Framing Advanced Social Media Engagement

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About the Author

Debra Askanase is the founder and Digital Engagement Strategist at Community Organizer 2.0, a digital consulting firm specializing in online strategy and digital engagement for mission-driven organizations. She has been consulting to the mission-driven sector since 2009, helping organizations understand how to actively engage online stakeholders and move them to action. Prior to opening Community Organizer 2.0, Debra worked for over 15 yeas at nonprofit organizations in the Boston area, originally as a community organizer and later as a program director, and executive director. Debra is on faculty at Marlboro College Graduate School, where she enjoys teaching dedicated nonprofit professionals and thinking about social media for social change.

Social media enables and empowers your communities to participate in your nonprofit organization's work. This workbook, the first of three, offers practical building blocks to engage meaningfully online and create an active and motivated social media community.

Social media is more than customer service, marketing, or outreach. It is a mechanism for you and your stakeholders to share information and work together to create meaningful change. We want you to use this set of workbooks as a guide to understanding social media and developing your advanced social media practice.

It is not about you, it's about your stakeholders.

But it doesn't exist in a vacuum: Social media is part of a fully integrated digital and marketing strategy. Your social media strategy reflects the hard work you've put into developing an organizational voice, values, and overall messaging. It builds on your organization and program goals and works in tandem with your entire suite of digital tools including website, content strategy, email, advertising, and SEO.

PART 1: Syncing Social With Your Entire Communications Framework

Your social media communications strategy should be based on a comprehensive communication framework that includes your organizational voice, core messaging, digital communication channels, organizational and program goals, and vision of how you work with your stakeholders. Before you craft a single social media message, it's important to understand how it relates to your organizational messaging, and the online voice that you'll use. Without understanding these, your social media efforts may work against your own efforts, or fall short of their potential.

Core Messaging Pillars

Let's begin with foundational messaging. Think of this as the large cornerstone of your communications: You have to understand the key messages your organization is trying to communicate, and why, in order to engage people in the work of your organization online.

In the space below, list at least the three very important, big picture messages that your organization shares across communication platforms. These represent your values, your uniqueness, and your vision. For example, a community elementary school might have these core messages: *Creative problem-solvers wanted, project-based learning cultivates lifelong social skills, and learning is a process.*

Here are some prompts to help you uncover your organizational messaging, if needed:

1. We are trying to solve _____

   by doing _____

2. We approach the issue by _____

   _____

3. We are _____

   _____

We'll call these the **Core Messaging Pillars.** Later on, we'll create social media conversations from these messaging pillars.

Current Communication Channels

Now let's turn to where you interact and communication online. Complete the chart to identify where, how, and why you communicate with your current and potential stakeholders online.

- In the "audience" column, complete who you think the primary audience demographic would be for each channel.
- In the "communication goal" column, consider why your organization uses this communication channel, to what end.
- In the "current messaging" column, describe the key asks or core messaging that is shared in each channel.

Channel	Audience(s)	Communication goal(s)	Current messaging	Description or Notes
Email communication				
Website				
Blog/News				
Social (name)				
Social (name)				
Social (name)				
Social (name)				
Social (name)				
Mobile App				
Text messaging				

Synthesize your learnings by filling in the blanks in the sentence below.

My organization shares (these types of messages)

