

## *Making Social Media Work*

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As we look into new ways to build relationships with potential volunteers and donors, social media seems like it should be the perfect solution to the problems many of our programs face. It's free, so it won't put a dent in our already overstretched budgets. It's quick, so we can get the message out to large groups of people instantly. And, perhaps most importantly, it is the preferred means of communication for young people today. Despite these redeeming qualities, it seems that we are still looking for ways to make social media work for our programs. Before you give up entirely, browse through these fifteen tips for successful tweeting, blogging, and facebooking. You might be surprised that you can develop a lively online community by spending only a few minutes each day on your sites.

1. **Update often.** The key to successful social media outreach is frequency. The ultimate goal is to build a feed that people will want to come back to time and time again and this will only happen if viewers get the sense that they are likely to find something new there.
2. **Keep an eye on your pages.** Occasionally a potential volunteer will post a question on your page. It is most helpful if you respond quickly to their inquiry. Also remember to post your response on the page in case other readers are wondering the same thing.
3. **Consolidate.** It can become overwhelming to stay on top of multiple social media outlets, but it is now easy to consolidate these into one stream using aggregators like hootsuite.com, sobees.com, and flock.com to name a few.
4. **Fan, follow, and friend.** Search for individuals and organizations that are writing about topics that are relevant to your program and follow them. This not only helps you easily follow what they are saying, it also lets them know that you support their efforts. They will be more likely to share about your program on their pages in the future.
5. **Prepare posts for slow days.** Some days the creative juices just won't flow, but that doesn't mean your pages have to go dry. You can be prepared for these times by putting together a list of blog ideas, Facebook status updates, and tweets. One easy way is to compile a list of questions that you are frequently asked about your program. You can easily turn each of these answers into a Facebook update or tweet. The longer answers can make a great blog post.
6. **Retweet.** When one of your followers posts something interesting, retweet that on your feed. This will increase the reader's interest in your page and will make them into more active users. They will then be more likely to retweet your posts in the future.
7. **Borrow blog posts.** Chances are many of your volunteers are blogging about their experiences. (See "Spotlight On: Incarnate Word Missionaries" in this issue of *How Can I Help?* for more information on volunteer blogs.) Whenever they write something particularly inspiring, ask for their permission to repost on your program's blog. A variety of voices makes a blog more engaging to the reader.

8. **Get organized.** Use keywords in your blogs and hashtags in your tweets to highlight reoccurring themes in your posts. This will help readers easily find the information they are looking for.
9. **Lighten up!** Remain upbeat and use humor whenever possible. Do pay attention to your grammar, but try not to be overly formal in your writing style. This will make your page more inviting and personal.
10. **A photo is worth a thousand words.** Post new photos whenever you can. Nothing sends a stronger message than images of your volunteers in action. If you are able, tag your volunteers in the photos they appear in. This will draw their friends and family members to your page.
11. **Be interactive.** Ending a blog entry with a thought provoking question encourages readers to comment and give their feedback. Or, maybe you are purchasing new swag for your recruitment efforts and can't decide between pens or bumper stickers – why not poll your fans on Facebook to see what they prefer? When you invite your readers to share their opinions you are letting them know that they matter to you as an organization.
12. **Know the lingo.** Can't keep your wikis and widgets straight from your tags and tweetups? This social media glossary might help brush up on the lingo: [www.socialbrite.org/sharing-center/glossary](http://www.socialbrite.org/sharing-center/glossary).
13. **Make use of the Catholic Volunteer Network page.** We invite you to visit our Facebook page and post about upcoming events, milestones, application deadlines or anything else you would like to share. Remember to include links to your sites there as well. Fans of our page include current, former, and future volunteers as well as volunteer program staff, campus and parish personnel, and other supporters of service. This is an easy way for you to broaden your audience.
14. **Make your pages accessible.** Remember to list links to your blogs, Facebook page, twitter feed and any other social media site right on your website's homepage. This is especially important if you are unable to make frequent updates to your website's homepage. Your social media pages will let the reader know that your organization is dynamic and active.
15. **Promote yourself.** Encourage others to follow you online – and don't be shy about it. Mention you sites often and you will notice more and more followers.

Finally, since self-promotion is an important part of social media success – I encourage you to get connected to Catholic Volunteer Network on Facebook, Twitter, and our blog!

Originally published in Catholic Volunteer Network's monthly e-newsletter *How Can I Help?* in December of 2010. Revised in February 2017.