Social Media Mini Guide

How to Woo and Wow Your Donors

A free fundraising guide from your friends at Network for Good
About This Guide

Smart nonprofits are using social media as one channel for reaching and reconnecting with supporters. Building strong relationships with existing and potential donors is the key to long-term loyalty and increased donations. This guide is part of Network for Good’s collection of free resources that give nonprofits practical tips for attracting, cultivating—and keeping!—active and loyal donors.

This mini guide was prepared by Caryn Stein, Network for Good’s Director of Content Strategy. Caryn has focused on building online communities and creating effective engagement strategies since 1998.

In this quick guide, you will learn:

🌿 Why you must continue the conversation with your supporters for a great donor relationship (and how this helps your cause).

🌿 Best practices and inspiration for continuing to engage your supporters through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and more.

🌿 Ideas to use right now in your social media outreach.
Why You Need to Keep the Conversation Going

Remember that group of people who signed up to receive your newsletter, liked you on Facebook, or followed you on Twitter? Don’t just leave them hanging. Now that they’ve expressed interest and (we hope) you’ve said hello and introduced your organization, strike up a conversation with them beyond your annual appeal or email newsletter.

Think of it this way: Who would you be more likely to help—a friend you regularly communicate with, or a passing acquaintance you only hear from in a holiday card? (A holiday card that hits you up for money, no less.) By forging a relationship with this group, you strengthen your nonprofit’s visibility and reputation while fostering a positive feeling that helps create more loyal donors and active supporters.
Continue the Conversation with Social Media

Along with email, your website, and direct mail, social media is another channel for communicating with your donors and telling the story of your work. Use platforms like Facebook and Twitter as tools for continuing the conversation and building a stronger relationship with your supporters.

When it comes to social media, your nonprofit doesn’t need to be everywhere—but you should be where your supporters are, and you should use the platform that furthers your overall strategy. Decide how you can tie the right social components together to best achieve your goals and grow your relationship with your supporters.

Just as you would plan your organization’s email outreach, take the same approach with your social media strategy. Create an editorial calendar to help schedule updates, topics, and themes, and decide who on your team will be responsible for posting updates and interacting with your fans.

10 Simple Ideas for Social Media Sharing

1. Offer a sneak peek of an upcoming newsletter, event, or program.
2. Show what goes on behind the scenes at your office.
3. Introduce a member of your staff.
4. Report from the scene of your work or event.
5. Share photos of your volunteers in action.
6. Connect your work to a news story, trend, or meme.
7. Ask a trivia question related to your cause.
8. Share a testimonial from a beneficiary or supporter.
9. Choose a “fan of the day” and give them a shoutout.
Nonprofit Storytelling via Social Media

Pairing your nonprofit’s stories with social media is a smart tactic for engaging supporters and inspiring them to take action. When coupled with a compelling story and an integrated marketing plan, social media is an easy way to promote stories about your cause.

Here’s why social media works:

**It’s dynamic.** Social media makes it easy to combine text, photos, video, and interactive elements to tell a richer story than just words alone.

**It puts stories front and center.** For many, social media is part of a daily routine. Sharing your stories through social channels helps your organization stay at the top of supporters’ minds.

**It’s easy to consume.** By breaking your stories into snackable sizes—just right for social media—your readers can engage with your message quickly from anywhere they happen to be.

**It provides instant feedback.** Unlike other channels, social media is optimized for real-time interaction. Get insight on what resonates with your supporters by offering a variety of stories and formats.

**It’s shareable.** Stories that amaze or inspire are irresistibly shareable. Take advantage of the fact that social tools are built to allow people to interact and share. Let your social media fans help you spread the word and attract new supporters.
Developing Social Content

Now that you’re ready to go social, how should you package your stories to stand out? Think outside the box when presenting your stories via social media. Here are a few creative ways to frame your content:

**Invite your supporters on a journey.**
Take readers on a journey to your field sites and local outreach events through video, photos, and up-to-the-minute updates. Use a combination of formats to really capture the full experience.

**Curate an exclusive exhibit.**
Have a collection of artifacts, illustrations, or thank you notes from constituents? Show them off and let them speak for you.

**Make them part of the action.**
Share a play-by-play of live events or behind-the-scenes activities with a virtual “backstage pass.”

