Welcome!

THE MOST AMAZING ONLINE ORGANIZING GUIDE

*well, it's the best one we can make right now*

This is a practical handbook for student organizers who want to leverage online communication tools (social media, email, and web) for social change. This guide is compiled from various resources and amazing organizations and digital trainers who work on social justice issues.

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Going Big Picture: How to Craft a Winning Strategy

By Ivan Boothe, Creative Director of Rootwork.org

Start here.

Drive-by actions. Hashtagism. Social media revolutions. Sometimes, it can seem like there are more examples of meaningless online activism than real social change.

So let’s start with a pledge: Our objective is building movements for social impact. Clicks, likes, donations, even actual organizations are just means to that end, and it’s the end toward which we’re working.

Social change begins with strategy. Rarely in history have movements been truly spontaneous — nearly always, it’s been the often-unseen strategic work of hundreds or even thousands of individuals. Trying, failing, and trying again, until all of a sudden it seems inevitable.

Nor are social networks new, of course — the only difference is that some of these networks are now made visible online. Strategies hashed out in the homes of workers during labor movements, black churches in the U.S. Civil Rights movement, gay bars in the LGBT movements, and college campuses in student movements have plenty to say to us today.

Friendships, communities and cultural ties are the birthplaces of social justice. We rely on our connections with others to work for social change. But relationships online can mirror social injustice around race, gender, class and more. The existence of online social networks makes our job easier in some ways, but it doesn’t replace the need for campaign strategy.

From faxing to Facebook

Working online, it’s easy to get sidetracked into focusing on the tools — the shiny object syndrome. We “need” to be on this social network, using this app, or spreading our appeals using this tool.

Activists are always using new tools creatively, but looking to past campaigns shows how strategy has always trumped technology in successful movements. Take the fax machine. In the 1990s, it was used by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines to knit together a coalition of disparate non-governmental organizations, by Turkish pro-democracy organizers to spread a coordinated nationwide nonviolent
demonstration, and by activists in New York City who jammed the fax machines of city officials responsible for bulldozing community gardens.

One tool, three strategies. In this light, “Twitter activism” or “Facebook organizing” won’t be an effective plan, because it substitutes the tool for the strategy.

In addition, starting with your favorite tool will limit your campaign strategy to tactics that work with that tool — it constrains your vision, and can result in diminished effectiveness. Before we sit down at the computer, we need a good strategy.

Three secrets to developing a great strategy

As Duncan Meisel describes in the next section, storytelling is at the heart of social change. The aptly named Center for Story-based Strategy has an excellent outline for storytelling applied to strategy, in which you analyze the current narrative, determine your strategy for intervention, take action, and then reflect on your results.

1. Determine your objectives

Consider what “winning” will look like — how will you know when you’ve won? Be as specific as you can. One technique used in the business community for setting goals is the acronym “SMART” — specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. It’s good to have a bold long-term vision like ending hunger or eliminating racism, but campaigns are built around shorter-term objectives that push the movement closer to that vision. This is where you identify your allies, and undertake power mapping to determine whom your targets should be.

Example: In Bill Moyers’ essay, The Movement Action Plan, he documents the changing objectives of the anti-nuclear movement in the 1970s and ’80s, as they shift their goals from educating the public to sponsoring ballot initiatives to civil disobedience to providing alternatives.
2. **Figure out what’s being said**

Most social justice issues have an existing narrative, or story that’s being told. Take a look at the underlying assumptions of that narrative — and what other popular narratives exist that support your position. For instance, if your campaign is around a crisis in public education funding, you might counter the belief that the state is broke with the frame that everyone in the community has to work together to ensure children have quality education, and that means the wealthy need to pay their fair share.

Example: Casino-Free Philadelphia wanted to oppose two casinos opening in residential neighborhoods. The popular narrative was that casinos would provide jobs and much-needed state revenue. Casino-Free Philly reframed the debate around democracy — the bill authorizing the casinos had been passed in the middle of the night — and forced a popular vote on casinos, which they won. They replaced a belief in scarcity (the state is broke, there aren’t enough jobs) with one of democracy (a community should have a say in what gets built).

3. **Identify the tactics that get you to your objectives**

Different campaigns call for different tools, and it’s not just about which ones we choose, but how we wield them. Facebook, with its massive reach and cultural ubiquity, could be used in a variety of different ways: building communities of activists, spreading specific action items, educating the public, putting pressure on companies and elected officials, and more. But even smaller social networks can be used in different ways.

Example: ForestEthics, a Canadian and U.S. environmental coalition, was fighting against tar sands pipelines in Alberta and British Columbia. “We created a communications arc that engaged supporters. We started with easier actions like petitions then targeted actions, and moved gradually into high-threshold acts like event sign ups and donations,” said Hilary Stamper, ForestEthics’ online specialist.

And they used social media not only to spread the action, but also to tell a story — for which social media is perfect. “Tension is powerful in advocacy,” said ForestEthics’ Samantha Stanley. If the group had simply positioned itself as the solution, there wouldn’t be much to say besides “please donate.” Instead, ForestEthics planned out a “campaign story arc” to require supporters’ participation to be successful. At key moments, supporters were asked for higher levels of activism: submit a public comment to the Canadian National Energy Board, speak at public hearings, and attend rallies. This meant that victories felt personal; instead of being about the organization, they were about the network — and they spread like wildfire on social media because of people’s personal investments.
Elements of a great social media strategy

1. **Point towards long-term change**

Be sure your online organizing or digital activism components are pointing toward a larger picture. Every action should aim at a long-term goal in addition to a short-term objective, and that “line of sight” should be clear to your supporters as well. No viral marketing campaign is going to convince people to sign your petition if it’s clear it won’t have any real effect.

