

The Affordable Care Act Leaps Into Social Media With Its Own Facebook Fan Page!

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today announced the launch of HealthCare.gov on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/Healthcare.gov>.

“HealthCare.gov on Facebook offers Facebook users a new tool to understand and stay informed about the Affordable Care Act,” said Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. “This new page is another resource that people can use to learn about and discuss health care issues that are important to them, their family, or their small business.”

HealthCare.gov on Facebook provides additional resources that allow consumers to take health care into their own hands.



HealthCare.gov on Facebook allows people to:

- Search for insurance coverage using our “Insurance Finder” tool. The tool asks users to fill out two fields with basic information about themselves and the state they live in. Users are then redirected to a page on HealthCare.gov that continues with the insurance finder process based on the information provided.
- Share thoughts and ideas with other members of the HealthCare.gov network.
- Learn more about what the Affordable Care Act means for individuals, families, or small businesses.
- Stay informed with new blog posts and webchats.

To join HealthCare.gov on Facebook visit <http://www.facebook.com/Healthcare.gov>, and click the “Like”

button at the top of the page.

*Text from today's press release

Your Digital Reputation: What Does Your Online Presence Say to Future Employers?

I have been getting lots of questions lately about finding jobs in healthcare management. The healthcare field is very mobile right now and many managers inside the field and in other fields are looking for advice on the best way to make a move.

In addition to making sure they have the right skills and experience, job seekers also need to be sure that their digital reputations are sterling, and if not, need to make the move to correct them. In fact, **every single person reading this post should check on their digital footprint** and see what the web has to say. You never know when an employment change will suddenly be in your future.

What if you don't show up on the web radar at all because you're not on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Google finds no matches for your name? That says you're not in the know, not networking, not sharing and definitely not computer-savvy. Here's an excellent SlideShare presentation by Susan P. Joyce of job-hunt.org that gives job seekers (and truly, each one of us in healthcare is a job seeker, whether we admit it to ourselves or not) a gold mine of information about creating or correcting your online presence.

[Online Reputation Management for Job Seekers](#)

View more [presentations](#) from [Job-Hunt.org](#).

13 Ways to Energize New Staff or Re-energize the Long Timers



Image by The Library of Virginia via Flickr

Sometimes a job just gets a little old, and even the best employees need a little something to get them re-engaged and excited again. Try one of the ideas below at your practice and let me know in the comments the ways you keep your staff energized and engaged!

1. Provide a career track and offer multiple levels of learning jobs. For instance, break the receptionist job into steps (see below) and set time lines for attaining those goals. You may want several steps to be accomplished at 90-days, more at 6-months, and more at 12-months. There may be monetary awards, honor awards, or qualifications for other acknowledgements.

- *Pre-registering patients by phone – demographics*
- *Making appointments & mini-register for new patients*

- *Registering patients face-to-face – demographics*
- *Understanding insurance plans and registering their insurance*
- *Taking photo ID or taking photos and explaining the Red Flags Rule*
- *Collecting co-pays*
- *Answering basic patient questions*
- *Answering advanced patient questions*
- *Reviewing the financial policy with patients*
- *Reviewing the Privacy Policy with patients.*

2. **Offer certifications and credentials** – support staff emotionally, time-wise and financially so they can attend face-to-face or online courses.

3. **Offer specific responsibilities** and the title of lead person for that responsibility – don't assume you know what staff are or are not capable of – they might surprise you!

4. **Meet every 6 months or every quarter to set goals.** A job can be a drag if there's nothing new to learn or to accomplish.

5. **Set up process improvement teams** to work on problems that everyone complains about – give them the responsibility to come up with solutions and try them out.

6. **Involve them in social media marketing of the practice.** Make sure they understand your social media plan (you do have a plan, don't you?), give them guidelines to work within and let them work on your website, your blog, and your Facebook page.

7. **Install a wiki** (many are free) and have them work on loading all the practice knowledge into the wiki. Have different staff responsible for different parts of the wiki and set goals for adding all the information that runs your practice every day.

8. **“Walk a Mile in My Shoes”** – this is also great for getting the clinical and administrative staff to understand each other better. Have the staff shadow each other and take turns seeing parts of the practice they don’t know much about. I recently participated in this at my hospital and shadowed a nurse (and asked a million questions) for about an hour. It was wonderful! I felt better equipped to work with my hospitalist service after having been on a patient floor for just a short time.

9. If you are a practice that receives referrals from others, have staff responsible for regularly **touching base with staff from referring practices** and asking how service can be improved. Teach staff about relationship building and remember that it’s the staff that often choose where the patient is referred to instead of the provider.

