



NEAR
NEIGHBOURS
BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

INTRODUCTION

The Near Neighbours programme works to bring people together who are neighbours in diverse communities, so that they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in.

Increasingly, social media is a key part of how projects and groups communicate about these issues and has a huge potential to reach a wide audience. This toolkit is designed to act as a guide for projects you are running, and for yourself, if you are looking to publicise your work through social media.

Within this toolkit you can learn about overall ideas and themes that will work across most types of social media.

Beyond that there will be a closer look at which social media sites will be most useful to you and your project. This toolkit will primarily look at Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

If you are interested in promoting your project through other forms of media, or looking to develop the story you wish to share through your work, such resources (along with a wide range of others) are available on our website under 'Resources': www.near-neighbours.org.uk



STEP 1

The Basics

The first step is to ensure that you have tried social media yourself. Make sure you understand how it is being used by some simple online browsing. You may also find it useful to take a look at what other groups or organisations similar to yours are sharing online.

Once you've done that, take a look at what leading social media accounts are doing. Maybe take a look at popular news sources such as The Huffington Post, The Independent, Buzz Feed, BBC News, Time, Amnesty International, Bill Gates, and Google.

From these accounts you will get a sense of what users find interesting and what posts they will engage with.

Of course, your content may be different from these sources, but style is also very important.

Once you've taken a look at what is already on social media, you can decide which platforms you wish to use. Later in this toolkit there is a basic outline of each of the main social media channels that you might wish to try. You can use this to help determine where you planning should be present.



STEP 2

Targeting

Before you can get started online, you should have a think about who your audience is and how you want to reach them. You also need to think about what kind of content you wish to produce to appeal to your audience.

Audience

Who is it that you want to communicate with? Who is a part of your current support base and who do you want to have join you? These are the questions that you need to consider as you plan where you start your social media journey. Once you have a clear idea of who it is that you want to engage with, you need to adopt an approach that will get a response from this audience.

Furthermore, different audiences will respond well to different types of content.

For example, you may be working with children and looking to engage with young families; if so then they might be interested in seeing informative content about raising children (this could be created by you in the form of a blog, or perhaps shared from external news sources).

Perhaps, if you are running a project for young children and the parents of the children are who you are engaging with online, you might want to consider putting up some pictures of the activities you have been taking part in. If you do this, be sure to use photo consent forms. It is also worth remembering that different social media sites will have different audiences. To find out more about this, you can take a look at the guide to the sites which is towards the end of this toolkit.

The crucial thing is to consider who you want to engage with and then think about, if you were in their shoes, what would you want to see online?





Content

As mentioned, different audiences will respond well to different types of content. Do you have a younger or older audience? Is it mostly male, female or a mixture? Is your audience based around a certain cause or concern? These are just a handful of questions you might want to ask and to think about how it will affect what you want to post. You should also try and add some variety to the content that you put up. This might include sharing links to interesting and relevant news articles, sharing your own blog content, posting up pictures of recent events that you've run, sharing news of upcoming events that you are running. You could also highlight the good work that someone else is doing in your field, or maybe share an inspirational quote.

Whatever you post, it's important to remember the power of using pictures in increasing the interest. Pictures can significantly increase the number of people engaging with your content. When people are online and scrolling through a social media feed, they are being bombarded with messages and it is important for yours to stand out.

The easiest way to ensure your posts stand out is to include an eye-catching photo. Often this can be something unusual that you wouldn't expect to see on social media, or it might just be something very colourful.

If you are concerned that you don't have an appropriate picture to use, you can often find one using a stock photo website (listed at the end of the toolkit). If you take a look at successful social media profiles you will see that sometimes the picture they put up is only loosely related to the content they are trying to get you to look at, but they have included the picture because they recognise the importance of an engaging image.

A general rule for social media is to not talk only about your own organisation. People want to know they will have some variety from you and not just be showered with marketing material, so try and share content other than your own where you can. Of course, it's important that any external material you share complements your message, and doesn't overshadow what you are saying about your own work.

At the end of this toolkit are a series of resources that you can use to help you generate content.

STEP 3

Choosing the right platform

Now that you have a broader sense of the basics of social media, it is time to consider which sites you and your organisation are best suited for.

Facebook



Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the UK, with around 30 million users per day on mobile alone. Having a Facebook account for your organisation is advisable in order to reach these people.

However, before you start to produce content, you need to make sure you are putting the content in the right place on Facebook. On Facebook you can set up a 'Facebook Page'. This is different from creating a profile (what an individual might have on Facebook) as it will allow you more options to understand how well people are engaging with your content and will make your organisation appear more professional.

Content that is easy to engage with will perform better on Facebook. For example, a picture that has a nice background and a motivational quote will go a lot further than a link to an article from an academic journal.

This doesn't mean that none of the content you put up on Facebook can have any depth. If you research some of the popular social media pages that are mentioned above you will see that they can reference serious material on Facebook, they just do their best to make this material digestible for somebody that is quickly flicking through a news feed. For example, if you wish to draw the attention of parents of young children to recent research about parenting, you need to offer a good caption with the link to the research. A caption such as: 'New research from Coventry University on young parents' won't receive as much interest as referencing an interesting quote from the research, e.g. 'Recent research shows only 35% of parents read their children a story before bed.' A caption such as this is both easily digestible and offers a hook to encourage your audience to engage with your post.

