

Navigating and Optimizing Social Media

A practical guide to building an effective social media presence for U.S.-based life science and medical device organizations.

Introduction

If you've ever thought to yourself, "Does my company *really* need to be on social media?" the answer is **YES**. With 4.95 billion people worldwide using social media and the average user active on 6.7 platforms¹, your business—regardless of its size or industry—needs a digital presence that includes social media. But for life science and medical device companies, the challenge lies in identifying the right platforms and maximizing their potential.

This white paper will guide you through establishing and growing your presence in the expansive social media landscape. You'll discover where your customers are active and how you can effectively engage them to achieve your business goals.

4.95 billion people currently use social media worldwide, with most social media users engaging with an average of 6.7 social media platforms¹.

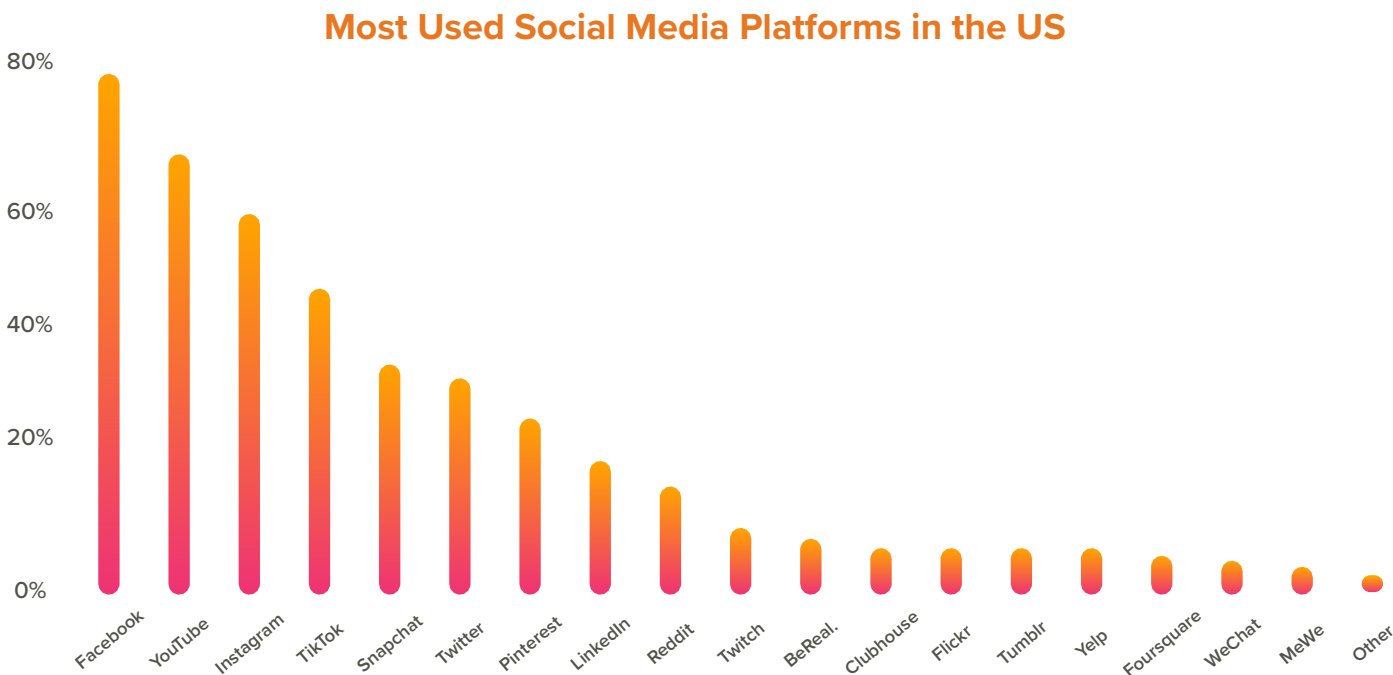
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The World's Most Popular Platforms

It's not just the number of social media users that continues to grow, but the number of platforms as well. Users have more options than ever before when it comes to both interacting with others and consuming content online, with options ranging from simply connecting with others to more creative and professionally focused platforms.

