

Social Media

Social media is a collective term that can be applied to a number of online communication forums (including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn). They enable users to build communities around common interests, share ideas, engage with experts, collaborate and create new networks. Within the allied health professions such interactions with a large audience can be used for clinical, research and educational purposes. This leaflet provides a handy 'Top 10 Tips' to help you through the initial stages of engaging with social media

Tip 1 - Stop and observe

If you've not used a social media platform before, take some time to observe how it is used well. Which posts interest you the most? How often are others posting content? What style of writing do other people use?

Tip 2 - Engage

Social media (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) is a fantastic resource to engage with a wide audience and network with peers. All platforms are easy to use with minimal training. With Twitter, you can add #hashtags, which enable you to link into wider debates and potentially reach a larger audience. You can also encourage specific individuals or groups on Twitter to read your Tweets by tagging Tweets with the @ symbol.

Tip 3 - Identity

Think carefully about your digital footprint, and the image that is portrayed through your on-line profiles. Try to maintain a level of professionalism in all platforms and on-line communications. If you have a personal Facebook page, check the privacy settings to ensure that patients do not have access to potentially compromising images or information about you.

Tip 4 - Think

Be careful and consider carefully what content you share. Before you post consider the wording, whether anything could be misconstrued and be clear whether comments are personal opinion or evidence-based.

Tip 5 - Think again

Don't be drawn into petty squabbles or let clinical differences of opinion descend into juvenile point-scoring. Only post what you would be prepared to say in front of a large audience at a conference. Social media is the largest conference in the world!

Tip 6 - Update and change

Try to maintain and add to your profile as frequently as you can. Even if this only involves re-posting content from another site or user. This ensures that your followers remain aware of your work and interests.

Tip 7 - Make it count

Don't post for the sake of posting. Make sure it's relevant to your audience and useful to you. Then get involved.

Tip 8 - Timing

Consider the time at which people consume Twitter. Does your audience read it at work, at home, during breaks or commutes? Not everyone will scroll back through all their unread Tweets so timing can be important. This is also where the @ symbol comes in handy and software such as Buffer which releases your preloaded Tweets at specified times.

Tip 9 - Spam

Don't mention someone unless you really want them to be involved. And try not to post the same thing frequently or people will get bored and 'unfollow' you. Aim for consistent updates rather than filling up your timelines in one day then posting nothing for weeks.

Tip 10 - Keep up to date

Social media adapts at an alarming rate. Find out about new technologies and platforms and then experiment to see whether they can work for you. Discuss them with colleagues and 'tech savvy' friends. Try to be the first person to sign up to a new trend rather than the last.

<http://www.wecomunities.org/resources/twitteriversity>

http://www.rcslt.org/news/events/rcslt_techipes

<http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/social-media-guidance-csp-members>

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