



The Top 5 Reasons Why Sports Organizations Should Be On Social Media

If you work for a sport organization or club, you know the meaning of the word 'busy.' So why add social media to the ever-growing To Do list? The short answer: because social media allows you to share your message in a way that traditional communication methods simply can't.

1. Social media allows your members to share your message for you.



Most communication gets relayed in a 1:1 ratio. A sender gives a message to a receiver. In social media, however, followers can share your content, spreading your message across the Internet in a branching pattern. If your followers are invested in your message, they'll do the heavy lifting for you and share your content far and wide to people across the world.

Here's an example. To launch their new website, the Bridging the Gap program created a captioned photo that listed all the benefits of wheelchair sports participation and shared it with their 400 followers. Within a 24-hour period, the photo had been shared by 717 people and seen by 20,931 people: more than 50 times more than their number of followers. Thanks to concept of "virality" and some truly beginner-level Photoshop skills, the Bridging the Gap program was able to share its message with people far outside its immediate circle without any additional effort.

2. Your members are online and you should be too.



Imagine that there's one community centre in your town that every single person interested in your sport visits every day. Wouldn't you want to have a poster up there? It's the same principle with social media. Right now, a 14-year-old kid with Olympic potential is browsing sport videos on Youtube. A parent is looking for information on how to get his or her child involved in your sport. A grant organization is doing due diligence on you. If you're not online, you're missing out on a great many opportunities.

When done properly, social media can foster an online community to complement your real-world one. It can familiarize newcomers with your sport, give your current athletes and fans a way to come together to share stories and news, and promote your sport to the media and the public.

You may be tempted to say that you cater to seniors, or to young kids, so your community isn't online. While it's true that different platforms appeal to different users, you'd be surprised by how many of your members use social media. Facebook alone claims to have over 1 billion users, which means that the senior citizens in your deep-water aerobics class may be more social media savvy than you are.

3. Social media evens the playing field.



Unlike traditional forms of media, you don't need a massive budget or a team of experts to have social media success. Look at some of the most famous "viral videos." A video of a father filming his son high on laughing gas after a visit to the dentist has 119 million (yes, million!) views. Videos of Maru the cat hopping into boxes have over 208 million views. In contrast, the top McDonald's ad on Youtube only has 9

million. In fact, most viral videos didn't cost a penny to make and they didn't require a film school degree. Someone simply filmed something they thought was cool and decided to share it with the world. With timing and luck, their video caught on. You don't need money or advertising executives to get attention online. All you need is good content.

4. Social media can reduce barriers to participation



There are lots of reasons why eligible athletes don't participate in your sport, or interested fans don't come to your tournaments. Maybe a potential athlete doesn't know your sport exists, or has never seen it played at a high level and doesn't know how exciting it can be. Maybe a fan wants to come out to a tournament, but can't find the schedule.

Social media can easily take care of the thousands of small barriers that keep people from participating in your community. The best part is that they often don't have to seek out the information. The information comes to them. A potential athlete might stumble upon a highlight reel of your sport while looking for something unrelated on Youtube. A fan might discover your tournament when a friend invites her to it on Facebook.

More importantly, however, social media can give newcomers a peek into what your organization is like. For weeks, months or even years, they can lurk on your Facebook page or Twitter feed and "meet" the people in your community before they even set foot in a program. Sport organizations that are active on social media hear time and time again from new participants that the Internet played a role in their recruitment. Trying something new can be difficult. Thanks to social media, however, you can make it a little easier to get newcomers to step through that door.

5. Social media allows you to control the message.



In traditional media like print, television and radio, you're dependent upon journalists and editors to give your story some attention. The journalists who cover your sport are often not familiar with its rules or culture, or they might choose to focus on a story angle you don't agree with. Social media, however, allows you to cut out the middleman, speak directly to the audience and represent your sport the way it deserves to be represented.

Best of all: these messages will often filter back to traditional media. Journalists assigned to cover your tournament or event often do research using social media and pick up the stories you've put online.

We've covered the 'why' of social media. Throughout the rest of this toolkit, we'll tackle the 'how.' To learn more, check out our Social Media Toolkit, found [here](#).



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