

# Basic Social Media Planner

**How To Do Social Media When  
You Don't Do Social Media:  
Nonprofit Edition**

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A communications template from [entremission.com](http://entremission.com)

# Introduction

According to recent-ish studies, only half of nonprofit organizations have a team of people working on social media. The other half leave it to one person or don't do social media at all.

This guide is for that second half.

Responsibility for social media at smaller nonprofits often lands on the desk of someone who has other commitments and priorities. Social media is hard to delegate, because you need to have insight into the communications and strategic goals to know how to use social media most effectively. You need to understand the issues and have access to current information to keep your audience informed. Plus you need to have the passion to personal connection to create an emotional charge with your audience. Those are all manager-level qualities.

At the same time, it can take an hour to find the best hashtags for an Instagram post. Image and video editing require skill and special software. Direct messages and comments from your audience might need prompt response. These are time-sensitive, fussy bits that specialists handle better.

As a result, social media rarely finds a comfortable niche in small organizations.

This guide is for the people who "do" social media because someone has to do it. They aren't specialists, and they probably can't afford to be.

We focus on how you can find and connect with a community online, without compromising your programs or other commitments. It's a plan to keep your organization visible and to show that you care about your community, even when your social media presence is modest.

We reference the five most-used social media platforms in Canada and the USA, and nonprofit organizations: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok. We don't count YouTube, because it's a step too far into the deep end of the social media swimming pool. We won't cover advertising, either, because that's a whole other beast.

Here's how you "do" social media, when other things are also calling for your attention. Please enjoy!

# Step 1: Decide why you are doing this

## State your purpose

It's important to know why you are choosing to spend time on social media in the first place. Since you can only focus on one purpose (for now), what will it be?

1. Brand awareness. Make sure people see your brand, recognize it, and feel positively towards it.
2. Issue awareness. Make sure people hear about an issue and understand what they need to do to help.
3. Build an audience. Increase the number of people who follow you and engage with you online, regardless of the topic.
4. Sell products or services. Get people to buy what you're selling, literally.
5. Provide customer service. Answer people's questions about your products and services.
6. Support other voices, brands, topics. Cheer on people in your community, amplify other voices, be a good friend or ally to people doing work you respect.
7. Get donations. Give people reasons to give and generate revenue for your work.
8. Listen. Watch what other people are saying to develop an understanding of trends, emotions, and public priorities.

# Step 2: Decide what channel you should you focus on

We say "channel" not "channels" because you should start by focusing on just one social media platform. You're going to be tempted to be everywhere. Resist.

For now, focus on finding the one channel where you get traction, connect with a community, and you can see real impact flowing from the time you're spending.

These 5 questions can help you narrow down which channel to focus on:

- (a) What age are the people you want to engage?
- (b) What type of content do you want to share?
- (c) Is it important for people to end up on your website?
- (d) How much time are you willing to spend to create a post?
- (e) Where are people in your audience already hanging out?

Before reading the rest of this section, take a minute to jot down your answers to these questions.

## (a) Audience age

Different platforms tend to be popular with different age groups. In general, these are the most popular platforms by age:

<b>Gen Z</b>	<b>Millennials</b>	<b>Gen X</b>	<b>Boomers</b>
<i>Age 10-25</i>	<i>Age 26-41</i>	<i>Age 42-50</i>	<i>Age 58-76</i>
TikTok Instagram	Instagram Twitter Facebook	Twitter LinkedIn Facebook	Facebook

## (b) Content

Different platforms lend themselves to different types of content. If you want to share written **articles**, full-length **videos**, or **website links**, then Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are best (in that order).

If you want to share **short videos**, then TikTok and Instagram are best.

If you want to share **pictures** with captions, then Instagram is best.

Instagram and TikTok are geared towards people who are creating content specifically for those channels.

Twitter and LinkedIn are primarily used to share links to content that lives somewhere else (for example, on your website).

Facebook is a hybrid. It allows you to create original posts or share links to other places on the web.

