

Social Media Guide for Small Voluntary Sector Organisations

So you think you want to use Social Media?

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A Social Media Guide for Small Voluntary Sector Organisations

Communicating • Networking • Informing • Promoting • Campaigning • Developing

Use Social Media to transform your organisation and the way you work

Introduction

Social Media is brilliant – if used well. Transform your organisation by getting it right. In this no nonsense guide we show you just how to go about using the power and potential of social media in a way that is right just for you. Find out how this exciting and innovative technology can help you to reshape your organisation and the way you work.

Aims of the Guide

- To put your organisation and its purposes first with social media only used as a tool to assist you in achieving your goals.
- To help you understand if social media will be helpful for your organisation
- How to develop and implement a social media strategy.

It recognises that voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) cannot afford to spend time or money on anything which does not help them with their overall purpose.

The guide has been kept intentionally short, practical, to the point and easy to use in order to fit in with the limited time available to VCOs.

Background

This guide is the final result of a social media experiment (#socialmediavco) exploring how social media is of value to VCOs, and how it can help them to achieve their goals. To see the background and to follow the experiment, go to the #socialmediavco category of the blog of the Regional ICT Champion for Yorkshire and Humber
<http://yhictchampion.wordpress.com/category/socialmediavco/>

How the guide works

The first part of the guide looks at what your organisation is trying to achieve. This is important and helps to create a focus so that any social media strategy will directly link to these goals.

It establishes if social media will be helpful for you at this time. This will ensure that you do not waste time on something that is not appropriate for you.

If you do decide to go ahead the guide then leads you through a step by step process on how to go about this. The guide is laid out so that, once completed, it will serve as your Social Media Strategy Document. You may wish to make more extensive notes and use the guide to summarise and present to your Board.

NOTE: The guide does not go into the details of how to use the individual social media tools, however it does provide links to resources which will help you in this respect.

Benefits of Social Media

See Appendix 1 at the end of the guide for a list of some of the potential benefits of social media. This may prompt you for ideas on how social media might help you to achieve your organisational goals.

Questions to answer

1. What is your organisation trying to achieve?

This is the overall purpose or mission of the organisation.

2. What are the specific organisational goals that you think social media might be able to help you with?

Social media is generally all about communication so it is likely that the organisational goals will relate to this in some form or other. This may be to do with connecting with current clients, to PR and marketing or raising awareness. At this stage it does not matter too much that you may not know what form of social media to use or how to use it.

So now you know what you want to do and you think social media might be able to help you achieve it. The next step before you go any further is to establish if this is true. By that I

mean whether or not it would be realistic and suitable for your organisation at this time to use social media. The following questions will help to establish this.

1. Do you already have a website that you can update yourself? This does not have to be an all singing, all dancing website, just one that you have control of. If you don't then you would probably be best focussing on this first. There are a number of ways to go about this. To get it right contact Electroville who will advise accordingly. The one exception to this is if your target audience is likely to connect with you via Facebook as this can be used very effectively as a website ie is your target audience under 30?
2. Are any or your target audiences using social media already (or likely to be doing so within the next 2 years)? It is a good idea to ask them. At least that way you can be pretty sure. If they are then you have a better idea where to focus your efforts. If they are not then are they using email? This can be a great medium to bring social media to your audience without them having to be actively involved with a particular social media route. It just might need more guidance from you.
3. Have you (or whoever is going to be doing it) got the time? Time to set it up and time to keep it going. You need both of these. The initial set up time can be seen very much as a project and may require a fair bit of commitment over the first month or two. Following that it just needs a small amount of regular time. Don't underestimate this though. You need to have both the time and the commitment to keep it going. How much? Once set up it very much depends on the route that you have taken but it may be a small amount daily or a bit more weekly.

If the answer to the above is 'Yes' then it is likely that social media will make a significant difference to your organisation. If the answer to any of them is 'No' then you need to think carefully if this is the right time for you to be spending time on this area. Don't write it off completely. Things change so quickly that if you were to review the questions this time next year, then the answers may well have changed.

Still want to go ahead? Ok.

How to get started.

