



7 WAYS TO WIN AT

# Nonprofit Social Media

WHO | WHAT | WHERE | WHEN | WHICH | WHY | HOW

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**onecause**<sup>®</sup>  
POWERFUL FUNDRAISING SOLUTIONS

**1832**  
COMMUNICATIONS

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## Introduction

Everyone's on Social Media. Facebook. Twitter. Pinterest. Instagram. YouTube. LinkedIn. Snapchat. TikTok. And don't forget everyone's newest darlings, Clubhouse and Spaces.

There's a plethora of social media platforms and it seems that everyone on the planet is busy scrolling and posting on at least one of them. Is that true?



11%



30%



19%



27%

*Percent of Internet users using platforms more than once per day*

Yes it is! Half of the world's population is on social media. And they're not just signing up and then forgetting about it. They're spending 2 hours, 24 minutes *daily* on social media. That means they're logging on to platforms more than once per day.

If your nonprofit is looking to engage your target audience, there is no doubt, you need to be present on social media. Period. End Story. Enough Said.

But can you create an effective social media strategy, especially if you are a nonprofit? After

all, there's often not enough time in the day or resources to fundraise, let alone create complex communication plans. *Don't worry! We've got you covered!*

This comprehensive guide lays out the seven steps any nonprofit can follow to create a powerful social media strategy. By devoting a little time to how you will reach supporters across multiple social channels, your organization can create your own social media engine.

By using social media strategically and wisely, you'll build more relationships and gain exposure to your supporters' networks, which in turn leads to increased awareness, deeper mission connection, and ultimately conversions (i.e., more donations). Together this creates more impact for your mission.

Simply put, social channels are ideal platforms to educate, raise awareness, advocate, connect, and mobilize people to take action!

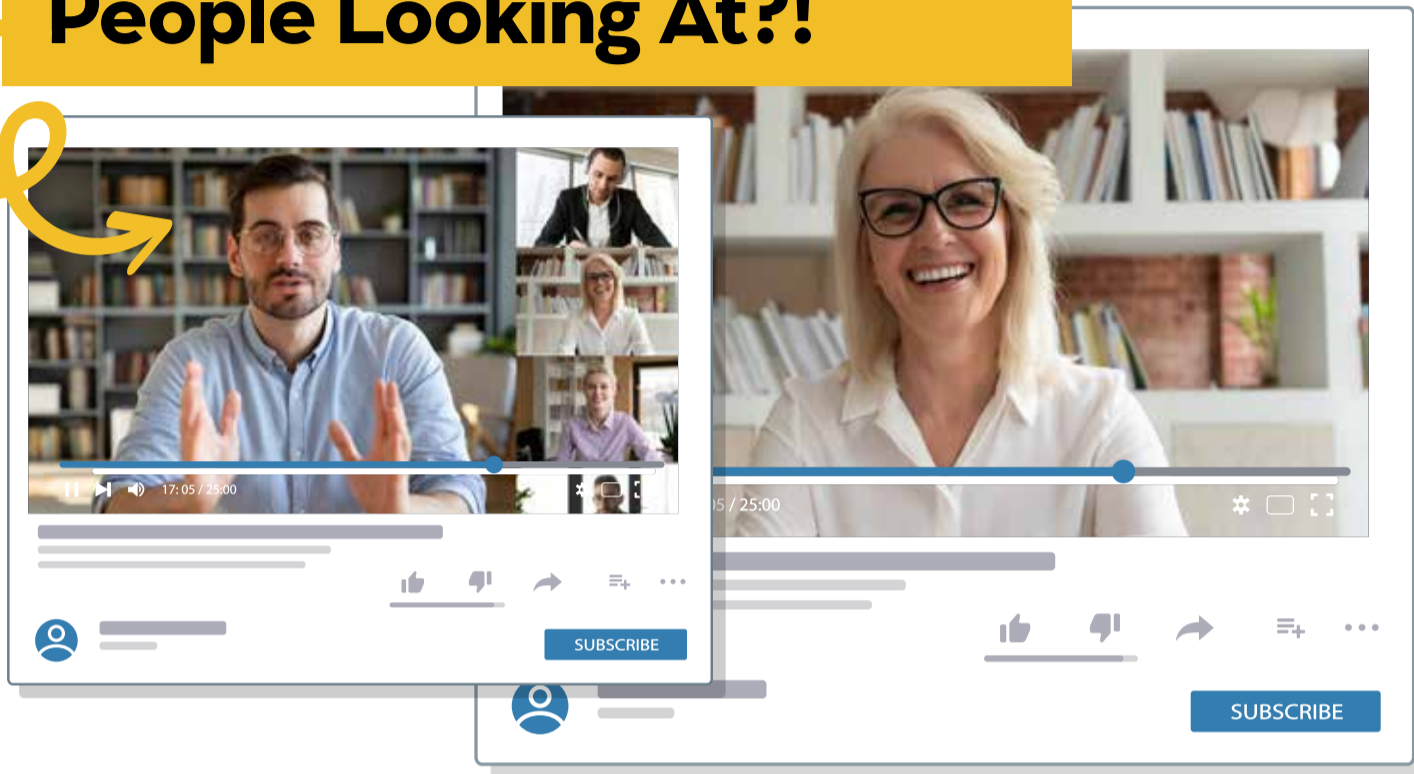
Let's get started breaking down the seven pillars needed to create your powerful social media strategy.

