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# Social Media Strategy for the Healthcare Industry

Healthcare Industry Ebook

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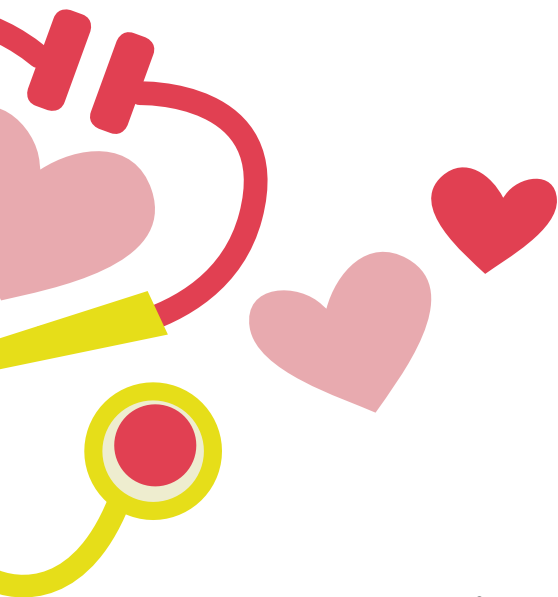
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## Introduction

Establishing a social media presence has never been more important for the healthcare industry. With patients going online to discuss their health and research their every ailment, it has become essential for healthcare professionals to connect with the social web and add their voice to these conversations.

Fortunately for the healthcare industry, we have the prescription for establishing a strong social media strategy with our healthcare industry ebook. Here's a quick peek at what to expect in the following pages:

- Avoid the “three Ds” that could cost you the trust of your patients — or your job
- Talk about yourself without driving away your audience
- Gain valuable competitive intelligence with social media
- Four simple phrases that can get you through nearly any difficult social media situation
- Listen for the 5 things that deliver real business value in social media

Social media adoption can be intimidating for an industry that must always be aware of HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) and its patient privacy regulations. Many healthcare organizations, however, have realized that with proper training and planning, they can pull out their social stethoscopes and start listening in order to improve patient education and satisfaction.

Your patients, their family members and the people within your local community are all discussing medical experiences, seeking opinions, and connecting with others that share their symptoms and ailments. Now it's up to you to tap into this wonderful resource and understand what your patients are discussing and what they expect from their healthcare providers.

Before we continue, ask yourself:

- How are you already listening to and engaging in the social media conversations around your facilities/organizations?
- What is your current social media strategy?
- What are some ways you can build off this strategy as the needs of your organization and your patients change and evolve?

Keep in mind that just as your patients have their own individual needs, personalities, and voice, your social media strategy should be unique to your organization. Healthcare professionals are compassionate, caring individuals. It's time to demonstrate that spirit to a wider, online community.

Your patients are paging you to the social media world. Will you meet them there?

## Chapter 1

# WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

### Where Did it Start?

Emerging technologies have dramatically changed how hospitals, healthcare systems and physicians interact with both each other and with their patients. The web first empowered patients with vast amounts of health and wellness information. Now social media platforms have given them something even more powerful: personal and professional connectivity.

Social media began as a way for friends and family to connect online. Companies quickly saw its game-changing advantages not just for marketing and advertising but, perhaps most importantly, for the health industry, consumer feedback and engagement.

The social web is changing how healthcare facilities are conducting business. It's shifted how they communicate within their own walls and how they communicate with their patients. Patients now have a platform to give feedback, express opinions, discuss, and collaborate with others.

### Where Do you Start?

Your healthcare facility may already have a basic social media strategy in place. Perhaps at this point, it's just a listening ear. But now you — or your administrator — decided to get serious about social media involvement and you're full of questions. What must you do to tie your social media activities to your bottom line objectives? How can you make sure your social media presence helps you reach your goals?

Step 1? Take a deep breath! Let's begin your journey into the social media realm by introducing common social media platforms and the etiquette that goes along with them.

## Chapter 2: HOW DO I USE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTIVELY?

Social media now covers a variety of sites and information with new platforms created daily. It can be a lot to absorb, but basic rules of conduct still apply.

### Social Etiquette

We all remember that big poster board from elementary school listing the rules for proper etiquette in the classroom:

“We say please and thank you.”

“We use our indoor voices.”

“We treat others they way we would like to be treated.”

We were referred to these rules whenever we squished scented markers on our neighbor’s face or said something cruel by the tire swings. These old-fashioned rules haven’t changed. Being polite and respectful is still Social Etiquette 101. Proper etiquette on the social web means being aware of your audience, understanding how they communicate and being a helpful, welcome and positive contributor to your community.

### Memorize the 3 R’s:

- *Reciprocation* - It’s about give and take. Promote others more than you promote yourself. [Chris Brogan](#) recommends promoting others 12 times for each time you promote yourself or your organization.
- *Respect* - Listen carefully, respond quickly, and share helpful information. People would rather trust their care and their money to organizations that treat them with decency.
- *Reliability* - Your Facebook, Twitter and Google+ accounts carry the implicit promise that you are available to answer questions and deal with problems. Better to not be on social media at all than to fail to deliver.

### How do you live out these principles?

- Join conversations because you’re invested in the subject matter and because you have something beneficial to add to health and wellness discussions. Period. Don’t push your agenda or aggressively sell your services.
- Say hello when you jump online to encourage conversation. Saying goodbye at the

end of your time online lets people know when you're heading offline. No one likes to be left hanging in the middle of a conversation. If you do this consistently, your community will come to know when you're available. Some companies add their hours of operation to their bio section so their online community can see exactly when they are active.

