

We're Live: Broadcasting Your Story

Live-streaming offers nonprofits an exciting opportunity to engage your audience online when they can't be with you in person. Nonprofits such as Greenpeace, Human Rights Campaign and charity: water, as well as a growing number of other effective cause organizations, have successfully used live-streaming to share videos featuring major announcements and events.

Should I Live-stream?

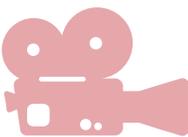
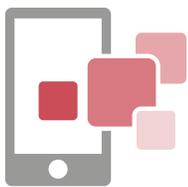
Organizations use live-streaming to invite audiences into the conversation, change perspectives, tell stories or bring the action directly to their followers with just the click of a hashtag. For example, in 2015, when the Supreme Court was preparing to rule on one of the most significant marriage equality cases, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) staff live-streamed a rally from the Supreme Court steps. HRC used the opportunity to share a pivotal political moment directly with its members, helping them feel as if they were part of a historic event.

Many of the organizations that have successfully live-streamed identify with one or more of the following characteristics. They tend to:

- Target a younger audience. Live-streaming is popular with younger audiences (41 percent of **Periscope's** users are aged 16-24 and 75 percent of them are under 35) so think about your target demographic when selecting a platform to share your content.
- Organizations that have visual events. Discuss internally to ensure what you're capturing will translate well to an at-home audience. Will your audience walk away thinking it was a meaningful experience?
- Organizations that already have a strong Twitter following. Live-streaming is often used alongside **live-tweeting**, so it helps to have a captive audience on Twitter. Build a strong social media following (we've got a **Spitfire guide** for that too!) or a particular hashtag in advance of live-streaming to build momentum before your live broadcast.
- Organizations with a tech-savvy audience. Your target audience should include frequent mobile and computer users – those who are already online and ready to engage with the click of a button – since most live-streaming platforms are designed for immediate viewing only.

What to live-stream

Certain situations or events are better suited for live-streaming than others. Here are some of the ways you can incorporate live-streaming into your digital strategy:



- *Shine a light on your everyday work.* Bring your fans to the heart of the action by giving them a peek into your organization's headquarters.
- *Big reveal.* Do you have an announcement, such as a campaign launch or conference keynote, coming up? Consider promoting it ahead of time and sharing it live.
- *Show a new perspective.* If your followers are used to hearing from leaders at your organization, live-streaming could be a perfect opportunity to share the perspectives of your grantees or beneficiaries. Demonstrate your impact by presenting from this fresh viewpoint.
- *Start a conversation.* You could introduce a new executive director and invite funders, volunteers and supporters to ask questions. Live-streaming offers the opportunity for your organization's spokespeople to have a live conversation and engage a broader audience.
- *Bring supporters to your event.* Would your annual fundraiser or a special performance be fun to watch from afar if you couldn't attend? Broadcast it so that your supporters feel like they're with you.

Plan Ahead

- **Be prepared.** There's no undo button when you're live-streaming! The content shouldn't be scripted per se, but you want to have a sense for the flow of events, particularly how you'll wrap up the live-stream. Familiarize yourself with the features of the app or program you're using to prevent any snafus.
- **Call for backup.** Have another staff person ready to respond to the comments feed, so you can appropriately handle questions. Think through the controversial points that might be brought up and prepare a list of responses to have ready to send.
- **Schedule your live-stream.** Different times of day might be better for different audiences, depending on age, income level and work schedule. Your Facebook or Twitter analytics can help you determine when your audience is online.

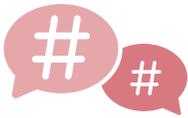
Tools

live-streaming is a relatively new space, so there are new apps and tools entering the scene all the time. Jumping on a trendy app can be tempting, but be sure to determine which is best suited for your needs first.



Periscope

- This mobile app is owned by Twitter, which makes it the most compatible with the Twitter platform.
- Periscope is great if you are pairing streamed video with live-tweeting.
- Content can only be created on a smartphone or tablet, so be sure your social media manager has access to one of those tools.
- If you already have a strong Twitter following, this is likely your best option



Google Hangout

- This platform has been around for a few years and has established brand recognition, both for its function and as part of the larger Google name.
- Google Hangout is best suited for interviews with a panel of experts in different places since it's easy to share multiple screens.
- Viewing these streams is less mobile friendly than other options, so it's a better option for an at-home audience.



Facebook Live

- Facebook **recently launched live-streaming** capabilities for brands and verified accounts, which organizations can access through their Facebook pages.
- Facebook broadcasts the live-stream to the organization's followers on the platform, so this is a smart option if you have an engaged Facebook audience.
- Unlike Periscope, live-streams stay on a Facebook page permanently.
- Facebook allows live-streaming for users on iOS, Android and **Facebook Mentions**, which is only available for verified users.

Others platforms we suggest taking a look at include **Rhinobird** and **YouNow**. Rhinobird has a few technical advantages over their competition (e.g., less lag time on broadcasts; group publishing of broadcasts based on hashtag; ability to broadcast to Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp). YouNow is especially popular among teens. **Snapchat** has also been increasingly used for event coverage with its "story" function. Though this is not technically live coverage, viewers can see a stream of clips and photos for a 24-hour span.

Measure Your Success

Each platform has a slightly different method of capturing your success statistics, but most will highlight the following:



- Retention rate (how many people clicked the video and stayed to watch)
- Number of viewers
- Amount of time watched collectively by viewers
- Duration of the live-stream clip

On some apps, viewers can interact by showing love or likes during the video. Be sure to measure that engagement while you stream so you know what worked best for your organization. Integration with other platforms can also help you quantify success. For example, if you used Periscope while live-tweeting your event, how many retweets and favorites did the posts get? Did people share your link on Facebook? Did they save any of the footage? This information will help you determine the total impact of your message and the number of people who were engaged.



At a time when capturing your audience's attention is harder than ever, live-streaming is the ultimate engagement tool. If you have a younger audience, the necessary resources and an interest in exploring this new space, take some time to find the tools and opportunities that are right for your organization.