

Social Media Do's and Don'ts for Hospitals

INTRODUCTION:

The 2012 *By the Numbers* report from the Society for Healthcare Strategy & Market Development (SHSMD) found that “A majority of hospitals and health systems are actively engaged in online and social media initiatives. And 49 percent actively use Twitter to communicate with consumer, patients and/or physicians.”

As communicators in the health care field continue to expand their use of social media, the American Hospital Association has compiled the following tips for using social media on behalf of a hospital, health system or other health care facility.

Under federal law, hospitals that are 501(c)(3) organizations can, within permissible limits, lobby about issues, including communicating with any legislator or legislative staff member, where the principal purpose is to influence legislation. However, there is an absolute prohibition on section 501(c)(3) organizations, like hospitals, participating or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for public office. To ensure that your organization's activities are permissible forms of lobbying, and not impermissible campaigning, it is highly recommended that you consult with your organization's legal counsel before engaging on Twitter.



DO

LOBBY! Ask Senators and Representatives to support legislation that helps hospitals. Use your representative's Twitter handle to target your legislators. (i.e. Twitter ID) in your Tweet to bring their attention to your position.

EDUCATE! Educate voters on hospital-related advocacy issues.

ENGAGE! Talk to your followers or “friends.” Answer and pose questions in your timeline or feed.

RESPOND! Respond to mentions in a timely manner. Social media is available 24/7.

SHARE! Share messages from other organizations by Re-Tweeting (RT) to your followers or posting links on Facebook.

PLAN! When developing promotional plans, include key messages to be delivered in 120-characters via Twitter or in short (100-word or less) Facebook posts.

CREATE! Develop a network of followers. Interact with them so that they are more inclined to Re-Tweet or “like” your messages.

ENCOURAGE! Hospitals are permitted to conduct nonpartisan voter registration activities and urge people to vote, which provide valuable contributions to public understanding of and debate about key issues.

MOBILIZE! Encourage employees to engage via your organization's social media policy.

DON'T

ENDORSE! A hospital cannot endorse or oppose a candidate.

CAMPAIGN! Re-Tweets, posts and other mentions should be free from campaign- and election-specific information.

FOLLOW! By following or “liking” a specific representative or candidate, the organization implies bias toward and the possibility of coordination with that candidate, which is against the rules.

BE AFRAID! Engagement with your stakeholders, including community members, staff, other hospitals, among others, should be a natural part of the communication process.

BE PASSIVE! Social media is a communication engagement tool. Don't open an account and let it go inactive.

SAY TOO MUCH! HIPAA and other laws protecting patient privacy and limiting disclosure of patient information apply.

Social Media Do's and Don'ts for Hospital Associations

INTRODUCTION:

The 2012 *By the Numbers* report from the Society for Healthcare Strategy & Market Development (SHSMD) found that “A majority of hospitals and health systems are actively engaged in online and social media initiatives. And 49 percent actively use Twitter to communicate with consumer, patients and/or physicians.”

As communicators in the health care field continue to expand their use of social media, the American Hospital Association has compiled the following tips for using social media on behalf of state, regional or metropolitan associations.

Legal requirements and limitations on activities may vary. So before engaging on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or any other social medium, it is highly recommended that you consult with your organization's legal counsel.



DO

NAME DROP! Mention your Congressional Representative's Twitter handle (i.e. Twitter ID) in your Tweet to bring their attention to your position. Tag his or her name in a Facebook post so that it shows up in his or her feed too.

ENDORSE! Advocate for passage of a piece of legislation your organization supports and either endorse or oppose a candidate.

ENGAGE! Talk to your followers and “friends.” Answer and pose questions in your timeline or feed.

RESPOND! Respond to mentions in a timely manner. Social media is available 24/7.

SHARE! Share messages from other organizations by Re-Tweeting (RT) to your followers or posting links on Facebook.

EDUCATE! Educate voters on hospital-related advocacy issues.

PLAN! When developing promotional plans, include key messages to be delivered in 120-characters via Twitter or in short (100-word or less) Facebook posts.

MOBILIZE! Encourage employees to engage via your organization's social media policy.

CREATE! Develop a network of followers. Interact with them so that they are more inclined to Re-Tweet or “like” your messages.

DON'T

COORDINATE! Coordinating efforts with a candidate or issue campaign is not allowed. Make sure all activities are conceived and executed by hospital staff and not campaign staff.

BE PASSIVE! Social media is a communication engagement tool. Don't open an account and let it go inactive.

BE AFRAID! Engagement with your stakeholders, including community members, staff, other hospitals, among others, should be a natural part of the communication process.

SAY TOO MUCH! HIPAA and other laws protecting patient privacy and limiting disclosure of patient information still apply.