



River Voices

Hitting Your Social Media Stride

Strategies & Best Practices for Nonprofits

by *Bart Mihailovich* Spokane Riverkeeper www.spokaneriverkeeper.org

Social media is a powerful tool, changing the ways organizations work and evolving how organizations interact with constituents. As Mashable recently put it, social media is a “tremendous opportunity for nonprofits to participate as trusted providers of credible information and ultimately cultivate the next generation of major donors through the social web.”

Chances are you and/or your organization fit into one of these three camps in terms of social media:

- 1. Engaged:** On board, embracing it and thriving in the social media sphere.
- 2. On the Fence:** Using social media ‘here and there’ because you know that’s where the conversation is, but you really don’t know your way around.
- 3. Laggards:** Yet to take the leap, and perhaps unsure what all the fuss is about.

No matter where you fall in the spectrum, this article will help you and your watershed conservation organization leverage what’s available to you and thrive in your social media communication, marketing, outreach, advocacy and activism.

Your relationship with social media and how you use it is a relationship that shouldn’t be taken lightly. It also shouldn’t be entered into without a purpose or a strategy. You’ll get out of it what you put in, and at some point, something you do—perhaps even something seemingly trivial—will go viral and despite your best efforts, you’ll probably never be able to replicate it. Such is social media. Some say there’s no method to the madness, but it certainly doesn’t hurt to know what you’re doing.

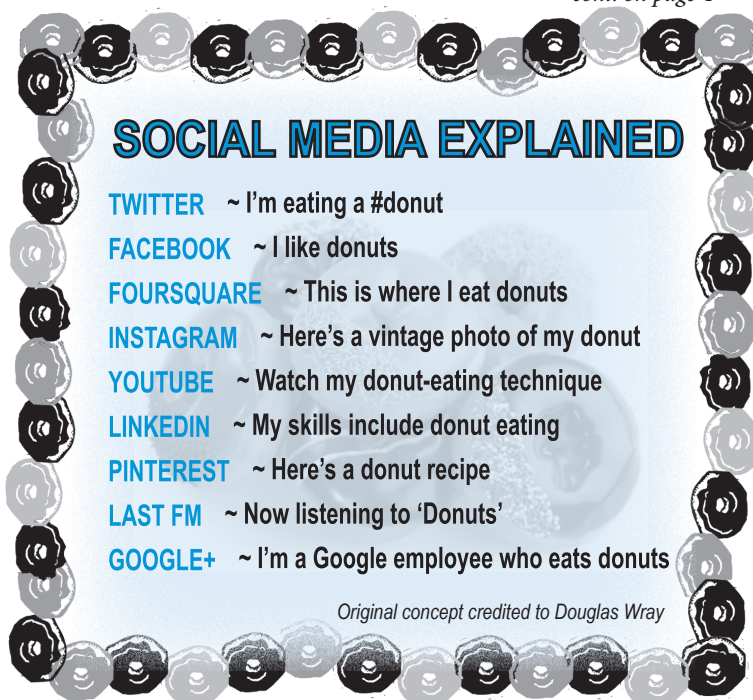
The Basics

Social media in the water conservation movement is bringing together ideas and solving problems more efficiently. It’s connecting us digitally to the already built-in connection of cause and purpose for clean water and healthy communities. Whether you embrace it or not, *you* are the representative of the waterbody for which you fight, and you are the representative of the knowledge that exists in your local area. Now is the time to share your expertise with the world.

In a very fundamental way, social media is a social instrument of communication. Through the lens of what many of us know, or have at least heard about, **Web 2.0**¹, social media is a website or an internet-based tool (application) that allows the creation and

¹ Web 2.0 was coined in 1999 to describe websites that use technology beyond the static pages of earlier websites.

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River Network

Connecting People, Saving Rivers

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River Network is a national, nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower and unite people and communities to protect and restore rivers and other waters that sustain the health of our country.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

A

little over a year ago, I was told by a social networking expert that it was time for me to join the 21st century and learn how to Tweet. So I reluctantly took the plunge into Twitterland last fall.

Now, understand that I grew up in an age when hand held calculators were a new thing. I already thought that I was pretty hip having hundreds of colleagues and friends on Linked In and Facebook—even if I wasn't quite sure what to do with them. And Twitter was just one more thing to have to learn to use—very intimidating.

So, with the benefit of an entire year of being part of River Network's social networking effort, let me say this: don't be intimidated. This is not rocket science. If you are smart enough to understand TMDLs or stormwater BMP's, you are smart enough to tweet and post.

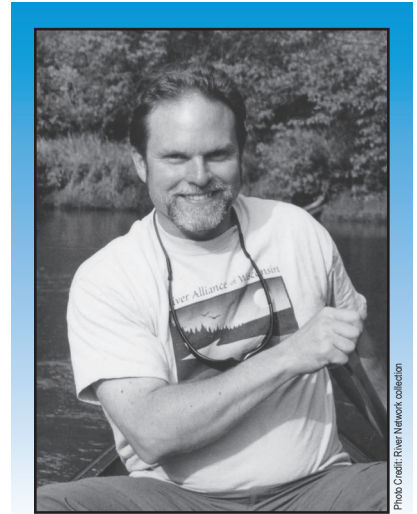
Nor is it time consuming: once you get the hang of it, you can do it daily in less than five minutes.

Is it worth it? A year ago, I would have said I wasn't sure. But there is clearly a demand: without much investment of time and no dollars, River Network has been able to more than double its social networking presence in six months.

We now reach as many, or more, river lovers via Facebook and Twitter than we do via our website, newsletter or print publications, at virtually zero cost.

Someone once said that the only bad publicity is your obituary. They would have loved social networking. Through the many modes of this medium, you can get the good work of your organization out to many more people. You can also use Twitter and Facebook to amplify the buzz around events that you hold. When we co-hosted River Rally 2012 with the Waterkeeper Alliance, our profile in cyberspace skyrocketed as we encouraged folks to tweet about Rally, follow our special Rally Facebook page and share everything from pictures to you tube videos.

So, join the fun. Follow me @ToddAmbs. I look forward to following you, too!



Todd Ambs, President
River Network

STRATEGIES & BEST PRACTICES FOR NONPROFITS, CONT.

cont. from page 1 exchange of user-generated content. Along the lineage of communication, this goes beyond the paradigm of news delivered to us for consumption, and brings it into the territory of information sharing.

Within this new territory is an array of categories that fall within the social media definition, only a few of which I'll dive into here. There generally are five categories of social media:

1. **Social networking** (e.g., [Facebook](#), [Google+](#), [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#)). A *social networking* service is an online service, platform or site that focuses on facilitating the building of social networks or social relations among people who, for example, share interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections.
2. **Social photo and video sharing** (e.g., [YouTube](#), [Flickr](#)). *Photo and video sharing* sites allow users to upload and post their digital pictures and videos to a website, and share that content with other users or viewers, either privately or publicly. Users are then able to view the photos and videos and can often rate them and leave comments.
3. **Social news** (e.g., [Digg](#), [Reddit](#)). A *social news* website features user-posted stories that are ranked based on popularity.
4. **Wikis** ([Wikipedia](#), [Wikia](#)). A *Wiki* (sometimes written with a lower-case 'w') is a website that allows anyone to add, delete or revise content by using a web browser.
5. **Social Bookmarking** (e.g., [Del.icio.us](#)). As the name implies, *bookmarking* allows you to store your bookmarks online, which allows you to access the same bookmarks from any computer and add bookmarks from anywhere, too.

Though this is only a fraction of what exists

in terms of actual examples, remember that any service that treats communication like a two-way street, asking for interaction or allowing for participation, is considered social media.

How It is Used

Engaging in social media likely means you'll be producing content that falls somewhere along the lines of entertainment, news, knowledge and/or inspiration. As you set sail on your social media adventure, be sure to start thinking how you'll be creating content. Will you be an entertainer? A news provider? A commenter? Or, will you create a balanced mixture, putting out knowledge in an entertaining way or providing inspiration backed by science?

Traditional media likely already covers your major issues, so think about using social media as a way to provide the behind-the-scenes look at the issue, or the in-depth, insider-knowledge report of the issue. Social media is your opportunity to tell your side of the story, provide opportunities for engagement and rely on your network to help get out the word in the fight to save our waterways.

Imagine this: Friends of Gin Creek (FOGC) successfully worked to remove a dam. There were celebrations, press releases, news coverage and tours. Instead of simply relying on the "old school" evening news for a seven-second sound bite to highlight their success, FOGC leveraged the mainstream media by doing the following:

- ◆ **Facebook:** FOGC posted before/after photos of the dam site and thanked all cooperating groups and funders. They linked the cooperating groups' and sponsors' names and also included a link to a detailed story on

their website, where along with more information, they invited individuals to donate.

