

THE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING GUIDE

FOR NONPROFIT EVENTS

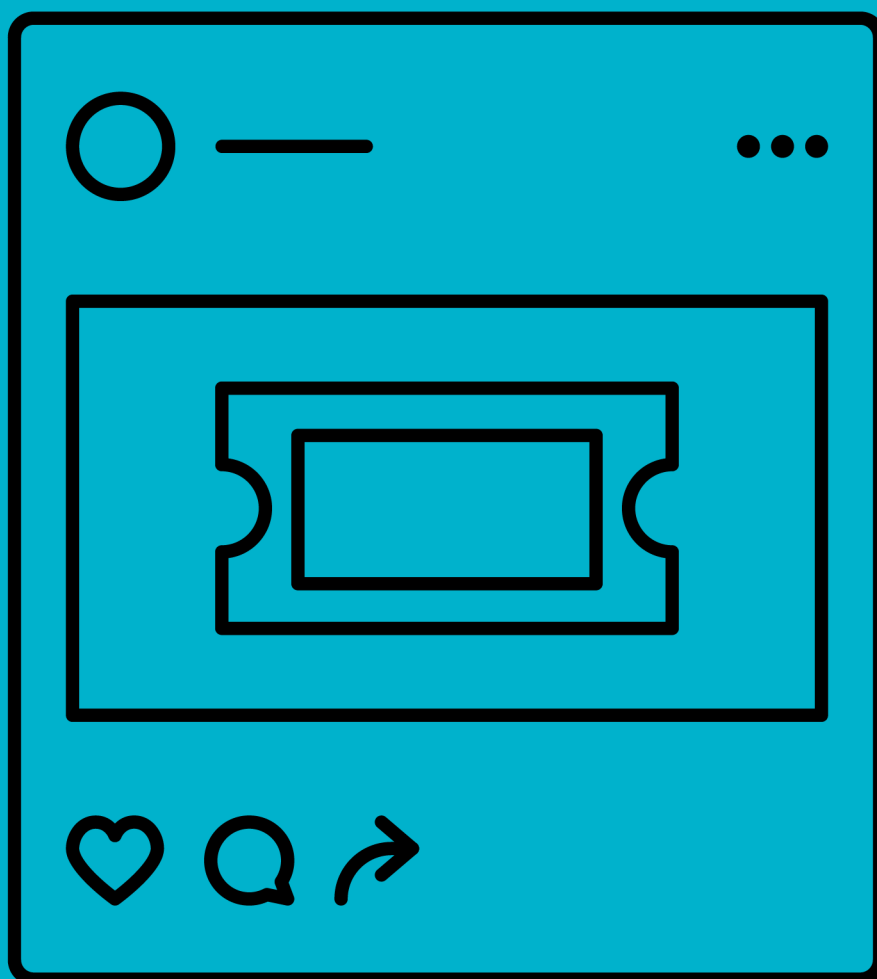


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Introduction

Social media has become an essential component of just about any event. Whether it's a major league baseball game, a local run/walk, or a conference, social media is intimately entwined in the marketing, experience, and success of events.

This can be beneficial to nonprofits because it not only allows for publicity and public engagement on unpaid channels, but it also puts some of the load of content creation on your supporters. Therefore, social media is a unique marketing channel that requires both planning and spontaneity.

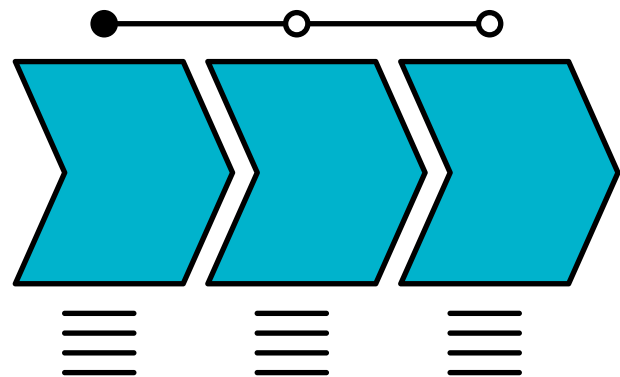
In this guide, we will dive into how a nonprofit organization can plan and execute a social media campaign for a large event, such as a charity run/walk, benefit concert, gala, or any other event you use to engage supporters, boost cause awareness, and generate funds. Read on to learn how to set goals and prioritize different social channels, along with how to implement your campaign before, during, and after the event.

If you're ready to plan your next big social media campaign, let's get started!