- Introduce yourself and introduce others. Any time you friend, follow or engage with new contacts, let them know who you are.
- Say please and thank you. If someone has shared your content, thank them. Though you may not be able to respond to every comment on your blog or Facebook page, you can take a moment to respond to a few and then make a general statement thanking everyone who passed along your content.
- If your social circle is large, it contains people you don't know well, if at all. Review your friends/follower lists frequently. Set some time aside each week to manage your following/follower ratio. Step outside your comfort zone and expand your horizons when it comes to connecting. Not everyone you connect with has to be like-minded. Diversity breeds inspiration.

### The Three Ds

Saying the wrong thing on social media can be disastrous. Here are the three Ds to avoid:

- *Disclosure* - Steer clear of disclosing trade secrets or intellectual property. This could cost you your job and give your competitors an unfair advantage. Also, healthcare professionals must always be aware of the regulations surrounding the discussion of patients' private health information. As the saying goes, "If you wouldn't say it on the hospital elevator, don't say it on Twitter."
- *Defamation* - Do not make statements about someone that are false and could result in legal action.
- *Discrimination* - It takes only one offensive tweet to damage your name beyond retrieval. Remember, the social web is a public place where your voice is amplified.

For a more detailed look at proper social media etiquette, check out these great posts:

[An Insider's Guide to Social Media Etiquette](#) by Chris Brogan

[The Ultimate Social Media Etiquette Handbook](#) by Tamera Weinberg

[Do we Need to Revisit our Settings for Trust and Transparency?](#) by Valeria Maltoni

## Social Sites

Most of your networking will be done in several major sites. Here's how to use them.

### Twitter

Twitter is more than just telling the world what you ate for breakfast. It's more like "conference call IM." It's a second phone on your desk.

Here are a few things to keep in mind if you're just getting started on Twitter:

- Use your real name and a profile picture, or include the real names of the team members who are tweeting behind your hospital or organization's Twitter handle. It lets your followers know that there are real human beings behind the company name. Build your bio the way you'd introduce yourself or your organization in person.
- To get the ball rolling, search Twitter for people you know by entering their names and plug in topics that interest you and see who's discussing them. As you gain more followers, check out the people they're following. That's the most organic way to build your network.
- Treat Twitter like a conversation. Start with 30 minutes, twice a day. The best way to build relationships and a community on Twitter? Participate. Spend some time sitting back and listening, then join the conversation. Jump on in and say hello.

### LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the interactive version of that pile of business cards in your drawer. It's your online resume, but it's also a mechanism to demonstrate your expertise and benefit from other's knowledge, make industry connections, and help connect others in your network to each other.

So here's our down-and-dirty guidebook for LinkedIn along with a handful of tips.

- Use a real photo. The real you.
- Share your goals more than your daily tasks. Focus on what makes you and your abilities different from the next person with your same title or specialty.
- Are you a blogger by night? A speaker in your own time? Share that too!
- Connect! Find connections, request them and watch your network grow.
- Ask for recommendations from those who know your work, and display them on your profile. Offer to write recommendations for those whose work you're familiar with.
- Join the conversation! Check the LinkedIn Answers section for opportunities to lend your expertise to questions in your field. Join relevant groups and contribute with content and conversations. The healthcare industry needs more professionals actively engaged in online conversations.



## Facebook

There's no denying Facebook's vast reach and popularity. You, your friends and your family are likely all using it. Since you know the basics already, it's an easy place to learn how to use social media for professional purposes.

- Remember that social networks are searchable, and you just never know who might come knocking at your virtual door. Use a picture that you'd be proud to show off in public. Set privacy settings to ensure the public sees only what you want shared publicly.
- Choose who you'd like to connect to. Some people prefer to keep their connections to people they know personally. You should check in once a day or so to catch up with friend requests and peek at the "people you may know" sidebar, just to see who's lurking out there that you should say hello to.
- Install only those applications you'll use. Facebook has a lot of applications. Choose wisely as they are a reflection of you and how you spend your time.
- Start and nurture a group. Group members are looking for dialogue, interaction, and discussion. Give your fans, friends and patients some meaty health care topics to digest and discuss. Mix branded topics ("Did you enjoy this past weekend's fundraiser?") with topics of interest to your audience ("10 things you can do to lower your cholesterol!").

## Blogging

Should your organization blog? It depends. Do you have something to say? Do you want to share thoughts, interests, ideas and helpful information? Are you interested in other health practitioners and patients weighing in on what you have to say? If so, starting a blog is a great idea.

Learn on the job. There's no better way to learn about blogging than to immerse yourself in it.

- Read like crazy. Read lots of blogs, both inside and outside your interest area. Pay special attention to things like tone, writing style, and how writers break up their content. Try [Google Reader](#) to better aggregate your blogs.
- Comment on blogs. Share your voice; the authors want to hear from you - it's part of their validation that they're writing something of interest and furthering the health topic discussion.

Ready to start writing?

- Set some sort of goal, such as three posts a week. They don't have to be mammoth. Just get comfortable with the medium. Talk about what you know. Write to share something valuable with others in your community, and serve as a discussion hub and health resource.