- ◆ **Twitter:** During the actual removal, live-tweets kept people informed of the progress. Sample tweet: *Rivers are forever, dams are not. Kaboom! Gin Creek flows free for the first time in 100 years. Tinyurl-to-video-link. #FOGC.*
- ◆ **YouTube:** Working with FOGC staff, a volunteer created and posted a video. The video included short interviews with key individuals, ‘live-time’ shots of the removal and reactions from the public. Again, FOGC made sure to acknowledge all the key players in the project.
- ◆ **Wikipedia:** FOGC’s board chair updated Wikipedia’s post about the dam, highlighting the date it was removed, creating an instant historical account on one of the world’s largest research tools.
- ◆ **Pinterest:** A FOGC staff member “pinned” the news story and YouTube video on the FOGC Pinterest boards titled “FOGC Work” and “FOGC Success Stories,” creating easily shareable web content on one of the fastest-growing social media sites.

All these pieces complemented the existing media coverage and gave FOGC various ways to keep the story on the public’s radar, provided multiple opportunities for fans to re-post and did the work necessary to create viral media. But most importantly, it provided the personal touch and the visual stimulation that is expected with something like a dam removal. With social media you always have photo and videos on your side—use them!

If the idea of social media gives you angst, or even if you are plugging away at it and feel that it’s just not working for you, fear not, for you are not alone. In fact very few organizations or brands have it fully figured out, and those that tell you they have, probably have not. Social media isn’t just dropping a few links on Facebook or Twitter or a video on YouTube because that’s where your comfort lies. It’s not just about allocating some of your budget to social media and attending a few webinars that tell you percentages of people using certain services. And, it’s certainly not just pinpointing the youngest (and therefore, “clearly” the most tech-savvy) person in your office and anointing her your organization’s social media czar.

How can you tell if it is working? While social media efforts can be measured in many different ways, at the very least, you should be able to answer these questions:

- ◆ *Am I increasing exposure to our organization?*
- ◆ *Are more people engaged in our work, be it through donation/membership increases, volunteer increases or other metrics?*
- ◆ *Am I reaching more people, and using less effort to do so?*

Answering those questions should give you a pretty good indication that you effectively are engaging your community in the online conversation, and that you’re doing it right.

The Benefits

Working on water issues is a very visual experience. Sure there is a fair amount of sitting through hearings or meetings, reviewing documents, writing official comments and even fundraising and planning, but unlike many causes, we all

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STRATEGIES & BEST PRACTICES FOR NONPROFITS, CONT.

cont. from page 5 have the luxury of working for something physical, like a river, stream or lake, to help explain the what, where, when, how and why.

We have a clear advantage as we seek to attract the eyeballs, and hearts, of a very visually-stimulated audience—an audience with a short attention span, I might add. Having a victory to celebrate or progress to report becomes much easier when you can show members and supporters (and potential supporters) what it is you're working for and what exactly you are accomplishing.

From starting your organization to keeping the lights on and everything in between, social media provides enormous benefits. You may have heard that social media is the wave of the future. But why?

Here are some real issues that nonprofits are dealing with and addressing through social media:

- ◆ **Increased competition.** *The New York Times* recently reported that the number of nonprofits has increased 60% in the last decade. Social media has helped cultivate a new wave of smaller nonprofits competing with the more established agencies and groups. Not to mention that social media is helping small nonprofits rise to the top in a crowded field.
- ◆ **Recession.** The need for nonprofits, specifically social service nonprofits, has dramatically increased while foundation and donor support hasn't. And nonprofit budgets are as thin as they ever have been. Social media is helping nonprofits do more with less.
- ◆ **Noisy landscape.** The great work of nonprofits is much more visible thanks to social media. Unfortunately a 24-

hour news cycle fills airwaves with gossip and bickering. With the ability to share information at lightning fast speeds, news of the work and mission of nonprofits (both for the positive and negative) is far-reaching.

Beyond just being able to show your work or visually explain your mission, social media provides an incredible opportunity to increase credibility, accountability and transparency to your work and your organization. Gone are the days where grant reporting or end-of-the-year newsletters simply explain the successes or measureable progress made on a certain project or program. With social media your funders or supporters can get instantaneous reports of your progress. Remember when you were a kid and your elementary school raised money to help build a school in some other country? You brought in your nickels and dimes and contributed to the pot of money, and felt good to make a difference. Today, kids are still donating to worthy causes, but in their classroom, they are seeing live feeds or YouTube videos of schools being built, or they are getting updated via a Flickr account or Twitter handle that was specifically created to keep people informed.

Social media is making it easier for organizations to embrace transparency. Craig Kielburger of Free the Children wrote recently, "[The Internet] has changed expectations around reporting. People don't want to just write a general check anymore [that goes] into some giant fund that they don't get to see the impact of...It demands an accountability of organizations and it demands an effectiveness of organizations that otherwise isn't there."

One More Benefit: FUNDRAISING

While social media can be used to show what you're doing with your organization's money, the question of how social media can help raise money is likely one of great interest. And why not? By this point you've likely carved out time that you would spend elsewhere for your organization to focus on a social media strategy. Remember: getting people to like your Facebook page is good thing; getting people to give money is even better.

You're in luck; social media has become an absolute game-changer for nonprofit fundraising. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- ◆ **Nurture your community.** While social media can be great for helping you raise money, don't use it solely for that. It's easy to fall in the habit of constantly asking for donations via your social media sites, but that doesn't do much in way of enhancing your organization with new members or donors. Use your social sites to create new relationships and strengthen existing ones. Grow your community and the donations will happen.
- ◆ **Appeal to emotions.** Facts about your watershed or statistics about pollution reduction are great, and you should be able to recite those in your sleep, but they are abstract and very hard to make personal. Use social media to tell the human aspect of your work to attract and inspire potential volunteers or donors.

- ◆ **Be an expert.** You know your watershed and your work better than anyone, thus you're a leader in the national and international water resource protection field. Use social media to turn your organization into an authority. Connect with other organizations nationally and globally; in turn you will increase your reach and you will start to see the benefits of sharing information.

- ◆ **Try something new.** Chances are you already have fundraisers or events that help you raise funds. While you should connect those existing events with your social media outreach, try creating a special social media specific event or project. You never know when something will catch fire and "go viral."

Social media is fun, helpful, and if done strategically, can really cut costs and save time. Keep in mind that there is an array of services at your fingertips, with more coming online every day. It's wise to keep your finger on the pulse of what's out there, but very dangerous to think you have to be on all of them all the time. Social media is meant to complement your outreach, communication and fundraising strategy, not replace it.



What is Groupon Grassroots? A new way to discover local causes, rally together, and lend a helping hand

- **Find your cause.** Groupon Grassroots showcases a variety of community projects you can support, from helping a local school stock up on supplies to growing a neighborhood garden that provides access to healthy food.
- **Do it together.** Collective action powers every campaign Groupon Grassroots features and unites you with enough supporters to accomplish amazing things that couldn't be done alone.
- **Keep it local.** With a little effort, you can make a big difference in your neighborhood. Projects you support will directly affect the schools, services and streets of your community.

Learn more at:
grassroots.groupon.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

	Tool	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn	Blogs
WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH IT	Text	X	X	X	X
	Photos	X	X	X	X
	Videos	X		X	X
	Tagging	X			X
	Sharing	X	X	X	
	Friending/Following	X	X	X	
	Rating				
	Reviewing				
	Commenting	X		X	X
	Checking In	X	X		
THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT IT	How You Can Use it	Customer service, PR, HR/recruiting, building personal relationships with customers, encouraging fans to share your stuff, driving site/blog traffic	Customer service, PR, HR/recruiting, building personal relationships with customers, encouraging fans to share your stuff, driving site/blog traffic	Professional networking, PR, HR/recruiting	Share your industry expertise, help your site rank better with the search engines, control your business's online reputation
	No-Nos	Oversharing (keep those party photos off your business/organization's page)	One-way conversations that don't listen and respond to others	Spamming Groups with pitches for your business	Letting them die; keep that content coming
	High-Profile Users	Nike, Coke, the <i>New York Times</i> , <i>NPR</i> , Dalai Lama	Lady Gaga, Anderson Cooper, Steve Case	Barack Obama, Bill Gates	Seth Godin, Bill Marriott
	How Big is It?	800 M users (worldwide)	350 M users (worldwide)	150 M users (worldwide)	152 M users (worldwide)
	In One Word	Ubiquitous	Easy	Professional	Storytelling

SITE COMPARISON

Flickr	YouTube	Yelp	Foursquare
		X	X
X		X	X
X	X	X	
		X	
X	X		X
X	X		X
	X	X	
	X	X	X
X	X	X	X
		X	X
Give your customers/ supporters another way to find you in search, showing instead of telling—especially good for hospitality, restaurants, retail	Give your customers/ supporters another way to find you in search, showing instead of telling—especially good for hospitality, restaurants, retail	Control your organization's/ business's online reputation, stay on top of customer sentiment, customer service	Offer deals for customers/ supporters near you, give your customers/supporters another way to find you (through proximity)
Failing to tag your photos	Bad sound quality, lack of valuable content	Posting positive reviews under a pseudonym	Checking in everywhere all the time; you don't need to be mayor of a parking lot
The Smithsonian, the British Monarchy, the White House	GEICO, Old Spice, Justin Bieber		Bravo TV, <i>The New York Times</i>
51 M users (worldwide)	120 M monthly U.S. visitors	25 M reviews; 66 M monthly visitors	15 M users (worldwide)
Pictures	Movies	Opinions	Proximity

Influencing Public Policy in the Digital Age

by Alliance for Justice
www.afj.org

Online communications and social media offer nonprofit organizations new, inexpensive, and easy-to-use tools for connecting with members of the public in a more personal way than ever before. When using the Internet and social media, however, nonprofit organizations find themselves facing an increasing array of laws and regulations.