**Create a serial drama.**
Never underestimate the power of a cliffhanger: Tell your story in installments over several days or weeks. Use hashtags, photo albums, and landing pages to link the pieces together.
Facebook: Be “Like”-able

Facebook is a daily destination for your supporters. Don’t be absent from their routine! This is a great way to interact with fans and showcase what you’re all about. The key is to provide plenty of opportunity for your supporters to join the party. Get more out of your Facebook posts with these guidelines:

- **Post consistently.** Commit to posting at least once per day, and post at a consistent time of day. Studies show that early morning and late afternoon updates have the best results.

- **But not too much.** Posting more than a few times a day may overwhelm your fans and cause them to tune you out.

- **Spark conversation and action.** Encourage conversation by posing questions, asking for input, and responding to their comments.

- **Use images.** Photos and video help your posts stand out. Use compelling images of the people and animals you impact to make an emotional connection and get more supporters to click, read, and interact.

- **Encourage shares, likes, and comments.** More comments, likes, and shares for a piece of content improves the odds that your updates will be seen by more of your fans and their friends.

Sanctuary One uses photos of the animals they help to connect with their supporters and encourage action.
Surfrider Foundation inspires comments and sharing on Facebook with this provocative photo and message.

**WHAT GOES IN THE OCEAN GOES IN YOU.**

RECENT STUDIES ESTIMATE THAT FISH OFF THE WEST COAST INGEST OVER 1.5 BILLION TONS OF PLASTIC A YEAR. FIND OUT NOW HOW YOU CAN HELP!

Arlington Life Shelter highlights a great behind-the-scenes moment in this photo update, including a beloved volunteer and a hardworking staffer.

*Surfrider Foundation*

January 25

What goes in the ocean, goes in you! Rise Above Plastics.

**Arlington Life Shelter**

Jack’s back! Jack came in again today with more towels from First Presbyterian Church Arlington. Here he is with our Facilities Manager Roger Mangum sorting out the towels. THANK YOU, Jack!
Twitter: Dive into the Stream

On Twitter, your nonprofit can add value, respond in real time, and be part of a larger conversation with supporters, like-minded organizations, and activists. News updates, event-based information (such as live tweeting key moments from an event), and sharing related resources work well in this format. Some tips for making the most of your tweets:

様々 Be in the moment. Don’t just “set it and forget it” on Twitter. Be timely and current with your updates, and always be responsive to direct messages, mentions, and replies.

様々 Offer more. Don’t just repost the same content from your newsletters. Add bonus information and related resources, and point them to the rest of the story.

様々 Be part of the conversation. Social media isn’t meant to be a one-way megaphone. Interact with your followers, answer questions, offer resources, and join in with your point of view.

様々 Listen. Watch for comments about your cause, organization, and sector. Use this feedback to inform your outreach.

Families Moving Forward shares a final tally from a product drive, plus a great photo of volunteers!
The New York Botanical Garden celebrates its fans by retweeting their comments and compliments.

Earn.org asks timely and relevant questions that followers love to answer.
**Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube: Social + Visual**

In a “skim and click” environment, eye-catching photos and engaging videos help your organization stand out. Whether you use Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, or another photo or video service, here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Share the love.** Create compelling visual content that your fans will want to share. Don’t forget to share alike: Sharing others’ photos and videos is a good way to serve your audience and be part of the larger social ecosystem.

- **Meet their needs.** Whether you post photos of your beneficiaries or host a how-to video for emergency preparedness, resist the urge to insert your appeal and concentrate on informing, updating, and delighting your fans with photos and videos.

- **Show your personality.** Show your true colors with humor, emotion, and honesty. Don’t worry about being perfect—just be real.

*Detroit Symphony Orchestra created a video of patrons and supporters who share what the symphony has meant to them.*

*The Friends of Fresh and Green Academy use Instagram to share photos of the families they help.*
5 Key Rules for Socializing

1. **Don’t be boring.** Yes, this should be obvious, but unfortunately too many nonprofits fall into jargon mode in their communications. Talk to your supporters like a real person, and keep your message to the point and interesting.

2. **Don’t come on too strong.** Don’t overwhelm with too many updates or too much information. This also means don’t ask for too much too soon.

3. **Be a good listener.** Conversations are two-way communications. Don’t just give your audience a way to talk back; listen to what your fans and donors are saying, and be sure to respond.

4. **It’s not all about you.** It’s true that everyone loves to talk about themselves—that includes your donors. Showcase them as a part of your story, share the impact they have, and invite them to chime in with their ideas and testimonials.

