

No. 2

# Pick your platforms

Four of the world's most popular networking sites, at a glance



QUEBEC ANGLOPHONE  
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**Communication  
Matters**  
Booklet Series

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Material in this guide was adapted from training tools developed  
by the Centre for Community Organizations (COCO).

*Communication Matters* booklets were produced with  
financial support from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

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## Engaging effectively with your community on behalf of a non-profit organization requires more forethought than simply opening a social-media account.

If you already use social media to stay connected with family and friends, then you know that getting people's attention comes with a price, namely the effort you put into sharing pictures, news and information. Managing a social-media account on behalf of an organization works the same way, but with different content, goals and outcomes.

When deciding which social-media websites are most likely to help your group get noticed and stay visible, there are a number of factors to keep in mind: these include the time that staff and/or volunteers can afford to invest maintaining an active online presence; the level of knowledge and skills they possess; your group's marketing goals; and the type of audience you hope to reach. Are you trying to engage with people in a specific age-range or employment sector, for instance?

Compiled below are some key facts and figures you should know about the world's four most popular social-media websites. Consider your organization's mission, community activities and goals, then use the following information to help decide which platforms would be the best fit. Remember, it's best to be active on just one or two platforms and to manage these well, rather than poorly managing multiple sites. So, choose wisely!

## START WITH FACEBOOK

Facebook is the most widely used social-media network in the world across all age-groups, and especially among young adults. It is also the platform that is most often used by non-profits. Although Facebook has its critics and mainstream media often speculate about its demise, the sheer popularity of this social-networking behemoth continues to be unmatched. Which means that, if you are considering investing time in any kind of social-media presence for your organization, this is likely the best place to start.

Facebook is constantly evolving, and there are lots of great features on this platform that you can put to work for your organization right away. The incredible amount of user data that Facebook has lets you easily refine the target audience for your messaging, so you'll feel less like you're shooting in the dark. Facebook has also made a commitment to improving features for non-profits.

**Time commitment:** Between one and five hours per week.

**Posting frequency:** Once or twice a day (at least three to four times a week).

**Audience:** The general consensus is that Facebook is the most used network by people over 30. While people under 30 use it a lot, it is not their favourite. More interestingly, around 65 per cent of Quebecers use Facebook, which is considerably higher than the Canadian average.

**Costs:** Free, but advertising is paid.

## INSTAGRAM FOR LIGHT FARE

Instagram is one of the top four most popular platforms for non-profits and it is owned by Facebook. A photo-sharing website that is geared towards smart-phone users, Instagram content is richly visual, creating a feel-good social-networking environment. The upbeat tone of the application also makes Instagram users especially responsive to supporting good causes, though it's not easy to monetize that support. Although Instagram offers very little in the way of marketing tools, the company has said it plans to give users access to more analytics and data in the future that may help non-profits better identify potential supporters.



**Time commitment:** Two to five hours per week.

**Frequency:** Once per day (or at least four to five times weekly).

**Audience:** 90 per cent of Instagram users are under 30, and the platform is used evenly across age-groups and income-brackets. Most users live in cities.

**Costs associated:** Free, but advertising is paid.

## TWITTER NEVER RESTS

In terms of worldwide usage, and in terms of how many non-profits invest their communication efforts here, Twitter is a close runner-up to Facebook. Twitter is used as a source of news and real-time information, and as a platform to comment (tweet) on current events. It's a great choice for groups active in marketing campaigns, whose work is tied to the news cycle or who want to document activities. If one of your goals is to "change the conversation" around a certain topic or issue, Twitter can be a great tool. On the other hand, Twitter requires much more immediate engagement (you have to respond to mentions, retweets, and comments fairly quickly), and it takes some time to learn. Twitter also provides great analytic information.

**Time commitment:** Five hours or more per week, to do it well.

**Frequency:** Three times a day minimum, although you can have silent periods with few repercussions.

**Audience:** Millennials are the most active (27 per cent of people between 18 and 29 years old, versus 16 per cent of people over 30). Twitter is used fairly equally by people in all age-groups and income brackets.

**Costs associated:** Free, but advertising is paid.



## LINKEDIN WORKS FOR SEEKERS

Initially conceived as an online job-search board, LinkedIn has become a leading professional networking site. It has a massive audience (second only to Facebook in Canada), although it is much more popular among English-speakers than Francophones. LinkedIn is most valuable as a recruitment tool (board members, volunteers and staff) and for interacting with peer organizations and professionals (if, say, you want to inform the conversation about best practices in conservation, community learning or social work). It can also be a great way to showcase your organization's services. A key part of a LinkedIn strategy includes your staff using their personal accounts to promote your work, so make sure they are on board!

**Time Commitment:** Three to four hours per week (However, it may only take a few hours a month to keep your organization's page current).

**Frequency:** Once a day (at least three times weekly).

**Audience:** LinkedIn skews to people who are well-educated professionals. Unsurprisingly, this means it is used more by those between 30 and 50 years old.

**Costs associated:** Free, but advertising is paid.

## Tips for group users

- Try to keep the name of your organization as consistent as possible across platforms. Make sure your logo is visible on each.
- Don't use the same content on all of your platforms. While there can be some crossover, variety is important. This is because your content should speak to the unique audience segment or style of each platform, and because some people will follow you on all of your platforms.
- Consider subscribing to an RSS feed or Google Alert to get the latest updates about any changes to platform features that may affect your communications strategy, and adjust accordingly.
- Choose platforms that you like. You are much more likely to do a good job if you're enjoying yourself.

## References

Centre for Community Organizations (COCO), Social Media Workbook.  
<https://coco-net.org/social-media-workbook-community-organizations-nonprofits/>

## For more information visit:

**Imagine Canada:** <http://www.imaginecanada.ca/>

**Idealware:** <https://www.idealware.org/>

**Nonprofit Marketing Guide.Com:** <https://www.nonprofitmarketing-guide.com/blog/>

## Other Publications

**Titles below are included in the *Communication Matters* series:**

1. Networking for Change: A practical guide for non-profits using social media
2. Pick your platforms: Four of the world's most popular networking sites, at a glance
3. Less is more: A guide to content style and strategy in the age of online marketing
4. Youth appeal: What volunteer groups need to know about reaching out to young people
5. First impressions: Tips and design principles for crafting eye-catching messages

**The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) also produces the following educational resources:**

*Cemetery Heritage in Quebec: A Handbook*

Why and how to care properly for early burial grounds.

*Oral History Guide*

Offers tips on preparing for, setting up and conducting interviews.

*Heritage Field Guide Series: Security for Heritage vols. 1-10*

Series of bilingual guides highlights best practices to ensure the security of heritage resources.

*Organized Planning and Emergency Response Assistant (OPERA): Your Guide to Emergency Planning (CD)*

An interactive tool for storing and retrieving emergency contact information, procedures for managing a variety of threats, a resources guide and an extensive reading list devoted to emergency management.

*Heritage Field Guide Series: Volunteering Matters vols. 1-8*

Series of bilingual guides highlights topics that will help and interest those working in non-profit organizations that depend upon volunteers.

*Volunteering Matters: Guide to Volunteer Recruitment*

A step-by-step guide to help your organization develop its ability to recruit volunteers.

*InHerit Handbook: Inspiring Heritage Renewal and Identity Together*

How to create great learning projects for schools and communities

*The Identity of English-speaking Quebec in 100 Objects*

A DVD portrait of Quebec's Anglophone communities in all their diversity

*Quebec Heritage News*

Our quarterly magazine devoted to history and heritage

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