Module 7
Using Social Media
Learning Outcomes

1. Learn about the different forms of social media

2. Learn how to use different social media platforms to help achieve your organisational goals

Contextualisation

Social media is the term commonly given to Internet and mobile-based applications that allow users to interact with each other and share opinions and content. Social media involves the building of communities or networks and encouraging participation and engagement.

Social media helps amplify advocacy efforts by potentially reaching more people, in more places, faster than ever before. To use social media effectively, you should have a clear plan in mind of who your audience is, which social media platforms are most suited to that audience, and what results you hope to gain from your efforts.

The modern digital era means that social media will no longer be stand-alone aspect of your advocacy plan, but rather something that should be integrated at the most basic level.
What is using social media for digital advocacy?
Digital advocacy is the use of digital technology to contact, inform, and mobilize a group of concerned people around an issue or cause. The purpose of digital advocacy is to galvanize supporters to take action.

Digital tools have become a central component of almost any movement. Some of the most-used digital advocacy tools include websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, email, and texts. Literally hundreds of social media applications exist that could be used for digital advocacy, but to get started, spend your time and resources where your supporters are most likely to be (Facebook and Twitter are good bets). Then integrate your efforts for better overall results.

Why use social media for digital advocacy?
The advantages of using social media include: low (or no) hard costs for set-up; potentially wide reach; quick/instantaneous sharing of messages; and new opportunities to listen, engage, and monitor your progress.

In 2019, it is estimated that there will be around 2.77 billion social media users around the globe, up from 2.46 billion in 2017.

- 1.40 billion people on average log onto Facebook daily and are considered daily active users
- Twitter has 330 million monthly active users (MAUs)
- 300 million people now use Instagram every day

When might you use social media?
Any time you are working to engage people that utilize some form of social media, you may want a social media presence to amplify your ability to reach supporters quickly. Social media is not a fad, it is a powerful trend that represents new methods for advocating.

To use social media as part of a direct action campaign, it is helpful, but not necessary, to have set up the social media tools and gathered supporters in advance of making a specific request. No matter where you are in the process, you can use social media to help support your cause.

You can join and participate in social networks at any time, 24/7. However, timing is important to consider when carrying out specific tasks. Email is typically better read on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mid-morning and mid-afternoon, for example. So think about and research when your potential supporters are most likely to receive and give thought to your messages.

Before beginning to use social media, carefully consider your goals. For example, are you hoping to: recruit volunteers; brand your organization as experts; disseminate information about an issue; promote an event; solicit donations; get people to take particular action; and/or tell stories about your work?

Who should use social media?
Almost every advocacy campaign can benefit from some form of social media. The perception is that social media reaches young people primarily, but its growth is explosive and far-reaching. People of all ages around the world are increasingly using social media.

Specialized tools exist to help organize volunteerism, donate, fundraise, bring people together for rallies and meetings, to boycott or support businesses, participate, discuss, and subscribe to updates.
Four Skills needed to use Social Media to Drive Social Change:

- Focus – hatch a goal that will make an impact
- Grab Attention – stick out in an overcrowded, over-messaged, noisy world
- Engage – make people connect with your goal
- Take Action – empower others, enable them, and cultivate a movement

How do you use social media for digital advocacy?
Clarify your main goals and your social media objectives. In the cluttered world of social media, the most important thing to remember is to stay focused on your advocacy objectives – what are the actions and outcomes you want to achieve?

Evaluate what time and resources are available to you and your team.

Be realistic about your ability to engage on any specific platform. Determine which platforms your target market is using most, and focus on those. Choose a central channel for online advocacy efforts, and use additional social efforts to point people toward your main channel. Determine how you will measure success at the start of the project. Begin by envisioning “the big picture” outcomes of how you’d like your social media efforts to turn out. Fortunately, it is easy to track data through many free analytic tools for websites and social marketing tools, which are often built into the tool itself. (Once you have decided upon which social media tools you will use, you may want to explore what built-in analytics they offer, and whether you will need additional analytics or monitoring capabilities. For example, some of these monitoring sites may be of use: Google Analytics, Google Alerts, Technorati, Addictomatic, Twazzup, Social Mention, HootSuite, Klout, Web2express Monitoring, BoardTracker).

