



# Rx for Social Challenges

*Participation in social media has become nearly universal among healthcare organizations, but they often aren't realizing the full benefits they hope to see from their social media efforts.*

Today, if healthcare organizations want to remain relevant to consumers and stay competitive, they have no choice but to be involved in social media. While most healthcare organizations have begun engaging with stakeholders through social media, most still have plenty of room for improvement. That's the key finding from the 2015 UBM Tech State of Social Media in Healthcare Survey, which polled 410 professionals who work for North American healthcare organizations.

Many of these organizations are turning to social media as an inexpensive way to connect with consumers. "Social media has become such a ubiquitous part of the culture that it just makes sense," said David N. Westfall, District 2 public health director for Georgia, who took part in the survey. "It also is a much more affordable way to get the word out [versus] hiring an ad agency or buying radio or TV time."

## A Work in Progress

Yet a majority (53%) of survey respondents said that while their employers have some presence on social media, they aren't particularly active. This finding indicates that, although healthcare organizations know they need to be doing something on social media, many of them are struggling to figure out exactly what to do and how to do it well.

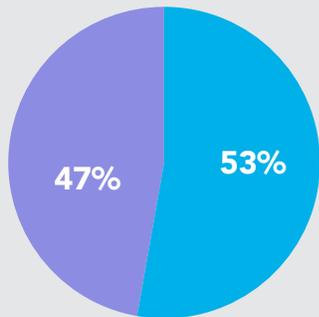
## Executive Summary

In December 2014, UBM Tech conducted a study, sponsored by Dell, to explore social media use in healthcare organizations. The responses from 410 healthcare professionals revealed that while the industry has begun utilizing social media, those efforts are not yet achieving all the benefits organizations hoped to experience.

Many healthcare organizations find their efforts hampered by security, privacy and compliance concerns. Few have dedicated social media staff and budgets, and few offer training or have hired outside consultants. All of those factors could be preventing healthcare organizations from seeing the success they hope for from their social media initiatives.

### Figure 1. Social Media presence?

How would you describe your organization's social media presence?



- We have some presence on social media (i.e., we have a presence on at least one social network, but we are not particularly active in engaging with our target audience)
- We have a good deal of activity with regard to social media (i.e., we have a presence on multiple social networks, and we engage with our target audience on a regular basis)

**DATA:** UBM Tech survey of 410 business technology professionals in healthcare organizations, December 2014

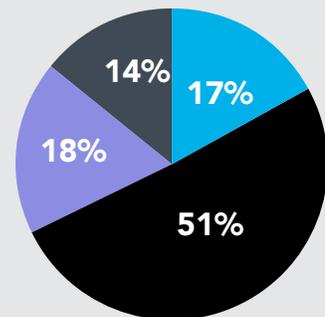
When asked how effective their organizations' social media efforts were, 51 percent of respondents said they have room for improvement. While only 18 percent rated their organizations poorly, just 17 percent described their social media efforts as "very effective."

"I think adoption of social media in the healthcare industry is still in its infancy," said survey respondent Jeremy Solly, manager of social media for Cambia Health Solutions. "Many companies in the industry are starting to use social, but I think few of us have figured out the most effective approaches. There is still a lot of experimenting happening."

Most healthcare organizations are limiting themselves to the best-known social media platforms without considering the possible benefit of lesser-known options. Facebook is the leading platform, according to the survey, with 87 percent of healthcare professionals reporting that their organizations

### Figure 2. Social Media Effectiveness

Do you think your organization is doing a good job with social media?



- Yes, our social media efforts are very effective
- Yes, but we have some room for improvement
- No, we are not doing a good job handling social media
- Unsure

**DATA:** UBM Tech survey of 410 business technology professionals in healthcare organizations, December 2014

have a Facebook presence.

Just over half of respondents have a presence on LinkedIn and/or Twitter, but few are using up-and-coming platforms like Instagram and Pinterest. Adding social features to corporate websites is also fairly uncommon; only 29 percent reported having a company blog and only 15 percent said they have discussion forums.

### Lofty Goals

Organizations are using social media in a wide variety of ways. A majority see social media as a way

## Survey Methodology

In December 2014, UBM Tech conducted an online survey on behalf of Dell exploring the use of social media in the healthcare industry. The data set is comprised of 410 respondents at healthcare organizations with a social media presence.

