# Guide to Digital Marketing for Study Recruitment

Parkinson's Disease Education Consortium

THE MICHAEL J. FOX FOUNDATION
FOR PARKINSON'S RESEARCH

# Guide Purpose

▸ Provide best practices for planning, implementing and assessing the use of digital marketing for clinical study recruitment.

▸ Offer direction on how to develop digital marketing content and strategy.

Many people use the internet as a source of health information and study teams can engage in digital marketing for trial recruitment.
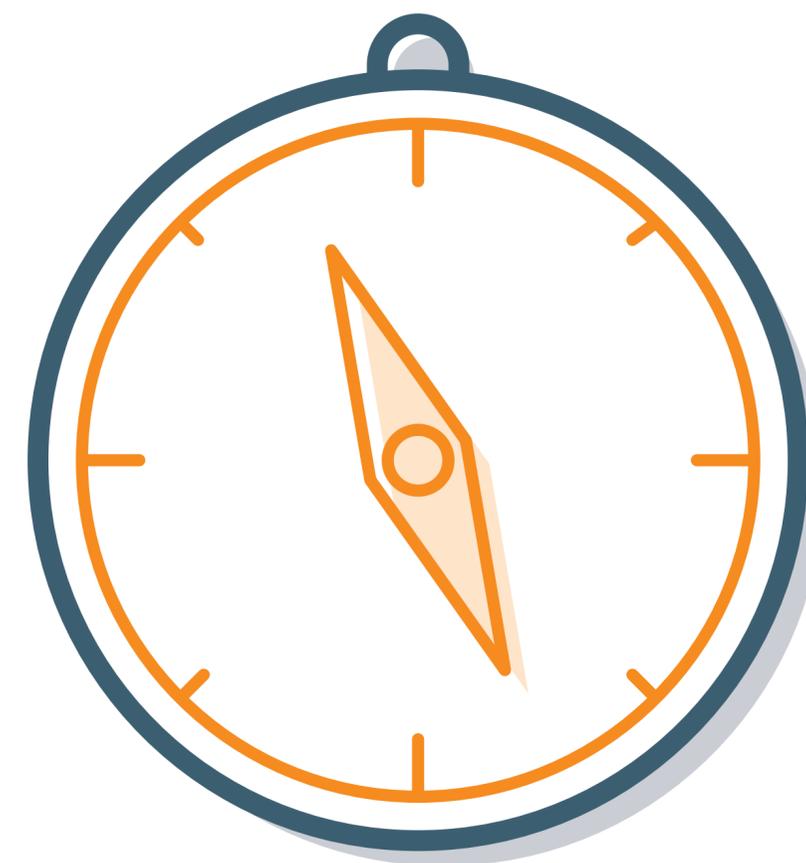
# Digital Marketing in Research

▸ Use social media to promote and recruit for studies.

▸ Tailor content for specific audiences across different digital platforms to reach subsets of the Parkinson's disease community.

▸ Remember to submit all digital marketing materials to your ethical review board before deployment.

Tips on content, strategy and promotion are provided in the following slides.

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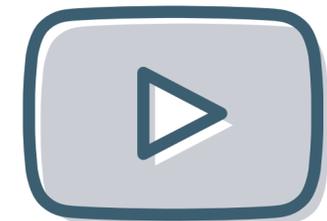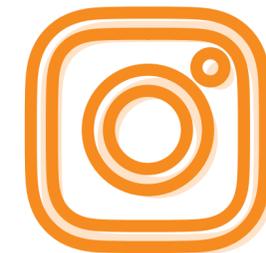
# Know Your Audience

▸ Identify your target audience and who you can reach through digital marketing (e.g., potential participants, care partners or clinicians).

▸ Determine which digital channels (Facebook, online forums, etc.) your target audience uses to find information.

▸ Test written and visual content to see what resonates most with your audience; for example, a Facebook post with an image may receive more attention.
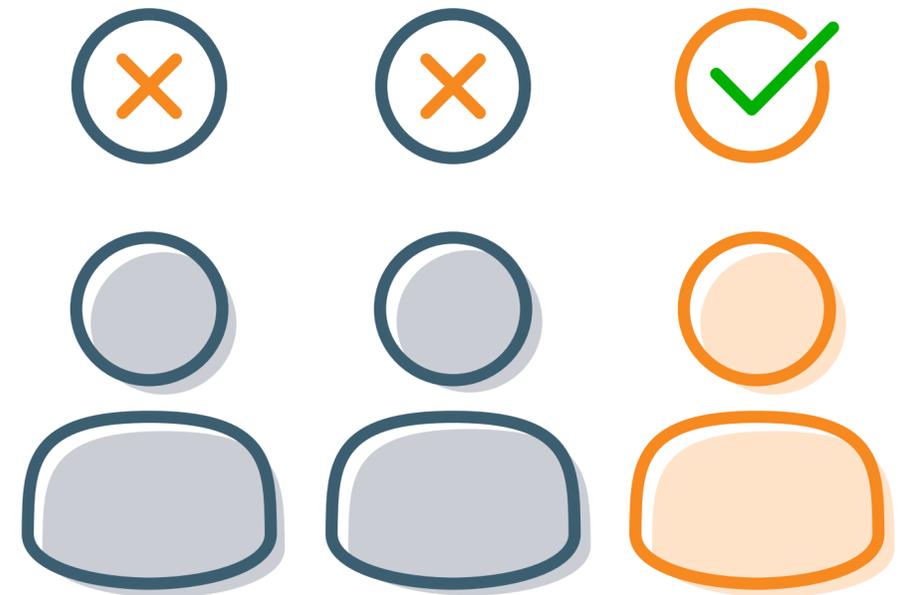
# Types of Digital Marketing

