



Advanced Social Media Strategy

Debra Askanase

Workbook 2 in a series by
NTEN: The Nonprofit Technology Network

About the Author



Debra Askanase is the founder and Digital Engagement Strategist at Community Organizer 2.0, a digital consulting firm specializing in online strategy and digital engagement for mission-driven organizations. She has been consulting to the mission-driven sector since 2009, helping organizations understand how to actively engage online stakeholders

and move them to action. Prior to opening Community Organizer 2.0, Debra worked for over 15 years at nonprofit organizations in the Boston area, originally as a community organizer and later as a program director, and executive director. Debra is on faculty at Marlboro College Graduate School, where she enjoys teaching dedicated nonprofit professionals and thinking about social media for social change.



Your social media strategy is an evolving universe of tools and strategies that, combined, create a road map for your social media practice. This roadmap includes your destination (goals), method of transportation (channel and tools), and who you want to travel with to get there (collaborators, online stakeholders, and audiences.) A great social media strategy empowers your community to help your organization succeed.

Your social media strategy is more than just publishing media-rich content and responding to inquiries. It should create a community of stakeholders that are engaged, feel valued, and who offer ideas that move your organization and its mission forward. Social media **is not about you, it's about your stakeholders.**

This workbook, the second of three, outlines the building blocks needed to research and develop a thoughtful and strategic social media plan that connects with your complete digital strategy. This workbook leads you to reflect on your SMART social communication goals, research the social media landscape, design a social practice that works for you, understand your capacity, plan communication, and put your plans into action.

PART 1: Planning Your Strategy

Articulating Your SMART Goals

Every social media strategy is driven by SMART goals, which state what you would like your social media communications to produce on behalf of your organization. For example, they might be to increase volunteer interest, find more advocates, get newsletter signups or higher turnout for events, etc. They must be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound.

Assessing Yourself: Social Media Practice

Organizational use of social media grows and matures along a maturity scale.

The further along the Social Practice Scale your organization falls, the easier it will be to achieve your SMART goals.

The Social Practice Scale is a tool for evaluating your organization's current social media use, and illustrates different types of practice in the following areas:

- External engagement, using social media and networks
- Finding and sharing content to your own channels
- Creating community within your own social channels

Identify your organization's Social Practice State by circling current practices within your organization. Do you find a pattern? Are there more than two in the same column?

Social Media Practice Scale

External social network activity	Content	Creating community	→	Stage of social media practice
Does not listen or engage outside of own social channels or community. Website	Primarily shares own content. Over 90% of social communication is one-way and informational.	Does not cultivate conversation or community within own social channels or community.		Pre-Social
Listens for keywords or phrases, but does not engage.	Searches for externally published content to share. Publishes primarily own content, with a few external sources.	May ask questions and offer resources but does not cultivate engagement. Actively considers what content engages conversation.		Curious
Communications staff and other staff periodically engages externally with colleagues and community.	All staff offer shareable content for comms team to consider. Relatively even mix of own content plus outside content.	Has identified the critical online conversation intersections, encourages social channel engagement.		Cautiously Social
Some staff and organization use social networks to move the organization's work forward.	Solicits guest perspectives. Actively seeks out and shares external content of interest to community.	Proactively cultivates community leaders, superfans, feeling of community. Identifies and tracks superfans.		Community cultivation
Staff beyond comms team use social media to move organizational work forward. External engagement is real, conversational, and incorporates external perspectives.	Invites stakeholders and cause community to engage with their published perspectives. Content invites conversation.	Offers stakeholders pathways to participation, enables them to support and encourage each other in action.		Social optimization

Organizational culture deeply affects your stage of the Social Practice Scale. Your ability to move along the scale will be affected by how willing your staff and organization are to invite external stakeholders into your organization, share leadership, and share others' ideas. Most social media teams find that it is easier to move along the scale one level at a time than to jump levels because of the internal cultural shifts necessary to accomplish the move to a new level of practice.