_____

primarily to (these audiences) _____

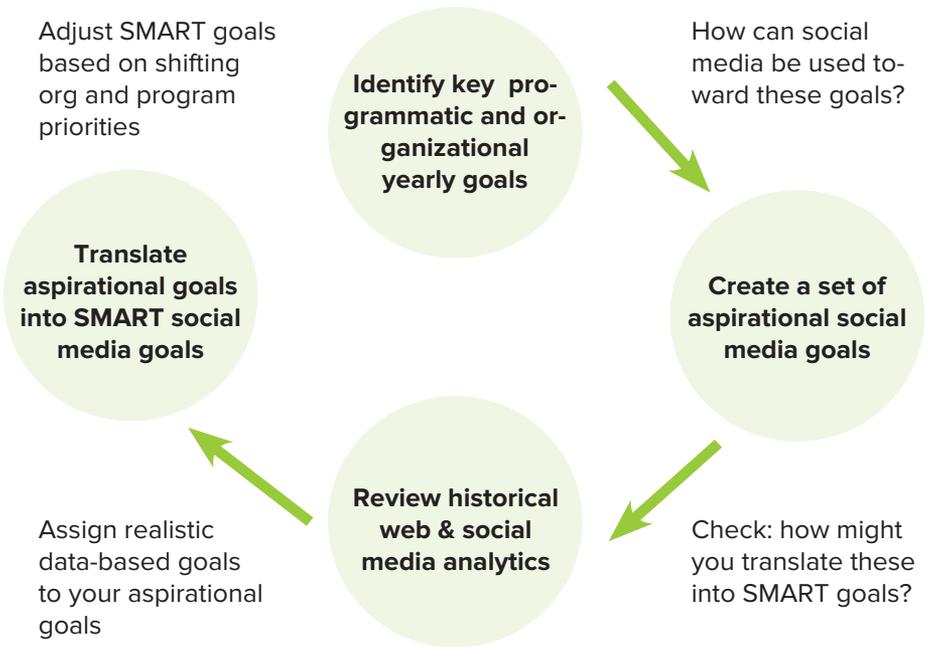_____ on (these channels)

_____

in order to achieve (these goals _____

_____ .

Our online personal might best be described as someone who is (insert adjectives)

_____

_____

_____

_____

PART 2: Social Media SMART Goals

Measurable and attainable social media goals light up the path for your social media actions over the coming year. These are strategic goals, not *"we need social media to solve our problems, and fill our funding shortfall"* goals (though others may have that expectation.) Your SMART social media goals are the realistic and measurable results of your social media efforts alone, within a very specific period of time. The process of creating SMART goals looks like this:

Social Media SMART Goals Creation Process

Adjust SMART goals based on shifting org and program priorities

Identify key programmatic and organizational yearly goals

How can social media be used toward these goals?

Translate aspirational goals into SMART social media goals

Create a set of aspirational social media goals

Assign realistic data-based goals to your aspirational goals

Review historical web & social media analytics

Check: how might you translate these into SMART goals?

For example:

Aspirational Goals ➜	SMART Goals
Increase traffic to donations page	Increase traffic to the donation and store sections of the website by 10-15% by end of Q2
Increase social media fan engagement	Increase amount of conversation and interaction within our social media spaces by 20% by the end of the calendar year
More referrals from social services	Six months from now, at least 1% of all referrals will be made by by social services professionals, as a result of social media posts and engagement and submitted via a website form
More volunteers	20% of interested volunteers this calendar year will initiate contact with our organization as a result of a social media referral

Transform your aspirational goals into social media SMART goals

Here are a few questions to keep in mind:

a. Are they measurable? (This usually involves a number or percentage in the goal.)

b. Do they include a deadline of sorts? (By a certain date...within a certain time frame or)

c. Can you ascribe this goal to your social media efforts, and not other communication efforts?

d. Does it support overall programmatic and/or organizational goals?

e. Are you certain that this is a goal and not a means to a goal? (For example, opening a Twitter account is a means to a goal. Creating a group of 15 Twitter followers who consistently retweet important news from your organization is a SMART goal.)

Aspirational goals are not yet framed as time-bound, realistic, or measurable but they are a first step in the creation of social media SMART goals.

Now that we've got the process in mind, and a sense of how aspirational goals might turn into SMART goals, let's create social media SMART goals, step-by-step:

1. What are they key programmatic and organizational goals for the year? If you don't know your goals, you may be able to infer these from the current communication channels chart you completed earlier. You may want to ask a colleague or consult your strategic plan. List up to 5.

   _____

   _____

2. Of the goals listed above, which can and should be supported by social media? Develop a set of "aspirational goals" that you believe you can achieve using social media channels. At this stage, the aspirational goal set does not have to be measureable. As a prompt, complete this sentence: "Social media should help us to…"

   _____

   _____

3. _____
   After researching historical social media performance and metrics, which of these could be made into SMART goals? In the SMART Goals creation process diagram (above), we include reviewing historical web and social media analytics before defining your SMART social media

Aspirational Goals ⟶ **SMART Goals**

| Aspirational Goals	SMART Goals
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)

Putting It All Together

What analytics might you want to review, and where would you find these?