The Alliance for Justice produced a guide aiming to answer the questions nonprofit managers often face regarding the Internet and social media. Below are answers to some frequently asked questions. Additional questions and answers—as well as all relevant citations—can be viewed by downloading the report in its entirety.



May our 501(c)(3) website provide links to candidates' websites?

A 501(c)(3) website may link to candidates' websites only if the links are presented in a neutral, unbiased manner that includes all candidates for a particular office. If the

501(c)(3) website indicates it is providing a link to signal its support for the candidate, that would constitute prohibited campaign intervention by the organization.

May a 501(c)(3) website include candidate endorsements?

No. An organization's website must follow the same rules that apply to the other communication channels used by the organization. Furthermore, a 501(c)(3) website may not indirectly provide information about favored candidates, such as by providing links where the context makes it clear that it is encouraging users to learn about specific candidates. Presenting links in a neutral manner, however, is permissible, such as on a webpage that provides links to all candidates for a given office, without indicating an organizational preference for any candidate.

May a 501(c)(3) organization sponsor an ad that doesn't support a candidate, but the ad sends people to a website that does?

If a 501(c)(3) organization is prohibited from doing something directly, it is prohibited from doing it indirectly. The 501(c)(3) may not avoid the prohibition on political intervention simply by engaging in a two-step process of directing people to another site that contains endorsements. This applies in the context of links from one website to another, and from one type of media to another, such as mailers or ads directing people to a website.

For appropriate citations and to view the document in its entirety, download the Alliance for Justice's free guide, *Influencing Public Policy in the Digital Age* www.afj.org/for-nonprofits-foundations/resources-and-publications/digital_age_public_policy.pdf.

May a 501(c)(3) public charity or 501(c)(4) organization use social media for lobbying?

Yes. Social media provide myriad inexpensive opportunities to influence legislation. Organizations may leverage the low cost of emails, web postings, Facebook, and other social media to maximize their lobbying influence.

Section 501(c)(3) public charities may lobby, but lobbying may not be more than an insubstantial part of the organization's activity. For an objective determination of whether lobbying is a substantial part of an organization's activity, charities may elect to use the "section 501(h) expenditure test" to measure their lobbying. More information regarding the section 501(h) expenditure test and the lobbying limits imposed on public charities is available in the Alliance for Justice publication, *Worry-Free Lobbying for Nonprofits*. The low cost of social media tools means a section 501(c)(3) organization may send numerous email alerts, status updates, or other efforts without exceeding the limits on its lobbying activities under the 501(h) expenditure test.

In addition to the limits imposed on "direct lobbying" communications to legislators and others, tax law imposes far stricter limits on "grassroots lobbying" aimed at the public. Communications on Facebook or a publicly accessible website that ask people to contact their legislators to support or oppose a particular bill will be considered grassroots lobbying. Under tax law, communications to an organization's members are treated as direct lobbying, rather than as grassroots lobbying, meaning that organizations may engage their members in more lobbying activities. Posts on Facebook, Twitter, and the like, which are not limited to an organization's members, will be



treated as grassroots lobbying even if the publicly accessible post encourages only the organization's members to engage in lobbying. Organizations that want to limit a lobbying communication to their own members, so the communication will be treated as direct lobbying, should use email, text messages, or password-protected websites, rather than a publicly accessible website.

It is important to keep in mind that the IRS may view certain communications about legislation or issues as political advocacy rather than lobbying. A tweet, text or email urging people to contact a particular senator about a certain piece of legislation may be viewed by the IRS as a political communication. Factors the IRS will examine include whether the communication mentions a candidate shortly before an election, whether it is targeted to voters in that election, whether it mentions a candidate's position on an issue that is a hot topic in the campaign, and whether the communication is tied to a specific upcoming legislative vote on the issue.

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PUBLIC POLICY IN THE DIGITAL AGE, CONT.

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May staff or guest bloggers support candidates on our 501(c)(3)'s blog? What about supporters or opponents who add comments to blog posts?

Treatment of blog comments is a difficult issue for nonprofit organizations. Blogs are an inexpensive way to broadcast an organization's message to a large audience, but monitoring a large and active blog can consume an enormous amount of staff resources, making this otherwise cheap resource too expensive to be cost-effective. The IRS has not answered this question, leaving organizations with little to help guide their decisions about how to approach blog comments. In the absence of IRS guidance, organizations may consider the following principles.

Staff postings: Because staff-written postings carry the imprimatur of the organization, they are likely to be attributed to the organization. This is the case even if the staff member writes the posting on his own time, without using organizational resources. Therefore, postings by staff on a 501(c)(3) website may not support or oppose candidates, or in any way violate the prohibition on campaign intervention. Staff postings on a 501(c)(4) website are permissible, so long as they comply with applicable campaign finance laws. Staff of a 501(c)(3) may post political content on a 501(c)(4) website if the two organizations have a written cost-sharing agreement in place, under which the 501(c)(4) pays for the staff member's time, ensuring that no 501(c)(3) funds are used for political advocacy.



Guest postings: It is unclear how the IRS would treat posts written by guest bloggers (i.e., individuals who are not employees or organization officials) on an organization's website. If the IRS follows precedents

in which it has permitted 501(c)(3) organizations to serve as a public forum for promoting ideas, it will not treat guest bloggers as speaking on behalf of the organization, provided the blog includes a disclaimer stating that the

views expressed are those of the guest bloggers and not necessarily those of the organization, that the organization does not endorse any political candidates, and that the commentaries are presented as a public service in the interest of informing the public.

It remains possible, however, that the IRS may treat a guest blogger's post as being speech by the organization. In a ruling relating to Internet activity, the IRS stated, "If an organization posts something on its web site that favors or opposes a candidate for public office, the organization will be treated the same as if it distributed printed material, oral statements or broadcasts that favored or opposed a candidate." This ruling did not include caveats saying a web posting would be acceptable if it contained appropriate disclaimers.

User Comments: Comments by the general public posted on an organization's blog likely will not be attributed to an organization if the organization allows comments to be posted regardless of political viewpoint. To avoid having comments attributed to the organization, the blog should include a prominent disclaimer stating that the views expressed

are those of the people making the comments and not necessarily those of the organization, that the organization does not endorse any candidates, and that the commentaries are presented as a public service in the interest of informing the public. An organization may delete comments that contain offensive language. However, if it deletes only some comments based on their political content and not all comments with political content, the organization may open itself to an accusation that it is promoting one political message over another.

What are the rules for “friending,” “liking” or “following” politicians?

While no specific “rules” regulate the friending or following of politicians, tax law and IRS regulations provide some principles to guide organizations. Section 501(c)(3) organizations may not intervene in elections, such as by showing bias against or preference for particular candidates. By taking action to friend or like a person on Facebook, the organization is signaling its approval of that person. If a 501(c)(3) organization

Do the IRS and FEC rules apply to social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and MySpace?

Social networking is uncharted territory for the IRS and FEC, but the agencies’ broader rules most likely apply to social networking sites just as they do to other communications channels. Organizations should assume that 501(c)(3)s may not use social networking sites to intervene in elections and that 501(c)(4) political activity must follow the relevant state or federal laws regarding corporate campaign contributions and independent expenditures.

The analysis in this section applies only to federal elections and elections in states whose campaign-finance laws do not treat communications with an organization’s members as a contribution. The analysis differs for state laws that do not include a membership communications exception



links to the profile of a political candidate as a Facebook “friend” or someone they “like,” the organization’s action likely shows a preference for that candidate over others. Whether the IRS would view “following” a person on Twitter as indicating approval for that person is unclear; organizations may follow someone simply to monitor what that person is saying, without passing judgment on the speaker.

Depending on the circumstances, the analysis may be different if the organization friends or likes the official government profile created by a public official, rather than that of a candidate. It may be preferable to connect to an official’s public profile rather than to a campaign

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PUBLIC POLICY IN THE DIGITAL AGE, CONT.

cont. from page 13 profile. In that situation, the IRS might view the organization as signaling approval for the politician's official actions but not passing judgment on the politician's election campaign, which may carry less risk. The analysis would be based on the specific facts and circumstances of the situation, such as the timing in relation to an election, whether the organization likes all members of a particular committee or delegation, comments by the organization on Facebook related to that official, and other factors. However, because friending or liking a public official may be viewed as akin to an endorsement of that person, it is possible the IRS would view any such action by a 501(c)(3) organization to be an impermissible political endorsement, even when done to a politician's official government page.