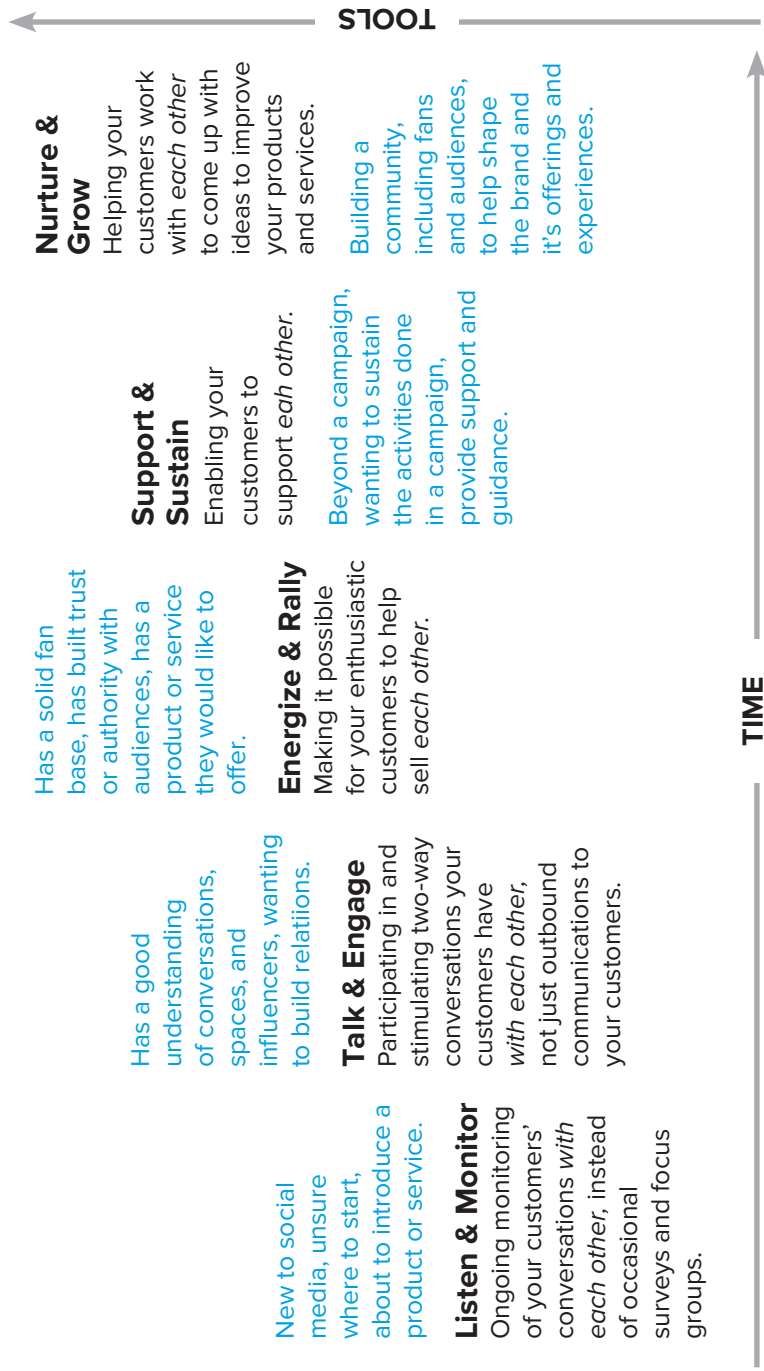
Social Media Objectives

Once you've identified your current stage of social media practice on the Social Practice Scale, the next step is to define your overarching social media objective. **This objective informs and guides the route to realizing your SMART goals.** It informs the types of actions and activities you'll implement and places your activities, along a continuum of practice. Colleague Demetrio Cardona-Maguigad, of Lime Red Studio, created these Five Key Social Media Objectives, based on Forrester Research studies on internet behavior.

The objectives also relate to your SMART social communication goals: If you want to develop a national advocacy campaign, then you'll want to consider objectives ranging from *Energize & Rally* through *Nurture & Grow*. From here, you'll select tactics that will support your SMART goals and framed by your Key Social Media Objective.

