Advanced Social Media Practice

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Workbook 3 in a series by
NTEN: The Nonprofit Technology Network

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.

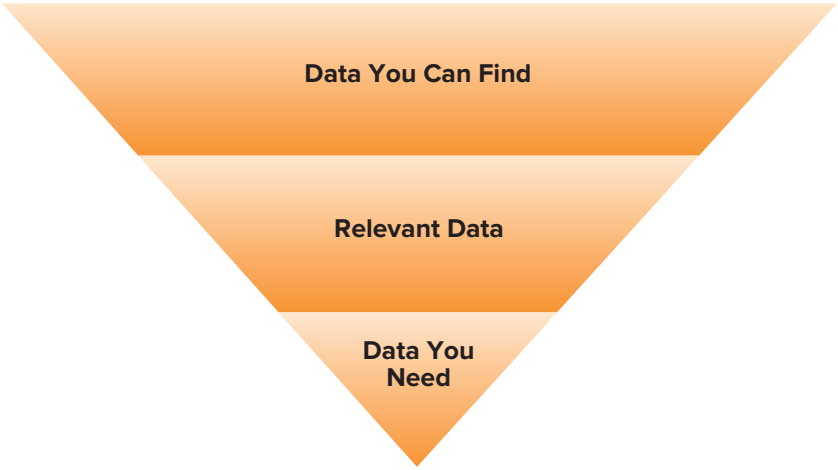
Move your social media practice beyond social media basics to advanced practice informed by integrating metrics, community engagement, and apps for efficiency. Most importantly, the advanced social media practitioner relies on data to inform decisions – information about how you are executing your strategy and meeting your social communications goals.

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

PART 1: Learning from Data

Metrics that Matter

There's a lot of data about our social media efforts that we are able to gather. Much of it is just data – information about some facet of our social media activities. Every social media platform has its own dashboard with information about shares, audience, content engagement, content consumption and channel growth. Then there are third-party apps, free and subscription-based, which offer even more data. We're drowning in data. This is the data you can find, but not necessarily the data you need.



Using Website Analytics

Analytics services record visits to your website, visitor actions while on the site, and demographic information, among other data. Google Analytics, for example, gives you the big picture of what visitors to your site care about the most, can drill down and follow discreet data trails, and inform us of the effect of social media on the website. If you haven't already added to your website, don't wait another minute!

Analytics are quite useful for tracking your social media efforts and SMART goals. You can find out, among other things:

- How many donors gave online as a result of a social media referral
- How many joined your email list as a result of a social media campaign
- How many people social media channels are sending to your website and what they do when they get there

As a bonus, analytics can also be used to guide social media content. By looking at what people have viewed on your website, you can estimate what might be compelling information to share with your social network.

Tracking Baseline Channel Health

You will want to have a data baseline tell you about the health, overall, of your social media channels. Think of it as your organization's social media annual checkup: pulse, blood work, weight, blood pressure.

To track baseline channel health, consider three factors:

- **Interest in your content** - as measured by engagement, likes/favorites, shares and comments
- **Actionable interest** - are people clicking on shared content?
- **Channel growth** - is your channel growing strongly and steadily?

Start by tracking your channels for a few months to determine the baseline health of each channel. Then compare Facebook to Facebook and Twitter to Twitter month over month, looking at the data (Are they increasing? Languishing?) and digging deeper to figure out why.

Compare apples to apples: Do not compare channels against each other. Some channels have more participation, or encourage more comments rather than clicks, etc. Comparing channels to each other is an unequal and invalid comparison.

#posts	Interest	Actionable Interest	Channel Growth	Bright Spots	External Mentions
	Total # of engagements this month (likes, favorites, shares/RTs, thumbs up, comments, etc)	# of clickthroughs of content or actionable items	# of new fans/ followers this month	Posts that received more engagement than others (note why if you can tell)	# uses of relevant hashtag or mentions of your org
Facebook	103	12	22	Video of Marie T.	n/a
	240	45	45		6
Instagram					
YouTube					
Twitter					
Snapchat					
Other					
Other					

Determining How Much You Matter

Finally, there are subtle metrics that tell you what matters most to your stakeholders: when they connect to content that is deeply relevant to their needs, and when they participate in the work of the organization. When you know how much you matter, your social media activities will have more impact.

The important data that tells us whether or not our organization matters to others, we are meeting our SMART goals, we are working as we should, we are recognizing and valuing our stakeholders and who will take action on our behalf. Ask yourself these questions to gather the data that you need.

- Is our social media practice healthy and engaging?
- What data tells us whether we are making progress towards our goals?
- What data tells us that we matter to our stakeholders?

What matters to stakeholders	Most engaging content	Least engaging content	Clickthroughs
Demonstrates you matter to stakeholders	Conversation (public/private)	Participation when asked	Shares of content
Identify who cares deeply	Participation in online events	Consistent sharing or conversation	Recruits and acts when asked
SMART goals	Social referrals	Conversions	Downloads and donations

Social Media Metrics That Matter

Putting Metrics That Matter together with SMART goal progress, any spreadsheet you use to track your social media should include Metrics That Matter elements, as described in the chart above.