A 501(c)(4) organization, because it may engage in political activity, is not bound by these restrictions. A 501(c)(4) may friend, follow, or like any candidate. The costs involved (which are likely to be de minimis) may be subject to the jurisdiction's campaign finance laws and may need to be reported as an in-kind contribution or an independent expenditure.



What should we do if a candidate or another person tweets something about our 501(c)(3) organization that's political, or associates a political hashtag with our name?

An organization cannot control what others say about the organization in tweets, so there is no legal obligation to respond. The IRS likely would not say a 501(c)(3) organization has intervened in a political campaign in this situation because the organization is not responsible for the tweets. This situation is akin to a letter to the editor in which a candidate mentions the organization: The organization may respond to clear its name or to correct the record by informing the public that it does not support or oppose candidates, but it will not be penalized if it chooses to ignore the offending statement.



May our employees use their work email accounts to send their friends messages supporting candidates?

A 501(c)(3) may not allow its employees to use the organization's property to conduct political activity.



Alliance for Justice is a national association of more than 100 organizations dedicated to advancing justice and democracy. For over 30 years we have been leaders in the fight for a more equitable society on behalf of a broad constituency of environmental, consumer, civil and women's rights, children's, senior citizens' and other groups. Alliance for Justice is premised on the belief that all Americans have the right to secure justice in the courts and to have our voice heard when government makes decisions that affect our lives.



YouTube Tip

☒ **Act to Remove Offensive Comments**

While you can't stop trolls from adding nasty comments to your videos or channel, you have the power to delete offensive or spammy remarks from the worst offenders. Taking advantage of this option requires good judgement. It's obviously not a great idea to instantly remove any negative or critical comments, especially relevant ones, but you can certainly remove any spam or comments that use offensive language. If challenged over the removal, make a simple statement to the effect that such comments will not be tolerated. If you're getting seriously spammed or abused by a particular person, you can also block that user, but this should be a last resort. There are also options open to you to moderate comments before they go live, so you can nip any nasties in the bud before they are posted.

Creating a Social Media Policy

by Ben Stuart
& Andrea Berry
Idealware
www.idealware.org

As nonprofits have increasingly turned to social media, policies to govern their use have become the new frontier. It can be difficult for organizations to find examples that fit their needs. A good social media policy will provide clear guidelines as to what staff should and shouldn't do when posting and interacting with the community on a day-to-day basis, freeing them up to think more strategically. But what's involved in creating one?

A good social media campaign or engagement strategy can help your organization fulfill its mission, and there are many examples of nonprofits using these tools successfully for everything from fundraising and volunteer recruitment to building awareness. But there are also examples of organizations that have encountered pitfalls along the way to an effective social media presence.

How do you avoid such a fate? By developing a policy that provides guidelines for how and when to use social media, you can save staff time, improve the effectiveness of your efforts, and limit the risk of other potential problems before they arise.

What your policy covers, and to what extent, will vary based on your particular needs, but the foundation is the same. Let's look at the different components one at a time.

Defining Policy within Your Organization

What should your social media policy say and do? That's going to depend on your organization's particular needs. For some nonprofits, a policy should spell out what staff can and cannot do on different social media channels by creating strategically

defined roles governed by hard-and-fast rules. For others, a policy is a vision statement that guides staff, but empowers them to make decisions for themselves.

Which is right for your organization will depend on whether your day-to-day work includes legal risks, privacy concerns, or other potentially risky situations. Do you have lawyers sign off on all policy documents? Do they take the lead in drafting policy? If not, informal guidelines—or something in-between—might be a better fit.

Before you write the plan, think about who is going to follow the policy and whether it fits into a larger plan, like an employee handbook. Existing policies could influence your guidelines for social media, so give some thought to whether they need to match with regard to style.

As an example of this, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, a global humanitarian organization, built its policy around its strengths—the volunteers who carry out the day-to-day work in the field. Many of those people have their own social media presences on Twitter or Facebook or blogs. The goal was to embrace the nature of volunteerism and empower people rather than restricting them. The organization could not guide what its volunteers said online, but it *could* ask them to think about what the organization would do and make suggestions.

Similarly, your social media policy is your opportunity to guide staff toward a better fit you're your organization's brand and values presence on social media. Some guidelines should be broad—for example, encouraging people to add value and be passionate about what they say—while others may more specific, like requiring staff to use a disclaimer distinguishing

their own personal views from those of the organization.

Identifying and Incorporating Values

The process of developing a social media policy gives you the opportunity to reflect on and organize your external voice and communication values. Think of your social media presence as an interactive extension of your organization. It's often the first and easiest way for stakeholders to learn about you and comment on, share, and applaud your actions—and sometimes, criticize them.

Start with your organization's mission, and identify a short list of values central to the work you do. Examples might include friendliness, collaboration, integrity or sustainability. Defining your core values helps ensure that you incorporate them into your social media guidelines—for example, if

“responsiveness” is a core value for your organization, it makes sense to focus on listening to what others are saying in your community and make it a priority to respond in a quick and informative manner.

Assigning Roles

Who will be the person interacting with your community through social media? Who maintains the Twitter feed, and who posts to Facebook? Is it one person, or several? Who is responsible

for finding content? Well-defined roles and responsibilities among staff will help to eliminate the ambiguity that can often come with social media content creation.

Some staff may have great stories to tell, but don't know how or if they should post them. Remember, social media works best when it is current, active and responsive—it's easier to allow for that when everyone is clear about who can post, when and how often. It's often easier to keep content organized if the social media strategy is owned by an individual or small group.



Creating and Sharing Content

Whether you're posting about your organization's work or events, or sharing interesting information related to your field, there are plenty of topics to post about—use your policy to narrow your focus to fit with your core values or organizational goals. There's a lot of content floating around the internet. By finding your niche and creating or sharing mission-related content, you're more likely to draw people in and

entice them to return, and more likely to find the right audience for your nonprofit.

This is also the time to consider what types of content should never be posted, or posted only with approval. This can be as simple as maintaining a certain image for your organization, or as complex as protecting it from legal problems. For example, health-related nonprofits subject to the Health Information Portability and Accountability ACT (HIPAA) should make sure health records and information that might inadvertently identify patients

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CREATING A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY, CONT.

cont. from page 17 or clients is protected. Other 501(c)(3) organizations might be concerned with activities that could be considered lobbying as they could endanger the foundation's nonprofit status.

If your nonprofit is concerned with such issues, a conservative policy can make sure no one oversteps the bounds. A good policy that defines what can and can't be posted can help prevent problems from arising.



Monitoring Conversations and Responding to Comments

Social media is a two-way conversation, so your policy should not just inform external communications—what your organization says, and how you say it—but how you deal with what people say to, and about, you. Creating and publishing content means it's open to comments, both good and bad, and can be shared with other networks—often without your knowledge. How do you control your reputation and your brand?

You could choose to disable comments on your Facebook page, but then you'd miss out on one of social media's greatest benefits. Instead, develop a strategy for

monitoring and responding to comments, both positive and negative. Who will respond? Will you do it public or take the discussion offline? Every comment is an opportunity to further craft your organization's personality and reputation and build relationships. Responding thoughtfully can turn a bad situation into a positive "customer service" moment and publicly correct misinformation.

A good way to develop a response policy is to practice with a series of hypothetical situations. How will you respond to posts that contain inaccurate information, vulgar or inflammatory language, or information that purposely or inadvertently identifies clients in a way that breaches their privacy?

Answering hypothetical questions will prepare you for real ones.

There are general guidelines to start with. If you receive a complaint you can turn into a customer service moment, or a post with misinformation in it, you should take the opportunity to respond. Determine who will do so, and what they will say. Consider removing comments that will damage your community or that include vulgar or inflammatory language. Some negative posts are better left unanswered, especially if a response is likely to incite the poster into further action.

Don't just reply to negative comments—be a part of the conversation and reply to positive or neutral comments to create a rich, informative environment for your audience. Answer questions that arise, invite others into the conversation, and thank people for participating. Your responses put a human quality to your content and can create a feeling of good will in your community. Let your organization's core values and mission inform your response policy.

Protecting Privacy

In an era where sharing content is so easy, and even encouraged, privacy concerns seem to be often overlooked or ignored. Part of the problem lies with the tools—new privacy complaints about Facebook and Twitter seem to pop up all the time—but it's important to review your organization's privacy and permissions policies, especially if you work in areas like healthcare or children's services.

Start by examining your existing policies for relevant information. When can you use photos of children or names of clients, and do you need their permission? Update your policies and waiver forms to include the social media channels you plan to use—there's a big difference between getting someone's permission to use their photo on a brochure, and using that same photo in a blog post or on your Facebook page. Photos or videos posted on social media can be widely shared, and often will.