- Get feedback and ideas from across your organization.
- Scribble down blog post ideas when you have them. Start drafting posts and save them unfinished. You can always come back to them later when inspiration strikes. If you get a burst of writing done, schedule your posts in advance.
- Share. Ask questions. Get people talking. You're a conversation catalyst.
- Engage with comments on your blog. Commenters like to know that you're listening and paying attention. How often and how deeply you respond is up to you, but comments are an important part of the blog ecosystem, so find a way to engage your audience.
- Link to any posts that inspired your writing. Point your readers to more health resources.
- Disclose relationships you have that may have bearing on the opinions you write about. Disclosure is the law if you're being paid to do so. If you're including other people's work, attribute it.

Once you're comfortable with social media, you'll be thinking of how you can transfer that knowledge to your staff. Let's dive in to training!

## Chapter 3:

### HOW DO I TRAIN MY STAFF FOR SOCIAL MEDIA?

Training your staff on how to use social media can be daunting. Many people in the healthcare industry are still learning how they can best use the medium. You'll notice your staff can be classified as follows:

*Digital Native:* They've grown up in a highly digital world and are totally at ease with using online platforms and learning new ones.

*Savvy Technologist:* They feel comfortable using most online social platforms and digital tools. These people approach new platforms with caution and often let others fumble around before joining in.

*Reluctant User:* They are aware of the digital world and social media but hesitate to explore into the digital space. They do not think about or use digital tools more than necessary and generally resist incorporating those tools into their lives.

*Digital Contrarian:* They fear and dislike the digital world. They sneer at social networking and use email only because they're forced to. They prefer phones, pagers and fax machines.

*Digital Newbie:* Last spotted in 1997. Believed to be extinct.

Your challenge as a leader is to get all these people working together.

#### Training Program Prep and Framework

Involve your staff when you plan your training framework. Their input will make your program better.

Establish a few different things:

- Who within each team is going to be using social media channels
- If there will be a single point person to oversee department social media activities or if everyone will have an even distribution of tasks
- Which social media tasks each team has been assigned to perform
- The social media comprehension levels of all team members (not just general use, but understanding of how social media can be applied in professional settings, crossing various departments within your facility)

Your findings should give you a clear view of the various user levels you must accommodate, what conversations have already happened around your company's social media initiatives, and how people are feeling about those plans.

The folks within your organization who are enthusiastic about social media and "get it" can help your training program take flight. Make them your friends.

### **Social Media Training Team**

Create a cross-functional social media training team that coordinates courses, benchmarks employees, answers questions, and provides constructive feedback. They should tweak the training program as needed.

Make sure your training program includes:

- Clearly-stated purposes for why your healthcare system is adopting social media and why a training program is in place
- Achievable goals and measurable objectives for each piece of the program
- Different course levels to account for different levels of adoption, as well as multiple opportunities for achievement. Break the process into easily digestible mental bites
- Tactical how-to training, conceptual training and scenarios
- Testing or benchmarking to gauge the progress of employees as they move through the program
- A review process for assessing the effectiveness of the program

Developing a successful team takes planning and training but in the end, you'll have a solid foundation and a strong, dependable team to create great social strategies.

Now that your team is ready, you need a technology platform.

## Chapter 4:

### WHAT DOES A SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING PLATFORM DO?

Social media listening, tracking, monitoring and engagement tools allow healthcare organizations to execute their social media strategy. This enables organizations to become socially-engaged enterprises, with strong insight into social media through metrics, measurement, sentiment and analytics reporting.

#### Social Media Monitoring

A social media monitoring and engagement platform, such as Radian6, lets you listen to conversations about your brand and services in real time. You can glean information from your online conversations and share important reports with those who need them.

Social media monitoring not only discovers public sentiment surrounding your healthcare brand, but can also be used to deal with crisis situations, to benchmark your top competitors, to better inform and engage with your patient community, and to better promote your services. Social media monitoring helps you reach out to and engage with a whole new audience.

#### How Does this Sync up with Social Media Marketing?

Social media marketing is changing how you interact with your patients. Instead of your clients clamouring for your attention, it's up to you to reach out to them. Take your messaging to where they're gathering – the social web.

Make the switch from traditional marketing. Interact more with your customers; engage with them at their point of need. Don't robotically push your message; talk about what people on the social web care about at the moment. Monitor public sentiment to understand how your latest campaign or event is faring. The social web gives you options that are almost limitless.

#### Social Media Strategy

If you're seeking rewarding online relationships with your consumers, you must craft a social media strategy.

Your strategy plans how you will engage your community. It will cover everything from how often you post, to how you handle complaints and concerns. It will help you connect with followers consistently and helpfully — and attract new fans to your organization.

A social media monitoring platform will help you execute your strategy by:

- Scaling your mountain of content. These platforms cull through content based on a number of algorithms so you don't have to!
- Tracking trends. Over time, you'll start to see trends emerge as you view the data.
- Lightening your load when it comes to reporting. Platforms can aggregate your data so you can simply pull the information you need.
- Getting information to those who need it most Log in and grab the data - it's that easy. You can often segment by different user settings or admin rights.

Social media monitoring platforms let you know your community inside and out. Once you understand their past preferences, you can give them a richer experience in the future. You'll also discover who is most influential in conversations surrounding healthcare and/or your organization. These loyal supporters can spread your message even more widely throughout the social web.

A strong social strategy has three components: listening, engaging, and measuring. Let us walk you through each one.

## Chapter 5:

### HOW DO I START LISTENING?

Listening – or social media monitoring – involves searching for online conversations about your brand or industry using key words and phrases.

#### Listening: The Ws

##### **What to Listen For:**

Monitoring social media can be overwhelming. So much information, so many sites, and all of it screaming by at the speed of light.

