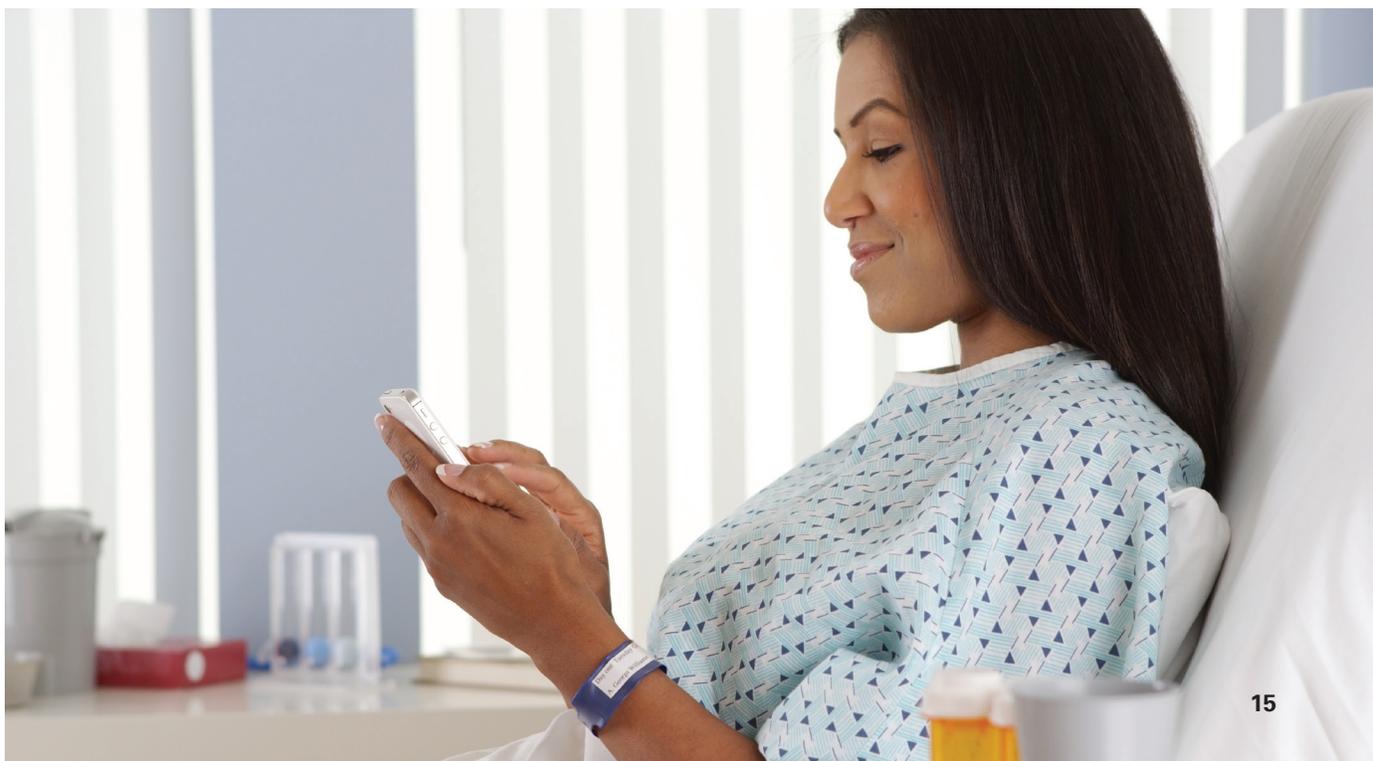
95%

of people believe patient engagement is very important in transforming health care^{xii}

Case Study

Houston, Texas-based MD Anderson connects patients with online discussions as well as support via The Cancer Forums and “The Living Room” on the Cancer Support Community

Website: <http://www.mdanderson.org/patient-and-cancer-information/guide-to-md-anderson/patient-and-family-support/online-support.html>





Social Media Conversations

Using social media allows hospitals to listen to and engage in conversations already happening online. While hospitals may not always engage in the conversations, the information gained from monitoring the interactions is invaluable. It also enables hospitals to start a conversation, bringing expertise and information to the community before a situation arises.

Some hospitals invite active, online members to join social media groups that focus on specific topics, such as diabetes, breast cancer or healthy living. Leveraging active users can ensure your online

community stays active. This helps attract other people to the conversation with the promise of real-time conversation and information. Other hospitals use engaged, online patients to create advisory boards that help promote patient engagement workshops and other hospital-based community resources. Such practices allow you to test programs or services with a smaller group before presenting it to the general public, and can range from a Facebook poll about changing the cafeteria food to asking for local volunteers to help with your annual coat drive.

