



## **Social Media for Non-profits Wednesday, June 10, 2015**

### **Get the Word Out!**

Now more than ever before, non-profit organizations are encouraged to expand their reach and use social media. It appears that social media is here to stay, so organizations may want to integrate at least one network or platform into its traditional communications plan and marketing strategy.

Social media is a category of internet tools that allow for social interaction and the sharing of content. Some of the most popular social web tools are: Facebook; Twitter; LinkedIn; Instagram; YouTube; Pinterest; and Google Plus. Let's not forget about websites! Be sure to create and maintain an appealing yet functional website and add social media buttons to your homepage.

So, why should your organization jump on the social media bandwagon? It is important to get the word out about your organization and to tell its story. Usually, heightened awareness leads to heightened action. When the public knows more about your cause, it may translate into more members, donors, volunteers, and advocates.

Assign someone to be your organization's social media coordinator who will post on your organization's behalf. It can be a volunteer or a paid staff member. Either way, there must be clear policies and procedures to address legal concerns and to protect the organization's professional reputation. Always pause and think before you post. Ask yourself if the content is professional, respectful, sincere, and relevant. Avoid personal posts on your professional accounts.

Dedicate time to post a variety of relevant news and other interesting content. Content should be ever changing. In addition to plain text, people enjoy visuals like photos, videos, and cartoons. Rather than filling your space with random pictures, choose visuals that tell the story. How about a video to evoke emotion or an infographic to present statistics? Remember that the goal is to have your audience share your content with the rest of the world!

Social media is a two-way interaction, so before you choose a tool, think about who you are trying to reach and why. Social media is designed to be a dialogue. Make the effort to reply to

those who ask questions or comment on your content. It can be a real eye-opener to see what your followers have to say and how they relate to your cause. If your audience doesn't get what they are looking for, they leave and typically don't return. Your posts are to inform the public, but also to elicit a response. The best possible outcome of social media is when the public decides to take action on your behalf. For example, join your society, make an online donation, fill out a volunteer application form, or bring a friend to your special event.

What social media network or platform will you choose for your non-profit organization? If a website is not the best choice at this point in time, then think about another option. Nevertheless, get your organization on the World Wide Web and tell its story. Like it or not, social media continues to be one of the most effective ways to get the word out.

## **Things to consider...**

- Develop a social media plan that includes the purpose for which you are using the tools, as well as clear direction on how to handle negative posts, and tricky situations. Also, make sure you create a disclaimer that you can post on Facebook pages etc.
- Choose social media channels that you will be able to maintain year-round. For example, Instagram might be a good choice during an event, but you may have trouble creating content during slower times.
- Create an editorial calendar to ensure you are posting content regularly. The algorithms that Facebook uses work in favour of those who post regularly, and of those whose posts are shared and liked. Make sure your content is appropriate and interesting for your target audience.
- Ensure you have permission (FOIP request forms completed) for all posted photos featuring people. Explicit permission must be obtained for social media.
- Consider creating Facebook ads that boost your posts and grow your audience. It is an inexpensive way to attract attention on such a busy site.
- Try not to delete posts if they are critical or negative toward your non-profit. If you do need to delete the post, create a post explaining why. "Hi there, you may notice that a previous post has been taken down. It is not your imagination: the post violated our terms of use and it was removed. Please message us if you need more information."
- Lastly, if you do not wish to engage in discussion with your audience, you are thinking of a website, not social media. Ask questions, share ideas and be open for feedback—it is as successful as you make it.

## How to create a Facebook page...

### To create a Page:

1. Go to [facebook.com/pages/create](https://facebook.com/pages/create).
2. Click to choose a Page category.
3. Select a more specific category from the dropdown menu and fill out the required information.
4. Click Get Started and follow the on-screen instructions.

[How do I create a Page? | Facebook Help Center | Facebook](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/help/104002523024878>

## How to create a Twitter account...

### To create an Account :

1. Go to <http://twitter.com> and find the sign up box, or go directly to <https://twitter.com/signup>.
2. Enter your **full name**, **phone number**, and a **password**.
3. Click **Sign up for Twitter**.
4. In order to verify your phone number, we will send you an SMS text message with a code. Enter the verification code in the box provided. Learn more about having a phone number associated with your account [here](#).
5. Once you've clicked **Sign up for Twitter**, you can select a **username** (usernames are unique identifiers on Twitter) — type your own or choose one we've suggested. We'll tell you if the username you want is available.
6. **Double-check** your name, phone number, password, and username.
7. Click **Create my account**. You may be asked to complete a Captcha to let us know that you're human.

[Twitter Help Center | Signing up with Twitter](#)

<https://support.twitter.com/articles/100990-signing-up-with-twitter>