



Healthcare Marketing White Paper



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## THE STATE OF SOCIAL MEDIA 2015

8 POWERFUL WAYS TO UPDATE YOUR  
HOSPITAL'S SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY



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### 8 POWERFUL WAYS TO UPDATE YOUR HOSPITAL'S SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Social media has made leaps and bounds since its inception back in the early 2000s. Not only have consumers changed how they use each social channel, but so have businesses and organizations. There has been a lot of trial and error, but it seems to finally be hitting its stride as a results-oriented, ROI-driven marketing tool.

A few years ago, we wrote an issue of Protocol titled “Healthcare Social Media Marketing 2012.” In this newsletter, we predicted the future of social media marketing. Here is what we said 2015 would look like:

*As social media becomes more ubiquitous, marketing delivered through social channels will become more interruptive and annoying to the user. In response, consumers will find ways to filter out marketing-heavy messages and ignore brands that aren't sensitive to their desire for a social experience. Loud, noisy brands will be shunned.*

It turns out, we were right. Even the social media channels themselves are attempting to only serve content that is relevant and useful to users by limiting distribution of content that is too 'promotional.' However, since we can't actually see the future, there are a few things we missed, too. Below are eight tips to update your hospital's social media strategy for 2015.

1

### **Post video on Facebook**

Is your hospital still only posting videos on YouTube? It may be time to add Facebook to the mix. Since June 2014, Facebook has reported an average of 1 billion video posts per day, and 76% of Facebook users said the majority of videos they watch are on Facebook. Think about it: patients may not think to seek out a health video, but if they scroll by it on their news feeds, and it's relevant, they're likely to watch it. Bonus points if it's engaging because videos posted on Facebook make it that much easier for patients to share it with their friends, whether they 'like' it, comment on it, or even repost it on their personal profile. Start posting your videos on both channels to test out where they perform best.

2

### **The best things in life are free (except social media)**

While social media was never *really* free once you factored in the time and resources that go into managing social profiles, it's now next to impossible to not pay for any social posts or ads. Facebook has been decreasing business posts in users' news feeds for a while, and now overly promotional content will have even less distribution among page fans. So what does this mean? It means you'll have to invest a little cash into promoted posts to make them worth your while. Only pay for posts that will drive conversions so you can measure their effectiveness. Community-related posts will perform better organically due to their shareable factor.

3

### **Write content specifically for social channels**

There are certain types of content that perform well on social media channels. Think about what gets you to stop the scroll on your news feed: fun, lighthearted content with compelling headlines. Compare a typical hospital's social content to the content posted by sites like BuzzFeed, Mashable and Bustle. The latter has top 10 lists, quizzes, animated gifs and headlines that pique curiosity. Don't fight it, you can't beat them. But you can apply their formulas to healthcare content. What about a top 10 list of family dinners that you can make ahead of time? Or a maternity quiz to help pick your baby name? Just don't take it too seriously — write around the service line you're trying to promote, not directly about it.

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### **Treat each social platform as a separate channel**

Once you've written content specifically for social channels, the next step is to figure out which platform it will live on. You're probably thinking, 'wait — I can't post it on all of them?' Sadly, no. Despite what you've done in the past, the same piece of content will not work across all social platforms. Content like the lists and quizzes mentioned above and graphic images of quotes and funny phrases work well on Facebook. Aspirational and how-to type content works really well on Pinterest. More scholarly/intellectual articles perform best on LinkedIn and Twitter. Videos live on YouTube, and as we mentioned above, are also finding a new home on Facebook. Photos of employees, patients and life around the hospital will thrive on Instagram. The lesson here is that social media, although we lump all the platforms together, is not one size fits all.

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### Real-time Marketing

While there is definitely a place for scheduled social posts, in 2015 the emphasis will be on real-time marketing. This means logging into your social listening platform of choice and replying, sharing and commenting on stories as they unfold. This also means jumping on trending hashtags to join a bigger conversation. There is definitely a risk of offending people by pushing your own agenda, so to avoid that, pick and choose hashtags relevant to your services. Scheduling some posts of your own content and interesting articles are good to fill in the gaps, but make an effort to show there's a human being managing the channels. Need an idea to get you going? Try live tweeting a popular TV show that reaches your target audience. For example, if you want to promote bariatric services, live tweet *The Biggest Loser*. If you want to promote maternity services, live tweet The CW's new hit show, *Jane the Virgin*. For something more general, try *Grey's Anatomy*. Take a cue from DKNY PR girl Aliza Licht, who live tweets ABC's hit show *Scandal*.

6

### Use Pinterest to make your content evergreen

Content marketing and Pinterest have become the new super team in healthcare marketing. When you post inbound content on your hospital's website or Facebook page, you may feel like it's popular for a day or a week, but then it drops off into the abyss of the Internet. Pinterest solves that problem. Content posted on Pinterest becomes evergreen because people pin and repin. Pins become more popular over time and make their way to bigger and bigger audiences. The other great thing about posting your content on Pinterest is that patients using this platform are in the correct frame of mind to digest healthcare information. Pinterest users are aspirational. They pin recipes they'd like to try, exercises they'd like to do and health tips or FAQs to keep as a mental note. Appeal to this mindset with your inbound content to extend its shelf life.

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### Partner with local bloggers

Did you know that 81% of US consumers trust advice and information from blogs? Many big brands have caught on to this trend and partner with mommy bloggers and fashion bloggers to help promote their products. Why not translate this model to work for hospitals and healthcare providers? 79% of bloggers accept advertising to monetize their blog, and sponsored or 'native' content allows you to tell a much more detailed story than a print or display ad ever could. Reach out to local parenting and lifestyle bloggers in your community to see if they are interested in partnering with your hospital. Whatever service you're looking to promote, find a way to make it interesting to that blogger's readers. That could be in the form of guest posts written by physicians, private tours of a new maternity wing or a review of nutritional counseling services.

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### Build community

Patients today don't just want to hear about others' stories, they want to start a dialogue. Women especially are looking for a space to swap stories, experiences and advice. Using your hospital's social channels, create a space for patients to do just this. It could be in the form of a Twitter chat, a Facebook group or a message board. No matter the medium, act as a moderator, but don't try to direct the conversation. Establish it as a space to encourage support and help patients to achieve their health goals, and then step back and listen.

## THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL MARKETING

Social media is constantly changing, and that's what makes it such a fun channel to work with. Hospitals and physician practices are constantly coming up with creative ways to interact with patients and community members. As we move into the future, we predict that social media will become more about one-to-one communication, rather than one-to-many. The rise of mobile apps like Snapchat and WhatsApp support this idea. It will definitely be interesting to see how organizations elevate one-on-one, and potentially physician-patient communications with social media in the future.

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