Most of the respondents work at healthcare providers such as medical practices, hospitals and clinics. Just less than half of respondents work in an IT job function, and the rest are patient caregivers or healthcare management. Sixty-four percent of the total respondents work at organizations with 1,000 or more employees.

The greatest possible margin of error for the total respondent base (N=410) is +/- 4.8 percentage points. UBM Tech was responsible for all programming and data analysis. These procedures were carried out in strict accordance with standard market research practices.



### Figure 3. Most Popular Platforms

Which of the following does your organization currently use?

Facebook

87%

LinkedIn

56%

Twitter

53%

Patient portal

35%

YouTube

35%

Company blog

29%

Google+

20%

Discussion forum on your website

15%

Internal social business software

11%

Instagram

10%

Pinterest

7%

Foursquare

1%

Reddit

1%

**NOTE:** Multiple responses allowed

**DATA:** UBM Tech survey of 410 business technology professionals in healthcare organizations, December 2014

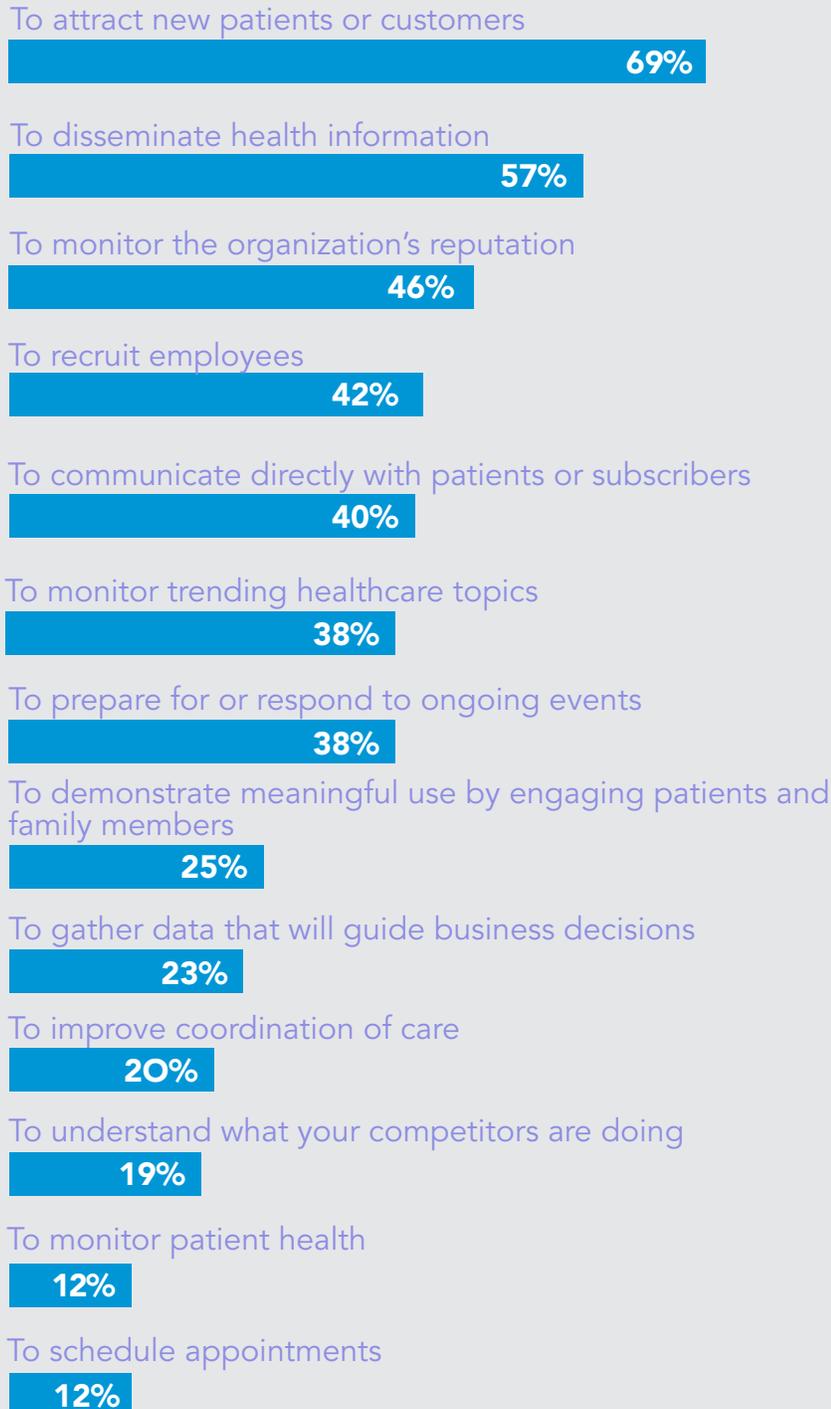
to attract new patients or customers (69%) or to disseminate health information (57%). For example, Westfall said that the Georgia Department of Public Health's Facebook postings have let the agency communicate with a much wider audience about public health priorities.