If we look back to the U.S. Civil Rights movement, there were many individual campaigns — the Montgomery bus boycott, the Nashville lunch counter sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, the voter registration drives, the March on Washington and more. In each case, organizers and strategists like Martin Luther King, Jr., Ella Baker and Bayard Rustin publicly connected the individual campaigns to the larger movement. The approach was grounded in community organizing, what Baker called “spade work” — preparing your garden to flourish in the next season.

Instead of building standalone, siloed campaigns, connect each action to the larger vision — publicly — and integrate community organizing to bring supporters closer to each other and build a deeper connection to the movement. Remember that new supporters won’t be ready for big actions right off the bat, and creating personal connections with existing supporters can help their learning and growth into your next dedicated activist.

2. **Embrace solidarity**

You’re not competing with other organizations for the same donors; you’re building bridges to a better future with many hands. Rising movements benefit organizations — people who are inspired to act, speak, or donate for one group is more likely to do so for a related one. And remember that ultimately, your work is about liberation, not ensuring your organization always exists — in a truly successful movement, organizations would be able to pack up shop after the last victory. The project Upwell.us researches online conversations about marine conservation in order to equip organizations across that movement with information to develop more strategic campaigns.

Instead of groups competing with one another for funding and supporters, Upwell’s motto of “the ocean is our client” is helping frame ocean conservancy as a movement with many players, in which a rising tide of support really does raise all boats. For instance, their analysis of “shark week” revealed that despite a media focus on “shark terror,” much of the online conversation was about “sharks being awesome.” With that information, marine conservation groups knew investing in social media outreach during the week would pay off — and it did, dramatically.
Use social media to become a source of movement knowledge for your cause — become content curators. Don’t endlessly repeat your own talking points, or pretend you’re the only group out there that cares about the issue. Share information from groups doing similar work in different places — your supporters will be both better informed and more inspired! So do away with the scarcity model — think about building the movement, rather than just your list!

3. Engage, don’t broadcast

You have movement activists, passionate about the issue, waiting to speak in their own voice. Give them the tools to speak — craft a strategy, set up the action opportunities, and amplify emerging leaders. For instance, the organization charity: water enables people to create their own fundraising campaigns, and then features the most creative ones, like the “campaign to save/shave Cubby’s beard.” Goodwill scours the Internet for blogs, posts and tweets about their work and their thrift stores, and then highlights them on Facebook. Many national nonprofits encourage local members to submit photos or videos of their work, which they then spread on social media — featuring their most active supporters.

Above all, don’t speak for your network. It’s not “billboard media,” its social media — cultivate these social networks of change. Stories appeal to our heart, not just our brain, and shareable content with a personal story from a supporter is much more likely to go viral than another “take action now” headline.

4. Be listening, be measuring, and be agile

If you haven’t reached your objectives — or it becomes clear that a win is going to be further off than you expected — how should you increase the pressure or change tactics? In addition to shifts in the popular story you’re trying to change, it’s important to recognize smaller wins too: if the number of supporters has increased, or new leadership has developed, or stronger networks have formed, then you’re in a better place to start a subsequent campaign, even if your original goals weren’t met.

For instance, MomsRising regularly solicits stories from their audience to see what issues matter to them, and then frames their work around it. MomsRising carefully measures their impact and adjusts campaigns accordingly. For instance, when they asked, “Please share your childcare story,” there wasn’t much response. So they changed the prompt to “What is your experience finding affordable childcare?” — and got much more engagement.
When supporters send in compelling stories, MomsRising works with them to hone the story and prepare it for sharing more publicly — with legislators, the media, and other potential supporters. MomsRising’s network becomes its strength, not just as names on a petition but in pushing the movement forward.

Closing Note: It’s the interwebs, people!

If you connect everyone to yourself, you’ve created a hub and spoke. You’re in control, but if anything goes awry or some spokes get out of whack, a crash is going to be imminent. Instead, use online tools to build webs of activism — facilitate connections among your supporters, not just between them and you. A community of social change will be far stronger in your movement than a bunch of names on a mailing list. Go for the deep ties and the big win.

Storytelling: Why it Matters & How to Get it Right

By Duncan Meisel, 350.org

What do you remember about the civil rights movement in the 60s in the South? Really, what’s the first thing that comes to mind? (Try to be clear about what it is. I can wait.) Now, I’m going to take a gamble here and say that the first thing you remembered when you read the question above was a story about someone, or a group of people, doing something brave—rather than voter registration statistics, or desegregation rates or the like. I suspect you remember Rosa Parks refusing to give up a seat, students being harassed as they integrated a lunch counter, Freedom Riders making their way across the South, or Martin Luther King Jr. at the pulpit. That’s because stories are the essence of human communication and relationships, containing our collective memory and values. That makes them a core part of movement building.

Personal stories aren’t just how we remember successful social movements — they’re the connective tissue that links a movement together. Stories are both the inspiration that brings people to a movement, and the substance of the relationships that hold people to it once they’ve joined. Telling the stories of the people you work with is one of the most important ways you can use social media to strengthen your organizing.
What makes for powerful storytelling? Powerful characters.

Effective storytelling is anchored by compelling, well-developed characters, and the stories we tell in movement building contexts are often most effective when focusing on people. Many fiction writers begin their work with involved character sketches, before any kind of plot development occurs, and I think that you will find (as they do) that firmly establishing powerful characters—i.e. you, your friends, and/or the other people around you who will change the world—will allow the rest of your storytelling work to fall easily into place.

