ASH
ACTION
ON SMOKING & HEALTH

SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

Advancing Momentum for a Tobacco-Free California

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide book contains best practices for the following social media platforms as of August 2023:

It aims to support communications teams and specialists that are not as familiar with the various aspects and features of these platforms. It is important to keep in mind that social media platforms regularly update their features and settings; it's vital that you and/or your team remain engaged in its evolution.

Throughout this booklet, you'll find resources that offer additional support. For personalized technical assistance from Action on Smoking and Health, please contact:

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Note: Twitter rebranded as X in July 2023. This guide will refer to the platform as Twitter/X to incorporate both known brand names and logos.

GENERAL TIPS

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE
- Determine who your primary and secondary audiences are.
- What social media platforms do they use?
- Choose your social media platform(s) based on where you audience is already active.
- Try to use the same username on every platform for brand consistency.

ENGAGE IN SOCIAL LISTENING
- This is a technique used to monitor your social media accounts to see what other individuals and organizations are saying in your field. This is highly encouraged as a first step, before developing your social media content and strategies. Look for the gaps in the field; where can your organization and voice add value?
- Once your accounts are live, continue watching others in the field and add in time to listen to and engage with mentions, feedback, or discussions of your organization.

SET AND TRACK GOALS
- To evaluate your project, set realistic and measurable milestones. This will also help you measure your progress and show where you need to improve. Ex: If your goal is to drive comments, ask a question in your post to prompt more comments.
- Every social media platform has free analytic tools that will track clicks, shares, comments, etc. Use them!
  - Find the general analytics tools here. Download Facebook Insights here.

PLAN POSTS AND USE A CALENDAR
- A social media messaging campaign requires a lot of content, on a regular basis.
- Plan your outreach efforts by staying organized and creating a posting plan.
- Delegate content creation, content scheduling, and analytics tracking across your team.
- Stick to your content calendar and full campaign schedule.
- Remember to incorporate deadlines and make sure you're not rushing to create content at the last minute.

GENERAL TIPS CONTINUED

AUTOMATE POSTINGS

- Having a calendar for your posting is important. However, automating posts takes this one step further and saves you time on a daily basis.
- Test posting your content at different times of the day to see what works best for your audiences.
- Facebook and Instagram (through Meta Business Suite) and Twitter/X all have free scheduling features when you create a post. Look for the small calendar icon to schedule your posts/tweets directly on the social media platform.
- Or, you can purchase a membership with a scheduling platform that lets you set up posts customized for every platform in the same place.
    - Paid scheduling tools include: SocialPilot, Buffer, Hootsuite, Sprout Social, Agorapulse, MeetEdgar, Zoho Social, etc. Most offer a free 14 or 30 day trial.

BENEFITS
- *Saves time.*
- *Keeps things running smoothly.*
- *Allows you to share content at the most optimal time (ex. When most of your audience is browsing social media based on their time zones).*
- *Incorporates an approval process if one person sets up the posts and another person needs to review them.*
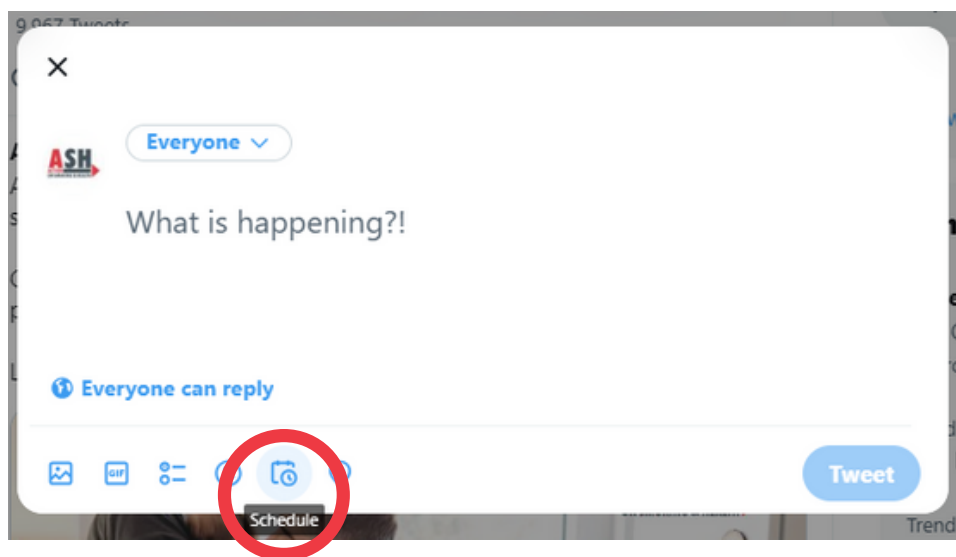
GENERAL TIPS CONTINUED

