

Mastering Public Relations in the Healthcare Sector



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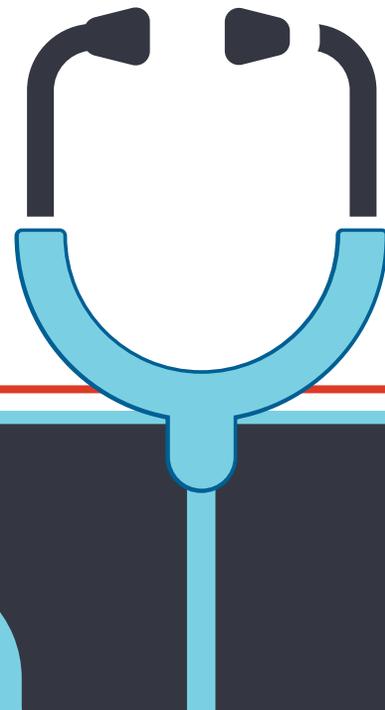


TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 Hints for successful healthcare PR
- 4 Public relations vs. Media relations
- 5 Thought leadership on all platforms
- 6 Influencing at the local level
- 7 Fixing your media pitches
- 8 Getting the most out of social media
- 9 Marketing with emotion
- 10 Storytelling through images
- 11 Channeling Facebook
- 12 Channeling Twitter
- 13 Channeling Instagram
- 14 Channeling Snapchat
- 15 Channeling LinkedIn
- 16 Harnessing your owned media

Introduction

When it comes to healthcare communication, trust and sensitivity are valued above all else. Public relations can help healthcare organizations of all sizes become a trusted provider or thought leader in their markets and across the industry.

While healthcare PR has always played a valuable role in helping an organization to cement relationships with key audiences, its importance has grown in recent years. Today, organizations must own their story across multiple platforms if they want to be noticed in the fast-paced, competitive world of healthcare.

From identifying micro-influencers to leveraging visual content to generating leads on LinkedIn, this guide will arm you with a toolkit of best practices in healthcare public relations.

Hints for successful healthcare PR

Various industries have their own rules governing communications efforts. Just think of listed companies, heavy industry, or government authorities. Healthcare is no exception. While a professional can guide you, there are some things you should know before starting a campaign or media outreach. Of course, details may vary from country to country, but the main points are international.

Be sensitive to the subject area

That's no surprise as there is personal data involved. Even if that has no bearing on your plans, remember that health, disease, and cure are always topics with a high level of sensitivity. Promotional work in this field deals with our physical existence and its fragile condition. Be aware of that when developing your strategy.



Know the regulations

In many countries, public relations efforts for pharmaceutical companies and other healthcare players are much stricter than for other businesses. Often, promotions for medicines or treatments are prohibited. In some countries, physicians are not allowed to appear in advertising or any marketing communications. Understand the rules.



Learn the language

To effectively demonstrate your expertise and competence, learn the terms used by the industries you partner with most often, such as hospitals and health systems, pharmaceutical companies, insurance providers, and other organizations. You should be able to talk the talk.



Assess your exclusivity agreements

If your PR firm is working for more than one company in the same sector, there could be questions about exclusivity. The healthcare and pharmaceutical industries may be more sensitive to this, especially in the area of research and development. Make sure expectations are clear.



Public Relations vs. Media Relations: What's the difference?

Public relations and media relations both play important roles in a great marketing and content strategy. But what are those roles?

Think of it this way: Public relations is the umbrella covering all communication strategy, and media relations is one of those strategies under the umbrella.

While PR handles multiple channels – social media, digital campaigns, online content, visual content – media relations manages interaction and partnership with the impartial content producers, editors, journalists, and visual journalists, who decide what content gets play.

Working with the media has long been and will continue to be a large piece of a PR pro's job. And the growing amount of gray area between the two doesn't make the distinction simpler, especially as technology continues to evolve the definition of what constitutes "media." But even as the tools and channels change, one thing is certain: Media relations is just one piece of what PR can do, and understanding that can help organizations get much more value out of working with a PR team.

To understand more, read on:



Public relations uses many channels.
Media relations is just one of them.

