



Nine easy steps to creating a social media action plan



If you've played a sport, you probably know a million quotes about the importance of planning. If you fail to plan, you're planning to fail! Wake up with a plan of action and you'll go to bed with satisfaction! It's true. No athlete would start his or her season without a training plan, and no sport communicator should venture into social media without an action plan.

Why? Because if you're like most sports organizations, you lack both time and human resources. If you've only got an hour or two to spend on social media per week, you should get the greatest returns possible out of that time. Having a social media plan allows you to focus your efforts and ensure that you're on the right track.

The good news is that your social media plan doesn't have to be complicated. We'll walk you step-by-step through the process and help you develop a simple plan that meets your needs.

Find the following nine steps in Module 15:

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1 . Figure out what you want to get out of social media

Lots of sports organizations dive head first into social media without knowing what they want to get out of it. There are endless ways to use social media, but unless you have a full-time social media manager, you're going to have to pick just a few.

Sports organizations often use social media to:

- communicate with their current members; 
- recruit athletes, coaches, volunteers and officials;
- increase attendance at tournaments or other events;
- connect with partners and the media;
- increase visibility of their sport and their high-performance athletes;
- answer questions and concerns;
- challenge stereotypes about their sport presented in the traditional media;
- provide coverage of tournaments and other events; and
- fundraise and connect with potential donors.

Depending on how many hours you have to devote to social media, pick 1 to 3 social media goals. Remember to be realistic about what your organization can achieve in the allotted time. It's better to make great progress on one goal than to try to do too many goals, get overwhelmed and abandon your efforts.

2. Do some research

 There's no need to reinvent the wheel when creating your action plan. After all, about 90% of B.C. sports organizations are on social media and many are having success. Spending just an hour or two browsing other sports social media accounts will help you determine what types of social media initiatives you should try and what types you should stay away from.

Some questions to research are:

- If you're already on social media, what are your most popular content types?
- What content gets the most likes, shares, retweets, and comments?
- What social media sites do your members use? What about your partners?
- What do you currently struggle with on social media?

- What types of sports-related content do you share on your personal account? (Chances are that what resonates with you will resonate with other people).
- Check out the social media profiles related to your sport, such as your national sport organization, other provincial sport organizations, sports organizations from other countries, fan pages and your international governing body. What are they doing well? What content falls flat?

One handy research tool (if we do say so ourselves!) is the viaSport Social Media Toolkit created in partnership with the BC Wheelchair Sports Association. We've got modules on everything from [how to increase your social media followers](#) to [how to create content your followers will want to share](#) to [how athletes can get the most out of social media](#). Check out [all 14 modules](#) to get ideas and help establish some priorities (we post a new one every two weeks!).

3. Decide what social media platforms you want to use



Look back at your goals and the research you've collected. Now, select which social media platforms will provide you with the most return on your investment. For example, if your goal is to connect with your current members and you've discovered that your members are mostly on Facebook, you should focus the bulk of your efforts there. (To learn more about what you can get out of each social media platform, check out our module "[What social media sites should my sports organization be using?](#)")

Remember: a poorly maintained social media account can cause you to lose followers, so it's best to start with only one or two social media platforms if you have time or human resource concerns. In the future, you can add platforms as your goals or capacity changes. For example, many sports organizations start with Facebook because that's where their members are, then branch out into Twitter because it helps them connect with the media and their partners.

4. Assemble your team



No social media manager is an island. If you're going to have social media success, you'll need some help. Brainstorm people who can help you and what they can offer.

For example, your Executive Director might be able to help you set goals. Your athletes could help you create content. A volunteer with experience in website design might help you put Facebook and Twitter buttons on your front page. If you're having trouble thinking of people to share the load, don't be afraid to ask. Put out a call for social media volunteers on your website or newsletter and see who responds.

5. Break your goals down into sub-goals

As the old saying goes, a goal without a plan is just a wish. By breaking your goal down into 2 - 4 smaller sub-goals, you can focus your efforts and measure your results.

To start, phrase your goal in the form of a question and write it on a piece of paper. For example, if my goal was 'to communicate with our members through social media,' I would write 'How can we better communicate with our members via social media?'"

Next, brainstorm all the possible answers to these questions. For example:

How can we better communicate with our members?

- We need to increase our followers since many of our members don't follow us.
- We need to start putting every article on our website on to social media.
- We don't post very consistently right now. We should post at least 1 - 3 times a week.
- We should share upcoming events, registration dates and tournament info on social media.
- We can answer questions via social media.
- We should share news articles written about our sport on social media.
- We should share our success stories by creating an Athlete of the Month or Success of the Month series.
- We should ask our members what they want to see on social media.
- We should inspire our members to keep participating by creating inspirational content like quotes.
- We should connect with our member clubs who are on social media and share their content.