The guide is laid out in 7 steps with guidance and a table to fill in for each step. On completion of the first 6 steps you will have your Social Media Strategy in place and implemented. You will probably want to 'jump off' along the way and discuss your progress and decisions with your Board before continuing onto the next steps.

Remember that this has been kept purposefully simple with the intention of helping you to get started. Once you have completed and implemented the first 6 steps of the guide you will then be able to take your learning into your review at step 7. At this point you can choose to go through the guide again as a means of helping you to further develop your social media strategy.

1. Pick one of your goals that you want to pursue.

This will give you a focus and help you to build your social network, and your understanding, one piece at a time.

Organisational Goal

2. Decide who is going to be involved and how much.

Whether an individual, everyone in the office or a group of volunteers, there needs to be a level of commitment. Treat it as a part of your job description or a project which you will report on. Remember social media is just another form of marketing, and an increasingly important one.

Team Member	Role

3. Research.

Take time to look at and listen to what others are doing in similar fields. You'll find quite a difference between the UK and the USA where social media is used much more extensively. You may be able to learn from their approach so don't rule them out just because they are not UK based. Find organisations of similar size to yours that are using social media. Ring them up. Get involved. Ask questions.

Organisation	Social Media used	Details

4. Decide on your approach.

What social media tools are you going to use, how are you going to use them and why? You may have a grand plan to use a network of different tools and link them all together and this can be very effective, however it is best to start with one and really get to grips with that. It may be that you will have a central focus to your social media such as your website or blog in which case make sure that you are happy with how that is working first.

Social Media Tool/s	Reason/s for using this tool	What we are aiming to achieve with this tool.

5. Jump in.

Don't feel that you have to get it right first time. Whether it is Facebook, Twitter or some other form of social media that you start with, everyone who is currently using it will have had to start at some point too. So there is generally a lot of help available with people being patient, kind and helpful. Have the courage to experiment, change things, get it wrong, make mistakes. This is where most of our learning takes place.

Social Media Tool	What works for us & What doesn't work for us	Learning & Development

6. Measure your success.

Don't expect overnight success. Just because you put what you think is something hugely interesting, informative and fun up on your blog/facebook etc it doesn't mean the rest of the world will come flocking to your door. This takes time and consistency. Make sure you have some means of measuring your achievements – website stats, phone calls, event bookings – whatever is relevant to your goals.

Social Media Tool	How we will measure success	Targets

7. **Develop.**

Continuous change is at the heart of social media. Regularly review what you are doing and how it is helping you to achieve your organisation's goals. If you want to introduce another form of social media, go through this process again. Take your time and above all enjoy it.

Social Media Strategy Review

Appendix 1.**Some of the potential benefits of social media.**

1. Spreading the word. This is what it is all about. Getting your organisation/campaign/issue better known. It provides an additional web presence and ways for people to understand what you are all about. It helps to build your 'brand', who you are, what you do and why.
2. Create a following. It gives people the opportunity to identify with a cause and to feel involved.
3. Developing a central networking place which in turn allows you to be more efficient and effective in your communication.
4. Providing a personal face to your organisation. Not necessarily literally (though that often is the case) but that personal connection gives a much better feel for your organisation than what can be a rather faceless brand.
5. Gathering information. It isn't just about you getting your message out there. Social networks are social. They are as much about listening as talking, receiving as giving. You become better informed as a result.
6. Building communities. Far from the internet breaking down community life, the effects (particularly of social networking) are the opposite with people coming together more both on and offline.
7. Up to date. Social networking is all about what is happening now. It helps you to keep up to date and to keep others up to date.

So, is it for you? Are you ready and able to take the plunge? There are loads of resources on the web for the various social media software. However much of the help provided is aimed at business and at larger non-profit organisations. For an overview on how the different forms of social media might be able to help small voluntary organisations, check out the social media experiment category #socialmediavco on the Regional ICT champion blog at <http://yhictchampion.wordpress.com/category/socialmediavco/>

For information on Electroville go to www.electroville.org.uk or email me at simonduncan@electroville.org.uk or call me on 01924 488725.

Electroville is a social enterprise providing ICT support and services to the voluntary sector in Yorkshire and Humber.