



Using Social Media for Fundraising and Campaigning Simon Gough explains the basics

This short guide will focus on two main areas:

- using social media to reach individual supporters; and
- using social media to reach funders.

Using Social Media to Reach Individual Supporters

Social media provide powerful tools for fundraising and campaigning on a personal level. When it comes to using social media the individual is everything. All other uses of social media work around this core concept.

As with most applications of social media, fundraising and campaigning work best when you already have a strong community to request donations from. It's best to start early and develop good conversations around things that are important to you and your community.

The advantage that most charity organisations have is that they have a central cause around which to create content that really engages people. The first step of any long-term use of social media is to really think about what kind of content matters to your organisations and its supporters.

Wherever possible it helps to think about what sort of content could be created by your supporters themselves. Could they make videos related to your cause or could they be encouraged to write about their own experiences? This constant feedback from your own community is key to engaging others.

Cultivating a community this way will enable you to really use social media effectively and get you to a point where you have contact with supporters who are happy to donate. But it takes time. The good news is that social media are also effective at highlighting campaigns quickly, as long as you're prepared to do your research, develop the right platforms, be creative and put in some sustained effort.

Long-term Development

Using social media to develop long-term relationships is ultimately the most effective use of your efforts. Whatever your organisation, start to develop a strong community now, that you can go to in the future for support. As outlined above, most charitable organisations have a cause that will really engage with people and provide a strong basis for developing interesting content.

Blogs

If you have a cause that really warrants in-depth discussion then it's worth considering writing a blog. A blog gives you an opportunity to put out detailed content around particular issues and then, most importantly, develop



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conversations around that content. Blogs develop over time but they're free and easy to set up. You can set up a blog on Wordpress.com (my favourite) or Blogger.com and there are plenty more but these are the biggest platforms.

If you are going to write a blog then commit to writing something (it doesn't have to be long) every week or two at least. And don't worry if you don't get comments straight away, they will come. When your community starts to develop you might want to write more often.

If you do start a blog then the next step is to promote it. There are lots of ways to do this but the basics include making sure that you have it listed everywhere, online and offline, that you communicate with people. Email signatures, business cards and your own website are important ones.

Facebook Pages

Facebook Pages are free, easy to set up and can provide a great platform to develop a community around your organisation or its cause. Some sort of personal Facebook account is a pre-requisite for setting up a Facebook Page but your identity remains separate from the Page and you don't need to use your personal profile if Facebook isn't for you.

Facebook Pages make it easy to work with any type of content, whether you are posting it or it's coming from fans of the Page. Some possible uses are to put up links of interest, photos of events, or videos about key issues. You can also use a Page to invite people to events and start discussions.

Twitter

Twitter can be a very powerful networking tool. By using the search page on Twitter and search columns in Tweetdeck (free software for using Twitter from Tweetdeck.com) you can find people or other organisations with an interest in issues that matter to you. By doing these searches and looking at the Twitter followers of other organisations like yours you can quickly develop a community.

As with everything else, the key to being successful on Twitter is to share information that really interests your followers and having conversations with them. Twitter doesn't work if you just send out messages about your organisation. Engage people.

Quick Wins

If you want to rally people around a campaign and you don't yet have a social media presence then a Facebook Page is probably the best platform to use. Because a Facebook Page is so quick to set up and so easy to promote through friends and friends of friends it can be relatively easy to develop an "instant"





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community. If you're starting from scratch, however, there are two things to consider:

- Make sure that you are prepared to put a lot of effort in over the short term in getting content on the Page and promoting it
- Make sure that you are creating something with longevity so that you don't waste the effort you've put in

Taking Payments

You might want to use social media as a way to encourage donations through your traditional channels but there is a growing market in applications that work with Facebook Pages, Twitter and blogs to enable you to take payments directly (for a small fee). One of the best established payment platforms is PayPal (paypal.com), which has a very easy to insert Donations button that can go on your blog (or website) but that also has a full fundraising platform called Fundrazr (fundrazr.com) that can provide applications to go straight on your Facebook Page.

There are also fundraising platforms that work with Twitter but this requires a more long-term strategy. Some further resources around this are provided at the end of this document.

One last thing worth mentioning about campaigning on Twitter is Twibbon (twibbon.com). This platform allows people to easily display affiliation with your cause and has been used very successfully to raise awareness of all sorts of issues.

Using Social Media to Reach Funders

Social media can have very different uses when it comes to finding suitable funders. Most importantly, the research capabilities of social media can be the most effective use. As discussed above, Twitter offers a whole variety of ways to search for people and organisations but something that can be even more powerful is Delicious (delicious.com). This simple, social bookmarking site allows you to save websites that are relevant to your organisation and then use this as a starting point for seeing who else is interested in the same sites. This human-powered search can lead you to all sorts of potential funders that you wouldn't have found elsewhere.

One last platform to mention here is LinkedIn. This business networking platform can allow you to develop connections with all sorts of useful contacts, even individuals in funding organisations themselves. In addition, LinkedIn groups can be really useful places to network with other charities and fundraisers to develop better contacts with funders.



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Finally, LinkedIn could enable you to tap into the corporate giving market. Again groups could be useful for this but always start with developing a good profile for yourself. To end on the same point we started with, social media is all about personal connections and this applies to every platform, without exception.

Further Reading

Social Media Fundraising: <http://mashable.com/2010/08/04/social-fundraising-alternatives-facebook-causes/>

Twitter Fundraising: <http://mashable.com/2010/02/26/twitter-fundraising/>



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