MAKE IT SOCIAL

Tips & Tricks for
#SocialMedia Success
# CONTENTS

- **PREFACE** 1
- **INTRODUCTION** 3
- **PART 1: COMMUNITY** 9
  - COMMUNITY - GOALS 11
  - COMMUNITY - GROWTH 14
- **AUTISTICA CASE STUDY** 19
- **COMMUNITY CHECKLIST** 22
- **PART 2: ENGAGEMENT** 23
  - ENGAGEMENT - CONTENT 25
  - ENGAGEMENT - STRATEGY 28
- **BLISS CASE STUDY** 33
- **ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST** 36
- **PART 3: SOLICITATION** 37
  - REMINDER: THE THREE STEPS OF SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS 39
  - SOLICITATION - STRATEGY 40
  - SOLICITATION - GRATITUDE 44
- **ISLAMIC RELIEF CASE STUDY** 47
- **SOLICITATION CHECKLIST** 50
- **CREDITS** 51
THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT WE LIVE IN A RAPIDLY MOVING DIGITAL AGE. AN AGE IN WHICH ONE IN TEN MILLENNIALS WOULD RATHER GIVE UP THEIR FINGER THAN THEIR SMARTPHONE,¹ WHERE ONE-THIRD OF MARRIAGES STARTS OUT ONLINE,² AND WHERE WEBSITES, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND APPS ACCOUNT FOR £2.7 BILLION* OF ANNUAL DONATIONS IN THE UK ALONE.³

The above is a quote from the UK Government’s “Culture is Digital” report released in early 2018, building on their commitment to increase digital skills and digital participation and to unlock the power of data. The report recognised the potential of technology to reach out to new and existing audiences in light of its findings that the UK has an online audience of 50.4m people, 76% of adults have a smartphone, and that 4 in 5 use the internet daily or almost daily.⁴

As leaders of three socially-driven organisations, we firmly believe technology can, and must, be used as a force for good. We believe the opportunities and potential available through digital should excite and embolden social and environmental organisations and the people who power them - that this modern revolution should include people on the frontlines of social change, putting them centre stage.

Social and environmental organisations of all shapes, sizes, and remits are crying out for digital and social media support. This is why we are sharing #MakeItSocial with you - to highlight inspiring stories, to drive social impact, and to help your work rise above all the noise that is out there.

Since the first Social Misfits Media publication six years ago, a lot has changed across digital, with social media in particular receiving its fair share of negativity. From US Department for Education typos on Twitter to full-scale inquiries into how Facebook harvests and uses our data for commercial and political means. But there is also more hope than ever before - incredible, transformative organisations are harnessing the power of social media, despite the odds, and using digital platforms to build communities and audiences, start conversation and debate, and make a profound difference. The vital

---

¹ The online audience of the UK (76% of the UK population)

² £2.7 BILLION* of donations in the UK come from websites, social media, and apps

³ #MAKEITSOCIAL
function served by digital communities is changing the way we relate to charities, connecting more people than ever with their work - across borders, cultures, languages, and other traditional barriers.

76% of UK adults have a smartphone

No matter what level you’re at, we’re here to advocate for the positive power of social media. There is so much to be excited about, and a lot we can teach each other through sharing. Social media is still a relatively new frontier, but in barely a decade it’s changed everything about modern communication. Its very newness leaves masses of room for innovation - and we believe you’ll be rewarded if you make time to experiment with your own approach to online relationships. Even if you’ve been working in this space for years, we hope you’ll still find some useful refreshers here, something to remind you of all the amazing work being done through the digital resources available to us.

So come join us in learning from and supporting the incredible organisations - like yourselves - that are making the world a better place. Let us know what you think by tagging us as you go forth and #MakeItSocial!

Carlos Miranda
CEO
Social Misfits Media
www.socialmisfitsmedia.com
@MisfitsMedia

Vinay Nair
CEO & Co-Founder
Lightful
www.lightful.com
@Lightful

Peter Lewis
Chief Executive
The Institute of Fundraising
www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk
@IoFTweets

1.  https://www.mirror.co.uk/science/one-ten-millennials-would-lose-12835452
2.  https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/online-dating-statistics-bumble
INTRODUCTION

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?
At Social Misfits Media, we know all about the social media blues. It can feel like an impossible task to keep up with the many different platforms and algorithms, with goalposts that are always moving, and little to no obvious reward for your efforts.

But despite the challenges of such a fast-moving, ever-changing medium, the charities and non-profits we are fortunate to work with have shown us time and again that they are capable of making astonishing progress beyond their starting point. And if there’s one lesson we want to drive home, it’s that social media needn’t be off-putting based on lack of budget. Yes, it requires a time investment; yes, it takes a bit of playing around to find your groove. But the best thing about social media is that you can do so much with so little. You don’t need a huge team, a huge budget, or expert digital skills. And that’s precisely what we want to highlight by producing this guide.

Social media is here to stay – it’s one of the primary reasons people use the internet worldwide.¹ We’ve written this guide to meet the needs of several audiences because we feel valuable knowledge should be shared. This includes the volunteer at a small or new organisation that doesn’t have the resources or capacity to hire anyone full-time. It also includes the social media manager at a medium-sized organisation, whose role it is to create and share content online, as well as a manager in a larger charity, who follows industry best practice, but could do with some inspiration.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE
To make it easier to digest, this guide is divided into three main sections - the fundamental aspects of social media success.

• Part one is Community: what it means, how to find your people, and where to look for them.

• Part two is Engagement: once you’ve found your audience, what do you share with them? In this section we feature top tips about content, how to measure it effectively, and how to tell stories in an exciting way - even if you’re on a tight budget.

• Part three is Solicitation: when and how should you be asking for something, what should you be asking, and how can you ensure the process is smooth?

You’ll also find a top 10 checklist accompanying each section, summarising the key actions you can take. This is designed to be cut or printed out, perhaps put up on your wall at work. And you’ll read case studies from three inspiring UK charities - Autistica, Bliss, and Islamic Relief - who are doing great things with social media, and whose approaches we can all learn from.

We hope that you’ll refer to this guide again and again as your social media activities grow. Social media is a long game, but we don’t think that should put you off doing something right now. With #MakeItSocial, we aim to include actionable advice for both long-term strategy and day-to-day online activity.
WHY WE WROTE THIS GUIDE

It's been six years since we wrote our very first Social Misfits Media guide, “About That First Tweet”, and a lot has changed since then. New social media platforms have emerged, GDPR has had major implications for the charity sector in Europe, and movements like #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo have dramatically shaped the digital landscape. More than ever before, content shared online has led to activism, and has brought key issues to the mainstream, as people share new perspectives, discussions, and voices more widely.

Yet social media is also under greater scrutiny than ever before. Its role in negative political campaigns across the world, widespread online abuse, and its use even in warfare and terrorism are just some of the things that have exposed its potential to harm not just individuals, but society as a whole. Fears have grown around social media “bubbles” where we only see content from people we agree with, and its link to cyber-bullying and negative self-image presents fresh obstacles for young people to navigate. There’s undoubtedly a dark side to social media, and these are not issues to be taken lightly.

Yet for non-profits especially, it is still the most far-reaching, efficient, and resource-friendly way to reach potential supporters in the early 21st century. With nearly three billion active social media users worldwide², we believe social media’s astonishing ability to connect people with common interests across borders, languages, and cultures is a strength worth defending. We’ve seen our clients use it in ways that are utterly transformative for them and the people they serve, and we all know about the positive impact of a charitable campaign that goes viral. In this way, the effects of social media on society are profound and invaluable.

Primarily, social media should be about building something: a community of people with whom you share values and goals. It has the capacity to change the world and bring people together over issues they care about, no matter how niche. It can help stigmatised people feel less alone, or bring an important issue to public attention. It’s this community element we want to emphasise, and that we see our clients use so effectively. It can be the primary driver in creating and sustaining long-term relationships with supporters and donors. It makes organisations and issues visible.

We’ve learned a lot in six years, and undoubtedly, social media remains a new frontier with a lot of problems. But it’s this very openness that creates unparalleled opportunities for experimentation. You can see social media as an amazing toolbox that you can open and search through to suit your purposes. You don’t have to use every single item in that toolbox – but if you’re not using it at all, you’re probably missing out.

This raises some important questions, which we want to help answer. In such a climate, how can organisations best use social media for good? With social media algorithms constantly shifting and evolving, how can charities ensure they remain relevant, meet their organisational...
and financial targets, and stay front of mind? What role does digital play in their organisation, and how well is it integrated with a wider marketing, fundraising, advocacy and communications strategy?

As we said, we believe building a strong community is at the heart of this. Your social media and digital presence should be about finding the people important to you, growing your audience, and nurturing your supporters. In order to make this happen, developing compelling content and talking to your community is key.

Once you have those relationships, it’s about taking your supporters on the next step with you, whether that’s through raising funds, signing petitions, or growing your volunteer base – driving your desired action.

This is why #MakeItSocial is about three things: Community, Engagement, and Solicitation. In order for charities, non-profits and foundations to thrive in the here and now, they need to be making connections in real life and online.

Whenever we run workshops and training sessions, we always encourage participants to approach their social media presence by following the same etiquette as you would at a dinner party. The first thing is to not constantly talk about yourself – nobody wants to sit next to that guy. The second is to engage with the person you’re talking to – what are they interested in, and do you have anything you can add to that subject? The third is to explore – you heard that someone on the other side of the room is an expert in a subject you want to know more about, so you make a note to go up to them later. We want to see organisations thinking about their online interactions in the same way.

Over the past six years we’ve had the pleasure of working with some incredibly dynamic organisations. In terms of their scope and focus areas, they couldn’t be more different – from animal sanctuaries and human rights activists, to environmental groups and grassroots community organisations. What unites them is the challenges that they come to us with – the desire for engaged, passionate, loyal communities; compelling and creative content; and knowing when and how to make “the ask”.

This guide is about your online audience. Community building is the most important thing you will be doing on social media, and we want to see more charities and non-profits improve how they identify their target audiences, build up a presence, and ask their supporters to take action on their behalf. Our goal is to show social good organisations that they have access to the tools they need to approach their digital activity creatively. What many charities, non-profits, and foundations might lack in resource and funding, they make up for in powerful, life-affirming stories of social change. It’s not necessarily about the size of your budget, or the capacity in-house, but what you do with it. We hope you’ll find inspiration in these pages.

SEVERAL YEARS ON: WHAT’S DIFFERENT ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA USE TODAY?

In our third publication, “Friends with Money”, we surveyed 100 charitable organisations in the UK about which platforms they had a presence on. Since then, we’ve seen that most charities have active presences on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and this is something we would recommend – to have a presence on one, if not all.

We’ve surveyed another 100, several years later, and many of the key players have stayed the same. To the three initial platforms we can add Instagram (which was bought by Facebook in 2012 after huge growth) and LinkedIn.

The graphs on the following page are taken from the results of our latest survey.
We can see that our 100 respondents are most present on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram—but other, smaller platforms are being used, too. Having a presence on a diverse array of platforms is important.

### WHAT SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE A PRESENCE ON?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linkedin</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reddit</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitch</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can see from the pie chart below that over three-quarters of our respondents report posting at least once per week, with most posting a lot more than that. We’re pleased to see this prioritisation of frequent posting, a key element of social media use.

### HOW OFTEN DO YOU ACTIVELY POST CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

- **Very Frequently** (5+ times a week): 44.44%
- **Frequently** (3+ times a week): 33.33%
- **Not frequently** (1+ time a week): 15.15%
- **Almost never** (less than 1 time a week): 7.07%

Sadly, we still have some way to go before social media becomes baked into organisations’ wider strategy—which we know from our own work is how you get the best results. But it’s looking promising, with more organisations recognising the intrinsic value of social media to their overall approach since our last survey.

### HOW WELL IS YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE INTEGRATED INTO YOUR OVERALL FUNDRAISING?

- **Not at all integrated**: 14%
- **Not very integrated**: 27%
- **Somewhat integrated**: 45%
- **Very integrated**: 14%
WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THESE CHARTS?

As the graph above shows, the “big four” plus LinkedIn dominate. These are also the most popular social media channels for personal use, so it shows that our surveyed charities are following best practice and meeting people where they’re already at. We’ll go into much more detail about platforms in the Community section of #MakeItSocial. Using LinkedIn, as reported by our friends at Autistica, has become an indispensable part of their organisational culture and has led to real wins for the charity (read more in our case studies section).

We can also see that 44.4% of our respondents post more than five times per week on social media, with a further one-third of them posting more than three times per day - which is great news from our perspective. Posting regular, high quality content is essential to keeping your audience interested and engaged. We discuss this at length in the Engagement section of this report, so head there for our best tips.

Finally, we can observe that fully-integrated social media and marketing/fundraising strategies are still some way off for many charities. We know that this is one of the hardest things to pin down, because it requires effort on the part of all members of your team. However, there’s been a big improvement since 2014, when we first asked the question in our “Friends With Money” guide: today, some 41% of respondents report being either “not at all integrated” (14%) or “not very integrated” (27%), compared with 53% (31% and 22%) back in 2013. We’re happy to see an upward trend in the “somewhat integrated” (39% to 45%) and “very integrated” (8% to 14%) categories, too. So keep up the good work!

PART 1: COMMUNITY

Your community is, without a doubt, your most powerful asset. Your supporters, beneficiaries and staff are what adds the fuel to your fire, and social media and digital is a powerful way to reach a wide and diverse audience. This section is all about finding those people.

Building a strong, committed community is a great undertaking. It’s not going to happen overnight, and it requires a robust and thoughtful strategy. There’s no one-size-fits-all approach to growing your community online - but it doesn’t have to be all about the size of the investment, whether that’s time or money. Processes can be automated, and while social media can be more art than science, there are a few best practice tips that you can begin to implement immediately - and you’ll find all these in this section.

Our case study for stellar community building is Autistica, a charity for people with autism and autism-related research. “You always need to be building your audiences, and you need to build it through your perspective,” says Sarah Bissell, Director of Fundraising at the charity. “Think about your audiences - where are they? Where do they want to see things?”

While many organisations might only have one member of staff (or even part of a volunteer role) dedicated to managing social media, it’s important to realise that success is down to all departments and facets of the organisation communicating with each other effectively.

Community building is the absolute building blocks of your organisation. Without it, everything else is immaterial. Ideally, it should form the basis of your strategy from day one, but if you haven’t been able to focus on it, remember that it’s never too late to start - and the best thing about being a charity or non-profit is that you’ve almost certainly already got an existing community you can tap into. There’s a whole group of people out there who already support you - and many more you just haven’t connected with yet.

PART 2: ENGAGEMENT

Once you have identified your target audiences, you need to figure out how to engage them, and take them on a journey. You know what you want from them, but equally important is knowing what they will want from you - what would motivate them? Excite them? Inspire them? Inform them? This section aims to address these questions.

Valuable interactions and great content make up what we mean by engagement, and you’ll need both. Success on social media is transactional, and it’s important to keep that at the front of your mind when putting together a campaign.

Interaction isn’t just reposting others’ content or liking a post. It’s also having conversations one-on-one with...
key influencers and supporters, and having direct interactions within the community you’ve helped create.

Our case study for high audience engagement is Bliss, a UK charity for premature babies and their families. “As an organisation, we recognise that social isn’t just a broadcasting platform, but a place for community, and that you can co-create content with your audience,” Gemma Collins-Ellis, Communications Manager at Bliss, told us. In terms of content, “almost anything contributed by the community works well. People who have a platform to share their experiences feel represented. Things that combine multiple opinions, like lists of tips, work well because it’s peer-to-peer information.”

Our case study for their innovative approach to solicitation is Islamic Relief. Interim UK Director Tufail Hussain told us: “I have personal relationships with five to 10 major donors that I see as friends, and I engage with them in that way. It’s all incredibly authentic. That’s why we started going to the field, doing Facebook Lives from there, showing people that we are delivering aid on the ground. It’s almost like we’re taking the donor with us on the journey.” You can read our full Q&A with Islamic Relief in this section.