Start with a tiered system that takes you from brand-centered listening, to competitive listening, to industry-wide listening (some more specifics on these are below).

Tag those conversations as:

- Complaints or concerns
- Compliments
- Questions (brand or overall health centered)
- Leads and/or Inquiries
- Opportunity Conversations

##### **Where to Listen:**

Start by casting a wide net. You'll begin to see where people are talking. Pay attention to those forums.

Social media is bigger than Twitter and Facebook. For your brand, it's wherever people are creating and sharing content. It could be anywhere — blogs, forums, message boards, LinkedIn, or niche (e.g. disease-state specific) online communities.

##### **Who Should do it:**

Who in your organization should be listening? Ask yourself:

- What's the central focus of our social media participation? Customer service? Marketing? Industry trend tracking?

- Do we have dedicated human resources for this, or does it have to be part of an existing role?
- Is someone on our team already interested in this?

You might anoint a “Chief Listener” but try to make listening pervasive throughout your organization. Since a wide array of people can benefit from social media intelligence, they should all be given the tools — and the encouragement — to listen.

## Listening: The How

So, let’s get down to brass tacks. What do we search for?

### **Brand:**

Concentrate your brand searches around terms, words, and phrases that are directly related to your healthcare brand. You can go broad or narrow, but in general, you’ll want to develop a stack of keywords and phrases that reflect:

- Your facility or system’s name
- Your brands, business units, or service offerings
- Names of specialized services you offer (e.g. Oncology, Pediatrics)
- Names or terms around specific campaigns or conferences
- Key stakeholders in your organization
- Nicknames, abbreviations, or common misspellings of any of the above

These terms will reveal whether it’s you that people are talking about. If they’re not, that’s intelligence in itself. If they are, you’ll want to know if it’s positive, critical, or neutral, as all of those things will help frame your future strategy.

### **The Healthcare Industry:**

Healthcare industry listening is proactive. It reveals the background conversation to your brand. It’s not about you, but how you might fit into the larger profile of your industry on the social web. Here, you might search for:

- Terms related to specialties and healthcare fields that are not brand-specific
- Phrases that define the markets you serve
- Wider industry keywords or categories
- Professional organizations you belong to or that fit your organization’s profile
- Names of thought leaders in the healthcare industry



Listening will teach you about how people perceive your industry and your organization. And you'll find conversations that aren't about your facility, but where you can meet new people, share helpful expertise, and establish your online presence as a health resource and authority without a focus on sales or marketing.

### **Competitors:**

Competitive intelligence was once limited to expensive reports from business intelligence companies, or whatever fragments you could dredge up from your personal network.

The social web has opened up a wealth of competitive data. You can look for:

- Names of competitive hospitals, brands, and service providers
- Stakeholders in those organizations
- Buzz around competitive campaigns and promotions
- Nicknames and misspellings

People are talking online about your competition. Who they're hiring, who's recently left. What new promotion or service they're coming out with. Where the competition is missing the boat (which presents all sorts of opportunities for you). And they can pinpoint emerging crises or buzz swells that you might want to be aware of for your own purposes.

The same unfiltered, fast-moving and open information that's out there about YOU is out there about THEM. It can be awfully worthwhile to pay attention.

Your listening program will set the tone for the rest of your social media activities. Fine-tune each piece to ensure you're listening in the places and to the conversations that matter to your organization. Once you've got this part of your strategy solidified, move on to tackle engagement.

## Chapter 6:

### HOW DO I START ENGAGING?

Engagement is the Holy Grail of a listening and monitoring program. Engagement means gaining and holding the attention of consumers and prospects through regular healthcare-to-community interactions.

If someone engages with your messages, they'll buy into what you're offering. And if you've done it right, they'll spread the good word about your outstanding level of expertise and service.

#### Engagement: The Ws

The social web has made it easy for people to share their opinions about everything on a mass scale, making it harder for brands to break through. Successful brands are stewarded by their loyal fans and passionate advocates. But some healthcare organizations could lose business because people's negative opinions are deterring prospects from making use of their services.

That could be avoided if healthcare organizations showed they care about their patients' experiences with them. That can be done through interacting directly, and acting on patient feedback collected either passively or actively, and showing patients you've heard and respect their input. People take their health very seriously, and they expect all health systems to do the same.

#### What to Say:

"What do we say?" is often the hardest question to answer, largely due to the fear that letting people speak on behalf of your organization could create problems like mixed messages, the spreading of inaccurate information, or even privacy/legal issues.

These simple responses can reassure people you're listening respectfully:

- We're sorry.
- Thank you.
- How can we help?
- We're listening and we hear you.

Calmly and openly addressing issues can often turn sour consumers into your organization's advocates.

## Where to Engage:

Don't waste your time on big social networks if your audience hangs out elsewhere. Do your research before you commit to engaging on a particular network. Your audience may not be on the same network as that of your competitors. Do your homework.

## Who (Internally) Should Engage and Who You Should Engage With:

Some of your workforce are already out there on the social web talking with your customers. Their initiative should be rewarded, not punished. Embrace their passion and insight. Work with them to create a more structured and effective engagement strategy.

You should also engage with:

- Patients with inquiries in need of support
- Brand advocates
- Brand detractors
- Healthcare veterans and influencers

Start interacting with just one group to gauge what kind of time and resources your engagement strategy will require to succeed. Add more groups when you feel you're ready and able.