1 | Planning

Even though social media is often thought of as a very timely, in-the-moment marketing channel, preparation still makes a huge difference in your success. Before you dive into posting and engaging with supporters, you need to have a solid strategy that covers what you want to achieve and how you are going to do it.

In this chapter, we'll cover how to set goals that strike the balance between ambition and practicality. Then we'll discuss how to choose which social platforms to focus on, and finally, we'll go over how to approach content creation early on to make your entire campaign run smoothly.



Goal Setting

Like any marketing or fundraising campaign, the first step to success is setting the right goals. With social media, however, this can seem complicated. What should you focus on? Selling tickets? Social engagement? Getting your hashtag trending?

It's a good idea to take a step back and consider your goals for the event itself. From there, ask yourself how your social media campaign can support these goals.

For example, a San Diego organization hosting a healthy family fun day (with outdoor activities, healthy snacks, and education on creating good habits) might set the following objectives:

- **Acquire 500 registered attendees (through online or onsite registration).**
- **Generate \$30,000 in sponsorship revenue.**
- **Increase the San Diego public's awareness of the organization and their cause.**

They would then ask how social media could support these goals.

- **Acquire 500 registered attendees (through online or onsite registration).**
 - Social media can drive online registration.
 - Social media sharing can recruit attendees from your supporters' social networks.
- **Generate \$30,000 in sponsorship revenue.**
 - Social media presence can be an attractive quality for potential sponsors.
 - Social media can promote sponsorship opportunities to businesses.
- **Increase the San Diego public's awareness of the organization and their cause.**
 - Social media can drive awareness (and attendance) of the event.
 - The event's social media campaign can generate new followers, which can be reengaged.

Once you have considered how social media can support your event's overall objectives, the next step is to take these opportunities for support and turn them into specific, quantifiable goals.

Here are some quantifiable metrics by which you can measure social media success:

- Posts
- Impressions
- Engagement
- Click-throughs
- New followers

In our example, the organization would consider their existing social media presence and the level of engagement they have had at past events. If you have a large, engaged social media audience, for instance, your goals will be very different from an organization that has only recently made social media a dedicated part of its marketing efforts.

Before finalizing the goals of your social media campaign, you should also ask if these goals are SMART.

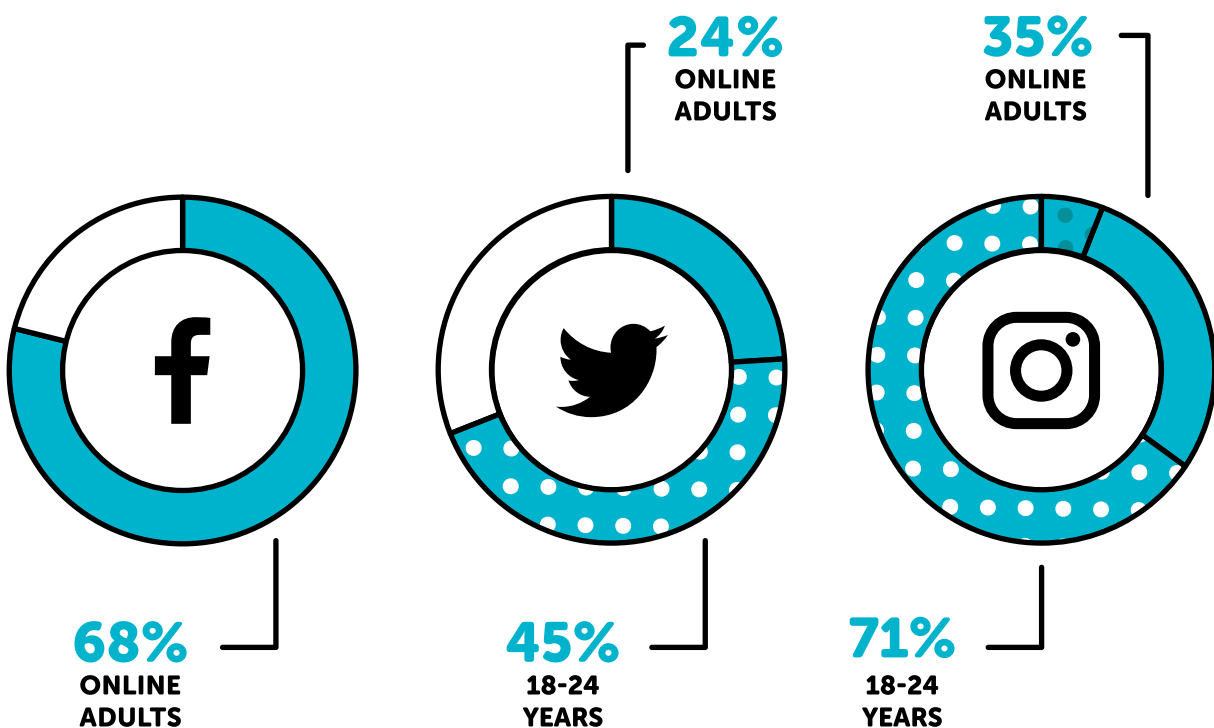


Use the worksheet at the end of this chapter to think through the goals for your next event's social media campaign.