Why focus on movement characters?

Character-focused storytelling helps overcome a few key challenges that we often face as climate justice and social justice organizers.

First, it provides us with protagonists that drive a positive message. Talking about the people who are part of our movement provides a positive message by showing that there are in fact real people trying to make a difference—instead of dwelling on the problems. Showing that organizing is underway, led by amazing people, is the best possible news we could give people.

Second, when planning an action telling stories puts momentum behind recruitment. Your stories make the action feel concrete, and not just a theoretical date on the horizon where an event might take place, bringing folks off the fence with the knowledge that they will not be alone.

Thirdly, stories help us build a diverse movement. Stories are entry points where communities can begin to identify with the movement. Feeling like an organization or action includes people who share your background makes it easier to feel comfortable about joining. Stories show communities that they have a place in the movement that we’re building. For example, featuring the story of a mother with her children will show other mothers that an action is a safe space for families, and lets them connect over shared concern for our children’s’ future.

Practical storytelling: How do you start recruiting powerful stories?

The first step to telling stories about participants in the movement is to ask them to tell their stories! It seems simple, but so many organizers don’t actually ask the basic questions supporters/participants need to start telling powerful stories. The first, maybe most important, question to ask is: “Why are you involved?” Putting a form with this
question on the thank you page of a signup form, or in an occasional email to folks on your list, will turn up fascinating people with stories to tell.

The next thing is to follow up, and empower people to tell their own story in their own words. This is more complicated than just asking. Usually, people aren’t accustomed to telling their own stories, and so following up requires providing guidelines and structures for the telling, as well as clear expectations for the ways you hope to share their story moving forward.

Often, the people affected by an issue won’t think they have a story to tell, or won’t think they’re good at telling it. It can be tricky to pull the story out of them, but totally worth it. The people most hesitant to share are the ones who’ll give you something that doesn’t sound forced and rehearsed, because they haven’t said it in fifteen interviews already. For any given storytelling project, I’ll usually write up a few key elicited questions that I can re-use for follow up after someone has signed up to join an action. When looking for written stories, I’ve found that many folks are unaccustomed to writing out their stories cold, and a few good questions can shape their responses into a good blog post. For video or audio, these can be the questions asked in an interview format, and cut up into a short video or audio clip.

Also, asking for personal photos - or taking your own! - is very helpful. Photos are particularly concrete, and can be more effective in meeting some of the goals I described above—in particular lending weight to action lead-up, and creating a mirror for the movement. Once you have a good photo, you also have the option to take the meme-making advice found elsewhere in this guide, and make a meme of their story.

**Sharing your supporters’ stories**

The final step in the storytelling process is actually sharing the stories you’ve gathered. Blog posts on your website are usually the best place to start, and sharing pull quotes or mini-bios on your social networks is a good next step. The key to story sharing is to use all of your bandwidth. By that I mean: use the fact that publishing online costs you just about
zero dollars, and tell as many stories in as many ways as you think your supporters can stand. The benefits of storytelling only get better the more you do it, so do it lots.

(There may be some limit to how many stories you can tell, but I haven’t found it). The only other advice I can give is that when telling a lot of stories, mix up your characters so that any given week of shared stories roughly reflects the diversity you want your organizing to embody.

**A few times where storytelling worked (or at least helped):**

The first example is the Tar Sands Action, a campaign I helped run in the latter half of 2011, targeting President Obama over the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. The campaign was driven by a handful of actions, starting with a two-week sit-in outside the White House. Each day of the sit-in focused on a different community linked to the pipeline—from Indigenous leaders near the tar sands mines themselves, to landowners whose land the pipeline crossed, to people living near refineries. Each day we produced storytelling devices—focusing on the community—from photos, to video, to first person storytelling blog posts. In addition, in the weeks leading up to the sit-ins, we filled our social media channels with simple personal narratives about the decision to risk arrest at the sit-in, which helped dispel fears for the parts of the climate movement that were just finding their taste for mass civil disobedience.

Another example of effective storytelling in action is the No Dash for Gas action at the power company EDF’s West Burton power plant in the UK. This was a technical shut down of fossil fuel infrastructure—climbing an under-construction smokestack and occupying it for seven days to delay its opening—but with an unusual amount of transparency. No one sought to hide their identities or role in the action, and they kept comprehensive photo and video records of the action as it was planned and executed.

These storytelling devices were the bedrock of their successful legal defense campaign, which waged a broad and effective PR campaign against EDF. They used a mass-pressure campaign involving a 60,000-signature petition (I signed), threats from supporters to switch power companies, driven by personal appeals from participants in the action to get the suit and charges dropped. The willingness of participants to talk publicly about their anger, hopes, and fears underlined the extraordinary courage behind their action, and galvanized 60,000 people to show their support, and score a bigger victory against their target.

**In conclusion...**
The specifics of your storytelling will no doubt change depending on the kind of work you hope to do, and at what stage of a campaign you are in. But I hope this chapter has encouraged you to explore a storytelling strategy that focuses on people, as a powerful and flexible approach to adapt to many circumstances, as we work to make our movement bigger, broader and bolder.

Facebook 101

By Michael Crawford & Cameron Tolle, Freedom to Marry

Facebook is much more than a platform we use to share photos with friends that show how much fun we’re having. With more than one billion users, it’s also an incredible way to reach lots of people.

Before getting started creating/building your organization’s page, ask yourself this question: **How would Facebook help advance my organizational goals?** If you can’t come up with solid reasons to use it, Facebook may not be the platform for your organization.

