



Social media checklist for sport event hosting



If you've hosted a major sporting event, you know it's a logistical undertaking requiring months or years of preparation and a team of well-trained staff and volunteers. It's no wonder that social media often feels like just another item on an organizing committee's endless To Do list. It's a shame, because social media can provide huge benefits to event hosts, including:

- increased awareness of the event and of the event hosts;
- increased number of fans attending the event in person or tuning in via webcast;
- increased ROI for sponsors. You may only have a hundred fans at the tournament, but a well-executed social media campaign can reach thousands of people;
- increased engagement among your sports community. Through social media and a webcast, thousands of people from around the world can follow your event's every result and cheer on athletes from thousands of miles away;
- increased awareness of your sport; and
- increased media attentions

In order to reap these benefits, however, you need to build social media into your event plan right from Day One. The earlier you start, the more time you'll have to slowly grow an online community of followers who have been bought in to your campaign and are eager to support you during your event.

That's why we've put together a social media checklist to keep you on track. This checklist is geared towards major events (it may seem overwhelming for those of you hosting smaller competitions) so just pick and choose what items on the checklist are useful to you. You should also keep in mind that the checklist grows shorter the closer you get to the event. By following the checklist and preparing months in advance, **you'll save yourself countless hours** (not to mention headaches) during event time.

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One year to six months pre-event



- Decide whether you want to host the event's social media campaign through your organization's existing social media accounts or whether you want to create a new account(s) specifically for the event. When making this decision, consider the following questions:
 - What is the magnitude of the event? A major international tournament might require its own social media accounts, but smaller events may not gain the number of followers needed to make a unique account worthwhile.
 - How strongly is the event associated with your organization? Fans will naturally go to a Provincial Sport Organization's (PSO) social media account to find information on a provincial championship, but might not think to associate an international tournament with the PSO hosting it.
 - How much time/resources do you have to devote to social media? Can you give a new social media account(s) the attention it deserves?
 - Is the event run on an annual basis? If so, will you reuse the account?
 - Will the social media coverage of the event require you to post at a volume that might be annoying to your organization's general audience?
- Decide which social media platforms you will use in your campaign. For more information on what platforms to use, check out our module [What social media sites should my sports organization be using?](#)
- Brainstorm a list of social media products to create. Examples include videos, image macros, albums, infographics, articles, Throwback Thursday/ Motivational Monday posts etc.
- Determine your French language requirements (if any) and brainstorm how to achieve them. Do you need to post in any other languages?
- Connect with your organizing committee about the event's look and feel and brainstorm ways to make your social media campaign match this aesthetic. Some organizing committees find it helpful to have a slogan to build their campaign around.
- Set a budget for your social media campaign.
- Make a list of event milestones to promote via social media. (I.e. 6 months/3 months/1 month before the tournament, schedule announcement, ticket sales announcement etc.). Create a calendar in Outlook or Google Calendars to receive notifications a week or two before the milestone occurs.
- Use analytics to determine your most popular social media content. This information will help you prioritize what content to create.
- Set some goals for your social media strategy.
- Define what role each member of your communications team will play in your social media

strategy. Do you need to recruit any volunteers to fill in gaps?

- Decide what you can do in-house and what you might need to contract out to a graphic designer, social media specialist, volunteer etc.
- Identify gaps in your capacity. For example, you may need video editing software or proper video camera to create video interviews. Fill these gaps by borrowing/buying equipment and ensuring that staff has the training they need to be successful.
- Use all of this information to create a detailed **social media action plan**. Check out our module [Nine easy steps to creating a social media action plan](#) to get started.
- If you're creating new social media accounts, begin publicizing them now.
- The earlier you start building a social media presence, the more likes and follows you'll attain. To learn more about increasing your followers, check out our module [Seven ways to increase your social media followers today](#).
- Use analytics to prepare a report on your current social media reach. This information is valuable for sponsor acquisition and also helps you establish a baseline to measure your social media progress.
- Set up a Google Alert for your event and your sport.
- Designate a hashtag for the event.

Three to six months pre-event



- As sponsors come on board, connect with them about social media initiatives and messaging. Pitch creative ways that your sponsors can achieve their goals.
- Connect with the organizing committee to see if social media can help achieve any other goals such as volunteer recruitment or solicitation of donations.
- Connect with sponsors and other event partners about potential contests.
- Create a timeline for these contests and solicit prizing.
- Begin posting social media content about your event to build interest. Make sure to celebrate milestones (i.e. six months to go), or lead-up events like qualification tournaments or the announcement of the schedule. If you are building a social media network from scratch, you will have to post more often than if you are using an existing social media network. Make sure to use the event hashtag.
- Integrate social media links and hashtags into your event website, brochures, posters, postcards etc. as appropriate.
- Distribute links to your social media platforms to event participants by connecting with their

team managers.

- Generate ideas for social media content by designing athlete profile questionnaires and distributing them to the teams. Good questions to solicit interesting story ideas include:
- What are your hobbies?
- What's something that people are surprised to learn about you?
- Besides your sports career, what accomplishments are you most proud of?
- List three 'fun facts' about yourself.
- How do you give back to the sport community?
- When did you first know you wanted to be an athlete?
- Connect with athletes and teams to create social media video interviews. The earlier you approach teams and the more time you are able to spend with them, the more likely you'll be able to earn their trust and work with them to create content that resonates.
- Find out which athletes are active on social media and which have skills like blogging or photography. Recruit these athletes to play a key role in your campaign.
- Begin preparing social media content to be released closer to the event.
- Test the waters with some social media content like a video interview or an infographic. Gauge your audience's reaction to the content and adjust your strategy accordingly.
- Use analytics to test your progress. What content is resonating with your audience? What times did your posts receive the most attention? Adjust your social media action plan based on what you discover.