The Right Tool for the Right Metric

Most social media platforms also include native analytics, some more robust than others. It's worth the time to investigate all the native analytics capabilities of each social media platform, as well as, so that you know what is easily available. There are many tools and apps available for a fee, which can provide the metrics not freely available. The most important thing is to determine your data needs, and then find the measurement app to support your needs.

Tracking SMART Goal Progress

What really, really matters is whether or not your social media activities are helping you to achieve outlined social communications goals. For this, consider your SMART goals, consider your SMART social communications goals and their successful outcomes. Most often, Google Analytics are used to track SMART goals.

SMART Goal	Success metric #1	Success metric #2
Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound goal	How can you measure achievement?	Is there another way to measure success?
Earn 10 registrations to our annual gala using Facebook posts during February.	Go to Google Analytics and choose Facebook as the Acquisition source. Find your registration confirmation page and add it as the secondary dimension.	Facebook's Insights can tell you how compelling the post was by showing the number of people who clicked on it.

Vanity metrics are metrics that we track because it makes us feel great. However, these metrics typically do not inform the direction of our work. Typical vanity metrics include impressions/views, social ad reach, your own influence, and number of blog posts or social updates. Sometimes we have to track vanity metrics to make our supervisors happy, but they don't truly offer a picture of the value of your social media practice to your stakeholders.

PART 2: Extending Reach and Engagement

One of the most challenging things for a social media manager is how to extend reach and engagement of social media content. It's hard, yes, but also there are some things we can do to bolster it.

Types of Content

There are three ways stakeholders discover social media content:

- **Owned/Organic Content:** Content that you share through social media and only promote organically, without paying, advertising, promoting, or exchanging. In order to effectively reach new audiences with organically-shared content, your organization should have a strong editorial content calendar with regularly published content, and a clear understanding of what content resonates with your audiences.
- **Earned:** Content that other community members share, and includes links to your website. This approach usually requires staff and volunteers to be active on their own personal accounts sharing your content, and/or for the organization to have a strong community ambassador program that shares your on a regular basis.
- **Paid:** This approach uses paid advertising to promote social media content, usually to send people to your website or grow your social media following. In most cases, paid social media is the only way to target potential online stakeholders based on interest, hashtags, and/or demographics like age or where they live.

Complete this exercise to help you consider earned promotional opportunities.

Earned Promotion Ideas: The following people (on staff or close to the organization) have active social media accounts devoted to mission-adjacent discussions:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Earned Promotion: Who do we have relationships with that might also promote our content? Our stakeholders follow these groups on social media.

Group	Platform	Following/impact
Moms Against Animal Cruelty	Facebook	10,000 US fans

Earned Media in Action: The Elder Justice League

In October 2015, elder justice advocates representing 11 organizations in the United States and Canada decided to come together to form the Elder Justice League. The EJL raises awareness of elder abuse across social media platforms and takes elder justice conversations mainstream. One area of focus is extending the reach and awareness of issues using social media. League members work together to generate ideas for elder justice-related social media messaging and coordinate the release of the messages, deepening the impact beyond what any one organization could accomplish alone. Current members report that their Facebook and Twitter posts are reaching larger audiences and attracting more followers.

Identify Your Audience

We know that our target audience is likely to be interested in

_____ and _____

and they live in _____ .

They use _____ hashtags and

_____ terms when talking

about _____ topic, that is related to our mission.

They are most interested in knowing or finding out about this

information: _____

_____

_____

Social Media Ambassadors

There are folks that already love your organization, are active in your social spaces, and are ready to do more for you. Your social media ambassadors leverage the power of the social web on your behalf: sharing your posts, posting information about your cause to their own fans and followers, and commenting on each others' posts (also giving you valuable earned content). Social media reach relies on shares, comments, and likes, and ambassadors will extend your reach with their own social power.

You can develop a full-fledged social media ambassador program (like the American Red Cross), develop roles for social media fans (like NTEN does), or ask your most excited fans to simply share content far and wide, like the American Heart Association/ American Stroke Association does.

Social Media Campaigns

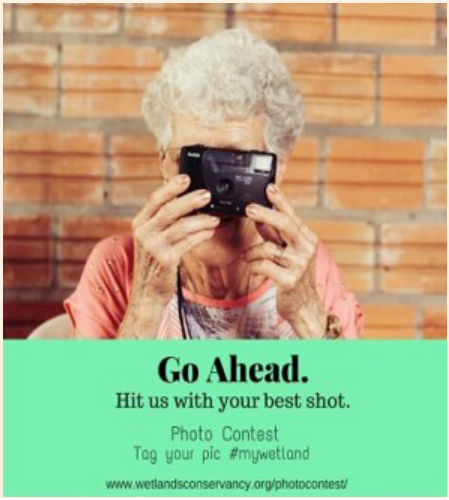
Another way to extend reach and deepen (or test) engagement is to implement a social media engagement campaign. Campaigns are a great tool to offer your fans the opportunity to become more involved, assist the organization with learning more about who is most engaged, test stakeholder interest in taking action, meet your goals, and extend organizational awareness. Be aware that campaigns take a lot of planning, staff time, and are not free!

