

Social media do's and don'ts

- DO understand that social media is a tool and that there's no point in buying a hammer if you don't have any wood to nail. Have a clear understanding of what you are using your online presence for. Are you aiming to be solely outward facing, only sharing new updates/content (in which case, is a social media presence really what you want?), or are you looking to engage your fans in an onmi-directional dialogue and get them talking with you and amongst each other?
- DO share the progression of your social media strategy with your team. Use what the audience are saying to feedback to your team drive your future communications
- DO it whole-heartedly but know your resource restrictions. Will you need a full time member of staff working on the page? If you are looking to mobilize your fan base, then a dedicated team member would be recommended, not solely to police what is being said on the page, but to engage the audience, keep conversation flowing and to maintain a semblance of organisational openness in which the fan feels they have a communicative dialog with the organisation they have are fans of
- DO your homework! Know what is popular within the realm of social media, most importantly, know why it's important and assess how it have help you achieve your top-line strategic goals
- DO stay active. The audience need to see regular activity on the page or else they will lose interest, so the amount of staff time really depends on what your strategic aims are. You may also want to get more than one person feeding into the page - so also bear in mind that it might not be one full-time person that you need, but a team bringing content together and communicating with the audience
- DON'T run away from a fight! If a member of your social network says something negative, address them rather than censor them. In extreme cases, this might not be possible, but for the most part, your transparency will show a sincere concern for your audiences opinions and in turn may endear more members to your cause

- DON'T give up without cleaning up after yourself. An underused and neglected social media space can be detrimental to your brand image. Get rid of any profiles that are no longer active.
- DON'T think social media is a fad. The 'wow' factor may be gone, but that's only because this means of communication is becoming a standard. Get involved now, so that when the standard evolves, you're not technological milestones behind.
- DON'T isolate yourself. The person at the party who brings wine and conversationally works the room is more likely to be part of the eventual drunken conga than the wallflower who no-one knew was even there. Corny metaphor, I know, but the point is to talk to other organisations online and share your experiences and resources (if available). With social media, the more you put in, the more you get out.
- DON'T forget that the audience drives the success of your social media strategy. Understanding what it is your audience likes/dislikes about your online presence is key to building a service around them.

Courtesy of:
Louis Yung-Hoi
New Media Advisor at Contact A Family

What next?

Try our other free downloadable PR, marketing and communications resources, covering everything from social networking to building a marketing strategy and dealing with journalists. Go online at www.mediatrust.org for information on Media Matching, Youth Mentoring, Community Newswire and our training & events calendar.