



Growing
Independent
Organisations

GIO Editions

MEDIA

&

COMMUNICATION



Image by Toshio on flickr.com

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It's all about Communication

Not Technology for the sake of it, but how to take these trendy new tools and use them for things that really matter.

The power of the internet, mobile phones, digital filmmaking and web software can be used to revitalise our communities, promote democracy, deliver public services and mobilise us for collective action.

It's all about communication. Communication is fundamental to our society, and to creating change in it. We all need to receive and share information, start conversations, tell stories, work together, promote our ideas, influence others. Good communication can change lives, stop wars and elect presidents; bad communication can start arguments, waste resources and even cost lives.

Much of our most important and effective communication doesn't involve **technology**. We talk, observe, play games, develop relationships face-to-face through our senses, without even thinking about it. Technology extends our reach, via print, film, radio, television, photography, phone, e-mail, and the internet, but it can't change our basic human nature. Communication comes in all shapes and sizes, but its basic social purpose stays the same.

A range of communication technologies have emerged over the last five years. Technologies include web 2.0 and social media, but also the rise of low-budget filmmaking and mobile technologies. What makes them important is that they place more power in the hands of individuals, and in doing so enable two-way communication - real, human **conversations**. They make it easier than ever for organisations and governments to talk to the people; but they also let the people talk back, and talk to each other. And not simply in writing, but through video, music, voice, photographs, animation and even virtual worlds.

Conversations are scarier and more **unpredictable** than 'pushing' messages to a passive audience. If your audience can talk back, you have less control of the message and ideas being communicated; your audience suddenly has as much power as you do. You can't plan a conversation. But if you really want to change the world, you have to change the conversations between people - and once you understand that, and how the smart use of technology can give you voice in these conversations, then things become very interesting indeed.

(Text taken from Social By Social)

Accessibility Top Tip

Improve accessibility, usability and user experience on the internet for disabled and older people by following the BS 8878 Web accessibility code of practice. Order a reduced price charity copy by emailing orders@bsigroup.com



TOP TIP

How to start using Social Technology

- 1.** Start by using as little technology as possible. Experiment with free or low-cost tools and grow from there. The less you spend, the less pressure there will be to get it right first time.
- 2.** Gain full commitment of the decision-makers: the Chief Exec and Board. Encourage them to gain hands on experience.
- 3.** Get the chief executive blogging.
- 4.** Expect people's attitude to be more important than skills in adopting new tools. If people are really keen they will find a way.
- 5.** First learn how to listen and converse online...by reading blogs, through RSS, bookmarking resources, and making comments.
- 6.** Blend online and offline communication methods.
- 7.** Don't expect social spaces online to work without a host. Face-to-face events don't unless everyone knows each other well.
- 8.** Expect people to be different in their preferences. Some will write, others take pictures or make movies. Work with people's strengths and give support where they are weaker.
- 9.** Go to other people's online spaces as well as attracting them to yours.
- 10.** Start with something bite-sized such as an event where there is scope to develop content before the event, at the event and after the event...including photos and video.
- 11.** Build the costs of technology into normal operational budgets. Don't treat it as a one-off project.
- 12.** Design for evaluation. Monitor how the technology is used against criteria for success.



Having a website for your group or organisation can be a great way to connect with your audience including potential new members, current service users and funders. Before you go ahead creating a new website spend plenty of time planning it first. Think about what type of content you will be uploading, who will be creating the content, who your target audience is, how people will navigate the site, and the overall appearance. Remember that first impressions count, and most people make a decision about a website on a subconscious level within the first 3-5 seconds.

Some providers allow you to create websites for free and will offer more than adequate services for smaller organisations. Free services include:

- Wordpress (www.wordpress.com)
- Google Sites (www.google.co.uk/sites)

If you have inhouse expertise or money to invest in building a website you may be able to look beyond completely free website services. If you are able to consult with a web developer I recommend using someone who specialises in open source content management systems such as Wordpress, Drupal or Joomla.

How much will a new website cost?

