Guide to Social Media

How to use Social Media for your Union

This guide is intended to assist unions with the development
of social media outlets to communicate more widely with
members and supporters. This is a starting point from which
locals can increase the sharing of information through tools
available over the internet.

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What is Social Media?

Social media is any website that allows online communication and interaction with other users. It includes sites such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Youtube, Flickr, Digg, Linkedin, Friendster, Blogs etc…

Why should I care about Social Media?

The numbers don't lie. Three out of four Americans use social technology and two thirds of the global internet population visit social networks. In fact, it accounts for ten percent of all internet time.

Ninety nine percent of social media users believe organizations should have a presence in social media. But they're looking for a dialogue, not a monologue.

Social media is a great tool for interacting with local union members, and a tool you will need to use if you want to communicate with younger members of your local.

Social Media Policy for Your Union

There are many questions that have to be answered when creating social media policy for your union. Some national and international unions have policies that you can use to guide the development and management of your own policy. Contact your union's national/international communications department for more information.

Some questions to consider:

- Who will manage the site?
  It is wise to choose one or two people from your union to create and manage the social media site your union will use. Treat what you post just as you would when you publish a union newsletter. Once someone posts information, it is, in theory, published for anyone to see.

- Who can post items to the site?
  Again, if your union is using the site to advance its issues and point of view, limit access to one or two trusted people. Others can submit items to them for review and posting.

- What kinds of items are appropriate for the site?
  Use your site to announce local meetings, events, call attention to website updates, let members know when your union is in the news, when your union's issues are mentioned at the legislature, etc.

A strong social media policy should make clear that whoever is posting information is a representative of the union. By identifying themselves as a member of a union, a social networker becomes a representative of that union and everything he/she posts has the potential to reflect on the union and its image.

Your policy should impress upon the representative, and all members of that union, that they take on the responsibility of representing the union.

Other Tips for a Strong Social Media Policy

- A strong social media policy will acknowledge that social networking sites are open to the public. If you don't want the world to know your organizing goals, negotiations strategies or audit results—don't put the information on Facebook, your blog, Twitter or any other social networking site.

- A strong social media policy will state that your union's social networking site exists to advance the goals and work of your union. It will clearly state that personal opinions that defame or tarnish the union's image do not belong on the union's site.

- A strong social media policy will include a few basic legal reminders: plagiarism, profanity and defamatory statements could land the union in court. Know your facts, cite your sources and play nice.

You can find additional resources for social media policy in the Resources section of this guide.

Popular Social Media Sites

This guide will cover how to use four popular social media sites: Flickr, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. However, there are many other social networking sites that are available. Here's a sample list of other sites:

www.myspace.com

www.linkedin.com

www.digg.com

www.vimeo.com

www.tumblr.com

www.TinyURL.com

www.typepad.com

www.picasa.com

www.Favtape.com

www.delicious.com

www.imageshack.com

www.xing.com

Flickr

Flickr is one of the most popular photo-sharing sites on the Internet. Flickr is free, you can store an unlimited number of photos, and easily link them to blog posts, websites, Facebook and other social media sites.

Register for a Flickr Account

To get started on Flickr, you'll need to register for an account.

1. Go to http://www.Flickr.com.
2. Click on the "Create Your Account" button located in the upper right corner.

    Flickr is owned by Yahoo! So if you already have a Yahoo! ID for email, you can use this to log in. But if not, click on "Sign Up" to register for a free account.

3. Fill in the information requested in the three sign-up steps.

If you're creating a new Yahoo! account, you'll receive two emails: a confirmation email with a link you need to click to activate your yahoo account. And, then an email from Flickr with a clickable link that will verify your email address. Open both emails and click on the provided links.

Now your account is active! Return to Flickr's home page and sign in.

Upload Photos

Now that your Flickr account is set up, you can begin uploading your photos.

