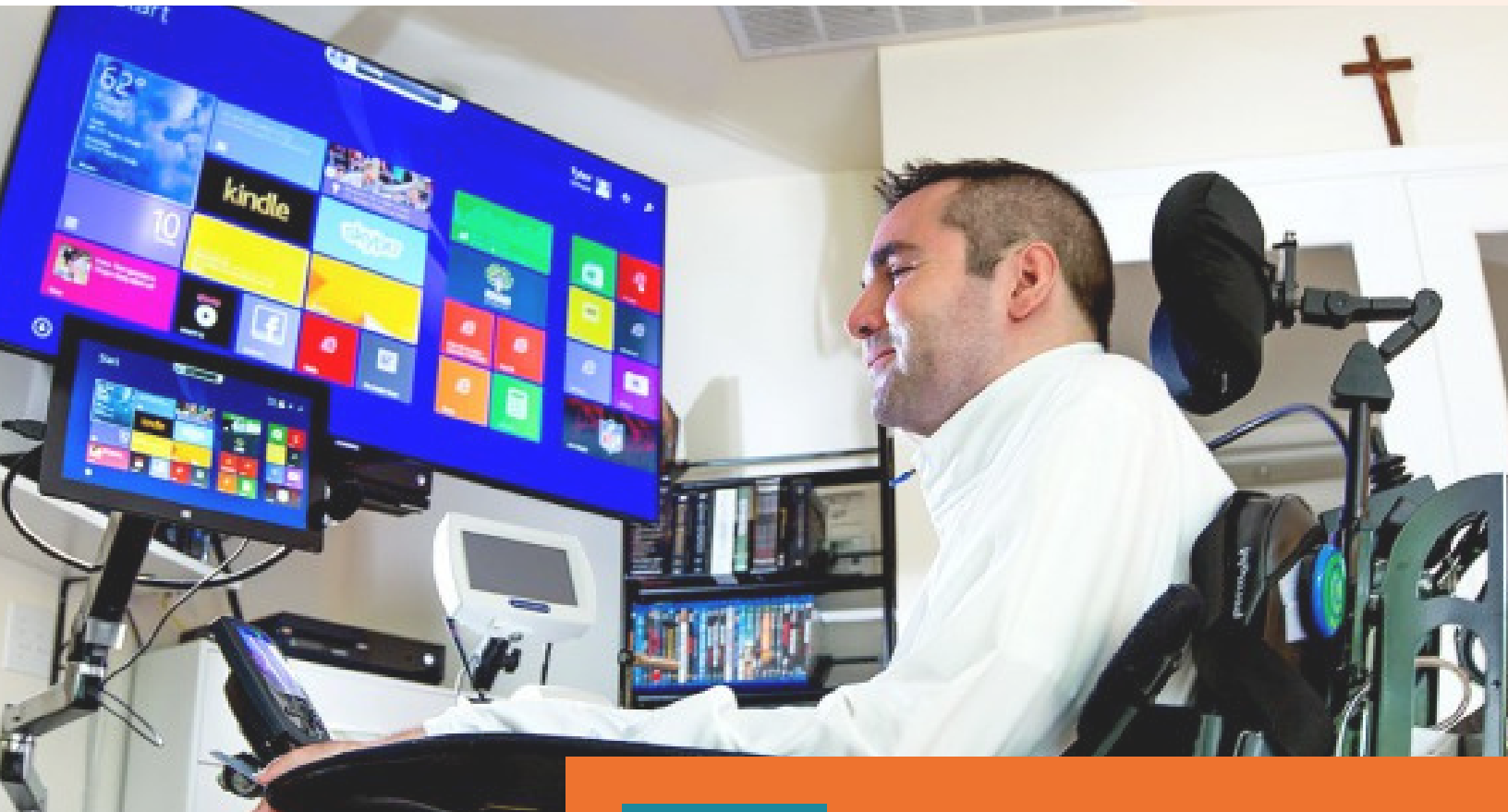


6

# THE VIRTUAL WORLD



***"THE INTERNET IS SUCH A POWERFUL TOOL TO USE FOR ADVOCACY. IT GIVES SO MANY IN THE SCI/D COMMUNITY THE ABILITY TO WORK, CONNECT, AND COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD."***

