Creating "shareable" social media content

Posts your followers will want to share

You can set up the best social media networks in the world, integrate them strongly and promote them to your members. But if you don't have good content, you're not going to have social media success. Why? Because unless you create content that resonates with your audience, it won't get shared and you won't be able to take advantage of the virality of social media. **Worse:** your members will stop following your feeds if they don't find your content interesting.

Sadly, there are a great many stumbling blocks that prevent organizations from creating effective social media content. Not having time or money is obviously a barrier, but too often organizations simply struggle to create content that their members care about. Think about the last time that you shared something on social media that wasn't directly related to your job. Did you share a seven-minute video of another organization's Executive Director laying out their annual plan and organizational goals, or did you share a funny one-minute video with an interesting message? Both videos take the same amount of time and money to produce. The latter, however, gets thousands of shares, while the former gets only a handful.

The bottom line is this: There is no point in creating content for the sake of creating content. If you want social media success, you need to create content that resonates with your audience.

In Module #6, you will find:

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Why people share content

Before you can create successful social media content, you need to understand what makes people share it on social media. According to a study done in 2012 called "Contagious Content" by Marketo, here are some reasons why people share content online:

- The content gave them something, such as a deal, a discount or the opportunity to win a prize. People are more likely to share content that benefits a large percentage of their followers rather than something that just benefits themselves. In fact, another study revealed that people choose to post information they feel will be interesting to their friends, rather than content that's simply interesting to them.
- The content offered advice about a common problem their friends and family might be facing, such as how to remove stains or maximize their tax returns.
- The content warned about a danger or problem, such as a product recall.
- The content was amusing. It's obvious that funny pictures, quotes and videos are very popular online. Humour that was inoffensive was much more popular than edgy or controversial humour.

- The content was inspirational.
- The content was amazing: Interesting facts, cool photos and videos of amazing feats (such as a one-in-a-million basketball shot) were all very popular.
- The content allowed them to declare support or unity for a cause. People love showcasing their hobbies or aligning themselves with causes/interests they're passionate about, and they love it when an organization will give them creative ways to declare that support.

The report also offered the following statistics:

- 75% of people said that sharing content on social media helps them to "understand and

'process' the news they're interested in."

- 85% say that they understood a subject better by getting responses to content they'd shared and discussing it with their followers.
- 94% "considered how helpful a link would be to another user before posting it."

- 68% share content because it showcases who they are as a person and is part of their self-image or how they want people to perceive them. (For example, someone who wants to be viewed as politically aware will share political articles).
- 73% said that sharing content connected them to people with similar interests.

In recent years, a great deal of scholarship has gone into figuring out how people craft their online personas. This doesn't mean that people pretend to be someone else entirely, but that social media sites give users an opportunity to edit their lives and present a better version of themselves. (I, for example, am more likely to post a photo of myself look glamorous at a party than I am to post one of myself eating Nutella directly out of a jar while watching reality TV, even if the latter takes up more of my day). If your organization can help your followers to present an idealized version of themselves, you'll have social media success.

That's great news for sports organizations. Not only do sports play a key role in people's identities, but sharing content about the sports they play online also allows your members to showcase themselves as healthy, active and fit. If you provide engaging content, your followers have ample reasons to share your message.

Four types of content you can try today

1. Articles

Whether it's an article or press release on your webpage or an article from a blog or newspaper that mentions your sport or your athletes, articles are a surefire way to promote discussion among your fan base.

Pros: Sharing content on your website across your social media channels increases your visibility and connects your fans with content they care about. Posting relevant articles from other sources also helps to spark discussion, celebrate your athletes' success and showcases the amount of media attention that your organization receives. By setting up a simple

[Google alert](#) to discover articles written about your sport by other sources, you can also keep your social media networks active and current with minimal effort.

Cons: Writing articles can be fairly labour intensive. This content is also not as shareable as photo-heavy content, since many people will not take time to read the full article. Unfortunately, in-depth articles from sources like the New York Times are often shared less than simple, easy-to-read articles about athletes.

