

Why Social Media?

Social media is an essential marketing tool for any nonprofit. This popular and inexpensive platform allows you to engage past and potential donors while highlighting your nonprofit. 540,000 of Alaska's residents are on Facebook and its extended platforms, creating a powerful word-of-mouth marketing tool.

Below you can find tips, tricks and best practices both for social media and a couple key networks that could help you get the most out of social media going forward.

Social Media Best Practices

- **Be intentional:** It's easy to become distracted by the continual evolution of social media platforms. Instead, focus on one or two platforms to maximize your time and budget.
- **Make each network unique:** Avoid recycling content verbatim among your social network. Each network has a different feel and user base, so rewrite posts to better fit best practices for each. Try not to cross post from one network to others when possible. Each social network has their own particular look and feel, and cross posting could negatively impact the quality of the post and its potential impact.
- **Share human stories:** The best posts center on stories of impact. This reminds current donors how important their contributions are while showing potential donors how their contributions can make a difference. Social media is a perfect mechanism for these stories.
- **Share Supporter Updates:** Your followers have indicated an interest in your service. Feed them regular and engaging updates to involve them in your process. Your donors will remember this interaction when choosing nonprofits to support.
- **Have a personality:** Social media users respond to authenticity. Have fun with your tone and content when engaging donors via social media.

Facebook Best Practices

- **Keep a schedule:** Facebook's algorithm ensures that people who like your page will be more likely to see your content if you post regularly. If you can, post four to six times a week, though three to five works as well.
- **Short and sweet:** Facebook studies have found that users are more likely to engage with shorter posts. For the best response, keep posts to 120 characters or less, but go longer if necessary.
- **Always include media:** Due to Facebook's algorithm, and the fact people respond more strongly to visual content, posts with images or video vastly outperform text-only posts. Always include an image or video. Per a study, video posts have 135% greater reach than image-only posts.
- **Don't link media, post it directly to Facebook:** If you share content from other video sites – namely YouTube – Facebook will limit your reach for competitive reasons. When possible, post video direct to Facebook rather than linking it from other sites.
- **Engage your audience:** Engagement – likes, comments, shares - is the best way to ensure people see your posts. Stimulate engagement in posts by asking questions that make your followers feel involved.
- **Pay attention to your Insights:** Facebook 'Page Insights' – located at the top of your organization's administration page – shows post performance and audience demographics. Use this as a posting guide.
- **Don't #hashtag:** Hashtags are very ineffective on Facebook. Don't use them unless it's just for fun.
- **Don't forget to advertise:** Facebook is a powerful advertising platform. Use it to extend the reach of your existing posts and to target specific audiences with the right messaging.

Facebook Advertising Best Practices

- **Promote what works:** If you're going to boost or promote a post, focus on posts that are already generating engagement. Those will be more cost effective and generate more reach than those with limited response.
- **Go beyond boosted posts:** While "boosting" posts can be a useful tool, use Facebook's ad platform to fully utilize available capabilities and targeting options. You can find the ad platform on the left side of Facebook's front page under "Manage Ads."
- **Keep image text limited:** If 20% or more of an ad image is covered in text, Facebook will limit your reach. That means you have to spend more money per person to ensure your audience will see it. The best performing ads have zero text, but this is not a requirement for success.
- **Use your email/donor lists:** To get the most value from Facebook ads, upload your existing email lists to create targeted audiences. You can create custom audiences (comprised of only addresses from your email list) or lookalike audiences (users Facebook has found to be similar to those on the original list.) These can decrease costs and increase effectiveness. You can find this option in the "Audiences" section of the advertising platform.
- **Control where your ad runs:** Facebook will automatically place your ads across several networks, including Facebook, Instagram, and Facebook's mobile audience network. Not every network is the right fit for your content, or you might find certain placements are more ineffective than others. If you'd prefer to stick to target your ads to specific networks, you can control where ads are placed in the "Placements" portion of ad creation.

Instagram Best Practices

- **Frequency is key:** It's difficult to build an audience if you're not active on any given social media platform. Five to seven posts a week is optimal, with increased frequency if you have enough valuable content. Frequent posts will put your message in front of users and generate more interest and engagement.
- **Use hashtags in the comments section:** If you're trying to broaden your post's reach using hashtags, post them in the first comment. This method has the same benefit of linking your post to related hashtags without cluttering up your primary message.
- **Share images that you're tagged in:** If someone tags your organization with a great image, save the image and share it on your own account. Make sure to tag the original user in your post.
- **Use Stories:** If your organization is having a large event, or is posting frequently in one day, use the "Stories" functionality to showcase what you're up to without overwhelming your followers.
- **Include a bio link:** While Instagram isn't a great tool for driving traffic to websites, make sure to include a relevant webpage link in your bio.
- **Think outside the box:** Instagram is about showing off a lifestyle. This is a great platform to appeal to your followers with fun, creative messaging. Apps like Boomerang and Layout can add extra appeal to your posts to further engage your audience.