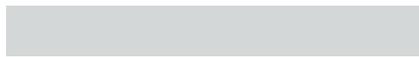

A STRATEGIC GUIDE TO

Social Media for Nonprofits



A GUIDE BY

sproutsocial

Introduction

Nonprofit organizations have become increasingly social over the past decade, whether they are cultivating a dedicated Facebook following or **blazing a trail** on new networks such as Snapchat. While part of social media's initial appeal was the potential to reach your audience without tapping into a limited budget, the growing popularity and changing algorithms of popular networks have made it difficult to keep your cause at the top of supporters' newsfeeds. That said, nonprofit organizations have never been a group to back down from a challenge.

Social media is an opportunity to tell your story, engage with supporters and get results—which means there's no time like the present to create or refresh your social media strategy . We asked five experts to weigh in on how to develop a nonprofit social media strategy and prove the value of social media to your organization. As we outline the steps to craft an effective strategy, their advice will guide the way.

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01 Define Social's Role in Your Communications Strategy

“Social media shouldn't be out there alone; it should be integrated and aligned with your strategic goals and target audiences,” said **Beth Kanter**, Nonprofit Consultant and Author of **Beth's Blog**, one of the longest running and most popular blogs about nonprofits and social media. “The role that it can play really well is engagement, especially donor engagement and donor retention, getting people to pay attention—capturing their attention.”

The actions you will take and the content you will create on social should tie back to your overall communications and digital strategy. Consider how you will connect your organization's social media efforts to your website and blog, email marketing, event promotions and any other content you share online.

02 Determine What You Want to Accomplish

As part of a nonprofit team, you're no stranger to having a mission. Whether to eliminate poverty or protect an endangered species, you understand what your overall charge is. Similarly, your social goals should be clear.

To give you a sense of common communications goals that can inform your social efforts, in 2015, **nonprofit communicators** identified these five goals as priorities for the year:

1. Engaging community
2. Retaining donors
3. Acquiring donors
4. Generating brand awareness
5. Building thought leadership



Social media provides opportunities for connection that other channels may not. Chara Odhner, Senior Copywriter and part of the social team at [charity: water](#), echoes the importance of using social for community engagement.

“As an organization that’s had a \$0 ad and marketing budget since day one, we invested in social early on,” Odhner said. “And we love social for what it does best: strengthening our community of supporters.”

Once you’ve determined your goals, decide how you will measure success and what metrics you will track to assess the outcome of your social media efforts. For example, if engaging your community is a goal, you might measure success by responses to your posts and engagement in social discussions, volume of posts using a specific hashtag and participation in online campaigns driven by social.

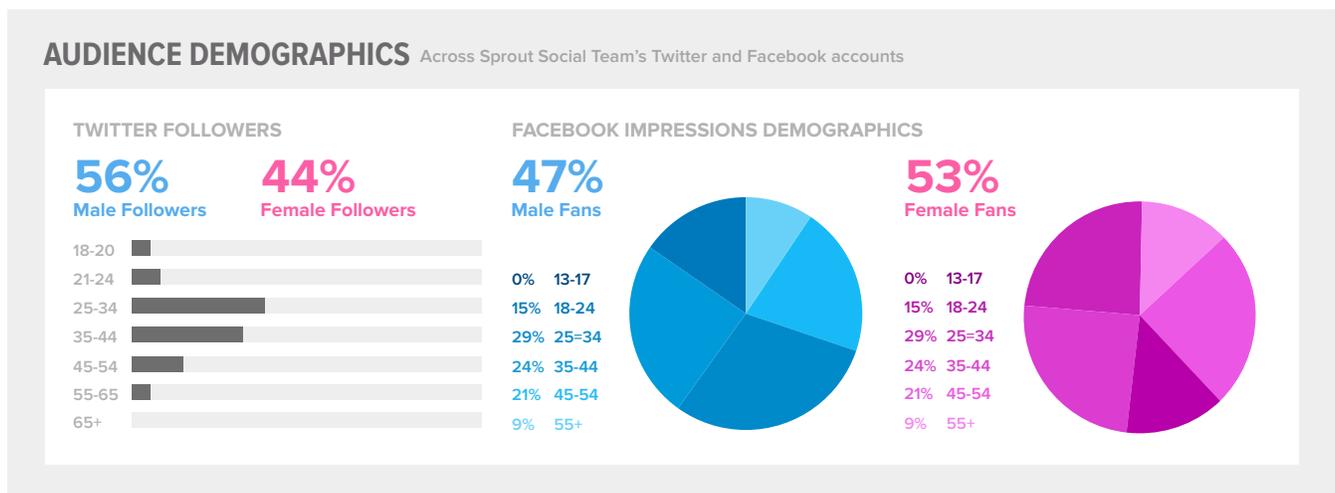
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Identify Your Target Audience