**Organic marketing**
Online "word of mouth," usually seen in the form of individuals sharing content through social media, or promoted by a third party. There is no cost associated with this type of marketing.

**Paid marketing**
Driven by ad placements on search engines through online search terms (e.g., Google AdWords) or through social media (e.g., Facebook Ads and Promoted Tweets).
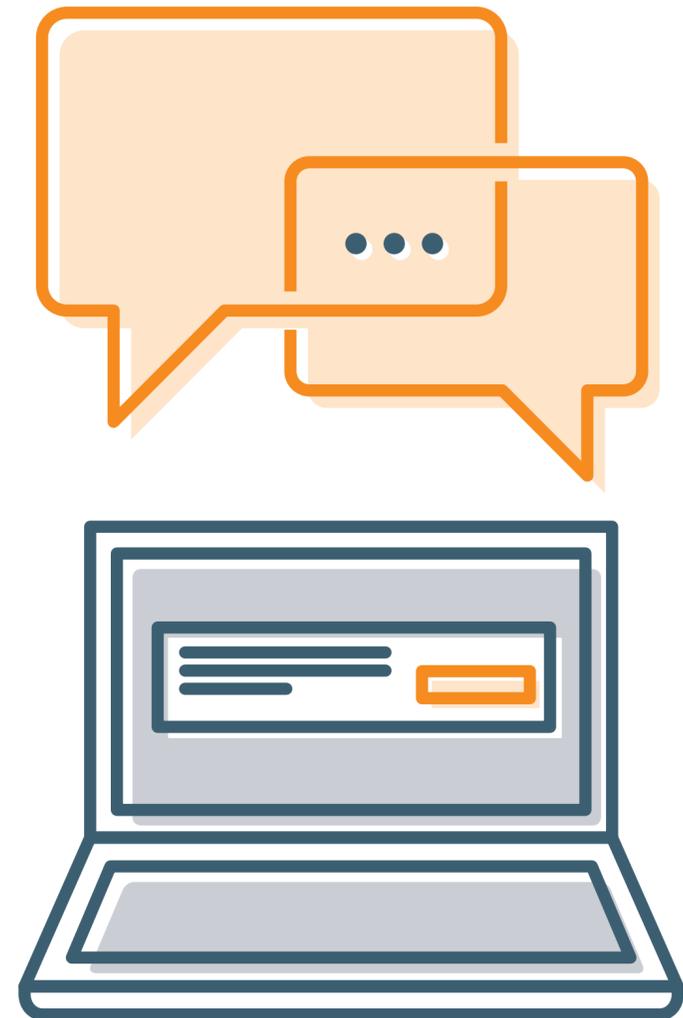
# Organic Digital Marketing

▸ Engage in organic marketing by tapping into the online presence of groups who regularly interact with your target audience (e.g., clinical sites, support groups, and patient health and wellness programs).

▸ Build a relationship with relevant groups by explaining how your study may be of interest to their audience.