If you're on social media to listen to others, then expect to see a lot of original visual content on Instagram and TikTok and click a lot of links on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

## **(c) Connecting to your website**

Many nonprofits want to redirect people to their website. That's often where you share important information explaining issues, describing programs, and listing ways for people to get involved.

Some social media platforms make it easy for people to click through to your website, but some try to keep users on their own platform.

If it is important to get people to visit your website, look at Twitter, LinkedIn, and possibly Facebook. Instagram isn't that effective at redirecting users from organic posts. TikTok isn't very effective at all.

## **(d) Time commitment**

How much time are you willing to spend creating and sharing a post?

One of the biggest misunderstandings about social media is how much time it takes to create a single post. You can consume a post in less than a second, but creating posts takes a lot longer (hours, even weeks).

If time is an important factor for you, make sure you don't embrace a platform that demands more time than you have to offer.

Here's the minimum time you need to set aside to create a post for each channel:

<b>An hour or less</b>	<b>Half an hour to two hours</b>	<b>More than 2 hours</b>
<i>Between 5-60 minutes</i>	<i>Between 30-180 minutes</i>	<i>At least 120 minutes</i>
Facebook Twitter LinkedIn	Instagram	TikTok Instagram Reel
Plus the time it takes to create the original article, infographic, website, or long-form video you plan to share.	Plus the time it takes to plan a photo, travel to the location, style everything, and shoot the photo <b>or</b> plus the time it takes to create the original graphic.	Plus the time it takes to plan video, prep the location, style everything, shoot & edit the video.

One of the most time consuming steps of the social media process is the actual posting. It takes longer than you'd expect to find the relevant hashtags and tag the right people.

## **(e) Go to where your network is**

All social media "rules" go out the window when you have real information about where your actual community is spending their time. Regardless of their age or what's "normal" for a platform, if your community is meeting somewhere, that's where you want to be.

Spend some time scanning different social media channels looking to see where your allies, partners, and supporters are most active. Pick the channel where your network seems to have the most energy and where people are the most engaged.

## **Step 3: Decide how often you are going to post**

How often do you want to post? There's no right or wrong answer to this question.

Maybe you want to post 10 times a day. Maybe once a day. Maybe once a week. Maybe once a month. Pick a number that works for you.

The most important thing is to make a decision so you can incorporate social media into your routine.

## **Step 4: Create your rules of engagement**

Your rules of engagement should answer these questions:

1. When do we create our own content? This usually happens when your organization has a blog post, media release, announcement, campaign message, or similar message to deliver. If your social media strategy is an extension of your other work, make a list of the organization activities that trigger a need for a post.
2. How quickly do we respond to direct messages? Do you need to respond to people within minutes? Hours? Days? Or ever?
3. What do we do when people engage with us positively? Do you follow everyone who follows you? Do you "like" every time someone shares your content? Do you re-share or comment when people mention you?
4. What do we do when people engage with us negatively? If this happens often or if people's message are hostile, then you'll need a thoughtful policy. But if negative comments are rare (and mild), just decide whether you will engage with critical comments, delete them, block them, or ignore them. Ignoring critics or redirecting people to private emails so you can address their concerns are common responses.

5. What hashtag(s) do we use and when? Many organizations are working on projects linked to larger campaigns. If there are recognized hashtags you want to include with messages, then identify them in advance. Decide how often you want to use them (only for specific topics, on every message, etc.)
6. What accounts or hashtags do you need to monitor? When will you like, share, or comment on someone else's posts?

## Step 5: Pick your content themes

There are loads of templates and tutorials online for creating social media calendars. But if you don't "do" social media, then you don't need to start with that level of detail.

### (a) Time sensitive themes

Look at your organization's calendar for the next three months. Make a list of the dates for events, milestones, announcements, etc. Focus on the things that will be important to the social media audience who is connected to the purpose you selected in Step 1.

Check the list when you are creating your content, or put them on your calendar, so you remember to talk about those milestones when they arise. (For example, you might make a reminder to focus on your Annual General Meeting for the week before and during your AGM or you might make a reminder to talk about #GivingTuesday in late November.)