Domain Name - I recommend a .org.uk web address (domain name) for community organisations and charities which costs £5.98 for two years. Domain names can be bought and registered with lots of providers including www.123-reg.co.uk.

Hosting costs - Expect to spend between £20 and £100 a year on hosting for an average website but hosting can cost more if you have very specialised features.

Setting up a website doesn't need to be scary.

Creating email newsletters

Only 20% of non-profit e-mails are actually opened and only 3.5% of messages actually generate a click on a link or a donate button. Here's 5 considerations that could make your next email newsletter stand out.

1 Be interesting - We are charities and social enterprises with something positive to shout about. Think about how you can offer your audience something that's either useful, entertaining or inspirational.

2 Have a call to action - Almost always, you'll want to get your reader to do something after looking at your newsletter. You may want them to donate money, register for an event, fill in a survey or book onto training. Whatever your call to action make sure it's both obvious and easy to do. If you don't have a call to action think carefully about whether you should be sending the newsletter at all.

3 Subject headline - The subject line of an email newsletter is like a front-page headline in a newspaper. You need to draw the reader in, so make it engaging and relevant (maybe promise a benefit) but no more than 25 characters so your reader can see it all before opening the email.

4 Make it scannable - Most people don't read online, they scan. Make sure you use easy-to-read bullet points and sub-headings. Link to your website and post extra details there.

5 Monitor and optimise - Some email clients have a built-in analytics package but if yours doesn't, make sure you integrate one. It's essential you know how well received your newsletters are so you can optimise and improve your newsletters in the future. Statistics regarding newsletter open and click rates can, for example, inform you what type of content is most appealing to your audience or provide information on the optimal time of day to send your emails.

At the Gio Project we like to use an email marketing service called MailChimp.

It makes it easy to design and send beautiful emails, manage your subscribers and track your campaign's performance.

For more information visit www.mailchimp.com or get in touch and we can offer you some 1-2-1 support

Favourite Social Media tools

- **Google Analytics.** A free web stats tool from Google that allows you to track the users of your website or blog.
- **Google Reader.** A free tool from Google that allows you to read and manage your subscriptions to blogs or websites via RSS in your web browser.
- **Facebook.** A free social networking site that allows you to create your own organisational fan page or group.
- **Ning.** A tool for creating your own social network and community online, either private or public.
- **Skype.** The most common voice over IP that is free for users to register and make chat, voice and video calls free of charge.
- **Twitter.** A free and popular microblogging tool that allows users to send short messages.
- **Wordpress.** A free website and blogging tool with a large support community.
- **Flickr.** A free online photo sharing and storing platform.
- **Google Docs.** Excellent for collaborative authoring of documentation and project plans.
- **Delicious.** The most widely used social bookmarking tool.

Summary: 5 Golden Rules of Digital Media

1. Tailor outputs to your audience

2. Be a real person

3. Don't just advertise but add value

4. Be interactive

5. Monitor & optimise

How the Gio Project can help

The Gio Project team can work with you in a range of ways to tackle your media and communication needs.

One-to-One Support

We offer bespoke support to non-profit-organisations. We can provide advice and guidance on developing a communication strategy including websites, newsletters and social media technology which could help you to identify and address the problems faced by your organisation.

Website Support

We can provide one-to-one support and consultation on creating websites. We will either be able to teach you step-by-step how to create your own website or put you in touch with professional developers once we've discussed appropriate options.

E-bulletin

Our e-bulletin is sent out once a month to your email address and updates you on current opportunities, news and events. If you would like to sign up to receive the e-bulletin then please email hello@gioproject.org.uk

Training

We run a range of training sessions focused on digital and social media including 'Promoting Your Organisation Using Digital Media,' and 'Building Awareness Using Social Media' look at our website www.gioproject.org.uk for current opportunities.

Monitor & Optimise Top Tip

Integrate Google Analytics into your website. It's free and enables you to manage visitor stats. It provides you with rich insights into your website traffic and marketing effectiveness. Powerful, flexible and easy-to-use features also let you see and analyse your traffic data. Visit www.google.com/analytics.



TOP TIP



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