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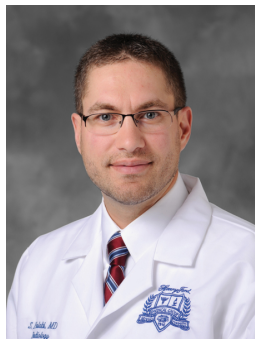
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## Speaking Out on Social Media



Social media has become a force to be reckoned with. Three experts share their thoughts on why and how radiologists can leverage social media to better their practices and connect with their patients.

### Leveraging Social Media for the Imaging Enterprise



By: *Safwan Halabi, MD* [@radhelper](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

The imaging enterprise has a huge public relations problem. Since the advent of PACS and real-time speech transcription, radiologists have sequestered themselves in reading rooms and thrown away the key. The days of radiology rounds and daily interactions with referring providers are gone.

To make matters worse, patients are not aware that physicians with specialized training are responsible for the acquisition and interpretation of imaging exams.

To help counteract this trend, the American College of Radiology launched the “Face of Radiology” campaign in 2008 to educate the public about what radiologists do.

In comes another disrupting technology: social media. It is almost impossible to view a print ad or website without being directed to a social media site. When the lights went out during the Super Bowl, the Twitter community was set ablaze with activity stealing thunder from the game.

How do radiologists use the social media playbook to develop digital trust with the healthcare community? Ironically, the ingredients to a successful social media presence are similar to the successful medical practice: availability, affability and ability.

## **Availability**

An exponentially growing number of patient consumers are living, breathing and interacting 24/7 on social media platforms. In a recent poll from the Health Research Institute and PricewaterhouseCoopers, one-third of patient consumers reported using social media sites for health-related matters, including seeking medical information, tracking and sharing symptoms and broadcasting how they feel about doctors.

Clinicians and patients want same-day imaging results and access to imaging and reports on the digital device of their choice.

It is essential that healthcare providers develop a social media apparatus that can communicate to and with their constituency. These platforms provide around the clock 'availability'—which helps retain current, and recruit new, patient consumers.

## **Affability**

Many providers have written off social media because of its novelty (inability to understand the technology), lack of security (fear of the HIPAA police) and transparency (fear of revealing skeletons in the closet). However, the affability and transparency of one's practice rarely goes unnoticed by the patient consumer.

Newer generations of patient consumers will demand full disclosure and transparency demonstrated by their willingness to share their most personal thoughts on social media. Will the radiologist be willing to reciprocate this level of transparency? Are we comfortable to engage patients on their terms?

## **Ability**

The ability of a healthcare provider was traditionally the benchmark that distinguished practices. Ability has taken a back seat to availability and affability. However, practices can highlight and amplify their abilities through social media. We have seen providers jump into the social media maelstrom by Tweeting surgeries with video. My contention is making healthcare digitally accessible will inflate the perception of ability in patients' eyes.

## **Getting in the game**

What steps should a radiology practice take to plug into the social media machine? Success or failure will depend on: a willingness to connect to the patient consumer in non-traditional ways; a strategic plan; and dedicated personnel.

## **Determine Your Objectives**

- Identify the customers you want to engage (e.g. physicians, patients, employees)
- Offer transparent customer service
- Build upon and enhance your brand recognition
- Increase local, regional and national exposure

## **Know Your Target Market**

- Make a list of 5-10 target markets
- Continue to reassess your targets and adjust accordingly

- Offer various platforms for different markets and various campaigns for different users

## Follow Your Competition

- Develop a competitive analysis profile
- Go to competitors' websites and follow their links
- Login to sites like Facebook and LinkedIn and search for competitors' profiles

## Craft Your Message

- Deliver content that is timely, engaging, entertaining, thought-provoking and educational
- Think outside the box
- Understand social media etiquette

We owe it to our patient consumers to adopt social media. This will undoubtedly help them feel more informed about their health and redefine the "Face of Radiology."

*Safwan Halabi, MD, is director of imaging informatics at Henry Ford Hospital. He is an active member of the Society for Imaging Informatics in Medicine (SIIM).*

## Consuming Social Media



By: Matt Hawkins, MD [@MattHawkinsMD](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

Social media is an intriguing topic for physicians. Most people who spend energy talking about and endorsing social media focus on the ability to engage with thought-leaders, establish a personal brand and share ideas. Others focus on an organization's ability to distinguish itself with an online social media presence by engaging with patients and using a social media platform to showcase the group's differentiators.