Addressing Negative Comments

Social media requires a thick skin. It is very likely that negative conversations about your hospital are happening already. But think of negative comments as constructive criticism. It helps you grow and change, ultimately looking at something with a different perspective. The important thing is that you are listening and defining the parameters of when, and at what level, you will engage with people who are making both positive and negative comments online about your hospital.

Do not delete negative comments unless they violate the terms laid out in your hospital's social media guidelines. If the guidelines are properly displayed on each of your social networks, users will understand the parameters of discussion. This allows you to manage the sentiment and flow in a manner that you have already communicated. If the dialogue goes beyond these lines, it should be expected that your social manager will remove the comments. Otherwise, deleting comments can be viewed as a cover-up or as the hospital restricting access and/or disturbing the open and transparent nature of social media. Bottom line: Social media is meant to be open; keep it open by allowing both positive and negative comments.

Be prepared to respond to negative or inaccurate posts if response is warranted. Some negative comments do not require a response, while others should be taken seriously and addressed. Some principles of good response include:

- Keep your side of the conversation professional, regardless of what you get from followers.
- Remember that patient privacy is still the most important item.
- In some situations, the best option may be to post organization policy statements and express your regret at their negative experiences.
- For anything specific, take the conversation off-line. Give the user an option to connect and then get a conversation set with a more specialized staff person within your hospital.

All social campaigns aim to create a large base of supporters that spread the messages of an organization. Creating an online community of patients, caregivers, community members and others who have had positive experiences with your hospital (online or offline) and will step up to defend your hospital is the gold medal of social media development. Until that goal is met, it is your responsibility as an administrator to set the guidelines for discussion and stick to them.



Angry customers used to voice their concerns over the phone, but now they share their experiences publicly on Facebook or Twitter. While most of the posts are positive, any comments from unsatisfied visitors at Desert Regional in Palm Springs, CA are forwarded to a patient advocate who can research problems, reach out to the individual and continue the conversation offline, if appropriate. The public relations department also is very involved with social media and respond to posts directed at the facility. "Any time you can learn about a less than desirable experience at your facility and are able to respond, you have a great advantage. Social media gives you a second chance for service recovery with patients and their families that wasn't available in the past."

– Carolyn Caldwell, *President & CEO,*
Desert Regional Medical Center

Case Study

When the Coalition to Protect America's Health Care first launched its Facebook page in 2013, the first post generated negative comment about a personal hospital experience. Although the Coalition was tempted to respond and correct the misleading conversation; it feared its newly created group would erupt in negative commentary about hospitals. Sure enough, before taking action itself, the Coalition's audience on Facebook stepped up and started defending the hospital's position. This type of interaction was ideal. Community was created through dialogue among page fans, while the Coalition was able to see increased engagement and ultimately, create a dialogue amongst hospital and health care consumers.

Case Study

Nemours Children's Health System believes that social media can advance its brand in one of four ways: help attract new patients, heighten brand awareness, support prevention and wellness efforts and support philanthropic endeavors. Nemours selects which platform to use depending on specific needs and target demographics. Educational posts shared on Twitter, YouTube and Facebook are utilized by physician liaisons in Nemours' referral outreach program. Pinterest supports prevention and wellness efforts with healthy recipes and children's activities. Yammer helped grow a private parent network in a way that Google Plus and Facebook could not.

Defining Success

The first question for most when deciding to invest resources in social media is related to the potential return on investment – what's in it for you?

Return on investment, or ROI, doesn't have to translate into dollars. The first step to determine social media ROI is to ask what were the program's initial goals and what does "success" look like to you? If your hospital began using social media to connect with patients and provide reliable information, effectiveness should be determined by comparing results to your organizations strategic plan, objectives, goals and performance metrics. Are patients receiving reliable information from your social media channels? Have you built your audience of social media followers from your community? Have you successfully created a two-way dialogue with community members related to new services at your hospital? The answers to these questions can often be found in the engagements reports for each social network. And as many brand managers will tell you, positive comments and interactions related to your brand online often correlate to positive comments and interactions related to your brand offline.

There are a number of benefits related to use of social media, the largest being increased coordination and connection with patients. Social media allows hospitals to expand the point of care to before, during and after a hospital visit. Managing that connection allows hospitals to answer patient questions in real time, something rarely possible within the normal framework of a care environment.

The biggest opportunity social media affords many hospitals is nurturing existing patient relationships and acquiring new connections. Building relationships online builds loyalty and trust. Providing constant access to both clinical and non-clinical information allows the 24-hour-a-day nature of the hospital environment to expand to a virtual environment. This can decrease the staff time needed to answer questions in person and triage the information flow in a more effective manner. By posting information online and ensuring it is constantly available through your website and social platforms, you are providing patients with the best possible chance to access the information they want when they need it.

