



What social media sites should my sports organization be using?

If you're new to social media, deciding which social media sites are right for your organization can be overwhelming.



There are, after all, hundreds of social media sites and everyone has an opinion about which of them will be the next "Facebook." Should you focus on just a few platforms that you can do well, or branch out and explore some of the new and promising platforms?

 Here are some **tips to keep in mind** when selecting social media platforms:

How many hours do I have to devote to social media?

If you're doing social media off the side or your desk, you do not want to spread yourself too thin trying to manage social media accounts that will lie dormant. Since the trick to growing your social network is to post consistent, quality content, having under-utilized social media accounts can actually hurt your efforts.

Where is my community?

When creating your social media plan, do some research to see what sites your community members actually use. Some sports have large followings on Pinterest, while some do not. Some sports have a unique demographic that makes them appropriate for sites that don't even appear on this list. If your organization caters mainly to children, for example, you might get some use out of CafeMom.com. A quick member survey, or even a search within the social media site, will tell you whether your community members use a particular platform.



Where is my potential audience?

Your social media network should always create real-world effects: more fans at tournaments, more new athletes recruited, more media connections made, etc. It's therefore a good idea to go where these potential audiences are, even if your community hasn't yet discovered the platform. For example, an organization might not have any community members who use Twitter, but choose to use the site because it allows them to connect with members of the media, other organizations, and the sport's national body.

What platforms will enhance our current social media strategy?

Certain social media platforms fit nicely with common ones like Facebook or Twitter. Photo-based

sites like Instagram and Flickr, for example, can provide you with a way to host photo content to share on your other networks.

What platforms should I be familiar with?

Every social media platform has its own culture, etiquette and rules. In order to be successful, you will have to familiarize yourself with them. On certain social media sites, such as Reddit, failing to follow the site's social code can lead to a harsh backlash.

To give you the lay of the social media landscape, we've created a list of all major social media platforms with a brief description of what they can offer to sports organizations.

Some of the most used social media sites

1. Facebook:



www.facebook.com

If you're going to join one social media site, Facebook should be it. (After all, what other social media site has a movie made about it starring Justin Timberlake?) This social media giant boasts over 1 billion accounts, meaning that a significant percentage of your membership is probably already online. It's no wonder that most sports organizations report that they have the most social media success on Facebook. Remember: to comply with Facebook's rules and take advantage of all that Facebook offers organization, make sure that your organization has a Facebook page, not a personal account with your organization's name.

2. Twitter:



www.twitter.com

While not as popular as Facebook, Twitter is a social media giant in its own right and it's growing, especially with young people. Twitter is a "micro blogging" site, which means that you can only post 140 characters or less in each "tweet." While Facebook requires two accounts to be "friends" before they can interact, Twitter accounts are mostly open, meaning that you can follow everyone from famous celebrities to large corporations without them having to "follow" you back. You can even use hashtags (#) to read the tweets on a particular subject from people around the world. (Searching for #Vancouver, for example, will bring up a list of all the tweets that use this hashtag).

Though many people in the sport community report that most of their members are not on Twitter, Twitter is a great way to connect with their high-performance athletes (who often have Twitter accounts for self-promotion), share news from other organizations and interact with sponsors and the media.

3. YouTube:



www.YouTube.com

If you create video content, YouTube is a must. Not only does this site allow you to host videos so that you can share them on your social media networks, it also makes it easy to embed videos within your own website using YouTube's embed codes. YouTube also enables you to do basic video editing, tag videos so that others can find them, create playlists of your content and receive comments on your videos. If your videos become very popular, you can even make money off them.

One of the greatest benefits of YouTube, however, is that the site suggests content to users based on what videos they watch. This means that users outside of your community will find your content without actually looking for it. For example, someone looking for videos of skateboarding tricks might wind up watching a video of snowboarding tricks and decide to pull his snowboard out of storage and get back on the slopes.

