

Social Media Management Best Practices

Aside from Tufts emails, some chapters have found it effective to utilize various social media platforms to spread the word about events and programs. We've reviewed three of these platforms in the following pages.

Top 5 Things Groups Should Do

1. Understand your audience

To have effective communication you need to understand the people you are trying to reach. If your group is personally connected, this becomes an easier task. However, for groups that are not, leaders need to identify preferences for information discovery, consumption, and sharing.

Considerations:

- Needs: What information are your members seeking?
- Preferred channels: Identifying where your members most comfortably engage and where the majority spend their time is a great way to identify which social media channels you should pursue.
- Preferred media types: Knowing what types of media encourage members' participation is vital. Do they respond more to videos, photos, or text?

2. Define your group's engagement objectives

Group leaders should discuss their groups' goals for engagement so that the administrators of these accounts have a clear picture of what is expected as online communities grow. Determining which social medial network(s) is/are best for your group is fundamental to this discussion.

3. Identify appropriate post content

Be thoughtful about what and when you are posting. Having a plan can help you attract and engage your audience. Remember to proof twice and post once.

4. Formulate a monitoring plan and measure success

Developing a strategy for how to effectively manage group participation on your social networks is a pivotal first step. This checklist should consist of goals and tasks (i.e. inviting new members; updating status; posting an article, responding to previous comments).

Considerations:

- Content and time: Decide how much content you can commit to distribute.
- Commitment and sustainability: Identify the individuals who possess the greatest

availability to commit to social media monitoring and delineate responsibilities.

Identifying measurement tools and tracking your group's progress is essential for successful monitoring. Measuring success using metrics can supply valuable information on your performance and members' responses. Some social media monitoring software is available at no cost. Many social media outlets offer analytic data to group or page administrators. Read the "Measuring Success" guidelines in each social media network section for more information on specific monitoring you can conduct. Choose wisely, be open to testing, and understand that not all tools may be practical solutions to measure your group's success.

5. Engage, Engage, Engage

Contributing and sharing is key to optimized use of social media networks for group establishment and engagement. Responding to comments is important. As representatives of the group, managers need to be ready to address concerns and participate in discussion with members, not just post.

Considerations:

- **Space:** Give room for your members to engage through likes, comments, and posts. A group is composed of many members, and your social networks should be focused on engaging and merging.
- **Software:** Social media dashboard management tools (TweetDeck/HootSuite) can trend high level data and provide priceless feedback. Coordination between social channels amplifies engagement and message circulation.

Facebook Summary & Tools

What is Facebook?

Facebook is a social networking tool, and its mission is to connect people to share and make the world more open and connected. Currently over 1 billion people actively use Facebook each month. They not only foster personal relationships, but they also upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos, refer businesses and services, and ultimately meet new people. How is Facebook a good social media platform?

- The amount of people connected on Facebook makes it the largest social media networking site.
- Facebook fosters a two-way communication mode: people can acquire information and instantly convey their own comments and ideas. This makes it a very successful platform because it facilitates exchanges and interactions among people. People today are not interested in just absorbing information. They prefer to interact and relay their views.
- Facebook draws people in. The majority of Facebook users are active on the site every day, and many check it frequently throughout the day. Today, 48% of Americans with Facebook accounts check updates when they wake up and 28% do so from their smart phones before getting out of bed.

Is Facebook right for my group?

If your group's goal is to keep an open line of communication between your members, Facebook can help. It enables members to engage and become more familiar with each other, which in turn increases group participation.

Facebook allows groups to create open or closed events and “invite” members and non-members, which is a great feature in marketing your group's activities. With its content sharing attitude, Facebook encourages people to engage in discussion instead of the face-to-face marketing used in the past. This helps organizations engage their members and create hype about their next event or initiative.

Finally, Facebook gives room for groups to not only share information but also create information. Members are given the opportunity to engage in new discussion (or, perhaps, continue a topic from last meeting's agenda). It gives busy people in a busy world flexibility to meet and engage with others. This in turn, has the potential to create a sense of community within your chapter, and even if members are unable to attend events, they continue to feel part of the group and are up-to-date on the group's activities and discussions.

What is the difference between a fan page and a group?

Many people make the mistake of creating fan pages and groups and not appropriately maintaining their platforms. This leads your page to be seen as unreliable, leading your contacts to disconnect after some time. This is why it is important to understand the basic difference between the pages and groups and focus your efforts on creating and updating one platform.