In an ideal world, at this point of the journey you are so inspired by what we’ve shared in the Community and Engagement sections that you’ve heeded all our advice to the letter. The community is strong, you’re interacting regularly with them, your content is spot on – but the ask isn’t quite there yet. How can you bridge that part of the journey, and transform your creative assets into support for your organisation? That’s where our Solicitation section comes in.

In our digital fundraising guide, “Friends with Money”, we broke down the fundraising process into four stages, and it’s something we wanted to revisit in #MakeItSocial.

The first is identification – knowing who you are trying to target, and why. For the purposes of #MakeItSocial, we focus our efforts on our communities and personas.

The second is cultivation – the second stage is when you engage your audiences and personas in the places where they are active.

The third is solicitation, but we also want to include the fourth – acknowledgment – as part of solicitation for the purposes of this guide. This is because these two stages are a crucial part of fundraising success on social media. We want to encourage you to always be thinking about the next step on the journey with your supporters. Your relationship doesn’t end after they’ve run the marathon for you - you want to thank them, acknowledge their donation - and in a year’s time, when they’re thinking that maybe they might sign up for it again, you’ll be the first organisation they think of.

In #MakeItSocial, we hope to inspire, and provide a compelling case for a lively, interactive social media presence. Social media use is a journey without a final destination, and with a good strategy in place you’ll be hitting many of the short-term targets you set while also contributing to your organisation’s broader ambitions.

There’s no overnight fix for creating a great social media presence, but we hope to show that you can do a lot with just a few resources. We’ve put #MakeItSocial together with the aim of sharing our top tips and step-by-step advice that we hope will help you, too. We’d love to be a part of your journeys - so be sure to reach out to us and let us know what you think. We love to hear your stories, celebrate successes, share findings and hear about the challenges - so get in touch at @MisfitsMedia using #MakeItSocial.

LINKS
2. [https://lightful.com/blog/social-media/audience-even-social-media/](https://lightful.com/blog/social-media/audience-even-social-media/)
PART 1
COMMUNITY
COMMUNITY

AT SOCIAL MISFITS MEDIA, WE SEE THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL. NOWADAYS IT’S ONE OF THE PRIMARY WAYS IN WHICH PEOPLE COME ACROSS A CAUSE, AND THERE’S AN EXPECTATION, ESPECIALLY FROM YOUNGER GENERATIONS, THAT THEY’LL BE ABLE TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO FOLLOW ORGANISATIONS THEY’RE INTERESTED IN. IN TODAY’S AGE OF RAPID INFORMATION SHARING AND MOBILE-FIRST MENTALITIES, THERE’S NO BETTER WAY FOR CHARITIES AND NON-PROFITS TO GET THEIR MESSAGE OUT THERE.

From the start, we believe growing and retaining a strong community should be at the heart of your digital strategy. By creating compelling content and sharing it on social media, you can reach those people who are most likely to support your work. We want to show you how, with a bit of time and effort, you can nurture these relationships, build loyalty, and create a base of committed advocates who share your values.

It may seem daunting when you’re first starting out, or if your current approach to social media is a little haphazard.

Experience tells us that charities who know their audiences well are rewarded with the most faithful followers. Identifying who supports you and what matters to them will enable you to create content they will share, remember, and take the time to seek out.

Good content - in the form of campaigns, images, infographics, blog posts, podcasts, videos, and more - needs to be backed up by a robust, well thought-out strategy with clear goals. Read on for our best advice about defining aims, deciding who you want to reach, and building your community.

THIS SEEMS LIKE A LOT TO TAKE IN! REMIND ME WHAT A SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL STRATEGY IS.

The word “strategy” can send shivers down anyone’s spine, and you may picture endless meetings and headaches ahead. But a strategy can be very simple, something as short as a one-page document of priorities, or a checklist you can pin on your wall - like the ones you’ll find at the end of the Community, Engagement, and Solicitation sections in #MakeItSocial.

All a strategy really needs to consist of is the following information, in one place:

• WHAT: your objectives, and what you want to measure
• WHO: how you will collaborate and delegate within your team
• WHERE: which platforms and channels you will use
• HOW: your audience via the use of personas (we’ll define this later on in this section)

And what about the nuts and bolts of a social media or digital presence? Well, this commonly consists of a presence on:

• The most popular channels: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn
• More niche platforms such as Twitch (for gamers), Pinterest (for creatives), and SoundCloud for audio
• Mobile apps such as WhatsApp and Snapchat
• A blog (using free platforms like WordPress, Wix, Medium, or Tumblr), a regular newsletter (using a free, simple platform such as MailChimp), or a podcast (every modern smartphone has an audio recording function, so you don’t necessarily need high-tech equipment)
FIRST THINGS FIRST: SET ACHIEVABLE GOALS

One of the most important aspects of any social media strategy is having clearly defined goals. Being able to measure progress is essential to seeing where your efforts are paying off, especially as it requires a time investment from your team.

From the beginning, you should determine your goals by thinking about why you want to use social media – beyond the fact that you feel you should! What will it add to your organisation? Who is it you want to interact with and why? Which bits of your organisation do you wish to highlight? And how will it help you achieve your broader goals?

IT’S A TEAM EFFORT

Like with all stages of the social media journey, it’s a good idea to involve the whole team when approaching this question. The way your organisation looks and sounds isn’t just something for the communications, digital, or marketing departments to think about. Even if you have a small team, or are mostly run by volunteers, more heads means more ideas – and more angles from which to view your strategy. It also boosts team morale for everyone to know your social media efforts are paying off.

For example, your fundraising team might have a specific aim to increase individual donations; or perhaps your volunteer coordinator hopes to recruit more people locally. And what about whoever oversees your research, who might hope that social media can help improve and widen responses to surveys? Consider recording people’s ideas on big sheets of paper which you can pin up in the office, if you have one. Send regular progress updates to everyone, highlighting what’s working well or any major wins – such as getting an endorsement from a key influencer’s account.

Social Misfits Media’s Senior Manager, Hannah Donald, knows the importance of getting everyone on board. “Every member of the team needs to see that goal-setting benefits them,” she says. “Winning a big funding bid, for example, or a key celebrity endorsement, makes everybody’s work easier. You can obviously do more if you have a bigger budget, and getting positive attention from the public encourages employees and volunteers to talk about their work in everyday life, or on their own social media channels, such as LinkedIn or Facebook. The benefits are shared across the whole team.”

We heard a similar response from the people behind Autistica, the award-winning UK charity that campaigns for research on autism and related conditions, which you can check out in the case study later on in this section.

The key takeaway is to involve your team and, like Autistica, make it part of your organisational culture for people to share professional successes on personal
accounts. Perhaps your staff don’t want to do this on Facebook, but if that’s the case, try encouraging LinkedIn or Twitter instead – they are better suited to professional purposes and your content will probably sit more naturally on these platforms.

AIM WITHIN REACH

Goals not only need to be clear, but also need to be achievable. Think about what is desirable and manageable for your organisation. Don’t expect too much within too short a timeframe, and remember your organisation’s relationship to social media is ongoing. You won’t get everything just right the first time, and you can always try again.

It’s better to have small, workable successes – such as a modest but consistent, highly engaged follower increase on Twitter – that can be built upon. Not all of us have millions of Instagram followers or a huge budget to work with, but that doesn’t stop you making real progress if you follow a good plan.

For social media purposes, goals should always be:

- Clearly defined;
- Measurable;
- Set to a particular timeframe.

And you should ask yourself these three questions:

1. Do I have clear social media targets that fit my organisation’s overall goals?
2. Does everybody on my team buy into them?
3. Are they realistic?

FROM GOALS TO ACTIONS

To use a specific example, let’s say your research team needs a minimum of 1,000 responses to a survey about people’s eating habits in a particular borough of London, within the next three months. So that’s the desired result, the goal. It’s clearly defined, measurable, and has a particular timeframe. It’s realistic, and everyone on the team understands its significance.

The next step is to figure out the actions you can take to achieve that goal. For this example, you could reach that 1,000 minimum target by:

- Posting once per day for 90 days using a clear call to action (CTA), i.e. “click here to take our anonymous survey”
- Reaching more people with a £100 click-to-site, geo-targeted ad campaign on Facebook or Google
- Offering a token of appreciation to respondents, such as a £10 donation to a charity of their choice

HELP! I’M NEW TO SOCIAL MEDIA. HOW DO I KNOW WHAT MY ORGANISATION’S GOALS SHOULD BE?

We know many organisations struggle to use social media and keep it updated regularly. A lively presence requires upkeep, no doubt, but the key thing to remember is that you can achieve a lot with a little time investment, as long as you have clear goals and a well-thought-out strategy. A strong social media strategy can complement, support, and even lead any organisation - no matter how new, old, small, or large.

Create your goals by making a list of all the ways you know social media is useful. For example, it offers diverse ways of:

- Engaging with current supporters and attracting new ones
- Mobilising volunteers
- Raising awareness
- Offering updates on your work
- Contributing your expertise to wider debates

How might that work for you? You need to think about your visual identity, tone of voice, messaging, and timing (schedule), and then come up with a plan. Follow the checklist below and remember - start simple and keep it doable!

REMINDER CHECKLIST

- Decide what you and your colleagues want to achieve, and how social media can help you
- Ask yourselves the important questions: is everyone on board, and are these goals appropriate and realistic for your organisation?
- Set goals that are clearly defined, measurable, and within a set timeframe
- Regularly check progress using free analytics tools
- Make tweaks and experiment with different ways of doing things to optimise ROI
MEASURING PROGRESS

Once you’ve implemented your plan, it’s important to check in regularly to see that it’s working. Do you need to up your ad spend to reach more people? Are clicks converting into responses? Are people abandoning the survey partway through?

Most social media platforms have free, in-built analytics functions, and you can use these to check metrics such as post reach, post engagement, link clicks, and best time of day to post. If you want a more detailed breakdown, you could also invest in paid-for tools such as those offered by our sister company Lightful. They have created a range of tools for scheduling posts, finding high-resolution images, and building stories. We’ll also talk more about analytics in the Solicitation section of #MakeItSocial.

WHAT IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG?

Bad decisions, faux-pas, getting someone’s name wrong – as with real-life scenarios, there are embarrassing and sometimes damaging consequences to making mistakes on social media. It happens to almost everyone at some point.

The good news is that the internet has a short attention span – the speed of the news cycle, thanks to digital and social media, means there’s a constant churn of stories and people quickly move on to the next thing. The bad news is, it has a long memory – anything you put up online is there forever, and even a decades-old transgression can be unearthed and used as ammunition against you or your organisation in the present day.

Understandably, this leads many charities and non-profits to exercise caution in their online activities. The best line of defence is to do your homework and to proof-read all aspects of your digital communications before they go live. This is especially important during “asks” (read more in the Solicitation section), or if you’re dealing with emotionally-charged or sensitive topics.

Before responding to any accusations made in public view, you should also take some time to figure out the difference between someone with a genuine reason to complain, and someone who’s just being provocative for the sake of a reaction. You don’t want to waste time being baited into bad faith debates when you could be helping someone with a real query.

Beyond that, it’s about having a robust response system in place. Particularly with large organisations, where more than one person is managing social media, it’s important that any negativity is dealt with consistently and officially. Advise your staff and volunteers not to respond via their private accounts, even if they feel moved to defend the organisation. They could make themselves vulnerable to personal attacks.

Aside from any mistakes coming from your own side, there’s the charity sector as a whole to think of. It’s no stranger to scandal, and sometimes your organisation can get caught up in the ensuing storm of disapproval. Consider how your social media posts can be amended in response to an occurrence like this, or how you can turn it to your advantage.

There’s no watertight way to avoid the negativity that can come as a result of online blunders or criticism of charities – but it’s not totally out of your control. The most important thing is to futureproof yourself against backlashes with a strong, in-built response policy. And remember – charities and non-profits survive public reproach all the time! Take a deep breath, make a note of any valid criticisms, and learn for next time.

DON’T EXPECT RESULTS OVERNIGHT...

Social media is not a magic bullet and spending lots of money on ad campaigns alone won’t get you very far. “Social media algorithms are always changing and increasingly favour pages and accounts with high engagement rates, not number of likes or followers,” says Social Misfits Media’s Hannah Donald. She therefore recommends making engagement your most important key performance indicator (KPI).

... BUT HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOUR STRATEGY

There are never any guarantees with social media, but by posting strong, consistent content that reflects your organisation’s ethos and aims, you will be following best practice, and you will learn what works well and what doesn’t. Setting goals is the essential first step to developing a great social media strategy. We’ll talk about how you can build your community in the following pages.
COMMUNITY - GROWTH

GROWING YOUR COMMUNITY

After you have set your social media targets, you can move on to the next important stage: growing your community. This is essential for any social media strategy to work long-term, and can be a measurable goal in itself.

It's always better to go for quality over quantity. It may look impressive at first glance to have 10,000 Twitter followers, but in the past few years, we've seen a shift towards prioritising community engagement rather than the number of followers, which is a welcome change.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY?

Your community are people who follow and support your activities, and who can be relied upon to take action on your behalf. For non-profits, that might mean you asking your community to retweet posts in solidarity, make a donation, or contact their political representatives to argue your case.

HAVING A PRESENCE ON MULTIPLE PLATFORMS

Many non-profits use Facebook and WhatsApp groups to coordinate volunteer and fundraising activities, and it's great to see organisations using the platforms effectively in this way.

However, just as organisations should diversify their fundraising streams, so they should approach digital and social media. How do you know if a platform is right for you? Which audiences or personas are you interacting with on which platforms? While we have always encouraged organisations to focus on quality, rather than quantity, we also advocate taking a multi-pronged approach.

“WHILE WE HAVE ALWAYS ENCOURAGED ORGANISATIONS TO FOCUS ON QUALITY, RATHER THAN QUANTITY, WE ALSO ADVOCATE TAKING A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH”

We are always trying to get our clients to think differently, and while a large platform might be incredibly appealing, it might not be the most effective way to reach a new audience - in fact, it may require a great deal of time and money.

BEYOND THE “BIG FOUR”: ALTERNATIVE PLATFORMS

Most people have a basic familiarity with the “big four” social platforms - that is Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube - and to a certain extent, we can add LinkedIn. But there are loads of other, smaller social media platforms you can explore, especially if your organisation fits into the niches they serve. Examples include Pinterest if your followers appreciate beautiful visuals, Reddit for having informal conversations, and Medium for blogging and text-based knowledge-sharing.

Finding potential supporters through less obvious social media platforms can be a key component of your growth plan. They may have a smaller market share, but the
bonus of using such platforms is that users tend to be more committed to their particular interests, which can translate into stronger support for the causes they care about. Big social platforms have broad appeal, but smaller platforms attract people who’ve already taken the time to seek out a different kind of online community.

By knowing who your audiences are, you’re able to map out more niche communities, where the space isn’t as saturated. It will require a little creativity, and strong relationships will need to be built, but speaking to a relevant audience on a platform they are already engaged with often leads to incredible results.

**FINDING YOUR TRIBE**

Remember, social media is a largely free resource. You don’t have to invest any money, although as we know it does require some time, and as we see above, highly targeted boosted posts really pay off. But even without that, a little research goes a long way. You can make the most of your limited time by identifying ways to get involved in broader conversations and raise your profile.

Keep an eye on trending hashtags throughout the day or week, and make use of those that correspond with your message or that are used regularly in your area of interest. Set up a Google alert to monitor the news for stories relevant to your cause, then contextualise them by adding a comment or opinion from your organisation’s particular angle. Search for related pages, groups, and blogs on Facebook and LinkedIn, and take note of who’s posting well-received content. Who are your people listening to?

