

Digital communications are critical to every nonprofit organization.

From social media to websites, to email and analytics, developing an integrated strategy is essential to helping you achieve your goals.

Set Objectives

Start by reviewing your organization's overall communication or strategic plan to see how digital can reinforce that work. If you need help developing a communication plan, the **Spitfire Smart Chart®** can help you develop objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (S.M.A.R.T.). Your plan should answer these questions:

- ✓ Who are your priority audiences?
- ✓ What are you trying to mobilize them to do?
- ✓ Where can those audiences be found and engaged?

Take Stock

Assess what you know about your organization's digital outreach:

- What forms of digital communications do you use? (i.e., social media, email, SMS/mobile, web, search, blogs?)
- Are you tracking metrics for your digital outreach?
- If yes, do you alter your content based on what the metrics tell you?

Prioritize Audiences

Examine the priority audiences from your communication plan and think about the following questions:



- Which forms of communication best reach your target audiences?
- What other forms of outreach do you need to consider?

Then, take a look at your metrics to prioritize where to focus your time. You don't need to fix it all right away – but if you know for sure that no one is reading your emails or tweets – you are in a position to better prioritize.

Staff Up

A strong team is essential to making a digital strategy succeed. If staff wear many hats, make sure they have enough time to meet objectives.



- Create a work plan to prioritize their time, based on your objectives.
- Determine which staff will be responsible for analytics, which will conduct outreach, and which will determine the strategy.
- Define how digital staff interact with other departments and senior management so that digital is part of the core organizational culture, not an afterthought.

Listen, Measure and Engage

Start off with a strong foundation of information that will help you judge how well your plan is working. Periodically reassess your plan and reevaluate your efforts to stay on top of the changing digital landscape.



- Research where your audiences are already active and where your current efforts need to shift. Are there new digital tools that can help you understand how your audience is reacting?
- Track the metrics of your digital channels on a monthly basis. Don't just look at the numbers but think about what they mean. If you had a spike in traffic to your website, investigate why. If a Facebook post was shared more widely than usual, take a look at what was different about it.
- Things change. Do you need to revise which metrics you are tracking to get a better picture of your achievements? Revisit your plan and strategy every six months.

Create Content

Good content is king in the digital realm. Everyone wants to go viral for free but many forget to think through the essential elements that make most viral sensations tick. Is your content timely or is it old news? Is your content simple? Does it evoke emotion? The following offer tips for creating your best content on any platform.



Websites

- **Pair simple content with strong visuals:** Make web copy engaging with short and active sentences free from jargon.
- **Help your audience find information quickly:** Use simple navigation to avoid having your audience click more than two times to get what they need.
- **Take advantage of Google Grants:** Google offers nonprofit organizations up to \$10,000/month of in-kind advertising through their Google AdWords Grants. Don't miss out on this free opportunity to drive traffic to your website.



Social Media

- **Prioritize social media platforms:** With so many available options, research the social media sites you want to join and which will help you best reach your audiences.
- **Post content appropriate for the channel:** Each social media channel lends itself to a certain type of content. Facebook content should be heavy on visuals, while Twitter is useful for breaking news or giving your organization's perspective in a conversation. LinkedIn content tends to be more for an academic audience.
- **Stay engaged:** Social media works best if you populate content on a regular basis, listen to your followers and engage them in a conversation.



Email

- **Personalize your emails:** Be sure emails come from a specific person, not just the name of the organization.
- **Short and sweet – with an ask:** Keep the text clear and concise, and include a simple action for your audience to take. Don't overload your emails with multiple actions.
- **Divide and conquer:** Segment your databases whenever possible so you can craft more targeted emails to each audience.



Mobile/SMS

- **Mind the limits:** Text messages limit you to 160 characters so be sure your message and ask can be explained clearly within the limit.
- **Harness your offline events:** Ask supporters to take an action via a live text-in pitch at your events. Make sure to repeat the short code and keyword more than once and display it on a screen if possible.
- **Make it interactive:** Text messages are a great way to collect feedback from your audience. Consider sending trivia questions or asking them to respond to a poll via text.

Expand Your Reach

Each month, look at your editorial calendar to identify opportunities for creative content and ways to expand your efforts to a larger audience. Think about both offline and online activities. Is your organization hosting a big event that month? Will you be attending a rally? Will you be launching a new petition drive? Is there an external event you can react to?

Create a plan to increase your reach on your priority channels. Below are a few examples:



- **Partner with bloggers:** Cross-post content relevant to their audience and vice versa. Many blogs include a blogroll that can point to other outlets you may want to reach.
- **Promote content on Facebook:** Once you have identified what types of content your audience responds to, consider testing a small ad buy or a promoted post.
- **Expand your Twitter following:** Participate in Twitter chats or live-tweet events you attend to reach a larger audience. Research influencers in your space and develop a strategy to engage them on Twitter.
- **Ask your subscribers to pass the word:** Make sure all your email actions include the option to share the action through social media and email.
- **Capitalize on offline and external events:** Circulate your petition with an email sign-up or ask the audience to take action and join your mobile list.