



Best Practices for Small Nonprofits on Social Media

Nonprofits of all sizes are using social media tools more than ever to share information about their cause, to build critical relationships, and to engage their supporters. When used correctly, social media can be a powerful marketing tool.

Use this checklist to ensure that your nonprofit is maximizing its presence on social media sites and working toward achieving your goals online.

- **Claim your nonprofit's name and account on at least three social media sites** (even if you don't think you will ever use them).
 - Claim your nonprofit URLs and user names, just as you did when you registered your website domain name.
 - Keep all user names, URLs, emails and passwords in a spreadsheet (ideally in a Google Doc if you are going to be sharing the work of managing the sites)
 - Be consistent, if possible, when registering – for example, if your website URL is <http://greatnonprofit.org> then your Twitter handle should be @greatnonprofit, your Facebook page should be <http://www.facebook.com/greatnonprofit>, etc.
- **Fill out all profiles completely.**
 - To be complete, a profile must have a photo/avatar that is square (not a cut off version of your horizontal logo).
 - Each social network requires more or less information, but make sure that they all include: at least one photo operational hours (if you have open office hours) your programs and services brief history your vision statement contact information website link
- **Spend time learning the unique culture of each network.**

- Facebook has a different culture than Twitter and LinkedIn, and it is important to understand the distinction.
- Spend some time listening and observing, learning the language, and getting the feel for what works on each network.
- **Quality over quantity.**
 - Don't put all your eggs in one basket, but don't spread yourself too thin.
 - Start out using one or two networks frequently, and move on to others if you have more time and more capacity.
 - Quality over quantity is paramount when using social media.
- **Promote your profiles!**
 - Just because you build them does not mean that your donors will find them.
 - Add social media buttons to the main page of your website and email newsletter (ideally easy to find, with links that work – double check those links).
 - Include URLs on business cards, in email signatures and on all print materials (brochures, press releases, flyers).
 - Put a sign in your waiting room, lobby, office – anywhere people congregate (even right now in smaller groups) - Zoom background, etc.
- **Be responsive and accessible.**
 - There is no greater online sin than a social media profile that has questions, comments, and engagement that is not managed.
 - If your online community engages and asks questions, answer them promptly.
 - If you need to wait to get the answer, let them know you will get back to them as soon as you can. 24 hours is an eternity in the social media realm – respond immediately to comments, questions, and feedback on your posts.
- **Always incorporate a visual into your posts.**
 - Videos get more engagement (comments, clicks and shares) than graphics or text, but photos also work well.
 - The key is to capture attention in the fast-paced social media news feed.
- **Ask for help and feedback.**
 - Are you aiming to “increase engagement” without having a plan about how to acknowledge and use that engagement?

- Do you follow up with and/or implement the suggestions and recognize the people who took the time to reply to your request?
- **Be personable.**
 - Let your fans and followers know there is a person or persons behind the tweets and the posts.
 - Go off topic once in a while – talk about the weather, sports, humor, local events. Don't just talk about your nonprofit and your services in a dry, impersonal, formal way.
 - Behind-the-scenes posts and personal stories are always very popular.
- **Always, always say thank you!**
 - Thank people for sharing your content, for following you on Twitter and Facebook, for posting your video on YouTube, for “plus-one”ing you on Google+.
 - Acknowledge supporters and donors on your social media profiles, thank a vendor for going above and beyond, link to another local small nonprofit partner. Create good karma and it will certainly come back to you!
- **Keep your expectations grounded in reality**
 - Just because charity:water can get millions of views on YouTube does not mean that you can be held to the same standard.
 - If you are a small shop with two hours or less a week to spend on social media sites, you are not going to get hundreds of fans and followers overnight.
 - Creating an active, engaged online community takes time and effort, trial and error, success and failure. Start with realistic goals and you may be surprised to surpass them!

Remember, getting the results you want from social media is time-consuming but well worth it. Success will follow if you are consistently engaged and online, authentic and accessible and add value to your fans and followers. Good luck!