Endorsing content from other organisations can help build relationships with them, but you should also be having conversations with individuals who might be interested in your perspective. And remember those who comment on or engage most often with your own content - follow them back, reply to them, give them a shoutout or even invite them personally to any events you have coming up. These are the relationships you want to nurture and reward in order to build up a strong connection. We’ll talk more about how to do this in the Engagement section of this guide.

**KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU**

One thing that organisations that excel at social media have in common is that they really know who they’re talking to, and adapt, create, and share content accordingly. Unlike the traditional TV ad, the mass-market approach doesn’t translate well online - by trying to appeal to everyone, your content might become watered down, generic, and run the risk of appealing to no one.

**WHAT ABOUT PAID BOOSTING?**

Anyone that’s ever posted a well-liked picture on social media knows it gets most of its attention in the first 24 hours. Momentum builds with strong content, and posts can take on a life of their own with a little financial help. So strike while the iron is hot and get the most out of a post that’s already doing well.

If a post is performing well, platforms such as Facebook will notify you, asking if you want to “boost” it to reach more people. You can also keep track of this yourself using the free, in-built social media tools that most platforms have. When this happens, we strongly recommend boosting it, even if you only have a little money to spare. You don’t need a bottomless budget - some organisations work wonders with highly targeted posts, boosting content during specific times of the year, or during a single campaign.

If you do have a budget to allocate, try some basic A/B testing to see which language, images, and calls to action (CTAs) work - and which don’t. Are you getting greater engagement with fewer words? Is your CTA clear enough? Do people respond better to the image of the puppies or the chicks? Thinking about your personas (see next page), are you being specific enough?

On the flipside, if a post isn’t getting a lot of engagement, don’t put money behind it in the hope that it will perform better. Think of organic (i.e. unpaid) sharing as preaching to the converted - putting a little budget behind a post people are already enjoying will get it in front of more people. It’s a tricky situation to navigate - particularly if you’ve spent time/resource/budget working on a specific piece of creative - but if it’s not getting engagement, throwing more money at the problem won’t necessarily get you anywhere.

We spoke to Gemma Croker, from Cats Protection, an organisation that educates the general public on feline care. As an animal rights charity, they have clearly articulated goals, outcomes and ambitions. As a result, they prioritise specific audience sets - and, through landscaping, testing content, and user insight, have a pretty good idea of where their audience is online, how they behave, and who they listen to.

“Facebook drives the most traffic to our website, by far,” she told us. “This is due to a combination of reasons: our reach on Facebook still far exceeds other channels,
so naturally draws more clicks on the content we share on our own social media due to the scale of its reach. And in terms of social sharing, our existing audience demographic fits best with Facebook’s demographics, so a lot of shares of our web content from supporters take place on Facebook as opposed to other channels, which drives more clicks.”

“Our audience is primarily 45-54, female, and incredibly active on Facebook. We spend more on Facebook advertising than on the other socials because this is our biggest channel and we’re having huge success there.”

“We use feedback from supporters to inform what we do - and don’t - put out on social. For example, we’ve taken frequently asked questions and turned them into blog posts, webpages, and videos for social media. The same goes for looking at common search terms, downloads of our PDF leaflets, etc. - we use this to inform what advice content to produce.”

“We can also use it to identify common myths that need busting - for example, if we see the public posting incorrect advice to others on our content, we can address this by publishing more advice to dispel misconceptions. We bear our audience in mind at all stages of content production and sign off - knowing they are predominantly female, cat-lovers, etc., we can ensure we’re using language that’s appealing to them, hooking messages onto cute or humorous content where possible.”

“WE ALSO KNOW WHAT CONTENT RESONATES WITH OUR AUDIENCE - SUCCESS STORIES, RAGS-TO-RICHES TALES – ANYTHING THAT SHOWS A SAD BEFORE AND A HAPPY, HEALTHY CAT AT THE END IS ALMOST GUARANTEED TO PERFORM WELL”

“We also know what content resonates with our audience - success stories, rags-to-riches tales - anything that shows a sad before and a happy, healthy cat at the end is almost guaranteed to perform well. Video content is popular. Timely, simple advice content performs well - for example seasonal advice in an animated format always goes down a storm e.g. our keeping your cat cool animation.”

WHAT ARE PERSONAS?
Developing brand personas for social media is a way of ensuring you are engaging with the right audiences when you have a particular objective in mind. If you’ve got a limited budget, you want to make sure you are speaking to the right people so they will carry your action forward. Think about their background, their motivations, their interests - and make sure you create and share content that they find entertaining, useful, and valuable.

Here is an example of a rare disease charity, and the types of personas you might want to target as a result:

- The first persona might be an individual affected by a rare disease. This person might be male, between the ages of 25-34, and active on Instagram.
- The second persona might be the parent or carer of one of your beneficiaries, the type of person who might host bake sales to fundraise on your behalf, and could be browsing Pinterest for recipe inspiration.
- The third might be doctors and medical professionals, the types of people you want to engage to help write to your local MP, or share your petition on Facebook or Change.org.

IDENTIFYING YOUR AUDIENCES
One thing we urge people to think about during all stages of the social media journey is audience identity. Who is likely to support you and why? What are their habits and interests? A very helpful way of thinking about this is through the use of personas. A persona is essentially an imaginary person who represents the characteristics of your desired audience.

So consider: what is this person most passionate about? What's their gender and age category? What’s their socioeconomic background, income, and education level? Think about their motivations for following you, and how their everyday routine might intersect with your online activities (retired people, teenagers, and working-age people are online at different times of day). How can you create and adapt content that will entertain, inspire, and inform them?

As our interview with Cats Protection’s Gemma Croker reveals, it pays to use personas, and you should be really specific. Many people might define themselves as animal lovers, so it’s essential to have a strong idea of your persona’s drivers and characteristics beyond a vague outline. This might take time, but you can go at your own pace - there are plenty of in-built social media metrics with at-a-glance information to help you.

Keep these relationships at the front of your mind as you develop and grow as an organisation. Ask yourself why
your persona would want to look at your social media posts. People care about how they appear to others online - what does it say about them if they share your video? What are they gaining by engaging with it?

"Personas can really shape your content creation strategy, pin down precise messaging, and help define ad sets," says Hannah. "Teamwork is key, so communicating this internally ensures that everyone in the organisation is working towards achieving the same mission. It’s important that these personas are defined clearly, and that the same messaging is used across departments."

The most effective personas are those that are developed collaboratively within teams - it shouldn’t just be something that the social media or digital teams refer to, but something that fundraising should know about in terms of getting donations, or that advocacy should be aware of when getting people to show up to their events.

This will enable you to accurately segment your audience, and tailor messages accordingly - such as in email newsletters. Autistica’s Rebecca Sterry tells us how their team is doing just that in our interview with her later on in this section.

**IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE**

People often come together on social media over shared interests or goals, making it an unrivalled medium for connecting with like-minded individuals and organisations. When identifying potential supporters on social media, you need to meet people where they are - figure out which platforms they’re already using, and go from there.

You can then move on to pinpointing relevant “interest indicators”. This could be in the form of likes, shares, comments, and posts, or even fan videos or memes. What are people in your tribe talking about? What are the issues that matter most to them? What arguments come up most frequently?

Autistica’s Sarah Bissell gave us some valuable insights about audience identification through that charity’s use of LinkedIn. “I gradually recognised the importance of LinkedIn,” she told us. “We knew what relationships in terms of corporate fundraising we wanted to go for, so we started a process where we would find people in those companies ahead of time. We think quite carefully about what they might be interested in. We think about our target audience, and then about what we need to post. We do that alongside personal outreach and trying to get meetings.”

You can also get inspiration from Twitter lists or Facebook groups, both of which bring people together around a specific topic or theme. See what you can find that relates to your organisation’s mission. Additionally, it’s worth checking out the accounts of charities working for the same cause as you to see who they follow and whose research they’re sharing.

**TALKING TO THE PEOPLE THAT MATTER TO THEM**

Once you know who you are trying to reach, and what platforms they are on, it’s time to start thinking about who they listen to.

People trust people, not brands. Social media for charities and non-profits should be about having conversations, and building deep, trusting relationships. This is a much greater challenge when you’re engaging with a logo, rather than another person.

This is something that Jaz O’Hara, creator of the Worldwide Tribe Instagram account, discovered about her journey. She told us how as an individual she was able to leverage and share her personal story about her time working in a refugee camp in Calais, and build it into a global movement with a legacy of positive social change.

“The Worldwide Tribe began as a way for me to share my experiences in a visual, honest way. It resonated with so many people, and it evolved – it became the movement it is today, and we are able to engage people and tackle other humanitarian crises globally.

“I set up a JustGiving page, aiming to raise 50-100 pounds just to cover the journey and supplies, and went to bed. I woke up, and the post had been shared 65,000 times, reaching 13 million people.”

“Wanting to find out more, I loaded up my car with things like tents, sleeping bags, warm clothing, and food. The people in Calais were kind, warm, welcoming, and wanting to share their stories. It really stuck with me that people were risking their lives to make the same journey that I had been able to make so easily, so I wrote a Facebook post to my friends and family, sharing the stories. I felt compelled to raise as much awareness as I could within my circle.

“I set up a JustGiving page, aiming to raise 50-100 pounds just to cover the journey and supplies, and went
to bed. I woke up, and the post had been shared 65,000 times, reaching 13 million people. I didn’t know it was even possible. My brother jokes that before that day, he hadn’t seen more than 20 likes on a status I’d posted before.

“That was the beginning – and it’s just continued to grow from there. We now work in Greece, Turkey, Lesvos, and Jordan, and our latest project is Jangala - reliable, easy-to-deploy Wi-Fi that provides connectivity in humanitarian situations.”

LOOKING CLOSE TO HOME

It isn’t just about engaging influencers, whether they are traditional celebrities, YouTubers, or Instagrammers, but about raising the profile of your staff as well. Getting your whole team on board with a social media strategy involves them in decision-making and goal-setting, boosts morale, and helps people to appreciate the importance of having a digital presence.

When it comes to sharing organisational content on their personal accounts, they’re much more likely to do so if it’s content they can be proud of, knowing their input helped shape it. This, in turn, will reach more people than your channels alone.

COMMUNITY EQUALS CONNECTION

By this stage, you’ve already come a long way. Your whole team has considered how social media goals can fit your overall aims for the organisation, and you’ve spent some time scoping out which platforms potential supporters might be spending their time on, and how they engage with content or themes like yours. If you keep your messaging authentic and make some effort to find those people who already support the causes you care about, you’ll find a natural home on social media platforms.

“COMMUNITY IS YOUR PEOPLE, YOUR CLUB, YOUR TRIBE – ALL THOSE INDIVIDUALS ROOTING FOR YOU BEHIND THE SCENES AND BEHIND THEIR SCREENS”

Community is your people, your club, your tribe - all those individuals rooting for you behind the scenes and behind their screens. Community grows from a combination of clear goals, targeted actions, and audience identification. Involve your whole team, set and measure goals, create carefully considered personas - et voilà! We’re not saying it’s going to happen immediately, but you’re putting your strongest foot forward by following these steps. Focus on your community from the get-go, because nothing else matters without them.

Glossary of Key Terms

**Influencer** / noun /ˈɪnfluən.sər/
Someone who affects or changes the way that other people behave, for example through their use of social media. A “traditional” influencer typically has a large online following and a broad appeal. Think about collaborating with or targeting influencers if you want your message to reach a lot of people.

**Microinfluencer** / noun /ˈmʌɪkrəʊˈɪnfluən.sər/
Like an influencer, a microinfluencer is someone who holds a lot of sway with their followers over a topic they particularly care about or are known for. Their audience generally consists of less than 20,000 people but they are extremely dedicated and engaged on a single issue.

**Hyperlocal** / adjective /ˈhʌɪpəˈləʊk(ə)l/
Relating to or focusing on matters concerning a small community or geographical area, such as the London postcode SE1.

Now, you want to keep your audience interested and coming back to you - getting to a point where they’re regularly searching for your page, sharing your content, and voicing support. In our next major section, we’ll look at Engagement - how you can create the best content possible for the people who care most about your work, how to measure its success, and how to keep your hard-earned community with you.

**Links**

Autistica is a UK charity funding and campaigning for autism research so that every autistic person can have a long, happy, healthy life. Their research strategy for 2017-18 is focused on research to improve understanding and support for mental health, physical health, language and epilepsy in autism.

This 16-person team, with a turnover of £3.59m in 2017, have been sweeping up the corporate fundraising awards – with 11 under their belt in the past eighteen months.

Part of their success can be attributed to their approach to social media in the nomination stage - we grabbed a coffee with them to find out what advice they have for other charities.

Rebecca Sterry
Senior Communications Manager

Sarah Bissell
Director of Fundraising

Social Misfits Media: Could you tell us a little about the Autistica approach to social media? Do you think it has contributed to your award-winning streak?

Rebecca Sterry: Our team is incredibly active on social media. Our success so far has really encouraged it, and it’s become part of our organisational culture to be active on the platforms that work for our audiences. The corporate fundraising team are all really active on LinkedIn, and we make an effort to keep on top of things that will be relevant to their audiences. We make sure we are constantly sharing things, but putting it into the most relevant context with plenty of calls to action.
We’ve used LinkedIn massively to get staff votes when we’ve been going for Charity of the Year with different corporates, and some of our team are active on Twitter, too. Our Policy Lead, our Director of Science, our CEO and myself in comms have our own personal accounts. We are really relaxed about it - we want the personality of the organisation to come through the people.

SMM: How do you know what to share on social media that your audience will find interesting?

RS: We want our research to be all about people, and not some intangible thing that happens in labs and test tubes. We want people to realise that everything we do is about long, happy, healthy lives. We’ve done a lot of consultation with our community about content for social media, and we know what issues are the most important to them.

Our community came together to define their top ten research priorities, so we make sure our content fits with these topics. As an example mental health was their number one priority so a lot of our social content focuses on that.

SMM: How does your team know what content to share?

RS: Our team reframes content from the Autistica channels for their individual audiences. It’s essential, because our audiences are really broad. We’ve got researchers, professionals, parents, and autistic people – and their views and priorities are so disparate. It makes sense for our teams to reframe everything we are putting out on our channels for their audiences.

Our Policy Lead might take news about a new mental health treatment and put that into the context about what the NHS should do, and our Director of Science might reframe a piece of research about what still needs to be done in that area. They’ve built their own networks that are very personal to them, and they nurture those.

SMM: How does social media help with relationship building?

RS: Every year we have a thanking day where we reach out to everyone that donated to us in the traditional sense, but we also really value our microinfluencers, and people that support us on social.

Everyone, from our CEO right down to junior members of staff, really goes out to their own networks to thank those supporters in ways that are valuable and will appeal to them. We value those networks as we would a donor – they are just as important for spreading our message.

SMM: What other audiences, besides donors, do you cultivate online?

Sarah Bissell: I’ve also done a lot of work in the sector. You usually wouldn’t have a lot of other fundraisers on your LinkedIn profile, but I’ve made an effort to connect with more people in my line of work. We need to make sure that we are profiling Autistica so that people know what a great organisation we are. Then when the time comes for recruitment, people will have seen all of the great things we are doing.

It has had some unintended but welcome consequences - we attracted the attention of the Institute of Fundraising, and we’ve been out there to do a few sessions, and have gotten quite involved in the wider sector as a result.

SMM: We are connected with a lot of your team on LinkedIn, and it was through activity on your own channels that we decided to feature you all as a case study. How do you use the platform, and what benefits have you seen so far?

SB: I gradually recognised the importance of LinkedIn. We knew what relationships in terms of corporate fundraising we wanted to go for, so we started a process where we would find people in those companies ahead of time.

We think about our target audience, and then about what we need to post. We do that alongside personal outreach and trying to get meetings.

We do some advertising on LinkedIn, but the two cases where we actually won votes were when we all spent a huge amount of time writing personal messages to individuals. It’s not the advertising, but the message. It’s the same mileage as the old days – it’s doing the brand building, then the personalisation. Things don’t change – your platforms change.

