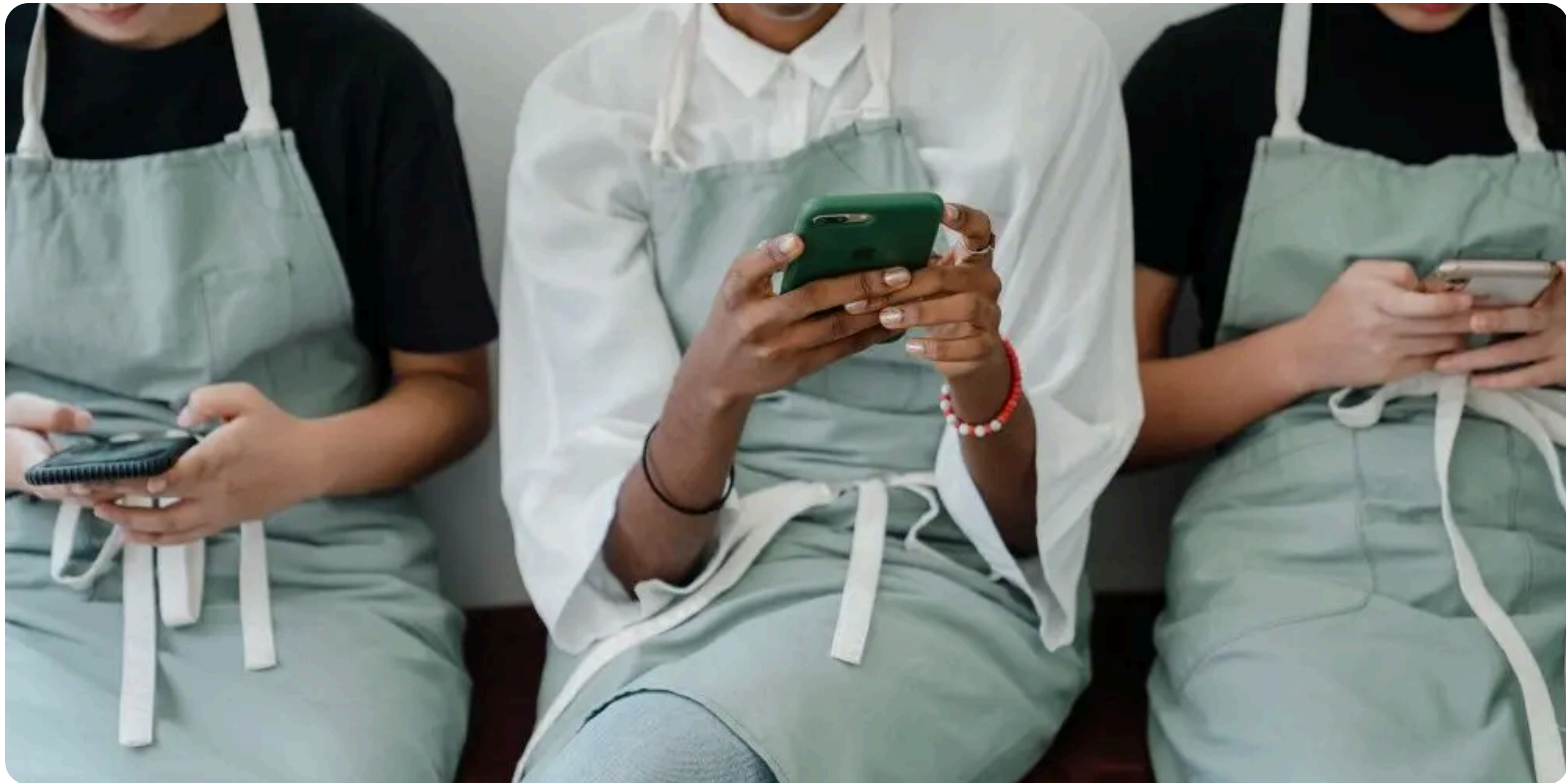


## Why Development Organizations Need a Social Media Strategy

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Tips & Guidance

 Partnerships Incubator



Social media connects people around the world and has the power to reach new audiences, often at a minimal cost. So, why aren't more development organizations going viral with inspiring stories about the social good they are providing? The fact is, while its benefits are clear to most organizations—increased awareness, engagement, and fundraising—social media can present challenges to many grassroots organizations.

