

## Creating a Social Media Strategy For Your Nonprofit

You're missing out if your nonprofit doesn't have a social media presence yet. As mentioned earlier, there are over 4 billion social media users worldwide, a number that is growing yearly. This means that if you want to spread the word about your cause, social media offers you access to a massive potential audience.

Here's how nonprofits can make the most of social media.

### Pick Your Platforms

Most nonprofits don't need to be on every single social media platform. For example: [48% of social media platform donors give on Facebook](#). That's double the impact of Instagram (24%), and other platforms (at less than 10% each).

Instead, the best social media platforms for nonprofits will depend on the kinds of content you want to share, the audience you hope to reach, and where your supporters are already active.

- **Facebook.** Widely used by people of all ages (though teens are [the smallest group](#) of users), Facebook is an excellent place to share events, fundraising, images, videos, and text. Facebook's live streaming and story functions continue to gain popularity.
- **Twitter.** Character limits make Twitter best for quick updates, discussions, and interactions with the media. Nonprofits that do a lot of advocacy or activism may also find Twitter a good platform for organizing and communicating about actions or running hashtag campaigns.

- **Instagram.** Instagram is a highly visual platform, so it's perfect for photos, videos, and impactful captions.
- **LinkedIn.** Designed for professional networking, LinkedIn connects you with talent when hiring and can help reach out to corporate donors and learn more about your existing donors' careers and connections.
- **TikTok.** A video-based platform popular with teens, users record and share 15–60 second video clips set to music. Users also participate in [challenges and projects that benefit nonprofits](#) by raising awareness and funds.

So, choose a couple of platforms that best suit your content and audience and focus solely on those. That strategy will instantly make social media management more manageable.

### **Start with strategy**

As we mentioned above, one of the common mistakes nonprofits make with [launching social media](#) is jumping on a platform because they think they have to, and then posting things randomly. In that case, social media doesn't really do anything for them, and they become discouraged or overwhelmed.

You're much more likely to be successful with social media if you start with a strategy. It doesn't have to be incredibly complex, but your nonprofit social media strategy should, at minimum, include:

### **A Clear Purpose and Goals**

The first step in creating a social media marketing strategy for your nonprofit is deciding what you want to achieve. Why do you want to use social media in the first place? What

do you hope to accomplish?

Some organizations set broad goals such as “raising awareness”—but that’s pretty hard to track. Instead, make your goal more focused and think about how you’d be able to report on it. Does “raising awareness” mean increasing the number of people who share each post, or the number of people who click through to your website?

A “SMART” goal format can help you set some tangible goals. A SMART goal is:

- **Specific:** Layout precisely what you’re trying to accomplish.
- **Measurable:** Instead of a vague target like, “be better at social media” try “post X times a week” or “increase our number of followers by X%.”
- **Attainable:** If you’re a one-person marketing/fundraising department, you shouldn’t have the same goals as someone with a staff of ten. Your time and budget will influence what you can get done, so set your goals accordingly.
- **Relevant:** Is your goal in line with what your organization needs and your social media purpose? If your primary purpose is to educate your followers, your goal shouldn’t be about fundraising numbers.
- **Timely:** When will you know you’ve reached your goal? How long will you try a strategy before evaluating it? Your goal should have a calendar date on it.

For example, you could aim to gain 100 new members over three months from a specific campaign. Or maybe your goal is to gain enough donations in a single, month-long campaign to complete some badly needed office renovations.

## **A Target Audience**

Successful social media marketing targets very specific audiences. So: Who are you

trying to reach? Look at your current followers and supporters, and consider their interests. What kind of content are they the most responsive to? Which platforms are they active on?

Figuring out your target audience will help you focus your social media posts on platforms and topics they care about.

Lots of organizations find it helpful to create personas — fictional characters who represent the people you're trying to communicate with. You may already use donor personas in your fundraising communications, and if so, you won't be surprised to find that they can be useful in social media, too.

To create personas for your nonprofit, start by looking at your existing members and supporters, and researching the people you would ideally like to reach. Ask questions like:

- How old are they?
- Where do they live?
- What kind of job do they have?
- What are their hobbies?
- How do they prefer to communicate?

## **A Schedule**

What's the best time to post on social media? There's no perfect formula! In general, consistency and quality outweigh raw frequency—it's better to post high-quality content once a week than several random posts, followed by gaps of silence.

When creating your schedule, consider these two things:

1. **Choose your frequency.** Will you be posting regularly, or more often around events? Are there major holidays or events coming up you want to piggyback on for traffic, or do you want to avoid them in case you get drowned out?
2. **Choose your optimal days and times to post.** Maximize the number of people who see your posts. Each social media platform has different points in the week when they receive the most visitors. LinkedIn, for example, has lots of visitors on mid-week afternoons, but very few on the weekends.

How much of your social media content should be promotional? A good rule of thumb is the 80/20 split—80% of posts should provide interesting or educational content for your readers, while the final 20% can ask for donations or promote events.

## Channel Integration

Social media is only one part of a broader content marketing and communications strategy. In addition to your social platforms, you probably communicate with your audience on:

- Email
- Website
- Blog
- Direct mail
- Print newsletter

Make these channels work together to tell a cohesive story and engage your supporters.

Imagine you see a hilarious interaction between a dog and a pigeon on your walk in the

park. The way you'd talk about it on the phone with your friend is different from the way you'd tweet about it, right? If you had a video, you might post it on Instagram with a single caption, but email it to someone with a longer note. The story would be the same, but telling it would be different depending on the communication channel.

It's the same way on your communication channels. Your nonprofit story will change form from email to direct mail to social media but remain the same in essence.

Maybe your story is, "Kids learn better when they eat breakfast. In that case, you might:

- Share a note from a volunteer at your school breakfast program via email
- Post a picture of breakfast on Instagram
- Tweet stats about child hunger on Twitter
- Invite people to dedicate their birthdays to raising money for breakfast on Facebook
- Post a static page on your website about your program
- Send a longer fundraising appeal that tells the story of one child who benefitted from your program

Wherever your audience encounters you, the message is reinforced.

## **A Social Media Policy**

Who should speak for your organization on social media? How can you control what's being said about your group and your cause? If you're not sure, it may be time to work out a social media policy for your staff and volunteers who blog and chat and comment online, where the personal and professional lines often blur.

"The reality is that no organization—either for-profit or non-profit—has control over its

image any longer,” says the Executive Director of Bailey WorkPlay Chris Bailey. “Any membership association or fundraising nonprofit that thinks otherwise will find out painfully that irrelevance is perhaps the greatest cost of all.”

A social media policy is a collection of guidelines for everyone who uses your organization’s social media accounts. It can include:

- Roles and responsibilities (who will post what?)
- What kinds of content you share
- The voice and tone you aspire to
- Your policy on responding to comments
- How to handle conflicts on social media
- How you handle data and privacy

Suppose you have no public communications policy in place that you can build on. In that case, however, it’s helpful to look at a few samples of social media policies from a variety of organizations, such as these:

- BBC Editorial Guidelines — [Personal use of Social Networking](#) and other third-party websites
- [Principles for participation online](#) for the UK Civil Service
- [Intel Social Media Guidelines](#)
- [IBM Social Computing Guidelines](#)