## Engagement: The How

So how do we build a solid engagement strategy? How do we start talking?

### Brand:

When it comes to speaking on behalf of your brand, the possibilities for engagement are seemingly endless. From saying thank you for a positive mention, to calming down an angry consumer who's writing negatively about you, the one thing to remember is there is no right, industry-standard way to engage. The right type of engagement for you is defined by the goals you set for your own social media program.

Don't leave your team hanging. Establish guidelines for engagement that give those on the frontlines enough freedom to be themselves while still properly representing your organization.

### Industry:

Joining the conversation surrounding the healthcare industry will establish your brand as not only a thought leader but also as a helpful care provider that truly cares about its community.

You're providing a service that hopefully makes life longer and happier, and sharing your knowledge about how to best deal with and resolve those issues that could affect us all someday, will create trust in your patients.

Listen and interact with your community first, catching up with their direct mentions of you before delving into industry discussions. But when you're ready, creating and adding to conversation threads will provide a wealth of perspective to both your healthcare organization and your community.

Some conversations you might want to get involved in include:

- General questions about the services and/or specialties your facilities offer.
- Requests for opinions on a subject matter your brand can share expertise in, provided it does not breach individual patient confidentiality.
- Detracting commentary about a service you provide or professionals within your organization.
- Conversations about specific professional roles, where team members can develop themselves.

### **Competitors:**

Competitive engagement doesn't mean elbowing rudely into conversations. It highlights points of differentiation and it allows you to reach out to people interested in your types of services at the right time.

Competitive engagement can also be used to stay on top of industry happenings like mergers and acquisitions, as well as protect and build your healthcare brand through ongoing interaction with people who mention you as well as your competitors.

Engagement is the most important aspect of a social media strategy. From market research to community assistance, engagement gets you tuned into what your market really needs from a healthcare brand like yours, and allows you to build relationships that carry into loyal advocates and referrals.

Now that you're listening and engaging in conversations on the social web, you need to track what's being said. Although the idea of tracking millions of conversations can be daunting, the next chapter is here to help.

## Chapter 7: HOW DO I START TO MEASURE, ANALYZE AND REPORT?

Mayo Clinic has long been at the forefront of social media adoption by the healthcare industry. Since early on they have had a very active presence on Facebook and Twitter as well as an informative YouTube channel. They've even taken it a step further by creating their own social networking site where patients can connect with each other, join health discussions, watch videos and read blog entries from Mayo's own health professionals.

Mayo has been so successful at integrating social media into their day to day operations that they hosted an annual Social Media Summit, where health communicators and practitioners discussed how best to implement and report on the healthcare industry's social media strategies. The event itself is a prime example of something specific a healthcare brand can measure and analyze as the event generated a great amount of social conversations on Twitter using the hashtags #MayoRagan (for Ragan Communications, the event presenters) and #MCCSM (Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media). Altogether the event generated over 13,000 Twitter posts during that week in October 2011.

### Measurement: The Ws

If you don't measure your social media efforts, you're simply drifting with the tides. Take regular soundings to ensure you're still on course you charted for yourself back in port. You won't achieve your objectives if you don't measure.

### What to Measure:

But be careful what you measure, because that's how you'll come to define success. Understand what your organization wants to accomplish and what audience you want to target to determine what metrics are actually relevant to you. For the most complete picture, mix cold hard numbers with real human insight.

Remember: You want to change people's attitudes and behaviours. Don't measure superficial things like number of fans or followers. Instead, choose some of the metrics below that relate to your unique goals:

## Revenue and Business Development

- % Customer Retention
- Transaction Value
- Referrals
- Net New Leads
- Cost Per Lead
- Conversions from Community

## Activity and Engagement

- Members
- Posts/Threads
- Comments or Ideas
- Inbound Links
- Tags, Votes, Bookmarks
- Active Profiles
- Referrals
- Post Frequency/Density

## Cost Savings

- Issue Resolution Time
- % of Inquiries Resolved Online
- Account Turnover
- Employee Turnover
- Hiring/Recruiting
- Training Costs
- New Product Ideas
- Development Cycle Time
- Product/Service Adoption
- Value Awareness and Influence
- Brand Loyalty/Affinity
- Media Placements
- Share of Conversation
- Sentiment of Posts
- Net Promoter Score
- Interaction with Content
- Employee Social Graphs

## How to Measure:

Form a hypothesis and test it. For instance, "An increase in blog subscribers over six months will correlate with an increase in online appointments booked," or, "Post activity on our help forum will decrease call center costs."

Build your goals and objectives based on these hypotheses, and measure against them to see if you're on the right track. The beauty about setting a baseline with your hypotheses is that you have a roadmap to follow to keep you on track. You'll know exactly where you stand at all times. Course-correct in real-time as you track changes in the level of content and patient engagement.

### **Brand:**

Measuring engagement around your brand can help you understand if your messages are resonating with your intended community, or whether there's a disconnect between how your healthcare brand is presenting itself and how your community perceives you.

To gain insight on just how well your brand is being reflected on the social web, begin measuring:

- *Reverberation*: The total volume of inbound linking and generations of retweeting of a post
- *Repetition*: The average times per month a source inbound links/retweets your content
- *Activation*: The monthly total of new sources that have shared your positive content
- *Engagement*: The amount of repeat commenting and length of those comments.

### **Industry:**

Keep your finger on the pulse of the healthcare industry to spot emerging trends and topics. These can drive content creation, as well as service improvements. You'll also find the key players and get early insights into the new voices in the industry. Apply these insights to help mold your outreach, engagement, and future business strategies.

