



Arts Management &
Technology Laboratory

Social Media Management Software: An Overview for Small Arts Organizations

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INTRODUCTION

Nearly three quarters of Americans online use social networks (Duggan, 2013). Social media has become an essential, indispensable component in interacting with constituents, informing the public about services, and monitoring impact. However, as stated in the *Harvard Business Review*, approximately 43% of organizations that utilize social media believe they are doing so ineffectively (Ennes, 2011). Organizations can address this problem through the establishment of a social media plan. However, while a social media plan is an essential part of effective social media practices, it loses value if it cannot be implemented successfully.

Smaller arts organizations do not always have the time, staffing, or resources to spend hours analyzing and updating social media in ways that align with a strategic plan. In these cases, social media management software has proven quite valuable. This software complements the clarity of a social media plan with efficiency and a constant source of data.

This white paper serves to provide smaller arts nonprofits with an introduction to the multiple types of social media management software available (focusing primarily on monitoring, analytics, and engagement software) and the effect they can have on an organization's ability to carry out a social media plan. Three affordable software products are discussed and reviewed based on their ability to carry out social media management practices: HootSuite, Sprout Social, and Buffer.

CREATING A SOCIAL MEDIA FRAMEWORK

For those organizations that have not created a social media guide and are ready to embark on one, the following section contains a list of factors included in a successful social media framework. In *The Networked Nonprofit*, Beth Kanter and Allison Fine write, "Tools will come and go, but strategy sustains organizations...using social media is a way of being more than a way of doing" (Kanter & Fine, 2010). A well-crafted social media framework should include not only a social media strategic plan, but also a social media style guide, and a social media handbook for day-to-day use.

Social Media Strategic Plan

The first piece of a successful social media framework is a strategic plan that articulates the organization's vision for its social media, and how that vision relates back to the mission and intended impact of the organization. In their session at the 2012 Nonprofit Technology Conference, the founders of Socialbrite stated that a social media strategic plan should include seven critical components: assessment of the organization's social media capabilities, goals for social media use, identification of online communities, proposed use of social tools and platforms, recommendations for expanded capabilities, competitive/peer analysis, and evaluation metrics (Lasica, 2012).

Social Media Style Guide

After the organization determines a strategy to guide its social media use, the next step is to establish a style guide. Similar to an

organization’s branding guide, the social media style guide stipulates the organization’s social media voice, including grammatical and stylistic guidelines.

An organization’s social media voice—its personality and tone when communicating with other social media users—should consider the number of people creating social media content as well as the specific person (or people) managing the account itself. If a large number of employees access the company account regularly, the social media voice may need to remain relatively neutral in order to remain consistent; too many individual voices may clutter the overall message the organization is trying to disseminate. However, if accounts are accessed by fewer people, then a more distinct tone may be able to emerge; fewer users often makes it easier for the organization’s social media voice to “stay in character.” The grammatical and stylistic guidelines outlined in the social media style guide should serve to reinforce and clarify the organization’s social media voice, and should evolve with the organization as its voice changes over time.

Social Media Handbook

A successful social media campaign is consistent and regular. Where the strategic plan articulates the organization’s vision for its social media and the style guide identifies the mechanics for creating the organization’s social media voice to achieve that vision, the social media handbook defines specific policies regarding social media use to reinforce the organization’s vision. This handbook could

Creating a Successful Social Media Plan	
Plan Component	Questions to Address
Assessment of social media capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time can the organization devote to social media? • How responsive are the organization’s constituents to online engagement?
Articulated goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the organization want to accomplish with social media? Will it have a positive effect on the organization’s intended impact?
Clearly identified online communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is paying attention to the organization’s online efforts? • Is there potential to broaden the organization’s market through social media efforts? • Who is accessible via social media that is not accessible offline?
Proposed use of social tools and platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What social media platforms will be used? • What kind of unique content can the organization offer on each platform? • How does proposed content relate to the overall goal of the specific social media platform? • Who has access to the company account(s)?
Recommendations for expanded capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What else can be accomplished through effective social media practices? • How can social media engagement relate back to the organization’s programming? • How could social media engagement affect fundraising?
Competitive/peer analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other organizations in the field are using social media effectively? How?
Evaluation metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the organization know if it has reached its goals? • What quantitative data can help to determine if goals are reached?