**Onward,**

*Ephraim Gopin & the OneCause Team*



## First, What The Heck Are People Looking At?!



**T**he fact is that images and video capture and captivate attention. Two data points of interest:

1. In the U.S., people spend **84 minutes per day** watching digital video! That's not streaming services like Netflix and cable TV (for those who haven't unplugged yet). People are watching videos on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and going down video rabbit holes on YouTube.
2. More than **50% of Twitter impressions** involve posts with images, video, or other media. People don't have time to read every tweet from everyone they follow. So they scroll until something catches their attention. That could be a great photograph, a funny GIF, or a compelling video.

Images and video are a powerful way to tell stories and connect with followers. It's essential that both are integrated into your social media strategy (as well as your fundraising efforts).

## Components of a Social Media Strategy

Think about the steps you take for a direct mail fundraising campaign. The same process can be followed for building your social media network.

- **Segment** your donors.
- **Develop** messaging for each segment.
- **Find** relevant stories.
- **Create** call to action.
- **Write** the copy, rewrite, edit, and edit again (and again depending on how many levels of management need to approve it).
- **Update** your donor database, and finally...
- **Hit send.**



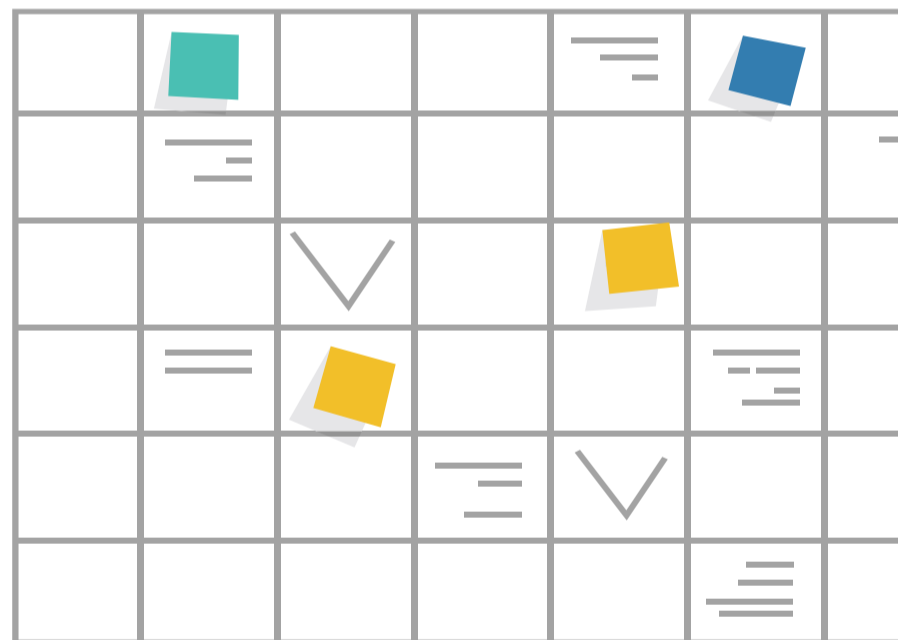
The same goes for your social media presence. “Tweet and they will donate” is not a strategy. Craft a strategy that provides very clear instructions on how to reach the specific audience on each platform, how to maximize engagement, and how to move followers to take action.