10. Have staff take turns **going with you to meetings, seminars and local events** where you represent the practice and introduce them to everyone.

11. **Forward listserv discussions to employees** and have them monitor the discussions and bring things to you that they want to know more about.

12. Encourage employees to **become the practice expert** in a payer, an employer, a referrer, a process or a protocol and help them learn about their topic by sending them information from the web or your professional organizations.

13. Have the staff **put together an internal or external newsletter** and help them with concepts of internal and external marketing.



Is Facebook a Serious Business Tool? Ask CMS.

Not on facebook yet?

[CMS is.](#)

Guest Author Jamie Verkamp: Healthcare Leaders Recognize Social Media as a Way to Connect with Patients in the New Year

✘ With huge growth in 2009, social media is not just a passing trend used by online marketers; it's a real, effective method of communicating ideas, sharing information and connecting with people across all age and socioeconomic groups. Healthcare, while slower to adopt the social media wave than other industries, is coming to realize the potential social media tools provide to develop connections with patients, potential patients, along with other physicians and healthcare leaders around the world.

What are some of the driving forces behind this explosion in popularity? One reason is that as consumers, we're no longer trusting of advertising and we don't want to be marketed to, we want to be engaged, build a relationship, make the company earn our trust and hear our friends or family's review of

their experiences. In fact, studies show that today, only 14% of people trust advertising, whereas 78% of people trust recommendations and referrals. Companies are using social media outlets to build relationships, trust and encourage recommendations and referrals from their engaged consumer base. As practice, hospital and physician growth are so strongly correlated to patient referral and recommendation volumes, it is only natural healthcare organizations look to social media outlets to continue to foster patient relationships and increase referral volumes.

As of February 2010, where is the healthcare industry in its adoption of this social media explosion? Larger organizations and health systems are utilizing the power to connect, share and engage their patients. While, on average, smaller private physician groups and individual physician offices are still slightly hesitant and dipping their toes in the social media pool cautiously. One can understand why healthcare professionals do need to take a more strategic approach to interacting and engaging patients online with potential HIPAA privacy issues and other challenges looming. However, with a carefully crafted social media strategy, many health organizations are realizing the benefits of becoming more accessible in their marketing and reaching out to inform, educate and build trust with patients. According to Ed Bennett (edbennet.org) hospitals are currently at a 53% adoption rate, with 336 Facebook pages, 430 Twitter Accounts, 254 YouTube Channels and 70 blogs. In total, 557 health systems are reported to be participating in some capacity with social media, with the term "social media" encapsulating many forms and tools, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, LinkedIn, Flickr, and a number of patient forums.

How are healthcare organizations using these tools effectively? Let's focus on the top three tools currently adopted and being utilized in the healthcare social media sector.

Facebook: Physician practices and health systems alike are using Facebook as a dynamic, community-based website. It has become a place where physicians and leaders can post timely, organic or professional videos to educate patients and also connect on a more personal level. As a valuable resource for health information sharing, many organizations are taking the embarrassment out of sensitive subject matter and addressing specific medical problems, questions and issues for patients. Also, introductions to staff members and tours of the facilities are assisting organizations with connecting with their patients outside the four walls of their office and building rapport before patients even arrive for their appointment. Practices are also encouraging patients to participate and engage on their site through discussions and contests. Private practitioners are more likely to start their social media strategy with just a Facebook Fan Page, while larger health systems and hospitals are embracing other social media tools in combination with Facebook in their initial strategy.

Twitter: Twitter is being adopted quickly by the larger health systems as a way to share information, publicize events like health screenings, fairs and clinics and also connect with other health organizations. I like to think of it as a public relations channel for these hospital and health systems. What's great is that in short, 140 character or less "tweets", these organizations are sharing a wealth of information to their patients and those patients are finding ways to access this health information and the system like never before. Overall the smaller, private practitioners are not as quick to adopt Twitter as they are a practice website or even Facebook, but many are starting to realize the benefits of utilizing this community as a way to share their expertise and knowledge, along with driving traffic to their websites.

YouTube: Healthcare organizations are using YouTube like their

own, private television station that can be shared with millions of viewers across the world. Again, more popular amongst the larger health organizations, videos of procedures, interviews with clinicians, tours of new facilities and patient testimonials are being posted in a searchable, user-friendly manner to continue to enhance brand awareness, build trust and gain patient loyalty. This social media tool can be used much like Facebook, easing patient fears and answering tough or embarrassing questions. It can also give patients a visual insight into the facility so they know what to expect before arriving at an appointment or for a procedure. It can act as an online referral source, highlighting patients that have had outstanding experiences and are recommending that organization to over a billion of their closest friends and family online. YouTube is the second largest search engine and healthcare professionals are quickly utilizing its power to share and connect with patients.