Another way to encourage engagement on Facebook is to offer lists. You might consider writing a blog article about how to engage with your community. This is likely to receive more interest on Facebook if it is titled '7 ways you can engage more with your community today'.

Top Tip



If you are on Facebook and wish to tag a page into your post, you can do so by putting '@' in front of their name. This should produce a dropdown list where you can see their name and click on it. After you've clicked this should delete the '@' and mean that people can click on the link to follow it through to the page you have tagged.

Once you have set up your page you have numerous options available to you. The first is the option to invite people to like your page. This option will allow you to send an invite to anybody on your personal friends list. You can use 'Insights' on your Facebook page to learn about your audience. Through this you can get a sense of how many likes your page is getting, how many people you are reaching with your posts, which of your posts are the most successful, what time of day your audience is online, and who your audience is (gender/age/location/language). This can be a valuable resource for you as you begin to understand what it is that your audience wants to see on their Facebook timelines.

As you spend more time on Facebook with your page you will begin to learn what your audience likes and you will receive increasing success. You will also begin to judge how often you should be posting. On Facebook, posting too frequently can be counterproductive, as people might lose interest or not see your most important posts. A good place to start is by trying to post once a day.

When you have your page set up you might want to consider allowing other people that you are working with control over it, including the option to post updates. You can do this by accessing the 'Settings' option through your page and selecting 'Page Roles'. Facebook also has a great advice centre that can assist you with any FAQs about running a Facebook page: www.facebook.com/help



Twitter



Twitter is less widely used than Facebook but is still very popular and offers some substantially different features.

There are 12.6 million UK users on Twitter and it is a hub for conversation in both this country and internationally. Whilst Facebook offers a more relaxed approach to social media, Twitter is more interactive and will provide an audience that is looking to engage.

Twitter will provide you with far more opportunity to interact with other organisations and individuals, it will allow you to see what conversations are taking place locally, nationally, and internationally. Twitter also provides a space for content that is a little more serious than what you can get away with on Facebook; Twitter is commonly used by politicians, senior faith leaders and academics as well as local community activists and other, more general users.

A lot of the same principles about posting on Facebook apply on Twitter with 'tweeting'. You still need to provide a 'hook' to draw your audience in and you should still include a picture where possible. However, there is one crucial difference between the sites: all tweets must be 280 characters or less. This can be limiting and force you to come up with creative ways to convey your message.

Twitter is also a much faster site than Facebook. People will tweet far more regularly on Twitter than they will post on Facebook, so your tweet could be pushed very far down a newsfeed only a few minutes after having been tweeted. This means that you might wish to tweet several times a day so that you have more chance of your audience seeing your tweets. However, Twitter is not just about your own tweets; it is about engaging with others. You have the option to 'like' (as on Facebook) and to retweet the content of other users, as well as reply to their tweet. Because it is so easy to engage with others on Twitter, it is important for you to know how to reach the right people.

Top Tip



When you want to 'tag' somebody into a tweet on Twitter, don't start with their handle (i.e. @nearneighbours) because then this Tweet will only be shown to those people that follow both you and them. If you want to start a tweet with a handle, try starting your tweet with a dot first, like this: .@nearneighbours

Twitter also makes extensive use of something called 'hashtags'. These are useful tags that people can add to a tweet, making it easy to follow categories of messages. A hashtag is simply a word with a '#' symbol included at the beginning, such as #community or #NearNeighbours. You can search twitter for hashtags and view all tweets that use these, even if you don't follow them. They are also a great way to have a conversation online. For these reasons it is important that you incorporate them into your tweets when possible. By doing this you increase the chances of people engaging with what you're saying. However, it is advised by Twitter that you don't use more than three hashtags in any one tweet, or you risk the hashtags have an adverse effect on the performance of your tweet.

Another useful tool is professional Twitter platforms such as Tweetdeck or Hootsuite. Using these sites means you can view multiple different feeds at once, as well as creating a newsfeed based on hashtags. For example, a #BringingPeopleTogether news feed would mean that every time somebody tweets #BringingPeopleTogether you will see it here. Through such lists you provide yourself with ample opportunity to engage with the right people for your organisation.

Twitter may be a more serious space than Facebook, but don't be afraid to have a little fun, as well. Also, don't worry about following more people than you have followers; following people is a great way to get started!

Instagram



Although Instagram hasn't been a household name for as long as Twitter, it has now overtaken Twitter in terms of users. There are now 700 million active monthly users on Instagram globally.

In the UK there are 16.7 million monthly active users. Be aware that a significant proportion of these users are young people. Instagram is a format that is entirely based around images; everything you post on Instagram will be a picture which you can then accompany with some text. Instagram has a similar style to Twitter in that you can follow people and they can follow you as well. Again, like Twitter, a lot of what happens on Instagram is based around hashtags.