Section 4: Tools Resources

PLATFORMS TO CONSIDER as you build your social media presence. The list below is by no means exhaustive but covers the most popular and tested networks for the hospital community.



Blogs

Blogs provide you with the ability to craft real-time, thoughtful content and push it out to the masses. Consider having leadership or caregivers featured monthly (or more frequently) in an online blog that appears on the hospital website. This gives your organization the opportunity to begin a conversation with the community. Enable comments and be prepared to actively monitor them, responding as needed.



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a great way to connect with potential employees. Many people use this tool in their job search and keep the platform up to date with employment information, somewhat like an online resume. At any point, someone could go onto LinkedIn to see a snapshot of your hospital's current employees. This tool provides a wealth of opportunities for you to engage the community as an employer and show potential employees that your hospital is a stable, good environment to work.



Facebook

Many people are familiar with Facebook as a way to connect to former classmates or keep in touch with family, but there are a lot of implications for health care and hospital professionals as well. Facebook can serve as a gathering place tied around hospital-related community events. You can connect communities of people interested in the same thing (i.e., breast cancer survivors, new parents, individuals working to stop smoking, etc.); similar to Facebook's plan to launch patient communities. Similar to LinkedIn, Facebook also provides a great way to connect with employees, most of whom already have Facebook profiles that designate their employers.



Google+

Google plus is another social networking site that is based on inviting groups of people together through social "layers" and a good platform for connecting employees, new parents, breast cancer survivors, etc.



Instagram

Instagram is an online network based primarily on sharing of photos and works well for hospital events and community benefit activities. However, all users must abide by all HIPAA policies and ensure all those featured in photos have given permission.



Twitter

Twitter can be a great tool to get news out quickly, but followers count on a reliable, personal voice. Depending on constant information flow, don't tackle this platform until you are ready to consistently tweet and engage your audience.



YouTube

Many hospitals already are producing marketing, educational and other kinds of videos – it's time to start posting those to the Web! YouTube is one of the most commonly used platforms by hospitals, with more than 700 hospitals users.^{xiii} It provides a great opportunity to share your voice directly with consumers and patients. Remember, don't just add videos of talking heads — be creative and keep it short!

HOW TO BLOG and find an online space that gives your hospital or health system the opportunity to engage with your community.

In today's connected world, finding an online space that gives your hospital or health system the opportunity to engage with your community is essential. This resource has touched on a few reasons to blog: provide accurate health information for consumers; create a venue that allows your organization to introduce ideas or respond to claims with which you disagree. Beyond why to blog, how should organizations go about it?

1. Determine your audience

First, be clear on whom you aim to reach with a blog. Do you want to target patients? The broader community? Consumers beyond the area you serve? Always have this community in mind when determining topics and tone of any blog post. From the name of your blog to titles for the content you post, aim to engage with the audience you've identified.

2. Find your voice (and name your blog)

Do you want your blog on the homepage of your website? If targeting patients, do you want the blog viewable when they're downloading necessary forms? Your audience and placement should be considerations when naming your blog. They should also inform the voice of your content. Blogs are conversational and can be an effective way to personalize your organization. Different staff – even the CEO – can be part of your blog allowing the community to see the faces (and hear the voices) of those who care for them. Alternately, plenty of blogs don't specify an author. Whatever you decide, stick with it.

3. Prepare

Put some thought into the messages behind your blog and be prepared to update it no less than once a month (ideally, you'll update it multiple times a week). Certainly, a huge advantage of blogging is the ability to rapidly respond to developing events (from responding to a news article to extreme events) but make this an effective communications tool and include it in your existing messaging. Develop a content calendar that ties blog topics to dates for important events at your hospital as well as health observances.

4. Set the rules of engagement

Make sure your social media policy is consistent with your blog (or adapt the policy now that you are creating a blog). Will you allow comments on your blog? If no, is there a way for interested readers to follow up? Remember, the blog is a way to reach and engage your audience. How will you handle people who disagree? How can you channel the enthusiasm of those who want to support the topic you've written about? Your rules of engagement should outline how these actions can occur.

5. Start blogging

Don't worry about the length of your blog post and don't obsess over search engine optimization. Do write for your audience. Make the articles something you'd want to read — well written about an interesting topic. Include a photo or image when you can that will capture the eye of your audience and get them to read the full piece.

USEFUL RESOURCES to help you build and develop your social media planning and practice.