Protecting Rights to Content

This is also the time to look at how you attribute the content you share, and how you copyright the content you create. Weigh the value of keeping complete control of your content against the value of sharing. Some nonprofits copyright all material and ask permission for others to share it, while others adopt a more open approach that lets others repost freely. The latter, called a "Creative Commons license," lets you maintain some control over how your content is used by setting guidelines for attribution and whether other users can modify your content or use it for commercial use. (See the Creative Commons website to learn more.)

Which approach is right for you? Again, this decision should be informed by your

organization's nature, and whether you're concerned with legal issues or interested in being open. Remember, this is a two-way street, as well—make sure you follow the rules and ask permission before reposting content you did not create, if necessary. It's OK to link to something as long as you don't pass the content off as your own, but do not assume anything you find online is free to repost. How can you craft your policy to ensure that you are respecting copyright restrictions?

Finding and Enforcing the Line between Personal and Professional

Social media lets you put a human face on your organization, making it easier to connect with constituents who, in turn, can become champions for your cause. In many cases, you want your social media presence to be as personal as possible. But you can run into problems when the line between the personal lives of your staff and your organization's goals is blurred.

What type of personal information can be posted to your organization's social media channels? Do you only allow mission-related posts, or can staff express personal opinions or share information about major life events, such as weddings and birthdays? Defining the boundaries in advance can prevent inadvertent problems, but make sure your staff understands how the policy relates to their own, personal social media use. If they link to your organization's page, or speak about the inner workings of your nonprofit on their personal pages, their audience might not distinguish their personal posts from your organization's posts.

There's a fine line to walk here—you can't enforce regulations for what staff do in their free time, but you can

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CREATING A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY, CONT.

cont. from page 19 encourage them to adhere to organizational best practices and to represent your nonprofit's culture and goals. The legal boundaries in this area are evolving almost as fast as the technology itself. If you have concerns about this aspect of your policy, it might be worth contacting your lawyer to make sure you define the risks and find the appropriate way to prevent them.



Even if staff don't self-identify as employees on their Twitter feeds or Facebook pages, in most cases, a good number of people still know where they work. To address that, your policy might train staff on the effective use of social media, and ask them to adopt strict privacy settings on personal pages. You might also encourage a "What would your mother think?" approach to posts. Each organization should decide whether it's necessary to dictate how personal pages reflect upon the nonprofit as a whole, and make it clear to employees what that separation is.



Twitter Tip

☒ **Add short links in your tweets**

Adding links to your website will drive traffic through to your site, however with only 140 characters it's important to use a short URL, many sites can do this for you for free such as <http://tinyurl.com>.

Creating Your Policy

You can't foresee or protect against all possibilities, but being proactive and thoughtful when creating a policy can help ensure that your organization gets the most benefit out of its social media efforts while avoiding many of the problems. The return on your efforts is likely to be worth the extra consideration.

So how do you go about crafting an appropriate policy? Start by identifying your team, and make sure all the right stakeholder groups are represented. Ask and answer the questions identified here to help get the conversation started, but don't hesitate to ask other questions specific to your organization's work and goals. Your policy should ultimately fit your own use of social media, and your own needs.



CASE STUDY

Making Clear Choices for Clean Water

Clear Choices, Clean Water (CCCW) is a social marketing campaign to increase community awareness about choices we make and the impact they have on our streams and lakes. Water quality friendly lawn care includes practices such as using phosphorus-free fertilizer, landscaping with native plants, managing yard and pet wastes, and properly maintaining septic systems. By educating individuals on these important actions and giving them the tools they need to make these essential changes in their own yards, we empower them to do their part for water quality.

The campaign employs an online pledge system, interactive website at www.ClearChoicesCleanWater.org and an advertising initiative. The advertising campaign includes both mass media (postcards, radio promotions, television commercials, billboards), and social media outreach including Facebook, targeted Facebook advertising and radio loyalty clubs.

Clear Choices Clean Water strives to give everyone a chance to help protect and improve water quality and to make that process as easy, popular, and as inspiring as possible. The campaign consists of two complementary goals:

1. Increasing Awareness and Knowledge:

Mass media helped us reach the masses (millions of impressions in 3 months), but measuring the actual impact is imprecise. We don't know if the people who saw or heard the radio and TV ads or billboards paid attention, learned anything, or altered their behavior. We also know that we had 11,733 visits to the website in 15 months. This number is slightly more meaningful since they had to make a conscious choice to go to the site.

- 2. Increasing the number of Online Pledges:** Between September 2011 and December 2012, more than 1,800 *Clear Choice* pledges were made online. The implementation of the pledged actions results in the prevention of 113,875 pounds of phosphorus from our waterways, and thus decreases algae by 51.6 million pounds.

by Lyn Crighton
Tippecanoe Watershed
Foundation
tippecanoewatershed.org

How We Did It

People feel good about making a positive difference. We tell them the problem, but we also tell them how they can be part of the solution. After taking a pledge, they receive immediate email feedback about how much pollution they will prevent from entering their local waterbodies. They get to see their name and location on an interactive map—providing further affirmation that they are doing their part. And they get an easy, low-pressure way to encourage their friends, family and neighbors to do their part by way of email invitations, Facebook status updates and Twitter feeds. Peer pressure is a wonderful weapon of influence—and the magic for using social media in social marketing.

We utilized two additional tools that are an interesting mix of mass media and social media.

- ◆ **Facebook Ads** - The first time we tried Facebook ads, we paid \$1.20 per click (you only pay when people click and you determine the amount up front). We didn't get many clicks at all. We reevaluated our ads and increased the rate per click to \$3 with a maximum of \$18/day in the next round. We maxed out every day. Paying more improves placement, which proved to be much more effective.

Social marketing seeks to influence behaviors not to benefit a business or sell a product, but to “sell” an idea, attitude or behavior to benefit society.



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MAKING CLEAR CHOICES FOR CLEAN WATER, CONT.

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◆ **Radio Loyalty Clubs** – Some people feel connected to their favorite radio station; it is part of their identity, like what kind of car they drive. Many radio stations (especially in large urban areas) have created robust online social communities through their own websites. When loyalty club members take certain actions (i.e., taking a survey, clicking a web link) they earn points; points are then redeemed for chances to win prizes (i.e., concert tickets, gift cards, CDs, etc.).



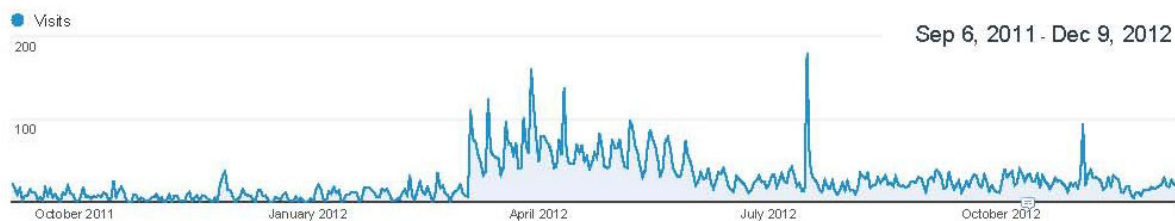
One of the major radio companies (Entercom) has an environmental sustainability campaign in each of their major metropolitan areas called **1Thing**. *Clear Choices Clean Water* became the “1Thing” for Indianapolis for three months (April – June), at the cost of \$3,750 per month. Sponsorship included radio ads on two radio stations, ads on all three station’s websites and Facebook pages, a huge presence on the <http://indianapolis.1thingus.com/site> (banner ads, surveys, blog, mass e-blast) and participation in their radio loyalty club with interactive tools. Entercom’s loyalty club in Indianapolis has 28,000 members.

Lessons Learned

Lessons learned are somewhat obvious, but sometimes the obvious is worth repeating.

1. **Collaborate with Partners to Increase Size of Your Network (Sing to your Choir)** – Utilizing your network of friends, colleagues, and partner organizations to spread your messages is simple and effective. The biggest benefit of Facebook has been connections with like-minded organizations. When our partner organizations “like” our page, they are likely to re-post our messages on their pages—thus spreading information across their network of loyal followers. People are more likely to pay attention when information comes from someone they already connect with.
2. **It’s Easiest to Get Your Message Out to the Choir.** Those who already have an interest in the environment or are actively engaged in natural resource protection (be it a river, lake, or nature preserve) are more likely to take notice when they see our mass media ads or social media messages. They are more likely to click a link, spend time visiting multiple pages on the website, and of course, take a pledge!

Daily visits to www.ClearChoicesCleanWater.org



- When we were successful in getting new audiences to the website via Facebook ads or radio loyalty club gimmicks, the visitors only spent a fraction of the time on the site—which means that opportunity for increased awareness and learning was lessened. The loyalty clubs were *really* effective in driving people to our website, but judging from the data they may not have spent enough time or viewed enough pages of information at the website to really get *why* they were there.

