

The Ever-Changing Landscape of Social Media

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SPEAKERS:

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Staying Social on Social Media

The first speaker was Kim Stuart, who manages several social media accounts for both the American Society of Nephrology and the Council of Science Editors. She provided some practical "do's and don'ts," as well as a few tips on how to leverage the advantages of social media and navigate its pitfalls.

Do's

Do keep a consistent tone for the longevity of your brand. Ask yourself how you want to be perceived by your audience. Are you a reliable news source, or are you a more friendly and informal presence? Keep in mind you can have more than one account, each with a different tone.

Do tag relevant accounts outside of your regular audience of followers. Expand your reach through accounts that relate to specific subject matter.

Do be aware of the limitations of each platform. X, for example, allows only 280 characters, so a more in-depth post might be more appropriate for LinkedIn. Some platforms also make it more difficult to schedule posts ahead of time, so choose accordingly.

Do post regularly. On platforms like X, where there is so much happening, post regularly, otherwise your post will likely get lost.

Don'ts

Don't respond to hate comments. If someone is upset about something you can change, you may be able to respond to them directly, but responding to most hate comments only legitimizes them.

<https://doi.org/10.36591/SE-4703-11>

Don't use too many hashtags. Research shows that using more than 2 hashtags makes your post less effective. Keep in mind what is most relevant.

Don't use emojis. Unless you are 100% certain you know what they mean.

Don't worry too much about typos. If you are posting multiple times a day, no one will remember the typo, so it is not worth deleting and reposting.

How to Use Social Media to Promote Research

Kim Stuart also had the following tips:

Ask for social media handles when sending an acceptance letter to an author. Authors love talking about their research, and you can help introduce them to new audiences.

Look for accounts that are similar to yours and connect with their followers. You can also use the "people you may know" or "people you may like" section on some platforms.

Take advantage of each platform's unique features. X, for example, has a polling feature that can invite easy interaction with your post.

Use text that authors have already provided. When trying to convert an article into a 280-character post, take language directly from the abstract or the author's own summary statements. This also decreases the likelihood that your post will misrepresent the article.

Don't be afraid to try new platforms to find one that is right for you. With some users leaving X, and the future of platforms like TikTok being in doubt, we don't yet know where people will go next. Communities form naturally online, however, so pay attention to what people in your field are talking about and where they are discussing it.

A Physician-Scientist's Perspective

In the next presentation, Dr Connie Rhee offered a much more personal account of how she became involved with social media, how she uses it, and how her experience with Korean culture highlights the power of these networks.

Dr Rhee first sees social media as her "academic news channel," offering up-to-date information she otherwise would not see right away. The brevity of most social media posts also allows her to make time in her busy schedule. She also uses social media to cultivate career development, easily spreading news about conferences and events, acknowledging colleagues' accomplishments, and disseminating information about her lab to a broad

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audience, including internationally. She even uses it to help recruit staff, trainees, and faculty. In addition to the well-known platforms of X, Meta, and LinkedIn, Dr Rhee also engages with health care channels such as Doximity and ResearchGate, and the Student Doctor Network. She enjoys social media as a forum for healthy discussion and debate, as well as a way to just have fun and be social.

Dr Rhee next gave attendees a look at how she has personally seen social media transform South Korean culture and bring phenomena such as “K-Pop” to the United States. She noted that South Korea, at one time, was known as the “hermit kingdom.” Now, K-Culture is everywhere, and much of its popularity can be attributed to social media. While most session attendees raised their hands when asked if they’d heard of the band BTS, almost no one had heard of TVXQ, who is also incredibly popular in South Korea. Social media has been largely responsible for what has become popular in the United States, attesting to its power to connect cultures around the world incredibly quickly.

Like the previous speaker, Dr Rhee had her own personal list of don’ts, which included the following: Don’t post pictures of patients. Don’t engage in negative arguments. Don’t post nonwork-related content during work hours. Don’t post about others without their permission. However, do know when to disconnect.

Social Media: What, How, and Why

What

The final speaker was Chirag J Patel, who began by noting that social media is global and looks very different depending on where you are. A user in China won’t see any of the platforms or channels used in the United States. Platforms like WeChat are more popular in China, so it is important to know where your researchers are and what networks they use.

He also noted that new platforms are continually emerging, each with a different focus. Cassyni, for example, is dedicated to discovering and publishing research seminars, while Kudos is excellent for posting research summaries. Both work with journals to develop communities around their content.

How

Patel next focused on the following strategies for effective social media dissemination:

Use short-form videos. Video currently drives engagement, with much of user network time spent watching them. People are also much more likely to engage with a 30- to 60-second video rather than with a 20-minute one.

Use infographics and images. These also drive engagement; strong, high-quality visuals make a huge difference.

Use jargon-free plain language summaries. When posting about research, focus on why the research was done to generate strong hooks and headlines.

Use artificial intelligence to generate summaries. However, be wary of using audio summaries that purport to sound like human speech.

Engage in comment sections. Also, host your own “Ask Me Anything” Q&A sessions.

Be aware of the algorithms that companies use. They determine what you see and who sees what you post. An algorithm can put you into a bubble of like-minded users, so it is important to engage with people you don’t agree with and see who they follow. The algorithm can, however, work for you to curate personalized content.

Why

Despite its challenges, social media creates accessibility, democratizing availability of your content. It can also combat misinformation about your research. And finally, people are filled with passion and wonder about science. Many users log into social media every day, eager to learn something new. Seen this way, social media can be a wonderful way to expand our knowledge.