Prioritizing Platforms

Unless you have a large social media team that is constantly testing new platforms, you can't succeed on every social channel. There are simply too many and they change too quickly. The good news is that you don't need to master every social platform to create an effective social media campaign.

In fact, your best bet is to focus on one or two channels and create a long-term, comprehensive plan. Your most important platforms will probably be among these top three¹:



¹ Pew Research Foundation. "Social Media Update 2016." <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016/>

Depending on your audience, Pinterest, Snapchat, LinkedIn, or some other channel might be appropriate. The important questions to ask are “Where is my organization most successful?” and “Which platforms do our audience use?”

For example, when planning a social media campaign for an upcoming event, maybe you choose to focus on Facebook and Instagram promotions based on your supporters' browsing interests. Instagram lets you post graphic-heavy content that engages them from one side while Facebook opens the doors for more fleshed out content they can't get on Instagram.

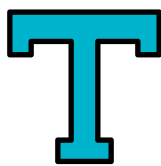
After you choose your primary platforms, you can get even more specific about your goals by considering the common types of content and engagement on those channels.



Content Creation

Social media is ultimately a tool for creating and sharing content, so content creation is a key component of planning your event's social media campaign. Much like when choosing your platforms, consider what kind of content has performed best for your organization, and ask yourself what kind of content opportunities this event presents.

The most common types of social media content are...



TEXT



IMAGES/GRAPHICS



VIDEOS

While visual content can require more resources, smartphones now allow almost anyone to take high-quality pictures and videos. A carefully produced promotion video might get lots of views and shares on Facebook, but a short, unedited video of a memorable moment might perform just as well.

While simple or spontaneous content can be a valuable part of a social media campaign, this planning stage is the perfect time to create some basic visual assets or text copy you can use again and again. If your event has a logo, resize the image to fit on your social media profile. Create a few taglines and brainstorm ideas for announcements, appeals, and other promotional posts. It's a lot easier to maintain a consistent story on social media when you have a few basic themes and images to pull from.

Start with the following assets:

- **Images** for your social media profiles (both your avatar and background image)
- **Logos** you can add to images or videos to establish your brand
- Your **unique event hashtag** and a few related hashtags to help your posts get discovered
- Some basic **copy** to announce, describe, and promote the event

Of course, since social media is constantly moving, you probably won't be able to create all your content ahead of time. But you can make a plan for how you will collect content during the campaign.

Think through opportunities you will have to collect images and videos, such as volunteer training or event setup. Also, come up with a few fun ways to ask your supporters for content, such as sharing a picture or memory from last year's event. The goal is to have a library of basic event promotion assets and to identify opportunities to collect more, either from within your organization or among your supporters.

These prior steps will put your organization in a great position when you begin promoting your event. In chapter two, we'll cover how to generate awareness, excitement, and content in the weeks leading up to the big day.

Event Social Media Campaign Goals

Use the table below to create measurable social media goals for the promotion of your nonprofit event. Begin by listing your overall event goals in the left-hand column. In the middle column, list ways social media can support these event goals. Finally, turn these types of social media support into quantifiable goals in the right-hand column.

OVERALL EVENT GOALS	HOW SOCIAL CAN SUPPORT	QUANTIFIABLE SOCIAL MEDIA GOALS

Are your goals SMART?

S

SPECIFIC

M

MEASURABLE

A

**ATTAINABLE/
AMBITIOUS**

R

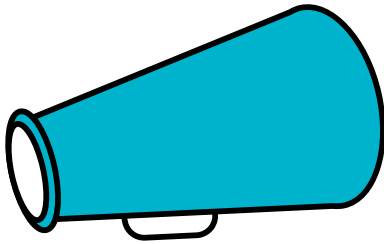
RELEVANT

T

TIME-BASED

2 | Pre-Event

Just as championship teams are built in the off-season, successful event promotion starts long before the big day. Your event's social media presence should start way before the event itself.



