SOCIAL MEDIA FOR YOUR NONPROFIT: TAKE CHARGE!

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VISTAS Ventureneer's blog offers practical insights for entrepreneurs and nonprofit leaders. The blog is written by Geri Stengel, Ventureneer's founder, who is a serial entrepreneur, consultant, and nonprofit board member.

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LESSONS FROM THE REAL WORLD:
WHAT CAN SOCIAL MEDIA DO FOR YOUR NONPROFIT?

If you doubt the power of social media, read the news. Social media can change history. While most of us may not be aiming that high, we do want to change the world by solving social problems. To do so, we must use all available tools. Social media are among the most powerful.

To harness this power, your nonprofit needs to build a community based on trust that is willing to spread your message and take action on your behalf.

In a world full of marketing noise, building trust requires two-way interaction – give as well as take, listening as well as talking.

Today, people expect to interact with what they see and hear. Expressing opinions – whether by clicking the "like" button or posting a comment on Facebook or signing and forwarding a petition – is the norm.

Social media have become like email and a website: Mandatory, not optional. This ebook is intended for those who:

- Need to convince management that their organization needs social media;
- Want to initiate a social media plan for their organization;
- Are committed to social media and ready to expand but want to formalize and professionalize their use of social media.

LAYING A SOLID FOUNDATION INCREASES SUCCESS

BUILD SUCCESS ON A SOLID FOUNDATION

Social media require the same steps as traditional media. You have to know:

- What you want to accomplish
- Who your market is
- Where does your market get its information
- What kind of information grabs their interest
- How you'll assess their response

With social media, you are simply adding new options to the print, broadcast, and email that you've always included in your marketing plans. New options, but same principles.

Just as all traditional media will not be suitable – not everyone should advertise in either *Seventeen* or *AARP* – similarly not every social medium will be right for your market or your message. But don't make the mistake of thinking this is just for young people. The use of social media by people older than 60 is steadily and rapidly rising, according to **the Pew Research Center**. Don't dismiss social media just because your donors wear bifocals.

The differences between traditional and social media are several and important:

- With social media, people come to you because they are interested in or curious about your organization, cause, services, or events.
- With traditional media, you are, for the most part, forcing yourself on your audience, waving a flag to attract attention.
- With social media, they've tapped you on the shoulder and asked for directions.
- Traditional media are one-way: You send a message but hear nothing in response. Social media are dialogues: You send a message and your audience comments on it, passes it along or even disputes what you said.
- With social media, if you guess wrong, you can find out immediately and change the media mix quickly so less time and money are spent on ineffective media projects.
- The impact of social media can be measured quickly, pinpointing the exact medium – the effects of Facebook vs. Twitter, for example – that is working best. The lag-time between sending a message out and knowing if it worked is much longer with traditional media.

> The main difference between traditional and social media? It takes a lot less money to reach people using social media.<

Relax. You don't have to jump on all the social media platforms at once. In fact, we recommend starting slowly. Do your research, decide which platform is best for your organization. Start with that one. Then repeat the process, adding more platforms as needed. Eventually, they will all **come together in one dynamic package**.

Why now? And why social media?

Social media is reinventing activism. It expands your reach and allows you to develop targeted messages for different projects and different demographic groups.

Most nonprofits don't have a lot of money or their staffs are already overworked. You need marketing tools that stretch your dollars and, believe it or not, social media offer that. They're low cost (but not no cost) and can generate dramatic responses.

Whatever your goal – raising awareness of your organization's mission, generating funds, letters to public officials or finding board members – social media can help. But you need the *right* social medium for each project. And you need to use it correctly. That's what this book is about: Getting acquainted with the most influential social media and their potential so you can choose what will work for you.

Don't delay. Instructions for the effective use of social media exist now, case studies abound, and measurement tools are available. The longer you wait, the more opportunities you lose.

The suggestions in this ebook are based on data from an August 2010 survey, **Nonprofits and Social Media: It Ain't Optional**, as well as the experience of Ventureneer and its founder, Geri Stengel, a recognized expert in social media and values-driven enterprises.

Our recommendations are also based on the combined wisdom of many social media users, both for-profit and nonprofit. The resources suggested are free, fully developed online seminars or documents and can be permanently found at **Ventureneer's resource center** where we have consolidated general information, case studies, tools, research, and online classes in an easy-to-use, one-stop website.

GETTING EVERYONE ON BOARD (INCLUDING THE BOARD)

Show them

To get nonprofit management – both boards and executive staff – comfortable with social media requires education. Even someone with a personal Facebook page may not appreciate Facebook's value for an organization.

Those who are not familiar with social media will need more than training; they'll need convincing that social media are relevant to the organization's mission and will generate return on investment. You'll have to overcome the image of social media as a frivolous toy used to share what people had for lunch.

The best bet is examples. And they do abound. Organizations of all sizes and purposes, both mission-driven and profit-driven, have used social media to reach mission goals as well as expand visibility and community.

Success stories have been highlighted throughout this ebook but there are more. A **report** from the George Washington University School of Business highlights public sector agencies that use social media to create "a more robust democracy." That's a big claim but the examples in the report back it up, as do the events in the news.

The report also states, "digital competence will play a seminal role in determining the ideas and people that gain or lose influence in the halls of power." Organizations exercising their influence via social media range from PETA to the National Association of Realtors, from the Marine Corps to the Peace Corps.

Small organizations as well as large ones have found that the interactivity of social media makes their outreach efforts more effective.

The first step in winning people over to social media is: Show them.

Put social media in their place

The second step is to put social media in their place.

Social media should not be viewed in isolation. Social media:

- are part of marketing, development, communication, outreach, advocacy, and even client services: any or all that apply
- costs should be allocated across departments and all departments should be encouraged to brainstorm how best to integrate social media with other tools
- benefits, from the ability to access more people who are already interested in your sector to the ability to connect with influencers, should be presented to both upper management and employees
- measurement tools can show return on investment as well as what works well and what should be dropped or modified

Adopting social media may be hard for some board members, executives, and staff to swallow. Some people are eager to try new things, others are less so. You know your own culture: Work with it. People also learn in different ways. Provide visual, written, group, and one-on-one opportunities to learn about social media.

And, remember, one step at a time, one medium at a time.

- Start slowly. Assess which medium might offer the best opportunity for a taste of social media. You may need outside help or training to do this.

- Make a plan that includes the medium you'll use, what your goal will be, and how you'll measure success.
- Present the plan to decision-makers. Include examples of how similar organizations have used social media successfully.
- Include fair estimates of costs, such as staff time and training,
- Explain how each department within the organization, as well as the overall organization, will benefit.
- Describe how outcomes will be measured and the measurements used.
- Answer questions, provide demonstrations.
- Keep board members, management, and staff informed and engaged. Invite them to submit content and offer suggestions.
- Measure, revise, and present again.

Social media aren't just another outreach tool

Choosing to use social media as a marketing, development or outreach tool is not the same as choosing to do a PSA instead of direct mail. When an organization engages in social media, the culture of the whole organization can – and even should – be affected. The hierarchical flow of information often is replaced by a more collaborative, egalitarian exchange of ideas. Not everyone will be happy about this. Social media give:

- Employees opportunities for inter- and intradepartmental communication they may not have had before;
- Staff a way to relate directly and often with management;
- Immediate access to criticism and the opportunity to respond to criticism;
- Access to new partners or collaborators for cause-marketing, advocacy for common interests, etc.

UNFILTERED CONTACT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

“In the modern world, the traditional gatekeepers – editors, publishers, producers, and movie makers – are no longer in control," explains author and social media expert Gary Vaynerchuk. "Today’s new technologies allow all of us to share our thoughts and opinions, and get our message out to potentially millions of people in an instant!"

