



Recommendations for Pharma Social Media Activities During the Coronavirus Crisis

A Step-By-Step Best Practices Guide

The Coronavirus National Emergency

The United States Government has now declared a national emergency over the Coronavirus pandemic. People's lives are being disrupted and we can expect things will only get more serious in the weeks to come. Schools are closing, events are being cancelled, and quarantines are taking effect. The business impact is already significant as the stock market has headed into a bear mode, workers are staying home, and supply chains are badly disrupted. In such an environment, how should pharma marketers respond? In this white paper we provide recommendations about how pharma companies should handle their social media activity; what they should continue, start, and stop doing; and what other actions to consider.

Guidance for Pharma Social Media Programs

Understanding the Value of Healthcare Communities

Patients seek social media communities to support them when they have recurring healthcare conditions. They are looking for:

- Connection with and support from others with the same health condition. This often includes guidance from others who have been diagnosed longer or who have tried different treatments.
- A replacement or supplemental support network when their personal networks fatigue. Often with chronic health conditions, the support from a patient's friends and family can decline. Patients may turn to online communities to add a new support system.
- Collaboration when there is new information or a change in the treatment of their condition. Often, we see patients with a lower level of medical knowledge use the insights and translations from the community to better understand these changes.

During the Coronavirus we have seen patients returning to their healthcare communities to connect with their peers, share their general fears, and specifically discuss if their condition or treatment makes them higher risk for contraction of the virus or more likely to have a more severe

case. Patients turn to social media pages and groups for these topics in order to avoid alarming their families, or because healthcare resources are less widely available, and their fear is very high. In general, we are seeing a surge in social media activity, which we expect will continue to rise.

Should we Stop all Content? No.

Many of our Pharma social media pages serve as the healthcare communities our patients need during these challenging times. Because of their high value to patients, we do not recommend stopping all content in these communities. A complete stop could have negative consequences for patients and the brand.

We do recommend you stop content that directly promotes or sells your product.

Evaluate Everything

It is critically important that all groups within a Pharma company evaluate their content and make decisions about what should continue. Here are some general guidelines for what content each type of social media program should and shouldn't publish:

Branded Pharma Product Social Media Pages/Communities

Product pages often become the treatment communities for their conditions. With this in mind, we recommend that you **CONTINUE** the following types of content:

- Content focused on how to afford your medications: As this crisis evolves the number of people who have new concerns about affording their medications will increase. It is a great help to them to showcase the programs you have in place to assist.
- Content about maintaining your medication schedule: With the disruption in routines we anticipate with the spreading of the virus, we also anticipate disruptions in medication routines. This leaves more opportunity for patients to miss critical doses.
- Content focused on how to correctly take your medication: Similar concerns about changing routines can alter how a patient takes their medication (e.g., with water only). Reminders of these limitations are still important to share.

- Content that shows condition understanding or support for the patients: As the fear grows, it is valuable for patients to know others understand their specific fears, and to take comfort in the voices of many. Content that acknowledges or prompts this support is great.
- Content about how to receive your medications: If patients' medication is delivered from a specialty pharmacy, or has an alternate delivery method, it is important to continue to communicate about delivery. It is also helpful to communicate about how to change delivery preferences, as we see some families consolidating and people's locations changing.

We recommend you **STOP** the following types of content:

- Content focused on selecting your product as their treatment choice: This can include content about product benefits, patient treatment stories, clinical trial data, product benefit information, etc. With the current virus outbreak, patients are not seeing HCPs for general checkups or medication change discussions. Such messages can come across as inappropriate and can make the company seem greedy or disconnected from the crisis.
- Content focused on condition diagnosis: This includes symptom content, lifestyle content, doctor discussion guides, patient diagnosis stories, etc. While this content is generally very valuable, most patients are more concerned with the immediate healthcare issues than with long term conditions. Paired with the inability to consult with a doctor, diagnostic messages are less relevant during the crisis.
- Content that depicts activities that are currently not recommended: In addition to the subject of your content, we also suggest you screen its images to ensure they are appropriate during the crisis. For example, you should avoid images that include large group gatherings, people on vacations, kids in school, etc.
- Content that is overly happy or humorous: We recommend extreme caution with content that is overly happy or humorous. While there is a chance this content would lighten a heavy-hearted mood, it can just as easily seem tone deaf.
- Content that directs patients to speak with their doctors: Given the limitations of the healthcare community during the virus, be cautious about content that recommends the patient go talk to their doctor.

