

The Essential Guide to **SOCIAL MEDIA** for Nonprofits

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Social Media + Your Nonprofit = A Good Match?

Ultimately, your goal as a nonprofit is to garner support — advocates, financial supporters, and so on. In order to get that support, you have to get noticed. Sure, email and direct mail are useful tools to reach the people you already know, but how do you reach those that you don't? Two words: *social media*.

You live in an era where information recipients are all potential publishers; if you're receiving email, odds are you have the power to forward it to tens, hundreds, or thousands of others with just a few clicks. The typical user is online every day, if not constantly tethered. What's more, people believe their family and friends far more than they do an organization, nonprofit or not. Getting your message to spread widely and quickly happens when people get information from more trusted sources, and that requires social media.



Keep in mind, too, that if you have a multi-channel (events, direct mail, social media, and integrated email) marketing strategy — meaning online and offline — donors are four times more valuable than a single-channel (modifies donor) donor.

So what makes viral messages spread, well, like a virus? Right time, right message, right place. There are steps you can take, though, to vastly improve your odds, and using social media is a critical part of your action plan. This chapter explains why.

The Potentials of Social Media

According to the folks at M+R Strategic Services and the Nonprofit Technology Enterprise Network (NTEN), 2012 data on email, fundraising, advocacy, social media, and mobile from 55 of the nation's leading nonprofits suggest the following trends:


- Online revenue was up 21 percent. Monthly giving was positively booming, up 43 percent.
- Social media audience sizes skyrocketed, with nonprofits' Twitter followers increasing by 264 percent.
- Metrics like click-through and response rate went *down* for both fundraising and advocacy emails.

What do these numbers suggest? If you aren't active in social media channels, your nonprofit is missing a huge potential for revenue and other types of support. Why? Because everyone is online! From millennials to GenX to Baby Boomers, the vast majority of the world's population is connected online to one another, to their favorite brands, and to the causes they care about most.

Also known as Generation Y, the *millennial generation* encompasses anyone born from the late 1970s to the early 2000s. That's an estimated 80 million people! The sheer number of people alone makes them important to connect with, but it gets better. They are the first generation to have grown up with the Internet and are very tech savvy, which is great, if you know where to reach them.

It's important to connect with this group now because they're future potential activists. They're responsive and have great expectations of those organizations with which they interact, including wanting impeccable credibility. So how do you do it?

Traditional media doesn't always work with millennials. To connect with them, you have to find other ways to engage them. One great place to start is social media — estimates say that 75 to 90 percent of this generation has one or more social media profile(s). (Older supporters are also adopting social media at a rapid pace — 78 percent of GenX, 60 percent of Boomers, and even 43 percent of Americans over 65 use at least one site.)



Another way to reach online supporters is through peer-to-peer influence. They know what their friends are up to and what they care about, and they're heavily influenced by each other. Offer content that's worth sharing and they will do it, spreading your message for you. Use tactics like storytelling, humor, and urgency to grab their attention. (For more on social media best practices, flip ahead to Chapter 3.)

The Big Question: Will Your Nonprofit Benefit?

The answer to the question of whether your nonprofit, no matter your sector, will benefit from social media efforts is yes (if, of course, you leverage your efforts well — which Salsa and this book help you do). Why? People are on email overload only reading the ones they really want with the help of spam filters and Google's new tabs; they prefer social media where they can control the pace as well as what is important to them. Nonprofits and political organizations today need to be prepared for the social conversation by taking the first steps: listening and going where the conversation is happening.

You may not think you have time for social media, but it's going on around you. Users are now in control of a significant part of your message, not just as users, but as influencers. Individuals are influenced by friends, friends' friends, and friends' friends' friends. Take advantage of the discussion, find out who your online supporters are, personalize your message, and make sure they're involved with your cause.

By integrating social media with your email lists, you can


- **Identify the influencers:** Not every supporter on your list is equal. Some have greater reach than others, and it is important that you identify and segment those supporters. After you determine who's interested in your cause, see who they follow and what messages resonate with them most. You can then target your key influencers who will push your message to their lists, reaching a far wider network.
- **Increase fundraising:** Embedding social media into your emails opens multiple channels for communications, increasing donations. And with a simple click of the mouse, supporters can complete donations in seconds, directly through their email. No forms to fill out, no credit card information to input, just click and give.