Other Options:

1. Pinterest:



www.pinterest.com

Pinterest allows users to collect, share and organize content (usually photos) that interest them. Users "pin" images or other content to "boards" linked by topic. For example, you might make a board of inspirational quotes or of design ideas for your upcoming bathroom renovation. Users can follow your boards, re-pin your pins and comment on pins. They can also search for content or just browse by subject.

You might think of Pinterest as the Land of Crafts and Wedding Decor Ideas Involving Mason Jars, but don't let its reputation fool you into thinking that doesn't have any sports-related content. Pinterest is now the third biggest referral site on the Internet meaning that it can drive traffic to your website or other social media networks. More importantly, however, fitness and sports are very popular Pinterest topics. If you're looking for some fun content to fill the gaps in your slow news days, head on over to Pinterest and do a search for your sport's name.

And if you think that Pinterest is for women only, think again. Pinterest's demographics are changing as it grows. When the site started, 95% of its users were women. As of last year, however, 50% of Pinterest users in the U.K and 32% of North American Pinterest users were men. As of August 2013, Pinterest was the 4th most popular social media network in the world (behind Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) with 85.5 million monthly visitors. This platform is picking up steam!

2. Instagram:



www.instagram.com

This photo blogging site gets a bad reputation as a place where people post filtered photo of their meals and sunsets and give them too many hashtags. Instagram, however, is an excellent way to share and edit photos in a quick way from your smartphone. Users download a free app, take a photo, edit it, and add filters to change the look and feel of the photo. You can then share your photo across different social media platforms, (including Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and Foursquare), and tag them so that other users can search and find them. Other users can follow you and share your content, allowing your photos to get a wider reach than if you simply posted them to Facebook

Instagram is a very useful platform for those doing social media coverage at competitions because it allows you to quickly and easily uploads photos and share them on multiple sites. You can also designate a hashtag for your event, enabling athletes and fans to share their own photos with each other.

3. LinkedIn:



www.linkedin.com

LinkedIn is most popular for those searching for a job or those searching for freelance or contract work. When done well, LinkedIn can connect you with people in your professional network, help you search for job opportunities, and enable you to share and discuss information related to your profession with others.

LinkedIn can be beneficial on a personal level for those looking to attain career opportunities, and organizations looking to hire employees also find it valuable. Many organizations report, however, that using LinkedIn correctly requires a high level of time investment. Those who work hard to join professional circles and share and post information find that they are able to access many opportunities. Those who do not have much time to devote to LinkedIn, however, report that they did not get much benefit out of it. Many other organizations also complain that they stopped using LinkedIn after being pestered for endorsements/connections by people only tangentially related to their organization.

4. Google+:



www.plus.google.com

Google is working hard to make its answer to Facebook take off. So far, however, it hasn't had much luck. While Facebook has 750 million monthly viewers, Google+ only has about 65 million. That doesn't mean, however, that Google+ isn't useful. Google+'s "Communities" function allows you to create communities geared around a particular interest (ie. "Ultimate Frisbee in BC"), invite people to join your community, post photos, and share comments. It's a great complement to your Facebook page, and can allow you to engage with your fans in a different way.

One unique aspect of Google+ is the “Hangouts” section. Your athletes can host “Video Hangouts” to answer questions from fans, and you can even use the function internally to host meetings with people who can’t be there in person. Now that YouTube requires people who want to comment on videos to have a Google+ account, it’s also possible that this site will finally catch on.

5. Meetup:



www.meetup.com

If you want a social media site that has real-world effects, look no further than Meetup. As the name suggests, Meetup is a site for people who want to get together to share common interests. Users can search for Meetup groups in their area to take part in every interest under the sun. You can, for example, go to Meetups only for tall people, or for seniors looking for a date, or for corgi enthusiasts, or tall seniors, or corgi enthusiasts looking for a date. The sky’s the limit.

Meetup is a great resource to attract new members and fans, or even organize the members you already have. A softball association might create a Meetup for their recreational softball league, which will help them to recruit participants, easily notify participants about upcoming tournaments, and send messages to members about any changes.