Think about it: Your organization has the power to take its unfiltered message directly to millions of potential supporters. You don't have to find a willing TV station to run a PSA or get on the good side of a journalist to get a story written about your cause.

The corollary is, of course, that you must be your own gatekeeper, ensuring that your message gets out correctly, often, and in the markets that will serve your mission best.

For more ideas about how to deal with the organizational changes that often accompany the use of social media, check out:

- **Networked Nonprofits Have Social Cultures**
- **Corporate Culture And Adoption of Social Networking**
- **The Art of Social Media**
- **Getting to the Root of Social Media Woes** a video about implementing a strategy for change.

One step at a time

Again, it's one step at a time. When you first dip your toe into the social media pool, it's not going to change your whole culture and bring instant returns. It's a process. As you start your first Facebook fundraiser, solicit ideas and contributions from management and staff about what to include and how to make it better.

The Human Factor: Who do you have and who do you want to reach?

Does your organization have staff members who know or are interested in learning social media? Talk to every department. You may find a surprising level of expertise already on staff. If you do not have in-house expertise yet, you may want to train staff or hire a consultant to help you get started.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS NOT ONE PERSON'S JOB

Social media produce the best results when used across all departments of an organization. Every department or program can and should be involved in posing and answering questions for online groups; providing material for blogs; connections on LinkedIn and Facebook; and responding to comments or queries received via social media.

The most obvious benefit is that your organization's expertise, no matter in which department it resides, will be brought to bear on whatever issues arise. Your staff will have access to support and suggestions from within the organizations as well as from outside connections. For-profits can give us valuable lessons, as H & R Block demonstrates.

Are the board and management willing to incorporate social media into outreach? Developing a social media presence requires commitment from every level. Implementing social media costs money, mostly in staff time. It is an expense that the board must approve.

Once you have a social media team, with support from management, it's time to look at your market.

To decide which social medium to use, you need to answer five questions:

- What do you want to accomplish?
- Who do you want to reach?
- Which social medium does this best?
- How much time and money can you spend?
- How will you measure effectiveness?

The first two are the questions you answer whenever you start an outreach program.

The third may seem daunting but it isn't. Long-time users of social media have found – through trial and error – which media work best in different situations. You can also get a feel for each medium by following conversations, blogs, and Twitter feeds to see what's happening on each.

If you look at the whole social media spectrum, you may be overwhelmed by its variety and complexity, giving yourself an excuse to do nothing. In this ebook, we are focusing on the Big Five in social media – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and blogging.

> Start with one of these and expand. Take one step at a time. Remember, it is more important to use one social medium well than to use several poorly.<

You'll get better results, be less frustrated, and use fewer resources.

- Learn enough about each medium to decide which one you want to work with first, based on the answers to the five questions posed at the beginning of this section and on the skills/interest/time of your staff.
- Measure results.
- Enlarge the plan by adding another medium.
- Measure again.

Involve communications, marketing and development staff in developing content and campaigns.

> Social media are most effective when everyone in the organization works together to maximize resources. In fact, social media may be the catalyst for a more collaborative culture. <

Most organizations start using social media to achieve marketing objectives, that is, to make people aware of the organization and its mission. However, as they become more comfortable and effective using social media, organizations add mission and business objectives, such as advocacy, fundraising, cause marketing, and mobilizing people.

Reason for Using Social Media					
		Hours Per Week Spent on Social Media			
	Total	**1-4**	**5-9**	**10-24**	**25+**
	(%)	**(%)**	**(%)**	**(%)**	**(%)**
Build/maintain awareness of the organization, its cause	92	93	96	94	90
Build and maintain community	76	72	83	83	83
Increase traffic to website	68	64	73	75	90
Advocacy	44	39	45	50	59
Raise money	43	38	49	46	54
Mobilize and coordinate people	39	35	43	45	49
Recruitment (e.g. staff, volunteers, board)	32	27	35	38	46
Cause Marketing	31	22	31	35	50
Reduce spending on marketing	28	33	33	26	22
Increase search engine rankings	23	18	25	32	37
Program delivery	21	17	24	26	32
Sell product / services	17	12	21	23	37
Test effectiveness	14	14	14	20	10
Market research	11	7	11	18	17
Crisis management tool	6	3	5	14	12
Other (please specify)	5	5	5	5	
Source: Nonprofits and Social Media: It Ain't Optional: A Survey Conducted by Ventureneer and Caliber					

Social media allow you to shift between these uses as your needs change. Perhaps you start by letting people know who you are and what you do. Then a bill is proposed in the legislature that will harm your clients so you mount an advocacy campaign to kill the bill. Later, your organization becomes part of an American Express Members Project and uses Twitter to generate the votes needed to win part of the $1 million being given away.

Once you are part of the social media world, you can move easily from one platform to another.

What do you need?

Training and time are at the heart of using social media well. They also are the costs to consider when planning a social media campaign.

It's like moving into a new neighborhood. You need to make yourself known as a competent, helpful source of interesting and reliable information so others will seek your opinion and invite you to their parties.

To do that, you have to spend time getting to know the neighbors, what's important to them, and the ways in which they communicate.

Lurking

It sounds slightly illegal, but it's not. In web-speak, lurking means watching the flow of information, getting a feel for the communities open to you, and learning the language.

It's like deciding which restaurant will become your favorite: You need to check out a few before you decide. What's the vibe? How's the service?

For more tips on monitoring conversations on the Internet, go to **7 steps to Free Internet Monitoring** by Pete Codella, CEO of Codella Marketing and NewsCactus.

When thinking about communities to join, include the people you serve, nonprofits providing similar services, trade associations, and your own network of friends. Expand your listening further to include the websites of:

- beneficiaries and alumni
- board members
- funders
- elected officials
- community organizations in the communities you serve
- people who make things happen in the community, whether the local gadfly or the local online gazette
- business organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce
- service groups such as the Elks and Rotary
- peer groups
- local and regional TV, radio, and print media websites

You will not join all these groups or “like” them on Facebook or follow them all on Twitter. But by casting a broad net, you may come up with previously untapped sources of information and support as well as groups that can provide you with donors, volunteers or board members.

A side benefit of surfing the web far and wide: You will see what's being talked about and where your input might change minds or add to the conversation.

You'll also get great ideas for blogs. Write them down. You'll need them later.

A number of websites help you "listen" to what's being talked about so you can choose the conversations you'd like to join. The quickest and easiest option is to set up a Google Alert on keywords that relate to your organization.

TIP > Whenever you start using a new medium, cross-promote on the media you already use. If you have a website, link to it from your Facebook page and embed Facebook links on your webpage. If you post a blog, let people on every social media platform know.

Hubspot has a good list of cross-promotional tips that includes traditional and social media.

TIP > Include links on brochures, stationery, email signatures, etc. This cross-promotion increases visibility and reach. It's what social media is all about.

Training

To listen successfully and implement a social media marketing plan, you need staff who understand how to use the various media and who understand your mission, message, and culture.

- Each medium has its own language, its own rules, and its own best uses. The staff who will post, tweet, and comment must know your message, your values, and your brand as well as the language of social media. For an introduction to terms, check out **Social by Social** or **Linked in to Business**.
- Don't leave this task to an unsupervised intern or someone who happens to use Twitter personally. This is a marketing tool that must be overseen by a staff member who understands the organization, its values, and the goal of the campaign.
- By all means, learn social media skills from those who know them – the intern or your teenager – but be sure that whoever is doing the writing knows your organization or works with someone who does.
- Allow people to learn in the way that works best for them. Many learning resources are free, but our survey found that most successful organizations spend money on classes, conferences, books, and consultants who are experienced with social media.

