



10 steps to running a social media contest



If you're looking for a way to get your social media followers to engage with your sport organization, look no further than a contest. When run well, even a simple contest can give your social media efforts a huge boost, drive fans to your events and impress your sponsors. However, many sports organizations, are nervous about running them.

What if no one enters? What if someone cheats? What if the contest breaks a law? What if a joke entry wins?

We've taken the stress out of social media contests by creating a step-by- step guide to walk you through the process.

What you will find in Module 27:

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1. Determine your contest goals:

✘ If you've read other modules of the viaSport social media toolkit, you know that we are big advocates of [social media action plans](#). If you want to get a strong return on investment for your contest, you need to set some goals.

Some possible goals include:

- Increasing followers or likes.
- Acquiring social media content like photos or videos.
- Increasing social media visibility for your organizations social media presence through shares.
- Gathering positive member testimonies to be used in grant applications, donations campaigns, etc.
- Promoting a tournament or big event.
- Raising awareness about an issue facing your sport (concussion risks, etc.).
- Providing greater return on investment for a partner or sponsor.

A word about increasing likes/followers:

✘ While increasing the number of likes your Facebook page receives looks good on your Analytics, getting the wrong type of followers can actually hurt your future social media efforts. Every time you post content, Facebook shows it to a small percentage of your followers. If these followers engage with your post, Facebook will show it to a wider audience. If you run a contest that encourages people who are not actually interested in your organization to like your page, these new followers may not engage with any further content and may skew Facebook's algorithm against you. It's better to gain a small number of interested followers than a lot of followers who only liked your page as a favour to a friend.

2. Find a partner:

✘ When you involve a partner or a sponsor in your contest, you not only amplify your contest's reach and stretch its budget, but you also provide your sponsor with access to your community and increase their sponsorship's return on investment. Everyone wins! When designing your contest, consider ways that you can match the brand image of your sport to that of your sponsor.

For example, if you're sponsored by a nutritional supplement company, you might design a contest that asks entrants to send in photos of themselves living a healthy lifestyle

3. Choose a great prize:

The first step to choosing a great prize is figuring out what kind of people you're trying to engage. Current members? Fans? Friends and family of your athletes? Newcomers to your sport? Pick a prize that will appeal to this crowd.

✘ Traditional wisdom dictates that if you want to attract people who are interested in your organization, your prize should be linked to your organization (tournament tickets, merchandise, etc.). If you're trying to engage new fans or the friends/ family members of athletes, however, you

might choose to bulk up the prize with something that appeals to a greater range of people. If, for example, you're trying to attract new fans to a big tournament, you might create a prize package that includes tickets to the gold medal game followed by dinner at a nearby restaurant. Remember: not every prize needs to have a monetary value. Rare memorabilia, opportunities to meet national team athletes, or experiences like getting lessons from a national team coach are often very popular.

Pro tip: If you keep your prize under \$500, the winner won't have to pay taxes on it.

4. Pick a contest type:



Design a contest that will help you achieve your goals and meet the needs of any partners. Common contest types include:

- **“Caption this” contests:** Contestants caption a photo.
- **Prize draws/ Sweepstakes:** A winner is chosen at random from entrants.
- **Video contests:** Contestants create a video according to a theme.
- **Photo contests:** Contestants post photos according a theme.
- **Essay contests:** Contestants share a story about your organization.

5. Pick a platform:

Pick a social media platform that will help you run your contest most effectively and meet your goals. You can also run a contest through multiple platforms provided that you have a way to keep track of entrants.

Note: If you choose to run your contest through Facebook, you might considering using one of [Facebook's pre-approved apps](#) to ensure that you're following all rules and regulations. Companies like [Offerpop](#) and [Woobox](#) will also allow you greater Facebook contest customization for a fee.

6. Keep it simpler. Now, keep it simpler than that.



As Ringmaster P.T. Barnum said, “You'll never go broke underestimating people.” Even if you have a fabulous prize, people generally won't put in the work you expect them to in order to enter your contest. In fact, having a contest that's too difficult or complicated is the biggest cause of contest failure or underperformance. As you design your contest, ask yourself if you can make it any simpler.

7. Design your contest:



Now, it's time to fill in the details. The amount of time you'll devote to this step depends on your contest's scale and its prize.

