



free-range THINKING™

free-range thinking™ is a monthly journal of best practices, resources and generally useful stuff for public interest communicators who want to reach more people with more impact



Five Things You Need to Know About Social Media (That They Don't Tell You in Nonprofit School)

We all know that social media is huge for building awareness these days. Anyone who's, well, *anyone* has a Facebook page. But there's a big difference between using social media and using it *effectively*. To be honest, I still have a lot to learn in this category, but the person from whom I've learned the most is Angela Wilson Gyetvan. Angela is a self-described "recovering high-tech CMO" who now helps businesses scale up using digital tools and media. Her experience includes senior marketing roles with Electronic Arts, Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts, IdeaLab and Evite.

For this month's back-to-school issue, I asked Angela if she could share some tips that can help nonprofits and other public interest organizations use social media more effectively. Here are five things she's learned over years of managing campaigns in this very 21st-century form of media. [Full story](#). Please note: Apple Mail users may need to scroll down manually.



Angela Wilson Gyetvan

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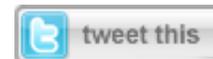
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1) Match the platform to your audience.

Like all forms of media, different social media platforms speak to different audiences and tend to trigger different behaviors. Sprout Social has a great list of demographics for the major platforms [here](#). Facebook attracts an older audience, Twitter is good for engagement and client service, Snapchat is - well, nobody over 25 actually knows what Snapchat is, Instagram has a huge presence with Millennials age 18-30, and YouTube has become the search engine of choice for video, with something for almost every age group and income level. So consider confining your social media efforts to platforms that reach the audience you are targeting. (Both Facebook and Twitter offer excellent local targeting tools, by the way.) And don't forget to include LinkedIn in your mix. It's populated by professionals and can be very useful when fundraising or trying to make strategic connections.



2) Don't rely on organic reach.

"Organic" in social media means "free." It used to be that you could just write posts on Facebook, post pictures on Instagram, or Tweet on Twitter, and then each platform's algorithm would share your messaging broadly for free. That's called "organic reach" and it's also known as "ancient history." In the past, about 60% of your followers would see your organic posts. Today that number is less than 6%. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter will deny it, but they want you to spend money - your organic reach is severely limited unless you boost posts and/or pay for ads. The good news is that a little investment goes a long way. Here's the recommended recipe: Create a post. Allow it to accumulate organic reach for up to 24 hours. Then spend \$20 to boost the post. ("Boost" means to spend a little money on your post/picture/Tweet/video, treating it like an ad. Facebook uses the word "boost," Instagram and Twitter say "promote.") Wait 24 more hours, and spend a little more money if desired. Doing this on a strategic basis will help improve your organic reach, while also expanding your message to other folks by paying to get in front of them, (a.k.a., "paid reach"). Write your budgets to accommodate this need for advertising even if the amounts are very small. It will help you.



3) Post frequently but pick your spots carefully.

It's easy to think that you're posting too frequently on social media, but you're probably not. As noted above, with organic postings a very small percentage of people are actually seeing your content. So post away but be strategic. Check out the best posting times for each platform. There's more good advice from SproutSocial on post timing [here](#). Use a tool to schedule your posts (more on that later). And remember: because different social media platforms target different audiences, share your messages to all platforms you use but tweak the content so it speaks to the audience for that platform.

4) Engagement is the name of the game.

Oh, that Holy Grail: engagement. Not only does having an active, engaged audience help boost your search engine rankings, it just makes everything better. So, try to create every post with these thoughts in mind: Am I relaying new, interesting information? Can I phrase this in the form of a question and ask people to respond? Can I turn the post into a short survey? Can I link to interesting articles? Can I use visuals like videos or photos? Visual content performs much better than text-only content. It's also good to include a call-to-action as much as possible, even if it's only to invite folks to comment and repost or



retweet. Engagement not only boosts the value of your posts, it also helps more people find you through search, because it boosts your search engine rankings.

5) Ensure all platforms are working together.

The truth is, social media campaigns are labor-intensive. And although they're designed to be self-service platforms, most native dashboards, frankly, suck. (A "native dashboard" is the toolset each platform offers to help you boost/promote posts and create ads.) Each platform has its own separate dashboard, and with the exception of Facebook and Instagram, none of them work together. So it's worthwhile to investigate third-party tools to unify your campaigns in one place. And remember I mentioned above that it's worthwhile to find a tool to help you schedule your posts? Well, among the most popular tools are [Hootsuite](#), [Buffer](#), [SproutSocial](#), and [Social Oomph](#). All offer affordable options, ranging from free trials, to always free, to monthly costs of \$10 to \$60. These tools not only allow you to post from multiple social accounts at the same time, they also allow you to automate posts, optimize posting times, track performance, and respond to your audience directly from the tool. Even at \$60/month, these tools are very much worth the investment. If you're graduating to larger paid advertising campaigns where you're creating actual ads for your organization, check out [AdEspresso](#) and even [Mailchimp](#), which now offers tools for social advertising. I personally love AdEspresso because it allows me to set up and track a Facebook/Instagram ad campaign in less than half the time it would take me using Facebook's native dashboard.



6) Bonus: Share and share alike.

Yes, I said five things, but here's a little something extra: Cultivate your core audience of fans. These are the people who always react to your posts by commenting and resharing. They're your fans, your evangelists, your word-of-mouthers, and they can help magnify your message. Make them feel special: give them personal recognition in social media, offer them swag for sharing your posts, alert them to upcoming events and activities first. So, how do you figure out who they are? Facebook's "Insights" tab on your page will tell you who's commenting and resharing. There are also third-party tools like [SocialRank](#) and [entourage.io](#) where you can enter your Facebook page name or social media handles to create a list of most active fans and followers. Here's a screenshot of my followers on Twitter from SocialRank that I just had to share because it turns out my most valuable follower is a dude named Barry:



SocialRank and entourage.io are free (entourage is an iPhone app). Use them to go get your own list and use it - it will especially be worth the effort when fundraising time rolls around. (No, I haven't asked Barry for any money yet.)

Now go forth and be social!

Angela Wilson Gyetvan is always open to answering questions and loves working on projects with purpose-driven organizations. You can find more information about her at www.digitalwhisper.co and contact her directly at angela@digitalwhisper.co.



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