Social Media Retargeting
If you're trying to reach people who have already visited your website, you might try using social media retargeting (also called remarketing). As an example: consider the vacation ad that has followed you on Facebook ever since you visited that travel site. The travel site is trying to "retarget" you after you've left their site, and remind you of the unfulfilled purchase.

Be prepared! Your campaign will be more successful if you:

- Know what your social media fans care about deeply (not just what you care about)
- Have a clean and robust email list of at least 2,500 names (the more, the better)
- Identify a team of social media campaign ambassadors that will help you share the campaign and build excitement (and potentially help you plan)
- Designate staff to plan and manage the campaign
- Have the capability to create assets or outsource development
- Have an active and robust social channel, including regular posts and active participation from followers and fans
- Are connected to a larger cause from which you can draw participants
- Have a social media strategy in place (and the campaign connects to your strategy)

Campaigns should be time-constricted. Most social media campaigns run one week to one month. Longer than that, and you run the risk of tiring or boring followers. When planning your launch, look at whether you can tie your campaign to a national awareness month or event, or other timely events that will help your campaign to gain exposure.



Most successful social media cause campaigns center around your stakeholders and not you. Think about how Wetlands Conservancy has made it about their stakeholders and what they love about Oregon wet lands. The hashtag #mywetlands highlights this element.

Planning Your Campaign

Your campaign should be based on your SMART goals. Keep these in mind when planning your campaign.

(Circle your answers in this statement)

I want to reach people *inside / outside* my existing social media community. I *do / don't* have their email addresses. These people are *likely / not likely* to have visited my website before.

Begin your campaign planning by completing this brief exercise:

The SMART goal for my campaign is _____

_____

My campaign will run from ___/_____/_____ to _____/_____/_____ .

The campaign itself will speak to what they care most because

_____

We will offer online fans and followers the opportunity to participate meaningfully with these types of actions during the campaign

_____

_____ .

The information that we want to capture from the campaign is

_____

and we will capture that information using this tool

_____

Success will be judged by _____

metric and I will find this out by looking at

_____ analytics process or tool.

Quick Campaign Checklist

SMART goal that the campaign supports	
Our social media audience cares deeply about this issue	
The campaign concept	
Social media followers contribute to the campaign by doing	
Primary social channels where the campaign runs	
The campaign will be successful if	
Success is measured by	
Tools to measure success	
Campaign timeframe	
Budget	

PART 3: Working Efficiently

Social media takes more time that we think. It's not only the time spent actually posting content and managing conversations, but it's searching for content, people, and conversations as well. Add to that tracking your social media metrics, and that's a couple of extra hours a week

Social media apps will help you make the most of your time at work, especially searching for and posting fresh content.
There are apps that do almost anything you need to do, save for creating original content.

Finding great content can be the hardest part of social media management. Find tools that will bring the content to you, including Google News Alerts, Twitter lists and plug RSS feeds into your dashboard.

Social Media Dashboard

The most important tool you will need is a social media dashboard, which should offer an almost-all-in-one view of your social media universe, with posting and analytics capability. Your dashboard is usually a web-based tool that is offered by a third-party software provider. When you're deciding on a dashboard, look at what you need, and find an auxiliary app that will offer you what's not included. The most important thing is to tie what you need into what you need these tools to do for you to meet your SMART goals.

Your dashboard should help you:

- Post content to multiple social media channels and networks
- See your scheduled social media at a glance
- Create trackable links
- Find good content
- See interactions and respond
- Search for keywords, hashtags and conversations
- Find your community
- Coordinate responses from your team
- Measure your impact

Conclusion

An advanced social media practice focuses on data-driven decisions, and identifying the data you need in order to determine how much you matter to your community. Your SMART goals set the stage, your activities make it happen, and your social media metrics tell you it what you are doing is working.

Once we've gone beyond the social media basics, practitioners think about how to extend reach, create community, drive stakeholders to act, and engage their community deeply. Developing an earned and paid content strategy will assist with reach and awareness, and a social media ambassador program will deepen commitment and reach. When the time is right, a social media campaign can significantly increase organizational awareness, reach, and engagement.

In this workbook, we offered guidance and practical exercises aimed at helping you design an advanced social media practice.

Best of luck!

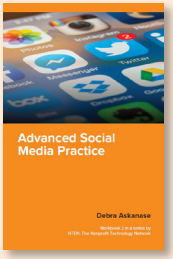
About NTEN

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 offers examples, practice sheets, and frameworks for these aspects of advanced practice:



- Learning from data: What your data should tell you, how to get it, and how to use it to make informed decisions about your social media practice.
- Extending reach and engagement: Social media ambassadors, campaigns to deepen and extend your reach, and leveraging paid social media platforms.
- Working efficiently: Marketing automation, apps, and tools to manage your social media practice efficiently and expertly.

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