5 Key Social Media Objectives

Demetrio Cardona-Maguigad, Lime Red Studio



For Example

We have prioritized these social communication SMART goals:

1. Grow our email list by 150, demonstrating increased interest in arts events.
2. Develop a new series of programming based on ideas from our social channels.
3. 500 people are exposed to arts programming through video views on our social channels.
4. 50 people attend an arts event, as a result of viewing arts programming videos on our social channels.

My organization's current Key Social Media Objective is

Talk & Engage

Right now, my organization's social practice fits most with the

Curious

Social Practice Stage.

In order to achieve our SMART goals, we will work to realize the

Community Cultivation

stage of Social Practice Stage over the next 12 months, using the

Energize & Rally

Now it's your turn:

We have prioritized these social communication SMART goals:

1.

2.

3.

My organization’s current Key Social Media Objective is

Right now, my organization’s social practice fits most with the

Social Practice Stage.

In order to achieve our SMART goals, we will work to realize the

stage of Social Practice Stage over the next 12 months, using the

key social media objective.

PART 2: Researching Your Strategy

The research phase of the strategy is the heavy lifting. This phase can take up to 10 hours of research time, but the rewards are immense! At the end of it, you'll know who's doing social well, which organizations are further along the Social Practice Scale, which have similar Key Social Media Objectives, where stakeholders are online, what they want to talk about, and what is working well. From this research, you'll begin to develop your own tactical strategy.

The Environmental Social Media Scan

Look at what comparable organizations are doing online, how they are succeeding, and what you can learn from their practices.

Identify 5 to 8 organizations that do similar work with similar audiences. They could be considered direct or indirect competitors, and/or collaborators. (These audiences do not need to be similar in every way.)

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____

For example, an international summer volunteer program that primarily sources high school volunteers from the US and Canada may also look at year-long high school study programs in developing countries, or domestic summer volunteer programs that are 3-month residencies.

Now research these organizations, keeping your Key Social Media Objective in mind. (Begin with four organizations that you feel are most comparable.) Go to their websites, look at all of their social media channels, their campaign sites, their fundraising pages, and their blogs. You'll probably find the most benefit from researching the previous 6 to 8 months of activity.

Find the Bright Spots

While you're researching, look for the "Bright Spots," or things that organizations and people are doing that really engage and move stakeholders to action. While looking at other organizations, keep these questions in mind:

What social channels have maximum and which have minimal engagement, and why?

What media-rich content promotes conversation and/or action? Why?

Are these organizations in conversation with other organizations, their networks, and their stakeholders? If so, in what way? What do you notice?

What are the conversations that activate their stakeholders to comment, like, and share?

Which online campaigns are successful, and why?

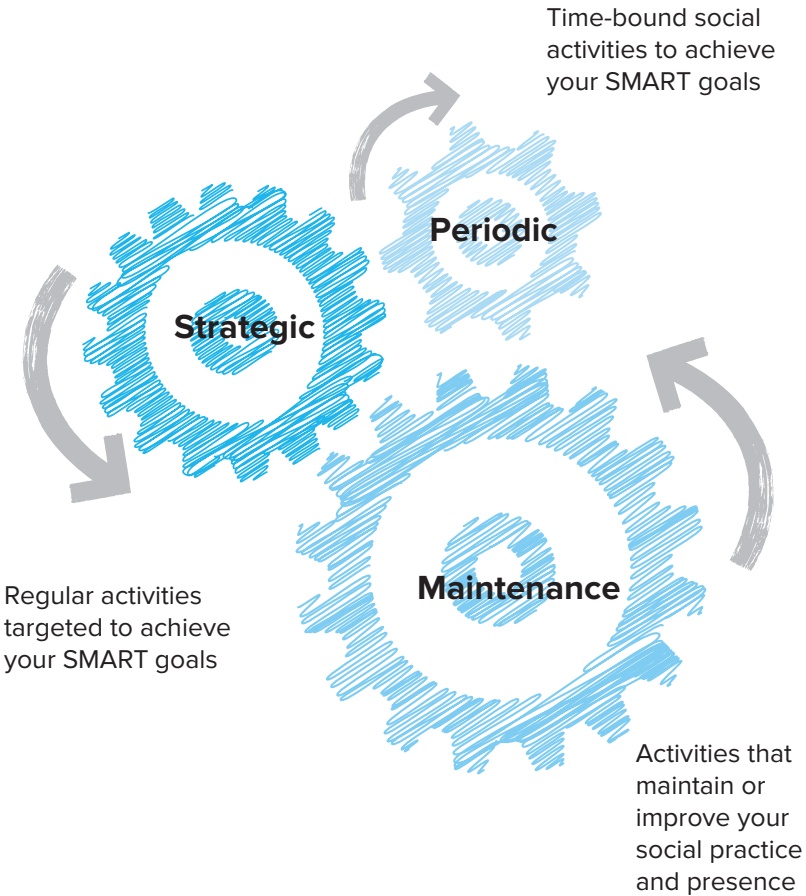
Are they enabling their people to help them create content in any way? If so, how?