- **Maximize your message's life span:** If you ask your followers to share your message on their Facebook pages and to re-Tweet to their groups, you can maximize the shelf life of your message. And don't just ask once — you can add your website, email, and social media to all your materials.

The Channels: Where Should You Invest, and How Much?

With hundreds of social media sites out there, how do you choose which ones to use for your organization? You can't possibly be on every network, so don't even try. Pick the two or three that make the most sense and approach them with gusto:

- **Do your research to figure out on which social media channels your supporters spend the most time.** Start with Facebook and Twitter, but you may find your specific audience prefers something else, like LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, or Instagram. Join the networks that your audience is using or that have an audience you have the potential to connect with. Meet them where they are; don't just join to join. And remember, each network has its own demographics.
- **Consider sites with a strategic advantage.** Being on Google+ can help your search rankings on Google. You can create content in Vine that can be shared in other places, like on its sister site, Twitter.
- **Before you hop on a new site, think about your level of performance and engagement on your current sites.** Evaluate whether you have the time and content to truly succeed on each site.
- **Remember that it's okay to say goodbye.** It's actually better to leave a social media platform altogether than have a page that's neglected.
- **When you join a new site, be sure to approach it with a strategic plan.** Consider the audience on that site, the content you'll be able to share with them, the times they are on the site most, your end-goals for your presence, and so on.



Many tools are available for *social append*, which is matching up your social media supporters to your email list. You can read about some of these tools at www.salsalabs.com/social-append.

2 Optimizing Your Presence in Social Media Channels

Rarely in history have movements been truly spontaneous — nearly always, it's been the often-unseen strategic work of hundreds or even thousands of individuals. Trying, failing, and trying again, until suddenly it seems inevitable.

Nor are social networks new, of course — the only difference is that some of these networks are now made visible online. Strategies hashed out in the homes of workers during labor movements, black churches in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, gay bars in LGBT movements, and college campuses in student movements have plenty to say to today.

Friendships, communities, and cultural ties are the birthplaces of social justice. People rely on their connections with others to work for social change — but relationships online can mirror social injustice around race, gender, class, and more. The existence of online social networks makes your job easier in some ways, but it doesn't replace the need for strategizing how you'll use them.

Building a Long-Term Strategy

While working online, it's easy to get sidetracked into focusing on the tools — the shiny object syndrome. You think, “We *need* to be on this

social network, using this app, or spreading our appeals using this tool.” Organizers are always using new tools creatively, but looking to past campaigns shows how strategy has always trumped technology in successful movements. Take the fax machine, for example. In the 1990s, it was used by

- The International Campaign to Ban Landmines to knit together a coalition of disparate non-governmental organizations
- Turkish pro-democracy organizers to spread a coordinated nationwide nonviolent demonstration
- Activists in New York City who jammed the fax machines of city officials responsible for bulldozing community gardens

One tool, three strategies. In this light, “Twitter activism” or “Facebook fundraising” won’t be an effective plan, because it substitutes the tool for the strategy. In addition, starting with your favorite tool will limit your campaign strategy to tactics that work with that tool — it constrains your vision and can result in diminished effectiveness. Before you sit down at the computer, you need a good social media strategy — one that’s organized around the elements in this section.

Point toward long-term change

Be sure your online organizing or digital activism components are pointing toward a larger picture. Every action should aim at a long-term goal in addition to a short-term objective, and that “line of sight” should be clear to your supporters as well. No viral marketing campaign is going to convince people to sign your petition or make a donation if the objective isn’t crystal clear.

In the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, there were many individual campaigns — the Montgomery bus boycott, the Nashville lunch counter sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, the voter registration drives, the March on Washington and more. In each case, organizers and strategists like Martin Luther King, Jr., Ella Baker, and Bayard Rustin publicly connected the individual campaigns to the larger movement. The approach was grounded in community organizing, what Baker called “spade work” — preparing your garden to flourish in the next season.

Instead of building standalone, siloed campaigns, try connecting each action to the larger vision — publicly — and integrate community organizing to bring supporters closer to each other and build a deeper connection to the movement. Remember that new supporters won’t be ready for big actions right off the bat, and creating personal connections with existing supporters can help their learning and growth into your next dedicated supporter.

Embrace solidarity

You're not competing with other organizations for the same supporters — donors or activists; you're building bridges to a better future with many hands. Rising movements benefit organizations — people who are inspired to act, speak, or donate for one group are more likely to do so for a related one.

