Enhancing Your Professional Presence on Social Media

Diana Mason and colleagues from the Center for Health Policy and Media Engagement at The George Washington University and the Berkeley Media Studies Group recently replicated a study conducted by Woodhull 20 years ago examining nurses’ representation in health news media. The sobering results indicated that nurses were identified as sources or quoted in health reports in leading print newspapers only 2% of the time (Mason, Nixon, et al., 2018), representing no significant change in the last two decades. They identified possible barriers that keep journalists from nurses:

- Journalists don’t fully understand the range of nurses’ roles, work, and education.
- Journalists often don’t know how to find nurses to interview and have limited time to track them down.
- Editorial biases, policies, and processes can get in the way of using nurses as sources (Mason, Glickstein, et al., 2018, p. 2).

Of course, nurses and nursing associations may not be strategic in engaging journalists and making themselves available. Health care organizations and universities may not be promoting nurses in response to journalists’ requests. Obviously, there is plenty of room for improvement.

One possibility, in which every nurse faculty could increase visibility of the profession, is through the appropriate and effective use of social media. In addition to replicating the original study, Mason, Glickstein, et al. (2018) analyzed the use of social media by the top 50 schools of nursing to showcase faculty expertise. They found that in over 11,000 tweets, almost 80% of the hashtags used were inwardly facing, meaning their intention was focused on their organization, other nurses, or those attending nursing conferences. Only 20% of hashtags used were outward facing to invite interaction from outside the university or nursing community (Mason, Glickstein, et al., 2018).

Faculty are able to build their own profiles and actually create content for their schools to share. Baxter and Mitchell (2018) recently published the following tips:

- Define your social media profile. Just as we are familiar with a novice-to-expert framework, social media profiles range from simple to highly sophisticated. Figure out where you lie on the spectrum and set a goal to move up one step.
- Identify your target audience. In light of the results from Woodhull revisited, it’s particularly important to think about outward-facing organizations, other than your school or other nurses. For example, what media outlets might be important for your work?
- Combine active with strategic listening. If you’re fairly new to social media, it’s okay to simply lurk in the background and observe for a while. Pay particular attention to the organizations that interest you. How often do they post? Do they use video or links to other media? What organizations do they follow and like? Do they share or retweet items of interest to you? How does your work fit within their profile?
- Align your profile descriptions with your goals. Be very clear about who you are and the interests you represent. Keep your profile up to date with changes in research interests, volunteer activities, and employment.
- Find your MOEL, which stands for Moment Open Engage Leverage. A moment is something about which you are passionate and excited to share in an online format. For example, when the Macy Report on Learning Environments (Irby, 2018) was published, I was excited to share my participation in that work, so I wrote an editorial about it (Barton, 2018), retweeted the report on Twitter™, and later published a blog (Rettie & Barton, 2018) about it. Open up the conversation by posting in more than one channel. Engaging requires that you respond to replies to your postings in a timely and thoughtful manner. Finally, leverage ideas to build momentum and continue to develop your thoughts and ideas through conversations with others.
- Manage your social presence. Many sources recommend creating an editorial calendar to publish regularly and keep the conversation moving. Three tips to create discourse are: “be social, encourage sharing and remix, and be authentic and human.”

In summary, here are some ways to enhance your professional image on social media:

- Be present. Create a separate professional profile and appropriately represent your credentials. Be sure to check any social media policies from your school or university before identifying yourself as a member of that community.
- Share information only from credible...
sources and refute inaccuracies with documented facts.

• Follow people you want to follow you. Comment on their postings and tweets. Don’t simply share or retweet. Add value and share some of yourself.

• Promote your work. Highlight publications and presentations. Be certain to craft specific messages for the audiences you are targeting.

My social media profile is moving toward the “advanced” stage at this point. It takes time and strategy to move up another level. How would you rate your profile? I’d like to hear from you. Send me a tweet @AmyJBRnRN.

References


Amy J. Barton, PhD, RN, FAAN, ANEF

The author has disclosed no potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.
doi:10.3928/01484834-20190221-01