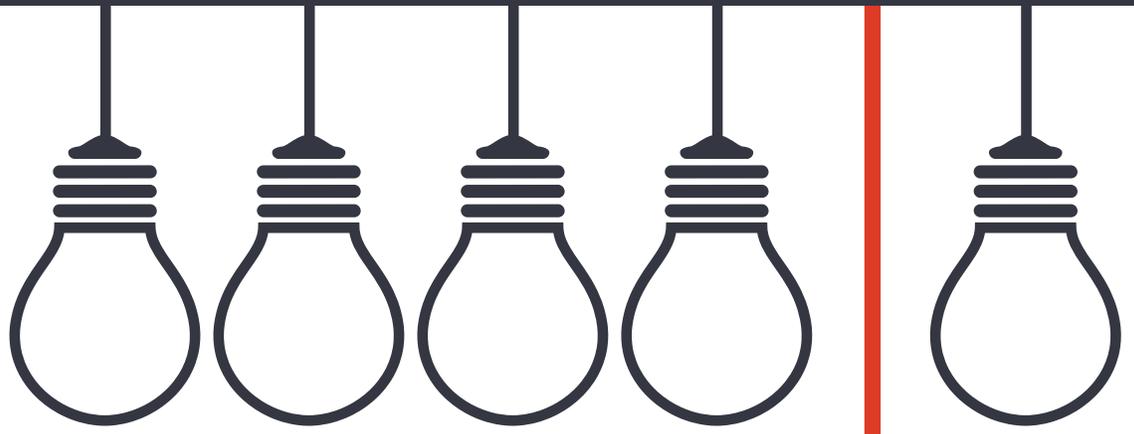
Public relations is the practice of building relationships between brands and their audiences, using a variety of methods. Placing stories is just one of these methods. Public relations can be executed without media relations, but media relations doesn't happen without PR. If media relations complements your brand-building strategy, creating relationships with members of appropriate media is key.

Public relations creates a brand's story.
Media relations broadcasts it.

A great public relations strategy helps an organization find its unique stories and identify the audience they want to reach. With media relations, these stories are given a platform and distributed widely. Evolving technology means there are more ways that organizations can reach audiences, such as through social media and blogging.

Public relations has many paths to success.
Media relations achieves one of them.

The number of media placements a PR team secures is not the only measure of success. Other sources of value for an organization can include level of engagement with popular influencers or bloggers. With that in mind, setting expectations for measuring success is essential. If media placements are important, define what that success would look like and plan to achieve it.



Thought leadership works on all platforms

Thought leaders are subject-matter experts who have built a loyal following by sharing knowledge and skills in specific areas. Thought leaders provide timely, relevant content in useful forms. This can include white papers, speeches, webinars, infographics, videos, blogs or social media posts.

Thought leadership allows executives and others to play an upfront role in guiding the future of their industries. Consider that the goal is not to immediately sell products or services, but rather to be known as a respected, trusted resource. To build that kind of reputation, it's crucial to look at the 3 C's of Thought Leadership: Content, Credibility, Commitment.

Think about *your content.*

What knowledge and experience do you have that would serve audiences and answer their most pressing questions? What are your goals? What do you want the company to stand for? Identify your in-house experts and brainstorm ideas for content they can deliver.

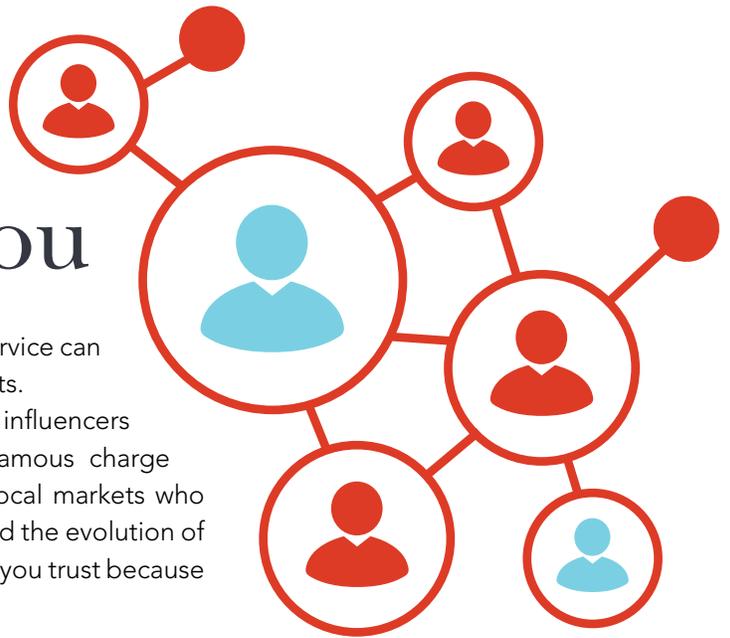
Think about *your credibility.*

Effective thought leadership takes time to establish. It takes consistent posting of relevant, valuable content that prompts audiences to look to those executives and their company for wisdom and industry knowledge. The professionals will tell you to be patient. It takes time to build a brand.

Think about *your commitment.*

Some organizations use in-house experts, while others hire agencies to develop editorial calendars, write and edit original content, pitch guest articles, and schedule social media posts. If becoming a thought leader is important to you, the commitment to a thoughtful plan is critical.

Why the rise of micro-influencers may be good for you



Having the endorsement of someone who uses a product or service can have a big impact on an organization's ability to attract new clients.