“A lot of nonprofits say, ‘well, our audience is the general public,’ but if you think you’re speaking to the general public, you’re probably speaking to nobody,” said [Bridgett Colling](#), Director of Content Marketing at [See3 Communications](#), a digital agency for nonprofits and social causes.

Colling recommends that nonprofits develop audience personas, which are representations of your ideal supporters based on a combination of demographic data and information about individual members of your target audience.

To learn about the demographic makeup of your current social media following, you can use native analytics on platforms like Twitter and Facebook or use a social media management tool. When you start a free trial of [Sprout Social](#) and connect your profiles, your audiences' demographic data will begin to populate, which you can see easily in your dashboard or export as a report.



Once you have an idea of who's already following you online, research and speak with supporters offline to gain additional insights about what matters to them when supporting your cause.

You can create multiple personas that represent supporters in different groups: Consider the makeup of your volunteer base, your board and junior board, your donors and more. Go ahead and give each persona a name as well as a comprehensive demographic background, then add specific details about what this person cares about, what their typical day is like, who they trust and more. Nancy Schwartz's blog has a helpful [step-by-step guide to creating personas](#).

04 Choose the Right Networks

Once you have identified your target audience, study [social media demographics](#) to find out where they are active online, and focus your efforts on those networks. If you have limited time to spend on social—and who doesn't?—don't spread yourself too thin by worrying about adopting every network that comes up. Do an excellent job on two or three networks with a large potential for reaching your audience instead of a mediocre job on five.

To give you an idea of which networks are most popular among nonprofits, Facebook remains No. 1, with 96% of nonprofit communicators ranking it in their top three social media sites; Twitter and YouTube take spots two and three, respectively, [according to the 2015 Nonprofit Communications Trends Report](#).

05 Create a Content Strategy

When creating a content strategy, focus on storytelling that gets your message across.

What to Share

Start by examining past posts to see what has performed well and what types of content get your followers engaged. Don't be afraid to ask supporters what type of stories they would like to see from your organization. You can gather this information in person, via an email survey or by asking on social media. Develop content categories for social media that you can cycle through on a regular basis, such as volunteer spotlights, client stories and how-tos.

Kivi Leroux-Miller, Nonprofit Consultant and President of Nonprofit Marketing Guide, suggests two questions to guide your content creation: “What problems do people have in their own lives when trying to live out the values they share with your organization? What tips or tools can you give them that make their lives easier as they try to be a better environmentalist, animal lover, parent, etc.?”

The American Speech-Language Hearing Association

Audiologist · 92,416 · June 23

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You don't have to be a singer to have voice problems, but if you have voice problems you might want to change the way you sing. SLP Kristie Knickerbocker explains: <http://on.asha.org/1fxoBIA>

Hey, I've Got a Voice Box and This is Crazy...Singing—Speaking—Similar Maybe?

-- If you see clients who complain of voice problems, its important to know if they sing in any context. Patients don't hvae to be professional singers to be rockstars in the car or shower, so may...