- *Fan pages:* These were created in order to highlight your favorite organizations, artists, and businesses and show your friends what you are interested in and recommend by adding these on your personal profile. When you become a fan of something, that information is posted on your wall. You can also see the pages your friends are fans of via the “Info” tab on their profile. As a creator of a fan page, you can add pictures and engage in discussion on the wall. New communication will be seen by your fans as updates. Like a normal Facebook profile, fan pages have tabs that uncover more information.
- *Group pages:* Group pages are different because they are meant to serve formalized groups and connect members. You can set join permissions on groups so that they are either open to anyone, closed (where users must get administrator approval to join), or secret (invite only). Groups have administrators that manage the group, approve applicants, or invite others to join. Administrators can also appoint “officers” who are nominally in charge – however, being an officer doesn’t mean the person has the ability to administer the group. Administrators can invite members to join via Facebook messages and public groups can be found via Facebook search.

Which one is right for me?

Due to their security features and size limitations, Facebook Groups are set up for more personal interaction. As long as a group is under 5,000 members, group administrators can send messages to the group members that will appear in their inboxes. Fan page administrators can send updates to fans through the Page, and these updates will appear in the “Updates” section of fans’ inboxes. There is no limit on how many fans you may send an update to or how many total fans a Page can have.

Twitter Summary & Tools

What is Twitter?

If Facebook is seen as the current telephone global network, Twitter can be described as the current texting global network. Currently, 140+ million people are connected via Twitter. As their homepage describes their mission: “Find out what is happening, right now, with the people and organizations you care about.”

How is Twitter a good social media platform?

Twitter is a short-messaging tool that gives people a platform to communicate with friends, family, and co-workers and to “follow” their favorite organizations, businesses, etc. As a combination of e-mail, instant messenger, and RSS feeds, Twitter becomes a daily virtual miniblog. As a Twitter user you can post updates, follow and view updates from other users, and send public reply or private direct message to connect with another Twitterer.

Today, tweets have evolved to reflect more than your everyday experiences, and now take the shape of shared links to interesting content on the web, conversations around hot topics (using hashtags), photos, videos, music, and, most importantly, real-time accounts from people who are in the midst of a newsworthy event, crisis, or natural disaster.

Tweets, however, are restricted to 140 characters or less, demanding you communicate efficiently and to the point, which reflects the fast-paced world we live in, where time is precious and information is key!

Is Twitter right for my group?

Twitter allows you to connect with people you know, but most importantly, you connect with people you do not know. This is a great way for new members of your chapter to become more acquainted with the group and for the administrators of the group to learn more about the members.

You can generally learn much more about the person/organization/group through reading their tweets (personality, interests) than through what is shown on their Facebook page (especially if that person has a private profile and requires a friend request).

Integrating your group on Twitter

Through the use of Twitter tools and features it becomes easy to integrate your group in no time!

- Retweeting (RT): The ability to retweet posts or to discuss the subject with the entire community, as Twitter allows through use of the hashtag, can further increase participation of your group's members. Retweeting is how Twitter users share interesting tweets. They copy and paste the original tweet and send it out.

Here's an example: *Tufts Sustainability (@TuftsOOS) tweets: Today at 4:30 - TIE Talk on Water and Agriculture: Tools and Techniques of Regional Food System Planning*
<http://ow.ly/echzh>

- Hashtag (#): The hashtag is a favorite tool of conferences and event organizers. If everyone agrees to append a certain hashtag to tweets about a topic, it becomes easier to find that topic in search, and more likely the topic will appear in Twitter's Trending. Tweets with hashtags receive two times more engagement than those without, but don't overdo it; tweets with more than two hashtags show a 17% drop in engagement.

Here's an example: *Tufts Alumni Boston (@TuftsAlumBoston) tweets: Who is participating in Trek2Talloires? What exercise did you do today?*
<http://trek2talloires.org/#tufts #fitness>

- Tweetup: A tweetup is an event where people who Twitter come together to meet in person. Normally we connect with our friends online after we have met them. At a tweetup you meet the people you might only otherwise know virtually. Like finally putting a face to a name, a tweet up is a great opportunity to really connect with the people in your network and share just a little more than 140 characters at a time.

Strategies for optimal Twitter use:

Active participation on the Twitter social networking platform is a time management black hole if you don't have a well-defined strategy and the discipline to execute it. Twitter is a great tool for sharing content and increasing website traffic.

- Give people a place to go: Sharing links of your Facebook/LinkedIn group or Alumni Relations website would be a great way to combine platforms.
- Engage with others to increase the number of followers. Responding to people that invest their time in mentioning you and expanding your reach is more than common courtesy. It is an opportunity to connect with others.
- Provide quality content on a regular basis.
- A great way to engage your followers in regular discussion is sharing pictures of social

gatherings and events hosted by your chapter.