1. On Flickr's home page choose "Upload Photos and video."

2. Click on "Choose photos and videos."

3. Select the photo(s) you wish to add to Flickr.

4. When you have selected your photo(s) to upload, click "Open."

5. Select the privacy level for your photo(s).

6. Click "Upload Photos."

7. Once your photo(s) are uploaded to Flickr, you can give it a title, description, tags and add to a "set."

8. Then click "Save This Batch" and your photos, with descriptions, are saved to your profile.

Organize Your Photos

The easiest way to organize your photos is into "sets." Sets are like photo albums, where you can group photos together. You can organize your photos in any way that makes sense to you. For example, "Local Picnic" or "June Doorknocks."

Create a Set

1. Click on the "Organize" tab.

2. Select "create new set" which will open up your organizer window.

3. Drag photos into the set.

4. Choose your set picture, and click Save.

You can also create "**Collections.**" These are collections of sets. For instance, you may want to make a set for each month of doorknocking, and then put all the doorknocking sets into one big collection.

"**Batch Organize**" will let you work with multiple photos at one time. If you have a group of photos you know are going into the same photoset with the same tag(s), working here will help you. For example: union rally, march, informational picket.

Groups

Groups are a way for multiple Flickr users to share their photos in one place. There are groups for dog photos, car photos, contest groups etc… You want to create a group for your local, so all your local members can share their own photos of local union activity with each other.

There are three types of groups on Flickr: Public, Public by invitation only, and Private. You should take a look at the Flickr Group Guidelines and the Group FAQ to find out how to run a successful group.

Create a Group

1. Click on "Groups" at the top of the page.
2. Choose which type of group you want. Give your group a name and description. Choose the safety level.
3. Then click "Next." Follow the steps to complete the group and start adding your own photos.

Other Tips

Free accounts have a monthly cap - you can only upload 100MB of photos per month. You will only be able to see the most recent 200 photos in your account as well. If you want to upload more, you'll need to upgrade your account to Pro level, which costs $24.95 a year.

Visit http://www.flickr.com/help/faq/ for an overview of Flickr.

YouTube

YouTube is a website where you can upload video for free. It provides a way to share union events and actions easily.

Register for a YouTube Account

1. Go to http://www.youtube.com.

2. Click on "Create Account" located in the top right corner.

3. Enter your username and a password as well as additional information.

4. Follow the steps on the screen to activate account.

Upload Video

Connect your video device to your computer. You should save it on your computer (always a good idea for back up). If your goal is to upload footage as soon as possible to the web for viewing, load the video directly to YouTube from the device. New video devices have this option. See below for "Mobile Setup".

Otherwise,

1. In the upper right hand corner, click on the yellow "Upload" button. It will take you to a page where you can choose a video to upload from the computer by clicking "Upload Video."
2. Click "Upload" next to the file. Enter the title, description and other details so viewers know exactly what they are watching.
3. Be patient! Allow some time for the video to upload. You may have photos from the event that you could upload in the meantime, or you could prepare the text of a future Facebook post. Consider uploading before bedtime so it is ready to go first thing in the morning.

Mobile Setup

Depending on your mobile phone, it may be possible to upload video from your phone straight to YouTube. Go to "My Account" and click "Mobile Setup" on the left hand side. It instructs you to email the video to an address which will process the video and put it online.

You can also have your video automatically upload to Facebook and Twitter accounts. To do this, choose those options when at the "Upload" video screen.

Share it

You can share the uploaded video a few ways. You can copy the URL for the video, copy the code and embed it for a website or blog, and simply share it on your channel.

A channel is a way to personalize your account. To do this, go to "Accounts" and set up from there. For example, you can change the appearance of your account to reflect your union's colors.

Track your Stats

YouTube provides easy stats to track how much play your video is receiving. The number will be reflected most often at the bottom right corner below the viewer. You have the option of making this known or hiding it.

Go Viral

"Going viral" means that your video is shared and is spread rapidly through the internet. It does not mean you are spreading a computer virus. In fact, going viral usually is a good thing for video exposure.

The videos that have the most potential to go viral are the ones that are shorter than two minutes in length. Strive to make your videos two minutes or shorter.

Facebook

Facebook is another free social media networking site where you can share photos, links, video and status updates. Chances are, most of your local membership already has Facebook profiles, and they spend a LOT of time there. Facebook helps to build union awareness, and engage your membership.