One to three months pre-event



- Ramp up the frequency with which you post on social media.
- Launch key event products like an event poster, athlete profiles, event schedule, ticketing site etc. on social media.
- Create a Facebook event for the competition. Make sure to brand it with the competition's look and feel (event cover photo) and invite any other organizations involved to join the event.
- If desired, run a contest like a photo or caption contest to increase engagement. By hosting a contest a month or two before the event, you'll build your audience and be able to give your contest the attention it deserves without being overshadowed by other tournament-related news.

- Create a Twitter list of media to target.
- Create a Twitter list of athletes.
- Create a Twitter list of sponsors/supporters. Not sure how to create a Twitter list? Read module 14 (page 9) - [Twitter 101 for sports organizations: Your top 12 questions answered.](#)
- Continue creating social media products (video, image macros, infographics, etc.) and launching them on a consistent schedule. Since social media moves so quickly, remember to save some time in your social media plan for reacting to unforeseen social media opportunities, such as a new meme or a content type that proves unexpectedly popular.
- Include social media links/contests/content in any e-blasts that go out to your members.
- Use a social media management software like Hootsuite to begin scheduling tweets and posts to ensure that you have regular content. Make sure to include sponsor messaging in your tweets. (For more on managing sponsors, check out our module [10 ways to engage sponsors and partners through social media.](#)
- Experiment with Facebook 'Promoted Posts.' A small budget of \$30 or so will increase the visibility of your social media content and help determine whether you are achieving a return on investment. If you find that the additional engagement you get is from bots or spam accounts, drop Facebook ads from your campaign.
- If you plan to use [Reddit ads](#), which can often provide a great Return On Investment (ROI), schedule them early. Since Reddit ads are so inexpensive, companies often buy up all the advertising space in a given time period months in advance
- Use analytics to adjust your strategy and update your social media action plan as needed.

Month of the event



- If you are running the event's social media campaign off your organization's accounts, swap out your Facebook and Twitter covers/profile pictures to reflect your event's look and feel.
- If the event is being webcast, use Hootsuite to schedule posts on Facebook and Twitter

pointing fans to the webcast. (I.e. “Germany takes on Japan in 15 minutes. Tune in live at viasport.ca.”)

- Continue scheduling sponsor messaging and adjust if needed.
- Continue to post the social media content you’ve created.
- If you had success with Facebook ads, run another ad campaign.
- With two weeks to go, send out an e-blast to your organization’s members letting them know how to support the tournament. Include social media links.
- With a week to go, run a very small contest such as a ticket giveaway on Twitter to continue building interest.
- Connect with similar organizations like your National Sport Organization (NSO), international governing body and even club teams and solicit their help in broadcasting your event across social media.
- Meet with your communications team (if applicable) to further clarify roles and responsibilities, including:
 - Who will respond to complaints or comments?
 - Who will handle Twitter/Facebook/Instagram etc.?
 - If more than one person is handling an account, how will you avoid double posting?
 - What content needs to be shared during the event (results, stats, photos, etc.)? Who will post this?
 - Who will monitor your event’s hashtag
 - Who is the point of contact for content like stats or photographs? How will this information be disseminated?
 - Will you do any live blogging via Twitter? If so, who will do this?
 - Who is the point of contact for French translation (if needed?)
 - What content (infographics, video highlights) will be produced during the event? Who will produce this content?
 - Who will deal with inappropriate posts? How will these posts be dealt with?
- Schedule as much content in advance as possible. You’ll be busy during the event, so the more you can take off your plate, the better
- Assemble a social media toolkit including: video camera, batteries, pencil and notepad, flash drive, tripod, smart phone and charger, snacks and a water bottle.

During the event



- All of your hard work and preparation is about to pay off! If your team members are all aware of their roles and responsibilities, you should simply be able to execute the plan you've crafted. Since hiccups are guaranteed to occur, make sure to check in with your team members often.
- Social media event coverage can result in very long days. Make sure to stay well nourished and hydrated or you won't have the stamina to achieve your plan...or you'll crash and wind up with a post-event cold or flu. You don't want to spend your well-deserved post-event break nursing a case of the sniffles because you worked 15-hour days on a diet of coffee, salt and vinegar chips and gummy bears (I speak from experience on this one).
- Make sure to respond to comments and relay results and updates quickly and efficiently.
- Don't be afraid to run with a new idea in response to a tournament result or unexpected development. If, for example, the home team wins in triple overtime, create an image macro celebrating the team's victory.
- Hold a debrief meeting every night trouble-shooting any challenges you had during the day.

Post event



- Depending on the magnitude of the event, you're probably exhausted, but there's still a bit of work to be done.
- Make sure to wrap up the event by thanking everyone involved in the tournament and congratulating the winning teams.
- After the event, prepare an analytics package and a social media report detailing key learnings, successes and challenges of the event.
- Show sponsors their ROI with a simple analytics package showing the reach their messages achieved. Highlight key successes.
- Celebrate your successes with your communications team! They've earned it!

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



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