▸ Provide study ads to relevant groups to facilitate the study's promotion through their digital channels.
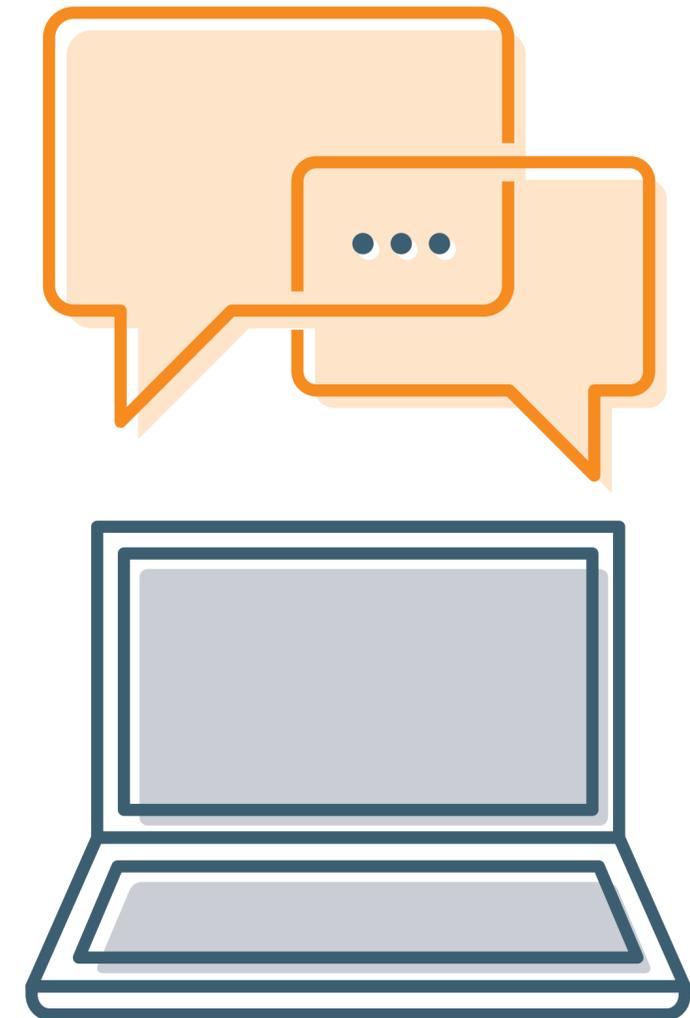
# Paid Digital Marketing

▶ Evaluate the cost effectiveness of paid digital marketing to determine if this strategy would help meet your recruitment needs.

▶ Run a small pilot campaign (e.g., one or two ads for one to two weeks) with a test budget to examine cost efficiency and optimize ad content, before investing in a larger campaign.

▶ Compare costs to recruit through print (or other) advertisement with those to recruit through digital platforms so you can assess if and how much to allocate to the latter. A robust recruitment plan is typically multimodal and does not rely solely on digital marketing.

▶ Note digital marketing has the ability to more reliably track referred participants than print advertising (i.e., you'll be able to better assess recruitment costs).

# Defining Goals

▸ Establish metrics of success for your digital marketing, such as volume of "Reactions," "Comments" or "Shares" on Facebook, or "Retweets" on Twitter.

▸ Set expectations based on your audience size ("Page Likes" or "Followers") and typical number of social interactions on your digital channels (average "Reactions" or "Retweets").

▸ Consider metrics of success that include actions taken outside of digital channels, referred to as "conversions," such as the number of phone calls to your clinical site(s) or number of individuals enrolled.
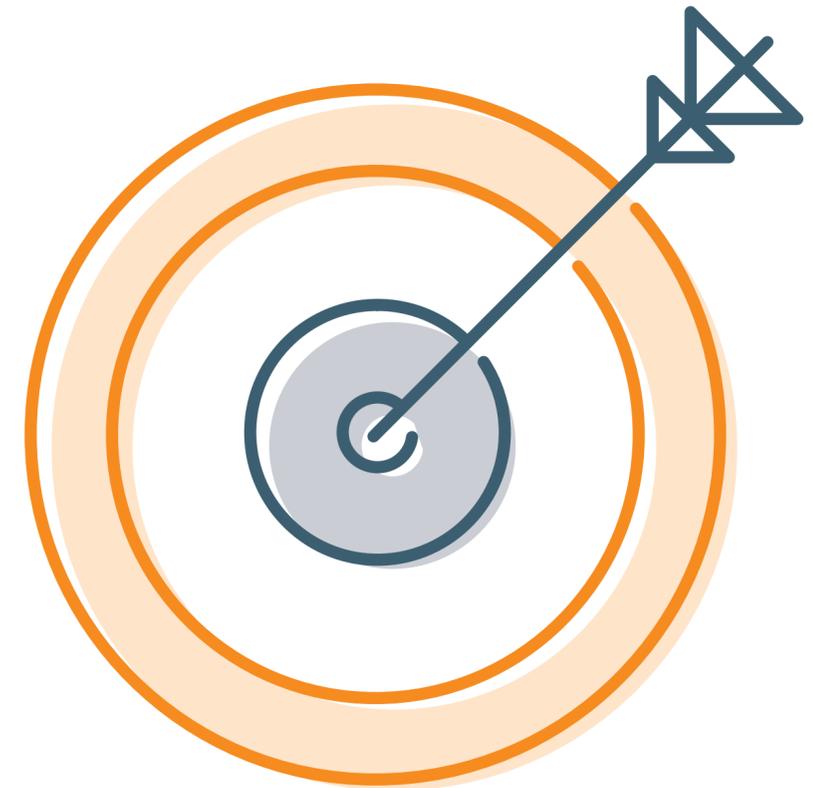
# Direct Traffic to Study Resources

- Direct individuals to a study website or Fox Trial Finder posting by including a hyperlink on ads.