For some physicians, these benefits of social media are appealing. However, for most—the thought of adding another task to their day is overwhelming. Spending time online engaged with thought-leaders and patients seems like an unnecessary time dump that offers little return on investment. "I have no need to share my thoughts and opinions with the random inhabitants of the Twitter-verse," they say. Fair enough. But there are two opportunities offered by social media that warrant physicians' attention:

1. Social media offers the opportunity for you, as a physician, to define your online presence.
2. Rather than a platform for sharing and engagement, social media (especially Twitter) can be a resource.

## Online presence

Have you Googled your name lately? Check it out. Unless you have your own well-publicized blog or social media profiles, I'll bet your Healthgrades.com or Vitals.com profile made it to the top of the search list. For physicians, that can be a scary thought. It's

scary because we have no control over what content is provided on those web pages.

But, if you have profiles established on well-known social media sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Google+, these profiles are more likely to make it near the top of the list when patients Google you. (And if you think your patients won't Google your name, think again.) Beyond Google, many patients are likely to search for you on Facebook, Twitter, and/or LinkedIn. If you have established social media profiles, you can have more control over what patients see during their online reconnaissance missions.

### **Social media as a resource**

Take a moment next time you sit down at the computer or with your tablet and observe your online habits. How many websites do you visit? How many writers do you read? How many blogs do you visit? How many videos do you watch? Social media, Twitter in particular, allows you to have all of the media you normally consume pushed to you efficiently in a single place.

And once you become comfortable with the Twitter interface, the opportunity to discover information is unlimited. You won't be forced to read the AP-approved propaganda being force-fed to the American public via Headline News, Fox News and other news outlets with HD-ready talking heads. If there is a well-respected columnist that you follow on Twitter, check out who they follow on Twitter. You'll find new resources from which you'll likely find information and media you enjoy consuming. Or if you want to see what experts in your field are sharing on Twitter, follow them. Being "on Twitter" does not mean that you have to constantly share your political views, sports analyses or personal feelings. In fact, you don't have to share a thing. You can use Twitter as a personal conduit for discovery and information consumption.

*Matt Hawkins is a pediatric interventional radiologist completing fellowships in pediatric radiology at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and interventional radiology at University of Washington in Seattle.*

### **Return on Engagement**



*By: Kim Longeteig @aliidesign [3]*

The social media marketing movement, specifically within medical imaging, has produced extreme polar responses. Either you jumped on the bandwagon right away seeing the value of engaging your audience in the social-sphere, or you've held back, convinced there is no value in pursuing social media marketing and that it would be a waste of time—or worse yet, you believe it presents privacy concerns.

No matter which side of the argument you're on, social media is here to stay. Your target audience, both referring providers and patients, are using social media to communicate with their peers about the products and services that are a part of their lives. An online conversation about your practice is occurring whether you are taking part in it or not. Wouldn't you rather be there to own and contribute to the conversation rather than let it take place without you?

The social media strategies that present the most important reasons for utilizing social

media in your marketing are brand engagement and brand perception. Social media is a medium that allows us to create brand engagement by producing and curating content that represents our business ideals, standards of care and services—simply put, it allows us to communicate the perception we want the imaging consumer to have about our practice in a visual and meaningful manner.

It is possible to create value in social media marketing through relationship building—essentially creating a sense of community, and by tracking important metrics. Building an online community offers new ways to connect with more people and to drive traffic to your website where the greatest opportunity to attract and retain patients exists. As patients move from being passive participants in their healthcare choices to being very active participants, it makes sense to steer them to the information that will help them make informed decisions. If you don't provide the information, I guarantee your competitors will.

Since social is not a traditional medium with traditional metrics, you'll need to look to metrics such as organic and viral reach, engagement and click-throughs to prove the time spent on social media is producing a positive return on your investment. Your reach represents the number of people who see your posts both on and off your page followed by engagement, which represents the number of people who liked, commented or shared your post with their own network. Click-throughs, similar to traditional mediums, represent the number of actions taken—such as clicking a link to your website, watching a video or viewing a full-size version of a photo. Each metric can be tracked and placed in timelines to help identify trends and repeat successful online behavior.

Social media has transformed how we socialize, make purchasing decisions, learn about news and current events, and how we market our businesses. Seize the opportunity to own your online conversation. It does take time to generate ROI for social media. Set realistic expectations and you won't be disappointed.

*Kim Longeteig, principal and creative director of Ali`i Marketing & Design, has worked in marketing, advertising, graphic design and social media for more than 18 years. She currently serves on the Radiology Business Management Association Board of Directors.*

**Topic Category:**

Practice Management <sup>[4]</sup>

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