KEEP YOUR PROFILES AND PUBLIC IMAGE CONSISTENT

- While you may have different strategies for different platforms, make sure your profiles, website, and all public messages/images are always consistent, following the same messages, using the same brand logo for the profile picture, and using the same brand colors in your graphics, etc.
- It can be hard to secure the same username across every platform but do the best you can to be consistent with your brand name.
- All accounts should link back to your website or Link-tree (a free resource to have one link in your profile share several key links, **learn more here**).

DON'T FEED THE TROLLS

- Some negative feedback is reasonable, and you should try to remedy the situation when possible.
- However, other feedback exists to create toxic negativity. This can be considered trolling.
- The main objective of trolling is to provoke and incite bad-faith arguments. Typically, no matter how graciously you respond, they'll never be satisfied.
- The best thing to do is ignore them and move on!
- To learn more about how to respond to negative comments on social media, visit this resource sheet **here**.

SOCIAL MEDIA SAMPLE POSTS

THERE ARE 4.5 TRILLION CIGARETTE BUTTS LITTERING OUR WORLD AT THIS MOMENT. IF THAT NUMBER SEEMS A LITTLE HARD TO IMAGINE,

PICTURE THIS:

600 CIGARETTE BUTTS FOR EVERY SINGLE LIVING PERSON.

Cigarettes are single-use plastics, NOT biodegradable, and contain toxic chemicals that leach into the ground and water. It's time to ban cigarette filters.

Learn more: https://ash.org/plastic-pollution

TOBACCO endgame MATTERS PODCAST

NEW EPISODE ALERT

Prioritizing the Social Determinants of Health in Tobacco Control Programming
ft. Ramsey King and Rosendo Iniguez

endtobaccoca.ash.org/podcasts

Tobacco Control Community, this episode of the TEM podcast is for you! Tune in to hear from The SOL Project and the Latino Coordinating Center on how we can prioritize the social determinants of health in our work.

Listen here: http://ow.ly/uejH50LtALI

OUTSIDE RESOURCES

HubSpot

TOP TACTICS FOR INSTAGRAM GROWTH IN 2022

RingCentral®

35 SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES FOR 2021: TIPS FOR EACH PLATFORM

simplilearn

10 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR FACEBOOK PAGE'S SEO

X Business

LEARN BEST PRACTICES TO HELP YOU TWEET

IZEA

10 BEST TIKTOK PRACTICES FOR POSTING

FACEBOOK BEST PRACTICES

KEEP YOUR TEXT SHORT

- Unlike with some other platforms (ex. LinkedIn), the text/information you post should be short and concise.
- According to data gathered by CoSchedule, your target word count for each post should be around 111 characters or less.

SPRINKLE IN KEYWORDS

- Keywords are essential, but be strategic.
- Avoid adding too many keywords. Spread them in the body of the post and include them in photo captions (where applicable).

DON'T OVERUSE HASHTAGS

- Don't flood your posts with a lot of hashtags. Work them into your message and limit yourself to one or two (or hide them at the end where followers will only see them if they click to expand your post text).
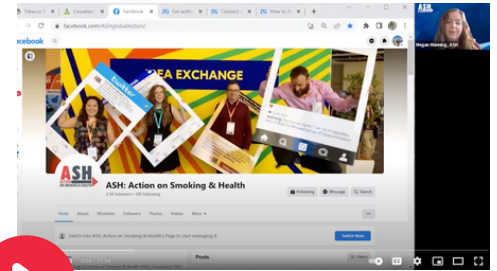
TAG OTHER BRAND ACCOUNTS

- Tag the source of an article (ex: CDC) or a key organization partner who you want to re-share your post.