Your strategy should include these key foundational elements:

### GOALS

Like every plan, outline your short and long-term goals for social media usage. It could be one or a combination of these:

- **Raise** awareness.
- **Encourage** volunteer sign-up.
- **Convert** followers into donors.
- **Build** your email subscriber list.
- **Mobilize** people to take action (e.g. signing a petition).



## COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

It's important for you to know how other organizations market themselves and communicate with supporters. Take the time to investigate what content they push out, which social media platforms they're on, and the messaging they are delivering.

With time well spent on research, you'll uncover where you have an advantage and where you need to improve. Differentiating your organization to your audience is key. This exercise will guide your messaging, branding and content.

## INTERNAL GUIDELINES

It's important spell out the rules of social engagement for employees and volunteers.

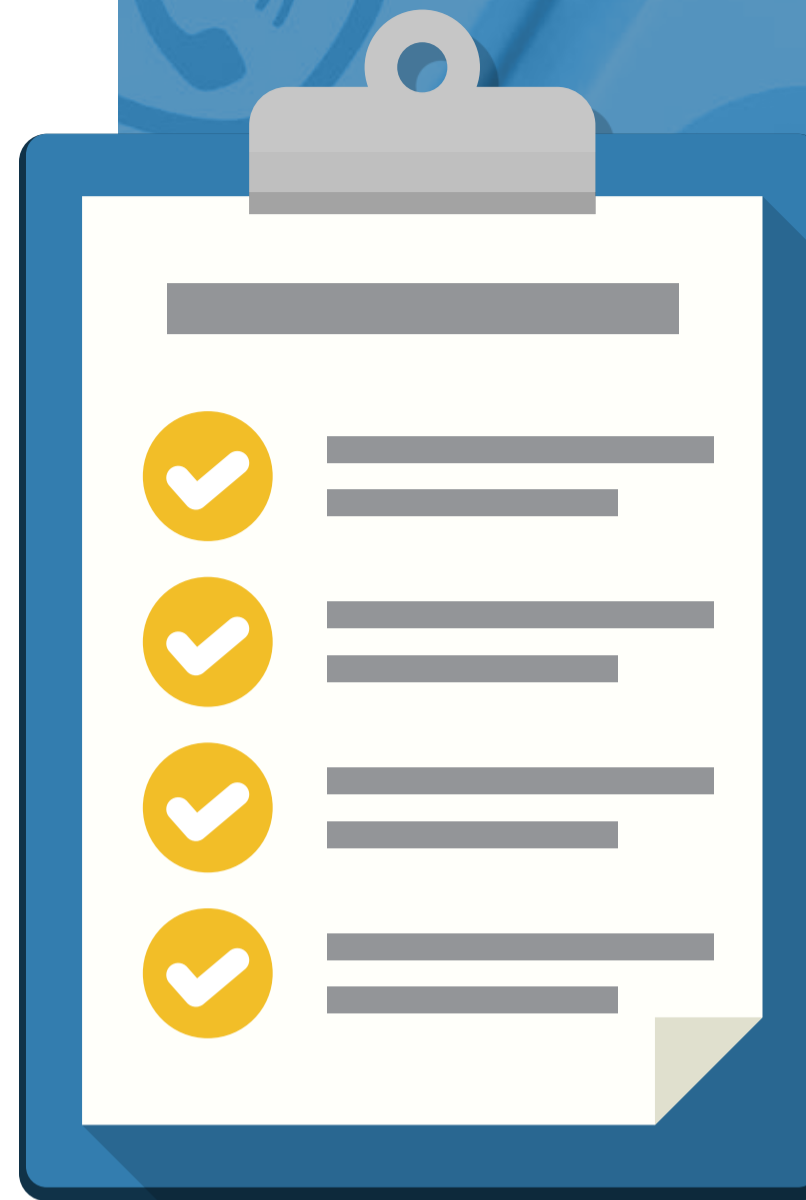
Let's start with the big three **no-no's** for your social media rulebook – **No** sexual content. **No** religion. **No** politics. (Unless your mission is tied directly to these topics.)