The fact of the matter is that for all industries, including healthcare, social media is both a curse and a blessing. Patients, who are now consumers with choices, can post content and interact freely with their physicians and their hospitals, sharing both outstanding experiences and negative experiences. Many health professionals are worried about their vulnerability, but social media is real life, online. As 2010 progresses, you'll be seeing more and more attention placed on social media by healthcare professionals and by the end of the year, it will be a necessity for organizations to be participating and engaging online, or be left out.

For those organizations still looking to test the waters, my best advice is to develop a clear and concise plan for your online activity. Think about your goals, who are you trying to reach and where are those patients connecting online? What resources do you have to allocate to this new marketing initiative? Will you keep your efforts "in-house" or look to a firm to help with the process? Who will manage this strategy

once it has been developed? What legal implications must we bear in mind as we move forward to protect our patients' privacy? These are some of the questions that must be asked before ever jumping into the real-life world of social media. Remember, your patients want to feel engaged and interact with you; they are not looking to be marketed to, promoted to, or sold to. They want real information that can assist them in making important health decisions, while getting to know you and why you care about them as a patient. Use social media tools as a way to connect with your patients outside your office and build lasting relationships, keeping you on the top of their mind. When you can make those types of connections with your patients and build loyalty, your organization will begin to see social media as an effective way to increase your referral and recommendation volumes.

Thanks to guest author Jamie Verkamp, Director, Growth and Development of (e)Merge whose tagline is "Helping Medical Practices Grow". She can be reached by phone (816)326.8464 – OFFICE, (816)565.1657 – CELL, (816)474.0595 – FAX and can be reached electronically [email](#) | [web](#) | [twitter](#) | [facebook](#).

Dear Mary Pat: Should Staff Be Allowed to Use The Internet on Their Smart Phones at Work?

I think so.

But I know I'm probably in the minority. Many managers do not approve of employees using their phones for social media

(Twitter, Facebook, etc.) at work, but I am actually okay with it when used with discretion. Unlike computers, with smart phones you do not need to worry about viruses infecting the office network.

Most managers accept and allow employees who smoke to step outside at least twice a day to smoke a cigarette. Doesn't it seem fair to allow everyone else to take a phone break to check messages, make calls and text a few people?

Here are some objections I've heard to allowing staff to use their phones at work, and my answers.

"They'll never get any work done if you let them play on their phones all day."

My Answer: I only hire adults. I expect adults to have a reasonably well-formed work ethic that is demonstrated by doing work first, and doing non-work on breaks and briefly other times. If the practice can't run without me peeking over their shoulders every hour or so to see if they're working, then I am not a very good manager.

Performance measures are a great way to set guidelines for what work must be done. If the employee is meeting their performance goals appropriately, why shouldn't they be able to take a micro-break to catch up on life?

"Employees should do work at work and save their home life for home."

My Answer: Employees are people with busy lives, lots of commitments and lots of responsibilities outside of work. Every single one of us needs to attend to our personal lives for some part of the day. Most of it can be dealt with at lunch or during breaks, but sometimes people need to attend to their lives at work. I want them to be able do that, within reason, because it is a realistic response to life in 2010.

“What if staff using the Internet on their phones puts the practice at risk?”

My Answer: If you have done a good job of educating your staff about confidentiality and HIPAA, you should have no worries. In short, staff should not reveal any patient information (via spoken, written or digital communication) to any third party for any reason besides those dictated in your Notice of Privacy Practices (NPP). Your HIPAA education plan should be reviewed and updated annually to include any policy changes due to the use of social media for personal and practice purposes.

Chris Brogan Gives Good Advice to Small Businesses (and Medical Practices are Small Businesses)

✘ I have been a fan of Chris Brogan’s for quite awhile now. He is a superstar on the social media landscape and I almost got to meet him once when I lived in Seattle (sigh.) Today I came across his post “5 Things That Small Businesses Should Do Now.” Many medical practices are small businesses (privately owned and operated, with 100 employees or less), but may have not considered any of these options.

Here are Chris’s suggestions and my commentary:

- **Start a blog** ”“ I can’t think of any simpler website technology to start and master, and there are cheap and free platforms readily available. Why a blog? Because

they're easy to create, because they're easy to update, because they encourage repeat visits, and because you can use them in many flexible ways.

