



TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

Social media strategy development

A guide to using social media for
public health communication

ECDC TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

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This report was commissioned by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), coordinated by Andrea Würz (project manager), Signe Rirdance and Marybelle Stryk, and produced by World Health Communication Associates Ltd (WHCA) under the Specific Contract No 4.ECD.5132 implementing Framework Contract No ECDC/2014/013.

This guide was developed by ICE Creates, with additional input from Philippe Borremans. A draft of the document was shared with members of ECDC's network of National Focal Points for Communication, and revisions were made based on their feedback.

Acknowledgements

In preparation for this guide, the authors reviewed relevant literature and conducted interviews with professionals in health communication in public health organisations in the EU to collect practical information on social media activities for risk, crisis and corporate communications.

We would like to thank the following organisations:

- Norwegian Institute of Public Health (Christina Rolfheim-Bye)
- Spanish Ministry of Health (Angel Manuel Suárez Iglesias)
- Public Health England (Sam Spindlow)
- Polish Public Health National Institute of Hygiene (Monika Wróbel-Harmas).

Things change quickly, especially in the online world. Please keep that in mind when some of the links and tools in this report have new URLs or were updated.

Suggested citation: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Social media strategy development – A guide to using social media for public health communication. Stockholm: ECDC; 2016.

Stockholm, May 2016

ISBN 978-92-9193-856-8

doi 10.2900/481659

Catalogue number TQ-01-16-471-EN-N

Cover photo: iStock

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Abbreviations

EAAD	European Antibiotics Awareness Day
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
EU	European Union
EEA	European Economic Area
NHS	National Health Service (UK)
NIPH	Norwegian Institute of Public Health
PHE	Public Health England
RADAR	Results, Approach, Deployment, Assessment & Review
SMART	Specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, time-based or targeted
THL	National Institute for Health and Welfare (Finland)
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

This guide provides public health organisations and practitioners with a practical approach to strengthening the integration of social media into their overall communication activities. It focuses, in particular, on identifying effective ways to use social media to enhance crisis, risk and corporate communication¹ related to communicable disease prevention and control.

Social media are effective two-way communication platforms for listening, informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues, and can also be used to collect surveillance data. Social media enhance the speed at which communication is sent and received during public health emergencies or outbreaks, help mobilise community action, facilitate desired behaviour changes, allow for a better understanding of public perceptions of issues, and make it easier for users to participate and engage [1].

Public health social media literacy and capacities vary widely between and within EU Member States. This guide provides a flexible approach that can be used to enhance existing strategies or serve as a basic resource for organisations just beginning to introduce social media into their communication activities.

This guide has five parts:

- **Part 1. Making the case for a social media strategy.** Introduces social media principles and concepts and sets out their importance to public health, particularly risk, crisis and corporate communication.
- **Part 2. Crafting a social media strategy.** Focuses on the key components of an integrated social media strategy and how to assess current organisational social media capability.
- **Part 3. Applying social media to risk, crisis and corporate communications.** Provides a framework for developing an integrated social media strategy to address the development and implementation of risk and crisis communication for communicable disease, as well as other public health interventions and corporate communications.
- **Part 4. Action tips on using different social media.** Practical advice on using the most popular social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn; identification of resources to support effective use.
- **Part 5. Other useful resources.** Annotated links to websites and resources on social media strategies.

This guide also includes practical examples, drawn from public health agencies, mostly in the EU/EEA, to illustrate various approaches on how social media are being used for health communication purposes.

Figure 1. ECDC retweeting Public Health England



Retweets endorse, emphasise and further disseminate relevant public health messages. This Retweet is about raising awareness and sharing preventative action for cryptosporidiosis

¹ For the definitions of 'risk, crisis and corporate communications' used in the context of this guide, please see Annex 2.

Guide approach and navigation tools

Audience. This guide addresses public health agencies and practitioners who are looking to start or are already engaged in social media. If you are the person in your agency entrusted to develop social media strategies or someone just interested in improving your social media skills, this guide will help you to improve your social media literacy, make the case for investment in social media, and support your organisation in the use of social media to improve health and wellbeing. Throughout the guide we talk to you directly, to the point and in plain English.

Integration. This guide does not view the use of social media as a stand-alone activity, rather it identifies it as complementary to other communication or engagement activities that also focus on listening, gathering insights, mobilising, engaging and empowering; e.g. health promotion, social marketing, and the use of traditional media.

Flexible approach. Desktop research for this guide has revealed that many professionals do not follow a structured strategic approach to developing and delivering social media communication. This guide sets out a basic planning framework that professionals can use in a flexible way to inform their approach to integrating social media into their communication activities in a way that best meets their challenges and needs as well as their human and financial resources. A strategic approach will greatly enhance the impact of social media and other communication activities.

Guide development methodology

The preparation work for this guide included a number of activities such as desktop research to review relevant literature around the topic, and interviews with communication professionals in public health organisations throughout the EU. Furthermore, thirty-one organisations across the EU/EEA were identified from the ECDC list of competent bodies². Website and social media platforms for each of these organisations were reviewed in order to develop a view of how many were actively engaging in social media and which platforms they were using. Insights from this work appear throughout this guide.

² http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/aboutus/Competent%20bodies/Pages/Competent_bodies.aspx

1 The case for social media – why they are important for public health

This section summarises the main advantages of integrating social media into other communication strategies. Feedback from public health organisations points to the importance of getting decision-makers on board and conveying the relevance and key benefits of social media to organisational managers and leaders.

Box 1. Key messages on benefits of social media activities for public health communicators: how do you justify the use of social media to management and other stakeholders?

- Social media – it's where the action is!
- Social media strengthen listening capacity, e.g. they help to know what your audiences are talking about.
- Social media allow for stronger engagement with influencers and their conversations.
- Social media shorten the response time to questions or comments, which saves time, builds trust and creates transparency.
- Social media create new opportunities for interaction with users.
- Organisations benefit from user-generated content, saving work and resources.

Tip

A good way to start thinking strategically about social media activities is to use online monitoring tools to gather insights about audiences, e.g. researching the channels they use, messages they create and share, etc. See Section 2.2.1 *Listen, evaluate, learn – gathering insights*.

There are good reasons why public health organisations should strengthen their social media capacities [2]:

- **It's where the action is.** Social media have become an integral part of the public health conversation. The number of users and the voracity with which these users consume information on social media sites continues to grow. With 1.49 billion active users, Facebook is the first social media site to exceed one billion registered accounts, and Twitter had 316 million monthly active users as of August 2015 [3]. As of January 2015, 52% of US adults online used two or more social media sites, an increase from 42% in 2013 [4].
- **Strengthened listening capacity.** A unique characteristic of social media is that it allows public health organisations to listen and collect feedback in real-time. Engagement with social media provides a unique resource to gather insights into the perceptions, attitudes and knowledge of users. Public health agencies can use social media to identify what people are saying, for example about communicable disease topics, competing advice and counter-arguments. They can identify gaps in messaging and misinformation that may need correction. Finally, they can get a better understanding of what people care about. Listening activities help to ensure that messages align with audience needs, assess if messages are reaching the intended target groups, and how these are being received. This alignment can help demonstrate that an organisation is paying attention to its clients and helps to build credibility [2]. Organisations can also see how they are being perceived.
- **Stronger engagement with influencers and their conversations.** Public health organisations can use social media to identify credible and persistent influencers who are driving online conversations on relevant topics of interest. These agencies and individuals can then be approached with the aim of developing mutually beneficial relationships [2].
- **Reduce response time to questions or comments.** Social media allow for direct contact with users and provide a channel to rapidly respond to queries and concerns. Rapid response demonstrates that public health organisations are paying attention to their audiences, and this can support their credibility³ and trustworthiness. In addition, questions and comments received via social media can be used to further

³ Strategic approaches to rapid response will require an infrastructure that enables meaningful, efficient and consistent feedback to enquiries (see Section 2.2.3: *Content management – 24/7 presence*).

improve and complement information available on the website. This also improves response time when similar questions are received in the future.

- **Create new opportunities for interaction with users.** Organisations can use social media to facilitate direct and real-time interaction with and between followers, organisations, experts and leaders; for example by hosting Twitter or Facebook chats as scheduled events. These events provide useful platforms for disseminating information on relevant topics and are opportunities for users to interact and respond to each other's queries and concerns.
- **Organisations benefit from user-generated content.** Agencies can use social media to encourage users to share stories, pictures, videos, news, observations, etc. User-generated content can be particularly effective for organisations that have limited resources for the development of large-scale social media content [2].

Box 2. Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH)

The NIPH started using social media in 2010 and strengthened its social media work considerably in early 2014, after it became evident that the institute needed to reach a larger target audience. During their initial listening and engagement activity, NIPH focused on Facebook and Twitter because they were the most popular channels in Norway for their target audience and therefore offered the greatest engagement opportunity (80% of the population had a Facebook account). Twitter also became an important part of NIPH's social media strategy because it could be used to communicate with health professionals, the media, policymakers, politicians and stakeholders. NIPH also embraced other platforms such as LinkedIn, YouTube, Vimeo and Instagram.

The Institute continues to conduct listening and engagement activities and is considering using more social media platforms, but needs to first evaluate their potential impact. However, the NIPH is careful not to engage in new social media platforms without first carefully weighing potential benefits against the required resources.

Box 3. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

ECDC uses a variety of social media platforms to engage with influencers, respond to questions and reply to comments. This is seen as an opportunity for users to engage with important stakeholders and with each other. In April 2015, ECDC (@ECDC_EU) – together with the World Health Organization (@WHO_Europe), the European Food Safety Authority (@EFSA_EU), and the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the UN (@FAOKnowledge) – hosted a live Twitter chat on food safety, as part of World Health Day 2015.

During the chat, experts covered alert and outbreak responses, nutritional aspects, biohazards, contaminants, pesticides, food- and waterborne diseases, and agriculture. ECDC shared this information on their Facebook page (see www.facebook.com/ECDC.EU). Links were also shared on Twitter (see #safefoodchat). On Storify (see <https://goo.gl/MoS7Uj>), the discussion was summarised and illustrated by quotes from conversations and infographics.

ECDC uses a number of social media platforms to share information in a way that both engages the audience and builds knowledge.

Figure 2. ECDC on Twitter and Facebook – sharing information about #safefoodchat

The image shows two social media posts. The top one is a tweet from EU_eHealth (@EU_eHealth) dated 7 Apr 2015, which has been retweeted by ECDC. The tweet text is: "Today is #WorldHealthDay Join @WHO_Europe @ECDC_EU & @EFSA_EU #safefoodchat, 14.00-15.00 CEST bit.ly/safefoodchat". The tweet includes a promotional graphic for the #safefoodchat event. The graphic is split into two sections: a dark grey section on the left with a white plate of green soup and a silver spoon, and a blue section on the right with white text. The text in the blue section reads: "On World Health Day, join our experts for a #safefoodchat Tuesday 7 April 2015 12:00-13:00 UTC/GMT (14:00-15:00 CEST) @WHO_Europe @ECDC_EU @EFSA_EU". Below the tweet are icons for reply, retweet (23), and like (7).

The bottom post is from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, dated April 10, 2015. The text reads: "Thank you for participating in the #safefoodchat Read the summary in Storify <https://storify.com/.../safefoodchat-summary-of-discussions-o...>". Below the text is a large image of the same green soup plate and spoon seen in the tweet's graphic. At the bottom of the Storify link is a summary: "#safefoodchat - summary of discussions on World Health Day 2015 (with images, tweets) · WHO_Europe @WHO_Europe, together with @EFSA_EU, @ECDC_EU and @FAOKnowledge, hosted a live Twitter chat on 7 April, covering food safety risks,...." and the Storify.COM logo.