Over the past few months, the Partnerships Incubator had the privilege of providing a few local partners with visual identity and marketing support, including enhancements to their social media strategy. The experience of working with these partners helped us

identify a number of common challenges facing smaller, nontraditional development partners in managing social media accounts. These challenges include a lack of awareness of best practices, a lack of time to devote to social media, a lack of staff support, and a lack of understanding about which topics to present.



*Photo credit: Retha Ferguson*

We were pleased that, at the end of our activity, the organizations we supported were feeling hopeful and excited to implement a clear strategy because of how it can benefit the sustainability of their work. The time you put into developing a social media strategy *now* will pay off in the future.

## **Why Create a Social Media Strategy**

Social media is a great way to present timely, brief updates about what your organization is doing. This can serve as a valuable sneak peek for funders on the types of services your organization provides and how your community engages with you. Consider how your public presentation might influence other entities' decisions to work with you. If your organization builds good rapport through social networking you can be seen as an organization worthy of investment or collaboration. Social media also offers you the opportunity to build transparency with your stakeholders by sharing real-time updates about how funding is being used and how your community is being served.

### Tips for Your Social Media Strategy

We learned throughout our partner support process that social media is too valuable not to invest in, and it's much easier to manage than you might think. So, let's break down how your organization can do it.

1. **Evaluate what you're already doing.** Start by connecting with your team to understand if you have social media profiles and, if you do, evaluate your content's performance, consistency, and quality. Take a look at the number of likes or comments on your posts, the last time you posted content and how often you post, and the resolution of images or branding on graphics. Are you satisfied with what you are seeing?
2. **Develop key performance indicators (KPIs).** You can use KPIs to track your success on social media. Consistency of content and number of likes are two common KPIs to monitor. At first, it's essential to ensure that your KPIs are small and measurable. This can be as simple as deciding to gain two new followers per week, sharing three weekly posts on each platform, and creating one weekly company update. After seeing success with those smaller goals, increase the targets your team is aiming for.
3. **Identify the tools and support you need.** To accomplish your goals, [research the tools](#) that can help you reach the finish line. Various platforms exist to help organizations manage and optimize social media content, including scheduling, graphic design, and competitor research tools. Setting up these tools will save your team time and energy in the future when implementing your strategy.
4. **Define your messaging.** Evaluating who your audience is and what their values are will help determine your content. You should focus not only on the goals and tools of your strategy but how you communicate with your audience. Your audience's demographics (age, education, income, etc.) and interests will enhance your ability to share your voice, tone, and values in a way that resonates with them.
5. **Curate stock posts.** Decrease the burden of maintaining fresh content by developing a content calendar and stock posts to cycle through. If your organization plans to share three to five posts per week, rotate the topics you share—these can include company updates, “meet the team” posts, recruitment and events notices, and industry trend commentary.
6. **Start, evaluate, and adjust.** Take a leap of faith and implement the strategy you have developed. A major benefit of creating a business account on all social media platforms is that they offer insights or analytics for you to evaluate your page's performance. Discuss with your team members which [social media metrics are most valuable](#) to your work—engagement, impressions, audience growth, or conversions. This discussion will help you determine your KPIs. Decide what takes priority and adjust your strategy to accomplish improved metrics in that particular area.

### Social Media Strategies in Action

As you build your social media presence, stay curious about how other organizations—especially those in your sector—use social media. Although social media is ever-evolving, so is development. That means we can pivot to use the latest social media trends to our advantage to meet our development objectives.

*How can your organization accomplish a successful social media strategy or campaign? Download the Partnerships Incubator's [Social Media Strategy template](#) to help strengthen your marketing and communication practices.*

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