

Using Social Media to Enhance Your Volunteer Program

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Facebook is the most popular social networking site, with literally millions of members who use the site to share thoughts, news, photos, videos, events and other content. This is a great catch-all for all sorts of content and interactions with members. When users become “fans” of your FB page, they see your posts in their newsfeeds, live.

Post frequency: from a couple times a day to once per week
Best for: photos, infographics, sharing links, events

Twitter gives members the instant ability to make a connection to anyone in the world via tweeting (sending a message to your followers) or following (receiving tweets from those you follow). Members follow friends, experts, charitable organizations, celebrities, or news organizations. Messages on Twitter (called “tweets”) are restricted to 140 characters.

Post frequency: from hourly to daily
Best for: announcements, sharing links, short-term marketing



CONTENT is what you post, whether photos, videos, quotes, memes, or shared content. The goal of your content should be to engage the audience, and inspire them to like and share your posts.

DO

- Know your audience
- Be active, not overwhelming
- Collect content ahead of time
- Use a consistent voice
- Share others’ content
- Research hashtags before you post
- Respond promptly to questions, comments, or concerns

DON’T

- Neglect your social media accounts
- Post negative content
- Use photos without subject’s permission
- Ignore analytics
- Post when it’s convenient for you, but when your audience is online

WHY SOCIAL MEDIA?

The primary purpose of using social media is NETWORKING.

We want regular interactions with and participation by members online so we can develop relationships with them. If you know your target audience isn't using social media, then it may not be right for you. If you *don't* know if your target audience is using social media, then it's worth a try! Make a plan, set some goals, recruit a social media manager and see how things work out. Just remember:

Social Media doesn't work for everyone. It's a tool, like a hammer. What I build with a hammer is much different than what a carpenter builds with a hammer. My project success will depend on how much time, skills, and resources I have.

Make a marketing plan. Before you delve into a social network define your goals, your voice, how often you want to post content, and who will be posting that content.

Measure the success of your posts. Which of your posts get the most likes or shares/retweets? Is there a certain day or time your posts are more popular?

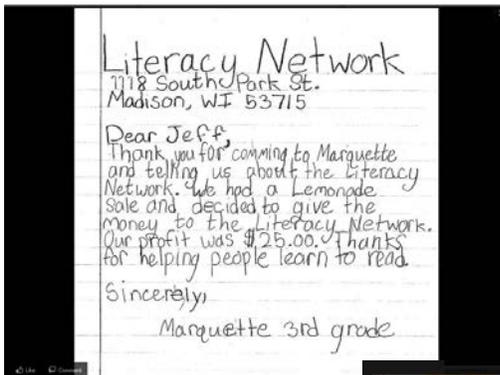
Be careful. Once you post content, it is out there for the world to see, so think before you post. Even if you delete something, there's the chance someone saw it and snapped a screenshot (electronic picture) of it before you deleted it. *Do not post photos or names without permission from those people.* Be respectful. Use spell check! Check your facts –especially before sharing someone else's content. Don't merely assume they checked their facts.

Students in our English for Citizenship class gain the skills and confidence needed to pass the civics exam to become naturalized US citizens.

Let people know you have a presence on social media by including links on your webpage

Social Media Content Ideas

- Photos! Programs, events, volunteers, staff
- Pictures of thank you cards sent to you
- Quotes from volunteers, clients
- Testimonials of volunteers, clients
- Share infographics relevant to your work
- Give thanks to a volunteer
- Special event save the date
- Link to online Volunteer Application
- Volunteer Demographic statistics
- Stories of former volunteers
- Client demographic or success statistics
- Link to recent newspaper/tv/radio story
- Ask Questions/Give Feedback
 - What does “----” mean to you? (“What does safety mean to you?”)
 - Which of our events is your favorite?
 - Why are you a volunteer with us?
 - Will you be at “-----“?



Don't have time to create your own images for content? Pinterest has a great wealth of images! Try one of these search terms: americorps, volunteers, or altruism!