How are they moving people to action successfully using social media or social elements of the website?

PART 3: Implementation

Tactics are the set of activities your organization and staff execute in order to achieve the Key Social Media Objective, create a desired social practice, and meet your SMART goals. Based on what you’ve found while completing the Environmental Scan, you should be able to identify the social channels where you’ll participate, and how.

As you begin to really shape your implementation plan, focus your activities around the three primary types of social media activities: maintain, strategic, and periodic.



Types of Social Media Activities

It may be helpful to use a chart like the one below to brainstorm tactics for the next 6 - 12 months. Replicate the chart for each SMART goal. Add more strategic and periodic activities, as needed.

Activity	Strategic Activity: Monthly	Strategic Activity: Weekly	Periodic Activity: media practice	Periodic Activity: February
	Identify and ask a different superfan to contribute an article to the newsletter each month	Ask online stakeholders to suggest a featured arts activity of the week, submitted through a form	Co-create an infographic about the arts with our online communities (they supply information). Result is a gated download from website and social channels.	#artlover February Arts Week social media campaign User-submitted photos of art around town, reshared through social media. Sign up for email push. ID and thank sharers.
Success metric	# of article contributions	# of form submissions	# of new emails submitted for download	# of new email signups. Secondary measure is # of hashtag uses.

Social Media Campaigns

Social media campaigns are a tactic, and are considered a “periodic” social media activity. To execute them well, they take time to prepare, staff, and implement. A commonly-asked question is: why should we run a social media campaign? Campaigns are most often run when we want to test an idea, achieve a very specific goal, or increase participation. Digital campaigns fall into three broad categories:

- **Advocacy:** a focused effort around an advocacy issue, such as online campaign to stop a bill or secure more city resources.
- **Fundraising:** a focused effort to raise money within a discreet amount of time, such as end-of-year, #GivingTuesday, etc.
- **Engagement:** a focused effort to engage more people with your cause, and/or engage your existing stakeholders more deeply. An example might be a school that asks parents to share stories of student success.

Creating Your Editorial Calendar

The editorial calendar is your central location for planning, publishing, and interacting. The editorial calendar is comprehensive of all your publishing channels and needs. Here is one downloadable editorial calendar template, designed by Debra Askanase of Community Organizer 2.0. When selecting or developing your content calendar, you may want to keep this checklist of content calendar requirements in mind:

Does our editorial calendar...?

- Sync with all of our marketing and promotions efforts
- Align with our SMART goals
- Relate to our conversation content topics
- Include a weekly and/or daily posting schedule
- Align with our specified key social media objective
- Reflect the reality of staff time and capacity
- Include maintenance, strategic, and periodic activities
- Outline who is responsible for activities

Staffing Your Strategy

Development, execution, and measurement take time. This equation will help give you a realistic picture of the available staff time to devote to your social media strategy. The numbers in the table are the estimated hours needed to get return on each of these tactics.

