

No. 3

Less is more

A guide to content style
and strategy in the age
of online networking



QUEBEC ANGLOPHONE
HERITAGE NETWORK
QAHN



**Communication
Matters**
Booklet Series

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Adding social media to your publicity toolkit may be the right choice for your group, but it also comes with responsibilities and commitments.

Managing social-media accounts on behalf of an organization is not trivial work, and at times may feel like a daunting task. Time is limited, especially in small non-profits that have traditionally relied on community volunteers to help carry their message forward. The first rule when it comes to using social media is to strive for efficiency.

One of the biggest challenges facing non-profit groups who use social media is finding and/or creating appropriate content for their channels. What different types of information and material do you hope to contribute? What sort of content will get and hold people's attention in a way that advances your mission? How do you decide which pictures and text will communicate your message effectively?

As you become familiar using social media in support of your group's activities and overall messaging, the answers to these questions will become more obvious. In the meantime, here are some pointers to help make the most out of the time you invest online.

WILL YOU CURATE OR CREATE CONTENT?

The internet offers a boundless and expanding supply of facts, lies, arguments and images to serve every imaginable human interest, taste and persuasion. Social-media websites allow users to interact

with this content in two basic ways: by spreading information already in circulation and by posting original material that may be spread by other users. In fact, the communication style that you adopt will probably combine passive and more active social-media activities.

For example, a passive strategy could be basic “curation:” finding articles and other information on the internet that relate to your cause and posting them with a brief comment from your organization. This kind of strategy can help you meet objectives such as raising awareness of an issue, creating conversations around new ideas, and raising the profile of your cause.

At the other end of the spectrum, a highly active strategy would be to focus on creating and sharing original content, such as writing a regular blog that you post on social media, uploading photos from your events, or live-streaming videos. Obviously, a more active approach will demand a greater time commitment, possibly some training and the development of policies to support your online activities.

START SMALL, DO IT RIGHT

While creating good-quality, original content takes greater investments of time and skills, the potential long-term rewards include better visibility among followers and a stronger likelihood that content will be shared with other users. On the other hand, this level of active engagement is often beyond the reach of smaller organizations and might not meet your objectives.

If current resources for social-media management are in short supply right now, start with a passive strategy. This will allow you to get familiar with all of the features at a low cost, while still being effective at reaching your goals.

Remember, it is better to offer quality content on fewer channels than to do a poor job trying to run multiple channels. Some commonly shared content types include:

- Photos
- Videos
- Links to articles, videos, blogs, etc
- GIFs
- Website content
- Newsletters
- Announcements
- Infographics



Whatever it is your organization hopes to achieve by having a social-media presence, here are eight pieces of solid advice that will help you succeed.

- 1. Use photos.** Pictures are the most popular kind of content, and you should take the time to take good quality photos. Many organizations do an amazing job spreading their message with photos, including photos superimposed with text, information, or infographics.
- 2. Make it collaborative.** Use social media to promote content from other organizations, news outlets, activists or writers. Share, retweet, tag people and organizations in your posts, and write comments on other people's content when appropriate.
- 3. Keep your content short and sweet.** Social media is not like traditional marketing or media work. For Facebook, try to not write more than two lines of text per post. For Twitter, the challenge is to communicate everything in 280 characters. Without losing sight of the fact that you are representing an organization, use less formal or bureaucratic language in favour of a more conversational tone.
- 4. Stay positive.** Congratulate other organizations on their success and celebrate your own victories. Thank your volunteers. Highlight when social change occurs. You can, of course, get angry about issues, but an online presence that is consistently angry or cynical is not appealing, and will not attract followers.
- 5. Tailor your message to your audience.** Is this information interesting? Is the story touching? Are there useful resources? Avoid posting content that people can't use or might not understand. Don't forget that you can easily re-use good content for different audiences at different times.



6. Encourage engagement. Ask questions, encourage comments and participation on your platforms. Even if this seems hard, we have to work to make social media truly social.

7. Use the news to your advantage. You will definitely see results if you can make the link between your organization's cause and events taking place in the wider community and around the world. Share news articles related to your mission!

8. Reference well-established social-media accounts. Identify potential partners who already have a strong social-media presence, such as other community non-profits, your funders, or media organizations. You can ask them to post your information or stories, and make sure their posts redirect back to the account you are building.

IT GETS EASIER

Managing social-media content doesn't have to be hard. Be realistic about the time you have and start small. Identify the content you already have and make a list of content you would like to post. Pick one channel and plan out your posts for one week. Once in a while, try something new! As long as you remain active and responsive on your social-media accounts, and follow the tips for best practices, you will find it easier and easier to identify what works for your community of loyal followers.

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

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