

Managing and Marketing Your Social Media Services

Managing your social media service is similar to managing any other communications program. Some similar issues include defining quality, determining what constitutes excellence, and establishing benchmarks and quality control procedures.

The more channels you add to your communications program, the more important it is to make sure they all work together. You need to think about:

- Making sure that your database of information is being shared across units and services
- How you will monitor what is being posted, such as on Facebook, so that you can refer users to your health care professionals, if needed.
- How to involve experts from your organization to help answer questions and to add to online discussions.
- Whether you need to create a new position overseeing all social media.
- How you can work with those who manage your organization's patient-focused Web site if it is not in your department.
- Whether you need to hire consultants or outsource the strategy and design for your marketing campaign.

Marketing Your Social Media

Although marketing in social media is a rather new field, there are some familiar steps to take to help you achieve success.

Step 1. Inform yourself

Do some homework. There are many resources, most of them online, that can help you. Many of them focus on business marketing. Some concentrate on marketing for nonprofits. But all give you lots of tips for marketing social media. Think across channels, and how you can create a multi-channel marketing approach.

Step 2. Active listening

Inform yourself by exploring. Social media is a way in which you can monitor what people are saying about your organization and area of work.

- Set up listening tools such as Google Alerts, using your own terms and keywords, so that you can track what is going on.
- Search blogs to find the most popular ones in your content area.
- Make a list of the major social networks and discussion groups that you could join to monitor the comments on channels where you see activity.
- Try monitoring one or two on your list, noting the trends and opportunities that relate to your activities.

Step 3. Create your marketing plan

Using what you learned in steps one and two, along with your objectives, produce a plan covering all channels that you are going to use. A multi-channel plan will make sure that you

will have one theme, one creative design, and one set of key messages. All will tell the same story and use similar images. The text will vary, since you cannot write the same copy for Twitter as you would for direct mail — but the theme will be the same.

Create a spreadsheet, listing each channel and all the planned messages, campaigns, and activities you will carry out for the next 4 weeks — for instance:

- When you will update your online communities' pages with major news, events, and promotions
- How you use the “favourites” function on the Facebook page with your partners
- What new content you will use to update your blog, what links you could add to other important blogs, what useful comments you could make on other blogs to build awareness of your blog
- What questions you will ask your communities to start talking about a subject
- What friends, advocates, influences, bloggers, and mainstream media you will follow or add to
- When you will monitor real-time conversations through hashtags on Twitter that are related to your cause.

Step 4. Set up your monitoring schedule

You need to set aside a time each week when you will check your schedule to make sure you are achieving your plan, to check your metrics to measure your progress, and to make any changes that are needed.