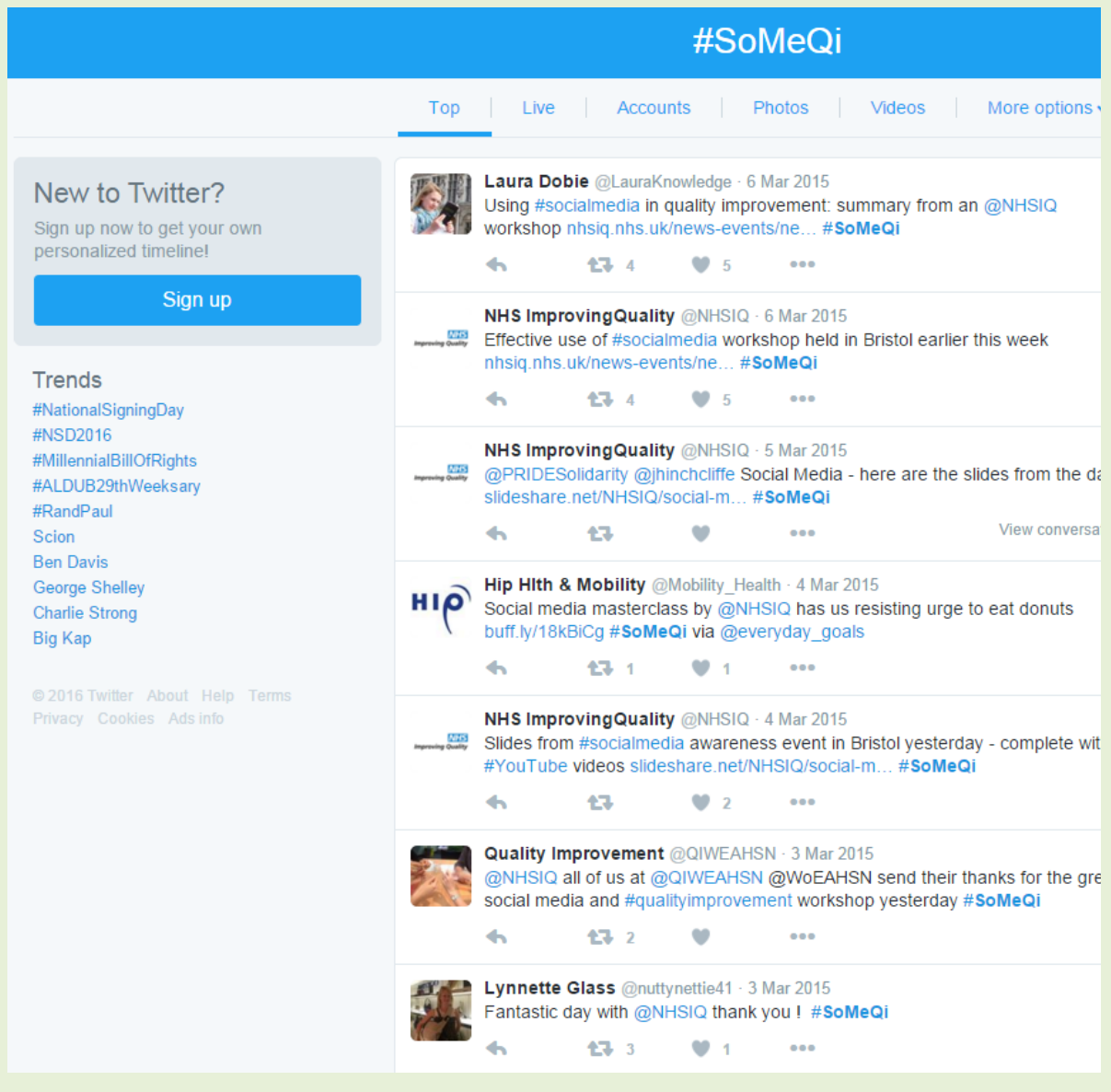
Another ECDC Retweet, this time on food safety. The event – an online chat on food safety – is covered on both platforms, Twitter and Facebook. After the event, a summary on Storify creates a unified narrative out of the various social media postings.

Box 4. National Health Service (NHS), UK

In the UK, NHS-IQ* (an organisation responsible for improving quality in the National Health Service) used to run a Twitter account. Under the hashtag #SoMeQi, NHS-IQ helped communicators and NHS workers to engage in public health social media, organise events, and share endorsements.

* As of 1 November NHS IQ have transferred into NHS England as their new Sustainable Improvement Team. See more at: <http://www.nhsiq.nhs.uk>

Figure 3. NHS IQ Tweets – sharing information about #SoMeQi



2 Crafting an integrated social media strategy

In this section we present a practical approach to social media strategy development and we emphasise the importance of taking action within a comprehensive organisation-wide strategic framework.

Expert input

Interviewed experts suggested that the majority of social media strategies were formed after identifying the need to reach a larger proportion of the public. Understanding their partner organisations' activities on social media helped them to see the potential. Further research by the interviewed experts showed them the effectiveness of social media in reaching target audiences, which also led to the identification of further target groups.

2.1 Assessing and integrating with your organisation's current social media capability

A social media strategy should form part of a wider communication strategy, which itself will also be part of wider activities, such as corporate communication, risk analysis, or planning and implementing emergency responses.

Before you start planning it is recommended that you begin by assessing your current organisational activity and interest. This will help you identify internal stakeholders or departments that you may need to engage. An initial consultation could include short one-on-one meetings, or brief workshops, where you explore whom you will work with and how you will engage with them during the process of establishing a social media strategy. Questions to answer could include the following:

- What social media policies and guidelines already exist?
- Do internal stakeholders already use social media, and if so, what platforms, tools etc. do they use?
- Are there training programmes and/or would they like further training to understand how social media can deliver benefits?
- Do different departments have any resources that could support the development or deployment of a social media strategy, e.g. interested or knowledgeable individuals?
- How would different stakeholders like to be involved in a) social media strategy development and b) social media deployment and review?
- Are there any other enabling issues or barriers to be aware of, e.g. supportive or conflicting policies, strategies, legislation?
- How are social media strategies currently being used to reduce communicable disease risk?
- Are social media currently included in planning emergency responses?

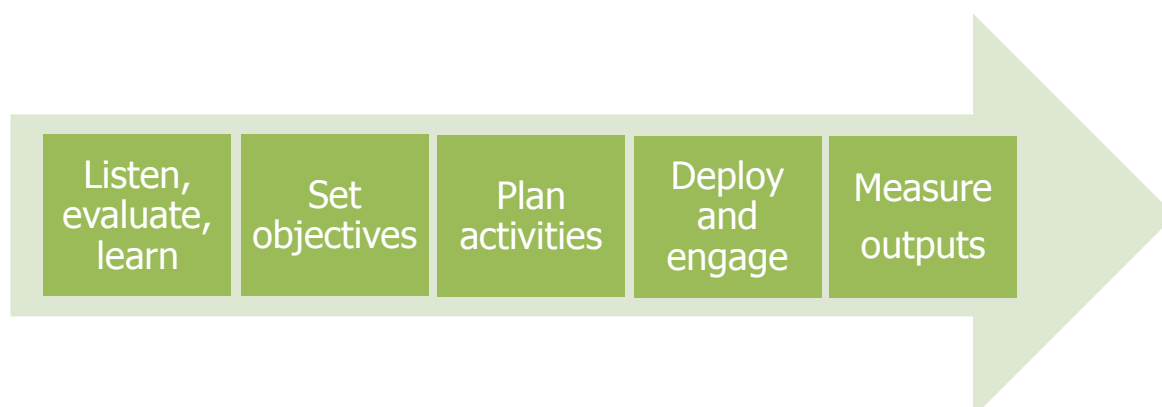
Such an exercise will help you assess enabling – and obstructing – factors related to the current interest. It will also identify those capabilities and capacities in your organisation that can help to deliver a social media strategy. In particular it should help identify the social media assets and needs of internal stakeholders. The results of such assessments can be used to help shape your strategy development processes. Such assessments can also be used on an ongoing basis to further develop your social media strategy over time.

A detailed self-assessment tool is presented in Annex 1.

2.2 The five stages of developing a social media strategy

This guide builds on a number of systematic approaches to develop integrated social media strategies [see references 5–9] and proposes a five-step approach:

Figure 4. Five steps of social media strategy development



2.2.1 Step 1: Listen, evaluate, learn – gathering insights

One of the distinct characteristics about social media is that it enables rapid, real-time and inexpensive two-way communication between organisations and audiences. Social media can therefore be used not only to disseminate information but also to gather intelligence.

You can use social media as a research tool to find out what information is already being shared and to identify conversation topics and people. There are many tools available (see Section 2.2.1 *Examples of monitoring tools*) that can assist in social media listening activities.

By listening to conversations on social media you will be able to identify what people are saying about your agency/organisation or communicable disease topics of interest. This will help you to identify gaps in messaging and understand what people care about, which in turn will help you to plan your content and align your messages with your audience. You can also follow current debates on health-related topics where there are conflicting viewpoints or where groups strongly object to public health advice. The ability to listen and respond appropriately will demonstrate that your organisation pays attention, which will help build credibility and trust.

In order to fully utilise the benefits of social media it is suggested that any staff involved in strategy development should personally try out social media platforms in order to gain a better understanding of functionality, types of messaging formats and online etiquette.

Selecting a monitoring tool

It can be difficult to stay up-to-date with the many social media platforms available, and even harder to get a good grip on all that is being said on social media about a specific topic or organisation (**monitoring**). Understanding comments in different languages or clarifying the (geographic) scope of a topic can be a challenge (**analysis**). From the dissemination side, it can be hard to determine how well you are reaching out to your target audiences (**engagement**) and who are their influencers.

There is a wide variety of social media monitoring and analysis tools that can help. These tools are designed to listen in on topical discussions, map the location of contributors, monitor contributions in multiple languages, and identify key influencers.

The organisations we interviewed reported that they used manual search functions on social media platforms to explore key issues and/or identify target audiences. Each day they set aside time to search relevant keywords or hashtags on social media, e.g. #ebola.

Social media monitoring tools address three key needs: monitoring, analysis and engagement. It is essential to decide what needs to be monitored, assessed and analysed, and which tools are best for this purpose. In selecting a monitoring tool, a good starting point is to ask the following questions [10]:

- Which social media sites are monitored by the tool and are these the sites relevant for you? Few tools cover all sites, and those that do can be expensive. If you are not active on a social media platform – or only consider using them – use basic and inexpensive monitoring tools. Consider more advanced tools if you need more details or want to monitor the principal sites you are using.
- Does the monitoring tool provide additional management functions? Some tools allow you to export data and put them into an attractive report format. Some tools make it easy to integrate data from different

sources. Other tools enable you to post to your social media accounts and schedule activities. Remember that if you just need a monitoring tool, there's no need to pay for functionalities you don't need.

- Does the tool offer a free trial? This will help you to check that the tool does what you need it to. If there isn't a free trial, ask for one anyway.

For further questions to ask before choosing a social media monitoring tool, check out the following article: <http://www.wikihow.com/Select-a-Social-Media-Monitoring-Tool> [10].

Remember to focus on a limited number of tools that address your needs; too many tools will be cumbersome to manage and will require additional resources and time.

Examples of monitoring tools

TweetDeck is a free tool designed for Twitter which allows users to follow multiple subjects (or hashtags). Setting up a stream on TweetDeck for #ebola, for example, will list every Tweet that contains this hashtag. TweetDeck lets you view specific topics. This can be utilised as a listening/monitoring tool and enables you to identify those who tweet on a specific subject.

Figure 5. TweetDeck review: #antibiotics



*Note: Alternatively, one can simply type the following text into the browser address field:
<https://twitter.com/hashtag/antibiotics?src=hash>
 Screenshot taken on 3 February 2016.*

Hootsuite is another tool that enables listening activities and offers more ways of analysing subjects, e.g. it can monitor emerging trends with so-called Conversation Maps, which compare trending keywords over a defined

period of time. It also offers the ability to search in 55 different languages and can identify any key influencers that generate important conversations. A free version (with limited features) is available for download.

Radian6 enables users to review historical data from a number of social media sites, although there are some limitations to this functionality. Radian6 is also capable of searching in over 32 different languages and gives the option to select geographical regions for searches. This tool is not free.

Engagor enables organisations to monitor and analyse what is being said about them; it also keeps track of related information shared on social networks, news sites, blogs and forums. The product is designed to support multiple users, enabling them to assign tasks, tag conversations, perform analyses, identify influencers, and publish across multiple platforms. Engagor is a commercial product, but a demo and free trial are available.

Similar web analytics tools include Brandwatch, Sysomos, Talkwalker, Trackur and Twitalyzer.

Tip

A number of monitoring tools offer additional features that can enhance your organisation's listening efforts. Some tools provide content management and publishing functionality as well as analytics, so they can cover a number of useful activities.

If you have the resources to buy analytical monitoring tools, it is recommended that you get a free trial before purchasing a license.

It is also worth talking to other public health organisations to see what approaches and tools they have used.

Finding social media advocates/amplifiers

Another advantage of social media listening is the ability to identify different groups that can act as advocates/amplifiers of public health messages. The web analytics tools mentioned above can help identify different groups that engage in topics that are of interest to a public health organisation and assess, for example, whether these groups engage with large amounts of people or whether the members of these groups are considered a trusted source of information.

2.2.2 Step 2: Set goals and objectives

Organisations should define the goals and objectives for their social media strategy based on their organisational goals and the information gathered through listening. When designing a social media strategy, we recommend setting very broad organisational goals, such as disseminating public health activities, reaching out to a broader audience, making information more visible, informing people about the risks of communicable diseases, establishing the presence of the organisation in several channels to improve authority, and promoting the exchange of information.

Box 5. Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH)

The NIPH has defined its goals in a social media strategy document. The use of social media is directed towards the following goals, which are taken directly from the institute's overall strategy:

- Share public health information with as many people as possible.
- Foster trust between the institute and target groups through increased transparency.
- Ensure quick and efficient crisis communication.
- Facilitate open discussions in and outside the institute in order to capture important input during revisions of advice and knowledge.