At Freedom to Marry, a key way we use Facebook is to help amplify our message with a goal of creating strong content that our supporters will want to share with their friends (and ideally, their friends will share it as well). This helps us to reach beyond our base to people who may be open to hearing our message and who may be inspired to take real world action.

We also use Facebook to drive traffic back to our site. In some weeks, Facebook has driven 30% - 40% of the traffic to our site. For the state campaigns we work with, we use Facebook to connect supporters with offline volunteer actions including door-to-door canvassing, phone banking, and rallies. Once you’ve made the decision to join Facebook and have created your page, the first big task is building your supporter base. Here are four ways to grow your Facebook presence:

**Here are some possible reasons your organization may use Facebook:**
- Spread your message
- Connect with and inspire your supporters
- Reach potential new supporters
- Raise money
- Drive traffic to your site
- Inspire supporters to take real world action
The newsfeed is the heart of Facebook, so at Freedom to Marry, we focus on creating engaging content that our supporters will want to share with their friends. By focusing on content that is emotionally compelling and that we hope our supporters will share, we’ve been able to reach new potential supporters who then “like” our pages, engage with our content and feel motivated to take offline actions—including donating money, volunteering on the ground, and calling their legislators.

Another reason to focus on optimizing content for the newsfeed is that 96% of a brand’s supporters don’t go back to the page after their initial engagement. That means that after “liking” your page, a majority of your supporters will never return. They will, however, see your content in their newsfeeds and have opportunities to “like,” comment, and share your posts.

At Freedom to Marry, we prioritize the number of shares because a key goal for us is using Facebook as a tool to reach new supporters. “Likes” and comments can show how engaged existing supporters are with the content you create— and shares can help you amplify your message to a broader base.

Let’s look at the types of Facebook content.

There are four main types of Facebook content: Text status updates, links to your website or other outside content, video content (which you can either upload directly to Facebook or post a URL from YouTube or another service), and image-based posts like photos and graphics. Facebook also makes it possible for you ask simple questions in a kind of polling format that can give you a way of soliciting feedback from your supporters.

You can also use Facebook to promote your organization’s events, including fundraisers, volunteer opportunities, and rallies. By creating event pages, you will also encourage supporters to RSVP. Once they RSVP, they will get notifications when you make updates to the information on the event page.
As you work to build your Facebook page, take note of how your supporters engage with your content. This will help you find a voice on Facebook that keeps your supporters engaged while helping achieve your goals. We tested a number of different types of content and found that a more aspirational message focused on photos of loving and committed couples works best for us.

Shocking Secret: Not everyone who “likes” your page will see every piece of content you post. Facebook uses an algorithm called EdgeRank to determine who sees what content. Through a complicated process, Facebook shows what it thinks will be the content most relevant to a particular user. There are, however, some tricks of the digital organizing trade that you can use to give your content a better chance of being shown to your supporters.

Crib Sheet: Five Tips for Making Your Facebook Updates Awesome

1. Keep It Short
We know that you have a lot of information to share, but less really is more when it comes to Facebook. Shorter posts receive more “likes”, comments, and shares than longer posts. You can always link to your website to direct supporters to more information.
Pro Tip: Make your descriptive text short and punchy. This goes for text, photo, and video posts. If possible, keep it to around 250 characters.

2. Make It Visual
Photos, graphics, and videos get more engagement. There’s no way around it.
Pro Tip: Post a photo, and in the descriptive text link to your blog or website.

3. Suggest An Action
When you post on Facebook don’t leave it to chance that your supporters will know how you want them to engage with your content. Include an action ask in the descriptive text.
Pro Tip: Post a piece of content with a question to your supporters like this tacked onto your message “Why do you think we should have paid family leave in our city?”

4. Post Daily
Posting daily is a great way to keep your content and your message in front of your supporters. It also gives you a better chance of achieving a breakout hit where your content is shared widely.
Pro Tip: You can now schedule posts in advance so that you don’t have to manually post every day.
**5. Be Relevant**

Never post something just to post. Make sure to find great content that is consistent with your organizational message and that your supporters will want to “like” and share, and hopefully take action. On occasion, you may want to post critical information or an update that you want people to know. In those cases, you can worry less about the number of likes and shares because it’s information about your cause or an allied cause that is important for people to know. Keeping your supporters engaged and inspired can be as important a goal as generating shares and “likes.”

**Pro Tip:** Unbranded content posted by other organizations that is relevant to your audience can be a great source of content to post to your page. You can also ask supporters to share their feedback or personal stories, or ask them to answer questions in the comments section. For example, we’ve asked our supporters to share which states they thought would be the next states to win the freedom to marry. Our supporters were eager to weigh in with comments and suggestions that helped us get a better sense of what their priorities are.

**6. Take risks**

This seems obvious—but it’s important. All the Facebook tips in the world won’t get you terribly far unless you’re willing to take some risks. Facebook is just a tool, and you can use it in myriad ways. Try looking at the tool sets in new ways. What are ways you can encourage a conversation in, say, the comments of a post? What are ways you can rally your Facebook supporters to storm a malignant corporation’s Facebook page? How far can you go in using an honest, personal voice when writing updates? Push the boundaries and you’ll see those boundaries turn into your most effective ventures. Value your mistakes—you’ll make plenty of them—it means you’re expanding your potential.

**Checklist: How to optimize Your Facebook Post**

Facebook can be a powerful tool in helping you rally support for your cause if you put a little effort into it. By scheduling posts in advance, repurposing content that you may have created for your website, and sharing graphics created by allied organizations, you can create a robust presence with minimal effort. This will help to amplify your message, engage new supporters and connect supporters to offline events and volunteer activities.