Many luxury brands hire celebrities, actors, and athletes to be influencers of target audiences in their marketing campaigns and the famous charge famously for their opinions. But what about smaller brands in local markets who need to speak to a local target audience? That need has prompted the evolution of micro-influencers — friends, neighbors, or others whose opinions you trust because they're "real" people.

What is a micro-influencer?

- Micro-influencers are everyday consumers with an active and growing media presence (typically between 1,000 and 100,000 followers) who focus on one social media platform, such as Facebook or Instagram.
- Authentic and trusted, micro-influencers produce a vast amount of content that is non-promotional and is geared toward advice and entertainment. This makes their recommendations more powerful. Studies show that 82 percent of people who get a recommendation from a micro-influencer are more likely to follow it.

Why are they effective?

- Micro-influencers are affordable, between \$50 and \$1,000 a post, if they participate in a pay-to-play partnership. They have a target audience that may dovetail with yours, so your investment has greater return. They bring value to your extended audience campaign.
- They feel "familiar" to consumers, who consider them trusted friends.

How do you find one?

- Look at your current follower base, and see who regularly comments, checks your feed, finds your location, and shares your posts. They can be potential micro-influencers.
- Use search tools to find blogs, vlogs and social feeds that cater to your audiences. Review and vet them, but don't be shy about contacting them to see if they are open to promoting products and services.
- Research hashtags and keywords to find influencers in your space. Be specific in your search terms.

Why your media pitches fail (and what to do about it)

Media pitching is highly challenging. Some surveys suggest that 95 percent of pitches never get a media response. Here are five reasons your pitches may be falling on deaf ears and suggestions for how to fix that.

You didn't do your homework.

Agencies that “spray” a press release at any target are usually ones that get limited pick-up, tick off reporters and give the rest of us a bad name. PR firms that excel at media relations spend time doing the homework essential to successful pitching.

That means fully investigating the story idea or topic. Has it been covered? By whom and how recently? For each journalist, the same diligence is required. What has she already covered this year? Does our topic align with what he usually writes about? Preparing a thoughtful media list makes it more likely that contacts will find your idea interesting and relevant. That's not a guarantee of an article, but it's a good start.



You didn't find a way to enter the news cycle.

Successful firms practice “newsjacking,” or finding ways to link a client's angle into trending news. This increases the chances of getting a positive response from the media. A former Page One editor for *The New York Times*, who now works as a senior consultant for a PR agency, gives this advice for pitching top-tier media outlets: “News outlets like *The Times* that are aimed at a broad audience seldom do single-source stories, and almost never cover one product, person or event in isolation. Understand the way who or what you're pitching fits (or swims against) a trend. Look for a wider, national or global angle.”



You made questionable claims.

By nature, journalists are skeptical. They are suspicious of unsubstantiated claims. Be prepared to defend your assertions, and if you have research to bolster your statements, share it.



Your pitch wasn't newsworthy.

One of the most important skills for media pitching is sound news judgment. This is developed through experience and regular news consumption. You will never develop that sixth sense for which story has “legs” unless you are routinely reading, listening and watching the news. News judgment is also closely aligned with media audiences. What passes for news in a weekly community publication usually doesn't qualify as news for a major newspaper like *The New York Times*. Make sure you are pitching to outlets whose readers and listeners will find your client's story of interest. Be prepared to make your case to the journalist or editor you're pitching, and don't be afraid to engage in a little back-and-forth to see if you can find common ground. One skilled PR professional uses this response when a reporter turns her down: “What would make this story more interesting to you?” This one question has been successful in turning “no” into strong placements for clients.



Your timing was bad.

Timing is important on several levels. First, don't pitch a journalist too close to his or her deadline. Make it a point to know what time of day is best to pitch a particular outlet. There are usually a couple of golden hours in the day, before stories need to be filed, when reporters and editors are more open to hearing from PR folks. Speaking of timing, successful pitching requires patience. Unless you are pitching a time-sensitive, breaking news story, don't be discouraged by a long wait before you get a reply. A shrinking news hole means it can take weeks (and sometimes months) before a journalist has time to respond to a good pitch. This is where personal relationships can help accelerate consideration (or at least get you an acknowledgement that they received the pitch).



Best social media practices

Social media presents the healthcare industry with many opportunities to drive patient and client engagement, share research and learn from other professionals, establish authority and ultimately grow an organization or institution. Doing so successfully, while remaining in compliance with stringent patient privacy regulations, takes some thought and intention.

1 Choose wisely

You don't have to be all things to all people. And if you try, your brand and its message will become diluted. When determining the best platform for you, consider the benefits of the five most popular social sites and how each would best fit with your social media strategy.



2 Promote employee advocacy

Employees can be your best advocates, spreading the word about the great things your company is doing. But in healthcare, this has to be done with care, sensitivity, and respect. Social media doesn't have to be blocked for employees, but it should be monitored, and measures should be put in place that ensure compliance and patient privacy protection. There should be company-wide social media guidelines and employee training.



