

Tool 6: Social Media Recommendations

Social media can be a powerful communication and engagement tool when used correctly. Every organization—no matter how big or small—should have at least one social media account or page. If you are a small organization with limited capacity, don't overwhelm yourself by trying to maintain a presence on all social platforms. Select the one (or two) that your audiences use the most, and focus on maintaining a consistent presence. It's better to post a lot on one account or page than rarely on five! If you're worried about not having the capacity to activate your social media network, consider hiring an intern and engaging your volunteers and supporters to post on your behalf.

To help you engage your audiences, here are some recommendations for how to effectively use social media tools and platforms.

How to Use Hashtags

A hashtag is a designated set of letters and numbers preceded by a # sign. Hashtags allow Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to congregate and group all posts, photos, videos or tweets with the same hashtag. Users can search for tweets with that hashtag and view them in a list. Hashtags allow users to take part in an online conversation while discovering new pages to follow or links to check out. Hashtags are great tools to create buzz and raise the profile of events. For example, by adding #Walking Summit to the end of anything written about the 2015 National Walking Summit event, you can view all conversations that have this hashtag. Publicize your hashtag for events when you send out emails and invitations and have it posted at events.

How to Engage Your Audience on Facebook

- **Share links:** Sharing links to relevant (i.e. walking-related) articles, videos, or other online content creates a drumbeat of interesting content, provides followers with more information about the walking movement, and demonstrates that you are actively engaged in the work.
- **Share photos:** Posting photos on your Facebook page is a great way to keep people interested and involved, while showing the real faces of your organization.
- **Create events:** Invite followers to upcoming events using Facebook event pages. Event pages can host their own information that is specific to the event, such as pictures, comments and an RSVP list. Invitees are also able to forward the invitation on to their friends.
- **Post and reply:** Post (or repost) discussion-worthy questions or topics, discussion topics, official statements, and information on your Facebook page. When people leave comments, reply to them, both to show that you value their engagement and to keep the conversation going!

How to Engage your Audience on Twitter

- **Tweets:** Keep your tweets focused and relevant to your audience. Post information that others will want to re-tweet. Tweet pictures, links to interesting articles, discussion topics, event information, news updates, etc.
- **Mobile Tweeting:** Ask volunteers and attendees to tweet while at events. Tweet about relevant news that is being shared, quotes from speakers, topics of interest, etc. Don't forget to use the designated event hashtag on all tweets!

- Re-Tweets: Re-tweeting information you think your followers will enjoy not only gives you content for good tweets, but will be appreciated by the original tweeter, helping to build a relationship and possibly motivating them to re-tweet your information in the future.
- You can also link your Twitter account to your website and Facebook page, allowing your updates to appear in all places. There are a variety of different (and free!) programs that can help you to create these links, and can add a Twitter feed to your Facebook page and website.

How to Engage your Audience on Instagram

- Show (don't tell) your story: Post photos or videos that illustrate your organization's story visually.
- Be a follower: Engage by following other organizations and individuals you admire or support, and 'like' and comment on their posts.
- Engage with other Instagram users, such as other walking and public health organizations, celebrities who promote walking and active lifestyles, companies that encourage walking in the workplace and others.

How to Engage your Audience on LinkedIn

- Share links: Just as on Facebook, use LinkedIn to share links to relevant (i.e. walking-related) articles, videos, or other online content. This creates a stream of interesting content, provides LinkedIn connections with information about the walking movement and demonstrates that you are actively engaged in the work.
- Connect: Connect to local policy makers and the media as well as other advocates in your area.
- Share updates: Let your connections know about your organization's updates by posting to your LinkedIn feed.
- Invite: Build your audience by inviting others to follow your organization's LinkedIn page.