Source	Ave. # Pages Viewed	Ave # Minutes	% of Visits
Link from a Sponsor's Website	5.68	5.83	3 %
Google Search or Direct Link	3.0	2.50	61 %
Link from Radio Club Website	2.49	2.83	23 %
Facebook.....	1.69	1.00	5 %
Average for All Visits to Site	2.81	2.35	100 %

- Incentives work!** The most effective way to get people to pledge was to provide them with a freebie or even the chance to win a prize. In one case we can pinpoint the day when one town's newsletter came out announcing a free rain barrel to anyone who pledged. Seventy percent of visitors to the site that month came from one community!
- A Social Media Plan is Essential.** Using social media can take a lot of time—probably more than you think! Do you hear that giant time-sucking sound? Before engaging in a campaign using social media, consider how much time, effort and money you want to put into it. Determine who is responsible for posts, how often, and how responses to comments will be handled. Brainstorm topics and have a timeline in place. If you ignore this step, your Facebook page may sit lonely striving to reach even 100 “likes.” Or alternately, your staff or volunteer could spend hours, days, and weeks doing nothing more than becoming addicted to Facebook.

Up Next

New for 2013, we are developing a marketing initiative with a set of pre-packaged social media tweets, status updates, photos, graphics, and links to share with our *Clear Choices Clean Water* partners and sponsors—utilizing that network that is already singing to the choir.



Always wanting to highlight the experiences and knowledge of our Partners, we asked organizations to share any unexpected surprises and/or results they've had from using social media. Here's what we learned:

River Watch of Colorado is an organization that brings many kinds of people together due to the nature of our work: volunteers testing our water ways. We have teachers who work with kids in schools, we have mentors with an interest in our waterways who also take part in our program. Each and every person who is involved has their own reason and their own things they gain from the program. This past 6 months we have begun to reach out to all of our members using Facebook, YouTube and our website. We have had a Facebook page for some time but had not really utilized it much. We have been delighted with the ways in which we can use Facebook to get all of our members engaged in River Watch online. Facebook has given us a way to introduce our staff and to let people know just how much work goes into the program. We have used Facebook, our website and our YouTube Channel in sync to introduce our members and coalition groups to some of our River Heroes, our trainings and the depth of involvement of most of our members. The growth of our engagement online is now organic! The one most unexpected gift of our social media presence is a sense that we now have a community of people statewide who can engage with one another. As an organization we know we are not only helping to protect our waterways and introduce kids to conservation, science and nature but we are also able to help like-minded people connect: kids, teachers, mentors and coalition groups alike. We are in this together and we are involved for many different reasons. Facebook has helped us beyond our wildest dreams reach out to a new community.

River Watch of Colorado (CO)

Website: www.coloradoriverwatch.org

YouTube: [RiverwatchColorado](https://www.youtube.com/RiverwatchColorado) YouTube

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ColoradoRiverWatch



One recent surprise was when I received a shout-out via Twitter from a national organization thanking my organization for a publication we had put out many months earlier. I really appreciated knowing that someone found it useful enough to re-advertise in that way. As a local activist, I've appreciated when other groups live tweet from a public hearing that I can't attend. For example, when Wisconsin was in the throes of a battle over mining legislation last year, live tweeting from the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters allowed me to check in later in the day and receive spirited play-by-play reporting of the sort that is almost never reflected in the mainstream media.

The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread (WI)

Website: www.johnsonfdn.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TJFWingspread

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TJFWingspread>

The most unexpected thing with social media for us, is that nearly everyone following us on those forums is *only* following us on those forums. They are not in our database, or on our mailing list, and they don't generally want to be involved in that way. Also, that for certain things they respond very well, like our annual cleanup. We are still working on understanding what people are looking for through those forums, and the best ways to move them to active engagement.



Prescott Creeks (AZ)

Website: www.prescottcreeks.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/PrescottCreeks
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PrescottCreeks>

One unexpected surprise from social media is that after one year (we are now almost two years into it), we discovered that people were going to our Facebook page 2 to 1 over our website (a website valued at \$8,000, though we were charged only half). I was shocked.

Social media is a great way to disseminate information very quickly. I have my Twitter account on my phone set up so when I tweet, it not only goes to Twitter, but also posts on Facebook, LinkedIn and our website. Just one tweet. I usually include a link to an article for more information if people want it. Once it is set up, it is very easy to do and you can keep people engaged much more frequently than a listserv which is much more formal and takes a lot more time to do.

Twitter allows you to personalize your organization, staff and projects. This is a strategy that all watershed groups can use to their benefit to engage people locally in their issues, quickly recruit volunteers or event participants, and/or have a dialogue about river issues that would never happen over a listserv or via announcements on websites.

Yadkin Riverkeeper (NC)

Website: www.yadkinriverkeeper.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Yadkin-Riverkeeper
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/yadkinriverkeeper>



One unexpected surprise of using Facebook is that our fans or followers or whatever you call them are all ages. Facebook doesn't cater to just a younger population anymore. We have tweens and 70-somethings on our list.

Johnson Creek Watershed Council (OR)

Website: www.jcwc.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/JohnsonCreekWC

Measuring & Monitoring Social Media

by Andrea Berry &
Chris Bernard
Idealware
www.idealware.org

Sure, you're on Facebook. Twitter, too. Maybe you have a blog. You put a lot a lot of work into keeping them fresh and updated with pertinent, interesting posts. But aside from the few comments you get now and again, how do you know if anyone is listening to what you have to say?

You think hard about your social media strategy, posting interesting links relevant to your mission, working to expand your network and engage your constituents and create a solid, online reputation for your organization. You want to monitor your efforts and measure your results. Knowing whether your efforts are paying off can help you adapt your posting strategy to better meet your goals.

Monitoring your social media activities means listening to what people are saying to you, about you, and in your area of interest. Measuring them means counting, calculating and quantifying those activities into useful metrics that will inform your actions. These are separate and distinct practices that rely on each other to succeed. Finding the right tools to meet your needs in this area can save long hours of work.

When it comes to the big three of social media—Facebook, Twitter and blogs—this can be done for no cost whatsoever, or for a significant investment. It all depends on what you want to track and measure. Every day, more and more tools join a substantial number of choices already on the marketplace.

We talked to a number of social media experts to find out which tools they use, and which they recommend. We then condensed their advice into this article.

Gathering Data

The process of gathering data, as well as what data you gather, differs for each channel. In Facebook, you focus on three main areas: likes, comments and links on posts, and shares. If someone “likes” your page, you know they’re listening to you. When followers add comments to your posts, you’ve made the conversation two-way by engaging them. And when they share your posts with their Facebook friends, you’ve expanded your audience.

Gathering this information helps you understand what people are doing on Facebook, and how to tap into it. Twitter is similar—engagement is a more accurate measure of your influence than follower count. Do followers retweet your posts, or share information of relevance and interest to your organization and constituents? Measure engagement against the time you spend on the site to get a sense of the channel’s value.

Blogs are a great way to share expertise and knowledge while getting your organization’s name out into the world. Who is reading yours? What keywords brought them there? What sites did they come from? Such information can help you figure out what readers want.

There are a number of valuable tools to help with each of these goals, ranging from free to more than \$1,000 a month. They’ll track almost anything, but simplicity is key. You can do plenty with a couple of well-considered free or affordable tools, and you’re better off being smart about what you’re collecting.

Non-Specific Tools

In fact, you might already be using tools that will work perfectly well for limited monitoring—for free. Your favorite search engine—Google, Bing, Yahoo! or others—

can provide a glimpse of where your name is popping up online, and help you find conversations to join. This is basic monitoring at its simplest.

Another simple but useful tool, [Google Alerts](#) will email you online mentions of keywords—for example, your organization's name. Set as many alerts as you want to clue you in to mentions on blogs, websites, other people or organizations' Facebook pages or Twitter accounts, or in the media.

Though [Google Analytics](#) was designed to track traffic and referral data, it can also help you better understand your blog's audience, and monitor traffic to your website from all your social media channels. What posts interest readers enough to click through?

Finally, most social media channels offer some built-in or third-party way to analyze your activity. Facebook Insights is a reasonably powerful tool available to any organization whose page has at least 30 fans. Twitter platforms like [Hoot Suite](#) and [Tweet Deck](#) provide basic metrics. And most blogs can be effectively measured with a combination of the blogging site's built-in metrics, [FeedBurner](#) and web analytics.

Aggregating Tools

For more streamlined or automated monitoring, an entire group of aggregating tools on the market help keep an eye on multiple aspects of your social media efforts—many of them, like those mentioned here, for free.

[Social Mention](#) aggregates any mention of keywords from more than 100 social media sites. Similarly, [Nutshell Mail](#) tracks your brand's social media activity and delivers a summary to your email inbox on a schedule you set.

[RowFeeder](#) creates reports by tracking keywords, hashtags (discussion threads marked with a # in Twitter) or usernames on Twitter and Facebook. [Currently](#) collects mentions of keywords on Twitter and Facebook. [Addict-o-matic](#) searches the web for the latest news, blog posts, videos and images based on your keywords or name and creates a page with what it finds—you can customize the page, and bookmark it for future use.

Monitoring Dashboards

Monitoring dashboards let you see the big picture of your social media presence by displaying a number of different metrics or similar items in a single place.