Smaller but still significant numbers are using social media to monitor their organizations' reputation (46%) and communicate directly with consumers (40%). Cambia Health Services is working on a pilot project to deliver customer service via Facebook and Twitter, according to Solly. "We are still rolling this out, but nearly every customer that reaches out to our brands via social is attended to promptly," he said. "Their issues are resolved quickly, and, over the course of a couple of hours, many of them flip from negative comments to praising our customer service team."

In addition to monitoring what people are saying about their own operations in social media, some healthcare organizations are also monitoring what people are saying about their competitors. However, it's difficult to say just how common this is because of a discrepancy in the research results. When asked, "How is your organization currently using social media?" only 19 percent of respondents checked the box that said, "to understand what your competitors are doing." However, when asked directly, "Does your organization monitor



**Figure 4. Social Media Use**  
How is your organization currently using social media?



**NOTE:** Multiple responses allowed  
**DATA:** UBM Tech survey of 410 business technology professionals in healthcare organizations, December 2014

### At a Glance Healthcare Social Media Vitals

- 51 percent of respondents said their healthcare organizations are doing a pretty good job with social media but have room for improvement; only 17 percent said their organizations' social media efforts are "very effective."
- 87 percent of healthcare organizations are active on Facebook, 56 percent use LinkedIn and 53 percent use Twitter.
- 77 percent of healthcare organizations spend fewer than 40 hours per week on social media efforts.
- Only 25 percent of healthcare organizations have a dedicated social media budget.
- Only 19 percent of healthcare organizations have hired a social media consultant.
- 60 percent of healthcare organizations plan to increase their use of social media in the future, but only 15 percent plan to increase their staffing or budgets to support that growth.

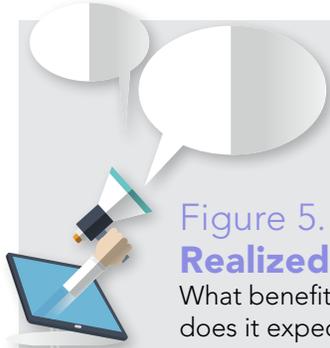
your competitors' activity in social media?" 61 percent said yes.

### Unrealized Benefits

Given that so many organizations are still trying to figure out social media, it shouldn't be a surprise that they haven't yet seen all the benefits they would like to see.