3 Prepare for negative posts

Unfavorable comments and posts will happen, but it's how you respond to them that matters most. Acknowledge the complaint and let the person know you are working to resolve the issue quickly. Then, respond personally to try to move the conversation off-line. Don't delete the post or try to hide it because that sends the wrong message to your audience. Keep it up and let everyone see how well you handled the situation.



4 Work with an expert

Don't expect your nurses, doctors, researchers, insurance providers, etc. to take the lead on social media initiatives. Fold them into the process, rely on them for support, input, and participation, but they shouldn't be the point person. Consider hiring an in-house social media expert or work with a PR firm that specializes in healthcare strategy. They can help define and direct the strategy, pulling in key leaders from the community and your organization, developing a social media presence that is effective, informative, and engaging.



FACEBOOK

This is the favorite platform for healthcare organizations that want to drive conversations and promote public awareness and engagement. If you have limited resources, focus your campaigns and budget here.

TWITTER

Consumers use Twitter to experience, create and report specific moments in real-time. This is a great space to respond to questions, create bite-size shareable moments, and quickly resolve issues or concerns.

INSTAGRAM

This platform helps build brand awareness, engage the community, and recruit new employees. It can also drive the discovery of new products and services. It's based on visuals, so if your organization is image-oriented this is your home.

SNAPCHAT

If you want to target young people, this is the place. Snapchat allows customized geo-filters and tailored photo lenses, making content immediately fun and engaging.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn considers itself the place for professionals to stay informed about their network and industry. Employee advocacy is important on this content-rich, B2B platform. When an organization puts content here, employees need to amplify and spread it.

The power of emotional marketing

Healthcare covers a spectrum of feelings – happiness, sadness, confidence, joy, fear, sympathy, hope, love, sorrow.

While you may be the most technically talented provider in your industry, if you are not telling potential clients that you care about them as people, you are part of their community, you are trying to make a positive difference, will they come to you?

It's a good question to ask yourself to learn more about your target market and the brand message you want to convey. It is where emotional marketing comes into play in the marketing strategy.

Understand why emotional marketing is important

The best marketing programs go beyond educating the public on who you are and what you do; they resonate with the public, bringing out an emotional response that lasts. The healthcare industry is inherently emotional, as powerful situations and life-changing moments happen every day. Combining the rational side of healthcare with emotional marketing allows you to create compelling campaigns that forge lasting connections, and utilizing social media to deliver those stories to the public is a wonderful and effective way to build your brand.



Leverage user-generated content

Nothing evokes an emotional response like a great personal endorsement from a client who has benefited from your skills and experience, and your caring.

- Ask your patients and clients what they think and what they have experienced.
- Identify where your audience lives on social media and where your patient advocates could make a difference. When they post, ask permission to share on your own channels.
- Tell your clients and followers that you are looking for user-generated content and give them strong guidelines to help them create it for you.



Practice emotional storytelling

These tips from Buffer explain how to use each platform:

- **Facebook:** Write the entire story in a post (check out The Humans of New York for an example). Create a photo album, then every time you add another photo, Facebook re-shares the whole album. Go Live on Facebook to tell your story and produce fresh video.
- **Instagram:** Use the photo captions to tell the full story behind the image. Turn one of your most recent blog posts into a series of Instagram stories.
- **Twitter:** Do a tweetstorm – share a train of thought longer than the character limit in a series of posts. Attach multiple photos to your tweet. Use a trending hashtag or create your own.
- **On Snapchat:** Design a relevant Snapchat Geofilter.



How to use content from clients and patients



FACEBOOK

Share user-generated video, photos, and stories about your brand.



TWITTER

This is a great platform for visual content, which is easy to share. If you decide to retweet, make sure you are following regulations for your industry.



LINKEDIN

Before sharing content, vet it to make sure it is relevant to the professional side of your company.



INSTAGRAM

This platform doesn't allow the type of sharing that others permit. Many Instagram users take a screenshot of content and add proper attribution in a credit when they post it.

Got the picture?

How visual content works for you

A well-chosen photo on Twitter. An infographic on LinkedIn. A Live Chat on Facebook. Linking to strong content online. They all serve the same purpose – audience engagement, building brand, establishing credibility – but visuals can help an organization tell its story and engage potential audiences in a powerful, emotional way.

Start with the basics and focus on the now

Don't let a perceived lack of know-how prevent you from capturing images that matter. You can always follow up later with higher-quality visuals and an original post that further explains the story. Just get the images that are powerful and support your brand story.

Keep in mind that horizontal images and video work best for most social channels, although a vertical orientation is required by Snapchat. Every social platform requires a different size image for it to look attractive in the feed. Make sure you know the differences.



Embrace the power of video

Videos pull people in, sparking interest and allure. Video content is highly memorable, threading human emotion into your organization's message and sparking engagement. Videos help people feel connected. It's a way to constantly display care and support, educate, and inform.

