

## Tips for Promoting Your RETAIN Project Through Social Media

From Twitter to Facebook to LinkedIn, there are numerous social media channels for organizations and initiatives to leverage in their outreach efforts. But is going “social” the right move for *your* RETAIN project?

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### Why Use Social Media to Enhance Your RETAIN Project?

As we work with state teams on their communications strategies, the RETAIN technical assistance (TA) team is hearing about several RETAIN programmatic goals that lend themselves to social media strategies, such as:

- **Recruiting and enrolling** program partners and worker participants;
- **Educating** target audiences about stay-at-work/return-to-work (SAW/RTW) issues, resources, and best practices;
- **Establishing** your RETAIN project as a trusted resource and/or center of expertise on SAW/RTW guidance; and
- **Fostering good public relations (PR)** for your RETAIN initiative and its partners.

### *Using Social Media for Recruitment*

The effectiveness of using social media for RETAIN recruitment and enrollment is not entirely clear, and not all Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) are open to using new media tactics to recruit candidates due to the lack of established ethical guidelines about using such strategies. Further, RETAIN teams should ask themselves whether their target audiences use social media and are likely to learn about the RETAIN program through social platforms. If yes, and if your IRB permits it as an outreach tactic, you may try posting recruitment notices or placing paid advertisements on social media.

By using paid social ads and “boosted” posts, you can target your social media content very specifically, for instance, to show up in the feeds of people of a certain age range, in a certain geographic region, or who work in a certain job function. Such targeted advertising is measurable and can be quite affordable.

## ***Using Social Media to Educate and Promote***

You may also want to use social media to educate target audiences about SAW/RTW issues, establish your project's credibility, or garner good PR for your initiative and team partners. To that end, you can actively seek out and share news articles, RTW success stories, and value-added resources to keep RETAIN and SAW/RTW issues top-of-mind among audiences. *But where can you share these kinds of posts?*

## **Your Channels or Others'? Understanding Social Media Approaches**

There are two main ways for RETAIN teams to share social media content:

- 1. Supply other organizations with RETAIN content to push through their social media channels:** this is a simple tactic all RETAIN teams should consider.
- 2. Start your own social media accounts:** this requires more effort and commitment on the part of your team, but can pay off in the long run as your program becomes more established.

## ***Using Others' Social Media Channels***

The simplest and fastest approach to sharing your news via social media is to use the established social channels of other organizations (e.g., the Facebook and Twitter feeds of your RETAIN partners, local employer groups, health care organizations, and others). A best practice is to provide them with compelling, ready-to-use content. Often, they will be happy to have fresh content and the opportunity to demonstrate their involvement in or support of the project. For example, you could request a local hospital share a recruitment message on its Twitter feed such as:

*Have you recently experienced an injury that affects your ability to work? You could be eligible to receive free services through the new RETAIN [State] Program. Learn more [Insert link to your website/contact info].*

## ***Starting Your Own Social Media Channels***

Should you decide to establish your RETAIN team's own social media channels, doing so is easy and free. The following recommended platforms provide instructions on how to set up an account:

- [Facebook](#) (Select CREATE A COMMUNITY OR PUBLIC FIGURE page. Alternatively, you can set up a *private* Facebook group to facilitate knowledge sharing among program participants.)
- [Twitter](#) (Click on the "Sign Up" box, or go directly to [twitter.com/signup](https://twitter.com/signup)).
- [LinkedIn](#) (Follow the instructions to create a LinkedIn group page.)

Note: [Instagram](#) is recommended only if you plan to develop a consistent pipeline of images and videos to share. Get started by setting up a free [Business Profile](#).

## Branding Your Account

When you set up your social media accounts, you will be asked to choose a profile name or “handle.” Choose a short, on-brand name—which for most states will be @RETAIN[State Abbreviation] or @[State Abbreviation]RETAIN.

In addition, you will be asked to assign a profile image—or “avatar”—that will show up alongside all of your posts. Your RETAIN graphic is an ideal choice for this avatar. Further, on Facebook and Twitter, you can add a banner image to your account’s landing page.

For example, below is a screen capture of RETAIN Kentucky’s Facebook page and avatar:



## Social Media Tactical Plans

Before taking the plunge and launching your own social media accounts, it can be helpful to develop a tactical plan to guide your internal social media operations. Such plans should outline:

- **Your designated social media managers.** Who on your team will manage postings, and who will have administrative access to the accounts?
- **Post criteria.** What types of content will you post on your RETAIN accounts?
- **Content development process and schedule.** How often will you aim to post on each platform, and what is the internal process for drafting and approving RETAIN posts?

## Social Media User Agreements

The RETAIN TA team also recommends implementing a *Social Media User Agreement* that outlines expectations for your followers. This can be an important safeguard in the event of problematic social media behavior (such as inappropriate commenting, etc.) Once created, you can make your user agreement available on your RETAIN program website and link to it on your social media landing pages. To view a sample social media user agreement, visit the [Campaign for Disability Employment’s website](#).

## Building Your Follower Base

While it can take time and effort, there are a number of tactics to help you attract followers—people who elect to “like” your pages and avail themselves to your content. Tips include:

- ❑ **Asking your friends and partner organizations to follow you** and alert their networks to your pages.
- ❑ **Including visuals and videos** with your posts, which are known to perform best on social media.
- ❑ **Tagging others in your posts**, which alerts those accounts and their followers to your content. For example, if you’re sharing an article about a business with a great RTW policy, highlight and tag that business’s social media account in your post.
- ❑ **Making use of hashtags.** Hashtags—phrases preceded by the “#” symbol—are used to identify messages associated with a specific, often trending topic and make your posts more visible and searchable. For instance, you can add #NDEAM to your posts about National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October. By following and attaching your content to trending hashtags, you can attract new followers and get your posts noticed by like-minded social media users.
- ❑ **Rotating your banner images frequently** to draw attention to your accounts and keep your feed current.
- ❑ **Sharing/retweeting relevant content shared by others;** the original poster just might follow you back as a result.
- ❑ **Making it easy for people to find and follow you.** If your RETAIN project has a website, be sure to post links to your social media accounts in the header and/or footer of your home page. In addition, include a prompt to “Follow us on social media!” on your printed materials along with the recognizable icons of Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms you use.
- ❑ **Posting insights on relevant LinkedIn group pages** in the SAW/RTW realm. You can do this in the “comments” section beneath news articles posted by each group’s moderator.