In this chapter, learn what objectives you should focus on before the event, how to plan your calendar around major announcements, and how to continually engage your audience to spread the word and generate excitement.

Pre-Event Objectives

While you will probably have several goals for your event's social media campaign, your initial focus will be on overall awareness and registration/ticket sales. Your big fundraising gala won't be much fun if no one knows about it or buys a plate.

Once supporters are on board with your event, they become valuable partners in promotion. Even after someone has registered, engage with them on social media to help your event get noticed by others.

Pre-event social media activity can also recruit and engage sponsors, and even speakers or entertainment. If you're still looking for sponsorship partners, it's always best to go through an in-person connection, but showing a company some love on Twitter can also go a long way.

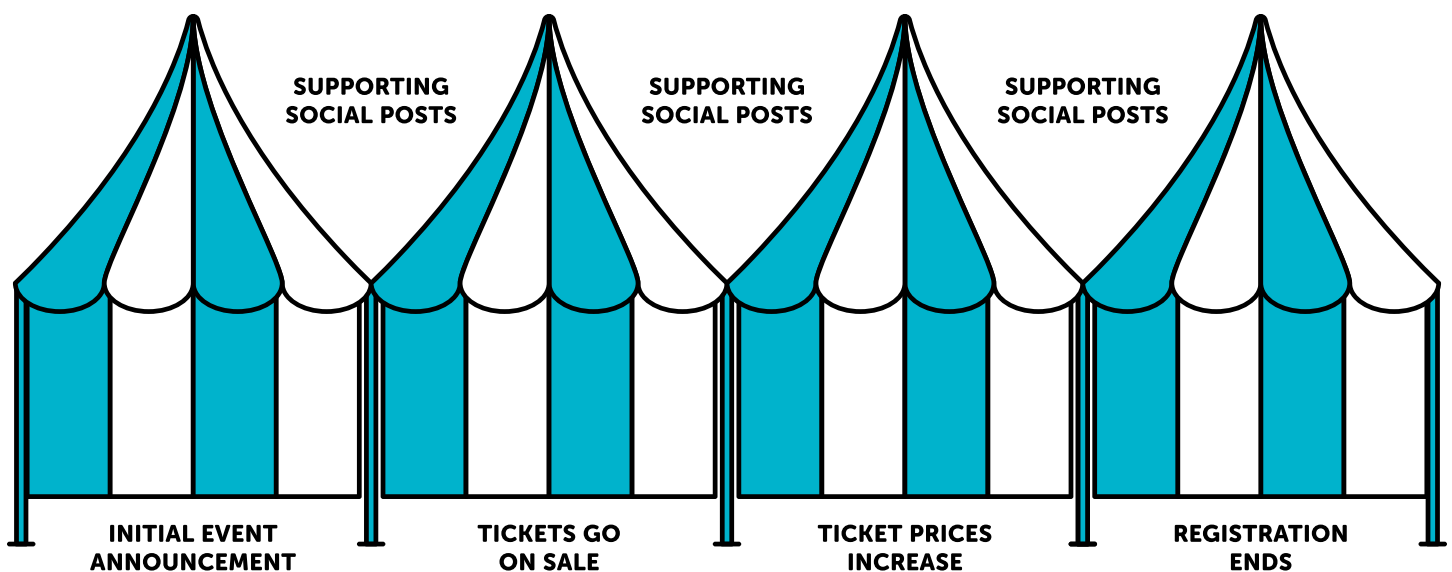
Make Announcements Your Tent Poles

Tent poles provide structure to large outdoor venues (which you may be using at your event). Metaphorically, you can use major announcements and milestones as the tent poles of your social media campaign. For instance, an event's promotion will usually start with the announcement of the event or, in the case of annual events, the announcement of this year's event date. Content immediately after that can describe the event and give context to your audience about who should attend.

The next tent pole might be the announcement that tickets are on sale or registration is open. From there, your social media posts could focus on driving people to the registration page.

The idea is to have one main message at a time and to repeat it, rephrase it, and add more details until it's time for the next announcement or message.

Your messaging timeline might look something like this:



Some important announcements you can use to guide your messaging are...

- Initial announcement of the event
- Registration/ticket sales announcement
- Speaker/entertainment announcement
- Pricing changes
- Deadlines for entry/registration/participation



Use these announcements to outline your content calendar and plan what to post as the event approaches.