Tips for success:

- If you're writing the content yourself, keep it short and to-the-point. Photos also make your content instantly more shareable.
- If you're writing the article yourself, make sure to have a strong "hook" to instantly capture your reader's attention. For example: "The best rugby club teams in Canada will converge on Burnaby to battle it out at the Tri-Nations Cup this weekend."
- Set up a Google Alert to have interesting, shareable articles delivered to your inbox, saving you time and effort.
- Frame the discussion by quoting from the article, posing a question, or telling your fans what's relevant to them. For example: "Our own Bob Smith talks to the Randomville Times about his recent gold medal win. Congrats, Bob!" or "Interesting article on an advance in ski technology. Has anyone tried this?"
- Post positive content and frame potentially controversial content in a manner that allows for productive discussion. Very negative articles should not be posted.
- To widen your communications network, share articles from your partners and similar organizations.

2. Photos

A study by Ipsos recently found that photos were the most popular content type and that social media was becoming increasingly "visual-heavy."[1] You don't need to be a professional photographer to tap into the incredible shareability of photos.

Pros: Not only are photos are incredibly shareable, but they also allow your organization to showcase the good work you're doing. Photos appeal to a wide range of audiences: They allow your athletes to share their sports experience with their followers, let fans, friends and family members who couldn't be at an event to share in the experience and appeal to journalists and other members of the media.

Cons: Some people don't want photos of themselves or their children online, so make sure to get permission of sensitive populations and build photo waivers into your release forms. Once you post photos online, you also lose control over what other people will do with them.

Tips for success:

- Create a folder of photos that are okay to post on social media so that you do not inadvertently

post photos of people who do not want to be included online.

- According to Canadian laws, you can take photos of people in public areas without permission because they have a "diminished expectation of privacy." Non-public event venues can be a grey area, so if you're hosting a competition post a sign at the entrance to say that all visitors

are subject to be photographed and videoed.

- Post photos of a wide range of athletes, instead of just the stars. The more people you include in your online albums or shared photos, the more people who will share your content online.
- To get great photos, connect with members of your organization to discover the amateur photographers in your ranks, then ask them if you can share their photos. They'll appreciate the exposure and you won't have to pay a photographer to attend. **Make sure to credit the photographer**.
- Don't just post action shots. Behind-the-scenes shots of volunteers, as well as general atmosphere shots (athletes hanging out between sets, children cheering for their parent who is competing, etc.) are often very popular.
- When photographing team sports, make sure to take close-up photos of one or two athletes, not large group shots. Wide shots are not as popular because they're often visually cluttered.
- Historical photos are very shareable and often bring former athletes out of the woodwork, so make sure to scour your organization's archives. Post them on Thursdays (Throwback Thursdays – hashtag content with #TBT) for a greater reach.

3. Memes

A **meme** (/ˈmiːm/; _meem_)[1] is "an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture."[2] When it's applied to the Internet, memes refer to shareable content that spreads like wildfire. You're probably familiar with common memes: image macros (captioned photos like _lolcats.com_), slogans/sayings (Keep Calm and ___), video memes like the _Harlem Shake_, _Advice Animals_ (socially awkward penguin, foul bachelor frog, etc.), and internet celebrities (i.e. _Antoine Dobson_, the 'hide yo' kids, hide yo' wives' guy). The list goes on and on.

Memes have developed into a sort of Internet language that can seem overwhelming to the uninitiated: Like a great big inside joke that everyone on the Internet is in on. Memes can also come

out of nowhere and dominate the Internet for a week or so, then fade into oblivion. (Is anyone you know still posting Harlem Shake videos?)

If you're unfamiliar with memes, head on over to *knowyourmeme.com* to familiarize yourself with popular and trending ones. Even if you don't want to go down the meme rabbit-hole and immerse yourself in meme culture, however, you can still benefit from this highly shareable content. When Harlem Shake videos were popular, for example, many sports organizations created their own. Those who hopped on the bandwagon early were rewarded with thousands of views for minimal effort.

