

# **A Practical Guide to Social Media For Educators and Physicians**

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# Introduction

We created the Practical Guide to Social Media For Educators and Physicians to teach colleagues, trainees, and other health care professionals how to use social media as a tool to complement and promote the work you already do.

In this guide you will learn how to create an online identity, build a community, interact with the community, and measure your impact.

We know that for some this is a steep learning curve. Whether you have a fear of social media incompetence or visibibliophobia (fear of social media), it can usually be remedied with support by champions of social media. Never fear! The Share Club is here to help and we promise to make it fun!

## About Us

The Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM) is an association of nearly 5,000 innovative family medicine educators. These teachers include medical school professors, preceptors, residency program faculty, residency program directors, and others involved in family medicine education.

The Share Club is a group of STFM members who understand social media and champion its use to advocate for family medicine education topics on social media.

## Why does it matter if I don't use social media?

I'm sure you are asking yourself, **“But I'm a health care professional, why does it matter if I am on Facebook or Twitter?”**

Social media is an opportunity for an individual or organization to create and maintain a professional identity and brand online.

### *For Individuals*

Doctors and educators can use social media to connect with other professionals, follow the latest research trends, and manage their online reputation. Also, an individual's social media account will appear at the top of internet search results ahead of physician rating sites. Using social media allows you to share your perspective and expertise with a potential patient or employer.

If you don't have an active presence on social media, you're missing out on the opportunity to:

- manage your online reputation
- be noticed as an expert in your field
- connect with others who share your passions
- easily follow the latest medical research, news, and trends
- quickly network with other experts who could be potential collaborators in a future project

### *For Companies*

If your organization doesn't have an active presence on social media, you're missing out on the opportunity to:

- be noticed as an expert in your field
- connect with potential customers or employees (patients, students, educators, etc.)
- collaborate with other organizations on projects of mutual interest

Don't miss these opportunities!

# Identity

## Developing a Vision

Before signing up for a social media account, think about why you'd want to get involved and build a vision statement for you or your company on social media.

A vision statement is a one-sentence statement clearly describing the long-term desired change resulting from an organization or program's work.

Answer the questions below to build your vision statement. The vision statement defines your purpose and describes aspirations. The vision statement will keep you on track whether you are doing this for yourself or managing social media accounts for an organization.

Ask yourself these questions first. Use the space below to do this work!

What do you want to accomplish by using social media?

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How can social media be used as a tool to enhance your professional or organizational vision?

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How much time and resources will you invest to manage your social media activity?

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Who is your target audience?

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## Building a Vision

What are your core values and principles?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What do you see your social media conversations being like in 1 year? 5 years?

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What are some keywords or phrases that reflect that ideal future?

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## Writing the vision statement

Now take a look at your answers, and try to sum them up in a one-sentence vision statement that includes what you want to accomplish with social media in the short term and long term and who your target audience is. The vision statement should be inspirational, clear, memorable, and concise.

### Example statements:

Business: “Striving to be the world’s leader in patient experience, clinical outcomes, research, and education through interaction with thought leaders and sharing outstanding content in these areas.”

Personal: “To receive support from, and to give support to, family medicine educators in my home state who teach students interested in sports medicine.”

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## How to use the vision statement

Use your vision statement to make sure that you’re staying on track for what you or your company wants to accomplish with social media. Look over your posts and see if what you are posting aligns with your vision statement. Ask yourself, “does this social media post help me fulfill my vision?” If the answer is no, then go back to your vision statement and brainstorm how you can move yourself back on track.

- Review how you are using social media to see if it is aligning with your vision statement every quarter.

## Keypoints

- ✓ Know why you want to be on social media and how much work you want to put into it
- ✓ Create a vision statement to guide you on what to post
- ✓ Review your posts quarterly to see if they align to your vision

## Defining Personal/Professional Boundaries

Social media makes it easy for anyone to participate in online dialogue. Physicians can play a role in combating misinformation and educating the general public on health issues or health care system issues. Yet **figuring out how to balance personal and professional perspectives can be a challenge.** The [Harvard Business Review](#) has recommended some strategies to manage this balance.

