

SOCIAL MEDIA AND RDA

What is Social Media?

'Social media' is the term to describe websites and online tools which allow people to interact with each other – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interested. Social media involves the building of communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement. For RDA Groups social media also provides the opportunity to recruit volunteers, participants and raise valuable funds.

Why is Social Media a Good Idea for my Group?

- Many Groups find social media platforms a quick and easy way to pass messages on to volunteers, participants and supporters, to ask for help and to deliver critical information.
- Less tangible (but no less beneficial) Groups find that Twitter invites a culture of communication and sharing that helps to strengthen the team as a whole.
- Many Groups already using social media find it speeds up the exchange of information and that people respond quicker than with other forms of communication. With volunteers increasingly accessing social media through their mobile phones, keeping updated with their RDA Group doesn't have to be done during dedicated 'admin time' in the evening – communication can be instantly received, quickly processed and immediately answered. It appeals to busy people who'd rather be active outdoors than sitting at a desk.
- One of the major benefits to social media is the ability to grow your network, rather than reaching the out to the same pool of supporters the whole time.

Overcoming Challenges

"Finding the time!" – It's not often you hear a Group of any size tell you that they have all the time, volunteers and funds to do everything they wish they could do. Social media doesn't have to be a full time job. You don't necessarily need a presence on every social media platform and to be updating them all the time. By setting a clear goal or objective and working from there to find the right platforms to reach your specific audience, you can limit the time spent on social media and make every tweet or post count.

"Figuring out how it works" – The creators of the world's biggest social media platforms haven't forgotten about charities – in fact, many of them have full time staff devoted to helping users get the most of their social interactions.

"What to actually post that might be of interest – not just the weather" – Libby Leffier, Strategic Partner Manager at Facebook, has five tips for non-profits to follow, and finding a voice is one of them. "Every post doesn't need to be Shakespeare, but it should be reflective of your organisation's personality and ethos." Once you find your voice, there is no limit to the information that you can share – inspirational quotes, success stories, original content, links to other stories, requests for help etc. The possibilities are limitless."

It goes without saying that social media like anything else, is not for everyone, but with clear benefits for Groups, it's really worth thinking about if you haven't already.

Behind the hype and the headlines, the white noise and the shock of the new, social media is just a way to let more people know about all the brilliant things your Group does every day – and encouraging them to get involved.

Social Media and Safeguarding

There is no doubt that the internet and in particular social media offer tremendous opportunities however as with any environment there are also risks.

It is important that if your Group is establishing an online presence and engaging in any form of electronic communications that an e-safety policy is created and there is a clear e-safety code of conduct which seeks to ensure all participants and volunteers are protected from potential misuse of these technologies.

A model e-safety policy and e-safety code of conduct are available on the RDA website under Running Your Group / Safeguarding.

Where to go for further information

- [About That First Tweet](#), a practical guide to Social Media for Charities and Social Enterprises
- www.facebook.com/nonprofits (information on how to use Facebook for non-profits)
- [YouTube's resource centre for non-profits](#) includes tips on how to make videos on a shoestring budget, and the link to apply to their programme for free. www.youtube.com/nonprofits

FACEBOOK



What Is Facebook?

Facebook is the most popular social network and is therefore a good place to start in the world of social media.

Facebook is a free-access social networking website. You can join networks, connect and interact with other people and networks. www.facebook.com

Why Use Facebook?

Many RDA Groups rely on public support and so need to find new ways to reach supporters, potential donors and volunteers. Facebook can be a very effective way for your Group to build supporters, boost donations, share success stories, network with like-minded organisations, encourage people to attend your events, recruit volunteers, or demonstrate the impact of your Group has.

80% of 18 to 24-year-olds and 73% of 25 to 34-year-olds use Facebook so this is especially relevant to ensure your Group can engage with a younger generation of supporters.

Hints for using Facebook to Promote Your Group:

Create a Page

- A Facebook page is essentially a profile for your group and is the best way to promote your group to the wider world.
- Pages are public facing and are designed to allow you to interact with the wider Facebook world as an organization.
- Users of Facebook can subscribe to receive the content you post on your page by "liking" it. The more likes you have the more people who are likely to be receiving, reading and interacting with your content.

Tell Your Story With a Cover Photo

- The first thing people will see when they visit your page is the cover photo, so it is worthwhile spending some time choosing an image that really represents your RDA Group.
- The image needs to be a specific size of 851 x 315. You can use www.picmonkey.com if you need to resize or crop a photo.

Think About Your Page Content

- In order to bring your page to life you will need to ensure there is regular content and the best way to do this is by making "posts" these will appear in the newsfeed of anyone who likes your page.
- You can post status updates and let people know what your Group is up to.
- It can be hard to come up with a constant stream of original content and posts. A good way to ensure your page remains interesting is to share the content of others, this may be links to other posts or photos or links to websites with relevant news or information.

Use Photos

- No type of content generates a better response than photos, try and use them regularly to ensure your page looks attractive.
- Photos are important because they are the best way of bringing the activity of your Group to life: Volunteers are more likely to get involved if they can picture the people they will help or the tasks they might do and donations may be more forthcoming if people can identify the impact of your Group.
- Be sure you have permission of all of those who appear in your photos, remember once a photo is online it can be very difficult to get it removed.