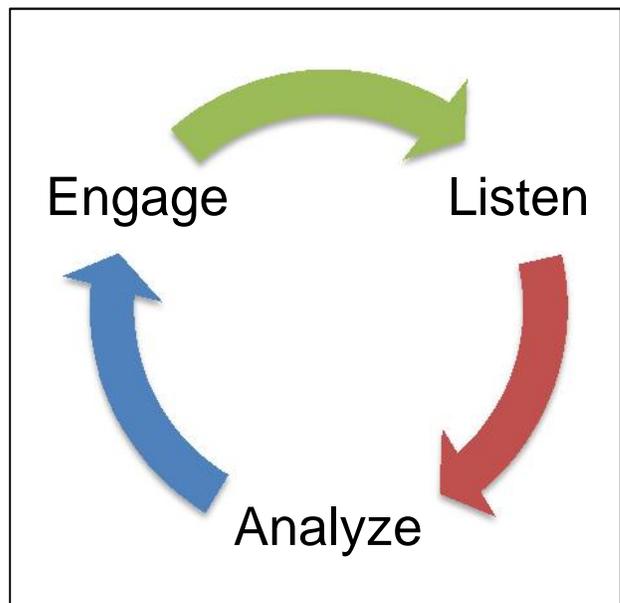
include a schedule determining when and how many times social media accounts are checked each day, or even an editorial calendar of when and what content is posted on each platform. The handbook should also include instructions on how to post and a chain of review, if applicable.

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

A comprehensive social media framework is only effective when it can be carried out efficiently. Many large arts organizations have allocated social media staff to maintain its accounts and interact with users, but smaller arts organizations do not always have the funding or resources to accommodate such personnel. For organizations where staff members maintain social media accounts in addition to performing other duties, the workload is ever growing. To manage these increasing demands and to help organizations utilize their social media more efficiently, several types of social media management software have emerged. These software fall into five types:

- **Monitoring Software:** Allows organizations to keep track of what is being said about the company online
- **Engagement Software:** Enables an organization to easily respond to all questions and thoughts posed across its social media channels
- **Social Marketing Software:** Customizes social media platforms to better fit the needs of the organization
- **Analytics Software:** Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of an organization's social media efforts
- **Social Influencer Software:** Assesses constituent interests for use in future organizational strategy and tactics

This paper focuses on three of these types of social media management software: monitoring, analytics, and engagement software. An organization's social media management occurs in a loop. First, it listens to (or, monitors) its constituents to learn of its reputation. Next, the organization analyzes this information to determine how it might affect future projects, marketing endeavors, and fundraising efforts. When the organization understands the data it has collected, it then engages and interacts with the public accordingly. This loop can exist in multiple speeds and many different times; what is most important is that it continues moving.



Monitoring Software

Monitoring software collects information online that pertains to an organization's reputation. For example, monitoring software can track uses of an organization's name or programs, company hashtags, and mentions of the organization's role in the public realm. Like a public relations representative, monitoring software keeps a close watch on the many moving parts that create an organization's online image.

Some social media platforms include monitoring capabilities for each account, such as Twitter does with its advanced search mechanism. However, these search tools usually only provide data in an unstructured form, without the ability to then analyze or measure.

Monitoring software quantifies this information, counting mentions, hashtags, and phrases, enabling an organization to better measure customer opinion. In addition, an organization may be discussed across many other corners of the Internet—for instance, on sites like Yelp and FourSquare. To stay abreast of each of these conversations requires additional search time. Successful monitoring software often goes beyond social media platforms alone to explore other online mentions of the organization.