Here’s a quick checklist that you can use to make sure that the content you’re posting is awesome:

- Is it visual?
- Is the descriptive text short, to the point, and actionable?
Does it include a link for more info or to take action?

Is it clear how it fits into the goals you’re working to achieve and the narrative you are advancing for your organization/campaign?

Would you click “share” on the content you want to post? If the answer is no, consider re-writing the post until you feel you would share it as well.

Case Study 1

To promote the results of a new poll showing growing support for the freedom to marry, we posted the graphic shown on page 16 to Facebook. Rather than just post a statistic, we posted a graphic with the stat that gave people an opportunity to identify as a marriage supporter. The graphic was shared by thousands, helping us reach 1.7 million people on Facebook.
Case Study 2

To help our partner organization, Illinois Unites for Marriage, turn out supporters for a rally at the state capitol in support of a marriage bill, we posted the following graphic (seen on page 16). We stressed all the details people needed to know to participate and linked to a Facebook event page where people could RSVP. After people RSVP’d, we could message them with updates and reminders about the rally.

Case Study 3

To demystify misinformation about refugees in the media, the International Rescue Committee uses the “Myth vs. Fact” design to set the record straight. This graphic had 808 shares and 871 reactions.
Case Study 4

To connect your organization’s message to influencers and surrogates is a way to reinforce your story through other individuals. For example, the Human Rights Campaign marked a historical moment at the 2016 DNC by quoting Sarah McBride’s speech and reaffirming that ‘change is possible.’ The graphic was shared 236 times and 2,900 people reacted to the photo.

Twitter 101

By Beth Becker and Meena Hussain, Digital Strategists

OMG ... How do I “Tweet”?

Twitter may be intimidating for those unfamiliar with it, however with some understanding of the basics Twitter isn’t intimidating at all. In fact, it may be the easier social platform to use. In its barest bones sense, Twitter is where the world communicates in “status updates” of 140 characters or less. Over 500 million have joined Twitter. You too can join the trendsetters, by signing up here: http://twitter.com/account/new.

So if I’m using Facebook why do I need to use Twitter too?

It’s easy to lump Facebook and Twitter into the same category of online tools, after all they are both social platforms that allow us to build community; however to do so is a mistake. While Facebook tends to be collections of people who have something in common, much like a school or church, Twitter is more like the world’s coffee shop - there’s something that brings everyone in but that something is different for everyone.
The real value of Twitter in organizing is that journalists and bloggers gather on Twitter, searching for stories of interest and promoting stories they’ve written or talked about. This makes Twitter a great tool for developing relationships with these influencers in order to increase your earned media for your work. Communities of activists can also be found on Twitter, their tweets aggregated in hashtags (Twitter specific search queries).

How do I build a community?

One of the biggest mistakes we see people make on Twitter, and social media in general, is to only care about the number of followers a person has. The truth is, it’s not the size of the audience that matters, it’s how engaged they are. Do they interact with you? Do they retweet you, talk to and about you? It’s very easy for people to follow an account on Twitter and then never interact with it again.

If your audience isn’t helping you to spread your message or engaging with you, how exactly are they helping you at all? They aren’t. As Alan Rosenblatt wrote on the Big Think:

“In the final analysis, to get the greatest value out of Twitter, maximize your influential followers and minimize your inactive followers.”

Use Twitter in a Different Way – “Twitter Chats”

A Twitter chat is when you have a real-time conversation with a group of people on Twitter-for a specific amount of time—with everyone using and following the same hashtag to connect. Twitter Chats are usually scheduled for an hour, and that hour tends to fly right by. Organizing a Twitter Chat can be a great way to build buzz for an event, or a way to launch a hashtag into the world. You could say the #noKXL Twitter Chat held in August 2011 was what launched the now pretty ubiquitous #noKXL hashtag into the world.

Below are some secrets to hosting a successful Twitter Chat:

• Invite and confirm about 5 featured guests
• Prepare 3-5 questions you’ll want to discuss in advance and share them in advance with guests
• Promote the Chat well at least one week in advance (with a list of your featured guests)
• Be prepared to host the conversation in real time through your Twitter account -- including asking questions, retweeting answers, connecting people together, moving the dialogue along, etc.
• Invite all your followers to join in before the Chat, and warn them that your tweet volume is about to get pretty high!
Live Tweeting

Live tweeting is citizen journalism at its best. You don’t need major news networks at your event. All you need is your phone and some good hashtags on your side to have your event reach a good chunk of people.

- Make sure you’re all set up ahead of time. If you are tweeting from a laptop, have Hootesuite or Tweetdeck open to track the conversation and tweet on the spot. If you do have a smart phone, make sure you have the Twitter App downloaded and that it’s working just fine with your account. If you’re live tweeting an event with speakers, make sure you loop up their Twitter handles ahead of time.
- Write out your tweets in advance! Yes, I’m serious about this. When you’re in the moment your thoughts can get lost in the chaos and excitement, so it’s best to write things down first and have an idea of what you want to come out with going into the event.
- Tell the story of your event: “[Insert Name] is speaking now,” “Great quote from speech,” “We’re marching now,” etc.
- Pay attention to the world around you, not your laptop or phone screen. Then take just a moment to blast out an update.
- Follow up! Interact with your followers; tag them in conversations so that they feel included.

