

Social media to reach your audience and partners

A summary of

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit. Electronic Media Branch, Division of News and Electronic Media, Office of the Associate Director for Communication. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/>



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Tool

Relevance For Public Health

The CDC provides an example of their 2009-2010 H1N1 and Seasonal Flu Outbreak Social Media Campaign. The CDC and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services worked together to use social media tools to provide consumers and partners with credible, science-based information. Similarly, public health organizations can use social media tools to engage stakeholders in real-time for high priority issues.

Description

[Social media tools](#) have become an effective way to expand reach, foster engagement and increase access to credible, science-based health messages. (A second edition of the tool is now [available](#).) Over the last several years, the use of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other social media tools to disseminate health messages has grown significantly. This toolkit, produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, offers resources for practitioners wanting to use social media in their work.

Using social media in health communication campaigns and activities encourages participation and public engagement. There are three key attributes of social media that make them highly effective as health communication tools:

- **Personalization** - content tailored to individual needs
- **Presentation** - timely and relevant content accessible in multiple formats and contexts
- **Participation** - partners and the public contribute content in meaningful ways

The CDC's social media team developed this toolkit by collecting lessons learned over a four year period. The goal is to help others develop strong social media at their organizations.

CDC's Top Lessons Learned from Using Social Media

1. Make strategic choices and understand the level of effort.
2. Go where the people are.
3. Adopt low-risk tools first.
4. Make sure messages are science-based.
5. Create portable content.
6. Facilitate viral information sharing.
7. Encourage participation.
8. Leverage networks.
9. Provide multiple formats.
10. Consider mobile phones.
11. Set realistic goals.
12. Learn from metrics and evaluate your efforts.

This toolkit is divided into the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. Social Media Tools
 - buttons and badges

These summaries are written by the [NCCMT](#) to condense and to provide an overview of the resources listed in the [Registry of Methods and Tools](#) and to give suggestions for their use in a public health context. For more information on individual methods and tools included in the review, please consult the authors/developers of the original resources.

- o image sharing
 - o content syndication
 - o RSS feeds
 - o podcasts
 - o online video sharing
 - o widgets
 - o eCards
 - o electronic games
 - o mobile health
 - o micro-blogs
 - o blogs
 - o social networking sites
 - o virtual worlds
3. Social Media Campaign Example: 2009-2010 H1N1 and Seasonal Flu Outbreak Campaign
 4. More Social Media Resources
 5. Social Media Communications Strategy Worksheet
 6. Social Media Evaluation Worksheet

Implementing the Tool

Who is Involved?

Anyone interested in using social networking to communicate public health messages, such as public health organizations, health care professionals and the public.

Steps for Using Tool

Using Social Media in Public Health: 2009-2010 H1N1 and Seasonal Flu Outbreak Social Media Campaign

The CDC uses their **2009-2010 H1N1 and Seasonal Flu Outbreak Social Media Campaign** as an example. By using multiple formats to disseminate messages, users had the option to participate based on their knowledge, level of access and engagement with social media. These tools included:

1. **Buttons and badges** were created for partners to post on their websites to inform visitors of the steps to take to stop the spread of H1N1 and seasonal flu.
2. **Widgets**, small portable applications, were created for users to add to blogs, social networking profiles or web pages to share H1N1 and seasonal flu information. A total of 11 flu-related widgets provided interactive resources on prevention, school guidance, seasonal flu updates, an interactive quiz and the FluView National Activity Map. CDC flu widgets were viewed more than 5 million times.
3. **Online video** sharing sites, such as YouTube, allow users to upload, view, share and comment on posted videos. CDC's YouTube channel, CDCStreamingHealth, provided 32 videos covering H1N1 topics, which were viewed 3.13 million times. The most popular video, "Symptoms of H1N1 (Swine Flu)," was viewed more than 2 million times and ranked in the top two videos across YouTube in the news and science category.
<http://www.youtube.com/user/CDCStreamingHealth>
4. **H1N1 podcasts** (both audio and video) were produced and available from the CDC.gov website and through the iTunes store. H1N1-related podcasts were viewed a total of 2.67 million times.
5. **eCards**, or electronic greeting cards, were developed for users to send flu-related health messages to friends, family and co-workers. eCards related to H1N1 and seasonal flu have been sent more than 22,000 times and viewed 103,000 times in total.
6. **CDC text messaging** campaign provided three health messages a week to more than 16,000 subscribers on important CDC information about H1N1 flu, seasonal flu and other health-related topics.
7. **Virtual worlds** are online environments where users can create a virtual persona (avatar) that can interact with other avatars in an online virtual environment. CDC partnered with Whyville, an educational virtual world for tweens ages 8-12 years old. The Whyville campaign featured virtual flu viruses and virtual vaccinations. At the end of the activity 14,749 Whyville citizens were vaccinated for the "WhyFlu" strain and 12,369 were vaccinated for the "WhyMe Flu" strain.
8. **Twitter** enabled CDC to provide real-time updates during the outbreak response. The CDCFlu and CDCemergency and CDCeHealth Twitter accounts used to share H1N1 information grew to a following of 1.28 million users.

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9. **Focus on Flu blog** was a joint partnership between CDC and WebMD. CDC subject matter experts served as guest bloggers to provide information on H1N1 vaccine safety, guidance for schools and child care programs and vaccine recommendations for older adults.

10. **Content syndication** was used by the CDC to make H1N1 and seasonal flu information available for partners to display on their own websites. Content syndication provided a streamlined process for disseminating credible and automatically updated flu content in real-time.

11. **Facebook** was one social networking site that CDC used to reach a younger audience than CDC.gov. The CDC Facebook page was used to share H1N1 and seasonal flu updates, provide social media tools, such as badges and widgets, for users to download and share, link to CDC.gov for additional information, post blogs from CDC subject matter experts and promote the CDC text messaging campaign.

Developing a Social Media Communications Strategy

A social media communication strategy should be only one part of a larger communication effort. Social media needs to be integrated into overall communication planning, activities and data collection. The components in the **Social Media Communications Strategy Worksheet** include:

1. Identifying target audience(s)
2. Determining objective(s)
3. Defining audience communication needs
4. Goal integration
5. Message development
6. Resources and capacity
7. Identify social media tools
8. Define activities
9. Identify your key partners and their roles and responsibilities
10. Define success for evaluation
11. Evaluate

The toolkit describes specific steps and tips for using the following social media tools:

- buttons and badges
- image sharing
- content syndication
- RSS feeds
- podcasts
- online video sharing
- widgets
- eCards
- electronic games
- mobile health
- micro-blogs
- blogs
- social networking sites
- virtual worlds

The last section provides a **Social Media Evaluation Worksheet** to help develop a basic structure for evaluating social media activities. This includes describing the inputs, activities, outputs and short- and long-term outcomes.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also offer Social Media Tools Guidelines and Best Practices, which have been developed from their projects. To access these resources, see [CDC Social Media Tools Guidelines and Best Practices](#).

Evaluation and Measurement Characteristics

Evaluation

Has not been evaluated

Validity

Information not available

Reliability

Information not available

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Methodological Rating



Unknown/No evidence

Tool Development

Developers

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/>

Method of Development

The Electronic Media Branch, Division of News and Electronic Media, Office of the Associate Director of Communication at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed this toolkit. It was designed to provide guidance and to share the lessons learned in more than four years of integrating social media into CDC health communication campaigns, activities and emergency response efforts.

Release Date

2010

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Resources

Title of Primary Resource	The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit
File Attachment	None
Web-link	http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/tools/guidelines/socialmediatoolkit.html
Reference	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). <i>The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit</i> . Electronic Media Branch, Division of News and Electronic Media, Office of the Associate Director for Communication. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/
Type of Material	Toolkit
Format	On-line Access
Cost to Access	
Language	English
Conditions for Use	Not specified