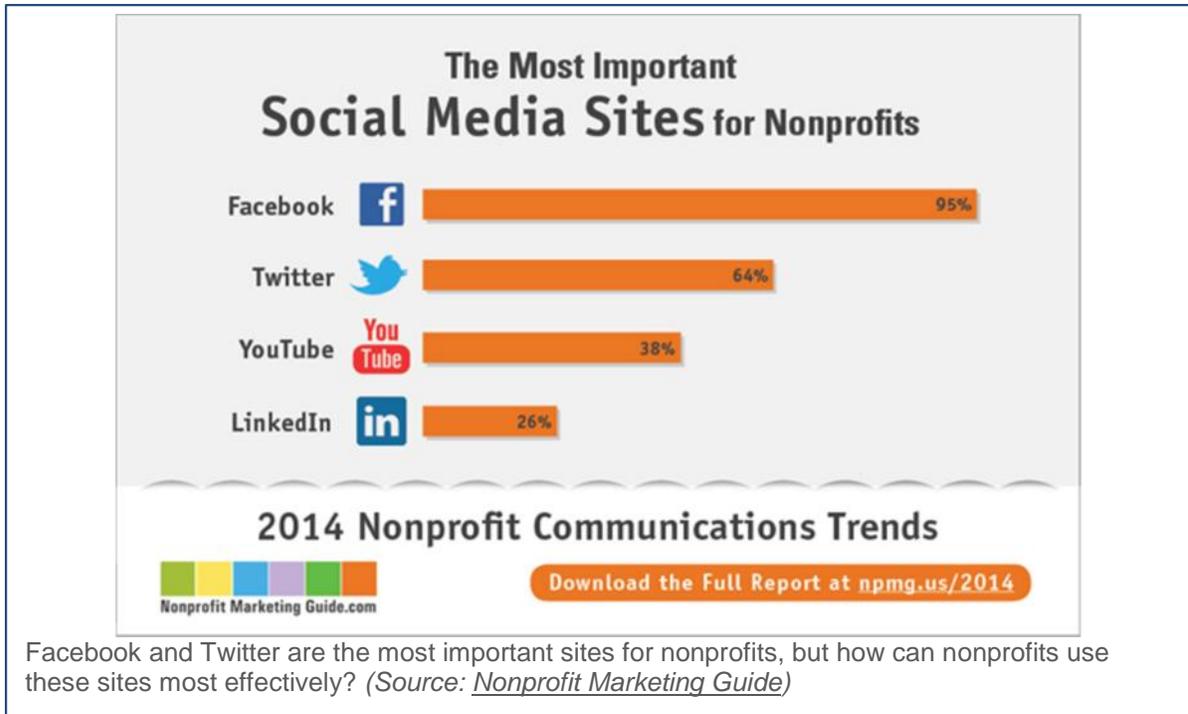
When selecting social media monitoring software, *Social Media Explorer* advises that suitable software should be able to answer the following questions:

- Who is saying what about my business (or brand) and how influential are they?

- Is what is being said about my business good, bad, or indifferent?
- What appears to be triggering negative comments or reviews?
- Where are my customers posting content about my business (what apps and websites)?
- How complete and accurate are my listings in online directories and review apps?
- What is being said about my competitors? How does my business compare or rank against them? (Berkowitz, 2013)

Analytics Software

Once monitoring data is gathered, the next step is to analyze that information. Mashable describes analytics as “the discovery and communication of meaningful patterns in data.” Effective social media analytics software should be able to accomplish both these tasks. It should collect relevant data, and it should present it to the user in a form that is comprehensible. Analytics software is inherently linked to monitoring software, and often the two emerge in one software package. As Amelia Northrup-Simpson writes in her AMTLab series *The Art of Social Media Analytics*, analytics software “is like a 24-hour focus group, answering many of the questions you may have about your audience as well as the questions you didn't think to ask” (Northrup, 2011). No one recipe exists to create perfect analytics data; relevant data, such as retweets and click-through rates, will vary for each arts organization. Still, Mashable does recommend



looking into the relevance of the following information (many of these apply to website traffic in addition to social media platforms):

- Time spent per page
- Retweets
- “Unfollows” and “defriends”
- Seven-day and 30-day inactive users
- Exit page/last page visited
- Human response lag

Engagement Software

After listening to what the public is saying online about an organization and analyzing the results of that information, it is time to take action.