Repetition and Reinforcement

The squeaky wheel gets the grease, but not if it only squeaks once. Repetition may sometimes become annoying, but it's often necessary to get things done.

Many nonprofit professionals worry that they will post too much or that repeating a message or appeal will bother supporters and drive them away. But on social media—particularly on fast-moving platforms like Twitter and Facebook—repetition isn't just necessary, it's expected. Your supporters will understand that you are promoting your event because it ultimately supports your mission—a mission that they also care about.

In fact, what your followers experience probably isn't as repetitive as you think. Only a fraction of your social audience will actually see any particular one of your posts, and even fewer will engage with it by clicking, liking, or sharing. So don't be afraid to post about your event often.

It is a good idea, however, to vary the way you present your message. If you are currently focused on getting people to register online, you could promote this on Facebook in a number of ways:

- A straightforward **ask for people to register**
- A fun **image showing an event highlight** with a link to the registration page
- Text or image posts that **show particular activities or features of the event**

As long as you include a link for potential attendees, you can vary your delivery while keeping a fairly consistent message.

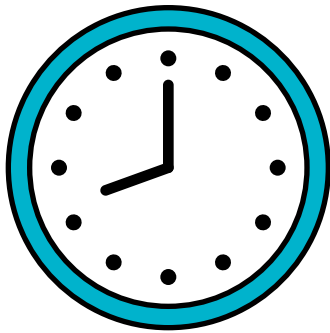
Test and Learn What Works

Along with promoting your event and spreading information to your network, your pre-event social media campaign can also be a way to collect information about what your audience wants and responds to.

By tracking the performance of your posts each week, you can see what topics and types of content most effectively engage your audience.

For example, you may find that posts about speakers and entertainers at your event get the most clicks, likes, and shares. This can inform your future promotion, indicating that you should prioritize these types of posts. On the other hand, if a certain type of content or topic receives little or no response, you might want to replace future posts like this with something that performs better.

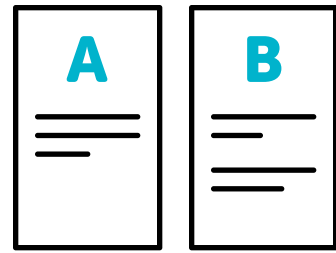
You can also experiment with the following factors to find out what works for your audience.



**THE TIME OF
DAY YOU POST**



**THE FREQUENCY
OF POSTS**



**DIFFERENT COPY
OR TAGLINES**

While planning campaign content is extremely helpful, keep your plans flexible. Track what's performing well and prepare to adjust your plans accordingly.

Build the Hype

Along with simply getting your message out, building excitement and supporter participation is an important part of your pre-event social media campaign. Here are several strategies you can use to generate engagement and spread the word about your event by getting your followers involved.

HASHTAGS

If you want people to post about and promote your event, it's a good idea to have a designated hashtag. This will allow you to easily track and promote posts related to your event. Start using your event hashtag early on to make sure people know about it and use it.

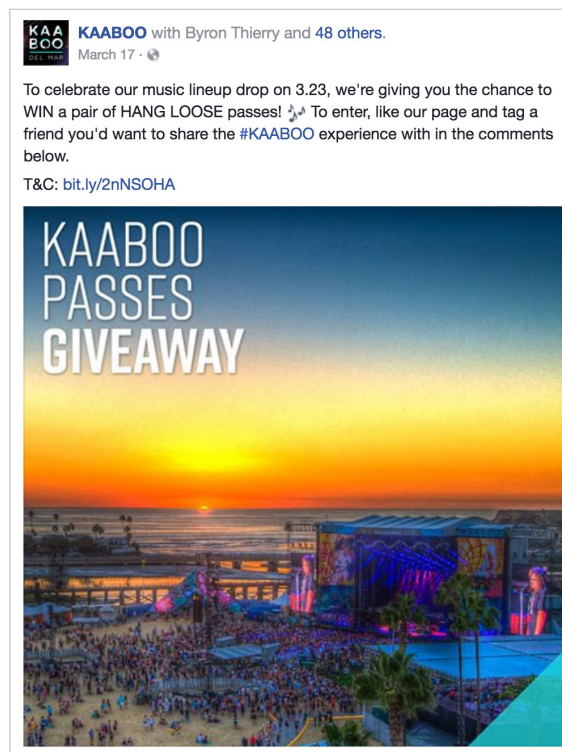
You can also take advantage of existing hashtags to gain exposure. If there is a trending hashtag that relates to your cause or event, use it in a post about your event. If it makes sense, even very general hashtags like #ThrowbackThursday (#TBT) can be used to spread the word. This is a great way to remind your supporters of the fun they've had at past events.

