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### **SOCIAL NETWORKING**

A social network service focuses on building and reflecting social network or social relationship among people who share interests and/or activities. A social network service essentially consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his or her social links, and a variety of additional services. Most social network services are web-based and provide various ways for users to interact over the internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging services.

Be social! Join Western Dairy Association's social media. Just go to our web site [HERE](#) and click on the Facebook or YouTube icon at the bottom of the home page. See you at the social sites!

You know you could gain important professional insights by jumping on the social networking train; but there isn't usually enough time in your day for your real job. Is it really that essential and can you find the time to dive in? In a word, YES! Here at WDA, we've been told we'll no longer be relevant unless we are utilizing social media. In 2009, 321.1 million people were on Facebook and the fastest growing group was people ages 25 to 34, with 35- to 44-year-olds close behind; Twitter users were 7.4 percent of adult Internet users in 2009 and expected to be 10.8 percent by 2010. If you can't afford to be left behind, here are a few how-to's and time-saving tips on social networking.

### **LISTEN**

The base of social networking is listening; you don't necessarily have to share your experiences. Listening to the populations you serve will help you be in direct contact with them and assist you in understanding their needs, frustrations and concerns.

Listen to moms' conversations

- MomCentral.com

To other health professionals

- NutritionUnplugged.com
- MealMakeOverMoms.com
- TheDairyReport.com

Track food trends

- HungryGirl.com
- SuperMarketGuru.com

### **CONNECT/NETWORK**

You can be a resource and answer questions. After listening and gaining a better understanding of your audiences, comment on their postings by providing your professional insight. By becoming a regular contributor, you become a part of a community. Daily comments are unnecessary, but weekly contributions could provide new understanding of community issues or make you a sought-after resource, gaining professional recognition. The number one rule when social networking is **help others, not yourself**.

### **CREATE**

Here's where you can provide thought leadership. By



Facebook is a social networking web site. Users can add friends, send messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves. Users can also join networks organized by city, workplace, school and region.



Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read short messages known as Tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters and are a great way to send quick updates, post questions or let readers know about breaking news.



YouTube is a video-sharing website on which users can upload and share videos.



creating a YouTube video for your specific client audience (it's easy using Windows Movie Maker or ProShow Gold software) you can get the same messages you might deliver to one person, delivered directly to a larger population. For instance, to inform your cafeteria clients on how food gets to their plates, video your food service staff making lunch using fresh, nutrient-rich ingredients and then post on YouTube; then tell people about it. Meet some of our local dairy farmers on our YouTube video [HERE](#).

By creating a blog or a Facebook fan page, you can provide weekly motivation to your 'friends' to be healthy, share current health news, or post upcoming events. We invite you to join our Western Dairy Association Facebook page for updates on local school events and the latest dairy nutrition news.

### **GAIN FEEDBACK**

Need a focus group at your fingertips? For free? You've got one. Once your social networking presence is established and you have followers on Twitter or friends on Facebook, you can engage them. It's just like striking up a conversation with the gal next to you on the airplane; everyone has an opinion, and when it comes to nutrition, you already know that most people have a lot of them! Understand the views of the populations you work with by asking them questions; post a link to a news story in order to gain their thoughts on a new idea; or ask them to be a resource on an issue with which you're struggling. And if your place of work doesn't encourage social networking, this prospect of a free focus group may convince them it's time to jump on the train.

### **TOOLS**

Now that you're ready, here are some tools to make the most of your social networking time:

#### **FACEBOOK / YOUTUBE**

As the owner of a Facebook page or a YouTube channel, you have a variety of analytical tools at your service using features in your account.

#### **TWITTER**

There are dozens of tools to find out what people are saying on Twitter. Twitturly.com tracks popular URLs people are sharing as a way to identify trends, topics. Use keywords in Twitscoop.com to analyze discussions around a topic. With Search.Twitter.com, you can search exact phrases.

#### **RSS FEEDS**

Many blogs or sites with frequent updates have RSS feeds. Signing up for the feed will alert you that there is an update, thus you won't have to spend time checking your favorite sites every day. To sign up, click on the square orange RSS icon on the site and you'll be given the option to "subscribe to this feed." Once you do, your subscribed-to feeds will appear in the "feeds" section of your Internet homepage, near your web site "favorites." American Dietetic Association, Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network, and School Nutrition Association all have RSS feeds.



RSS feed or "Really Simple Syndication" is a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works -- such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video -- in a standardized format.

#### SENDIBLE

This free site has the potential to save you oodles of time. Sign up here to post updates to all your social networking sites at once without signing into each of them; you can even schedule updates to appear later in the week or month.

#### BLOG TIPS

If you decide to blog, follow these guidelines:

- 1) Determine your target audience; ask how your thoughts could benefit them and how it's different from what others are saying.
- 2) Spend a few weeks following related blogs.
- 3) Choose a name that's easy to remember and relevant.
- 4) Make it easy for your audience to engage with you.

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