BLOG.ASHA.ORG | BY KRISTIE KNICKERBOCKER

242 Likes · 10 Comments · 123 Shares

Like Comments Comment Shares

Types of Content

From pictures and graphics to short videos and text, your organization should share a variety of posts across its networks. Visual content can often reach emotional triggers in a way that words alone cannot. There are plenty of [free tools for image creation](#) that can help you create beautiful graphics, but don't worry about making every image highly polished. Capturing snapshots and short videos on your phone enables you to share powerful moments from events, and those types of posts can give your followers a meaningful peek behind-the-scenes of your organization.

While every post doesn't need a link, social media can be a helpful tool for directing people to your website, blog or mailing list. Fundraising Coach and Author [Marc Pitman](#) says that one common mistake is keeping your entire social media presence on social media.

"Facebook could change the rules; Twitter could shut down," Pitman said. "You should have a healthy mix of content that points back to your site and helps build your email list where you give away helpful content—an ethical bribe. Then, you can track how many people are coming from social and signing up or taking action."

Posting Frequency

Creating a [social media content calendar](#) will help you plan and schedule your social media posts in advance. If you are working with a team, or reaching out to others in your organization for photos or information, a content calendar will help you stay on top of planning campaigns and preparing materials in advance. Determine a posting frequency and cadence that will keep your organization in front of your audience while leaving you time to manage your community, share newsworthy content and measure your impact.

06

Put Engagement First

Social media is far more than a publishing platform —it’s a place to capture people’s attention, connect with supporters and build communities.

“Social media is designed for two-way conversation, and that’s when it is most powerful.”

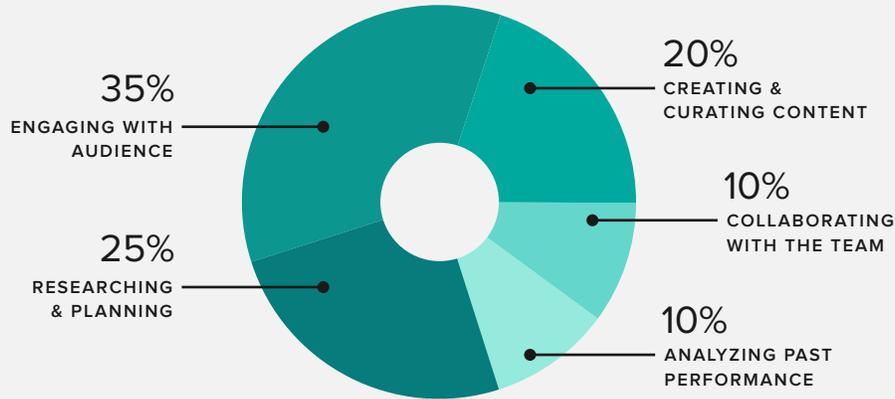
CHARA ODHNER, CHARITY: WATER

“The most powerful thing about social media is something many companies and organizations often forget: It’s social,” Odhner said. “Instead, many brands use social media as a broadcasting platform.”

With limited time to spend on social, engagement should be a priority. Respond to questions, comments and posts tagging your organization, and look for relevant hashtags to find new conversations to join. While your tone may be more formal on other outlets, social media is a particularly good place to cultivate a personable **brand voice** that helps supporters feel connected. Don’t be afraid to use humor to connect either.

“Part of what we’re trying to do with engagement is show donors that we see them as more than an ATM,” Pitman said. “The social media accounts that show humanity seem to get noted more, particularly when you give quick or humorous responses.”