### *Audience Strategy*

You can adopt an audience strategy keeping personal and professional contacts separate. For example, rather than accepting a Facebook friend request from a co-worker, you may connect with him or her on LinkedIn instead. Perhaps you post only industry news or professional news on Twitter, but share your summer vacation stories and pet pictures on Facebook to your friends. A drawback is that as co-workers become friends, it can be difficult to keep that division of information shared.

### *Content Strategy*

Some people prefer to use a content strategy and only post information that presents a professional demeanor. For example, they will accept Facebook friend requests from co-workers and friends, and chose to only post information that presents a professional demeanor. The downside to using this approach is that people may be perceived as inauthentic or may not seem relatable.

### *Custom Strategy*

A strategy that takes more elbow grease is operating with a Custom strategy. This separates personal and professional contacts and posts different content tailored to each list. You can create [lists of friends in Facebook](#) and modify which groups of friends can see specific posts.

### **TIP**

In general, do not post anything that you would not want your parents or employer to read or to end up on the news. Privacy settings can be adjusted, but any of your connections could capture a screenshot and disseminate the picture. Be sure to express your ideas in a respectful manner. For personal accounts, you should include a disclaimer explicitly stating that the opinions expressed do not reflect the views of your employer or organization.

**Don't forget about HIPAA!**

It is important to remember that the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) rules on patient privacy extend to the social media sphere. The safest route would be to avoid writing about individual patients in case there is enough identifying information to fail to maintain patient confidentiality. Writing about conditions, management, and research in general terms protects individual patients, your professional reputation, and educates the public.

**Keypoints**

- ✓ Don't post anything you wouldn't want to be front page news
- ✓ Maintain patient confidentiality
- ✓ Be professional

## Creating Your Profile

# Twitter

### Picking Your Username

If you haven't created your Twitter account already, go to [twitter.com](https://twitter.com) and sign up. Your username should be something memorable, not just a name with many numbers. As a professional, it's useful to have your username contain your name or your title, such as KaylaSmith or KaylaMD. You may not want a long username as it counts toward characters when someone retweets or responds to you.

### What To Write In Your Profile Bio

**Focus on what you do and why people should follow you.** Be specific. You have 160 characters to complete your profile. Remember some of the keywords you thought of when developing your vision? Include keywords for search engine optimization (SEO). End with a fun fact in a tone that matches how conservative your industry is. Doing so can add some personality and make you more memorable.

**Complete the location and URL.** Completing the location and URL will increase the visibility of professional websites, blogs, and/or other media. If you're an individual, you could use a personal site, LinkedIn profile, blog, newsletter, or your company's website. If you're an organization, you could include a call to action and link to a landing page.

**Upload a current profile photo.** Don't use the default Twitter profile photo and be an egg! Individuals should use a professional headshot. If you don't have one, find someone to photograph you. You want good lighting and a non-distracting background that keeps the focus on your face. Organizations could use their branding logo. For the header picture, use a photo or photo collage that illustrates your work or product, a graphic that supports your mission, or get creative with a background photo that incorporates your profile picture. You could include more detailed contact information in the header picture or use the cover photo as advertising space and rotate it.



## Examples of Profiles

uses the Twitter  
username of the  
organizations  
she's involved in



**Natasha Bhuyan, MD**

@NatashaBhuyan

Family physician, Board of Directors  
[@TheAFMRD](#), Med Unit Alum  
[@ABCNewsHealth](#); interests in health  
policy, social justice, public health,  
medical education

📍 Phoenix, AZ

🕒 Joined September 2012

shares what  
she's interested  
in

uses popular  
hashtags to say  
who he is



**Chris Morley**

@morleycp

Social Scientist & Assoc Professor of  
[#familymedicine](#), [#publichealth](#) &  
psychiatry; Opinions here are my own;  
Publications: [bit.ly/morley\\_pubs](http://bit.ly/morley_pubs)

📍 Syracuse

🔗 [about.me/cpmorley](http://about.me/cpmorley)

🕒 Joined May 2010

links to his  
publications



## Facebook

### *Individual*

Facebook seems to pose a bigger quandary for some individuals on this social media platform. With over 1 billion Facebook users in the world, what does it mean to be “friends” with a colleague? We previously discussed developing an audience strategy to keep personal and professional contacts separate on social media. However, it can be challenging to set boundaries with students, trainees, or colleagues after accepting a “friend” request on Facebook. There is a solution!

