

# Introduction to Social Media

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Today 89% of charitable organizations are using some form of social media as a key part of communications, outreach and development. Nearly half (45%) of these organizations stated that social media played a very important role in their fundraising strategy. Social mediums enable nonprofit organizations to create relationships and engage with their constituents. This allows them to nurture their online communities, which in fact creates a viral marketing effect with little or no effort. Costs associated with this effort are often less with better return-on-investment than traditional communication, outreach and development efforts. The realm of social media enables any individual with a specific interest in a charitable organization to share it broadly and become that nonprofit's ambassador. This can often lead to more involvement such as real life volunteering or fundraising.

By generating content worthy of other peoples' attention, interaction, and distribution to people in their own networks, target audiences are pulled into consuming interesting and relevant content and sharing it within their networks. Word of mouth is taken to an exponential level of sharing now known as "word-of-mouth" or "world-of-mouth" marketing.

## **Goal:**

Generate increased distribution of key messages among target publics via social media channels to increase engagement, resulting in an increase in the perceived value of Pennsylvania's state lands by the general public.

## **Objectives:**

- Set up your Friends Group with a profile on Facebook and Twitter.
- Like Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation on Facebook and alert PPF to 'like' your page.
- Follow @PaPPF on Twitter.
- Engage with Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation on these platforms.
- Invite your local constituents to engage with your Friends Group on these platforms.
- Interact with fans and followers to garner support for your park, Friends Group, and the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation.

# Foundations for Social Media Success: A 12-Step Program

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Each of these steps is intended to build on the previous steps. Each should be approached in order. If a communicator has already mastered certain steps; he or she should start with the step in which he or she is most inexperienced or unfamiliar.

## **Step 1: Get comfortable with social media: Initiate personal social media use.**

Explore the tools you'd like to adopt by using them in your personal life first. It's easier to understand the specific culture of different outposts like Facebook and Twitter when you spend some time posting your own pictures and experiences. This is a no-stress, low-risk way to practice social media engagement.

### **Frequently Asked Question: How do you balance the personal/professional mix online?**

You need to determine your own comfort level in discussing work in your personal communications. Just be responsible and remember that the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation social media team will see all mentions of Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation and may contact you to praise your discussion, invite you to contribute to our online spaces, or to give you guidance about how to talk about your work responsibly. Keep in mind that if you would not say something out loud in a room full of people, you should not post it in social media. Become familiar with Facebook's privacy settings. These settings allow you to restrict some personal content, such as photos, from being shared with your business associates.

## **Step 2: Learn the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation social media philosophy.**

To use social media to support the state park and forest system in Pennsylvania; to increase memberships in both the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation and the affiliated Friends Groups; to increase volunteer support and donations; to encourage stakeholders including interest groups, businesses, and elected officials to support the ongoing well-being of the state's parks and forests.

### **Our Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation social media goals:**

To create an empowered online community of Pennsylvania park and forest supporters who will:

- Inform and educate individuals and groups about the work of the Friends and the Foundation.
- Provide helpful, accurate, enjoyable information about public resources to users and the general public.

- Engage staff, volunteers, and supporters in a two-way conversation that enhances our missions.
- Issue a call-to-action that results in increased membership support, volunteer support, donor support, and political support.

### Step 3: Start listening to your target audiences.

Seek out individuals already engaged on various social media channels who are talking about Pennsylvania parks and forests or who are allied in a specific area of interest such as outdoor recreation, wildlife, or environmental issues. Learn to search for accounts of interest. Look at the followers of your existing contacts to explore opportunities to broaden your social networks. Follow others who fall into your target audiences and interest categories.

**TIP:** The best way to start growing your own network of followers is to follow others and build a network. ***70% of the individuals/groups that you follow will follow you back.***

#### **Frequently Asked Question: Should I respond to comments or mentions I read about Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation or my chapter?**

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation social media team often responds to mentions you see when they deal with items of interest or when they deal specifically with statewide programs, initiatives or issues. When needed, we seek the counsel of subject matter experts to help us get the right information to people talking about us. You are also welcome to respond to these mentions, especially if you have grounded (verified) firsthand knowledge. Please let us know when you do.

### Step 4: Engage with other Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation social media platforms as well as with sister chapters.

- Read Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation social media channels on Facebook and Twitter.
- Comment on the posts.
- Contribute your own stories, comments and photos.
- Tell your local stakeholders.
- Share Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation content in your own online communities. With each post you'll see a Share (Facebook) or Retweet (Twitter). Click it, and choose where you want to share the information. Vice versa, we will share information on your social media channels.

**Facebook Page:** [www.facebook.com/PennsylvaniaParksAndForestsFoundation](http://www.facebook.com/PennsylvaniaParksAndForestsFoundation)

- Join Facebook with a personal page.
- Write, post photos/videos to your page and share with the foundation's page
- You can click the share button on anything you see on our Facebook page to make it automatically show up in your personal Facebook page.