[iGoogle](#), Google's free offering, creates a start page that you personalize with RSS feeds, news readers, and other gadgets, plus custom searches and access to Gmail and calendar. Similarly, [NetVibes](#) collects the blogs, RSS feeds, Facebook and Twitter feeds, YouTube

A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO HIGHLIGHTED RESOURCES

Addict-o-matic: www.addictomatic.com
AllFacebookStats: www.allfacebookstats.com
Booshaka: www.booshaka.com
FeedBurner: www.feedburner.google.com
Google Alerts: www.google.com/alerts
Google Analytics: www.google.com/analytics
Hoot Suite: hootsuite.com
iGoogle: www.google.com/ig
Klout: www.klout.com
Kurrently: www.kurrently.com
Lithium: www.lithium.com
Netvibes: www.netvibes.com
Nutshellmail: www.nutshellmail.com
Radian 6: www.radian6.com
RowFeeder: www.rowfeeder.com
Social Mention: www.socialmention.com
Spredfast: www.spredfast.com
Thrive: www.smallact.com/software/thrive
Tweet Deck: www.tweetdeck.com

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MEASURING & MONITORING SOCIAL MEDIA, CONT.

cont. from page 27 channels and other items you select into a single page—the slogan is “Dashboard everything.”

You can also create a customized monitoring dashboard by strategically using RSS feeds from your social media channels in conjunction with feeds from Google Alerts and other tools. Whether you use a dashboard or a tool that emails updates to your inbox is a matter of preference, but it's worth trying both methods to see which is the best fit for you.

TOP 25 SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT TOOLS

If you perform an online search for “social media tools,” you're sure to be overwhelmed by the dizzying array of results that you'll get. That's the problem: The Internet is overrun with these kinds of tools. Instead of enduring all of the trial and error for yourself, you should check out the following list. In it, you'll find 25 shining examples of today's best social media tools.

www.leapgo.com/blog/bid/110262/Top-25-Social-Media-Management-Tools

Channel-Specific Tools

Each social media channel has engendered a subset of very specific tools. Tools that pull together and calculate specific measurements can provide some of the sophisticated metrics you want from an expensive tool for free, and offer detailed insight into a small section of your social media activities to inform the focus of your efforts, or how you manage your engagement activities.

Klout measures your Twitter influence. *Booshaka* measures Facebook fan interactions. *AllFacebookStats.com* (soon to be renamed ‘quintly’ and integrate Twitter and YouTube stats) collects general Facebook page data and calculates change rates and other complicated statistics.

Higher End Tools

Many free tools offer expanded functionality for a small monthly or one-time fee—and once you start looking at these options, and at other tools that cost money, the market grows more broadly. Mid- and high-level tools, sometimes called social media management tools, offer a wide array of metrics and analysis not possible with the free or lower-end tools. These powerful analytics are also expensive, and can cost anywhere from \$10 to more than \$1,500 a month.

Small Act's *Thrive* and *Spredfast*, both at the low-to-middle-end of the scale, offer fairly comprehensive pictures of your social media activities and allow you to manage accounts, develop relationships with stakeholders and measure overall effectiveness.

At the higher-end of the price scale are *Radian 6* and *Lithium*, which measure influence, deliver comparisons to competitors and data on your market share, and provide tangible methods of improving. Both platforms offer nonprofit discounts.

Choosing the Right Ones

Whether your organization decides to spend money on these tools or ops for the free ones, you've got plenty of choices. How do you decide?

First, determine whether social media gains would generate enough of a return on your investment to make it worth investing in the higher-end, more-expensive tools. Consider what kind of return you need to see for them to pay for themselves, and whether there's another way to achieve it.

In either case, there's no need to go for the biggest, baddest tool right away until you know exactly what you'll need. It's less important which tools you use than that you use some at all, and that you adapt your methods and practices based on what you learn.

Spend some time planning. Determine your goals and the data you'll need to gather to reach them—what do you want to know at the end of the process? Then, select the tools to help get you there, and work them into your daily or weekly processes to make them an iterative part of the way you work.



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10 THINGS

You're Doing Wrong with Social Media

You're on social media—maybe Facebook, Twitter or your organization's blog—and you're having some success, but you know there's room for improvement. Before you start strategizing big plans for what you might do with the tools, take a little time to consider what you're already doing with it, and whether you're making common mistakes that are needlessly hindering your progress. Here are 10 such mistakes you can turn around with a little effort for quick, improved results.

1. Not telling people you're on social media.

If you build it, they will come—possibly true of a baseball field in an Iowa corn field, but definitely not true of a social media presence. Take every opportunity to let people know. Include your Twitter handle and links to your Facebook page on your website and in the signature on your email, link to them in your newsletters and other communications, and publicize them at events. Use Twitter and Facebook as opportunities to comment on other peoples' posts, as well, which is a good way to establish a presence in the community.

2. Not integrating social media with your communications mix.

Your organization's communications efforts may include broadcast emails, direct mail, maybe newsletters or some other outreach—these should not occur in a vacuum independently of your social media efforts. Consider them all part of the same overall strategy and make sure they tie together well.

3. Not integrating social media with your website to get people to take action.

You've got a website with contact info and other useful resources for constituents, maybe photos, staff bios, program descriptions, or donate buttons for fundraising. Why not link to it from your social media posts? Once you've engaged people, send them to your website to mobilize them to give, volunteer, or otherwise represent you and your cause.

4. You're not thinking about the channel you're using.

Each social media channel (e.g., service) is a little different, with different rules, etiquette and protocol. It's important to recognize and abide by these rules. Twitter posts should be succinct, but you can post a half-dozen times a day or more. It's a two-way conversation, and that means interacting with others, sharing links and resources, and giving credit where credit is due. Facebook, on the other hand, gives you a chance to stretch your legs with longer posts, better photo galleries and other ways to engage followers, but followers expect far fewer status updates—no more than two a day—and may find too many overwhelming. Don't confuse the two channels, and don't spam people by sending the same message on every tool without changing it to fit the medium.

5. Posting inconsistently.

Posting too much or too little is not the only mistake you can make. You can also post unpredictably or inconsistently. Instead of waking up and posting six items first thing in the morning and nothing else the rest of the day, spread them out. It's better to post twice a week over three weeks than six times the first week and then disappearing. People need to be reminded that you're there.

by [Chris Bernard](#)
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10 THINGS YOU'RE DOING WRONG WITH SOCIAL MEDIA, CONT.

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6. It's all about you—and you're not very interesting.

Sure, you're an organization, but organizations are groups of people, right? And let's face it, people find other people more interesting than organizations. For starters, don't be afraid to show a little personality. Don't send out blanket news feeds or public relations material. Put up photos and multimedia that can add depth and texture to your presence. Don't just promote your organization without providing other value. And don't ask too much, or too often. If you want to reach humans with your posts, you need to post as a human.

7. Making it “antisocial” media.

Remember that it's a two-way conversation. Holding up your end of that conversation is critical if you want to attract, engage and maintain a following. Take advantage of what each channel has to offer. Link to other people's resources, and make sure you give credit to the people or organizations that provided them. Comment on other people's posts, and reply when they comment on yours. Answer any questions people ask. Fail to do any of this and you're overlooking 50 percent of what the tool has to offer.

8. Posts are disconnected from your mission.

Social media is about outreach, but it's an extension of your organization—at least, it should be. What you're posting should be connected with your “brand,” or mission. Stay on topic. Your mission is what attracted people to your organization on social media in the first place, and it's what they're interested in.

9. Not respecting people's privacy.

This should be common sense, but the truth is, the Internet makes it easy to cross lines when it comes to people's privacy. Don't post photos of people or tag people in photos without their permission. This is especially true of children—get permission from their parents. Remember, too, that privacy doesn't apply just to photos. Before you post anything that mentions other people, think about what you're saying from their perspective.

10. Continuing to do things that aren't working.

You should have some way to know whether what you're doing is working or not—in other words, you should be measuring your social media efforts. You need to have specific goals for your social media and a way of measuring to know whether you're meeting them or not. If you don't adapt your efforts based on what you're learning, you're doomed to repeat your mistakes.

Rules are meant to be broken. Social media has rules, both formal and informal, and following them can help you make the most of these sites and all they have to offer your organization. Remember, though, that it's OK to break rules from time to time—as long as you have a compelling reason to do so. Use common sense. Think about the practices that annoy you when other people or organizations do them, and think about those that you like. Find a way to make the ones that resonate work for you. You're bound to make a few missteps—everyone does—but with a little consideration and thought, you can learn from them and improve your organization's message.



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40 Social Media Tips for Nonprofit Organizations

A

lthough social media marketing is just as important for nonprofit organizations as it is for traditional business, some of the tactics are slightly different. Below is a compiled list of some important social media tips for nonprofits to remember.