The project Upwell.us researches online conversations about marine conservation in order to equip organizations across that movement with information to develop more strategic campaigns. Instead of groups competing with one another for funding and supporters, Upwell's motto "the ocean is our client" is helping frame ocean conservancy as a movement with many players, in which a rising tide of support really does raise all boats. For instance, their analysis of "shark week" revealed that despite a media focus on "shark terror," much of the online conversation was about "sharks being awesome." With that information, marine conservation groups knew investing in social media outreach during the week would pay off — and it did, dramatically.

Use social media to become a source of knowledge for your cause. Become a content curator. Don't endlessly repeat your own talking points or pretend you're the only group out there that cares about the issue. Share information from groups doing similar work in different places — your supporters will be both better informed and more inspired. Think about building the movement instead of just your list.

Engage, don't broadcast

If you connect everyone to yourself, you've created a hub and spoke. You're in control, but if anything goes awry or some spokes get out of whack, a crash is going to be imminent. Instead, use online tools to build webs of conversation — facilitate connections among your supporters, not just between them and you. A community of social change will be far stronger in your movement than a bunch of names on a mailing list.

Remember, you have supporters who are passionate about your shared concerns and are waiting to speak in their own voice. Give them the tools to speak — craft a strategy, set up the action opportunities, and amplify emerging leaders. For instance, the organization *charity:water* enables people to create their own fundraising campaigns, and then it features the most creative ones. Goodwill scours the Internet for blogs, posts, and Tweets about their work and their thrift stores and then highlights them on Facebook. Many national nonprofits encourage local members to submit photos or videos of their work, which they then spread on social media — featuring their most active supporters.



Above all, don't speak for your network. It's not "billboard media"; it's social media — cultivate these social networks of change. Stories appeal to our heart, not just our brain, and shareable content with a personal story from a supporter is much more likely to go viral than another "take action now" headline.

Listen, measure, and be agile

If you haven't reached your objectives — or it becomes clear that a win is going to be further off than you expected — it's important to recognize smaller wins too: If the number of supporters has increased, or new leadership has developed, or stronger networks have formed, then you're in a better place to start a subsequent campaign, even if your original goals weren't met.

For instance, MomsRising regularly solicits stories from its audience to see what issues matter, and then frames its work around it. MomsRising carefully measures its impact and adjusts campaigns accordingly. For instance, when the group said, "please share your childcare story," there wasn't much response. So it changed the prompt to "What is your experience finding affordable childcare?" and got much more engagement. When supporters send in compelling stories, MomsRising works with them to hone the story and prepare it for sharing more publicly — with legislators, the media, and other potential supporters. MomsRising's network becomes its strength, not just as names on a petition or volunteer sign-up form but in pushing the movement forward.

Creating Your Persona and Profiles

As nonprofit organizers and dogooders, you often don't think first about how you look — vanity isn't usually a word used to describe you. But your "curb appeal" often influences whether people will give you the time of day. As you enter social media channels, think in particular about your profile, page, group name, and your voice.

What's in a name?


If you're like most folks, odds are you immediately know what you should name your profile or page in social media. After all, it's obvious that you should just use the name of the organization itself, right? Obvious, yes. But effective? Maybe not. Yes, you'll want to have a page

with your organization name, but you won't want to stop there — or perhaps even start there.

Take, for example, Left Action, a progressive activist network with over 1 million activists. The Facebook page for the organization has nearly 600,000 fans, which ranks it among the top political pages. But Left Action didn't start with Left Action — not with a Facebook page by that name, that is. It started as a series of Facebook pages entitled things like “Not Having George Bush as President,” “Telling Dick Cheney to Shut the Hell Up,” “Telling Sarah Palin She's Full of Crap,” and so on. When John Hlinko was ready to launch Left Action, both the site and the Facebook page, he was able to use these pages to jump start the process far more quickly than if he'd started from scratch with Left Action itself. Fans who'd already been receiving and responding to posts from those pages for months were much more predisposed to give a chance to the new, like-minded page than if they'd been pitched it cold.