Pros: When done right, memes allow you to take part in a massive conversation going on online, which enables your content to be shared far and wide. By capitalizing on a trend, you convey to your followers that you're engaged with social media and give them the tools to broadcast their allegiance to your sport. Memes are also usually quite easy to create, (if they were difficult, they wouldn't go viral), so you can get a lot of exposure from just a little effort.

Cons: To use memes correctly, you need to understand them and they can be confusing. There are, for example, two different Business Cat memes: the traditional business cat, who doles out business advice from the POV of a cat, and the "I should buy a boat" business cat. (See? Confusing).

Using a meme incorrectly can result in negative publicity and online mocking. Since memes move virally, they can also be over before you get permission from your executive director to make one, so if you're going to try them, you'll need to move fast.

Tips for success:

- Understand a meme before you use it.
- Make sure that the meme will appeal to your audience. Not everyone is familiar with Advice Animals, for example, and may not appreciate the humour of your Business Cat meme.
- Act fast. Memes can go from "all the rage" to "so passe" in a week.
- Understand which memes are the easiest to make and share. Photographs captioned with funny slogans or inspirational quotes are very popular and require minimal effort.
- As with any humourous content, make sure that you actually ARE as funny as you think you are by running your idea by coworkers, and make sure to never insult anyone.
- Save time by using meme generators. Try: *quickmeme.com/caption*.
- Take part in weekly memes like Motivational Mondays or Throwback Thursdays.

4. Video

Many organizations believe that creating engaging video content is beyond their organization's means. This, however, isn't true. You don't need professional, HD video to get results online. Luckily, we'll be covering this topic extensively, so be sure to visit our future video modules. Though video requires a greater time investment, the reward can be great. While only a few hundred people might read an article you post, a single viral video can give you hundreds of thousands of views.

Pros: Video allows you to cut through all the stereotypes, misconceptions and misunderstandings about your sport and present it just the way it is. For sports that don't receive a lot of television coverage, online video (including webcasts) might be the only way for fans from around the world to enjoy your sport.

The payoff with video can also be massive. Video, especially videos posted on YouTube, tend to go viral among people outside of an organization's social circle more than any other content type because of YouTube's search algorithm. Video can also complement your communications work outside of social media. Athlete interviews, video highlight packages and clips of great plays can be shown at events, given to the media as b-roll and sent to potential sponsors.

If you think video is beyond your abilities, think again. Technological advances in video cameras have brought decent cameras to the masses, and easy-to-use video editing software (like iMovie) enables you to create polished videos without special training.

Cons: Video can be very labour intensive, depending on what type of video you're making. While video editing software has gotten more accessible, it still requires a bit of experimentation to become proficient in it.

Tips For Success:

- Keep it simple. Going overboard with special effects, transitions and animations are a recipe for cheesiness. Let your content shine.
- Keep it short. Studies have shown that the most popular videos are 2 minutes long. After that, your followers tune out at a rapid rate.
- If you're new to video and are only shooting for the web, don't waste a great deal of time trying to shoot, render, edit and process HD video. YouTube automatically shows your video in 360p no matter what quality you filmed in. Though users can choose to view the video in HD, many don't know how to access this feature.
- Having the right music can make or break a video. To find great music that you can use for free without copyright restrictions, check out Creative Commons (*creativecommons.org/legalmusicforvideos*). Make sure that you **credit the artist.**
- Balance time invested with potential reward. A video highlight package might take time to prepare, but they usually rack up at least 500 views, so it's worth it. Spending several hours slaving away on a video of your executive director delivering the contents of a PowerPoint Presentation, however, might only get 50 views and might not be worthwhile.

- If you're posting your video to YouTube, make sure to give it a title that's easy to find and use relevant keywords.
- Read our other video tutorials (coming soon) to learn how to create online videos on a budget.

Sources

1. http://socialmediatoday.com/varuntulsyan/1834911/what-most-popular-content-shared-social-media).

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

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