**Twitter:** [www.twitter.com/PaPFF](http://www.twitter.com/PaPFF)

- Join Twitter and follow this account
- Look through the followers/followed lists and follow as many relevant individual accounts as possible.
- Send @PaPFF @ messages when you have information to share. Not familiar with how to use the @ message function? Check out the Twitter guide here: <http://support.twitter.com/articles/20169871-how-to-post-replies-and-mentions>
- Tell your stakeholders where they can find Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation on Twitter.

### **Step 5: Study what other Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation groups and stakeholders are doing with their social media presence.**

- Find Facebook and Twitter accounts with Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation ties.
- Follow these accounts, and study their followers to see if there are other accounts you should follow as well.
- Read the posts; repost/retweet/share as a courtesy and a way to build online relationships.

### **Step 6: Evaluate best practices.**

- Take cues from the successes and challenges of your colleagues.
- Talk to one another to share information and collaborate.
- We encourage you to share each other's content, but please properly attribute the content by disclosing its origin and linking back to the original source.

#### **For all platforms:**

- All board members and volunteers should list your Friends Group's social media links in their email signatures, on their own social media pages, websites and blog pages.
- All individuals should be following PPFF social media accounts, and should be following each other.

#### **Additional tips:**

##### **Facebook**

<http://mashable.com/2011/04/18/non-profit-facebook-guide/>

<http://forwardjump.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/FB-BestPrac-nonprofits.pdf>

##### **Twitter**

<http://www.socialbrite.org/2011/10/03/24-best-practices-for-nonprofits-using-twitter/>

<http://news.change.org/stories/10-twitter-tips-for-nonprofit-organizations>

##### **Facebook**

1. Post as often as possible - two to three times daily is ideal.

2. Photos are the most read and shared items on Facebook. Text items with links are second. Videos are third.
3. Most Facebook posts are read between 8 a.m and 7 p.m. Lowest traffic is on Wednesday and Thursday. Highest on Monday and Saturday.
4. Do NOT link your Facebook account with Twitter or LinkedIn. The platforms have different styles. The longer Facebook format discourages readers on Twitter.
5. Do not use hashtags on Facebook.

### **Twitter**

1. Post four to six times daily maximum. Post at least twice daily minimum.
2. Highest Twitter readership is between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.
3. Leave at least 10 unused characters/spaces so others can retweet easily without editing, which discourages sharing.
4. Using two hashtags is the optimum amount to gain followers. Three is too many to most readers. One leaves an unused opportunity.
5. Review trending search terms regularly. If any dovetail with your objectives, adopt them to capture new audiences.
6. Participate in the Follow Friday exercise: Send out lists of Twitter handles with the hashtag #FF each week. This means you recommend that others follow them. It is a way to build relationships; those recommended are appreciative and will often reciprocate with their followers.
7. Links and photos help generate interest.
8. Retweeting others is a quick and easy way to fill your Twitter stream on a day when it is difficult for you to generate fresh information.

### **Step 7: Discuss your group's social media objectives. Think about what you want to achieve.**

- What are the critical information needs of your target audiences? This is the type of information you should provide to your local stakeholders online. This can be as simple as maps or calendars of events.
- What are your strategic communication goals?
- Evaluate how you currently correspond with local media, stakeholders, volunteers, donors, and the public.
- What are your community goals?
- Evaluate how you're currently mobilizing volunteers.
- Evaluate how you're currently engaging with your donors.
- Evaluate whether there is a clear call to action. Are you ASKING people to become members, and describing the benefits of membership? Are you specifically ASKING people to become volunteers, or to contact legislators to secure support for funding?

### **Step 8: Create Your Social Media Goals.**

- Adopt the goals you hope to achieve by using social media.

- Analyze whether your goals make sense and work with your time, resources and skill level. If not, can you improve your circumstances to achieve these goals through reallocation of time, more training, or by securing help?

### **Step 9: Create your social media strategy.**

- Write down the reasons why your social media use will complement your group's overall strategic plan.
- Write down the types of content you will provide and the types of content you will solicit from your community.
- Figure out how you will execute the strategy to achieve your goal.
  - Who will be responsible?
  - What tools will you use?
  - How will you develop content?
  - How often will you be present?
  - What steps will you take to reach your desired outcome?

### **Step 10: Choose Your Tools**

There are numerous social media tools available. We recommend starting with the two most popular: Facebook and Twitter. You can use tools that aren't included here if they work for you.

#### **Facebook**

More than 900 million people are now on Facebook, making it a prime opportunity to offer Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation information to a wide audience through Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation's Friends Groups.

Before you think about creating a Facebook presence for your Friends Group:

- Create a personal Facebook account.
- Spend time figuring out how the platform works.
- Learn the culture of Facebook.

**NOTE:** Don't skip this important step. We don't want to force you to friend people you haven't seen since pre-school, but it's important to understand how the platform and the people on it work before you can figure out how to be effective with an organizational presence.

Setting up a presence for your Friends Group:

Facebook Page: Pages work just like personal profiles.