We recommend creating either a separate Facebook account for professional use or using your current Facebook account and creating a filter list to limit the content that your colleagues can view on your page.

In fact, if you create a professional Facebook page, you can toggle between your personal and professional page for easy posting! Log in once and post from each separate Facebook account.

PAGE INFO	
Category	Websites & Blogs : Personal Website
Name	Dr. Kristine M. Diaz
Topics	Health psychology, Medical education and LGBT health
Facebook Web Address	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/DrKristineMDiaz">www.facebook.com/DrKristineMDiaz</a>
Start Date	Joined Facebook

After deciding your audience strategy, log into Facebook, click on your profile, then “Update Info.” From there, you can edit the Overview, Work and Education, Contact and Basic Info. For a Facebook page, use Facebook as a personal website, click “About,” then edit the different fields. Share your story in an authentic way. You have 160-225 characters in the About You section. Add a link to your website or landing page in the short description. Include keywords for SEO.

Similarly to the Twitter photos, add a profile photo as well as a cover photo. Make it consistent with your Twitter photos so that your brand is recognizable.

## Company Use

**Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM)**  
transforming health care through education  
Community & Government and Family Medicine Practice · Add A Category

Timeline **About** Career Center Photos More ▾

**About Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM)**

Overview  
**Page Info**

**PAGE INFO**

Category	Companies & Organizations : Non-Profit Organization
Name	Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM)
Subcategories	Community & Government and Family Medicine Practice
Facebook Web Address	www.facebook.com/STFM.org
Address	11400 Tomahawk Creek Parkway, Suite 540, Leawood, Kansas 66211
Start Date	Founded in 1967
Hours	<b>Mon-Fri:</b> 9:00 am-5:00 pm
Short Description	Transforming health care through education.

Use of a Facebook account for an organization is fairly straightforward. As an organization who starts a page, you can fill out three words that describe the page, fill out the Short Description, identify your product(s), and include contact information.

Log into Facebook, click on your profile, then “Update Info.” From there, you can edit the Overview, Work and Education, Contact and Basic Info. For a Facebook page, use Facebook as the organization, click “About,” then edit the different fields. Share your business’s story in an authentic way. You have 160-225 characters in the About You section. Add a link to your website or landing page in the short description. Don’t forget to include keywords for SEO. Similarly to the Twitter photos, add a profile photo as well as a cover photo. Make it consistent with your Twitter photos so that your brand is recognizable.

### **In General**

You don’t have to complete all the fields. Fill out as many as you can and return to it later. You can update it as things change.

If you need help finding the right-sized images for your profile, use a tool like Canva. There are social media image sizes guides that can be found online for help as well.

## **Keypoints**

- ✓ Fill out the profile section with keywords
- ✓ Upload a profile photo and header or cover photo
- ✓ Use the link sections to promote your website

# Connection

## Emojis, Hashtags, and Memes - Oh My!

### Emojis



Reading about how to post on social media may lead to the feelings demonstrated above by the emojis. Not familiar with emojis? Emojis have become popular as a means to communicate how an individual feels about a certain post or news item. Their popularity is gaining so rapidly on social media that companies are constantly creating new emojis. Whether or not to use emojis in your posts is an individual decision. It depends on the voice you or the organization is using with social media. You may use emojis if you want to be perceived as youthful or are reaching out to a millennial audience.

### Hashtags

Hashtags are effective on social media. A hashtag is distinguished by the pound sign “#” followed by a phrase, for example #STFM. Hashtags create an opportunity for a conversation amongst multiple social media users to occur on social media. If a hashtag is used by many people it becomes a trend. It can be used for online discussions in tweetchats like #HCLDR or #MedEd, a way to share information during a conference such as #STFM15 or #AAFPNC, or being part of a larger, trending topic like #worldcup. Do you want to be part of a conversation? Use the trending hashtag to join! Use [The Healthcare Hashtag Project](#) to discover hashtags and tweetchats. You also can create your own hashtags. If you choose this option, you want to create a specific hashtag that isn't too long to save characters.