SMM: It’s great that your whole team shares, rather than just your CEO, as LinkedIn has found that employee advocacy is key. How do you communicate and get everyone in the organisation to do that?

RS: We use Slack as a conversation tool, so we post on there if there is a Charity of the Year that we are going for. We all come from different fields, so we all try to reach these networks.

Encouraging people to share or reframe interesting content is really important. When we are going for a big charity of the year, everyone is expected to go out to a certain number of contacts. It stops it from being the same two people, and from being a bit spammy – because it’s not just about fundraising, it’s about relationship building.
SMM: Do you have any advice or tips for small organisations, who want help communicating and collaborating with each other digitally?

SB: You always need to be building your audiences, and you need to build it through your perspective. Think about your audiences - where are they? Where do they want to see things?

RS: I think that each of the team getting buy-in for the end goal that they want is very important. Going back to a big corporate partnership example - winning one benefits all of us, and makes all of our lives easier. We get bigger budgets and can do more than we have ever before. It means that everyone wants to help out on LinkedIn - because at the end of the day if we win the partnership, we all benefit. It's not just "that's the corporate team's win, so I'm not going to get involved." Every big win for us as an organisation helps autism research, which is great, it allows us to all do a better job.

SB: I think that as a small organisation it's much easier to jump over those silos. If we win something big, we're going to be running around the office ringing a bell, drinking champagne - it's everyone's win, not just the wins of a couple of people. That should never be a problem for a small charity - that's what we've got. We're all in it together.

SMM: What's next for Autistica? What does the rest of the year look like?

RS: We've gone a bit mad on awards, so we're going to step back and let all of the amazing things we've done sink in. We are working on tweaking our messaging and looking at our brand, trying to get a feel for what people think about our brand as it is, how we can segment our audiences better - we've launched a new network and we've got a new mailing list of segmented audiences, but we need to look at some of those insights.

When should we ask them for donations? When should we ask them to take part in events? When are we going to get maximum buy-in from those people? That's a big piece of work we will be doing over the next few months, and we will be doing some social listening too. We want to see the kinds of things people are talking about in the field of autism, and how our work can fit in with that.

SB: We've done so much off the back of having won these key corporate partnerships, so we're hoping to grow our social following, and nurture relationships with the people that are committed to our research and committed to giving - to finalise the relationship. This really matters, so it's about defining those audiences and bringing them in.
COMMUNITY CHECKLIST

OUR TOP 10 TIPS FOR BUILDING AND GROWING A LOYAL FOLLOWING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

A community is a village, a town, a group of people united by a common interest - but how does that work online? For charities and non-profits, and organisations with commitments to a cause, social media enables you to reach people halfway around the world who care about the same things you do. Here’s our reminder checklist for creating your community on social media:

GOALS

- Clearly defined, measurable, and set to a particular timeframe. These are the three essential qualities of your goals on social media.
- Involve your whole team. You’re all in it together, so get everyone invested in your goals, use their input, and celebrate your successes as a team. Discuss what you want to achieve, and how you’ll respond to any criticism along the way.
- Create specific actions to fulfil every goal. Once you have your social media goals, create a dedicated plan with particular actions to help them become a reality, then measure your progress regularly.

IDENTIFICATION

- Look out for “interest indicators”. Keep an eye on common hashtags, social activity, and recurring themes relating to your cause.
- Take the time to find your tribe. Make contact with potential new supporters by searching across different social media platforms and meeting them where they’re at.
- Create personas. Get to know your supporters - think about their background and motivations for supporting you. Use these personas to inform your decisions.
- Get involved in existing networks. Connect with pre-existing online communities that share your interests.

GROWTH

- Think quality, not quantity. As a rule of thumb, it’s much better to have a few hundred actively engaged, loyal supporters than thousands of followers who never get involved.
- Talk to the people that matter. Find out who your target audience is listening to, then connect with them, too.
- Amplify your best content. Consider using a bit of money to boost any posts that are doing well to gain momentum and maximise reach.
PART 2
ENGAGEMENT
Engagement is a word that's thrown around a lot in the social media sphere. But for our purposes, engagement consists of purposeful, original content and quality interactions that build longer-term relationships on social media.

As a non-profit or charity, you are ideally placed to comment on your particular issues of concern - and social media offers the most efficient and shareable way of publicising that. In this section, we'll look at how you can do that, whatever your budget.

The content you create is the key partner in these interactions. Engaging the community you have built with compelling content is what will keep you in their minds when they're thinking of a cause to support for #GivingTuesday or when they are running a 10k. Always put yourself in the end user’s position and be critical. Will this piece of content add value? What is the purpose? Is it entertaining, created thoughtfully, or educational?

Ask yourself why someone might share your video, comment on your post, or use the hashtag you created - not from your perspective, but from theirs. Everyone on social media, to some extent, wants to raise their profile. What does your content contribute to people's sense of identity? How does it motivate, intrigue, or inform them? Success on social media is transactional, so if you don't give people what they are seeking, they will go elsewhere to find it.

And you shouldn't always expect people to come to you - are you making it obvious that you want to hear from them, and are you responding once they've put in the effort? Perhaps that's having something like a live video Q&A on Facebook or posting a poll on Twitter, then following up on the results with a longer blog post or responding directly to people. If you're working on something interesting, people will want to know what your findings are.

---

"You need to show your audience you're listening, provide them with reasons to keep trusting you, and demonstrate accountability and respect."

---

Engagement on social media should drive a dialogue forward - you should be having conversations. It helps with transparency too; social media has made it easier than ever for people to give direct feedback to brands and organisations, both good and bad. But this also means it's easier than ever for organisations to engage with and respond to their supporters. Your social media profiles offer a way for people to assess your values as an organisation. You need to show your audience you're listening, provide them with reasons to keep trusting you, and demonstrate accountability and respect.
You don’t have to spend hours of time or thousands of pounds creating original content. In fact, it is often the easiest to produce. You know your organisation better than anyone else - so think about what you’re most proud of, what you think is most interesting to your supporters, or what might encourage someone to click on a link to your website.

A powerful, emotive, purpose-driven message is what you should be aiming for. You could start with filming short video interviews with volunteers, or listing your achievements in the past month or year via a well-crafted infographic. Keep your colour scheme, font and tone of voice consistent, and use your own images rather than stock photos where possible. You could ask people in your network to contribute a post to your blog. If you’re a bit stuck about where to start, refer to the box opposite.

Consider which of your content might be “evergreen” – namely, content that isn’t time-specific and is of consistent interest to your audience. This kind of content is really useful if new content is a bit thin on the ground and you don’t have the resources to put out something new. You can post it again and again, repurposing it throughout the year.

At Social Misfits Media, we’ve heard all the excuses - “we can’t measure the value!”, “we don’t have anything to say!”, “it’s a waste of time!” But we are using #MakeItSocial as a platform to shut all of those excuses down - because it’s simply not true, you just have to be smart about it.

The way to get around these excuses is to experiment. Your first port of call should be the people that make up the organisation - the staff. What expertise do you have in house? What motivated each staff member to join your organisation? What activities do you have coming up in the next few weeks? Other types of content you can create on a budget, besides podcasts, include:

- Blog series;
- Infographics (free tools like Canva and Piktochart can help!);
- Live interviews (using Facebook or Instagram);
- Twitter chats;
- Online polls and surveys;
- Videos (you can use your phone!)

The most important thing when you produce and share a piece of content is to measure and track its performance, and not to sweat the small stuff. If it didn’t perform well, don’t just chuck some budget behind it to boost performance - take learnings, assess what worked well and what didn’t, and move on. As long as you’re learning, you’re golden.
USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

User-generated content, or UGC, can add immense value to any charity on social media. In an era when home-made videos of people pouring ice over themselves compel people to part with their cash, content that seems spontaneous and authentic can really strike a chord. So much so, in fact, that effective UGC can generate 6.9% higher engagement than brand-generated content on Facebook\(^1\) and can even lead to the emergence of a subculture, driving loyalty and creating a strong association with your organisation.

Think about how you respond to something like a photo that’s been taken by a real person with a heartfelt message. Seems more genuine, right?

“UGC drives engagement, because people respond to its authenticity. Most importantly, it creates moments to engage in rather than information to absorb or donation requests to respond to,” says Erin Niimi Longhurst, Senior Manager at Social Misfits Media. “Your organisation likely already has a significant amount of content just waiting to be repurposed into a UGC campaign, so get creative and see what you can find. With UGC, you’re turning your supporters into advocates.”

Again, it helps to remember the transactional relationship of social media. “UGC campaigns tap into people’s egos,” adds Erin. “It therefore potentially offers a very successful way of cultivating support by appealing to your followers’ desires to share their own stories, which are often very inspiring in themselves. By offering to share your platform with your supporters, it links you directly to the people you serve. You’re saying that their stories and input are important to you, and that can resonate really well.”

Consider amplifying posts that are doing well with a paid content or ad campaign and try to keep the momentum going by reposting popular content (see more in our pull-out box on boosted content in the Community section).

It’s safe to assume that most people own a smartphone or a device with which to effortlessly take photos, videos or voice notes. Although, as always, think about the demographics of your audience using the personas you created (see more in the Community section) to determine what type of content they’d be most comfortable creating. Whatever you decide on, content created by your followers for your followers is an excellent way of engaging stakeholders, donors, and other interested parties to show them that there’s a groundswell of support out there for your cause.


can anybody hear me?

There’s a common misconception that if your content isn’t viewed by millions, it’s somehow a failure. True, you want it to reach the right people, but your content doesn’t have to go viral to be a success.

In order for your content to reach its potential, it needs to be contagious - even if only within the small community you serve. Good content is not about high numbers, it’s about high engagement - and high engagement happens when your content and conversations hit their mark. Always put yourself in the user’s position and ask why they would want to share your posts. What does it mean to them? What problem are you solving that makes them feel good?

LET’S TALK ABOUT MONEY

Don’t be put off by the thought that all your content needs to be slick and expensively-produced. It doesn’t! High quality content that’s consistent in tone and appearance can be achieved with little to no budget using free tools like Canva (for images) or basic video-editing tools that come pre-installed on many smartphones.

Alongside this, think about asking your followers to get involved by contributing their own stories via a user-generated content (UGC) campaign. Read our case study with the charity Bliss for great examples of UGC. We’ll also talk more about how to “make the ask” in the final section of this #MakeItSocial guide, Solicitation.

“At Social Misfits Media, we see this entire movement of people taking selfies on their phones and creating other UGC that costs nothing to produce. It’s very genuine and can generate a lot of content,” says Erin Niimi Longhurst, our Senior Manager. “If your organisation already has a strong following, you could be sitting on a gold mine.”
WHAT CONTENT SHOULD I CREATE?

We’ve seen that content doesn’t need to cost the earth, but it should be authentic. In fact, there are several organisations creating different types of campaigns and content – it’s incredibly easy to create engaging pieces of content like podcasts, chatbots, and video in-house.

An example very close to home comes from our sister company, I.G. Advisors, a strategy and management consultancy working in the social impact space. Advisor Rachel Stephenson Sheff shares her experiences with the “What Donors Want” Podcast, and her top five tips she wished she knew about before getting started with creating content.

“What Donors Want” is a podcast series that provides short, sharp interviews with a wide range of donors, hosted by the I.G. team. The podcast came about because of the unique relationship I.G. has with both sides of the grantmaker/grantee equation – we have access to both perspectives and wanted to use this to facilitate fresh, dynamic and slightly irreverent conversations where the donor could speak candidly about their experiences.

“We saw the need to create ‘What Donors Want’ because a lot of our target audience – our clients and partners – kept asking the same questions. How could they be more effective when trying to secure a grant? How could they become more attractive to corporate and family foundations? At first, it was an experiment, but since its launch, people have turned in from over 40 countries and ‘What Donors Want’ has become recommended listening and is used to train fundraisers at some of the largest institutions.”

The podcast has helped I.G. better connect with their target audiences, through events like live recordings, but also has tangible impact too.

“The podcast truly has changed the way I work for the better,” says Sofia Soni, Donor Engagement Manager at WE UK. “The straight-talk you provide (in such an easily digestible format) has been invaluable. I am working faster and getting better results. It has made me bolder and braver.”

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TRENDS

Video content has grown a lot on social media in recent years, and 11% of UK consumers now listen to a podcast on a weekly basis.2 As a result, many organisations and brands are pivoting towards these formats.

As with all stages of your social media journey, think about how your audience is accessing the content they want. If there’s a clear trend taking place in society at large, adapting your own content strategy to reflect this is no bad thing.

RACHEL’S TOP FIVE PODCASTING TIPS

Podcasting is one of the best ways to create content on a budget – the format is exciting, accessible and fresh, and it’s easy to do on a shoestring. When getting started with “What Donors Want”, Rachel fell into a rabbit hole of YouTube tutorials and blogs, and a year later felt much more confident in the medium. For anyone looking to get started, here are her top 5 tips:

1. Do Your Research:

Figure out who else is podcasting about your topic and listen to their shows - not only will this provide you with inspiration, but it will also ensure your content is addressing a unique need in the space.

2. Invest in a Good Mic:

You don’t need much to podcast, but what you do need is a high quality mic (around £50) and pop filter (around £10). Sound quality can make or break the experience for your listeners, so it’s certainly worth the investment.

3. Learn Your Software:

Many blogs recommend Audacity, but I prefer GarageBand, which is free on all Macs and much more user friendly. It’s a very intuitive programme and the functionality is excellent.

4. Record in a Quiet Space:

If your guest(s) are remote (or if you only have one mic) a great way to record is through a free online podcasting tool, like Zencastr. The sound quality is superb and gives your guests a seamless experience; all you need is a quiet spot with a strong wifi connection and decent acoustics.

5. Edit for Rhythm & Flow:

Podcasting is supposed to be a conversational medium so there is no need to spend too much time in the editing trenches; that said, it’s a fine balance between resisting the over-editing of pauses and ‘um’s, while ensuring the rhythm and flow of the conversation keeps listeners engaged.

In general with podcasts, a good rule of thumb is that ‘done’ is better than ‘good’. It’s a medium that people listen to in transit and while doing other tasks, so no one is going to notice if there’s a small blemish. Edit as you wish, but then don’t be afraid to release the episode, learn from feedback and refine your skills iteratively as your show develops. You’ll find your groove sooner than you think!
ENGAGEMENT - STRATEGY

NO ONE IS AN ISLAND

Great content is just one of two pillars of high engagement on social media. The second is interaction. Just as newspapers publish letters from readers, so your social media channels should invite dialogue with your supporters. Are you making yourself approachable, are you starting conversations, and are you responding once people have put in the effort to reach out?

As a non-profit or charity, you exist to fill a gap or provide support where it’s most needed - so conversation about your cause is already built into your mission. This ability to converse and argue a case on behalf of your beneficiaries can translate really well on social media. You should be constantly reiterating the value of your work and speaking to individuals, donors, local politicians, and anyone else who might lend an ear.

You can encourage debate and dialogue on social media by:

• Asking a direct question, e.g. “what made you donate to us last year?”
• Creating a poll, e.g. “what issues would you like to see us prioritise this year?”
• Hosting live video Q&As, e.g. Facebook Live
• Holding an “ask me anything” chat, e.g. on Twitter or Reddit
• Hosting an “Instameet” to bring activists together in person
• Live tweeting or writing blog posts from an event that relates to your cause, tagging and following the relevant speakers
• Creating a specific hashtag linked to your cause
• Sharing your most inspiring stories of the week
• Doing a shout-out to the supporters who comment and engage with you most often
• Recommending other accounts you think people should follow
• Responding individually to everyone that comments on your posts
• Creating simple, shareable quizzes to test people’s knowledge of an issue

Dialogue doesn’t only include the people who already follow you, but also those with a higher profile who could potentially give their endorsement. Take advantage of the direct access that social media can provide and don’t be shy. Identifying key influencers within your area of work and engaging them in discussion - responding to their posts, asking their opinion - can shed light on your work and help you reach more people. And don’t forget microinfluencers - you may find they are more responsive and easier to interact with directly than those with a larger following.