- Make sure you have a plan that identifies the purpose of the video, the target audience, and the process.
- Start with short videos, 30 seconds or less, if you're new to this (the professionals at an agency can guide you, and there are online resources you can tap).
- Don't sell yourself; tell the story. Focus on what the audience is going to get out of an interaction with your brand. This isn't a commercial. It's an experience.



Be educational

Part of the healthcare industry's mission is to educate its customer base, most often patients, on how best to stay healthy and prevent disease. Visual content, such as infographics and explainer videos, accomplish the task of conveying an educational message. By offering visual guides, organizations can help people better understand complex topics. And you can use the content on multiple channels!

Invite the community

To reach more people and have a greater impact, pull city and community partners into your social media plans. Work with celebrities, associations, and civic officials to create a wider buy-in and more strategic partnerships.

For instance, to kick off a campaign, post visuals of any number of key influencers with the cause's hashtag, then tag people and places to influence cross-promotional sharing. This type of campaign often sparks a trickle down to the audience, motivating others to post images of their own, using your hashtag or sharing your page.

Share real-time footage from conferences, health fairs, seminars, and classes. This helps your audience connect with what you're doing to improve your services for them.

Facebook still tops

Facebook is the top network healthcare organizations use to drive conversions and promote public awareness and engagement. If you have limited resources, focus your campaigns and budget on this robust social platform. Create consistent, engaging content that is educational, interesting, and aligned with your brand's message. The marketing power behind this platform is astounding, and if used properly, can help you reach an infinite number of potential customers.

1 Learn organic posting basics

Organic posts are posts that you publish on your business Facebook page without paid distribution.

Organic posts can be used to disseminate health information, give tips and advice, promote your service, solidify brand recognition, and engage with your audience. Organizations should post at least 2-3 times per week and link to an image, video, or relevant article or blog from other channels to increase the likelihood that it's seen by your followers. Tag people, business pages, events or partner organizations when posting content related to them. Tagging helps you tap into their followers, pushing the relevancy and reach of your post.

2 Keep up with Facebook's rule changes

In 2018, Facebook began to shift ranking to make its News Feed more about connecting with people and less about consuming media. Why? Because there is just so much content out there. Competition for visibility on the News Feed is high, so try these tips:

- **Narrow your audience:** Targeting allows you to choose which factors — age, geographic location, income, education, and interests — matter most in reaching people who would most likely interact with your post.
- **Nudge your audience:** Remind your fans that they can go to the Pages Feed in the left sidebar of their News Feed to see content from Pages they've liked.

3 Invest in video

Posting your own videos and sharing videos from other channels grabs attention, drives more traffic, makes you more memorable, and better explains who you are. Videos could show a tour of your office, share a success story, explain a procedure, or provide awareness and education around a cause. Keep videos short and to the point and make the first 30 seconds count. Facebook ranks live videos higher in the news feed, so try Facebook Live for a patient testimonial or interview, a quick report from an important conference or seminar, or an invitation to an event or class sponsored by your organization.

4 Stay consistent by scheduling posts

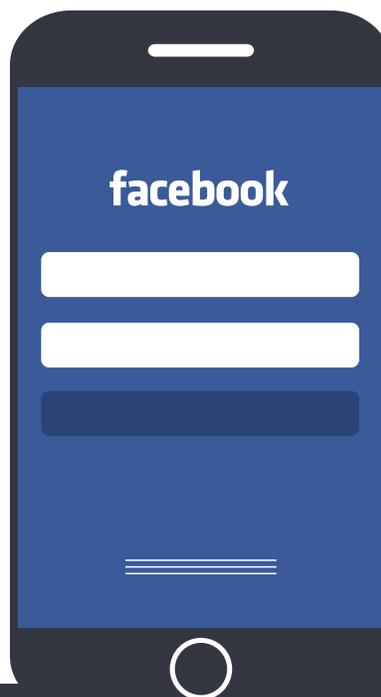
Posting too much can turn away an audience, and so can posting too little. Establish a solid cycle by earmarking days of the week for specific kinds of content. For example: success story Monday, education Tuesday, community Wednesday, etc. Instead of using an external service, schedule content directly from Facebook.

5 Experiment with boosting

Boost your posts by paying Facebook to promote increased reach and visibility. There are a number of options to select when boosting a post, but the most important is defining or targeting the audience. Customize the reach to only those you think would be interested in the content — your ideal client or patient.

6 Measure your strategy

The Facebook analytics platform, Insights, is free, and it can help you track engagement, reach, follower size, boosted posts and more. This is a great way to gauge the effectiveness of your strategy and adjust as necessary.