The sheer number of options in the social media world can make it hard to understand where to focus, but a good place to start is understanding what the top-performing platforms are. Among the various social media platforms, the ones with the largest reach in the United States are as follows²:

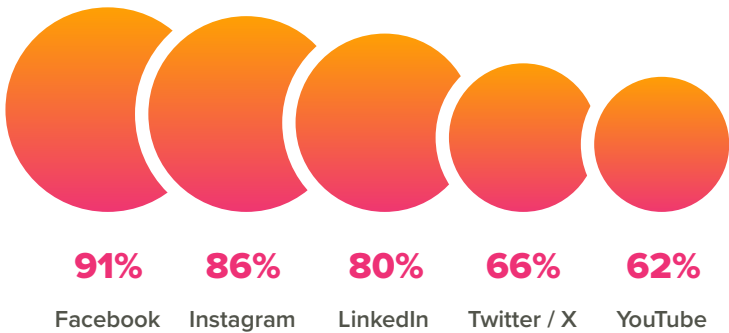


Source: [Doofinder](#) 2024

Facebook

Despite the frequent claims that Meta-owned Facebook's online presence is declining, the reality in the U.S. tells a different story. Accounting for 77% of all U.S. social media usage², Facebook continues to retain its status as the largest platform in the United States, and doesn't look like it will be giving up the title any time soon.

With a solid usage base among all ages, genders, and ethnicities³ alongside the largest population of organizations and brands⁴, Facebook truly remains a platform that can reach users across demographic or professional interest.



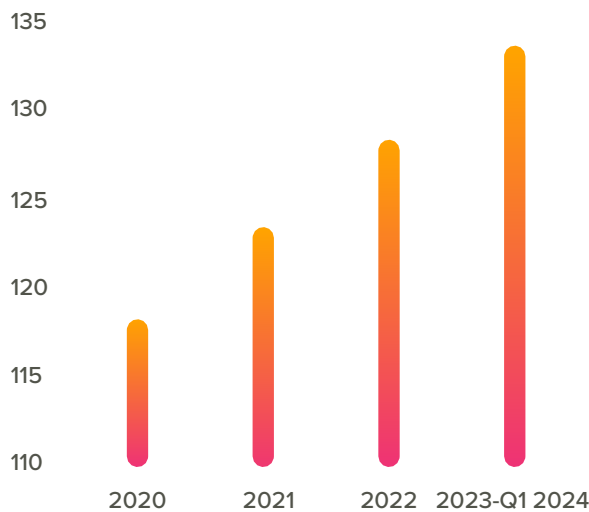
Source: [Hootsuite Facebook Statistics](#) 2024

Instagram

Meta doesn't stop at holding the top spot; its second-largest platform, Instagram, ranks third overall, capturing 56% of the U.S. social media usage share². **While Instagram has always been a major player in overall social media usage, the growth of Reels alongside an ever-increasing online demand for lifestyle and influencer-based content has allowed the platform to skyrocket in overall users in recent years.**

As of the most recently available data, the platform has hit over 158 million MAUs in the U.S. alone⁵, with a consistent and aggressive level of growth. **And, while the platform's user base has often been considered to be on the younger side, recent data suggests that over half of U.S. adults aged 30-49 are active on the platform³.**

Instagram Users (Millions)