- Social media metrics: size of community, average % of posts engaged, types of content that garnered engagement, actions based on specific social media asks). You can find this information in the native social media analytics (for example, Twitter analytics), third party-apps, and within Google Analytics (such as referrals from specific social media channels to specific pages on your website.
- Google Analytics: # or % of visits from social media in general, visits to specific pages of the website, most popular social media referral channels, external referrers, and time on site from social media referrals.

PART 3: Stepping Onto the Ladder of Engagement

Social media is not about you, it's about them. Social media success relies on how much you know about your stakeholders, how you personally connect, and how much you make them feel as if their voice is important. The connection between you and your stakeholders powers social media conversation. Once you've established mutual trust, you will find that your online fans are more than willing to take action when prompted by you, and on their own.

Leveraging the Social Media Ladder of Engagement
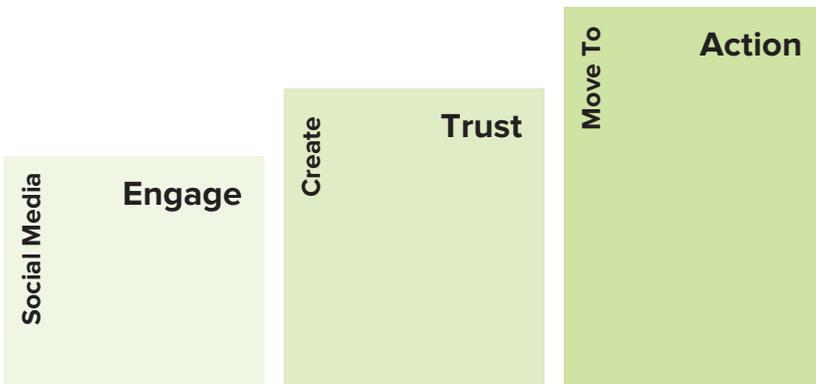
As anyone who has ever administered a Facebook page can attest, it can be incredibly difficult to cultivate conversation within an organizational social media channel. In this section, we'll walk through two foundational elements that power social media: Creating trust through personal connections, and understanding the online conversation intersection.

Create Trust: Using Social Media Personally

In whatever job you have, there will be opportunities to develop a network of community members. If you are a social media manager or in the communications department, this will be a greater part of your job than if you are in administration. In any position, connecting with the community will also help your organization do its work more effectively and efficiently.

In this section, we will help you connect with and identify the people with whom you, personally, should connect via social media channels. Why? People connect with people. The the surest way to create more engagement with your organization is to show who you are behind the logo.

Developing Your Community Engagement Plan

First, look at the followers you have in your organizational social media network. Who is most engaged in your work, and tries to connect with your organization online? Who comments frequently on your posts, retweets you, and mentions you online? Follow them back, consider friending them on Facebook, and commenting on their posts. Find a way to create a personal connection. Develop a list of these fans (usually five to 20 people).

Now Find the Others!

Create a set of keywords and keyword phrases associated with your cause. Search for groups, pages, hashtags, and accounts using these keywords. Search for active bloggers and writers. Use geographical boundaries if that is relevant. Look for the most active social spaces, keywords, and accounts. Then, identify the people who post regularly about this topic, and also those who engender the most positive comments and conversations.

Keyword:	**Keyword:**	**Keyword:**

Group:	**Group:**	**Group:**

Let's take this one step further, and begin to create an outline of your organization's extended social network. List the names of groups you will need to join, hashtags to follow, and pages to watch. If there are other staff, board members, or volunteers that could help you with this work, duplicate this chart for them.

Places where I will engage (add/substitute social media channels for those listed) and people with whom I will connect personally:

Once you've found where you should begin to engage personally, and with whom, it's time to create meaningful relationships for your organization. Listen, comment on their actions and ideas, and begin participating in conversations to create connections and be part of your organization's extended social community.