### Images and Memes

Think a hashtag is the only way to get attention on social media? Wrong! Images increase the amount of traction you will obtain on your posts. This could be as simple as attaching a screenshot or gif to your tweet or post. A meme is a popular image used to communicate a picture, words, or thoughts of the poster. The degree to which an meme or another type of image used (e.g. infographic) has a lot to do with the skill and time demanded to create an image. You can use a stock photo or copy an image you think will communicate the content of your post.

### Keypoints

- ✓ Images are a reliable attention grabber
- ✓ Hashtags allow you to create or join a conversation
- ✓ Whatever the method, you can be creative in your conversation

## Ground Control to Major Tom

Imagine yourself as a big satellite transmitting information to a larger group of people. What information do you want to share with others? What do you want to say? Your posts should aspire to be consistent with your professional interests. Revisit your vision and intention for starting a professional social media account. You are in family medicine, right? Post about family medicine! Or what about primary care? Pretty easy, right? See, you got this.

You might be dreading more “work” to add to your day with using social media. However, if you follow or like other accounts with like-minded individuals/organizations, then you can easily retweet, quote, or share this information from your account. In fact, there are social media management tools, such as Hootsuite or Buffer, you can use to schedule and send posts for you.

As healthcare professionals, we become used to quantifying our work. I’m sure your next question will be, “How often to do I need to post from [Facebook/Twitter]?” You determine how often you want to post from your accounts. Post as little or as much as you want. Remember, the number of posts you make increases your visibility in a newsfeed (information that shows up when you log into your account). A social media management tool might benefit you if you want to send out multiple posts daily.

### Keypoints

- ✓ Identify the information you want to communicate with others
- ✓ Follow or Like social media accounts with similar professional interests
- ✓ Use a social media management tool to schedule and post for you

## Share

### Engagement

It’s called social media because it’s social! Get out there and interact with your followers. Kick back with a cup of tea and scroll through your home feed. As you skim, you will likely find conversations or posts that you want to explore further. Searching hashtags can help you quickly find topics that may interest you. Searching Twitter or Facebook with a pound sign (#) followed by a phrase or abbreviation (hashtag) will pull all tweets or posts tagged in that topic. Using [Twitter lists](#) also can help you focus on specific topics or people.

In Twitter, you can reply to an individual or organization, reply to multiple people mentioned in a tweet, or retweet with a comment. On Facebook, you can comment on posts and share them with your friends. Starting a dialogue can raise your or your organization’s visibility to others online. These interactions can lead to increasing your audience with more follows on Twitter or likes on Facebook. It also helps you build connections that may lead to collaborations or opportunities offline.

## **Keypoints**

- ✓ Reply to tweets and comment on posts
- ✓ Retweet others' tweets and share others' posts
- ✓ Favorite others' tweets and like others' posts

## **Reviewing Analytics**

When you first thought about getting involved in social media, you defined your goals for why you wanted to get involved. Now, it's time to think about goals and objectives so you can develop performance measures and track growth.

There are a variety of metrics that can be tracked. You can measure number of followers, referral visits to your website, or engagement statistics such as retweets, clicks, likes, and comments.

Reviewing this data on a monthly or even weekly basis can reveal growth and trends.

Tracking these metrics in a spreadsheet can keep data organized and chart your progress. Twitter Analytics allows you to export data from your last 500 tweets. Facebook Insights exports 180 days of activity. Other third-party tools are available to provide analytics. Sorting the data can give you an idea of what you're sharing that generates the most interest.

Studying factors that may increase engagement such as the type of content, time of post, and others can help you enhance your social media approach to reach your goals.

## **Keypoints**

- ✓ Track metrics
- ✓ Use a social media management tool
- ✓ Evaluate analytics on a monthly basis



## **And that's it!**

You're all set to be a social media professional. Now go out there and be social! If you join Twitter, be sure to tweet us and let us know that you're online.



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If you have any questions about social media or STFM in general, or want to contact the authors of this publication, contact Sarah Eggers, STFM Membership Marketing and Social Media Specialist at [seggers@stfm.org](mailto:seggers@stfm.org).

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