- You can make friends.
- You can update your status.
- You can upload videos, photos, and articles.
- You can create events.

Is a Facebook page right for my Friends Group?

- Is your local audience on Facebook?

- Do a little research (search your area within Facebook).
- Ask your constituents if they use Facebook.
- Do you have the time to update your page with valuable content?

If you choose to launch a Facebook page, you should try to update it daily.

- You'll need someone to be responsible for your page and make sure they have a few minutes each day to concentrate on updating it.
- Do you have the capacity or desire to interact with your fans on a daily basis here?
- Not only will you need to update your status, post news items, and offer other types of timely content on your page, you'll need to acknowledge and engage your fans and followers here each day.
- Please assign someone to be the primary person responsible for these activities. You can also share these responsibilities and have multiple individuals administer your Friends Group's Facebook page.

Can you offer local content focused on your local stakeholders?

- Please list your local events, volunteer opportunities, classes, and mission-related news in your area.
- Share it with people who care about you.
- Do you have a clear goal in mind that Facebook will help you achieve?

If you can answer yes to all of the above questions, you are ready to set up a Facebook page.

If you can't answer yes to all of the above questions, please join our main statewide page and let your stakeholders know they can find Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation there.

What if people leave mean comments on your wall?

- Facebook does not currently allow you to moderate comments before they're published, so you will need someone dedicated to checking in here each day
- If you receive a negative comment, evaluate whether it's constructive. If it is constructive, don't be afraid to engage the person who left it. Even if you don't have all the right answers, try to find them together. Remember, deleting the comment isn't always the right answer, and can cause more harm.

## **Twitter**

What is Twitter?

Twitter started by asking the question, "*What are you doing?*" and millions of people answer in 140 characters or less.

Personal Account: We recommend setting up a personal Twitter account and using it for at least a month before creating your group's strategy.

Is Twitter right for my Friends Group?

- Are you ready to offer mission-based value to your local supporters?

- Do you have at least one person dedicated to spending a few minutes per day tweeting, engaging and responding to supporters?

What works on Twitter?

Lots of stuff works. Here are a few examples of organizations doing a bang up job of providing valuable, engaging information to people who want it:

- <https://twitter.com/ecomagination>: General Electric's forum for clean technology. A good mix of links, video, tips, news, and comments.
- <https://twitter.com/OCCoastkeeper> Orange County, California chapter of the national Coastkeeper organization. Lively, well-populated, features people and events, many specific examples of direct Calls to Action.
- <https://twitter.com/NYCParks> New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Nearly 28,000 followers; this popularity shows the account offers valued, timely information.

Naming your Twitter account:

- Choose a name that clearly indicates your local affiliation.
- Keep your name as short as possible. You only have 140 characters to type, so the fewer characters your name takes up, the better for retweeting.
- Your profile image. Note a picture of you is more effective than a logo, people want to engage with other people, not with organizations.
- Twitter's image machine is tiny. If you're having trouble, please contact us at Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation and we'll help you devise an appropriate image.
- Your Twitter design - You have the flexibility to design a background image for your Twitter account. Please be conservative and use a representative photo or design.

### **Step 11: Implement Your Plan**

- Have a short term and long term implementation plan.
- You may want to devise a communication plan for your community where you announce what you're doing.
- Consider linking to your social media activities from your main web site.
- Stick to your commitments, but be ready to be flexible and make adjustments as you encounter successes and challenges along the way.
- Remember that we're here watching you (scary!) and ready to help out at any time.

### **Integrate key messages whenever possible**

Examples:

- A photo of Promised Land State Park – a great place to rejuvenate your mind and body!
- There is a bird watching event at Black Moshannon State Park this weekend – just one of the hundreds of recreational opportunities provided by our award-winning state parks.
- Friends of Blue Knob State Park will be at XYZ Outfitters this Saturday – one of the hundreds of businesses that benefit from Pennsylvania's great park and forest system.

## **Step 12: Evaluate and adjust**

- Document your challenges and successes on your chosen tools.
- Analyze results, gain insight, take action, continue to monitor and measure.
- Define what you want to measure and achieve (volunteers, donations).
- Determine what you are benchmarking against (the starting point).

### **Documentation**

If you've documented your activities as you progress through steps 1-10, you've got a great baseline starting point to measure:

- The impact your social media strategy has in your community
- Whether you are able to achieve your original goals

Write down everything that happens in the beginning, so you have a multitude of qualitative and quantitative results to analyze.

### **Evaluation**

In the beginning, give yourself room to learn and gain insight before you tie yourself to a traditional ROI analysis. This means you can adopt what social media experts call the Listen/Learn/Adapt strategy. After you've tried your strategy for a while, ask yourself what you've learned and how you can improve for the next iteration or try.

### **Be present and active!**

Nothing beats regular reading, searching, and a true interest in what your contacts are saying and what topics interest them. Invest some time daily into a simple scan of activities on your social networks. Look over the trending or hot topics. See which of your followers are having a conversation.