Social media

Why social media?

Social media is the term used to describe social interaction through the internet including audio, video, images and text media such as podcasts, social networking and content-sharing. The services are mostly free to use and you don't need to have any technical skills to use them. Charities and voluntary groups are increasingly using social media to build online communities or networks, keep in touch with members and let people know about what they're up to and what services are available. You do need to be able to keep them updated though so think about which social media platforms are the most relevant to you and spend your time on them. It gives a worse impression having an account you never update rather than none at all

Some examples of social media platforms

Facebook – www.facebook.com

Facebook enables you to set up an online group that other people can be members of, which contains 'wall' space for posting messages, lets you upload photos and gives you the opportunity to create pages advertising events and invite attendees. You can also join other groups and become friends with people who may have important updates about networking events, funding and services. You can add contact information and details of where your group meets and add information to encourage members to join or volunteer.

Example of use: The Lesbian and Gay Foundation have a very popular Facebook page with 1,577 members. From looking at the site they have a good mix of social events that may be attractive to members, have posts from health services, advertise their newsletter and highlight their Facebook friend of the month. Friends also post information like a spate of hugger muggers operating in the Gay Village.

Twitter - www.twitter.com

Twitter is a social networking and 'microblogging' service that allows you answer the question 'What are you doing?' by sending short text messages 140 characters in length, called 'tweets', to your friends, or 'followers'. Twitter is ideal for tweeting about an event, telling people your news or linking to your website and to photos. It also allows you to 'follow' others, which is good for finding out updates and opportunities from organisations and funders. Other people on Twitter may 're-tweet' your tweet so other people can also view it.

Example of use: Followers will slowly build up as you follow other people and begin tweeting useful or interesting information. It is good to tweet at least twice a day and you can do this easily by pre-scheduling through tweetdeck or hootsuite (see below). The type of audience you will have on twitter will be different from Facebook and other medias you will have access to partners, MPs, Councillors and journalists.

Linkedin - www.linkedin.com
Linkedin is a business-related social networking site. It's mostly used for various forms of professional networking. The site allows the creation of a professional profile, similar to a CV. Users can maintain a contact list of other users with which they have had some form of professional relationship (called connections). A 'network' for the user is then created from these relationships. There are facilities on the site for interest groups and organisational profile pages.
Example of use: Although not particularly useful for directly marketing an organisation, it is useful for attracting professionals as trustees, volunteers or employees. It could also be useful in discussing issues with people who are from the same background/profession.

Foursquare - www.foursquare.com
Foursquare is a location based social network. It lets people 'check-in' to places they visit using their mobile phone, and read and leave tips for other people. In addition, there is a game aspect to the service – checking into different venues earns you points and badges (check in between 3am and 5:59am on a weekday to earn your 'school night' badge for example) to compete against others with. Check-ins are pushed out to the user's friends and can optionally be shared automatically on Facebook and Twitter.
Example: Last year Marks & Spencer donated £1 for each of its first 25,000 customers to check into one of its stores
(www.marksandspencer.com/Breakthrough-Foursquare-Promotion/b/681537031?extid=fb11).

Yammer - www.yammer.com
Yammer is a social network used for private communications within groups and networks. Anyone can create secure networks to collaborate. It's a great way to quickly share and discuss documents, images and videos across a group. It works in a similar way to Facebook but is for small groups to share documents and ideas.
Example of use: Macc are starting to use Yammer for networks so they can easily and safely share resources, documents and ideas.

Flickr - www.flickr.com
Photo hosting websites such as Flickr allow you to upload an image so that people can view it. Photo sharing websites tend to provide a dedicated space for you to display your photos in different ways, such as a slideshow.
Example of use: Sharing images of an event link to from the article or report.

Tweetdeck/Hootsuite - www.tweetdeck.com   http://hootsuite.com/
Tweetdeck and Hootsuite are 'social media dashboard' applications that faciliate interaction with Facebook, Twitter and other social networks. They allow you to interact and manage multiple accounts on different networks more easily. They simplify the process of uploading pictures and posting links and allow you to schedule updates on social networks in bulk in advance.

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Example: We use Tweetdeck to queue updates. You could take a couple of hours and schedule in a number of tweets for the next couple of months. This way content is always refreshed and it doesn't matter if you are on holiday. Don't rely solely on this though remember to scan your incoming tweets for good content to re-tweet and tweet timely content.

RSS

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds are a way of delivering frequently updated information on a website to one place where you can read them. RSS is often used for newsfeeds, blogs and podcast. The feed may contain the date-published, a summary or subject, and web links back to the site.
Example: You can subscribe to Manchester Community Central's RSS feeds on our News page: www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/news-and-events/voluntary-and-community-sector-news and Events page: www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/news-and-events/events

RSS Reader

An RSS Reader is a piece of software, or a website that will periodically check a list of chosen RSS feeds and reassemble the data from each into a list of articles. This can make it much easier and quicker to keep up to date with information being posted across multiple websites or blogs.
Examples of RSS readers:
Basic RSS reading features are available in Microsoft Outlook.
Google Reader (web-based) - www.google.com/reader
RSSOwl (software based – PC, Mac) - www.rssowl.org
Reeder (software based – Mac, iPad/iPhone) - http://reederapp.com

Web Portals

This is like an RSS Reader but allows you to add other stuff in too like weather forecasts, currency converters, films and games. You personalise the content of your browser to your own requirements. You can then see all your RSS feeds in one place every time you log onto the internet. They allow you to choose the type of news or articles you'd like to see, incorporating RSS feeds, or tweets from a Twitter user.
Examples of Web Portals:
iGoogle - www.google.com/ig
Excite - www.excite.co.uk
MSN - www.uk.msn.com
Yahoo! - www.uk.yahoo.com

Further help
Manchester Community Central – Tel: 0333 321 3021
Email: info@mcrcommunitycentral.org
Website: www.manchestercommunitycentral.org