Where monitoring software helps an organization listen to constituents, engagement software helps an organization contribute to social media conversations and respond to constituents in a clear and timely manner. When

an organization has a growing number of social media platforms, updating each one with unique content and answering all constituent concerns can take a large amount of time. Social media engagement software enables staff members to post on multiple social media platforms at once and to schedule automated posts. However, simultaneous and scheduled posting is only one of the useful components of social media engagement software. It also allows a social media manager to respond to constituents, follow conversations, and keep the organization’s profile relevant, all through one interface. Instead of conversing on Twitter, leaving Twitter to converse on Facebook, and so forth, social media managers can track simultaneous media conversations. When dealing with a medium like social media that never sleeps, the ability to interact in multiple places at once is vital.

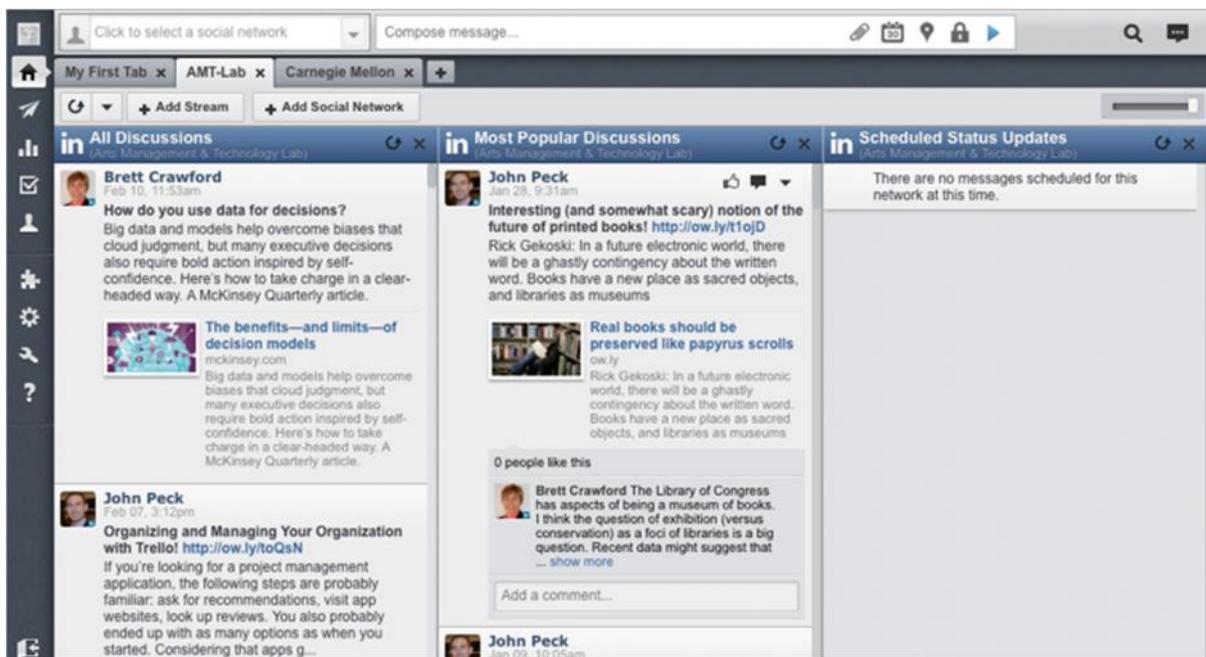
PRODUCT COMPARISONS

Of course, utilizing three different types of software for one strategic purpose can be prohibitively time-consuming. Software that combines all three of these tasks—monitoring, engagement, and analytics—is far more prudent. This paper explores three software options: HootSuite, Sprout Social, and Buffer. The number of social media software options available to nonprofit organizations increases each day. As social media priorities evolve and new technologies emerge, software options continue to multiply. The three software options considered here represent only a fraction of the selections available. Yet because these three are among the more affordable choices currently available, especially for smaller arts organizations, they are featured here.