Ways Nonprofits Learn Social Media

	Total	Hours Per Week Doing Social Media:			
		1-4	5-9	10-24	25+
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Learning by doing	91	91	91	94	89
Observing what others are doing	82	83	83	86	78
Reading online resources	70	63	76	78	83
Talking to colleagues	61	60	63	69	51
Attending classes (in person and online)	47	41	53	55	54
Talking to experts	43	39	41	47	52
Attending social media conferences	26	20	28	35	43
Reading books	22	17	22	30	35
Hired an expert on staff	15	9	13	31	43
Hired a consultant or firm and outsourcing some all social media functions	11	7	11	13	27

Source: *Nonprofits and Social Media: It Ain't Optional: A Survey Conducted by Ventureneer and Caliber*

Implementing social media may mean creating new job descriptions within your organization, such as "social media manager." **as described in the Chronicle of Philanthropy.**

W E B S I T E

Social media bring people to your nonprofit's front door and invites them in. Don't bring them home to a run-down shanty. Make sure your website is up to date and takes advantage of the latest tools, such as a "donate" button for those inspired to do so at that moment and that your website is able to integrate with social media.

Getting noticed

No matter what social media you use, you want people to find you. The key to visibility is keywords, which are the words and phrases people type into their search engines when trying to find an organization, cause or service.

Whenever possible and appropriate, include these keywords in the title of articles, blogs, tweets, comments on other people's pages, and in the header of your web page.

The trick is to select the right keywords, the ones that will bring your name to the top of the list when your target audience types a search request into Google, Yahoo or Bing. Bringing your organization's name to the top of search engine results is called Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

You not only want to bring people to your site, you want them to take action (volunteer, donate, write a letter, attend an event, etc.). In other words, you want what they read "converted" into action.

This is called the conversion rate. High is good; low is bad.

The more exact the keyword or keyword phrase, the lower the amount of traffic you'll get but the higher the conversion rate is likely to be. So be specific about who you are and what you do. You are not confined to one keyword phrase. Develop a list of the phrases most likely to be used by those whose support you are seeking.

Suppose you are a nonprofit that provides information about multiple sclerosis. What would be your best choice for keywords? Using an abbreviation for multiple sclerosis – MS – brings up information about everything from the state of Mississippi to Microsoft to Masters of Science degrees.

Even spelling out the term “multiple sclerosis” is too broad. Too many organizations compete for that phrase. Try combining the term with other meaningful descriptors to better focus those you want to reach. For example, “multiple sclerosis diagnosis,” “multiple sclerosis support” or “multiple sclerosis treatment new york.”

COMMENTING

You have a good website (or are building one). You have surfed the internet and listened on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and checked out other blogs. You have some idea about the wealth of groups out there as well as the keywords best for you.

And, most important, you are still reading a lot – the blogs, tweets and Facebook pages of people with influence in your community, other nonprofits in your sector, research groups, umbrella groups in your sector, the nonprofit trades, and mainstream newspapers.

Now you are ready to join the conversation. Start by commenting on what you are reading. Focus your comments on the conversations that are most relevant to your organization or about which you are most knowledgeable.

- If you agree – or disagree – with a blog or tweet, say so and give your reasons.
- Comment promptly, not two weeks after the blog or tweet is posted.
- Provide information that is useful to other readers, whether resources or food for thought.
- Link to other resources (your blog or website and those of others; newspaper articles; research reports).
- Keep comments short and simple. People don't read lengthy comments. If you have a lot to say on the subject, this may be the time to post your own blog and link to it in your comment.
- Once you've gotten your feet wet with commenting, you may want to start your own blog or ask if you can be a guest blogger on a site where you particularly want to be heard.

Commenting and guest blogging should continue even if you start your own blog. All three options ensure that your name and message are known to a wider audience. If your goal is to establish yourself as a thought-leader, commenting is a tactic critical to accomplishing that goal.

Other resources

Going Social: Tapping into Social Media for Nonprofit Success [registration required]
Social Media for Nonprofits: Whose Doing It & What Works
Rev Up Your Nonprofit, Small Business Revenue With E-marketing
25 Ways To Listen To Your Customers On Social Media
Social Media Library
4 Ways Social Media Are Changing the Nonprofit World
Social Media Best Practices for Nonprofits
Search Engine Optimization: What Every Small Business and Nonprofit Needs to Know
How Entrepreneurs and Nonprofits Can Make Search Engines Work for Them

THE BIG 5 SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK

Laying claim to more than 600 million users, Facebook is top-dog among social media. More than 30,000 of those users are nonprofits.

A Facebook page provides an opportunity to get your message out visually and widely. Some good examples include **the ASPCA and the Humane Society**.

> ***TIP > If you don't have a website, a Facebook Page is a great short-term substitute that allows you to test the Internet with very little time and money expended.***

Individuals on Facebook have "profiles," to which they can limit public access. Organizations, businesses, and public figures have "pages" that are visible to everyone by default. People connect to your organization by becoming a fan of your page. They will then receive updates and news about your organization.

Facebook is a rich resource that can be tapped for funding, as mentioned, or to better assess the interests of your supporters or increase your visibility as a thought-leader by using applications such as **Ask a Question**.

The bonus with Question is that you are accessing readers who are already interested in the topic or they wouldn't be asking/answering questions. That means they are more likely to engage with your organization than a random reader who happened to find you through a search engine.

When you understand all the Facebook tools and applications, called "apps," you'll find that your options for reaching clients, supporters, and donors are almost endless. The list is long but as a sample, you can:

- target supporters by geographic location, tailoring messages to be more interesting to specific followers
- join cause-marketing efforts
- tie into mobile phone fundraising campaigns
- solicit support for advocacy efforts
- direct viewers to the specific pages on your website that are most likely to interest them

The resources listed in our *Laying A Solid Foundation* section also include guidelines for using Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and blogging. But be sure your message doesn't end up as "spam" for your fans. **How To Ensure Your Facebook Wall Posts Are Seen** will help you avoid that problem.

> ***TIP > You must respond to questions or comments in a timely manner. That means within a day, not a week. The response can simply be "Thank you," or "Interesting idea," but if you don't respond, you'll lose your credibility.***

> ***TIP > If the comment is a complaint or criticism, post a substantive response, such as a fix or corrected information.***

What can Facebook do for your nonprofit?

Facebook has designed a feature just for nonprofits, the "**Causes**" app, which allows nonprofits to register and solicit donations directly through Facebook. Since 2007, Facebook reports that more than 390,000 causes have been created by users raising more than $28 million for causes ranging from breast cancer research to increasing support for local parks to raising awareness of genocide.

Even the Salvation Army has taken its **Red Kettle** holiday program online.

The full range of benefits from Facebook Causes can only be appreciated by going to the source, Facebook itself, although other resources may help as well, such as **Accelerating Fundraising Through Social Media**.

To supplement your fundraising, Facebook Causes or its sister app **Petitions** can be used for advocacy and building awareness of a cause and engagement with it. **One cancer awareness group** obtained 3.7 million signatures using this Facebook app.

But Facebook's own applications are the tip of the iceberg. Having a Facebook page gives you an easy way to find and connect with other organizations that may be potential partners as well as the ability to participate in corporate-giving programs and group fundraising programs.

Size does not matter on Facebook. **Neighborhood Link** of Fort Wayne, Indiana, uses its Facebook page to highlight the joys of volunteering to help neighbors with jobs they can't do themselves as well as to highlight the needs of people in the community.