Tracking the Conversation

It’s always great to keep track of how your tweeting is going, as well as various conversations that are relevant to your campaign. Here are some tools and tips that can help you with that:

- **Tweetdeck** is a tool that allows you to load multiple Twitter accounts all into one place. You can also schedule tweets, send out tweets on multiple handles at the same time, and have multiple columns loaded with hashtags and keywords for real-time tracking. There is a Chrome App for this, as well as downloadable software for your computer, and an App for your phone.
- **Hootsuite** is also another free service, and has added features for a pretty low monthly price. It has added analysis functionality and allows you to run reports, and also allows you have multiple team members on one account so you can all schedule tweets together.
- Use **bit.ly** or another URL shortener to track your tweets. This type of tool allows you to actually see roughly how many people clicked on your version of the link you put out, so that you can track engagement of your tweets.
So how exactly is Twitter an organizing tool?

We’ve talked about Twitter as a communication tool, both for delivering content to people and getting information from others, but how can we use it as an organizing tool? Think about what your goals as an organization are and what you are doing offline and how can Twitter complement that. A few examples:

1. If you are having a bunch of people go out and knock on doors- ask them to live tweet about it. Use a protected account (protected Twitter accounts allow you to control who follows the account - people have to request to follow the account and you have to approve them) to communicate with volunteers in the field.

2. Holding a rally? Designate a hashtag and ask people in attendance to live tweet the rally using that hashtag. Host a Twitter town hall, or question and answer session featuring a guest expert or celebrity.

Twitter Case Study

New York Paid Sick Days Campaign Rapid Response Success
A coalition of diverse organizations in New York City banded together to escalate the conversation regarding paid sick days for workers, with an emphasis on getting the NY City Council to pass legislation mandating paid sick days. At the time, Council Speaker Christine Quinn had not called for a vote on this issue. But they took advantage of a moment on Twitter to press their case when the coalition (with a little help from their friends) gave an impromptu course in how to run an online rapid response campaign.

On a Wednesday morning, the coalition announced that they were teaming with Gloria Steinem to ramp up the pressure in this campaign. Speaker Quinn must have realized she needed a powerhouse of her own. So on Thursday, Susan Sarandon (aka, a celebrity activist who often ends up on the progressive side of things) tweeted the message below.

Using other online tools such as email and Facebook and even offline tools like phone calls and text messages, they urged supporters to ask Susan to use her relationship with NYC Council Speaker (and expected candidate for NYC
Mayor in 2013) Christine Quinn to allow the council to vote on paid sick days legislation.

What followed? A firestorm of over 100 tweets to Susan Sarandon within a few hours (shown above). Enough people tweeted at Susan Sarandon that she replied with two more tweets of her own (shown below).

What followed? A firestorm of over 100 tweets to Susan Sarandon within a few hours (shown right).

Enough people tweeted at Susan Sarandon that she replied with two more tweets of her own (shown left).

It’s important to note that the actual win—a vote on paid sick days took another year to happen but the combination of smart online and offline organizing, in the end, won and NYC’s City Council did in fact vote on and pass paid sick days
Conclusion

Twitter can be a powerful tool in your online advocacy campaigns. It is important to remember it is just that: a tool. It will never replace anything else you are doing, but when done purposefully as part of your overall strategy it can help you build your community and accomplish your goals.

Mastering the Power of Photography w/ Your iPhone

A lot of campaigns and groups forget one very critical element to success, and this photography. A campaign can be the most strategic, technically savvy, and logistically dialed and still fail if it has nothing to show for it – if it doesn’t have beautiful photos to demonstrate its power, ignite the media, and inspire its supporters. Powerful photos can make a movement sour. What if Rosa Parks never had a photographer? (Yes, she did – and that iconic image we have of her sitting in front of the bus wasn’t an accident). If you have a decent camera, a solid plan, and a good eye, you’re well on your way to taking our movement’s next iconic images.

Here are 7 Quick Tips to Getting Great Photos on your Smart Phone =

1. Who’s Shooting?

In order to effectively tell the visual story of your event, you need to plan for that story by making sure someone is tasked solely with taking photos during the event or action. It’s very easy to think ‘someone’ will take photos, and that the media team will surely end up with them. If you are the photographer, you should assess if you need help.

2. Shot List

Before you begin shooting, create a “shot list.” This is a list of images that you are anticipating you will shoot. Generically this can include: speakers, any notable participants, close ups, crowd shots, sweet children, and poignant signs, behind the scenes organizing, pamphlets or materials laid out.

3. Follow the rule of thirds

Your iPhone has a grid option available, which can aid you in lining up photographs so that they follow the rule of thirds. You can turn this option on by visiting Settings > Photos & Camera and enabling the Grid switch.
4. Turn on HDR Auto

Your iPhone comes with a software feature called High Dynamic Range, or HDR: This lets you snap photos that may have high contrast light sources (say, a bright sunset against a darkening mountain) and still capture a nice image without distorting either the light or the dark area of the picture. Your iPhone does this by snapping several pictures in quick succession at different exposures, then merging them together to create a unified image.

5. Hold down a spot on your viewfinder to lock focus

If you’re trying to shoot macro photography or want to prevent your iPhone’s camera from attempting to grab a different subject in the frame, it can be incredibly useful to lock your focus point on your current subject.

6. Slide the exposure meter to brighten (or darken) images

If an image is too blown out or underexposed for your liking, you can fix it before snapping the picture by adjusting the yellow exposure slider next to the focus square. Just tap once on the focus square and exposure slider, then use the sun icon to increase your exposure by sliding upward, or decrease exposure by sliding downward.

7. Snap photos with the volume button

Because the iPhone is so thin, tapping the digital shutter button can cause camera shake and blur the photo you’re trying to take. Instead, you can use the volume up button when in the Camera app to snap a photo — and avoid camera shake entirely.