Sources: inboundmd.com, theverge.com, reachlocal.com, healthcaresuccess.com, disruptiveadvertising.com

You can't beat learning to tweet

As the number one news app in the world, Twitter has carved out a niche encouraging “town square” conversations that focus on real-time information meant to engage, educate, and inspire. Healthcare organizations can use this platform to spread industry specific information about their practices and specialties, and to join the ongoing discussions surrounding healthcare globally.

With Twitter, as with other social platforms, remember to follow the rules and regulations specific to your healthcare position. Make sure you're in compliance with all HIPAA regulations by respecting the privacy of your patients and coworkers. Do not directly reference anyone as a patient online and avoid giving clinical advice. Instead, encourage them to make an appointment at your place of business or another institution.

1 Post when it matters

There isn't a magic number of times to post in a day or in a week. Tweet when you really have something to share or say. Don't fill gaps with meaningless content that brings no value to your followers. What should you share? Your own thoughts (quick tips, blog posts, industry-related news articles, conferences, etc.) and content others have shared that centers around relevant healthcare topics that are important to your clients, patients, and profession. This positions your company as a true source within the industry.

2 Use (but don't over use) hashtags

Hashtags on Twitter are a wonderful tool for a few reasons: They help drive traffic by putting your tweets in front of the eyes of millions of people interested in learning about a certain topic, they help categorize your content and increase tweet longevity, and they expand your audience both on a local and international level. The Twitter userbase is huge, but by appropriately tagging your posts, you can shrink it down to better target the right audience. Use hashtags to target key audiences, hospitals, causes, trending topics, devices, diseases and conditions, and industry conferences. The hashtags your organization uses on a regular basis should be a mixture of common/popular hashtags used within your industry and a few of your own to categorize your content. Only use two to three hashtags in a single tweet (otherwise you may come off as spammy) and consistently use about 10-15 hashtags over time to create a searchable flow of information followers can count on.

3 Create a Twitter Moment

If you've already mastered the basics of Twitter and are looking to take your organization's impact up a notch, check out Twitter Moments. Twitter's storytelling feature allows brands and individuals to share and create stories by stringing together their own tweets, the tweets of others, and other multimedia that's been uploaded to the channel. By creating a slideshow story format, healthcare organizations can dive deeper into a topic or tell a more comprehensive story in smaller segments.

4 Try it as a professional resource

Beyond audience engagement, Twitter can be used for your organization's professional development. Keep the pulse of trending hot topics through hashtag monitoring while finding some inspiration for your own marketing plan. Use this dynamic social platform to get to know others around the world in your professional field and expand your own frame of reference.



Instant gratification on Instagram

Instagram is a powerhouse social network built around photo and video sharing. It is a great way to tell stories and showcase the human side of healthcare by focusing on patient narratives, clinician or staff spotlights, and community involvement. While the total number of users is smaller than on other social networks, Instagram has the most engaged user base. Instagram is a largely untapped resource that could help healthcare organizations connect with younger social media users.

1 Set up your profile

Instagram used to have one account option for both businesses and individuals, but that's no longer the case. Businesses can now choose to be recognized as a business account, giving them all the basics of a personal account, but also providing access to real-time metrics, audience insights, ads, and calls to action. Be sure to have a clear profile photo of your face or company logo. Draft a simple bio that includes a brand slogan or short description of your organization. Your bio is also the only place where you can include an outbound link so consider linking to your website or blog.

2 Define a content strategy

Ask yourself why you are using Instagram and what kind of audience you want to reach. Do some competitive research of Instagram accounts in your industry and take note of what kind of content is posted and which posts have the highest engagement levels. If your business has multiple departments or sectors, consider creating different Instagram accounts so the content can be tailored to a particular audience.

3 Become more discoverable

The more frequently you post, the more likely you will appear toward the top of people's searches. We recommend posting 1-2 times per day. In your photo caption, tag the location where you're posting and the accounts of others in the post (using the @ symbol). Add hashtags with a short slogan, phrase, or simply the name of your business with every post (using the # symbol), encouraging others to use it when posting photos related to your organization. Try [Symplur's Healthcare Hashtag Project](#) to help identify hashtags for medical conditions, conferences, and chats. Follow others in your industry and like and comment on accounts related to your niche. Users can find you through these connections, spreading awareness of your Instagram profile.

4 Create a sustainable posting practice

Develop an editorial calendar and ask a variety of team members to participate in posting. Use a social media scheduling tool, such as Buffer or Hootsuite, to post directly to Instagram. Cross-link social accounts so that a photo and caption shared on Instagram is automatically shared on sites like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Flickr, and Foursquare.



Sources: [smithandjones.com](#), [hootsuite.com](#), [mashable.com](#)

Snapchat is a snap to use

Snapchat is one of the more popular mainstream social media platforms. Its simple design and easy-to-use interface makes it a hit, especially among Millennials, Gen X and Gen Z audiences. A mobile-only app, Snapchat allows you to send a photo or Snapchat Story to friends in your community. Snaps are only visible for 24 hours, so there is a finite shelf life to the content. Depending on your business and the type of audience you'd like to engage, Snapchat could be the perfect fit for you.

