

How to use social media

There are lots of great reasons for using social media - to create dialogue, to share information, and to keep in touch. Having a presence online can be really beneficial to your group and it's members.

What is social media?

Social media is a form of web-based communication. It has transformed the way we communicate, and created opportunities for people across the world to share information, mobilise campaigns, and stay connected with their friends and family.

Using social media

Define your goals

What do you aim to do by using social media? Is it to recruit volunteers, publicise your events, support a campaign, keep in touch with people, or to fundraise? This might seem like an obvious question but it's important to be clear about what you want to achieve when using social media so that you get the most from it.

Know your audience

Think about who you are trying to reach - in this case, students! Think about what kind of students you will be reaching out to, and spend some time profiling a student you think would be likely to be interested in your group. Knowing your audience will help you to target your message, and keep it relevant.

Now that you know who your audience is, think about how you will reach them. What content do you think will be most likely to engage your audience and encourage them to interact?

Finally, get an idea of the best time to post. Are your audience likely to be online early in the morning, or late at night? Plan when you'll post to make sure it gets noticed.

Choosing your message

Use variety

Share visual content such as videos, pictures and images, which can be more exciting than plain text, and share links to articles and news stories of interest to your community.

Make it personal

Engage with your community in the first person, be conversational, and share updates from members of your group to create a personable identity.

Create dialogue

Get people talking by asking questions; respond personally to people who comment on your posts or feed, and re-post interesting content from members of your community, thanking them in person.

Which platform?

Facebook

Facebook was launched in 2004, and has over 900 million active users. You can use Facebook to create a 'Page' for your group that other users 'like' to receive updates from you. Pages are similar to user profiles—you can share photos, update your status and create events, as well as 'like' other pages.

Twitter

Twitter was launched in 2006, and has over 500 million active users. It's a micro-blogging service that allows users to send and read messages of up to 140 characters, known as 'tweets'. You can 'follow' people to see what they tweet, and re-tweet their messages to your own followers.



This 'How To' guide was written by Chris Wood and Lisa Murphy.

Time management

Using social media to promote your group can be a valuable method of communication, but it's important to make sure you can devote enough time to using it properly. It might be useful to have a specific person or a small group dedicated to updating your social media profiles.

Tip

Twuffer is a useful platform which allows users of Twitter to compose their tweets and schedule their release in advance: twuffer.com

You can also link your Facebook page to Twitter using an app on your page, so you only need to post once. Click 'edit page' > 'Update Info' > 'Resources' > 'Link your page to Twitter' and follow the easy steps.

Have a communication strategy

Social media is a great way to stay in touch with your members and promote your events, but make sure that you don't neglect other methods of communication. Use social media as part of your wider strategy, by linking your profiles to your e-newsletters, website and promotional materials.

Remember, social media can never replace face to face personal interaction where your community will form and take shape!

Tip

Both Facebook and Twitter have plug-ins so that you can add a Facebook or Twitter feed to your website.

Confidentiality and ethical issues

Using social media raises a number of questions around the confidentiality of personal information. Only share personal details such as addresses and phone numbers through social media if you have explicit permission to do so.

Tip

If you wouldn't feel comfortable sharing something on your own profile, don't share it using your group one.

Monitor, evaluate and re-evaluate

Social media is evolutionary rather than linear, which means that platforms are modified and change over time. Stay up to date and well informed with the latest changes, and rethink your approach to social media if necessary.

Monitor how many people follow you on Twitter, or like your page on Facebook. Is the number going down? Rethink the content you're posting to make sure it stays relevant.

Numbers not changing much?

Ensure you put your twitter username and Facebook URL on your publicity so that people can find you.

Numbers going up? Great!

Tip

Tweriod is an app that analyses how often your twitter followers are online, and the time of day that is best to connect with them: tweriod.com

Facebook Insights (accessible from your Facebook Page) shows how many people see your posts and how they interact with your page. Facebook also sends this information to you in a weekly email.

Resources

- WikiHow have created a simple guide to using Twitter: www.wikihow.com/use-twitter

- The Facebook Help Centre includes some useful information about how to set up and manage a page:
www.facebook.com/help/?page=168617716530627

- Direct.gov has a useful page about how to stay safe online: www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople/CrimeAndJustice/KeepingSafe/DG_10027670

SCM's Twitter:
[@SCM_Britain](https://twitter.com/SCM_Britain)

SCM's Facebook
www.facebook.com/studentchristianmovement