CONTESTS

You can also incite tons of engagement on social media through simple contests or sweepstakes. For example, you could ask supporters to post a favorite picture or memory from last year's event and choose a winner to receive a free ticket this year.

You can also ask supporters to like and share your post and choose a winner from those who do. Another strategy is to ask your followers to tag friends they think would be interested in the event.

However you structure these promotions, the goal is to activate your existing social network and reach more people through their posts and responses. For the cost of one or two tickets or prizes, you can generate thousands of impressions.



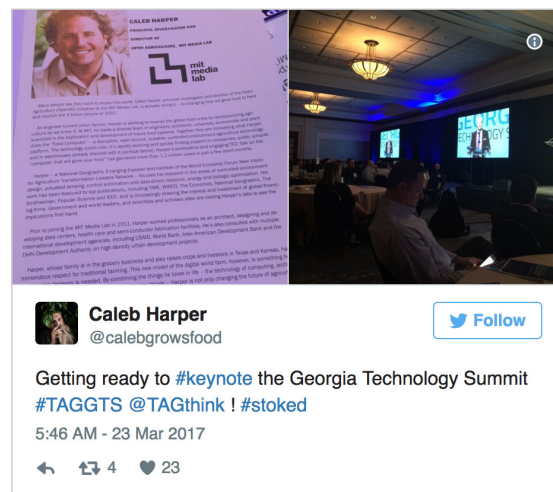
This music festival created a contest for free tickets that asked people to like the event's Facebook page and tag a friend.

INFLUENCERS

On social media, almost anyone can build a large following and become influential in their field. Influencer engagement is a great strategy for your nonprofit's overall social presence, but it can also be deployed specifically to promote your event.

Reach out to any influencer who might be attending or speaking at your event and ask them to post about it. Ideally, you should send ready-made posts that influencers can simply copy and paste. Be sure to include your hashtag and a link to the event or ticket page.

Also keep an eye out for any followers on social media who post repeatedly about your event and share, like, and respond to their posts. This not only encourages them to keep promoting the events, but can subtly influence others to do the same.



Agriculture innovator Caleb Harper promotes his upcoming talk at the Georgia Technology Summit.

Like studying for a big test or training for a race, it's the work you do before your event that will make the biggest difference in attendance and participation. Use significant announcements to structure your pre-event social media promotion and use a variety of strategies to drive home your message.

In the next chapter, find out how to use social media during your event to boost awareness and engagement and create an exceptional experience for attendees.

3 | During the Event

Social media isn't just way to get people through the door, it's also a key tool for creating new marketing content and a remarkable attendee experience. The work you do onsite will affect how your community remembers the event, whether attendees engage with your cause in the future, and your ability to promote next year's event.

In this chapter, learn which goals to prioritize during the event, how to use both pre-planned and on-the-spot content, and how to improve the event experience through social media monitoring and support.

Onsite Objectives

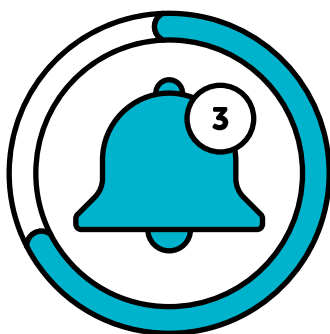
Your social media goals during your event will be different from your pre-event goals. While in preceding weeks you probably focused on spreading overall awareness and getting people to register and show up, your onsite goals will tend to fit into these three categories...

- **Social media presence and engagement** – acquire new followers, promote usage of your hashtag, and spread your event beyond current attendees
- **Attendee experience** – guide attendees through the experience, respond to questions or complaints, and highlight and celebrate your supporters
- **Asset collection** – accumulate images, videos, and quotes for future marketing efforts as well as build relationships with attendees for future partnership

Pre-Planned Content

Much like you used announcements in your pre-event stage, you can use pre-planned content to map out your social strategy during the event. As one of the fastest and most popular social platforms, Twitter is ideal for a large volume of announcements and reminders, but you can also plan a series of posts for Facebook or other social networks.

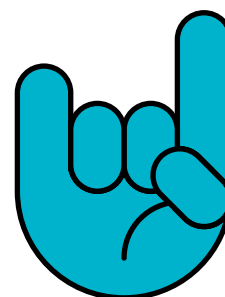
Some posts you might want to prepare in advance are...



