NEWS

Spectrum Launch: Four tips for advancing your career via social media

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For many scientists, social-media platforms aren't just somewhere to go for silly memes or analysis of the "Succession" finale — they're also **useful places** to find the latest science and connect with other researchers.

Engaging with colleagues online can even spark new collaborations, says **Zack Williams**, a medical and doctoral student at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee — a **review article** he and his colleagues published earlier this year stemmed from just such an interaction. Finding online forums to discuss autism research "has probably been one of the most useful career development tools that I've had so far," Williams says.

But social media can suck up time and energy, and users sometimes face **harassment** and **abuse**. So how do Williams and other early-career researchers minimize such downsides and get the most out of social media?

1. They post when they have new research findings.

"Getting a chance for more people to notice our work is the greatest benefit" of engaging on social media, where the audience can be orders of magnitude larger than it would be at a scientific conference, says **Arjun Bharioke**, a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Molecular and Clinical Ophthalmology in Basel, Switzerland.

When Bharioke and his colleagues published a new paper in *Cell* in April, he spread the news online. The paper made a splash, and his **tweet** announcing the publication and summarizing the findings received more than 12,000 views.

"Within a day of our paper coming out, my professor was being congratulated about it at a conference he was attending," Bharioke says. "And it was apparently entirely due to people

noticing the paper on Twitter."

2. They blend the personal and the professional (within limits).

Social-media platforms are places to bring "some personality," says **Laurel Gabard-Durnam**, assistant professor of psychology at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, and she lets hers shine through — whether that's through a SpongeBob GIF to convey exciting news or through personal tweets about her dog. That openness is relatable and tends to encourage others to share about their own experiences.

"I'm 'myself' on Twitter," she says. "I'm not 'myself after two glasses of wine' on Twitter, but it's still my voice, and I still use a lot of the same goofy words that I use in person."

3. They embrace a diverse audience.

Talking about science on social media is not the same as talking about it at a scientific conference. And stepping outside of the comfort zone of academia can sometimes be difficult, Williams says, particularly when researchers receive pushback about their work.

But to Williams, having a diverse audience is also the best thing about discussing one's work on social media. For one, it's a way for academics to share their expertise with people who do not typically come across it, he says.

And on top of that, getting into a dialogue with non-researchers — autistic self-advocates, clinicians and other members of the autism community — is "transforming the way we do science," Williams says. "I think that it helps the public hold scientists accountable."

4. But when need be, they "find their people."

Although public posts are a great way for scientists to gain visibility and make new connections, they also open the door to unwanted criticism and nasty comments — particularly for women and people of color, says **Lucia Peixoto**, assistant professor of translational medicine and physiology at Washington State University Spokane.

Peixoto still tweets publicly as a way to discover new research, promote her own work and highlight important topics in academia — such as issues around diversity, equity and inclusion. But for certain conversations — including, she says, "soliciting feedback and advice, and sharing your lows as well as your highs" — she now relies more heavily on a different form of social media: a small, private Slack channel that comprises other researchers who share her values.

"While I think it is important to also share your lows on public networks, especially so that trainees can see it, it does not come at the same cost to those who already have to work harder just to be

seen," such as people from underrepresented minority backgrounds, Peixoto says. Having a separate forum for these conversations can help distinguish "between the people whose opinion you value and the people who you should just not listen to."

Jobs, trainings and funds:

- The psychology department at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa is hiring a **postdoctoral fellow** to work on a multi-site clinical trial to test mindfulness-based therapy for autistic adolescents and adults.
- Applications are open until 16 June for the **NextGen Psych Scholars Program**, a mentorship program for psychology researchers from underrepresented backgrounds that pairs graduate student mentors with undergraduate or post-baccalaureate mentees.
- Members of the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies can apply for a **travel grant** to attend the Society for Neuroscience meeting in Washington, D.C. in November. The deadline is 14 June.

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> — FENS (@FENSorg) **May 31, 2023**

Recommended resources:

- A recording of a talk entitled "Everything you wanted to know about running a lab but were afraid to ask," presented last month by **Russell Poldrack**, professor of psychology at Stanford University in California, is now **freely available online**.
- When entering the academic job market, it is difficult to know whether you're a good fit based on the hiring ad alone, writes **Meike van der Heijden**, a postdoctoral associate at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. Van der Heijden recently accepted a job as an assistant professor, and she **posted some thoughts** about the things she wishes she had known before starting the job hunt.
- Need help with your writing skills? **Stephen Heard**, professor of biology at the University of New Brunswick in Canada, has **gathered a list** of books, blogs and podcasts containing advice on how to elevate your research papers and grant proposals.

- Researchers from underrepresented minority groups face structural bias throughout their journey from postdoc to professor, but updated hiring practices could change that, writes Esther Landhuis in a **career feature** for *Nature*.
- And … has anyone else ever felt this?

> Student: spends days carefully composing a 4 pages long email describing in great detail the plan for the next 2 years.
>
> PI: **pic.twitter.com/WL8vaolalj**
>
> — Oded Rechavi ???? (@OdedRechavi) **May 25, 2023**

Any suggestions for how to make this newsletter as useful as possible, or recommendations for what topic we should cover next? Send them to **angie@spectrumnews.org**.

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