

Social Media for Cultural and Arts Organisations



widgetbox



What is social media?

- Social media is a way of **connecting to a wider online community** of people, organisations, businesses, governments, the media, entertainment...the list is endless.
- Being part of an online community means you can **directly target key audiences** quickly, easily and for **free**.
- Different social media sites can work for you in different ways, all of which you can **link from your home website**, or together can operate as your web presence.
- By signing up for a www.facebook.com or www.twitter.com account you can **access** and **update** information about your organisation, tour, event, or campaign from **anywhere in the world**.
- By definition social media sites are more **interactive and social domains**. There are professional networking sites such as www.linkedin.com which allows you to exchange information, ideas and opportunities with your contacts, allowing you to create a professional identity online.

Blog: A website, usually maintained by an individual, but can also be a business or organisation, in the form of an online journal with new entries appearing in sequence as they are written.

Micro-Blogging: A form of blogging that allows the blogger to write brief text updates (usually 140 characters) and publishes them either to be viewed by anyone or restricted to a group chosen by the blogger.

RSS Feed: (Really Simple Syndication) A format for delivering regularly changing web content such as blog entries, news headlines, audio and video. Readers can subscribe to timely updates from favoured websites or aggregate feeds from a variety of different sites into one place (i.e. www.igoogle.com).

Feed: Rather than information being requested and “pulled” by the user, a ‘Feed’ represents information “pushed” or “broadcasted” to be interested and subscribed user.

Podcasts: A series of digital media files, usually digital audio or video, which are made available for download via web syndication.

Browser plug-ins: Are additional pieces of software that add extra capabilities to your web browser i.e. the ability to view movies or to update RSS feeds. This is a computer program which interacts with a host application to provide a specific function “on demand”.

Widgets: An icon or graphic interface element that is manipulated by the internet user to perform a desired function online. User friendly websites are using widgets to simplify and enhance the internet user’s experience. Examples of widgets: media player buttons, web browser controls, social networking sites that enable information sharing, RSS feed icons, and interactive graphs, charts or statistical media. <http://www.widgetbox.com/>

What does it all mean?

Social Networking: An online community of people who share interests and activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. Allows people to connect with individuals and organisations.

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Is Social Media right for you?

- If you're looking for an **easy way to build a web presence** or connect with a younger, tech savvy, or new audience, its worth considering using a social networking tool such as www.myspace.com or www.facebook.com.
- Are you looking to **promote specific actions or petitions**? Facebook and MySpace allow users to be much more proactive. Often people delete email petitions while Facebook offer easy, social and fun applications at the **click of a button**, instantly adding your name to a petition or cause.
- If you're looking for a more **informal approach** to keeping in touch with a group of people, letting them know what's going on with you, updating them on your organisation or simply commenting upon the number of cups of tea you've had that day, a social network can **blend the personal with the professional**.
- When working predominantly with volunteers or seasonal participants a social networking site can **help sustain and foster relationships** between these groups of people. This is an ideal way of encouraging them to keep in touch with one another and continue to be involved with your organisation.
- If your looking for a **quick and honest** way of delivering feedback to your supporters, social networks make it really easy for people to find you and make requests or post comments, but make sure you respond quickly, personally and when possible, publically.

Almost two-thirds of the world's internet population belongs to a social network and these sites are nearly surpassing the popularity of email updates and newsletters.

Social Media might not be right for you if...

- **You're still trying to get a handle on your current software** –ensuring your computers are networked and backed up regularly, maintaining customer/ supporter databases, investigating the benefits of a newsletter or e-bulletin and understanding your current software systems makes more sense before turning your attention to new areas like social networking.
- **Your target audiences aren't using social media sites** – social media works best when the people you're trying to reach or work with are already members of online communities.
- **You don't have the time to experiment** – Online communities are not self-maintaining, and they are unlikely to yield an immediate or measurable return on your time investment.
- **You want to avoid dealing with technologies which may not work as well as they could** – Social media sites are evolving everyday, reacting to users needs and sorting out the kinks in the system.
- **You want clear editorial control and brand management** – it's hard, even impossible, to control the context in which your organisation will appear in today's society. By actively engaging with people you're opening yourself up to public comment.

Online communities are not interested in promoting your brand and in an open forum such as Social Networking anyone can have their say – good or bad – about you and your organisation for all to see.