Now, pick the most important or achievable 2 - 4 sub-goals. **Remember:** you'll update your plan every three months or so, so don't feel bad about having to temporarily shelve a great idea. Once you achieve your current sub-goals, you can move on to new ones.

Write your sub-goals down and see how measurable you can make them. The more specific and measurable your goal, the easier it will be to see your progress. For example:

Goal: To communicate more effectively through social media with our members:

- **Subgoal:** To increase our followers by 30% in three months.
- **Subgoal:** To post on our social media accounts at least three times a week.
- **Subgoal:** To create a survey asking our members what they want to see on social media.

6. Give your sub-goals some action items

Action items are a list of the steps you'll take to complete your sub-goals. They should be concrete and measurable. Try to come up with 3 - 6 action items for each sub-goal. The more time you have to devote to social media, the more action items you can list.

For example:

Goal: To communicate more effectively through social media with our members:

Subgoal: To increase our followers by 30% in three months.

- Put links to our social media accounts on the front page of our website. 
- Write an article urging people to follow us on social media on our website.
- Put information about our social media accounts in our newsletter.

Subgoal: To post on social media at least three times a week.

- Post the articles we write on our website on social media.
- Determine when our followers are online so we know when best to post.
- Create a Google alert for our sport, our organization's name and our high- performance athletes to find news articles.
- Monitor our national sport organization's social media account and the accounts of our member clubs and share relevant content.
- Try weekly posts like Motivational Mondays or Throwback Thursdays.

Subgoal: To create a survey asking our members what they want to see on social media.

- Come up with survey questions.
- Circulate them among office staff to make sure they're relevant.
- Use Survey Monkey to create the survey.
- Come up with an incentive for people to respond, like being entered to win a \$20 iTunes gift certificate.
- Promote the survey in our newsletter, on our website, and through social media.
- Collect the responses and analyze the data.

7. Put your plan into writing

Now it's time to put all the pieces together. We've created a simple social media action plan template for you to start with, and make it your own.

Click here to [download the social media action plan template](#).

Here is a sample section filled out from the template:

Goal: To communicate more effectively through social media with our members

Subgoal: To create a survey asking our members what they want to see on social media.

Action	Who?	Deadline	Status	Notes
Come up with survey questions.	Bob, Sue & Irene	May 1		
Circulate questions among office staff to make sure they're relevant, edit based on feedback.	Sue	May 10		
Use Survey Monkey to create the survey.	Sue	May 20		
Promote the survey in our newsletter, on our website, and through social media.	Sue, Bob & Irene	May 20-30		Sue to promote in our newsletter. Bob to send the survey to partner orgs., Irene to post on social media.

8. Put your plan into action

Congratulations. The hard part's done and you've created a social media action plan. Now, it's time to put your plan into action. **Make sure to:** 

- Circulate your plan among the people who will help execute it.
- Refer to it regularly. Use the notes section to record new ideas, adjustments to your plan or stumbling blocks you faced.
- Don't be afraid to add and delete action items if you find a more effective method.
- Leave room for experimentation. You don't want to miss out on a great social media opportunity because you were sticking too rigidly to your plan.

9. Measure your results and adjust your plan

Because your action items are measurable, you'll be able to easily track your success. Most organizations measure the results of their social media action plan every three months and adjust their strategy based on their data. We'll have a module on Analytics in the future, but checking a few simple 'metrics' based on your goals will help you determine whether you're moving in the right

direction.

To measure your results:

- Go back to your sub-goals and action items. Did you achieve what you set out to do? If, for example, you wanted to increase your followers by 30% and you only increased them by 20%, was the missing 10% a sign that you were too ambitious or that your strategies need adjusting?
- Examine general 'metrics' to see the growth of your social media accounts. Use Facebook Insights to see: how many likes (and unfollows) you got; what posts had the greatest reach; what posts got the greatest number of likes, shares and comments; and how many people saw your content on a daily/monthly basis. Use Twitter to see how many retweets, mentions and comments you received. Make sure to look for spikes in any graphs. What caused these spikes?
- Using the information you've discovered from your analytics, update your action plan. If you weren't able to achieve a goal or sub-goal, how can you change your strategy to have more success? If you achieved your goal/sub-goal, should you shift your focus to a different goal/sub-goal or set a higher target of the same goal?

At the end of the day, your social media action plan should be tailored to your organization's needs. Large organizations that employ a dedicated social media manager may require a more complex social media action plan complete with detailed deadlines and reporting metrics. For most sports organizations, however, simpler is often better. Create a plan that meets your needs and you'll be reaping the benefits of social media in no time.

Sources

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



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