WATCH: HOW TO SETUP A FACEBOOK ADVERTISEMENT

GETTING YOUR FACEBOOK AD CAMPAIGN APPROVED

POST VIDEOS

- Facebook is becoming increasingly video oriented, with a particular focus on vertical videos that post as Reels. **Visit our training series here**.
- Directly upload your video content to Facebook. Don't force your viewers to navigate away from Facebook by linking to other websites like YouTube. This will also make your videos appear in more feeds because Facebook's algorithm favors videos posted to their platform.
- Add closed captioning to your videos. About 85% of Facebook video watchers prefer watching videos with their volume muted.

POST ON FACEBOOK STORIES

- The first post in your series is the most important one, because it's what viewers can preview before clicking into your story. Make it engaging. Viewers prefer to see a photo or video of a person, because it looks personal and like their friends posted it.
- Use the sticker features within Story, like polls, questions, location, etc.

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INSTAGRAM BEST PRACTICES

UTILILZE HASHTAGS

- Instagram lets you use up to 30 hashtags, and if you choose them well, you can boost engagement and reach a wider audience. But, the Instagram Creators account recommends using only three to five hashtags in captions. You can get around this discrepancy by commenting on your own post with additional hashtags. Or if you do use several hashtags in a caption, space them down a few extra lines at the bottom of your caption so they don't distract from your content.

TIPS
- *Make sure your hashtags are relevant to your topic.*
- *Try different hashtags to see which get the most engagement for your content. Test popular hashtags on some posts against niche hashtags on others, and continue using whichever work best for your messages.*
  - *Keep in mind, if a hashtag is very popular, your post can get lost in that hashtag feed. The more specific your hashtags, the less posts would be included alongside them.*
- *Keep track of trending hashtags and use them.*
- *Check out what hashtags similar organizations are using.*
- *As you type a hashtag on Instagram, it will tell you how many times it has been used. This will show you common vs. niche hashtag communities.*

ADD A LOCATION

- Geotagging, or adding a location to your post, is a great feature that can boost social media engagement.
- Posts that add a location can get 79% more engagement!
- Geotagging is most useful if your organization has a specific location, and you want to reach a local audience.
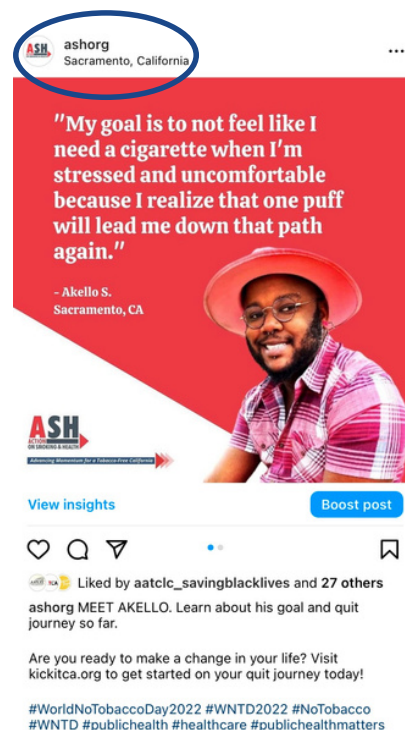
COLLABORATE WITH RELEVANT INFLUENCERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Influencers are individuals that have their own voice and have grown a large, organic audience on any social media platform.
- If you think influencers would be an asset to your outreach strategy, think about whether you'd want them to post content on their accounts about your work, or if you want to post photos of them collaborating with you on your own page.

> **PERKS**
> - *Maybe they have a much bigger audience (based on who you want to reach) than your account and can reach more people, in which case you'd want them to post something about your organization on their accounts,*
> - *Influencer partnerships are a form of paid advertising, so only reach out to them if you have an advertising budget available to use.*
> - *The FDA published a **guide** for working with Influencers on public health issues that may be helpful to you.*

- Organization partnerships should be free. Share sample social media posts (including caption text that tags your organization) with partners, and they are likely to use the post if it's relevant to their audiences.
  - View an example **here**.

