



# Social Media Guidelines & Best Practices

Revised April 2019

## **Stanford University guidelines for an individual employee's personal use of social media**

- The guidelines for personal use of social media are not intended to and do not limit your right to engage in protected concerted activities related to terms and conditions of employment.
- Even when you are personally engaging on social media, a Stanford affiliation on your profile has the ability to affect the university as a whole. If you identify your affiliation with Stanford in your profile or comments, other users will naturally associate you with the university. You should always think before you post, be civil to others and their opinions and not post personal information about others unless you have their permission. Your behavior should be consistent with the Information Security, Intellectual Property, and Privacy policies of the university. In addition, you should include, where possible, a statement on your profile that indicates your views do not constitute official statements on behalf of Stanford. Finally, except as permitted by law, no employee is permitted to use Stanford's marks or emblem without the prior approval of the Assistant Vice President for Business Development, [trademarks@stanford.edu](mailto:trademarks@stanford.edu).<sup>1</sup>

### **Additional Medical and Surgical Guidelines for Social Media**

["Best Practices for Surgeons' Social Media Use: Statement of the Resident and Associate Society of the American College of Surgeons"](#)

### **Creating an Official Stanford Account**

If you are interested in creating an account for a Stanford Surgery division, center, or lab, please contact Rachel Baker ([rebaker@stanford.edu](mailto:rebaker@stanford.edu), 650-723-2301) for guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ucomm.stanford.edu/policies/social-media.html>

## Developing Your Personal Brand Through Social Media

### Reasons to use social media professionally:

- *Learn:* gather information that's specific to your areas of interest and follow journals/ peers you respect.
- *Teach:* be a source of timely, credible information for the education of other physicians and the public.
- *Engage* with patients and peers. Mentorship is no longer bound by location. Gain national or international notability for professional organization membership.
- *Protect* and control your online reputation.

### Questions to answer before launching a social media channel:

1. *What purpose would this new channel (or channels) serve?* There are many reasons to start a social media channel. What are the goals you hope to reach by creating this new channel?
2. *Who is your target audience?* Who you want to reach will affect which platforms you should choose, your tone and...
3. *What will you post?* What do the people you want to reach want to know? What types of content are they interested in?
4. *Is it realistic to maintain the channel(s) on a regular basis?* How much time are you willing to commit to using your professional accounts? How often you engage with your audience will directly influence the number of followers you have (to a certain limit).

## Choosing a Platform(s)

### Twitter

#### [How to use Twitter – the basics](#)

There are 261 million International Twitter users, and 37% of them are between the ages of 18 and 29. It is particularly popular among surgeons with movements such as #ilooklikeasurgeon and #thisisourlane starting and gaining momentum on the platform.

#### *What to post:*

- Great content ...be it original or curated (e.g. journal articles, news articles, and startling statistics). You only have **280 characters**; make them count.
- Event info (e.g. pics of keynote speakers with great quotes, guest speakers at grand rounds, you with your colleagues at conferences) Use the specific event hashtag (see below)!
- Career milestones (e.g. welcome a new colleague, congratulate a friend on joining a professional society, thank the people who helped you earn an award, etc.)
- If you are including a link in your post, a Twitter card may appear below your tweet. To determine whether your link will pull such an image, use the [Twitter Card Validator](#). If it doesn't, add...
- Photos! Posts with images are more likely to garner engagement (e.g. likes, replies, and RTs).
- Hashtags “flag” your post for people interested in the topic you’re writing about. Try not to use more than three hashtags per post.
- Including other people or groups’ handles will alert them to your post and improve engagement. This practice is commonly referred to as “tagging.” Try tagging your fellow authors and/or the journal it was published in when you tweet a new publication. Tag everyone who is shown in a group shot you post as well as your common denominator (are you all at the same medical center, do you have the same alma mater, etc.)
- Use the rule of thirds (no, not the photo rule): 1/3 of content should be original resources, 1/3 should be retweeted, 1/3 should be shameless self-promotion

*Frequency:* try to post at least once a day but no more than 10x a day.

*Lists:* limit who you listen to. By creating a “must read” list, you can eliminate noise and streamline the amount of time you spend maintaining your account.

[Learn more.](#)

### **Facebook — Personal v. Professional Accounts**

2.23 billion people log in to Facebook every month. It is the top mobile app by number of downloads and is the third most-visited website (after Google and YouTube). Thus, it should be of no surprise, that Facebook is the platform of choice for physicians wanting to attract new patients. Note: Facebook’s algorithm gives precedence to people pages over business pages.

