

# *Social media for Public Health Communications*

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# Acknowledgements

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- The full report for this research is available at: <http://www.ncceh.ca/en/node/9534>
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# What is Social Media?

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- Both a set of channels & new media environment
- characterized by **interactivity**, **user-generated content**, and **multi-directional communication flows**
- marks a shift from a “one-way conversation” to a “multi-way conversation,” in which users participate as both creators and consumers of web content.



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# **Potential and Current Applications of Social Media for Public Health Communications**

# Promises

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- Improve reach and user engagement
  - Access to difficult to reach populations (both for pushing and pulling information: e.g., anonymity; landline-less)
- Tailor Messages
  - Reach audiences when *they* are looking for information (relevance)
- Improve Trust
  - Reach audiences through social networks (trust and authenticity)
- Support Healthy Behaviours
- Novel surveillance tools

# Improving Reach: Maximizing receipt of message and change of awareness

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Media	Number of Years to Reach 50 million people
Radio	38
TV	13
Internet	4
iPod	3
Facebook	<1/4

**Extracted from: Social Media Revolution 2. (Refresh).**



# The Potential to Tailor Messages

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- “growing big ears” through social media
- Deliver messages relevant to the individual when they are seeking information
- Messages based on individual, geographic, or group characteristics



# Improve Trust

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*“In addition to evidence of the accelerating popularity of online platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, new data also suggests that organizations can increase feelings of trust and loyalty through social media use.”*

*Schein, Wilson and Keelan 2010*



# Support Healthy Behaviours

Autonomy	Competency	Relatedness / Social Connectedness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Self-help management tools, e.g., quit smoking applications for Facebook, mobile phones</li> <li>● Personalized health information; development of patient-centered health records (Google Health, Microsoft Health Vault)</li> <li>● Health Portals such as Web MD, trusted sites for health information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improve functional health literacy- through social network applications, interactive tutorials &amp; medication reminders.</li> <li>● <i>Information</i> Prescriptions</li> <li>● Skills augmentation (similar to spell-checker, online applications can augment users skills to help them find and process health information); collective wisdom- users ranking, commenting and rating of health interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Patient and Health Intervention networks, such as online weight-loss social networks that provide individual and group incentives and monitoring</li> <li>● Health advocacy groups (e.g., Breast cancer awareness)</li> <li>● Shared Communities of Knowledge (e.g., Wiki Public Health)</li> </ul>

# Pitfalls

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- ❑ Sea of information
- ❑ Capturing audiences (more likely to contribute to than host discourse—go where the public is...)
- ❑ Changing consumer health information seeking behaviours (Google to networks)
- ❑ Subversion of advertising regulations
- ❑ Not necessarily inexpensive (different kind of expensive)
- ❑ Requires institutional agility and responsiveness



# Evidence for Utility of Social Media

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- Largely anecdotal / theoretical
- Studies reviewed are observational / few experimental designs
- Social media likely has heterogeneous effects
- Metrics measured are only proxies for behavioural change
- Poor study design for attribution of behavioural change
- Only one controlled study (n=21) measured behavioural changes

So why are so many leading PH  
Organizations developing social  
media strategies?



# Meet New Expectations

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- “Consumers ... expect timely, transparent access to information *they want, in the form they want it in, and as they need it.*”

*Schein, Wilson, and Keelan 2010*




# Meet Changing Communication Objectives

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- New communication objectives:  
From “Push” to “Push/Pull”

Agency	Social Media Strategies of Leading Public Health Organizations
US CDC	<p><b>Provide access</b> to credible, science-based health information when, where, and how the public wants it. Use tools and platforms to: <b>Reach</b> new audiences; <b>Reinforce</b> and personalize messages; <b>Build</b> open information-exchange infrastructure</p>
PHAC	<p>“Monitor the conversation, participate in the conversation, initiate the conversation, share content, include social media in all marketing initiatives.”</p> <p><b>Create</b> (Wikis, podcasts videos); <b>Share</b> (MSN, Google, Yahoo); <b>Marketing</b> (Flickr, YouTube, Facebook); <b>Monitor and Participate</b> (Google blog search, Technocrati, Bloglines)</p>
ONT MOHLTC	<p><b>Listen; Refine; Leverage</b> word of mouth advertising; <b>Customize</b> / provide relevant messages; <b>Invite</b> user-generated content</p>

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- If you are using traditional media to push out messages, you are already “on” social media






# Corporations are already there!

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- Companies are heavily investing in developing a social media presence to increase the impact of their advertising dollars, to send tailored messages to target audiences, and to create stronger relationships with existing customers.

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- Leading North American public health organizations, in particular the US Center for Disease Control, have integrated, or are moving to integrate, social media into all their communications.



# Summary of Findings

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Social Media platforms **improve reach** and **promote** campaign messages and organizations activities.

They enable:

- i) rapid and ongoing capturing of public mood, sentiment and knowledge about health issues;
- ii) free or extremely inexpensive **amplification** of broadcast messages;
- iii) a range of opportunities to tailor messages and engage the public in a conversation about health promotion and health protection;
- iv) user-generated content and feedback systems which **improve loyalty and trust** in organizations and **confidence** in information.



# Recommendations

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1. Establish clear objectives
2. Know your target audiences
3. Design campaigns for longevity
4. Determine Resource Needs
5. Listen to online health discourse
7. Encourage or sponsor research
8. Encourage coordination
9. Determine an Agency Content-Clearance Processes and / or Prepare Pre-approved Messaging Scripts



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## Guideline for External Use of Web 2.0

Tools & Resources ▾

### 1. Publication Date

The publication date of this guideline is November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011, and it will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis as appropriate.

### 2. Purpose

This guideline is designed to provide specific guidance to Government of Canada departments on the use of externally facing Web 2.0 tools and services.

This guideline does not alter or replace any existing legislation or policy instrument. When interacting with external audiences through Web 2.0 tools and services for official purposes, departments must comply with existing legislative and policy requirements. This guideline includes practical advice to help departments make informed decisions about how to meet these requirements when using externally facing Web 2.0 tools and services. In addition, the guideline encourages departments to:

- Designate clear accountability for the coordination of departmental Web 2.0 initiatives; and
- Develop guidance for personnel on the use of Web 2.0 that addresses expected behaviours, benefits, risks and consequences for all types of potential use (official use, professional networking use and personal use).

This guidance may not cover every situation, but it will help departments make good choices that mitigate risks while maximizing benefits of these tools and services.

### 2.1 Application

This guideline was released by the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) Chief Information Officer Branch. It supports and should be read in conjunction with the [Policy Framework for Information and Technology](#), including the [Policy on Management of Information Technology](#) and the [Policy on Information Management](#), as well as the [Communications Policy of the Government of Canada](#). Unless explicitly stated otherwise, the guidance provided applies to the use of Web 2.0 tools and services developed by the Government of Canada and/or hosted on Government of Canada networks, as well as to those developed and/or hosted by a third party.