## LEVERAGE DIFFERENT CONTENT FORMATS

- Reel (vertical videos) and carousel (more than one photo and/or video in the same post) posts are the type of Instagram content gaining the most engagement, especially when compared to single image posts.
  - *Carousel posts can contain multiple different media forms (image or video) in one. Many organizations use this feature to tell a story that users swipe through to read each fact/element/story.*
- Both forms of content keep users engaged for a longer amount of time, whether they're scrolling through your five-picture photo set or watching your Reel.
- The longer a user interacts with your content, the more valuable their engagement is for the Instagram algorithm and for your organization because they have more time to take in the information.

INSTAGRAM BEST PRACTICES CONTINUED

PRIORITIZE POSTING ON INSTAGRAM STORIES

- The first post in your series is the most important one, because it's what viewers can preview before clicking into your story. Make it engaging. Viewers prefer to see a photo or video of a person, because it looks personal and as though their friends posted it.
- Use the sticker features within Story, like polls, questions, location, and link.
- Design your content to fit the vertical dimensions needed so it's more engaging.
- Share posts from your timeline to your Story to promote them further.
- View our "Optimizing Instagram Engagement through Stories and Reels" training **here**.
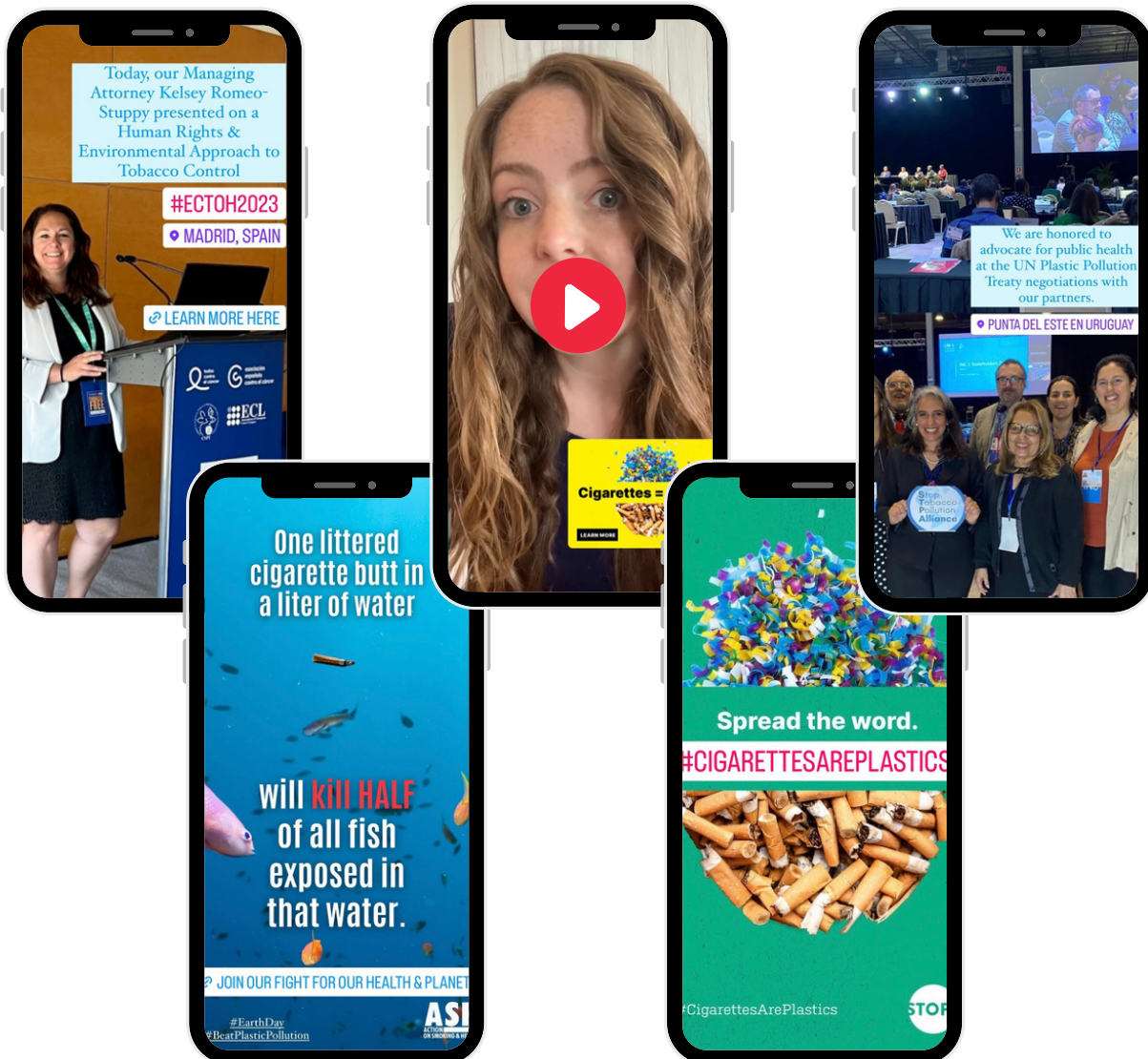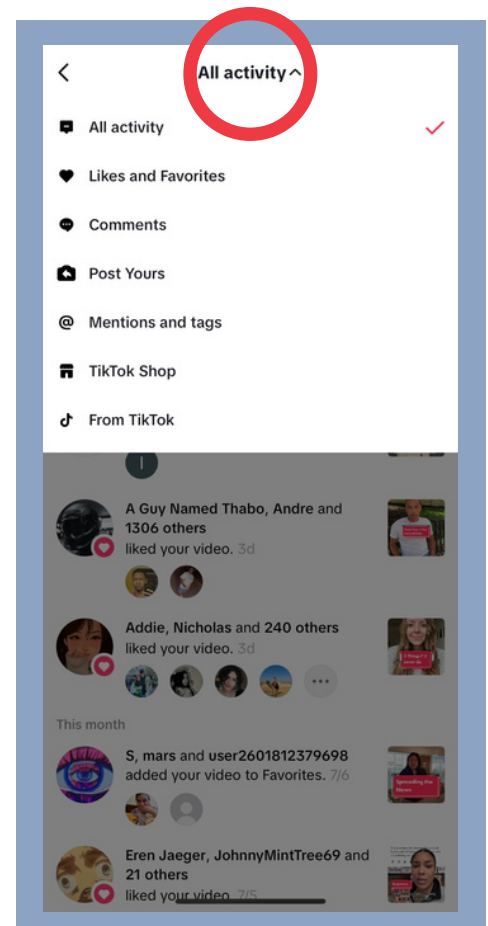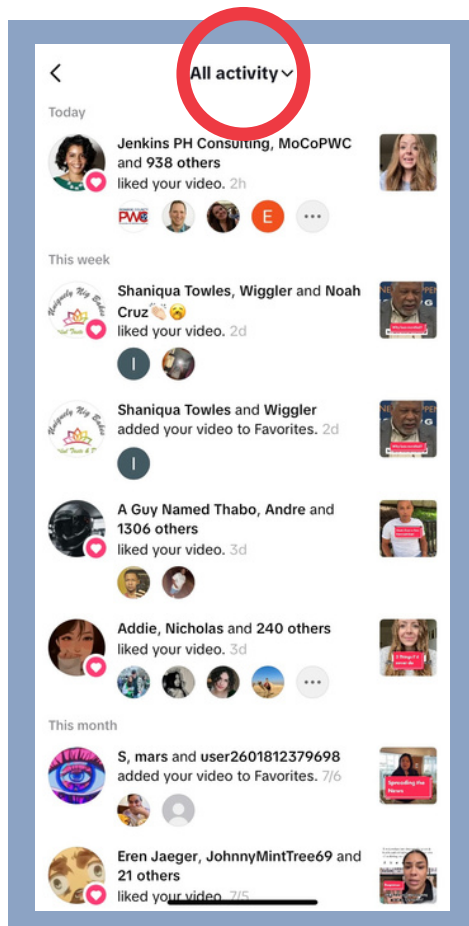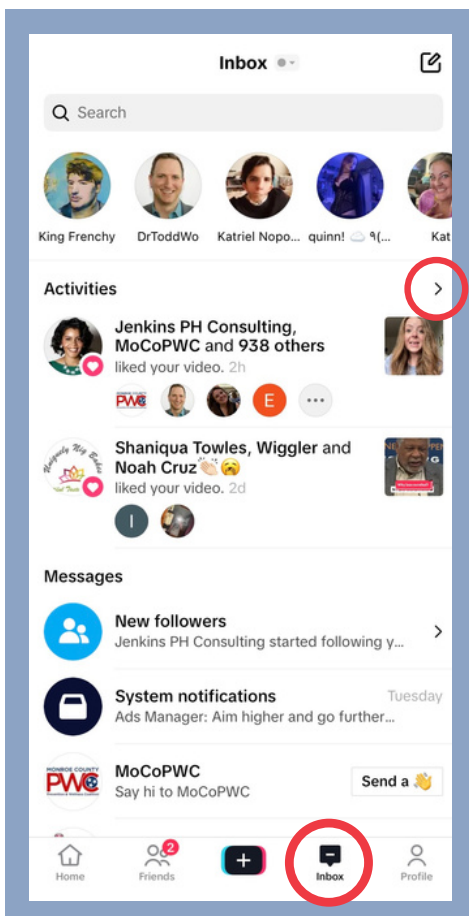
TIKTOK BEST PRACTICES