Unbranded Pharma Condition Pages/ Communities

Unbranded healthcare communities are absolutely essential during these times. We recommend you **CONTINUE** the following types of content:

- Content that shows condition understanding or patient support: As the fear grows, it is valuable for patients to know others understand their specific fears, and to take comfort in the voices of many.
- Content about maintaining your medication schedule: With the disruption in routines we anticipate with the spreading of the virus, we also anticipate disruptions in medication routines. This leaves more opportunity for patients to miss critical doses.
- Content about wellness and overall condition: In times of high fear and disruption, people may abandon their exercise, good eating habits, and other health positive lifestyles in favor of comfort foods and too much TV. Content that encourages healthy choices is very important for us all.

We recommend you **AVOID** the following content:

- Content focused on condition diagnosis: This includes symptom content, doctor discussion guides, patient diagnosis stories, etc. While this content is generally very valuable, most patients are concerned with the immediate healthcare issues more than long term conditions. Paired with the inability to consult with a doctor, diagnostic messages are less relevant during the crisis.
- Content that depicts activities that are currently not recommended: In addition to the subject of your content, we also recommend you screen its images to ensure they are appropriate during the crisis. Avoid images that include large group gatherings, people on vacations, kids in school, etc.
- Content that is overly happy or humorous: We recommend extreme caution with content that is overly happy or humorous. While there is a chance this content would lighten a heavy-hearted mood, it can just as easily seem tone deaf.
- Content that directs patients to speak with their doctors: Given the limitations of the healthcare community during the virus, be cautious about content that recommends the patient go talk to their doctor.

New Content for Branded and Unbranded Pages

During the virus outbreak and treatment period you can **ADD** content that fits the current situation as appropriate. This could be content that supports or shares information on the condition treatment and the virus, or even content more reflective of the daily concerns about lifestyle limitations, such as ideas to entertain the family and stay connected with extended family and friends.

Corporate Social Media Pages

As a general rule, most corporate content about the company should be discontinued during this period to avoid appearing insensitive. Here are a few things that could **CONTINUE**:

- Virus related content: reassurance of company processes, staffing, supply; posts that share information about the virus and intersection with treatment areas; information on employees impacted.

We **DO NOT** recommend these:

- Company earnings
- Employee stories, awards, gatherings
- General content
- Recruiting, job postings, etc.

Actions to Help

Large brands should consider joining relief efforts as soon as an event occurs. Do NOT trade likes or other marketing actions for donations. Brands can announce a donation to a reputable aid agency or even just share the NGO so others can also donate to help. (Or do both. For example, "<Brand> just gave \$25K to the American Red Cross for relief efforts. If you'd like to help out too, please go to <http://someurl.com>.")

If your brand is providing direct assistance to hospitals or other groups in the Coronavirus response with products or with expert staff, we recommend you tell the story from the perspective of the participants or the volunteers.

- This framing shares the brand's efforts without appearing to seek credit.
- The assistance work seems more personal when told from the perspective of a volunteer.

Moderation & Response Best Practices

While some of the content and promotion might have changed, the need for moderation and response continues.

Alert your Moderation Team

- Events can bring out the best and the worst in people, and they will often display both online. With this in mind, we recommend you alert and clarify to your moderation team what they should be watching out for.
- Reiterate the community rules about political statements, hate language, and aggressive posts with both the moderation team and the public.
- Decide the criteria for hiding comments. We do not recommend you hide or remove general comments about Coronavirus. Examples of comments that should be hidden or deleted include content that is untrue, suggests cures, or promotes conspiracy theories.

Anticipate These Questions

It is important that Pharma companies be prepared for some of the questions you will likely receive. Here is a list of questions you should anticipate and prepare responses for:

- Patients asking about product supply and shortage concerns
- Questions about employees who might have contracted the Coronavirus
- Questions asking if a specific product (drug) or condition makes them higher risk for acquiring or having a more severe case of the virus.
(Note: We recommend you direct patients to call their HCP to discuss.)

- Patients who ask if they should they stop taking their medication

Best Practices for Response

- LiveWorld recommends that you create a single set of responses that can be used for common questions asked on any social media page.
- We recommend that during this high support time you are especially aware of the need for peer discussion. We recommend you respond only to questions that are directed to you or if you have to correct misinformation.
- We recommend against hiding or removing general comments about Coronavirus. This could provoke a negative reaction, including distrust. Certainly, consider removing information that is inaccurate or inflammatory.