Source: [Backlinko](#) 2024

LinkedIn

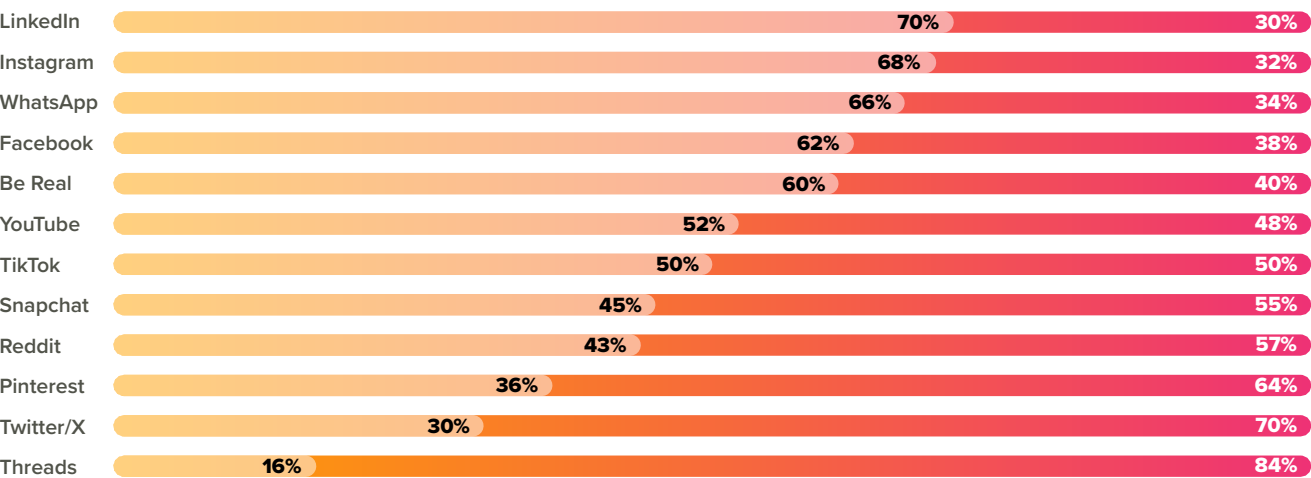
LinkedIn may not match Facebook and Instagram in sheer user numbers, but it compensates with its influence, particularly in the B2B space. With 67 million active company pages as of 2024⁶, LinkedIn has long since established itself as a premier professional platform.

While other platforms excel in broad reach, LinkedIn's more targeted, business-focused user base offers marketers a valuable opportunity to precisely target their audience—an approach that many brands find delivers significant returns.

Video-based Platforms

Brands are most confident in LinkedIn, Instagram, and WhatsApp

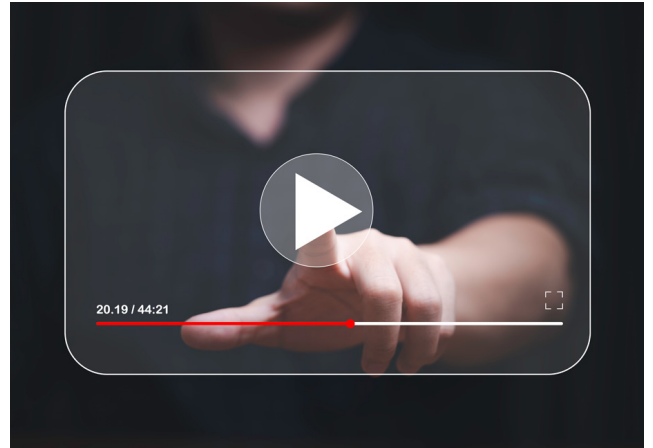
How confident are you that each of the following social platforms delivers a positive return on investment for your organization?



Source: [Hootsuite Social Media Trends](#) 2024

Alongside content and image-driven platforms like Facebook and Instagram, video-based platforms like YouTube and TikTok have emerged as top channels for both entertainment and educational content. Meanwhile, platforms that were once considered niche, such as Snapchat and Twitch, have grown significantly in size and influence, making them increasingly viable for social media promotion.

While these platforms offer significant potential for businesses, including life science and medical device companies, effectively optimizing them presents unique challenges compared to more conventional social media platforms. For best practices and additional resources on navigating these platforms, visit d2creative.com.