TURN "ON" DUETS, STITCH AND COMMENTS

- Make sure TikTokers can interact with your content in various ways.
- Besides commenting directly on your videos, there are options to Duet your video (post a side-by-side reaction) and Stitch it (show a short clip of your video followed by a viewer's response).

CHECK INBOX > ALL ACTIVITY: NOTIFICATIONS BY TYPE

- If you expand the Inbox section of notifications to see All Activity, you can sort by Likes/Favorites, Comments Q&A, Mentions/Tags, etc.
  - *This is essential to ensure you are replying to your community and remaining an active participant.*

TIKTOK BEST PRACTICES

CREATE HIGH RESOLUTION CONTENT IN PORTRAIT/VERTICAL MODE

- TikTok users' preferred viewing mode is portrait, so it's best to create videos in a 9:16 aspect ratio, or by holding your cellphone vertically while recording.
- This will allow your content to take up the entire screen, boosting your chances of catching and maintaining your target audience's attention.
- Beyond format, quality matters, with 83.2% of top-performing TikToks boasting a resolution of at least 720p. Most cellphones record at this level, so you don't need to hire a videographer to produce great videos.
- Talk directly to your camera, be human. TikTok is a more informal platform where viewers want to get to know the real you.

ADD AUDIO

- TikTok's algorithm was originally designed around the sounds users add to their videos, showing users more videos with that same background sound if they have posted or engaged with that sound before.
- Whether it's trending TikTok music, a voiceover, or simply speaking to the camera, ensure there is sound on every video you post.
  - Raise your video's audio to ensure the added sound isn't louder than you speaking. You can also lower the added sound audio to 20% or even less to make it truly a background sound. Or, lower it down to 0% and enjoy the algorithm perks of adding an audio without hearing the sound.

ADD CLOSED CAPTIONING OR ON-SCREEN TEXT

- Mentioning your call to action and including it in the post caption is essential (when characters allow it), but TikTok recommends including closed captioning (when possible) or at least on-screen text. The added text gives the algorithm keywords to associate with your video to find more interested viewers.
- The platform's metrics show that displaying a call to action on screen has given videos a 55.7% lift in impressions compared to those without it.

TIKTOK BEST PRACTICES CONTINUED

SEEK OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAID ADS

- TikTok's advertising tools allow you to run paid video ads that appear in users' feed as they scroll through videos.
- Another option is to pay for influencers to create and post sponsored content on their channel. This let's you reach their wider audience and create new video content to repost on your account.