## A Note About Accessibility

When implementing your social media strategy, it is vital to ensure your posts are accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. That means including image descriptions, writing in plain language, and ensuring any videos you post include captions. The Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT) offers a handy synthesis of [social media accessibility best practices](#). It is also important to consider the accessibility of content to which you are directing users. For example, videos on pages you share should be captioned and audio described or introduced.

## Measurement and Analytics

Individual platforms and other social media “dashboard” tools can provide you with a range of metrics to help you measure the effectiveness of your social media. Key metrics to consider tracking include the *reach* of individual posts (i.e., the number of users who came across your posts), social media *engagement* (i.e., the extent to which other accounts are interacting with your account), and numbers of *likes* and *shares*. (Sharing occurs when someone forwards, re-posts, or re-tweets a particular post.)



The approach you use to post your content will determine the types of social media analytics you can access. For example, you can use the free in-platform analytics tools offered by Facebook, Twitter, and others to monitor the reach and popularity of your posts. If you use a paid social media dashboard tool, the metrics you can measure are even more advanced. Whichever approach you use, it is important to review analytics regularly to identify trends that can inform and improve your social media efforts going forward. If your posts often link back to your program website, you can do this in concert with your website analytics to see if increased web traffic occurs when such posts are published.

## What to Post and How to Systematize Your Operation

Whether you are using your own accounts or pushing content out through others' channels, there are numerous things to post about RETAIN or SAW/RTW in general. Depending on your particular outreach goals, examples include:

Goal	Content Type:
Recruitment and Enrollment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recruitment notices</li><li>• Reminders about key enrollment deadlines</li><li>• Paid social media ads about enrollment</li></ul>
Education about SAW/RTW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Links to news articles about SAW/RTW strategies</li><li>• Success stories highlighting people's RTW journeys (Note: You must get signed permission if you are featuring your own study participants)</li><li>• Retweets/shares of relevant content shared by other organizations</li><li>• Resource spotlights highlighting others' SAW/RTW tools and services, your own website, etc.</li><li>• Infographics featuring statistics and metrics about SAW/RTW</li></ul>
Program News and General PR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Posts about your organization's participation in RETAIN (e.g., links to press releases about your team's selection as a grantee)</li><li>• Staff spotlights (a series featuring the people behind your RETAIN project such as RTW coordinators, treating physicians, etc.)</li><li>• Posts about local or state-level disability inclusion or workforce news, with a tie to your state's participation in RETAIN</li></ul>

For purposes of systemization, it can be helpful to develop an “editorial calendar” outlining posts for a week or more in advance, as in the following example. Please note the shortened web links used in these examples, which can help you save space and meet Twitter’s character limit of 280 characters per post.

Day	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn
Mon.	We love this video from the Campaign for Disability Employment that tells the story of Chanelle Houston, a research analyst in Silver Spring, MD who sustained a spinal cord injury when she was hit by a car. In the interview, Chanelle shares the importance of strong support from her family, employer and health care team in returning to work. <a href="https://bit.ly/2rTdncQ">https://bit.ly/2rTdncQ</a>	Check out this video featuring Chanelle Houston who, with support from her employer and health care team, returned to work following a spinal cord injury. <a href="https://bit.ly/2rTdncQ">@CDE tweets</a> #WorkingWorks <a href="https://bit.ly/2rTdncQ">https://bit.ly/2rTdncQ</a>	<b>Chanelle’s Story</b> This video from the Campaign for Disability Employment tells the story of Chanelle Houston, a research analyst in Silver Spring, MD who sustained a spinal cord injury when she was hit by a car. In the interview, Chanelle shares the importance of strong support from her family, employer and health care team in returning to work. <a href="https://bit.ly/2rTdncQ">https://bit.ly/2rTdncQ</a>
Wed.	RETAIN STATE Team’s Return to Work Coordinator, NAME, takes pride in her/his work helping program participants get back on track after injury or illness. [Include photo/web link]	RETAIN STATE Team’s Return to Work Coordinator, NAME, takes pride in her/his work helping program participants get back on track after injury or illness. [Include photo/web link]	N/A
Fri.	Meet Ira Edwards, a land use planner for the state of Alaska. In this article, Ira, who uses a wheelchair due to an accident nine years ago, shares the value of employment and encourages employers in Alaska and elsewhere to understand the benefits of supporting workers in returning to work after injury. #PhotoFriday <a href="https://bit.ly/33GBUzv">https://bit.ly/33GBUzv</a> 	Meet Ira Edwards, who brings skill and talent to his job as a land use planner for the state of Alaska—and illustrates the benefits of helping workers return to work after injury. #PhotoFriday <a href="https://bit.ly/33GBUzv">https://bit.ly/33GBUzv</a> 	N/A

## The RETAIN TA Team: Here to Help!

The RETAIN TA team stands ready to help you explore whether social media is the right approach for you and to discuss strategy, implementation, and more advanced tactics as desired. Please feel free to contact us through your AIR state liaison or by emailing [RETAINTA@air.org](mailto:RETAINTA@air.org).