

# **Date Your Donors: Woo and Wow with Social Media**

*(A Mini-Guide to Sharing and Socializing)*

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## About this guide:

Smart nonprofits are using social media as one channel for reaching and reconnecting with supporters. Building strong relationships with existing and potential donors is the key to long-term loyalty and increased donations. This guide is part of Network for Good's "Date Your Donors" series which focuses on practical tips for attracting, cultivating – and keeping! – active and loyal donors.

*This mini-guide was prepared by Caryn Stein, Network for Good's Senior Manager of Content Strategy. Caryn has focused on building online communities and creating effective engagement strategies since 1998.*

### *In this quick guide, you will learn:*

- **Why you must continue the conversation with your supporters for a great donor relationship (and how this helps your cause)**
- **Best practices and inspiration for continuing to engage your supporters through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and more**
- **Ideas to use now in your social media outreach**

# Why You Need to Keep the Conversation Going

Remember that group of people who signed up to receive your newsletter, liked you on Facebook or followed you on Twitter? Don't just leave them hanging. Now that they've expressed interest and (hopefully) you've said hello and introduced your organization, strike up a conversation with them beyond your annual appeal or email newsletter.

Think of it this way – who would you be more likely to help: a friend you regularly communicate with or a passing acquaintance who you only hear from in a holiday card (a holiday card that hits you up for money, no less)? By forging a relationship with this group, you strengthen your nonprofit's visibility and reputation while fostering a positive feeling that helps create more loyal donors and active supporters.

## 5 Key Rules for Socializing:

- 1. Don't Be Boring:** Yes, this should be obvious ... unfortunately too many nonprofits fall into jargon mode in their communications. Talk to your supporters like a real person and keep it to the point and interesting.
- 2. Don't Come on Too Strong:** Don't overwhelm with too many updates or too much information. This also means don't ask for too much too soon.
- 3. Be a Good Listener:** Conversations are two-way communications. Don't just give your audience a way to talk back: listen to what your fans and donors are saying, and be sure to respond.
- 4. It's Not All About You:** It's true that everyone loves to talk about themselves – that includes your donors. Showcase them as a part of your story, share the impact they have and invite them to chime in with their ideas and testimonials.
- 5. Be Yourself:** Your nonprofit should have a unique personality and point of view. Express this when communicating with your supporters – it helps them get to know you better and sets you apart from other organizations.

## Continue the Conversation with Social Media

Along with email, your website and direct mail, social media is another channel for communicating with your donors and telling the story of your work. Use platforms like Facebook and Twitter as tools for continuing the conversation and building a stronger relationship with your supporters.



When it comes to social media, your nonprofit doesn't need to be everywhere – but you should be where your supporters are and should use the platform that furthers your overall strategy. Decide how you can tie the right social components together to best achieve your goals and grow your relationship with your supporters.

Just as you would plan your organization's email outreach, take the same approach with your social media strategy. Create an editorial calendar to help schedule updates, topics and themes, and decide who on your team will be responsible for posting updates and interacting with your fans.

### 10 Simple Ideas for Social Media Sharing

1. Offer a sneak peek of an upcoming newsletter, event or program.
2. Show what goes on behind the scenes at your office.
3. Introduce a member of your staff.
4. Report from the scene of your work or event.
5. Share photos of your volunteers in action.
6. Connect your work to a news story, trend or meme.
7. Ask a trivia question related to your cause.
8. Share a testimonial from a beneficiary or supporter.
9. Choose a "fan of the day" and give them a shout out.
10. Celebrate a success story.

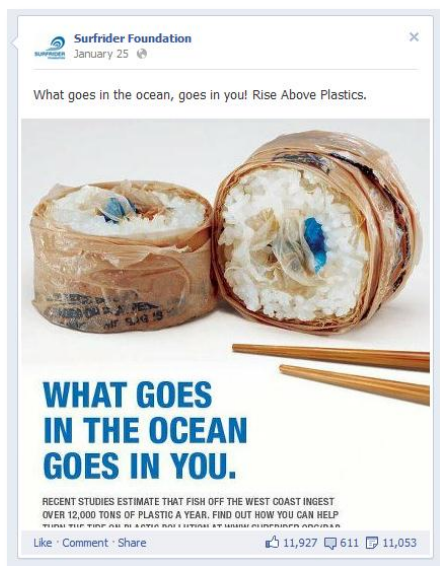


## Facebook: Be “Like”-able

Facebook is a daily destination for your supporters. Don’t be absent from their routine! This is a great way to interact with fans and showcase what you’re all about. The key is to provide plenty of opportunity for your supporters to join the party. Get more out of your Facebook posts with these guidelines:

- ✔ **Post Consistently:** Commit to posting at least once per day and post at a consistent time of day. Studies show that early morning or late afternoon updates have the best results.
- ✔ **But not too much:** Posting more than a few times a day may overwhelm your fans and cause them to tune you out.
- ✔ **Spark conversation and action:** Encourage conversation by posing questions, asking for input and responding to their comments.