**REMINDERS FOR
PARTICULAR
ACTIVITIES**



**SITE MAPS OR POSTS
ABOUT THE LOCATIONS OF
INFO DESKS AND FIRST AID**



**THANK YOU POSTS TO
HIGHLIGHT SPONSORS
OR MAJOR DONORS**

But your social media plan must take into account the need for on-the-spot content. For example, you can't create an image post of the event before it starts. In this case, you can still plan to get a certain picture (such as the starting line of a run/walk), but you must plan to have someone there to get the shot. It's a good idea to make a list of pictures or videos you want to capture and plan to have a volunteer or staff member there to make it happen.

A schedule for onsite content collection might look like this.

TIME	TOPIC (LOCATION)	ASSIGNED TO	IMAGE OR VIDEO
9:00 AM	Attendees arriving (check-in table)	Mitch	Images
9:15 AM	Athletes warming up	Mitch	Video
9:45 AM	Starting line	Mitch	Images
10:30 AM	Finish line	Cora	Video
11:00 AM	Athletes celebrating	Cora	Images
12:30 AM	Awards (main stage)	Cora	Video

Plan to have someone capture the main activities of your event. You can also have planned live-tweet sessions or stream live video on Facebook or Instagram. Before your event, identify a few opportunities for this kind of in-depth sharing.

Spontaneous Content

While your social media plan will include content that you must collect onsite, your event will probably toss you a few surprises or special moments worthy of spontaneous promotion. And you never know when they will happen.

That's why it's smart to have staff members or volunteers all over the event on the lookout for spontaneous content. It might be a particularly profound quote from a speaker or a heartwarming moment captured on a smartphone.

Before the event, remind your team to send any content like this to your primary social media person (or people). While only a few select people should be able to post from your accounts, make sure your whole team knows how to deliver spontaneous content to them.

STAFF ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Much like a soft launch for a fundraising campaign, you can call on your closest supporters (including staff) to get your hashtag started. People will be more likely to join in and share posts when they see that people are already talking about your event.

Ask your staff to post appropriate content with your hashtag on their social media. While not every staff member uses social media and some may prefer to keep theirs personal, even a few posts about your event can help it gain social momentum.

Use Social Media to Improve Attendee Experience

No matter how much you prepare, events—especially large ones—always have unexpected delays or changes. Social media is the best way to quickly alert attendees of these changes. When something unexpected comes up, attendees will likely turn to social media to find out what to do.

You should also monitor what attendees are posting about the event. Like, share, and reply to positive posts and offer assistance to people with complaints. Responding on social media shows that you care about the attendee experience and are on the lookout for any issues. In fact, one study found that 42 percent of customers who contact a brand on social media expect a response within 60 minutes, so always keep an eye on your feed and the use of your hashtag.²

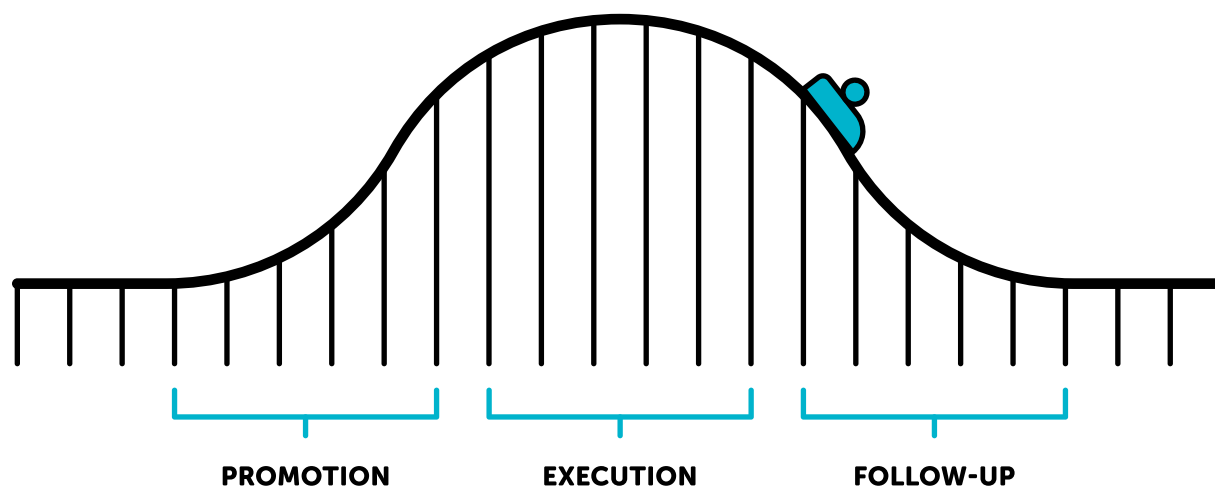
² Convince & Convert. "42 Percent of Consumers Complaining in Social Media Expect 60 Minute Response Time." <http://www.convinceandconvert.com/social-media-research/42-percent-of-consumers-complaining-in-social-media-expect-60-minute-response-time/>