Working towards general goals, you can consider specific objectives, e.g. engagement with a specific community group in a specific location who is at particular risk from a communicable disease. It is important to express these actionable objectives in SMART terms.

- **Specific:** What exactly needs to be achieved?
- **Measurable:** How will progress be measured and tracked?
- **Achievable:** Can the objectives be achieved with the current resources, capabilities, capacities?
- **Realistic:** Are the objectives actually possible to attain, and if so, what evidence is available?
- **Time-based:** What is the time frame during which the objectives will be achieved?

Here's an example applied to social media:

Table 1. Setting SMART objectives

SMART	Example
Specific	Inform people in the EU about risks of hepatitis and preventative measures.
Measureable	Reach 'x' individuals and 'y' local community groups with key messages.
Achievable	Will require research of social media preferences for people in the EU and their support groups. Will require development and delivery of key messages 'x' times a day and on the 'y' most popular channels.
Realistic	Similar results achieved by other public health organisations with limited resources.
Time-based	Achieve 'x' EU followers or 'y' message shares within three months.

Another critical feature of social media is that they can easily be used to measure objectives, e.g. audience growth over a specific period or average engagement rate. You can, for example, set a measureable objective to achieve x number of Facebook likes in y amount of months within a designated community. You can review similar Facebook pages to see if a certain goal is actually attainable. Other measures could include an increase in Twitter followers, an increase in visits to the website, or a certain number of Retweets per week.

2.2.3 Step 3: Plan activities

Once you have identified your objectives, you should develop a plan of activities:

- What should be included in the social media policy?
- Who will carry out the activities?
- How will the staff be trained?
- Which social media platforms should be used?
- How will the content be managed?

Policies

A common challenge is the mixing of organisational and personal social media accounts within an organisation and its implications for the posted content. Ventola (2015) suggests that healthcare professionals use social media to share information, debate healthcare policy and practice issues, promote health behaviours, engage with the public, and educate patients and caregivers. However, Ventola also identifies a number of dangers such as poor-quality information, possible damage to the professional image, and breaches of patient privacy. All these issues should be addressed by guidelines for the use of social media [11]. Having clear social media policies in place and ensuring staff are briefed can help you achieve meaningful and engaging social media content.

You'd better not...

The Red Cross employed a social media agency to manage some of its content. By accident, the appointed agency once posted a Tweet through the official Red Cross Twitter account, which had been written for another client. The Tweet included the hashtag #gettingslizzered, which was clearly inappropriate.

The Red Cross decided to post a considered response to the error: 'We are an organisation that deals with life-changing disasters, and this wasn't one of them'.

The incident resulted in a wave of support for the Red Cross, and donations increased.

However, social media incidents don't always end so well. More examples are available from: <http://www.stickyeyes.com/2013/10/09/10-social-media-crises-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly> [12].

Clear social media policies for staff are an essential strategy component to ensure that employees understand what is expected of them when using social media. This can include which type of content can be shared and when. For instance, caution is key during a public health emergency as staff may post incorrect or unchecked information through their personal social media accounts. Staff should therefore be informed that all information will first be released on the website and that any enquiries from the media need to be channelled through the communications team.

There are many online examples that you can use to form your policy. One such example are the EU Social Media Guidelines for staff who use social media in a personal capacity (see Box 6) [13].

Box 6. General social media policy principles [13]

- Loyalty to the institution: presenting the agency's/organisation's views within your field to the best of your ability and clearly in line with the views previously expressed by the agency/organisation and its leadership.
- Discretion: i.e. non-divulgence of any information that has not yet been made public.
- Circumspection: exercising caution, carefulness, moderation and due propriety.
- Objectivity: presenting any situation in a reasoned and unprejudiced manner.
- Impartiality: weighing opinions in a balanced manner without taking a position. For example, explaining the reason behind an agency/organisation position, while acknowledging different views.

Source: European Commission. Social media guidelines for all staff. Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/docs/guidelines_social_media_en.pdf

Another important aspect in policy development is the consideration of risks that arise from social media activity and how they should be addressed. The following approaches are advisable:

- Compliance with existing privacy and data protection policies.
- Appropriate disclaimers that clarify the purpose of each social media channel and rules of participation (e.g. type of content that would be removed). Additional disclaimers that third-party content does not necessarily represent the organisation's views.
- Procedures on how to deal with the escalation of issues and possible reputational damage.
- Procedures for the correction of mistakes and for addressing the accidental release of sensitive information or misinformation. Keep in mind that social media are dynamic and fast-paced, thus content needs to be thoroughly checked prior to posting.

Another important policy issue for consideration is how to maintain editorial control of content and the clearance processes. There will always be a dynamic tension between the immediacy of social media and the need to ensure editorial approval. Social media is a 24/7 reality, and users expect a quick response to requests and comments. It is therefore important to have clear editorial policies and efficient approval systems.

Staffing

When planning and implementing a social media strategy, public health organisations may need to bear in mind the level of staff commitment and effort required. As noted by Heldman et al. [2], public health agencies need to commit dedicated staff time and resources to ensure they provide appropriate oversight, monitoring and response to feedback and questions, identify engagement opportunities, and need to be able to analyse user data and adjust strategies accordingly. Staff resources required during the initial stages of development and implementation of a social media strategy can be expected to be higher than when the strategy is in place.

Expert input

Resources set aside for social media varied across the public health organisations interviewed. Public Health England has one dedicated full time staff member who coordinates activities with content support from others, whereas the Norwegian Institute of Public Health has a team of sixteen general communications staff, all of whom have access to social media and who are also trained in the use of social media. At any given time, two or three members of the communications team keep a particular focus on social media activity.

It was also evident that encouraging the use of social media throughout an organisation is important so that staff members outside the communications team could share their insight and expertise online.

Most social media guidance documents suggest that there should be a designated position within the organisation for someone to take charge of social media. This person should have the authority to make decisions (in line with their organisation's policy), assign and delegate responsibilities for the implementation of actions, and make sure that everyone in the organisation is aware of the corporate social media strategy.

If there is no budget for a full-time social media manager, you have several options:

- Identify a current member of staff who has the time (and passion) for social media.
- Contract someone who is experienced in the area (someone with either direct experience of managing and using social media, or someone with skills such as website management, project management, writing, or PR).
- Contract a digital marketing agency to handle social media for you.

Keep in mind

Once engaged in social media, you need to make sure there is capacity to continue this activity. Unacceptably long response times or a temporary – or even complete – withdrawal from social media could have a more negative impact than not having started in the first place. If people need to contact you repeatedly for information and receive a late or no answer, they are unlikely to have confidence or trust in you in the future.

There are a number of skills to look for in a social media editor/manager: being up-to-date with social media developments and the most popular social media platforms; understanding social media analytics and monitoring tools; being friendly, patient and responsive; and having editorial and public relations experience.

More on finding the right person for the job can be found online:

- <http://www.viralinnature.com/component/k2/item/359-traits-and-skills-to-look-for-when-hiring-a-social-media-manager>
- <http://www.nptechforgood.com/2011/09/13/11-qualities-of-an-effective-social-media-manager/>
- <http://blog.hootsuite.com/6-underappreciated-skills-for-social-media-professionals/>
- <http://www.adweek.com/fishbowl/ny/what-exactly-is-social-media/241369>.

Training

A vital part of the activity planning for an organisation is staff training. It is important to ensure that staff members are fully trained before granting them access to the organisation's social media feeds. They also need to be aware of social media policies so they know what can be shared and published. There is a whole range of training activities that may be required for different roles. This may include anything from social media listening activities to writing and posting messages.

Training requirements also depend on the people in your organisation. Some training may warrant the use of external experts to deliver the required content, but you should also think about whether you can deliver training internally by using in-house resources and/or expertise. Conducting a *training needs analysis* to identify the training and development needs of your staff will help you assess what can be achieved within the available budget. If you only have limited resources, you need to prioritise and train those staff members first who show the greatest potential.

Platforms and tools

At this stage you may want to decide which social media platforms or tools should be used for each activity. An organisation could consider following a segmented engagement strategy (i.e. targeting specific audiences), which relegates certain topics for audiences with particular interests to niche channels while communication with a broader audience would take place on primary social media channels.

ECDC, for example, has a main corporate Twitter account for a wide audience, which contributes to the overall visibility of the organisation and provides a platform for sharing information on its activities. More specific issues are dealt with by additional Twitter accounts, e.g. accounts for European Antibiotic Awareness Day or specific disease topics. The choice of platforms for specific issues should also depend on the identified target audience, e.g. public health professionals, policymakers or topic-related communities, and how organisations want to engage with them. We suggest using a straightforward approach to planning and agreeing activities. Table 2 provides a mock template which illustrates a structured approach to social media activity planning and deliverables.

Table 2. Planning activities: mock template

Objective	Activity	Resource	When	Deliverables
1.1 Establish platforms to ensure wider communication of public health activities; build trust through open and visible communication	Offline planning and consultation	Comms manager	June 2016	Short report
	Identify social media preferences	Comms manager	July 2016	Updated report
	Identify appropriate platforms and set up corporate account	Comms assistant	July 2016	New corporate account set up (e.g. Twitter account or Facebook page)
	Develop key messages and information on most preferred platforms	Review in July 2016	July 2016	...
	Identify key influencers and connect with ten of them on social media platforms	Comms manager	Aug 2016	10 new followers
1.2 Connect with vulnerable groups and raise awareness	Identify specific issues to address (e.g. hepatitis) and decide on suitable platform	Comms assistant	Sep 2016	Shortlist of preferred social media channels
	Agree and set up relevant channel for specific communications relating to issue	Comms assistant	Oct 2016	New specific account set up (e.g. Twitter account or YouTube channel)
	Raise awareness of preventative measures (e.g. on Twitter)	Comms manager, internal experts	Nov 2016	10 Tweets/week 30 Retweets/week + share 1 relevant video per month

Objective	Activity	Resource	When	Deliverables
	Provide more detailed information and links (e.g. websites)	Comms manager, internal experts to retweet	Nov 2016	3 000 website hits/month
	Get new followers from target group		Dec 2016	100 per month

Content management – planning

Content is key. It attracts people to social media channels and makes them come back. You will need to allow sufficient time for planning and producing content while monitoring that your content remains relevant. You will, of course, also need to ensure that you have sufficient resources to do this (see Section 2.2.3 under *Staffing*).

If you are planning content for a specific event, you will need to decide how exactly you want to use social media: should participants be encouraged to use social media before, during or after the event; do you want to introduce a new hashtag; which follow-up content do you need to develop?

Some content may be used more than once, and images and quotes can be used to support different messages at different times. It is important to keep a library of materials or and records of what has been shared in the past. Some social media sites will let users review what they have shared in the past.

Expert input

The value of a risk and vulnerability analysis

In spring of 2015, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health released a summary report on the potential health risks of electronic cigarettes. This was a hot-button issue, generating many questions and comments on Twitter and Facebook.

The team had not conducted a risk and vulnerability analysis before publishing the report, and many of the researchers at that time were not available to respond promptly: for several weeks, online response times were much longer than usual.

A risk and vulnerability analysis before major events – What could happen? Why would that happen and how often? What would be the consequences? – would have prepared the team better for the online discussion and ensured that there was a plan to respond to the increased social media attention.

Tip: Editorial calendars

Using an editorial calendar is an important aspect when planning social media activities.

Keeping track of what will be published where and when, will help you to stay on top of future activities and keep tabs on your workload.

The link below includes examples of editorial calendars for social media, as well as some useful tips on how a calendar can be used to cope with 'overwhelming content writers' or 'not spending enough time on research': [How to create a social media content calendar](#) [14].

Content management – tone of voice

The tone of voice when creating messages on social media is very important. It is better to use plain language and an authoritative tone, but without being overly formal. Use a conversational style to engage with your audiences. Your tone may also vary depending on the channel, the target audience, and the situation.

You may want to consider developing a content and style guide that outlines which channels will be used for what purposes and gives examples of expected tone and content.

Consistency is an important way to build trust and establish relationships. Cohen [15] lists a number of useful characteristics of tone and style:

- Be friendly, approachable, and responsive
- Use inclusive language (us, we, you)
- Talk like a person, not a machine or a press release
- Be honest
- Don't exaggerate – base inputs on evidence
- Be expressive if appropriate (e.g. 'Great news!').

Content management – addressing multiple audiences

Your agency – like all public health organisations – will have multiple audiences looking for different kinds of information, for example scientific content and data, practical information about prevention campaigns and activities, and updates on outbreaks. Some of this information will be directed at very specific audiences, while other information will be more suitable for larger and broader audiences. In some cases it will be difficult to attract people to the messages being shared, particularly if they don't appeal directly to their interests. In all instances, however, message content has to be useful, clear, scientifically correct (with supporting evidence) and actionable.