So what makes a page effective? Consider the following tips:

- **Name it something you know supporters already agree with.** Make it easy for them to “like” you — they should be able to tell at a glance just what you're advocating.
- **Make sure it's in sync with your organization's larger goal.** The Left Action examples, for example, are all clearly designed to appeal to left-activist types.
- **Think of what will stand out in a feed.** When someone becomes a fan of a page or adds a new friend, some percentage of their friends will see that activity noted in their feeds. Feeds are crowded things, of course, so if you can make your name stand out from the din by using humor, a play on words, and so on, then you're far more likely to have those friends click it to learn more, and become fans or friends themselves. “John Hlinko likes Left Action” in a feed may provoke some clicks, but “John Hlinko likes Telling Sarah Palin She's Full of Crap” will get a heck of a lot more.
- **Check out Facebook's rules to make sure you don't run afoul of them.** For example, Facebook has (or at least had) a habit of disapproving generic pages not representing a brand. Putting “by LeftAction.com” in parentheses after the name enabled the humorous pages to go through, avoiding FB's wrath but still having a minimal impact on the power of the title.



Give it a shot, get creative, and don't just stick with the obvious approach. You may not get a million fans, but with a little creativity and a little testing, your odds of doing well are a heck of a lot higher.

Images tell all

Taking a few extra minutes to design your accounts with imagery that ties into your campaign will make your organization look more professional on social media and can tell your story in an instant, compelling supporters to stay. Each channel is a unique community with its own culture, codes, and rules, and you need to understand those communities to be a part of them. Generally, your profile or page will have the following images:

- **Profile picture:** This photo is your identity. It's the little picture that appears with your tweets or with your status updates in a feed. Because it's so small, it's best to go with something clear and easy to see, like your brand's logo or a picture of your face. If you have a large logo, is there a mark (a portion of your logo) that's easily identifiable to use in its place? Think of it this way: If your nonprofit was a person, a faraway shot of you in front of a mountain is unrecognizable; a close-up on your face lets them know quickly they're on the right page.
- **Banner image or cover photo:** This is the backdrop image behind your profile picture in both Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Google+. An iconic photo of your organization's identity (or your own) or an image that helps supporters recognize your brand or colors works best here. Examples include a photo of a group of volunteers doing work for your organization, pictures of beneficiaries of your work (like dogs and cats for the Humane Society), or an iconic image of what you're fighting for or where you're from.
- **Background image:** This image is unique to sites like Twitter and is the image design behind all your posts and profile information. A great background photo is usually one image (not a tiled version of a small image) and has your brand imagery/logo on the left side of the feed so it can be seen clearly.

A distinct voice is easily heard

It's in your favor to develop a distinct voice for your organization (or for yourself) so your posts and tweets can shine above the masses. This can be especially difficult if you're an organization, which is usually a collection of distinct voices. So don't be afraid to experiment with different voices and see what sticks. Don't be afraid to fail — social media is all about iterations. Try something, look at how people react, adjust, and try again. Then, do your best to get everyone in your organization that posts to social media to match that voice as best they can.

When thinking about voice, ask yourself these questions:

- Who are your potential supporters?
- Who would they relate to when someone talks to them?
- How do they want to be talked to? Casually? Formally?
- How will the message be forwarded? Who do you want to forward it?



Establish a persona, an ideal message carrier. Build a personality, with likes and dislikes; why would this person care about you and your cause? What would [insert personality name] do?

Gaining Followers

Bigger communities don't just let you reach more people — they let your current supporters see they're part of something much bigger. And that kind of realization can be key to encouraging folks to check out what you're up to and share your stuff. Nobody wants to be all alone “liking” and “sharing” your stuff, you know?

After you've made the decision to join social media networks and have created your page or profile, the first big task is building your supporter base. How you do that varies according to the channel.

On Facebook

There's no reason your campaign should have a small Facebook page — or if you already have a few hundred or a few thousand fans, why you can't grow significantly. You can grow your Facebook presence in different ways:

- **Ask your friends to “like” the page.** These days, anyone can access the feature to invite friends to “like” a page. So, why not encourage all your staff and core volunteers to invite all their friends? Host an “invite your friends” pizza party! If ten of your core staff and volunteers invite all their friends, and on average you have 300 friends each, you will have invited 3,000 friends in one fell swoop. If just 10 percent say yes, that could be 300 new fans for your page!
- **Include a “like us on Facebook” button on your website.** A multi-channel platform needs to be well integrated, with all channels ultimately directing supporters back to your website. The website, though, should also point readers to your social networks, where they can interact with the community you've created.

