

# **SOCIAL MEDIA**

*Source: The New Breed of Volunteers*

A message needs to be communicated 5 times, 5 different ways and when people hear it the 5<sup>th</sup> time, they often say, "I've never heard that before."

## **Facebook**

Facebook is truly the king of all social network sites. Americans spend more time on Facebook than they do on any other US website.

Every nonprofit really should have a Facebook page where people can "like" the organization, look at videos or photos and keep updated with current information.

A Facebook page also provides a fast-response format for feedback or discussion.

Many organizations will even post questions that members can respond to and discuss.

Another way to use Facebook is to create buzz for an organization event, or movement. President Obama's campaign did this well in the 2008 election, but you don't have to be as big as a national political party to make an impact with Facebook. Even the smallest organizations can use it to help spread the word about their causes.

One of the simplest ways to do this is to build a Facebook page about an exciting project or event. Invite people to take a peek at what's going on and encourage them to invite their friends.

## **Twitter**

When the floodwater destroyed huge parts of Nashville, Tennessee, in May 2010, the Rev. Pete Wilson tweeted a need for volunteers, hammers, trash bags, and brooms, and hundreds of people showed up to start relief work in and around a badly flooded Nashville. "I love being able to mobilize so many volunteers...so quickly," said Wilson, who has more than 54,000 Twitter followers. "I love that power of communication."

Create a Twitter account for your project and ask volunteers to "follow" you. Share last-minute project updates. During the project upload and tweet photos for those who could not join you that day to show them what they are missing.

## **YouTube**

Some people don't think of YouTube as a social networking site, but it actually functions like one. You can create a page, recruit followers, post videos, and send notice of a new video to your followers. It's interactive because people can rate or comment on videos.

YouTube is the "go to" place for video online, so volunteer organizations are smart to create a YouTube page and post training videos, instructional videos, or publicity videos.

Your organization's YouTube page is a great place to post a video about an upcoming project or event. Create a video that makes a compelling case about why the project is important and asks people to get involved. Don't stop at YouTube; share the video through the project's Facebook page and share it via Twitter, linking your YouTube video.

## **Other Social Media**

As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it's difficult to write much about technology when the only constant about technology is its rapid change. Each one has different draws and features. A site like LinkedIn® draws many men in the business world, while the very artsy Pinterest currently is drawing more women.

Many companies and organizations are seeing incredible benefits from marketing to people through these and other sites. President Obama even launched a Pinterest page in 2012 after seeing the potential that this new social networking site offered.

We need to constantly remain on the lookout for tech-savvy volunteers who can keep us current in how we use social networking technology in our organizations, nonprofits, and ministries.

## **Wikis**

The wiki may be one of the greatest inventions since the light bulb. A wiki is a prime example of Web 2.0. Forget the old methods of event planning that required making conference calls, printing, stapling, mailing, making more calls, writing in the margins, reprinting, faxing—those days are gone.

Recently I spent a day with the Washington State 4-H Club leadership. To facilitate their statewide planning sessions, the leadership introduced the statewide team members to the concept of a wiki—an online tool that lets a group of people share ideas, files, information, and conversation. Because planning sessions for a statewide organization can be expensive when you consider the cost of travel, hotels, or even videoconferencing equipment, the 4-H leaders began using a wiki to plan their events. They found that they liked the way they could share and collaborate on documents without special software or training.

Because the wikis are Web pages, it's simple to provide links to references. Planning team members browse and modify the wiki with nothing more specialized than a Web browser. For conference calls, one person posts a rough document or an agenda online; the others correct and contribute to it in real time.

The beauty of a wiki is that you don't need to master any special training or programming. With most wikis, you simply click on the wiki page's "Edit" button to begin changing the page's content. A click of the "Save" button posts the changes back to the website and updates the wiki, making the assembly of content easy and straightforward – everyone on the team can read and react to information being generated and then add modification or corrections. And because the wiki lives online, the team can work on the planning process at any time, from any location offering internet connection.

Many groups use websites such as wikispaces.com to create wikis for their committees, teams or volunteer projects. Other groups purchase software that allows them to have their own wiki just for their organization.