Their Facebook page reads like a conversation between two people at the local coffee shop. This writing style and approach makes helping others very personal and just plain neighborly. Money is raised for individual home maintenance and repair projects while volunteers are mobilized to assist low-income seniors and those with disabilities.

To put to rest the myth that social media is for the young, **Elders in Action** and **AARP** partnered to build awareness and to advocate for older adults around health care reform and the promotion of changes to help older adults. Such collaboration raises awareness about both organizations as well as leveraging the impact of their advocacy.

The World Wildlife Fund has taken Facebook to a new level by starting a nonprofit gift page where fans can buy merchandise or "adopt" an endangered species. Doing so requires using some of Facebook's more sophisticated tools, such as a shopping cart. These tools require more experience with Facebook and some ability to do programming.

Corporate online giving programs, such as **Chase Community Giving**, allow nonprofits to use the clicks of their fans to potentially earn a minimum contribution of $5,000. It's not about being big; it's about reaching out; it's about gaining as many votes as possible through clicks.

> ***TIP > Don't expect a donation from every fan. You may have a huge social media following but the percentage that donates is usually not high. The Humane Society has 13 million fans. It raised $372,000 through Causes. That's not much per fan, but it is $372,000 the Humane Society might not have had otherwise.***

Other Resources

[How to Create And Optimize A Facebook Content Strategy]
[Facebook] has instructions for getting started.
[The Ultimate Guide to Facebook]
[Fundraising on Facebook]
[How to Build A Facebook Landing Page]

TWITTER

Twitter is now attracting 190 million visitors per month and generating 65 million tweets a day. It can be used to update an advocacy or fundraising campaign, urge participation in an event or – believe it or not – conduct a debate, called a Tweetup.

As the last paragraph indicates, Twitter has its own language and terminology to learn.

A good source for Twitter information is **How to Use Twitter for Business**. Although aimed at business owners, the tips are equally applicable to nonprofits. Instead of "customer," you can think "donor" or "potential partner" for a cause-marketing campaign.

Twitter is used with great success by a surprising array of nonprofits, both local and global, large and small. An interesting list is available at **The Chronicle of Philanthropy**.

You can start by following some of these on Twitter. And you can get some good pointers about following … but not too often or too closely … from **Elliott Kosmicki**.

For visual learners, try **We Are Visible**. Rather than reinventing the wheel, check out some good tips from **Chad Norman of Blackbaud**.

What can Twitter do for your nonprofit?

The US Department of Veterans Administration (VA) is using Twitter to provide client services rather than advocacy or fundraising. Since 2009, the **VA has developed and personalized its social media presence**. Veteran's can Tweet (that is, send a message on Twitter) complaints and get a response. Interestingly, many of those using this new technique are Vietnam war veterans, part of the Baby Boom generation that some people assume will not adapt to social media. The VA Facebook page ties to its Twitter feed, allows comments, and has updates on laws affecting veterans, discussions of issues, and links to resources.

It's a conversation in which the VA finds out how well it is doing, what changes might be needed, and provides help to individual veterans.

Several airlines have used Twitter to update passengers and even re-route them. It's an example of the versatility of Twitter and its ability to deal with critical issues quickly.

As mentioned before, social media are low-cost but not free. Questions posted to the VA on Facebook and Twitter are answered directly, which means the conversations are monitored, just like a phone bank would be. The platform is free but the staffing is not.

Check out how **Epic Change** uses Twitter. The Founder of this young nonprofit, Stacey Monk, blogged about her volunteer experience at a school in Tanzania. Her blog attracted a Twitter following. Now, Epic Change has three staff members – yes, that's the entire staff – who use their personal Twitter accounts and an Epic Change account to interact with followers and raise money, most notably through a concept they call TweetsGiving.

Started in November 2008, TweetsGiving was an early charity-entry in the Twitter world. That first year, Epic Change used Tweetsgiving to raise $10,000 for classrooms in Tanzania. The money was raised in 48 hours. Epic Change continued the **Tweetsgiving** program, then switched to other social-media based programs called Epic Thanks, TwitterKids, and To Mama With Love. To date, the organization has invested nearly $175,000 in its projects. The vast majority has been raised via online channels, according to Monk. Social media and its website are essentially the only marketing channels.

This year, as the first recipient school paid back a portion of its investment, Epic Change collaborated with the principal of the school to choose its next global partner, according to Monk. A third beneficiary was chosen by popular vote on social media from Epic Change's most active local community in Tampa, Florida.

As Epic Change demonstrates, the yield of Twitter is not dependent on size. In fact, individuals can use it to raise matching funds for donations, as **cancer patient Drew Olanoff proved**.

Twitter has services that aggregate donations as well, such as **Small Can Be Big**, which pulls together small donations to accomplish big things for working families in Massachusetts. Using Facebook and Twitter, donors can leverage their $15 into enough to help people find a home, escape domestic violence or pay their electric bill.

> ***Tip > By using Google checkout, for which Google gives a discount, Small Can Be Big is able to transfer 100 percent of donations to partner nonprofits.***

The Salvation Army in Tulsa, OK, uses Twitter to **raise awareness of its toy drive**, not to raise money directly. People spread the word to friends that they support the program or are dropping off a toy.

Even individuals – the staff, clients, celebrity supporters, and board members of a nonprofit – can make a difference. The combined donations to your nonprofit in lieu of other gifts on birthdays and holidays could generate both financial returns and more awareness. Such efforts are often done across social media platforms. In the case of celebrities, Twitter is frequently used.

As with Facebook, Twitter excels at cause marketing. Junior Achievement of Greater Miami has a cause-marketing relationship with its local Papa John's Pizza. Using Facebook and Twitter, Junior Achievement encourages friends and followers to order a pizza online. Each order generates a $2 donation to the nonprofit. Papa John gets good vibes, great press, and new customers. Junior Achievement gains a regular stream of revenue.

As mentioned, Twitter and Facebook complement each other by offering cross-promotional possibilities to leverage outreach. The Theater Alliance of Greater Philadelphia held a rally to stop a proposed theater ticket tax in Philadelphia. It started small, but grew as notices were sent out on Facebook and via an e-newsletter to local theater artists, administrators, students, and ticket holders.. More than 100 people showed up for the first rally.

This issue received TV and newspaper coverage because of the online chatter – a new way to get press coverage -- and the rally. Local politicians came out in support of the effort because of the press coverage. Ultimately, the tax proposal was thrown out.

The Theater Alliance experience is an example of leveraging social media to get coverage in traditional media. It is also an example of advocating to a group of people already interested in the topic. Would the outcome have been the same if an ad had been taken out in a newspaper? Probably not, but newspaper coverage and political impact generated by a rally arranged through social media … That is the power of social media!

Mistakes do happen and you can learn from those of others. **The best and worst of 2010 local cause marketing** gives you both good ideas and cautionary tales.

YOUTUBE (OR OTHER VIDEO-SHARING SERVICE)

People watch 2 billion videos a day on YouTube. Nonprofit power-users of social media rated YouTube the second most effective social medium, according to **Nonprofits and Social Media: It Ain't Optional**.

Visuals have significant and memorable impact. They can hit the emotional target more accurately than a blog or even a photograph. A video tells a story. And a good story grabs interest and brings your cause to life.

YouTube has a **nonprofit** program that offers technical assistance. It will also list your organization on the YouTube nonprofit channel. Take advantage of this resource.

While the production values on YouTube are not expected to be Emmy-award quality, your video does represent your organization to the public. You want the image you present to be professional with a clear message. And you must include a call to action: donate, click, contact, write a letter.

It's not as daunting as it sounds. Flip-style video cameras make it fairly easy to tape high-quality videos. Resources to help you abound, such as this from **DoSomething U**.