To see which sorts of topics and issues are gaining traction in the healthcare industry, measure:

- *Exuberance*: The monthly count of testimonials and positive posts
- *Attention Span*: The average span of time a post is commented on and retweeted, or shared on Twitter
- *Resonance*: The total volume of "in-sync" conversation around an idea
- *Potential*: The monthly comparison of declared need and estimated revenue from successful referrals

## Competitors:

Competitive intelligence will clue you in to rumors and insights about your competitors' business moves, how their customers are perceiving them, and help you identify unmet needs of the crowds.

That information will also help you establish if you're ahead of the social media game, behind the curve, or somewhere in the middle. Benchmarking your competition on the social web can help you clarify how your social strategy should emerge and evolve, too.

To get a handle on how you're comparing in the competitive landscape, measure:

- *Conversation*: The total monthly relative share of conversation versus competitors
- *Infatuation*: The score of the relative direction of inbound and outbound links/tweets between sources
- *Bucket Volume*: The monthly count comparison of post types (e.g., complaints, referrals, etc.)

The metrics you select to track your progress must relate directly to your goals. There is no template or best way to measure anything, but the information we've shared here should get you started on brainstorming which metrics make the most sense for tracking your social media program.

## Analysis

Analysis takes time. Benefit from some others who are already doing great work in the space.

## Share the Knowledge

We're not talking about exposing internally-sensitive or trademarked information here, but rather methods and metrics that have been found to work well in the social space. If we are sharing this information we can start to learn from each other in a collaborative environment. Collaboration could be done through conferences, white papers or councils. Perhaps you have an idea for a Twitter chat for collaborating ideas? Check first to see if it already exists, and if not, be the leader!

## Try, Try Again

Some metrics will seem promising but don't get the job done. Don't get frustrated or defensive. Try something else.



If you want to see this in action, Google “What is Social Media ROI?”. Just a few examples of articles discussing this topic are [Social Media ROI for Idiots](#), [2011 Trending Topic: Social Media ROI](#), and [How to Measure Social Media ROI](#).

## **Believe in the Integrity of the Data**

Data doesn't lie, but it can be misinterpreted. Don't force the data to say anything that isn't there. Sometimes as much as we want 1+1 to equal 3, it just ain't meant to be.

## Reporting

At some point in your social media journey you'll be asked to create a report that shows how your efforts are doing.

From kindergarten to high school and beyond, we're all very used to seeing our semester grades in an easy to read standard format. Whether it be the letter scale of A – F, a percent out of a hundred or a GPA, each of us could probably take someone else's report card and understand whether they were doing well or need some work. Here's what this can teach you about your own reporting.

## Grading Scale

The point of a grading scale is to be able to compare your marks semester over semester, year after year. It also enables anyone familiar with the scales to jump right in and understand. This touches on the idea of standardization we've been talking about. We don't have across the board standards in the social media industry yet, but you can still have a system that your internal staff is comfortable with so no matter who you hand the report to, they will be able to understand.

## Labels

You would hate to confuse your English grade with your Math grade, which is why report cards have the great advantage of having very clear labels. These are essential to a good report. From the proper date, to time period, to the labeling of information, these are all a must to make sure nothing in your report is misunderstood.

## Easy to Read

Short and sweet (or sour as the case may be) is why parents love the one page format of a report card. In 5 minutes they know exactly what's going on with the most important parts of their children's lives. Here's an inside secret, executives feel the same way about their

healthcare brands. Give them a report that's short and hopefully sweet and they'll love that 5 minute read they get.

## The Shifts

Most report cards will show you how much you've improved or slipped, semester to semester. This is one of the most effective things to show on a report because these shifts are the bread & butter to seeing if you are meeting your objectives.

## Teacher's Comments

"Johnny is progressing at an expected pace, but needs to pay more attention in class." Even though some of us might have cringed seeing paragraphs of writing on our report cards, teacher's comments were really analysis points highlighting what's working and what's not. Therefore, including comments like these on your reports will help to draw attention to what's working and what's not.

## Pass or Fail

A part of the report most of us jumped right to the bottom to see: the pass or fail. This gave us a clear answer as to whether or not all the grades, notes and shifts meant we were moving on or giving it another go. Incorporating a clear manner to say whether or not your efforts and results line up with your business objectives is key to any report so that not only are you giving the "why," but also the next steps, whether they are to move on to the next grade or take a step back and try it all over again.

Now that you have the knowledge to navigate the aisles of the social web, let's look at other healthcare organizations that have taken that path and succeeded in their social endeavors.

## Chapter 8:

# WHAT ARE THE KEY SOCIAL MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS?

Let's review the key uses of social media for your healthcare organization:

- Patient service: directly responding to patients' concerns, complaints and inquiries
- Crisis management: having your finger on the pulse of an unfolding crisis and responding, assisting and diffusing as quickly and effectively as possible
- Campaign or promotion management: the use of social media channels to spread the word about a contest/fundraiser/exciting change that you want your community to hear and talk about
- Patient loyalty: keeping your patients engaged and interested in the community you create and making it difficult for them to ever fall out of love with your organization
- Keeping tabs on the competition: understanding the successes and failures of rival healthcare groups, and using this intel to earn more loyalty points for your healthcare brand

Just as your patients carefully research your facilities, your professionals and their own symptoms, a great social media strategy should be implemented one thoughtful step at a time. Don't burn yourself out in the first week. One thing at a time. Always.