Social media is ultimately a communication tool, so tap into it during your event by sharing useful information and updates. You can also learn about how the event is being received and pick up on any issues attendees have. With a base of prepared posts and a plan for capturing new content, your organization can facilitate an outstanding attendee experience and create buzz in the wider realm of social media.

In the next chapter, learn how to leverage social media after your event.

4 | Post-Event

The end of a large, complex event can bring with it a massive wave of relief. After months of planning, you've made it to the other side. But just as you must clean up the venue and send thank yous to donors and sponsors, your social media campaign requires follow-up action, too.



In this chapter, we'll cover your objectives following an event, how to learn from and develop content from the big day, and how to continue the conversation with your community.

Post-Event Objectives

After an event, your aim should be to solidify a great experience and turn that engagement into future support. Part of solidifying a great experience is simply thanking attendees (on social and through more personalized channels like email). Now, you also have the opportunity to review the results of your social media efforts and learn what initiatives worked and what didn't.

Of course, you will want to review and organize any content you collected at the event. This will come in handy for follow-up social media posts, but it can also be used for future marketing content and the promotion of next year's event.

Debrief and Learn

Experience is the greatest teacher, so your recent event is an important learning opportunity. One way your team can debrief is to review the goals you set for your social media campaign and how you fared against them. Now is the time to go into your tracking analytics (either in the platform or in an external tool) and tally up measurable results like impressions, shares, engagements, and more.

Ask yourself these questions:



**WHAT WERE YOUR BIGGEST
SUCSESSES AND WHY?**



**WHAT WERE YOUR BIGGEST
MISSES AND WHY?**



**WHAT SURPRISED YOU
ABOUT THE RESULTS?**

Use your observations to start plans for your next event (or next year's iteration of this event). If a social channel you didn't prioritize was surprisingly successful, think of how you can leverage it in the future. If you found that a certain type of Facebook post was especially effective at driving registrations, this is a lesson with the potential to create big value.

Now is also the time to discuss the logistics of how your team monitored, updated, and collected content for social media. Did you have enough manpower? If you used volunteers, were they trained for the task? It's easy to focus on the hard numbers, but with events, onsite organization is key.

Follow Up With Followers

Along with discussing the results with your team and gathering takeaways for next year, you must keep the conversation about your event going on social media. Particularly if you gained lots of followers, you must incorporate content related to the event that made them take an interest in your cause.

Here are several strategies to continue the conversation with attendees.

- Use social media to update your followers on fundraising or operational results from the event.
- Post fun images and favorite moments from the event. This is a great way to remind attendees of the fun they had and influence them to stay involved with your organization.
- Help your supporters relive the event on #ThrowbackThursday and #FlashbackFriday for months afterwards.
- Ask for feedback from attendees, such as what activities they found most valuable. Many social platforms (like Twitter and Facebook) even have simple polling features.

Don't forget to keep using your event hashtag for these posts! It helps you and your followers find this follow-up content.

Prepare for Next Time

For big, annual events, promotion for next year starts immediately. Remember that the experience you portray to your community will affect the attendance and success of future events. Remind attendees to come back next time, and post lots of fun images and videos to give a taste of the experience to those who didn't attend.

If you really want to get a head start on next year, you can even offer this year's attendees tickets for next year at a discounted rate.

But even if you're not ready to start the promotion cycle all over again, make sure you collect and store all your event content in one place that will be easily accessible in the future. Nothing helps you share the feeling and personality of your event like real, firsthand content.

When you review the logistical and measurable aspects of your social media campaigns, you set yourself up for future success. A little bit of follow-up effort with your community also helps to make a more memorable experience that makes people want to stay involved with your organization. After all your hard work, make sure to take those final few steps to bring your social media campaign to the finish line.

Conclusion

While taking on a social media campaign for a large event is a big task, the rewards of increased attendance and engagement are substantial. Nonprofit organizations that plan a comprehensive campaign spanning the period before, during, and after the event tap into a powerful strategy for community engagement and event promotion.

For more tips on marketing and executing nonprofit events, check out the Classy blog.



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