Bonus tip: Take it to the next level, offline! Once you've connected online meaningfully, don't hesitate to send a postcard of thanks, make a phone call to find out more about their participation, or send a personal email.

Similar to creating real world, offline relationships, digital relationships require interest in others, a desire to reciprocate, and creation of trust over time.

| Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	LinkedIn	Blogs
List page names and groups	**List accounts to follow and hashtags**	**List accounts to follow and hashtags**	**List page names, group, and people to follow**	**List prominent bloggers, journalists and new sites to follow**
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5 people with whom I will engage personally	**5 people with whom I will engage personally**	**5 people with whom I will engage personally**	**5 people with whom I will engage personally**	**5 people with whom I will engage personally**
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Engage: Finding the Online Conversation That Matters

Before posting something to social media, ask yourself this question: *"Would sharing this through my website or by email garner as good, if not better, a response?"* If that's the case, share it there. Every organization is clear about what it wants its supporters to know, but how many know what its supporters want to *discuss?* Social media is a platform for immediate connection, discussion, and messaging. The organizations with the most effective social media strategies really **understand the online conversation intersection.**

Finding the Conversation Intersection

What your nonprofit wants to talk about with its stakeholders

A+B

What your stakeholders most urgently want to talk about

A

B

Where their conversation becomes your online conversation
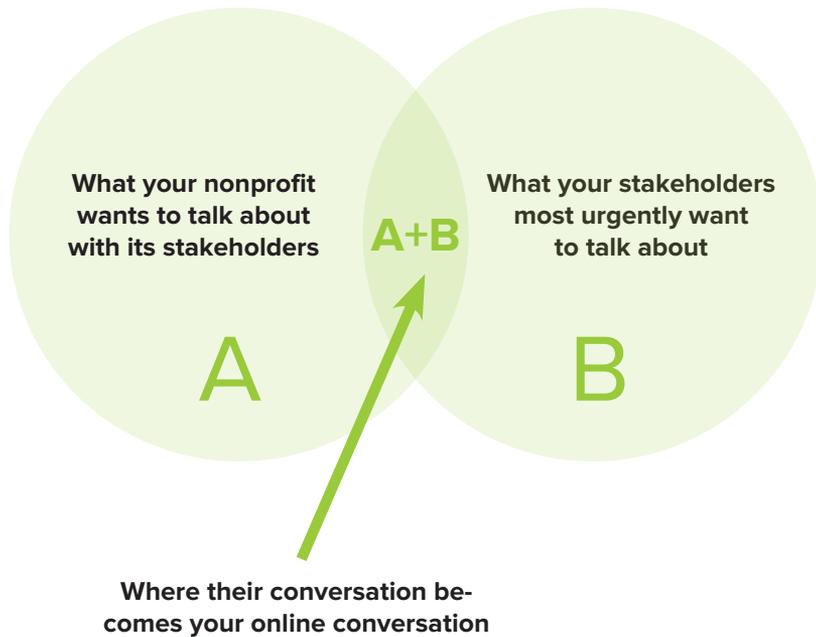
Here are a few organizations that understand and cultivate the online conversation intersection.
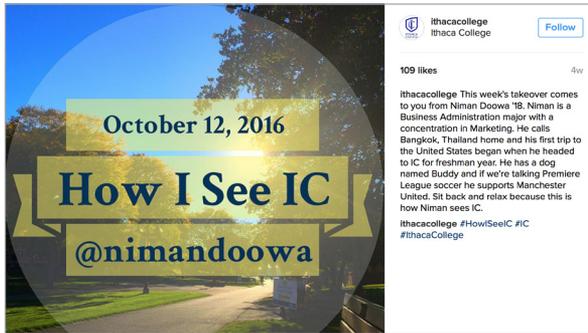
Ithaca College's Instagram is the intersection of how Ithaca College wants to show its best self to potential students and donors with what students care about on campus. The conversation intersection is a mix of stories from campus and a regular #HowISeeIC instagram takeover by a student. During the takeover, the student snaps photos and shares what he or she is experiencing at Ithaca College.