Nothing good comes from posting on social media about these 'Big 3 **No-No's**.' They can quickly ignite a virtual war, and force your supporters to tune you out and turn you off. You'll want to clearly lay out your social media guidelines and well-define exactly what's permitted and what's not.

Some things to cover:

- Can you use the names of your beneficiaries/service recipients in your posts?
- Can you use pictures of your beneficiaries/service recipients?
- What are the rules governing image use including the faces of children?
- What types of stories can be posted?
- How to avoid mixing personal and business accounts.
- Restrictions on what can be publicly mentioned about internal processes (your organization's "awesome sauce"), staff, volunteers, and the Board.
- What specific language/words/phrases can and cannot be used based on your brand guidelines?

Keep your guidelines to a one-to-two-page document and be sure to update regularly.



# The 7 Pillars of Your Social Media Plan

One of the best ways to craft a social media strategy is to answer the ‘W’ questions: **Who, What, Where, When, Which, Why** and the single ‘H’ question, **How**. Each of these pillars will help direct your social media presence and power your strategy to reach your overall goals.

We have oodles of pro-tips to help you craft the right strategy. Sit down with your team and discuss each of these questions. Brainstorm ideas and find solutions to problems you’re encountering or hadn’t considered. Be intentional. Cover the steps and assignments to put plans into actions! **Here we go!**



## 1. Who

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**Q:** *Who is the target audience?*

**T**he content you publish and the platforms you’ll be using will heavily depend on how you define your target audience.

- Is it Boomers? Gen X? Millennials? Perhaps a more mature audience?
- Are you trying to reach people in your local community or looking to spread the word beyond your city lines, such as statewide, regionally, or nationally?
- Do you want to connect with politicians, funders, field experts, or journalists?

It may take a few rounds of testing, to get it right. Just remember, it’s important to map this out from the outset.



**Q:** *Who is in charge of collecting and posting content?*

Identify one person responsible for collecting content and publishing content to social media. That can include blog posts, pictures, videos, articles, studies, and more. **Everyone** in your organization should be on the lookout for content opportunities. But you'll need a point person in this role.

The goal is to have enough assets that it's easy to call up content and supporting visuals when needed.



**CONTENT TIP:**



**Build banks.** Your organization should have several content banks (safe and secure - saved in the cloud, as best practice).

- Storytelling
- Data/Statistics
- Studies
- Images
- Video

**Q:** *Who oversees posting content, engaging followers, and listening?*

Tasks will include posting content, engaging the audience, answering questions, and liking, reacting, and replying to comments.

Digital listening is also a major component of social media success. You'll want to track what people are saying about your organization and respond in real time.

Keep up to date with changes in your specific niche. Pay attention to field experts and be sure to engage them with a comment or reaction. Follow the news to keep abreast of what's trending and be sure to join the conversation if relevant.



## Face Behind the Logo

People want to interact and talk to people, not just a faceless brand. The person in charge of posting, responding, and engaging on social is extremely important to how people perceive your brand online. Think customer service and how we use social media to demand it. We want to talk to someone **right away!** Demonstrate personality along with an inviting, friendly, and welcoming online atmosphere.

## Digital Listening

### AN EBUG AND A KIDNEY TRANSPLANT

In professional hockey, each team carries a starting goalie and a backup. But what happens if both get injured during a game? The EBUG comes in.

EBUG stands for emergency backup goalie. In every arena there is someone designated as the EBUG who could come into the game if needed for either team. This is usually someone who played junior hockey and may have played in some semi-professional leagues. More likely they play in adult beer leagues.

On February 22, 2020, in a game in Toronto, both goalies for the Carolina Hurricanes went down. In came 42-year-old David Ayres, an arena manager, Zamboni driver and goalie for a local hockey team. He played goalie for the second half of the game. Carolina won the game - the EBUG was the winning goalie!