My comment: Most practices have websites and it is easy to add a blog to a website. Some administrators and/or physicians would gladly take on a blog, and if not, there are some great writing professionals who can create and write a blog for you. Professional bloggers get to know your practice and your patient demographic and create a voice for your practice that uniquely fits you. A blog extends and enhances your relationship with existing and future patients. It's all about the communication.

- **Start listening** "" People are talking about you. Find out where they are and who they are.

My comment: It has been hard for physicians to come to terms with the fact that patients are publicly rating them. In some cases, physicians are requiring consumers to sign gag orders before becoming patients. The truth is, patients will not be stifled and physicians need to monitor the bandwaves for commentary about them and take it seriously.

- **Try Twitter OR Facebook** "" Let's not rush things. Facebook has many more users, but it's a bit harder to find customers, prospects, partners and colleagues. Twitter is easier to use and faster to connect with people, but there are far fewer users on there today. I'll let you choose. If you go with Facebook, make a personal account under your own name, and then start a fan page for your business.

My comment: Does this seem too far out? It's not! At the very least, practices should be learning about the technology and preparing for the time when they will need to jump in. Businesses (who want customers) can no longer hold themselves aloof. You need to be part of the conversation, or at least know where/what the conversation is.

- **Get the word out** "" If you're going to spend time building these social sites, let's presume that you want more people to contact you and interact with you through them. Print business cards with the company name, and/or the request for people to join your fan page or follow you on Twitter.

My comment: Your website and your social sites should be on everything you print that patients take home or receive from you, and can also be communicated to patients via automated communication: appointment reminders, messages on hold, emails, and electronic newsletters.

- **Try moving the needle** "" now lets *really* get crazy. See if you can fill the place up with social-media minded folks. Okay, this won't work for *every* business, but don't be too quick to count out the idea. Let's try inviting them to a store-only special event, or let's give them a discount code. You know, the stuff you already know how to do. Any difference in the results? See if you can do some kind of really special one-day-only push, and what that brings to you.

My comment: This won't work for every medical practice but it's ideal for practices with elective services – plastic/cosmetic surgery, allergy, complementary & alternative medicine, sports performance, vision correction, cosmetic dental services, infertility treatment, etc.

[You can read Chris's original article here.](#)

[More information on Chris's book Trust Agents here.](#)

Military Health System (MHS) Taps Into Social Networking Tools in Healthcare

✘ [Nextgov.com's](#) Bob Brewin reported June 8, 2009 that the Military Health System (MHS) has added social networking tools to its web portal serving 1.4 million people on active duty. The social networking tools are designed to connect with the 18-24 year-old demographic which makes up a large portion of the active duty personnel.

In addition to MySpace, FaceBook, and Twitter, Brewin notes:

The agency also uses sites such as YouTube to reach to the younger age group with videos on subjects ranging from [prosthetic legs](#) to [golf therapy clinics](#) for combat wounded veterans to a [short profile of an occupational therapist](#) who works with combat-wounded veterans.

The video on prosthetic legs had the most views last month. The second-most-viewed video was a 2008 video on the [Bataan Memorial Death March](#) at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., which features Army medic Staff Sgt. Matthew Sims, an indication that troops crave more than just medical information. Kilpatrick said MHS posted 66 videos on YouTube in May, with the top five viewed 3,785 times.

The portal has been available for about two years, but the Twitter feed was just launched in March.

The MHS web portal is impressive as is their stated mission: *The Military Health System mission is to provide optimal Health Services in support of our nation's military mission* "anytime, anywhere."

Learn This: Twitter, Social Networking, and Micro-blogging



Twitter is a combination of two concepts, **social networking** and **micro-blogging**. When combined, they create a fascinating way for people to communicate and keep in touch. Let's explore social networking and micro-blogging individually first.

Social Networking

This is the Myspace, and [Facebook](#) you've heard so much about. You already know what networking is – you create, build, and maintain personal and professional relationships to meet

people, find opportunities, and learn new things. Successful practice managers are constantly networking to be in the know and stay ahead of the curve. Now add the social aspect of it to the equation. *Social* networking means starting with people you already know, and using that as a jumping off point. Take your existing network of contacts and digitize them to build an on-line community.

Think about your contact list in your address book, email, phone, or Blackberry. You have everyone in there: colleagues, friends, family. What if you also had access to the contact lists of everyone in *their* contact lists? There would be duplicate entries but there would also be a lot of people in this “friends of friends” list that you didn’t know before.

You would probably see a lot of new names and faces, some of whom you might want to talk to about your organization, their organization, your product, their service, their hobbies, even ask out on a date!