Choosing the Right Social Media Platform for Your Life Science or Medical Device Company

The size of a social media platform is an important attribute, but it is far from the most important, especially for life science and medical device brands. Trying to force your brand onto a popular social media platform that likely doesn't work for your audience not only provides no value and is financially costly, but can be detrimental to your brand reputation. **The 'trick' to selecting the right social media platform lies in understanding where your target audience is actively engaging online and how to connect with them in those spaces.**

When examining whether or not a specific platform is worth your time, there are two particularly important factors worth looking at aside from platform size: **User Makeup** and **Platform Purpose**.

User Makeup – “Is my Audience Here?”

Given that healthcare professionals (HCPs) constitute the majority of life science audiences, targeting in this industry is inherently more specialized compared to many B2C or broader B2B audiences. Identifying where the medical professionals you aim to connect with are located is a crucial first step. This requires a deep understanding of what HCPs typically seek from their social media platforms.

For many HCPs, social media is a tool for connecting with the medical world and networking with their peers in the field. Because of this, **physicians generally favor communities online that center around discussion.** They join platforms where they can read articles around developing health topics, ask questions and discuss medical issues with colleagues, and, in rare cases, even reach out to patients and the general public to give broad advice and share their knowledge⁷. To this end, professional communities centered around education, networking, and thought leadership are where HCPs tend to congregate and engage the most.

Facebook and LinkedIn have long been the go-to platforms for connecting with doctors and other medical professionals.

LinkedIn serves as a professional network, allowing medical professionals to explore in-depth articles and engage in discussions on specialized topics. In contrast, Facebook operates more as a personal platform, enabling them to connect with colleagues and even interact with patients.

Instagram and TikTok have largely been on the rise with HCPs as well. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare-related posts on Instagram increased by 93%, reflecting the platform's role as a vital source of information during crises⁸. **Instagram stories have become a popular tool for healthcare providers to share daily health tips, reaching over 500 million daily active users⁹.** Gen Z and Millennials are increasingly turning to TikTok for health advice and information, in lieu of speaking to their doctors¹⁰. Physicians and other HCPs are building a following on TikTok and, in 2023, TikTokers spent an average of 630 million hours watching videos involving doctors¹⁰.

HCP-only Social Media Platforms

There are also specialized social media platforms that ensure users identifying as doctors and other healthcare professionals are indeed who they claim to be, as these platforms require National Provider Identifier (NPI) numbers for membership. **HCP-specific platforms such as Sermo and Doximity provide many of the same benefits of a “typical” social media platform with the additional benefit of having tools designed specifically to aid medical discussion and come with the appeal of an exclusive “HCP Only” community.** Brands cannot have an organic presence on these platforms, but can take advantage of sponsored content opportunities.

Platform Purpose – “Should I be Here?”

A high-value social media platform isn't just one that fits your target audience, it has to be a fit for your brand and the content you can produce as well. In today's social media landscape, every platform that develops a large user base is able to do so because it occupies one or more specific niches. **These niches not only affect the kinds of conversations that are happening on each platform, but also what kind of content and strategy you'll need to have to make your company an authentic part of the platform.**

Let's take a look back at Facebook and LinkedIn. While the two fulfill a similar purpose of networking and information sharing, our research into these platforms has shown that the ways users actively engage in these behaviors are actually quite different, especially for HCPs.

Facebook, as the larger and more casual platform, is where users seek general updates and uplifting industry stories. This makes it ideal for broad, attention-grabbing branded content aimed at a wide audience. For example, content aimed at patients and/or within the patient education/advocacy space works well on this platform. **LinkedIn, on the other hand, is an almost purely professionally-focused platform where brands can get real mileage out of in-depth company updates and thought leadership content, since that's what users are specifically there for.**

Instagram isn't a 'networking' space but it is a highly visual space where approximately 57% of users are actively searching for health-related information and medical advice⁹. **For this reason, this platform will likely have your brand's target audience, but determining whether or not your brand should have a presence on this platform will be dependent on your brand's ability to develop engaging image/video-based content that authentically works on the platform.**