HootSuite

One of the most affordable social media management software options on the market, HootSuite allows organizations to operate all of its social networks on one dashboard. An organization can create a profile for free and add up to five social network profiles onto a single dashboard. To create a dashboard with more than five social network profiles, the user must upgrade to a paid package, which begin at \$8.99/month. The dashboard employs a relatively simple, intuitive interface and allows a social media manager to keep track of an organization's multiple platforms in one place.

One of the more exciting features in HootSuite is the ability to incorporate many social networking sites. Some “apps” can only be



A sample dashboard in HootSuite

added by paying a monthly fee, but YouTube, Flickr, MailChimp, and WordPress (among many, many others) are available without any extra cost. Because many arts organizations have fewer than five social media profiles, the free version of HootSuite has great potential value, especially in terms of social media engagement. However, when it comes to analytics and monitoring, the Pro Package and Enterprise Package are far more thorough than

the free package. The free package comes with basic analytics capabilities, but reports are generated on a point system (i.e. some reports cost more points than others). HootSuite does, however, have the ability to generate detailed, in-depth reports on social media data, but at a price. For those arts organizations seeking more engagement options, HootSuite is a viable option but if the free package is selected, additional analytics software may be necessary.



Screen shot of a test report option in HootSuite

Sprout Social

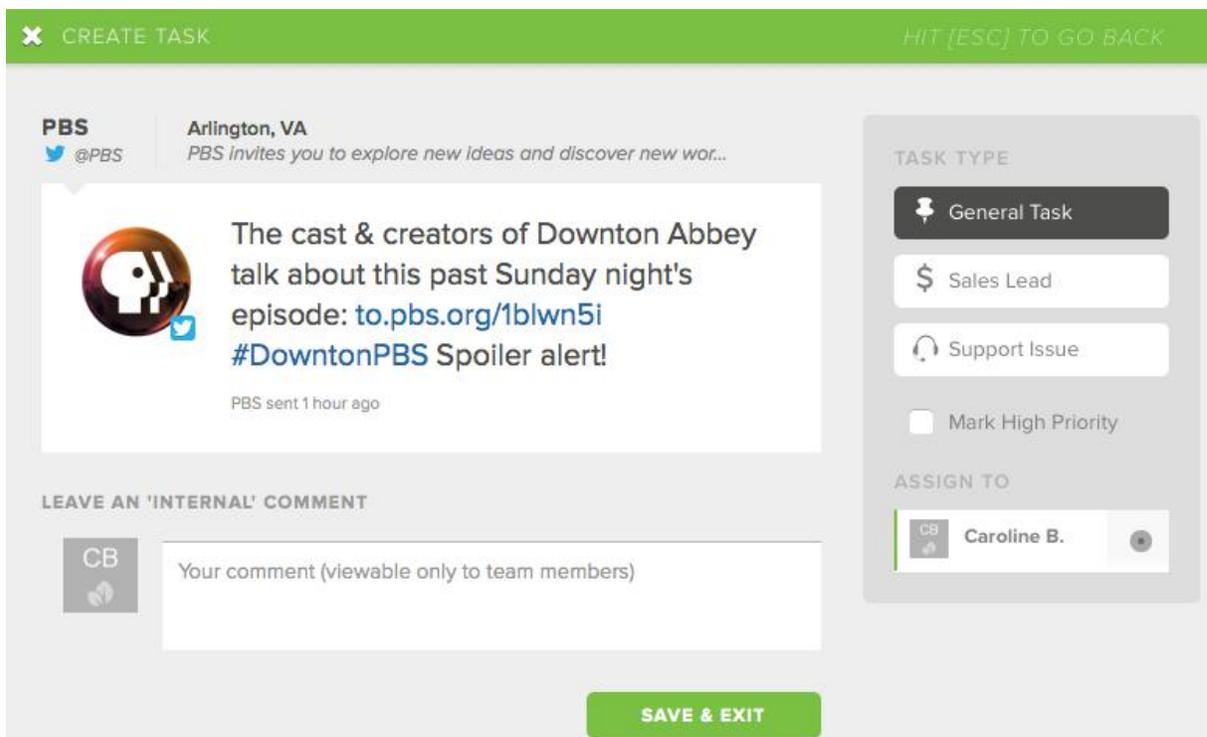
Of the social media management software featured here, Sprout Social is the most robust, providing many more features per package and much more accessible information. While it only covers Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, and Feedly, the information provided to the user is incomparable. While Sprout Social has engagement capabilities similar to that of