The catch: You have to pay to start a group on Meetup. Plans start at \$12. Still, if it helps you to recruit even one participant a month, you could recoup your investment in no time.

6. Vine:



www.vine.co

Vine is a newcomer to the social media world. This platform allows you to create short videos and post these on Twitter and Facebook. The top videos also trend on Vine, so if your video racks up a lot of views, you can go viral more easily than on other sites, since Vine has fewer users competing for attention. Vine might be a fun way for sports organizations to share great plays, but the jury’s still out about Vine’s staying power.

7. Vimeo:



www.vimeo.com

Think of Vimeo as Youtube’s classier older sibling. Vimeo has carved out a niche in the video hosting market by catering to high-quality videos and giving users more control over their videos, making it very popular with video professionals and other creative types. On Vimeo, you can upload and store videos, share your videos on a variety of social media platforms, control who views them and how they view them, embed them on your website, and do simple editing. One unique aspect of Vimeo is that you can choose monetize and distribute your videos. Vimeo On Demand hosts full-length films and other content for a price, cutting out the middleman.

If you’re making simple web videos and not paying much attention to editing, then you might want to

stick to Youtube. If you're paying someone to create broadcast-quality video, however, Vimeo might be for you. In addition, Vimeo has a smaller, more intimate community that will give you useful feedback on your videos. You can also password protect videos, which makes it easy to get feedback on drafts.

Basic membership is free, but you will pay \$10 a month for Vimeo Plus, and \$199 a year for a PRO membership.

8. Foursquare



www.foursquare.com

Foursquare is a social media site for places. Users can check-in at different locations, earn "badges" for accomplishments, get deals at local establishments, and become the "mayor" of places by visiting them frequently. It's a great resource for business owners and other service providers, but it really only offers major value for sports organizations that own a venue.

Lesser used sites, here's why...

1. Reddit:



www.reddit.com

Quick: would you rather fight 100 duck-sized horses or 1 horse-sized duck? When does the narwhal bacon? If you don't know the answers to these questions, then you should probably stay away from Reddit.

Reddit is a content aggregate site that bills itself as the "front page of the Internet." Members, called Redditors, submit interesting articles, photos and videos they find elsewhere on the Internet to subreddits based on specific topics. If you can imagine it, there's probably a subreddit devoted to it. (There is, for example, an entire subreddit devoted to pictures of dogs with drawn-on eyebrows). Users comment on submissions and 'upvote' or 'downvote' them, allowing the most interesting content to rise to the top.

There's no doubt that Reddit is a social media juggernaut. When Reddit throws itself behind a cause, it can have big real-world impacts. When a young girl with cancer posted a sign in her hospital window asking for pizza, for example, Redditors sent thousands of pizzas to the hospital to the point that the hospital had to ask them to stop. Reddit, however, can be a minefield. Reddit's etiquette policy (called Reddiquette) forbids self-promotion and marketing and the site can be very hostile to anyone trying to promote his or her own organization. In addition, Reddit does not have a strong interest in sports. The sports subreddit only has 94,000 subscribers, which is a drop in the bucket compared to the 4 million+ subscribers of bigger subreddits.

Bottom line: if you want to use Reddit, familiarize yourself with the community's culture. Reddit's AMA (Ask Me Anything) series is a great place to promote individual athletes, and if you have an

amazing video (such as a great play) you might give Reddit a shot. But beware: one false move, and you could find yourself “downvoted” to oblivion.

2. 4Chan



www.4chan.org

4Chan uses a message-board like format where users can post anonymously. To put it mildly, 4Chan is often a hotbed of disturbing images, pornography, violent images, foul language, and some truly disgusting content. Racist 4Chan users have hacked into the email of Trayvon Martin to “prove he deserved to die;” others called in bomb threats, and even caused the swastika to be the top trending search on Google. Long story short: stay away. Stay far, far away.

Sources:

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To learn more, check out our Social Media Toolkit, found [here](#).



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