



Digital Fundraising Playbook Series:

How to Make Meaningful Social Content
on Any Channel

Introduction and Program Overview

Social media is important because it meets our basic human need to share information with one another. When people see content that resonates with them, they will share it with friends and family or repost it on their own profile. By creating meaningful, compelling content, animal welfare organizations can reach beyond their existing network to not only increase financial support, but steward supporters, recruit new volunteers and develop trust within the local community. All of these results translate into more lifesaving.

Social media is for everyone. Thanks to the growing list of popular platforms, each with its own target demographic, anyone can find a platform that meets their interests.

Facebook: Facebook is the bread and butter of your brand. Every organization should start with a Facebook page to promote their lifesaving work and brand. Nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations should set up their pages to allow donations. (Currently, your organization must be a 501c3 nonprofit to use Facebook's donations option.) Municipal organizations can rely on their "Friends of" groups for that option, or redirect individuals to donate on their website. The absence of 501(c)(3) status should not stop you from using Facebook. Individuals can raise money in conjunction with special events in their lives (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.) and give those funds to your organization.

Instagram: Instagram has a younger audience than Facebook, but it now also has a comprehensive set of donation tools. Instagram has better engagement (reactions, comments, shares) than Facebook.

TikTok: This platform primarily targets the GenZ generation (born from mid-to-late 1990s through the early 2010s). It's easy to look past TikTok, but it is one of the fastest growing social platforms, with the easiest path to going viral.

Twitter: Twitter is easy to use for networking and brand awareness, easy communication with celebrities and politicians, and more.

Program Composition

Necessary skills and equipment

Here's what you'll need:

- A smartphone
- Creative writing skills
- Enthusiasm and a creative spirit

If you don't have a smartphone you can use, a tablet or desktop computer can suffice. Just bear in mind that mobile technology will be increasingly important.

Having the latest and greatest phone for image quality and speed is beneficial, but as long as your phone can run social apps, you're good to go. Thanks to the popularity of user-generated content (UGC) on social platforms, photos taken on cell phones tend to perform better than branded marketing images. Choose authenticity over perfection.

How to create a social media program

Here are the basic steps:

- Determine which channels make the most sense for you, your organization and your schedule. Start with one and grow from there.
- Create a content calendar. You can do this for free with Google Calendar, or it may be included in some social media management tools.
- Consider using a social media management tool. There are both free and paid options. [SproutSocial](#), [Hootsuite](#) and [Later](#) are popular inexpensive choices.
- Create a response document containing answers to FAQs. Think about questions or issues you address frequently (e.g., "How do I adopt?" "I adopted a dog but it's not working out," "Do you offer a food assistance program?") and include answers to those questions in the document.

Create each piece of content with these tips in mind:

- Try fun things to engage readers. How can you do more than just share information? How can you get them to take an action or become actively involved in another way? Use action verbs and different options (watch, read, listen, etc.) to provide variety.
- Ensure that content is specific to your agency. Don't simply repost cute animal stories from other organizations.
- Use organization-specific Facebook groups (volunteer, fostering) and/or stage pages to collect content and engage staff and volunteers. If you're not on Facebook but have internal capacity to create a digital folder for staff, encourage team members to add content. You can give recognition for submissions and even prizes for content used (though seeing their content used may be a sufficient prize for many people). Make it fun!
- Consider paying attention to the content people [tag](#) you in (particularly on Instagram) to repurpose their content.

- Be sure to ask for permission before using content you did not create yourself (particularly photos, videos and [music](#)).
- Try to figure out what keeps people on the platform longer. For example, rather than sending them elsewhere to donate, encourage them to use on-platform donation tools. Meet people where they are.
- Avoid graphic pictures of injured or sick animals. Show the impact of your work with the “after” pictures.
- Help your readers see themselves in the potential role of hero, creating happy endings and making a difference.

Frequency of posting

How frequently should you post new content? Think quality over quantity: It’s better to provide top-quality content a few times a week rather than poor content every day. If you can, try to post quality content daily, but be cautious about over-posting, which decreases your results. More than three posts a day is too many to engage most audiences effectively.

Initial measurements

To determine the effectiveness of your social media content, you’ll want to collect some data:

- Engagement: How many people are interacting with your content? If the answer is not very many, you may not be providing content that’s meaningful to your followers.
- Reach: How many people did your content reach? This is the total number of screens your content was delivered to. The more people engaging with your content, the more people it will reach. If you have budget dollars, considering promoting posts on channels like Instagram to reach a wider (or more targeted) audience.
- Effectiveness of your [call to action](#) (CTA): Is the purpose of your post to get more volunteers or donations for a specific campaign? If so, did your post meet your expectations?

How to sustain a social media program

Here are some basic tips:

- Showcase the scope of your work.

- You don't need to ask for something with every post. To brighten your supporters' day, include posts that are simply sweet or funny.
- Cultivate donors' trust before big campaigns by saving your best content for posting just before your campaign starts. This strategy primes donors to give.
- Stay engaged with supporters. Try to interact with as many communications as you can.
- Bonus tip: When social media platforms release a new feature, be one of the first to adopt it. The [algorithm](#) will reward you.

Conclusion

Effective use of social media is now a vital part of every comprehensive fundraising program, as well as a critical tool for fostering, adoptions, volunteer recruitment and many other lifesaving functions.

Nonprofits and municipal shelters face a wide choice of platforms, which can be confusing. Start small and focus on the platform that makes the most sense for the core audience of your organization or agency. Add more platforms as you increase your bandwidth for executing consistently and providing quality content. Effective use of social media doesn't just help you tell your story. It also allows community members and donors to engage actively and to help that story unfold.

Resources

- Social Media Today's [newsletter](#) can help you stay current on this rapidly evolving environment.
- *Later* is a scheduling tool that also has a great [newsletter](#) (no service agreement required).

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