Live streaming and Video w/ Your Iphone

If you have an iphone (or any smartphone, for that matter), you’ve got everything you need to make a great science video. Of course, if you want to make an amazing video you’re going to have to learn a few filmmaking techniques to make it shine.

Here are 4 Quick Tips for taking amazing video on your Smart Phone =

1. Hold it steady

This is extremely important. The first of our iPhone video tips is to keep the phone as steady as possible. The iPhone can take lovely HD footage if it is perfectly still, but if you
shake the sensor (move the phone) the image quality begins to degrade. Just as when you shoot with a professional video camera, a tripod will only help you!
If you don’t have a tripod, one stabilization trick is resting the phone on a t-shirt or something soft while you hold it on a table top, the ground or any solid surface. Holding your breath during shots can also help minimize shakiness if you are handholding the phone on a solid surface. If you can prop your phone on a surface without holding it (I’m fond of using two bean bags to hold it at the right angle), that’s even better.

2. Use Good Light

If you can’t get good studio lights, one simple solution is to go outside! Smartphones can take amazing photos and video, but the light needs to be fairly bright. We’ve all seen grainy photos and videos from well-meaning folks, so just keep in mind the lighting in most houses alone is not bright enough for crisp photos and video. If you’re filming indoors, light it up as much as possible – with bulbs or even just filming near a sunny window.

3. Focus on Sound

The best way to get good sound is to use a quality microphone that’s close to your mouth. There are a few good microphones for the iPhone. The two that I’m a big fan of are the Rode SmartLav and the Rode iXY. If I were to consider any of these iPhone video tips the most important, it would be this one. Without good sound, the video is going to feel more amateur.

4. Use some lenses

Mix it up. Try a few specialty lenses. They may not be the best things in the world, but they’re fun to try to mix up you shots. For this shoot, I used a 60x microscope lens, a telephoto lens, and a wide-angle lens kit. Overall, they’re cheap and kind of fun to play with. However, I should note that the BEST lens is the one that is on the camera. These cheap lenses do act to degrade the quality of the image a bit, as you can probably see from the video we took.

If you don’t want to purchase lenses, you can still set up interesting shots. Variety is the spice of life AND filmmaking. Try shooting from the ground, from up high, from the side, from inside things – lots of angles! The camera may be small, but you can still be very dynamic with the way you shoot and tell your story.
Live streaming? Here are some good tips on how to live stream, when to live stream, and how to prepare for a live stream:


Periscope: [http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/periscope-app-live-broadcasting-tips#sm.0001acyskkvn5e0fwkk2clwxsk2dp](http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/periscope-app-live-broadcasting-tips#sm.0001acyskkvn5e0fwkk2clwxsk2dp)


**How to Write an Email That People Love to Read**

The 4 questions you must answer before pressing *send*

Before you send your email, step into the shoes of the person receiving your email, and answer the following questions.

1. **Is your goal crystal-clear?**
   
   Is it instantly clear to your reader what they should do?
   
   Whether you’d like your reader to reply with information or click through to donate or read a blog post, have one specific goal for your email.

2. **Why would your reader care?**
   
   Most emails don’t explain why the receiver should care about taking action. What’s in it for them? What will they learn? How will you make them feel better?

3. **What’s stopping your reader from taking action?**
   
   Are they nervous about the time it would take to read your blog post or make a donation?
   
   Consider how you can take their nervousness away.

4. **Can you cut any redundant information?**
Have you edited your text, so every word counts? Remember, each redundant word slows your reader down, reducing your chances they’ll take action.

How to make your emails more persuasive

Example 1: Blah blah email

“Hi Henneke,

My name is Johnny Depp, Marketing Coordinator for Awesome App. I'm reaching out to you specifically because I have noticed that Enchanting Marketing is an extremely influential resource for eCommerce business owners.

I'd like to offer you an exclusive, personal demonstration of the Awesome App platform from our Product Director, Jackie Chan. This presentation will only take 40-50 minutes of your time, and will showcase every part of the Awesome platform.

We are not asking for any commitment from you in exchange for this demo. We feel that the Awesome platform is strong enough to speak for itself. Our hope is that after seeing the platform’s innovative capabilities, eCommerce industry influencers such as yourself will take notice. I hope that you will consider giving us the pleasure of demonstrating for you what the Awesome platform is capable of!

Please let me know if you are interested in this opportunity. I would love to connect you with Jackie for a private demonstration of Awesome. Jackie is a real eCommerce pro, and will be well equipped to answer any questions you may have.

I can be reached at my direct line (888) 888-8888 xt 1010, and also by direct email at johnny@awesomeapp.com.”
Why this email is meh:

1. **The goal**: While it’s clear that Johnny wants to set up a demo, his call-to-action is rather wishy-washy and long-winded.

2. **Why should the reader care**: Johnny doesn’t tell me what his Awesome App does, and he doesn’t explain why I would be interested in spending 40 minutes of my time for a demo.

3. **What’s stopping your reader from taking action?** Johnny tries to flatter me into taking action. Flattery often works, but a cookie-cutter approach to flattery doesn’t work. Make your flattery specific.

4. **Redundant words?** Loads! Why start with telling me he’s Johnny? I’ve seen that already in the “from” field. He rambles on about his app without explaining anything. And the stuff about his boss doesn’t interest me either.

A more persuasive email:

```
Hi Henneke

I read your fantastic blog post about product descriptions on Shopify, and I wondered—do you have copywriting clients who own ecommerce stores?

I’d love to introduce you to our new Awesome App. This App helps ecommerce owners [fill in a serious benefit]

Sound interesting?

Please reply to this email and I’ll set up a quick demo at a time most convenient for you.

Kind regards,
Johnny Depp
Marketing Coordinator, Awesome App
```
Extra tips:

- Don’t send an email without editing. And when you edit your email, aim to cut 50% of words. Your reader will be grateful.