- **Use Facebook ads or boost a post to target potential supporters to “like” your page.** Use these pay-for options to extend your reach to beyond just your core group of supporters. You can gain more “likes” or perhaps even eventual donors with these options. Let Facebook help you. And, you set the budget. Facebook has a minimum, but it isn’t budget-breaking.
- **Post compelling content that people want to share.** The newsfeed is the heart of Facebook, so focus on creating engaging content that your supporters want to share with their friends. By focusing on content that’s emotionally compelling and that you hope your supporters will share, you can reach new potential supporters who then “like” your pages, engage with your content, and feel motivated to take online actions — including donating money, volunteering on the ground, and calling their legislators. Emotionally compelling can mean anything from heart-wrenching to laugh-getting to anger-provoking — so be creative.
- **Create a group.** Although Facebook pages help owners to create community and deepen commitment with stakeholders, that trust and commitment can never compare to what happens in a group. Groups are designed to facilitate online community-building. The mere fact that admins must post as people changes the internal dynamic of the group conversation. It becomes more personal. Group members are notified when anyone posts, as opposed to relying on it appearing in a news feed. The conversation tends to focus on issues, experiences, and connections. There’s a bit of magic that happens when a group begins to feel and act like a connected community. The organization is just the facilitator, and the momentum is generated from within the members of the group.



The Facebook page concept is for the company, institution, or organization on Facebook, which usually includes branding and messaging — and the very act of creating a “company space” means that it isn’t a “community space.” Pages are also at the mercy of the Facebook news feed algorithm — the average post by a brand only reaches 16 to 17 percent of fans. And, the more (or less) supporters that engage with your posts, the more (or less) likely it is that Facebook will serve your content up in news feeds next time.

On Twitter

Building a Twitter following is more of a two-way street than on Facebook; part of getting people to follow you is following people yourself. That’s not all, though: You do need to actively enlist followers.

Finding people to follow

Finding and adding followers is just as important to building your Twitter community as gaining your own followers. By following people, you can view their updates in your Twitter stream. This can make Twitter a very valuable learning space; seeing what kind of blog posts users are reading, what links they like to share, and what people they interact with provides insight into the values and beliefs of your audience.

So how do you find people to follow? These are some good places to start:

- **Use Twitter Search.** Follow thought leaders and bloggers as well as people you know and trust and see who they are following.
- **Use Twitter's "Who to Follow" feature.** On the left side of your main Twitter stream, Twitter recommends three people you may want to follow, and this list changes every time you refresh the page. (You may not want to follow everyone they recommend — you'd be amazed by the crazy recommendations that sometimes appear.)
- **Investigate hashtags.** Click on a hashtag associated with an issue you care about and see who is tweeting into that hashtag.
- **Refer to online sources.** There's a wealth of websites and Twitter handles that can help you find people based on their interests or influence in particular areas, like Klout, Twellow, TwitDir, and TweetGrader.



Whatever you do, don't follow too many people at once. It's better to add followers gradually. If you're following more people than are following you, people may begin to wonder why. On the other hand, if you're following only a handful of people but thousands are following you, people view that as a good sign. You're perceived as discerning.

Getting people to follow you

In order to have a two-way conversation, you need people to start following you back.

- **Make sure your profile is 100 percent completed.** If people don't recognize your organization's name right away, they will rely on the information in your profile to decide whether to follow you.
- **Make your organization's Twitter usernames easy to find.** Use your group's name as your username; an abbreviation of your name; a tagline; or maybe an abbreviated cause or mission. (Twitter limits your username to just 15 characters.) Remember

that your Twitter name is subject to search engine optimization (SEO), which has an effect on how close to the top of a search results list you appear.

● **Pimp out your Twitter handle:**

- Place “Follow” buttons on your blog and various pages of your website.
- Have employees of your organization add your Twitter handle to their email signature and other social profiles like LinkedIn and their business cards.
- Add your Twitter handle to your other social media profiles.
- Place a Twitter widget on your blog.

● **Make your tweets useful resources so people need you.** Think about what someone would want to send to a friend. Essentially, your Tweets are 140-character microblogs or microstories, so make them count. Become the go-to subject matter expert for your mission, cause, or movement and everything related to it.

● **Interact with those people you follow who don't yet follow you back.** The Twitter community is all about karma: Follow back like-minded users, retweet liberally, and link to interesting news stories about your partners or sector.

● **Engage with your network.** Ask questions, run a contest, schedule a Twitter chat with your organization's executive director, and have people Tweet their questions. Have fun with your Tweets.

● **Participate in Follow Friday.** Every Friday, Twitter users recommend their followers or favorite people by using the hashtag #ff or #followfriday. #FF (Follow Friday) is a great opportunity to cultivate relationships inside and outside of your base. #FF acknowledges your hard-working free agents, and you can use it to show influencers that you're courting, you know they're tweeting, and you're paying attention.