HootSuite, with message scheduling and multiple feeds on one dashboard, it differentiates itself through its analytics and team use capabilities.

When analyzing a Twitter account, Sprout Social not only allows users to view followers, follow feeds, and search phrases, but it also gives detailed information on user patterns and

trends. For example, the Discovery section contains a cleanup option to figure out which followers are relevant. In the Reports section, users can compare their own Twitter accounts to others outside the organization, an incredibly useful tool for competitor analysis.

Further, Sprout Social encourages interaction among the organization's social media team members. By allowing tasks related to social media posts to be assigned to specific team members, for example, Sprout Social has the ability to act as a project management tool in addition to its other capabilities.



Screen shots of the comparison report and assign task options in Sprout Social

Buffer

The newest of the three software packages presented here, Buffer is a social media engagement and analytics tool. It allows users to schedule posts as well as to view analytics data connected to those posts. However, it does not aggregate social media feeds the same way HootSuite or Sprout Social does. It does allow for consistent scheduling on multiple days, including the ability to assign certain days of the week and times of day that information is posted to accounts.

Buffer offers multiple plan options, including “The Awesome Plan,” which at only \$8.50 per month is significantly lower than the business packages (\$50-250/month). But The Awesome Plan provides no analytics. If an arts organization is looking simply for automated posting and scheduling, and not for analytics data, The Awesome Plan may be an option. Otherwise, it will need to budget for at least the lowest tier business option.

Every Mon, Wed, Fri New Posting Schedule

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

Post at these 4 times **Every Mon, Wed, Fri** :

🕒 09 : 58 AM

🕒 01 : 45 PM

🕒 05 : 49 PM

🕒 09 : 31 PM

Add Posting Time

A sample posting schedule in Buffer

The table on the following page provides a comparison of the three social media management software options introduced here, contrasting price, size, and scope.

Social Media Management Software Comparison Chart			
	HootSuite	Sprout Social	Buffer
Free version available?	Yes	No	No
Lower tier price	\$8.99/month	\$39 per user/month	\$50/month
Upper tier price	Depends on organization	\$99 per user/month	\$250/month
Discount available for nonprofit organizations?	Yes – 20% off monthly fees	Yes – 50% off monthly fees	No information published
Platforms included	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Wordpress	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Feedly	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn
Able to add other platforms?	Yes – App directory available (some carry monthly fee)	None known	No information published
Number of users included in lower tier package	10 members	Unlimited; pay per user	5 members

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the recognition among arts organizations that it is important to be methodical and deliberate in determining social media practices, allocating the time required to do so is often a challenge. In the current era of social media, the emphasis is on social intelligence, not just social presence. Constituent data that can be generated through social media is integral to measuring an arts organization’s impact and success. Social media management software collects the multifaceted features of an organization’s social

media platforms and places them into a single interface that combines monitoring, analysis, and engagement. By facilitating these multiple components of sound social media management, social media management software enables organizations to more efficiently and more effectively their online platforms. Moreover, as arts organizations start to grab onto big-picture data and social metrics, social media management software products hold high potential for strategic value across a range of price points.

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