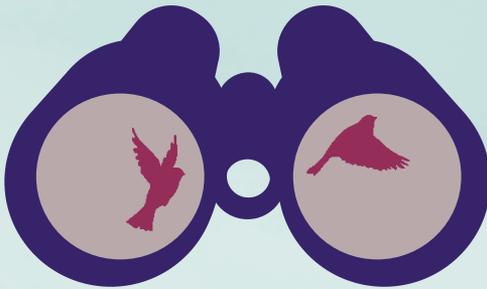




A MARKETING  
**FIELD GUIDE**  
AND HANDBOOK

THE  
DOs AND  
DON'Ts  
OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NONPROFITS



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FOUNDATION

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# DOs AND DON'Ts

If used effectively, social media can be a great, budget-friendly tool for your nonprofit. By showcasing the amazing work you do through well-tailored, curated postings, your organization can harness the marketing power of social media to get a lot of bang for your buck — and have some fun in the process! If you are a beginning or intermediate social media user, here are a few dos and don'ts to follow so you can avoid some common pitfalls, and help your nonprofit shine.

## DO CONSIDER CAREFULLY WHICH KINDS OF SOCIAL MEDIA YOU WOULD LIKE TO USE.

Take into account how many people you have on staff to help with social media, and how familiar they are with the various platforms. You should also think about what kind of content your organization will have, and which platform is best suited to that content. For example, an art museum may have images of beautiful works to share; these kinds of materials translate easily into Instagram or Pinterest postings, which are both image-heavy sites. A healthcare nonprofit, on the other hand, may want to distribute more articles and text-based information; these kinds of postings are best-suited for Facebook or Twitter.



## DON'T USE TOO MANY HASHTAGS.

Hashtags can help potential followers find you and engage in conversations about your organization, but they should be used sparingly. We recommend using no more than three. Hashtag best practices also vary based on the platform you're using. For example, hashtags are common and very useful on Twitter (they were actually originally created for the site), but are less effective on Facebook and should be avoided there.



## **DO PLAN YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS IN ADVANCE.**

If you are in charge of your nonprofit's social media and you wear multiple hats at the organization—and we're guessing you do—then make your life easier and create a schedule of posts. You can always use a “Throwback Thursday” to post something that may have happened a few weeks or months ago, but is still worth highlighting. Planning out posts can also help you avoid making a careless error, like repeating content or posting a spelling mistake (we've all been there!).

## **DON'T WRITE REALLY LONG CAPTIONS.**

Captions should be short and sweet. Don't overwhelm your audience with too much text, because most users will just scroll right over it. Lengths should vary by platform—Twitter already limits your character count, for example—but in most places, two sentences is a great upper limit. Users will appreciate your concise, pithy content!



## **DO MAKE EACH SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT HIGH IMPACT.**

Tailor your accounts according to what works best for your organization, and don't spread yourself too thin across multiple platforms. It is much better to have one or two fantastic profiles that are well cultivated than it is to have multiple accounts on different platforms that are rarely used. If you must choose only one, we recommend Facebook; you'll gain access to the largest audience, and the site allows for a myriad of uses by your organization.

## DO KEEP UP WITH CURRENT EVENTS.

Keep your eyes open for events, both local and global, that might dovetail with the work you're doing or affect your clients and donors. For example, if your nonprofit were located in a city that had suffered a major disaster, you would probably want to acknowledge its effects on the local population. You can also create posts related to specific holidays. Christmas and Thanksgiving are great times for nonprofits to launch social media campaigns.



## DON'T REPEAT THE EXACT SAME CONTENT ON MULTIPLE PLATFORMS.

Each platform is best suited for certain kinds of information. For example, Instagram is a great place to post beautiful and compelling photos, while Facebook is a perfect site to promote events. Try to learn as much as you can about each platform and create content that feels like it belongs there. Curating posts to mirror each platform's strengths will demonstrate your tech savvy, and help you gain high-quality users.



## DO HAVE FUN!

Social media is a wonderful way to connect with real people—be they potential donors, possible clients, or simply an interested spectator here and there. When appropriate, let some humor and levity brighten your account. Engage creatively with online communities already out there, and enjoy yourself!

### **NONPROFIT TWITTER ACCOUNTS WE LOVE:**

FWD.US @FWD\_us  
Skoll Foundation @SkollFoundation  
Invisible Children @invisible

### **NONPROFIT INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS WE LOVE:**

826 Valencia @826valencia  
Team Rubicon @teamrubicon  
PAWS Chicago @pawschicago

### **NONPROFIT FACEBOOK PAGES WE LOVE:**

Girls, Inc.  
826 Valencia  
Charity: Water



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