ASH RESOURCES FOR TIKTOK
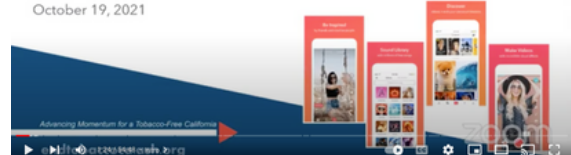
NEED TO KNOW FEATURES ON TIKTOK

WATCH: HOW TO CREATE A TIKTOK ACCOUNT

WATCH: HOW TO CREATE A TIKTOK VIDEO

**WATCH: THE HYPE AROUND TIKTOK & HOW TO USE IT AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL**

TWITTER/X BEST PRACTICES

PLAN FOR THE CHARACTER LIMIT

- Every individual tweet is limited to 280 characters.
- If you add a link to the tweet, it will count as 23 characters, whether the link itself is longer or shorter than 23 characters.
- Media (photo, video, GIF, poll, quoted tweet) no longer count as characters. A great way to tag additional partners in a post (to seek a retweet) is to tag them in the image or video you are sharing, instead of tagging them in the text of the tweet.
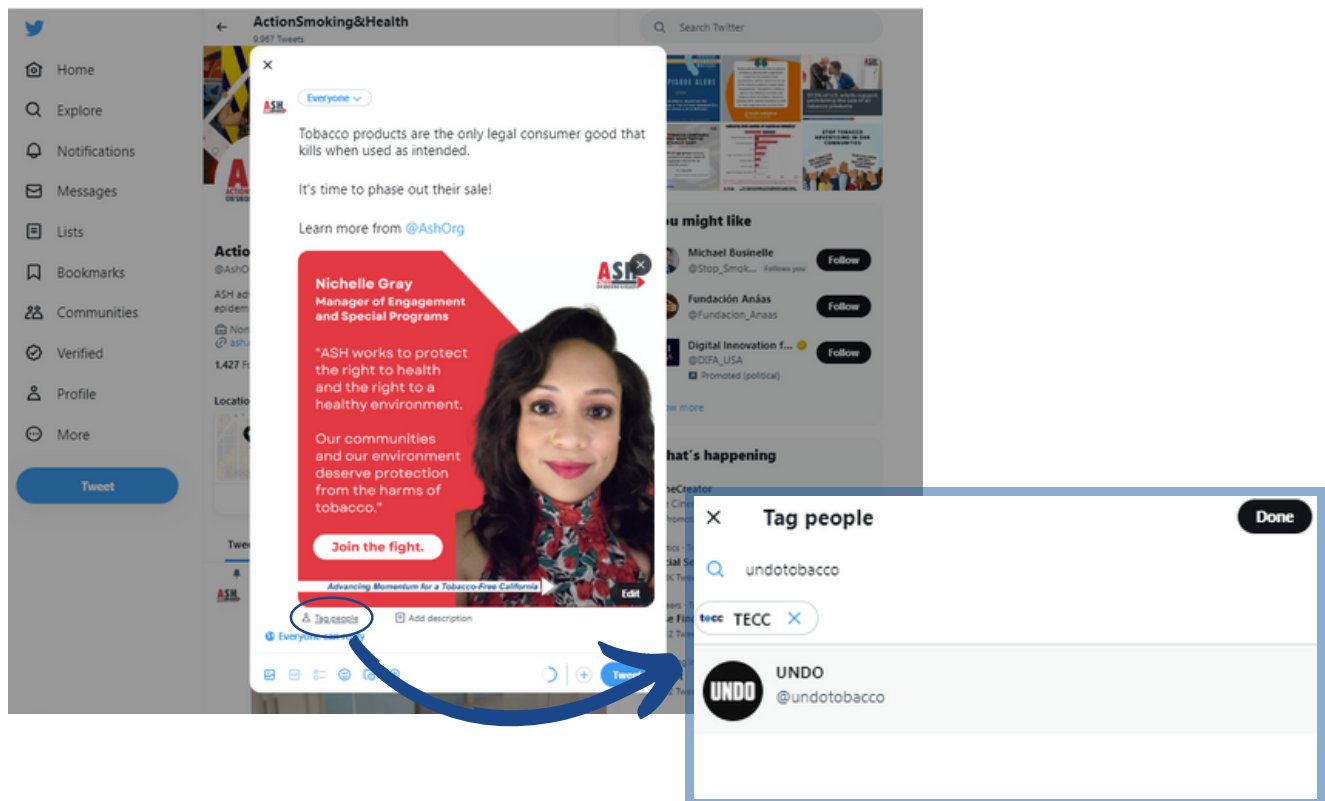
Note: Twitter rebranded as X in July 2023. This guide will refer to the platform as Twitter/X to incorporate both known brand names and logos.

TWITTER/X BEST PRACTICES

BE MINDFUL WHEN USING HASHTAGS

- Hashtags originated on Twitter/X to link users of the same topic to one another. As such, a good hashtag will give your tweet exposure to people talking about a similar topic.
- But you should be selective and use hashtags minimally to avoid using up all your characters too quickly or making the tweet hard to read.
- Don't use more than two or three hashtags and try to work them into the tweet. For a campaign hashtag, you can leave it on its own at the end.

