Effective Strategies for Using Social Media in Food Safety

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USDA/FSIS/Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education
Food Safety and Inspection Service: Our Mission and Authority

We are the public health agency in the USDA responsible for ensuring that meat, poultry, and processed egg products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled.

Our Authority

Through a series of Acts, Congress empowers FSIS to inspect all meat, poultry, and processed egg products in interstate commerce.

- Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA), 1906
- Agricultural Marketing Act (AMA), 1946
- Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA), 1957
- Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA), 1958
- Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA), 1970
FSIS Food Safety Objectives

• Publicize recalls

• Raise awareness of the risks of food poisoning

• Motivate parents to reduce their family’s risk of food poisoning by regularly practicing safe food handling behaviors in their homes

• Drive consumers to websites to check their food safety steps and learn about food safety
For outreach, we must ‘go where the people are.’

Recent Survey Data

72% of internet users say they looked online for health information within the past year (2013)

29% of internet users look online for information about food safety or recalls (2011)
Most popular food safety accounts across USDA/FDA

Twitter

@USDAFoodSafety
637K Followers

@FDArecalls
526K Followers
@FDAfood (4K)

Facebook

Facebook.com/FoodSafety.gov
135K ‘Likes.’
Interest in food safety & recalls on Twitter

**Twitter Hashtags**
- #Recall ➔ average 1,400 tweets per week
- #FoodSafety ➔ averages 2,500 tweets per week
- #FoodPoinsoning ➔ averages 6,000 per week

**Social media ≠ ‘traditional media’**
- Some organizations continue to use one-way messaging in the broadcast manner that is suitable for traditional media, but ignore the engagement element that is central to social media
Twitter Audience (@USDAFoodSafety)

Primary Audiences

- Parents
- Those interested in product recalls
- Public health professionals
- The news media
- Trade associations
- Owners of FSIS-regulated businesses
- Populations at increased risk of food-borne illness,
Twitter Audience:

Secondary Audience

Secondary Audiences

- FSIS employees
- Anyone interacting directly with the Agency (at events, on projects, etc.)
- Those working in food and nutritional science, nutrition education, dietetics, or a related field
Twitter Audience: 

Audience Characteristics

- 53% female vs. 47% male
- Interests: Health news, cooking, weight loss, foodie news, alternative care (i.e. foster care)
- Followers also follow:
  - @CNNBRK (media),
  - @WomensHealthMag (media),
  - @RedCross (NGO),
  - @WebMD (media),
  - @CDCEmergency (government),
  - @DailyHealthTips (media),
  - @WHO (NGO),
  - @FDAREcalls (government),
  - @WomensHealth (government)
Metrics

• Several services offer metrics. Due to discrepancies between systems, FSIS relies on Hootsuite analytics when reporting on metrics.
• Based on historical data tracked back to the beginning of 2013, engagement targets have been developed for strategic planning.
• Quarterly we evaluate our communications campaigns against targets.
Twitter Analytics:
Average Results

USDA Food Safety @USDAFoodSafety · 18h
Will you need help on #Thanksgiving? The USDA Food Safety Hotline will be open 8am-2pm ET Thanksgiving day. Call us @ 1-888-674-6854!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impressions</th>
<th>13,700</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retweets</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Engagements</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement Rate</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
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</table>
Pilot Program:
Using Innovative Topics to Promote Food Safety on Twitter

Think a #sharknado is bad? Foodborne illness is worse. Learn the basics of how to be food safe: go.usa.gov/5bc2
#Sharknado2conOno

Staying in groups during a #sharknado will keep you safe. So will grouping foods in the freezer if the power goes out.

Not sure if food is safe to eat after a #Sharkado? 'AskKaren' our database of common #FoodSafety questions can help: go.usa.gov/N3bA

Even During A Sharknado
Tweet Success as Compared to Average Tweet

Rate of 1 = average
(Example: 4 = 4 times normal reach)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impressions</th>
<th>Retweets</th>
<th>Replies</th>
<th>Favorites</th>
<th>Total Engagements</th>
<th>Engagement Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tweet 1</td>
<td>Tweet 2</td>
<td>Tweet 3</td>
<td>Tweet 4</td>
<td>Tweet 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Engagement Rate

- **Average Tweet**
- **1**
- **2**
- **3**
- **4**
- **5**

Example: 4 = 4 times normal reach.
Pilot Program: Application

- Standardized pilot program, with goal of engaging non-traditional audiences about food safety through pop culture topics.
Full Successes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>January to July ’14</th>
<th>August’14 – present</th>
<th>% Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tweets</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>+238%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentions</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>+179%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retweets</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>+382%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Followers</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>20,826</td>
<td>+231%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Risks on Social Media

Thanksgiving Turkey Recall Hoax: Millions of Turkeys Recalled Over Avian / Bird Flu? Nope, it’s Just Satire

By Jack Phillips, Epoch Times | November 22, 2014

Social media can be a hindrance to food safety because:

- Lack of control on accurate information
- Low trust
- The risk of information overload
- A communication preference for traditional media
Social Media:
Engaging the Audience

• Keep Track of Trending Topics

• Incorporate Relevant Words or Hashtags

• Utilize mixed media in tweets to increase engagement ➔ Link to video, pictures, infographics, and tables

• Planning Tweets in advance to take advantage of food related events (there are hazards w/ this as well)
Social Media:
Future Goals

• Build Digital Allies
• Foster relationships
Questions?

Follow us on twitter @USDAFoodSafety and Facebook at Foodsafety.gov