



Social media best practices

The social media landscape offers multiple channels for telling your story and engaging with audiences. This tip sheet provides an overview of best practices for divisions that are considering engaging in social media. While the following list is by no means exhaustive, it highlights key considerations to help you make the most of your participation online.

- 1. Develop a strategy & review process.** Before you get started, be clear about your purpose, what you want to achieve and the audiences with whom you want to engage. Identify how your social media plan will intersect with your overall communications plan. Design a mission and purpose for each social media account you connect with. Be clear on your goals. Do you want to launch a new initiative? Promote your division? Create discussion about specific topics? Include a process to regularly review your social presence so you can readily adapt to what is working and what is not.
- 2. Identify resources.** Participating in social media is resource and time-intensive. It requires constant new content and close-to-immediate responses to those who choose to interact with you. Identify and train a primary person who will be responsible for updating and monitoring your profile or page on a daily basis, as well as a back-up person. You should also decide who in your division will have the authority to post new items and respond to comments, questions and potential criticism. If you don't have the resources to commit, it is strongly recommended to revisit whether you can achieve your purpose by engaging in social media. If you are looking at this as a resource tool, a bulletin board or a communications tool there may be an existing vehicle that might fit this purpose.
- 3. Know your audience, research options.** Learn about who you are trying to reach and why. Understand their needs, interests and expectations. Spend time learning about different social channels and which one(s) are best aligned with your goals, resources and audiences. Consider the negative impression of a Facebook page with only three likes or no comments to any of your posts, or a Twitter feed with only a few followers and outdated information. It's better to have no social media presence than one with no followers, comments, or 'likes'. The links at the end of this document from [Moz's Beginner's Guide to Social Media](#)¹ provide tips about how to participate effectively on different social media networks.
- 4. Consider content.** Think about the kinds of stories and information you have to share and whether you will have enough content to post new material on a regular, if not daily, basis.
- 5. Get the word out.** Decide how you are going to promote your social media presence. Ideally, you should cross-promote your social media site(s) in various communications vehicles, e.g. website, newsletter, email signature block, etc.

¹ Note that Doctors of BC and Divisions of Family Practice do not formally endorse moz.com or other online resources or suppliers. We provide links to information that may be helpful and of interest to you in considering your involvement in social media.

- 6. Listen before you speak.** The best communicators are often the best listeners. Observe conversations on different sites (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) to see who is talking about topics that relate to yours.
- 7. Engage in real time.** Social media is based on dialogue and two-way interchange. Your followers want, and expect, a prompt response to questions, comments or concerns.
- 8. Who to follow?** “Listening” can help you identify who to follow or invite to your pages. Ideally, you want to engage with those who are likely to be interested in your division such as media outlets, hospitals, health authorities, and so on. You can also follow people and organizations involved in topic areas such as health care, physician recruitment, etc.
- 9. Think before you post.** Everything you post online can and will live forever. While most social sites offer a “delete” option, this is generally not recommended unless a post is vulgar or racially offensive. Removing posts by others simply because they are critical is typically not a good idea.
- 10. Engage and converse.** Social media is more than just a platform for news about your division. Leverage the power of your online presence to engage in conversations with your followers or fans. Ask questions. Comment on posts, contribute your division’s point of view, add insights or links to other reputable sources about topics being discussed.
- 11. Monitor and respond.** You will also want to think about how you will monitor your social channels for interaction and feedback. Monitoring can also help you identify and manage potential concerns or issues. Ensure you have a protocol for responding quickly to negative comments. A variety of social media monitoring and measurement tools are available online.
- 12. Correct errors.** Openly address errors in a timely manner.
- 13. Evaluate and adjust.** Regularly evaluate your success based on your communications goals and make changes where needed.
- 14. Learn more.** The following links contain more detailed information about how to successfully participate in different social sites.

Twitter: <http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-social-media/twitter>

Facebook: <http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-social-media/facebook>

LinkedIn: <http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-social-media/linkedin>

YouTube & Pinterest: <http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-social-media/youtube-pinterest>

Google+: <http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-social-media/google-plus>

For more information, please contact a [member of the provincial communications team](#).