**ANNIE STREIT (IN)  
UNITED SPINAL GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY MANAGER**

# SOCIAL MEDIA

## The internet is a powerful advocacy tool.

Social media and virtual advocacy are an efficient way to reach more advocates and allies who can help elevate your message. Following your elected official's social media accounts can also help you keep track of their activities, events, and policy positions. The following tips will help ensure that your use of social media is most effective:

- **Be courteous and to the point.** Staffers will often remove comments seen as offensive or harassing toward the representative.
- **Share your story.** Share how the legislation would affect (positively or negatively) your life if passed/not passed.
- **Be consistent.** According to the Congressional Management Foundation, as few as 10 social media posts to a member of Congress is enough to catch that office's attention.



## Follow the United Spinal Association



## Follow the United Spinal Association Grassroots Advocacy Network



# SOCIAL MEDIA DOS AND DON'TS

## DO

### **Share relevant posts:**

Information related to SCI/D and your own content should be shared daily, or a few times per week to increase engagement.

## DON'T

### **Share posts unless they match your mission:**

Your platforms represent your group, so only post items that are a good fit.

## DO

### **Take feedback seriously:**

Pay special attention to comments that suggest how you can improve. Constructive criticism can add strength to your group.

## DON'T

### **Be unprofessional:**

Stay focused on your mission and avoid posting political opinions, religious views, or coarse language on your membership pages.

## DO

### **Share relevant photos:**

Photos draw attention! It is best to use your own photos, but unrestricted, high quality images from the web are an option too.

## DON'T

### **Delete critical comments:**

People will wonder what you are hiding, which then may cause them to wonder if the commenter has a point.



# SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES



**Follow Back and Interact.** If you are only following a small amount of your social media followers, that may come across as disinterest in what your community is saying.

**Keep the Social in Social Media.** Engage with those who reach out to you to create connections and network.

**Determine Your Voice and Tone.** It is important that your voice and tone coincides with your prospects. Don't stray from your brand image.

**Keep it Short.** Some social media platforms do not have character limits. Remember that shorter is better.

**Create Brand Awareness.** Take advantage of sharing content related to your brand, and engaging with influencers in your industry.

**Don't Overshare.** Create a content calendar to ensure you are not oversharing, but instead sharing content that your community values and that reflects your brand.

**Don't Always Feel Compelled to Jump In.** It is beneficial to determine what types of post that you respond to and which ones you should sit back in order to let others interject first.

**Be as Transparent as Possible.** Openness is an important way to relate and build trust with those in your community.

**Be Proactive, Versus Reactive.** Monitoring social media will allow you to see posts that do not mention your brand, but still have value. This strategy helps to create conversations and foster new relationships.

**Respond to Negative and Positive Feedback.** View negative feedback as constructive criticism, and an opportunity to improve. Respond as quickly as possible instead of ignoring or deleting.

# DEVELOP A GAME PLAN

Questions to consider as you develop your social media game plan.



1. Are you confident using social media for your chapter or organization?
2. Have you decided which platforms to use?
3. Have you set up your social media accounts?
4. Have you figured out your objectives?
5. Have you set yourself targets?
6. Do you have a social media policy?
7. Do you have a social media strategy?
8. Do you have a content strategy?
9. Do you know how to measure performance?
10. Do you have a social media team?
11. Do you have a process in place for your activity?
12. Do you know how to handle mishaps?
13. Have you perfected your campaigns?



# AVENUES OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD

## **WEBSITE**

Wix  
Web.com  
Network Solutions  
Squarespace

**Creating a website is one step to building an online presence.**

- Be creative
- Foster engagement with a clear message
- Cover the basics
  - What you are
  - What the mission and goals are
  - What activities you are a part of
  - What can individuals do to make a difference
- Always keep website accessibility in mind

## **BLOG**

Wordpress  
Blogger  
Wix  
Squarspace

**A blog is usually less formal, but more interactive than a website.**

- Share important campaign news and milestones
- Post updates on events
- Collaborate with other advocates
- Build enthusiasm for your campaign
- Reach out to other bloggers and advocates whose interest center around the same issues.