That's why it's important for your local to set up a "Fan Page" for your local members to access information and communication.

About Profiles

Facebook has three main types of profiles. "Profiles" are for individuals, "groups" are created by a fan of a product, celebrity or organization and "fan pages" are created by the actual product, celebrity or organization. Pages show up in search engines because they're public, whereas groups are not public.

Local unions will want to create a Fan Page.

One of the benefits of a Fan Page on Facebook is that it's really simple to use. With Facebook, updates are as easy as logging in and typing or uploading. The fresher your content, the more you will engage your membership, so you want to update often.

Register for a Fan Page

You do not need to have a profile to have a Fan Page. Most often one person with a profile sets up the page, and then authorizes "administrators" who have permission to update the page. Discuss with your local leadership who will own the page.

1. Go to www.facebook.com.
2. On the right hand side, under "Sign Up" find the "Create a Page" link and click it.
3. Enter your local's name and appropriate categories.

4. Next, you will get to a page that asks if you already have a Facebook account. Choose the best option for you and fill out the information. Under "Brand, Product, or Organization" pick "Non-profit."
5. You will have to go to your email and click on the confirmation email that was sent to you.
6. The link should open up to your new Page and you can start building it from there.

If you already have a personal account:

Once you've logged on to Facebook, scroll to the bottom left hand side of the page and click on "Ads and Pages." At the top of the next page on the left hand side, click "Pages." Facebook has a nice overview you can read at this point. But if you're ready, then select "Create a page."

Next, select "Brand, Product, or Organization" and then "Non-profit." Enter the name of your local, and sign the authorization section.

Select the type of organization you own and start filling in all the details. The more info you add, the more useful it will be to your membership.

Add Content

Make sure to include your union logo, RSS blog feeds, Links to your website, Videos, Photos, etc… Once you're satisfied with the Fan Page, hit publish, and you're good to go!

Give people a reason to check in on your page regularly.

- Update Content
- Post breaking news
- Ask questions that engage your membership!

Promote your Fan Page

Facebook Fan Pages are unable to friend someone the way individuals can from a profile. People can elect to become fans of your Page, but only if they know about it. So you have to introduce people to your Page.

In the upper left hand corner, click "suggest page," and invite your contacts. Send out an email to your local membership, and notify allies (DFL, Alliance for a better MN, MN 2020 etc.) people in other unions or State Federations/Area Labor Councils or who would otherwise benefit from the information your union provides, and invite them to become a fan of the Page. Send a short note and include a link to the Fan Page.

Do whatever it takes to help people know that you're on Facebook and you want them to become a part of your community.

Here are additional ideas of how to advertise your Facebook page:

- Put a Facebook Page button on your website to help others find it

- Spread the word on Twitter if you're there

- In every meeting ask people if they want to become a fan of your local on the Fan Page by putting the Facebook address at the bottom in the footer on your agenda

- If you post or send out your local's agenda electronically, include the Facebook address in footer

- Add it to your electronic signature on emails you send out

- You could use something like "Become a fan of ___ on Facebook" and put a hyperlink on your local so others can click and join

It will take time to build your fan base, so just keep sending out invites to new members, and new contacts.

Other Tips

- Membership will feel involved with their local union if they feel like it is a two way relationship

- So, plan to dedicate a couple of hours each week to getting new fans, connecting with your members and updating your content. You'll quickly appreciate the instant ability to connect with local members and your community members using Facebook

- Post messages when you anticipate most of your membership and fans will be reading and checking Facebook. For example, you could post news before heading to work or directly after work

- And remember, Facebook is meant to be a communication tool, not a pulpit

Twitter

Twitter is a free online service that enables you to broadcast short messages to your friends or "followers." It's like an online real time journal.

Twitter is designed to work on mobile phones, Ipod touch, or on a computer. Because Twitter messages are limited to 140 characters, each message can be sent as a single SMS alert (Text message).

You can set your Twitter updates to private so only "friends" you've authorized can see them, or make them public, which means anyone who knows your Twitter ID can read and subscribe to them. Your updates will also be on the public timeline.