- Don’t muddy your message with multiple goals. Keep it simple.

- When you’re emailing your chapter supporters or the press, make sure your emails are up to date and there are no typos. If you spend hours on an email and it fails to make it into their inboxes, then you’ve set yourself up to fail already.

- Subject lines matter! Example of a bad subject line: “Renew your commitment to end dog homelessness” versus a good subject line: “Help Keep a Puppy Safe in DC’s Blizzard!” This is a good subject line because it’s focused, local, timely, and a bit emotional. Who doesn’t want to keep a puppy safe from a terrible blizzard in their hometown?

- Put your call to action or ask upfront. People skim emails; so provide an opportunity for people to donate or sign a petition within the first paragraph of the appeal (preferably within the first three lines). Then repeat the call to action at least three more times.

- Close the loop. For example, once you thank your donors for their donation, send a follow up email letting them know if you met your goals or tell a compelling story or share photos so donors feel that their donation made a difference.

How to turn blah emails into persuasive emails

Everyone’s inbox is overflowing. To the brim filled with promotions. Newsletter updates. A couple of business inquiries. And a few emails from good friends. Nobody wants to read the gobbledygook-filled emails. Write as if you’re emailing a good friend. Be conversational. But don’t become a babbermouth. Because everyone’s time is precious.
How to Create a Successful Crowd funding Campaign

Need to raise money for your chapter? Think about starting an online crowd funding campaign that draws on your community and network.

Start with a moderate goal

Choose a moderate, realistic goal so you can create momentum. You can always raise it later. To set the goal, learn about the costs the beneficiary is facing and add up these expenses. Once your fundraiser is hitting its stride and halfway to its original goal, consider raising the figure to inspire more people to help. You can also increase your goal at any point if you find the financial needs have grown since you kicked off the fundraiser. Be sure to update your campaign description with these new costs so potential donors can easily see what their money is supporting.

Name your fundraiser well

Pick a name that will make people want to read more about your cause and story.

- Make it short, descriptive, inspirational, and easy to find when people search online.
- Include the first and last name of the fundraiser beneficiary in the title as people almost always type this into the search field on our site and in Google. Also, include the cause to give people a quick understanding of the need. Ex: Help Gina Ober Kick Cancer to the Curb
- Keep in mind that the fundraiser name will be part of the URL link and included in each message you share.

Tell your story honestly

Successful fundraising campaigns describe the situation honestly. Write your story with vivid, heartfelt words that you would use to explain your cause to a friend.

- Clearly highlight the goal, deadline, and specific details that paint a unique, personal, and compelling picture.
- Answer basic questions any reader would have, such as who the fundraiser is for; what happened; where, when, and why it’s important to you; how you know the organizer or beneficiary; and how the funds will be used.
• Include a breakdown of the costs that comprise the goal. For example, “How the funds will be used: $1,000 will be used for medical transportation. The other $9,000 will cover Jennifer’s unpaid leave from work to care for her children.”
• Read your story aloud and consider how it will sound to potential donors. Which parts will generate empathy and inspire readers to care enough to make a donation?
• Use headlines and sub-headlines in your fundraiser description to make your text scannable. Tell your story in your headlines to allow people to understand the gist of your text if they only read the headlines.
• Include an address on your fundraiser so people can send offline donations if they choose.

Upload good photos and videos

• More is better, because numerous images let you broaden the appeal, show diverse aspects of your cause, and give powerful updates wordlessly.
• Choose large, clear, high-resolution photos that will attract and persuade donors to lend support.
• Videos are the most impactful way to communicate with your potential supporters and can drastically improve your fundraising success.

Create community

• Use Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat to spread the word about your campaign and use a hashtag to make your campaign easier to find. In each message, feature the link to your fundraiser page and ask others to share your campaign.
• Don’t hesitate to reach out to your social networks with personal letters or emails asking them to help spread the word, not just donate. There may be people in your network who aren’t in a place to give, but they can definitely share a Facebook post or text their friends about your campaign.

Update your fundraiser regularly

• I recommend posting text, photo, and video updates once a week. This will keep your fundraiser fresh, grab attention, and invite compassion. Share good news as well as bad, and often as you would fill in a friend.
• Be sure to share all these updates on Facebook and Twitter as well.
• Encourage donors or supporters to “get fundraiser updates.”

**Adjust goals and deadlines as needed**

If circumstances change or progress is slower than expected, consider raising your goal or adjusting your deadline. If you update your deadline, increase it just by 30–60 days at a time to ensure a strong sense of urgency. Let all your donors know about your new deadline or updated goal and encourage them to take action.

**Follow up on your fundraiser**

Achieving your goal is not the end of your story. Donors want to find out what happened and how the beneficiary is doing. Wrap up your fundraising success with updates that share your gratitude, along with photos, a video, or links to news coverage.
Bonus Awesome Resources

Looking for more amazing resources to support your kick-ass online organizing skills? Check out some of my faves below:

Learn how peers are using social media: http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/

Make Memes and photos for social media: https://www.canva.com/

Email and social media blog: http://blogs.constantcontact.com/

Facebook strategies and updates: http://blog.actionsprout.com/

How to create an email engagement (sequence) plan: http://www.enchantingmarketing.com/how-to-write-an-email-sequence/

An activist’s guide to live tweeting: https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/abraham-greenhouse/activists-guide-live-tweeting

Nonprofit donation strategies blog: http://www.care2services.com/care2blog