Monitoring activities (see Section 2.2.1) will help you to gain insights into the type of content that people are looking for. This will make it easier to develop content which your audience finds interesting and educational. A public health organisation's audience may include people at risk from communicable disease and those who can influence their behaviours to reduce the risk of infection, e.g. healthcare practitioners.

The key issue is to provide content that so-called influencers find useful and are willing to share with others on their own social networks. For example, if influencers want to improve the uptake of preventative health behaviours, they would probably find a report very helpful that outlines how to successfully communicate preventive actions.

Content management – human interest stories

Personal stories can be very useful for illustrating public health messages. For instance, a public health organisation could interview people who recovered from a serious communicable disease and publish the interviews in a blog. (Please make sure you obtain a signed personal release from the interviewees.) Such interviews show how contagious diseases affect people's lives, illustrate their struggle with the disease, and demonstrate how they eventually defeated the disease. Stories that are personal and emotionally compelling can positively influence health-related behaviour and are often more effective than approaches that are exclusively based on the presentation of facts.

Content management – links to websites

Social media are an excellent medium to further raise awareness and disseminate information about and from your organisational website. Social media like Twitter and Facebook can be used to attract visitors to web content (new reports, data, infographics). The public health agencies we interviewed all consider their organisation's website as the core of a multi-channel digital presence, and take steps to ensure that their individual social media channels are well integrated. They also take steps to maintain consistent messages across the different platforms. There are social media management tools for multiple accounts that enable users to post the same content to different social media platforms, which could support your efforts to provide consistent information (i.e. content can be repeated or expanded across different platforms).

Blogs on a website can serve as editorials where experts from your organisation can comment on scientific findings, data reports or current developments in the field, thus adding a personal touch to the scientific debate. Links to these blogs can then be shared in the social media channels.

Content management – 24/7 presence

You will also need to consider how to maintain a 24/7 presence on social media, as replies, comments, queries, could pop up at any time. Adopting a 24/7 public information model can be challenging and may require additional resources. Useful strategies include:

- **Remote access.** Social media can be accessed remotely (e.g. by mobile phone or tablet) so staff with mobile devices can respond on the go.
- **Putting messages on hold.** Some responses may require input from experts that are not necessarily available around the clock. You can reassure social media followers with a so-called holding message that you will respond to them within a specified period of time.

Content management – sharing and using images

A key issue in relation to social media is dissemination. On Twitter, messages posted by another user are 'retweeted', i.e. reposted or forwarded. Photos are retweeted more than any other content on Twitter and have been described as 'pure social media gold'. Twitter Inc. confirms this in the 2014 *Twitter government and elections handbook* (p. 12): 'Including photos in Tweets boosts Retweets by 62% (on average)' [16].

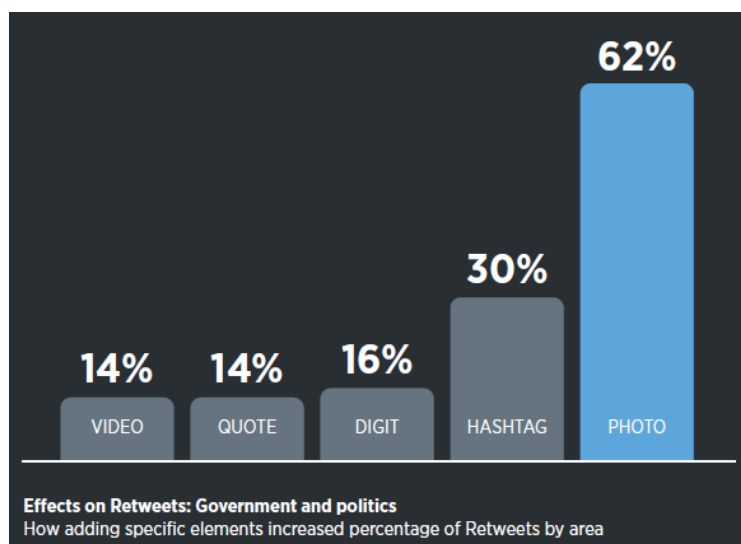
The image below, a UNICEF post, was retweeted by a Twitter user called 'Ebola @ Sierra Leone' who is seen as key influencer with a strong interest in the subject. The UNICEF image of a schoolgirl in Sierra Leone sends a strong emotive message, and is also used to convey additional information. Adding images to your Tweet will invariably boost your message and result in higher audience engagement and a higher number of Retweets.

Figure 6. Tweet with schoolgirl quote



The UNICEF Tweet above was retweeted 178 times (as of 11 February 2015, when this screenshot was taken). In general, photos get retweeted more than any other content on Twitter [16]

Figure 7. Effects on Retweets



Source: Twitter government and elections handbook, p. 47 [16]

There are a number of free tools that will enable you to create professional looking images that can be used on a social media (see [free-image-creation-tools](#)), but often it is enough to get your own camera out and snap away. So even with limited resources you can produce meaningful images for social media very quickly and easily.

Photos and images are more than just eye candy, so think of them as relevant content and make sure that they illustrate your message and are in line with the text of your Tweet.

It is difficult to determine how many new images an organisation should post per week or month. But even Twitter, which started out as a text-only service, now uses lots of visual content to boost engagement and interaction.

Infographics, charts or a graphs have a high information density and can convey large amounts of information in a small space. The graphic below highlights – tongue-in-cheek – the main elements of an infographic [17]:

Figure 8. An infographic about infographics – a tongue-in-cheek look at infographics

The **INFOGRAPHIC** INFOGRAPHIC

SO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT INFOGRAPHICS

Infographics are usually based on a popular topic of discussion or an internet meme. They mostly use block letters and vector illustrations to take boring data and make it entertaining. This paragraph introduces you to the idea, but most people don't read this.

Keys to Success

Draw graphics to support each talking point.

Illustrated **visual puns** keep people interested. If they don't normally care about the topic at hand, they certainly will now.

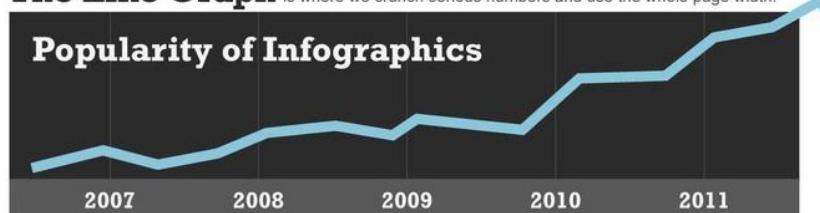


Color Usage



Infographics use mostly values and only use the main color for illustrations. Highlight colors will only be used to **draw attention** to certain words.

The Line Graph is where we crunch serious numbers and use the whole page width.



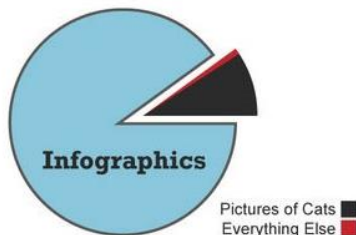
Make it Obvious

with a **semi-related** humorous illustration.



Shocking Extrapolation

At the current growth rate, in **2158** infographics will be **90%** of all internet content.



Sources need to be hard to read, use a lighter and smaller font so no one will try and fact check you.

<http://www.google.com/trends?q=infographic&tab=0&geo=all&date=all&sort=0>

© comicalconcept.com

Source: Nathan Batson [17]

Top tips for social media

'As humans, we connect emotionally to images more than video, audio or text. People make decisions and take action quicker when prompted by images, rather than by reading a lot of text'. [18]

- '[Using] infographics [...] can increase [...] traffic by 12%.'
- '94% more total views on average [for] content containing compelling images.'
- '14% increase in page-views are seen when press releases contain a photograph. (They climb to 48% when both photographs and videos are included)'. [18]

Social media updates that include images outperform those without. Click on this link ([free-image-creation-tools](#)) for free tools that can be used to create unique images for a variety of social media platforms including infographics and profile pictures.

Box 7. Tweets by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

The first Tweet in the screenshot below promotes an interview on the Ebola crisis intended to highlight ECDC's work during the Ebola epidemic.

The Retweet directly under the Tweet shows that a member of the scientific community endorsed an ECDC project, which boosts ECDC's credibility.

A second Retweet, also by ECDC, endorses the scientific journal Eurosurveillance, raises awareness for World Tuberculosis Day, and emphasises the advances in the treatment of TB made in the EU.

Figure 8. ECDC Tweets and Retweets about #Ebola, #E3geoportal, and #WorldTuberculosisDay



2.2.4 Step 4: Deploy and engage

Start small and slow

If this is your first foray into social media, try to develop your activities step by step. Gradually building up your social media presence gives your organisation the opportunity to assess what works well and what needs to be done better. Once this has become clear, you can scale up activities.

Communicate/share your plans for social media activities with everybody in the organisation who could potentially be involved in supporting these activities; this is an opportunity to raise awareness within the organisation about social media. Get people interested, motivated and active, build contacts and networks.

This is also a good time to share social media policies and plans if you haven't done this already. This will help to ensure that those posting on social media are in line with the agreed strategy. A planned activity, for example, might include sharing key messages with designated target audiences or publishing a certain number of messages at specific times during the day.

There are tools which let you post at predetermined times, for example TweetDeck. Automatically posting messages after hours is not recommended – unless you have people on standby who can respond to the latest developments.

Building an audience

You can employ different tactics to increase your audience on social media. The table below summarises some of the most popular approaches:

Table 3. Building an audience

Tactic	Description
Focus on quality and gradually build an audience	Focus your resources on creating high-quality content, especially if your resources are limited. Targeting specific audiences will improve chances of developing a following: demonstrate through your content that the interests of core groups and key stakeholders are important to your organisation. If your posts resonate with your audience, your messages will be shared and your audience will grow.
Pay to play	If you cannot reach your target audience, hiring a specialised agency to promote your organisation online can boost reach and impact.
Choose platforms wisely	Organisations do not need to be on every social media platform. Some may find it easier to engage on Pinterest, Instagram or YouTube, while others prefer Twitter or Facebook. Try to find out which platforms are important to your target groups and stakeholders, then get a feeling for these platform, their online etiquette, their reach, their demographics, and their technical complexity. Weigh all criteria before deciding on one or several of these platforms.

Further advice on building an audience can be found here:

- [Ten ways to build a social media audience](#)
- [Seven tips for building a social media audience](#)
- [How to build a social media audience from the ground up](#)
- [Twenty-five ways to grow your social media presence](#)
- [How to use social media to build an audience](#)
- [How to build your audience on social media \[infographic\]](#)

Responding to messages

How you respond to questions or messages on social media needs to be carefully considered. Also determine who in your organisations responds to what type of question, especially if different programme managers share this responsibility. Table 4 below offers some suggestions [5]:

Table 4. Responding to different types of social media messages and requests

Type	Description	Response
Optimistic	Expressing satisfaction, enthusiasm or endorsing a message or activity.	'Like', retweet, share, approve, etc. Answer with appreciation or further information to carry on the discussion.
Impartial	Neither enthusiastic nor offensive. Or: request for more information.	Acknowledge inquiries and resolve matters to show the community that your organisation addresses all issues.
Adverse, negative, confrontational	Displeasure with information, message or action. Also: deliberate misinformation.	Always recognise and never delete. Demonstrate that the issue is important and will be dealt with. Only if a message is offensive or deliberately misleading, it should be deleted, but never before properly documenting the incident. Then contact user directly to explain your reasons for deleting his or her message.
Critical	Criticism of organisation or its messages. Can sometimes be an indirect request for help or further information.	Should be passed on to an appropriate expert for a direct response, otherwise put the message on hold. Make sure that users feel listened to and that their question is taken seriously. Take the communication offline if possible but comment online to show that the issue is being dealt with. Document the incident.

Source: Adapted from The Essential Guide to Marketing in a Digital World [5]

You can try different response strategies and develop pre-formulated responses to anticipated messages, which can substantially reduce your response time and improve the quality of your message. Such messages, however, should never be impersonal or overly generic and should be adjusted to the actual situation.

Expert input

Several interviewed experts confirmed that questions and comments posted on social media can be challenging. All organisations we talked to have a policy for social media use with response mechanisms regulating, among other things, the prioritisation of messages and comments and the provision of further information.

Public health organisations underscored that responses in social media should be candid and truthful and that all information posted online should be correct at the time of publication. This was an important aspect of building trust and confidence.

2.2.5 Step 5: Measure outputs

Measuring success against objectives is important; it not only allows a direct comparison against objectives but also gives the opportunity to refine the social media strategy by, for example, considering what has worked and what didn't. Continually evaluating the strategy helps identify weaker areas which need to be addressed and strengthened. As part of the planning process, schedule regular strategy reviews with support from internal stakeholders. A performance review may include the following points (based on an adapted RADAR assessment [19]):

Assessing enabling activities:

- Was the strategy deployed in all of the relevant areas of the organisation and within the agreed time frame? Were there any issues or problems that need to be addressed?
- Did you measure social media activities? Are the right tools being used to measure relevant social media activity and outputs?
- Are learning activities in place to address identified problem areas? Have you identified alternative ways of working?
- Are improvements being shared and implemented as a result of measuring, listening, learning and engagement activities?