There is a bit more space to include hashtags on Instagram because you aren't limited to 280 characters with your writing, but you should still try not to include too many.

Try and keep your pictures colourful and engaging. Also, don't be afraid to take a picture on your phone of an event and then immediately post that to Instagram.

Top Tip



Sign up for Google Alerts to get daily news updates on a topic of your choice:

www.google.com/alerts

Through doing this you can bring people to the heart of what you're doing, something that people like to see on Instagram.

Make sure you stay active on Instagram; try and post regularly; follow other people and like their posts; through the 'Home' tab you can stay on top of what the people you are following are up to on Instagram. And, if you want to use tools like Twitter's Tweetdeck, then try Hootsuite, which you can use for Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.



Other things to Consider

When you know which platforms you wish to have a presence on, you can start thinking more about the details of how you will operate on social media on a day to day basis. Moving beyond your audience, it is worth thinking about how social media will be managed by yourself or others. It is important that you have a good idea of the 'who, what, where, when' of how you conduct yourself on social media. If you are prepared with answers to those questions then you stand a better chance of avoiding getting into any trouble.

You need to consider who has access to your social media accounts. If your account is going to be used by more people than just you, who are those with the authority to post on behalf of your organisation? This will allow for clarity so that you can choose those best placed to post and so you know who to talk to if something goes wrong. As well as thinking what you want to post, also be conscious of what you don't want to post.

If you are a faith based organisation and want to do work across faiths, you would do well to avoid posting material that promotes one faith over others. If you consider your work to be politically neutral, you might choose to steer away from posting party political content.

Have a think about what material you want to steer clear of. Then consider what it is that you do want to share. Perhaps this would be good news stories or stories about building community. The where question really relates to which site you want to be posting on, e.g. is your content best for Facebook, or maybe Twitter, or perhaps elsewhere.

You can get a better sense of this using the site descriptions in this toolkit. It is also important to consider how many social media pages you want to use. It is better to use one or two well than to use many pages badly. The last question is when, and refers to what time is best to post online, and how often. Often people check their social media profiles in the mornings, as they get ready for the day; in the evenings, when they are winding down from the day; and before they go to bed. However, you should experiment and see when you are getting the most interaction from your audience. Through such experimenting you will learn how often you might wish to post on each site, as well.

Final thoughts

Don't be afraid to get stuck in! As with most things in life, you only get out of it as much as you put in. If you stay an active member on social media, then you will see your audiences grow and engagement with you and your organisation will improve.

Always remember, however, that social media is transient, yet permanent. Think carefully before you post something, because if you aren't careful, some of your posts might come back to haunt you. Don't say anything through social media that you wouldn't be happy to say in public.

But, if your posts are considered, if you put in solid time and effort, you will reap your rewards and develop a fantastic social media site from which to shout about the great work you are doing.

Glossary

Social media platforms: These will include the likes of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, but also others such as Pinterest, Tumblr, and Reddit.

Analytics: These will provide you with insights about the performance of your posts online, e.g. how many people you reached or how many people you engaged.

Tweet: This is a post on Twitter and is comprised of no more than 280 characters.

Newsfeed: This is where you can view posts from other people and where most social media engagement takes place.

Handle: This is the name through which you can tag people or groups in to your social media posts. For example, if you wished to tag Near Neighbours, you can do so through @nearneighbours.

Facebook page: This is what organisations will have to represent them on Facebook and is different from a 'profile' which is what individuals have. Make sure you have a Facebook page representing you to appear more professional!

Tag: To tag somebody is to include them in your post. This is more than simply writing their name in your post but means that they will receive a notification from this and others will be able to click on their page through your post. To do this include an '@' before their name on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. E.g. @nearneighbours. (On Facebook the '@' will disappear and you will be left with just a linked name.)

URL: A URL is a website link such as www.near-neighbours.org.uk. These can be shortened through websites such as bitly.com

Hashtags: This is a tool to allow you to tap in to a conversation that is happening. For example, Near Neighbours wanted people to talk about Inter Faith, so we asked people to tweet using #InterFaithMeans. Once this conversation had begun it became possible to search #InterFaithMeans and see what people had been saying. You can use this tool to start your own conversation but also, to join in others.

Audience: These are the people that you are already engaging with and the people you want to be engaging with.

Retweet: This is similar to a 'share' on Facebook, it is simply to allow you to tweet somebody else's tweet. Be careful not to retweet things you don't agree with. You may also sometimes see this shortened to 'RT'.

Blog: A regularly updated website or web page, typically run by an individual or small group that is written in an informal or conversational style.



Resources

Stock Photos:

www.pixabay.com

www.gratisography.com

www.splitshire.com

www.picjumbo.com

Blogging Sites:

wordpress.com

tumblr.com

medium.com

Graphic Generating Websites:

www.canva.com

piktochart.com

Performance Analysis:

analytics.twitter.com/about

www.twitonomy.com

bitly.com

(by signing up to bitly you can shorten the links you share to fewer characters (great for Twitter) and get information on how many times the links have been clicked.)