1 Audience is everything

As with any social media platform, make sure Snapchat is worth your time and investment.

According to Omnicore, more than 70 percent of Snapchat users are under 34 years old (45 percent are between 18 and 24) and 70 percent are female. If your product or service is geared toward a younger population, such as an orthodontist, dermatologist, maternity facility, or sports medicine, this could be a great space for you.

2 Now, not later

This platform is designed for temporary, but consistent engagement with the virtual community through unique content, fun filters, and real-time information. It requires a solid understanding of the platform and the time necessary to keep up with "snapping" and consistent engagement. When you open the app on your phone, the screen defaults to a back-facing camera because the idea is to snap a real-time photo or video. Then you can add filters, emojis, stickers and links (available on the app), include a short message, and post to your followers and friends. You can also tag other users. And don't forget to add a link, which is helpful when promoting a specific brand, event, product, or cause. If you don't want to send the Snap (photo) immediately, save it to your Snapchat memories and decide later when to send it and who should see it.

3 Tell a story

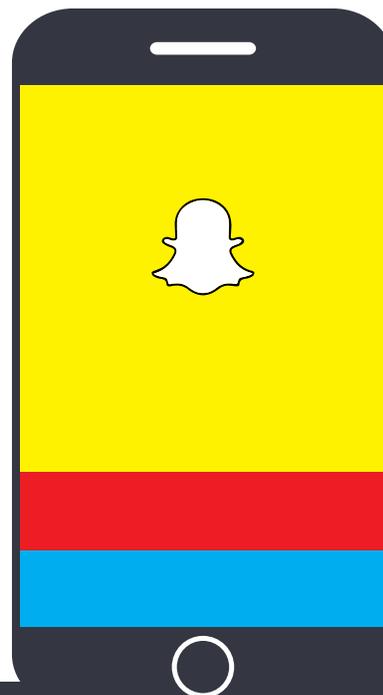
A Snapchat story is a select collection of Snaps that play in the order you took them. Stories last 24 hours and are a great way to piece together a larger narrative for your audience. **Our Stories** are collections of Snaps submitted from Snapchatters in a community, collected and categorized to capture a place, event or topic from different points of view. Snapchat also creates **Live Stories** during big events and conferences. To get your Snap included in a Live Story, turn on your phone's location services so Snapchat knows you're at an event and can alert you to any location-specific filters.

4 Sponsor custom Geofilters

Geofilters allow users to send Snaps from specific locations and events. Filters allow you to embed a symbol or recognized design element into your images. Geofilters can be applied based on a certain theme or holiday, like National Autism Awareness Day or World AIDS Day. Snapchat makes it easy for any user to design a Geofilter, so consider developing one for a fundraising campaign that includes an "I donated" sticker, or use a custom filter for breast cancer awareness month showcasing survivors.

5 Sponsor custom Lenses

Sponsored lenses are a bit more interactive than Geofilters. While filters are applied after a video or picture is taken, and then sent to friends or added to your Snap Story, lenses change the actual look of the user. Lenses have special facial technology that allow users to become something else, like an animal, holiday figure, princess, and more. Sponsoring a lens related to your product, cause or brand is a great way to be creative and fun, boosting your engagement and reach in the process.



Sources: smithandjones.com, hootsuite.com, mashable.com

The ins and outs of LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a vibrant space where healthcare organizations have the opportunity to provide thought leadership, insights into emerging industry trends, and showcase their key attributes – attracting potential patients, B2B leads, and prospective job applicants. Here are five ways to make your presence on LinkedIn really stand out of the crowd.

1 Set up a company page

Write a company description that describes what you do and who your clients are. Use a professional narrative format that is emotionally compelling, but avoid buzz words and be as transparent as possible. With a 2,000 character limit, focus on your company's mission and brand and include a brief overview of product offerings. Add a showcase page, also known as a product page, to promote specific offerings and products, or tailor the page to specific audiences. Make sure your employees use the same company description on their profile pages so the organization's message is consistent.

2 Become a thought leader

The most active members have something to say that others want to hear. As a healthcare organization, you have a wealth of professional knowledge, education, and opinions based on experience that many within the industry and beyond would benefit from knowing. Consistently publish top-tier content including case studies, listicles, how-to or best practice pieces, industry studies, and commentary on industry trends. This kind of content not only influences potential patients, it also attracts prospective staff interested in working for a forward-thinking, innovative industry leader. Ask your employees to share this content with their networks.

