

How Organizations Can Build a Successful and Sustainable Social Media Presence

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Horwitz and Detsky¹ provide readers with a personal, experientially based primer on how healthcare professionals can more effectively engage on Twitter. As experienced physicians, researchers, and active social media users, the authors outline pragmatic and specific recommendations on how to engage misinformation and add value to social media discourse. We applaud the authors for offering best-practice approaches that are valuable to newcomers as well as seasoned social media users. In highlighting that social media is merely a modern tool for engagement and discussion, the authors underscore the time-held idea that only when a tool is used effectively will it yield the desired outcome. As a medical journal that regularly uses social media as a tool for outreach and dissemination, we could not agree more with the authors' assertion.

Since 2015, the *Journal of Hospital Medicine* (JHM) has used social media to engage its readership and extend the impact of the work published in its pages. Like Horwitz and Detsky, JHM has developed insights and experience in how medical journals, organizations, institutions, and other academic programs can use social media effectively. Because of our experience in this area, we are often asked how to build a successful and sustainable social media presence. Here, we share five primary lessons on how to use social media as a tool to disseminate, connect, and engage.

ESTABLISH YOUR GOALS

As the flagship journal for the field of hospital medicine, we seek to disseminate the ideas and research that will inform health policy, optimize healthcare delivery, and improve patient outcomes while also building and sustaining an online community for professional engagement and growth. Our social media goals provide direction on how to interact, allow us to focus attention on what is important, and motivate our growth in this area. Simply put, we believe that using social media without defined goals would be like sailing a ship without a rudder.

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KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

As your organization establishes its goals, it is important to consider with whom you want to connect. Knowing your audience will allow you to better tailor the content you deliver through social media. For instance, we understand that as a journal focused on hospital medicine, our audience consists of busy clinicians, researchers, and medical educators who are trying to efficiently gather the most up-to-date information in our field. Recognizing this, we produce (and make available for download) Visual Abstracts and publish them on Twitter to help our followers assimilate information from new studies quickly and easily.² Moreover, we recognize that our followers are interested in how to use social media in their professional lives and have published several articles in this topic area.³⁻⁵

BUILD YOUR TEAM

We have found that having multiple individuals on our social media team has led to greater creativity and thoughtfulness on how we engage our readership. Our teams span generations, clinical experience, institutions, and cultural backgrounds. This intentional approach has allowed for diversity in thoughts and opinions and has helped shape the JHM social media message. Additionally, we have not only formalized editorial roles through the creation of Digital Media Editor positions, but we have also created the JHM Digital Media Fellowship, a training program and development pipeline for those interested in cultivating organization-based social media experiences and skill sets.⁶

ENGAGE CONSISTENTLY

Many organizations believe that successful social media outreach means creating an account and posting content when convenient. Experience has taught us that daily postings and regular engagement will build your brand as a regular and reliable source of information for your followers. Additionally, while many academic journals and organizations only occasionally post material and rarely interact with their followers, we have found that engaging and facilitating conversations through our monthly Twitter discussion (#JHMChat) has established a community, created opportunities for professional networking, and further disseminated the work published in JHM.⁷ As an academic journal or organization entering this field, recognize the product for which people follow you and deliver that product on a consistent basis.

OWN YOUR MISTAKES

It will only be a matter of time before your organization makes a misstep on social media. Instead of hiding, we recommend stepping into that tension and owning the mistake. For example, we recently published an article that contained a culturally offensive term. As a journal, we reflected on our error and took concrete steps to correct it. Further, we shared our thoughts with our followers to ensure transparency.⁸ Moving forward, we have inserted specific stopgaps in our editorial review process to avoid such missteps in the future.

Although every organization will have different goals and reasons for engaging on social media, we believe these central tenets will help optimize the use of this platform. Although we have established specific objectives for our engagement on social media, we believe Horwitz and Detsky¹ put it best when they note that, at the end of the day, our ultimate goal is in "... promoting knowledge and science in a way that helps us all live healthier and happier lives."

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