

## Facebook Announces Clickable Hashtags

### BACKGROUND

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Earlier this month, Facebook introduced clickable hashtags. A hashtag is a keyword prefixed with the "#" symbol, and its purpose is to label a topic or filter related conversations. This means that when a Facebook user posts a status update that includes a hashtag, the hashtag becomes clickable and takes the user to a list of all posts with that same hashtag that are set to "public" or posts from your friends that are set to "friends only."

Clickable hashtags have been a staple on Twitter and Instagram, and their popularity in helping people find relevant information caused hashtags to become a recognized standard for categorizing conversations. The general public began using hashtags even on networks that did not provide a way to connect them with similar comments (like Facebook).

Now that hashtags are functional on Facebook, brands, specifically pharmaceutical brands, need to consider how they will use hashtags in their Facebook content. Below is a list of our top three.

### USING HASHTAGS ON FACEBOOK

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Adding a hashtag to a Facebook post is no different than it is on Twitter or Instagram. It's accomplished by adding the hash symbol (#) in front of the word or phrase that describes the content of the post, avoiding spaces in between words. Facebook permits up to 101 characters, including the hash symbol. Hashtags provide a way of joining topic-specific conversations.

Pharma marketers that own Facebook Pages will need to determine whether or not they want to include hashtags in their status updates. If so, each community manager will need to create a strategy for how and when to use hashtags. Best practices include:

- Knowing what hashtags your target community is using

- Including no more than 2-3 hashtags in each status update
- Regularly monitoring hashtagged conversations that are important to your brand or disease state

Gaining insight into what hashtags your target community is using can be accomplished by building a filter for social listening and continually monitoring what's trending. Note that search results will vary from user to user based on their social profile, connections and activity. That is, John Doe will be able to see results from hashtagged status updates that have been published by a) his own friends, b) by Facebook users who have their privacy settings set to "public," and c) Pages. He will still be unable to view hashtagged status updates published by non-friends who have their privacy settings set to "friends only."

Also be sure not to overuse hashtags, as they are not necessary in every post. And while Facebook *allows* up to 30 hashtags per post, our recommended best practice is to use them sparingly (2-3 per post). The intent is to add meaning and help categorize. The best scenario is when there's an opportunity to include a keyword that isn't in the status update messaging.



#### I Heart Diabetes?

My A1c went from a horrible 10 down to a 6.2 in just 3 months!!!!!! And because of lows I've been advised to lower to meds again. In track to be med free by the end of the year.  
[#Icandothis](#) [#Diabetes](#) [#type2diabetes](#)

Like · Comment · Share · 10 minutes ago ·

Another way to derive benefit from hashtags is simply to listen for the sake of research. Once you have identified what hashtags your target community is using, you can search Facebook using those hashtags to view feeds of discussions related to those topics. This allows you to better understand what topics are trending with your core audience and how you can tailor your status updates to provide value.

## BRANDED HASHTAGS

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We anticipate seeing the general public participate in very few branded hashtagged discussions. Those who do are likely brand advocates or brand adversaries.

Page owners will need to decide whether it makes sense to use brand names as hashtags. Our view is that pharma Pages should avoid that approach whether the Facebook Page is branded or unbranded. If the page is branded, branded hashtags are inadvisable because the recipient of the messages will already be aware of the brand due to the Page name. If the Facebook Page is unbranded, branded hashtags would likely require important safety information or other legal and regulatory considerations.



We recommend that owners of unbranded Facebook Pages avoid branded hashtags due to the same concerns that led the Page to take an unbranded approach when established.

Another question that arises in the conversation of Facebook hashtags is “Will the brand be responsible for monitoring branded hashtags?” Our point of view is that hashtagged words and phrases are no different than any other text. As such, the brand is not responsible for third party content and we do not believe brands are obligated to monitor branded hashtags. If a brand chooses to do so, it will be responsible for reporting adverse events that are discovered.

The advantages of monitoring branded hashtagged discussions include:

- Understanding general sentiment and common user experiences
- Identifying brand ambassadors, who could potentially be approached for future initiatives

Considerations when monitoring branded hashtagged discussions:

- The need to report any adverse events that are discovered requires time and resources
- You will not be able to view hashtags used by people whose privacy settings are not “public”

## MODERATION BLOCKLIST

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Moderation blocklists apply to only Facebook Pages, and not personal profiles.

Moderation blocklists allow Page administrators to create a list of blocked keywords. If a fan posts a comment that includes one of the blocked keywords, it is automatically treated as spam and placed in the Hidden Posts filter where only administrators can view the content.

Testing done at the time of publication shows that words included in a Page’s moderation blocklist *will* encompass the hashtagged version of each of those words. As a result, Pages will not need to duplicate a hashtagged version of each word in its moderation blocklist.

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