**Online video is a powerful tool for educating and engaging viewers.**

## **ONLINE VIDEO**

YouTube  
Vimeo  
Wistia  
Magisto

- An effective video creates an emotional response that coincides with the core value of the viewers
- Video content can include interviews, highlights of events, and stories that show the impact that advocates can make.
- Use social media as a way to drive traffic to your online videos

# VIRTUAL ADVOCACY

Virtual advocacy is an effective way to communicate remotely about issues on both an individual basis as well as a member of a group effort with your policymakers, especially on your state and local government levels.

- Determine the remote meeting platform that works for you.
  - [Zoom](#)
  - [Microsoft Teams](#)
  - [Webex by Cisco](#)
  - [GoToMeeting](#)
- Understand and clearly define your issue(s).
- Develop an organized meeting strategy and agenda.
- Develop talking points. Decide who will discuss each point.
- Assign responsibilities. One group member should moderate.
- Prepare materials for your event. Develop "Issue Papers."
- Share personal stories related to the issue from 1-3 advocates.
- Create a remote event speaker schedule and schedule visits. Contact information for Representatives and Senators:
  - [House of Representatives](#)
  - [Senate](#)
- Follow-up with a thank you, the issue paper, and any other information that you agreed to provide.



# VIRTUAL ADVOCACY EVENTS

**Along with effective communication, there are tactics you can use for virtual advocacy events that help to publicize your issue, your events, and support for your issue.**

**Virtual Advocacy Team Office Hours:** Remote platforms can be used for smaller meetings as a way to strategize, plan, and report.

**Social Media Advocacy Challenge.** Implementing advocacy challenges is an effective way to increase advocacy participation and to raise awareness on a particular issue or organization.

**Branding Social Media Profile Pictures and GIPHY Stickers.** Changing social media profile pictures and creating GIPHY stickers to add to Facebook Live or Instagram Stories that correspond to an event, cause, or organization makes visual branding easy.

**Online Resource Hubs.** Hubs are a one-stop-shop for colleagues and advocates to find need resources such as, talking points, scripts, web graphics and content, and videos.

**360-Degree Videos.** Videos are a great way to highlight an issue or event, because they provide the opportunity for virtual visitors to be in the center of the action.

**Video Testimonials.** This type of live or pre-recorded video provides opportunities for advocates to share how issues directly affect their lives.

## SOCIAL MEDIA | VIRTUAL ADVOCACY RESOURCES

[United Spinal Association Social Media Guide](#)  
[United Spinal Association Social Media Basics](#)  
[Virtual Advocacy in a Pandemic World: A Guide](#)

# ADVOCATES IN ACTION: RALLYING ONLINE

## GINA SCHUH (AZ) UNITED SPINAL ASSOCIATION ADVOCATE

For both business and pleasure, Gina Schuh loves to travel. Over the years, her frustration has grown over the large variance she faces in the height of hotel beds. When a bed is too tall, it makes transferring from a wheelchair impossible or unsafe. After hearing consistent complaints from other wheelchair users, it hit home that this was a community-wide problem that needed her help. Gina explains, *"In the grand scheme, this seems like a small issue, but it has enormous impacts on people with disabilities being able to travel with ease. Currently, this appears to be the result of a lack of education and awareness by policymakers and those in the hotel industry."*

After raising this issue at the National Council for Disability meeting, Gina checked with the United States Access Board about any hotel bed height guidelines. Upon learning they were nonexistent, Schuh engaged other wheelchair users and got to work on a resolution that reflected the community's needs. Armed with a plan, Gina started a petition on change.org by summarizing the issue and asking those in her network to read, sign-on, and share. Noting, *"It was a simple process, but once it was out there, it spread like wildfire. Seeing the huge amount of sharing and support clearly shows what an important issue this is and that our community needs hotel bed height regulation."*

Today, the petition has 44,000 signatures, but Gina is looking to increase that to 100,000 signatures. With this clear demand, Gina will start talking to legislators and bring this data to the U.S. Access Board along with individual experiences and stories to hotel brands and chains to help realize this important need.