Assessing results:

- Do the results clearly show how the organisation is progressing against the identified social media strategy and objectives?
- Are the data reliable and can they be segmented to give a clear understanding of what's happening with regard to different stakeholders and other groups?
- Are there any positive or negative trends (requires data collection over a certain period)?
- Have you set appropriate targets for improvement and engagement?
- Are there appropriate comparisons with other organisations?
- Is there an understanding of the enablers of, and barriers to, performance?
- Is there a plan to ensure that performance is sustained and that the social media strategy can be continuously improved?

Expert input

Interviewed public health organisations all undertook routine reporting for social media that covered audience growth, reach, users clicks, user time on site, shared information, and most popular content. Metrics were reported weekly, monthly and bi-annually. Results were used to evaluate current approaches and to improve social media strategies.

Public Health England said that when communicating about Ebola (2014 outbreak), they had to constantly adapt sharable content and media types. During the crisis, the most effective content included simple pictures, diagrams and short and concise texts.

2.3 Obstacles to effective social media communication and how to address them

Just as there are many benefits to using social media for engagement purposes, there are also risks and challenges that need to be addressed. Taking a strategic approach to social media helps to avoid many pitfalls. You may face the following challenges (adapted from Heldman et al. [2]):

- **Loss of message control.** Negative comments can misshape a message and affect an organisation's reputation. Engagement with key influencers on social media is a good way to proactively encourage a sensible dialogue on public health topics and minimise the risk of losing control of messages.
- **Resource allocation.** Public health organisations interested in engaging in social media should not underestimate the amount of time and money needed to maintain a meaningful online presence. Generally speaking, the higher the level of engagement, the more human and financial resources are needed to adequately and effectively implement a consistent, coordinated approach. Organisations need to adopt a long-term perspective toward social media, as starting and stopping activities impacts credibility and trust.
- **Assessing impact on public health outcomes.** Quantifying the impact and demonstrating the value of social media engagement can be difficult. This guide provides information on how to evaluate and measure the impact of social media activities (see Section 2.2.5). Attributing health outcomes to social media engagement can be challenging because there are many other factors to take into consideration.

You'd better not...

Loss of message control

The Dove *Campaign for Real Beauty*, Unilever's marketing effort focused on encouraging women to embrace their own bodies, curves and all, won two Cannes Lions Grand Prix awards.

But a few savvy customers quickly noted that Unilever also markets a skin-lightening cream (*Fair & Lovely*) and diet aids (*Slim Fast*), and they quickly spread their observations across social media. Adding insult to injury, a company employee revealed that the images in the 'Real Beauty' campaign had been photoshopped, which was also shared widely across the internet.

This is a good example of where an organisation lost control of the original message it was trying to create [20].

Research into the impact of social media on health communication and health behaviours is expanding rapidly. Staying abreast of developments in social media research for public health communication can be achieved by networking with other people who work in public health, or by developing links to organisations dedicated to this topic. Using social media is also a good source of information. On Twitter, a group of social media experts uses the #SMEM hashtag to share information about social media emergency management.

Social media change quickly. In February 2016, Twitter changed the way it displayed Tweets from reversed chronological order to an order based on both relevance and chronology. Other social media sites also expand their functionality, for example by introducing new apps. It is important to tailor your organisation's communication efforts to these new functionalities, especially if they are gaining currency with users. Public health organisations also need to be mindful of the digital divide because some population groups refrain from using social media, and organisations need to consider how they can still reach these groups with public health messages in the context of their overall communication strategy.

Strengthening professional networks in the area of health communication is another way to promote the sharing of best practices and expertise. It may also be useful to engage with communicators in other types of organisations, e.g. via associations or conferences where new developments are discussed.

Figure 9. Twitter #smem (social media emergency management)



Sharing tips about social media for disaster management. This example presents information in a way that makes it easy to identify what it is about. It uses a relevant image and provides a link to an external site, which makes sharing easy.

3 Applying social media to forecasting and risk, crisis and corporate communication⁴

Social media can provide a timely and low-cost method to gather and disseminate important public health information in the context of risk and crisis communication. It thus supports the listening function and helps to build relationships with key audiences. Social media also provide a mechanism to help health authorities keep in touch with key players and appropriately frame messages and conversations during crisis situations.

Reference documents

Wendling et al. [21] provide in-depth information on the various types of social media and how these can be used for risk and crisis communication in a 2013 OECD paper entitled *The use of social media in risk and crisis communication*.

For further information see also Reynolds and Seeger, *Crisis and emergency risk communication as an integrative model* [22].

Box 8. Using social media in risk and crisis communication

Type of social media	Examples	Use for risk and crisis communication
Social networking	Facebook Myspace Friendster	Enhance coordination among volunteers and emergency services; allow to share information inside a community; provide swift updates on emergency situation.
Content sharing	YouTube Flickr Vimeo	Enhance situational awareness in real time through exchange of pictures and videos; allow emergency services to launch campaigns about risks; can help identify missing individuals, victims.
Collaborating and knowledge-sharing	Wikis Forums Message boards Podcasts	Enhance dialogue between victims and emergency services.
Blogging and microblogging	Blogger WordPress Tumblr Twitter	Convey recommendations, warnings; share facts. Twitter allows immediate information sharing and feedback.
Specialised crisis management platforms managed by volunteer technology communities	<p>Mapping collaboration OpenStreetMap Crisis Mappers Google Map Maker</p> <p>Online and onsite contribution Ushahidi Crisis Commons Sahana Software Foundation Geeks without Bounds</p> <p>Public-private-people partnership Random Hacks of Kindness (with Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, NASA, World Bank)</p>	Mapping of emergencies; facilitation of emergency responses.

Source: Adapted from Wendling et al. [21]

Social media let public health organisations directly address their target audiences, with messages that are specifically tailored to these groups. As there are no intermediaries involved (e.g. traditional media), public health organisations retain full control over their messages. Social media also allow agencies to join online conversations, become involved in key issues and interests, and expand the reach of their communications to their target audiences.

⁴ For the definitions of this terms as used in this guide, see Annex 2.

3.1 Risk communication

It is beyond the scope of this guide to describe all steps required to identify and mitigate risks. Obviously, it is essential that your social media strategy is developed together with those people in your organisation who are in charge of risk assessment/mitigation. This is particularly important because your social media strategy should not only include your overall communications objectives but also criteria on how to decide which risks need to be addressed, prioritised, and communicated through social media.

Our interviews with public health organisations in the EU/EAA found that this activity was generally approached in a rather ad hoc way by social media stakeholders and generally lacked a well-articulated strategy. This guide advocates a much more rigorous and planned approach, i.e. identifying and prioritising risks, setting communication objectives, and identifying social media channels.

Some public health organisations have limited resources for the continuous monitoring of risks related to communicable diseases. These organisations can boost capacity through online resources or ask partner organisations in the EU/EAA for support. ECDC, for example, provides a number of online resources that can help national agencies in identifying and tracking risks:

- ECDC's data and tools page at <http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/data-tools/Pages/home.aspx> lists a host of helpful tools. The ECDC Map Maker (EMMa) is an easy-to-use, web-based GIS tool for communicable disease surveillance experts which lets you produce maps than can be used to help identify patterns in disease surveillance data or during outbreak investigations.
- Communicable disease threat report (CDTR). A weekly bulletin intended for epidemiologists and health professionals in the area of communicable disease prevention and control. It summarises information on communicable disease threats gathered through epidemic intelligence. It also provides updates on the situation in the EU and worldwide and reports on changes in the epidemiology of communicable diseases that have the potential to affect Europe. The CDTR is available from: http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/surveillance_reports/Communicable-Disease-Threats-Report/Pages/default.aspx.

Reference documents

The WHO's *Communicable disease risk assessment: protocol for humanitarian emergencies* [23] is a useful resource for risk managers because it provides a three-stage approach to risk assessment. It also provides useful background information on categorising risks based on vector type, environment and other factors, which could be useful in planning risk communication objectives.

Once disease data have been collected and analysed, agencies can prioritise which risks they want to communicate and determine which traditional and social media platforms they want to use to interact with different target groups. Social media, as noted above, can be of great help to understand how people perceive disease risks or what behaviours they show towards different risks. These insights can help shape risk communication strategies.

Comprehensive communication strategies utilising a variety of media channels – including interpersonal communications, community mobilisation, or mass media campaigns across traditional and social media – have been found to be most effective in changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviours [24]. How much you can achieve will depend upon the resources available. We recommend prioritising risks, setting clear objectives, and identifying ways to integrate social media into a comprehensive communication plan. This should also include measuring and evaluating the impact of an organisation's social media activities.

3.2 Crisis communication

Social media are useful for communicating information in emergency situations because they can reach a large audience almost immediately.

Good crisis communication is anything but spontaneous and reactive; it should be planned in detail, should have been practiced beforehand several times, and should be proactive/pre-emptive in nature. Crisis communication messages are based on what is known or not known about a current state or condition (for example its magnitude, immediacy, duration, control, cause, blame, consequences, etc.) [25]. Consequently, issues such as planning, building trust, transparency, listening, and releasing information early are important for crisis communication. In an emergency, the public needs information to reduce risk and increase protection. As time is of the essence, crisis communication needs to be concise and is often unidirectional [26].

The US Department of Health and Human Services has developed a number of stages that depict the use of social media in crisis situations [27]. These activities can be useful in developing objectives for crisis communications:

- Improve preparedness, provide information and warnings.
- Quickly, and with empathy, acknowledge the event as soon as possible (e.g. Twitter).
- Explain and inform the public, in clear and concise language, about the risk (e.g. wikis, blogs).
- Establish relationships with relevant media outlets.
- Provide emergency courses of action, including how to access further information. Include links.
- Commit to stakeholders and the public that you will continue communication on the crisis.
- Provide consistent messaging throughout the crisis.
- Solicit support for response and recovery plans (e.g. Facebook).
- Listen to stakeholder and audience feedback.
- Engage with the public, answer questions, provide up-to-date information and correct misinformation (e.g. Facebook and Twitter).
- Explain emergency recommendations (e.g. Facebook).

In order to create an effective approach to social media crisis communication you will need to consider how social media activity is included in the overall planning of your organisation for crisis situations/public health emergencies, e.g. as part of a wider response plan. There is little doubt that information can be quickly disseminated through social media, but there is an imminent danger of rumours and misinformation. You therefore need to listen and try to detect early signals of concerns, rumours and misinformation. We recommend that you work closely with those responsible for emergency planning in your organisation to ensure that the social media aspects are taken into account and integrated into the plan in order to ensure that your emergency response is properly handled and does not lead to any unwanted side effects.

During a crisis, social media activity may be subject to even more scrutiny, and the fast pace may increase the risk of misinformation. It is therefore important to ensure a coherent and coordinated approach in dealing with an increased number of requests for information. For example, you should ensure that you have sufficient resources to run social media communication – especially if you need to provide 24/7 coverage – and that your clearance procedures are fast and do not cause any delays. Staff that usually handle other communication roles could be seconded to help support efforts for a limited time. While some organisations may have provisions to quickly mobilise additional resources during emergencies, others will need to ensure that additional staff involved in an emergency response are properly trained first and briefed in how and when to use social media.

You'd better not...

We advise against starting social media activity during crisis situations, especially if there is a) uncertainty about where to start, and b) a shortage of resources.

An impromptu foray into social media can potentially be very damaging to an organisation's reputation and can have a detrimental impact on crisis communication.

It is important that staff are updated on the official announcements and that there are mechanisms in place to inform staff of what to do if they are approached through their personal social media accounts. We would also suggest that you create a separate policy that informs staff regarding the use of social media during emergency situations. Once a certain crisis level has been declared, communication on social media follows clear rules, making sure that all social media activities are in line with the crisis team's key messages for the organisation. (Incidentally, we do not recommend preventing staff from using social media during a crisis because their sudden silence would undermine the trust of their followers and thus discredit the organisation as a whole.)

You will need to ensure that all crisis activities have been tested out in advance, e.g. through simulation exercises or scenarios (within the organisation or together with other national/international organisations). Social media should always be included in emergency response exercises, e.g. in exercises with other public health organisations.

3.3 Corporate communication

Social media offer a new set of tools and ways for public health agencies to communicate and manage relationships with stakeholders at a variety of levels in order to achieve their aims and objectives.