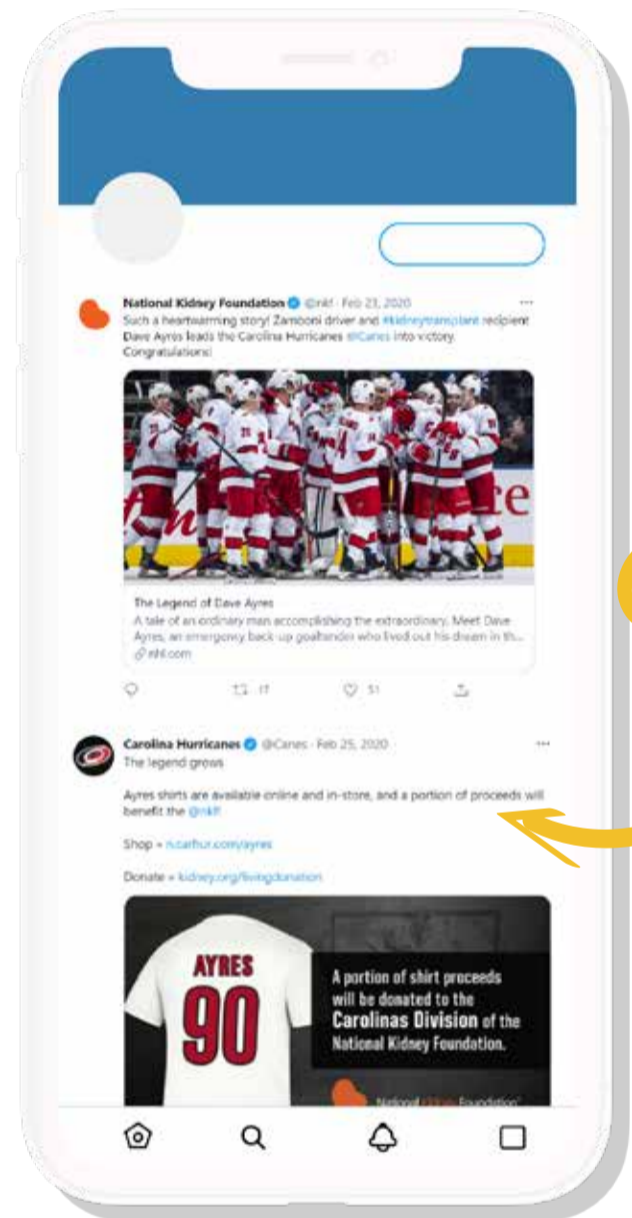
The story spread like wildfire. Every media outlet, local, national and international, carried a story about David's heroics. As more reporters asked questions and dug into his personal story, it turns out that David had been a kidney recipient. (The donor was his mom.) Suddenly #kidneytransplant was trending.

The person managing social media for the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) was clearly listening because they jumped on the story. Their national CEO tweeted.

The Carolina Hurricanes hockey team was paying attention and they took advantage of the story. They sold David Ayres jerseys with part of the proceeds going to the Carolina chapter of the NKF.

Money was raised because the NKF social media manager was listening online and took part in the ongoing conversation in real time.

Social listening is an important part of social strategy. Allow your point people to be social and take turns listening and responding.



## 2. What

Q: What are the goals of posting a story?

Story posts should include a CTA or 'Call-to-Action.' A CTA is a simple direction telling your reader where to go or what to do next. It takes them on a journey with your post. Social posts that lack CTAs are like invitations without an RSVP. A CTA invites a response and is effective at converting viewers into donors.

### Ideas for CTA's

- DONATE
- VOLUNTEER
- ADVOCATE
- SIGN
- FUNDRAISE
- ATTEND
- PARTICIPATE
- RECRUIT
- SHARE
- COMMENT
- REACT

The idea is getting people active in some fashion. When developing your call-to-action:

- Use a strong command verb
- Provoke emotion
- Explain why
- Be creative
- Rely on data

Here's an example: "**Donate Now** to save Freedom's life and his 7 other four-legged friends." Then add a direct link to your online giving site.

Don't let viewers pass you by without a CTA. According to [The Giving Experience Research Study](#) conducted by OneCause, social media is the most important channel for spreading the word, with 46 percent of those who gave to occasions, challenges, and giving days hearing about the donation opportunity on social media.



**DONATE NOW**

Q: What content should you be posting?