You can learn a lot from these intra-community interactions, and this can inform future decisions you make. Human beings are social creatures, and social proof matters - people want to show their followers what they care about. So, make it easy for them to show their support for your organisation by streamlining the process of engagement as much as possible.

SHOW PEOPLE WHAT YOU’RE UP TO

Content needn’t cost more than the time it takes to create it, but it should always be something that aims to get people to like, share or read it. Diversify the type of content you post, and don’t post content that’s self-promotional or lacking purpose - it will only serve to weaken your organisational identity.

Gemma Collins-Ellis of Bliss told us about what the charity has learned through posting different types of content. She recommends focusing on creating high quality, authentic content that isn’t too navel-gazing. “Anything that focuses on the organisation doesn’t do as well, so things about Bliss and our achievements, as opposed to our impact on babies and their families,” she says. “We draw a line at low-res or low-quality, but I don’t mind publishing things that are medium or grainy, because it comes across as more authentic.”

There are many ways that social media helps maintain connections you’ve worked hard to build. Keeping up a regular blog, for example, is a great way of publicly showcasing how donors’ money is being spent while also educating and informing your audience. You might get asked to contribute to another organisation’s blog, and you can return the favour by encouraging guest posts. Make sharing new blog posts across your networks - those of the organisation and, where possible, of your staff - an integrated part of the process.

GET THE TEAM INVOLVED

Given your best ambassadors - your staff and volunteers - are probably on social media themselves, and some of them will be talking about their work already, encourage them to document their work and share anything they’re proud of on social media - whether that’s a petition on Facebook, a blog post on Medium, or a behind-the-scenes selfie with a celebrity at one of your events.

The element of authenticity is key - but while it would be great to get your trustees sharing Instagram stories on
your behalf, it’s not always realistic or fair to ask people to use their personal channels for professional purposes. 

“ONLY 3% OF EMPLOYEES SHARE COMPANY-RELATED CONTENT, BUT THEY DRIVE A 32% INCREASE IN ENGAGEMENT. EMPLOYEES GET TWO TIMES HIGHER CLICK THROUGH RATES FROM THEIR SHARES, COMPARED TO COMPANY SHARES OF THE SAME CONTENT.”

A platform like LinkedIn might be more of a natural or comfortable fit for the team, and LinkedIn have some great tips to drive employee advocacy with impressive results. “Without active, engaged employees sharing your brand messaging, it won’t go much farther beyond your channel audience. Even a small percentage of employee sharing can have a drastic impact on your brand’s reach,” the LinkedIn team told us. “Only 3% of employees share company-relevant content, but they drive a 32% increase in engagement. Employees get two times higher click through rates from their shares, compared to company shares of the same content. Employee advocates are also better than brand ambassadors - customer-facing employees are direct representatives of your brand. With the continued prominence of social media, even those whose roles don’t directly deal with customers are making an impact. Studies have determined that 70% of customer brand perception is determined by experiences with people.”

BE ACTIVE ON THE CHANNELS THEY’RE USING ...

Diversifying your presence across multiple social media platforms is very important, not only to show that your organisation has an active online presence across the board, but because it creates more opportunities to strengthen organisational identity and to engage.

In the Community section of #MakeItSocial, we talked about how users on more niche platforms - like Pinterest for creatives, Twitch for gamers, and Xing for business professionals - are a self-selecting group, so they are already starting from a higher level of engagement than your average, say, Facebook user. That means that if you have a strong presence on their preferred platform, they might be more open to connecting with you on issues they care about.

We heard about how Twitch is considered a vital platform by Mark Saville at SpecialEffect. “We’re very fortunate to be helping people within communities who count social media almost as a first language, so using our digital channels to celebrate and share the inspiration and achievements of the people we’ve been able to help is priority,” he told us. “Social media touches every aspect of what we do - fundraising, storytelling, researching and thanking - and it’s been a cornerstone of our brand identity since we started over ten years ago.”

“For gamers who want to help a specialist charity like ours, which was specifically set up to help severely disabled people play video games, Twitch is an ideal pathway. It’s a natural fit! As a result, we’ve been grateful for the wonderful support from thousands of gamers over the years with whom our mission, and the way we carry it out, resonates so closely. Every February our GameBlast weekend provides a festival of sponsored online gaming and game-related fundraising events, and the role of Twitch is inevitably pretty central to that. Twitch themselves have been fantastic partners during events like these; our relationship with Twitch and their streamers goes back many years.”

“A platform such as Pinterest is a great driver of traffic, too, and an excellent place to share and distribute content once it’s been created,” said an influencer on the platform. “By pinning your content on Pinterest, you can make it go further and give it new life, getting it in front of new and wider audiences for a longer period of time. Pinterest is a visual catalogue of ideas, and content performs really well seasonally. By sharing beautiful visual content, like recipes, you have the potential to capture traffic over a long period of time.”

By this stage, you should already have identified what platforms your supporters are most likely to use. “But don’t have all your eggs in one digital basket! It’s obviously fantastic to have a really engaged, active audience on a single platform, but there’s always the risk of losing it all if that platform loses popularity (remember MySpace?) or
changes its algorithms in a way that disadvantages your methods of engagement (like Facebook did in 2017)” says Social Misfits Media’s Erin Niimi Longhurst. “It’s essential to have touch points with supporters across a variety of platforms, and cross-post about your activities on other platforms to let people find you in other places."

... BUT REPURPOSE CONTENT ACCORDINGLY

Diversifying your presence is important, but it doesn’t make for a good strategy to simply repost the same content across all your platforms. Even less appealing is an automatic feed with links from one platform to another. You should adapt and share content across different platforms, with a specific strategy for each. Posts on Instagram and Pinterest should be visually appealing, tweets should be short and shareable, and video content for YouTube should engage viewers within the first 10 seconds. You’ll also want to play around with wording according to the type of supporter you’re trying to appeal to. Are they younger or older? Are they more likely to engage with a chatty style, or a formal one?

WE’VE GOT RESEARCHERS, PROFESSIONALS, PARENTS, AND AUTISTIC PEOPLE – AND THEIR VIEWS AND PRIORITIES ARE SO DISPARATE

Most platforms automatically optimise content to be more appealing to viewers. Most links posted on Facebook or Twitter, for example, come up with an automatic preview. That means you probably don’t need to accompany them with a long explanatory paragraph – a “wall of text” - which might put people off. Tweets with images get 18% more click-throughs than tweets that don’t, so in order to avoid being scrolled past, make sure you enable Twitter Cards so that your website automatically previews the links you share.

We heard from the team behind the award-winning UK charity, Autistica, about how their team members reframe interesting content for their individual audiences. “It’s essential, because our audiences are really broad,” said Rebecca Sterry, Senior Communications Manager. “We’ve got researchers, professionals, parents, and autistic people - and their views and priorities are so disparate. It makes sense for our teams to reframe everything we are putting out on our channels for their audience.” To get more tips from Autistica, look out for the case study earlier on in this guide.

FLASH THE HASHTAGS ...

When creating personas, search for hashtags - you can narrow them down by location – particularly on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram that are used by people and organisations in a similar sphere to yours. You can use them to advertise volunteering opportunities, open discussions or to showcase your achievements. You can also use broader hashtags such as #CharityTuesday, #WednesdayWisdom, and #4Charity, which trend on Twitter on a weekly basis, and can be a good way of getting involved in the online discussion space.

Be careful not to jump onto a popular cause that is only tenuously linked to yours, as this can backfire and make your organisation seem inauthentic and out of touch. In an example from 2014, DiGiorno, a pizza brand, made a faux-pas when it tweeted “#WhyIStayed You had pizza.” in response to the hashtag – which in fact was connected to stories of domestic violence. Perceived as making light of a very serious issue or, at best, having not bothered to do its homework, DiGiorno quickly responded with an apology when they realised what had gone wrong. If you are going to contribute to a wider conversation in society, make crystal clear any link to your organisation’s work, and add a comment that contributes something new to a debate.

Remember, hashtags aren’t popular on every platform, and they work differently on Twitter and Instagram. When it comes to Twitter, less is more; retweets are more likely when there is only one hashtag, so choose the best one and don’t expect hashtags to do the work for you.

THINK BROADLY, ACT NARROWLY

Social media can feel like a big, borderless network, with seemingly limitless opportunities to engage with others across the globe. But while you should always think big and keep in mind your organisation’s broader goals (refer to the Community section of #MakeItSocial for more on that), you should also consider the specific locations when you’re posting.

Perhaps you have an upcoming event you want to publicise - why not tweet your local newspaper to see if they want to cover it? If interest is sluggish, consider boosting attendance by paying a small amount for a geo-targeted ad. Always ensure your in-person events are backed up by lots of buzz on social media and try to report live from the event with photos and quotes (a platform like Twitter is best for this). And try to locate influencers who are in the same geographical area as you - who’s working for the same outcomes, and how might you be able to connect and help each other?

Referencing the power of social media to bolster a live event, Islamic Relief’s Abdul Basit Ali told us: “If we didn’t do social, then only the people at the event would have seen the event. Social took the message from 300 people
in attendance to five million impressions on Twitter. It transports the message across the UK - and those ROIs are what our senior management team are looking at.”

Just remember that you are always representing your organisation, so agree on messaging, tone and how you want to be perceived with the whole team beforehand.

DON'T FORGET HUMOUR

It’s important to take your work seriously and to speak earnestly about your cause - but that doesn’t mean your content can’t be fun. People often use social media for entertainment purposes, so humour can work really well. Taking a fun and inspiring approach can be a breath of fresh air if your followers are used to more serious content from you, and it can make tricky topics easier to talk about. As with all your content, we recommend testing out some funny posts and seeing how they land.

Gemma Collins-Ellis of Bliss told us about the importance of striking the right tone on social media - but also about the value of humour. “We try to address a range of emotions,” she says. “There are stories of hope, bravery, honesty, intimacy, the strength of premature and sick babies, and humour as well. We are talking about babies - and babies are funny! We have the stories about vulnerability that parents feel on the unit, but also about explosive poop. Having range and variety is important because it represents the truth and diversity of the experience.”

SHOW YOUR PERSONALITY

Social media has forced brands and organisations to have more of a “personality”. This represents a great opportunity to decide how you want your organisation to be seen by others. A good thought experiment is to imagine you’ve just met someone new. What three adjectives would you use to describe your organisation to them? How might you translate those to social media?

“The best way you’re going to connect with people is by having a strong and consistent tone of voice which users can identify as being uniquely yours,” says Social Misfits Media’s Erin Niimi Longhurst. “This means that your messaging needs to be synchronised across the entire organisation - from accounting to sales - and every time you put content out there, you’re following the guidelines you’ve laid out together to make sure your message is on point.”

This same tone of voice doesn’t apply when members of staff, or influencers/microinfluencers post on their own accounts about your organisation, because their own followers are looking for authenticity. Let their personalities shine through, and if you want to guide them, you can always share a toolkit which includes key stats, facts and figures, and encourage them to share those in their own unique style.

PEOPLE WILL SEEK YOU OUT

By sticking to the agreed tone, it will help you decide what content you want to share and prioritise. By carving out a niche for yourself, people will come to associate you with expertise on particular issues - whether that’s children’s mental health, forest conservation, or access to clean water.

If there’s an apposite news item relating to your cause, consider sharing a comment about it on your social media channels. Make sure that any press releases you send out to media contacts are also being shared on social media, with an explanation. After all, you’re the experts - don’t be shy. People will become familiar with your organisational stance, and you’ll come to mind when they think about a particular issue, or if they’re deciding who to support for a charity marathon. This is an important building block of strong online communities, and further engagement.

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR OWN DIALOGUE

Charities are sometimes hit by scandals, and public trust can be severely impacted. There’s nowhere to hide on social media if something goes wrong - but in our view, that can be a good thing. Willingly engaging in conversation on social media demonstrates your commitment to transparency. You’re in charge of your own channels, so take control of your own messaging and decide how you’ll respond if people have a complaint or question.

Being open, responsive, and personable on social media can go a long way. Your community trusts you and your work, and you should show them the same courtesy. A large part of this is the conversations you create through your own channels. People want to know that they are being listened to - they are more likely to invest in a two-way relationship. So, don’t be aloof - celebrate the fact that people are reading your blog, listening to your podcast, and sharing your content.

PRIORITISE YOUR OWN SPACES

While using a separate platform, such as Medium for blogging, can be a great way of reaching more people, consider integrating your channels and services in a way that keeps visitors on your website. Facebook’s current algorithm, for example, massively favours videos uploaded directly to your page (thus keeping users on Facebook) and deprioritises external links (for example, to your video on YouTube). Having to click an external link can sometimes put people off and dilute your brand. You also risk spreading yourself too thin or relying too heavily on algorithms that are beyond your control.

“Building community and creating touch points in spaces that you have genuine control over is very important,” says Erin. “This could be newsletters, forums, online
shops, and membership portals, as well as driving sign-ups for offline touch points such as volunteering, activism, meetings, and events.

GET FAMILIAR WITH DATA

Your content plan should be informed by data at least at some stage, and there are plenty of free tools you can use, as well as some paid ones. Even tracking basic things like net likes or follows, most popular time of day to post, and number of engagements is worthwhile, and very easy on a platform such as Facebook, which provides data and visuals for Page managers.

The sheer volume of social media data available can be overwhelming, so always have an actionable plan in mind when browsing through it. Are you looking to improve click-to-donate conversions? Then that’s the metric you want to focus on. Are you seeking more detailed information about your audience? Then narrow it down that way.

As an organisation, you should be striving to use technology and the data available to you, through things like platform insights and Google Analytics, to inform what your audience wants to hear from you. Use the tools at your fingertips to make informed decisions about your content creation process – things like bounce rate (how long people stay on your page) can provide valuable insight, and help you become smarter, leaner, and more efficient. It’s worth comparing your metrics with other organisations of a similar size, too.

Consider timing and scheduling insights – some users will go on social media on their way home from work, or just before bed. How can you adapt your content to fit the rhythm of their day? If you do want to post at the weekend, lessen the workload by using a scheduling tool like Tweetdeck.

TAKE IT FOR A SPIN

While doing this, you should be constantly testing out the user experience. A whopping 47% of consumers expect websites to load in two seconds or less – and 40% will abandon a page that takes three or more seconds.6

“YOU SHOULD BE STRIVING TO USE TECHNOLOGY AND THE DATA AVAILABLE TO YOU, THROUGH THINGS LIKE PLATFORM INSIGHTS AND GOOGLE ANALYTICS, TO INFORM WHAT YOUR AUDIENCE WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU”

In this digital age, the first time people encounter your organisation could be via social media – so make it easy for them to keep up with your activities and engage with you. Make sure your website is optimised for mobile viewing and, if possible, for Google’s Advanced Mobile Pages (AMP), which have a faster load time.

Another consideration is around having content distribution processes in place. You can spend a lot of time and money creating a beautiful video, platform, or app, but if it’s not being shared where your target audience is, it might not be worth it. Bear in mind that mobile internet traffic as share of total global online traffic now stands at 51.2% – so think about how your content might be consumed on the go.7

And remember that your community might be waiting for you in a place you haven’t thought of yet – Reddit, Pinterest, Twitch, Soundcloud, Medium, and other social media platforms are worth looking into if your content doesn’t seem to be resonating on the larger platforms.

TO CONCLUDE …

By enthusiastically interacting with your followers and other organisations, you’re using social media as it’s intended: to create connections with people who otherwise might never find each other. That’s something that just cannot be replicated on the same scale in real life. That’s the positive power of social media, and we hope you feel that too.

