



Social Media

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What is social media?

Social media is a blanket term for various online networks that allow users to share news, ideas, images, and/or video. Some of the most popular social media channels include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Different networks specialize in different kinds of engagement:

- **Facebook:** Most often used for community engagement and commentary, and sharing all kinds of content (images, links, and general posts).
- **Twitter:** Often used for short messages to a potentially larger audience, if posts are re-shared. This tool is best used to share news, links, and to engage with other community groups and authorities (e.g., police, politicians, partner organizations and interested partners).
- **Instagram:** Mostly used for photo and short (15 second) video sharing.
- **YouTube:** Best for sharing high-quality videos.

How do I start?

Choose the networks that seem to best suit your message, content, and audience. Many groups begin with Facebook, because it is used by people of all ages and walks of life. Twitter is also a popular choice because it makes it easier to reach out to groups, individuals, and brands without requiring them to follow you.

What do I post?

Start with things you already have access to: topical news links, online resources, and of course any events, materials, or news related to your organization. Follow, comment on posts by others (positively), and share content that other groups post that is relevant to your campaign issue to build your network.

How often should I post?

It is not necessary to post several times a day or even every day, but you should share interesting content at least a few times a week so that followers know you are active and engaged.

There are several free online resources that can help you manage posting to multiple social media accounts, such as HootSuite (hootsuite.com), which also provide free online tutorials about what to post, where, when, and how often.



How do I know if I'm doing it right?

Your community will build slowly. Ask all your members to follow, and encourage their networks to follow as well, and you should see it grow almost every day. Stay focused on not just your number of followers but also who is following you. This will help you identify relevant partners and gauge the quality of your engagement with your target audience.

An important aspect to the success of the social media component of your campaign is to recruit and foster alliances with relevant others. For example, a road safety campaign can also be shared by police services, paramedics, and health organizations within your community on their respective social media channels. Community groups and individual advocates interested in road safety can be engaged and encouraged to re-share the materials to their members. Local businesses may also wish to get involved as part of good citizenship.

What do I do if someone is negative or abusive to me on social media?

This is the biggest issue on social media. People are free to say almost anything to each other, in public, within the limits of speech laws.

While you cannot prevent negative comments, there are ways to deal with them that will help you keep your brand looking professional.

If your campaign is criticized, consider politely explaining the positive objectives — if the criticism is civil. Abusive comments can either be ignored or in worst cases the users can be reported or blocked. The key is to never take anything personally, and not to be provoked into an angry response.

Generally, valid complaints about services can be “taken offline” through private messaging, email or a campaign phone number or e-mail address. Attempts to report a crime should be redirected to the police or 911.

This document is part of the Community-Based Toolkit for Road Safety Campaigns.

Visit www.tirf.ca to download digital copies of the complete set.

To order a printed toolkit please contact the Manager, Marketing and Communications at the Traffic Injury Research Foundation.

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