**Try the 90/10 rule if possible.** Only 10% of your content should be about your organization and its work.

The other 90% should contain information that educates and enriches, raises awareness, engages, humors, or shares data. Make your audience laugh, make them cry, make them go wow and aww. You will want to elicit a broad range of emotions.

# 3. Where

**Q:** *Where can you find content to post?*

Internally, your program managers and field staff are living and breathing your organization’s mission 24/7. They know in real time when breakthroughs, successes, and inspirational moments happen.

Build a process to get those stories, images/videos, and data to the people managing social media as quickly and seamlessly as possible.

There are several **external sources** you can leverage to find

- Thought leaders from various platforms.
- Trends based on hashtags.
- Field experts engaged with your organization.



## TOOL TIME:

The Internet is a pretty vast place. You can use these two tools to easily find relevant content:

**G Google Alerts** - Using your Google account, you sign up to receive emails (“alerts”) when articles or posts online match the keyword/phrase you’re searching for. This allows you to keep up on mentions of terms related to your organization’s mission, the latest news in the space you operate in, mentions of your organization online (important to combat negative news), and more.

**◆ Feedly** - Feedly is a news aggregator. You add the URL of the websites/outlets you’d like to receive news from. Within Feedly you’ll see a listing of all the articles published that day by each outlet. Scan the headlines and click on relevant articles. No need to search the entire Internet. You’re bringing potential content to you.

**Q:** *Where should you post your content?*

Not every piece of content is right for every platform. This goes back to crafting your overall strategy and knowing who your audience is, where they can be found, and what content engages and interests them.

It may take time and testing to refine and optimize the ‘where’ for your posts. Carefully watch high volume reactions vs. posts that fall flat. Be flexible.

## Observe reactions to:

- DIFFERENT VERBIAGE
- LONG AND SHORT STORIES
- IMAGES AND VIDEOS
- IMAGES WITH AND W/O TEXT
- DAYS OF THE WEEK
- TIMES OF DAY
- SUBJECT

## 4. When

Q: When should you post?

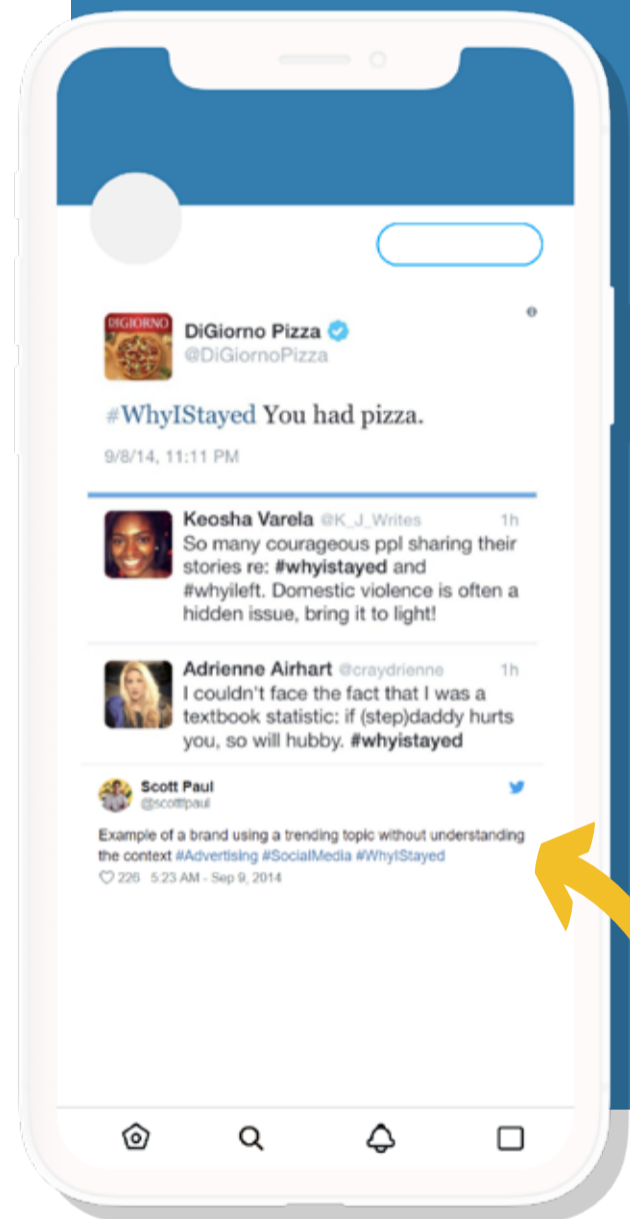
We cannot emphasize this enough: *Build a content calendar!* The goal of a content calendar is to collate all the information about upcoming content to be published and what has already been posted. The calendar keeps you on track.