A SAMPLE FACEBOOK PLAN

1. Start a folder in your computer called “FB content”, which contains photos you have permission to use and a Word document full of statistics and quotes by volunteers/clients. Plan on adding to it regularly, and ask other staff members and volunteers to send you more photos/quotes/statistics to add.
2. If you haven’t already, create a group page for your organization called “FoodNinja Volunteers”, stocking it with basic agency information and a few identifying photos of your agency (building, office, or staff)
3. Post a link to your agency FB page on your website homepage; include it in your email signature
4. Schedule 10 minutes daily to check the page daily, to monitor likes/comments
5. Schedule 30 minutes every Thursday, at 11am, to post new content and check your page insights (statistics on visitors to your page).
6. Keep things interesting! Boring FB posts will cause people to ignore you or worse, block your agency from appearing on their live feed.

CONTENT

Week 1 content: Photo of volunteer Mary Beth working in the soupkitchen and the caption: Volunteer Mary Beth says, “I volunteer because I don’t think anyone should have to miss a meal due to poverty.” Thanks for 3 years of service, Mary Beth!

Week 2: “Volunteers completing 100 hours of service in one year receive one season pass to the Unicorn City Baseball team!” (link to online Volunteer Application or your website with volunteering information)

Week 3: “Number of families using FoodNinja foodbank is up to 140 this month, an increase by 60% compared to this time last year. Federal statistics show that 3 of 10 children go to bed hungry in Unicorn City. Want to help but on a tight budget yourself? Donate your time: email volunteer@foodninja.org”

Week 4: Plan and post an event happening in 2 weeks called “Volunteer Open House: How to Help FoodNinja” where you invite folks to come and learn about your agency, meet existing volunteers and clients, and fill out volunteer applications. Invite all fans and post a link to the event on your group page as well as your website.

Week 5: “FoodNinja needs volunteer cooks, servers, drivers and greeters! By donating just 2 hours every week you can help keep our families from going hungry, and meet other awesome volunteers.” Link to event page.

Week 6: Short video of visiting local luminary Joe Famous, interacting with volunteers and lending a helping hand. Caption: “Joe Famous stops by to thank our volunteers for being so awesome!”

Week 7: “Interested in helping out with our Baby Food Drive? Call Amanda Hugginkiss at 123-4567”

Week 8: Photo of foodbank client and volunteer, smiling together, with caption: “Volunteer Marcel says: It’s not only about the food, but about connections; being human. We are all humans.”

A SAMPLE TWITTER PLAN

You will use Twitter to recruit 15 volunteers for a kids winter coat drive in January, because you asked around and many of your short-term/event volunteers use Twitter. You told them, “Hey, I just opened a Twitter account! My handle is MadLiveStrongVolunteer –find and follow me.”

Week 1 content: “Last year we collected over 120 winter coats! #Volunteer for the next #coatdrive: January 2012 – call Sparky at (608) 123-4567”

Week 2: “8yo Jesse says: this is the first time I had a winter coat that fits me right and doesn’t have holes in it. Help more kids like Jesse! #Volunteer #Coatdrive

Week 3: “#Coatdrive has 2 of 15 needed to #volunteer January 1-20. Help us get warm winter jackets to kids that need them!”