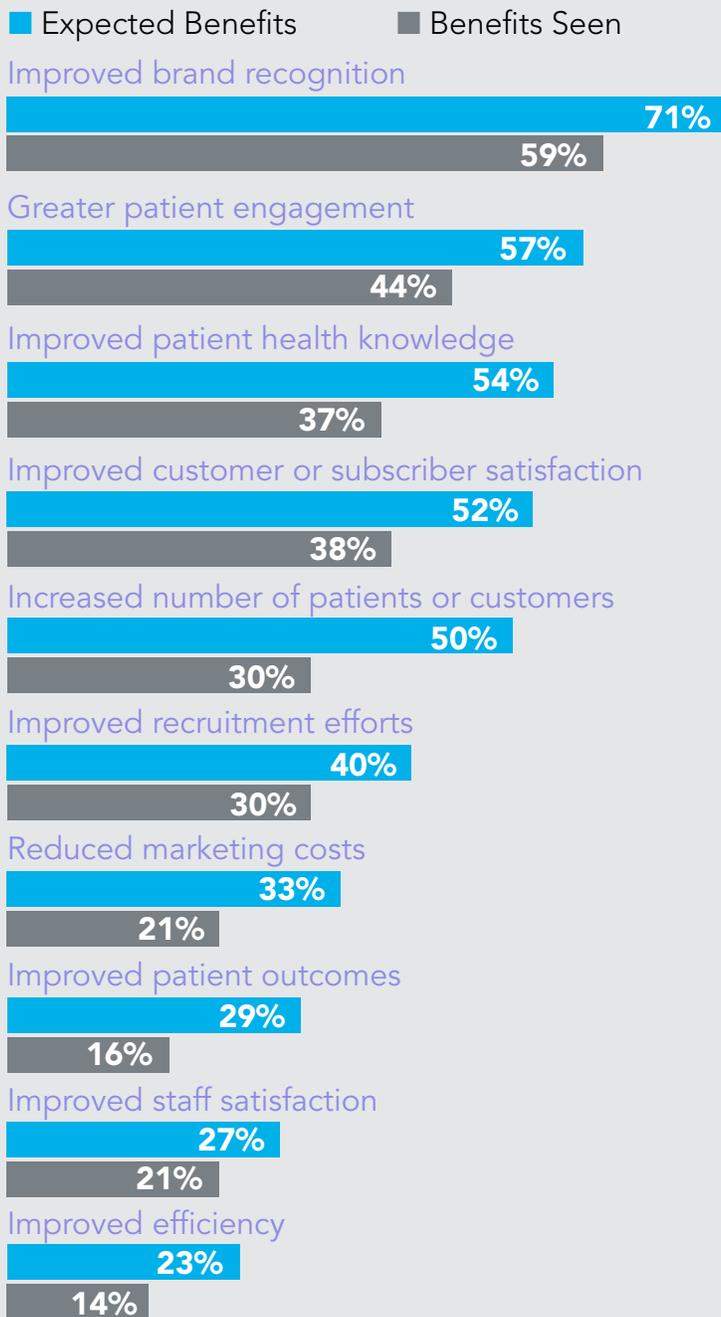
The survey revealed a discrepancy between the benefits organizations expected to see from social media and the benefits they are actually experiencing. Across the board,





## Figure 5. Anticipated Benefits vs. Realized Benefits of Social Media

What benefits or business value has your organization seen or does it expect to see from the use of social media?



**NOTE:** Multiple responses allowed

**DATA:** UBM Tech survey of 410 business technology professionals in healthcare organizations, December 2014

those who anticipated a benefit outnumbered those who actually saw the benefit. The difference is particularly great for those who expected to increase their number of patients or customers (20-point difference) and those who expected to increase health knowledge (17-point difference). In contrast, it is much more likely that organizations would realize benefits like improved staff satisfaction (6-point difference) and efficiency (9-point difference).

Part of the reason for the unrealized benefits may be that many organizations are still struggling with security, privacy and regulatory issues. When respondents were asked about social media challenges, this trio surfaced as the most common. While most of the respondents agreed that they have faced some challenges, 18 percent said they really haven't faced any noteworthy obstacles.

### A Part-Time Pursuit

Another reason for those unrealized benefits may be that most healthcare organizations are dabbling in social media rather than focusing considerable time and energy on the new platform. In fact, 77 percent of respondents said employees at their organizations spend fewer than 40 hours per week in total on social media. Similarly, only 35 percent of organizations have any full-time social media staff. A full quarter of the respondents said that no employees in their organizations

### Figure 6. Social Media Challenges

What challenges have hampered your organization's social media efforts?

Security issues



Patient privacy



Regulatory concerns



Lack of guidance on how to use social media appropriately



Lack of customer interest in using social media



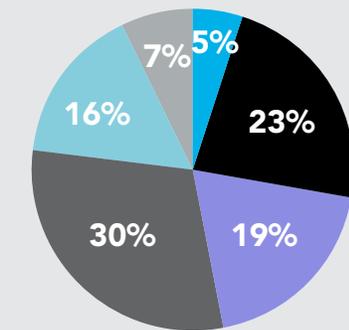
Lack of staff interest in using social media



**NOTE:** Multiple responses allowed  
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### Figure 7. Time Spent on Social Media

Approximately how many hours per week does your organization's staff spend monitoring and using social media?