Where Life Science and Medical Device Companies Should Focus Their Efforts

With all this in mind, it's finally time to answer the question is where should your company start building its presence. **Based on demographics, user behaviors, and industry insights, there are a few clear winners for life science and medical device brands, along with one platform that may be best to avoid.**

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a great place to start your social media strategy. As previously stated, no other general-use platform is as singularly focused on professionals, and this is especially true for healthcare professionals. With nearly 8 million healthcare professionals in the U.S.¹¹ spending an average of 15 minutes per day on the platform⁸, **LinkedIn is one of the fastest-growing platforms for professionally driven HCPs. The platform is also a favorite among healthcare executives and decision-makers, who engage with thought leadership content on the platform 47% more often than anywhere else⁸.**

Additionally, **LinkedIn provides the most comprehensive targeting by career-based demographics, such as job title, seniority, etc., giving you the fastest path to find your ideal target audience for sponsored content.** This makes LinkedIn an obvious choice for brands looking for high-quality leads and other engagement.

HCPs Are Growing at Double-Digit Rate on LinkedIn



Healthcare executives engage with thought leadership content on LinkedIn 47% more than any other platform⁸.

Facebook

Facebook's size simply can't be ignored, especially for advertising. **The sheer reach of this platform enables promotional posts and announcements on Facebook allows brands to both market products and raise awareness to a larger audience than most other platforms.** Facebook also boasts an extremely high overall ROI compared to other social media platforms¹², making it a safe bet for most brands.

Additionally, since they are both Meta-owned platforms, Facebook and Instagram ads are both managed within the same tool. This means that any content developed can be cross-promoted.

Instagram

Despite being a more casual platform compared to LinkedIn, Instagram remains an appealing space for life science and medical device brands, particularly when targeting HCPs. Healthcare professionals are not just defined by their roles—they're individuals who enjoy browsing travel inspiration, recipes, and other lifestyle content like anyone else. **Even if they aren't specifically seeking out medical devices or industry updates on Instagram, that doesn't mean they'll overlook such content when it appears.**

That's not to say HCPs don't use Instagram for more professional purposes, however. As more and more of the online population uses their preferred social media platforms to seek out health advice, medical professionals have increased their presence on them in turn. At least 70% of HCPs claim to use Instagram or similar platforms for professional reasons⁸. **Catching your audience at this intersection of work and leisure with exciting and visually appealing content can bolster both their awareness and confidence in your brand.**

A Word of Warning: Cross X off Your List

Formerly known as Twitter, this platform has always been a fast-paced and wide-reaching platform, which in the past has made it a hotspot for HCPs and marketers. However, in its current state, X regularly goes through sweeping changes that affect the way people engage with posts, the types of content that get prioritized, and the value of the platform as a whole for meaningful conversation.

And while some of its influence is still there, the platform's current tumultuous culture makes it a tough sell for branded content, especially within heavily regulated spaces like the life science and medical device industries. For this reason, it may be best to put this platform on the back burner or even remove the brand from it altogether.

Finding Your Best Platform

While these recommendations are a place to start, you know your audience better than anyone else, which puts you in the ideal position to find out exactly which platform will reach them best. **When determining what platform(s) to start on or focus on, an audit of the platforms you're considering is one of our most recommended first steps.**

Taking the principles of platform purpose and audience demographics into account, try to align your company's goals to the goals of both the social media platform itself and the goals its users and community have when using the platform. By seeing how well they match up, you'll find not only where your audience likely is, but how easily you can craft messaging that will resonate with them on it.

Speaking of which...

Essential Strategies for Social Media Success

Finding the right platform is only half the battle, the other half is a rock-solid strategy. Far too many companies fall into pitfalls that make their content either unexciting or difficult to find. Poorly optimized content like this isn't just less effective, it's also a bad look for businesses, especially life science and medical device companies trying to present themselves as knowledgeable and professional. Once you've established your target social media platforms, be sure to keep these best practices in mind when creating content.