It's time to put some of what we've covered today to good use. We hope you enjoyed coming with us on this journey, and that you're on your way to finding the best fit for your social media strategy when it comes to your organization. We can't wait to hear what exciting things are in store for you and your patients.

## White Paper: INDUSTRY MONITORING AND YOUR HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATION

Dear Radian6,

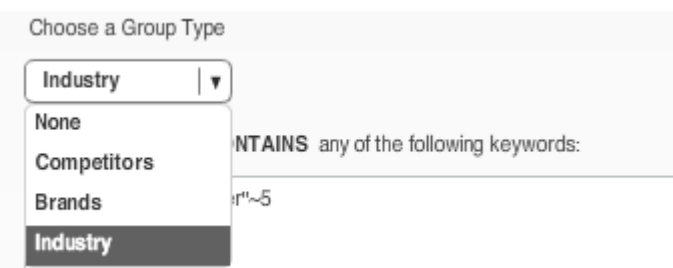
We've been using the Radian6 platform for mentions of our healthcare system's brand name and for active engagement with our online community. Are there any other ways to make use of social media monitoring that we may not have taken advantage of yet?

### Dear User:

It's great to hear that you are now engaging with your social media community and keeping a close eye on discussions surrounding your brand. Health is topic of great interest to everyone and it's likely you're getting plenty of mentions in the social space. According to the latest research from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, [80% of internet users](#) have looked online for health information. Of particular interest to your question for us today, it should be noted that the most commonly researched topics are specific diseases or conditions followed by specific medical treatments and/or procedures. The takeaway for your brand here is that the majority of online users are searching for discussions centered on disease states, not facilities or doctors, as their highest priority. Taking this into consideration, how could you add to your listening strategy?

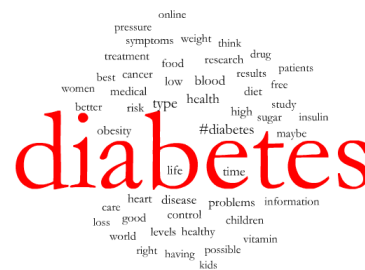
Since you're actively monitoring for brand mentions already, you've no doubt set up your topic profile with all relevant keywords surrounding your hospital or health facility's brand name. Let's take a look at how the Radian6 platform can be used to pull in conversations surrounding specific disease states and conditions, perhaps those that happen to be specialties at your facility.

We'll start by selecting the Keywords and Keyword Groups tab and the 'Choose a Group Type' option, making certain to classify this new group of words as Industry rather than Brand-centric. Keep in mind, depending on how many specialties your facility deals in, this may necessitate setting up a brand new topic profile to thoroughly track all of those disease specific conversations.

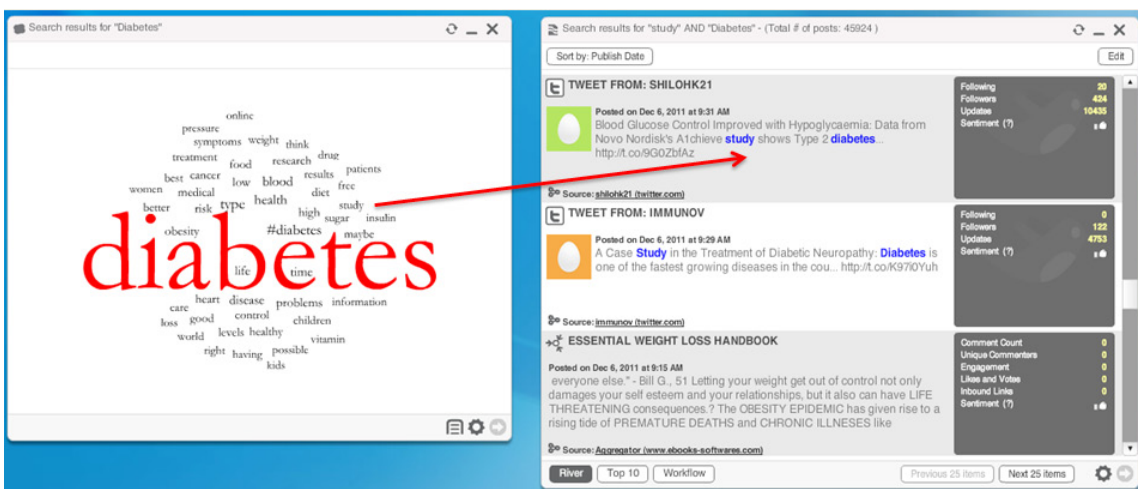


## Get a Snapshot of your specialty's discussions

For simplicity, let's say our facility specializes in only endocrine disorders. We might like to take a look at diabetes and the conversations surrounding it. Let's start with a conversation cloud and a look at the top 50 words used in conjunction with diabetes in the discussions we've pulled in within our topic profile.



If any words stand out, we can pull up a River of News widget directly from that word and see all the posts containing that word. For example, let's grab the conversations using the word 'study' in conjunction with diabetes.



## Making New Connections

Since you've already begun using the Radian6 Engagement Console to engage with your facility's community, you can incorporate this new industry coverage into your engagement strategy. You may find this opens up new conversations and new community members that were not previously on your radar. Perhaps there is a doctor on the opposite side of the country who's sharing a ton of great diabetes information through Twitter and his/her blog, you just hadn't picked up on it since your monitoring to this point was centered solely on brand mentions. Voila, industry monitoring has opened up new potential contacts and collaborators that may have floated along outside your view until now as you focused more on engaging with your local community.

