

Social Media and Planned Giving

God's marketing gift to the planned giving industry or a time-sucking excuse to avoid real work?

by Viken Mikaelian



Should we invest in social media for our planned giving efforts?

Probably not.

What? Are you kidding?

No.

Here's the thing. Only a handful of non-profits succeed in marketing with social media because they can't afford the time and effort needed to do it right.

What do you mean by doing it right?

Successful social networking requires:

- Promotions from all venues
- Constant day-to-day monitoring
- Publications to your Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn sites
- *Embracing* the online social networking culture
- Cultivating participation
- Creating engagement activities
- Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.

That's a lot of work.

Exactly.

Even the miraculous Internet will not give you something for nothing. (That's why Viagra spammers are dying). Ask yourself: can you spend 3 to 4 hours a day updating your social media outlets? Is it worth it? If not, focus on other tasks that are already working for you today.

Look at the graphic illustration at the top. Does it not give you a headache?

So you're saying just ignore social media?

I'm not opposed to social media. I am

opposed to *following* the herd. *And I'm opposed to hopping from this year's hype and hoopla to the next.* Social media isn't bad, but it often distracts you from venues that are already getting you results. So ignore peer pressure and do it only if you have the commitment and resources to do it right. *Focus on what you do best and what's working for you.*

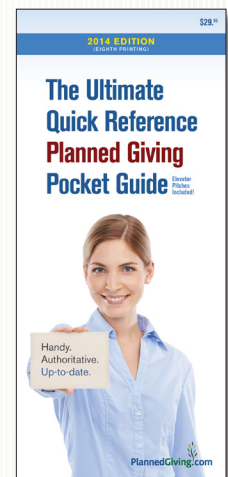
But I see many nonprofits on Facebook.

That's good. And many are not. If your organization has social media outlets, great! Use them to promote your fundraising efforts instead of wasting time creating your own outlets.

Can we outsource our social media efforts?

"Social media experts" are a dime a dozen, so proceed with caution. The best part about social media is when you give your audience the "inside scoop" on your organization. They feel like part of the club. It's hard to achieve an intimate, personal tone with an outsider posting on your behalf. In most cases the best way to update your pages is by you.

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Over...

Are there exceptions to the rule?

Of course. First ask whether or not you have time for social media. If you're already doing a bang-up job at direct mail, visiting prospects and dining with donors, and still have time and resources left over, then by all means, go to town on Twitter.

Second, *make sure you have the budget.* We have a client that's a breast cancer foundation with over a million Facebook followers. This organization is well positioned to use social media. Why? First, breast cancer not only affects the woman, it affects her husband, children and friends. Second, women are generally more sociable than men (online and in real life). Third, this organization has a full-time person who works just on social media. He does not make donor calls or answer phones. He does not write thank-you cards, attend donor analysis meetings, or deal with the board. He doesn't have to handle irate donors or learn Blackbaud Analytics. He is in front of a computer, working on social media full time. Oh, and I neglected to mention he has an assistant who works 42 hours a week on (you guessed it) social media.

So who's raising money from social media?

The people promoting it. The "social media experts" who want a handsome hourly rate to update your Facebook and

tweet for you. Even organizations like the breast cancer foundation I just mentioned aren't counting on social media to rake in the big bucks. It's a component of bigger strategy, icing on the cake perhaps. Consider this: in 2012, 98% of nonprofits didn't raise a dime on Facebook, which is the second most trafficked site on the web in the U.S. About 2% of nonprofits raised between \$1 and \$1,000 (2012 Nonprofit Social Network Benchmark Report)...

Planned giving moves 25 times slower than cash giving—so do the math.

So should I use social media at all?

Social media can help your organization build relationships with your current base of donors. But please treat it like what it is—just another marketing vector, not a silver bullet. Tag along with your organization's existing social media outlets, and let the marketing department take the ball and run with it. Set aside 10 minutes a week to check in with them and make sure planned giving is being represented well on social media.

Should we place social media widgets on planned giving websites?

Sure, do it. It's easy, it's free, and we've been doing it for years for our clients.

By the way, did you hear that Google+ is the next best thing? Social Media is a moving target.



I hope you found this white paper stimulating and useful.

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Let's improve and succeed together.

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