Be Brief

- The most successful Facebook posts use less than 80 characters, use this as a goal to summarize important information.

Ask Questions and Prompt a Response

- Facebook pages are designed as a mechanism to talk "to" people rather than "at" them. Asking questions in your post is a great way to engage your audience and get people to interact with your page. Ideally you want to start a conversation.

Make a Plan

- Nobody is going to interact with an account that's been dormant for six months, so stay relevant and topical where possible.
- It is a good idea to make a plan of content you will post and stick to it.
- You may find it useful to have a team of people responsible for your Groups Facebook Page, this way you are more likely to have regular content.

Facebook and Volunteer Management

Recruitment

Once you have set up a page to promote your group and are engaging those who like your page you are in a position to begin to use this as an area to promote volunteering opportunities. You can link to your website, or link to an advert in the volunteer opportunities of the RDA UK website.

Share News Stories About Volunteers

Facebook is a great place to share news stories about RDA volunteers, be it within your group, region, county or in RDA UK. Keep an eye on RDA UK Website and social media channels for stories to share.

Use Facebook to Recognise and Thank Your Volunteers

Facebook is a wonderful tool for letting the wider world know about the valuable contribution volunteers at your Group make. If any volunteers use Facebook you can tag their name in your post to personalise the message.

Facebook and Communication

Facebook is ultimately a tool designed for communication. You may choose to use Facebook as one means of staying in touch with volunteers, and a great way to do that is by setting up a Facebook group which they can join. In this group you can post updates, news, information and even set up polls. If you want the information you post in the group to only be broadcast to invited members, be sure to create a closed group.

TWITTER

Twitter is a social media platform where individuals or organisations can write short messages (a maximum of 140 characters long), which can be seen by other users who have chosen to follow them. As well as writing messages, users can read what others are saying, and select people or organisations of interest to 'follow'. It doesn't sound like much, but it provides a platform for communication that is quick, informal and inclusive.

Twitter is free to use, and you can sign up to the service very easily by creating an account on the Twitter website www.twitter.com

Hints for Using Twitter to Promote Your Group

Get to the point

Before sending your tweet, practice typing messages to within the 140 character limit so you get the key words included in the smallest amount of space. Every character counts especially if inserting a web link, there are many ways of saying the same thing, focus on the key words or phrase you want to convey. Don't waffle.

Use @

Always use people's @ names where possible when talking about them so readers can check out who you are talking about. And always check you've got their address right as some people have similar names and you may be linking them to the wrong person!

Encourage a response

Try to tweet about things which would generate a comment back by asking a question, or for an opinion. Be generous with compliments and congratulations when responding to other people's tweets, everyone likes a compliment and they would also be more likely to Retweet your kind words to their followers.

Include pictures and weblinks

Tease followers by including photos or web links to click through to rather than use hashtags. I find photos generate more response than creating a trend using hashtags – these are only really beneficial if part of a bigger tweet up by lots of people and they need to be typed consistently for conversations to be found, so unless you have tons of time or are joining a massive group conversation about something I wouldn't bother too much about using them.

Tweet celebrities

Twitter is a great way to contact people who you might otherwise not be able to approach, eg, celebrities, potential supporters, corporates whoever. Be bold and ask them questions.

Ask for Retweets

Do keep asking people to Retweet (RT) your message as it is simple and quick to do. Inject some urgency into the message by saying what you are trying to do by when put a deadline, date, event etc. Then follow it up by letting them know if you achieved the target and what happened and thank them for Retweeting.

Check who's following you

Keep checking who is following you, look at their profile and what they are interested in, so Tweets are interesting for them and comments are relevant.



YOUTUBE

YouTube is a video sharing website on which users can upload and share videos. It's not just for posting silly videos and other embarrassing moments – it can also be used as a highly effective tool. You can use it to show off your expertise, share knowledge, market your Group and connect with participants, volunteer and supporters.

To upload or comment on videos you will need an account which you can obtain by visiting www.youtube.com

Ways to use YouTube to Promote Your Group

- Create a video introducing your Group and what you do
- Conduct an interview with a participant, volunteer, Trustee or Instructor
- Make a video focusing on achievement or success of participants and volunteers
- Create a video diary of your group at a competition or holiday.
- Promote group events by using recordings of previous events

Ways to use Youtube to Recruit Participants and Volunteers

- Take viewers on a tour of your yard to help new participants and volunteers connect with you
- Embed videos on your website, a good example is the RDA volunteer recruitment animation "John's Story"
- Post participant or volunteer video testimonials to add to your credibility. Anecdotes may inspire others to ride or volunteer.

Ways to use Youtube for Volunteer Training and Induction

- Create "How To" videos to help participants learn new skills or volunteers complete their green card training.
- Create introduction videos of staff, volunteers or trustees and their roles to show to new volunteers.
- Upload recordings of presentations you've given so they can be watched again.

Hints and Tips for Great Videos

- Display Group information and logo in every video including name, website address, email and telephone.
- Enhance your videos using YouTube's special features, such as annotations, audio swap, insight, language options and quick capture.
- Add Call-to-Action overlays to your videos to drive traffic to your website
- Go the extra mile by adding closed-captions or subtitles to your videos. Remember that not everyone can watch or hear videos in the same way.
- Make use of other social networks such as Facebook and Twitter to get your videos out to the wider world.