Sign up for social media accounts
Select one central social media platform. This will likely be your website or blog site or your Facebook cause page. If you don’t already have something like this, create it. It will be the hub of all your online advocacy work, at least initially.

Then, choose the combination of social media tools that will be most likely to help you communicate with and engage supporters and potential supporters. Use the information from your research in step 1 to decide what you can pursue with the resources you have now.

Reference: Community Tool Box

Social Media Content
Social media isn’t the place for long paragraphs of carefully written content. Content which works best has an emotional impact which people can relate to and instantly connect with. Well-produced stories can help to explain why your cause is important, show how the work you do makes a difference, explain about difficult topics, change attitudes and give a voice to those you help – from their perspective.

A good story can share the detail of a moment or can show transitions or a bigger picture. Stories can be shocking or funny or sad or happy. They should bring the person or situation to life. They should be interesting, start with impact and end with an action for thereader (share / vote / help etc).

Relax
Social media is where people play out their social, personal and business lives. So if you want to engage, experiment with ways of expressing yourself that match your audience’s own approach – that means informal language, acronyms, one-word replies and hashtags.
Creating Images
Image-based channels such as Instagram are well used by big charities who use the platform to share great images and stories. There are lots of free tools to help you create images (such as Canva). If you have a smart phone, why not take the photo you need yourself?

A good picture on social media:
- Is clear and easy to understand.
- Tells a story or shows something happening.
- Is uncluttered and in focus
- Isn’t dark or gloomy.
- Can be cropped in closely
- Can be moving / shocking / funny.
- Can be creative

Top Tips
Be ready to respond quickly to a topical campaign idea. Make it easy for people to get involved and participate, e.g. by providing great content and images.

If your social media campaign is strong, do look at opportunities for press coverage

Reference: The Charity Social Media Toolkit

E-safety
Don’t let e-safety worries be a barrier to using social media in school. Some common sense rules on how to improve the safety and security of social networking in schools

Follow your GTC guidelines regarding the use of social networking. Then check your school’s policy, and check your LA’s policy. If you cannot find specific guidelines or policies, ask senior management. If there is no policy or guidance for your school, ask for a statement to this effect to be put in writing. If you are accused of misconduct, claiming that you were unaware of guidance will not be a defence. If your school or LA does not have specific guidelines, create your own framework for how you use social networking for professional purposes – and stick to it.

- Be professional on the internet - including Facebook, Twitter and any other social media networks.
- Don’t post anything inappropriate, including comments or photos which might embarrass yourself or the school.
- Avoid interacting with, initiating contact with or ‘friending’ current pupils using your personal profile.
- Keep all school-related conversations focused on school, teaching and learning.
- Remember, there is potential for anything you post online to be copied and distributed. Bear this in mind every time you post.
- Check – are you able to delete the content once you have posted it? How long will the material stay online? Consider your digital footprint.
- Always ensure you own the rights to your content. Posting someone else’s copyrighted material will appear very unprofessional if a complaint is made.
- If you intend to use social media as part of your teaching, ensure parents and other teachers are clearly briefed on how this will work. Seek and obtain written permissions if required.

Source: What Every Teacher Needs To Know About Social Media

Reflection & Engagement

Group discussion:
- What social media platforms are you aware of?
- How do they reach their target audience?

Group activity:
Profile your target audience as an individual.
- Are they male or female?
- How old are they?
- What is their occupation?
- What are their interests?
- How do they use social media and when?
- What message are you trying to reach them with?
- Which platforms would be most effective for achieving your goals and why?
Task

- Create a social media campaign for your target audience using the following process:

1. Choose your social justice issue
2. Make a statement about what you want to achieve
3. Translate your statement onto most relevant social media platform
4. Set target for who you want to reach
5. Go live!