When you walk into a room and see a friend talking to someone you don’t know, you go and say hello to your friend, and introduce yourself to the stranger- **you are building your network by social networking!**

The differences between various social networking sites ([see the MMP post on LinkedIn](#)) will be explored in a later article, but all social networking sites have one thing in common – they are designed to help you meet new people through common friends, interests, pasts, and goals.

Micro-blogging

It’s blogging, but smaller. But what’s blogging? “Blog” is short for “web log”, and it is keeping an online journal of

writings, pictures, and other multimedia, as well as news items and content found on the web. Some blogs are just places where people write about their feelings and activities so other people can read them. Some blogs are focused on a topic- like ManageMyPractice.com focuses on health care administration. But all blogs are simply websites that are updated by their authors fairly frequently around some common theme.

How does blogging become “micro”? By shrinking it down to its bare essence and relaying the heart of the message, communicating the necessary. How could this be of use to you?

What if you set up a system where your kids received updates when you were going to be home later than usual from work, telling them they were allowed to have a soda with their homework before TV, and what would be for dinner when you arrived? Or maybe your kids need to update you when their plans change. What if all your colleagues were updating each other about the goings-on at a professional conference so they could decide on the fly which events to attend, and share their experiences, and decide where everyone would be meeting afterward.

Anything that could be helped by contacting an entire group of people quickly with short message could benefit from micro-blogging.

Twitter puts it all together

Twitter takes these two concepts, and merges the whole shebang with your mobile device. **Twitter lets you easily microblog to your social network over your mobile device.** You don't have to use a cell phone or a Blackberry to use Twitter- you can send and receive updates over the web, and through a variety of

third party providers.

If you want to get started, go to the Twitter homepage at www.twitter.com, and click the green button that says “JOIN THE CONVERSATION”. You will create a username and password, and start adding contacts and you’ll soon be able to make your first micro-blog post (they call them “tweets”).

On Twitter, anyone you want to receive updates from is someone you are “following”, and anyone who is receiving your messages is one of your “followers”. You can also send messages directly to just one user, or set up groups of people to receive certain updates – your co-workers don’t have to see your notes to your kids, and vice-versa. You can also do fun things, like upload a little picture of yourself to be your icon that people will see when they are on Twittera.

Now it’s time to supercharge your cell phone

But you don’t have to ever go to the site if you don’t want to! The real power of Twitter is that it can let you do all these short internet communications (micro-blogging) right from your cell phone. Basic text messages that you may already use on your cell phone (called “[SMS messages](#)“) can be used to send and receive messages from Twitter. Just link your Twitter account to a mobile phone in your Twitter settings, and then you can send your updates as text messages to 40404. Incoming Twitter messages from the users you follow will show up as incoming texts from Twitter, but with labels to show you which user the update is from. You can also customize your mobile updates, so you only get messages from certain users. If you follow some people who are heavy

updaters, you might get tired of constant alerts of new text messages. Also be sure you understand your cell phone's text messaging plan – Twitter is free to use, but if you don't have unlimited messaging on your phone, it could be easy to run up a big bill.

Once you have your Twitter up and running on your mobile phone things get really interesting, as now you've basically turned your cell phone service into an internet chat room. And in terms of business, that gives you near constant connection.

Twitter users are often the first people to know the newest information, and love to post updates about it online. It's an interesting way to see what's new in the world – finding out what people are talking about literally “right then”.

Plus it creates an interesting crowd of which to ask questions: What's going on tonight? Can anyone recommend good seafood on the north side of town? Is anyone getting anything out of this conference?

The brilliance of Twitter is that it so easily connects people on all different types of computers and cell phone platforms.

Twitter can seamlessly create networks of people communicating for mutual benefit, and provide an interesting new way to keep on top and keep in touch.

To Recap:

1. Social Networking = networking with your friends' friends
2. Micro-blogging = little missives without all the niceties and all the heart
3. Twitter = #1 + #2 (little missives to your friends' friends' friends)
4. How can you leverage this technology to make your practice more efficient and productive?

Note from Mary Pat: How can Twitter be used in a medical practice setting? Here are a few ways – I'm sure you can

think of others. If your doctor is running late, use direct messages to Twitter patients to let them know right away that they can arrive later or reschedule their appointment.

Likewise, when an earlier opening is available, Twitter a patient to see if they could fill your appointment time.

Twitter your doc to let him/her know about schedule changes that would affect what s/he is doing right now.

And to get you started on Twitter, my Twitter name is "Mary_Pat_Whaley."