- ✔ **Use Images:** Photos and video help your posts stand out. Use compelling images of the people and animals you impact to make an emotional connection and get more supporters to click, read and interact.
- ✔ **Encourage shares, likes and comments:** More comments, likes and shares for a piece of content improves the odds that your updates will be seen by more of your fans and their friends.



*Surfrider Foundation inspires comments and sharing with this provocative photo and message.*







*Arlington Life Shelter highlights a great behind-the-scenes moment, including a beloved volunteer and a hard-working staffer in this photo update.*



## Twitter: Dive into the Stream

On Twitter, your nonprofit can add value, respond in real-time and be a part of a larger conversation with supporters, like-minded organizations and activists. News updates, event-based information (such as live tweeting key moments from an event) and sharing related resources work well in this format. Some tips for making the most of your tweets:

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**Be in the moment:** Don't just "set it and forget it" on Twitter. Be timely and current with your updates and always be responsive to direct messages, mentions and replies!
- 
**Offer more:** Don't just repost the same content from your newsletters. Add bonus information, related resources and point them to the rest of the story.
- 
**Be part of the conversation:** Social media isn't meant to be a one-way megaphone. Interact with your followers, answer questions, offer resources and join in with your point of view.
- 
**Listen:** Watch for comments about your cause, organization and sector. Use this feedback to inform your outreach.



*Families Moving Forward shares a final tally from a product drive + a great photo of volunteers!*



*The New York Botanical Garden celebrates its fans by re-tweeting their comments and compliments.*



*EARN.org asks timely and relevant questions that followers love to answer.*





## Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube: Social + Visual

In a “skim and click” environment, eye-catching photos and engaging videos help your organization stand out. Whether you use Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube or another photo or video service, here are some things to keep in mind:

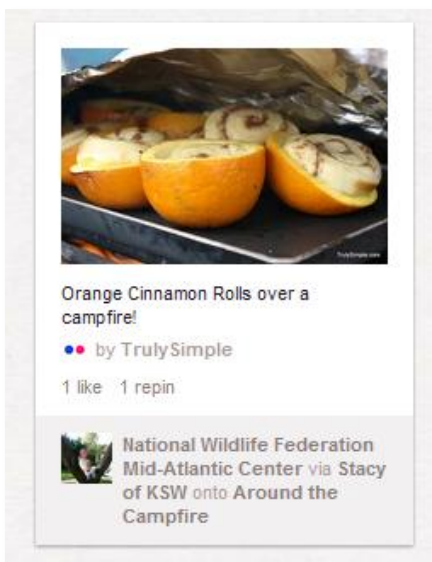
🌱 **Share the love:** Create compelling visual content that your fans will want to share. Don’t forget to share alike: sharing others’ photos and video is a good way to serve your audience and be a part of the larger social ecosystem.

🌱 **Meet their needs:** Whether you post photos of your beneficiaries or host a how-to video for emergency preparedness, resist the urge to insert your appeal and concentrate on informing, updating and delighting your fans with photos and video.

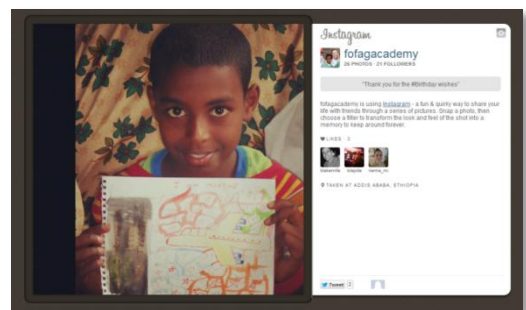
🌱 **Show your personality:** Don’t be afraid to show your true colors with humor, emotion and honesty. Don’t worry about being perfect, just be real.



*Detroit Symphony Orchestra created a video of patrons and supporters who share what the symphony has meant to them.*



*The National Wildlife Federation Mid-Atlantic Center understands that its audience loves outdoor activities, so sharing a campfire recipe is a “pin” win!*



*The Friends of Fresh and Green Academy uses Instagram to share photos of the families they help.*

## Remember:

- 🌱 Always continue to find ways to provide value to your audience.
- 🌱 There's no one-size-fits-all approach in social media, your outreach should reflect your culture and needs.
- 🌱 Talk less about your organization and statistics and more about your impact, the people you serve and those who make it possible.
- 🌱 Don't be afraid to show your personality by being creative, unique or using humor. People want to interact with other real people on social media, not faceless organizations.
- 🌱 Learn by listening to your supporters and others in the conversation; observe what type of updates work best for your nonprofit so you can build on your success.

## More Resources:

### Network for Good Premium Training

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