Your contest should have:

- **A clear timeline:** When will it begin? When will it end? If there's judging, when will the winner be announced?
- **A simple call to action:** If contestants are confused about your contest, they won't enter.
- A **catchy** title.

- Appealing **graphic** design.
- A clearly communicated **page on your website** with official terms and conditions.
- A **hashtag**, if necessary. (Hashtags can be a great way to track entries).
- A simple **promotional strategy**.
- A **judging** mechanism. Will the winner be decided by the number of likes/retweets, by a panel of judges, or by a random draw? How will you prevent fraud?

Pro tip: It's a good idea to have at least some form of judging, (such as having a judge pick from the Top 10 entries as chosen by fans), so that you don't wind up being the subject of an Internet prank.

8. Make sure that your contest complies with all laws and rules:



Not only does Canada have laws governing contests and sweepstakes, but most social media platforms also have strict regulations. Facebook, for example, is constantly changing its rules surrounding contests. To err on the safe side, make sure that you do a quick Google search for the most recent platform rules.

As of November 2014, here are the most up-to-date rules.

✘ **Canadian Law:** Contests in Canada are governed by the *Competition Act* and by some contract laws, intellectual property laws, and privacy laws.

- Contest entrants must take an "active step" to enter. (Clicking on a link isn't enough).
- Contests are considered a legally binding contract. If the contestant wins the contest, you must fulfill the prize.
- To avoid your contest being seen as gambling, it's recommended that winning contestants answer a skill-testing question.
- Contestants should not have to purchase anything to enter.
- Contests should have a simple-to-understand "short rules," including odds of winning. "Long rules" should explain all of the contest terms and conditions.
- Quebec has different contest regulations, which is why most contests are not open to people from Quebec.
- Contests should comply with Canadian privacy laws and intellectual property laws. If your contest requires entrants to submit a photo or video, make sure to specify that all contestants must have the copyrights to all materials included in their submission.

Still confused? [This Globe and Mail article](#) and [this blog post](#) have excellent information. You can also [read the laws for yourself here](#).

✘ **Facebook:** Facebook is notorious for changing its rules on contests. For example, social media marketers used to be able to run contests on their page's timeline...then they had to use an approved app...and now they're allowed to use their page's timeline again. It's enough to make a social media marketer's head spin! As of Nov. 2014, however, here are the most recent rules:

- You can host contests on your Facebook page's profile or a Facebook page app, but not a personal profile.
- You can ask people to like or comment on a post, post on a page, or message a page, but you can't (as of Nov. 5th, 2014) make people like your page to enter. You also can't make entrants share a page to enter, like multiple pages, or like a different page.
- You can use liking as a way to vote.
- You can't make people tag themselves in a photo or share a contest on a friend's wall for more entries.
- You cannot contact winners through Facebook directly. You can, however, post a status update, make a comment on your page, email the winner, or make an announcement on your website.
- Your Facebook promotion must include official rules and terms and eligibility for your promotion. You must acknowledge that Facebook is not associated with your contest or liable for it.

Still confused? Here's a great [infographic](#).



Twitter: Twitter's rules are a lot simpler:

- You can't encourage people to create multiple accounts to enter.
- You can't encourage people to post the same tweet repeatedly.
- You should ask users to @reply you so that you can track entries.
- You must comply with Twitter rules.

Here's Twitter's [official stance on the subject](#).



Instagram:

- You must clearly state official rules, terms and eligibility like age or residency restrictions;
- You must include a "complete release of Instagram by each entrant;"
- You must acknowledge that the contest is not sponsored/endorsed by Instagram.

Here's Instagram's [official stance here](#). Instagram also offers [these tips](#) on running photo contests through their site.

9. Run your contest:

 Phew, after all that hard work, your contest is ready to launch. Make sure to promote your contest across all of your communications channels (website, e-newsletter, other social media platforms etc.) and communicate with contest entrants to answer their questions and keep building momentum.

10. Check the Analytics:

 After the final prize is rewarded, you might think that your job is done. Think again! Run some simple analytics to see how you can improve your contests in the future.

As you can see, running a contest on social media requires a little bit of advance planning. The good news is, however, that once you run one, every other contest gets a little easier.

Have a question about contests? Have an example of a great contest run by your organization? Email

arley@bcwheelchairsports.com to get into the conversation!
To learn more, check out our Social Media Toolkit, found [here](#).



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