SET UP AN AUTOMATED TWITTER/X SCHEDULE

- Twitter/X is a high-volume, fast-paced network that's always being updated and thrives on breaking news.
- Set up a schedule to post as often as your capacity allows, and plan to post in real time when news and events comes up.
- Some accounts even post the same thing a few times a day since posts get pushed down users' feeds so quickly by new content.
- Scheduling your tweets will free up time and resources for you.

REPLY TO COMMENTS

- Make sure you're answering questions and responding to replies, quoted tweets and your mentions (when not from trolls, who are quite active on Twitter/X). **Visit our guide sheet here** to learn more.

CLEARLY STATE YOUR CALL-TO-ACTION

- Every time you tweet, ask yourself "what do I want people to do when they see this?"
- Write it out! Tell your audience to comment below, follow you, read more, or sign up today.
 - *If something is urgent, emphasize it.*
- Don't be shy to make the next steps clear!

TWITTER/X BEST PRACTICES

TELL STORIES USING THREADS

- Because of the character limit on individual tweets, creating a thread is an easy work-around.
- This makes longer stories easy to follow and allows other accounts to retweet your entire thread/story as a group.
- To create threads, start composing the first tweet, then hit the (+) button instead of the blue tweet button, and the next post's box will pop up for you to compose the 2nd tweet, and so on.
  - *Add a tracking number at the end of each tweet: 1/4, 2/4, 3/4, etc. so readers can more seamlessly follow along. And if one tweet is getting more attention, users know to click over and read the full thread.*
  - *Once all of your tweets are ready, click the updated blue "Tweet All" button.*
  - *The final result will look like the images on the right*

  - *Pro Tip: tag partners in the images you post in your thread. They will see the thread to engage with and you don't lose characters for the tweet or distract readers with several visible account tags in the body of the tweet.*
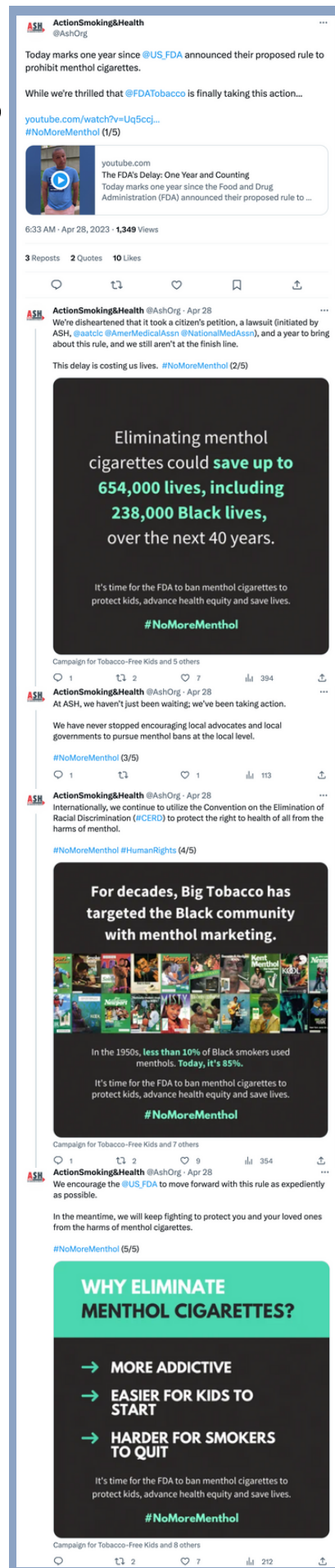
ENDING REMARKS

We hope this booklet is helpful to you as you navigate through using your social media platforms.

ASH provides a variety of trainings that may be helpful. If you have any questions, or would like additional one-on-one technical assistance, you can request it at https://endtobaccoca.ash.org/request-assistance.

You can also reach out directly to *Advancing Momentum for a Tobacco Free California* by contacting:

Carol Maytum, Project Director
maytumc@ash.org

Megan Manning, Associate Director of Communications
manningm@ash.org

ASH California offers a variety of other social media and communications resources, available here:

https://endtobaccoca.ash.org/communications-tools

https://endtobaccoca.ash.org/social-media-posts

Thank you again for using our Social Media Best Practices booklet.