Be an Advocate for Psychology on Social Media

With more than half of the world’s population (approximately 3.96 billion people) using social media, platforms like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn can be powerful tools for building connections and advocating for change on local, state and national levels. However, with many users comes much noise. These tips can help you build your network and position yourself as a thought leader so you can break through the clutter and help your messages reach the right people.

BUILD YOUR NETWORK

Choose your social media platform(s). There are a growing number of social media platforms to choose from, but you don’t need to be active everywhere to make a difference. Focusing on one or two platforms allows you to take a deeper dive into the available features and concentrate on building your presence.

Join interest groups that align with your areas of expertise, advocacy efforts or interests. Facebook and LinkedIn offer a wide variety of groups, separate from individual or organization pages, where users can build connections and share information. Can’t find a group that matches your interests? Create your own and invite your friends and colleagues to join.

Follow policymakers, organizations, brands, colleagues and other users. Social media is all about connections, so be sure to follow accounts that relate to your areas of interest. Twitter provides an easy way to follow and connect with public officials and other experts and decisionmakers. Use the Twitter Explore tab to follow topics that interest you, and create Twitter lists to organize and keep up with important accounts.

BE A THOUGHT LEADER

Post regularly. Social media platforms use algorithms to determine what appears in users’ feeds; therefore, it’s important to remain active on your chosen platforms. Because of the fast-paced nature of Twitter, users can post up to several times per day without overwhelming their followers. However, posts on platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn tend to have a longer “shelf life,” so posting once a day or a couple of times a week is usually sufficient.

Schedule time for social media. Set aside time (as little as 15 minutes per day) for social media. Use this time to catch up on trending topics, see what your favorite accounts are saying, and compose your own messages. Free tools like Google Alerts and Pocket can help you find relevant articles to share with your audiences. Scheduling tools like Buffer, Hootsuite and TweetDeck offer free ways to write and plan your social media posts in advance.

Tweet like you talk. When writing for social media, use your own voice. Inject your personality into your posts and use a conversational tone to make yourself
approachable to other users. Don’t be afraid to show enthusiasm, use humor, or throw in an emoji or two when appropriate.

**Showcase your expertise.** In addition to sharing your thoughts on others’ work, highlight your own accomplishments, such as new research, an invitation to speak at a conference, an award you won, or a link to a recently published article, letter to the editor or op-ed you wrote. Promoting your work on social media helps other see you as a thought leader, but make sure you aren’t the subject of all your posts.

**KEEP THE “SOCIAL” IN SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Interact with others.** Like any conversation, social media is a two-way street. Show your appreciation or support for others’ posts by liking or retweeting them. Comment with your thoughts or to ask follow-up questions. Don’t forget to reply to users who comment on your posts, or to thank users who share your original thoughts or content on their own accounts.

**Use hashtags to join conversations.** Hashtags are a great way to find and join existing conversations about topics that are important to you. Use hashtags in your own posts or tweets so your messages can be found by other users who are interested in the same topic. When using hashtags, limit yourself to 1-3 tags per tweet and try to avoid using general tags like #psychology.

**Participate in organized events.** Find and join scheduled Twitter chats hosted by organizations that align with your advocacy efforts to share information and resources. Share advocacy action alerts, like those from APA, with your audience and participate in others that align with your interests and efforts.