● **Avoid the auto-welcome.** Don't send all new followers the automated “thanks for following us.” You aren't a bank that needs to send a form letter. Make them glad they chose to follow you when they re-Tweet you or “Favorite” your Tweet. That's when you send them a shout out. It is much more personal — and they will remember.



As you grow your following, remember not to focus solely on the number of followers — it's about quality, not just quantity.

On Google+ and YouTube

Interestingly enough, Google+ and YouTube fall under the Google Empire, so if you haven't already, get a Gmail account (which you need in order to have a Google+ profile) ASAP. What you post on your Google+ page syncs with the search engine itself, and the more you post content — and the more it's shared — chances are the content will show up in Google's search engine. Bottom line, Google+ likes relevant content. And here's a word to the wise: You don't have the same advantage on sites like Facebook and Twitter.

Google+ uses “circles,” which are essentially groups that you create — for example, Donors, Staff, Board of Directors, and so on. You can post to these circles individually or all at the same time. Recently, Google+ introduced a feature called “Communities” that is especially beneficial to nonprofits because it allows you to engage with others who share your interests. Sharing content within Google+ Communities helps to increase your visibility and, in turn, bring in more supporters to your cause.

Though the content on YouTube is different, the principle of relevant content applies: The more people share, watch, or comment on a video of yours, the more it appears in searches. So get your staff and friends to comment on your videos, because all boosting helps. You can also get people to subscribe to your YouTube channel by adding a Subscription Widget to your website; adding annotations to your videos; and sharing your videos everywhere. People can play your videos directly from shares on Facebook, Twitter, and Google+.

Top ten Twitter handles to follow or mimic

These Twitter handles are created by nonprofit leaders. You can learn a lot about being effective in organizing a base of support online from these handles. From technology recommendations to how-tos to simply following the news, these folks have it covered (some even provide inspiration and humor):

1. **@ntenorg:** Nten gives you tips, resources, and even live webinar coverage (#NTENlearn) about all things nonprofit technology.
2. **@care2frogloop:** Frogloop follows the latest trends in nonprofit communications, marketing, fundraising, and technology.
3. **@salsalabs:** Salsa helps nonprofits and political campaigns ignite action and fuel change around the world to grow and engage a base of support online.

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4. **@kanter:** Beth Kanter talks about networked approaches and social media for training and capacity building for the nonprofit sector that leverage learning and impact.
5. **@NonProfitProbz:** Nonprofit Problems provides a place to unload your issues. Overworked? UnderPaid? Hungry? Saving the World? non-profitproblems.tumblr.com
6. **@GivingTues:** #GivingTuesday is a new day for giving back. The inaugural giving season kicked off on November 27, 2012.
7. **@NonProfitTimes:** NonProfit Times is the leading business publication for #Nonprofit Management. #News, special reports, jobs, and expert advice for the nonprofit sector.
8. **@zenpeacekeeper:** Marianne Elliott is a collector and teller of tales. Advocate for truth, justice, and a kinder way. Believer in courage, yoga, and tea. Director of @ActionStation, author of *Zen Under Fire*.
9. **The Associated Press:** News, discussion, and behind-the-scenes insight from The Associated Press. Managed 24/7 by a team of editors based in New York.
10. **Every other nonprofit with a related mission to yours:** By following, retweeting, and engaging other nonprofits with missions related to yours, you can build an online network of the best information available. Your supporters will appreciate you giving them a complete picture of everything they need — all in one twitter stream.

3

Social Media Best Practices and Etiquette

Generating donors and recruiting volunteers requires establishing strong relationships, and your social media strategy plays a crucial role in that. This chapter gives you tips for moving beyond information-based posts and Tweets and injecting community-minded engagement into your social media strategy.

Make Different Types of Posts

The goal of different types of posts is to get friends and followers to share your content, and they'll only do that if they deem it relevant to their own lives. So to spark the most engagement, follow these five proven post types:

- **Funny/entertaining:** Don't underestimate people's desire to just have fun. Everybody appreciates a good laugh.
- **Controversial:** Get people thinking and talking about a recent event, ruling, or other topic.
- **Touching:** Tell a story or anecdote that stirs an emotion.

- **Educational:** Teach about your industry or cause. Post facts, statistics, quotes, studies, and articles.
- **Polling:** Ask a question to find out more about your community.