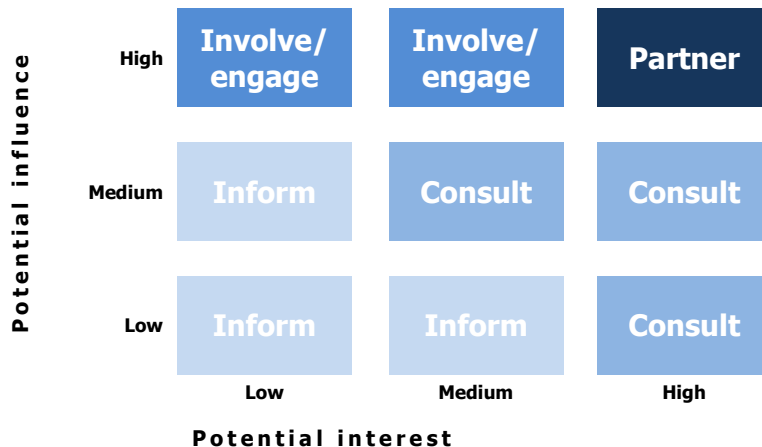
3.3.1 Stakeholder management

Stakeholders are essentially anyone with an interest or concern in what an organisation is doing, or anyone who can affect or be affected by the achievement of an organisation’s objectives. Stakeholders can include:

- users/beneficiaries
- governance (steering groups, boards, government)
- influencers (trade unions, the media, interested individuals, professionals)
- providers (healthcare providers, carers, family members, doctors).

A key step in the planning is to undertake a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify the most important stakeholders for the organisation. This will require you to assess a stakeholders’ potential influence and interest:

Figure 10. External stakeholder mapping



Understanding the social landscape is key to successful social media engagement, and getting to know online influencers is crucial: who are the commentators in an area of interest and how do they influence the wider group of an organisation’s stakeholders? Connecting effectively with these influencers is often a first step to successfully communicating your messages to a wider audience. Remember that independent bloggers can be just as important and influential as established media commentators in the impact that they can have.

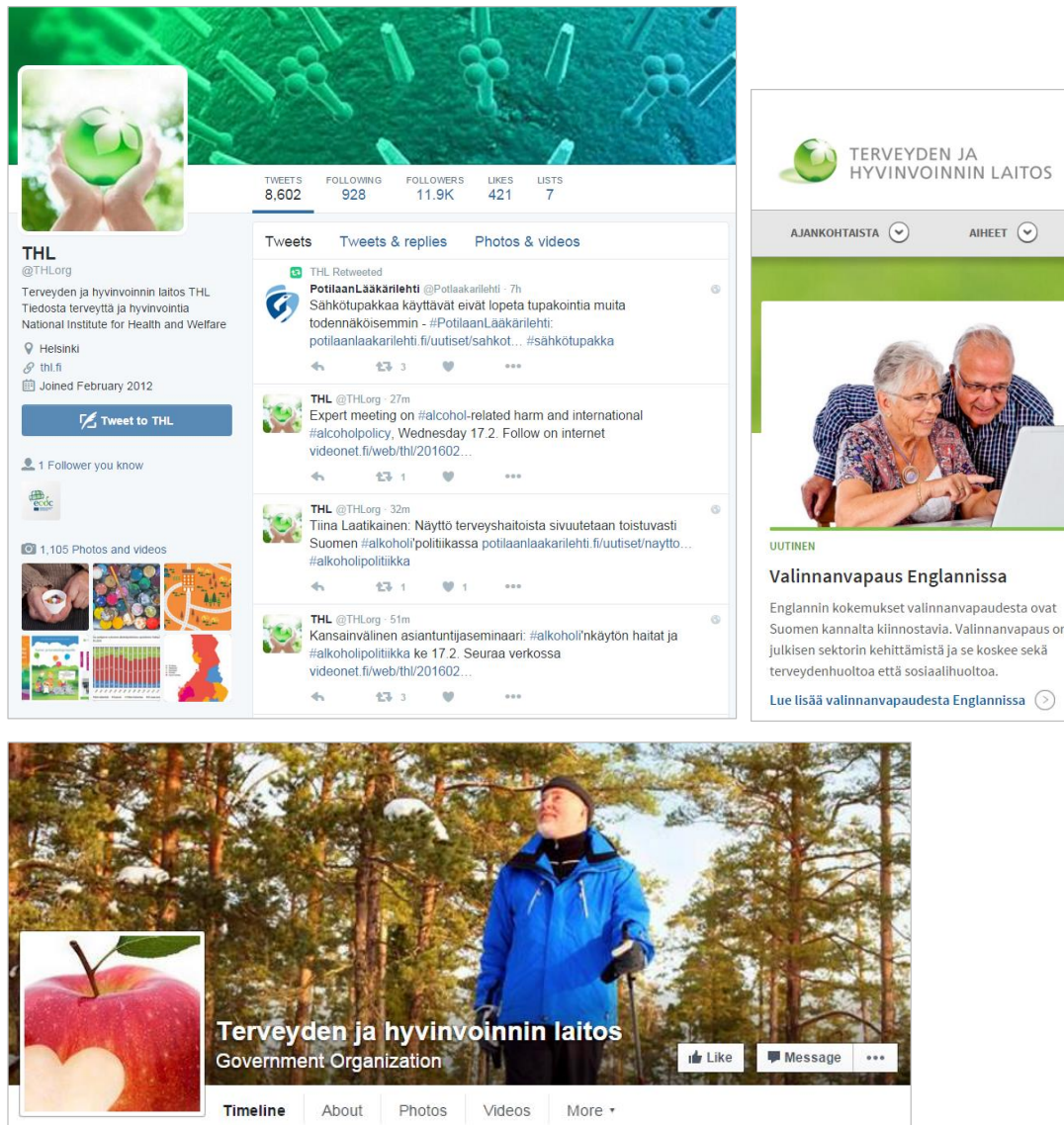
3.3.2 Brand management and corporate identity

Box 9. THL – National Institute for Health and Welfare (Finland)

Although the THL (Finland) was not interviewed for this document, we observed that they have a strong internet presence through a number of social media channels. Their main website features a dedicated topic page for infectious diseases, with specific information on diseases, microbes, surveillance and outbreaks. Downloads include reports on the status of communicable disease in Finland.

The website also links to social media sites including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Slideshare, and a blog. THL’s presence on these social media sites is engaging, with lots of shared information, conference proceedings, and advice. This demonstrates a balanced strategy across a number of sites.

Figure 11. Social media used by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (Finland)



Source: THL Finland; images above are from Twitter, the THL website and Facebook

Staff members engaged in social media should follow some basic rules on how to connect and communicate with specific stakeholders (see Section 2.2.3 *Staffing*). These rules should include visual guidelines, naming conventions, and terminology. This will ensure that your organisation is consistent in its use of language and visual appearance.

Your online activity should follow a simple activity list. The table below is an example of such a task list.

Table 6. Corporate communication planning

Group	Stakeholder	Objective	Social media tool	Activity	Metrics
Influencers	Press	Share corporate messages	Facebook	2 updates/day	500 views
		Engage in conversations	Twitter	3 updates/day	250 views
		Share videos of corporate activities	YouTube	1 update/month	100 views
Beneficiaries	Community group	Share information through infographics	Instagram	1 update/week	500 views

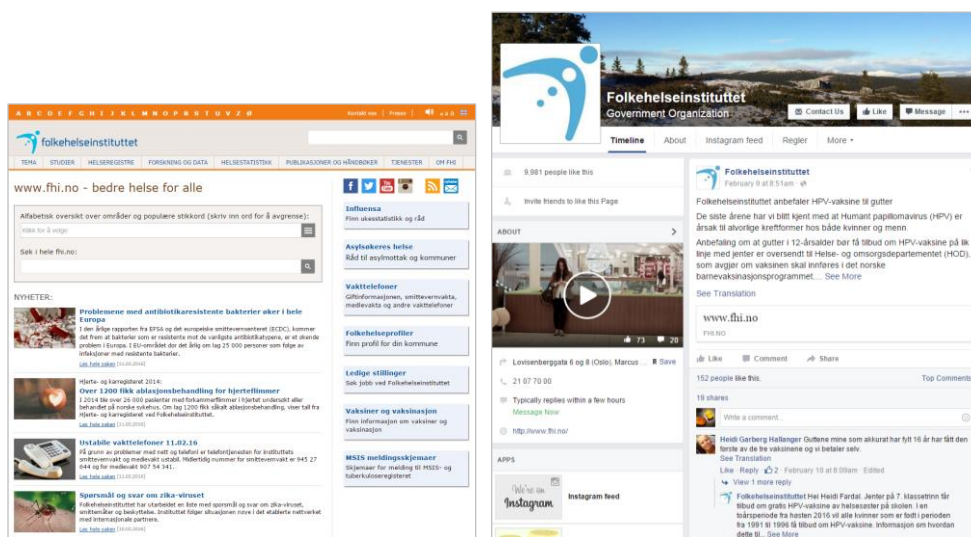
The sample table above also makes an indirect statement about which channels are the most relevant and which media (chats, videos, infographics) are the most appropriate for a given channel. Such a table should be based on the number of users and key stakeholders active on these platforms.

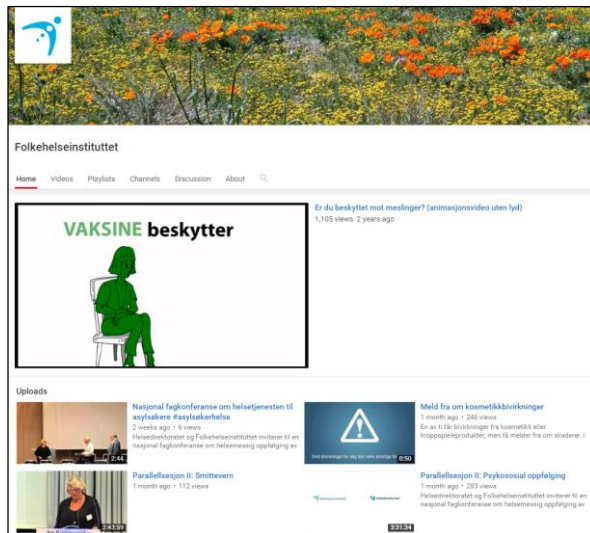
Box 10. Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH)

NIPH have identified the following channels, target groups and content:

Channel	Primary target(s)	Secondary target(s)	Content
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The general public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcare professionals Collaborators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice and knowledge News releases Campaign messaging Crisis communication
Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journalists Social commentators Decision-makers Healthcare professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools and kindergartens Collaborators Municipal and state administration General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> News releases Advice and knowledge Academic events Press conferences Campaign messaging Crisis communication
Instagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The general public Employees Collaborators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journalists Social commentators Decision-makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behind-the-scenes information about the institute Advice and knowledge Campaign messaging
YouTube and Vimeo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants in scientific studies Healthcare professionals Schools and kindergartens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about the institute Research findings Campaign messaging
LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees, current and prospective Researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job listings Content marketing

Figure 12. Social media used by the National Institute for Public Health (Norway)





Source: National Institute for Public Health (Norway); images above are from the Institute's website, Facebook, and YouTube.

The National Institute for Public Health provides a number of helpful links; on its Twitter page there is even a phone number for direct contact. A short animated video on the Institute's YouTube channel informs about vaccinations.

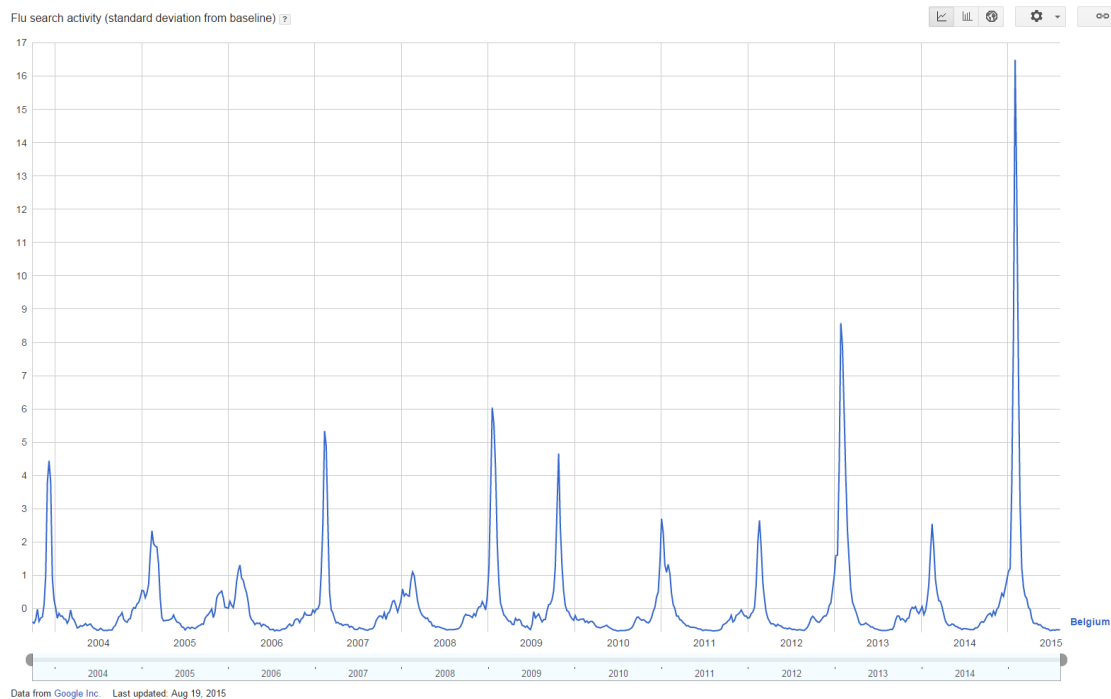
3.4 Using social media in health risk preparedness

Social media are also used as trending and forecasting tools. Accurate disease forecasts are essential when preparing for epidemic outbreaks, and there is evidence to suggest that some social media platforms can significantly improve forecasting.

