**Social Media Best Practices**

Social media can be an effective tool for sharing messages, engaging in conversation with your stakeholders and raising your hospital’s visibility among many different audiences. Social media is a great tool for amplifying positive messages and news by cross-promoting over multiple platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. These platforms provide an opportunity to engage with all of your target audiences, including consumers, legislators, health care professionals and industry peers.

**Universal Rules of Social Media**

**What is Social Media?**

* Live, Public Conversation
* Forum for Debate
* Information Resource
* Message Sharing Platform
* Relationship/Network Builder
* Keep the conversation active and post frequently
* Put the “social” in social media – talk with not at your audiences
* Make social media a priority – consistency is the key to gaining traction
* Establish guardrails on the time you spend on social media because it is easy to go down a “rabbit hole”

**Twitter**

Twitter is a digital forum for all types of discussions. Many of the conversations are among consumers, but professional health care conversations also take place.

* Follow Practice Greenhealth’s Twitter handle ([@pracgreenhealth](http://twitter.com/hhiorg))
* Tweet regularly
	+ At minimum, 5-6 times a week
* Engage often
	+ Start a conversation and reply to other users
	+ Use re-tweets to show you are listening and engaging
* Follow back
	+ Follow valuable users who follow you
* Follow others with similar priorities
	+ Build relationships with other hospitals, sustainability initiatives and key decision makers
* Create value
	+ Share media coverage, organizational news and metrics (such as cost savings)

**Facebook**

Facebook is a great platform for engaging with members of the community and other consumer advocates for sustainability.

* “Like” Practice Greenhealth’s page ([facebook.com/PracticeGreenhealth](http://www.facebook.com/HealthierHospitalsInitiative))
* “Like” similar organizations and sustainability initiatives among your “favorites”
	+ Build relationships with other hospitals and key decision makers
* Post regularly (3-4 times a week)
* Use updates as conversation starters
	+ Don’t overlook replying to comments on your status updates
	+ Use polls and events to increase visibility and engagement

**YouTube**

YouTube is another platform for sharing your hospital’s messages and examples of the role your hospital plays in the local community.

* Subscribe to Practice Greenhealth’s channel (practicegreenhealth)
* Include videos of speaking opportunities around your sustainability work
* Add Practice Greenhealth keyword "tags"
	+ Tags make searching for content easier and connects similar content
	+ A few suggested tags include: Practice Greenhealth, sustainable, hospital, green hospital, green health, environment

**LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is an appropriate platform for communicating with industry peers, employees and other thought leaders in the health care landscape.

* Link your hospital’s page to Practice Greenhealth’s group page (Practice Greenhealth)
* Post regular updates – don’t be afraid to brag about the work your hospital is doing
* Use the platform to deliver “kudos” to employees involved in sustainability efforts
* Link to media coverage illustrating the positive impact you are having on the community
* Add your award win to your hospital’s profile description

**Encountering Criticism**

Even when you do the right thing, criticism can emerge. Sustainability issues can sometime evoke a political reaction or make people feel defensive about the choices they make. Be prepared for any type of conversation with the following rules of thumb:

* Because social media is a moving target, it is easy to miss part of any given discussion. Have all of the facts and information on hand before you weigh in on conversations.
* Tone is easy to misinterpret online. Be careful to never use sarcasm.
* If you encounter any negative conversations, limit the spread by responding only on originating platform. Correct the facts and don’t get into a debate.