*What to post:* Facebook’s latest algorithm update prefers organic video and posts that stoke conversation. Post educational content alongside promotional.

*How you post:* Change your tone for your audience. Example: you’re at a professional conference. You can post a photo from the conference to both accounts, but the caption should be more formal for the professional account.

*Frequency:* Try to post at least once a week but no more than twice a day.

*Security:* You may choose to make your professional profile public. Check your security settings to ensure no one can see posts you don’t want them to.

### **Doximity — LinkedIn for Medical Professionals ONLY**

*Reputation Management:* If you went to a medical school in the United States you already have a Doximity account; you just need to claim it. By claiming your account, you can then control what is posted and maintain accuracy of the information listed.

*Make connections:* The only people with accounts on Doximity are other MDs. HALF of America’s physicians have claimed their accounts.

*Vote:* Did you know that *U.S. News and World Report*'s list of the best hospitals in the country are partially based on data collected from Doximity surveys? Doximity is also one of the leading ways medical students learn about the residency programs they want to apply to.

## **LinkedIn**

Because Doximity already provides a social networking platform for physicians, maintaining an additional profile on LinkedIn isn't time efficient... unless you are interested in working in the private sector. Tech start-up execs and venture capitalists don't have access to Doximity, so they'll be looking on LinkedIn for information about your education and work experience. Edit your CV to highlight the skills that are applicable to the job you want.

## **Instagram**

Instagram is a photo-centric social networking platform. Because of its visual nature, this channel has become particularly popular with plastic surgeons. Insta's audience also skews the youngest of all the platforms this packet reviews.

*What to post:*

- *Photos* (obvi). Before and after shots are very popular among plastic surgeons. In addition to highly-groomed images, candid shots of you or other staff members can help humanize your account.
- *Captions:* Instagram will cut out any links that you post in your image's caption. If this is a requirement of your posting, there are several third-party services that can link up photos from your bio page ([for a fee](#)).
- *Hashtags* are extremely popular on Instagram. Each post can have a maximum of 30 hashtags and each story can have 10.

*Frequency:* Major brands post an average of 1.5 times a day. Laymen are encouraged to post once a day but the more important goal is to post consistently. Starting off slow and then ramping up as you get better at taking photos and posting them is better than opening with a deluge of content and then sputtering off into oblivion for a week.

## **Yelp/Vitals/RateMD/Healthgrades & other crowd-sourced review platforms**

Perform a simple Google search of your name and odds are the results will return at least one page for you on a crowd-sourced review platform. There are many approaches to maintaining one of these pages, but we suggest the following:

- 1) Claim your page. Once you've claimed your page you can add a link to your website, professional headshot, and include your hours and specialties.
- 2) Ask for positive reviews. This doesn't mean you have to put a sign on your main desk with a QR code (though some do!) Simply suggest a customer writes a review after having a particularly positive experience.
- 3) Don't respond to negative reviews. This can cause a firestorm and end up calling more attention to the not-so-flattering comments. Even if a comment is untrue, sites will refuse to take a comment down unless you can provide evidence to the contrary. This information is most likely protected by HIPPA, so unless you're interested in filing a suit for libel, you're out of luck. If you feel you must respond, apologize that the customer/patient felt that way and ask them to continue to the conversation away of the public forum.

## **ResearchGate**

ResearchGate claims to be the "world's largest scholarly social network" and may be the best choice of platform for scientific researchers who aren't MDs. Like Doximity and Healthgrades, the odds that an profile has already been created for you is likely. Profiles are often machine-generated based on papers that have been uploaded by co-authors. Claiming your profile is important for managing your online reputation.

While ResearchGate offers a litany of tools to promote academic collaboration, a survey conducted in 2016 by *Times Higher Education* reported that "relatively few academics appear to post questions and answers," but instead use it only as an "online CV." This is possibly due to ResearchGate's own reputation taking a hit in past years for copyright infringement and allowing non-peer-reviewed research on the site.

## Social Media Best Practices

### Always

- Acknowledge sources by using their Twitter or Instagram handles (i.e., “@name”)
- Use relevant hashtags judiciously. Including hashtags on Twitter and Instagram can help you enter the national conversation. Research popular hashtags by using [hashtagify](#) and exploring the posts of people you admire.
- Be yourself.

### Never

- Post content that contains protected health information (PHI) or exposes or implies a risk of exposing the privacy of others.
- Post unless you have something to say. Quality over quantity!
- Post when angry.
- Engage with trolls; just block them.