Your calendar should include:

- What is going to be posted
- Where it will be posted
- When it will be posted
- Who is in charge of composing and posting the content
- Which links and hashtags were used in each post
- How many people interacted with each post

### GENERAL GUIDLINES FOR WHEN NOT TO POST:

1. **When tragedy strikes**, it's not the time to further your brand. A simple and supportive post is more appropriate.
2. **Deploy common sense** and understanding with what's going on around you when deciding whether to post something or not.
3. **Be sure to understand the relevance of hashtags** before using them. Recognize the focus of the conversation. Make sure they are not trending for different reasons other than your intent. For example, the hashtag #WhyIStayed was trending on Twitter. People were sharing their personal, heart wrenching stories about domestic violence. DiGiorno Pizza saw the trending and decided to enter the conversation. What they forgot to do was check why it was trending. Their poor attempt at humor was immediately met with great clapback. Social listening is good but make sure to be thoughtful and sensitive when using hashtags.



Q: When should you not post?



# 5. Which

*Q: Which platforms will you use?*

This is the bigger question: Which platforms should you have a presence on? This varies with your target audience and where they congregate. It also depends on the content you'll be sharing and how often.

**Why does it matter?** Joining a platform but never posting or engaging there is a bad look for your organization. Only set up a presence on platforms where you'll maintain your consistent activity.

*Q: Which people/accounts should you follow?*

Is your mission related to homelessness? Hunger? Education? Teens at risk? Ideally you want to find the thought and industry leaders in your space and follow them. But not just follow: Engage. Converse. Retweet. Share. Be active.

Follow foundations (both family and community) who fund programs similar to yours. Engage nonprofit consultants who post good content and respond to questions.

Follow national philanthropy publications such as:

- [The Chronicle of Philanthropy](#)
- [Nonprofit Quarterly](#)
- [Inside Philanthropy](#)

*Q: Which online persona will you choose?*

In the "Who" section we discussed the face behind the logo. But there's also your public facing image. Part of your strategy is deciding what type of online voice to use.

Will you always be serious? Will you use snark/sarcasm like Wendy's? Will you mix in humor and irreverence like the [Royal Holloway Library at the University of London](#)? How about friendly and helpful like JetBlue?

Your voice will influence how your posts are worded and what your replies sound like to the person asking the question. Take time to weigh all options before moving forward.



## 6. Why

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**Q:** *Why support your storytelling with image and videos?*

**S**torytelling should be central to your fundraising and marketing efforts and carry through to your social channels. Stories connect people. They explain a problem and how it can be solved. Stories touch people emotionally and drive them to take action.

Although basic storytelling hasn't changed for thousands of years, certain elements are newer. Powerful stories can spread to millions of people in an instant.

Remember the old saying: An image is worth a 1,000 words. If that's true, imagine the power of video! As nonprofit digital strategist Taylor Shanklin says, "Video is worth 100 coffee conversations."

Images and/or video are fantastic tools to help educate followers, build relationships, and drive viewers to take action.

When it comes to video, you do not need to produce a Spielberg type video (though dinosaurs coming to life might be nice!). Open your phone, record, and upload. At one time professionally edited videos shown at gala dinners ruled the nonprofit landscape. But today authenticity rules. Find value in your b-roll. People love bloopers, too!



**Q:** *Why should I use social stories?*

Almost every platform has its own version of Stories, which disappear after 24 hours. Why should you use them? Consider this - 500,000,000 people view Instagram stories daily. Enough said.

But stories also offer different forms of storytelling, engagement, gamification, polling, and call-to-action.

On Instagram Stories, [St. Jude](#) asked followers to choose which branded shirt their annual Walk/Run participants should wear. St. Jude posted pictures of the 4 design concepts and then prompted people to pick their favorite. It served a double purpose: Audience participation and a reminder to register for an upcoming event.