Ultimately, people get connected with your social media with just the click of a button, so be sure to include social sharing, calls to action, and like/follow buttons on every page of your website and in every email.

Create Spread-Worthy Content

What makes a message spread-worthy? Think of your readers as reporters. Give them a message that makes them look good if they spread it to their own audience. When they spread a message to others, they're putting their own message on the line, so give them something that enhances that reputation:

- **Make it new, novel.** People like to spread new things because it makes them seem ahead of the curve.
- **Join an existing conversation.** Find out what people already talk about and inject yourself into the conversation. Add your message to it through a parody or through a reference. Memes are a good way to do this.
- **Create cognitive dissonance.** By causing your audience to pause and think about something that doesn't seem quite right, you can get its attention.
- **Get funny.** A lot of people think that if they have a serious message, they can't use humor. Humor spreads because it makes the spreader look good — it makes you look smart, clever, funny. But make sure it's *on-message*. Unless your message is spreading along with the humor, you aren't ultimately reaching your goal, which is to get your message read and spread.
- **Be outrageous.** Think shocking content — being outrageous is a great way to get noticed. With all the competing messages out there, your goal is to get noticed.
- **Test it.** Testing to see what works is the single most important tactic in figuring out what's the most spread-worthy message. When sending an email, try sending it out to subgroups first — 3 to 5 percent of your list — and watch your Facebook and Twitter posts to see what gets the most shares. Note what works and do more of it.



Practice quality over quantity and be sure not to over-post. Unnecessary spamming is a great way to ruin your online presence.

Target to Your Messengers

How do you find the 5 percent of supporters who do 95 percent of the spreading? Nearly everybody can spread a message, but very few actually do — and even fewer do it effectively. To find out who they are, follow these tips:

- **Look for regular social media users.** If an individual is on Facebook, Twitter, or other social media platforms daily, she may be more comfortable sharing opinions and actions. There's also an added bonus: Studies have shown that social media users are also more likely to be influencers offline as well.
- **Look for people with a large readership.** Find supporters on your email list who have large numbers of contacts or large numbers of Facebook or Twitter followings. Think of the messaging for your whole list, but focus on the people spreading them who have the potential to create the largest echo.
- **Look at the data.** Who's actually doing the sharing? Consider specific people as well as demographics.

After you find these people, craft your message so it speaks to them. Consider giving them special one-on-one attention. If you ultimately want to increase the total volume of people who are reading and receiving your message, look at the spreading and take steps to make these spreaders feel special.

Engage with Your Supporters

Being social is about two-way communication, so get to know your supporters by conversing with them. Some of the strongest communities are based on supportive relationships between supporters and the organization. Read your supporters' comments, chime in when you think you can add something, ask them questions to learn more, and take note of the type of content that engages them. If your organization covers multiple issues but supporters respond well to one particular issue, focus on that issue more than the others on that platform.



Remember, too, to speak conversationally. People log on to social media to hear fun updates, not to read formal, technical, or business language.

Fundraise Lightly

People tend log on to social media for a fun break, so don't use social media channels as primary fundraising tools. Get your community engaged; show the results of the donations you've collected through photos and posts. Promote campaigns or causes — just be sure to mix it up. If you do ask for donations, link to information about what your local chapter is doing, and tie your posts to topical events.



Consider using special events like #GivingTuesday as the right time to do your social media fundraising asks. Check out www.salsalabs.com/giving-tuesday for more info.

Don't Be Repetitive

As long as you have new and interesting things to say through your social media channels, you can watch your number of likes and probably your list size increase consistently. *But* don't fall into the trap of repeating the same old song and dance; keep content fresh and diversify what you're saying.

Tell Your Story Effectively

Potential donors are out there, but getting them to choose your organization over the countless others available requires you to provide a compelling story behind your mission. When crafting your story, consider including the motivation behind your organization or focus on successful past events or objectives, highlighting how you've helped those in need. When it comes to social media marketing for nonprofits, you've got to be creative and convincing.



Learn more about attracting supporters through effective storytelling in *The Essential Guide to Growing Your Online Support* at www.salsalabs.com/grow-support.

Resist the Urge to Automate

Automating your social media posts offers a level of convenience, but you also run the risk of alienating your followers if you rely on it too heavily — especially so for nonprofits, where building long-term

relationships is key. Letting Facebook post to Twitter for you or vice versa leads to insincere and poorly formatted posts — neither of which is going viral. Avoid automation and exploit each social media platform's strengths. Facebook is great for articles, images, and videos; Twitter is best for short snippets (you don't need to use all 140 characters); and Instagram is best for focusing on visuals.