### Images

Adding a high-quality image to your post can take more time, but it’s worth it. Images can [increase traffic](#) to a post and help viewers remember the post better. Use the [optimal image ratio](#) for your channel; no one wants awkward crops. Note that channels update their optimal image sizes often, so be sure to check their online guides for current information.

Only use images/illustrations you have the rights to or that are freely available under a [creative commons license](#). When in doubt, contact the original photographer, illustrator, or creator to get permission before posting. You can find Stanford images at [SALLIE \(Stanford ALL-Image Exchange\)](#). Smartphone cameras have more than enough resolution for posting to the internet. You can also try screenshotting a webpage, etc. for a quick image.

### When to post:

- [Myriads of studies](#) have been done to discover when the best times to post are; they all contradict one another. Post at different times of day until you discover the habits of your unique audience. You can also use free analytics tools to see when your audience is active online.



- Don't post all of your content at once. Use a free scheduling tool like [Hootsuite](#), [Tweetdeck](#), or [Buffer](#) to publish your content throughout the day—this will increase the number of people who see your posts.
- Be consistent. “But I'm going camping/on a business trip/to the moon and I won't be able to post for several days!” you say. See above.

### **Analytics**

Most platforms offer limited analytics for free. Use the data collected each month to figure out what types of content you should post more of and what types garner less engagement. Remember: correlation is not causation. Business accounts may offer greater insight but this comes at a cost, as those pages don't receive as much organic engagement algorithmically.

### **Simul-posting**

Some applications will allow you to simultaneously post to multiple channels at once. While sharing the same content across several different channels is encouraged, simul-posting is NOT recommended. Different platforms have different audiences and goals. Post to each channel individually, making small changes in your tone of voice, timing, and hashtags to earn the most return on each piece of content. (e.g. If you simulpost from Instagram to Twitter, the photo won't display properly.)

### **Notifications**

Change your profile settings on each platform to send you emails, text messages, or push notifications when someone mentions you, leaves a comment, etc. Because of the nature of social platforms, quick responses are expected and encouraged particularly on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

## Resources

### **Who to follow on Twitter:**

The Department of Surgery's Twitter Account uses lists to organize who we follow into groups. Exploring these lists can help you find colleagues, mentees, and others who already have accounts. NOTE: These lists may not be complete as new accounts are constantly being created!

<https://twitter.com/StanfordSurgery/lists>

### **HubSpot**

Inbound marketing and sales software purveyor, HubSpot creates free educational content on social media and personal branding on a regular basis. Their blog is a great place to get new ideas and stay up-to-date on a field that is constantly evolving.

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing>

### **Social Media Examiner**

As its title implies, this blog examines the latest and greatest in social media. Take a look at the daily content for information on everything from what size photo to post on Facebook to how to use paid LinkedIn ads.

<https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/>

### **Hootsuite**

In addition to helping you schedule posts across multiple platforms, Hootsuite offers free (and paid) resources to help posters learn the science of social media.

<https://blog.hootsuite.com/>

### ***Stanford Surgery #socialMedia Slack channel***

Have you joined the Stanford Surgery Slack workplace? If so, please join the #socialMedia channel. This channel is regularly updated with information about social media best practices and platform updates. You can also ask questions of your fellow posters.

## Research

*(in case you need more convincing or data to validate your decision)*

*The academic tweet: Twitter as a tool to advance academic surgery*

Logghe, Heather J. et al.

Journal of Surgical Research, Volume 226 , viii - xii

[https://www.journalofsurgicalresearch.com/article/S0022-4804\(18\)30210-5/fulltext](https://www.journalofsurgicalresearch.com/article/S0022-4804(18)30210-5/fulltext)

*Social media is a necessary component of surgery practice*

Scott R. Steele MD et al.

Surgery, Volume 158, Issue 3, September 2015, Pages 857-862

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0039606015004468?via%3Dihub>

*Social Media in Surgical Training: Opportunities and Risks*

Sander Ovaere MD et al.

Journal of Surgical Education, Volume 75, Issue 6, November–December 2018, Pages 1423-1429

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1931720417308668>

*Social media in the mentorship and networking of physicians: Important role for women in surgical specialties*

Jessica G.Y. Luc et al.

The American Journal of Surgery, April 2018 Volume 215, Issue 4, Pages 752-760

[https://www.americanjournalofsurgery.com/article/S0002-9610\(17\)30665-7/fulltext](https://www.americanjournalofsurgery.com/article/S0002-9610(17)30665-7/fulltext)