## Share of Conversation

Your **share of conversation** is a key metric to keep an eye on if you are interested in your brand's impact and growth within that particular area of study. By using a topic analysis widget we can have a look at how often our Brand is mentioned in the overall conversation about diabetes.

First we'll include a keyword group for the industry (diabetes).

Next, we'll compare it to a keyword group for our Brand. (e.g. Your hospital: Note we are using a fictional brand name for display purposes only.)

Query Builder

Keywords | **Keyword Groups**

Title: Industry R 0 G 0 E 0

Choose the Keyword Group you want to add and display:  
Keyword Group  
Disease States / Group 1

Keyword Group: Disease States / Group 1  
Includes the following keywords:  
\*diabetes\*

Query Builder

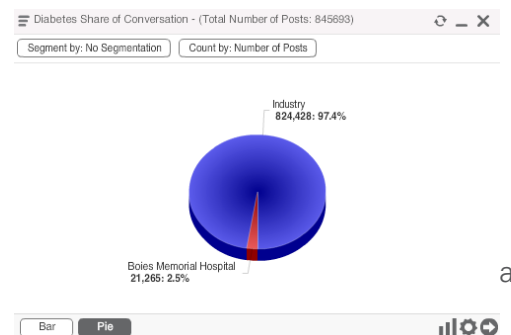
Keywords | **Keyword Groups**

Title: Boies Memorial Hospital R 0 G 0 E 153

post content contains Boies Memorial Hospital +

Now we'll use our topic analysis widget to see how our hospital fares in the online conversations surrounding diabetes.

As we can see, Boies Memorial Hospital is mentioned in only 2.5% of online diabetes conversations. Not bad for fictional hospital, mind you.



## Increase Your Share of that Conversation

Now that you've gotten a glimpse at where you stand vs. your industry, you may wish to track your share of conversation each week/month as your online engagement continues. Consider where your brand can add value to the disease specific conversations that are important to the online health community. Contribute helpful content and commentary where you see fit. You can ask questions designed to better understand the community's needs and deepen your learning about diabetes patients. Be sure to take a regular look at your conversation share to see if your hospital or facility is becoming more intertwined with the online discussion of the specific specialty or topic you wish to be associated with.

## Case Study: AMERICAN RED CROSS

### American Red Cross Social Media Case Study for Haiti

When a devastating earthquake hit the country of Haiti in early January 2010, it was no surprise that the American Red Cross was one of the first emergency response organizations to jump to its aid. Since the quake, the ARC has allocated more than \$80 million to help survivors, and has been supplying much-needed food, water, and shelter items to quake victims. In addition, countless volunteer teams from the worldwide Red Cross movement have been sent to Haiti to provide frontline assistance.

The Red Cross' involvement in social media seems to be a natural progression for a non-profit centered around outreach and community, and the unprecedented response from people on the organization's multiple social media channels after the quake is proof the Red Cross is doing something very right on the social web.

### The First 24 Hours

"The first 24 hours [after the quake] were about getting information out there," said Gloria Huang, social media specialist for the ARC. Huang is half of the Red Cross' social media team, which also includes social media manager Wendy Harman. The ARC was able to release a short video providing detailed information about the state of the island and its residents on the organization's YouTube channel just five hours after the quake.

During the days immediately following the quake, Huang and Harman monitored activity on the ARC's various social media outlets – which include the ARC's Disaster Online Newsroom, the Red Cross blog, its Twitter stream, multiple Facebook pages and groups, and a YouTube channel – to make sure the information being circulated and discussed was accurate and as up-to-date as possible.

"We provided the latest facts and figures from the ground and just tried to make sure that what we had across our social media platforms was consistent across the board," said Huang.

### Different Networks Have Different Needs

One of the more interesting developments on the Red Cross' various social media outlets has been the clear distinction of user needs on each platform. "On Facebook, we have tons of fans, and a lot of them have previous experience with us," Huang said. "So there's a lot of discussion on Facebook. It's a lot like a forum, where people are helping each

other.” Specifically, volunteers from previous campaigns were offering tips and advice and answering the questions of those interested in volunteering for the Haiti relief efforts.

On the Red Cross’ main blog, firsthand accounts, photos, and videos have been posted with unerring regularity, and the Twitter account remains a source of news, links to donation pages, and updates from the ground.

## Findings, Lessons Learned, and Next Steps

The Red Cross’ social media team has never seen the kind of traffic on its social media sites as it has for this relief campaign. While Red Cross aid to Haiti is ongoing, Harman and Huang are planning to take a big-picture look at the results of their work during those first few weeks after the earthquake to see what worked and where there’s room for improvement.

From an observational standpoint, Huang said it was interesting to see which topics received the most attention. “It’s interesting to see what peoples’ minds first jump to, what they want to know immediately. In this case, it’s been ‘How can I help?’” she said.

Huang added that the key to this particular campaign was making sure they were consistently spreading the information people were looking for across their social networks, and that that same information was easy to find on the Red Cross website.

“We’re excited to work into future exploration of how we can use social media and crowdsourcing to improve communication during these times,” Huang said. Along with reviewing the details of this campaign, Harman and Huang are looking at the social media efforts of other emergency aid organizations to gather additional ideas for bolstering their communication efforts during crises.

One fact that was reinforced for the Red Cross social media team during the weeks following the Haiti earthquake: social media is incredibly powerful.

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