Hopefully your community is engaged with your work, you’re continuing to build your presence, and you’re getting noticed. Now what? In our next section, we’ll discuss Solicitation. This should be the third and final stage of your social media journey – one in which you feel confident “making the ask” of your audience, whether that’s in the form of a donation, a supportive tweet, or by creating some user-generated content. This is the moment when all the effort you’ve put into high quality content and community engagement will start to pay off.

LINKS

6. https://neilpatel.com/blog/loading-time/
BLISS

Bliss is the leading UK charity for the one in seven babies who are born premature or sick needing neonatal care. They fund research, campaign, and work directly with health professionals to improve care on neonatal units. The fourth pillar of their work is providing information and emotional support for parents.

Bliss is active on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. They mostly engage with parents, family members, and people who may have been born premature or sick themselves, as well as with healthcare professionals.

The team is committed to creating and sourcing good content and spends lots of time experimenting. Bliss is a fantastic example of a charity making very meaningful use of user-generated content.

Gemma Collins-Ellis
Communications Manager

Social Misfits Media: Your beneficiaries are among the most vulnerable in society, and telling their stories must be extremely challenging. How do you approach that?

Gemma Collins-Ellis: The most important thing is to let families use their own words. We edit only for consistency, tone, and style. Some families write letters to their babies, which are incredibly popular, and others publish diary entries from when they were on the neonatal unit. We also share poems, blogs, spoken word, videos, photographs – every kind of content you can imagine. Because it’s authentic, it’s successful.

We also try to represent a range of experiences – reaching out specifically to those voices we don’t hear from very often like dads, people from BAME groups, and grandparents. We ask to
hear these stories via call-outs on social media.

We try to address a range of emotions, too - stories of hope, bravery, honesty, intimacy, the strength of premature and sick babies, and humour as well. We are talking about babies - and sometimes babies are funny! Families talk about the vulnerability they feel on the unit, and they also talk about explosive poop situations. Having range and variety is important because it represents the truth and diversity of the experience.

SMM: Can you tell us about Little Bliss magazine, and some of the successes?

GCE: Little Bliss is written specifically for parents on the neonatal unit, which makes it unique - our audience is found almost entirely in one place. It’s available in over 90% of neonatal units in the UK. The content is evergreen because it only comes out twice a year.

It predominantly features family stories, as well as vital information and support, expert Q&As, in-depth features and recent achievements of the organisation. The latter is quite brief because Little Bliss is often parents’ first introduction to Bliss, and at that point they want information and stories most.

Little Bliss has developed successfully in part because of the involvement of a panel of parents who review each issue of magazine, give feedback on the content, and pitch ideas for future issues. Having constant feedback from the target audience is incredibly valuable, and it’s been that way since the beginning of its publication 12 years ago.

Little Bliss is a success in that it is a print publication that is thriving in the digital age, in part thanks to it having a captive audience in the neonatal unit. While so much of our information is digital (which is how it should be, as that’s how many people are accessing it), Little Bliss has stayed consistent, and parents and health professionals still want it in print. It’s a piece of branded content which complements the information we have online.

SMM: Have there been any challenges?

GCE: One of the key challenges is addressing difficult topics like bereavement. The audience is parents that are currently on the unit, so understandably they want to read stories of hope, and want to think about the best possible outcome.

But we have a responsibility to represent every possible outcome, and that includes stories where babies don’t go home and die on the neonatal unit. That is incredibly challenging to talk about, and for some people it will be a turn off and they won’t want to read the magazine. For others, it will mean they know where to turn if the worst happens.

Measuring readership is a difficulty - you can measure how many issues you send out but can’t measure how many people actually read it.

SMM: When you have commissioned or created content - either in-house or by your community - what have you found works well, and what doesn’t?

GCE: Social isn’t a broadcasting platform, but a place for community and conversation. Almost anything contributed by the community, especially emotional content, or anything that provokes thought or asks a question works well.

Things that combine multiple opinions, like lists of tips, work well because they are considered peer-to-peer information. As an organisation we don’t give advice - we give information, so doing it through our community is a good way of catering for that need. Information and expert content is popular, like Q&As, animations, and infographics. We’re about to do our first podcast which we’re very excited about!

Anything that is really promotional doesn’t perform as
well - so things about Bliss and our achievements, as opposed to our impact on babies and their families. We draw a line at low-res or low-quality, but I don't mind publishing things that are medium or a bit grainy if it's been submitted by a parent, because it comes across as more authentic.

**SMM: In general, what performs better: user-generated content or content you have created?**

GCE: User-generated content goes down really well because it's intrinsically authentic content that people can trust and relate to. But what sometimes works equally well for us is educational or informative content that meets the user's needs. People are seeking credible, reliable information about caring for a baby on the neonatal unit. We created an animation about weaning a premature baby and that type of information does not exist anywhere else, from any other source, so it performed really well. Everyone wanted it - health professionals, parents. It was exactly what the audience needed.

**SMM: How do you encourage your stakeholders to create and share user-generated content - do you have any tips?**

GCE: There's no secret formula, but be clear about what you want and why. We get the ball rolling by asking people to share their own experiences at the end of a story. They can then see an example of the type of content we're looking for and are more likely to share their own. We've created this expectation that we are sharing and asking regularly on our channels - so our supporters join in because they see other parents doing it. They know that on Mondays we might ask them for their milestones, and on Fridays we publish parent blog posts. We are clear about how their content will be used.

**SMM: What about content creation have you learned now that you wish you had known before?**

GCE: You won't always get the reaction that you hope - you might spend ages creating a beautiful piece of content that doesn't land well. I wish I'd known that it's alright, you just need to tweak and test and try again.

Stories and softer content don't need to be absolutely perfect, they just have to be meaningful and relatable. But informational content has to be absolutely accurate because you risk eroding your credibility. And involving the audience in content creation takes time, but it will save money and keep you focused on them, not you.

**SMM: How do you define a successful piece of content, and how do you measure this?**

If it's part of a conversion campaign we measure views, engagement, how far into a video people watched, and how many people complete [read, listen, or watch from start to finish]. And user comments don’t always represent the majority, but they can give you context for your figures.

We have a great culture of asking for feedback through surveys, in person, via email, and in focus groups. We do engagement campaigns before a big appeal, build up loyalty and brand awareness before a bigger campaign ask.

We also do a lot of testing on social, both organic and paid. We might have two identical Facebook ads testing calls to action, longer or shorter headlines. Then we turn off the ones that aren’t working. Some things we know for sure, like real life photos always perform better.

**SMM: How much budget or resource do you put towards content creation?**

GCE: Across the organisation it’s almost impossible to say, because we create content for everything - fundraising, campaigns, information, brand. Everyone, including me, is involved in that process.

We don't spend a lot of money on it unless it’s for fundraising or campaigns. Weekly blog posts and Twitter chats are free, and our most successful piece of video content for World Prematurity Day was a user-generated video made on a £2,000 budget. A little bit of budget means you can test, and that allows for more creativity and flexibility as you can evaluate content.

**SMM: Are there any other examples of organisations in the charity sector whose content you admire?**

GCE: I love WaterAid! Everything they create has a lot of power. They have beautiful images, and it's very aspirational for a small charity.

The Lullaby Trust, who I used to work for, communicates essential, life-saving information in a very accessible way. Their icons and graphics are easy to understand even if you don't speak the language, and the advice they give out has saved so many infant lives.
ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

OUR TOP 10 TIPS FOR ENGAGING YOUR FOLLOWERS WITH GOOD CONTENT AND CONVERSATION

Engagement is made up of two things: high-quality content and good dialogue with supporters. Social media is what enables you to have those interactions directly - and to hear what people think about your work. Here’s our reminder checklist for maximising fruitful engagement on social media.

CONTENT

- It doesn’t have to cost the earth. You don’t need a bottomless budget to create great content. It can be something that already exists - an article, an online photo album, a press release.
- Encourage user-generated content. UGC is authentic and relatable, and often has higher engagement rates than regular content - so think about how you can get your community involved.
- Prompt employees to engage via their own accounts. Posts from staff members and volunteers are more likely to be clicked, and help develop team spirit in your workplace.

INTERACTIONS

- Be approachable. Create lines of communication between you and your supporters, and make an effort to respond to them individually.
- Target key influencers. Find out who’s talking and who’s listened to - and don’t forget microinfluencers. In fact, you may find they are easier to make contact with.
- Think about location and timing. Use geo-targeted ads and boost content locally to help get it to the right people, and schedule your posts to go out at popular times of day.
- Develop your own voice. Discuss messaging with your whole team, then decide on a strong, consistent tone of voice that you’ll use across departments - not just on social media.
- Ask for feedback, then feed back. Being proactive with your supporters means valuing their opinions and relaying your findings to them. Follow up on interactions and try to reward curiosity by answering people’s questions.

PLATFORMS

- Don’t forget niche platforms. You may find a more committed community on smaller, narrower platforms like Twitch, Pinterest, or Tumblr.
- Repurpose content across channels. Each social media platform has its own style, so be creative, adapt content accordingly, and keep an eye on changing algorithms that may affect your engagement levels.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, ORGANISATIONS CAN CONNECT WITH A POTENTIALLY LIMITLESS AMOUNT OF PEOPLE WITH A CLICK OF A BUTTON.

Year on year, donations to charities are increasing - £10.3 billion in the UK in 2017 - and social media has a very important part to play in that. From Twitter hashtags like #YouMadeItHappen and #4Charity highlighting the work of charitable organisations, to inspiring user-generated content that increases awareness of critical issues, social media has truly transformed the way that the average person relates to charitable causes. Part of that is what we’re calling solicitation, or “making the ask”.

Throughout this guide, we’ve encouraged you to focus on the building blocks of your social media strategy - your community, and your engagement with them. But up until now, we haven’t talked about that most obvious of social media uses for charities: raising money. That’s because your approach to social media should be about much more than that, like community loyalty, trust, and public image.

Of course, we’re not only talking about money. This final stage of the three-step social media journey could consist of anything from asking your supporters to participate in a user-generated content campaign to signing a petition you started, both of which count as making the ask.

Solicitation comes at the moment when the two-way street between your organisation and your supporters is functioning well. Every ask should be planned and worked into your overall content strategy, and you should be priming your audience in advance, setting the scene for them to contextualise your request. In this way, when the time comes to make the ask, they won’t feel that the request has come out of nowhere. They’ll understand why you are asking, and precisely how they can help.

In addition to making the ask, we also want to emphasise the importance of acknowledgement within the solicitation process. You should demonstrate gratitude routinely, saying thank you for every individual donation, marking key milestones and updating people about what their money is being spent on, or how their contribution, whatever it is, has helped you in your aims. With all this in mind, we’ll discuss how you can go about transforming your engaged community into material support for your organisation.
For us at Social Misfits Media, the three-step process of social media success begins - and in many ways, ends - with community. They’re your greatest asset, and they should be front of mind at all times when thinking about what works and what doesn’t online. You need to seek potential supporters out across different platforms, in online forums, in already-existing groups – putting yourself on the map.

Online communities can be just as important as real-life ones, and you need to prioritise both and create crossovers between the two. We want to see more charities and non-profits identify their audiences through personas and show real commitment by building up a presence, approaching their activities creatively and putting their supporters front and centre.

The second stage is engagement. High engagement takes place when you’re proactive about posting high quality content and having positive interactions with your audience. It’s worth remembering that success on social media is transactional. Whatever content you post needs to be high quality (either high-res or high quality in the sense that it’s authentic and relatable), and accompanied by plenty of interaction in the form of polls, questions, and responses to comments.

Engagement is all about building bridges between you and your audience, driving loyalty. It’s also about having inter-community discussions, reaching out to influencers and other organisations that might collaborate and bolster your own efforts.

The final step of the journey is solicitation. By now you have cultivated an engaged loyal audience, and you can take a risk and ask them to do something on your behalf: “make the ask”. Drive your desired action – fundraising, recruiting volunteers, or another action such as signing a petition – via content campaigns that you plan well in advance.

You should test your posts repeatedly until they are optimised for action, using A/B testing to see what kinds of content your audience is most responsive to. Demonstrate consistent gratitude, acknowledging every kind of support you receive. With a well-planned solicitation strategy, you will reap the benefits of all your previous hard work identifying, building, and engaging your online community - and they’ll get something positive from it, too.
PASS THE SALT, PLEASE

As we outlined in the Introduction, we encourage trainees in our workshops to approach social media the same way they would a dinner party. Think about who you might meet there, how you’ll find common ground. Nobody wants to get stuck on the receiving end of a lecture, even online, so take a genuine interest in others, don’t talk about yourself all the time, and be friendly in your conversation and delivery.

Bear this concept in mind when you think about soliciting support on social media. What can you learn from your audience while you’re making the ask? How might you follow up on a conversation that interested you earlier on in the night? You wouldn’t immediately ask a favour of someone you’ve just met - so how will you broach the subject of asking for money?

“You should never take your community for granted,” says Carlos Miranda, our Chief Executive here at Social Misfits Media. “Treat them with respect and ask politely but clearly when you want something from them. State your purpose. If they are confused about why you are asking, then you probably haven’t been explicit enough or laid enough groundwork beforehand.”

LOOK BEYOND THE BUCK

Something we want to emphasise is that making the ask encompasses a lot more than direct requests for money, although that’s obviously a goal for many charities. Maybe you need help distributing leaflets in your local area, are urging people to contact their MP about a specific issue, or want people to take part in a protest you organised. A platform like LinkedIn encourages users to list volunteering opportunities they would be open to, and it’s a good way of finding board members or highly skilled volunteers to engage with. Or perhaps you could hear from fresh voices and get more shares by doing a call for guest contributors for your organisation’s blog, or reach more people by asking your followers to recommend your newsletter to a friend.

“There’s no use thinking about your audience as a cash point - the relationship is much subtler than that,” says Lightful CEO Vinay Nair. “From the start, when you’re making any kind of organisational plan, you should be thinking ahead about key moments throughout the year when you know you’ll be seeking donations - but crucially, other kinds of support as well. You always need to be two steps ahead, offering your audience enough in return that they feel you care about them and not just what you can get out of them.”

SOLICITATION - STRATEGY

3. SOLICITATION

“You always need to be two steps ahead, offering your audience enough in return that they feel you care about them and not just what you can get out of them.”

“Nobody wants to get stuck on the receiving end of a lecture, even online, so take a genuine interest in others, don’t talk about yourself all the time, and be friendly in your conversation and delivery.”
Making the Ask

We’ve talked about making the ask, but perhaps you’re wondering how that actually works in practice. In our view, there are three major components.

First of all, you need to think about tone and language. You can derive this from the overall message of your organisation. Do you generally use a playful, colloquial tone of voice, or is a more serious approach needed? Do you want to evoke a particular response by using provocative language? You may well find that less is more, with short, sharp phrasing attracting greater attention. Regardless, the aim is to nail down your optimal message and the right tone of voice for what you’re trying to achieve. Are you making the ask in the right way? How are you asking? What journey are you asking your supporters to go on?

Secondly, conduct some A/B testing informed by basic analytics. You can do this by taking two different forms of the same post, making them live, and monitoring how they are received. Are you posting a statement or a question, for example? Which works best? Even better, if you have a bit of budget, boost these posts · you could even pay for them to reach different segments of your audience to see who is most reactive. Keep track of your findings and carry that forward with you. And keep testing · your results may differ according to time of day, time of year, urgency of the campaign, and other factors. Social media analytics can help you assess these.

Finally, test the user journey. By journey, we mean the linear progression the user takes in order to complete your ask · whether that’s giving a donation or signing a petition. This is often left by the wayside, but it must be prioritised because it’s going to cause you fewer problems down the line if you take care of it before the campaign goes live. You and other members of your team need to be trying out everything for yourselves, across different devices (smartphones, laptop, tablet, desktop computer) and interfaces (Apple, Android) and browsers (Firefox, Edge, Chrome, Safari). And you need to do it multiple times · any slight hiccup in your process will cost you support.