- 1 Remember: it's about sharing and discussing, not broadcasting.
- 2 Integrate social sharing buttons into your website so that visitors can pass along your content with just one (or a few) clicks.
- 3 Make social media someone's specific job. Assign responsibility to a person or group of people on your staff.
- 4 Deliver quality information via your social profiles. Users should feel that your tweets or Facebook posts are useful.
- 5 Research what organizations you admire are doing on social media.
- 6 Set up a Google Alert (www.google.com/alerts) for your organization's name to keep track of what people are saying.
- 7 Encourage employees to include your social media information in their email signatures.
- 8 Inspire people. Try to focus more on success stories than tales of tragedy, if possible.
- 9 Aim high, but stay realistic. Your social media campaign (probably) won't be an overnight success story.
- 10 Check out Twitter's hope140 (<http://hope140.org>) program.
- 11 Participate in Follow Fridays (#FF) by highlighting people or organizations accomplishing social good.
- 12 Reply and retweet often.
- 13 Use Twitter hashtags relevant to your cause. If one doesn't already exist, create a new one (but be absolutely sure one doesn't already exist).
- 14 Publicize volunteer opportunities.
- 15 Share photos. If relevant, ask followers to share photos. For example, @ASPCA often asks their followers to share photos of their rescue animals.
- 16 Create a custom Twitter background.
- 17 Compile a Twitter List of your employees, volunteers, corporate partners and supporters.

by Shama Kabani

The Marketing Zen Group

www.marketingzen.com



Twitter Tip

☒ **Before creating your hashtag**

Check to see if the hashtag you have in mind already exists and is in use. It is also very important to check if your desired hashtag has not taken on some other meaning. Twitter Search (twitter.com/search), Hashtags.org and Tagalus (twitter.com/tagalus) are some tools you can use to do a quick hashtag check.

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40 SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, CONT.

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- 18 Consider including “please RT” (e.g., “please retweet”) at the end of very important tweets that you’d like people to share.
- 19 Create a customized Facebook landing page with an email capture form.
- 20 Use Facebook’s Questions feature to poll your fans for their opinions.
- 21 Hold a photo or video contest so fans can submit user-generated content relevant to your mission.
- 22 Include your page rules in your “about” section, so fans know what they can and cannot post.
- 23 Create a partnership campaign – for every specific number of likes, a business will donate a fixed amount of money to your cause.
- 24 Apply to set up your YouTube account through the site’s nonprofit program (www.youtube.com/nonprofits).
- 25 Encourage your organization’s supporters to upload responses to your videos.
- 26 → Consider creating an internal social network for your employees.
- 27 Use QR codes (e.g., Quick Response Codes, otherwise known as bar codes) to direct mobile users to unique content and information.
- 28 Monitor and update your organization’s Wikipedia entry as needed.
- 29 Create a company page for your organization.
- 30 Create a LinkedIn group for your supporters.
- 31 Check out the nonprofit section of the LinkedIn Learning Center (<http://learn.linkedin.com/nonprofits>).
- 32 If you have a physical location, “claim” it on Foursquare, Facebook Places, Google Places, and even Yelp.
- 33 Apply to create a Foursquare Partner Badge (<http://learn.linkedin.com/nonprofits>).
- 34 Submit organization photos to relevant Flickr groups (www.flickr.com/groups).
- 35 Upload your photos to Flickr under the Creative Commons (www.flickr.com/creativecommons) program to allow for broader sharing.
- 36 Launch a photo petition, like the example from the National Wildlife Fund (<http://online.nwf.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=16949>).
- 37 Get familiar with Google+ Pages (www.google.com/+business) and their functionality.
- 38 Blog about the progress of your active projects, so donors can see where their money has gone.
- 39 Include a “call to action” at the end of your blogs, asking readers to comment or check out your other social media sites.
- 40 Read social media and tech blogs regularly to stay on top of the latest trends.

Resources and References

A quick look at some of the available online social media resources:

ARTICLES, REPORTS & RESOURCES

Alliance For Justice recently released a guide that walks you through the laws for charities as they relate to using social media.
http://bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Influencing_Public_Policy_in_the_Digital_Age.pdf

Idealware is a nonprofit that provides thoroughly researched, impartial and accessible resources about software to help other nonprofits make smart software decisions. From the most basic questions (like how to use software to help manage emailing hundreds of people at once), to the more complex (like understanding the role of social networking and mobile phone text-messaging in fundraising strategy), organizations need a trusted source for answers.

Visit www.idealware.org for scores of free articles, reports, online webinars and other resources to help you make the most of your time and financial resources.

- ◆ Link to Idealware's social media-related articles, reports and trainings search result: <http://bit.ly/VTrUf4>
- ◆ Links to social-media related articles on Idealware's site:

The Nonprofit Social Media Policy Workbook. From Facebook to Twitter to LinkedIn, nonprofits are flocking to social media, but not everyone is prepared for the challenges and ramifications of what you post—or how to manage the process. Who is allowed to tweet? Who can comment on your posts? How do you respond if someone says something mean about your organization? How do you make use of what social media offers while protecting your nonprofit and your constituents? <http://idealware.org/reports/nonprofit-social-media-policy-workbook>.

Building Your Social Media Fan Base. If you post a message on Twitter and no one's there to hear it, does it make a noise? The fact is, there isn't much reason to tweet if you don't have an audience—a fundamental truth of all social media channels. As you think about ways to engage constituents and advance your nonprofit and its mission through Facebook, Twitter and blogs, you should also be thinking about how to promote each channel and build your audience.
<http://idealware.org/articles/building-your-social-media-fan-base>

Measuring Your Social Media Success. Social media has provided nonprofits with a whole new toolbox for marketing themselves and engaging constituents. Though each tool is a little different, they all create opportunities for your organization to start conversations and to show the personal side of, and the personalities behind, your work. And though we are making huge strides as a sector to understand the most effective techniques and approaches to using these tools, we still have a lot to learn about one of the most important areas of social media: measurement.
<http://idealware.org/articles/measuring-your-social-media-success>

Mapping Your Mix: Are You Providing The Right Mix of Content? Odds are good that your organization is using multiple communications channels to reach people, from social media to direct mail and email to websites and blogs. Because each can attract a different audience, and may be better-suited for certain types and lengths of content, coordinating among them all can be difficult. You want to provide useful, interesting, mission-related information to use each channel successfully and meet the expectations of the people who follow you, but how do you keep each channel different enough to be interesting on its own without turning content-creation into a full-time job?
<http://idealware.org/articles/mapping-your-mix-are-you-providing-right-mix-content>

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RESOURCES & REFERENCES, CONT.

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John Haydon is the founder of **Inbound Zombie**, a social media strategy firm that helps nonprofits increase awareness, amplify engagement, and get more donations online. Visit his website to download resources, watch videos and sign up to stay informed about the latest research on fundraising, nonprofit success stories and technology you need to know about. www.johnhaydon.com

NationBuilder is the world's first Community Organizing System: an accessible, affordable, complete software platform that helps leaders grow and organize communities to achieve great things. Cost is based on records in your database. <http://nationbuilder.com/start>

Social Media Examiner, the world's largest online social media magazine, is designed to help businesses discover how to best use social media tools like Facebook, Google+, Twitter and LinkedIn to connect with customers, generate more brand awareness and increase sales.



Facebook Tip

✓ Short stories at Bedtime

According to Facebook, posts between 100 and 250 characters in length (or less than 3 lines of text) are often the most effective, garnering about 60 percent more likes, comments, and shares than ones that are longer. In addition, Facebook pointed out that user engagement for the 18-24 age demographic is highest between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Socialbrite helps nonprofits & organizations with all facets of social media: strategy, website design, community building & fundraising campaigns. Their website hosts numerous tutorials from creating blogs to maximizing the effectiveness of Facebook. www.socialbrite.org/sharing-center/tutorials/

Thunderclap is the first-ever crowdspeaking platform that helps users be heard by saying something together. It allows a single message to be mass-shared, flash mob-style, that rises above the noise of your social networks. By boosting the signal at the same time, Thunderclap helps a single person create action and change like never before. There is no charge to create or support a Thunderclap. www.thunderclap.it

YouTube Nonprofit Program can help you activate your cause, tell a compelling story, and launch an effective campaign on YouTube, we now have a resource for nonprofits. Learn how your nonprofit can use these benefits and make the most out of YouTube by downloading the Playbook for Good and joining the YouTube Nonprofit Google Group to receive the monthly newsletter. www.youtube.com/nonprofits

TechSoup Global, with generous support from Fieldstone Alliance, created an online self-assessment questionnaire (Social Media Literacy Tool) and gathered relevant content to help get you started or further increase your social media savvy. Ever wonder what tools are available, how they are used, which ones best meet your needs, whether you're engaging our community effectively, or if a social media strategy and setting goals will make a difference? Visit TechSoup for numerous helpful resources. <http://home.techsoup.org/pages/socialmediaresources.aspx>

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www.rivernetwork.org/programs/partnership-program

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Partnership Benefit Highlight

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\$100,001 - \$250,000	\$275
\$250,001 - \$500,000	\$375
\$500,001 - \$1,000,000	\$500
\$1,000,001 - \$2,000,000	\$675
>\$2,000,000	\$900

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