The [New York Public Library](#) asked their Instagram audience a very interesting question: What is the most checked out book in the library's 125 years? They used Stories to showcase some of the answers submitted by followers- using the specific book cover, of course. The last slide in their Story shared the correct answer. Something fun for their audience!

## 7. How

*Q: How should you measure the success of your posts?*

We'll start with what you should **not** be measuring: Likes. Those are just a popularity contest, and vanity stats.

On Facebook for example, the number of comments and shares tell a better story. Comments engage people and reveal what viewers are thinking about your posts. Shares mean your audience thought the content was good enough to share in their personal feeds.

Each social media platform has analytics and data which you can study to see which types of posts engage the audience the most. It can also provide insights into what time of day your audience is online and reacting, and when they're offline.

You can also look at post links and how often they were clicked. That gives you an idea if people are interested in learning more beyond the verbiage you added in the original post.

*Q: How can you make content go viral?*

If someone suggests to you that they can make a post go viral, you may want to proceed with the utmost caution. For each company or organization, peak engagement looks different. It could be very little engagement to the actual post but a ton of clicks on the link and people signing up to a newsletter or donating.

Look at each post and learn what works and what doesn't. That's how you'll achieve long-term success.

*Q: How do you engage the audience?*

**Great question!** Stay tuned for our sequel eBook which tackles the *10 Commandments of Social Media Engagement*.



## Bonus Content: The Buy-In

The nonprofit sector has many challenges to face from resources, bandwidth, and budget constraints. Marketing often takes a back seat. And social strategy is even further down the totem pole. But smart fundraising works in tandem with marketing and social. The fact is a powerful social media strategy needs complete buy-in from the nonprofit team and C-level. Make sure everyone understands and is aligned on the time, effort, scope, and timing of your social media strategy,

Getting buy-in across your nonprofit will make sure you have the organizational staying power to build a compelling social media presence that connects with your supporters and furthers your mission. Use your built-in social media analysis to answer these important questions. Nothing says value, worth, and validation like data can. Taking the time to check and communicate, both your successes and areas for improvement are important to getting and keeping buy-in.



Ask yourself:

- **Does the data show** we're moving the needle on our social channels?
- **Are more people learning** about our mission?
- **Are we raising** awareness?
- **Are we able to help** more people in our community?

Lastly, Test. Test. *Test again.* Keep testing your copy, images, videos, GIF's, and audience participation. The more data you collect and patterns you detect, the greater the chances your posts will hit their mark.

It's an ever-changing, learning landscape. Don't stop expanding your knowledge! Your strategy should include time set aside to read articles that will help you improve your social media presence. Blog posts about copywriting, images and videos, marketing, engagement, story arcs, impact, and calls-to-action can help.

Now go forth, plan it out, and power your mission with social media!



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Ephraim Gopin is a third-generation nonprofit executive and fundraiser. Over the last two decades, he has been a CEO, fundraiser, alumni director, grant writer, event organizer, marketing and communications director for both nonprofits and foundations.

Like you, he has worn all the hats.

Ephraim is the founder of [1832 Communications](#), an agency which helps nonprofits build relationships and raise more money to help service more people. 1832 partners with nonprofits to craft strategies which upgrade their online presence, boost their email marketing, improve their marketing collateral and strengthen their overall fundraising and marketing efforts.

Your bottom line? We're gonna give it a boost.

Ephraim is the publisher of the popular daily nonprofit newsletter, [Your Daily Dose of Nonprofit](#) (YDDN). Every Monday through Thursday, YDDN delivers to your inbox content relevant to any nonprofit role you fill. Content that helps you learn, grow and provides actionable items you can implement at work.

Ephraim is also the host of the [Your Weekly Dose of Nonprofit podcast](#). The podcast introduces you to sector leaders and experts who supply you with the information you need to better serve your beneficiaries and clients.

Ephraim is always happy to connect and talk shop with nonprofit pros via [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

Ephraim is a new recipe cooker, 80s pop music and culture master, Boston sports cheerer, puzzle doer and Looney Tunes lover. He is the proud father of three young adults who enjoy taking road trips with their dad but disapprove of how he takes selfies.



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