5. **Be yourself.** Your nonprofit should have a unique personality and point of view. Express this when communicating with your supporters. It helps them get to know you better and sets you apart from other organizations.
How to Make the Case for Social Media

It’s clear that social media is an effective channel for establishing your nonprofit’s brand identity, championing your cause, and engaging with current and would-be supporters. So, how do you make sure your organization is on board—especially your boss, executive director, or board members? Here are eight tips for making the case for your next social media initiative:

1. **Change the subject.**
   If you’re debating the value of social media, you’re having the wrong discussion. The discussion should be about your organization’s goals—with social media being the means, not the end.

2. **Make it about what your boss already wants.**
   Don’t position your idea as a social media initiative; frame it as your initiative to support your boss’s goals, in your boss’s language. Is donor retention a big concern for your executive director? Highlight how social media can help keep donors engaged. Does your board want more success stories to showcase? Underscore how social media can help make that happen.

3. **Make it about the audience.**
   A good way to depersonalize the debate over social media is to make it about your target audience’s preferences rather than a philosophical tug of war between you and your boss.

4. **Sign your boss up to listen.**
   Set up Google Alerts and TweetBeep (email alerts for Twitter mentions) for your boss, so she or he can see that many discussions about your organization are already happening online. Once this is apparent, two things are likely to happen. First, it will become clear that your organization no longer controls its message online—so worrying about social media causing a lack of control is not worth fearing. That day is already here. Second, it will be hard not to want to join those conversations — which is what social engagement is all about.

5. **Set some ground rules.**
   Create a social media policy for your organization so it’s clear how to respond to what you’re hearing and what types of initiatives have internal support.
If you’re going to start a social media initiative, start small. Pinpoint where your supporters are and branch out from there. You don’t have to be an overnight social media expert—you just need to be a part of the conversations about your cause.

7. Set a clear goal.
Just as with any other marketing effort, establish a specific, measurable goal so you can identify success. Goals can include things such as how many people have liked your Facebook page, how many posts have been shared or retweeted, or how many people donated after being referred from a post.

8. Measure and report.
Once you’ve identified your approach and have set a goal, ensure that you can track and measure your progress. Most social media platforms have built-in analytics, and you can also track Web traffic to your site through Google Analytics. Be sure to tie your results back to your social media efforts where possible with careful tracking. (This could mean using tracking codes on your donation pages, Google campaign tags, or landing pages created specifically for your social media outreach.) Share every little bit of progress—and then give your boss credit for it!

---

**Keep in mind:** This isn’t a crusade—it’s a learning experience for everyone. Make sure there is a good case for your initiative, and if it does fail, share and learn from what went wrong. There is no shame in gaining knowledge from mistakes—for you or your boss.
Remember

🌱 Use social media to continue providing value to your audience.

🌱 There’s no one-size-fits-all approach in social media. Your outreach should reflect your culture and needs.

🌱 Talk less about your organization and statistics and more about your impact, the people you serve, and those who make it possible.

🌱 Don’t be afraid to show your personality by being creative, unique, or funny. People want to interact with other real people, not faceless organizations.

🌱 Learn by listening to your supporters and others in the conversation. Observe what type of updates work best for your nonprofit so you can build on your success.

Share your ideas and social media experiments with us!

Follow us on Twitter

Like us on Facebook

Add us to your Google+ Circles

Follow us on Pinterest
About Us

Network for Good powers more digital giving than any other platform. Since 2001, we’ve processed over $875 million for more than 100,000 nonprofits. We are Level 1 Audited PCI Compliant and accredited by the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance, meeting all 20 of its standards for charity accountability. Plus, we’re registered in every state for online fundraising.

We’re a mission-minded organization, just like you, so we understand the challenges you face. We’re here to help.

Our suite of affordable fundraising solutions helps nonprofits raise money and engage supporters online—plus we provide the training that will make you a fundraising superstar.

1. Get an easy-to-use, branded, and secure online donation page with DonateNow. With built-in best practices and mobile-friendly giving options, you’ll raise more than ever before.

2. Email campaign and newsletter tools by Constant Contact for sending and tracking emails and telling you which messages work best.


4. Online event management: EventsNow, powered by givezooks!, for accepting donations, registrations, and ticket purchases online.

Free Fundraising Tips

Get weekly fundraising advice delivered right to your inbox.

See a Demo

Learn more about how DonateNow can help you reach your fundraising goals.

Let Us Help

Find out how you can attract more donors and raise more money online.

Subscribe Today

Contact Us Today!