Allison Fine, a social media expert, has a **quick sample of good videos** that demonstrates the range of acceptable production values.

As with all social media, there is a right way to get the most out of YouTube. Videos should be posted regularly and should be simple, to the point, and no longer than 4 minutes.

Once it is produced, the next step is to get your video out to your target audience. One way to do this, is by taking advantage of YouTube's nonprofit channel and listing your organization there. Other ways are to post the video on your Facebook page and to send out a Tweet about it with a link.

For examples of good videos and how to make them, check out **a few videos** and **how-tos**.

What can YouTube do for your nonprofit?

Want impact? A **violence-reduction program** in Chicago has found that a video is worth a thousand words. It uses the videos to show the impact of violent death on a community.

YouTube and Facebook often work together. Videos from YouTube can leverage a Facebook page. It's not hard to find examples of **fundraising** and **raising awareness** success using YouTube.

Videos can go "viral," which means that they are passed from person to person so rapidly that millions of people see the video in a very short time. It really means that the video hit a nerve or the funny bone. In the "hit a nerve" category is **It Gets Better**, a video that launched a community support site for young gay people.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is all about business. It has 100 million business users who are all professional people, contacts from whom you can get ideas and knowledge.

And it can be personalized. You do not have to let everyone see everything about you. You can choose to connect with some people more closely than you do with others. You can also post presentations, videos, and links to other social media.

While used by many, LinkedIn is understood by few and therefore is often deemed the least useful of the social media. Its greatest value is for research in the nonprofit world, especially researching people.

- Learn about people before you meet them. Whether you're asking them for a donation, to be on your board or for advice, you can get to know them first.
- Use **Advanced Search** to find experts with the talent, experience, and aligned interests who could advise you.
- Get an introduction from your network to someone you want to meet.
- Use Advanced Search to find the right contacts at nonprofits that you want to partner with or corporations who can provide sponsorship, etc.
- Find a board member or research a prospective board member.
- Check references of people you're hiring.
- Treat LinkedIn as your Rolodex. Information about contacts will always be up to date. You'll have the latest phone number and current title of your contacts because they'll be regularly updating their profiles.
- You can search by keyword, name, title, zip code, etc.

LinkedIn research includes getting answers to questions or ideas from online groups. LinkedIn also increases the online visibility of your organization and your staff members when you answer questions for others.

The Chronicle of Philanthropy has a **video that shows how this can work**.

To understand the real power of LinkedIn, check out **LinkedIn For Nonprofit Organizations**.

What can LinkedIn do for your nonprofit?

LinkedIn groups, such as Social Media for Nonprofit Professionals, can quickly provide very practical advice and information. Recently, a member of the group asked how to more actively engage her Facebook followers. Comments from social media professionals included:

- advice on which Facebook tools to use and how to use them
- changes in wording of surveys
- suggested changes to the organization's Facebook page

Other members of the group noted that the answers helped them re-do their Facebook pages as well.

Rebecca Zannata, a development director, **used LinkedIn to find new donors** for Washington State University. When traveling, she searched by zip code and "Washington State University" to find alumni in the region she was visiting. She compared responses from her LinkedIn outreach to her email outreach and was astounded to discover the difference … in favor of LinkedIn.

Community Organizer 2.0 cites the work of The Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust (PSYBT), which used Linkedin to support mentors and promote knowledge-sharing.

A private LinkedIn PSYBT group for mentors and their entrepreneurs allowed both to discuss issues, such as the best way to make cold calls, and to answer each other's questions about business or mentoring. Now members of the group are writing LinkedIn recommendations for each other. Participation was slow to take off, noted Margaret Gibson of the Prince's Youth Business International Program, so she urges allowing at least 6 months before expecting results.

BLOGGING

A blog is usually a series of short articles, but can also be photos, video and/or audio. The articles should be pertinent to your cause and interesting to your readers. You can have a blog as an organization or the individuals within your nonprofit can blog on the organization's behalf.

Blogs are popular. A **recent report** discovered about one-half of all internet users read a blog at least monthly and this number is expected to grow to 60 percent very quickly. To keep readers coming back:

- Have a unique point of view. The reader should be able to understand the values of your organization quickly.
- Have personality. A blog is not a term paper. It should have a recognizable voice and style.
- Be provocative. Add new ideas to the discussion or challenge old ones.
- Invite comments – both positive and negative -- and respond to them.
- Trigger an emotional or personal connection, whenever possible. The world is full of distractions. Linking your nonprofit with an emotion etches it into people's minds.
- Be up to date. Blog about what's happening now or even issues that might crop up in the future.

Share information directly from your organization to educate supporters about new issues and programs. The issues may affect your whole sector, not just your organization. Let the reader know what your values are and the challenges you face.

Make sure that you communicate honestly, genuinely, and with passion. What you say needs to be compelling. For more ideas, check out **Hubspot**, which has many articles on how to incorporate blogging into your marketing plan. One of the best, *Better Business Blogging 2011,* starts with purpose and proceeds through buy-in by staff to blog design and cross-promotion.

TIP > Remember, this is a conversation, not a monologue. Encourage response by conducting polls or surveys and by asking questions of your readers.

When you make a connection, the reader is more likely to take action – donate, write a letter, volunteer, talk up your organization. It's that conversion rate again, which brings us back to attracting search engines so readers can find you.

TIP > Write compelling content while using keywords or very specific phrases multiple times in 500 words or less.

What can blogging do for your nonprofit?

Wildlife Direct, an organization devoted to saving endangered species, uses blogging extensively to attract supporters and keep them updated about precisely the species they care about. It has blogs from every field location highlighting the work being done with heart-warming and donation-generating video.

To capitalize on the emotional connection, the blog site has prominently placed a donate button and quick links to share on Facebook. Cross-promotion is essential when using more than one social medium.

Charity:Water shares their failures (wells that didn't work) and gushers by blogging with videos. You can blog about advocacy efforts, updates on program impacts as well as news of interest to clients. Be sure to include the results of your efforts, whether advocacy or fundraising.

With help from social media expert Geoff Livingston, **Goodwill of Greater Washington** developed a fashionista subtext for its website, including blogs, fashion shows, and online purchasing. The project opened a new market for Goodwill – young, vintage-clothes buyers – without a huge outlay for marketing. The key, according to Livingston, was to focus on integrating social media into the marketing plan rather than trying to build a stand-alone social media presence. The online sales and fashionista appeal were pushed through Facebook, Twitter, and fashion show videos as was the organization's overall goal of helping people find jobs.

> ***TIP > Respond to comments about your blog within 24 hours, even if only to say "Thanks for reading."***

Other resources

5 Tips For Blogging In The Post RSS Era [registration required]
Learning SEO From the Experts
Brainstorming Blog Topics

SMARTPHONE APPLICATIONS

The cell phone is a micro-computer that can go everywhere you go. Happily, the last three generations of cell phones all tie into social media platforms so smartphone applications are golden opportunities to expand your Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or LinkedIn presence. Now supporters or potential supporters can read your blog or vote for you in a fundraising contest while they're riding the subway or waiting for the dentist.

Fundraising apps

Smartphone applications (called apps) hit the stratosphere in January 2010 when an earthquake hit Haiti. Using your cell phone and texting 'Haiti' to 90999 triggered a $10 donation to the American Red Cross. In a matter of days, $8 million had been raised in $10 increments and the face of fundraising changed.

Such texting campaigns have flourished since then, almost always tied to Facebook and Twitter campaigns, if not directly then through cross-promotion. Again, the concept is aggregation: pulling in many small donations rather than hunting for that one big donor.

While lucrative, cell phone fundraising is also expensive. Setting up the number to text can cost thousands of dollars and the credit card company will take a cut as well.