How to Allocate Your Time on Social Media



Through Oxfam, a global organization that works to end poverty, hunger and injustice, supporters can purchase a symbolic gift of manure—er, fertilizer—for a friend, while their donation supports someone in need. A clever Tweet like this one encourages followers to engage by sharing the joke (and the ask) with friends:

Oxfam America [Follow](#)
@OxfamAmerica

Show your loved ones that you really "give a \$%*#" for our planet, donate manure from Oxfam Unwrapped:
oxfamamericaunwrapped.com/gifts/manure/

8:31 AM - 2 Dec 2013

Oxfam America

Donate Manure | Charity Gifts For A Family In Need | Oxfam Unwrapped

No need to feel like a stinker when you give manure to a loved one. This green gift transforms waste into power—agricultural power. Organic manure increases crop yields and is cheaper, greener, and...

[View on web](#)

10 8

07 Empower Your Advocates & Cross-Promote Your Content

Even the most enthusiastic proponents of your organization may not realize that social sharing is a powerful way that they can raise awareness for your cause. If you are creating or ramping up your presence on a specific network, make it known to all of your constituents that they can connect with you there. Show them the value of following—the stories, tips and images they can expect to see—and educate them about the best ways to show support. Don't be afraid to cross-promote your social media content on other channels.

Our experts provided a few suggestions to get your advocates talking.

Start a Private Group

“Invite them to join a private group or another mechanism of communication so you can ‘rock ‘n’ roll,” Kanter said. “Everyone likes to be on a winning team and to cheer on the team, so you need that kind of connection. Make it super easy: Provide sample posts for Facebook, sample Tweets, etc.”

Promote via Other Communication Channels

“Support your social with email, phone and other means of communication,” Pitman said. “Send a link to board members, and ask them to like it, share it, comment and tell you what they think. However you want them to interact with you, let them know. People can't read our minds. It's not obvious to them; their universe doesn't revolve around our nonprofit or our social media outreach.”

Provide Sample Posts

“Make it easy to share by sending an email with prewritten Tweets and graphics people can share when you’re launching a big campaign, telling them one of the ways they can support you is to share on Facebook, Twitter or whatever network you think they’re most active on,” Colling said. “Make it easy for people. Give them options. And tell them that sharing is meaningful.”

08

Track & Measure Your Results

From day one, track your social media efforts to ensure that you are progressing toward your goals. Demonstrating results will show your leadership the importance of investing time and resources into social media, and it will help you adjust your content strategy to focus on the type of content that performs best.

“If it doesn’t get results,
don’t do it. You don’t get
impact by wishful thinking.”

BETH KANTER

Kanter suggests that you look not only at what content is getting a good rate of return but also at what takes less time to get that return.

For goals such as driving website traffic, Colling recommends using Google Analytics to see how many social referrals are getting people to your website.

“Even better, if you put goal tracking in your Google Analytics, you can see how many referrals actually led to someone completing a donation,” she said.

If making time to run reports is a challenge, this is just one of many areas where a [social media management](#) tool will help. You can use Sprout to run weekly or monthly presentation-ready reports on everything from sent message performance to audience changes to engagement. You can also use information from social networks’ native analytics (Twitter Analytics, Facebook Insights, YouTube Analytics) to create your own reports. For a clear breakdown of how to use native analytics, check out our post on the [social media metrics that matter](#).



Conclusion

Above all, remember to listen and create a habit of strategy and measurement. Over time, you will learn what content gets your community talking and how to fine-tune your nonprofit's social media strategy to get the best possible results. We'll leave you with this one final piece of advice:

“It’s important to set reasonable expectations and know that social media and content marketing is a long game. You’re not going to put one post out there and instantly get hundreds of dollars in donations.

Like any good relationship, it’s all about communication over time.”

BRIDGETT COLLING, SEE3 COMMUNICATIONS



Sprout Social is a social media management platform for businesses. Sprout powers smart social communication for leading brands, including Anthropologie, GrubHub, Hyatt, Spotify and Zipcar. A powerful platform for business, Sprout enables brands to communicate more effectively, collaborate across teams and provide an exceptional customer experience. Headquartered in Chicago, Sprout is a Twitter Certified Product, Facebook Preferred Marketing Developer and Google+ Pages API Partner.

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