For example, [Google Flu Trends](https://www.google.org/flutrends/about)⁵ used to use aggregated Google search data to estimate flu activity around the world in near real time. As millions of users around the world searched for information online, Google filtered out flu-related queries and – based on an assumed correlation between the number of these queries and the number of people with flu symptoms – tried to calculate the actual numbers of influenza cases [28].

Despite its shortcomings, the approach taken by Google demonstrated how query data can be used to estimate current levels of influenza in large populations of internet search users, which can then be used to improve the timing of social media messages to mitigate risks and improve response times in outbreak situations.

⁵ According to <https://www.google.org/flutrends/about>, 'Google Flu Trends ... are no longer publishing current estimates of flu [trends] ... based on search patterns'. The experiment ended when Google's Flu Trends prediction system overestimated the number of influenza cases in the USA for 100 of the past 108 weeks.

Figure 13. Google Flu Trends

Source: Google

The graph shows historical query-based flu estimates for Belgium

Social media as predictors of disease trends can help health professionals to better respond to seasonal epidemics and can be an important tool for people who are in charge of social media in public health organisations.

A recent study has demonstrated how Twitter data improve influenza forecasts [29]. Twitter data were used to produce forecasts that were two to four weeks ahead of baseline models. Furthermore, it was shown that Twitter data are, on average, better predictors of influenza prevalence than models that use data from Google Flu Trends. Twitter data are insensitive to influences from mainstream media, are more accessible, and provide better forecasts than Google Flu Trends. This is an important validation of social media as a data source for influenza surveillance and forecasting.

4 Top tips for the most popular social media sites

People in public health communication consulted for this guide emphasise the importance of having an attractive and functional website. An organisation's presence in social media should always be displayed on the website: Don't forget to display clear links to the social media platforms used by your organisation on the homepage of your website. Also, social media postings should refer back to the website, which serves as a repository of in-depth information.

Top tips for social media

- Be open, honest, flexible and adaptable.
- Understand the limitations of the channels you want to use.
- Be prepared for the unexpected.
- Know your audience.
- Budget your time.
- Keeping things simple (text and images) can be very effective.
- Produce and share information that people actually want.
- Expect intense scrutiny on social media.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help, e.g. from other public health communication professionals.
- Evaluate – how are people processing the information?

4.1 Twitter

Twitter is an online social networking service that enables users to send and read 140-character messages called 'Tweets'. At the time of writing, Twitter had 316 million monthly active users, with 500 million Tweets sent per day. Furthermore, 80% of active users accessed the site via mobile devices. The site supported 33 different languages, making it accessible to a broad range of users around the world [31].

Here are a few things you should keep in mind when using Twitter:

- Personalise your profile by adding your picture, or, for corporate profiles, your logo. Inform your readers about the names of all Twitter accounts maintained by your organisation, official and personal.
- Max out the number of characters allowed in a Twitter profile so that you can include more keywords that people can search for.
- Use third-party tools to enhance your Twitter experience. [Qwitter](#), for example, is an application that allows Twitter users to track individuals through their Tweets.
- Use Twitter Search to check if your website or blog have been mentioned.
- Search for local Tweets on Twitter Search. (See figure below for search operators.)
- Retweet and/or participate in conversations with people with lots of followers (but only when it adds value to the conversation). Only retweet accounts that have the same values, mission and audience as yours.
- Include your Twitter address wherever you can, e.g. on your business card, web page, etc.

These tips have been adapted from www.computerhope.com/tips/tip149.htm [32].

Figure 14. Search operators on Twitter Search

Operator	Finds tweets...
twitter search	containing both "twitter" and "search". This is the default operator.
"happy hour"	containing the exact phrase "happy hour".
love OR hate	containing either "love" or "hate" (or both).
beer -root	containing "beer" but not "root".
#haiku	containing the hashtag "haiku".
from:alexiskold	sent from person "alexiskold".
to:techcrunch	sent to person "techcrunch".
@mashable	referencing person "mashable".
"happy hour" near:"san francisco"	containing the exact phrase "happy hour" and sent near "san francisco".
near:NYC within:15mi	sent within 15 miles of "NYC".
superhero since:2010-12-27	containing "superhero" and sent since date "2010-12-27" (year-month-day).
ftw until:2010-12-27	containing "ftw" and sent up to date "2010-12-27".
movie -scary :)	containing "movie", but not "scary", and with a positive attitude.
flight :(containing "flight" and with a negative attitude.
traffic ?	containing "traffic" and asking a question.
hilarious filter:links	containing "hilarious" and linking to URLs.
news source:twitterfeed	containing "news" and entered via TwitterFeed

Source: <https://twitter.com/search-home>

4.2 Facebook

Facebook is an online social networking service. Organisations can create a Facebook page, add other users as 'friends', exchange messages, post status updates and photos, share videos, and receive notifications on the Facebook activities of others. Additionally, users may set up and/or join common-interest user groups. As of August 2015, Facebook had over 1.49 billion monthly active users.

- Reciprocate: if someone posts on your profile, you are expected to respond.
- Always consider potentially negative consequences before making a post.
- Not every organisation is on Facebook. Assess where your target audience is and focus on the social media sites that will have the highest pay-off for your objectives.
- Have a clear idea of who you want to reach on Facebook. The more you know about your target audiences, the better you can tailor your messages.
- Give serious attention to your cover image, profile image and the 'about' section.
- Your profile picture is the first thing your visitors will notice; make sure that it is representative of your organisation and conveys helpful information at a glance.
- Infrequent posts are just as counterproductive as too many messages. Test the optimal message frequency by watching 'shares' and 'likes'. Creating a content calendar can also help.
- Facebook [Page Insights](#)⁶ provide data to help you measure your success.

These tips have been adapted from <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/top-10-must-read-tips-run-successful-facebook-business-page> [32].

4.3 YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing website. The site allows users to upload, view, and share videos. Available content includes video clips, TV clips, music videos, and other content such as video blogging, short original videos, and educational videos. YouTube has more than one billion users, and 300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute [33].

⁶ Page Insights are only available if at least 30 people like your page. Page Insights provide information about your page's performance (demographic data about your audience, information on how people are responding to your posts).

- Set up a YouTube channel to promote featured videos, playlists, and other videos/channels that support your message.
- YouTube displays a video thumbnail in its search results. Potential viewers use these thumbnails to decide whether to watch a video, so make your preview thumbnails attractive.
- A good headline can make videos more successful.
- Make sure your video's description includes a call to action and a link back to your website.
- Adding captions to your video enables millions of hearing impaired people to access your content.
- Tags help users find your video when they search the site.
- Ensure you post videos on your website and other social media sites.
- YouTube offers free analytics for every uploaded video. You can access performance metrics such as number of views, demographics, engagement, and traffic sources.

These tips have been adapted from <http://www.smartshoot.com/blog/top-10-youtube-tips-and-tricks> [34].

4.4 LinkedIn

LinkedIn [pronounced /, lɪŋkt. 'ɪn/] is a social networking site which lets you network with people you know and trust professionally. The site boasts 364 million users in over 200 countries around the world (with 89 million in Europe) [35].

- Join LinkedIn groups to connect with users in your target audience and take part in discussions with them. Invite them to join your network or groups.
- Reuse content in different ways to reinforce messages and provide consistency.
- Embed relevant white papers and articles in your profile or groups to increase followers.
- Target relevant groups that are highly active and have many followers.
- Use a QR code on printed materials (e.g. business cards) so that people you meet can scan and access your profile immediately.
- Follow industry experts to keep up to date with the latest news, topics and thought leadership in relevant areas.
- As with your website, your LinkedIn profile is more likely to get views if you are active in updating its content. Use all available tools, e.g. use the status bar to add comments on relevant and interesting news.
- Your default LinkedIn public URL address may include irrelevant characters and numbers. You can customise the URL and make it shorter and easier to share.

Some of these tips have been adapted from www.forbes.com/sites/williamarruda/2014/03/04/22-linkedin-secrets-linkedin-wont-tell-you/ [36].

4.5 Other social media sites

There are other sites you may want to cover. Their popularity varies between countries, regions, and population groups. Some of the more well-known sites are:

- Pinterest
- Instagram
- SlideShare
- Vimeo
- Wikipedia

In addition, instant messaging services such as Snapchat and WhatsApp are popular. WhatsApp is also used by organisations to share information: the BBC used WhatsApp to launch a public health information service on Ebola during the outbreak in West Africa.

5 Useful resources

5.1 Organisations

5.1.1 European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

ECDC was established in 2005. It is an EU agency which was established to strengthen Europe's defences against infectious diseases and has a mission to identify, assess and communicate current and emerging threats to human health posed by infectious diseases. ECDC's website (<http://ecdc.europa.eu/>) includes extensive resources, links, tools and other information.

ECDC social media sites:

- Twitter
https://twitter.com/ecdc_eu, https://twitter.com/ecdc_outbreaks, https://twitter.com/ecdc_vpd, https://twitter.com/ecdc_tb, <https://twitter.com/itraineu>, https://twitter.com/ecdc_flu, and https://twitter.com/ecdc_hiv aids
- Facebook
www.facebook.com/ecdc.eu
- YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/user/ECDCchannel>
- Vimeo
<https://vimeo.com/ecdcvideos/>
- LinkedIn
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/ecdc>
- Pinterest
https://se.pinterest.com/ecdc_eu/
- Slideshare
http://www.slideshare.net/ECDC_EU
- Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Centre_for_Disease_Prevention_and_Control

5.1.2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the leading national public health institute of the United States. The CDC is a federal agency under the Department of Health and Human Services. Its main goal is to protect public health and safety through the control and prevention of disease, injury, and disability. The CDC focuses national attention on developing and applying disease control and prevention. The CDC provides information on emerging infectious diseases, emergency preparedness and response information, as well as useful resources for crisis and emergency risk communications (CERC).

CDC social media sites:

- Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/CDC>
- Twitter
<https://twitter.com/CDCgov> and <https://twitter.com/CDCemergency>
- YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/user/CDCStreamingHealth>
- Instagram
<https://instagram.com/CDCgov/>
- Podcasts
<http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/>
- CDCTV
<http://www.cdc.gov/cdctv/>
- RSS Feeds
<http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/rss.asp>

5.1.3 World Health Organization

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialised agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health. Since its creation, it has played a leading role in the eradication of smallpox. Its current priorities include communicable diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, Ebola, malaria and tuberculosis; the mitigation of the effects of non-communicable diseases; sexual and reproductive health; development, and aging; nutrition, food security and healthy eating; occupational health; substance abuse; and driving the development of reporting, publications, and networking. The WHO is responsible for the World Health Report, the worldwide World Health Survey, and World Health Day. See <http://www.who.int/entity/en/>.

World Health Organization social media sites:

- RSS feeds
<http://www.who.int/about/licensing/rss/en/>
- YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/user/who>
- Twitter
<https://twitter.com/who>
- Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/WHO>
- Google+
<https://plus.google.com/+who/posts>
- Info App (iTunes)
<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/who-info/id895463794?mt=8>
- Google Play
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.adappt.whoapp>

5.2 Other useful resources

Resource	Link
ECDC social media toolkit for European Antibiotic Awareness Day	www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/eaad/Pages/social-media-guidance.aspx
ECDC Social Marketing Guide	http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/healthtopics/health_communication/health-communication-topics/pages/social-marketing.aspx
US CDC. Crisis and emergency risk communication – 2014 edition.	www.bt.cdc.gov/cerc/resources/pdf/cerc_2014edition.pdf
Mixed uptake of social media among public health specialists.	www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/11/11-031111/en/
European Commission. Use of social media in EU communication.	http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/go_live/web2_0/
The ECDC communicable disease threat report (CDTR), weekly bulletin	http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/surveillance_reports/Communicable-Disease-Threats-Report/Pages/default.aspx
World Health Organisation. Outbreak communication planning guide	www.who.int/ihr/elibrary/WHOOutbreakCommsPlanngGuide.pdf
OECD working paper. The use of social media in risk and crisis communication	http://goo.gl/cEhGmO
Social media engagement and analytics tools: TweetDeck Hootsuite	https://about.twitter.com/products/tweetdeck https://hootsuite.com

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Annex 1. Assessing your organisation's social media capability

Since no independent benchmarks exist to assess the social media competence of an organisation, the below questionnaire is based on self-assessment. You may be able to identify similar organisations who are willing to fill in the same questionnaire, which will help you to measure yourself against the results of your partner organisations.