Plan Canada International's Twitter feed mixes the conversation that the organization wants to have (how to support social justice and end poverty for children in developing countries) and the conversation its supporters want to have (causes of poverty, girls' rights, the good that comes from sponsoring a child). The conversation intersection is an informative mix of current news about girls' rights, refugee information, anti-poverty work, and social justice activities.

Find Your Own Conversation Intersection

To find your communications sweet spot, ask yourself: "What's going to power our organizational online conversation? What is the one thing that most encapsulates what they want to talk about, and what we want to share?"

Complete the diagram , filling in circles A and B.

A
B
A+B
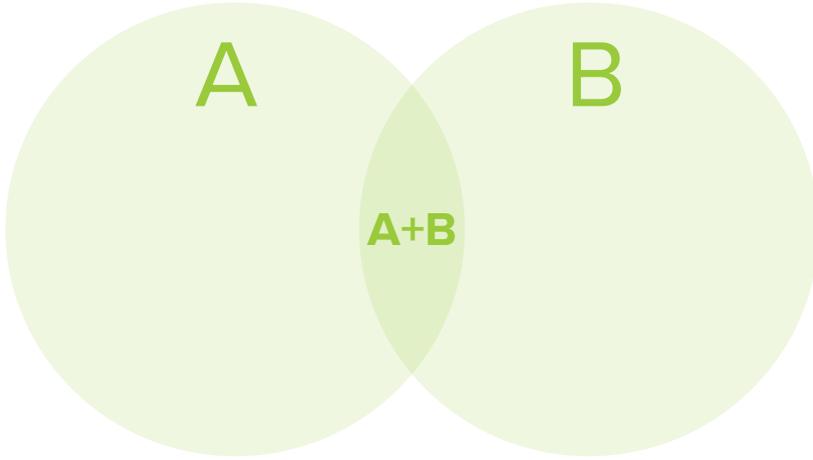
Get creative! Brainstorm three conversation intersection ideas.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

Conclusion

Just as organizations exist to cure, solve, and change outcomes, social media supports the people who care the most. An effective social media strategy focuses on what your stakeholders want to discuss, facilitates conversations that benefit both the organization and its supporters, and brings the community together.

In this workbook, we offered guidance and practical exercises aimed at helping you become prepared to effectively implement a social media strategy. This included:

- Organizational and programmatic goals that will inform your social strategy
- Understanding your social media voice
- An high-level view of your communications channel approach and engagement
- Defining social communication SMART goals
- Creating a community engagement plan
- Cultivating personal connections with community stakeholders
- Understanding the online conversation intersection

While it may be externally focused, it involves an organizational commitment internally to acting less like an organizational logo and much more like a group of people *in relationship* with others.

This workbook is one of a three-part series designed to take you from a basic to an advanced understanding of how to use social media within a nonprofit setting. We want you to use this set of workbooks as a guide to understanding social media, and developing your advanced social media practice.

About NTEN

NTEN: The Nonprofit Technology Network aspires to a world where all nonprofit organizations use technology skillfully and confidently to meet community needs and fulfill their missions. We are the membership organization of nonprofit technology professionals. Our members share the common goal of helping nonprofits use all aspects of technology more effectively. We believe that technology allows nonprofits to work with greater social impact. We enable our members to strategically use technology to make the world a better, just, and equitable place.

About Public Interest Registry

Public Interest Registry is a nonprofit organization that operates the .org top-level domain — the world's third largest "generic" top-level domain with more than 10.5 million domain names registered worldwide – and the newly launched .ngo and .ong domains and OnGood community website. As an advocate for collaboration, safety and security on the Internet, Public Interest Registry's mission is to empower the global noncommercial community to use the Internet more effectively, and to take a leadership position among Internet stakeholders on policy and other issues relating to the domain naming system. Public Interest Registry was founded by the Internet Society (internetsociety.org) in 2002 and is based in Reston, Virginia, USA.

This workbook will take you from a basic to an advanced understanding of how to use social media within a nonprofit.

You will learn how to map and develop:

- **Your organizational communication frameworks**
- **Social media communication SMART goals**
- **Creating connections and conversations that matter to your stakeholders**

Ready to Engage? Framing Advanced Social Media Engagement

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NTEN: The Nonprofit Technology Network

NTEN

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