“Remember that every time you add a stage to the user journey, it adds friction · and whenever there’s friction there’s drop-off,” says Carlos. “Remove all but the most important stages of the journey. Minimise the amount of click-throughs, information people need to enter and unnecessary images and videos that slow down load time for those accessing on-the-go or from abroad.”

Consider that there is much greater awareness nowadays of how user data is stored · reassure any donors that their personal details are safe, and that you won’t be selling on their email address to anyone else or contacting them without permission.

Making the Ask

We’ve talked about making the ask, but perhaps you’re wondering how that actually works in practice. In our view, there are three major components.

First of all, you need to think about tone and language. You can derive this from the overall message of your organisation. Do you generally use a playful, colloquial tone of voice, or is a more serious approach needed? Do you want to evoke a particular response by using provocative language? You may well find that less is more, with short, sharp phrasing attracting greater attention. Regardless, the aim is to nail down your optimal message and the right tone of voice for what you’re trying to achieve. Are you making the ask in the right way? How are you asking? What journey are you asking your supporters to go on?

Secondly, conduct some A/B testing informed by basic analytics. You can do this by taking two different forms of the same post, making them live, and monitoring how they are received. Are you posting a statement or a question, for example? Which works best? Even better, if you have a bit of budget, boost these posts · you could even pay for them to reach different segments of your audience to see who is most reactive. Keep track of your findings and carry that forward with you. And keep testing · your results may differ according to time of day, time of year, urgency of the campaign, and other factors. Social media analytics can help you assess these.

Finally, test the user journey. By journey, we mean the linear progression the user takes in order to complete your ask · whether that’s giving a donation or signing a petition. This is often left by the wayside, but it must be prioritised because it’s going to cause you fewer problems down the line if you take care of it before the campaign goes live. You and other members of your team need to be trying out everything for yourselves, across different devices (smartphones, laptop, tablet, desktop computer) and interfaces (Apple, Android) and browsers (Firefox, Edge, Chrome, Safari). And you need to do it multiple times · any slight hiccup in your process will cost you support.

“Remember that every time you add a stage to the user journey, it adds friction · and whenever there’s friction there’s drop-off,” says Carlos. “Remove all but the most important stages of the journey. Minimise the amount of click-throughs, information people need to enter and unnecessary images and videos that slow down load time for those accessing on-the-go or from abroad.”

Consider that there is much greater awareness nowadays of how user data is stored · reassure any donors that their personal details are safe, and that you won’t be selling on their email address to anyone else or contacting them without permission.

Making the Ask

We’ve talked about making the ask, but perhaps you’re wondering how that actually works in practice. In our view, there are three major components.

First of all, you need to think about tone and language. You can derive this from the overall message of your organisation. Do you generally use a playful, colloquial tone of voice, or is a more serious approach needed? Do you want to evoke a particular response by using provocative language? You may well find that less is more, with short, sharp phrasing attracting greater attention. Regardless, the aim is to nail down your optimal message and the right tone of voice for what you’re trying to achieve. Are you making the ask in the right way? How are you asking? What journey are you asking your supporters to go on?

Secondly, conduct some A/B testing informed by basic analytics. You can do this by taking two different forms of the same post, making them live, and monitoring how they are received. Are you posting a statement or a question, for example? Which works best? Even better, if you have a bit of budget, boost these posts · you could even pay for them to reach different segments of your audience to see who is most reactive. Keep track of your findings and carry that forward with you. And keep testing · your results may differ according to time of day, time of year, urgency of the campaign, and other factors. Social media analytics can help you assess these.

Finally, test the user journey. By journey, we mean the linear progression the user takes in order to complete your ask · whether that’s giving a donation or signing a petition. This is often left by the wayside, but it must be prioritised because it’s going to cause you fewer problems down the line if you take care of it before the campaign goes live. You and other members of your team need to be trying out everything for yourselves, across different devices (smartphones, laptop, tablet, desktop computer) and interfaces (Apple, Android) and browsers (Firefox, Edge, Chrome, Safari). And you need to do it multiple times · any slight hiccup in your process will cost you support.

“Remember that every time you add a stage to the user journey, it adds friction · and whenever there’s friction there’s drop-off,” says Carlos. “Remove all but the most important stages of the journey. Minimise the amount of click-throughs, information people need to enter and unnecessary images and videos that slow down load time for those accessing on-the-go or from abroad.”

Consider that there is much greater awareness nowadays of how user data is stored · reassure any donors that their personal details are safe, and that you won’t be selling on their email address to anyone else or contacting them without permission.

Making the Ask

We’ve talked about making the ask, but perhaps you’re wondering how that actually works in practice. In our view, there are three major components.

First of all, you need to think about tone and language. You can derive this from the overall message of your organisation. Do you generally use a playful, colloquial tone of voice, or is a more serious approach needed? Do you want to evoke a particular response by using provocative language? You may well find that less is more, with short, sharp phrasing attracting greater attention. Regardless, the aim is to nail down your optimal message and the right tone of voice for what you’re trying to achieve. Are you making the ask in the right way? How are you asking? What journey are you asking your supporters to go on?

Secondly, conduct some A/B testing informed by basic analytics. You can do this by taking two different forms of the same post, making them live, and monitoring how they are received. Are you posting a statement or a question, for example? Which works best? Even better, if you have a bit of budget, boost these posts · you could even pay for them to reach different segments of your audience to see who is most reactive. Keep track of your findings and carry that forward with you. And keep testing · your results may differ according to time of day, time of year, urgency of the campaign, and other factors. Social media analytics can help you assess these.

Finally, test the user journey. By journey, we mean the linear progression the user takes in order to complete your ask · whether that’s giving a donation or signing a petition. This is often left by the wayside, but it must be prioritised because it’s going to cause you fewer problems down the line if you take care of it before the campaign goes live. You and other members of your team need to be trying out everything for yourselves, across different devices (smartphones, laptop, tablet, desktop computer) and interfaces (Apple, Android) and browsers (Firefox, Edge, Chrome, Safari). And you need to do it multiple times · any slight hiccup in your process will cost you support.

“Remember that every time you add a stage to the user journey, it adds friction · and whenever there’s friction there’s drop-off,” says Carlos. “Remove all but the most important stages of the journey. Minimise the amount of click-throughs, information people need to enter and unnecessary images and videos that slow down load time for those accessing on-the-go or from abroad.”

Consider that there is much greater awareness nowadays of how user data is stored · reassure any donors that their personal details are safe, and that you won’t be selling on their email address to anyone else or contacting them without permission.
If it is money that you’re asking for, be straightforward and creative. Of millennials’ top pet peeves on the internet, seeing the same content too often comes out top, along with being hit with asks time and time again – and you can assume it’s the same for other age groups, too. Post a stimulating variety of content and resist the temptation to copy and paste the same post over and over, at the same time of day. You risk becoming a bore or even worse, irritating.

Any ask also has to be clear, well-planned, and supported by response systems. Will you use an automated system like MailChimp, or is someone in charge of sending personalised thank you emails manually? Have you enabled GiftAid or PayPal? Are you using a third-party system like GoFundMe? Are you GDPR-compliant, and is the journey smooth?

**CHECK THE DIARY**

Seasonal campaigns might be more successful, so think about key events in the cultural calendar and see how you can tailor your content to match.

“Ramadan, by miles” is what Abdul Basit Ali of Islamic Relief told us when asked about the best time for the organisation to make the ask. “For other organisations Christmas is comparable – whatever your audience has the most affinity towards is going to be when they get most involved on social.”

---

**LIGHTFUL**

Our sister company Lightful have been working hard to develop products on their platform that make planning social media campaigns easier, smarter, and more efficient. By using social media analytics and listening tools, they have a pretty good sense of when their donors are most likely to engage with them.

“Social media can be very effective once you start being more strategic about its use,” says Tereza Litsa, Social Media Manager at Lightful. “You don’t need to be an expert to improve awareness, engagement, or donations for your cause. Everyone can seize the power of social media simply by learning the basics and implementing a good plan. There’s so much you can do once you start understanding your supporters and what they’re likely to respond well to.”

As Tereza says, a successful social media campaign starts by improving your understanding of your target audience. Social media listening can help you find the inspiration you need for your next campaign based on your supporters’ interests and conversations. Analytics can also help you understand how your supporters react to your existing content so that you tailor your content to their needs.

“There is a real need for charities and non-profits to incorporate all of the aspects of digital technology – including social media, customer relationship management, websites – in order to tell their stories better,” says Vinay Nair, CEO of our sister company, Lightful. “Social media can have such a positive impact when used well. I want to see more charities embracing it as an integral part of their fundraising strategy. Not only can you reach a lot of people instantly, but it can be a tool for building trust, engaging in ethical marketing, and increasing transparency.”
Your supporters are likely already aware of important dates relating to your cause, such as Black History Month, World Refugee Day, or Trans Day of Remembrance. You should mark these in your calendar and plan specific content strategies around them – especially if you need support for a particular project that relates to the event. Because your supporters will already have some level of awareness, it’s probably a good time to make an ask. Bolster interest and lay the groundwork for your ask by posting relevant, high-quality content that highlights your own work in this area. You could also suggest that your supporters “donate their birthday” - asking their friends to donate to your cause instead of buying them a gift. Create aesthetic, shareable, “I donated” images that people can tweet after donating.

GIVE PEOPLE OPTIONS

Create infographics with obvious calls to action and consider listing your aims in bullet points. As with all your content, set your messaging and tone with your team in advance - how do you want this to come across? Then make it as clear as possible what your desired action is. You want to create a powerful, emotive message to really capture people's attention.

If you’re seeking support in multiple ways, create a clear landing page with different options for action such as “donate”, “sign petition”, or “share campaign”. Depending on your organisational style, drive people towards that landing page using arrow emojis and capital letters, which act as visual prompts.

We recommend going across platforms with a specific plan for each. Just as you should seek out your audiences on whatever platforms they’re using, creating platform-specific content, so should any asks you make be distributed accordingly.

Consider segmenting your audience with donation buttons tailored according to income or interest - this kind of data can be collected and analysed through social media tools.

You’ll also want to consider where people will be when they see your calls to action, and create different donation channels accordingly. If they’re just leaving the office, they will likely be on their mobiles - therefore a text donation number will be the most natural route. Alternatively, a GlobalGiving page might offer the best conversion rates during the day.

SET THE TIMER

People can engage and respond more to a campaign with a time limit, so create a sense of urgency by setting a tight deadline or short turnaround. Use your social media channels to remind people of approaching deadlines, or create a digital countdown.

“Don't be scared of asking questions on social media!” advises Tufail Hussain of Islamic Relief. “I see a lot of charitable organisations that don't seem to ask effectively on social media. With the right video, coupled with the right ask, we can raise awareness and a lot of funds. Donations on Facebook are an amazing opportunity - one of our partners in the sector Medical Aid for Palestinians, set a Facebook donate page up for Palestine, at the time when there was a call for urgent medicine support and it raised over £1.5 million within days. Timing is vital - they only thought they'd raise a couple of thousand pounds, yet they far exceeded that.”
SOLICITATION - GRATITUDE

THE VALUE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM

We hear a lot of complaints about "slacktivism", the idea that it’s easy for people to show support for an organisation or cause on social media but don’t truly engage or make a change. It plays a part, certainly, but our theory at Social Misfits Media is that many organisations just don’t see social media as a good fundraising tool unless they can see direct conversions (e.g. how many people donated X as a result of tweet Y).

Yet there is no other tactic that provides more peer-to-peer visibility than social media. People are seeking social approval online, and social media enables donors and supporters to spread the word themselves, creating huge potential for organic growth in your supporter base. When people see a friend supporting a cause, they can be inspired to do the same.

DON’T FORGET YOUR BIG DONORS

Ultimately, your major gifts aren’t like to come through via Facebook or from your very young audience on Snapchat, so your messaging on these platforms should be different. Instead, a channel like LinkedIn is probably what you should focus on for this kind of ask, ensuring you’re communicating the kind of content that’s going to be noticed by the right people.

Your major donors might not be directly responding to your LinkedIn posts, but staff at foundations looking at who will be administering grants might be – and they want to see that you are engaging with your beneficiaries. For example, if you have young beneficiaries, they’ll want to know that your organisation is properly engaging with them on the platforms/spaces where they spend the most time.

If someone is going to part with a small fortune, they may want to see evidence in person or have more regular contact with senior representatives of your organisation too. You should keep all the options on the table and make yourselves available (wherever possible). Maybe you could encourage them to become volunteers, so that they are more personally invested. Keep tabs on their online activities, vocally supporting them and sharing their content – it shows that you are paying attention and emphasises your mutual interests.

You don’t want to spam them with constant online mentions or invitations, so make sure you’re not duplicating any actions that are already taking place. For this, you need proactive dialogue between your internal departments and to keep tabs on all communication.

SHOWING YOUR IMPACT ON SOCIAL

Because interaction is built into any strong social media strategy, it’s a fantastic way to show donors’ impact – and there is an almost endless list of ways you can do this.

First and foremost, think about your beneficiaries and how you can link your supporters with them. Photos, testimonials, and videos all make for affirming, positive content that you can share online.

Secondly, create simple graphs or infographics breaking down where your impact has been felt. Try to make your content shareable, with short captions pulling out key statistics. Be thoughtful and varied in your approach – you don’t want to bore or overwhelm people. Give people a snapshot of what’s going on, and direct them to a URL if they want to see more. You want to show the impact and evidence of your good work – so this kind of content should be an intrinsic component of your content strategy.

How you report on the impact of donations and other forms of support will factor significantly into people’s decisions further down the line, when they’re weighing up whether to put their cash behind your organisation. Ultimately, having an authentic array of beneficiary testimonials helps you to win hearts and minds.

Tufail Hussain of Islamic Relief told us about the content they share via WhatsApp with major donors. “It’s all incredibly authentic. We’ve found that that element is very important and that’s why we started going to the field, doing Facebook Lives from there, showing people that we are delivering aid on the ground. It’s almost like we’re taking the donor with us on the journey.”

Abdul Basit Ali, of the same charity, agrees. “We have started doing regular live content for donors to help them make connections with fundraisers and key staff members, like our programmes team.”

This is a major way Islamic Relief keeps donors informed about their donations and the real time impact they’re having. Read more about them and how they engage donors in the case study section.
All your communications should point towards building your major donor’s knowledge and understanding of your cause,” says Carlos. “If you cultivate the relationship respectfully, what follows is a mutually beneficial affiliation both parties can be proud of.”

MIND YOUR MANNERS

At Social Misfits Media, we think that saying thank you is an indispensable component of any solicitation strategy. And not only because it’s good manners – but because you want your organisation to be the one people remember when they’re deciding on who to support when they climb Mount Kilimanjaro or run a half-marathon next year. Small organisations can really shine in this area, because they may rely on volunteers and really notice the impact of each individual donation. Any help is invaluable, so make sure your supporters know that.

“It cannot be a one-way street,” says Carlos. “If you’re asking something of your community, you have to show genuine gratitude. Don’t take them for granted - every single individual that donates or completes an action on your behalf must be acknowledged.”

Saying thank you also provides a great way of gathering user-generated content. “Ask beneficiaries to send photos, videos, a scan of a thank you letter - anything that you can repost and say, ‘this is where your donation went’,” says Carlos. “This can be redistributed across your social feeds, providing you with authentic content that resonates really well and shows a direct impact.” (For more about user-generated content, refer to our pull-out box in the Engagement section.)

DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK

It’s best not to ask too much or too often - it’s a delicate balance, says Islamic Relief’s Abdul Basit Ali. He told us about how the charity approaches “the ask”: “If we’re doing a fundraising appeal on Facebook Live then ‘the ask’ is usually constant. Generally, we try not to do too many asks, but during emergencies and specific time periods we do them more regularly.”