In the short term, this questionnaire will help you identify areas for improvement. After you have addressed your shortcomings, you should reassess yourself and see if your score has improved.

We suggest that you use a scale from 1 to 10. For example, when answering the question 'Is the strategy integrated with other approaches, strategies, policies, etc.?', a score of zero indicates a clear no. Where there is limited evidence, we would expect a score of between 1 and 5. If there is plenty of evidence of integration with other approaches, the score should range between 6 and 10.

Some of the questions require a short written answer in the notes/action column.

1. Your organisation's approach to social media

Question	Score 1 (low) to 10 (high)	Notes/action
Does your organisation have a social media strategy?	Yes/no	See Part 1
If yes, is the strategy integrated with other approaches, strategies, policies, etc.?	1–10	See Part 1
Does it describe the objectives that the organisation is looking to achieve?	1–10	See Part 2
Do the objectives include objectives related to:	N/A	See Part 3
risk communication	1–10	See section 3.1
crisis communication	1–10	See Section 3.2
corporate communication	1–10	See Section 3.3
To what extent does your organisation plan the activities needed to deliver the objectives and results?	1–10	See Section 2.2.2
To what extent are these objectives being achieved?	1–10	See Section 2.2.3
To what extent does the organisation ensure that these objectives will be achieved in the future?	1–10	See Section 2.2.3
Is there an appointed person in charge of social media in the organisation?	1–10	See Section 2.2.3
Is there a board-level commitment to adopt social media for risk, crisis and corporate communications?	1–10	See Section 2.2.3
Does your organisation regularly monitor social media for situational awareness (how often)?	1–10	See Section 2.2.1
Do you train your staff in the use of social media as a situational awareness tool?	1–10	See Section 2.2.1
Does your organisation have the necessary human resources to use social media as a situational awareness tool?	1–10	See Section 2.2.3
Total score	1–130	

2. Social media strategy and activity and in your organisation

Question	Score 1 (low) to 10 (high)	Action
When, where and how was the strategy implemented?	1–10	See Section 2.2.4
Has the strategy been applied in a systematic way?	1–10	See Section 2.2.4
What percentage of the organisation has deployed the social media strategy?	1–10	See Section 2.2.4
Which parts of the organisation still need to adopt the strategy?	1–10	See Section 2.2.4
Is there a plan to address any deployment gaps?	1–10	See Section 2.2.4
Do you have a list of people with blogs, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts who could help you gather information from communities that could act as multipliers of your messages?	1–10	See Section 2.2.1
Do you use social media in emergency/crisis situation exercises?	1–10	See Sections 3.1 and 3.2
Total score	1–70	

3. Assessing social media activity in your organisation

Question	Score 1 (low) to 10 (high)	Action
How does your organisation detect and measure whether the strategy is working?	1–10	See Section 2.2.5
What has your organisation learned?	1–10	See Section 2.2.5
What improvements were made? What improvements should be made?	1–10	See Section 2.2.5
Total score	1–30	

4. Collating and assessing results

Question	Score 1 (low) to 10 (high)	Action
Has your organisation been successful with its social media activities? What are the results?	1–10	See Section 2.2.5
Do the results of your social media activities clearly show how your organisation is progressing against its social media objectives?	1–10	See Section 2.2.5
Are there reliable data and can they be segmented to show target audiences, stakeholders and groups?	1–10	See Section 2.2.5
Can you identify any trends?	1–10	See Section 2.2.5
Has your organisation set appropriate targets for the objectives and were these achieved? Did you have to reassess your objectives?	1–10	See Section 2.2.5
Can you put your results in context with the achievements of similar public health organisations or activities?	1–10	See Section 2.2.5
Is there evidence that your organisation understands the underlying drivers of the results?	1–10	See Section 2.2.5
Do you use metrics to monitor the number of visits on emergency services web pages or social media pages in order to identify trends towards one particular risk or crisis?	1–10	See Section 2.2.5
Total score	1–80	

Reference documents

This self-assessment approach is loosely based on the RADAR Logic approach put forward by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). RADAR Logic is supposed to help organisations to assess themselves against the Business Excellence Model [19].

The above self-assessment also includes questions taken from an OECD working paper entitled *The use of social media in risk and crisis communication* [21], which is a helpful resource for risk and crisis communication.

Annex 2. Definitions

The following definitions summarise and encompass available descriptions of risk, crisis and corporate communication and reflect how these terms are used throughout this document. These definitions are not based on a systematic review of the literature, but are intended to provide a common understanding of the terms used in this guide.

Risk communication

Risk communication is 'an interactive process of exchange of information among individuals, groups and institutions. It involves multiple messages about the nature of risk and other messages, not strictly about risk, that express concern, opinions, or reactions to risk messages, or to legal and institutional arrangements for risk managers' [1]. Risk communication aims 'to provide the public with meaningful, relevant, accurate and timely information in relation to ... health risks [related to communicable diseases] in order to influence choice' [2]. It is based on ongoing projections and calculations of the potential for future harm. Risk messages emerge long before a crisis event occurs and aim to reduce the likelihood of a crisis event occurring in the long term [3].

Crisis communication

Crisis communication – in the context of public health – is seen as 'risk communication' with an added element of immediacy: infectious diseases, especially during outbreaks, require immediate attention. As opposed to risk communication, crisis communication can be a spontaneous and reactive process, often occurring in unexpected emergency situations. Crisis communication messages are based on what is known and not known about a current state or condition (for example, its magnitude, immediacy, duration, control, cause, blame, consequences, etc.) [3]. In an emergency, the public needs information to reduce risk and increase protection. As time is of the essence, crisis communication needs to be concise and is often unidirectional [4].

Corporate communication

Corporate communication is a management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication, with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining a favourable reputation with all stakeholder groups which the organisation serves [5]. In the context of this review, corporate communication relates to raising awareness of an organisation in order to promote its public health function.

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- 5 Cornelissen J. Corporate communication – A guide to theory and practice. 4th Edition. London: Sage Publications; 2014.

Annex 3. Glossary

Of the many comprehensive glossaries online, we found these two to be the most helpful:

- <http://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-managers-definitive-glossary-2014/>
- <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/6126/The-Ultimate-Glossary-120-Social-Media-Marketing-Terms-Explained.aspx>

The glossary below only covers the terms used in this guide.

A

Advocates	Social media users, who provide support to an organisation or cause – through 'likes', sharing and other endorsements, e.g. messages.
Audience	A group of social media users who participate in, or encounter, social media messages

B

Blog (blogging, microblogging)	A website, typically run by an individual or small group, that is updated regularly and characterised by an informal tone. Some bloggers allow comments and discussions.
Brandwatch	A social media monitoring tool/organisation

C

Content calendar (also: editorial calendar)	Used by social media users/publishers to control publication of content across different social media sites
Content management	The administration of digital content, from creation to storage to publication. May include images, videos, audio, multimedia, text, etc.
Communicable disease	Disease transmitted from one person (or animal) to another
Crisis	A time of intense difficulty or danger. In public health, the term relates to outbreak situations. A sudden occurrence or increased incidence (epidemic, outbreak) of a communicable disease.

D

E

Editorial calendar	(See <i>content calendar</i>)
Emergency response	Aggregate of decisions and measures taken to contain or mitigate the effects of a communicable disease outbreak to prevent any further loss of life and minimise impact
Engagement	A measure of success for social media activities (can be different for separate platforms), e.g. the number of unique people who have clicked on your posts; occupying and attracting the interest of a target social media audience.
Engagor	A social media management tool

F

Facebook	A popular social networking site
Followers	Social media users (e.g. on Twitter) who subscribe to receive your social media messages

Forum	A social media platform that shares information, questions, answers, and discussions in an open format for users to freely contribute to
Flickr	A social media platform for sharing images
Functionality	The range of functions that a social media platform performs
Friendster	A social networking site

G

H

Hashtag	A word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#) used on social media sites (especially Twitter) to identify and group messages on a specific topic. You can use a hashtag to search for information of interest.
Holding message	A message that you post in response to a question, especially when the information to answer that question is not yet available. This helps build trust and reassures target audiences that you are responsive and are dealing with their concerns and questions.
Hootsuite	A popular social media management system for brand management
Human interest story (in journalism)	A feature story that discusses a person or people in an emotional way. It represents people and their problems, concerns, or achievements in a way that brings about interest, sympathy or motivation in audiences.

I

Infographic	A visual representation of information or data. Can be a more engaging way to convey information in an easy-to-understand format.
Intelligence	The collection of information about target audiences which has particular value, as often this will help create more engaging content for these audiences.

J

K

L

Likes	A way of showing support or approval for another user's social media content (especially on Facebook)
LinkedIn	A professional-oriented social networking site
Listening	The active monitoring of social media channels for information about an organisation, individual or groups of individuals
Listening tool	A software or online tool that enables listening activities in social media

M

Message board	An internet site where users can post comments about a particular issue or topic and reply to other users' postings
Monitoring	(See <i>listening</i>)
Monitoring tools	(See <i>listening tool</i>)

N

O

Online	Controlled by, or connected to, a computer on the internet
Outbreak	A sudden occurrence of increased cases of a communicable disease

P

Pinterest	A social media site that enables sharing and grouping of images in a novel way
Podcast	A digital audio file made available on the internet for downloading to a computer or media player, typically as part of a series of podcasts which can be subscribed to
Posting	Sending/disseminating a message, video or other media via a social media platform
Public health organisation	An organisation with an official responsibility to promote health and or prevent disease, prolonging life through organised efforts (e.g. raising awareness and education about communicable disease)
Public health	The health of the population as a whole, especially as monitored, regulated, and promoted by the state

Q

R

RADAR	An approach devised by the European Foundation for Quality Management to assess the implementation of the Business Excellence Model. The acronym stands for results, approach, deployment, assessment and review.
Radian6	A social media monitoring tool
Remote access	Accessing the internet from a mobile device
Resource allocation	Allocating staff or other resources to a project or function
Retweet	A way of sharing another user's Tweets. Can be – but isn't automatically – an endorsement. Users can also add their own comments.
Retweeting	The act of creating Retweets. Can be a powerful way to demonstrate advocacy or objection, or just a way of sharing information with your own followers/audiences.
Risk	A potential situation involving exposure to danger (e.g. communicable disease)

S

Self-assessment	Evaluation of oneself or one's actions or performance
Slideshare	A social media site that enables sharing of presentation files and other resources.
SMART	An approach that is widely accepted as good practice in setting and managing objectives. The acronym stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time based or targeted.

Social media	Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content, or to participate in, social networking
Social media policy	A corporate code of conduct that provides guidelines for employees who post content on the internet either on behalf of their organisation or as private persons.
Social media strategy	An organised, coordinated, and integrated approach to using social media for a specific outcome or outcomes
Social network	A network of social interactions and personal relationships
Stakeholder	A person with an interest or influence in something
Storify	A social media platform that summarises information from other platforms
Style guide	A set of standards for the writing and design of documents or messages for general or specific publication. A guide establishes and enforces a style to improve communication.
Sysomos	A social media analytics tool

T

Talkwalker	A social media and internet monitoring tool
Tone of voice	Not what we say but how we say it. A combination of the language we use, the way we construct sentences, the connotations of our words and the personal touch of the message.
Trackur	A social media management tool
Traffic	The entire volume of users viewing a website or an individual's social media messages
Training needs analysis	A formal audit of training requirements in an organisation
Tweets	Short messages of up to 140 characters posted on the Twitter social media platform
TweetDeck	A tool for analysing hashtags and Tweets on Twitter
Twitalyzer	A tool for analysing hashtags and Tweets on Twitter
Twitter	A social media tool for sharing short messages of up to 140 characters
Tumblr	A social media platform.
24/7	Twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week (i.e. around the clock)

U

Ushahidi	An online tool for managing emergency responses
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V

Vimeo	A social media site for sharing videos
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W

Website	A location connected to the internet that maintains one or more web pages of an organisation, individual, or group
Website hits	The number of visitors a website receives over a given period of time
Wikis	An open-community-lead repository of information

Wikipedia

An open-community-lead repository of information

WordPress

A social media platform for creating blogs and simple websites

X

Y

YouTube

A popular social media site for sharing videos

Z

**European Centre for Disease
Prevention and Control (ECDC)**

Postal address:
Granits väg 8, SE-171 65 Solna, Sweden

Visiting address:
Tomtebodavägen 11A, SE-171 65 Solna, Sweden

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Fax +46 858601001
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