

Navigating the Changing Media Landscape

These days, people are more likely to read the day's top stories on their smartphones than a printed page, and often check Facebook or Twitter to learn what's happening in their communities. News is becoming more democratic and participatory. This creates an opportunity for nonprofit organizations and individuals alike to shine a light on issues they care about, cutting out the media middlemen to communicate directly with target audiences—be they friends, prospective donors, or lawmakers.

There are a number of popular social networks, each with different features and advantages. The following tips are designed to help you select the best tool and maximize the impact of your efforts.

GETTING STARTED

Social media offers endless opportunities to share and consume information, and the first job of any communicator is to focus and prioritize.

Step 1: Get clear on goals

- What do you hope to accomplish with this effort?
- Who do you want to reach?
- What do you want them to do?

Step 2: Choose your channel

- [Facebook](#) is best for building community, and keeping supporters informed and engaged.
- [Twitter](#) is best for up-to-the minute news, and engaging directly with journalists and electeds.
- [Pinterest](#), [Instagram](#) and [Flickr](#) are best for visual storytelling.
- Blogs are best for providing in-depth commentary or an alternative viewpoint on the day's news.

Step 3: Listen first

- Use the search box to find existing content about your issue and identify opinion leaders.
- Adopt the language used by current and prospective allies (using the same keywords or Twitter hashtags to help them find your content).
- Study the opposition so you can preempt their messages and strengthen your narrative.

Step 4: Go forth and communicate

- Draw people in with compelling stories, imagery, or surprising facts.
- Remember that social media is a two-way street—engage in conversation!

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CONTENT THAT CONNECTS

Tell a story (or solicit one)

The human brain is hardwired to process information in narrative form, and we are better able to relate to a single individual or community we identify with than a slew of statistics. Below is an example of a tweet from MomsRising, and a [member stories blog](#) where women shared their reasons for voting.

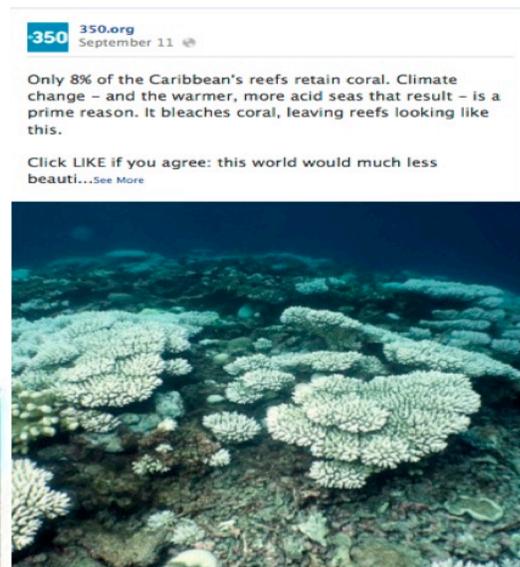


I was never interested in politics until I had a child

Now I realize how much his future is threaten by the greed of politicians who serve global corporations, who wage war for profit and oil, who don't protect our natural resources, who have destroyed our education system and ignore completely the needs ...

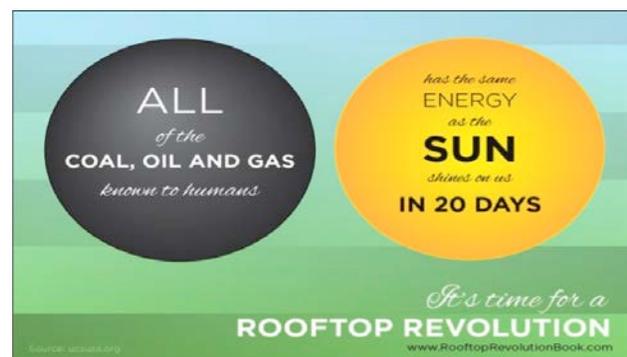
Inspire and delight

People turn to social media for a moment's break, and are more likely to share positive content. Consider the two Facebook posts below about ocean health. One inspires fans to help clean up the coast, while another portrays devastating coral bleaching without offering a way to make a difference.



Focus on solutions

If you communicate successfully, friends and family will want to get involved. It's important to introduce the problem and convey urgency, but equally important to offer a solution and empower your reader. This infographic highlights the potential of solar energy. But what makes it shareworthy is the call to action: Join the Rooftop Revolution! For more on creating content that moves, check out this [blog post](#).



Say it with pictures

People tend to skim social media content rather than reading carefully, so images are a great way to capture attention and make a point. But be mindful of the emotional reaction they elicit. For more on selecting images that connect, check out this [blog post](#).



Riff on current events

As savvy media consumers, you know what topics are trending among target audiences. Connect your issue to current events or breaking news to make it feel relevant and timely.



[On Food Day, thinking about going back to the future of farming.](#)

Natural Resources Defense Council (blog) - 19 hours ago

Or because today is **national Food Day**. Food matters because what food we choose to grow, how we grow it, and who makes those decisions ...

SUMMARY

Social media has opened up new lines of communications between organizations and the communities they serve. But most organizations are still working with the same communications capacity, so it's important to focus your efforts, and invest time in the channels and content that will really advance organizational or programmatic goals. Want to strategize about what that might look like? We'd love to help! You can reach Resource Media's Digital Strategy Director Nicole Lampe at 503-719-5626, or nicole@resource-media.org. And we have many more social media resources on our [website](#) that we hope will get your creative juices flowing.