For more information or advice please contact Marcus Wilson
e: Marcus@hi-arts.co.uk t:01463 717 091 w:hi-arts.co.uk

HI-Arts – Suites 4&5 Ballantyne House – 84 Academy Street – Inverness – IV1 1LU

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What advantages are there to being part of a wider social media network?

- Social media sites allow you to **instantly collaborate, share information and have conversations** about ideas, causes, events, or organisations we care about or are interested in.
- Used effectively social media sites can enable you to **reach new volunteers, locate audiences, build up supporter lists or even raise money.**
- Social networks lend themselves greatly to **generating brand affinity** – particularly with fan sites (i.e. facebook).
- If you know and respect the culture of social media, these sites can be an effective way to **encourage people to take action and spread the word** about you, your organisation or your cause.
- Allows you to **follow similar organisations across the world** or get updates about events in your area, giving you access to collaboration opportunities, highlight potential scheduling clashes or even inspire new ideas for your own organisation.
- For many small organisations **audience development** will be a challenge given the current economic climate, which is all the more reason to look into social networking sites to reach out and communicate with new audiences.
- Social media offers an opportunity to **reach a global network and broaden your catchment beyond what was previously possible.** This could be particularly useful for rural-based venues seeking to reach audiences for more specialist programmes. Not only can you create your own social network, but you can **join other networks**, for instance promoters can join loyal, but perhaps geographically dispersed, fan networks of particular artists.

Top Tips

#1 A Unique Culture - Social networks are ultimately about **friendships** and **adding value** to one another's lives through interaction. When using social networks to publicise your organisation, event or campaign you should **follow the same ethos** and consider how you are adding value through this type of interaction.

To be successful it's critical that you **understand the culture of the communities** you're joining. Social media is a collaborative and open forum; anything which is considered hard-selling, marketing or corporate will be ignored.

#2 Consolidate your audience - Look for opportunities to interact with people on sites they are already using, rather than ask them to sign up to the site you join.

#3 Spend time with it – developing a social network is time consuming, it may require a dedicated member of staff to deal with updating, maintaining and delivering an open, accessible and collaborative network.

#4 Less is more - There are hundreds of different types of social media sites on the web, be selective and join the ones which best represent you, remember the sites you join are also a **reflection upon you and/or your organisation.**

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Social Media and Social Networks (May 2009)

General (most popular sites)

- www.facebook.com
- www.twitter.com (micro-blogging)
- <https://cotweet.com/> (Help for businesses using Twitter)
- www.MySpace.com
- www.Flickr.com (photo sharing)
- www.YouTube.com (sharing videos)
- www.Tumblr.com (micro-blogging, RSS)
- www.Digg.com (sharing content from anywhere on the web)
- www.StumbleUpon.com (sharing websites)
- www.Delicious.com (social bookmarking)
- www.Blogger.com (blogging)
- www.Typepad.com (blogging)
- www.Wordpress.com (blogging)

Niche

- Arnie Street (music)
- ANobii (Books)
- Bebo (General)
- Broadcaster.com (video sharing and webcam chat)
- Reverbnation (social network for musicians and bands)
- ShareThis (sharing websites)
- Shelfari (books)
- SocialVibe (Social network for charity)
- Soundpedia (Music)
- Tagged.com (general)
- Travbuddy.com (travel)
- Travellerspoint (Travel)

- Buzznet (music and pop-culture)
- Cafémom (mothers)
- Care2 (green living and social activism)
- CosyCot (south east asian women)
- CouchSurfing (travel)
- DeviantART (art community)
- Eons.com (babyboomers)
- Filmaffinity (movies and TV)
- Flixster (movies)
- Gather.com (article, picture and video sharing)
- Goodreads (book lovers)
- InterNations (International Community)
- Itsmy (mobile community)
- Jaiku (general – akin to twitter)
- LibraryThin (books)
- LiveJournal (blogging)
- MOG (music)
- OneWorldTV (Not-for-profit video sharing and social networking)
- Passportstamp (Travel)
- Quarterlife (social network for artists, filmmakers, musicians and creative ppl)
- Reddit (sharing links)
- Tribe.net (general)
- Wasabi (General)
- WAYN (travel and lifestyle)

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