

Healthcare Marketing White Paper



## Social standards for hospitals and health systems

A guide to building the ultimate social media plan  
for your organization



## SOCIAL STANDARDS FOR HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

**A guide to building the ultimate social media plan for your organization**

Social media has made leaps and bounds since 2004 when Facebook first exploded onto the scene. The creation of LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat followed in its footsteps and rapidly changed how social media is consumed. It went from a fun place to make connections with friends to an open house for marketers and advertisers. In fact, about nine in ten U.S. companies use social media for marketing purposes. The question is: what is your hospital or health system doing to keep up?

Long gone are the days you could hire one intern to tackle all your social media responsibilities. To keep up with demand and ensure internal teams are on the same page about the purpose of your organization's social media efforts, more than one capable person should know how to contribute. We understand — getting multiple people involved in social media marketing is like trying to herd cats. Various people within your organization have different levels of comfort and commitment to it. That's why it's important to create a detailed plan to help facilitate and deliver an engaging experience. Not only can this help get everyone involved, but it helps create a clear, consistent brand voice across multiple channels.

## Getting Started

Most marketing projects at your hospital or health system should start with a goal — the same goes for social media marketing. Establishing the purpose of your social media efforts will help determine what types of content you should promote. It will also help you keep track of whether or not it's meeting expectations. Do you want to increase traffic to your website or see an uptick in appointment requests? Do you want to engage new users or gain more friends and followers? Once you answer that question, you can start laying down the foundation for your social media plan.

## THE PLAN

Content and social media go hand-in-hand. Having great content to share will determine the success of your hospital's social media marketing. If you don't have a blog or any original content, you'll get stuck posting content from other sources and end up promoting their brands with little benefit to yours. Therefore, we suggest developing a content marketing plan that includes editorial guidelines, an annual content calendar, and a monthly social calendar.

### Guidelines

The editorial guideline sets standards for the types of content you'll create and promote on social media. Additionally, it defines when you'll post to social media, what channels to post to, and the themes and topics to cover. The guide should also establish a voice for your organization to make sure it's clear and consistent across multiple channels. Not only should the voice be a reflection of your brand, but also the relationships you wish to cultivate with your audiences. What are they looking for in your hospital or health system? Develop a language that speaks to them.

If you're concerned about the effectiveness of your social media efforts — do a little research. Look outside of healthcare to figure out which major players are setting trends on social media. For example, Oreo has a large following on social media for its relevant and whimsical content. AdWeek even dubbed Oreo one of the most amazing creators of social content in 2015. When it comes to content creation for your hospital, learn from the best and set the bar high.

Additionally, it's important to remind your team about how to avoid HIPPA violations on social media. Although every new hire at your organization most likely undergoes HIPPA compliance training, add a refresher in this guideline.

#### Here are some commonsense rules to follow:

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- ➊ Keep personal accounts separate from professional business accounts
- ➋ Try not to friend/follow patients and clients
- ➌ Don't post or comment about a patient

The list goes on, but make sure to brief your staff on this subject thoroughly.

### Content Calendar

The content calendar is broken down into themes and topics. The themes reflect the services your organization offers and feels passionate about promoting. The topics help to push that narrative, and determine what the content will be about for those months.

When reviewing the schedule, make a note of all the National Health Observances that take place throughout the year. It's important to have topics that revolve around the observances. For example, in the month of October, "breast health content" should coincide with Breast Cancer Awareness month.

The content calendar may look something like this:

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Cardiology Theme	Nutrition	American Heart Month	Prevention & Screenings	Family History	Flutter and Arrhythmias	Eating Right	Exercise tips	Caregiver Resources	Cardiac Rehab	Cholesterol	Cardiac Arrest	Congenital Heart Defect
Orthopedic Theme	Hip surgery	Hand surgery and therapy	3D printing technology	Rehabilitation	Protecting bone and joints	Sports medicine	Orthopedic Pediatrics	Spine Surgery	Trauma and Fracture	Congenital Disorders	Joint replacement	Good Joint Health
Women's Health Theme	Cervical Cancer Awareness Month	Heart Health for Women	Nutrition for Women	Mental Health	Menopause	Incontinence	Diet & Exercise	PMS	Weight Loss	Breast Cancer	Infertility	Nutrition
Cancer Theme	Cervical Cancer	Prevention	Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month	Testicular Cancer Awareness Month	Skin Cancer	Genetic Testing	Post Treatment	Chemotherapy	Childhood Cancer	Breast Cancer	Relay For Life	Nearing the End of Life

## Social Media Calendar

The social media calendar lists the dates to publish blog posts, when to post to sites such as Facebook and Twitter and the content to share from other publications. Everything from the call to action (CTA) to the hashtag should get determined before the posting date. This helps you manage the language you want to develop for your brand and keeps your team organized.

The calendar is separated into sections to ensure a smooth approval and posting process. The categories are as follows: publish date, channel, topic/theme, keywords/hashtags, offer/CTA and "comments."

[Click on the link to download the social media calendar tool.](#)

## Approval Process

Your social media posts and content represent the organization as a whole. That's why it's important to gain buy-in from department heads and physicians before posting to social sites. Not only does this get them involved in the process, but will help mitigate any issues or errors with language or subject matter.

Make sure to delegate the reviewal process to the right people, meaning they have the characteristics and traits necessary to get the job done right. Establish a deadline and let them know how important it is that the job gets completed on time. Depending on how fast projects move through your organization, we suggest giving them a few weeks to provide feedback.

## Execution

You can streamline the posting process by using efficient tools such as Buffer or Hootsuite. Remember, when posting, it's imperative to differentiate language between the various social channels. Not all content works on all social media accounts. Facebook allows for storytelling. For Twitter, it's best to keep messages short and sweet.

**For more guidelines check out this chart:**

-  **Facebook:** Create custom content that's shareable and creates engagement in the form of click-throughs and shares.
-  **Twitter:** More about sharing than social engagement. Keep it simple and relatable.
-  **Instagram:** Simple, beautiful imagery that looks like something a friend may post.
-  **LinkedIn:** Post content related to the industry.
-  **SnapChat:** Popular among younger generations, great for telling a story.

Additionally, ask internal teams to like, share, retweet, and comment on your hospital or health system's content. Not only can this help boost employee morale by getting everyone involved, but it's also (free) advertising for your organization.

## TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Creating a content and social media marketing plan for your organization takes time. You can either develop it in-house or outsource it to a firm like ours. Remember, a social media plan doesn't replace the monitoring of social media in realtime. Your team should still check in daily on your social media accounts to help with community engagement and customer service.

Negative comments are bound to arise on your organization's social media pages. Know when it's appropriate to respond. Some consumer feedback deserves a timely response, such as a customer complaint or inquiry. Other times, users just want to troll your organization. At that, we suggest letting it go.

Social media is a continuously changing force. Developing a plan will help you stay ahead of the game and outsmart the competition. If you'd like to learn more about social media and content marketing, feel free to reach out to [a hospital marketing expert here](#). We're happy to help. ☺

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## MORE MARKETING RESOURCES FOR HOSPITAL EXECUTIVES

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