The resources below were helpful in creating this guide but in no means should this list be considered comprehensive. Many additional resources can be found via AHA.org, SHSMD.org and other health care organizations.

Articles/Reports/Lists

- A doctor's prescription for social media – Part 1 <http://autoinflammatorydiseases.org/social-media-2/physicians-guide-social-media-part/>
- CDC's gateway to health communication & social marketing practice <http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication>
- Copyright Fair Use and How It Works for Online Images <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/copyright-fair-use-and-how-it-works-for-online-images/>
- ECRI Institute: Social Media in Healthcare / Healthcare Risk Control www.ECRI.org
- Five tips to guide your hospital's social media policy <http://www.healthleadersmedia.com/content/tec-250829/Five-Tips-to-Guide-Your-Hospitals-Social-Media-Policy>
- Healthcare "friending" social media: what is it, how is it used, and what should I do? <https://www.himss.org/files/HIMSSorg/content/files/HealthcareFriendingSocialMedia15%284%29.pdf>
- Health care social media policies <http://ebennett.org/hsnl/hsmpl/>
- Hospitals: Prescribe social media policies and training to your staff <http://www.socialbusinessnews.com/hospitals-prescribe-social-media-policies-and-training-to-your-staff/>
- Hospitals on Twitter: current trends and proven strategies <http://www.advisory.com/daily-briefing/2012/03/21/on-twitter-six-year-anniversary-hospital-adoption>
- How the air force responds to blogs <http://www.afpc.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-091210-037.pdf>
- Mayo social media health network <http://network.socialmedia.mayoclinic.org/hcsml-grid/>
- SHSMD: Information on HIPAA and Social Media (PDF) www.shsmd.org
- Should healthcare organizations use social media: a global update http://assets1.csc.com/health_services/downloads/CSC_Should_Healthcare_Organizations_Use_Social_Media_A_Global_Update.pdf
- Using Social Media to Engage Communities www.ache.org/HEOnline/digital/heonline_index.cfm

Blogs

- Top blogs for healthcare marketing <http://thehealthcaremarketer.wordpress.com/tag/list-of-healthcare-marketing-blogs/>
- Hospital Impact blog <http://www.hospitalimpact.org/>
- Health Populi <http://healthpopuli.com/category/social-media-and-health/>
- The Health Care Blog <http://thehealthcareblog.com/blog/tag/social-media/>
- Jim Rattray's Blog <http://jimrattray.net/?tag=social>
- The Feedback Agency Blog <http://feedbackagency.com/blog/>
- GeoVoices <http://geovoices.geonetric.com/category/social-media/>
- (Not) Running A Hospital <http://runningahospital.blogspot.com/>
- KevinMD.com <http://www.kevinmd.com/blog/>

Books

- The Thought Leaders Project: Hospital marketing (2011)
- Bringing the Social Media #Revolution to Health Care by Mayo (2012)

Case Study Contacts

- Children's Hospital LA – <http://carenetworks.com/social-media-and-hipaa-what-you-need-to-know/#sthash.vzGSQfoi.dpuf>
- Coalition to Protect America's Health Care – Etta Fielek
- Desert Regional Medical Center – Carolyn Caldwell, President & CEO
- MD Anderson – <http://www.mdanderson.org/patient-and-cancer-information/guide-to-md-anderson/patient-and-family-support/online-support.html>
- Nemours Children's Health System – Lisa Klueppel, Social Media Manager
- New York Presbyterian – Gina Czark, Director of Social Media
- University of Maryland Medical System – Ed Bennett, Director, Web & Communications Technology

Other

- VIDEO: Physicians should be using social media: A legal perspective <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GhVJVf4wc&list=PL6003F59BB2B2A6F8>
- EBOOK: Digital marketing in healthcare (includes survey findings) <https://www.geonetric.com/learn-and-share/ebook-digital-marketing-in-healthcare/>
- COLLECTION: social media policies across industries <http://socialmediagovernance.com/policies/>

The **DIGITAL MEDIA CHECKLIST** is a helpful form to start a dialogue with your communications team about where your hospital is on social media. Answer the questions below individually or as a team.

Use this form to start a dialogue with your communications team about where your hospital is on social media.

1. What is my organization's digital presence?

Website Yes No In Progress

Online ads Yes No In Progress

Blog Yes No In Progress

Facebook Yes No In Progress

Twitter Yes No In Progress

Other Social Network Yes No In Progress _____

2. How successful are we in engaging patients, staff and community on social media? Yes No In Progress

What are our social media metrics? What is our definition of success?