3 Comment on curated content

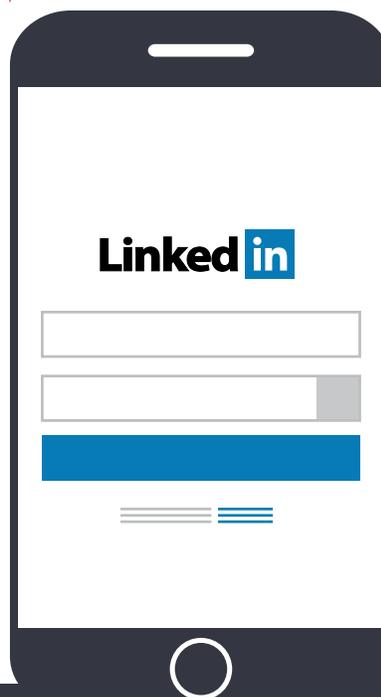
The most successful and active companies on LinkedIn don't focus on purely self-promotion, they seek out the best industry content from other sources. They share those links on their own company pages. Simply sharing the link isn't enough — the key is putting your own spin on the content by briefly describing why it matters or providing a fresh opinion on the topic. When any of your medical staff is published in a trade publication for your industry, post a link to that article on your company page. This provides a valuable endorsement of your staff's medical expertise.

4 Participate actively

Medical professionals should craft a personal profile that presents the best elements of their personal brand. A complete profile is more easily discovered by colleagues and healthcare industry leaders, forging important connections with those who can make referrals and recommendations. LinkedIn allows you to join professional groups where you can share relevant content and network with others in your specific field.

5 Sponsor important content

Similar to other social media platforms, LinkedIn has a suite of sponsored content services. Sponsoring content in the news feeds of key audiences can help surface your brand, getting your content in front of prospective contacts and clients. Use pay-per-click, not pay-per-impression, to invest in real action or engagement. Through in-depth targeting, sponsored content can reach a highly interested and engaged audience, driving real leads and building brand awareness.



Sources: linkedin.com, inprela.com, weatherbyhealthcare.com, forbes.com, healthcaresuccess.com

Social channels shouldn't be the only owned media you use

Social media channels can be educational, entertaining, and engaging forms of communicating with a target audience, but they're not the only forms of owned media that allow an organization to "shake hands" with prospective clients.

Is your website a "wow-site"?

Your website can be the most important form of owned media you have at your fingertips. This is where people learn about your organization and your services, schedule appointments, and seek out professional advice. Ensure your website is easy to search, has current content, uses great visuals, and connects with your social media platforms. Remember, without a great site, potential clients won't visit or follow you anywhere else.



More bang from your blog

Blogging is a great way to improve your organization's reputation, attract new clients and patients, educate your audience, and improve your website's searchability. Fresh, original content sparks conversation in your community and plays a strong role in building your reputation as a subject matter expert. Blogs have a more permanent footprint as you can refresh and republish the content on all of your owned media channels.



Action in the inbox

Email marketing nurtures relationships with current and prospective patients and clients by keeping your brand top of mind. Education-based emails are more successful than promotional or direct sales content. Share treatment options, wellness tips, general health topics, and your latest blog posts to keep your audience engaged. This type of content will increase action in the inbox in the form of open and click-through rates.



Education is a key to success

For research organizations, teaching hospitals, universities, laboratories, foundations or medical associations, white papers, and research papers may be one of the best ways to connect with your ideal audience. Using empirical data to report on information about cutting-edge studies or research enhances your reputation and brand awareness, propelling your organization into the limelight as a thought leader in the health industry.



Be my guest ... writer

Getting your content published on other print or digital channels expands your reach and influence.

FIND THE RIGHT HOME

Make sure the publications or sites you are targeting accept contributed articles and appeal to the audience you are seeking.

ADD VALUE

Say something new by providing insights or analysis that reflect your knowledge and expertise, but also highlight interesting topics

OFFER EXCLUSIVITY

Offer publishers exclusivity, but let them know you will shop the article around if they pass on it.

BE GENUINE

Let your personality and voice shine through. Potential clients and patients want to get to know you in an authentic way.

NO SELF-PROMOTION

This is not the space for pushing your own business and services. Editors will run if they sniff advertorial content.

Conclusion

Healthcare communication stands at a critical crossroads today. Never before have communicators had access to so many tools and channels to help them share their organization's story. At the same time, new regulations and growing privacy concerns have raised the stakes for healthcare communicators.

It is no longer enough for a healthcare provider to rely solely on traditional media relations. Astute organizations must work across all communications channels in their quest to reach multiple audiences.

Put yourself in the shoes of your patients, customers and partners as you develop and implement your PR program. Make sure that you are compliant with all regulations as well as sensitive to privacy concerns. Consistent messaging across all platforms will help reinforce your position as a trusted provider, innovator and thought leader.



This guide was developed for healthcare communicators by PRGN, a global network of public relations firms. It represents the best practices in healthcare communications around the world. For more than 25 years, PRGN has tracked the best thinking in PR worldwide and shared it with local clients in multiple markets. To see how PRGN could help your organization, [contact us](#).