**How to…. use social media for advocacy**

Social media can be a great way to extend the reach of your campaign online (showing how many people care about the issue) and get people fired up about your cause. Many businesses, decision-makers, municipalities, politicians, news outlets/journalists, and organizations have social media accounts. You can amplify your message by sharing your campaign on social media and by tagging the appropriate audiences.

Here are some tips to make your campaign effective.

# **Social media platforms**

* Twitter is a very time-sensitive platform. Content can be tweeted as it happens and allows for real-time interaction. Twitter users are comfortable with seeing a lot of content. Tweets are limited by character count, but you can post a series of tweets as a thread.
* Facebook is better suited for longer-form content and typically more restricted with user privacy settings.
* Instagram is a social media platform for sharing photos and videos.
* LinkedIn is a social network that focuses on professional networking and career development. You can use LinkedIn to display your resume, search for jobs, and enhance your professional reputation by posting updates and interacting with others.
* TikTok is a video hosting app where users create short videos based on trending filters, sounds, and activities, often featuring music in the background. Many viral trends start on Tik Tok, including memes, lip-synced songs, and comedy videos.

# **Choose your platform(s) wisely**

When considering a social media platform, consider what you hope to get out of the platform.

* Who is your intended audience (general public, journalists, municipalities, politicians etc.)?
* Is your social media account private or public? If it’s private, you can’t engage with audiences outside of your followers.
* Do you want to post a video or photo, or is your content primarily words? What is the length of your content? Is it accessible?
* Do you want to rally a group of people to get together and have a more interactive platform to organize and/or privately chat with people?

# **Have a clear and concise message**

Brevity is the soul of social media! Social media moves fast and has shortened our attention spans. No one will read a long rambling post that doesn’t have clear goals and points. Be direct, concise and have a clear call to action.

# **Build your follower base**

Like any good relationship, social media is a two-way dialogue between you and your followers, enabling you to initiate conversations, offer insights and be a thought leader. To build your follower base, start following or adding other people and groups online who are interested in the same or similar causes to you. Not only will you keep informed about the latest news on these issues, but people will start to follow you back and show mutual support for your campaign. As well as posting your own content, repost other peoples’ content when relevant to your cause to show support and potentially gain new followers in the process.

# **Hashtags**

Hashtags are a way to group posts about a similar topic. They allow people to easily search for content about a topic. Typically, you’ll find hashtags at use on Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn. While you can use them on Facebook, they are more common on the other platforms listed above.

To make your hashtags accessible, capitalize the first letter of each word (sometimes called "camel case” at the end of your post. #Braille #Literacy #Vancouver

To direct more online traffic to your pages, it is much more effective to piggyback on other hashtags that people are already looking for rather than creating your own. One example is using the universal accessibility hashtag #a11y to replace the word ‘accessibility’ in a sentence. If your advocacy work relates to a time-specific hashtag like #WhiteCaneAwarenessMonth, use these at the correct times to help the theme trend and make yourself more visible online.

# **Maximize visibility**

If you want to get another user’s attention, such as a decision maker or an organization, you can tag them in posts. If you have a positive meeting with a decision maker or organization, it’s perfectly acceptable to ask them if you can take a photo with them to put on social media. Don’t forget to ask them for their official account name so you can tag them, and they can repost the message to their followers.

# **Be friendly, be credible**

It is a natural part of any advocacy campaign cycle to meet frustrations and roadblocks to success. But as in-person, no one will want to partner with someone online who is incoherent, angry or offensive. Even if you come across someone being negative or unhelpful to your campaign, try bringing them to your side by sticking to the facts and backing them up with links to external evidence if applicable.

If you appear to be bullying or ‘trolling’ someone online, you will alienate potential supporters and destroy any credibility, even if your advocacy campaign is valid. And if possible, try to take any escalating arguments to a private message as soon as possible. A public slanging match doesn’t make anyone look good.

# **Quality over quantity**

No one enjoys being spammed with a flood of messages and will unfollow people who start to do this. Think carefully about any upcoming milestones (for instance, an important meeting or legislation going to the next stage in parliament), build your timelines around this, and only increase the frequency of posts during this time. If you need extra help, free social media scheduling tools can auto-time posts for you to have the most impact.