3. Does my organization have social media guidelines for employees and staff that include basic HIPAA and copyright reminders? Yes No In Progress

4. Are those guidelines easily available and posted publicly? Yes No In Progress

5. Does my organization provide information and educational resources that are readily accessible to employees and staff? Yes No In Progress

6. Has my organization reviewed professional and ethical standards related to social media engagement? Yes No In Progress

7. Does my organization use social media to further the mission of our organization? Yes No In Progress

8. Is my organization effectively connecting with employees through social media? Yes No In Progress

9. Is my organization effectively connecting with patients through social media? Yes No In Progress

10. Is my organization effectively connecting with the community (those with limited hospital experience) through social media? Yes No In Progress

11. Does my organization have a clear set of expectations / responsibilities related to who engages in social media conversations on behalf of the hospital or health system? Yes No In Progress

Key Definitions/Glossary

Digital Media Any type of information stored in a computer or mobile device, including data, voice and video.

Facebook is a Web- and app-based service that allows users to post comments publicly or privately. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world and to share and express what matters to them. www.facebook.com/facebook

Google+ is a Web-based service that allows users to add social networking components to all of Google's other services, including Gmail, YouTube and Blogger. Google+ brings popular social-media features, like comments, photo- and music-sharing, videochat, etc., to social circles. www.plus.google.com

HCAHPS The Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems is a patient satisfaction survey required by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for all hospitals in the United States. The survey is for adult patients, excluding psychiatric patients, and asks a core set of questions that measures patients' perceptions of their hospital experience.

Instagram is a Web and app-based service that allows users to share pictures with friends. Instagram allows users to experience moments in friends' lives through pictures as they happen. www.instagram.com/about

LinkedIn is a Web and app-based service that aims to connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful. It currently connects more than 300 million professionals in over 200 countries around the globe. https://www.linkedin.com/static?key=what_is_linkedin

LinkedIn Groups provide a place for professionals in the same industry or with similar interests to share content, find answers, post and view jobs, make business contacts, and establish themselves as industry experts. [https://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1164/~groups---getting-started](https://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1164/~/groups---getting-started)

Pinterest is a Web and app-based service that allows users to visually share, and discover new interests by posting (known as "pinning") images or videos to their own or others' boards (i.e., a collection of "pins," usually with a common theme) and browsing what other users have pinned. <https://about.pinterest.com/en>

Radian6 is a paid software program that allows subscribers to identify and analyze conversations about a company, product and competitor with the leading social media monitoring and engagement tools. <http://www.salesforcemarketingcloud.com/>

SEO Search Engine Optimization allows website users to increase the accuracy (and sometimes frequency) of being listed in search engine results by entering specific keywords and meta-descriptions which are page summaries used by search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo. <http://static.googleusercontent.com/media/www.google.com/en/us/webmasters/docs/search-engine-optimization-starter-guide.pdf>

Snapchat is a mobile app that allows users to take photos or videos, add a caption and dictate how long recipients can view the "snap." After the time limit expires, the Snap can't be seen by the recipient and is deleted by Snapchat's servers. <http://www.snapchat.com>

Social Media The online forms of communicating that any individual can employ, which include blogs, microblogs such as Twitter and social networking sites such as Facebook.

SproutSocial is a Web-based service that allows subscribers to track and view all social messages in one place to easily engage with customers across multiple platforms. <http://www.sproutsocial.com>

Social Networking Connecting and sharing information with other individuals through sites and apps, including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The term also applies when sharing information via social bookmarking sites such as Digg and Reddit.

Tumblr is a microblogging platform and social networking site that allows users to post text, photos, quotes, links, music and videos from a browser, phone, desktop or e-mail. <https://www.tumblr.com/about>

Twitter is a Web and app-based service for friends, family and coworkers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. People write short "tweets" of 140 characters or fewer. These messages are posted to your profile, sent to followers and are searchable on Twitter search. <https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585-getting-started-with-twitter>

Vine is Web and app-based service that allows users to post and share short videos (6 seconds). <http://www.vine.co>

Yammer is a web-based social network that allows private communication within an organization or group based on a user's email address. www.yammer.com

YouTube is a video platform allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally created videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small. <https://www.youtube.com/yt/about/>

Notes

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About the Society for Healthcare Strategy and Market Development

The Society for Healthcare Strategy and Market Development is the premier organization for healthcare planners, marketers and communications and public relations professionals. A personal membership group of the American Hospital Association, SHSMD serves more than 4,000 members and is the largest organization in the nation devoted to serving the needs of healthcare strategy professionals. The Society is committed to helping its members meet the future with greater knowledge and opportunity as their organizations work to improve health status and quality of life in their communities. For more information, visit shsm.org.



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