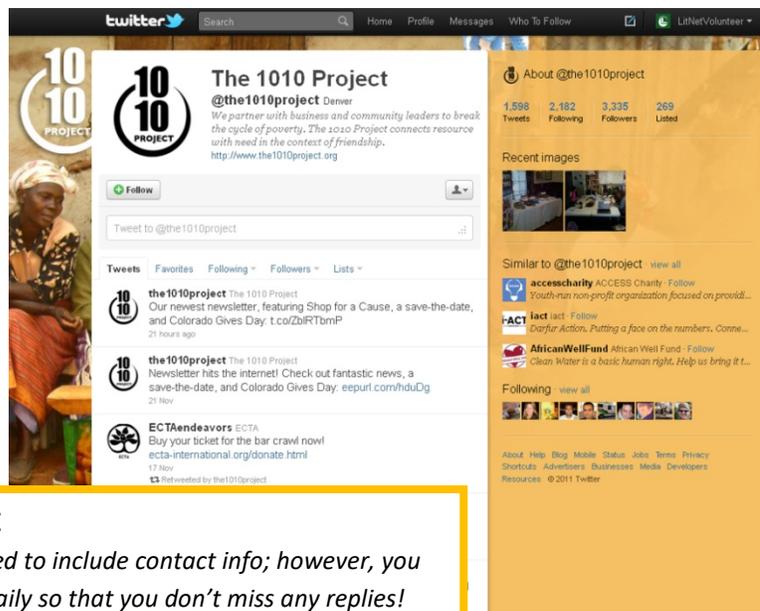
Week 4: “Have you heard about our January #coatdrive yet? More info at www.myagency.org”

Week 5: “Sign up to be #coatdrive #volunteer by December 15 and be entered to win 2 tickets to see #guysonice @Overture Center”

Week 6: “Just 3 more weeks until our kids’ winter #coatdrive and we still need 4 more people like you to #volunteer! Email me@myagency.org for more info”

Week 7: “Getting closer to what looks to be the most successful kids winter coat drive yet: we’re hoping to get 150 donated coats to kids who need them, and you can help! #volunteer #coatdrive

Week 8: “Thanks @wildcat @madjim @tuckerlee @kingmoney and all other folks who signed up to #volunteer for our #coatdrive to get winter jackets to kids who need them. You rock!”



NOTE

Any tweet can be replied to, so there’s no need to include contact info; however, you will want to monitor your twitter account daily so that you don’t miss any replies! #hashtags create searchable words and @mentions make sure your tweet gets to those specific users, even if they do not subscribe to your tweets.

ALWAYS RESEARCH AND VET HASHTAGS BEFORE USING THEM! #neverforget

NEED TO RECRUIT A SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER?

If you simply don't have the time (or interest) social media management can easily be done by a volunteer, as long as you're able to give clear guidelines and expectations. A sample Volunteer Position Description could read:

Title: Social Media Manager

Description: Spend just a few hours every week helping our organization reach out to potential supporters and volunteers using online social media! We are looking for a bright, reliable, mature volunteer who is able to create and oversee our social media accounts. Your primary responsibilities will include:

- Working with our Social Media Team to establish and implement an effective 6-month marketing plan using Facebook and/or Twitter.
- Collecting content (photos, testimonials, etc) from staff and other volunteers.
- Creating daily or weekly posts to increase community awareness of our work and recruit volunteers
- Regularly monitoring account activity to improve effectiveness. Management of our accounts should take no longer than two hours each week, which can be done on your own time.
- Meeting monthly with the Social Media Team to share progress and feedback.

Requirements: A strong belief in and understanding the goals of our organization, as well as maturity, reliability and fluency in how Facebook and Twitter works. You must be able to work efficiently and independently. If interested, please send us a sample of your favorite non-profit Facebook page and an explanation of why you find it appealing and effective.

AND FINALLY... ASK QUESTIONS!

There are other non-profit organizations out there, using social media with varying degrees of success. Look around social media sites for local and national organizations that do similar work to you –note what they are posting and which posts get comments/responses. Find local organizations that run successful social media accounts and ask them for tips. Don't be afraid to recruit a volunteer who is more experienced in social media to either show you how to manage your accounts or manage your accounts for you. It takes courage to step into social media, and even more courage to ask for help. You can do it!

ONLINE RESOURCES

Other organization's Social Media pages:

<https://www.facebook.com/GiveShelter>

<https://www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympics>

<https://twitter.com/#!/MalariaNoMore>

<https://twitter.com/VCEastCentralWI>

Online tips/articles:

<http://blogs.constantcontact.com/social-media-to-recruit-volunteers/>

<https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-non-profits>

<https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-marketing-voice-and-tone>