“During a Facebook Live, we estimate that we need to give people at least five minutes to watch the video and check notifications, and so we try to make a subtle ask every five minutes. If it’s an emergency appeal then asks are constantly on the screen as a graphic, or we might pin a comment as well.” Read more about Islamic Relief UK in the case study section further on in this guide.

WHAT IF IT GOES WRONG?

Inevitably, things can go wrong at times. The solicitation phase, particularly when it comes to digital fundraising, can be a risky business. In order to minimise risk, it’s always good to be prepared. What tone do you want to strike when dealing with tricky situations? Who in your organisation needs to be looped in and informed when something goes wrong? What structures do you have in place? By having a crisis plan and process that is signed off in advance, you can focus your efforts on minimising reputational damage. Maybe one of your high-profile supporters is involved in a scandal, or you create a campaign that falls flat. You can never have complete control over everything, so ensure that your team is comfortable with dealing with the consequences of a badly-received campaign.

IT SOUNDS OBVIOUS, BUT IF YOU DON'T EVER GO OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE, YOUR ORGANISATION WON'T REACH ITS FULL POTENTIAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA. IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG, LEARN FROM IT, AND MAKE ANOTHER ATTEMPT LATER ON - BUT DON'T BE ASHAMED OF HAVING TRIED.

Don’t allow it to put you off in future, though. “Be brave!” advises Lightful’s Vinay Nair. “It sounds obvious, but if you don’t ever go out of your comfort zone, your organisation won’t reach its full potential on social media. If something goes wrong, learn from it, and make another attempt later on - but don't be ashamed of having tried.”

IN CONCLUSION...

Solicitation is a process involving making the ask and acknowledging people’s contributions, whatever form they take. As always, your community is your number one resource, your raison d’ètre: draw on them for inspiration, never take them for granted, and show them respect throughout every interaction.

As we emphasised, advance planning should be baked into your overall digital strategy. Making any ask of your online community should always, where possible, be something that has been carefully laid out. Be bold and brave - trust that you will find support and put every process in place to make it happen.
Telling good stories - with images, videos, infographics, podcasts - must be at the heart of your social media feeds, showing your audience the value of their money and other forms of support. If people can't see why they are needed, they won't feel as compelled to donate, and donors will also want to see evidence of impact. Blogs and email updates are a great way of publicly recognising people's support. When running a fundraising or other sort of solicitation campaign, accompany your content with calls to action wherever possible.

Gratitude is an indispensable component of solicitation, and you should remember dinner party etiquette at all times. There are so many ways to show your thanks with social media - so use those tools to your advantage.

With this #MakeItSocial guide, we want to encourage more charities and non-profits to reclaim the positive potential of social media. There is a wealth of support to be tapped into, and it comes in various forms. Think about what your audience wants from you - how can you create a fair exchange? Maybe you're not going to make millions, but you can do plenty without spending a penny. We hope that with this final stage, solicitation, you'll see how all the hard work you've put into community building and engagement can bear fruit.

SAYING THANK YOU
You've been doing the digital equivalent of shaking the donation bucket, and people's coins have been tumbling in. You're not going to let them walk off without calling out a “Thank you!” - and the same should apply online.

Luckily, social media makes it incredibly easy to acknowledge supporters, no matter how small their contribution. Here are some suggestions:

- Thank you letter or email.
- Social media shout-out.
- Running a gratitude campaign with a hashtag, e.g. #ThankfulThursday.
- Retweeting or reposting donors’ content, and celebrating their successes.
- Offering exclusive access to behind-the-scenes content or information about your organisation.
- Showcasing success stories that were aided by people's donations on your social media feeds.
- Donor gift: this could be a pen, postcard, or sticker, but ideally it's something practical that relates to your mission and keeps this in the donor's mind.
- Knowledge sharing: send links to relevant, practical resources that your donors might find useful.
- Donor appreciation page: a dedicated page on your website acknowledging everyone who supports you (you could offer an opt-in to this during the donation process). This offers a chance for donors to connect with each other, and may encourage people to share on their own social media accounts, too. Just remember to tell your donors about it, otherwise they may not find it!

Acknowledgements should be:

- Immediate. People need to know that their donation has been received, and their money is not floating about somewhere.
- Meaningful. It’s nice to know that a donation has reached the right organisation, and not just in the form of a cold bank statement or PayPal receipt.
- Impactful. Let people know exactly how their money will be used, and what it will help to accomplish.
- Specific. Where possible, allow people to make a choice about which project they want to support.
- Transparent. Poor customer service isn't a good look. Offer a link to a donor FAQ page and make your annual financial reports readily available to view or download. On a higher-tech level, if your organisation has an app or interactive website, you could have a dedicated transparency section where people can directly follow the journey of their donations.

Telling good stories - with images, videos, infographics, podcasts - must be at the heart of your social media feeds, showing your audience the value of their money and other forms of support. If people can't see why they are needed, they won't feel as compelled to donate, and donors will also want to see evidence of impact. Blogs and email updates are a great way of publicly recognising people's support. When running a fundraising or other sort of solicitation campaign, accompany your content with calls to action wherever possible.

Gratitude is an indispensable component of solicitation, and you should remember dinner party etiquette at all times. There are so many ways to show your thanks with social media - so use those tools to your advantage.

With this #MakeItSocial guide, we want to encourage more charities and non-profits to reclaim the positive potential of social media. There is a wealth of support to be tapped into, and it comes in various forms. Think about what your audience wants from you - how can you create a fair exchange? Maybe you're not going to make millions, but you can do plenty without spending a penny. We hope that with this final stage, solicitation, you'll see how all the hard work you've put into community building and engagement can bear fruit.

LINKS
Islamic Relief has won awards for its work alleviating poverty and bringing disaster relief to people in some of the toughest regions of the world.

From using Facebook Live videos in the zones they work in and at their own events, to WhatsApp messaging their biggest donors, the charity is making innovative use of social media and digital tools.

Supported by a senior team that places high value on social media, the team makes it a priority to integrate their digital goals fully into the overall organisational strategy - and it’s really paying off.

Abdul Basit Ali
Social Media Manager

Tufail Hussain
Interim UK Director at Islamic Relief

SMM: Please tell us a little bit about Islamic Relief, and the audiences you engage with on social media.

Abdul Basit Ali: Islamic Relief is a disaster relief and international NGO. We have been around since 1984, established in Birmingham and have now expanded to over 40 countries. We have a massive team delivering our long-term development programmes on the ground, and we also do a lot of disaster relief work like in Syria, Yemen, and Mali.

Social media ensures we are communicating about our work, enabling us to tell the stories of the people we support who live in some of the most difficult circumstances.
We approach each channel differently because our audience is so varied - Instagram is a young audience, mostly students and volunteers, so we don't necessarily share content within the feed but on Stories and through Instagram Live. We try to ensure we are encouraging them to take action and volunteer - it's not always about asking for money, one of the biggest ways young people can give is by giving up their time.

**SMM: Do you have personas that you target?**

ABA: We look at personas per channel, so Snapchat content is geared towards young people and is based on fun activities in our offices around the country, and our volunteering activities.

LinkedIn is professional, and we tailor content towards that type of audience. We’re working with our new Major Donors Manager to see how we can create thought leadership content.

Through social media you can grow your network and make contacts like you would at events. We're working with our media team to target more journalists and amplify our news agenda. We use Facebook to run paid ads, but also as a hub to showcase our work and provide timely updates.

We have started doing regular live content for donors to help them make connections with fundraisers and key staff members, like our programmes team.

**SMM: How does your organisation approach social media and fundraising?**

ABA: Our social media is embedded into the overall organisational strategy. One of the big things we are looking at is how to innovate in our fundraising - it’s a constant challenge for the social media team.

After Charity Week, we have an annual dinner. Last year, it was in Glasgow - and at that dinner we announced the final total of our international fundraising efforts. We did a big Facebook Live production so everyone could tune in - a red carpet live. We interviewed volunteers, and had one continuous, seamless stream from outside on the red carpet to inside the main event.

Social media played a huge role in connecting and celebrating the achievements of students and volunteers from seven countries around the world. One of the key components of Charity Week is unity, and this was a great example of bringing people together from different countries, cultures, races under one platform.

**SMM: How does your organisation use Facebook Live as part of your fundraising strategy?**

ABA: We use Facebook Lives from the ground where possible, to communicate real-time occurrences. We have used Facebook Live from our emergency distributions to show our donors and supporters how the money raised for emergencies is being utilised. That's helped to build trust.

In the past we've done a lot of testing that’s helped us run many successful Facebook Live fundraising campaigns, raising over £25,000. We're now looking to set up a Facebook Live studio space and have a convertible meeting room so if an emergency strikes, we can set up a Facebook Live instantly - and get the most out of guests who come to our offices by asking them to do live interviews.

**SMM: How do you know when to make “the ask”?**

ABA: Generally, we try not to do too many asks. But if we're doing a fundraising appeal on Facebook Live then “the ask” is usually consistently there. If it’s an emergency appeal then asks are constantly on the screen as a graphic, or we might pin a comment as well.

During a Facebook Live, we estimate that we need to give people at least five minutes to watch the video and check notifications - so we make a subtle ask at that frequency.
league night when everything else trending was football related).

SMM: For your organisation, when is the best time to make asks on social media?

ABA: Ramadan, by miles. For other organisations Christmas is comparable - whatever event your audience has the most affinity towards.

SMM: What have you learned about fundraising for social media that you wish you had known when you started?

ABA: Not to be afraid - to be brave enough to say, "as long as I have this budget and these resources, I think it will do really well." Maybe it will fail, but it’s important to try. And to advocate for the social team when it comes to delivering fundraising initiatives. If the social team think something will work, and you test the idea with the fundraising team who also think it will work, then normally your idea will be a success.

Also, to collaborate more. More so than any other team, social media teams cannot work in silos, and have to keep positive relationships with other departments - especially external-facing teams, because they generally become the social media spokespeople and tweet at events for you which is great because you get diverse content.

SMM: Can you tell us about how your organisation uses social media for major gifts fundraising?

Tufail Hussain: We use our channels not to specifically target major donors, but as part of a wider awareness raising and fundraising. However, we utilise social media and specifically WhatsApp for major donor giving, to keep our donors updated in a personable way and to appeal to them - from the UK, but also when we're in the field.

When we do use WhatsApp for major donors it’s sparingly - we don’t spam them. Only if it’s a real emergency campaign will we send out a message that way. We make WhatsApp-friendly videos and those will be shared - they are normally about a minute, or a minute and a half long.

It is about different levels of relationships. I have personal relationships with five to ten major donors that I see as friends, and I engage with them in that way. It’s all incredibly authentic. That’s why we started going to the field, doing Facebook Lives from there, showing people that we are delivering aid on the ground. It’s almost like we’re taking the donor with us on the journey.

SMM: What advice would you give other charities and organisations that are looking to shape their digital fundraising strategy, from an individual and major gifts perspective?

TH:

1. Invest. It’s vital to get the right people and expertise in.

2. Be creative and brave. In the run up to Ramadan, we did Facebook Lives from the ground from Palestine, Syria, and East Africa, and in minutes had 12,000 views. You need to think outside the box. Platforms allow you to reach potentially millions, and it would be a shame not to use them because you’re fearful.

3. Don’t be scared of asking questions on social media! I see a lot of charitable organisations that don’t seem to ask effectively on social media. The right video, coupled with the right ask, can raise awareness and a lot of funds. Using Facebook for donations is an amazing opportunity.

SMM: You’re fairly active on social about your work on your personal Twitter and LinkedIn. Do you think you being active plays a role in some of the success?

TH: Definitely - it helps me build a profile within my community. I can go to events and people recognise me from my social media, and that obviously helps to build trust and reduce barriers.

It’s important to show your human side. My channels were very much set up to promote the organisations I work for, but then after a while I realised that when I’m constantly sharing items about work it can become boring. It’s important to show that you are just like everyone else with interests and passions.
OUR TOP 10 TIPS FOR MAKING THE ASK AND ACKNOWLEDGING SUPPORTERS

Solicitation comes at the end of the three-step social media journey, at the point when you are feeling confident in your supporters, and they in you. Having established a strong relationship with them, you can now ask them to take action on your behalf - be it donating money, signing a petition, or attending an event. We outline our best advice here.

CONTEXT
- Showcase your work. You should be informing and updating your supporters regularly, letting potential donors, volunteers, or activists see the kind of work they could get involved with in the future.
- Time campaigns with wider events. Be aware of significant dates in the cultural and social calendar that relate to your cause, and curate content and ask campaigns accordingly.

WHAT AND HOW TO ASK
- Remember dinner party etiquette. Don’t be boring or arrogant, don’t make requests too often, and respect the two-way rapport you have with your supporters.
- Tell people what you want. Don’t be sheepish – explain precisely what you are asking for and why, including clear calls to action in your posts.
- Fine tune your content. Make use of social media analytics and basic A/B testing to see which kind of content works best, and with whom.
- Test-run the user journey. You don’t want to fall at the last hurdle - set aside time to rigorously test each stage of your ask to ensure smoothness, speed, and user-friendliness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
- Tell good stories. Social media is all about stories, and documenting beneficiaries is a great way of showing the tangible benefits of people's donations. Post visual and audio content making that link explicit.
- Recognise every contribution. Your exact phrasing may differ, but whether they’re a major donor or an individual who gave their time to volunteer, use social media to acknowledge and thank them.
- Keep the relationship alive. The journey doesn’t end when the ask campaign is over - cultivate supporters’ interest with graphs, infographics, blog posts, and other content that might interest them in the future.
- Don’t skimp on transparency. People understandably expect clarity and honesty from non-profits and charities. Provide detailed updates on where people’s money is going and make your financial reports readily available.
WE HOPE YOU FOUND #MAKEITSOCIAL USEFUL, PRACTICAL AND INSPIRING - NOW GO FORTH AND BE SOCIAL!

CREDITS
Written by: Sadie Hale & Erin Niimi Longhurst
Edited by: Rachel Stephenson Sheff & Cameron Standage
Designed by: Roger Chasteauneuf, Fred Design
www.freddesign.co.uk
© Copyright Social Misfits Media 2019

ABOUT SOCIAL MISFITS MEDIA
At Social Misfits Media we help charities and social enterprises think strategically about their digital presence. We work with our clients to better engage with those critical to their success by creating dynamic social media strategies for marketing, campaigning, and fundraising.

With years of experience across every social platform, Social Misfits’ team of social media specialists can analyse your current activity, create future roadmaps, manage your daily posts, and train your teams for social success; in other words, everything you need to turn your social media into social good.

Founded by Carlos Miranda, Social Misfits Media is part of The Brewery, parent company of global communications agency freuds.

ABOUT LIGHTFUL
Lightful is a full service, creative technology company that helps charities, foundations and social enterprises transform how they do digital. With a mission to strengthen relationships between good people and great causes, Lightful follows a user-centric design process and has developed the world’s first social media management tool for the social good sector.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF FUNDRAISING
The Institute of Fundraising (IoF) is the professional membership body for UK fundraising. We support fundraisers through leadership and representation; best practice and compliance; education and networking; and we champion and promote fundraising as a career choice.

We have over 600 organisational members who raise more than £10 billion in income for good causes every year, and over 6,000 individual members.

A BIG THANKS
The team here at Social Misfits Media would like to thank the following individuals for their advice, support, help and time - without them, this guide wouldn’t exist.

Abdul Basit Ali
Adam Bryan
Angharad Francis
Alisha F. Miranda
Arlo Brady
Beth Kanter
Ben Simpson
Emily Boardman
Gemma Collins-Ellis
Gemma Crocker
Hannah Donald
Jaz O’Hara
Jean-Luc Picard
Johnny Murnane
Kira Miranda
Laura Weidman Powers
Lola Miranda
Mark Saville
Mike Powers
Peter Lewis
Rebecca Sterry
Sarah Bissell
Sofia Soni
Tereza Litsa
Tufail Hussain
Theo Miranda
Vinay Nair