- Make it easy for interested individuals to learn more about your study by providing high-level eligibility criteria and contact information.

- Consider providing a phone number for interested individuals to speak to someone about the study. Before implementing this option, evaluate the potential volume of traffic and capacity to promptly respond to inquiries.
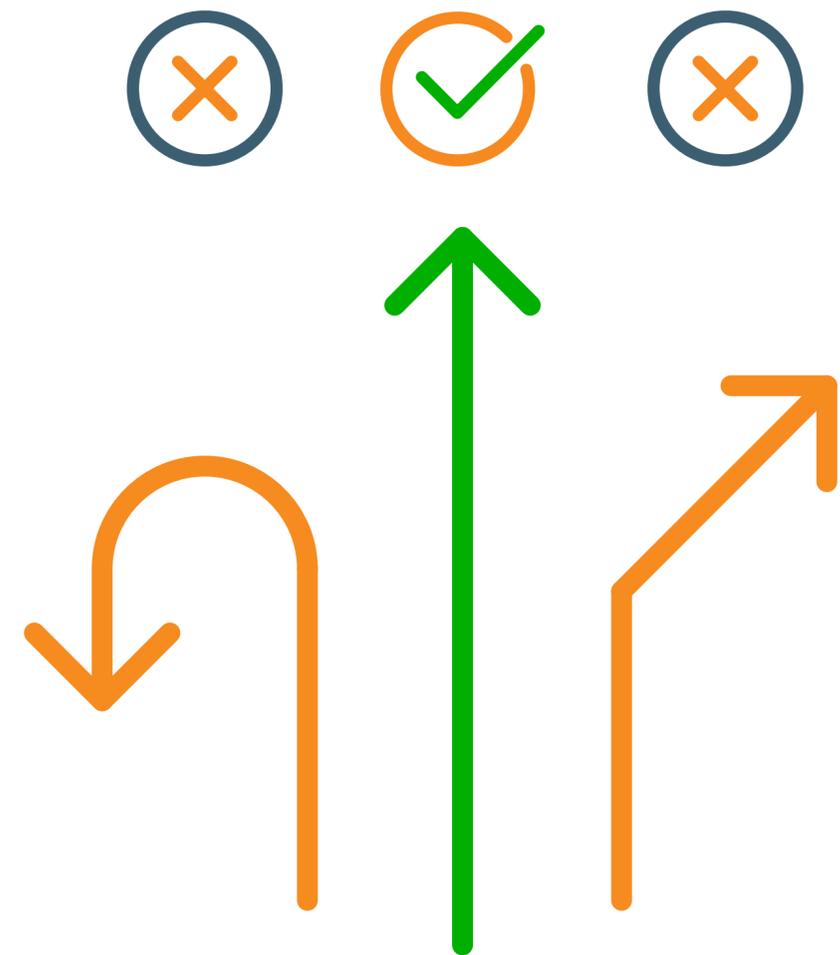
# Develop Ad Content

▶ Keep written ad content succinct — Facebook posts should be one to two sentences, while Tweets can be no more than 280 characters including a link.

▶ Select ad images, such as a smiling doctor speaking to a patient, that are accessible and welcoming to your audience.

▶ Consult with your marketing department to ensure your ad content aligns with your institution's messaging.

▶ Obtain ethical review board approval for your overall digital marketing strategy, as well as for all written and visual content, before testing or fully deploying any ads on your digital channels.

# Deploy, Assess and Optimize

▸ Start by deploying one or two ads with different content variables (e.g., a question vs. a statement, or an image of a doctor vs. an image of a patient).

▸ Refer back to your success metrics and assess the actual results of your initiatives.

▸ Optimize written and visual content based on success metrics and insights into your audience's preferences.

# Digital Marketing Tools

Consider using these tools and services to help manage ad content and marketing:

**Google Trends** Find keywords for use on Google Adwords (free)

**SharedCount** Track URL shares and likes (free)

**Hootsuite** Manage all social media accounts in one place

**Twitter Character Counter** Verify that Tweets are under 280 characters (free)

**Bitly** Create shortened hyperlinks, especially for Twitter (free)

**Canva** Create visually appealing social media posts

# Additional Resources

▶ The Michael J. Fox Foundation (MJFF) has effectively used digital marketing to recruit study participants for its sponsored studies, the Parkinson's Progression Markers Initiative (PPMI) and Fox Insight.

▶ Direct questions about digital marketing for clinical trial recruitment to trialsupport@michaeljfox.org.

See the Foundation's manual *Accelerating Clinical Trials: Best Practices for Recruitment and Retention* to learn more about how to use digital marketing for your study.

See "Social Media Content Template" in MJFF's Recruitment and Retention Toolkit for customizable Facebook posts and Tweets.