Register for a Twitter Account

1. Go to www.twitter.com and click the button "Sign Up Now."
2. Create your user name your union and local # (AFSCME945 for example).
3. Create your password and provide an email address.
4. Then press "Create my Account."

Again, you will have to decide who is going to manage it.

Upload your union picture or logo. If you select the "Protect my updates" box, people won't be able to read your Twitters unless you authorize them. This is another decision for your local leadership to decide. If it's public, be very careful what you tweet. For example, be sure NOT to Twitter, "Leaving union hall open and unlocked for the weekend: 123 solidarity Street. Stop in to pick up your lawn sign."

Promote your Twitter account

Tell your membership your username and send them the link to your Twitter page just like you did with your Facebook Fan Page. Each user has their own page, in

the form www.twitter.com/username. (Example: my Twitter page is www.twitter.com/MNAFLCIO)

Send a Twitter message, a.k.a. "Tweet"

From the Web page, enter a message in the entry window at the top of the page where it says "What are you doing?"

Once you hit send, all of your "followers" will see your message on their own Twitter pages and/or their mobile devices as well.

To see other people's updates, you need to follow them. Go up to the top of the page and click "Find people." Then search for a person or group.

Once you find your person or group, go to their page. Under their name you will see a button labeled "follow" and click on it. You are now following them, and their updates will be available on your Twitter home page.

Hook up your mobile phone and IM account if you want to use that to update.

Usernames, Replies, and Direct messaging

The @ symbol put in front of any username creates a hyperlink to that Twitter user.

You can reply to another Twitter user by hitting reply, or by beginning your tweet with @username but this will be in the public timeline.

You can send a Twitter message directly to another Twitter user with the Direct command. Enter d username message. This is not in the public timeline, only that user will see that message (users will get a ping if they have direct messages enabled on their phone or IM account, much like a text).

Hashtags

Anything with a "#" symbol is a tag. For example, anything someone twitters about the 2010 Governor's race will be followed with #mnguv10. You can then search #mnguv10 to read tweets specific to this topic.

Some common hashtags:

#mn2010 -- Minnesota's 2010 election, particularly the governor's race.

#mnguv10 -- Minnesota's 2010 election, governor's-race-specific

#mnbudget -- Minnesota state budget

#EFCA—employee free choice act

#mnhouse --Minnesota House

#mnleg -- Minnesota Legislature

#mnrecount -- U.S. Senate race recount, which ended in January 2009

#mnsenate -- Minnesota Senate

#mntaxes -- tax issues/proposals in Minnesota

#TPaw -- Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty

Twitter accounts to follow

Unions with a Facebook page or Twitter page or both include, AFSCME, AFT, Air Line Pilots (ALPA), American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA), California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee (CNA/NNOC), Electrical Workers (IBEW), Fire Fighters (IAFF), Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT), Sheet Metal Workers (SMWIA), Transport Workers (TWU), UNITE HERE, United American Nurses (UAN) and United Steelworkers (USW).

@MNAFLCIO – Minnesota AFL-CIO

@MDECOM -- Minnesota Department of Education

@MinnLRL -- Minnesota Legislative Reference Library

@MNDot -- Minnesota Department of Transportation

@MNHealth -- Minnesota Department of Health

@MNHouseInfo -- The Minnesota House of Representatives' Public Information Services

@PositivelyMN -- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

@UMNews -- University of Minnesota News Service

@alliancemn -- Alliance for a Better Minnesota

@wellstoneaction -- Wellstone Action

Resources and contact information

Website:
http://www.mnaflcio.org

Blog:
http://www.mnaflcio.typepad.com/mnaflcio/

Twitter:
http://www.twitter.com/MNAFLCIO

Facebook:
http://www.facebook.com/pages/MN-AFL-CIO/84206511914

Social Media Policy Website with comprehensive list of links to other sites:
http://www.wildapricot.com/blogs/newsblog/archive/2009/01/08/creating-a-social-media-policy-for-your-nonprofit.aspx

For questions or to schedule a training for your local union on social media, contact:

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