

# Social Networking and Technological Influences on Recruitment and Retention Strategy

By Kristy Wort

Social media has redefined the rules of marketing like no other medium in recent times. From tweeting about corporate accomplishments and friending industry colleagues on Facebook to seeking or posting job opportunities on LinkedIn, social media has revolutionized the way businesses communicate with internal and external audiences.

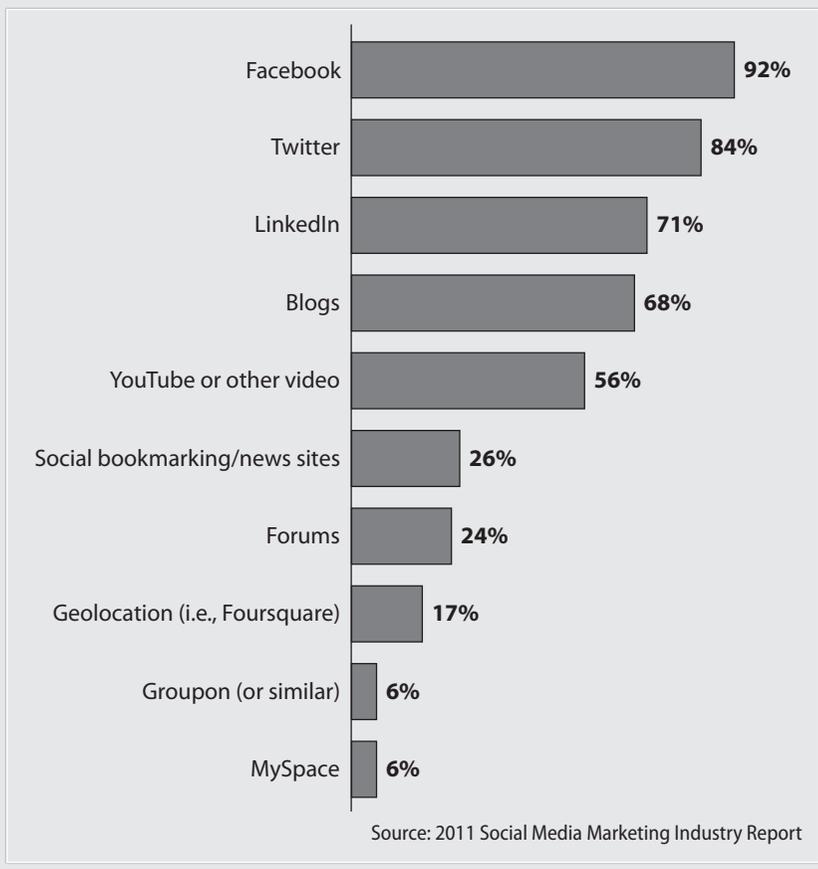
According to the 2011 Social Media Marketing Industry Report sponsored by Social Media Examiner, 93% of businesses are employing social media tactics to support their marketing strategies. Specifically, pharmaceutical companies increasingly leverage social media to promote clinical trial opportunities and engage prospective participants. Since February 2010, the number of individuals using social media in the United States has grown from roughly 115 million to 149 million, and from 244.2 million to 314.5 million abroad.<sup>1</sup>

The top four tools used by marketers are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and blogs.<sup>2</sup>

## The Role of Social Media in Clinical Trial Recruitment

Enrollment delays cost pharmaceutical companies \$8 million each day a study is delayed, according to a recent report from Cutting Edge Information. These delays are normally due to recruiting patients into the trial. According to the Center for Information and Study on Clinical Research Participation, missed enrollment deadlines extend phase I studies by 42% on average, while phase II and III studies last 31% and 30% longer, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

To enroll clinical trials more quickly, the general public must become aware of specific opportunities, eligibility criteria, goals of the research and their protections as participants. According to an article in *Nature Biotech-*

**Figure 1: Commonly used social media tools**

nology, 94% of the public realizes the potential their participation could have on the advancement of medical science. Yet 75% of the general public states they have little or no knowledge about current opportunities and what they need to do to participate.<sup>4</sup>

To raise study awareness, a variety of tools may be deployed. Site-focused recruitment materials can be placed in the most prominent locations for potential study patients' viewing. These might include a site's reception area or a referring physician's office reception area. Community outreach is another effective way to reach potential patients. This is especially true in certain indications such as diabetes and multiple sclerosis, for which the support and advocacy community is active and close-knit. Building study awareness within the medical community also can generate interest and referrals from physician colleagues. Physician-to-physician materials that include a letter, fliers and brochures have proven effective in educating physicians and other healthcare practitioners about study opportunities.

Based on experience recruiting for difficult patient populations, social