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	LinkedIn	Snapchat
Estimated # of staff hours/week	1	3	1	1	1
<div> <div></div> <div>NUMBER OF CHANNELS</div> </div> x <div> <div></div> <div>HOURS</div> </div> = <div> <div></div> <div>STAFF HOURS/WEEK</div> </div> x 52 weeks = <div> <div></div> <div>FOR SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT HOURS/YEAR</div> </div>					

	Blog Post	White Paper	Other Article	A 3-min. Video	Newsletter
Estimated # of staff hours/item	1-2	10	1-2	6	5-8

<div> <div></div> <div>CONTENT TYPE</div> </div> x <div> <div></div> <div>NUMBER OF TIMES/MONTH</div> </div> x <div> <div></div> <div>NUMBER OF HOURS/ITEM</div> </div> = <div> <div></div> <div>TOTAL STAFF HOURS/MONTH</div> </div>	Total staff hours for longform =
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(Number)

 of campaigns x 30 hours/campaign =

HOURS/YEAR FOR INTENSIVE CAMPAIGNS

Based on this equation, what did you discover? Has it forced you to reevaluate any part of your strategy? (Share your thoughts in the space below.)

Budgeting for Success

Social media isn't free. There are two categories of paid items: evergreen (analytics, staff, management, design) and periodic (freelancers, campaign costs, special incidentals).

While many tools are free, it is worth paying for the right tools and opportunities that will return your investment. Budget planning should take into account your SMART goals, tactics, editorial calendar, staffing, and measurement needs.

Based on your social media strategy, what social media budget line items might you want to research? (check all that apply)

Evergreen budget items:

- Graphic design for social
- Podcasting (tools and software)
- Social media management
- Social media analysis tool
- Staff for _____
- Video creation and/or editing software
- Social media analysis tools
- Search/listening tools
- Database to input online stakeholders
- Publishing platforms (newsletter, other)

Periodic budget items:

- Freelancers for (name of activities)

-
- Social media campaign costs
 - Social media advertising on (name of platform)

-
- Site or content hosting (for campaigns)
 - Special measurement or listening tools for campaigns
 - Other graphic design needs

Conclusion

An effective social media strategy focuses on your **SMART** goals, is informed by your key social media objective, facilitates conversations that benefit both the organization and its stakeholders, and offers a practical playbook for achieving your goals.

In this workbook, we offered guidance and practical exercises aimed at helping you design an advanced social media strategy. This included:

- Articulating your social communication **SMART** goals
- Assessing your stage of social media practice on the Social Practice Scale
- Defining your current and aspirational Key Social Media Objective
- Researching the social media environment and comparable organizations
- Developing a set of maintenance, strategic, and periodic activities for implementation
- Creating an editorial calendar
- Staffing your strategy
- Understanding your budget needs

Now you're ready to dive deep into creating your own social media strategy. Best of luck!

About NTEN

NTEN: The Nonprofit Technology Network aspires to a world where all nonprofit organizations use technology skillfully and confidently to meet community needs and fulfill their missions. We are the membership organization of nonprofit technology professionals. Our members share the common goal of helping nonprofits use all aspects of technology more effectively. We believe that technology allows nonprofits to work with greater social impact. We enable our members to strategically use technology to make the world a better, just, and equitable place.



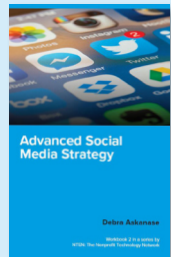
About Public Interest Registry

Public Interest Registry is a nonprofit organization that operates the .org top-level domain — the world’s third largest “generic” top-level domain with more than 10.5 million domain names registered worldwide – and the newly launched .ngo and .ong domains and OnGood community website. As an advocate for collaboration, safety and security on the Internet, Public Interest Registry’s mission is to empower the global noncommercial community to use the Internet more effectively, and to take a leadership position among Internet stakeholders on policy and other issues relating to the domain naming system. Public Interest Registry was founded by the Internet Society (internetsociety.org) in 2002 and is based in Reston, Virginia, USA.



In this workbook, we consider and map out these elements:

- **Planning:** Defining your **SMART** goals, social media key objectives, and understanding your social practice.
- **Researching:** Understanding how comparable and collaborating organizations are using social media to achieve their goals, reflecting on your findings, and pulling out the bright spots.
- **Implementing:** Developing a set of implementable tactics, organizing them with an editorial calendar, staffing your strategy, and budgeting needs.



Nonprofit Technology Network

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