Inform Your Followers

Clearly inform your followers of the goals and achievements of your organization. For starters, include transparent commentary on any administrative expenses you incur. If yours are too high, it can be a turn-off for potential donors. If you clearly outline where these expenses go, you can in fact improve donation levels.

Make It Easy for Followers to Take the Next Step

If your goal is to get a reader to sign up for email updates, clearly state that in your postings. If you're seeking actual donations, make that clear too. Too many websites lack easy-to-understand instructions for next steps, so don't be that organization. And don't be shy, either. If you need money, say so. You won't be offending anyone, and your followers are going to have a better understanding of exactly what they need to do to help you. After all, that's why they're there.

Get Email Addresses through Facebook

The first step toward getting email addresses from your social media fans is to set up custom tabs in Facebook. You could use custom tabs to highlight a basic email signup form and maybe a hot petition around your issue. You can setup custom tabs with free apps like Static HTML iframe tabs and Static HTML for Pages by Involver. (For an example of this in action, visit the Facebook page of USAction.) Don't forget to add custom graphics to your tabs to make them pop.

After you have tabs set up, keep making asks to your audience to get people to sign up for your email list. You can alternate direct asks with petitions, post at different times and on different days to reach different audiences, but you must keep doing this because social media is a river. Your messages float on by. Also don't forget to "pin" one of your asks to your Facebook timeline, so it will stay at the top for up to a week.

Provide Your URL

Put a URL in your About section on Facebook, and as the website link on Twitter. Facebook's Timeline showcases the first sentence or two in your About section, so make your bio is succinct and powerful and add the URL. Twitter has the same opportunity with the Bio section and the ability to directly add a URL so you don't have to waste valuable bio space on it. Do the same for all your social media channels.

Manage Your Accounts

Designed to fit organizations of all types and sizes, ActionSprout.com is a Facebook app that unlocks the full organizing and fundraising power of Facebook. Behind the scenes, organizers can export Facebook fan data, including name and email to track and further interact with active supporters. Salsa clients can easily incorporate forms they've already created in the Salsa platform, like petitions, for Facebook posting, driving action back to Salsa for data capture. The features can also be customized with additional calls to action, like posting it to walls, sending an email, or even Tweeting.

Get Help If You Need It

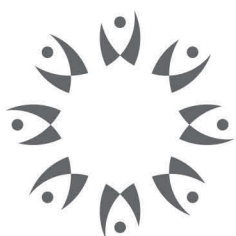
Social media marketing requires a significant time commitment if you want meaningful results. If no one in your organization has the time or expertise to properly conduct operations, consider bringing in outside help. If your budget is limited, don't hire a full-time employee; find qualified freelancers at websites like Guru and Elance. You can certainly increase donations through effective social media marketing, but if you're not the one for the job, be prudent enough to admit it.



Avoid using volunteers or interns for the job unless you know for certain that they're both qualified and committed to doing the work. Your brand's identity in social media can be marred by someone half-heartedly posting and engaging your supporters.

“you must be
the change
you wish
to see in the
world.”

Mahatma Gandhi



salsa
ignite action. fuel change.

Grow and engage support online with a company,
community and platform specifically for nonprofits.

To find out more go to **salsalabs.com**

Fundraise | *Advocate* | *Communicate* | *Organize*

In today's culture, to gain support for your nonprofit, being on social media is an absolute must. It's a simple, yet effective tool to get your mission, message, and cause out there — for little to no cost. However, with so many social media channels available and limited time to invest in your outreach efforts, you need to work smarter with your social media, not harder. But choosing the right channel and the right tactics can be tricky.

The Essential Guide to Social Media for Nonprofits provides you a primer for making effective decisions for your strategy whether you're new to the social media space or looking to improve your existing presence. In this book, you discover how to:

- CHOOSE THE RIGHT CHANNEL
- GAIN FOLLOWERS AND FRIENDS
- LISTEN TO YOUR AUDIENCE AND LEARN ABOUT THEM
- BE HEARD WHERE YOU WANT TO BE HEARD

Easy-to-understand language and practical tips make *The Essential Guide to Social Media for Nonprofits* a quick way to get that much closer to your social media goals and your organization's mission.



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