Develop Platform-specific Content

Every social media platform online is somewhat unique in its overarching offering. The users that are on social media platforms are there for the specific content and experience those platforms provide, and won't tolerate anything less—*especially* when they sense that they're being sold to.

Content should fit naturally within the platform where it's posted. This includes basic elements like image size or post length, but more importantly, it should guide the type of content created for each platform. For instance, a long, detailed caption works well on LinkedIn, where users are more likely to engage if they find the information valuable. However, on

Instagram, that same lengthy caption might not only be ignored but could also result in low—or no—engagement for the post. **Determining what works and what doesn't requires knowing the platform you're targeting inside and out, it may take a little trial and error, but it's one of the most important things to get right with any social media strategy.**

When using multiple platforms, it's fine to repurpose content occasionally for announcements or important updates. However, it's important to avoid the appearance of simply copying and pasting the same content across platforms. **Even just making small tweaks to fit each platform can go a long way toward keeping posts engaging.**

<p>YouTube </p> <p>PURPOSE Entertain • Educate • Inspire</p> <p>CONTENT Personal Vlogging • Products • Interviews</p> <p>PRO TIP Clear and engaging thumbnails are key • Ensure videos are clearly and appropriately title and tagged • Create content similar playlists</p> <p>CADENCE As often as content is available</p>	<p>Instagram </p> <p>PURPOSE Inspire • Entertain</p> <p>CONTENT Aspirational • Luxury • Culture • Personal Vlogging</p> <p>PRO TIP Utilize Stories, often, and include Story engagement stickers</p> <p>CADENCE Stories: 4-5 times a week In-Feed: at least 1 time a week</p>	<p>LinkedIn </p> <p>PURPOSE Thought Leadership</p> <p>CONTENT Opinions based on expertise • Business Success Stories • Industry Trending Topics • Educational • Jobs</p> <p>PRO TIP Post consistently but not overwhelmingly</p> <p>CADENCE At least 1 time a week</p>
<p>facebook </p> <p>PURPOSE Broadcast • Amplify</p> <p>CONTENT Stories • Emotive Tales</p> <p>PRO TIP Don't hesitate the value of a compelling cover photo</p> <p>CADENCE 2-3 times a week</p>	<p>TikTok </p> <p>PURPOSE Entertain • Educate • Inspire</p> <p>CONTENT Personal Shortform • Vlogging • Products • Shortform Interviews</p> <p>PRO TIP Host live Q&A sessions • Showcase reviews • Share 'tour' style videos for places, buildings, and even a variety of products</p> <p>CADENCE 4-5 times a week</p>	<p>Pinterest </p> <p>PURPOSE Inspire • Empower</p> <p>CONTENT How To • Informational (Visuals) • Inspiring Images</p> <p>PRO TIP Include relevant keywords across profile, boards, and pin descriptions (Content should be in an image-based format)</p> <p>CADENCE As often as content is available; Do not allow more than 3-4 days to pass without posting content</p>

Incorporate Scroll-stopping Imagery

Social media is tricky in the sense that your posts will be one of multiple posts vying for attention in a user's feed, who will likely be scrolling through very quickly.

The imagery you use is your way to cut through the noise and grab your audience's attention.

As a best practice, every post from your brand should have imagery, be it images or video. Even on platforms like LinkedIn that don't require images, posts that add an image anyway receive an average of

98% more comments¹³, that's engagement you can't afford to miss out on. But, even among brands who do see the value in imagery, it's still possible to use the wrong imagery. **Bland stock photography, unprofessional product shots, and poorly spliced videos don't help you stand out, they just make you blend in more.** Any image content you make represents your brand, so make it stand out with vibrant and engaging visuals that are made to fit both the social media platform and your brand.

And to keep things interesting, you can even try experimenting with available post formats across platforms to vary the way you present imagery to your audience. For example, incorporating carousels of images into posts can help encourage users to engage with posts more.