But smartphones have other uses beyond fundraising.

Information apps

The Museum of Modern Art in New York City and the American Museum of Natural History have both developed free cell phone apps to guide you around the museum. Users can find exhibits or the nearest restrooms. Some include audio tours so you don't have to read the little placards on the wall.

Smartphone applications are just getting starting but include **everything from "karma points" to uploading photos to help a cause**.

Outreach apps

And a new treat has been added to the menu: QR codes, those strange looking black and white squares that you see on billboards, products or your airline boarding pass. Take a picture of one with your cell phone and you can go directly to a website or store someone's contact information in your phone. **QRStuff** has demonstrations of how to use QR codes as well as explanations of some uses.

What can a smartPhone do for your nonprofit?

Hope House, a nonprofit social service agency in Memphis, TN, uses QR codes on posters about its 5K run. With the click of a cell phone, a runner is linked directly to the registration site. T-shirts with the QR code will be given away. Every time the T-shirt is worn, people will be able to click on the code to make a donation or get more information..

FUNDRAISING

The first step in online fundraising is to set up an electronic payment services account such as **e-giving.com** that will allow people to donate online easily. Updating your website with a "donate now" button is the second step in online fundraising.

After that, you can use any social media platform as the basis for a fundraising campaign. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube: They can all communicate why people should give you money. With the credit card or electronic check payment, you make it possible for them to do so.

Cause marketing

Once you have a social media presence, you can join cause-marketing campaigns sponsored by corporations, such as the **Pepsi Refresh** project or **Chase Community Giving**. These corporate online giving programs allow nonprofits to use the clicks of their fans to potentially earn a minimum contribution of $5,000. It's not about being big. It's about reaching out, it's about gaining as many votes as possible through clicks.

Charity malls

Then there are the "charity malls," such as **iGive** and **OneCause**. When someone makes an online purchase through these sites, money is donated to nonprofit causes, such as yours.

Donation aggregators

Websites have been developed to bring your nonprofit to the attention of many donors through websites that provide information about an array nonprofits, let donors choose one or more nonprofits to help, process the donations, maintain the records, and otherwise manage the record keeping. **JustGive.org** is one. You must have a presence on Facebook and/or Twitter to reap the rewards of these sites.

CrowdRise is a slightly different kind of aggregator. With CrowdRise, individuals are guided to start their own fundraising campaigns in a competitive, game-playing mode.

The advantage of both corporate campaigns and online fundraisers, such as aggregators and malls, is that the infrastructure is in place. All you have to do is energize your supporters through tweets or posts on your Facebook page and website.

Caution #1: Don't overdo it. People do not want endless solicitations via email, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Plan each fundraising effort carefully. Don't jump on every corporate offer that comes along. Fundraising should be balanced with news, progress reports, insights, and conversations with your followers.

Caution #2: Online donation services may cost money. Part of the donation, sometimes as much as 30 percent, is taken by the service provider. At this time, Causes.com (not to be confused with Facebook Causes) charges about 4.75 percent to pay credit card company fees and other expenses. The service also asks for a "tip" to cover its costs.

Crowdrise charges 5 percent plus a transaction fee on each donation; in its online example, a $100 donation nets your organization $92.50.

Often, these charges are not well publicized so do your homework. It is worth noting, however, that these sites do offer a service and if the charge is in keeping with the service, it may be worthwhile to take advantage of their longer reach. Just be sure the decisions you make are based on full disclosure.

An article [registration may be required] in *The New York Times* discusses the pros and cons of several donation aggregator services.

Caution #3: Be careful which of these programs you choose to join. While some “contests” have an application that verifies the authenticity of votes, other programs don't and organizations can cheat to win. Yes, even nonprofits may cheat. You can read more on **The Huffington Post***.*

Criticism has been leveled at these contests for reasons other than cheating, including:

- lack of transparency
- use of the email addresses of followers without their permission;
- disqualifying nonprofits after the voting has begun due to the mission of the organizations.

The list goes on. Be sure you know what you are giving away, how much time it will take, what it will cost your supporters, and what you will gain from the effort.

Other Resources

About.com online fundraising tips
Credit Card Processing for Nonprofits
Social Good Fundraising Tools
Charity Mall Shopping Links
Facebook Causes

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Internet postings are the closest thing to immortality any of us will ever see. Once you hit the “send” button, your post, tweet or email message is searchable and may turn up in unexpected and even undesirable places.

Your staff's electronic communication is the new face of your organization. With so much at stake, you and your staff need to understand how to best represent yourselves and your company online.

Hence the need for policies and procedures to guide staff whenever they use e-media to communicate. This includes email.

Four areas need to be addressed in any organization's policies:

- Guidelines for the **content** of postings, whether on behalf of the organization or personal comments by staff in which the organization is mentioned.
- Guidelines for **comments**, which includes notification of copyright rules, acceptable language, respect for others, etc.
- Action plan for **response to negative** comments, inadvertent slip-ups or negative publicity.
- **Procedures** to ensure that all social media commitments – blogging twice a week, three tweets per day, etc. – are accomplished, that social media content is on target, and social media responses are assessed.

Because social media are evolving rapidly, it is highly recommended that the policies and procedures be online and subject to wiki updates by those actually using social media. IBM's social media guidelines were a wiki creation, that is, developed by the employees collaborating to create a final policy. This wiki approach to policy development can be very useful, especially if staff has more experience with social media than management.

Understand that “wiki” means everyone can suggest changes. Management still decides which changes will be implemented. If you don't have an intranet that allows collaboration, you can use Google docs or similar applications.

Today's workforce is more wired than ever before, with immediate and constant access to text messaging, email, and social networking sites. Technology encourages us to share information in the blink of an eye but we still only get one chance to make a first impression.

Content

All content should reflect and support the mission and values of the organization. Ensuring that official content does so is part of the social media marketing/development plan. So, too, is ensuring that your content is not misused by others.

The organization must decide if its official content can be copied and used elsewhere. The easiest answer is, “Yes, with attribution.” In other words, anyone can reproduce your copy if they say it is yours. That is called **Creative Commons License**. It encourages sharing information without losing credit for your work.

The more difficult questions arise when staff members have personal social media accounts.

Staffers who have their own Facebook page, LinkedIn or Twitter account should be made aware that their personal comments can be inadvertently or directly linked with the organization. The Fraternal Order of Eagles has developed **policies for its members' "unofficial" sites**. When discussing issues that touch on the work of the organization, staff members of any organization must realize that their comments can be construed as being the comments of the organization. Therefore:

- When speaking about the organization on their own sites, staffers must be trained to use a disclaimer, that is, to state that their views do not represent the views of the organization.
- Those providing content must understand copyright laws. Information posted on the internet is not necessarily "in the public domain." You cannot download any picture or text you find and use it without permission. This is particularly critical for those who have long used social media without supervision. There is a serious misconception that anything on the web is "public domain." It is not. A print magazine was recently forced to close down for acting on this misconception.
- Remind staff that internal discussions and client information are private and should remain so.

Tread carefully: Privacy and free speech rights must be considered.

The **guidelines of the American Red Cross** are detailed and cover many issues, including respecting the opinions of others and never hiding behind a pseudonym. In other words, be who you are and behave as you do when you meet people face to face.

Comments

Social media stimulate conversations and foster engagement. That's the point. You and the reader give and get information that is relevant to your organization. However, it is unprofessional and irresponsible to allow comments that contain personal attacks on others. This includes abusive and defamatory remarks.

The organization should monitor comments, not to censor disagreement but to ensure that the site is not used for excessive self-promotion, defamation or spam.