*For example: The author of this article is a volunteer in a musical band. The director uses special software for their communication. They receive instructions about rehearsal times and programs, and he even attaches MP3s and copies of the music so they can practice before the rehearsal.*

# **Making Social Media Work**

By Katie Mulembe, Membership and Recruitment Coordinator

As we look into new ways to build relationships with potential volunteers and donors, social media seems like it should be the perfect solution to the problems many of our programs face. It's free, so it won't put a dent in our already overstretched budgets. It's quick, so we can get the message out to large groups of people instantly. And, perhaps most importantly, it is the preferred means of communication for young people today. Despite these redeeming qualities, it seems that we are still looking for ways to make social media work for our programs. Before you give up entirely, browse through these tips for successful tweeting, blogging, and facebooking. You might be surprised that you can develop a lively online community by spending only a few minutes each day on your sites.

## **Update often.**

The key to successful social media outreach is frequency. The ultimate goal is to build a feed that people will want to come back to time and time again and this will only happen if viewers get the sense that they are likely to find something new there.

## **Keep an eye on your pages.**

Occasionally a potential volunteer will post a question on your page. It is most helpful if you respond quickly to their inquiry. Also remember to post your response on the page in case other readers are wondering the same thing.

## **Consolidate.**

It can become overwhelming to stay on top of multiple social media outlets, but it is now easy to consolidate these into one stream using aggregators like hootsuite.com, sobees.com, and flock.com to name a few.

## **Fan, follow, and friend.**

Search for individuals and organizations that are writing about topics that are relevant to your program and follow them. This not only helps you easily follow what they are saying, it also lets them know that you support their efforts. They will be more likely to share about your program on their pages in the future.

## **Prepare posts for slow days.**

Some days the creative juices just won't flow, but that doesn't mean your pages have to go dry. You can be prepared for these times by putting together a list of blog ideas, Facebook status updates, and tweets. One easy way is to compile a list of questions that you are frequently asked about your program. You can easily turn each of these answers into a Facebook update or tweet. The longer answers can make a great blog post.

## **Retweet.**

When one of your followers posts something interesting, retweet that on your feed. This will increase the reader's interest in your page and will make them into more active users. They will then be more likely to retweet your posts in the future.

**Borrow blog posts.**

Chances are many of your volunteers are blogging about their experiences. (See “Spotlight On: Incarnate Word Missionaries” in this issue of How Can I Help? for more information on volunteer blogs.) Whenever they write something particularly inspiring, ask for their permission to repost on your program’s blog. A variety of voices makes a blog more engaging to the reader.

**Get organized.** Use keywords in your blogs and hashtags in your tweets to highlight reoccurring themes in your posts. This will help readers easily find the information they are looking for. Lighten up! Remain upbeat and use humor whenever possible. Do pay attention to your grammar, but try not to be overly formal in your writing style. This will make your page more inviting and personal.

**A photo is worth a thousand words.**

Post new photos whenever you can. Nothing sends a stronger message than images of your volunteers in action. If you are able, tag your volunteers in the photos they appear in. This will draw their friends and family members to your page.

**Be interactive.**

Ending a blog entry with a thought provoking question encourages readers to comment and give their feedback. Or, maybe you are purchasing new swag for your recruitment efforts and can’t decide between pens or bumper stickers – why not poll your fans on Facebook to see what they prefer? When you invite your readers to share their opinions you are letting them know that they matter to you as an organization.

**Know the lingo.** Can’t keep your wikis and widgets straight from your tags and tweetups? This social media glossary might help brush up on the lingo: [www.socialbrite.org/sharing-center/glossary](http://www.socialbrite.org/sharing-center/glossary).

**Make your pages accessible.**

Remember to list links to your blogs, Facebook page, twitter feed and any other social media site right on your website’s homepage. This is especially important if you are unable to make frequent updates to your website’s homepage. Your social media pages will let the reader know that your organization is dynamic and active.

**Promote yourself.**

Encourage others to follow you online – and don’t be shy about it. Mention you sites often and you will notice more and more followers.