Measuring Success on Twitter

Measuring success on Twitter may require the assistance of other analytical tools. The following tools are free, user friendly, and efficient ways to gather the data you need in no time!

Twitalyzer (twitalyzer.com)

One of the most popular analytic tools available is *Twitalyzer*. This tool looks at your overall effectiveness as a user. This is a great tool to gauge your effectiveness in the Twitter community. You can determine what you need to focus on to improve your account.

It uses five different benchmarks:

- How popular you are on Twitter
- How much of your information is helpful compared to how much is noise
- How likely you are to retweet other people's content
- How often you update your account
- How often you are mentioned by other users

Tweetstats (tweetstats.com)

This tool is useful for identifying how often you or another Twitter user is tweeting. It breaks your tweets down by month. You can use Tweetstats to see how frequently you tweet compared to other users. You may realize that your group is not as active as you thought and can try to engage more regularly.

Tweeteffect (tweeteffect.com)

Tweeteffect compares when you lost or gained followers and approximates how those changes were affected by tweets you made. It takes a look at the last couple hundred tweets and how many followers you lost within five minutes of each. This can give you an idea of what content your followers are looking for.

Tweetmeme (tweetmeme.com)

This tool helps you identify your more popular tweets. You can see how many retweets virtually any of your tweets received.

LinkedIn Summary & Tools

What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network platform, highlighting professionals, businesses, and groups. Currently, 175+ million members are connected via LinkedIn. LinkedIn connects you with trusted professional contacts and gives you a space to exchange knowledge, ideas, and opportunities with a broader network of professionals.

How is LinkedIn a good social media platform?

LinkedIn is a great social media platform because of its professionally-oriented structure that allows you to connect with individuals that share a passion for their occupation. It allows you not only to connect but also to market your skills and background in difficult economic times and socialize with employers. The advantage of LinkedIn is the simplicity and straightforwardness of the platform, which prioritizes your time.

Is LinkedIn right for my group?

Since many chapter members tend to focus on expanding professional links through networking events throughout the year, LinkedIn would be a great platform for those members that may not be able to attend these networking sessions to connect with the group. It is also a vehicle for group members to stay connected and network in between events.

LinkedIn Groups allow you to have an active role in top discussions by liking and commenting. Unlike Facebook, discussions on LinkedIn tend to incorporate both business and fun. LinkedIn Groups also allow members to follow the most influential people in the group by checking the Top Influencers board. This is a great feature if your group possesses a leadership core. Finally, LinkedIn groups keep you updated on other news while seeing group member-generated discussions all in one setting.

Open or Members-only LinkedIn group?

By creating a LinkedIn group you establish a reserved area for productive discussions within your chapter and allow membership to be highlighted on individuals' LinkedIn profile. This is a great addition to members' professional descriptions and sets your group on the LinkedIn map for other individuals to be able to access and connect. There are two types of LinkedIn groups. Similar to Facebook, LinkedIn provides the options of Open and Members-only (by invitation) groups.

Integrating your Group on LinkedIn:

As the manager or moderator of your LinkedIn group, you should implement moderation tools to better integrate your group. These will help you keep high quality discussions rolling and optimize your chapter's experience on LinkedIn.

A great way to integrate your members in quality discussions is the "Manager's Choice" featured discussions:

- Original user discussions, user-submitted articles, and RSS items can all be featured by clicking "Add to Manager's Choice" from the top of any item's detail page.
- The top Manager's Choice will be visible in a module on the right side of the most visited page within groups: the discussion detail page.
- The top Manager's Choice, rather than the top five, appears on the group homepage in a module on the right side of the page.
- Managers can re-order up to 10 Manager's Choice discussions from the "See All" link in the Manager's Choice module.

LinkedIn Groups also offer several tools through which managers can moderate and insure the quality of group discussions.

- Managers and moderators can now delete inappropriate posts right from their email box using the new option "Send me an email for each new discussion" in More > My Settings.
- Managers and moderators can now delete inappropriate comments right from their email box by clicking "Delete" within any followed-discussion email alert.
- Members can flag items as inappropriate in the moderation queue and, if you choose, you can delete the content outright after an adjustable number of flags.
- The moderation queue will allow group managers to decide how many member flags can delete a thread or a comment.
- Very-low-connection users will now be flagged as such in groups' request-to-join queues and no longer admitted directly to open-access groups.