You should also post your policy regarding comments, spelling out what is acceptable and what is not. A good example is the **Easter Seal** comment guideline.

Such moderation requires staff time and should be included in any cost analysis of social media.

Response to negative comments and events

We have all witnessed recent corporate crises – Toyota, for example – where the outcomes were worsened by slow and ineffective responses.

Nonprofits may also be the target of complaints or accusations. The key is quick response by someone who can fix the problem or post the correct information.

Quickly! This is the internet. Misinformation or news about a bad decision can travel the world in minutes. Minimizing negative impact requires that your organization have a crisis management plan in place and that you consistently monitor comments and news.

- The crisis plan should include designating a team with power to make and carry out decisions. The crisis team should brainstorm its response to various hypothetical situations before they happen.
- A negative comment can be a legitimate criticism. If a supporter complains that your new cause-marketing partner is inappropriate and may cost you support, you have an opportunity to reconsider the guidelines you use in selecting partners as well as the opportunity to tell your

discontented supporter that you appreciate the comment and will look into the issue.

- Remember, if that same commenter remains disgruntled, she can post her feelings about your organization on her Facebook page, blog about the situation, or post comments about you on other pages. It's much better to be nice. To see just how damaging unresolved complaints can be, check out **United Breaks Guitars**.
- Your response, your transparency, and your accountability can raise your status or lose supporters. An example is the response of the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure's affiliation with KFC. The partnership of a cancer research organization with a high-fat/high-sodium food purveyor was resoundingly criticized.

  Komen's response was … not much. Instead of making a strong case for the validity of the partnership or admitting poor judgment, the organization released short press releases without follow-up. Its response became the subject of as much criticism as its original decision. The same charge has been leveled against the Smithsonian which removed artwork because it had been criticized as “unChristian.” The Smithsonian's lack of response in the social media has opened it to more criticism.

Plan ahead. You must respond quickly, not call a committee meeting.

Procedures

Procedures for social media are like procedures for any other marketing project:

- Who is responsible for writing content?
- Who is responsible for approving content?
- How often will each medium be updated?
- Who is responsible for those updates?
- How will staff not directly responsible for social media be involved and encouraged to contribute ideas and news items?
- How will the organization ensure that everyone on the staff knows what the procedures and policies are?
- How will changes in social media tools and formats be accommodated?

Answer these questions and you are well on your way to a procedure that can be maintained when staff changes occur. But the answers will be unique to your organization. By all means, review the procedures and policies of other nonprofits. No need to re-invent the wheel. Just be sure you *adapt*, not just adopt, the work of others.

Other resources

Creating a Social Media Policy for Your Nonprofit
Social Media Policies for Nonprofits
Send Is Forever: Workplace Communication in the 21st Century
Social Media Governance

Every nonprofit is unique and has its own goals and proficiencies in measurement. Your social media measurement system needs to reflect your organization's priorities and abilities. Measurements can be as simple as: number of visitors to your site; number of followers or fans; and/or how many people comment on or like your postings. Decide what is important to your organization. Concentrate on analyzing data that provide meaningful information about the project at hand and ignore the rest. Your measurement use will evolve as your use of social media increases.

Ways Nonprofits Measure Social Media

	Total	Hours Per Week Doing Social Media:			
		1-4	5-9	10-24	25+
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Number of community members, connections, fans, followers, friends, etc.	84	84	88	84	82
Website traffic: overall visitors	69	65	67	73	74
Website traffic: page views	60	56	63	69	77
User response: number of comments	57	51	58	68	68
Website traffic: new visitors	53	45	54	65	72
User response: number of retweets	39	28	45	56	59
User response: quality of response	31	24	35	40	40
Website traffic: bounce rate	30	27	28	37	50
Amount of money raised	23	18	25	28	29
User response: number of people rating	16	10	18	22	32
Leads	13	10	13	18	24
User response: quality of rating	9	5	9	13	24

Source: Nonprofits and Social Media: It Ain't Optional: A Survey Conducted by Ventureneer and Caliber

When measuring the effectiveness of social media, you will be using some old terms and also expanding your vocabulary. Bookmark a good reference page, such as the Internet Advertising Bureau's **Jargon Buster**.

A very good guide for those getting started is SocialBrite's **Getting Started With Social Media Metrics**. It is another page you should bookmark. SocialBrite also has a very good **information about measuring nonprofit success** in social media.

From your website analytics program, you might measure impressions, conversions, bounce rate, time spent, pages visited, new visitors that were referred by each social medium you use. In other words, how many people visited your site (impressions) as a result of engaging with you through a social medium; did they click through to other pages (page visits); take the action you requested (conversion); or leave right away (bounce)?

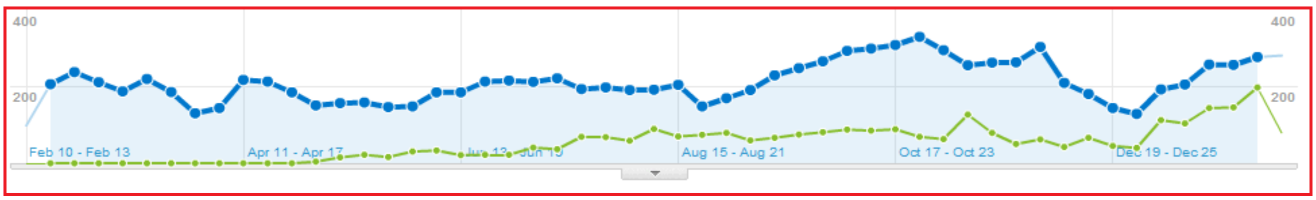
You will find that some data should be looked at monthly, other data less frequently. Reviewing metrics regularly speeds up the learning process: Your staff will more quickly gain an understanding of social media, what the metric changes mean, and how your social media presence should grow and change.

If you are just starting a social media initiative, you may want to look at your data on a daily basis. Yes, daily. Many social media metrics are available instantly so you have the opportunity to quickly determine what is not working well and make changes so you don't waste time and money on ineffective messages.

Measurement is a comparison tool. Compare your results over different periods of time – daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, etc. When appropriate, compare to a competitor or an organization similar to yours with which you might be competing for funding or followers. **Compete** provides both free and paid information on how your website is faring compared to similar organizations.

Evaluation is not something that gets done once and put away. It is an ongoing process. Track results over time. Does an event work better at a particular time of the year? Are responses cyclical, rising and falling in a regular pattern? You'll only know if you are looking at results over the course of an entire year.

Search Engine Visits
Weekly Comparison 2010 v 2009



Start with your goals

Many of your goals are directly and easily counted, at no cost:

- Donations
- Leads
- Subscribers
- Members
- Page rank (Google, **Alexa**)
- Website traffic
- Media attention
- Petition signatures
- Calls or emails to government officials

Some goals can be counted indirectly:

- Interaction
- Engagement
- Reputation
- Loyalty
- Sentiment

Goals that measure outcomes may require conducting a survey, also easily done using online tools such as surveymonkey.com. A survey can measure:

- Awareness
- Perception
- Satisfaction

Choose Your Tools and Metrics

Metrics are measurements, such as the number of clicks, page visits, visitors, and so on. Analytics are software programs that help analyze the performance of marketing campaigns including email, website and social media.

Metrics fall into four basic categories:

- The simple count of how many people know you exist (fans, followers, etc.)
- How much time they spend getting information from your website
- How much it costs to attract them
- How engaged they are with your cause.

These tell you whether your message is hitting your target audience with enough impact to get them involved in your cause.

Each type of measurement can be done at an entry level and at more advanced levels.

