



Using Social Media

TO STAY ENGAGED WITH PARTICIPANTS AND PARTNERS: PART 2

TIP SHEET

Introduction

In a separate [tip sheet](#), we talked about the benefits of using social media and the different platforms available for you to use. First things first, always work with your program director and follow your organization's social media protocols before you post anything.

In this tip sheet, we discuss how facilitators can create posts that get attention and connect with participants and other facilitators. As facilitators, you have great skills that give you an advantage to use social media effectively to stay engaged with your participants outside of the classroom. Here are some steps and things to keep in mind when maintaining your social media:



Maintain a consistent presence.

As facilitators, you know the benefits of being consistent when conducting a class. Consistency in posting to social media is also important when using it to engage participants. Maintaining consistency can be a challenge when you are busy but when an account is not regularly updated and maintained, the result is that the information does not present a current or engaging online presence.



Create a plan and a schedule for posting.

You may want to put reminders on your calendar and include ideas that you want to post about. This prevents large gaps between posts and also makes maintaining social media accounts a regular reoccurring task. Spreading out posts over time builds a consistent online presence for

you as a facilitator who wants to stay connected to program participants and other facilitators. On platforms like Facebook, you can schedule items to auto-post at specific times in the future.



Establish your own “voice” that reflects your organization’s values.

Every organization has a unique voice and because social media is based on personal, social connections, a genuine voice will build connections with your audience. Always remember that you are representing your organization. Everything you post should reflect the same ideals and standards that you have when facilitating a class with program participants.



Create visually appealing content.

Social media posts perform better when they are visually engaging. This might mean different things on different platforms, but at a minimum, make sure each post has both text and an image or a link. Do you have pictures of other facilitators or staff that have engaged recently with participants? With their permission, use these pictures to add interest to your posts. Original photos are best so make it a habit among staff to take photos for social media use. You can include partners, materials used in classroom activities, or participants (with the appropriate permissions). There is no such thing as having too many photos to choose from!



Be highly responsive to viewers and commentators.

In the same way that effective facilitators are authentic and pay attention to their participants, social media works best when it is authentic, personal, and responsive to comments and questions promptly and appropriately when they’re posted. The benefit of this responsiveness is that positive feedback can be spotlighted and amplified to demonstrate the genuine benefits of your program.



Use your facilitator skills to deal with negativity on social media.

As facilitators you know that groups need to feel safe without blaming or scapegoating individual members. This is why you set boundaries in the classroom. It is your role as a facilitator to directly intervene when negative dynamics arise. You can accomplish these same goals on social media by having pre-written guidelines that set boundaries like prohibiting profanity, threats, abusive or defamatory comments, or off-topic comments. You can also adjust Facebook settings so that comments must be approved by a moderator. Just as you model appropriate behavior in the classroom, do the same on social media by preparing calm, positive, proportional responses to complaints, but don’t engage repeatedly with unreasonable critics.

Your training and experience as facilitators prepare you to use social media effectively to engage your participants and create a virtual community. Feel free to share this tip sheet with your program director when you are discussing your organization’s social media protocols.



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