### (b) Evergreen themes

What topics do you need to talk about to achieve your purpose? Make a list of the most important themes and topics and then *only* create social media content that promotes those themes. (For example, if you are using social media to engage volunteers, then you might post monthly profiles of a volunteer. If you use it to raise awareness for climate change, then you could choose themes like science, policy, consumer products, or amplifying grassroots voices).



## Step 6: Book time on your calendar

This is where your plan comes to life.

Block off the time you plan to spend on your calendar now. It could be one-hour once a week, or it could be three 15-minute sessions a day. Whatever time you set aside, make sure it matches the amount of time you said you wanted to spend creating content, listening, and amplifying other voices.

## Step 7: Set up camp

Have you made it this far and secretly have plans to keep managing three, four, or give social media channels? Are you afraid to focus on one? Or are you just wondering what to do with the ones you can't wait to ignore?

If you have other social media accounts, it's wise to do a bit of housekeeping. Let's call it "setting up camp".

You don't have to actively manage a social media account to ensure it represents your mission and voice accurately. You can set up camp, then leave the profile alone.

Make sure the main image is appealing and reflects your brand. Make sure your bio is up to date. In your bio or in a pinned post, explain how people can reach you. If you don't plan to update the account regularly, be sure to tell people where else to find you. Use positive, proactive wording like "Meet us on Instagram" or "For breaking news, subscribe to our newsletter."

For tips on crafting a bio or explaining your mission, see [Entremission's "Explain Yourself" communications template](#).

You don't need to manage these accounts often, as long as you make it clear to your audience that you are easy to find elsewhere. Now you're ready to focus on the one channel where you can have the biggest impact.

# Step 8: Measure your impact

Let's keep impact measurement simple. (After all, this is a social media planner for people who don't want to do social media.)

Measuring impact means collecting information to help you answer three questions:

1. Did we achieve our goal?
2. Is this a cost-effective way to achieve that goal?
3. Is this a goal worth pursuing?

You set your goal in Step One, so that's done. Your cost is your time, and you figured that out in Step Six. The last step is to pick a single metric to help you answer those questions. We've provided a few examples below, but you can pick anything that reflects your purpose.

Purpose	Related Metrics
Brand awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Camping: Are we happy with the way our profiles look to users?</li><li>- Impressions: How often was our @handle or #hashtag used?</li></ul>
Issue awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Reach: How many people did our posts reach?</li><li>- Hashtag uses: How often was our #hashtag used?</li><li>- Engagement: How many likes or comments or shares did we get?</li></ul>
Build an audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Followers: What is our follower growth rate?</li><li>- How many followers do we have compared to this time last year?</li><li>- Engagement: How many likes or comments did we get?</li></ul>
Sell products or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Clicks: How many people landed on our product or services page?</li><li>- Revenue: How much revenue did we generate?</li></ul>
Provide customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Interactions: What % of custom comments were resolved?</li></ul>
Support other voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Activity: How many posts did we share?</li><li>- Recognition: How many accounts did we amplify?</li></ul>
Get donations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Clicks: How many people landed on our donations page?</li><li>- Revenue: How much did we raise?</li><li>- Acquisition: How many new donors did we attract?</li></ul>
Listen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lessons: What information or insights were we able to incorporate into our work?</li></ul>

## Step 9: Reassess your plan

Go ahead and implement your plan.

Put a note on your calendar to review and reassess in the future. If you are using this plan for a campaign, do it at the end of the campaign. Otherwise, check back in three months.

When you check in, look at the questions in Step 8. How are things going? Is your goal still relevant? What's working? Where could impact be greater?

If you aren't getting traction on the channel you chose, consider testing a different one.

Don't forget to compare your results to other elements of your communications strategy, such as your email list performance, website engagement, or an event. How does the time spent on social media compare to the time spent on those other communications channels?

Take your insights and return to Step One.

### **You'll know it's time to really "do" social media when ...**

1. Your efforts on social media are paying off as well as/better than your efforts on other communications activities.
2. You are depending on social media performance to achieve program, fundraising, or other communications goals.