Counting eyeballs: Fans, followers, connections, subscribers

When you talk in terms of fans, followers, connections, and subscribers, be aware that you're looking at *potential* reach, not *actual* reach. Not all of your fans or followers are logged in and viewing your content on any given day. Not all will take action when asked to do so. Actions taken – money donated, petitions signed, volunteers signed up, etc. -- are the most important metrics of all.

- Look at your average monthly potential reach across all of your online networks. How many people have connected to you in some way? Track over time.

Metrics: Where to Find Them and Frequency of Updates			
Source	Social Media Platforms	Website Analytic Programs	Other Analytic Programs
Update Frequency	Real Time	Day After	Depending on program, varies from real time to several months later.
Metric	▪ Connections, fans, followers ▪ Likes ▪ Comments/Subscribers ▪ Tweets ▪ Retweets (You can also measure through bit.ly, tweetreach.com, backtweets.com and retweetrank.com)	▪ Visits (impressions) ▪ Page views ▪ Bounce rates ▪ Average time spent on site ▪ Percent new visitors	▪ Media mentions ▪ Sentiment and influence measures (not recommended for those just starting out)

Facebook and YouTube each have tools to tally the numbers and to analyze the results.

Some social media have tools to measure the effectiveness of specific applications. **Go Go Give** provides data when raising money using a Facebook campaign. YouTube has the ability to add a "call-to-action" overlay with a donate button.

As your use of social media grows, you can use these tools to track how well your message is getting out in each medium. Choose only those tools that measure exactly what you need to know.

Whether you use free Google Analytics, your hosting company's analytics or pay for a more robust program, website tools provide a vast amount of data that can be used to evaluate the social media performance. Look at:

- The number of visits (high is good)
- The average length of time spent per visit (the longer, the better)

- The number of pages viewed (more is better)
- The bounce rate (the percentage of visitors who exit after visiting a single web page; lower is better.)

Website analytics allow you to evaluate which social media sites are sending you the most people. Is Facebook generating more visits or is Twitter? How does that compare to your search engine optimization (SEO) or public relations effort?

You may notice that search engines drive high numbers of visits but have a high bounce rate. That is, people come to the site then leave immediately without looking at additional pages.

On the other hand, social media may generate a lower number of visitors than search engines but the visitors are often of a "higher quality," with more page views per visit and a lower bounce rate. You need to add quality of visits into your calculation of return on your investment in social media.

Some other ways to evaluate effectiveness:

- Compare metrics over time to determine which media are the most effective for different projects. What works for your fundraising campaign may not be as effective when you want people to write their Congressperson.
- Check out which keywords are driving traffic from the search engines to your website. You may be able to increase traffic to your website by writing blog posts that are optimized for these keywords. Do your tweets periodically include your keywords? Should you be developing hash tags (the # names for organizations or topics) for your keywords?

Often, it is easier to export data from analytics to a spreadsheet where you can format it in whatever way is most meaningful to your organization.

Return on Investment (ROI)

Track the costs put into each social medium. Be sure to include staff time and training in those costs.

When you combine data from a web analytics program with dollars spent by using a spreadsheet, you can calculate the social media return on investment (ROI) by visit. You can also combine the cost with data such as volunteers recruited, dollars raised or other metrics that are important to your organization from other measurement tools.

Sample Website Analytics with Costs

Source	Visits	Pages/ Visit	Avg Time on Site	% New Visits	Bounce Rate	Cost	Cost/ Visit
Search Engine							
google	1225	2.18	1:24	78%	60%		
yahoo	58	1.88	:51	90%	53%		
bing	53	2.32	1:00	92%	53%		
ask	11	2.18	1:40	100%	45%		
search	10	1.50	:14	90%	60%		
aol	5	1.40	:02	100%	60%		
live	1	7.00	3:57	100%	0%		
Search Engine Totals	1363	2.17	01:21	79%	59%	$ 1,000	$ 0.73
Social Media							
facebook.com	177	2.36	2:41	79%	45%		
twitter.com	127	3.80	8:44	28%	39%		
youtube	91	5.33	13:38	15%	21%		
linkedin.com	11	1.36	0:09	55%	73%		
Social Media Totals	406	3.45	06:58	48%	38%	$ 1,000	$ 2.46
Comments							
newyorktimes.com	27	1.96	0:53	96%	48%		
huffingtonpost.com	18	2.44	2:07	89%	50%		
change.org	11	1.18	1:35	9%	40%		
triplepundit.com	8	3.88	1:26	100%	42%		
Comments Totals	64	2.20	01:25	80%	47%	$ 250	$ 3.91

Look at the number of new donors/contributions/volunteers/attendees/etc. each month. Divide that number into the total amount (including salaries) that you spend trying to get those donors (money/results). Compare the result to other marketing and communications activities.

COST ÷ VISIT = ROI

Substitute donor, volunteer, attendee or any other metric for “visit” in the formula above.

INBOUND LINKS

Inbound links are direct links to your website from someone else's website. Usually considered a search engine optimization (SEO) metric, inbound links are an indicator of how well respected you are and how much influence you have, that is, whether people think what you have to say is worth following and passing on to their followers.

- **Google PageRank is an algorithm based on the number and authority of links that shows you the relative importance of each page of your website. To get this information, install this free application.**
- **Majestic SEO has both free and paid tools that allow you to compare the number of your inbound links to that of your competition and peers.**
- **Open Site Explorer has free and paid tools that allow you to compare link metrics between multiple sites to determine the level of competition / difficulty /importance of your own site in comparison to other sites.**
- **Yahoo Site Explore is a free tool that tracks inbound links for users' own and their competitors' sites.**
- **Page Inlink Analyzer is a free tool that provides insight into the number of inbound links to each of your site's pages.**
- **HubSpot Website Grader is a free tool that provides an overall SEO grade for websites based on inbound links, website traffic, SEO, social popularity and other factors.**

Engagement

Engagement means different things to different organizations so you need to take into account your specific goals and the outcomes you want when deciding which metrics to focus on.

Measuring engagement is really about measuring what people do in response to your message. For ideas about what to measure, check out **Social Media Key Performance Indicators**.

Develop a Continuous Feedback Loop

Evolve! Once you know what works and what doesn't, tweak your social media efforts and start the whole process all over again. That's the beauty of social media. You have instant results that allow you to modify your social media program quickly. Once one medium is working, add or expand another.

If a social medium isn't working for you, don't throw the baby out with the bath water. Analyze why:

- Is your message reaching the right audience?
- Are you communicating the right message?
- Are you communicating too many messages at once?
- Are you cross-promoting your presence enough? Leverage one medium with another.
- Are you measuring the right things?

Again, the mantra is "One step at a time." The terminology of metrics can be overwhelming, the data can be a deluge that drowns you. Stay focused and wade in slowly.

Other resources

[Guide To Social Media Metrics]
[Reasons Why Your Social Media Strategy Isn't Working]
[Top 25 Ways to Listen to Social Media Today]
[Nonprofit Marketing Dashboard: Key Metrics to Monitor]
Social Media Analytics: 6 Steps to Measuring What You Care About While it is aimed at small businesses, this article has useful information for nonprofits.
For survey tips, try **Surveys Are a Great Marketing Tool: Ten Tips for Doing It Yourself**

CONCLUSION

In writing this ebook, we realized how much excellent information is available about using social media. And the resources expand daily.

Rather than re-inventing the wheel, we have tried to simplify the social media start-up process for you, organize the information, direct you to resources, and give you ideas about how the various platforms might work for your organization.

But the rest is up to you. To use social media really well, nonprofits learn by doing. Yes, you may stumble along the way but the more you use social media, the more confident you'll become and the better your results will be.

Pick a social medium and just do it.

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