

DELAWARE COALITION



AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE

Social Media Guide 2016

The importance of an effective social media strategy cannot be underestimated. Organizations that are actively engaging with users online and connecting across platforms have a major advantage over organizations that aren't. Non-profits stand to benefit greatly from the easy and inexpensive use of social media to spread their mission and gain a following.

Getting Started

One of the main concerns of the Coalition is the aging of its audience; a strong social media presence can go a long way in attracting a younger membership. As the Coalition grows and seeks student involvement, social media will be vital to finding and keeping potential new members.

The New Media Team suggests looking into adding a student communications intern to the organization. A young, fresh-eyed student could be the perfect addition to your team, especially when implementing a new social media strategy. You can contact Meg McGuire—the UD English professor who coordinates English major internships—at mmcguire@udel.edu.

After analyzing both client and user research data, we have created the following guidelines for the Coalition's social media presence.

Posting

Currently, content is being posted on Facebook about once a week, or whenever relevant events and articles come up. This isn't frequent enough to keep users engaged. We recommend posting at least once a day. These posts don't have to be outside articles, and can be as simple as posing a question to your audience to keep them engaged and participating in the community.

Keep the length of posts in mind. Many current posts are quite long, making it likely that readers will lose interest before they get to the end. The key to effective social media is keeping posts concise; in terms of Facebook this means avoiding written posts any longer than 4-5 lines. Adhering to this rule encourages you to include the most valuable information right away, increasing the chances that your audience's attention is captured and maintained.

Utilize related images whenever possible. User research has found visitors' eyes will be drawn more to photos than large blocks of text. Pictures should be clearly related to the topic. Focus on choosing pictures that directly reflect your organization, i.e. community members affecting change, gun violence infographics, and relevant politicians, activists, etc.



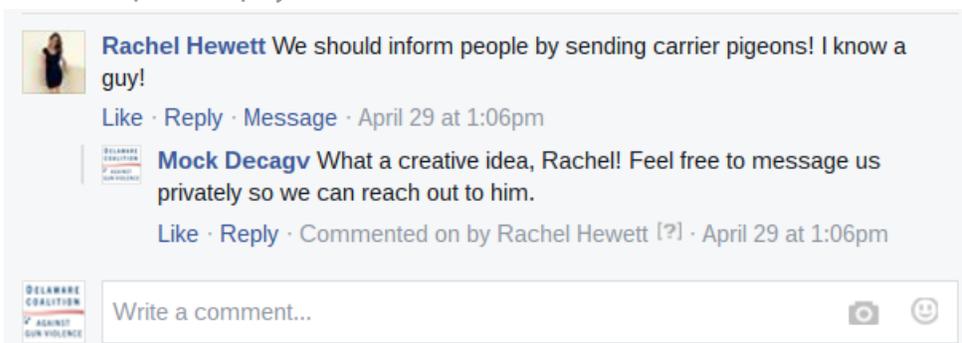
Example Facebook Post

Content & Engagement

The key to effective social media is participation. Users generally don't come to platforms like Facebook to seek information, but rather to **participate in a community**. Think of your website as the information hub, and your Facebook page as an online gathering place for your users to interact with the organization and each other. **You must skillfully craft the content you post to stimulate interaction between your audience members**. Here are some guidelines to make this happen:

- Don't solely post articles and other information-heavy posts.
- Pose questions to start a conversation and encourage participation (i.e. "What do you think of this new law?", "What are some ways you can promote gun safety in your community?")
- Post pictures of members of the coalition in action (at community events and/or legislative hall, etc.) to give the broader group an inside look into the organization.
- Respond to comments, questions, and concerns that are posted by users in a timely and friendly manner.
- Interact with similar organizations to create a wider network of participants and make connections—this includes "liking" other pages and directly addressing them in posts.

Example reply to user comment



You want your Facebook page to be an online extension of the greater community. Foster trust by listening to your members and responding to their comments and

concerns. Facebook users will be turned off if a page feels too stuffy or unwelcoming, so always post and engage online with your users in mind. Also keep the sensitivity of the subject in mind when posting, in efforts to keep interactions conflict-free.

Posting

Tweet or retweet new related content **every day**. In the past, Twitter content has been very sparse. When this guide was created in April, over a month had elapsed between DeCAGV's last tweet. It is important to post frequently when followers' timelines are constantly inundated with hundreds of tweets.

Unfortunately everyone remains limited to the 140 character maximum for posts on Twitter. **You must make sure that you're stating your message in the most clear and concise manner possible**, and never tweet multiple times to get your full message across. If what you're trying to say doesn't fit in 140 characters, reconsider your wording and only include the most essential details. **If you need to include more information or details, you should provide a link** to a related article/DeCAGV website post within the tweet itself.

Tweet Content

Keep in mind that while you are trying to reach a very broad audience, Twitter and other niche social networks are geared toward a younger generation. **Don't be afraid to use a more youthful tone or voice when drafting tweets**. Despite the heavy subject matter of gun violence, crafting your tweets with a charismatic and inviting tone may generate interest and encourage interaction both from and among followers.

As media survey respondents pointed out, including **a balance of visual and textual elements** in your posts is important. Almost all survey respondents under 30 stated that their web experience is more enjoyable when information is disseminated through multiple mediums, especially visual content. **Make sure you frequently post images and videos that accompany your tweets to capture the attention of this younger audience segment**.

Engagement

Always keep in mind when drafting new posts that you want to **provoke conversation** among your supporters and followers, and **increase sharing activity** through encouraging retweets. Use **direct call to action phrases**, i.e. “like & retweet to help spread awareness,” or “Please tell us your thoughts on this proposed legislation.” Do not be afraid to ask for interaction!

Twitter lacks the visibility of Facebook, your tweets get lost in users’ timelines, and “liking” the tweet doesn’t accomplish much in the way of spreading awareness or growing a community of Twitter followers. Because of this, **you must heavily rely on your followers retweeting your content to their followers.**



Growing Your Followers!

DeCAGV’s current follower count is very low. Many followers are accounts of fellow community groups and community awareness initiatives, **not individual members of the community.**

The organization needs to expand its efforts to create links between itself and the community through **following like-minded community organizations as well as the individuals that follow these related groups.** The goal is to increase your own follower base through encouraging others to follow you back. This is not fool-proof, however if these individuals already follow similar organizations, this shows that **they may also be interested in following DeCAGV.**

@-a-glance



- **Post at least once daily**
- **Keep Facebook posts shorter than 5 lines**
- **Combine text posts with quality images relevant to the community**
- **Use hashtags to group content, i.e. #FriendsNotFirearms**
- **Craft clear and concise tweets, include links to relevant information**
- **Use youthful voice/tone to attract younger audience**
- **Directly ask for feedback**
- **Friend Request/Follow individuals already following similar organizations**