



Using Social Media

TO STAY ENGAGED WITH PARTICIPANTS AND PARTNERS: PART 1

TIP SHEET

Social media networks are some of the most powerful communications channels available to facilitators.

In addition to being cost-effective, social media serves as an effective venue to reach out and interact directly with your program participants. This tip sheet is the first of a two-part special edition of *Facilitating Change* to provide you with ideas, guidance, and strategies for how to use social media strategically. It is important that you always work with your program director and follow your organization's social media protocols before you post anything.

Benefits of engaging via social media

Social media has gone beyond its early image as a time-waster for tech-obsessed youth.

It is now widely accepted as a key medium for a variety of organizations to interact with their participants and partners. About 70% of all Americans use the most familiar platform, Facebook, with even higher usage among adults of prime parenting age (79% of 30-49-year-olds).¹ Because social media is now seen by users as a primary source for up-to-date information, social engagement is a powerful tool for facilitators to keep in touch with your participants.

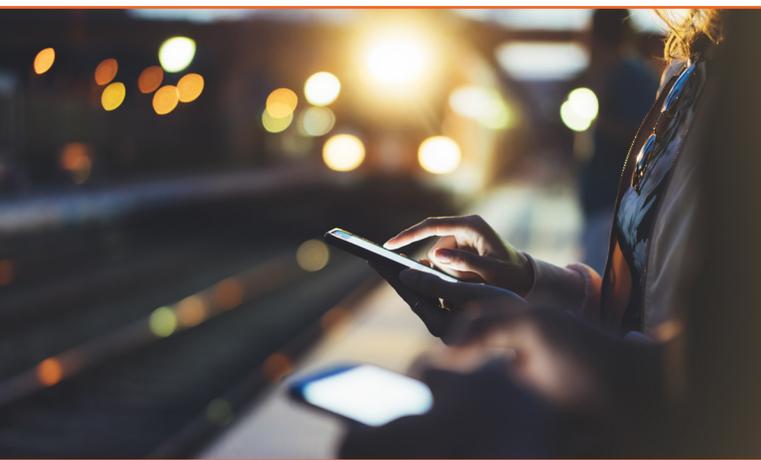
First: Consider your audience

The single most helpful step toward creating an effective social media presence is to gain a clear picture of who you want to reach. This includes not only their characteristics but also their social media preferences.

Think of the participants in your classes and your organization’s target population:

- **Fathers**
- **Adult Couples & Individuals**
- **Youth**
- **Community Partners**

Use this information to inform *where* and *when* to engage your participants effectively, what kind of message they’ll respond to, and what form those messages should take.



Choose your platform

Rather than chasing trends, be strategic in choosing which social media platforms to use.

Does your program director have a preference for which social media platforms are used? For organizations and facilitators with limited time and resources, it is not necessary—or advisable—to try to participate on all platforms. Each platform offers different advantages and reaches slightly different audiences.^{1,2}



Facebook

- **Age of Heaviest Users:** Adults ages 25-29 (84%) and ages 30-49 (79%)
- **Pros:** Most widely used, including among older adults; user-friendly
- **Cons:** Comments should be monitored



YouTube

- **Age of Heaviest Users:** Adults ages 18-24 (93%) and 25-29 (90%)
- **Pros:** Broadly used; compelling medium
- **Cons:** Production can be resource-intensive



Instagram

- **Age of Heaviest Users:** Adults ages 18-24 (75%) and teens ages 13-17 (72%)
- **Pros:** Targets a more youthful audience; well-curated medium means less “noise” and competition
- **Cons:** Requires compelling, well-composed images; must use the mobile app



LinkedIn

- **Age of Heaviest Users:** Adults ages 25-29 (44%)
- **Pros:** Good venue for professional networking
- **Cons:** Not an effective medium for “retail” communication



Twitter

- **Age of Heaviest Users:** Adults ages 18-24 (44%)
- **Pros:** Conversational, dynamic; good for “live” updates and interaction
- **Cons:** Requires frequent updates and knowledge of Twitter norms



Other
 (Snapchat,
 TikTok, etc.)

- **Age of Heaviest Users:** Adults ages 18-24 (73%) and teens ages 13-17 (69%)
- **Pros:** Popular among younger users; more casual
- **Cons:** Trend-driven; requires frequent re-calibration of strategy



Knowledge is critical

Knowledge of how your target audience consumes social media will be critical to targeting the most effective channels.

Considerations include:

- **Type of content**—what kind of content can you produce?
- **Audience preferences**—where does your target audience spend its time online?
- **Frequency of posting**—how often can you reliably post?

Monitor how many likes/comments/clicks/shares each post receives. Pay attention to whether those clicks are coming from your target audience. If not, you might consider changing your post or trying a different platform. This will let you know if you’re being effective or not. All this data can be monitored on the “Insights” tab of any social media organizational page.

In a separate tip sheet, we will discuss how facilitators can create posts that get attention and connect with participants and other facilitators. Feel free to share this tip sheet with your program director when you are discussing your organization’s social media protocols.

¹ Perrin, A. & M. Anderson. (2019 April 10). Share of U.S. adults using social media, including Facebook, is mostly unchanged since 2018. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/>

² Anderson, M. & Jiang, J. (2018 May 31). Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/>



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