Don't Slack on the Tagging

One of the most common mistakes companies make is neglecting the minute but important details that affect performance. Elements like hashtags and video descriptions are easy to overlook, but they play a significant role in boosting the visibility of posts.

Whether it be hashtags, video tags, or keywords in titles and descriptions, tagging plays a critical role in how social media algorithms work. These elements affect results when your audience searches for specific content or receives recommendations. In the case of hashtags, they can even be customized to promote brand awareness around key topics and events. The amount and type needed to drive engagement will vary from platform to platform, but **taking the time to build a tag strategy around what you want to say and what people are saying in your industry is a surefire way to ramp up engagement.**

And, just like with your choice of imagery, there's no shortage of approaches you can take to tagging. Social media platforms are constantly adding new ways to tag your content to help it reach a wider audience, such as partner tagging on Instagram, where collaborating accounts can appear on each other's tagged posts. It pays to keep an eye on what tools get added or updated so that you can get a head start on your competition in utilizing them.



Posts on LinkedIn with images receive an average of **98% more comments** than posts with no images¹³.



Know When to Utilize Paid Promotion

While there’s no shortage of optimizations you can make to boost a post’s organic reach, sometimes the old adage rings true: **You get what you pay for**. Most major social media platforms allow brands to boost organic posts to increase their visibility on the platform and to serve the content to a specific audience.

You don’t have to boost every post you make, but strategically putting some of your advertising budget behind your most important social media content can make a huge difference in ways purely organic posts can’t. A good best practice is to boost posts that are already performing well organically. If your audience is engaging with it, there’s no better indicator that the content is high-quality and worthwhile to try and share outside of your current following.

Use Case: 1,046% Increase in Organic Engagement for Medical Device Leader

A medical device manufacturer was facing challenges in effectively reaching its target audience on LinkedIn despite having an established presence. The brand’s inconsistent approach hindered its ability to gain traction and engage followers.

To address this, a structured social media content strategy was introduced, featuring defined content pillars and a consistent posting schedule. This helped create a cohesive framework that built their presence while establishing a foundation of expertise to keep their audience engaged.

Additionally, a strategic post-boosting approach was implemented, focusing on amplifying high-performing content and key updates like webinars and trade show appearances, ensuring maximum visibility for the most relevant information.

This led to across-the-board increases in overall page performance in just 6 months, including:

358 new followers

1.14 million impressions and over 7,000 clicks on sponsored posts

336% more organic clicks, and an 887% increase in impressions

A 1,046% increase in organic engagement

Next Steps for Life Science and Medical Device Companies

There’s no better time to build or grow your company’s social media presence, and this guide is designed to help you get started. If you’re unsure where to begin, consider conducting an audit of the platforms you’re interested in to assess how well they align with your brand and whether they offer the opportunity to engage with your target audience effectively.

Our digital presence audit has supported numerous life science, pharmaceutical, and medical device companies in building and optimizing their online presence, both on social media and beyond. Let us make your brand the next success story! Our team is dedicated to helping you navigate the digital landscape, and we look forward to partnering with you on your journey to success.

As a special thank you for reading our social media guide, we're excited to offer you a **complimentary digital presence audit!**

Mention this guide when you reach out, and we'll work together to assess your current online presence and identify opportunities for growth.

[Schedule Your Free Audit](#)

Author

Kenny Kudzma

Copywriter & Content Specialist, D2 Creative

Prolific author and researcher, Kenny has worked with dozens of life sciences brands to tell their stories across a range of digital channels and platforms.

With Contributions From

Vijaya Singh

Digital Marketing & Strategy Manager, D2 Creative

Vijaya is a seasoned marketing professional with a passion for strategic planning and brand management, driving growth through innovative campaigns, and pushing boundaries to achieve business objectives.

Laura Lentchitsky

Director of Messaging & Digital Growth, D2 Creative

Laura has over 10 years of experience building and growing brands across life sciences, technology, and manufacturing, with a passion for content and data-driven campaigns.

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