

## Use of social media

Social media has become a part of everyday life and includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other media outlets. While social media can be an effective tool for political action, it must be used in a strategic and thoughtful way. This section provides guidance on how to use social media appropriately in your political advocacy efforts.

## Social Media

Social media has become an everyday part of life in both personal and professional realms. It can also be an effective tool for political action when used appropriately in a thoughtful and strategic manner. Some examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Social media can be used in many ways. Some examples are listed below.

### Networking

There are many social media platforms that allow networks to be formed based on interests (Kirmayer, Raikhel & Rahimi, 2013). Tapping into these networks (whether they be personally or professionally focused) could help you connect with individuals who are like-minded and supportive of your political stance.

### Communication

Social media platforms can accelerate the distribution of key messages. Social media allows you to rally a large group of people behind an issue in a faster way than traditional techniques (Wilson, Ranse, Cashin, & McNamara, 2014).

### Testing the water

Keeping your finger on the pulse of an issue is important when pursuing political action (McKee, 2013). Through social media you can share ideas and gauge public reactions. Depending on the type of participation by others in your social media circle, you may also become more aware of the context and related events surrounding your issue.

While social media can be an effective tool for political advocacy nurses should be cautious in how they use it. Here are some things to consider:

### Possibility for misinformation

While you may have the best intentions to promote evidence-based messaging, that information could be misinterpreted or worse, other individuals may use your platform to advance commercial interests. Of concern, crowd knowledge can be spread much faster than evidence-based information within the unregulated environment of the internet (Wilson et al., 2014). This highlights the importance of regularly reviewing what is being communicated on your social media platform. For example, an organization promoting for profit health services may post on your social media account making it seem that you are endorsing them and their values.

### Trolls

Trolls are uninvited contacts who can use your digital platform to be offensive (Wilson et al., 2014). Do not let these contacts provoke you to respond in an aggressive or unprofessional

manner. Ignore their posts and stop yourself from responding and engaging them in further dialogue.

### Keep your personal and professional profiles domains separate

Reducing a political issue to your personal opinion undermines the importance of the issue itself. You do not want your contacts to lose respect for your professional profile by becoming too personal. Similarly, if you are representing yourself in your professional capacity, ensure that you are not implying endorsement from your workplace or sharing identifying or confidential information (Royal College of Nursing Australia, 2011). You can place a disclaimer on the social media profile to communicate that information.

### Loss of control

Once you make a post on social media you lose control on where that post goes or how it is used in the future (Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2008). You also open yourself up to criticism in a public sphere so always maintain your integrity.



## RNAO's Social Media Guide

RNAO's communications department developed the following social media guidelines to support nurses that choose this use this strategy:

### Social Media Guidelines for Nurses

Electronic communication has altered the way we interact with one another, organizations, and products.

The ever-changing digital landscape can bring uncertainty to professionals such as nurses when it comes to appropriate online conduct. We encourage every nurse to become familiar with the standards and codes of ethics set out by their regulating board/college to ensure compliance.

There is a general perception that nurses are trustworthy and the nursing profession is honorable. We implore all nurses/nursing students to conduct themselves in a manner that not only maintains this trust in the profession, but also builds upon it.

The tips below are guidelines on how to create a constructive, respectful, and authentic online persona whether you are on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn YouTube, or any other social channel. Remember: as a nurse, you work in the public sphere. Carefully consider what you write before hitting the 'Post' button.

1. **Build your brand** – Are you speaking as yourself, with or without your 'nursing hat' on? Tone and context can often be misinterpreted. Building your voice or online persona will help to minimize confusion when it comes to the tone of your comments.
2. **Transparency** – Identify yourself, write in the first person, and don't be afraid to show your personality. Own your voice. Social media is all about continuous dialogue. Be smart, post smarter.
3. **Honesty** – Do not make false or misleading comments/statements. If you make a mistake, take responsibility for it. It's ok! It's better to own it and clarify than to deny or ignore and open yourself to further criticism.
4. **Respectfulness** – Exercise discretion and confidentiality when referring to others, including coworkers, patients and clients. Do not post identifiable information and/or content unless you have permission to do so. Avoid harassment, intimidation, abuse or threats (both when posting and responding to posts). Not all conversations are worth participating in. Anything you post online becomes public information and may remain online indefinitely, even if you attempt to modify or delete your post. Avoid fights and personal attacks.
5. **Add value** – Stick to what you know. Post meaningful comments, and aim for quality. Interested in gaining new knowledge? Ask! Someone will likely post back to you!
6. **Be diligent** – Check your sources. Separate opinions from facts. Know the difference between offering suggestions and offering health-related advice. Offering advice could lead to liability.
7. **Stay engaged** – Stay informed, post regularly, and respond to comments in a timely manner.
8. **Protect your privacy** – Never disclose your personal information. Once it's posted, it's there for good. Keep your personal information personal. Get to know your privacy settings.
9. **When in doubt, don't post** – Many social applications have timers built in. If you're unsure about posting something, ask yourself 'is this something that MUST be posted right now?' 'Am I posting out of emotion?' If you are afraid of losing your thought, type it out and put it on a delayed post. Come back to it later. Social media is very fleeting. By the time you decide it wasn't worth posting, the topic might be irrelevant on social media.
10. **Get off the Internet** - Be aware of the amount of time you spend on social media. Don't let it negatively affect your life. There's nothing wrong with unplugging.

#HaveFun

Available at: <http://rnao.ca/news/socialmediaguideline>

## References - Social Media

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