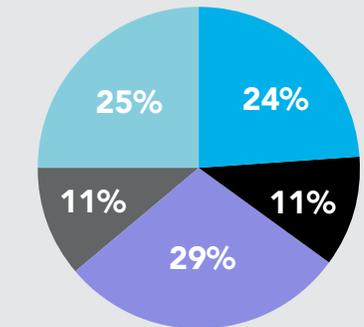


- Less than 1 hour
- 1 to 4 hours
- 5 to 9 hours
- 10 to 39 hours
- 40 to 99 hours
- 100 or more hours

**BASE:** 286 respondents at companies with dedicated social media staff  
**DATA:** UBM Tech survey of 410 business technology professionals in healthcare organizations, December 2014

### Figure 8. Social Media Staff

Does your organization have staff with social media responsibility in their job description?



- Yes, we have several full-time social media staff
- Yes, we have one person who handles the organization's social media full-time
- Yes, several staff members throughout the organization handle social media part-time
- Yes, we have one person who handles social media part-time
- No

**DATA:** UBM Tech survey of 410 business technology professionals in healthcare organizations, December 2014

have social media in their job descriptions at all. All of this suggests that social media efforts continue to be an afterthought for some healthcare organizations.

In light of those low staffing numbers, it's not surprising that only 25 percent of healthcare organizations have a dedicated social media budget. In general, organizations tend to perceive social media as free; however, this is something of a misperception. While it costs

nothing to use Facebook, Twitter or the other social platforms, monitoring social networks and interacting with consumers can take a great deal of staff time, not to mention investing in the activities that must precede social posting, such as a social media strategy and an approach to governance.

Organizations that want to excel at social media may need to invest in training or hire an outside consultant who can offer expert

advice. The survey found that 73 percent of healthcare organizations do not offer training for employees, and less than 20 percent have engaged a social media consultant or outside experts.

### Planning for the Future

The study also revealed a potential problem in healthcare organizations' future social media plans.

## Five Steps for Establishing an Effective Social Media Strategy

Experts say that in order for any organization to be successful at social media, it needs to begin by defining a strategy. The technology company Dell has earned a reputation for having one of the most successful social media programs in the world, and its consultants regularly offer advice to firms in many different industries. Dell's experts recommend that healthcare organizations follow five steps in setting up their social media strategy:

1. Establish governance and assign responsibility for social media activities.
2. Integrate social media use throughout every aspect of the organization; it's not just a function of the marketing department.
3. Monitor and post to social media outlets on a regular basis.
4. Integrate your social media data with other data streams and apply analytics.
5. Disseminate the data you obtain through your social media efforts.

Having experienced some initial social media success, 60 percent of healthcare organizations are planning to increase their use of social media. That seems like a positive sign. However, only 15 percent are planning to increase their staffing or budget to support those efforts.

It's unclear whether healthcare organizations will be able to realize more benefits from social media if they don't allocate additional funds; begin training staff; and seek out ways to address security, privacy and regulatory concerns.

### Prognosis: Mostly Positive

Social media initiatives are quickly becoming an integral part of delivering healthcare.

"Healthcare is at the beginning of a journey of disruption," said Cambia Health's Solly. "With advances in technology, shifts in our culture and recent changes to the healthcare industry, [we] can no longer

continue to conduct business as usual. I think we will only continue to see more implementation of technology to improve the healthcare experience, and social media is part of that mix."

Undoubtedly, healthcare organizations will begin to see more benefits from their social efforts as they gain more experience with the media over time. Those who devise a solid plan, back it up with a budget, and make wise investments in training and consulting services may be able

[Dell](#) has years of social media experience and can eliminate the guesswork, advancing an organization's overall understanding of and participation in social media practices. Dell has helped healthcare customers, in particular, make the leap from social media as a concept to successful social media execution. Dell has assisted healthcare companies in running social marketing research, combining social with other data to get a 360 view of customers, and using social as a leading indicator to predict HCAHPS star ratings. Dell's Digital Business Services enable digital transformation for healthcare organizations by taking a patient-first approach. Digital Business Services use a robust consulting methodology to create digital strategy road maps for organizations, enabling new care models, exceptional patient engagement and superior operational excellence. Digital Business Services leverage digital technologies of Analytics, Mobile, Social Media, Cloud and Internet of Things to deliver digital solutions. Learn more about [Dell's Digital Business Services](#) and stay on top of the latest healthcare news by following [@DellHealth](#) or [@DellDigitalBiz](#).

## Figure 9. Future Social Media Plans

What are your organization's future plans for social media?



**DATA:** UBM Tech survey of 410 business technology professionals in healthcare organizations, December 2014

set themselves apart from the competition and set up their organizations for more success.